



THE RESPECT PODCAST with host Mike Domitrz

And Guest Rick Clemons

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Mike Domitrz: Welcome to the respect podcast, I'm your host Mike Domitrz from mikespeaks.com, where we help organizations of all sizes, educational institutions and the US military create a culture of respect, which is exactly what we discuss on this show. So Let's get started.

Mike Domitrz: This weeks guest is Rick Clemons, a close friend of mine, I wanna let you know about Rick right away, he is the author of Frankly my dear I'm gay. Host of Life uncloseted podcast, certified life coach, Tedx speaker, world record holder and a guy who's helped thousands of people in over 50 countries across the globe come out of the closets of their lives, to escape their BS, explore their fears and elevate their f-ing self expression.

Mike Domitrz: Now if a few of you are listening going whoa Mike, I've seen you speak on stage around the world, you don't drop the F bomb, you don't swear, but this is Rick's bio and I honor the voice of the people we have on the show, so that's why you're gonna hear me speak that, and your gonna her people, such as Rick speak in their language, I'm not gonna censor people. Even my own work, some people will be like, hey but you call people out when they use inappropriate language, the key is inappropriate, where the context of the language is, it's not always just about the words. So that's important here, but the context of what Rick is saying is so important. So Rick lets get right into it. Thank you so much for joining me.

Rick Clemons: Thanks for having me Mike, I love that you started with that, because this is of respect is respecting people's voice and truly letting people step into who they are, and I don't always drop F bombs on stage, there are moments I do, and if I do, it's because there's a point being made by either the story I'm telling or the thing I want someone to learn. And I've learned from myself, having been a guy who disrespected himself over and over again by not being who I was that sometimes you just gotta let yourself be who you are and by doing that, you teach other people how to do the same. So thank you for having this awesome platform man, and I am just so honored to be here on the show with you.

Mike Domitrz: Well, I am thrilled to have you here, lets get right into that, because your life history talks a lot about one's voice, and gaining the voice back and that journey.

Rick Clemons: Yeah.

Mike Domitrz: Let's talk about how respect plays a role there, because I think a lot of people don't think about respect on the self journey of coming out, from whatever that coming out means.



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- Rick Clemons: Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Mike Domitrz: So to give all of our listeners and viewers a little background, when people hear, Life uncloseted frankly my dear I'm gay, they're probably thinking there's gotta be a story there, there some ties there. So Rick can you share your personal story?
- Rick Clemons: There's no story, it's just that Mike picked up, and said hey lets go do this right. Of course there's a story, and you know, I kind of already alluded to it but there was so, much of my life that I disrespected myself because I was trying to live by other peoples standards, and I'm so blessed that I did because I wouldn't be here today if I hadn't disrespected myself.
- Rick Clemons: I came out to my parents when I was 19 years old and they pretty much said no, you can't be that. There's was a little bit of faith based stuff going on there, and I'm glad they did because that was right at the beginning of the AIDS epidemic and I know myself, now that I can ... you know, the wise on, as you lose more hair you become wiser and wiser and wiser, and I realized that had I come out back in 1982 when I told my parents, fully come out, you and I wouldn't be having this conversation, I just know it, I know it in my heart, I know it in my soul, because I was naïve, I was immature, I hadn't had any kinds of sexual experiences so to speak at that point in time and honestly believe that I would've become a little rebel and probably have contracted the virus and wouldn't be having this conversation.
- Rick Clemons: So then we roll almost double that amount of time forward, I was 36-
- Mike Domitrz: I'd it's okay to pause there Rick? Because, I think there's a lot of powerful stuff there. One, when you came out and your parents said no, you went back in.
- Rick Clemons: Yes I did.
- Mike Domitrz: Okay. Which a lot of people don't realize happens, I think everybody thinks, oh once somebody is out, their out.
- Rick Clemons: No. No.
- Mike Domitrz: But you're well aware that's not the case.
- Rick Clemons: No, and that's why I do the work I do today, is because so many of my clients are older and I'm gonna kind of, you know, [crosstalk 00:04:28].
- Mike Domitrz: Thanks for pointing at me by the way Rick, for anybody who can't see, Rick went older with his hands right at me.



