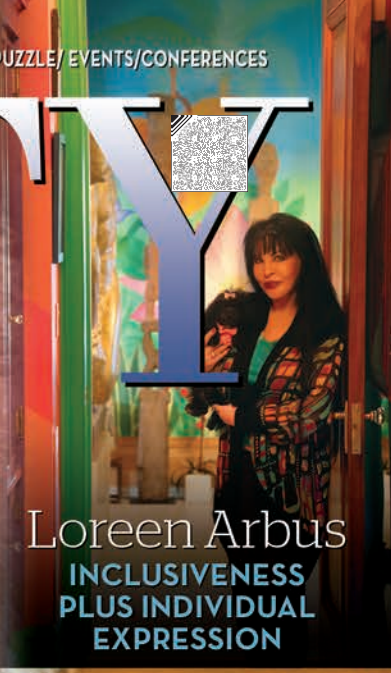
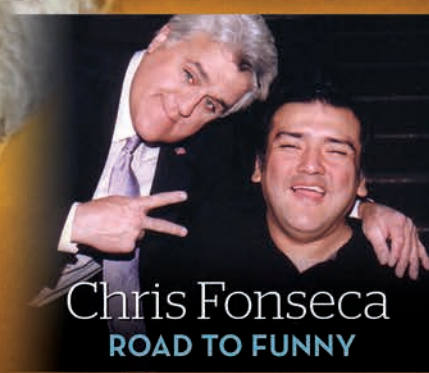
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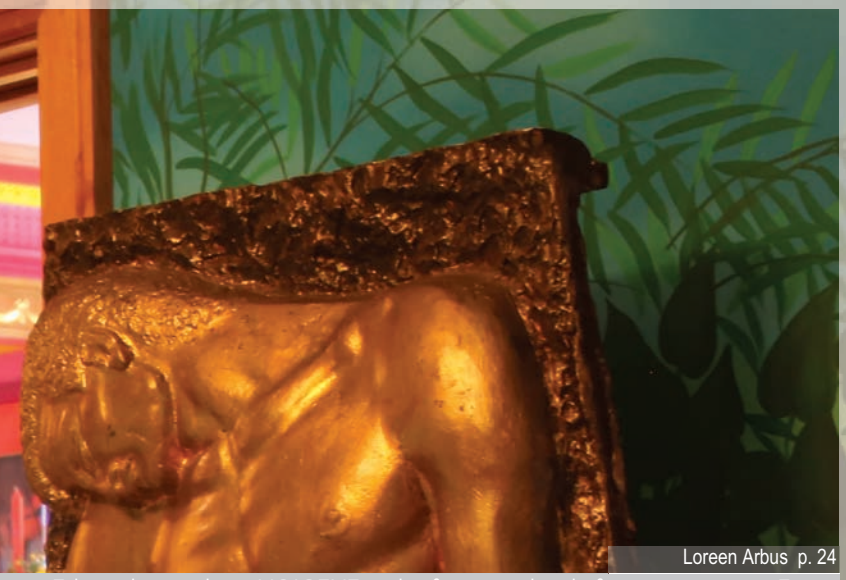
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- For High Contrast modes, under the "Setting" selection, press the button with four colored squares.
- To access the 58 Language Translator, press your phone's "Option" button, and select "Translate". To translate into another language, select the language button to the right, choose your language of preference, then hit the "Translate" button to the right of the selected language.





Memories & Mountain Biking!

Recently, I have been catching up on some much needed rest from my travels. I have been going through all of my emails for class requests and setting up a new schedule for my AFMX schools. Actually, right now as I write this, I am headed out to Washington for an MX school. It will be the biggest AFMX school ever in the US! I'm super excited to able to teach such a large class and to ride with them also. I love Washington so it will be a great time to hang out there for a couple of days and ride too, it's so beautiful there! My friend Ashley is going with me to help interpret. I'm sure we will have a fun trip; it's always fun to scout out some new restaurants too!

During part of my travels I took a mini vacation and went to Las Vegas with some friends and then on to Phoenix. I was in Vegas for the fourth of July and we



had a great time! One of my friends got us all into a VIP pool party, I looked up by the bar and Kevin Hart was dancing around… haha. He had so many bodyguards around him it was insane! There are plenty of good restaurants in Vegas; I had the best oysters there!

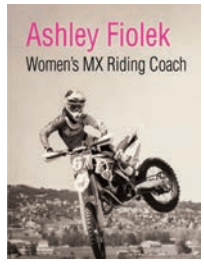
After that, my friend Lindsey and I drove to Phoenix, she had to attend a NAD (National Association of the Deaf) conference for her work so I tagged along with her. I had a really good time because I met a lot of new people and made some new friends. When I was there I finally felt like there was no communication barrier at all because there was literally over three thousand deaf people there for the event! It was a great memory for me and I am really glad that I was able to attend. People have invited me to go to NAD event's before but I was always too busy or not in the country, I am glad it worked out this time.



When I got back home I decided it was time for me to buy a mountain bike to get some training in. I got a GT bike and rode it for the first time yesterday. Let's just say the uphill climb kicked my butt but the downhill was a blast, wow I didn't think it would be so much fun. I'm itching to get back out there and try it all again but it will have to wait until I get back from Washington! Wish me luck….

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HUMOR THERAPY

It's No Day at the Beach



When people want to take a vacation, the most common place is the beach. They rarely say, "I'm going to take the family to the jungle," or "we're going to kick it for a few weeks in Damascus"(that's where the terrorists are hanging out.) So, the beach is the place to go. But is it the best place to go?

The packing is the hard part. Umbrellas, blankets, chairs, towels, books, IPOD, cell phone, sunglasses, lotion, food, beer, it's a lot to remember. No matter how much you prepare, and go over your checklist, you're always going to forget something. It's okay, as long as it's not one of the kids or, even worse, your bathing suit.

The main thing to bring is that cooler. You can always eat more at the beach; all you need is an excuse to stuff your face with sandwiches. You don't even think of lunch when you're at home, but for whatever reason, when you're at the beach, you can gobble down like six cold cut subs. Just be sure to wait fifteen minutes before going swimming. Of course, what good is a cooler without beer? The beach and beer are like inseparable twins. If you're on the beach, you can have a beer at ten in the morning. No big deal, it's the beach. But, if you have a beer at ten in the morning at home, you got some alcohol problems, big fella. Prepare to be blindsided with an intervention. The Intervention is the one time in your life when the people close to you tell you they love you. It's brutal. The whole time you wish you were on the beach enjoying a nice cold beer.

The main reason we go to the beach is to relax and lay out in the hot, burning sun. A suntan is so important. Without it, who's going to believe you went to the beach? A good tan tells you, you don't like the way you look and you're hoping a change in skin pigment will make you a whole new person. I don't blame you. Looks are everything. It helps prevent people from backing up and hissing when they talk to you. We're crazy people. We're willing to wager the beautiful bronze-look now and risk the possibility of skin cancer later. After all, what's it all matter when you're old and ugly?

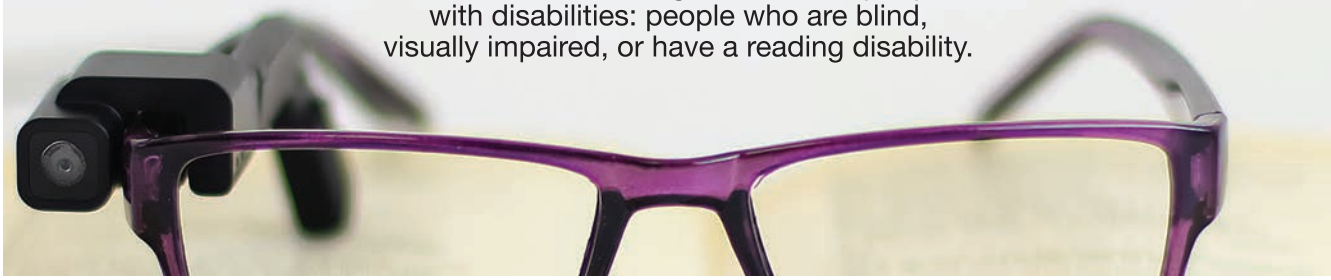
It's scary out there in the deep blue. One minute you're enjoying the bubbly waves and the next minute a piece of seaweed touches your arm and you're running on water like a track and field messiah. You never know what's in that ocean. Fish, eels, dirty needles, and those crab thingies. That's always a treat, to step on one of them. Who would want some crustacean nibbling on their feet? Not me! I guess those things like toe food. Then, some years ago, that Australian dude died by getting a stingray tail shot through the heart. No thank you. I'll stick to the kiddy pool. Swimming in a kid's urine is a lot safer.

Walking up and down the shore, looking for shells is always very exciting… well, what I mean is it's something to do. There's nothing better than taking a box of shells home and looking at them, smiling, then throwing them away. Collecting them seemed like a good idea at the time, but when you notice all the other clutter in your house, there's just no room for shells. Like, what are you going to do? Throw out the old broken snow globe, with the little castle in it, to make room for some crusty shells? Yeah, right.

Salt water feels good, but even swimming isn't so relaxing. Every night on the news there's some story about some poor slob being attacked by a shark. To me, that could really dampen the vacation if you come out of the water with one arm. It happens. They have a whole shark week on it. And what about the movie *Sharknado*? That's scary stuff. If the sharks don't get you, the jellyfish will. They are invisible assassins. It is funny to watch someone running out of the water waving their arms and screaming in terror. Your first thought is that some beach goer is tripping on LSD, but they're actually

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covered in jellyfish stings. They say you're supposed to urinate on the victim to relieve the pain.

"So, how was your day at the beach?" one asks. "Lousy. Three lifeguards pissed on me," one responds. "Well, at least you still got your arms," one concludes.

Also, while you're in the water you have to be concerned about the undertow (that's the strong current beneath the surface that can pull you out to sea). One minute you're laughing and giggling while body surfing, and the next you're in the middle of the Pacific Ocean praying a cargo ship passes by. The riptide can rip the life out of you. It's no wonder one spouse is always trying to get the other to go for a dip. "The water's nice… especially right past the buoys."

I think the hardest part of going to the beach, at least for women, is finding that right bathing suit to wear. Will it be the one piece or two-piece… or the gutsy thong? After shopping for this suit, there is no doubt the anxious woman will need a vacation at the beach. Being attacked by a shark is nothing compared to showing the world the cellulite on your thighs. But, perhaps the biggest travesty in life is when some big, hairy, flabby man is sporting a thong. It's just not right. The sharks never eat that guy.

Sand looks beautiful. It's so inviting to lay a blanket on it and curl your toes in it. But did you ever try to walk on it on a hot day? It's like a burning coal walk at a Tony Robbins self-help conference. Every step is followed by a curse word. Some people claim they wish they could take the beach home with them. Well, we always do. After leaving the beach, for months, I find sand in everything that I own. Even the things that never went to the beach with me. How did this sand get in my desk at work? Many moons later, it's still in your bed. It's terrible. The worst thing in the world is being hungry and eating a meal, only to feel your teeth grinding on some grains of sand. No, that's not why we call it a sandwich, or a crunch wrap. I despise sand. It has one purpose only: to make those cute castles, other than that, it's burdensome. Like that little baby brother that follows you everywhere.

Yeah, sometimes a day at the beach is no day at the beach. On the upside, the best thing about being at the beach is that you're not at work, which is usually the worst place on the earth, next to the DMV. You can get sand in your crotch, a blistering sunburn, and wrestle with a shark, but it still beats sitting behind that desk listening to a customer on the phone griping that their package hasn't arrived yet. If you sit around at home doing nothing, you're lazy. If you sit around on the beach doing nothing, you've done something. You went to the beach. ■ ABILITY



by Jeff Charlebois



IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN!

I woke up recently startled by the fact that my deadline to write my next column for *ABILITY* was that day! First I spent about 30 minutes or so eyeing a blank Word document on my computer. Then, unable to think of anything to write about I thought, Hey! How about some peanut butter toast! So I shut my computer off and dashed off to the kitchen.

It was only after I had sticky peanut butter on my fingers that I realized I wasn't all that hungry. In truth, I was procrastinating so I didn't have to face that dreaded blank page. After I finished my toast—waste not, want not, right?—I headed back to the computer. It was getting late, and I felt the pressure mounting.

Then it hit me, I want to write about time. We're all affected by it, and we all know how many hours there are in any given day. However, we all have our own way of relating to it.

Some of us feel like there's not enough time in each day to do all the things we need to do, while others have too much time on their hands and spend it surfing the internet for hours, or vegging out in front of a wide screen TV flipping channels and not watching anything in particular as they numbly kill time.

Time can feel like an eternity or it can whip by in an instant, depending on what we're doing. If we're doing something we love like soaking in a hot bath, or dining with a friend, time races by. But if we're stuck in a long line at the DMV, or waiting on hold for a customer service rep, probably in some far-flung place like Bangladesh, it can feel like it's taking forever.

How interesting that we either love or hate time, and that we spend a lot of each day obsessing about it. Seriously though, if time didn't exist, we would not be alive. Time is an earthly reality, probably put in place by a sage mastermind so that all of life did not happen simultaneously.

The lyrics to the Byrds' song, "Turn! Turn! Turn!" come to mind, particularly the way their voices harmonize on the lyrics:

A time of love, a time of hate
A time of war, a time of peace
A time you may embrace
A time you may refrain from embracing…
I swear it's not too late.

Basically the song means that you can fit everything you need to do into one lifetime.

One of the ways we learn about what to do during our brief stay on the planet is through our dreams. You may go to sleep and then wake up from an epic dream where you flew to France, climbed a hillside, frolicked in the ocean, and topped it off at Disneyland.

In real time, it would take days, months, possibly years to do all these things, yet you accomplished them in the handful of hours that you slept.

So whether we believe we have too much time on our hands or not enough, we still each have a 24-hour a day to work with. So time is not really the issue here, so much as how we perceive it, and how efficiently we use it.

Whether we're waiting in line at the DMV, or swooshing through our favorite ride at Disneyland, let's tap into our gratitude for every minute we're alive. The choice to live in the moment is a different way to bend the hands of the clock and comprehend the elastic, illusion of time. And it can be more fun. ■ ABILITY

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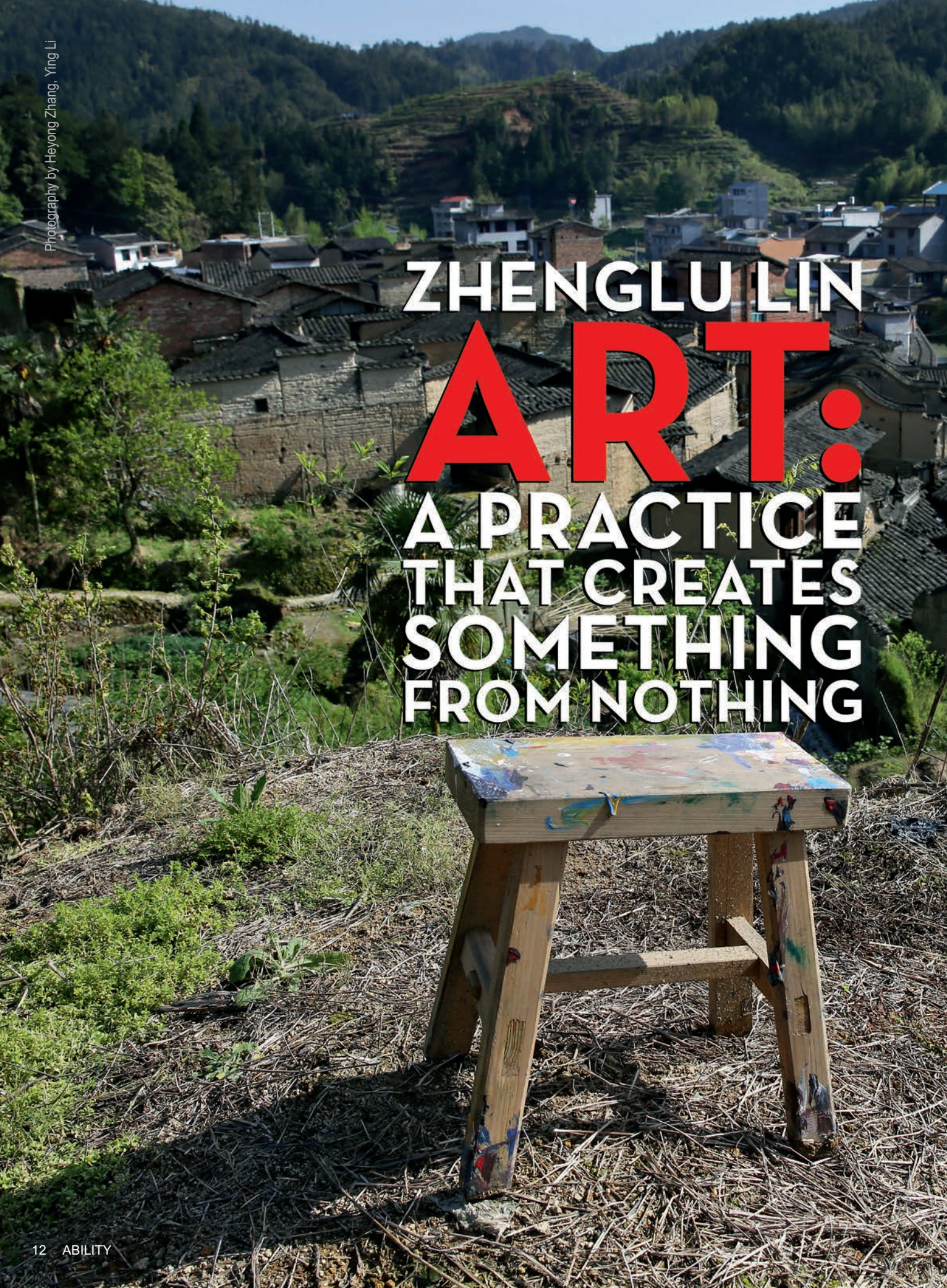


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ZHENGLU LIN

ART: A PRACTICE THAT CREATES SOMETHING FROM NOTHING



We would never have thought to look for the town of Shuangxi on a map if it were not the home of the International Art Education Center for the Disabled. What kind of resources allowed the Center to use the terms *International* and *Disabled*? What beliefs does its founder, Zhenglu Lin, hold? It was with these questions in mind that we set off for Shuangxi Town, Pingnan County, in the city of Ningde in China's Fujian Province.

