**How to Pay It Forward With Sheryl Chamberlain Edit 1**

[00:00:00] **Natalie Benamou:** This is your host, Natalie Benamou. I am also CEO of HerPower2 Lead and the founder of HerCsuite™, a platform with one single solution where executive women can come together, meet and thrive. I know that this episode is going to be incredibly useful because it's with Sheryl Chamberlain. I have the chance to attend an event, a group empower power event on international women's day and fast forward to today with the opportunity to not only interview Sheryl, but also I have the great honor of being one of the mentors that's going to work on the Hope prize and we talk about what the Hope prize is. Um, it is about global diversity and inclusion and I can't wait for you to hear that as well as other topics about group empower and many things about how we can come together as a community, have one conversation and make a difference.

Sheryl is also, she is the board chair [00:01:00] at empower, which is the Cooper woman's program. She is the chair at the Hope prize council. And she has had an incredible career, including being a CFO and so many other things in the arc of her experience. I'm excited for you to hear this. So let's take a walk now. Sheryl, I'm really excited to welcome you to HerCsuite™ Radio here today.

Thank you so much for being on the show.

**Sheryl Chamberlain:** Oh, thank you. I'm so happy to be here.

**Natalie Benamou:** And I, you know, I, we were just talking a moment ago about your background and some insights, and for people that are listening to you for the first time, you have had an incredible journey, an arc of transformation in your career.

And I would love for you to talk a little bit about what that's been like for you and your career.

**Sheryl Chamberlain:** In the career. So uh, there is only a career. Yeah. You know, people do say that there's and I think you've heard me say this once before that there is no work-life [00:02:00] balance there's life and the decisions that you make in life that make it one.

So when you say what's the arc, I think the arc started when I was very young and grew up in New York city. And I went to a really tough high school. It was 90% black and Puerto Rican, 10% other, which included everyone else. And in that environment, I realized that I probably needed to really listen and pay attention and absorb what was going on around me so that I could be part of that community and also survive.

So if I take it from there and I look forward to where I am today in everything that I do, I'm an open-ended listener. And I always look for ways to bring people together, to make the world and people better, in any way that's possible. So, you know, the arc is, I started out in accounting and then I'm, I moved forward and I became an auditor.

I had an opportunity to be a CFO, but really the [00:03:00] greatest thing that I've ever done is understand that I'm best at alliances. Bringing people and organizations together to bring better results for each person, each company, but really focused on the client. So how can we bring more to the client and to do that?

What I understood as I had to bring the other side of me this time, that wants to make the world a better place, because that humanizes who I am and the humanity part around social impact around women's leadership. When you combine that with. What you do, people are more interested in what your topic is and what you're bringing forward.

And they want to be part of that team, that organization, that company and the arc is that today I'm a master at it, but I'm only a master at it because I bring everybody with me and we do it together. We do it better together.

**Natalie Benamou:** Well so many things are coming to mind as you're, as you're talking about this. And the first thing I think of is.

You know, better together, bringing people together and this [00:04:00] incredible thing that you're embarking on this, won't be your first year, I think. Is it your seventh year that you're doing the Hope prize?

**Sheryl Chamberlain:** Uh, yeah, so we say it's almost a decade.

**Natalie Benamou:** Okay. So, I mean, that's the ultimate bringing people together. Can you share a little bit about how you came into contact with them and what it is because I'm sure not all our listeners know what it is that we're even kind of alluding to at this moment.

**Sheryl Chamberlain:** Sure. And the word hope is hard to say is, you Hope prize is hope. Hope prize is a challenge. That's put out by president Clinton and it's put out by him so that the voice is heard.

And the challenge resonates all over the world. And the challenge is put out to university students. University students at 3000 universities are responding to it at over 120 countries. And they're responding to a challenge that solves problems that exist [00:05:00] today that we can solve that will impact 10 million people in five years.

So, if you want to do that, you're doing something when you're very young and you're thinking outside the box, but you're also thinking with people from different countries, different backgrounds that are trying to solve for their community, the communities that they live in, the ultimate end of all of this is of those thousands of hundreds of thousands of students that are competing to win this prize.