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- Rick Clemons: Yeah. Exactly its [inaudible 00:04:30].
- Mike Domitrz: Somebody might be asking am I a client, no Rick and I are friends.
- Rick Clemons: No.
- Mike Domitrz: Not that being a client of Rick's would be anything but wonderful but yes, so continue Rick.
- Rick Clemons: So, its so interesting, so I say older in general, but what's so fascinating is my work started with people like myself 35 plus, all the way up, I mean my oldest client was 72 when he came out of the closet and what I found is many people go back in the closet. Now heres the interesting thing Mike, is in the last couple years, I have still had young people come to me and go, you know, I'm about to get married I think I shouldn't, you know, their stories unfold. And in two cases, they actually went back in the closet, and I was fully supportive in their decision, because my role as a coach is not to say go do this. My role is to help you become comfortable and respectful in your own right of who you are, and so its been really and interesting [inaudible 00:05:27].
- Rick Clemons: When my book came out, what I was shocked the most by, is the younger people who came to me, I'm talking in their 20s, okay, so that's what I mean when I'm young, I'm like almost 55 myself here. Young people who came to me and said, "I'm so glad you wrote this book, because I'm way behind the [inaudible 00:05:49].", 22 and your behind the [inaudible 00:05:49], but you have to put it in perspective of where we are today. Kids are coming out at eight, nine, 10 and its amazing to hear those stories.
- Rick Clemons: That respecting of yourself and realizing, I might have to respect myself and go back in the closet, is so that you can, as I love to say percolate and let the yeast rise in your life and finally go okay either, this is where I supposed to be, which is a path, or wow, I'm gonna do this and it's gonna happen much later in life.
- Mike Domitrz: Very powerful. So, Rick right there you talked about the fact that people choose to go back in and you support this because this is their journey, you said hey, I'm glad I went back in when I did, because I think I would've been, by what you were saying, I don't wanna change your words, but exploratory in that rebellion stage and therefore not as safe in decision making. Is that considered controversial?
- Rick Clemons: Of course, it is, because people then can come back at you and say, well then you knew what you were doing, you were consciously doing this even though you know. And I would argue that yes, in some cases that is true, in my case that was 50 percent true, but I was still trying to figure out, am I really gay? Or is this just something part of my sexual awakening? Am I trying to figure it out?



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- Rick Clemons: Other people they will actually go back in and they push that way, way, way, way down, and there is no acting and there is no going forward and exploring it, its like nope, this is where I'm supposed to be, and then something happens, and that comes rushing back forward. And that's only two examples, there's lots of different ways that people will go do this.
- Rick Clemons: And its not just in sexuality, I have kids that I talk to in university that literally have shown up- you'll love this Mike, because I know you do this too, I was in a classroom one day, just in the moment, I had this brilliant question of, okay I'd like everybody to close your eyes, and nobody peek and I'm gonna ask you a question, how many of you in this classroom are here at college pursuing a major or a path that is because someone else told you what you were supposed to do.
- Rick Clemons: 50 percent of the room raised their hands, because they were in college pursuing a major or a direction because mom and dad, someone else said this is what you're meant to do. That was so impactful and so powerful, because it drove home the same story that I had just told them bout myself going back in the closet.
- Mike Domitrz: Yeah, absolutely. Are there people that would say, Rick since you're out, how can you be telling others to go back in.
- Rick Clemons: Because its their life.
- Mike Domitrz: I'm not saying that, that's what I'm preaching, but I could see that push back.
- Rick Clemons: No, no, no, no, I know. And it happens all the time. That's where I say, my job as a coach is not to say this is what you should do, my job as a coach is to help people find a path to their truest essence themselves, and if that's what's their truest essence, then they need to go do that.
- Rick Clemons: I have a client who I just finished working with who did exactly that, he went on an exploratory path for about three months, his wife totally knowing what he was doing and he came back and said, I believe my path is not this path, and I said then you need to follow your values, your belief, your heart and you need to live life your way.
- Rick Clemons: Which is always what I say, I want my clients to live life their way, I want the audiences that I have the privilege to speak in front of, that is my message, you know this Mike, its about make the bold move, life your life uncloseted, live life your way. And if that's what we gave each other a human beings man, I don't know, I think the planet would be so much different.