Three Lives Changed

At the Center, we met three people with disabilities whose lives were changed through the Center's art program: Fawang Yang, Meilan Xue, and Minghui Shen.

Fawang Yang is well known by local government leaders and the China Disabled Person's Federation (CDPF). His paralyzed right hand made it impossible for him to do farm work; with no parents or a home, he was forced to survive by begging in the streets. When he was unable to scrounge enough to get by, he would seek help at various local government organizations.

The local CDPF brought Yang to the Center to learn to paint. Gradually, with the encouragement of Lin, Yang opened his heart to paint the world that he sees.

He paints familiar things in his life: mountains, water and trees. The more he paints, the more he finds his own style. In a painting titled "Life Flower Mountain," he depicts the mountain as flat and green and decorated with pink flowers. One flower occupies half the canvas, representing a culmination of all the flowers on the mountain as seen through his eyes. The piece reflects a contemporary, post-Impressionist style. His art is surprising to those who generally regard painting as an upper-class activity.

In as quickly as five months though, Yang is earning between $600-$750 per month through online sales of his paintings. He gave some of his works to local leaders as gifts and proudly told them: "I will not come back for money anymore!"

Meilan Xue, who is part of the Center's first group of students, saw her seemingly impossible life change for the better. When she was only 20 years old, a stroke impaired Xue's language capabilities, causing memory decline, leaving her right hand and left leg paralyzed,





and blind in one eye. For nearly a decade she avoided going out, preferring to stay in her room where she killed time by sketching day after day.

She heard about the Center and made her way there with the help of her mother. Since enrolling, Xue has completed one painting after another, and her work gets better and better. The horrors of the past ten years have become more bearable for her. Painting taught her to listen to her own peaceful heart. Books, oil lamps, red candles, old chairs, sewing baskets—all of these objects speak their stories under her brush and are reminiscent of China's lovely rural traditions. Her paintings are popular online, having earned her $600—the first income she's earned since her fateful stroke ten years ago.

Xue's physical health has progressed remarkably since her time at the Center. She can now walk without assistance, her arm is stronger, and she is able to speak in complete sentences. This transformation has not only brought her family happiness, but also allows them to feel hopeful for her bright future.

Minghui Shen joined the Center around the same time as Yang. At three feet, eight inches tall, Shen is a dwarf, and he used to make a living by selling toy balloons in the streets. To solicit business, he'd dress up as a clown and use his dwarfism to entertain passengers and customers. One week after Shen started learning how to paint, he devised his own technique of Pointillism, a 19th century method of painting. In Shen's paintings, the cross, the cottage, and large tracts of rice fields are all expressed as thick bright colored dots. Pointillism has been sought after by some in the art world due to its hint of a more primitive style. Lin plans on organizing a personal exhibition for Shen as his works have a theme.

From painting, Shen learned how to create something from nothing. More importantly, he's learned to understand life and to be grateful. He is always ready to help fellow students. Sometimes he helps carry frames; sometimes he sits as a model for other painters. Since he began earning income from his paintings, he's declined any government assistance, preferring instead to give that opportunity to others in need. Art has made Shen a giant of a man.

Since the Center was founded, the local CDPF has helped more than 30 individuals with disabilities learn to paint in a month-long boot camp. CDPF provided the students with food, lodging and compensation. The students competed with each other to create their own distinctive paintings. This competition resulted in many high-quality paintings, which were displayed in a special exhibition area in the Center. Yang, Xue and Shen became artists-in-residence due to their excellence and clearly defined styles.



Expressing Individuality through Art

When students with little experience in painting discuss Lin's teaching methods, they unanimously agree with his motto: "Putting colors on the canvas will not cause any damage, right? Then, just do it."

Although identified as "International Disabled," the Center is open to everyone and provides free supplies, such as frames, brushes and paints. Many white-collar workers from big cities are lured to the Center's 10,764 square feet of space with its wall-to-wall easels. Some fly in from the US and go directly to the center from the airport. One couple came from Shanghai to learn how to paint, with a six-month old baby in one parent's arm and a paint brush in the other. No matter who comes, everyone is excited to be there.

Lin firmly believes "Everyone is an artist. Everyone can paint. It is an innate ability similar to eating and running." In China, most learn about painting techniques and standards in school but never experience painting itself. Lin's method is different: he never gives demonstrations, nor does he teach technique. Instead, he encourages his students to practice boldly and independently from the very beginning in order to, "let people who have never touched brushes be brave enough to paint."

"Try it!" he insists. "You need to break down your psychological barriers first. You are successful once you put something on the canvas. No need to debate about it. Everyone has the potential. You are an artist when sitting in front of the easel." Lin understands the importance of encouragement, adding, "It makes one believe in his or her potential." Psychology also plays a key role in his teaching philosophy, especially with new students who've had little or no training in painting.

After students independently paint two or three pieces, Lin starts to make recommendations such as, "Slightly brighten up the junction sites." Junction does not only mean the edges as in a traditional painting, but includes any changes to the shapes, spaces and brightness. "Junction is always slightly brightened up relative to a certain area. With guidance, the naked eyes will be able to distinguish that." This type of analysis and mastery of light has been endorsed by an art critic because it blends traditional art methods with respect for the students' artistic visions and expression, all while maximizing their individuality. This is the reason students with no basic training have the courage to paint.

Lin's model of teaching painting for free to students is reminiscent of Dafen Village in the city of Shenzhen. Dafen was transformed from a poor, tiny village to a famous oil painting workshop, known first for reproducing masterpieces, and more recently for encouraging original art. Lin's model, however, differentiates from Dafen



by emphasizing original artwork inspired by students' daily observations. "If we have no feelings toward the things around us, it is useless to simply copy masterpieces," he asserts. Hence, all the artwork hanging at the Center depicts objects from the surrounding environment, such as bottles, fields and cottages. "These paintings train your ability to observe and generalize the world," he says.

Lin's Center also encourages humanistic ideals by "blending those who are disabled with those who are not disabled." He does not separate them into special areas; everyone is treated equally at the Center. During our visit, an able-bodied student from Beijing was discussing painting tips with Shen, and their topics even included whether to paint breasts on a woman. Says Lin: "Normally the non-disabled would have few things in common with those who are disabled, such as Shen and Yang. But here, we communicate because of painting, which results in a type of blending."

Local governments generously support Lin's work. Shuangxi's Town government invested $448,000 to help provide the space and painting supplies. Lin frequently shares student updates and progress on various projects on WeChat, a popular Chinese social media network. The government staff frequently "likes" and "shares" Lin's updates. They see that Lin's work will not only help the vulnerable lower class, but also stimulate the local tourism industry. According to the government, "Shuangxi has abundant tourism resources. The Center can endow Shuangxi's tourism with cultural connotations, expand tourism and enhance the education of local villagers. "

Painting Awakens Old Villages

In Lin's opinion, it is unwise to relocate villagers in order to preserve old villages for the sake of tourism. "It is more precious to keep the local residents than to keep historic walls, as the former keeps the traditional ecology vivid. It will evoke a different emotion when you hear the resident pointing out that the stone seat at his front door was passed down by his ancestors." In fact, it is because of the reciprocal nature of its relationship with tourism that Lin boldly labels the Center as *International*.

Months before the Center was founded, Lin brought his project to Jixia Village. On one hand, he taught villagers how to paint for free while helping to preserve the old village, while on the other hand, he explored more resources for local tourism. Pingnan County, where Shuangxi and Jixia are located, has abundant resources for tourism. It has two 5A ranked resorts, as well as the natural and man-made areas with waterfalls, bridges and rocks. Importantly, Jixia has kept its traditional human ecology. Nearly 99 percent of the villagers carry the surname of Gan. The village dates back more than 570 years to the Ming dynasty. A beautiful river flows around


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the village, with a traditional covered bridge providing a peaceful place for villagers to pray and rest. Many houses are 300 years old. Lin introduced one of them by saying that, "The house is older than the US."

Pingnan is home to around 30 old villages, some of them are in decline because villagers have moved to the cities to make money. The houses are collapsing, and the human ecology is disappearing. How to revive these old villages? Lin believes that the solution lies in the protective development of a creative cultural industry, and the first step is to awaken the villagers to this possibility.

There are also villagers with disabilities in Jixia. Lin introduced us to a villager named Qiaoying Gan who was painting at the time. Gan spends more than $100 per month to control a chronic disease. For that reason, she lost both her job and her marriage. But she is high-spirited and smiles everyday. After she successfully sold her art, she donated 200 yuan ($30.00) to a boy with leukemia from another village. During our visit, Lin taught Gan to link her WeChat account with her bank account; now she can sell her paintings online by herself.

An independent critic, Meixin Cheng considers Lin's method very smart. "Transfusion-style of protection is not enough for old villages. Tourism and precision marketing are also needed. To awaken the old village is to awaken the villagers: to optimize their creativity. Coupled with the Internet business model, villagers can start their own businesses by selling paintings and farm products in the future. This is the most sustainable way to support the protection of old villages."

Spring Breeze's Ying Li chats with Zhenglu Lin

Ying Li: The project, "Everyone is an Artist," is being implemented in Shuangxi under the name of "International Disabled." What drove this decision?

Zhenglu Lin: I think the Cultural Creativity Industry will surely bring improvements. I chose to direct my projects toward people who are disadvantaged in a place that is not so advanced. The reason it is called the International Art Education Center for the Disabled is because those who are disabled are at the bottom of society, and they carry a deep sense of self-denial. If "Disabled" is not in the name, those who are disabled would not have the courage to come. Only by seeing the benefits, would they think of giving it a try. The title implies some social psychology of encouragement, to let those who are disabled believe in their potential and to come here and learn, and to let them experience hope. But we would not artificially separate them from the able-bodied people once they are inside the center.

Ying: Do you see any differences in terms of visual expression when comparing artwork by those with disabilities and those without disabilities?

Zhenglu: This type of comparison is inconsiderate. We encourage everybody to establish his or her own style. The differences that you suggest are actually differences of individuality. Here we want everyone to bloom like a flower. As long as you bloom, you are spectacular.

Ying: Wouldn't that individuality bear the life experience of a person with a disability?

Lin: People with disabilities have similar life experiences as able-bodied people, except that maybe the able-bodied look forward to success more than simply experiencing life. If the able-bodied always paint to resemble masterpieces, it could make success harder to achieve. We have to let everyone experience painting independently. Sometimes people with disabilities paint better than the able-bodied because they have purer goals. An able-bodied person could have very good talent, but forget about painting when buried in busy, daily life back in the city. The one who puts more love and persistence into painting will surely paint better.

Ying: Nearly 100 people with disabilities participated in your art project, but why have only a few persisted and stayed in this field?

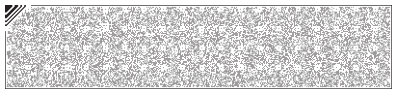
Zhenglu: Learning to paint does not mean you have to use painting to make money. It is more important to recognize one's life potential through art. We should not regard art as a direct transaction. Take Fawang Yang as an example. He was changed by art at the Center. When he leaves the Center, the other parts of his identity would be induced to change as well. This is a self-approval process. Through self-approval, he will not give up on himself and would be stronger in other ways. This self-approval makes him believe in himself, and believe that he can create miracles out of nothing. This is very important.

Ying: Yang earns quite a bit from selling his paintings and has spent a lot on consumption. Do you think the sudden change in his lifestyle will affect his creativity?

Zhenglu: We cannot guarantee that one would not expand some secular desires after a sudden success. But at least we educate students to always keep their purity and independence. We strictly request them to paint from their hearts. But I have a dangerous judgment about Yang. He had been in the streets for most of his life and made connections with all kinds of people who misbehaved. He is a simple man and would follow people who asked him to go gambling. Anyone, who is suddenly respected as a great man, might lose himself. Could someone lure Yang into drugs, now that he is making money? It is important to maintain and enrich the soil for his creativity. I do not exclude the possibility of exposing these things online, as it's the best way to stop misbehavior. ■ ABILITY

by Ying Li

This story is part of a series of articles published as an exclusive editorial exchange between *China Press for People with Disabilities & Spring Breeze* and *ABILITY Magazine*.



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It's been four years since I concocted this million-mile motorcycle journey for multiple sclerosis (MS), and I thought it might be a good time to review and evaluate my mission. I know I've missed some original goals and opportunities, but like fighting the disease itself, I charge forward with determination daily while continuing to chase the cure. I may have fallen short of my optimistic 100,000 miles per year plan, but I've so far managed to document riding 180,000 miles for MS across the United States and Canada. If you consider the average motorcyclist rides 3,000 miles a year, I've racked up 60 years of riding. I have burned through 25 sets of tires, over 5,000 gallons of petrol and not a drop of soap. Yep, bike #1 still has yet to be washed!

At one point I was hoping to raise a dollar for every mile, but I am not completely disappointed to report that with the help of riders and supporters, I've raised nearly $100,000 for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. Thanks to opportunities from multiple pharmaceutical companies, I have been able to share my story at almost 200 MS patient programs from Florida to Alaska, as well as Maine, California and almost every state in between. Amazingly, no one has questioned my traveling to every single event by motorcycle. I've also spoken at dozens of motorcycle rallies, open houses and conferences. Apparently, my humorously painful struggle to overcome challenges while riding the world's biggest piece of crap in the World's Toughest Motorcycle Competition is gaining universal appeal because I have been receiving inquiries to share my *Also Ran* presentation at colleges and conferences.

With the help of National Powersports Distributors in New Hampshire, I was able to set a world record by being the first person to ride 1,000 miles in 24 hours on 100 different bikes. I then rode one of their scooters from Boston to Chicago in a powder blue tuxedo. The two extreme rides raised $10,000. Although my second attempt at a world record was stalled by lack of funding and employment issues, I've not completely given up on my plan to ride 50,000 miles in 50 days. I've new fundraising ideas as well, like riding a chopper coast to coast in 50 hours and other ridiculous feats, *so stay tuned!*

I may have started as a man with a bike and a half-baked idea, but my determination and perseverance have now garnered respect and support from motorcycle industry leaders such as Yamaha, Twisted Throttle, Bridgestone, Spectro Oils, Bill Mayer Saddles, Aerostich, Globalstar and the Iron Butt Association. My second Yamaha motorcycle, riding gear and accessories have all been graciously provided by people and companies that believe in my journey; I am humbly appreciative.

I've appeared in national live educational broadcasts, motorcycle podcasts, newspaper articles, evening







newscasts, and I am now featured in pamphlets and websites about treatment options for MS relapse therapy. I've appeared in multiple motorcycle gear and accessory catalogs and been the subject of corporate inspirational e-mail blasts to hundreds of thousands of people. Thousands of followers visit my web site weekly, read my blog or just check my live SPOT satellite-tracking page to see where the heck I'm heading next. Yamaha invites me to share my story and display my dirty bike under their tent at national events across the country. I believe every bit of exposure I get is another opportunity to raise awareness and funds that will ultimately lead to a cure for MS.

