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Editorial pages have VOICEYE codes for a new level of content access - Enjoy

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### iOS

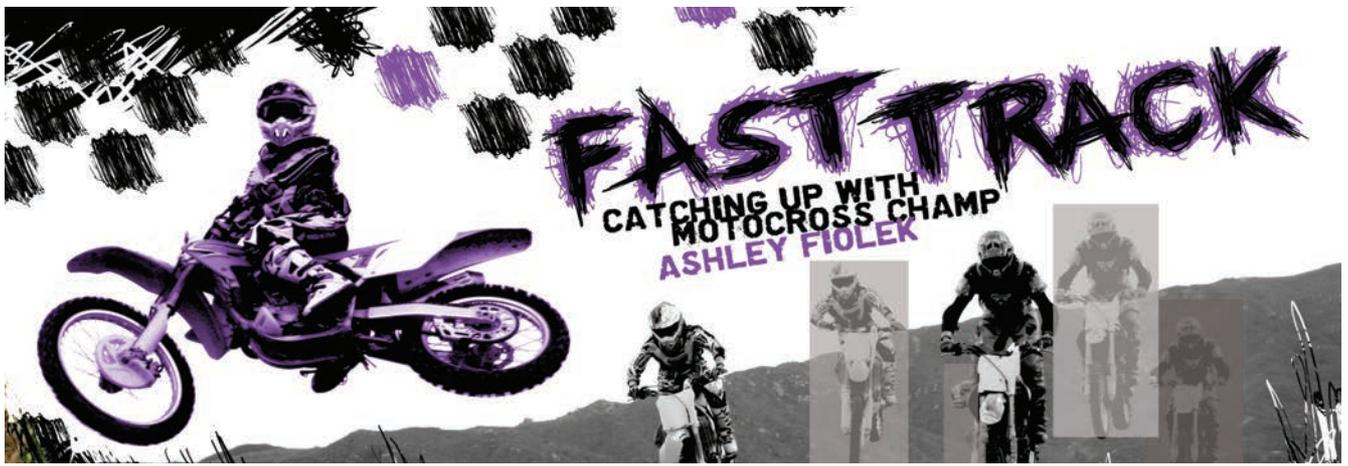
- To hear the text, turn on Voiceover. Using two fingers, swipe down, from top to bottom of the screen.
- To get text in large font, press the "+" button, and to decrease font press the "-" button.
- For High Contrast modes, press the button with four colored squares.
- To access the 58 Language Translator, move to the next bar by pressing the button with three dots. Select the first box, with the letter "A". To translate into another language, select the language button to the right, choose your language of preference, press done, then hit the "Translate" button on the bottom left of the screen.



### Android

- To hear the text, press your phone's "Option" button, then select "Start TTS"
- To get text in large font, under the "Setting" selection, press the "+" button, and to decrease font press the "-" button.
- 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.





ate last summer, my mom and I planned a mother/daughter trip to Northern California to go wine tasting in Napa. But as the day to leave drew closer, we kept a close eye on the weather reports about Hurricane Irma.

It came right down to the wire: The Category 5 storm wasn't hitting on the day we were scheduled to fly out, but they predicted that our airport would be shut down the following day due to hurricane winds! Even at that point, they still weren't sure which coast of Florida would be affected, or if it would even hit us at all!

As the hurricane barreled its way through the Caribbean with 100-plus mile-per-hour winds, doing serious damage and killing 134 people in its wake, we were really undecided about leaving our family to cope with such a scary forecast, but also didn't want to miss the trip, especially if it turned out that the hurricane blew right past us! As we all know, weather reports can change on a dime.

At the last minute we decided to go forward with our plans, and as we headed the to the Orlando airport, we saw that the northbound lanes of 95 were almost at a standstill as people evacuated. Again we wondered if we'd made the right decision.

We got on the road early, choosing to stay in a hotel the night before because the next morning we had a super early flight. As we got to bed, we kept watching the news, and it didn't look good. But my dad kept reassuring us that he and my little brother would be okay no matter what, and that they had plenty of supplies to get them through it: The generator was gassed up, and the motorhome had reserve water in the case of emergency.

The next day, the airport was crazy as everyone was trying to fly out! People wanted to buy our tickets, but we had made up our minds that we were Napa bound. We had a good flight out and landed safely in California. The Orlando airport wound up closing that very same day, because the winds had gotten so bad, so we made it out just in time.

While everyone in Florida was bracing for the hurricane, my mom and I drove to San Francisco to spend a few

hours at Fisherman's Wharf and check out a couple tourist spots.

The following morning, we headed up to wine country with a list of all the places we wanted to visit. While it was enjoyable, it was always in the back of our minds that Irma was not to be trusted, so we kept checking in with everyone.

By that night, my mom received a notice on her phone that our flight home Monday morning had already been canceled. Irma was on track to strike Miami, or possibly drive right up the middle of the state, so airports throughout the state closed just in case.

I began to panic, but my mom said not to worry! She and my father, who've lived in Florida since 1998, have gotten used to hurricanes. But I have never really been in Florida during one of those powerful storms.

Though my mom tried to rebook our flight to Orlando for Tuesday, the only options were for Thursday. She finally got us on a flight to Jacksonville scheduled for Tuesday, but the problem was that our car was still down in Orlando!

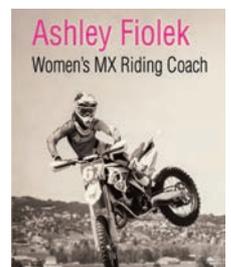
The hurricane did hit and caused some leaks in our roof. Meanwhile, my mom and I landed safely, but then had to drive over two hours to pick up her car.

My dad fixed the roof, but then there was an electrical outage in our neighborhood, so we went a week without power, which was no fun, but at least we were all okay—just as my dad had predicted.

Maybe I'll catch the next hurricane, or maybe I'll be out and about again as my new Huskies have arrived! They're so much fun to ride.

Hope to see you all out at the tracks. But wherever you are, stay safe!

■ ABILITY



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Every night, I'm plagued by the same question, what am I going to make for dinner? When you live alone, cooking for one is not so enticing. If someone makes you a meal, you can taste the love in the preparation. When I'm just cooking for myself, I know there's no love in it. Sometimes, I don't even know what's in it. I just slop things together and hope for a winner.

It's the same routine every night. Around six o'clock I meander in the kitchen and look in the cabinets, and then the refrigerator for something to whip up. I realize the ordeal is going to take close to an hour, even if I just stick a frozen dinner in the oven. I'm always slightly hungry, so I snack on something like cheese and crackers. It never fails, after that, I'm not hungry for any dinner. Then I go watch tv for an hour, hoping that my appetite will return and give me some time to think about what I want for dinner. Maybe I'll see a soup commercial and be like, "Oh wow, I didn't even think of that." That's easy. I won't even have to chop anything. Hell, I don't even have to open the fridge.

As I contemplate what's for dinner, an hour morphs into two hours and my mind goes back-and-forth between, "Are you really hungry" and then "Yeah I'm kinda hungry." But, I know if I don't eat dinner I'll be really hungry later and eventually I'll still have to whip something up. I think deep down I'm hoping a friend will stop by with a pizza—which happened the other night. The problem was, he was one of those friends who's boring and talks a lot and then doesn't leave when they're done eating. Six or seven times I said, "Well, this was fun.

We gotta do this more often," as I moved close the front door. He just sat at the table throwing out some future dates in the next week that would work for him. I told him, "We'll see, I usually like to make a nice home cooked meal and enjoy that." He fired back, "Ah dude, I love home cooked meals. Let's do that tomorrow." I acted like my shoulder hurt and told him, "We'll see how my arm feels in the morning." He finally left around midnight, after I came back into the room while brushing my teeth. I should've just whipped up something to eat and not answered the door. Oh well, at least he didn't charge me for half the pizza. I would've had to fake another shoulder injury reaching for my wallet.

Some people like to cook. I don't. If I spend time creating something, I want people to admire it for years to come, like a sculpture, or painting, or a fruitcake. But, I think even the people who like to cook don't like to just cook for themselves. I'll guarantee they're cutting corners to speed up the process. That's the good thing about eating alone, everything doesn't have to be perfect. You don't have to take time and cut up your meat, just pick it up by your hands and eat it. Nobody's watching. You just need to make sure it doesn't become a habit; the next thing you know, you're out dining in a fine establishment and all eyes are on you, watching, while your mitts cling to a slab of corned beef as you gnaw on it. Then some stuffy lady huffs, "I do declare. Did the baboon escape from the zoo?" right before she faints.

I never plan out my meals, but I should. It would make life easier. But, there's always been some demon inside



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me that likes to do things the hard way. Even if I do decide to make something simple, like pull out a left-over meal from the freezer and toss it in the microwave, it's still a pain-in-the-ass. I don't know if I'm just not a dinner man or I'm lazy. I like going out to dinner or having someone cook for me, so I think the evidence is overwhelming that I must be lazy. Case and point, I even find it exhausting to look up a restaurant's phone number and order take-out. Oh my God, and then I have to go all the way to the front door and open it.

A well-balanced meal is supposed to have a meat, a starch, and vegetables, but sometimes I cheat a little to speed things up. My “go to” meal is a hot dog on a roll and raw carrots on the side. I got the meat (hot dog), I got the starch (roll), and the vegetable (carrots). This takes about 3 minutes and twenty-six seconds from getting the stuff out of the refrigerator, to microwaving, to putting relish and ketchup on the dog. That's not bad. I can live with that, maybe not long, but, at least it wasn't time consuming or messy enough to clean up, which is always in the back of my mind.

Perhaps the biggest thing about cooking just for yourself is the clean-up. After putting the time into preparing some dish, and quickly gobbling it down, you're now looking at all these dirty bowls and plates and asking yourself if the meal was worth it. A five-minute dinner is going to cost you an hour in clean up. I don't need

that. I'd much rather spend my time reading (by reading, I mean the TV Guide to see what's on HBO that night). Besides, after you finally wash all the pots, pans, and dishes, then put everything away, guess what? You're now hungry again. When does it end?

I didn't get many trick-or-treaters this year, which means I have a bunch of leftover candy. I see it sitting on the counter and I think... now there's an easy dinner I can sink my teeth into. The Kit Kat bar could be the meat, the Reece's Cup will be the starch, and the M&M's could be the vegetables. Plus, the only clean up would be throwing away the wrappers. Also, it beats scouring.

I dread having to deal with this dinner dilemma every night. What to make? How hungry am I? How messy is it going to be? I could see me getting married for the sole purpose of having someone to make me dinners. Even if I didn't like talking to the girl or kissing her, if she told me she makes dinners I'd say, “Here's your ring.” And when the priest asks the gibberish about loving in sickness and health, yada, yada, yada, I'd lean over and whisper, “Hey Father, can you put something in there about making dinners?”

Well, now it's about dinner time. Any ideas? I feel like making something nice. I'm going to make a nice call to Dominos. ■ ABILITY



by Jeff Charlebois





## Bold. Brazen. Bankrupt.

We're living in a world where people who previously breezed by in the shadows, and at other times boldly marched the red carpet, are being revealed for who they truly are: morally bankrupt individuals.

Whether drugging women, molesting children, or otherwise harming others from their pedestal of power and prestige, they're now being outed by more and more accusers who bravely step forward to reveal their truths. These predatory conditions have always been a part of our society, but the instant nature of the information age has thrown the matter onto the hot seat of public display.

In spite of the number of accusers who have come forward, I suspect that some of those engaging in the behavior, who haven't been caught yet, will arrogantly continue to take their chances, which is horrible and distressing.

As they come to the surface, all of these breaches of trust—known and unknown—harm us in one way or another. This is why we must be extremely careful about how we respond. Rather than ricochet from headline to headline, we need to navigate the process in a way that we learn from it, and yet avoid becoming totally consumed by it.

I am by no means denying the disgust that we naturally feel, but suggest that after we honestly acknowledge the ugliness, that we take the steps to fight against it in the future, and continue to embrace joy.

Remember what Martin Luther King, Jr. said: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that." King was correct, and his wisdom also applies to tending to our individual pilot lights, which we can never allow to burn out, even as those who come forward to report these crimes, and those protest against them, whether massing in the street, or taking to social media to express their feelings, also face no shortness of criticism.

As I write about this, I feel deep stirrings of its affects on me, too. This year has been, without question, the most painful and challenging of my life. Surviving it, and learning to adjust my wings and sails to the enormous ever-changing winds, is a testament to my own ability to keep my little boat afloat, even when the wind of moral bankruptcy has tossed

me around like a tiny boat upon the ocean.

I have faced anger and feelings of mistrust to the point that even my belief in a higher power has gotten shaken up from time to time. However, by acknowledging my own experience, I can make peace with the reality of it, and find some calm in the storm each morning by breathing and making conscious choices to love life and move forward.

We all do this in different ways. Sometimes I see messages on social media like: "The worst feeling in the world is being used and lied to" or "Such a disappointment when you defend someone for so long, thinking they are different, and they turn out to be just like everyone said."

People share these feelings publically for many reasons. Sometimes they seek to create empathy for our pain, cathartic healing, or even to communicate to the actual person they perceive as causing the pain. These posts are usually followed by: Agree and share.

While I do support their self-expression, I rarely share these posts because they put the painful energy on display. I do usually acknowledge them, though, by sending a virtual hug or love, as a way to remind the person and myself that—if no laws were broken—it's best to forgive and let go, otherwise we get so caught up in our rage that it becomes our "fuel to exist" rather than our "light to live." The effect of that is to give the person in the situation the power to continue to snuff out our spiritual pilot lights.

Sometimes there's a fine line between the two energy fields of giving a voice to our pain, and soldiering on. We must stay aware of how we feel to keep ourselves balanced as we ease through the chaos and continue on our journey.

The best defense against those who would do us harm is to love and respect ourselves, to be there when others need us, and to consciously make choices that support the highest good of all with a sense of gratitude for life. If we can embrace our blessings daily, especially during the most challenging times, we will prevail and show others what is possible, which can have a ripple effect of global proportions. ■ ABILITY

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by Geri Jewell

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## ***LIFE IN THE TRAVEL LANE***

**B**y the time you read this column, my “new” Yamaha Super Ténéré will have 100,000 miles on the clock, and 80,000 of them accrued in 2017. That averages out to 220 miles *every single day of the year*. It has certainly been a year of living in the travel lane for me. I shared my story and hopefully inspired a few people living with multiple sclerosis (MS) all the way from January 8th in frigid Newry, Maine, to December 15th in sunny Tampa, Florida. I rode to all 28 MS events this year and crossed the entire country six times!

I was also invited to speak or present at various motorcycle events and trade shows and at the Vintage Festival at the Barber Motorsports Museum. My audience on YouTube and Facebook continues to grow as I try to improve my posts and videos from the road. Next year should be exciting: a new bike is coming soon, and I’ll

travel a designated route to Yamaha dealers to hang out and meet local riders, talk about the bike and share my MS journey. Look for updates on my website ([longhaulpaul.com](http://longhaulpaul.com)), because I may be riding to a bike shop near you!