We down select oh 50 to 60 teams and they go to an accelerator that takes place at a castle outside of London. So they can take their nascent idea, field tested and bring people like you and me marketing executive sales executives, people that really understand business so that it becomes something viable that can present at the United Nations in front of Bill Clinton in hopes that they will win a million dollars in seed money to start [00:06:00] a for-profit for good business. Now, how did I get involved? Same way we get involved with anything. Someone couldn't be a judge one year and they asked me if I would do it. And once I put my hand up, I never could put it down.

I bring, bring people together and help you have an opportunity to be part of this community. And we invited you today. So you will be part of this and you'll get your advice

**Natalie Benamou:** And there are many ways about that, but you know, you had said something the last time you chatted about the ultimate diversity and inclusion, how this.

Is the ultimate because you're involving students and people from everywhere around the world. Can you talk a little bit about what that looks like and how it is so inclusive?

**Sheryl Chamberlain:** And if you really think about it, if there's somebody from India, Canada, Egypt, Mexico, America, all over the world and they're solving for the same problem, they actually get [00:07:00] together and they innovate and they share ideas and they realize.

Oh, we're the same. We're solving for something that's going to change the world. I can bring my experience in. You're bringing yours and we're sharing with others and together we are solving. I don't have to win the prize, but now I don't see you as somebody from a different country, from a different background and having more or less money.

I see you as my friends. And together we're doing this and that's, what's amazing. I mean, I'm Jewish. And I worked with Palestinians who would come up to me and go, this is how we solve what's going on between Israel and Palestine, because we're humans, we take the politics out of it. And that's what we need to do today in the world that we live in.

**Natalie Benamou:** And, and the video you just shared, which I will have in the show notes, talks about the humanity. Of it, you know, the humanity of coming together. And maybe you can mention what that, what it is, because I think it's such a, I think people think this is [00:08:00] so big. How can we, when I love the approach of like, how can we not, how can we not try to do this?

**Sheryl Chamberlain:** Yeah, well, this, this year's challenge is food. So a lot of people in the past looked at food as food insecurity. How do we get food to everybody? And it's bigger than that. It's about humans. How we distribute food, the supply chain, the human experience, how we eat it together from a healthy lens and perspective.

So you take all those notions of what's going on around us. When we eat fast food, and we've put that in our bodies. We're not sitting down to have dinner with family and friends. If we solve all these food problems, we fall solve something bigger, provide jobs for more, and then we're healthier and we get much more out of life than we could.

If we continue down the road of fast food, that's not really good for us.

**Natalie Benamou:** Amazing. And I think the way that the transformation is going to happen is I can't wait to be part of this. Cause I want to see [00:09:00] how this is. And, you know, I, I found out recently that my grandmother who was born in the, in the 1800s.

So that shows you a little bit about how old my mom went to a one room school house. And it was during the depression. And there were children that had no food at lunch. And my grandmother who was not an activist, figured out a way to get hot lunch or food at lunchtime for these children in 1934 and 36 and 37.

And it's that problem hasn't really left us, but now it's like even bigger, like what you're describing. And so I think about that and I was like, oh, this feels really great to me to be a part of this. Cause I feel like maybe I'm carrying forward something that was started in the last century with my own thing.

But that's another.

**Sheryl Chamberlain:** It's amazing. But do you also say that your uncle worked at NPR? What was that?

[00:10:00] **Natalie Benamou:** Yeah, in case he's listening. Now that wasn't what the story was about. That was really about this amazing thing that happens in the thirties, in the depression. And you think about today. You know, there's places around the world that are similarly impacted. And I love this thing about the family and food.

So, you know, it's, we really lost that sense of having dinner together has a purpose.

**Sheryl Chamberlain:** So yea. That's great. So I just, the reason why I brought up NPR and I didn't tell you this before, when we were chatting is when the first time that I got to be a judge of health prize was at the Boston regionals. And the idea that won that year was bugs.

The notion that crickets, you can take crickets and grind it up into powder and. NPR interviewed me.

And they said, why this idea? And I said, could you imagine seeing a crickets lying around [00:11:00] and grabbing it and saying, oh, there's dinner tonight. And it's just so creative, but it's actually created a whole industry where the team that won that's a company right now, they've created the ability to re procreate, procreate, crickets.

