



Back in the fall, I read an advanced copy of [*Radical Inclusion: What the Post-9/11 World Should Have Taught Us About Leadership*](#), and couldn't put it down. In 173 pages, General Dempsey and Ori Brafman challenged me to become a better leader. Thankfully, I got a chance to ask them a few questions about teamwork, leadership in the 21st century, and some recommended reading.

JOE: The two of you come from radically different backgrounds, yet you've worked together on several projects throughout the years. What have you learned about the importance of connecting outside of your professional circles?

ORI: It could very well be that your average Berkeley student is less likely than to have interacted with a person in uniform than a civilian in Iraq. But when we have substantive conversations with those outside our circles that aren't bogged down by politics or platitudes, we find that our core beliefs are much more similar than we could have expected. Getting the other's perspective allows us to have not only a broader but a more accurate perspective of the world. We're humbled that even the City of Berkeley has declared June 4 Bridging the Military/Civilian Divide Day.

DEMPSEY: You mean the fact that Ori is a Berkeley instructor with a degree in Peace Studies and a Vegan, and I'm...well, none of those things! Actually, we became friends when he offered to help me adapt the Army's training and education system to address the realities of speed, complexity, and decentralization in our missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

From that point, we became mutually-committed to sending the message together that learning is a “team sport.”

JOE: What role do you think narratives will play in 21st century conflict?

ORI: We’ve moved beyond the age of competing ideas to an age of competing narratives. Facts are either right or wrong; they’re logical, objective, and depend on experts. Narratives, on the other hand, are either interesting or boring; they’re emotional, subjective, and easily mutate and depend on retelling. In the 21st century, those narratives that are most amplified will be the ones that influence people’s opinions. It’s weird to think about, but we’re about to come to an age where discerning the objective truth in certain cases will be nearly impossible. We need to have inclusion so that we have access to the most accurate narratives from the most trustworthy sources.

DEMPSEY: Leadership is a competition for trust and confidence, and to compete, leaders have to be “sense makers.” In this “era of digital echoes,” making sense of narratives within a team, a company, an organization, or within a country for that matter becomes a crucial leadership skill.

JOE: What is one thing military leaders could do to follow principle #1: Give them memories?

DEMPSEY: Stop using powerpoint presentations. I say that somewhat “tongue in cheek,” but if leaders think more about engaging the emotions of their subordinates, they will be taking an important first step in giving them memories. By the way, good leaders help their organizations understand what both success and failure feel like.

JOE: If you could go back in your professional lives, what is one thing you would do differently based on what you learned writing *Radical Inclusion*?

ORI: From my young days as a vegan activist, I would have surrounded myself with people who saw the world very differently than me and would have adopted the instincts of listening, amplifying, and including to more effectively move the cause forward.

DEMPSEY: I’m not sure I would have done anything differently, but I would have done certain things more often and with greater emphasis. Ori has stated the most important point: nearly every leader, especially senior leaders, can work at becoming better listeners.

JOE: What is a book (besides [Radical Inclusion](#)) or podcast that you would

recommend to military leaders interested in improving their leadership abilities?

ORI: One of my favorite books is [Are You Fully Charged?](#) by Tom Rath, which teaches leaders to create networks around them that will improve their own health and performance, and to create opportunities to have meaningful interactions with those around them.

DEMPSEY: Because I strongly believe that we all have it in us to be leaders of character and of consequence, I would recommend [The Road to Character](#) by David Brooks. But most of all, I recommend that leaders make it a priority to continue to learn and, in particular, to learn about things outside of their personal comfort zone.

[Radical Inclusion](#) is out March 06, 2018. I highly recommend you add it to your professional reading library. It's in mine!

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