

JESS PETTITT

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Short Bio

Jess Pettitt, M.Ed., CSP, has always had a foot in two different approaches to her life. Perhaps it is her Texas roots, but she believes to thrive in this world you have to ride two horses at once – one of humility and one of ego.

This is why while hosting and performing stand-up in NYC she also worked as a diversity and inclusion specialist as a day job. She quit her day job after a decade and almost 20 years later still uses humor to deliver actionable content related to everything you ever wanted to know about where leadership and diversity collide but are afraid to ask. Though often referred to as a thought leader, Jess responds that she just makes leaders think.

For Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work to stick, the first step is a conversation that matters about what you don't know you don't know then you can do the best you can with what you have some of the time without getting sued, losing talent, or failing customers.



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Long Bio

Jess isn't a chef by any stretch of the imagination, but similar in that a true chef has a secret ingredient that they often leave out of a recipe on purpose and add a dash when no one is looking that pulls from past experiences and is exactly what is needed to really elevate a dish. By pulling from a variety of consulting clients, direct crisis management experiences, multitudes of different jobs along the way, and experience on stage as a stand-up comic, trainer, and now keynote speaker, Jess can elevate conversations.

It is through Jessica's work in Student Affairs, as a college administrator, in South Carolina, Oregon, New York, and Arizona that she realized her love for the conversations across difference. As a Social Justice Training Institute Alumna, Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, and a Certified Speaking Professional, Jessica has taken the typical diversity talks to the next level of social justice conversations examining privilege, oppression, entitlement, and our collective responsibility to make change while connecting difficult topics with employee retention, crisis management, and increasing innovation and profits.

Jessica blends politics, humor, identity, and local flair with big city passion and energy through direct, individualized, and interactive conversations. Her workshops, seminars, and keynotes don't just leave participants invigorated but inspired and motivated to follow through with action to create change. Having traveled and lived in a variety of communities and environments all over the world, while also engaging with education as student, teacher, administrator, and active community member, Jessica uses her take on life to lead participants through a safe but confrontational process of examination, self-reflection, and open dialog that is as challenging as it is rewarding.

Responses to Jessica's programs are overwhelmingly positive and include comments ranging from, "This was awful – I never had to think so hard while laughing!" to "I can't believe my boss brought her – thanks for actually treating us like adults," to "She answered all of my questions knowledgeably and without making me feel dumb for asking."

With her attention now turning to larger associations and corporate leadership, Jessica is pulling from the past 15 years of direct experience to lead teams to try instead of avoiding a stretch. It is in this trying that clients uncover a deeper sense of belonging, resourceful collaboration opportunities, and reignite their creativity and innovative ideation. Learning, feeling, and being Good Enough Now allows for teams to do the best they can with what they have and persist long into the future no matter the crisis, topic, or challenge.

Graduating from the University of South Carolina with an M.Ed., in Higher Education Administration with an emphasis in Crisis Management, Jessica pulls together lessons from teaching History and English in the classroom as well as those from the stand-up comedy stages of New York City to bring real and actionable results to meeting rooms and board tables. She is well published, including multiple online training courses, curriculum guides, and a book that makes the abstract actionable.