These four years did not pass without pain, problems or consequences. My days on the motorcycle can be long and hard and leave little time to enjoy the beautiful places I whir by. I am often on the interstate 15 to 18 hours at a time, trying to make it to my next scheduled event. Thousand mile days blend into each other as I race against time and the uncertainty of my disease's progression. There is no place in my schedule for waiting out the weather. Rain, fog, sleet, snow, and blistering heat wear me down but also feed my determination to press on. I fear if I slow down, my symptoms and my disease will catch up, and I may never regain my momentum. When my body complains about the constant jarring and repetitive motion of riding, I try to remind myself how lucky I am to still feel pain, as many people who live with MS have complete numbness in their limbs or entire bodies. My million-mile journey is for all who have been struck by this disease. I battle my MS symptoms daily: fatigue, cognitive issues, heat intolerance and my latest inconvenient symptom I now refer to as RBS or Restless Bladder Syndrome.

Besides my body, I have also beaten the snot out my bike and most of my gear. My journey expenses are double what I collect from speaking honorariums. I had to choose between being on the road and my full-time job, so I switched to part-time. I have no guarantee or control over the amount of presentations I get invited to speak at, and at some point they may stop altogether. A third of my appearances and seminars are on my dime. I am always looking for additional opportunities to help with the high costs of this venture and to help survive financially at home. While I'm going there, I might also mention I am also coming up short on my share of the work in and around my home. I buzz in for a few days, reload and buzz back out. While I'm eating at restaurants and having a maid make my bed, my incredible wife is taking care of everything at home alone. This journey has indeed challenged our relationship. As we celebrate ten years together, I must say I am the luckiest man alive to have such a caring and loving partner who rarely complains or reminds me of the sacrifices she endures every single day because of a







monumental change she did not sign up for. Without Elin, this journey would not be happening. Her patience, understanding and unconditional love is worthy of sainthood. She is my best friend by far, and I love her dearly.

Overall, I'll score my mission at the four-year mark a B-. My journey has grown some very strong roots, but there is so much more to accomplish. I need to ride more and raise more awareness. I need to find additional time to write, create new fundraisers and update the social media portions of my mission. I believe encouraging folks to find something to be passionate about and to make it more important than their disease really helps. The warm fuzzies I get every time I leave an event where I was able to make a difference helps medicate my soul and treat my disease. I need to help more people. I want to inspire new audiences who may also need encouragement to overcome the challenges they face in their lives.

Publishing my life's story, setting new world records and receiving additional requests to speak could certainly help ease the financial burden of my quest. It would also be great to see my MS5000 fundraiser become a national event, thus increasing exposure and funds raised exponentially for the National MS Society. I take great pride in knowing some of the money I've raised was used to fund stem cell research, which shows great promise in actually stopping and possibly reversing MS damage. As I travel around to different regions of the country, I see folks who've lived decades without treatment or quality care and who suffer from the debilitating symptoms of this disease. Every mile and every dollar I raise, I think of them. I am also riding against a ticking clock, and I understand the uncertainty of what may happen to those of us lucky enough to slow the disease down. Today, MS is an incurable, progressive disease that damages the central nervous system. The remedy, by my calculations, is only 820,000 miles away and that is why I must continue riding as fast and as hard as I can, Chasing the Cure.

Thanks to these companies who've supported my journey, while asking for nothing in return; Yamaha, Twisted Throttle, Bridgestone, National Power Sports, Aero Stich, Spectro Oils, Eazcycle, Bill Mayer Saddles, Find Me Spot and Iron Butt. ■ ABILITY

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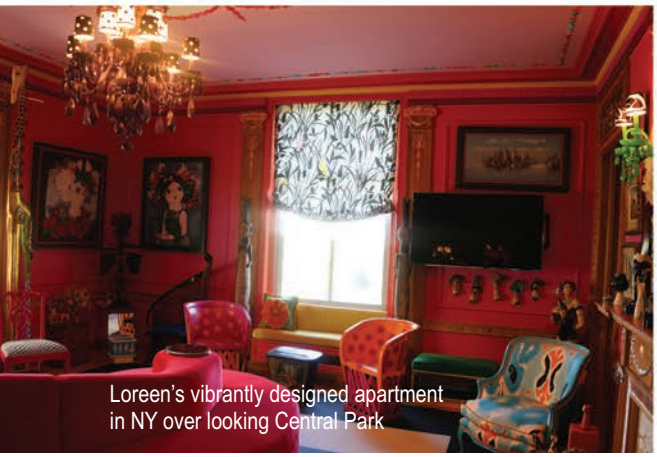
LOREEN ARBUS

A PASSIONATE TANGO WITH LIFE

Entering the home of Loreen Arbus, almost all senses are tickled at once. A never-ending color palette of combinations not typically seen under the same roof, and yet reds, pinks, gold, turquoise, patterns, polka dots all living in perfect harmony. Her love for vibrant energy shows in the pieces of art and sculptures she has chosen to display throughout each room, hallway and, yes, bathroom. Initial thoughts circle around whether or not someone actually lives in this comfortable museum. A subtle aroma fills the home from incense softly burning by a window. The flavors she paints her environment are important in understanding her dynamic character of experiences, desire to connect people and tireless advocacy for inclusion.

Arbus is the daughter of Isabelle Goldenson, co-founder of United Cerebral Palsy (UCP), which became one of the largest health organizations in the US. Her father, Leonard H. Goldenson, was founder and chairman of ABC. She serves on over a dozen non-profit boards, is currently the President of The Loreen Arbus Foundation, The Goldenson-Arbus Foundation and Loreen Arbus Productions Inc. and is the first woman to head programming for a national network, including Showtime and





Loreen's vibrantly designed apartment in NY over looking Central Park



Lifetime Television. She has a penthouse in Los Angeles and an apartment in New York—where we chatted overlooking the enchanting Central Park.

Lia Martirosyan: In your TEDx talk, you pretty much announced you were going to be different from birth…

Loreen Arbus: *(laughs)* I was the biggest baby born in the history of the White Plains Hospital. I weighed 11 3/4 pounds.

Martirosyan: Did they give you a plaque?

(laughter)

Arbus: There is one! It was an auspicious birth: my mother never forgave me.

(laughter)

Martirosyan: In your talk, you mentioned that there were three disruptions in your life.

Arbus: There have been too many to recall, but lately I've been talking about marginalization a lot. I had these long lists of causes that would make people's eyes glaze over, but when somebody asks, "What does your foundation do?" I couldn't give a simple answer. You can't do that many things and have anybody pay attention. I'm interested in so many things, and I can't possibly narrow it down, and I'm not about to.

Anything, everything and everyone who's marginalized potentially has interest for me, and all the areas I focus on have that element of people or animals being marginalized, whether it's women and girls, issues to do with public policy, animals that cannot fend for themselves… The lack of women artists' representation is a very big area interest of mine: on every wall of every museum in this country, women have done less than five percent of the paintings and sculptures.

Martirosyan: That's unbelievable.

Arbus: I can understand museums having a problem with their statistics because going back hundreds and thousands of years, women had no place in the world, so to speak. But it's still so shocking that it has hardly changed. In the media, women are totally marginalized. There are a lot more women anchors and reporters, but the percentage hasn't changed. When you look at producers, directors and writers, when you look at people with a disability having a role in television, being portrayed in television, whether they're acting or not, it's much less than one percent. And the disability population is over 20 percent of the country. So that's my elevator pitch.

Martirosyan: Ding! Your elevator ride is over.

(laughter)



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If I were drilling you about what to do about that, how would you say one could help, beyond simply being concerned?

Arbus: While it's important that people do give to capital campaigns, this is something that I never do. To me it's like sending a bottle into the ocean and hoping it will reach a shore somewhere. My giving is very targeted to a few people within various initiatives, such as research, where there'll be documentation and statistics. As an example, research I've commissioned revealed that over 70 percent of all children in foster care have a disability is not something that is well known, talked about or publicized. Now we have to find different ways government authorities, foster-care agencies and others utilize this awareness to make a difference in the programs that we have.

Another great interest of mine is fashion design and art, but I've never understood why so few people are coming up with designs for people with disabilities. Now there are two sides to this: some people with a disability don't want something specifically designed for them. My feeling is that there should be a lot more universal design in the market—for people with and without disability. When I'm struggling to get dressed and have to go down to the lobby to find a woman, and there are none on staff here to help me zip up my dress, I'd be so grateful if somebody came up with a design to assist me with that.

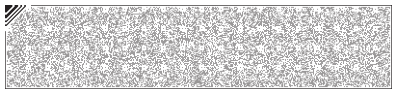
Martirosyan: Tell me about your recent Design for Disability event.

Arbus: We did a search throughout the country for designers in association with the Fashion Institute of Technology. We had 12 finalists, and each one had an assignment to design for a woman with a disability. Every one of the models was in a wheelchair, on crutches or used a walker. It was pretty darn exciting to see. They were so excited to present, and the audience was so enthusiastic. Every designer got something, but the number one person got a bigger amount of money.

Have you heard of Rent the Runway? Anywhere in this country, if you have a graduation coming up or a wedding, but don't have the budget—this company, started by two women, has items for rent by over 500 major designers: Dolce & Gabbana, Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger. It's a who's-who of designers. They have four million members. It's all virtual; you go online.

Martirosyan: That makes so much sense.

Arbus: So for the event they said, "We're going to tag everything for people with disabilities, and how it can be utilized." That was over 50,000 garments! My personal goal is to start a for-profit fashion line with designers who create for people with disabilities and/or people with disabilities who are designers. Rent the Runway is currently only for women, but my line would be for everybody.





Loreen hosts a screening of *Margarita with A Straw* in her LA home

Martirosyan: That is so needed.

Arbus: I met a lovely woman at TED four years ago. It was the last day, the sun was shining, and we were at a wonderful picnic for those who didn't leave right away. We got to talking, and she told me about her online business. Her name is Carrie Hammer.

Martirosyan: She had a fashion show recently, right?

Arbus: You read about it?

Martirosyan: I did.

Arbus: Great! Four years ago I said to her, "Have you ever thought to design for women with disabilities?" She said, "No." I talked with her about that. She became interested.

Martirosyan: So you were behind that?

Arbus: Absolutely.

Martirosyan: Very cool.

Arbus: And so at my next Women Who Care event, I sat her next to Dr. Danielle Sheypuk, who is a wheelchair user and a psychologist with a very interesting practice, because she can do therapy via Skype, which is pretty cool. She was named Miss Wheelchair New York a couple of years prior. They struck up a really good friendship.

Martirosyan: We met her at ReelAbilities.

Arbus: Exactly. So Danielle was the first model Carrie had in her fashion show. She had never been at Fashion Week. It was spring two and a half years ago. And shortly after that she made the commitment that she will not do a Fashion Week—twice a year, spring and fall—without at least one "role model," who can be any size, any age. They are role models because they're doing terrific things in their lives and should be known. Danielle was the first one with a disability but not the last. And I'm sort of obsessed with that world because image is so much a part of the obstacles, the aspirations and an area that has to be challenged. We see very few commercials with people who have disabilities.

I think the concept that you cannot be what you cannot see is really valuable. We need to see on television, in print ads, in all media, in the workplace, on the street, people with disabilities who are functional in ways that for many are unexpected. I have a goal to get the first woman with a disability on the cover story of the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue. *Playboy* did do, to their credit, a centerfold like that [Ellen Stohl], but *Sports Illustrated* hasn't so far. So I put together a list of ten women who have a disability. I think three of them, maybe two

of them, were in the Olympics, and the others were in the Paralympics. Stunning women. I've spoken with the former head of ESPN about it. I mean, why not a stunning beautiful woman with a disability?

Martirosyan: Very nice.

Arbus: I think it's exciting. In answer to your earlier question, a lot of the research that I underwrite is seminal. Dr. Michelle Ballan is studying violence against women with disabilities. This has been her life's work. She's at Columbia University, is brilliant and has become a great friend. She is not only exposing this horribly taboo area, but she is also coming up with proactive information and recommendations, so that people can look for signs of abuse, violence and rape against women with disabilities. It's estimated that one out of two women with a disability has been abused. That's staggering! It's unknown territory, much like bullying before people finally recognized it.

Martirosyan: You've mentioned bullying before.

Arbus: I came forward as one of the perpetrators. There may be others who have come forward.

Martirosyan: When did you become aware, "Wow, I was the bully"?

Arbus: I was a bully because I had so much pent-up anger, and I had nowhere to go with it, until I had two amazing people in my life who helped me channel it. And I was so angry because I personally was marginalized, many times over. I was the only girl of my faith at my school, and the discrimination was rampant. For a long time, I did not realize I was being discriminated against. I didn't know why I wasn't being put in the front row or given a solo as a dancer, when I was the best dancer in the class and probably the school.

I overheard girls on the school bus talking about the older brother of one of the girls, "You can't date him. Wrong faith." And I thought: "That's my faith." Also, my mother was bipolar and schizophrenic. But because she was the wife of the chairman of the board, she was considered eccentric, which is a pretty interesting phenomenon. How many people are treated differently by virtue of their birthright and/or circumstances? People used to draw straws as to who would have to sit with my mother at company dinners. Many times over she was abusive to my younger sister and me. That's another area where I was marginalized, because no one would come to my house. Every mother said, "we're not going to let you near that woman." I didn't blame them; I didn't want anybody coming over. It was scary.

Martirosyan: That was a lot for you to have to deal with.

Arbus: And probably the biggest reason people didn't want their children to come over was my older sister's disability. We'd go into a restaurant, and if we got seated—and most often we did not—they would put us back near the kitchen. Wherever we went, we were discriminated against; it was probably like what it must have been during the Civil Rights Movement in this country.

Martirosyan: We call it a civil rights movement.

Arbus: And it's not that it's totally changed; it's just slightly better. As we traveled the country, Howard Johnson's was the only restaurant and/or motel willing to accommodate us. Unfortunately, Howard Johnson's is down to so few locations. I love that company, and I'm so grateful to it. My sister would sit in a wheelchair. She had a bib. She drooled. She made strange sounds. Her caretaker, the most remarkable person in my life, I always referred to her behind my mother's back as my "adopted mother." Karen Hansen came into my older sister's life when my older sister was two, way before I was born, and stayed with her till her dying day. She never took a vacation.

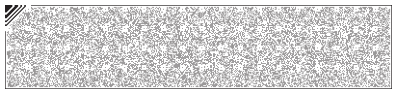
Ms. Hansen felt it was very important for my sister to have a sense of self-respect and self-sufficiency. She'd put the spoon in her hand, and my sister's spastic movements often meant the food was going some place else, but she wanted my sister to be able to feed herself. She thought that was important. So many restaurants did not have us come back. I'm sure you've been up against that: Taxis that go right on by. Uber doesn't have anything that forces them to accommodate people with a disability—

Martirosyan: *Yet.*

Arbus: My mother made huge changes for people with disabilities. To my dying day, I do whatever I can to pay homage to my parents because of the differences they made in this world. My personal relationship with my mother was not all that meaningful, but I have so much respect for what she accomplished. She was responsible, 15 years before the ADA, for what I feel is more important legislation: the Architectural Barriers Act, Proposition 502.

It was her idea that every single sidewalk in this country be wheelchair-accessible, and that became federally mandated because of my mother. She also pushed for every set of public telephone booths to have one that's lowered so it's wheelchair-accessible; that every public bathroom has a stall that accommodates a wheelchair; that every public parking garage has handicapped-only spaces. I often wait to see somebody get out of a car or to return to the car. And at theaters they'll say, "There's one bathroom stall open." And I'll say, "Neither you nor I have the right to use that. That is not for us." I get so angry about people's lack of respect for these situations, and why they've been created.

Martirosyan: I know what you mean.





Moments inspire profound combination of words, "We want inclusiveness, but not at the price of sameness." says Loreen (L)

Arbus: And there's a lot more of my mother's ideas that have been incorporated. She said, "They can put a man on the moon, but what are they doing for people on Earth?" She never said, "Please." She said, "I want a meeting at Ames Research Center," which is our NASA research headquarters located in Southern California. My father set up the meeting, which was not difficult for him to do, and they basically felt they had to accommodate the chairman of the board and his wife. So my parents went there, and what was to be a 15-minute meet and greet turned into many hours, and that turned into a three day conference a few months later. My father asked three former presidents of the United States, as well as, and also the head of the National Institutes of Health, the then head of Harvard University, where he graduated. My mother had the idea that MIT should work with Harvard, because she saw the potential of MIT programs to make a difference in the medical science research Harvard was doing. So now they have a dual degree program.

Out of that program came a lot of the technology invented for outer space. For instance, a heavy spaceship needed to be light enough to get to the moon, which required finding lightweight materials. So titanium was born from the space program. It required braces that were so heavy—and 99 percent of the time women were lifting those braces. Applying that technology to wheelchairs cut their weight by half or more than half. Also by using remote control, astronauts could climb into the moon's weightless environment. Then my mother said, "Why can't you use remote control for people with disabilities to be able to move their limbs?" So the staircase that wheelchairs ascend came as a result of the space program.