This year (2017) wasn’t trouble free; I certainly hit a few potholes. One of the companies I used to speak for is no longer using patients at their programs, so opportunities for me to speak were cut in half. These events provide the miles I log for MS as well as compensation, so it was both a financial and a mileage loss. A sponsor who assured me would be a sure bet turned out to drop the ball and back out, leaving me without funding for some of my planned rides this coming year. My savings are dwindling, home improvements are being neglected and my ability to continue to afford this ride are in question. I’ve spent more days and nights away from



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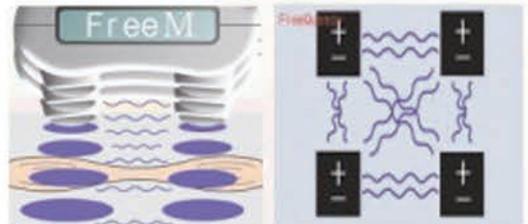
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home this year, which has also been hard on my marriage. I am amazed that my wife continues to support my journey. She is a saint!

The hours of high speeds, long days in the saddle, long weeks on the road, and years of long distance riding are all taking a toll on my body—from a scratchy throat that never clears up caused by fumes and rubber irritants on the highways to sore wrists and arms from repetitive motions. My shoulders, neck, back, knees and butt all suffer from continual 15-hour days on a vibrating machine. My kidneys are spitting out stones like a jammed gumball machine, and my optometrist claims I have the driest eyes she has ever seen. My bladder causes me more problems than I care to explain. Eating well while traveling is a constant struggle between what I can carry from home and what I can find cheap or fast. I often skip meals and find it hard to

keep hydrated when the temperature makes it difficult to open my face shield. Exercising as a regular routine is almost impossible, and my physique is showing evidence of that. Sure, life on the road is new and exciting, but it is also challenging and hard.

Thankfully my MS symptoms have been kept in check, no doubt to the disease-modifying medication I have been taking for 12 years, and my drive to continue riding until my million-mile goal is met. My symptoms only seem to bother me when I stop. Therefore, I need to hit the travel lane once again, riding, reaching out and raising a little hell along my journey, Chasing the Cure for Multiple Sclerosis.

See you down the road. ■ **ABILITY**

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# 陆向东 李纪元 奔跑吧, “蓝睛灵”

陆向东 李纪元

夫妻二人长居上海, 2015年发起“做你的眼睛”视障陪跑活动, 致力于推动运动无障碍。目前已经汇集上海及周边等地的视障跑者, 举办超过100期活动。

文\_本刊记者 张西蒙  
图\_受访者提供

2017年6月, 在“做你的眼睛”参与的一场少儿马拉松里, 这些来自盲校的视力障碍孩子们迎来了一位重量级的陪跑员: 刘翔。在他的带领下, 盲校的孩子接连冲过终点, 切身感受到了奔跑的力量。

“在大部分家长蜂拥在起跑线为自己的宝贝拍照的时候, 一个视障参赛儿童的盲人父亲默默在终点线挤到

一个绝佳位置, 全神贯注地用耳朵期待孩子冲线那一刻。”

向东将这条暖心的朋友圈截图、转发, 给妻子纪元看。纪元会心一笑: “视力障碍群体可以自由自在地跑步, 这在以前想都不敢想, 能让视力障碍者无障碍地参与运动, 正是我和向东创办‘做你的眼睛’的初衷。”

“做你的眼睛”

“视力障碍人士也能跑步吗? 对于大部分视障人士, 出行都是个问题, 他们是如何做到运动无障碍的?” 曾经关于盲人能不能跑步的讨论, 甚嚣尘上。

在2012年12月的上海马拉松赛场上, 纪元看到来自





Do you remember the moments in your life that shaped the person you are today? Where is your drive derived from? Andrea Lee felt a little like that.

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香港的两位跑者，一名背后写着“视障”，另一名背后写着“听障”。“两个人相互陪伴着跑完了全程，这一幕震撼了在场的所有人。”也引发了纪元想做一名陪跑员的愿望。

类似的场景向东见得更早，因为夫妻俩同是运动发烧友，曾多次参与国内外的马拉松、铁人三项赛事。在被称为“世界六大马拉松”之一的伦敦马拉松上，有一个特殊的报名版块：慈善。作为一场参与者达到38000多人，主打公益慈善的马拉松赛事，从跑者到现场的工作人员，频见身体障碍人士的身影。向东代表一家专业于先天性视力障碍儿童的公益机构参赛，“那是我的第一个全程马拉松。”

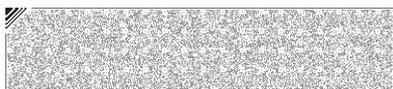
“偌大的上海，我从没见过本地的视障跑者，也没有找到任何关于陪跑活动的组织。如果我想做陪跑员，

可以联系谁？如果谁都联系不到，我可以做什么？”这些问题一直萦绕在纪元和向东心里。

2015年年初，两人在一次公益骑行活动中，纪元向小伙伴提出了“视障陪跑”的设想，没想到一拍即合。有人负责寻找视障跑者，有人帮忙招募陪跑志愿者。多方努力下，由纪元等人发起的第一场陪跑活动在世纪公园开跑。

向东和纪元为了首场活动尽心尽力，原本抱着试试看的心态，没想到来参加活动的朋友比他们想象的还要多，每个人都热情高涨，视障者是第一次感受跑步的魅力，健全人则是第一次和视障者一起跑步。

“当看到大家脸上洋溢着的笑容，感受到从未有过的运动体验，那一刻我们便下定决心要把这个活动延续





下去。”向东半开玩笑地说：“转眼摸爬滚打着完成了100期活动，在这两年里我和纪元‘顺便’谈了恋爱，‘顺便’结了婚，‘顺便’生了孩子。”因为对于他们二人来说，大部分精力用于让“蓝睛灵”顺利成长，留给自己的时间实在太少太少。

### 可爱的“蓝睛灵”

“因为我们的标志主基色是蓝色，象征着自由、平等，大家都像精灵一样自由、奔跑，‘睛’又体现出我们的特点，所以就叫‘蓝睛灵’。”来组织的伙伴们，不管是健全人还是视障者、不管是跑者还是陪跑员，大家亲切地称彼此为“蓝睛灵”。

今年34岁的陈晓斌是元老级的“蓝睛灵”。2014年，一位来自台湾同样是视力障碍的歌唱老师告诉晓斌，要回台湾去参加一场跑步活动。“他的话一下勾起了我的兴趣。”晓斌说，因为先天性的青光眼，从小就有视力障碍的他几乎不参加任何运动，身体素质也一天不如一天，内心对运动充满了向往。

从盲校同班同学口中得知纪元和向东要举办一场“能让盲人参与的跑步活动”时，晓斌下定决心“不管怎样我一定要去试试。”

让他没想到的是，这一试就是两年多。现在的他，成为“做你的眼睛”里一名专业的培训师，教视障朋友成为合格的跑者，教健视朋友做一个称职的陪跑员。

尽管晓斌还是无法参与大活动量的剧烈运动，但是慢长跑他游刃有余，“和以前比，我就和脱胎换骨似的。”晓斌说，在“做你的眼睛”中他交到了许许多多朋友，被鼓励过，也鼓励过别人，从以前不怎么出门到现在每天打卡上班，最根本的变化不是身体上

的，而是心灵。

比晓斌晚些加入的狄雪慧，是盲人跑者里的佼佼者，她曾在北京鸟巢半程马拉松超过许多健视选手，取得了不错的成绩，目前在“做你的眼睛”里负责各类常规活动的培训与协调。随着“做你的眼睛”活动越办越好、名气越来越大，视障人士的圈子里大家口口相传，更多的人加入了进来。一名叫季祥州的盲人按摩师，辞去了江苏的工作，搬到了上海，就是为了方便参加每周的活动。

“陪跑有难度，入队需谨慎。”

“陪跑有难度，入队需谨慎。”尽管向东一直告诫，仍不断有跑者加入志愿陪跑的队伍。这些跑者们来自五湖四海，医生、工人、白领、学生，各行各业都有，其中最大的已经退休，最小的刚上高中。

事实上比视障跑者付出更多的，是能看得见的陪跑员们。向东和纪元为了让每次的跑步更安全，学习国际上的陪跑经验，通过这几年的摸索实践总结出来了一套严格的规范。这也就使得“随便谁都能陪跑”可能引发的各种不良后果降到最低。

想成为陪跑员必须先有正确陪跑的理念，他们在第一次参与活动的时候，都需要经过培训与学习，必须戴着眼罩跑一圈，亲身体会“在黑暗中跑步”，然后在实际操作过一定数量的场次后，通过笔试和路考，才将会成为一名合格的陪跑员，考核出来之后也不是一劳永逸，而是需要不断陪跑，不断更新技能。向东说，这是为了保证视障朋友和陪跑员的安全，同时传递更先进的陪跑理念。

红姐是“蓝睛灵”里的“老大姐”，即便已经60多



# START



2017  
耐克少儿跑  
NIKE KIDS RUN

# START



岁，仍保持着无限的活力和热情，和她年纪差不多的宝叔，到现在仍坚持每天晨跑，很多年轻人在两位年过六旬的跑者面前自愧不如。红姐和宝叔都是合格的陪跑员，也较早加入“做你的眼睛”，“每当我们举办各种活动，他们都特别积极，即便没有任何人要求，他们也会主动来帮忙。”纪元说，正是因为有许多像红姐和宝叔这样的热心人，活动才能一期一期组织下来。

向东说，大家在一起跑步、交流，时间久了，除去视障跑者和陪跑员的身份，更像是一家人，“有时把大家牵连在一起的，不仅仅是一根陪跑绳。”

### 视障跑步，门道很多

“一般人估计难以想象盲人怎么去跑步，即便听说过，大多也就觉得一个人带着跑就行了。”向东说：“其实这里面的门道多着呢，光陪跑绳我们就换了至少四代。”

为了让视障跑者跑得更放心，让每次跑步活动走上正轨，向东和纪元查阅了大量国内外资料，并且向香港、台湾的专业跑者请教。“最初的陪跑绳是纪元亲手编织的。”后来则是由一些志愿者赞助，一代一代调整之后，现在湛蓝色的陪跑绳，成了“做你的眼睛”的标志物。

“跑步时候的配速、呼吸、节奏，我们都是经过培训的。”狄雪慧说，从一开始战战兢兢地小跑，到后来完成半程马拉松甚至全程马拉松，很多视障跑者在这个过程中能超过赛道上的其他跑者。向东特别提出，在正规的大型赛事里，一名视障跑者的陪跑员标准配置应当是3人，一名陪跑员、一名伴跑员、一名领跑员。“在比赛过程中，领跑员充当开路的角色，而陪

跑员直接拿陪跑绳，及时和视障伙伴沟通路况，伴跑员在另一边协助拿饮品，防止有人冲撞进来，万一有特殊情况发生，可以和陪跑员替换。”

北京马拉松、上海马拉松……近三年来，“蓝睛灵”们参加了大大小小多场赛事，常规的体验式公益活动每周都会举办，期间不断有人加入进来，有的人会留下来成为陪跑员，一起参与活动组织，有的人虽然不再来参加活动，但是心里会存有这样一份意识。“我们其实想让更多的人意识到，有这样一个视障群体，就生活在我们身边，能在参与者心里，建立平等的意识，和无障碍的理念。”向东说，只要来参加过了，有了这样的意识，并且大家可以把这个意识传递出去，我们做的就有意义。

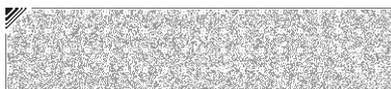
“并不是让大家热衷于关注视障群体，而是自然而然地面对，如果在街上看到了，不感到这是一个奇怪的事情，在视障伙伴遇到麻烦时，比如说过马路、坐地铁，能用正确的方式，提供力所能及的帮助，这样就很好。”纪元笑着说。

“这几年大家的变化都很大。有人从只能跑一两百米，到能跑全程马拉松；有人从一个害羞的人，到虽然声音颤抖但很有勇气地在人群面前讲述陪跑知识；还有一位视障男孩和他的陪跑员在最近结为伴侣，看着他们蜜月旅行时发来的笑容，就让人觉得幸福。”纪元和向东说，“我们也许改变不了这个世界，但是愿陪着‘蓝睛灵’们，一直跑下去。”

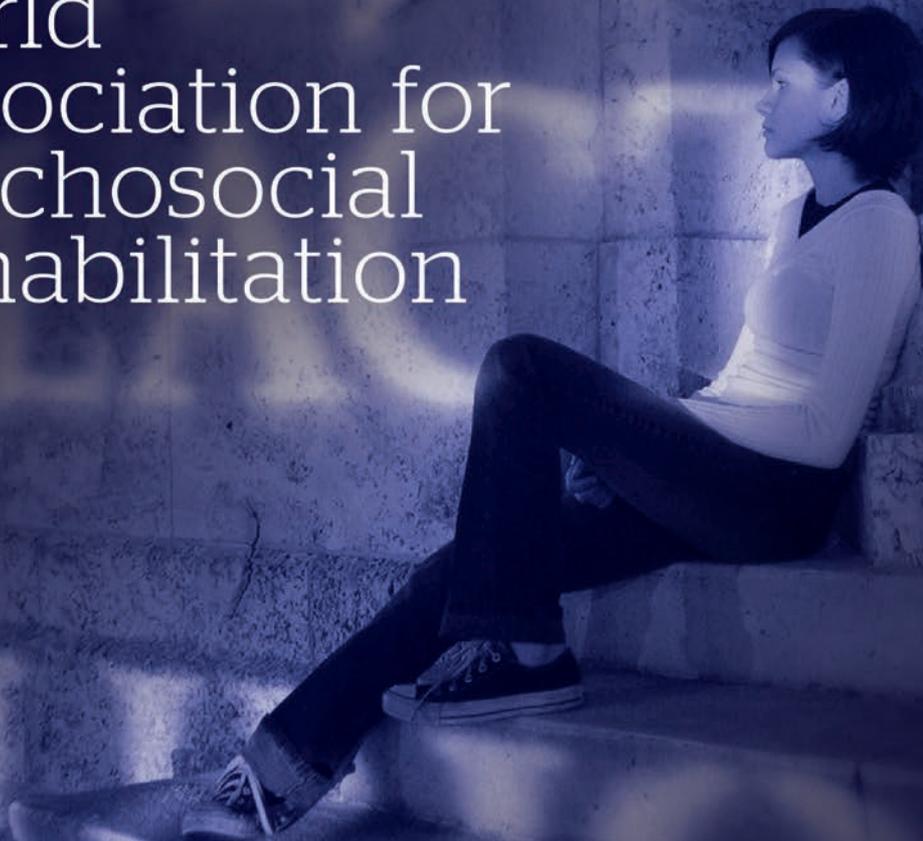
■ ABILITY



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



# World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation



Around the world there are vastly different ways people who are disabled due to mental disorders receive treatment. At worst, they're removed from their families and institutionalized in psychiatric hospitals, given sub-par treatment and alienated from society. But the World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation (WAPR), an international non-governmental agency, is working diligently to educate countries and practitioners around the globe about a more integrative, humane approach.