They have a whole industry and they created a new. That's something new. That's very important for the world. So you just never know what's going to come out of different experiences.

**Natalie Benamou:** Oh, that's so wonderful. I love that. And speaking of different experiences, one of the things I know outside of the whole prize that you are also involved in, that is how I got to know you first was that you're the board chair of Cooper empower.

Can you talk a little bit about that and what that means and how it, how that is impacting the world because you're impacting the world in many different ways. So I'd love for you to share that. Yes.

**Sheryl Chamberlain:** Thank you. It's very similar, right? If you think of that whole prize, it's a community, it's a world, a global community and Coopa, which is a procurement [00:12:00] software business spend management company also builds community.

So the community that we build are the suppliers that help all of our customers and clients get. Whatever we need to market at the right time. And if you think about COVID, that's even more important today than it ever has been before, but there's other elements around what you buy and the suppliers that you work with.

We want to reduce risks, but we also want to make sure that there's a diversity element of who we buy from. So that there's those, there's a lot about that. And my role at Coopa is alliances. So that's what I get paid for. I get. System integrators to work with our sales organizations so that we can help customers a better outcome.

And also, you know, when I joined Coopa, I realized that women's leadership is even more important today than it ever has been before. And because of the experience that I've had before, they said, oh, Cheryl, you know, you can't just join the board. You have to chair the board. And I go really. I could do that, but I'm [00:13:00] going to reestablish a restate our mission.

And our mission is to create a community of organizations, customers, partners, for-profits not-for-profits universities working together. To unleash the impact of women in business. And what does that mean? That means we share best practices. We talk about mentoring. We get outside the four walls that we live in, in our company.

And we talk amongst us so that we don't have to recreate everything. And we can use the foundation of what we've already done to grow much more quickly, more in a way that will create more impact. And what I find to be amazing is every company we have talked to to join, empower. They immediately say, yes, of course this is, I want to be part of this.

Cause it's a movement. It's a movement of women leaders. And when women work together, we're going to raise the bar of what's possible much more quickly than we ever have before. Especially when we work in community. It's an everything that we do [00:14:00] community as the foundation.

**Natalie Benamou:** Community is the foundation. And I think that's the one way that we can disrupt.

If, if you think about it, if we are all working together, instead of siloed, That is how you really make change. If we keep doing the same thing of looking at trying to get on boards, when you know the same way, for example, that's not going to change things, but when we come together and we, and we try to make an impact.

That's when really the magic happens. I think so I'm so thrilled to know about, about empower. And I think there's, I'll have the link in the show notes and I just think there's just so much, so much, so many good things that can happen out of that. If you had to think about one thing, then there's so many things I would ask you, but to help people that might be listening to this to find a way to.

To make an impact around them. If they are trying to figure it out or, you know, figure out their heart, what would you tell someone? Cause I know that you have taken [00:15:00] journeys and, and found what was important to you. What would you suggest to someone to figure that out?

**Sheryl Chamberlain:** The most important thing is to remember, you want to pay it forward.

And you can pay it forward when you're 18, you can pay it forward. When you're 95, it's about taking your experience, your knowledge, what you care about and sharing it with someone else and finding out in that conversation, how you can do something. As we said before, better together, those unintended allies that are all around us.

And you are one of them now, and now I am one to you. And we've only met in a short period of time, but we've already changed each other's lives. So it takes one conversation that can create something that's unbelievable that inspires you each and every day and creates the smile that you want to have in life.

And that's the smile of happiness and goodness. So yeah, let's go do that.

**Natalie Benamou:** So good. Sheryl, thank you so much. For being on the show for sharing these stories for helping lift [00:16:00] the world and shine your light around to everyone that knows you. I'm so grateful for you to be on the show. And I can't wait to be part of this amazing, amazing experience.

So thank you for being here.

**Sheryl Chamberlain:** Thank you. And you're a part of empower and you're part of Hope prize. Now.

**Natalie Benamou:** It's so good. So, so grateful to you for that. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you so much for joining us on that discussion. I know you got a lot out of it. I'm going to have everything in the show notes for you to learn about the Hope prize and all the things that we discussed today as always, we really encourage people to get out and move.

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