Martirosyan: Tell me about your history with Media Access.

Arbus: Fern Field, a TV Producer, called me up. She knew I was an early disability-rights activist. She said, "We have an initiative, but we don't have funding, we don't have a platform, and we need help." I said, "Let's go. Let's do it." She and her husband Norman Brooks had already created it, but I'm acknowledged as a co-creator, which is lovely. And I took it to another level, our annual gala to another level, the board to another level.

Similar to some of the grants that I'm giving out. It's not just, "Here's your money," it's overseeing them, trying to implement media exposure for them, giving them guidance along the way. I've set up these grants for a lot of reasons, with a ton of organizations; I couldn't possibly deal with the onslaught that would come to me otherwise. Whether it's New York Women in Film and Television, the Alliance for the Arts, Women in Communications, the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, UCLA—there are a lot of them, and now one at

the Fashion Institute of Technology. That is, in answer to your other question, how do I reach people?

Martirosyan: How did you turn situations that felt like a negative into a positive?

Arbus: And have an impact.

Martirosyan: Exactly.

Arbus: Here's a really good example. A young filmmaker with a disability gets her award and my grant at the New York Women in Film annual event. As 2,000 women and men in the film and television business watch this, they say, "Oh, I never thought of that." Our grant applications go out to organizations and hundreds and hundreds of colleges and universities, so that people say to themselves, "Maybe I could do something on that subject. I never thought about it, but there's money." It potentially involves them in a subject they knew nothing about.

And, when I get really lucky, that person gets hooked beyond the one project.

I underwrite a multifaceted grant for the Women's Media Center so that articles are written about issues and experiences that have to do with disability. They reach millions of people. One article profiled a young Serbian woman with a disability who was escaping. It dealt with her incredible journey. And there are many different stories from all over the world. I do the same with Women's eNews, which is the equivalent of Reuters or the Associated Press.

Martirosyan: Can you get any big names to work with you?

Arbus: Jane Fonda and Gloria Steinem are at all the meetings, on the phone making suggestions. I co-chair with them an annual Gala for the Women's Media Center.

Martirosyan: While we were at the UN, they said every 24 hours in America a million people a year—or some staggering number like that—are turning 65. It's the largest movement in an age group in the history of the world, and with the largest disposable income as well.

Arbus: It has a huge business potential.

Martirosyan: You've done well; you've broken some ceilings, haven't you?

Arbus: I did. I never wanted to ride on my dad's coattails. I adored him. He was an amazing person, an innovative, modest, small-town boy. His parents had the only general store in their Pennsylvania town. His mother was a very strong woman and said to him, "Leonard, you're going to go to Harvard." There were very few kids in that school, he was in the top percentile, and didn't have to take tests. So he got to Harvard and didn't know how to take a test, but, worse yet, he didn't know very much of anything. The standards at the school were so different than what he found at Harvard.

A cousin of his who was at Wellesley said, "I'm going to help you study, and you're going to learn." I feel so fortunate that both my parents had great values. My mother was horribly strict, but it had its advantages. I took my grandmother's maiden name, Arbus, when I was 13 or 14.

Martirosyan: You had your own mind.

Arbus: I like doing things my own way. But I never want to ride on somebody else's reputation or make things easy. When I first got to Hollywood, I worked on a lot of X-rated films, behind the scenes, as the assistant to a cameraperson who also worked for *Entertainment Tonight* by day.

I also had a job editing the X out of films because there was a house that was trying to make their films R-rated to get better distribution.

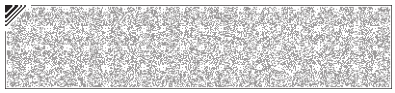
Martirosyan: Did it change your mindset after seeing so much porn?

Arbus: I was very popular. Everybody wanted a little bit of the footage and a lot of the stories.

Martirosyan: That's funny!

Arbus: The whole scene made me very depressed because it's so debasing. There's a woman named Gail Dines who's written an amazing book called *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality*. Her premise is that boys get their sex education from porn, which means that they're going to be much more inclined to abuse women and be violent because that's what they see and accept as the norm. Young girls think that boys are asking for something that young girls are supposed to deliver. It's a vicious cycle. She talks a lot more articulately about it. It's brilliant. The world of abuse keys into the world of disability, as well. It's not out there as an issue as yet, but I'm bound and determined to make that happen. In terms of other glass ceilings, cable programming had the CableACE Award, but it was not ever possible to get a cable program considered for an Emmy. I lobbied long and hard to get the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences to rethink their criteria, and finally we got cable in.

I was responsible for the very first scripted original series in the history of cable television. Until then, everything in pay television was acquired feature movies. I was the first woman to be head of programming for a network. After Showtime, we turned another venture, Cable Health Network, into Lifetime Television for Women. The then-chairman of the board of Viacom called me up one day and said, "I want you to





Tango: stars and Producers/Directors Alberto Toledano and Loreen Arbus. The critically acclaimed show was the first and for many years the only theatrical, touring Argentine Tango stage show to originate in the US. It premiered in 1994 at the Fountain Theatre in Hollywood.

do something for me." And I said, "Anything." He said, "I've seen you, and you're a very colorful person… We've done horribly in our first-run syndication area and with our pilots for network television. We're hiring the wrong people. I want you to be present at all staffing interviews."

Martirosyan: That's a great compliment!

Arbus: Yeah! It was because I didn't fit the mold. That was so brilliant of him to think out of the box. It's great when you're celebrated for your differences, which is what we're all about. We want inclusiveness, but not at the price of sameness. Wait. That's a good line. I'll have to remember that! *(laughs)*

There's nothing more exciting and fulfilling than to go against the grain and accomplish something. For me it was always such a negative energy I was putting out there, going against the grain, picking on people, and being the bully I was—until I realized how powerful and satisfying it is to take that energy and make something happen in a positive way.

Martirosyan: When you look back, would you have changed some of those things that you knew you were doing to fight the status quo?

Arbus: Yeah. There would be two teachers who would still be at my school if I hadn't made their lives so miserable and gotten them fired.

Martirosyan: The bully years?

Arbus: Exactly.

Martirosyan: What about when you got into business and you were being the rebel? Did you see anything where you would say, "If I had gone that way, maybe doors would have opened quicker"?

Arbus: In all honestly, it's less about what I could have done differently. I had the right ideas, but the timing was wrong, because it was not acceptable for those ideas to be coming from a woman. My better ideas were stolen. I'd sit in a meeting, and I'd hear, "You know what I think would be a good idea?" And then they would repeat what I'd just said and get credit for it. This happened over and over and over again. But even if somebody accomplishes something for all the wrong reasons, if the end result is a good thing it's worth it. Even though I didn't get credit on a lot of things, changes were made and projects came to be. *The Elephant Man* was a television project that did not have any supporters when I went to bat for it. Have you seen *Me Before You*?

Martirosyan: No.

Arbus: I had a very interesting experience along those lines when I tried to commit suicide one time. One evening when I was 14 or 15, my parents and younger sister went out to dinner, and I said I wasn't feeling well. My parents let me stay in the hotel room. I had my plan all set to go. I had taken Bufferin, aspirin, Tylenol—anything you could get over the counter. I melted it all down, and I took a ton of that.

Unexpectedly, my sister came back to the room to get a sweater. She could tell I was pretty groggy and out of it, and then she saw the bottles and said, "What have you done?" I said, "Well, it's obvious what I've done, but it's none of your business." And she said, "No, I know it's not my business, but I have to get you to the hospital." I said, "No, you don't. My life is my life. This is my choice to make. You don't have a right to rule over my life." And here's what she said in a later discussion: "I couldn't have lived with myself if I let you do it." Point well taken. I think that this fellow in the movie took into account what others had to live with and suffer from by him taking his life, but ultimately that was his right.

Martirosyan: There are protests against that film's message, which has stirred up quite a bit of concern.

Arbus: My credo is: I don't pass judgment on anything unless someone is hurt against their will. On the way into the kitchen is my favorite saying: "Everything is what it is and its opposite." If you think about this film and his choice it's absolutely correct—and the opposite is also.

Martirosyan: We haven't even talked the tango yet.

Arbus: That's been a huge part of my life.

Martirosyan: Did you compete?

Arbus: No. I've never liked dance competitions. But I also think Argentine tango is antithetical to competition because it's all about individual expression. When you look at dancers who are doing the waltz or foxtrot in the ballroom competitions, they have to keep to a very strict set of criteria. Ugh! That's not of interest to me. Tango is a dance of rebellion and individualism.

Martirosyan: What about music? I see your piano. Do you play?

Arbus: Horribly, but I do compose a lot of tango, a lot of waltzes. I don't read music, and I can't write it per se. I work with somebody who's an arranger; she transcribes what I hum… I can pick out a tune with my right hand.

Martirosyan: I used to play piano, and now these fingers won't allow it. But—

Arbus: You could still compose. You would need an arranger.

Martirosyan: I'll give that some thought. So, what are you doing tonight?

Arbus: Working. I have a zillion proposals I have to get back to people on. I host many events in my New York and Los Angeles apartments, each is attended on average by 50 people. That results in a lot of requests to get together and/or submit proposals. It can be quite overwhelming.

Martirosyan: What do you think about them stopping the telethons?

Arbus: The annual United Cerebral Palsy telethon was a remarkable event over several decades. The theme song was so beautiful and moving. "Look at us, we're walking. Look at us, we're talking." It was like a rallying cry. For the first time people with disability were experienced in millions of American homes. It only came to an end because my father stepped down as head of ABC at age 80 and no one else could clear the station time the way he did.

Martirosyan: We've been invited many times to the New York UCP gala. I always wondered how they got so many celebrities to come out when it was just an affiliate.

Arbus: It was because of my dad. The best one, I think, was the year that Princess Diana and Colin Powell were both there. Trump was a co-chair with Ivana for two years. That was before the ego exploded and the politics came out. They had seven US Presidents and Governor Rockefeller attend; it was just amazing who they got over the years.

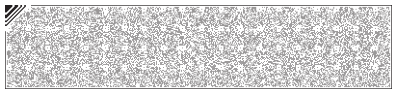
Martirosyan: That is incredible. I'm curious about your art collection and what might have inspired it?

Arbus: I was painting and drawing at a very young age. Everyone in my family is artistic, musical and suicidal. Not everyone, but a lot. Diane Arbus is the best known, a photographer, and the best-known suicide, I guess. We've had quite a few. They were all so eccentric. On my mother's side, relations were always strained. There would be obligatory get-togethers periodically. Art and music for me was a way into other worlds.

I was painting designs on my nails—when no one had ever done it. I have always felt it's important that we be authentic and express who we are. People say, "You know, Loreen, you pay a price." I'd respond, "I know. I'm going to get paid less money, and some people aren't going to come near me because I'm too different..." For me, it was a great way to test people because, as a friend once said, "If somebody is strong enough or committed enough or brave enough to come into your world, that's a person you want to have there." And it's true.

■ ABILITY

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carriehammer.com
womenwhocare.org
reelabilities.org
access-board.gov
mediaaccessawards.com



Born This Way

THE TALENTED CAST OF A&E'S HIT SHOW



Photo by Nancy Villere - VillereDesign.com

On a beautiful summer afternoon in Los Angeles at John Paizis' Performing Arts Studio West, the cast of TV's *Born This Way* met up with David S. Zimmerman, an *ABILITY* contributor and founder of Meet The Biz, and actress Jamie Brewer of *American Horror Story*. Later in the conversation, the cast's families joined them as they talked about life, love, and the up side of having Down syndrome.

David Zimmerman: I have to say your show has become one of my favorites. In fact, I binge-watched the first season last week.

Jamie Brewer: We both did.

David: I cried! I laughed!

The Cast: Awwww.

David: I identified with a lot of stuff that was going on.

Jamie: Same here.

David: You guys seem so honest and open.

Elena: What was your favorite thing about it, David?

David: It's hard to say because there were so many things I liked. It's more than a show. It's like a movement.

John (A K A J.T.): I think it's because between Cristina, Rachel, Megan, Elena, Sean, Steven and I, we're like a big family. We love this show. We're always there for each other, in good times and bad times… We would sit down and talk about what bothers us the most. I feel like I'm the one to give advice to everybody.

David: You said "family." The show makes the audience feel like they're part of the family, too, doesn't it?

Jamie: It does. I really liked that about it. And I really liked when you guys were in the bowling alley.

David: Omigod the bowling alley!

Rachel: I broke 100 for the first time.

Sean: I broke 600!

(laughter)

[Bowling's highest score is only 300.]

David: I thought we might play a word game, where we'll say a word—

Jamie: —And you say the first thing that comes to mind. Okay, first word: independence.

Steven: Freedom.

Sean: Loving.

Elena: Romantic.

David: Okay, let's see: love.

Steven: Happiness.

Rachel: I know what love is.

David: What is love?

Rachel: It's when you have this spark in your eyes. Sparkle, sparkle!

David: And that spark connects you with someone else?

Rachel: Yes.

Elena: Like you could spread your wings and fly.

John: I would say family, because we're always there for each other, including Cristina, who's getting married.

Cristina: I would say that marriage means someone will always love you and care about you a lot. They will always stay with you, ask you out, and really love you the way you are.

David: Show us your ring.

(Cristina shows her ring to cheers.)

Jamie: That's gorgeous!

David: It is.

Jamie: And Elena has a poetry workshop!

Elena: I do!

David: I would love to hear some of your poems.

Elena: You should come to the open mic night!

Jamie: I want to go, too!

David: Let's do it. But first, let's finish our word game.

Jamie: Another fun word: fashion.

David: Megan, you have a clothing line, don't you?

Megan: I do.

Jamie: What inspired you to get into fashion?

Megan: When I graduated high school, I started a family



David & Jamie interviewing the cast (top, L to R) Sean, Elena, Steven and John (bottom, L to R) Cristina, Rachel and Megan

business, a tie-dye company, where I'm making my own clothing.

David: I saw the episode about it, and I seriously felt like I wanted to hand money through the TV screen and say, "Can I have that one?"

Jamie: Yeah, I wanted one of your scarves.

David: Okay, this question is for everybody: What do you want most at this moment?

Cristina: For me it's hanging out with my mom.

David: I love that. Rachel, how about you?

Rachel: What I want the most in my life is my mom and my dad. I really love my parents a lot, and me and my mom are really good friends. I love her so much.

David: Watching your connection with her, I related it to me and my mom. I just got back from a little vacation with her, which really touched my heart.

Jamie: Megan?

Megan: To be honest with you, some day I want to get married and have a baby.

Jamie: J.T.?

John: I want to be able to do more new music. I want another season of *Born This Way*. My TV family means a lot to me. And maybe I want to get a spinoff from the show.

David: It would be amazing if Born This Way *was nominated for an Emmy.*

Jamie: Yes. Here's hoping it goes eight, 10 seasons.

John: More like, 20,000 seasons!

(laughter)

David: Steven, what do you want the most at this moment?

Steven: I want to be able to express myself...

Jamie: And Sean?

Sean: Actually, at this moment I'm feeling love for my mom, and for my friends here, all of them Downs. And someday, I'm gonna marry my girlfriend.

Jamie: We see a lot of animals on the show. What are some of your favorite pets?

John: I like dogs.

David: How about you, Sean?

Sean: My favorite animals are the baby elephant and the baby chihuahua.

David: I'd love to see a combo of those two; that would be interesting!

(laughter)

Jamie: Steven?

Steven: I kind of like the wolf.

David: Why?

Steven: Because my high school was the Northwood Timberwolves.

Jamie: Ah, that makes sense.

Cristina: My favorite animals are my two cats.

Rachel: Cat girl!

Steven: Meow!

Rachel: My favorite pets were my two cute dogs, Chloe and Dolly, but Chloe passed away. When I put Dolly, my little Maltese, in my arms, she kisses me. I love her so much.

Megan: I have so many pets in my life. My dog just had puppies, after I told her, "Please don't get pregnant."

(laughter)

It's really hard to give up all those puppies.

David: How many did she have?

Megan: Four. On Halloween night.

David: Wow! Let's go in a different direction: What would be the one change you'd make if you were President?

Rachel: I would change how people get jobs. And stop so many people from breaking the law.

Steven: I would like to change the way we socialize with each other, and talk more about equality.

David: What does equality mean to you?

Steven: That we all get to have equal chances and equal opportunities.

John: For me, if I was President, I would like mothers and fathers in the Army to be reunited with their families, because a lot of their kids don't see their father and mother for a very long time.

Cristina: At the school where I work, some people don't have enough money; they don't have clothes, or school supplies. If I was President, I would want to help people.

David: That's beautiful.

Megan: If I was President, I would want the world to have more peace, and for innocent people to stop getting killed.