Psychosocial rehabilitation is a process that facilitates the opportunity for those with long-term mental disorders to reach their highest level of functioning within the community. In other words, it's personalized treatment focusing on helping individuals develop skills and access the resources needed to live meaningful lives. Recently, *ABILITY* spoke via SKYPE with WAPR's president, Ricardo Guinea, MD, who is based in Spain, about the organization's mission, successes and challenges.

*Chet Cooper: Can you give us some background on WAPR, when it started and its mission?*

Dr. Ricardo Guinea: Yes. It's a professional organization that was created in the last decade of the last century by a group of psychiatrists, psychologists and other mental health professionals. We are interested in improving the psychosocial rehabilitation of people

who are disabled due to a mental illness. The approach is very community-based. I realize the term "mental illness" can be controversial for some groups, but this is, I think, the clearest way to state it.

We've been working for the last 30 years trying to improve treatment options. We have a declaration that states what we define as proper attention and care. It is in our founding document, which is on our website, and states that it should be a good treatment with all kinds of social support for the person that includes family and the wider community. To accomplish this in various countries, it requires a lot of intervention in terms of politics, improving facilities and training professionals. Of course, we are advocating a community-based approach as opposed to an institutional approach. We think people should receive the best support possible in an environment with his or her family, and that offers all kinds of social support, access to work, and so on.

We need to change the philosophy of how help is provided for people affected by mental illnesses. When we started, institutionalized treatment was the most common approach. In many parts of the world, it is still the norm—someone receiving treatment will likely be put inside a hospital and might receive good or maybe not-so-good treatment. So the philosophy we try to spread is, "Okay, colleagues, we have to change this perspective. We have to provide patients with the best possible



treatment in their homes, and we have to think beyond just providing treatment, but helping patients access work and so forth.”

*Cooper: How do you promote this approach internationally?*

Guinea: We don't receive a lot of support. We are not a wealthy organization, so our main tool is to offer training wherever needed. Sometimes it involves participating in mental health conferences for professionals. Sometimes we collaborate with organizations to provide training in both developed and developing countries. We try to provide training everywhere. In developed countries our main tool, for instance, is our World Congress. We have a World Congress every three years, but between congresses we have a lot of small, local and regional conferences, where we can explain our philosophy. Slowly, I think, this philosophy is being accepted more and more everywhere.

*Cooper: So when you talk about training, do you have best practices? Do you have examples of the differences between the conventional, old-school methods compared to what WAPR advocates?*

Guinea: Yes, of course. We have all kinds of things we consider good practices, but what can be considered good practice varies a lot depending upon the country. In a developed country, for instance, good practices a couple of years ago could be, “We should try to reduce the number of long-term beds in psychiatric hospitals. We don't like psychiatric hospitals. We want to offer different types of treatment.” But in middle-developing countries where mental health is receiving very, very little attention from the states' health and social ministries, we try to push by saying, “Okay, your government needs to offer a network of services for the people.” For example, one big success over the last few years is Peru.

Four years ago we toured Latin America, and in Peru we succeeded in connecting with some key professionals at the right time. They began to push for full psychiatric reform. When we first went there, there were only old-fashioned psychiatric hospitals in the middle of big cities. This was the normal situation in many, many countries in the world. But then, they understood this philosophy, and they said, “You are right. We will begin with psychiatric reform.” They opened a lot of community centers in many different places around the country, not only in the big cities, but also in accessible areas where people could go frequently to receive support, advice and medication when necessary. This is an example of what we do.

*Cooper: So the idea is to replace hospitals with community centers that allow people to receive treatment but live on their own or with their families?*

Guinea: Yes, but in Peru, for instance, the success involved a very complex strategy. They have trained hundreds of professionals in this new approach. By

professionals, I mean psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists and even teachers. And instead of people going to these old-fashioned mental hospitals in the middle of the cities for treatment, they go to a community center in their neighborhood. Individuals and their families should go there to receive advice about treatment and support. This should be a good practice, for instance.

*Cooper: Right, but do you also address human rights?*

Guinea: Yes. In other places, for instance, we talk about the importance of human rights. There are still many broken places in the world where there is no possibility of support or advice if you suffer from a mental illness. So the only possibility is to have very, very, very bad institutional treatment, which is not actually treatment. This is the old-fashioned way. They put patients inside an institution who receive no treatment. So in these kinds of places, we try to educate the policymakers by saying, “You should spend some money to help people with these kinds of problems, and furthermore, the way you are treating people in these very bad places is against the Declaration of Human Rights.”

*Cooper: In Peru, were they able to find the funding to support community centers and train staff?*

Guinea: Well, yes. In this particular situation, in Peru, for instance, the funding for training came from European foundations.

So European foundations, for instance, paid for professionals from Peru to come to Europe and see with their own eyes how things are done here in Spain. And also some specialists have gone to Peru to teach hundreds of professionals in the new model. And now, the university is becoming more interested in this approach, so some degrees and master's degrees are beginning to be implemented there for the activity. And of no less importance, the government is beginning to pay for new professionals out of the mental hospitals. So it is a combination of things.

*Cooper: Very nice. What is the biggest struggle your organization is facing now?*

Guinea: Well, as an organization, one struggle we have to face is our very limited resources. We do not receive any money from the medical industry. And we fund ourselves from our conferences when there is some kind of surplus, from the dues from members. And sometimes we've found partners for particular projects. The financial struggle is ongoing.

Another struggle we face is that it's very slow and difficult to implement this kind of transformation. We've been working at it for 30 years. I am the 13th president of our organization. Things are better in some areas, slightly better in others, and we are aware that the task



we have ahead is so huge that this will take a lot of time to improve the situation to the extent it needs to be.

*Cooper: Is Peru currently the best example of your organization's success thus far?*

Guinea: It is only an example. For instance, Spain, the country where I live and work, could be an important success. We made our psychiatric reform some 25, 30 years ago. Of course, it is not the only agency doing this kind of work. There is a lot of synergy with other organizations and with committed professionals who work on these issues. But maybe Spain could be considered a good example. Another success is that we have now a number of research and training centers in different parts of the world, which has happened during my presidency. We now have a number of places in Egypt, in the United Arab Emirates, in Colombia, in Kenya, in Norway, and we will probably have a number of new centers to disseminate good practices and to conduct research in our field to provide new evidence and new credibility for our strategies.

*Cooper: That's good. You mentioned other organizations doing similar work. What makes your organization unique?*

Guinea: Well, I don't think we are unique.

*(laughter)*

We are humble, and I think we are good people, but you have the World Federation for Mental Health working in a similar way. We work along—not together—with other organizations that have similar views to ours. There are plenty of them. We work with a lot of national organizations. We are an umbrella organization. A lot of national organizations are doing the work in a lot of countries. We have representation in 40 countries and with 40 national organizations doing the job in those countries.

*Cooper: So that's why you're being humble, because there are organizations you work with that are doing some of the same things, but you're doing something different, or you wouldn't exist. I would think that there is a need for the organization to exist.*

Guinea: Yes, yes. I think as a professional organization, we are quite different from other organizations. For instance, you have the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), which is the biggest psychiatric organization in the world. In WPA there are a lot of different opinions. You have quite conservative and progressive opinions. When I say "conservative," it is medical organizations that have a medical and biological approach to these problems. And when I say "advanced," I mean people who believe mental illness or disability is a construct with biological, psychological, and social aspects, and we have to work in all of the aspects.

What is particular to us is that we work on the psychological and social aspects. And we are not very keen to be near the drug industry. It is another line.

*Cooper: I picked that up. Do you know Dr. Liberman out of UCLA?*

Guinea: Yes, of course. I met him at a conference. We are not friends, but I know him.

*Cooper: Oh, good! We did a two-part article on him years ago about his work in psychosocial rehabilitation.*

Guinea: I think he was one of the pioneers in that field of research, along with maybe Marianne Farkas and William Anthony in Boston. There are also people working in different parts of the world. You find people doing a very nice job in Brazil, Thailand and Spain. But Bob Liberman was coming from the US and was one of the pioneers in writing and doing worldwide research on psychosocial psychology.

*Cooper: I'm glad you met him. Are you familiar with the United Nation's (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)?*

Guinea: Oh, yes, I'm familiar with it. I'm actually writing an article about it right now for a journal.

*Cooper: Tell me about that. Have you been able to attend any of the Conventions usually held in June in New York?*

Guinea: No, unfortunately I'm not able to go.

*Cooper: How is your organization connected with the UN?*

Guinea: We used to be connected with the UN, but it is kind of expensive to be connected with all organizations. We had to pay dues of \$1,000 to the UN each year. But the relationship became a bit "loosey."

*(laughter)*

Guinea: We also were connected with the World Health Organization (WHO), but there are more and more requirements. So our connection is quite loose with different organizations. We have agreements with the Western Psychological Association (WPA) and other professional organizations. But since we do not run programs that require a lot of money, our links are quite theoretical. We used to have a representative in the UN committees. But this person retired. *(laughs)* So now we don't have a connection with the UN.

*Cooper: Who are you working with for this paper on the CRPD? How did that come about?*

Guinea: The paper is for a Brazilian journal. Last month



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MKT-P0019

I was in Florianópolis in Brazil. There was a conference there organized by the Brazilian organization for mental health. The topic was "Citizenship and Human Rights in Mental Health," which is our approach. So I am working on the meaning of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Declaration of the Rights of People with Disabilities in the field of mental health. That is what I am writing about in this article.

*Cooper: So you have studied what the CRPD has produced around mental health?*

Guinea: Yes, I'm quite familiar with that.

*Cooper: Are you writing it in such a way that will support it or maybe identify a better approach to what they've written?*

Guinea: Well, no. Personally speaking, and I say personally speaking because our organization has not made an agreement or a comment on that. Most of our delegates support our approach. But still, there are some remaining discussions about how these declarations should be implemented. I think we support the philosophy of these declarations, and in particular, for instance, we support the philosophy of no coercion, no forced treatment, and the right to receive not only treatment but to maintain civil rights. For us, this means states and policymakers must work to make this chapter of rights effective by investing more in mental health, which is basic, because

the investment in mental health is very, very slow in most countries, in particular with other aspects of medical treatment. So we believe in the principle of equity, which means everyone should receive the right treatment and support, and there should be no excuses about lack of funding.

*Cooper: How do you deal with patients who have spiraled into psychosis in such a way that may potentially harm themselves or others?*

Guinea: Well, this is one of the more difficult issues to address. From my perspective, a good relationship—and by that I mean a collaborative relationship with the person who is seeking help—is the basis for everything. We should work toward a positive, collaborative relationship. This means professionals should have the training to understand that and also the time to invest, because this kind of approach requires time and training. This would be my first approach.

There are a number of issues under discussion about how to better ensure the protection of a person who is mentally distressed and unable to make the best decisions about his or her life. Of course we are, as I said before, trying to exclude any type of coercion and instead explore all possibilities for a collaborative approach. ■ **ABILITY**

wapr.org  
wpanet.org  
uscd.org/index.cfm/crpd





# The Homecoming

*More than a Movie*



Pure Joy. Those are the words that come to mind when trying to describe what I experienced this fall while filming the musical feature film, *The Homecoming*. A magical, musical, all-inclusive feature film by Zeno Mountain Farm and the producers of *Becoming Bulletproof*.

I always dreamed of a world like this: An all-inclusive atmosphere where everyone is treated equally, with kindness and respect, regardless of their differences. On this film set, on a chilly night in Bristol, Vermont, my eyes welled with tears as I looked out and watched that dream happening. And *everyone* was happy.

No one minded if they had to slow down to help someone into a costume or tie a shoe. No one minded if you had crutches or a limp. No one minded if you needed to sit down between takes or if you needed a little extra help with your dance number. They didn't even mind if you needed help going to the bathroom. As a matter of fact, this cast and crew seemed to love the challenges, the creativity, the uniqueness each person was bringing to this massive filmmaking endeavor. There was peace and joy on every face as people literally searched for ways to help each other. It didn't take long to see that every single human being involved was gaining something quite valuable from this experience.

For a moment, I wondered if it would last. Would we end up seeing the melt downs, egos, and tantrums often encountered on film sets? Would someone start stressing over something that really didn't matter in the great scheme of things?

Nope. Not on this shoot. How could *anyone* complain? You only had to look in *any* direction to see someone smiling from ear to ear, because they were doing something they loved, with friends they love. They were having the time of their lives. On this film production, everyone was valued. And it was a team effort to handle every challenge. That's what made it all so exciting.

At one point, my eyes landed on Emily Kranking who was smiling so brightly she lit up the entire football field. She definitely had that sparkle of joy in her eyes. She was playing a cheerleader and best friend to our lead actress, Shannon DeVido. When I asked Emily if she was having fun, she beamed, "I still can't believe this is happening. It's like a dream come true!"

Our young lead, Rickey Alexander, seemed to be floating on clouds as he led the most diverse football team ever assembled. The local high school team showed up to play against our movie team, and many of their families and friends came to cheer for the crowd scenes.

As the night rolled on, Lauren Smitelli and Michael Parks Randa directed the cast, crew and nearly a hundred extras with ease, humor and a sense of purpose that drove them through to the final take. Their camera team,





led by the exceptionally talented Chris “Westy”, worked tirelessly into the wee hours. Perhaps the toughest job was that of our first assistant director (AD), Jake Sharpless who had to make sure we were on schedule, no matter how much fun we were having.

Katie White, our mastermind producer, jumped right down on the field and danced along with the cast. Her infectious energy swirled through the set as she made sure spirits were up and every need was swiftly met. Our choreographer, Frankie Orr, was wearing a cat’s tail as she shouted through a megaphone, while her sidekick dance instructor, Amy Hessler, showed us all how to shake our booties, one way or another. No matter the challenge, these girls had a dancing solution! Our brilliant composer, Madeline Rhodes, who also played the bad girl in the film, entertained the cast often with her gravity-defying acrobatics. Matt Marr, a producer who looks like a movie star himself, got into a band costume and marched right out onto the field too. Almost every member of the crew ended up in the film somewhere, as our costume designer Shari Bisnaught and costumer Maya Luz worked miracles with the help of local seamstress Grace Freeman. Julie Potter, an LA rapper and longtime friend of Zeno, helped shuffle the cast around, always laughing and helping.

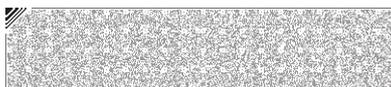
This set was overflowing with strength, humor, talent and good will.