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Mike Domitrz: Absolutely, to really honor each person's choices is the key to what we're discussing. For anyone listening, some of the things we're discussing, the aspects of it are not choice, they're born, how do I live with innately who I am?

Rick Clemons: How do you give your yourself permission? There's the choice, how do you give yourself permission to accept this is innately who I am, this is how I'm supposed to show up in the world. That's the choice, when we know who we are. I have so many entrepreneurs that I've worked with that they knew, they knew for so many years they were not supposed to be sitting in a corporate cubicle, they weren't supposed to be following those kind of rules, that they were supposed to be doing their thing, they knew it innately, as much as I know innately I am a gay man. But they have to give themselves permission to say, I'm going to go stand in my truth.

Mike Domitrz: All right, so lets go to- because we jumped in early on your story, you didn't get to finish that, and so to honor and respect his voice lets go ahead. You were jumping the bean in your 30s, so that was like 19, now your in your 30s.

Rick Clemons: 30s, I'd been married for 13 years and-

Mike Domitrz: And married, as in a heterosexual relationship?

Rick Clemons: ... in a heterosexual relationship, with a wife, I had two daughters, very young daughter. Four and a half, and nine months old, and there was a moment, there was a moment that I realized this can no longer be the way I live, I could no longer live a dual life, I could no longer pretend that this was the way life was supposed to be. And I made the conscious decision to say, i gotta do this. And that's when I came out of the closet, and it was a very specific reason that I came out of the closet.

Rick Clemons: Some people say, oh you met a guy. Yes I did, but this guy made everything completely different for me because I was used to hooking up, that was my outlet to okay, I know this is what I am, but I'll go hook up and then I'll pretend like nothing happened. Not proud of that, I will never say, oh yeah that's the way to do this, it is a way, but its not the way.

Rick Clemons: And when I met this guy-

Mike Domitrz: So for listeners, you're referring to during the years of being in a heterosexual relationship, you would still explore the sexuality side of who you innately are during the marriage.

Rick Clemons: Yeah.

Mike Domitrz: Okay. Gotcha.



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- Rick Clemons: So, there was a weird twist of respect there, that I was respecting some of my truth but I was disrespecting the honest truth. I would take it only to the sexual realm, I couldn't at that point in time take it to the innate emotional, you know, just connected, being with someone realm, because I was like, well no, gay people can't do that, we just have quote sex because of so many things that had been raised and societal views on that.
- Rick Clemons: And then I met this guy, and started down the same path and I ended up in his hotel room, but that night was the night that there was no sex, I literally fell in love, and I fell apart because there was a connection, it was all about the connecting. And I saw something in that moment that I hadn't seen, and in that moment even though I knew I was about to embark on a journey, and I knew it, I knew I was going to embark on a journey that, this is where I had to step into my self respect, this is where I had to respect the process, this is where I had to respect the journey. And eventually I figured out this is where I also have to respect others. At that moment I realized I had to respect my wife, because this could no longer be the way I did life.
- Mike Domitrz: And so you now go to your wife.
- Rick Clemons: Yeah, yeah.
- Mike Domitrz: Talk about one's voice.
- Rick Clemons: Not an easy thing to do, except, and now we've talked about my book being frankly my dear I'm gay, that's pretty much how it went down. I didn't use those exact words but it was, I walked in the door from that trip I'd been in London, landed at LAX airport, because I'm from southern California at the time, and I had about a two hour drive home. I called her from the airport and said, "I'm home.", and she goes, "Great I can't wait to see you.", and I said, "Yeah, I can't wait to see you too.", and then I dropped a bomb and said, "We got some stuff we gotta talk about.", and I hung up the phone and I felt like a real shit to be honest.
- Rick Clemons: The whole way home, I was like, this could be so much easier. And I remember four times on that trip, four times Mike, on that trip, four times looking over my shoulder, right in front of semis, and going I could just turn the wheel, just turn the wheel and nobody would ever know, nobody would ever have to know this dirty little secret that I held.
- Rick Clemons: And when I think about the respect piece that you talk about, that's when I really started respecting myself, respecting my wife, and respecting my children, because I needed to man up. I needed to be who I was meant to be, I needed to man up and be the father I was meant to be, and I actually needed to be the husband I was meant to be and say, I created this nasty space and I need to