Sean: If I was President, I would stop the bullies.

David: I don't get bullying. I'm all about love. You all show so much love on the show. Each episode, I seriously got a healing.

Jamie: Healing and dancing at the same time! Especially when there's a certain song on there.

David: Oh yeah!

*Jamie and David: (*singing*) "Shake Your Booty Booty!"*

*David: We were dancing to it in the dressing room before we came out here. (*To John*) And you have a second album coming out now.*

John: Yes. I'm working on it.

Jamie: Are there types of music that energize you?

Steven: Hard rock, but also some movies I like because they can look at the stuff that's going on in the world. Like the movie *Spotlight*. I never knew about that whole [sex scandal] with the church.

David: That's an amazing film that really brings something to the forefront that we need to address. Hmmm. I'm curious, how do you all deal with your fears?

Cristina: When I was a child, my babysitter closed my door and I found out that I was scared of being in the dark. But I kept growing up, and now I don't feel fear.

David: I have to say, I still leave my door open.

Rachel: I sleep with a nightlight because I have a fear of the dark myself. Another fear is crowds and loud noises. When I am in a crowd, I take baby steps and I get through it.

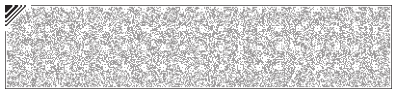
*David: (*To Sean*) Is there a fear that you have?*

Sean: I don't have any.

David: You just go for it?

Sean: Yup. Go with the flow.

David: I love that.

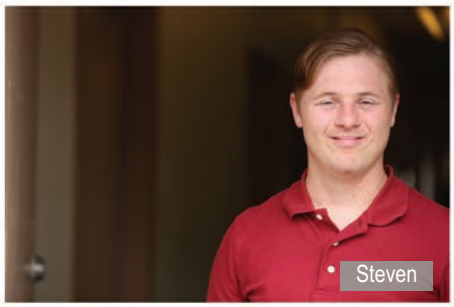



THE EMMY-NOMINATED SERIES RETURNS
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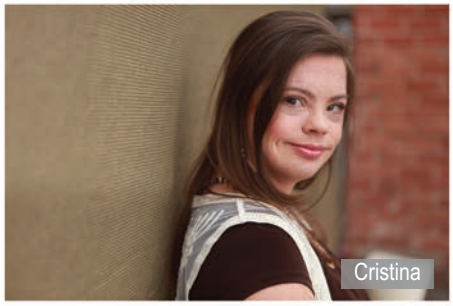

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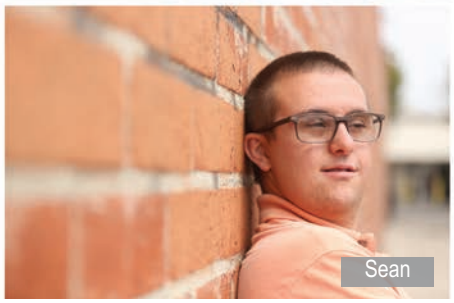














Jamie: It seems that in a lot of episodes, we see you guys in the kitchen, cooking. What are some favorite foods that you like?

Sean: Bean burritos.

Steven: Yup, bean burritos.

David: Those can be powerful!

(laughter)

David: There is this taco truck where I live that makes the best chicken burritos. We should go get some one of these days.

John: I love chicken. If my mom brought home some KFC, the whole box would be gone.

Cristina: I have one question for John. One time Rachel got a particular food that you didn't like.

Rachel: Calamari. Yes. That's my favorite.

Cristina: But John said, "I've lost my appetite."

John: I take that back. The fried squid was good, but the squid with the ink was nasty. My favorite saying from *That's so Raven* is "ya nasty."

Rachel: My favorite word is "snap." Like (*snaps while moving hand across face*).

David: How about you, Megan?

Steven: Megan says the word "cool" all the time.

Megan: There's a family word we use that I like better than "cool"—"legit."

David: Why "legit"?

Megan: It means good.

David: It's all good.

Jamie: Who said that sometimes their favorite word is "diva"?

Megan: Me. I'm the diva on *Born This Way*, and John is the rapper.

Sean: My favorite word is "lovecakes."

(laughter)

How about you, Jamie?

Jamie: All of you guys know that for me it's "admiration."

David: I like "love," but also "plethora," just because I like the way it sounds and feels when I say it.

(*laughter*)

Jamie: Here's a word we all love, "family."

David: Yes! There you go!

Cristina: My favorite words are "romance" and "sexy."

(laughter)

David: What does "sexy" mean to you?

Cristina: I do have a fiancé, Angel, and that's why I choose that word. I'm such a lucky girl that I met him and he's in my life… In the past I was single, but now I've found a person that I really love into my heart.

John: The word "sexy" for me means when you walk like a diva.

David: J.T. I think that should be one of your next songs: "Walk Like a Diva."

John: Okay!

(laughter)

Jamie: And every one of the girls can walk the catwalk to your song.

John: I'm gonna write a song called, "Walk That Walk." It's gonna be a rap—

David: I love it.

John: It's gonna be for all the females and males who walk that walk. You betta walk it! (*snaps*)

David: You know, I was driving today, and I was thinking about the title of your show. We're all born the way we're born, and we all live our lives. We're all in the same boat that way.

Cast: Yeah. Yeah. We're born this way!

David: And we're all so beautiful in our own way. We have our wonderful qualities and gifts.

Megan: When I started this TV show with these friends here, I said: They are beautiful people, inside and out. I look at their faces right now and I think, "Wow, we're doing this together."

Rachel: Thank you, Megan!

John: We're all in this together, right?

Megan: Always.

Jamie: Sean, how did you feel getting on that plane that time to go see your mom? Were you excited, nervous, scared?

Sean: I was scared. I never sat on a plane before.

David: You know what's interesting about flying and riding your bike and doing all these things that happen in Born This Way*? It circles back to the audience watching it, and they identify with it because we all had those feelings the first time we did those things.*

Steven: It's called "challenges."

Jamie: Yeah. And we all fall, right?

David: And when we fall?

Cast: We get back up.

Sean: Okay, I've got one for all of you—Let it go.

David: Let things go and move forward?

Sean: Yes.

Rachel: Move forward, yes.

John: Some people with Down syndrome, Autism or whatever disability, if their parents love them as they are they will be okay. Love makes the difference. When I was born my mother loved me, and was glad she gave birth to me. On *Born This Way*, it shows the public the talents and the dreams of young adults with Down syndrome. We're still people. We are here.

After Jamie and David's conversation with the cast, their families arrive and join in the conversation:

David: I want to thank you again for being here. When I walked in today I was a little star struck. I was like, there she is! There he is!

Jamie: It's a huge honor for us.

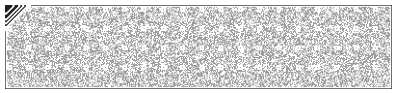
David: One of the questions I want to ask of the families is: What can the show teach people about Down syndrome?

Rachel: I want to teach people that people with Down syndrome can do anything… I also want to inspire people who have Down syndrome. This will never stop me. I love being who I am.

David: Steven, what do you want to teach others about Down syndrome?

Steven: Don't be so in a box. Express yourself, be creative.

Jamie: One of the key words I'm hearing is teaching others and advocating for them. I think about what you and your mom went through, Sean.





Cast and Parents of *Born This Way*

Sandra (*Sean's mom*): I want to teach people that every life has value. It doesn't matter what you're born with, everybody has a purpose, and every single person has the opportunity to change the world...

Jamie: Thanks Sandra. Parents, how would you teach others to advocate for children with Down syndrome?

Joyce (*John's mother*): I think the public could accept them more and see that they're just like everybody else. We all have challenges, we all have desires, we all have dreams… Like John says, "Don't just stare at me and walk by. Say hello or give me a smile. I'll smile back. You don't have to make a big deal of it. Just accept me as I am, without limitations, without discrimination, without judging me."

John: I see different faces, from Steven, Megan, Cristina, Elena, her mother, my mother, father, sister. Every face we have on this TV show means so much. People can see our different lives and how we live… We're all a family. We respect each other and we're here for each other. We're always gonna love each other. And it's really powerful that with *Born This Way*, people can see that. Don't give up on us because we have the same dreams as you.

Mariano (*Cristina's father*): I want to add something to what J.T. said about differences. One of the things that I hope comes across on the show is how different they all are. A lot of times people lump everyone who has Down syndrome into being one kind of person, but they all have their own personalities. And to the families who have very young children with Down syndrome, this new generation has a lot to look forward to. This is a very interesting journey. It takes you in many, many different directions. I'm hoping that that message comes across loud and clear.

Laurie (*Rachel's mom*): The most important thing is that the show educates people. I've dealt with so many questions like is my daughter gonna hurt me? Is she violent? I hope that this show will teach people [to let go of their fears]… What has helped me the most is getting feedback from other parents-to-be [who get a prenatal Down syndrome diagnosis] and still decide to keep their baby because they've seen our show. That's been very, very, very encouraging to me.

Sandra: For people who don't have a family member with Down syndrome, the show offers opportunities to see that everybody with Down syndrome or any disability can be very capable, and not to prejudge them before actually seeing the talents each possesses… Sean's drama teacher wanted him out halfway through the year because the play was coming up and

he didn't think Sean could memorize a lot of lines. I explained that Sean would be happy being a rock onstage, he didn't need lines, but he still didn't cast Sean in the show. He was the only member of the drama class not cast. When his fellow students found out, they had a little fit. They advocated for him, and he did get a part at the last minute. But he wasn't allowed to go into Musical Theater or Drama II the next year. And that was because the teacher told me, "I have to spend my time with the students who are going to make it in the industry."

David: Oh, geez! No! That's bull!

Sandra: I actually sent that teacher an email a couple weeks ago. I wanted to let him know that Sean was in the cast [of *Born This Way*], and that only six shows received the TV Academy Honors Award [for significant social content], and *Born This Way* was one of them.

David: I love that!

Dave (*Steven's Father*): I have two kids, Steven and Amanda. They're both amazing, and they're both talented. It's been wonderful to see both of them grow and become young adults.

Hiromi (*Elena's Mother*): I'd like to add that they all have feelings. They get hurt. I often see that people think that people with disabilities don't feel things, but they do, very deeply.

Jamie: I'm curious about something. Hiromi, how did Elena get into Taiko [Japanese traditional drum]?

Hiromi: She likes the music, and feels it in her body... I wanted her to stay connected to her Japanese heritage.

Jamie: A question for Mariano: What traits do you see in Cristina that you and your wife have?

Mariano: Cristina takes after my wife in her beauty, and she's very extroverted like me.

Cristina: How?

Mariano: You like talking to people, going places, you're not shy. That's like me. And you're very beautiful, smart and organized like your mom—thank God!

Jamie: Sean, where did you get the passion for golf?

Sean: Actually, I taught myself.

Sandra: He has natural athletic ability that was definitely inherited from his Dad.

Sean: And I'm deaf.

Sandra: In one ear, but you didn't get that from either of us—although your father sometimes acts like he's deaf when I'm talking!

(laughter)

Jamie: Laurie, what are your most treasured memories of Rachel?

Laurie: Oh, she's just sweet. I call her my sweetface, that's her nickname. She's loving. She's always happy. She makes us laugh.

Rachel: I love you, Mom.

Laurie: I love you too!

*Jamie: [*To John*] From which side of the family did you get your love for performing, your Dad or your Mom's?*

Joyce: His father loved to dance. He was dancing when I was pregnant.

John: Really?

Joyce: And John, from three years old, was dancing. [*To John*] You would dance to anything on the radio, but by the time you were six, you really had some moves.

John: When I was six, I got my dancin' from my sisters.

Joyce: Oh, yeah, they were dancing. His outgoing personality he got from me. He loves to talk and will talk all day long. Other times he's kind of quiet.

John: I spend a lot of time around the house rapping. I love it.

Dave (*Steven's father*): I used to ride bikes a lot, not much any more, but it was hard to teach Steven to ride, because once he got bigger he was pretty heavy. And if he leaned over, there was no way I was gonna be able to catch him. So having that class he went to on the show was great. They had special equipment to help him learn how to ride.

David: It made me want to buy a bike again and get back out there. Well this was great. [To Jamie] Thank you for doing this with me.

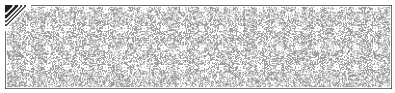
(Applause)

Jamie: Let's all think Emmy Award!

David: I sure hope so. I want to see all of you on that stage.

Everyone: Woo hoo! Yes!!!!! ■ ABILITY

Editor's Note: Shortly after this interview, *Born This Way* was nominated for three Emmys.



Itzhak Perlman

BEYOND THE VIOLIN

Tune in to your local classical radio station anywhere in North America, and it won't take long for someone to mention the name Itzhak Perlman. It is rare for a musician in the classical genre to become the rock star that Perlman has become. Known for the tremendous emotion he exudes through each string he caresses, he has taken lead in dominating the title 'virtuoso of the violin'. He has shared his journey on stage with such transparency, whether you watch him live or through his plethora of performances available online, Perlman lets you in.

As long as Perlman has been performing, he has also been educating and fighting for inclusivity for those with disabilities. Contracting polio as a young boy, he has discovered first hand the obstacles that come with navigating the world with a limited mobility, as well as the "hostility" he feels when requesting basic necessities.

From humble beginnings, Perlman knows the impact of giving. He recently was presented with the Genesis Prize, which honors individuals who excel within their professional fields, and who make significant contributions to humanity, as well as inspire through their dedication to Jewish values. With this accolade comes a one million dollar reward that, which Perlman has decided to use towards greater integration of people with disabilities into society. During his acceptance speech, Perlman highlighteds being able to give back:, "The physical prize is wonderful, but what I will cherish even more is the opportunity you have given me to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others."





Photo by Natasha Kuperman

Laureate Itzhak Perlman receives his award with Speaker of the Knesset Yuli Edelstien, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Chairman & CEO of Genesis Prize Stan Polovets and Chairman of the Selection Committee, and Helen Mirren host

During our interview we laughed a bit, and, he shared some personal tips and tricks of travel; then, we bid Perlman adieu as he sped off to mold the skills of young talented musicians.

Lia Martirosyan: Before we begin, I want to let you know that some of the questions we probably know the answers to, we just want to share it with everyone else …

Chet Cooper: Thanks for saying that Lia. So what instrument do you play?

(*laughter*)

Perlman: That's very funny!

Cooper: Thank you.

Perlman: (*laughs*) Believe me, I've had interviews where the person says, "So when did you start and why? What about your parents?" I say to them, "Please, have you heard of the word Google?" Anyway, that's funny. That's a good story. I like it. I'm going to repeat that.

Cooper: Do you know the name Millard Fuller? He started Habitat for Humanity. Are you familiar with the organization?

Perlman: Not really.

Cooper: Then I won't get into the story. You've seen pictures of former President Jimmy Carter, building homes with—

Perlman: Yes, yes I have.

Cooper: That's Habitat for Humanity.

Perlman: I see. I do know a little bit about it.

Cooper: And they're all over the world. I created a partnership with Millard to build homes for families with disabilities, and we access volunteers with disabilities to build the homes. It's a great program.

Perlman: That sounds great!

Cooper: Millard and I had talked many times over the phone. Finally, I got to Georgia and meet him at his office. I knew what he looked like. He's a six-foot-four white male. I entered his office, and there was a five

foot-two African American woman. I went up and hugged her, and said, "Millard!" He stood looking down at us, a bit confused and said,"I'm Millard!?"

(*laughter*)

So he's shared that story often. Did I just go off track?

(*laughter*)

Martirosyan: Had you heard of the Genesis Prize prior to receiving the award?

Perlman: Actually not. When I first received the call that I was being considered, I was led to understand that it was a very prestigious and fairly new award that was granted, that it was a fairly new one, that there were only two previous laureates who have received it. So for me, that's pretty new. They call this award the Jewish Nobel, but it's a little different than that, because this award, which entails a big money award of about a million dollars, which a lot of people misunderstand. They think that I'm getting a million dollars and isn't that great? But with this award, you have to re-gift it to causes that have something to do with the betterment of the world, which in Hebrew is called *tikkun olam*.

So the award is an opportunity to be a generous person towards particular causes that may be close to you. That's basically what it is.

Cooper: So it's good news, bad news?

Perlman: No, there's no bad news there! *(laughs)* It's just a different kind of an award. I'm being sort of a conduit. The money goes to me, and then it goes to other people. In this particular case, I feel like saying, "Forget about the money, just let me figure out who it should go to." That's what we've been doing. It's not like awards where you sit down and somebody bestows an award on you, and you say, "Thank you so very much." No. After this "thank you very, very much," then the work starts, where you have to figure out whom you want to give it to. There are so many wonderful causes in the world, and let's face it, when you talk about a million bucks, if you think about it very carefully, it's not that much money, if you start to divide it. You have to figure out a philosophy as to whom you want to give it to.