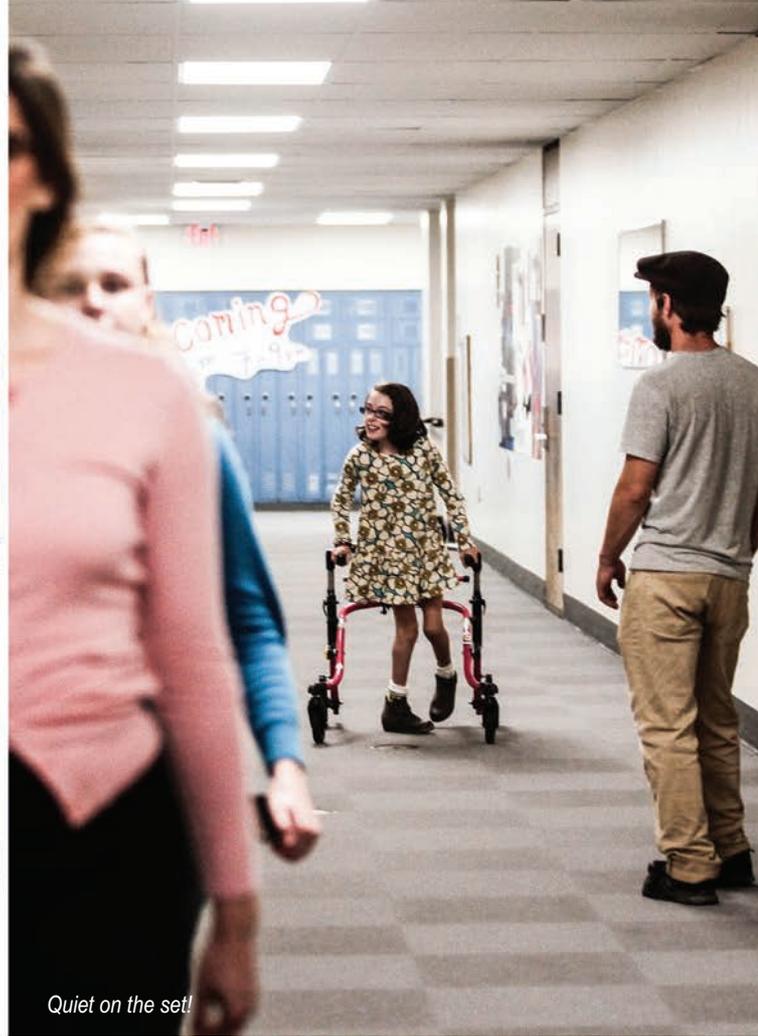
Dozens of friends from around the country came just to help, with anything and everything necessary, so each member of the film had all the support they could possibly need to do their best work.

I often found myself just standing there, in absolute awe, watching this team work and play.

Then I spotted executive producer Will Halby, standing near a heat lamp, making sure all the actors were warm and happy. Ila Halby soon came bouncing up, dressed in a huge letterman’s jacket to hide her eight-month baby bump, and joined the cast for the big finale dance scene. She would be pushing one of the performers in a wheelchair onto the field and dancing with them. Her husband, Peter Halby, was sorting out logistical and technical issues. He and his brother Will would stop to watch the takes, help the football players with their moves, and then interact with the large gathering of extras they had recruited from town. Vanessa Halby, with a young child on her hip and several more running in circles around her, was organizing a massive late night meal for the entire cast and crew. Each Halby seemed to have endless positive vibes flowing as they worked tirelessly through the long, cold night.

Who is this awesome Halby family? They were the masterminds behind this production, and I had to know more. This Halby foursome had somehow created the





Quiet on the set!

very world we have all been fighting for in Hollywood for decades. How did they do it? And why?

So I reached out to Will Halby to ask a few questions.

*Tell us about Zeno. Who created it?*

Will Halby: Zeno is a non-profit camp for people of all abilities. Zeno started as an idea between my wife Vanessa, Pete, Ila and me. We all had experiences at various programs and camps that supported people with disabilities. We were always a bit frustrated because the programs were too clinical. Our experience with our friends with disabilities was that we were all contributing to the friendship, and it seemed strange one of us was a “counselor”, “volunteer” or “staff”. We wanted to create a place where everyone is responsible for the functioning of the community, and everyone is invited back forever.

*Why do you care about this community?*

Halby: I love the culture of disability. I believe diversity is the best part of any community, and there is no more diverse population than in the disability world.

*What inspired the first film, and how many years have you been making films?*

Halby: We’ve been making films for 14 years now.

Sounds amazing to hear myself say that. I wanted to do it because we had been doing theatre forever so I knew we had the chops, and film just seemed to be the next logical step. Making movies is fun, it’s collaborative, but most importantly, its hard work and complicated. Everyone needs to pull their weight to pull it off. I love helping people find their worth. I believe knowing that we matter to each other is a basic human right ignored for so many. It’s critical for our sense of self. Besides, when it’s done, we get to share it with the world, travel with it and share our message.

*What impact have you seen on the young adults without disabilities who have been a part of making these all-inclusive films?*

Halby: If we are doing it right, our litmus test is to ask everyone at camp, disabled or otherwise, if they are there for the same reason. You won’t find folks who are non-disabled at camp talking about how meaningful and inspirational their friends with disabilities are. We love this community because of the diversity, creativity and hard work we all put in. That’s true for everyone here.

*Tell us about this magical, musical film.*

Halby: *The Homecoming* is a story about two kids who fall in love over the summer at a dance camp. We all know what summer love feels like. I don’t want to





Part of the team

give any more of the story away except to say that they have to figure out how to negotiate their relationship in “the outside world” under very different and extraordinary circumstances.

*What was it like making your first feature film?*

Halby: Grueling, expensive, emotional, rewarding, scary, fun—a steep learning curve. The truth is, none of us have ever done anything like this, certainly with this group. We take a lot of pride in knowing we are doing something for the first time. It is a lot of responsibility too.

*What were the greatest obstacles to getting this feature film made?*

Halby: Money, money, and money. Talent and enthusiasm abound. No shortage there!

*Do you think a film like The Homecoming will inspire Hollywood and the general public to see the value in including people with all kinds of disabilities?*

Halby: I do. And at the end of the day, that is the goal. We want to show the world what they are missing. We also want to communicate to the world that inclusion is not a “charity” issue. I think it has been in that box for a long time. It is a social justice issue and needs to be

framed as a basic human right.

*You’re now in post-production for the film. When do you expect it to be finished?*

Halby: If we can get the funding, we should be able to finish by spring.

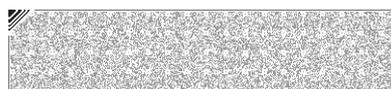
*What are your plans for the film?*

Halby: Films take on lives of their own once they are released, so our plans are only hopes. We will be submitting to festivals and seeking to find the largest audience possible.

The next few weeks were just as much fun as we all got to know the wonderful human beings around us. The production barn (aka dance rehearsal hall) and wardrobe room were constantly buzzing.

Andrew Pilkington, one of the producers, was always in the barn editing with his feet, except when he was on set or partying with the gang. He would often show clips of the scenes as he assembled them. The scenes were so beautifully shot, and every glimpse of a scene got the team even more excited.

Elisabeth Good, a kind, soulful woman, was our script supervisor and constantly in motion on set, juggling





Grubba heading to another scene



multiple responsibilities. After the film, I asked her how she felt about this Zeno production:

“I learned about *The Homecoming* through the National Disability Association on Facebook. I had no idea what to expect when I arrived at Zeno Mountain Farm. Within ten minutes of my arrival, I knew I made the right decision to come to Zeno. I worked as the script supervisor, keeping track of continuity and how many takes there were for each scene. Along with script supervising, I also helped in departments like electric and props. An extra hand goes a long way, especially in the loving environment that is Zeno.

All I can say is it felt like a dream I didn’t want to wake up from.

I have cerebral palsy—right-sided Hemiplegia. I’m from South Bend, Indiana, where there isn’t much diversity in terms of meeting people with disabilities. I met so many awe-inspiring people at Zeno with and without cerebral palsy. As a kid growing up, I was bullied for the way I walk and felt so unwanted. The Zeno family welcomed me with open arms, and there I felt “normal.” At Zeno there is no such thing as a disability, who you are is beautiful.”

Emily Kranking shared her thoughts too: “Growing up, I loved musicals, whether it’s Disney or my school plays.

As I watched *La La Land*, *High School Musical*, and live productions on TV, I was dying for there to be a movie musical starring disabled people. When I heard about this on FB, I knew I had to jump on board, no matter how big it is. I was not expecting to get a lead role. For the first time in my acting career, I wasn’t treated as a disabled actor but as an actual actor. I felt like I belonged for once. I am hoping this movie goes big, so the world can know that in media, the disabled are abled!”

One night after camp dinner, a fun part of every evening at Zeno, our casting director, Terra Mackintosh, drove me back to Bristol. We talked for quite a while about the entertainment industry, the dreams and disappointments, and found out we had similar encounters, as well as friends in common in NYC. These late night chats were not uncommon at Zeno. A lot of real friendships were formed.

I was quite impressed with Terra and how efficient she always was. Not only was she our casting director, but also our talent wrangler, actress in multiple scenes, and an all-around super star on the production. She seemed to have endless love to give and was a skilled problem solver. When they were running short on extras, our make-up rock stars, Mariella Dawn and Marissa Devine, fluffed her up and sent her into the town bar to “pick up” extras. Another day, she got into a football uniform and played on the team. Terra, who epitomizes the Zeno





*The Homecoming* director, producers, editor & crew, watching the edit

spirit, shared her thoughts on the film experience:

“The dream as an artist is to create important work with people you love...so this movie has been the ultimate dream for me. We have created something truly special, and it comes at a time when the world desperately needs more love, more compassion, and more celebration of what makes us human. I can’t wait for the world to see the magic we’ve made together!”

What a nice surprise when fellow disability inclusion advocates, Christine Bruno and Lawrence Carter-Long showed up on set. Both played roles they would not normally even be considered for: a mechanic and a police officer.

Christine and I are on the national SAG/AFTRA (Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists) committee for performers with disabilities, so we had a lot to catch up on. Our rooms were directly across from each other, so we shared some wine and pow-wowed into the wee hours on ways to make our industry more like Zeno.

I could go on and on telling you about all the fantastic people we met at Zeno. With every person who comes to mind, another memory warms my heart. I am sure this family will be in my life, and in my heart, forever.

In the end it was hard to leave. We planned our next adventures, and made sure to let everyone know we would all see each other again.

So on that wonderful night, as the magic happened before my eyes, I told Will Halby this was the happy environment I always envisioned for Hollywood. Like a dream come true.

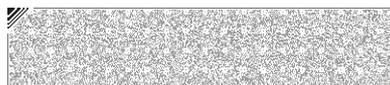
He smiled and said, “It’s so great, isn’t it? Shouldn’t it always be like this?”

Yes, Will. Yes, it should. And thanks to people like you, we are finally getting there.

Executive Producer Michael Barnett also made an award-winning documentary film called “Becoming Bulletproof” about Zeno’s summer film camp and a short western called “Bulletproof”. You can find it online, on Amazon and U-Tube, if you want to meet some of the characters in “The Homecoming” as well and see how it all works. ■ **ABILITY**

by Eileen Grubba

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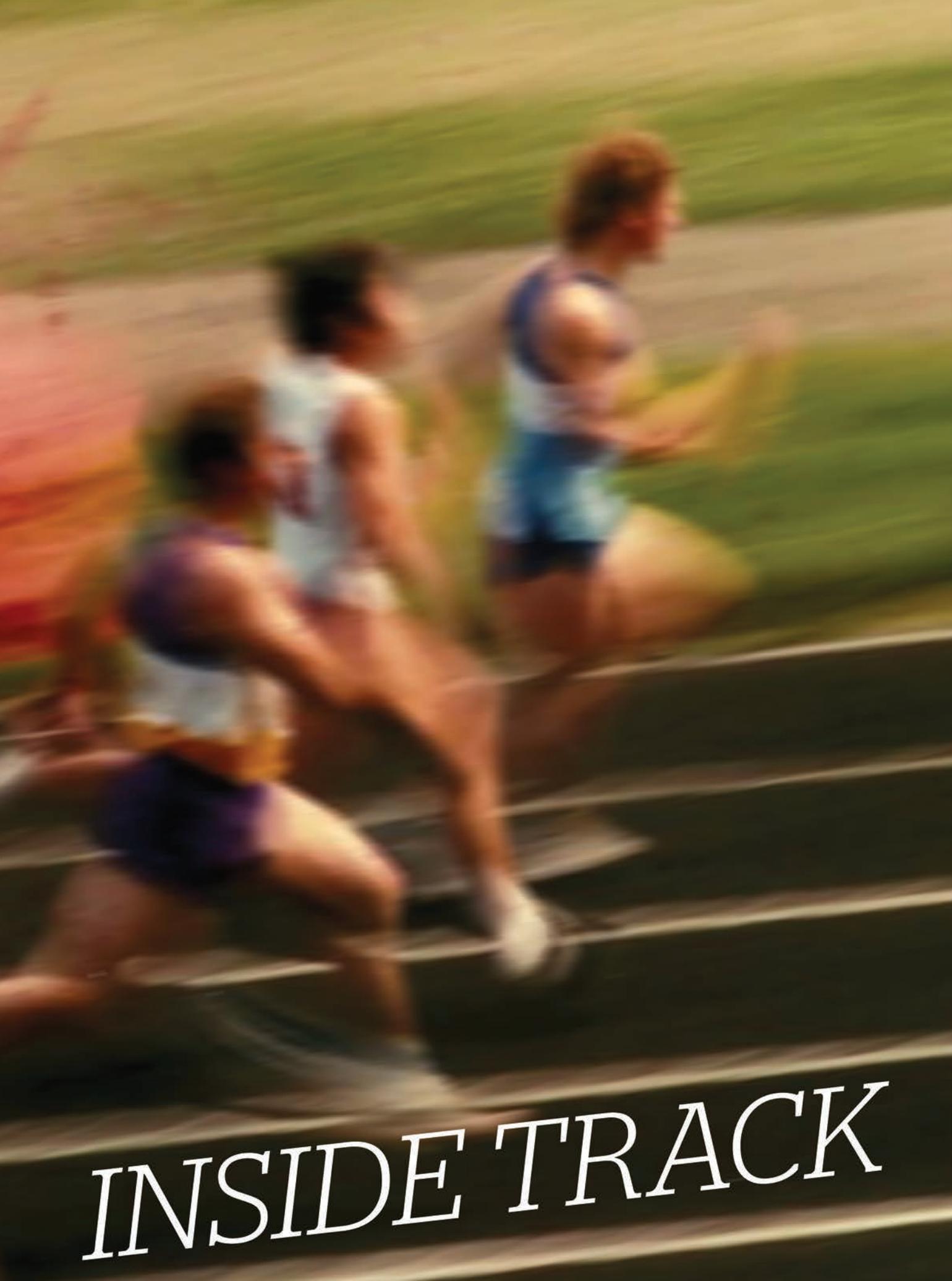
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INSIDE TRACK

**I**nside Track, an upcoming film written and directed by American Film Institute's (AFI) graduate Jevon Whetter, aims to inspire and unite deaf and hearing audiences around the true story of a coach and team of eight boys from the Oregon School for the Deaf High School, who overcome tremendous odds to win the 1986 Oregon State Track and Field Championship. Based on Whetter's real life experience as an athlete on the winning team, the film explores the significant economic, and ableist, hurdles they had to defeat in order to surpass the world's and their own expectations for themselves.