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clean it up. I walked in and I literally said the to her, "I love you and I care about you but I'm gay. And this isn't gonna work.". And of course, not pretty stuff happened, I was literally out of the house the night, justifiably so, I mean justifiably so for her, she was upset.

Rick Clemons: Through a lot of work and every thing we made it, we made it through we've continued to raise our children and- kind of back to what I said just a minute ago, I had to respect myself, I learned to respect the process, because it is a process coming out, no matter what that coming out is, there's a process.

Rick Clemons: Even becoming speakers like you and I have, there is a process to respect in the process of being a speaker and respecting the journey of being a speaker and respecting others as you go through that journey. Those are four huge pillars that I think a lot of people will miss as they come out of the closet, whatever it is.

Rick Clemons: I've seen people come out to be an entrepreneur, and they respect themselves but they don't respect the process, they don't respect the journey and then they sure don't respect others, they want everybody else to tell them exactly why how to do it, what they need, like thanks, good, got it, and there's not really a genuine thank. There's not a thing, and then they think okay, now, here I am I'm supposed to do this, but they haven't respected the process and they haven't respected that there's a journey.

Rick Clemons: This is what I love about doing what I do, because I can take this and really overlay it into, you wanna do this? Great. What is it you need to do first? Well you gotta respect yourself. Now some people will miss that piece all together. They'll do this because they think okay, this is what I need to do and people are like, yeah this is what you need to do, but guess what, as soon as they keep listening to what somebody else says they need to do-

Rick Clemons: I have a really good friend who so badly wants to run his own business, and I'm sure you're gonna like this Mike. He keeps going to people, going to people, going to people, and then he'll adopt what that person says and then he'll adopt what the next person says, and then he'll adopt what the next person says and at the end of the day, he doesn't respect himself, because he won't allow himself to say here's what I wanna do to run my own business-

Mike Domitrz: Right, he won't listen to the voice inside himself. So Rick, how do you respond to the person that says, what a second, why am I listening to this expert Rick Clemons, who disrespected his relationship for all these years by living a lie and I'm not saying that, you and I both know that, that statement living a lie is overused, it can be harmful.

Rick Clemons: Yeah. Yeah.