Cooper: I think that's one of the hardest decisions. I was joking about the bad news, but I guess if there's anything that's difficult, it's how you do that. Are people stepping up to donate more? Is that part of it?

Perlman: That's true. There is a gentleman who's going to double the prize. I think that would be at least two million, which is good. And then there's something else about matching. Believe me, it's very complicated. I'm now in the process of finding out exactly what's going on. It's not like, I get some money, and then I give it away. It's a little complicated, and of course it has to do with the causes. Everybody has his or her own favorite cause. I mentioned the two causes that I felt were close to the life that I lead. One of them has to do, obviously, with music, because that's what I do. Let me tell you, in case you didn't find out, I'm a professional musician, and I play the violin.

(*laughter*)

And the other cause, of course, has to do with people with disabilities, which is because that's what I am. I'm a polio survivor. That's been part of my life as well. So I told the Genesis Prize committee I would be interested in giving help to organizations that have to do with those two causes. But now the work starts.

Cooper: Speaking about work, how often are you working?

Perlman: I have not been working during the summertime because my wife started this wonderful music program called the Perlman Music Program. It's a music program for talented string players. This is the program's 22nd summer. So during the summer I teach. That's what I do. This summer I have one or two concerts, and the rest of the time I devote to teaching. When summer's over, I start to perform again. Between conducting and playing concerts, recitals, etc., that's what my musical life is all about.

Cooper: These are students who are out of school during the summer, and that's when they're able to come?

Perlman: It's like a summer camp, if you want to simplify it. The thing is, this particular program is different than other summer programs because it also takes place during the wintertime and throughout the year with different kinds of events. For example, we have a winter residency in Florida. We do the same program that we do in the summer except that it's slightly shorter. The summer program entails approximately nine weeks, but the one in Florida during the winter is two to three weeks. And then we have all sorts of events that give our students opportunities to perform, to get together and play chamber music and so on. It's basically an all-around kind of program. They sing in chorus, they do chamber music, they do solo work and so on. It's very, very exciting. I'm very much involved in that when I don't play concerts and when I don't conduct. I have that triple kind of activity in my musical life.

Martirosyan: Sounds like a wonderful opportunity. Where in Florida does this happen?

Perlman: In Sarasota. That's where we have our winter program.

Cooper: I think we're heading down to Clearwater. The



the people who are inviting us to come down are talking to us about visiting just to highlight, if you will, their accessibility—

Perlman: Oh, that's good. Listen, if you show off accessibility, that means, "Let's go on. This is very good. Let's continue to think along the same lines." Because sometimes when you show off, it's very good, but then it has to continue. You cannot be happy with just, "We've done that," because there's always more work to be done.

Cooper: Did you know there's a movement showing a business benefit to accessiblity? Last year we attended the first international conference, in Montreal, on accessible tourism.

Perlman: I find that extremely important, because I just recently came from Europe, for example, which was in many, many ways a nightmare to take the train. People right now have all sorts of new rules and regulations about not being able to take—I go on an electric scooter, and so if you try to get on the train with in an electric scooter, you have all sorts of problems. Which car can house the scooter? And so on. It's not always very, very easy to do. I'm assuming that tourism probably includes accessible rooms in hotels?

Cooper: It should include everything, yes. That's what the meetings were about.

Perlman: Which is also a huge challenge. But it's very important.

Considering that you've got the Americans with Disabilities Act, which I always think of as a good start, but it's something that can be quite personal as far as—what do you need? You have a bunch of codes and regulations, but that's not enough. You need to think about it. Codes are almost something that prevents you from thinking. "Oh, yeah, I'm following the codes and everything is fine." Which is, of course, untrue. A lot of society tries to put people with disabilitiesy into one cube, and when you think about it, many, many people have different types of disabilities, and you cannot put a code that applies totowards everyone—generally, they can be guidelines, but in the long run, interior designers and architects need more education on the subject. That's what's missing.

Cooper: There is activity in all of this. Our nonprofit is a non-governmental organization (NGO) to the UN Convention for the Human Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD), and this year we held a side panel on assistive technologies. Matter of fact, two of the companies we invited to be on our panel are from Israel. OrCam, helps people with low vision navigate daily activities with a wearable camera you attach to your glasses; and Sesame Enable, the first smartphone you can control with your eyes. If you have no capability of touching the device, you can play a game solely with eye movement.

Perlman: I've heard of that.

Cooper: CRPD is just what you're saying. There are regulations that all these countries around the world are signing, most every country has signed off, but now they're looking at implementation. How do you fulfill what you said you were going to do? That is the difficult part. We're working with different NGOs around the world to help shift the attitudes, because they're only going to do the bare minimum to meet the law.

Perlman: Exactly. It's very frustrating. Sometimes you go into places, and you say, "This was thoughtless. No thought at all."

I go into a hotel room, and they said, "This room is ADA-accessible." And then you open the closet and the coatrack is so low that if you hang your jacket, it basically stays crumbled on the floor. What brilliant designer thought of that?

(laughter)

Or, the other way around, where you go in and the coatrack is so high that even if you stand up, you'd need to be six foot six in order to reach it.

Martirosyan: It would be nice if there were a design to easily adjust the height.

Perlman: It's the little things like that, where you think, "This is just nothing. We have bigger problems." That's not really true, because it's an indication of, as you said, trying to get away with—well, not trying to get away, but following some sort of a code. And once I've followed the code, I'm safe. But that has to do with the DNA of designers, of architects and so on. It's always—I find it interesting, when they ask, "How would you know that everything is accessible?" I say, "Well, just imagine yourself in a wheelchair. Go through the building. If there's a place you can't go in, it's not accessible."

It's very simple. If you have a step more than four or five inches high, forget about it. You can't do that. These are little things, but these are things that confront people trying to live their lives in a "normal" way. And I find personally that when I go to a place where I can't get in, I feel hostility from whatever it is, a hotel, a shop, a market, a street corner where there are no curb cuts, because somebody forgot to put them in, and where I have to go two blocks to the corner to do it. A lot of the excuses are, "Well, this is an old building." That's my favorite one. "This is an old building." It's as though 50 years ago, people with disabilities did not exist. As if the disabled are a new problem. It has always been a problem.

Cooper: I haven't heard the word "hostility" used like that. I like that. I use the word "ignorance."

Perlman: It's like somebody saying to me, "Hey, you're not welcome here. That's why we have this step."

(laughter)

Cooper: Lia and I have traveled a lot on different assignments, literally around the world. Even in DC, we were going to meet with Senator Harkin when he was still a Senator, and as you probably know, he was one of the authors of the ADA. We go to lunch in Georgetown, and almost every restaurant has a step in front. And they say to us, "We're grandfathered in." And I say, "You don't have a ramp to pull out? A simple ramp will fix this problem." And they say, "We don't have people with disabilities come in here." I say, "Have you thought maybe it's the step that's causing people not to come in?"

Perlman: It's really unbelievable. For $75 or a $100, you can get a little ramp you can put out and fold up. People don't think about that.

Cooper: Lia and I have traveled a lot of assignments, literally around the world as well. Even in DC, we're going to meet with Senator Harkin. As you probably know, he was one of the authors of the ADA. We go to lunch in Georgetown and almost every restaurant has a step in front. They say to us, "We're grandfathered in." And I say, "You don't have a ramp to pull out? A simple ramp will fix this problem." And they say, "We don't have people with disabilities come in here." I say, "Have you thought maybe it's the step that's causing people not to come in?"

Perlman: Oh! I'll never forget one time several years ago, not recently, I remember in Washington at the international airport, there was a public bathroom where you opened a narrow door, a very, very narrow door. At that time, I was still walking with crutches. I went in there, and inside there was an accessible bathroom, but there was no way to get inside because the door was too narrow. They said, "What is that?" Like you said before, it's a question of codes. You have to follow the codes, but what about the door?

Cooper: We always educate as we go. We'll call the



manager and say, "Think of yourself in a wheelchair and try to open that door." Their eyes are like, "Oh, wow!" And what's surprising is that it seems like they haven't heard about it before.

Perlman: Yes, yes. I don't know if it's ever happened to you, but it's one of my funniest and saddest experiences, when you go into a hotel, and they have an accessible walk-in shower. So you go in and open the curtain, and there is a bench off to the side of the shower. However, the shower is rectangular. On one side there's a bench, but the faucets are across from you.

(laughter)

So if you sit on the bench, you cannot reach the faucets. Has that ever happened to you? And I say to them, "Can you please sit in the shower? Unless you're a seven-foot basketball player with very long arms, you cannot reach the faucets. Who designed that?" I always find that funny and sad at the same time.

Of course, I carry a shower chair with me. I have a suitcase where I have my own shower chair with me just in case something like this happens.

Martirosyan: That's a good idea. I hadn't heard anybody do that before.

Perlman: Absolutely. They're not heavy. The ones I like are made out of plastic. I don't know if you know about Carex? I love that company. You can look them up on Google. They have a lot of fairly lightweight but very sturdy chairs. That's what I do, especially if I go to Europe, where I know that some of them don't even have it, and if they do it's kind of weird. So it's always nice to go with your own. And you know that it'll fit, and you know what to expect. That's what I recommend.

Cooper: It would be so funny if you had a little recording and you pushed the button right now, and there's a little jingle about Carex with music in the background.

Perlman: *(laughs)* Funny.

Cooper: That's a good commercial for them.

Perlman: I've never got in touch with anybody. I don't know if you've ever had to use those shower chairs, some of them are tiny, and when you sit on that thing you think, "I'd better not move because if I do I'll lose my balance and fall down." So even among that, sometimes you have people who don't really know a lot about design. So when you find something that really works, I say, "Oh, I'll use that!" That doesn't necessarily mean if you go to a small town that they will have their product available. Sometimes when I don't take a

chair with me, especially if you go to a nice hotel, they will offer every now and then to buy a shower chair. Shower chairs are relatively inexpensive. You can get one for $80 to $100. I say, "Just buy the chair, I'll pay for it, but you keep it, so the next person with a problem can use it."

There's this other thing where hotels have one accessible room in the whole hotel, or two at most. So if you go there and you don't like the room, they say, "Well, that's the only room we have that's accessible." What is that?

Cooper: Here's a really sensitive subject, since we're talking about accessibility and portable chairs and such. Have you traveled in different parts of the world where their restroom facilities are just holes in the ground?

Perlman: Yes, of course. But that's old. You're talking about the Far East. It's called Western toilet or Eastern toilet. Western is the normal, Eastern is a hole in the ground. I used to encounter that many, many years ago. I think it's a little better. But that's a nightmare.

Cooper: We've been to many places where that's still the standard, even in very modern cities. Lia's the first singing engagement in China was in a major metropolitan area. What's the name again?

Martirosyan: Guangzhou.

Perlman: Guangzhou? I've been there.

Cooper: We met someone and were driving with them and then the issue came up, "Let's stop for the restroom."

Perlman: Oh, God! Forget about it!

Cooper: We thought, "We're clever, we'll go to an American franchise, Kentucky Fried Chicken or McDonald's." Nothing. Nothing. What happens in that kind of a community is, the people who have mobility issues don't go out, or if they do, they time it in such a way that they'll be able to get back to their own place.

Perlman: Look, even today, think about flying. So many people I know plan when they fly to make sure that they don't have to use the bathroom. And you're talking about modern jets where you get into the bathroom, and I always say, you don't get into the bathroom, you wear the bathroom, it fits like a jacket.

(laughter)

You go in there and there's no way you can move. It's just horrendous. And every now and then, I don't remember which airline it was, but I think we were flying to China or Japan, not on an American airline, they had a bathroom that was twice the size of the normal bathroom. My God, what a difference that makes!

But 99 percent of the time there is absolutely no way. You have to go through contortions in order to do whatever it is you do in there. It's horrible. It's just horrible. In many instances people say, "Would you like to go to Europe?" And I say, "I'll have to think about it. Is there a hotel available that I could live in that would make it easier for me? What about the airport? What about the planes?" There are so many things. Right now every time I get to a hotel, I always have somebody call up the hotel and send me photographs of the room, especially the bathroom. And, of course, photographs don't always help because people don't know how to take photographs. I say, "I'd like to know how accessible this room is." So they take a photograph of the ceiling.

(laughter)

I say, "Thank you very much. The ceiling is very accessible. How about the floor?" So life is not as easy as it could be for a person with a disability.

Cooper: And we're still talking about mobility. You also have scenarios for people who are blind and deaf, etc.

Perlman: Exactly. Absolutely.

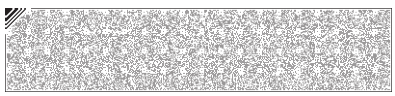
Cooper: We've been doing a lot of networking with NGOs around the world that are trying to put together as much data as possible so that you wouldn't have to call a friend and say, "Take pictures."

Perlman: Right.

Cooper: Some of these organizations we're working with are creating crowd-sourcing to get more information, more data, into a central location that everyone can access.

Perlman: And also, every time something outrageous like that happens to you, one should write it down, make a journal. Which is what you're saying. It's very important. And I've been doing it, but the thing is, I have all these instances, and they're so outrageous that I remember them. I don't forget them, because whenever something like this happen, I'm like, "Oh, I know that place. I couldn't get into that place. That place was easier for a porter with luggage to get in." Of course, you always have to go in the back. I find that the interpretation of "access" is interesting. People think it means, can you get into a building? You should be able to get into a building with dignity along with everybody else. There should be an alternate way, but not back where the garbage is, through the kitchen and so forth. But people don't think about that.

There are always examples. We should continue to talk.



Martirosyan: I was curious about stages and having an accessible stage when you're performing.

Perlman: It all depends. In some of the newer halls—the stages themselves are OK. It's very, very rare that you have different levels where you encounter a step. Right now, to get into a hall, it all depends. These days a lot of the newer halls are more accessible. They put in elevators and so on. So from that point of view, it's not as bad. But the minute I play in an older hall, sometimes they don't have a bathroom on the same level. So they put one of those little portable toilets. That still happens, especially in older concert halls.

But when I go on the stage, usually it's one level. And right now, especially when I've played recently, I just go on the stage in my scooter. It's very easy for me. I used to walk and everybody used to follow me and make sure that I didn't fall down, which did happen a couple of times. It was very, very interesting, especially people's reactions. (laughs) But now, in the scooter, it's great. I go onto the middle of the stage, and I do my concert.

Martirosyan: Good.

Cooper: When you went to Israel to accept the award, was that your scooter or theirs?

Perlman: I always take my scooter. I take my scooter everywhere.

Cooper: Has it been OK? They haven't destroyed it yet?

Perlman: Taking the scooter onto planes is the most horrible experience. So they always ask, "Is it a dry cell?" "Yes, it's a dry cell." "What's the wattage? What's the voltage?" "We'll put you in a wheelchair, and we'll take the scooter because we can't carry it because there are stairs and we can't carry you." I say, "Wait a second, the scooter is—" In other words, if I land in a place and I say to them, "I'd like my scooter at the door of the plane," every now and then, and especially in when you go to Europe or the Far East, they say, "Oh, no, we'll have a chair for you and you'll get your scooter at the baggage claim." I say, "Look, I'm trying to avoid extra transfers. I don't want to transfer, because when I transfer, I get up and it puts a strains me. I'd like to have one transfer where I come in and sit down." Many, many people don't understand that, I would say 90 percent of the time I have problems.

Cooper: They're taking it right to the oversize baggage claim.

Perlman: Yeah. In some places in the States, it all depends. Some of the guys who handle this say, "Yeah, no problem. We'll fix it." And it's great;, it's fantastic. But when you don't know and they don't know, because they've never seen one before, or they've seen one before and it's too heavy, sometimes there's no elevator next to the gate, so they have to go all the way to the other end of the terminal to get the elevator, and they don't like to do that. So they say, "We'll put you in a wheelchair and then we'll wheel you to the luggage." That's when I say, "Please don't do that, because I'm trying to avoid—once I'm in a wheelchair, how am I going to get out? It means I have to—" And some of those wheelchairs are too low for me.

As I said, it's the same thing. Every person with a disability has a slightly different kind of disability. Not everybody has the same problems. Usually the wheelchairs are the wheelchairs. It's the same height and so on. To answer your question, it's a problem.

Cooper: I don't know if you've experienced a special vehicle that raises itself up and enters the other side of the plane where they're loading and unloading the food.

Perlman: Right.

Cooper: People using wheelchairs exit there, and that's where they could have put the scooter.

Perlman: Yes, yes, absolutely. They can do a lot of stuff. It all depends on where you land and the local people.
Cooper: While we've been talking I've realized you've traveling literally around the world with your music. I know you're busy, but I wonder if you want to write about your experiences, maybe in bullet form and then we'll massage it. We can develop a Perlman column of travel. We're expanding our travel editorial with a section on accessible tourism.