Exodus Film Group, a production company helmed by Jevon's brother, Delbert Whetter, which produces family-friendly content that speaks to a diverse audience, will produce the film. Prior to *Inside Track*, Exodus Film Group produced the popular animated film *Igor*, as well as *The Hero of Color City* and *Bunyan & Babe*. With *Inside Track* they hope to break into the world of live action storytelling and present a compelling narrative that can unite audiences of all abilities and make them fall in love with these diversely-abled heroes.

*Roxie Perkins: As a filmmaker what inspires you?*

Jevon Whetter: As a deaf child of three generations of deafness in our family in Oregon, our maternal deaf grandmother told us stories about her childhood when she attended silent films at theatres in her hometown in Oregon. At the time, silent films had no sound, and they were completely accessible for hearing and deaf audiences. My deaf grandmother was able to enjoy watching films with her deaf classmates from the Oregon School for the Deaf. When the "talkies" came out with *The Jazz Singer* in 1927, the deaf audiences were suddenly excluded from the film experience at theatres. After the silent film era ended, the Deaf community was denied the opportunity to experience the "golden era" of film. Because of sound in films, the deaf community lived in the "dark ages" of film experience for several decades because there were no captions or subtitles for several decades. The irony of it all, there were deaf actors performing in silent films for many years during the early days of film, and a few of them appeared on the screen with Charlie Chaplin as well as many other notable silent film stars.

Why didn't a lot of people know about stories like these? Unfortunately, the Deaf community didn't have the opportunity to present stories from our culture to the mainstream public. To the non-disabled world, deafness may be another type of disability. This may be true, however, the Deaf community also has a language and culture when compared to ethnic groups. We have our stories from our culture, presented and framed in our unique deaf worldview.

To use a metaphor, a rainbow has a spectrum of all types of colors. One extreme end of the spectrum is the

Deaf culture and American Sign Language (ASL). Very few stories have been told from this side of the spectrum. Most films seem to portray people who are deaf as helpless victims or people who need to be fixed, cured, or rescued. All of that was presented from a hearing person's point of view. Unfortunately, most stories where people who are deaf have been misrepresented have been written by hearing filmmakers who have an objective point of view of deafness. It is often rare that we see people who are deaf in stories as heroes or shown in a position of power or influence on the screen.

For instance, when the studios wanted to purchase the rights to the film, *Boyz n the Hood*, John Singleton insisted he needed to be the one to direct the film because of his African-American roots [and hometown of South Central where the film takes place] to bring authenticity to the film. Just like John Singleton, I am also protective of my ASL and Deaf culture because I know that life, and I've lived it all my life. The only way for people to understand is for me to ensure the information is accurately communicated to the audience. As a filmmaker who is deaf and a leader, I feel it's important that I represent my community accurately.

Back in 2009 I had the opportunity to present my Producer's Portfolio, along with my screenplay, at the AFI Conservatory right before my graduation. After completing my Producer's Portfolio review, a review committee member admitted to me that nobody, not even a non-deaf person, could tell the story the way I did. It was largely due to my life experience as a person who is deaf since birth. The review committee agreed I'd shown them that my story is presented from a unique perspective that will resonate with audiences in a way none others can, because it represents an authentic vision of a filmmaker who is deaf that has experienced the rich lives being portrayed on screen.

*Roxie: What drew you to film as the medium you wanted to tell stories in?*

Jevon: In Oliver Sack's book, *Seeing Voices*, he describes his revelation that deafness was more than just a disability of a degenerative hearing loss and observes that the Deaf community has a culture that parallels cultural patterns found in ethnic groups, including the use of a distinct language. ASL has a remarkably unique characteristic in that there is a distinct cinematic value in its use.

Sacks goes on to explain that sign language is distinguished by its unique ability to communicate visual imagery in various mediums in dynamic ways such as, for instance, close-up shots, medium shots and long shots.

Filmmaking has always come naturally to me because it speaks to me in the same language as ASL. As a deaf person, my language of ASL and film are interchangeable





Jevon Whetter



Delbert Whetter

when it comes to bringing my thoughts and visual imagery to the screen. Film is the best way to preserve ASL, especially because it's not a written language. To us, the camera is our "pen" and the silver screen is our "paper". I immediately had a connection to filmmaking because I could transfer my vision to the screen with ease.

*Roxie: Did you and your brother always know you wanted to make films together?*

Delbert Whetter: We always had a shared interest. We didn't set out to make a movie together, but we had always talked about it. When this opportunity came up, we couldn't resist. It was too good of an opportunity to pass up.

*Roxie: Tell us about Exodus Film Group. What's the mission of your company?*

Delbert: We are really interested in diverse stories that are told by diverse storytellers. We like telling stories that are meaningful and that highlight the exceptional stories told by people who are not easily found anywhere else—people who feel different—people who are having trouble feeling accepted or feeling like they belong. We like to tell stories about those people in an uplifting way, to show all the positive aspects. A lot of our animated films have to do with people who feel

like they're different than other people, yet they're still special. They still can bring a lot of beauty to the world in their own way. One does not have to conform in order to make that happen.

At Exodus Film Group, we released three animated feature films in the past 10 years: *Igor*, through MGM Studios, *The Hero of Color City*, through Magnolia Pictures, and *Bunyan & Babe*, through Cinedigm, which was released just this year. We had always wanted to do a live-action feature film, so we'd been looking for a project. My brother wrote a screenplay based on his real-life experience as a student at the Oregon School for the Deaf. So I brought his script to my company, and we all fell in love with it. We decided to make that our first live-action feature film.

*Roxie: As a director working with people of different abilities on a film set, what are the biggest lessons you've learned, and what would you like other directors to know about conducting a diversely-abled set?*

Jevon: I was asked once during film school how a director who is deaf is able to direct a full-length feature film. In response, I explained that if American studios are willing to hire foreign-speaking directors from other countries, where their first language is other than English, they should not have any problem hiring a director who is deaf. If they're willing to be patient with foreign





directors' lack of fluency with the English language, they should consider extending the same amount of patience and leeway to directors who are deaf.

We feel strongly that we should embrace diversity because it creates an environment where everyone will share their perspectives from all types of backgrounds and experiences. One thing people often overlook about people who are disabled is they don't really understand that we've been fighters all of our lives. We are often the underdogs, and we have to resist the temptation to surrender on a daily basis. Our resiliency is probably much stronger than other people who have it easy, and people of our character should be welcomed on the film set.

I believe diversity is a huge selling point for the film industry because it's still largely an untapped resource, and we want to lead by example. It is a huge plus to celebrate diversity as it sells well, instead of perceiving diversity as a burdensome task. Our desire to create art is driven by our passion and our determination to succeed. All of these traits far outweigh another person who may have no passion at all.

My mother, who is deaf, once shared with me what her mother (my maternal grandmother), who is also deaf, told her: "Deaf people must work twice as hard than hearing people to be equal, and work three times as hard

to get ahead." This has been my mantra for a lifetime, prompting me to earn my Master of Arts degree in Theatre Arts from San Diego State University as well as my Master in Fine Arts degree in producing from the AFI Conservatory. I wanted to learn everything about the craft, leaving no room for doubt whether I'm qualified or not.

*Roxie: When you look around at other media, other movies and TV and the representation of diversity of ability on-camera and off, do you feel like it's moving in a positive direction?*

Delbert: I feel like we're just starting to make that issue known. A lot of times when diversity is discussed, disability does not even show up in the conversation, and we're working very hard to change that. And the best way to do that is to show how it's done, and we're hoping to do that with this movie. We also believe it's important to work within the independent film genre, because most of the positive changes we're seeking to make will be very slow with the major studios, with the big-budget, high-stakes films. They're not interested in taking risks, whereas independent film is where a lot of people in this industry start out. I really believe we can make the most amount of change more quickly in independent film.

Diverse characters, diverse stories are so hard to do





right. In order to get it right, we have to involve people of diverse backgrounds in the creative process. We believe diversity in front of the camera is a reflection of what's going on behind the camera. It's interrelated. In order to get it right, we have to have a symbiotic relationship in diversity between the two. It's so important to include diverse storytellers in the creative process, especially when it comes to characters who are deaf in deaf storylines. There are a lot of people who often forget that when you're dealing with characters, it's not merely a case of can an actor hear. There's a language involved, and when you have language, you have culture. It's really important to get that right. To cast somebody who is not deaf in a role for a character who is deaf, for example, you run the risk of cultural misappropriation. In dealing with those issues, a lot of people don't realize that. It's important to get it right.

*Roxie: As a drama teacher for 10 years, what would you like other directors to know about the similarities or differences when working with actors who are deaf and hearing actors?*

Jevon: I taught high school drama for 10 years to teenagers who are deaf, and I've also been teaching theatre at the college level to students in Deaf Studies at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) for over six years. At CSUN, the majority of my students are hearing.

After teaching theatre and ASL for over 16 years, I've noticed that acting seems to come naturally for most people who are deaf because when we go out into the hearing world, we need to find other ways to communicate with hearing people who don't know ASL. Culturally, people who are deaf have to find other ways to make them understand by acting things out or using gestures. For people who have been deaf since birth, they have been actors all of their lives. It's not because of the sake of art, but it's essentially a tool of survival. Actors who are deaf seem to be more at ease with the use of their facial expressions as well as using body language, and it shows in their performance. As a deaf director, I want to celebrate and showcase the talent of actors who are deaf and present this in a new light. There are so many talented actors who are deaf across the globe, waiting to get their chance. As a filmmaker, I'm hoping to become their bridge to success and bring as many people who are deaf into the entertainment business.

*Roxie: Did you always know you wanted to tell this story? How closely does the film mirror your high school experience?*

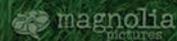
Jevon: The story of *Inside Track* is largely based on my own experience as well as true-life incidents and situations. Teenagers who are deaf were often bullied by hearing students during the time when the Americans



# The Hero of COLOR CITY



**COMING FROM A CRAYON BOX NEAR YOU**



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with Disabilities Act (ADA) didn't exist, leaving us with the feeling that we were second-class citizens. We had to endure a lot of discrimination or oppression for many generations. During the '80's, ASL classes were non-existent. Today, ASL is the third most popular language in college, according to the Modern Language Association's most recent report. Because of increased awareness, people are more accepting of people who are deaf and ASL than we did back in the 80's. In *Inside Track*, we want to capture the spirit of the time and show the viewers what people who are deaf had to endure during the pre-ADA years.

Delbert: Much of the disability education rights came about in the '70s, so the students on that track and field team would have spent the early part of their education without the benefit of those rights. It was before Marlee Matlin won her Oscar, before the Deaf President Now (DPN) movement at Gallaudet University took place, and the sign language interpreting industry was in its infancy. A lot of the students on that team had faced discrimination at their public, mainstream schools, which is part of the reason why they came to the deaf school, because the education and accommodation to accessibility they were receiving at their schools was not what it should be.

Jevon: When I pitched the true story of *Inside Track*, people kept telling me they got goosebumps from hearing the story. I eventually realized I had to make this film myself. We had over 40 plus teams in the State Track and Field Championship back in 1986. Most teams usually have large teams who qualified to compete in the state meet. For Oregon School for the Deaf, we only had eight boys who qualified to compete. We fought and won the team championship title by only one point. We were probably the smallest high school in the whole tournament, with only 64 high school students at Oregon School for the Deaf. It was like a dream team back then, everything came together at the right time and right place.

Because of my personal journey as a state champion, it was instilled in me at a young age that I could do anything, even if people thought it was impossible. With each challenge, I feel that I become stronger as I fed on adversary as my motivation to overcome obstacles. When I was very young, I was bullied at school because I was an easy target. I later discovered that sports were the best way I could earn respect because I was faster and more athletic than others.

*Roxie: I understand that in the film you will be using a technique of having voice actors dubbed over deaf actors using ASL, signed performances. What inspired this decision?*

Jevon: I have been acting professionally since 1992, and I had the distinct honor of performing with the National Theatre of the Deaf, Deaf West Theatre, as

well as many other productions. We had voice actors, who voiced all of our lines, performing alongside our signed performances. When a deaf actor signs their lines, the audience can enjoy the show with ease by listening to the voice actors. If we have captions or subtitles on the bottom or the side of the stage, we run the risk of losing the hearing audience because their "untrained" eyes are not used to watching the performance and subtitles simultaneously.

I've studied many different types of approaches from other films or television shows with characters who are deaf and the voice-over approach is still the best option. The hearing viewers will be allowed to see the signing and match the spoken word with the signs. The subtitles will take their focus away from the beauty of ASL and performance by forcing them to read the subtitles.

That's where my brother, Delbert, and producer, John Eraklis, come in. They have expertise with handling quality voiceover work for several of their animated feature films. The approach for *Inside Track* will be exactly the same, where the voice actors will voice the signed lines during post-production. We want to include the entire audience, hearing or deaf, for the film experience.

Delbert: We have a strong animation background, and a big part of that is using voiceover talent combined with the animation. We think we can use the same expertise with our film in order to make ASL accessible to mainstream general audiences. Using our expertise and voiceover talent, we think we can match professional, experienced voiceover actors with the sign language used in the ASL dialogue. This way people can watch the ASL dialogue in its full glory and feel like they're understanding what is being said. We're hoping this will be a new and innovative way of making ASL—which, by the way, is so popular that it's the third most popular language in schools in the U.S., so clearly people want to enjoy and watch ASL performances. This way they can listen to it and feel like they're involved.

*Roxie: What would you say to combat the unfortunately common excuse that there aren't more characters who are deaf or disabled in films because hearing audiences won't be able to relate to their stories?*

Delbert: That's a myth that's been proven to be not true by the simple fact that so many times when we have deaf characters, deaf story lines on film or television, they often get critical acclaim or win awards. That happens so often that it's clear people are interested and want to see the material. Deaf West Theatre is another favorite example of mine. Every time they come out with a stage play, they get rave reviews and win awards. Not only is there demand, but there's also appeal for ASL dialogue and ASL performances. We're hoping to take that success and translate it to film and television.





Jevon State Champs 1986

We think the translation will work very well.

*Roxie: What's the next step for the film?*

Delbert: We're in development and assembling the production team for the film. That's where we are right now. Renowned Deaf West Theatre actor Troy Kotsur is attached to play the head coach, Fred Farrior.

Nyle DiMarco is attached to play the assistant coach, Rocco. The rest of the characters will be cast further into the development process. We're hoping to shoot in 2018 or 2019. It all depends on how quickly everything comes together.