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- Mike Domitrz: But why am I listening to this person who cheated, who wasn't himself, why is this the person I'm gonna listen to when it comes to respect.
- Rick Clemons: Because I think I bring forward the insights of, wow, when you can see that, then you're able to help other people see it. If you haven't lived it, if you haven't done it, you can't teach other people and you can't keep learning yourself. That's the place where I think it starts, you keep learning yourself, and I don't do this because I want to teach people, I don't do this because I think I'm a guru or an expert.
- Rick Clemons: I do this because I want to help people avoid the pain, no of us want to live in pain. And this was not easy, this was not pain free, this was not stress free. In fact, I was so stressed out that first year coming out of the closet that I literally lost 120 pounds and when people saw me-
- Rick Clemons: here's where it was really interesting, so Let's roll back to when I was 19 and didn't know anything about HIV and stuff, so now we're in 1996, things are still being figured out right. I lost so much weight that people thought, oh my god he came out of the closet and he's positive, because I looked skin and bones. Those of you who can see me now, you can see I'm a fluffy guy, I'm not skin and bones but it was that thing where I had to learn this.
- Rick Clemons: Now I do this because I don't want anybody to not live their truth, that's why I go speak at colleges and universities, because I want kids to respect themselves enough, in this moment, in this time, as they start college and university to go, this is my life and this is how I want to live. Because you don't want wait to about 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, and go, oh, I could've don't his differently.
- Mike Domitrz: And I love this about you, you're open and your vulnerable along the journey I mean, you're the definition of someone speaking their voice, respecting their voice, because you don't hold anything back when you're talking with people and I love that about you.
- Mike Domitrz: What are strategies you would give people, maybe questions, thought, skill they can use to help them find that respect for themselves? Because there's and interesting dichotomy in this conversation, right. Because you said at 19, I'm sort of glad my parents pushed me back in, because of the danger I could've been in, but at the same time that means, were talking almost 15 to 20 years of some form of not being able to live with that respect of yourself.
- Rick Clemons: Right. Right. Well, the first thing that I like to ask clients is, do you want to end up here 20 years from now and still feel the same way you do? If you don't do this now, what's going to be different? And what's going to be the same? Because its all about getting to that emotional space Mike, it's about figuring



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out- anybody who's in pain, they don't wanna feel it. So if they make this change now, what's will be different?

Mike Domitrz: Let's pause there, that's so powerful Rick, because this applies to so many things in peoples lives. So can we go back and just say that question one more time? So if it was 20 years from now ...

Rick Clemons: Yeah. What would be different? And what won't be different?

Mike Domitrz: Right, if you stay on this track, the key wording you used right was if you stay on this track, is this where you're gonna wanna still be? Is that- if I remember right.

Rick Clemons: Yeah. Yeah. It's really, is this where you wanna be. And if you don't stay on this track what might be different? And its not about having people predict their future, its about inviting them to go explore that future, it about giving themselves permission to even ask the question, so many people don't give themselves permission to ask the questions.

Rick Clemons: One of the best ways to do this Mike, I think this will help your audience so well, if you're struggling with this thing, whatever it is, doesn't matter what it is, but if you're struggling with this thing and tomorrow morning you woke up and you had made the decision that, that thing, it was time to give yourself permission to fix it.

Rick Clemons: How much different might you feel, just tomorrow morning if you went to bed knowing I'm going to fix this, and you woke up tomorrow morning and you knew you were fixing it. I can guarantee you, that one nights sleep will be completely different than all the nights sleep you've been having until this decision was made.

Mike Domitrz: And its very much where the 10-10-10 principal comes in, and that's this idea that in 10 hours from now, 10 days from now, 10 months from now, sometimes you'll take it to 10 years from now, how will I feel if I make this decision? Well in 10 hours I might be scared out of my mind, in 10 days I might be dealing with some really difficult consequences of this, in 10 months, I could start to be feeling freedom and in 10 years, I'm gonna look back and go why didn't I do this sooner. Is that very much in line with that?

Rick Clemons: Yes. Because heres on of the exercises I have my clients do, and it is the 10 levels, at a level one, if you don't so this or you do, do this what are you gonna feel? And then at a level two, and at three, and at four, and at five, by the time you get to a level 10, if you do this what will you be experiencing?

Rick Clemons: The whole point is I'm gonna be scared to death at level one but by the time I'm living at a level 10 and I'm doing the thing I wanna be doing, wow I may be



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changing careers because I camera out of the closet, because now I know I don't have to settle for anything. I may be going on that trip around the world, I may be deciding to have a child with someone new, because my other spouse is like, I'm never doing this, and I was able to do the coming out journey. But I love the exercise because I have clients take it, at each level what will you be doing that will then make things different.