Perlman: That sounds great.

Cooper: Good, then you're hired!

(laughter)

Perlman: You should get in touch with me and I will see if I can put something together, because there's so many instances in so many areas. You can talk about the area of air travel, which can sometimes be a real nightmare. And you can talk about the area of simply regular lifestyle, going to stores, going on the street. Where can you get in? Where can't you get in?

Cooper: We're going to be covering all of this.

Perlman: I have to go and teach a class...

Cooper: We'll talk again.

Martirosyan: Enjoy your day! ■



ITZHAK PERLMAN'S LAUREATE ADDRESS

When I was growing up in Tel Aviv, my parents were poor, and to get enough food was a constant challenge. I remember care packages arriving from an aunt in Toronto: home-made chicken soup in a jar, a can of Del Monte fruit cocktail with that red cherry, and a check for a few dollars. We were recipients of charity. We were on the other side of giving. We were receiving.

Besides the constant struggle to survive there was always at in the corner of our tiny apartment a "push-kele" for the Jewish National Fund. My parents would put in a penny or two when they could spare it. Giving tzedakah was a way of life, whether you could afford it or not. It was tradition. It was what we do.

It's funny. Even though my circumstances have changed since I was a poor kid in Tel Aviv, those two childhood lessons still inform my life. I remain focused on getting enough to eat and the act of giving tzedaka. It won't surprise you that I have little trouble these days finding enough to eat. The moral obligation to give charity is one that I take seriously.

It is a lesson that we Jews learn early. It starts in nursery school and continues until the day we die. Sometimes even after that. Somehow I know that after 20 years in the ground, I'll still be getting requests from the United Jewish Appeal. "Itzhak, answer the phone! We know you're there!"

It reminds me of the story I always tell at all fundraisers of the Jewish couple who are going on vacation from New York to Hawaii. In the middle of the flight the pilot comes up and says, "Folks, I have some bad news and some good news. The bad news is that we lost two engines and we have to land earlier than we planned, and we're going to be over the ocean. But the good news is that when I was flying during the Second World War, I knew an island that was unchartered and we can land there. Of course, the problem is whether anybody will find us."

So Mrs. Goldberg turns to Mr. Goldberg and she says, "Moshe, did you do the usual annual pledge of $100,000 to the UJA?" He said, "Yes, I did, dear." "Did you pay it yet?" He said, "Not yet." "Don't worry, they'll find us." It's not a true story, but it could be.

The charity we received from our Canadian cousins was not my only childhood experience with receiving tzedakah. When I was a student at The Julliard School in New York, a lady of means helped me out by providing taxi money to and from the school and funds for books and sheet music. It wasn't a lot of money, but it made a difference.

She was not Jewish. She did not want anything in return. I suspect she had a soft spot for me because she had lost her daughter to polio. However, I'm sure that she influenced me. Her generosity did two things: it deepened my commitment to giving, and it also made me curious about the larger concept of charity and how it affects not just the recipient but also the giver. Her pure agenda taught me something about giving, and the Genesis Prize has given me an opportunity to make some of my dreams come true; to help others the way I was helped.

We have been hard at work trying to figure out how to make the most of this prize. You know, this prize is to give you the money and you have to give it right back, so it's a good challenge. There are so many good causes, but one of the wonderful aspects of being given this prize is that I get to choose who, where and what I want to support.

You will not find my answers surprising. What is closest to my heart is not a secret. Classical music is my life and so are the problems of the disabled. Developing new talent is something my wife, Toby, and I have always supported through the Perlman Music Program. Our goal has always been to nurture a new generation of world-class musicians.

A portion of the award funds will be invested in developing superior training for talented musicians in Israel, to give them an opportunity to grow and bring their talents to the world stage as well. It's continuing the growth of music and culture here in this country.

Another portion of the award will be invested in creating a better and fairer world for men, women and children with disabilities. To fully support those with disabilities and work with them to tear down barriers in their path, both attitudinal and physical.

In the coming weeks, you will hear details about some very exciting initiatives in both culture and music, and the establishment of a partnership with Matan in Israel and the Jewish Funders Network in the United States, which will lead to significant investment in supporting persons with disabilities.

I think of charity two ways. There is global charity – that's the Bill Gates type, when one gives a giant amount to a large organization that helps thousands of people one does not know and will never meet. Don't get me wrong, that's important. Wherever the money goes to – cancer research, vaccinations for kids or mosquito netting to prevent malaria – lives are being saved.

Then there is the more personal type of tzedakah. That is what the woman from Detroit did. She gave knowing what it would mean to me. It didn't save my life, but it changed my life. Which is better? Of course, both. Both types fulfill critical needs and both are worthy of our prayers.

Thank you, everyone, for this honor. The physical prize is wonderful, but what I will cherish even more is the opportunity you have given me to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others. I am humbled and honored to receive this award. ■ ABILITY

Chris Fonseca

CRAZY LEGS

Comedian Chris Fonseca knows a thing or two about adversity. Born with cerebral palsy, Fonseca not only laughs at his own condition, he'll get you laughing as well. A stand up, sit-down comedian with the added fun of a speech impediment, he's rolled his way through the comedy circuit for decades and was the first comedian with a visible disability to appear on *The Late Show with David Letterman*. *ABILITY*'s Chet Cooper caught up with the Colorado-based entertainer, who spoke about his latest endeavors including an upcoming tour and his involvement with the Million Gimp March (MGM).

Chet Cooper: When did you start your career in comedy?

Chris Fonseca: I started almost 32 years ago, in May of '84.

Cooper: And what time was that?

Fonseca: (*laughs*) 8:35 p.m.

Cooper: How do you remember that date as well?

Fonseca: Well, I was a sophomore at Trinidad State Junior College in Colorado. We were having a Gong show at the end of the school year, and at that point I was student body president, and I thought that if I entered the Gong show, other people would follow. You know, I didn't think I'd ever make a career of doing comedy.

Cooper: For the people who don't remember The Gong Show*, can you describe it?*

Fonseca: Yeah. *The Gong Show* was basically a talent show. If you didn't do well and they didn't like you, they had a big gong that they would hit.

Cooper: So you had your own version of The Gong Show *on campus?*

Fonseca: Right.

Cooper: What was your major?

Fonseca: I majored in journalism. My intent was to write a humor column, either that or be a sports writer.

Cooper: Have you been a sports writer?





Fonseca: Yeah, I've dabbled in it a little bit, but I've mainly focused on being a stand-up—sit-down, if you will.

Cooper: You could even lie down. It's fine with me.

(laughter)

Has your career taken you international, or do you stay in the States?

Fonseca: I mainly stay in the States, but I have been to Canada a couple of times. I've done the "Just for Laughs" Comedy Festival in Montreal, which is the biggest comedy festival in the world. I also did the Winnipeg Comedy Festival. And other than that, I've only been on the island of Guam, but I haven't been going to anything like that yet.

Cooper: We've been doing a lot of international work. I'll try to remember to mention you when we're talking to different events and see if they are looking for that kind of entertainment.

Fonseca: I appreciate it.

*Cooper: Oh, it's gonna cost you! (*laughs*)*

Fonseca: Oh, yeah? Would that be in dollars or rubles?

Cooper: In Philippine pesos.

Fonseca: Wow! I'll have to dig some up.

(laughter)

Cooper: Do you work on your routine? Do you change it up often?

Fonseca: Yes. I'm always writing. I've got a set routine that I'll do for a period of time. It's kind of like a band. Some people want to see the old stuff, the stuff that they see on TV, and some people want new stuff. It's always kind of a hodgepodge of whatever I'm in the mood to do. I try to keep it fresh for myself, because I find that if I do the same thing verbatim, I fall asleep up there.

Cooper: That's not good for the audience, unless you've given them pillows.

Fonseca: Exactly. That would be expensive.

Cooper: Hard to take them on carry-on as you fly out.

Fonseca: Exactly.

Cooper: Does your material cover current events, say politics? I'm familiar with your older stuff, but I haven't seen you lately.

Fonseca: I try to include current events as much as possible. It's kind of tough, because that stuff has a shelf life, and now with social media, everybody and their mother considers themselves a comedian. So it's hard to do something, for example, like the election. There's a gazillion Donald Trump jokes out there. But the ones that I do—because I am of Mexican descent—I'm trying to get to know Donald Trump, but I feel like there's a wall between us.

(laughter)

Cooper: Did he make you build it?

Fonseca: Yes, and I had to pay for it also.

(laughter)

Cooper: That's not good! Where was the last place you performed?

Fonseca: The last couple weeks I've been at home getting ready for the tours this year. I start out in Houston next week, but it'll be a busy month. At a show, I was hanging out with Adam Sandler and David Spade, they're doing a tour right now and Rob Schneider, Norm McDonald, and Tim Meadows joined them, too. So that was a really cool show. I got to talk to Adam, whom I've known for a while. I tried to do a spoof on the old TV show *Ironside*—

Cooper: Oh, that'd be funny, just as a one-off episode or as a potential pitch for a series?

Fonseca: We're thinking of just a one-off, maybe even an animated thing.

Cooper: Yeah, you actually look better as an animated cartoon.

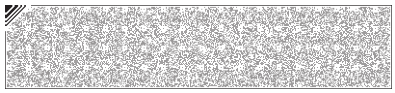
Fonseca: (*laughs*) Exactly.

Cooper: I didn't know they were touring. That sounds like a pretty nice event you got to go to.

Fonseca: Yeah, it's on Netflix and it's called *The Ridiculous 6*. They're touring to promote it. Adam hasn't done stand-up in 20 years, so it was really cool to see him do that. At the end, he did a tribute to Chris Farley. It was amazing. And it was cool to be in that kind of company. I've been real fortunate in my career to be able to work with big names like Adam. I tour a lot with Pablo Francisco. I don't know if you're familiar with him. I also did stuff with Dave Chappelle and others.

Cooper: That's really good. Will you be touring with someone this year? Who puts it together?

Fonseca: Well, I have a manager in Hollywood who helps me put dates together. I'm doing some of the dates with Pablo Francisco, and I'm doing some on my own. It's a





matter of putting things together that make sense money-wise and travel-wise. I spend half my life in airports.

Cooper: Wait, and the other half you're sleeping?

(laughter)

Fonseca: And if I sleep at the airport, I might end up in the dumpster.

Cooper: What kind of venues do you perform at on your tours? Is material PG?

Fonseca: Mainly through Comedy Clubs. I also perform at different disability events and fundraisers, that kind of thing. As far as the shows themselves, I do anything from G-rated to the late-night comedy clubs. I'm not like Andrew Dice Clay or anything like that.

Cooper: You're more like Amy Schumer?

Fonseca: I write my own material. So I'm not Amy Schumer.

Cooper: Oh, ouch.

Fonseca: Oooh! (*laughs*) It's kind of weird because I've only met Amy in passing, but when all that came up, generally the rule is, everybody has to like one joke every now and then that might have been done before—you know, do a little thinking—but when it becomes joke after joke, then you kind of go, "Wait a minute." You know? It really puts it into question and you wonder, is it her writers? What exactly is going on?

Cooper: Wow, I hadn't heard that about her.

Fonseca: Oh, yeah. It's a big comedy secret. Oooh!

(laughter)

Cooper: You heard it here first, folks! Tell me, where are you based?

Fonseca: I'm in Colorado Springs and obviously psyched that the Broncos won the Super Bowl.

Cooper: You moved there originally because of the marijuana, when you were a kid?

Fonseca: (*laughs*) Actually, it hinders me from moving. No, I'm a Colorado native. I was born here, and I've spent most of my life here. I did live in Texas for a couple of years, but then I came back.

Cooper: Tell us about the Million Gimp March (MGM).

Fonseca: Basically, it's kind of like the Million Man



Fonseca with Bronco's John Elway



Living it up on set on *Bay Watch* with Pamela Anderson

March or the Martin Luther King (MLK) march back in the day. It centers on disability employment rights and trying to get things so that people who are able and willing to work not only can without discrimination but also without losing some of their benefits that they need to survive.

Cooper: Did they come to you?

Fonseca: I saw it, like everything else, on Facebook. I reached out to them and said I would like to be involved, and it could be something where I could be the national spokesman, because obviously I can get people listening, do publicity, do some fundraising shows and that kind of thing, and they were all for it.

Cooper: So you're promoting MGM?

Fonseca: Right. By the way, I wanted to touch on the name of the march, Million Gimp March, because it's been a point of contention. When I reached out, media wasn't giving me support. The word "gimp" really strikes a nerve. I understand where they're coming from, because of all the political correctness and so forth, but the organizers specifically chose the word "gimp" with the idea of taking the power out of the word.

Cooper: Like the n-word?

Fonseca: The n-word for Bill Cosby is "no."

(laughter)

Cooper: Have you read our article with Dan Keplinger?

Fonseca: Yes, I remember that. And wasn't there an HBO documentary on him?

Cooper: Yeah, they followed him for years. It was pretty cool. We've been working with language and political correctness and that word rates high in the don't-say-it category. I think Dan was doing the same thing that you guys are trying to do in calling his documentary King Gimp.

Fonseca: Right. Where I'm coming from is, people should be more offended that people with disabilities have trouble gaining employment and so forth, than by using that word.

Cooper: Right. I'll be curious to see a survey of who's offended, if it's people with disabilities or people who just like to ride on the political-correctness bandwagon.

Fonseca: I think it's a mixture. But the people who are disabled who are offended, to me those are the kind of people who, the word has to almost change daily. It gets

kind of ridiculous. One day they're "physically challenged," the next day they're "differently abled," the next day they're Kardashian.

(laughter)

Cooper: Have they set a date yet for the march?

Fonseca: Yes. I believe it's October 14, 2016.

Cooper: How far is the walk?

Fonseca: I think it's to the moon and back.

Cooper: So it's a weekend?

Fonseca: Yeah. But no, it's basically the walk that MLK did.

Cooper: Your trip to Houston, is that at a comedy club or for an event?

Fonseca: It's a comedy club, the Houston Improv.

Cooper: Who started the Improv?

Fonseca: Bud. Every time he sees me it's a running joke. No matter where I am in the club, he'll come up and say, "You have to move. You're in the way."

(laughter)

Cooper: How often do you go to LA?

Fonseca: I go out to LA every couple of months and do shows—make sure people know I'm still alive.

Cooper: Are you looking into any kind of acting?

Fonseca: Actually, back in the day, I was in an episode of *Baywatch* when it was the number one show in the world.

Cooper: Did you do a slow-motion scene?

Fonseca: Yeah, my boobs were bouncing (*laughs*). My back still hurts. Actually, they wrote the script specifically for me, and I basically played a character based on myself. I was a comic in a wheelchair protesting because there was no access to the beach for a chair. And in my protest, I handcuffed myself to Pamela Anderson.

(*laughter*)

We know that's the best way to protest.

Cooper: That is funny. Do you have any photographs of that?

Fonseca: Yes, I do. The full episode is on YouTube. It's called "Lost and Found".

Cooper: Is it bizarre to see yourself so young?

Fonseca: Oh, yes. And I wonder how I ever had the heart to break up with Pamela Anderson.

(laughter)

Cooper: She still talks about it!

Fonseca: (*laughs*) Yeah!

Cooper: Did you guys put out a video, you and Pamela?

Fonseca: What's funny is that the week after we shot the episode, that video got quote-unquote "stolen." I literally got a call in my office, and they said, "You didn't happen to make off with the video?" And I'm like, "What are you talking about?" (*laughs*) They wouldn't be specific. And then of course, a day or two later, it was everywhere.

Cooper: Wow! I didn't know that you did that.

Fonseca: Yeah. It's my side job.

(laughter)

Cooper: That's really interesting. That's a good story right there.

Fonseca: Oh, yeah. Like I said, I've been forced into being in different places at the right time, or maybe the wrong time. But it's publicity.

Cooper: When you travel, do you travel with anyone?

Fonseca: Mainly my shadow.

Cooper: But he seems to disappear for an hour at noontime and at night.

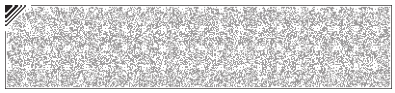
Fonseca: Exactly. But it does follow me on Twitter.

(laughter)

I usually travel by myself. Sometimes I'll travel with an opening guy that'll help me around. I don't drive, so if I'm in a city, usually I'll meet the openers in that city, but sometimes I take people with me from Colorado.

Cooper: Are you using a power chair?

Fonseca: No, I use a manual chair, just because a power chair would require, like, a van all the time, you know. It's hard enough to get cabs sometimes. I spend a lot of time arguing with cab drivers and making jokes. "Well, you need your wheelchair-accessible van." And I'm like, "No, I can transfer just fine. It's taking you longer to argue than it would just to throw the chair in the trunk and get me to the strip bar."