*Roxie: How can people stay up to date with your progress and support the film?*

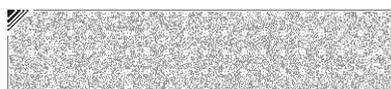
Delbert: We have a website—[insidetrackfilm.com](http://insidetrackfilm.com). We're also partnering with Film Independent, a non-profit organization that works with independent film production companies and independent filmmakers. We're very excited about that because, as I said, independent film is one of the best places where we can make positive changes for people with disabilities in front of and behind the camera. It also gives people a way to support the film through tax-deductible donations. It's typically the kind of opportunity that's not there for independent films or any kind of film. We're

very happy to make that a variable as a way for people to support us.

*Roxie: Lastly, if you had to describe how the experience of watching Inside Track should make an audience feel what would it be?*

Jevon: To sum it up: "There are no barriers for champions, only hurdles..." We intend for the audience to leave the theater reminded of the timeless and universal message that the only obstacle that matters is the one you set for yourself. We hope, through its universal message that accentuates ability over disability, *Inside Track* will change the way the world perceives people with hearing loss and other disabilities by tearing down preconceived notions, stigma and stereotypes about persons with disabilities, affirming our reality as intelligent and passionate multi-dimensional beings that are capable of remarkable achievements on and off the field. ■ **ABILITY**

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# THE TV EPISODE THAT RESOUNDED AROUND THE WORLD!



Left: The cast of *Maude*, starring Bea Arthur  
Above: Charlotte Rae, Rue McClanahan,  
Fern Field and Norman Lear



Fern

When *Maude's* Reunion aired on February 21, 1977, none of us who worked on the show knew it would set off a domino effect that would change our industry's perception of people with disabilities. And I, working as a first assistant to the executive producer, Rod Parker, certainly didn't know it would launch a career I didn't know I was looking for.

The episode was a great one with stellar performances by Bea Arthur and Nanette Fabray. In it, *Maude* attends her 30th college reunion and is shocked to find that one of her closest school friends has suffered a debilitating stroke. The program builds to a crescendo when her friend Nanette confronts and challenges *Maude* to face her feelings: "I scare the hell out of you!" she tells *Maude*.

The impact of this episode on our studio audience, the subsequent viewers, the critics, the network, and Norman Lear was palpable. So much so that a couple of weeks after the show aired, Norman dropped in to see Rod. After their meeting, Rod called me in and said "I want you to do some research for me. Find me an assembly line with "handicapped" (remember this was 1977) workers. But don't say whom you're doing it for because we don't want to get people's hopes up. We're going to develop a sitcom with handicapped people."

Which I thought was the worst idea I had heard since I went to work for the company!

But research I did! We were going to be on hiatus so I had plenty of time, and eventually a phone call to the Governor's Committee for Employment of the Handicapped steered me to a committee in the South Bay area. I was told they were looking for a tape project to use as a conversation-breaker when they called on employers to encourage them to hire people with disabilities.

I attended one of their monthly meetings, listened to what they had to say, and promised to come back the following month with some suggestions.

Back then, I was new to TV and knew nothing about "tape" production. Everything that went on in the booth every week at our tapings was still very much a mystery. However, my ex-husband was a documentary and industrial film producer/director, and I had helped out with the company when we were together. So I knew and was comfortable sitting in a darkened screening room, looking for negative scratches and other imperfections in our productions. All much more civil than the chaos that prevailed (in my opinion) during a taping in the booth at Metromedia where Norman would be giving notes to his assistant, the director was giving





notes to the script supervisor, the tech director was talking to the four camera people on the set as well as the engineers in their control room. All while one person on the sidelines had a silent version of a ball game on the screen while my boss would turn to me every now and then and mumble some note of which I had no idea what he said. And as I was trying to figure it out, we'd "taped" more pages from the script! So I welcomed the idea of a "hiatus" once I learned exactly what that word meant. Vacation!

At the next meeting of the South Bay Mayor's Committee for Employment of the Handicapped, I submitted my proposal. "You don't need a tape project," I told them. "You need 16 mm film; we'll get a friend of mine who only has one leg to play tennis with Norman Lear; we'll get John Denver to do the music; and we'll go for an Academy Award," said I, was confident this group would never get it together to finance a project. After all, it was a completely volunteer organization, and they probably had a dollar-and-a-quarter in the bank. I had told them the budget would be \$50,000—a figure I pulled out of the air.

Well, the stars went off in their eyes. This was showbiz! They assured me they would get the funding from various sources and set off to do just that, while I went

away confident I could enjoy my vacation without having to worry about this project any longer. Over the course of the summer I would get the occasional phone call: "Unfortunately so-and-so doesn't fund film projects." I understand, said I, thanks for keeping me posted. Or, "We just missed their budget deadline so can't reapply until next year!" And so it went until the summer was winding down, and I would soon be back at work setting up our offices for the fall/winter season of *Maude*.

As I rearranged the office furniture, the phone rang and it was the committee chair. They had found a government office—the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW)—that had a grant program they could apply for to help fund the film, but the deadline was the following week! They had hired a grant writer, and all they needed from me was a budget; could I get them one right away? "Sure," I said weakly. "Let me get back to you." I hung up the phone and almost fainted. A budget? I had never done a budget for a film. I wasn't sure I would even know where to begin. I got up, started pacing and tried to figure out whom I could ask. There was my ex-husband, I supposed. But I really didn't want to do that. Finally, I realized the husband of one of the young assistants I had hired for one of Rod's shows (he was now supervising three shows) was a





comedy writer who had also done some industrials when they were living in Detroit. Well, I figured, if he worked for General Motors, maybe he would know how to do a budget. So I called Jim Belcher, brought him up to date and asked if he wanted to be my partner on this project. He said “yes,” so I told him he better come right over because we had to do a budget and get it to the committee by tomorrow. I was going back into productions with three shows. He was freelance, so I figured at least he would have some time to devote to this endeavor.

A short time later, Jim showed up, and as he stood in the doorway said, “A funny thing happened as I was leaving the house.” “Really?” I asked. “What?”

“I got a call to be a staff writer on Lila Garrett’s show *Baby, I’m Back*. “Oh shoot,” I said (actually I’d used a stronger expletive). “Why?” he asked, perplexed. “Well, you know what this means, don’t you?” No, what?” he said, still puzzled. “It means they’re going to get the money and now neither one of us has the time to do the project.”

Well, to make a long story short, they won the grant. The government, however, reduced the money allotted to \$40,000, and that’s when luck kicked in. The government

never advances money. They will reimburse expenses, except the committee had *no* money. So, their volunteer treasurer, Jack Kramer, who had a day job at Mattel, badgered, cajoled, and God knows what else, but finally succeeded and got the money in advance.

By that time, Jim and I had done some research, watched other films on the subject, and came to the conclusion that what we wanted to do was showcase our talents, include celebrities, and basically take a different approach to the subject.

And then the fact that I was working for Norman Lear’s company came into play. He was the first “celebrity” we asked to be in it—and, of course, he said yes. After that, to everyone else we approached, we said, “We’re making a public service film to encourage the accurate portrayal and employment of people with disabilities. Norman Lear will be in it, and we’d like to include you.” Nobody said no.

The film was nominated for an Oscar and received more than a dozen national and international awards; it enlightened us and all of our colleagues in the industry; and spawned a number of other activities as we became aware of the enormous job that needed to be done. And somehow Norman always played a part.





Norman Lear and Michael Keaton presenting Fern the Lifetime Achievement Award from Media Access

One day, months after the film was in circulation, I was speaking at a governor’s committee meeting about the film, and I was confronted by a very sexy guy in a wheelchair named Peter Arballo, who said, “You folks from the media are always coming to us and exploiting us (this was on the heels of *The Men* and *Coming Home*) and then you leave (a phrase I will never forget), and we disappear into the back bedrooms of America!” I was stunned. He continued, “Will you serve on a task force?” I meekly suggested he talk to me after the meeting, which he did.

And we came up with the idea of having a dinner and panel discussion with the casting folks who had booked the extras for *The Men* and *Coming Home* at the next Board of Governor’s committee meeting. So I, of course, lined up the entire cast from *Maude* to attend. I was on my way to Norman’s office to invite him when I ran into our publicist, Barbara Brogliatti, and told her I was going to invite Norman to this dinner. She said, “Oh, are you giving him an award?” Recovering quickly from my amazement at what she just asked, I responded, “Of course we are!” And that, my friends, is how the Media Access Awards was born.

Addendum: After that first Media Access Awards dinner at the Holiday Inn on Wilshire Blvd. in Westwood (LA), where we showed clips (seven, I think) from Norman Lear shows that had featured actors with disabilities, the second Media Access Awards was a luncheon honoring Garry Marshall and Henry Winkler. At that luncheon, we introduced Geri Jewell, who played cousin Geri on *The Facts of Life*—the first primetime sitcom to feature a recurring character with a disability on national television.

When it became evident that advocating for any minority was a full-time job, we established the Media Access Office. And, because we hadn’t paid anyone to

be in *A Different Approach*, a film about hiring people with disabilities, when Disney called and wanted to distribute the film with maybe a 10 or 20 percent royalty, I declined the offer. Instead, the South Bay Mayors Committee distributed the film and made enough money to fund another award-winning short called *It’s A New Day*, which featured all the technology that was being introduced to level the playing field for people with disabilities, along with scholarships, wheelchair ramps, etc. I was even invited to Japan back in 2005 because they were celebrating 20 years of showing *A Different Approach*. All of this occurred because *Maude’s Reunion* gave Norman Lear the idea of developing a show that included people with disabilities. And the rest, as they say, is history.

This year’s award show was a very special experience for me. The fact that Norman Lear was there, who triggered it all, was so nostalgic. It took me back to the ‘70s. We sat at a table with people who’d worked with Norman back then, like producer David Hoberman, who created *Monk* and who has since made these wonderful films—*Wonder*, *Stronger* and *Beauty and the Beast*. But to have Norman present me with the award was so special. Even Michael Keaton showed up, and he was so funny when he talked about how I approached him to star in *A Different Approach*: “There was this girl. She was making this film. I didn’t care what the film was about, I just wanted the gig.” And then I said that I’d had a backup waiting in the wings in case he didn’t show up, which I really did! But he turned in such a magnificent performance in the film, and not only was I a first-time producer-director, I didn’t even know that was going to be a career. I was just doing a job, and he came in without any preparation and without pay. What’s interesting is I gave Norman the first Media Access Award and now he gave me an award. It’s all come full circle. ■ ABILITY

by Fern Field

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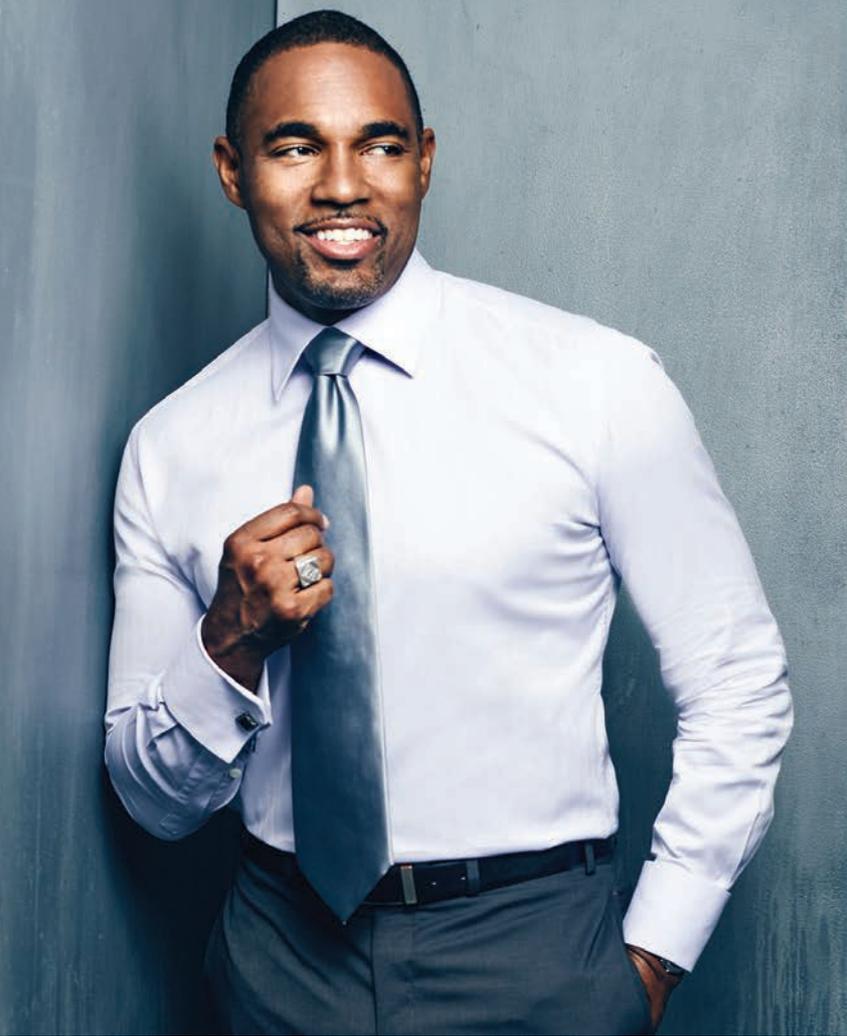
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# JASON GEORGE

When actor Jason George isn't busy saving lives as Dr. Ben Warren on *Grey's Anatomy*, he finds other ways to help. He champions diversity in the entertainment industry, guides at-risk youth, and raises funds for cancer research. He's also a classically trained stage actor, who's landed over 50 guest roles on primetime television, including nine series, such as *Mistresses*, *Eve*, *Eli Stone*, and multiple films and plays. So chances are good you've seen his face somewhere.

When not filming a series or on stage, the married father of three serves on the National Board of SAG-AFTRA (Screen Actors Guild and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists). He chairs their Diversity Advisory committee, which helps protect performers and supports diversity as part of the unions' negotiating teams for primetime television and film contracts. He's also a melanoma advocate. Last year he partnered with the Melanoma Research Foundation (MRF) to host the Miles for Melanoma 5K Run/Walk to raise funds for research.





Recently, *ABILITY* caught up with the actor at a symposium called “Engage: Navigating Hollywood’s Shifting Landscape” in Santa Monica. George spoke openly about disability and inclusivity in the entertainment industry, what he loves about acting, and his role in a new spin-off from *Grey’s Anatomy* in which he plays a firefighter in an as-yet-named TV series slated for 2018.

*Lia Martirosyan: Tell us about the symposium.*

Jason George: Engage is about inclusivity and diversity in media and television and how to get work in the industry, especially behind the scenes. It’s a comprehensive look at how to get employed, the kinds of employment there are, and what the changing trends are, especially when it comes to inclusivity and diversity.