Mike Domitrz: Is the number one fear the judgment of either family or colleagues that have that sort of leadership role in our life, those that we look to like parents. Is that often the number one fear with somebody coming out with whatever they're coming out with?

Rick Clemons: Yeah. It's always the number one fear, what are other people gonna think?

Mike Domitrz: The the question I would imagine becomes, if I'm so afraid they won't accept me, and I don't know, but from a coaching perspective as a response to that, then why do you want that person dictating your life, someone who doesn't wanna support you and give you true love and let you be who you are. Why do you want them to dictate your life? Is that a question?

Rick Clemons: That's definitely a question. Like if that person were no longer playing that role in your life, what would be different? If they weren't telling you, you couldn't be this? If they weren't disrespecting you and your dreams, what would be different?

Rick Clemons: And the dream one is a huge one, its like, okay, so if you're living by that persons dream and you quit living their dream through your life, then what's gonna happen for you? If you just basically just ejected them out of the picture, what would you be able to do? If you didn't carry the burden of them on your shoulders all the time, how much taller and prouder and powerful would you stand in your life?

Rick Clemons: This isn't about disrespecting other, I don't want people to get- it's about finding the space and respect to put someone in where it enables you to live you're life the way you're meant to live it.

Mike Domitrz: And we forget that you're gonna gain new people in your life, because when you're in that realm arena of respect, you draw people in, you draw like energy, like values, and you're gonna be in a supportive environment, not instantly, right away, but over time you're gonna have connections that are gonna be powerful and wonderful if you're open to that if you're truly respecting yourself and being open to the world.

Rick Clemons: Exactly. Well, Mike as you were saying that, the first thing that went through my mind is that's exactly why you and I are even having this conversation, that is



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why you and I are friends, because yes, Jess introduced us but Jess would not have introduced us if she didn't feel like, hey, these two guys, they belong in the same circle.

Rick Clemons: As we've gotten to know each other it's because we do get each other, we get each other, we're totally different. Yes, you're a straight guy kids, I'm a gay guy with kids, we have fun, we both have this quick wit but its because we know we can operate in this space and I drew you, you drew me because of how we show up in the world.

Mike Domitrz: Love it. I think that's awesome for listeners to think of, who could I draw into my life if I could truly be me, if I could respect every element of me, that's so powerful.

Mike Domitrz: Rick, obviously your book is Frankly my dear, I'm gay. What is another book that has impacted you along the journey?

Rick Clemons: Well, it would be the one that I sent you Mike, and you know which one I'm talking about because this is where I am draw out the F bomb, it is the subtle art of not giving a fuck. And when I read that book, I was like oh my gosh, this is- if I could've have written any book, that would have been the book. But I'm so glad that Mark Manson did, and read it. There's things in it that I don't 100 percent agree with, but for the most part its spot on, spont on about how to truly live your life and live it in the right way with respect for yourself, with respect for others and truly step up to that space you're meant to live in.

Mike Domitrz: The book is so powerful, and like you, there are some examples he chose that I wasn't a fan of, I thought did some harm to our work. But that doesn't mean there's not some incredible lessons in that book, and powerful lessons in that book.

Rick Clemons: Yeah.

Mike Domitrz: I wanna thank you so much for joining us Rick.

Rick Clemons: Oh thank you man, it's always a pleasure to get to do anything with you and to be a part of your journey and supporting the work you do.

Mike Domitrz: Well thanks. For everyone listening you can find Rick at rickclemons.com, we're gonna have all of the links to his social media, his book everything in the show notes of the respect podcast.

Mike Domitrz: Thank you for joining us for this episode of the respect podcast. Which was sponsored by the date safe project at datesafeproject.org. And remember you can always find me at mikespeaks.com