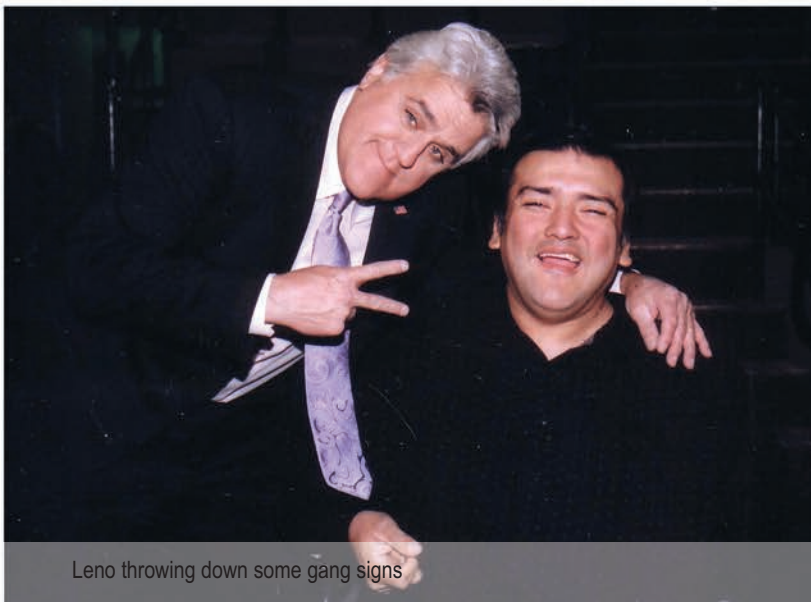
Hanging with an All-Star crew, oh, Tom Hanks too!



What? No tongue?!



Fonseca with the Smother brothers



Leno throwing down some gang signs

Cooper: If you argue that much, you should just record what you're going to say and play the tape back as they start.

Fonseca: Yeah, exactly. With cab drivers, the combination of ignorance and sometimes them using English as a second language, plus my speech impediment—that could be a reality show by itself (*laughs*).

Cooper: Are you using Uber or Lift?

Fonseca: I have used Uber, and I've been happy with it. It's a little difficult for me because with my cerebral palsy (CP), I have trouble with a touch screen, and Uber is also app-based. You can't call for an Uber. So you've got to do it from a smartphone, and to me a smartphone is just like playing golf. It's a bunch of frustration with little payoff.

Cooper: Have you used any apps or anything with smartphones that suggest there's better accessibility to them?

Fonseca: Actually, I'm working with a company out of Israel. They're developing software specifically for people with speech impediments. It'll learn your voice, and then it'll come back clear in a sort of robotic voice.

Cooper: That might open up a whole area for people from New Jersey to be able to use smartphones.

Fonseca: But never in Alabama. "Smart" just doesn't equate down there.

Cooper: (laughs) We've done a couple of stories on accessibility coming out of Israel. We just did one on the technology from that smartphone, which uses eye-based movement to control the phone.

Fonseca: Oh, really?

Cooper: Yeah, I think it was a young child who had CP who was using it.

Fonseca: Would that work with Tinder?

(laughter)

Cooper: For the kid, it was a tinderbox. It's called Sesame Enable

Fonseca: Oh, really? That's pretty cool.

Cooper: It's incredible technology.

Fonseca: That's awesome. By the way, did you know I'm currently writing my autobiography?

Cooper: No, that's pretty cool—it should be a good book.

Fonseca: Oh, yeah, I have funny stories about being a performer with a disability. I tend to meet people kind of by accident. I became friends with the guys in Kiss by accident, and over the years I seem to meet people. Back in the '80s, I was told I was performing at an Elks lodge convention. I got there, and it was actually a benefit for handicapped people, and the chairman of the event was President Carter. He and I are still friends to this day.

Cooper: When you say Kiss, are you talking about Gene Simmons?

Fonseca: Yes, Gene Simmons and all of his family. It's cool to run into people who I've been a fan of for years. I got to meet Stevie Wonder back in '98. I was part of an ABC special, a tribute to Christopher Reeve, when he was still with us.

Cooper: I was there that day, in the green room.

Fonseca: Oh, really? That was a show with Steve and Willie Nelson, an amazing night. I still keep in touch with most of those people. Amy Grant and her husband Vince Gill have been real good friends to me. My middle daughter is named after Amy.

By the way, I just connected with the guy from The Mendenhall Experiment. They're a metal band, but their lead guy has CP. Anyway, I just asked him in the past week if I could use their current single, which is called "Seize the Day", as my intro song. I'm trying to keep it all in the disability family, so to speak.

It kind of got me thinking that I'm ending up somehow meeting most of the big names with a disability, Marlee, Geri Jewell, and Stevie Wonder. With some people, it seems like we automatically know each other, as if we're always in the same big house.

(laughter)

I was in Vegas one time on the radio and we were taking calls, and someone said, "Hi, I had a friend named Greg who has cerebral palsy. Do you know him?" "Oh, yes, Greg!"

Cooper: (laughs) Do you remember us meeting at a Media Access Award?

Fonseca: I may have. I'll be perfectly honest. You might have read in my bio that I am now three-and-a-half years sober. The '90s and the early 2000s are kind of hazy.

Cooper: I've hung around Dan Keplinger. Because of the CP, he felt like there was something that was allowing him to drink more than other people. I've never quite understood that, but man, he could drink.

Fonseca: Yeah, it's kind of weird. That's how I felt. I was a legendary drinker. I'm not bragging. Part of it was because I was sitting down, so I wouldn't feel like most people do when they stand up to go to the bathroom or whatever. I was sitting down all the time.

Cooper: So at one point you could say, "Oops, I think I just fell down"?

Fonseca: Exactly. But I definitely feel better, and the career's back on the right track. Even though I was struggling for a while, there were other issues with the drinking. I'm glad that's all behind me.

Cooper: How did you figure out how to stop drinking? That's a major challenge.

Fonseca: For me, it was like a light bulb came on and I said, "If I don't stop now, it's going to stop me." Because towards the end of my drinking days, I was literally drinking from the time I woke up to the time I passed out. And part of it was the nightclub lifestyle. I won't blame it on that, but it certainly didn't help. I found that I was in Pittsburg for the week, and between Thursday and Sunday I was offered a drink 70 times. It's socially awkward to say no, because fans are like, "Here, let me buy you a shot, a beer. Have a drink with us." It became automatic. "OK, this one's on me." And before you know it, it's 3:00 in the morning.

Cooper: Not the easiest thing, especially if it was fun.

Fonseca: Oh, yeah, like being a rock star.

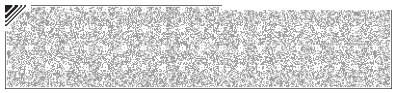
Cooper: It's great that you were able to quit.

Fonseca: I agree. It's definitely paying off in my career. I'm trying to get on late-night TV. It's really strange, because in the last couple of years, the landscape has really turned over. Leno's gone, Letterman's gone, Arsenio tried to make a comeback. I originally did not know any of these guys, but Adam Sandler is going to go to bat for me and introduce me to Jimmy Fallon.

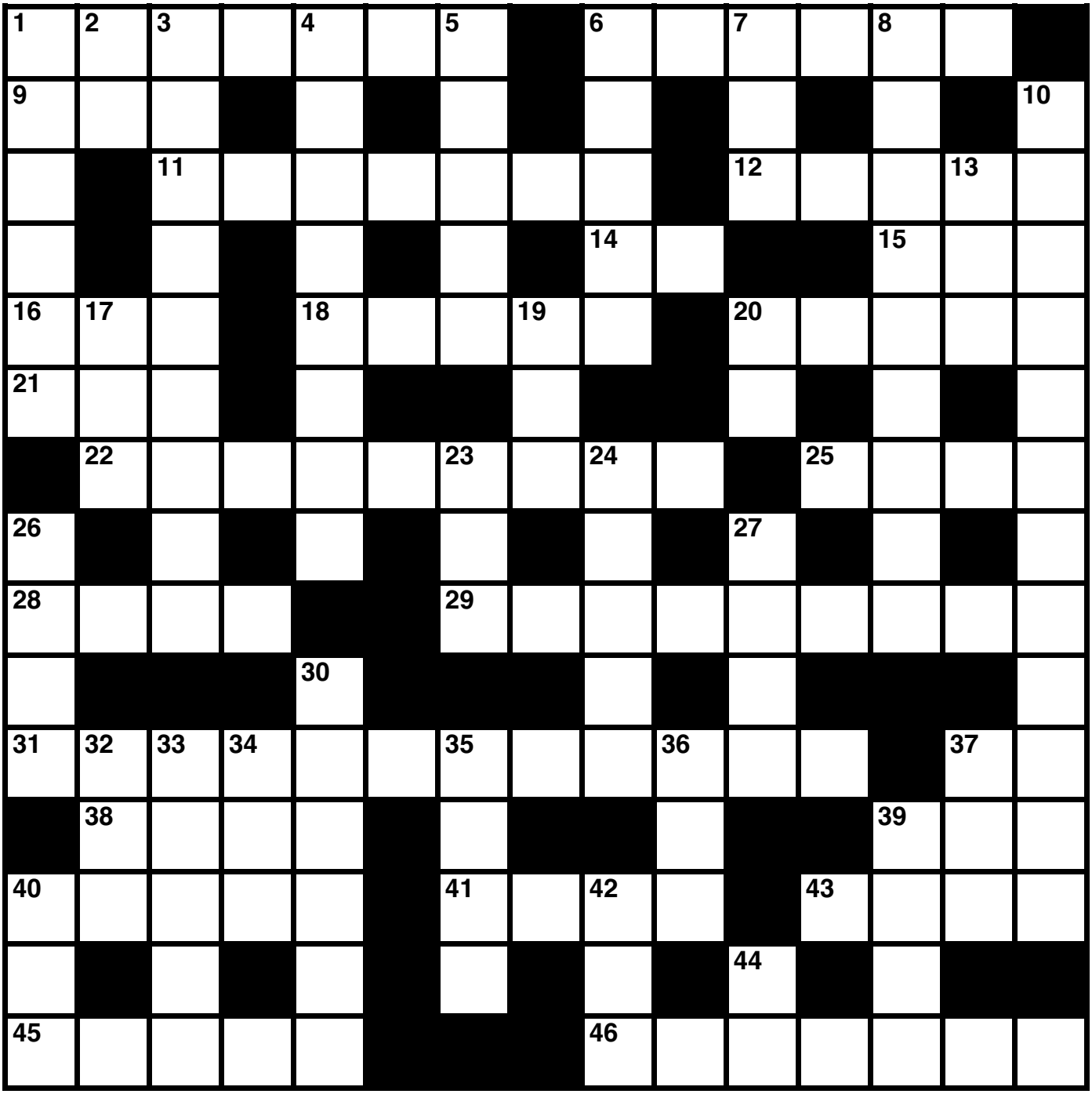
Cooper: We'll be watching

Fonseca: Yeah. ■ ABILITY

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ABILITY's



Crossword Puzzle

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The Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC) is a non-profit consortium devoted to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and dual-career couples.

ACROSS

1. Courage
6. Young actor playing the part of a child with cerebral palsy, a condition he has in real life, Micah _____
9. Naval rank
11. Disabled actress in a wheelchair who starred in "Glee," Ali _____
12. Parody
14. "__, myself and I" Beyonce
15. Coke's partner
16. Ambulance teams, for short
18. Shapes that come to a point
20. Desert plants
21. It comes before com or org
22. Respect for and fair treatment of people of all kinds
25. Cruise ship stopover
28. Lost in wonder
29. Tennis club that started including wheelchair tennis in 2016
31. Equine assisted treatment to improve muscle tone speech and other functions
37. Will.i.__
38. Tower over
39. Mendacity
40. Celebrity artist, Chuck ___, who continued to paint even when paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair
41. Extends
43. One of the most successul Paralympic atheletes of all time, Trischa ____ (born blind)
45. Overly sentimental
46. First name of an iconic heroic Tom Hanks character

DOWN

1. Smiled really wide
2. Nurse, abbr.
3. Describing technologies that help people with disabilities
4. Made better
5. Mount Logan territory
6. Companies
7. Jazz great Montgomery
8. Got rid of a demon
10. Film featuring a mentally disabled character, Lennie Small played by John Malkovich
13. Passé
17. Aaron Spelling show "The ___ Squad"
19. "The Book of __": 2010 Denzel Washington film
20. Golden state
23. Hem
24. Stopwatch
26. Johnny in black
27. Applaud
30. Tina Fey genre
32. Unfavorably
33. Swimming areas
34. The P in GPS, abbr,
35. The Incredible one saved a lot of people
36. Business promotions
37. Publicize
39. Like the Ranger?
40. QB Newton
42. Mischievous fairy
44. Portland's state, abbr.

answers on page 64

SEE BETTER AT ANY AGE

AUTHOR
- The Miracle of Pi in Eye
- LASIK in the 21st Century
- Cure for Keratoconus

VOTED BEST
- Newsweek Showcase Top Doctor
- LA Daily News Readers
- VC Star Readers
- Consumer Research Council

DOCTOR'S DOCTOR
- Surgeons & Physicians
- Chiropractors & Dentists

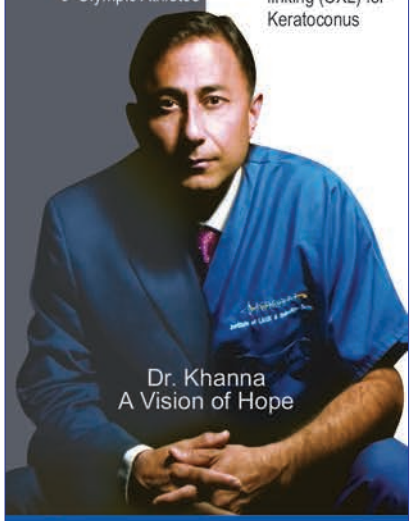
SURGEON TO STARS
- Actors & Celebrities
- Olympic Athletes

FOR PATIENTS 18-45
- Thin Flap Lasik
- ICL

FOR PATIENTS 45-65
- Superlasik
- Pi in Eye

FOR PATIENTS ABOVE 65
- Pi in Eye
- Laser Cataract Surgery

OTHER THAN LASIK
- Pterygium
- Intacs & Cross-linking (CXL) for Keratoconus

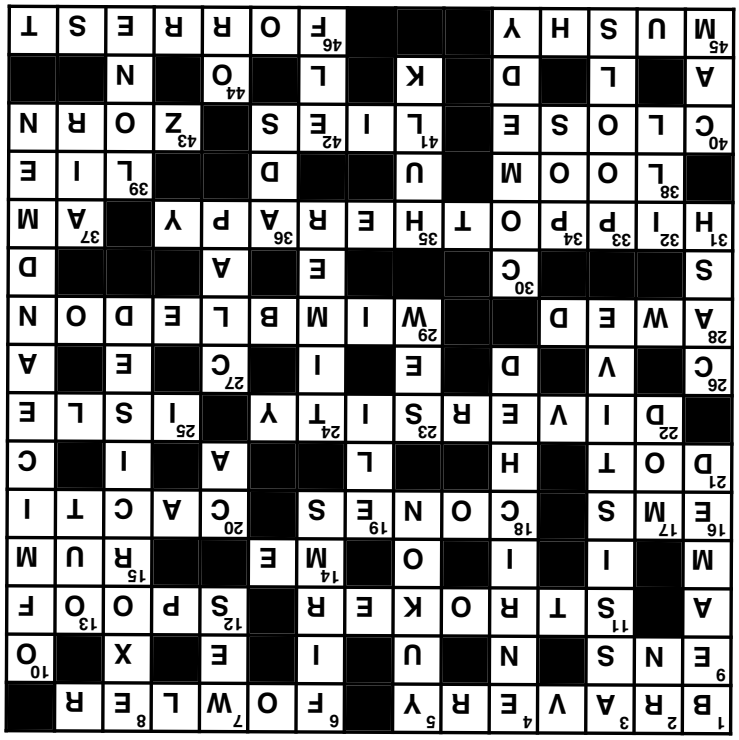


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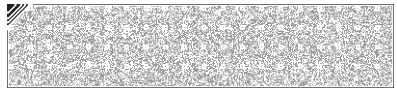
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More information: **riworldcongress.com**

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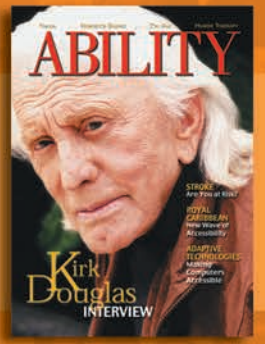
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