*Martirosyan: Disability has been left out of the equation when talking diversity in media. What have you experienced?*

George: Disability in general hasn’t been included in the conversation about inclusivity. It’s only recently that it’s really started to move the needle. I do a lot of work with SAG-AFTRA around issues of diversity and inclusivity, and I’ve got to say that the Performers with Disabilities Committee has done phenomenal work moving the needle and getting this conversation happening in the industry. It’s amazing how much energy it takes to get that

big old boulder rolling just an inch, which they’ve done. It’s starting to roll now and people are having that conversation.

I think what I’m most excited about right now is that so many people are talking about equality and inclusivity and trying to make sure that nobody is left out. When you point out to somebody that they’re leaving out 20 percent of the population, they pay attention. They wake up. I think it’s not been nearly as hard a conversation as it would have been 10 or 15 years ago. People suddenly go, “Oh, you’re right. You’re right. I hadn’t been thinking about that. I hadn’t been including performers with disabilities in my projects. I haven’t been hiring writers with disabilities. I haven’t been looking for producers with disabilities.”

It’s pointed out to them, sometimes in a shaming way, but in terms of, “This actually will help improve your bottom line. People always want to see themselves on camera.” There doesn’t need to be a point. Most powerful is when you see a person on camera with a disability, and it’s not the point of the story. That’s happening more and more. Not enough, let’s be clear, but it’s happening more. At the end of the day I think people are starting to realize that if you say you stand for equality, it has to be equality across the board. It can’t just be equality for people who look like me, are my gender, think or love like me. It has to be equality for everybody. Either you



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fight for everybody, or you're really just fighting for yourself and people like you. So I think that's the message that needs to get out there more and more. It's that simple. The simple note of, "Don't forget about these folks who are, by the way, the biggest population of people who are forgotten in the country."

*Martirosyan: I heard you're also part of a committee focused on inclusivity and diversity?*

George: Yeah. Right now, I happen to chair the Diversity Advisory committee for SAG-AFTRA, which I call the United Nations of committees for the protected classes—all the groups like Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), women's committee, seniors' committee, performers with disabilities, and then there's a number of other task forces that are even more specific, such as the Native American Pacific Islander and the Asian-American Pacific Islander task force. These groups are traditionally underrepresented. We have a roundtable where we all come together, because these people have been forgotten. For "these people," you can fill in the blank with a lot of different names of groups. Whenever one of those groups has a breakthrough and figures out a new way of programming, we share best practices, because the structure of problems ends up being the same. People make assumptions about you based off of what they can see. So we're trying to make sure all the groups share best practices of how to try and move the needle,

because in that regard we have very similar issues.

For example, at this conference, I heard that the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media is working with Google on facial recognition software. They were able to quickly and accurately count the number of women in media by incredible numbers, whereas previously there were grad students sitting in a room and counting to figure out what the percentages of women were, like in the sciences, for example, they're represented 15 to 1. When you hear those numbers, you go, "Wow, that really is a mistake." Two out of 30 characters in the story, is not enough. Now they're able to do it for race as well, which is going to move the needle in that regard. My question is, to what extent can we also begin to look for a wheelchair or a crutch. I think there are so many ways it can at least move the needle forward in that regard. You can't necessarily catch other disabilities, but the reality is, you will catch a lot more than a grad student sitting in a room with a note pad and a pen doing their best.

When everybody's trying to do their best, right now we're in a culture where I think by and large most people, especially in Hollywood, want to be telling authentic stories, and don't want to be seen as the bad guy. Show them data, they say, "Oh, I guess I am the bad guy in this regard." And they change.

*Martirosyan: The bad guy or the "oops" guy.*





George: Right, the “oops” guy. And that’s the point. You’re not a bad buy, the reality is, you only know your story. Only thinking about life from your perspective, until somebody else shows you another perspective, then you say, “Oh, I hadn’t even thought about that”. “Well, now you do.” So the data is a very non-accusatory—the emotion’s out of it. A way of saying, “You had 300 characters come through in the last 10 episodes, one had a disability”. So it’s a way to move the needle—a picture’s worth a thousand words. I think some data is worth a million.

*Martirosyan: The National Institutes of Health says on average everyone experiences one or more disabilities for 13 years over the course of their lifetime.*

*It usually happens when we start to go over the hill and our bodies fall apart. Hearing loss, eyesight, and it goes on and on.*

George: The interesting thing about forms of disabilities is, when I look at that committee, they represent all different races, religions, shapes, sizes and ages. As you mentioned “natural” disabilities come up as we age. “My eyesight is starting to go. I’m going to need reading glasses.” These kinds of things we don’t think of as a disability, but the reality is that it is. We put it under a different heading. I think in large part because we think of it as a stigma. And the more we pull that stigma out of it, it’s like, no, this is a natural thing. Once we accept that, then we’ll probably pay attention, and we might have a little more investment in moving the needle, making sure the story’s being told.

*Martirosyan: We’ve had experiences where we’ve met people over the years, and now they’ve lost their hearing, saying, “What? What? What?” and they still don’t consider themselves under the disability umbrella.*





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George: They don't want to put themselves under that umbrella because they still have assumptions about what that term means. "I don't have a disability, I'm just getting older, and my hearing's starting to go, my eyesight's starting to go." It's like, "Uh, you've got a disability. Merry Christmas. It's the gig".

Still a stigma because in their minds, that's a whole separate category. For the average person, they think of it as a scary thing, but that's because of the assumptions that have been heaped on it for decades. The more you pull away those assumptions, the more they start to realize that "It's not that deep. It's all good."

*Martirosyan: Can you think of any best practices which will move us in the direction of getting more actors in front of the camera right now—behind the camera is another issue—to change society's attitudes?*

George: My experience with the performers with disabilities committee at SAG-AFTRA is what I think so many organizations are doing. I love that some of them are using the stick, pointing out what they're not doing, how harmful it is, that sort of thing. Some of them are using a carrot, making sure they receive praise when they do do it. I think that combination of needs is going to continue to grow on both sides. You need both. Look, I'm African American, so I always say, you need a Martin Luther King and you need a Malcolm X. You need

those two things working in concert with each other to move the needle.

I think all the right ideas are in place. We just need more ways to gather data so we can lay it in front of them and tell facts. "Yes, you know emotionally it's the right thing to do. Statistically, this is going to give you the opportunity to reach 20 percent of your potential audience, a population that has some form of disability. When they see themselves, they're more apt to actually watch your show. So, yes, morally it's the right thing for you to do, but it's also going to make you money." At the end of the day, with all of these issues, that's what it comes down to. Show them how it will make them money, and they'll respond. Twenty percent of the population, you're talking about a population in the country of hundreds of millions of people. That's a massive number. This wakes people up.

*Martirosyan: Yes if companies understood there's \$1.3 trillion in expendable income...*

George: Not my income.

*(laughter)*

*Martirosyan: Tell us about your acting background.*

George: I first discovered acting at the University of





Jason with Norman Lear, during the Media Access Awards



Virginia (UVA). Planning on a career in law. I'd gotten tight with a Virginia Supreme Court justice who said, "You get the grades, I'll write the recommendation. You come clerk for me, we'll get you into law school." I took an acting class, and that all went away. Then I went to Temple University to get my master of fine arts in acting, because I thought that everybody goes to LA thinking, "I'm cute, and I can read, so I should be an actor." I actually wanted to understand the craft, its history, that sort of thing. It's served me well. I'm a believer that your education continues—it's a big UVA thing. They don't believe in senior or freshman. Your education goes on forever. You're never done. You're a first year, second year, third year, fourth year, and it goes on from there. The idea that you're always learning stuck with me.

When I went to one particular school, they gave me dance, singing and stage combat classes and all these different ways to understand craft. Several of my greatest acting lessons came out of stage combat and dance class. I'm a very physical person. I can take that and translate it into how to emotionally break down a scene. An actor needs to be good at a lot of different things. That was useful for me. You can piece that same thing together wherever you are. Find people who teach, whether they're doing it for money or somebody who can mentor. The education is ongoing. Learning to love learning is, I think, an actor's greatest job, because

whoever you play, you want to learn how to get into their skin, and it's usually about something you know little about.

Right now I'm playing a doctor on *Grey's Anatomy*. I had to learn all these things. I had to love the idea of getting the nuances of that. If it's drudgery, you're in the wrong business.

*Martirosyan: What if you get sick at the sight of blood?*

(laughter)

George: Fortunately, the blood is only so much. It's really mainly a steak that they throw on there. The blood is tasty. It's actually just syrup.

*Martirosyan: Do you ever find yourself feeling like you're actually inside a human body?*

George: I am saved from getting lost in the surgery, mainly because I don't know how to do surgery. I know how to tie some of the knots, we'll always do research to find out about the disease we're talking about and the surgery we're about to perform, but I can't perform it. I'm not a real doctor. What's fun about my show is that it's far less about this activity, than it is about the connection that comes between people because of this activity. I think that's what people respond to. Even



when we're doing an intense surgery, it's really about checking out what's going on. We always call it "eye acting", because we're supposed to be paying attention to what we're doing, and real doctors never take their eyes off the field, but to never look up doesn't work in TV. You have to choose when to look at that person, and that's the world. The eyes are the window into the soul. At the end of the day, when you connect, how much you connect and for how long is a huge piece of what we do as actors.

*Martirosyan: Can you give us inside information about what's going to happen to your character?*

George: *(laughs)* Well, Ben has applied to the firefighter training academy. Ben is in pursuit of another goal. It's still, in his mind, a pursuit of medicine. He wants to be at the source of where things go wrong for people. You can think of it like spokes on a wheel. If you can change the trajectory by just three degrees from the center, by the time you get someone to the hospital that may be a life-changing difference. He wants to see if he can't expound on that.

*Martirosyan: We have a couple of doctors who write for the magazine. One day I was on the phone with our Managing Health Editor and he says, "I've got to get back in surgery." I said, "What?"*

*(laughter)*

*"You didn't need to call me back" He said, "No, no, I had time, but now I've got to put the scull back on this person." He's a brain surgeon, and what can happen with head traumas is that the brain swells and can kill a patient, so they take the scull off, and need to wait—*

George: —for the swelling to come down. One of the most mesmerizing things I've learned in the course of playing a doctor, I watched an open-heart surgery where they were changing someone's valves. One of the valves had calcified. So they had to put a plastic one in and cut off the only valve. They literally sew it on, like the way you'd stitch on a button. Not the same exact stitch, but you could learn to do the stitch. What's crazy is how bloodless an open-heart surgery is, because they're running all of your blood through a machine, pumping it around. In the middle of the surgery, right after they finish working on the heart, they sit down and they jaw, because they're waiting for the body to warm back up and the blood to start flowing again. What's surprising is how much downtime there is in this surgery. One of the greatest quotes about film is that film is a lie that tells the truth. I need you to tell me the truth of how it feels, not the facts of how it feels. We're going to lie about the facts to get to the truth.

So if we showed you the real six-hour surgery, how much downtime they have, it would be the worst rated show in the history of television. But when you watch

the surgery and find out how casual doctors can get, you understand they have to be. This is what they do every day. I'm going into the spinoff of *Grey's Anatomy*, which is about firefighters. People who stand three, five, ten feet from roaring flames with a hose, from certain death, having a conversation. Occasionally barking out orders and that sort of thing, but they also look like they're washing the car. That's their job. It could kill you, but it's what they do every day. Finding where that person lives—that element of playing these roles—is one of the more fun parts of acting. We all have fight-or-flight, in our head, our heart, our gut. Where they have to live and where they have to move themselves as if, "You know what? I know this could kill me, but I'm good". Or, "Okay, I'm not as good any more. I'm getting nervous". If I were a doctor, this is what I'd do every day. It's not that big a deal. Finding that level of what makes this person nervous who already has to have nerves of steel, is always fun. The writers find it for us, set us up, and we've got to figure out how to make it real.

*Martirosyan: What is the show called?*

George: It doesn't have a name yet. Right now it's the untitled *Grey's Anatomy* spinoff. It will have a name shortly, before it airs. It's supposed to air in the spring some time. A Shonda Rhimes special, so you've got to be ready. You're going to have the feels. You're going to clutch the pearls sometimes and have some laughs, some cries.

*Martirosyan: Looking forward to it. Can you share any advice for an actor experiencing adversity or having a difficult time?*

George: If I had to give advice to any performer, whatever their disability or not, "Do you. Do you." Because the reality is, there will be a bunch of actors who can memorize lines, say them like they mean it, like it's truthful. But nobody can say it like you. At the end of the day, all you have is your distinct point of view. More and more, especially as technology is democratizing media, everybody's got their own YouTube channel, everybody's got an Instagram account where you can actually begin to put forward great content and get discovered. You can shoot an entire movie on an iPhone and get it to Sundance. That's happening now. Your individual story, what makes you, you, is the most valuable asset.

Yes, people are going to have assumptions, and when you dispel them by telling your story, what you are fully capable of, that will be the thing that blows them away and makes them want to hang out with you, want to watch you, to hear your story and tell your stories. At the end of the day, "do you". ■ **ABILITY**

[abc.go.com/shows/greys-anatomy](http://abc.go.com/shows/greys-anatomy)  
[sagafta.org](http://sagafta.org)



# MARSHA MALAMET

## *Lessons to be Learned*

### Part II

*ABILITY's* Geri Jewell and David Zimmerman continue their interview with songwriter Marsha Malamet in her quaint bungalow in Hollywood, CA

**M**alamet: I believe we come back time and time again, and have hundreds of past lives.

*Jewell: Do you believe that we connect with the same people we connected with before?*

Malamet: Absolutely. We come in, and we have groups. We travel in groups. We're always changing roles. Let's say if Nancy is my caregiver now, and I'm the patient, maybe in another life I was the caregiver and Nancy was the patient, so we experience the other's perspective, and work out some issues we continually have, lifetime after lifetime, until we finally resolve it and it ends.

*Zimmerman: I feel like that's why when we met, we connected. That's why when you and Geri connected; we all felt a bond.*

*Jewell: It's amazing.*

Malamet: Yes! All right, you have to indulge me here.

*Zimmerman: Indulge, indulge! (laughs)*

Malamet: So, we have lifetime after lifetime to perfect and evolve, but what happens between the times of each

incarnation? We plan, we choose certain things to experience, and people are at the top of the list. Who knows? Maybe we all chose this time, this place, to share, to experience one another. And now it gets fun. Maybe we wrote this in our life script to have this interview now, for this particular magazine, so we would help and inspire people.

There's a guy named Robert Schwartz who wrote a book called *Courageous Souls*. I would suggest you read it. It's about the notion that we plan our life challenges before birth. We have to be courageous to even choose to come back to this earth, because it's not very pleasant, especially now. We all our warriors in some sense, and I believe we are all looking to heal, whether we know it or not.

*Jewell: We're spiritual warriors.*

Malamet: Right. If we do decide to come in, we have consults with our spirit guides and our angels and we write up an overview, like a PowerPoint of our life. Of course, there's free will and there's things that happen, but basically we created our lives.

*Zimmerman: And then jumped in?*





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Malamet: We jumped in. “Aaaaah! Waaaah!”

Jewell: “Why did I agree to this?”

Malamet: Right! Exactly!

Zimmerman: I always say that when I popped my head out of the womb, I said, “Push me back in!”

(laughter)

Malamet: Well, hey, my mother was in labor 48 hours. Did she want to have a baby? I mean, I’m sure she did, but there was some fear involved. Anyway, so this is what we do. We create our lives on some level. So of course we connected, because I wrote you into my script to be at this time and place, and that we were going to all be friendly. There’s an unconscious acknowledgment of the familiarity of it.

Zimmerman: And what’s making me tear up right now? We all have helped each other in the short time that the three of us have known one another.

Malamet: We’re basically on the same page. I want to help you, you want to help me. I want to be creative with you, you guys want to be creative with me.

Jewell: I have to tell you, that story you told early about

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The Garry Moore Show is really interesting, because my idol wasn’t Barbra Streisand—sorry, Barbra!—it was Carol Burnett! Mom used to say, “I don’t know why you are obsessed with Carol Burnett! The only thing I can think of is that when I was pregnant with you, I watched The Garry Moore Show all the time; you must have heard it from in here!” So when you said that, I was like, “Garry Moore!”

(laughter)

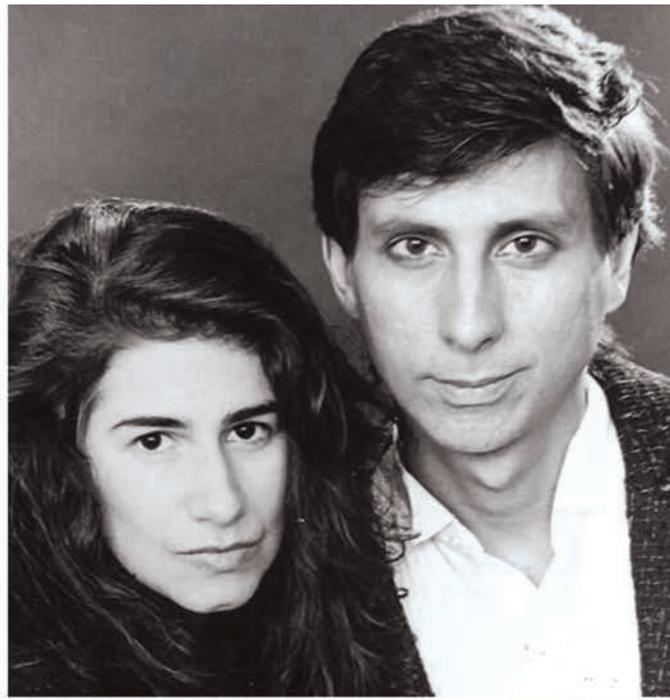
Malamet: So look, we have another connection. By the way, Carol Burnett is a bloody genius.

Jewell and Zimmerman: Oh, yes!

Malamet: You hitched your wagon to a brilliant actress and comedian. She and Lucille Ball were it...period. They’re the queens and everyone else is below. It’s these people who inspire us. God knows what I would have written if I hadn’t heard Babs singing, “A Sleepin’ Bee,” and all her songs on that first record, which was so spellbinding. I walked around in a daze. My mother would say, “Marsha, time for lunch!” I didn’t eat. I wasn’t hungry. Barbara sang over those little speakers and I was transported into heaven.

Zimmerman: When I saw Streisand and Hoffman were to play the parents in Meet the Fockers, I said, “Listen,





Top, Left to Right: Marsha at a songwriting workshop, with the lyricist, Liz Vidal; Marsha, Ru Paul and Diahann Carroll; Marsha and AIDS activist and her, Michael Callen; Marsha with writing partner Liz Vidal; Michael Feinstein, Marsha and John Bucchino; ASCAP event with Rick Shumaker, Les Binder, Bruce Hornsby, and Marsha

*they must have a role for a cousin somewhere. They must have a wedding or a bar mitzvah or a bris! I've got to be in that movie!" And ultimately, I got to play Dom Focker. I was on the set for one day, and it was amazing and wonderful. When I see those little residual checks that say Meet the Fockers, I smile.*

**Malamet:** You set your intention.

**Zimmerman:** *Because I always thought, "I'm the love child of Barbra Streisand and Dustin Hoffman."* (laughs) *You have a connection to Dustin; tell us about it.*

**Malamet:** *Midnight Cowboy* floored me. The pathos of his character, Ratso, made me weep. Dustin is our Jewish De Niro.

**Jewell:** *Maybe 10 years ago, I was invited to a speech Dustin Hoffman gave at UCLA. I got a front-row seat because I'm hearing impaired. He spoke for two hours about his life and career. I just sat there like, "Oh, my*

*God!" And then when it was over— and you can relate to this—my back pain was so severe I couldn't get out of my seat. Everybody was getting up and shaking hands with him, and I was sitting there, trying to get up, but couldn't. He pushed through all those people and came over to me and said, "Let me give you a hand." He helped me up, and I had tears in my eyes.*

**Malamet:** I love that! There's a humanity about him. The reason why I also have a little affinity for him is that, in 1978, I was hanging out at Catch A Rising Star in New York where I performed.

**Jewell:** *I performed there, too!*

**Malamet:** A lot of us did. So he comes in. I was with friends. For half an hour, he tried to pick me up. He was schmoozing heavily. I thought his flirting was cute. Of course, I knew who he was. He didn't know that I was gay. If I were straight, we would have gone to a hotel. After that I had a warm feeling for him. At



least he had good taste. (*laughs*) He has this twinkle in his eye, and he's such a brilliant actor. That's sexy to me.

*Zimmerman: On the set of The Fockers, when they called "cut," I was in a haze because I had been so focused. And then I heard "playback" of the scene, caught a glimpse of myself, and heard muffled laughter. Somebody grabbed my hand and started shaking it hard. He said, "Good s—, man, good s—!" And I turned and it was Dustin Hoffman.*

*Jewell: Wow!*

*Zimmerman: And I said, "Thank you." I was standing there like, "Okay, I can die happy now." Such a mensch he is. You know, there was something I wanted to ask you. Tell me about the poem, "Again..."*

Malamet: It's something I'm proud of. I'm not a real lyricist per se, but when I get inspired it comes out. A couple of my records that are—shameless plug— on iTunes, Amazon, and CD Baby, are songs that I wrote the lyrics to. For months I had the melody to that one written, and I wanted to set it with my own lyric. But the lyric wouldn't come to me. I was sitting there and nothing. When that happens, I give it up and I let my higher self dictate what it is. And one night, one of the only times this ever happened, this lyric, this poem just came to me. I wrote it in an hour, which is amazing for me. It was about how when you say goodbye to someone you love, and you want to be there but can't, so you have to do something. You maybe have to go away for a day, a week, a month, the separation is so intense that in my mind, I think, "Oh, if I could just love her again, one more time." That's what inspired this lyric. It goes back to ancient times because love has no boundaries. So I think on some level I wrote this song for one of my past lives that was during Sappho, the Greeks, the Romans, whatever, that whole time in history. I really feel that... It translates into the old Celine Dion song from *Titanic*?

*Zimmerman: "My Heart Will Go On."*

Malamet: That's it. That's why the song was such a megahit. This is true. Even if we pass, the love is there. It's real. Because the only thing in life that's real is love, not hatred and fear. The opposite of love is fear. And this planet is in a lot of fear now. But hold onto your hats, because it's going to turn around.

*Zimmerman: The yin and yang is going to balance out?*

Malamet: This planet will balance out soon.

*Zimmerman: It's got to. I remember reading that you opened for Eartha Kitt. I loved her.*

Malamet: That was my big debut at Lincoln Center's

Alice Tully Hall. There's a story connected to that.

*Jewell: Why does that not surprise me?*

(*laughter*)

Malamet: I had a great fear of performing. I used to get panic attacks while I was showering and getting dressed. My throat would tighten, and I had sweaty palms. By the time I got to the club I was soaked in perspiration and couldn't talk.

*Jewell: When was this?*

Malamet: Throughout the '80s. I was in therapy at the time. I got booked to open for Eartha, and a wonderful male trio called Gotham. They were all my friends. I was looking forward to it, but of course I freaked out at a venue of 80 seats, and now I was in a Lincoln Center hall with over a thousand seats.

So I went to therapy that week and I said. "Vivian, you've got to help me." She walked me through it. Luckily I had two months. I forgot her process, however, by the time of the performance, I was a chill ball. I was so confident. I was like, "I got this." And I got up on stage and there was a moment when I saw my background girls, and this amazing grand piano and I sat down, took a deep breath, and went: "Okay, Marsha, this is what it's all about," giving myself a little validation. I started playing and got a little nervous. But my therapist told me what to do in my mind. I had the sense to deep breathe. It's something you can do between the notes, staying conscious of the breath. Luckily it was a ballad and it went flawlessly. I worked out my phobia and my stage fright by playing Lincoln Center.

*Jewell: What are the odds!*

Malamet: It's one thing to hear 80 or 100 people applaud, but a thousand is an out-of-body experience. It's visceral. You feel it in your bones.

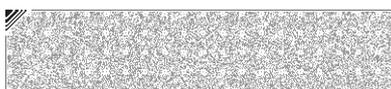
*Zimmerman: It's a rumble.*

Malamet: And it's addictive. Who doesn't want to be applauded by thousands?

*Zimmerman: I'm going to say a title, and you tell me the first thought that comes to your mind. "Why Did You Promise Me the World?"*

Malamet: I was down on my knees for that one, too. My girlfriend had left me after we were together for close to five years. It was my first big breakup. I didn't get dressed for a month... So what does a songwriter do to mitigate the pain?

*Zimmerman: She writes.*





Geri, Marsha and David

**Malamet:** She writes. That song came out fast and furious. And when I finished it, it was cathartic because, I said, “At least I acknowledged myself for the grieving.” When I listened to it, it really helped. And then a couple years later Barbara Cook recorded it. That’s when I knew that my breakup wasn’t in vain. I was thrilled that a woman of her stature would sing my song. Barbara Cook was the queen of Broadway, even then.

**Jewell:** *Oh, yeah, absolutely.*

**Malamet:** She used a lot of the new songwriters in the late 70’s.

**Zimmerman:** *So she had heard you sing the song?*

**Malamet:** She used to come to some of my gigs and heard me perform it. Barbara and Wally Harper, her musical director, decided to do a record by the new kids on the block, so to speak. The new writers who were singing their hearts out in the cabarets of New York. She also picked a song by the brilliant Janis Ian. I was in great company.

**Jewell:** *Oh, wow!*

**Malamet:** Barbara did “Stars,” which will make you will bawl. She was so brilliant. I’m very lucky to be on that record. My song has a very bombastic chorus, the queen of Broadway sings like a pop-rock queen. It’s unbelievable.

**Jewell:** *So you had to be in your feelings many times in your life.*

**Malamet:** Many times. I have the scars to prove it. I was scraped off the floor, the basement, walls, everything. I’ve also have had tremendous highs. Now with this illness, I’m not a victim, and I will do my best. Since I’ve had so many good things happen in my life, why wouldn’t this be another good outcome for me? I’m convinced that once I find the right doctor that will make a big difference. It’s been a little tricky finding the right one, because they all have different protocols. So I have to go with my intuition, and do my research. The good news is, I’ve found a medical medium. She’s going to read my body and get in touch with what I really need. I’m looking forward to that.

**Jewell:** *That’s what Edgar Cayce did.*

**Malamet:** Exactly. She’s going to do that for me. I’m going to set up an appointment. It’s time to bring in the big psychic guns. This illness has made me see what’s really important.

**Zimmerman:** *You sure are loved. You know that.*

**Malamet:** I know. I love you.

**Zimmerman:** *We love you.*

**Malamet:** It’s funny, isn’t it? These are tears of joy, a breakthrough of possibility.



Zimmerman: What brings you the most joy?

Malamet: I love when people are real, and don't have any pretenses. Meeting people who have no agendas.

Jewell: Yes! (claps)

Malamet: When people are authentic, they see me. It's a two-way street. And any kind of music brings me joy.

Zimmerman: Your music gives so much joy to others.

Jewell: I agree.

Malamet: When you create something, you take yourself into that creation. And you take it and give it to other people. Serve other people. And that's the miracle.

Jewell: Remember when we talked earlier about spiritual contracts? I believe that we chose to come into each other's lives at this time.

Malamet: Absolutely.

Jewell: Because this is when we all agreed that we were going to need each other the most. Maybe, had we met years ago, it would've been like, "Hello! Hi!"

Malamet: "There's Geri Jewell and David Zimmerman. Hi, guys!" But this is much deeper.

Zimmerman: And it's this kind of connection that keeps me breathing.

Malamet: It's like, "Let's have a ball. Even with a little disability. Let's utilize what we came here for." And I am suffering to a point, but I am more deeply happy in the solar plexus of my body than I ever have been.

Zimmerman: What do you want the most at this moment?

Malamet: I want to be able to get up from this chair without anyone helping me. I want to keep healing body, mind, and spirit. More of an independent life, and to just keep doing what I'm doing, keeping my heart open. Being vulnerable, having dreams, and even accepting the funky stuff.

Zimmerman: It's the struggles in life that make you who you are. Like, with my heart attack, it changed me. But I got through it and onto the next level.

Jewell: I came into the world with a quote-unquote "disability," cerebral palsy. I never had anything to compare it to. People have said many times, "That's so much easier than acquiring a disability later in life, because it's a whole different psychological challenge." I would have to say that I agree to a point, but I spent my childhood doing what you guys are doing now, so that I could learn to

adjust and accept the beauty of it later. So it is a struggle, you just go through it in a different way.

Malamet: Absolutely. That's a great point. I really believe, on some level, that I chose a physical disability. I know it sounds crazy. I was forced to pick something that showed my fragility and my vulnerability. There are no accidents.

Jewell: And truthfully, I want to do it right in my own life because I do believe if we screw up radically, we have to come back and do it again.

Zimmerman: Oh, no, please! (laughs)

Jewell: And the thought of me having cerebral palsy twice is like, "No, no, no, no. Once I can deal with, and I'm going to do it right so I don't have to come back and do it again." (laughs)

Malamet: Right. But of course, remember, you choose on the other side how you want to work out some karma, learn your lessons. We're all learning.

Zimmerman: We get to choose that?

Malamet: Oh, absolutely.

Zimmerman: You know, we could have a 20-hour interview; we could keep going for a week. There are so many singers you've written for: Chaka Khan, Diana Ross, Patty Labelle, Sheena Easton, Luther Vandross, Peter Allen... Such a history you have!

Malamet: I've had so many diverse artists recording my songs, from Meatloaf to Jessica Simpson, and from Chaka Khan to Sesame Street, and Meatloaf and Jessica recorded the same song.

Zimmerman: The same song?

Malamet: Yes. How crazy is that? And then throw in the mix Barbara Cook—may her soul rest in peace—to Judy Collins. The only genre that hasn't been fulfilled is rap. Any of your rappers out there—

Zimmerman: "Call up Marsha!"

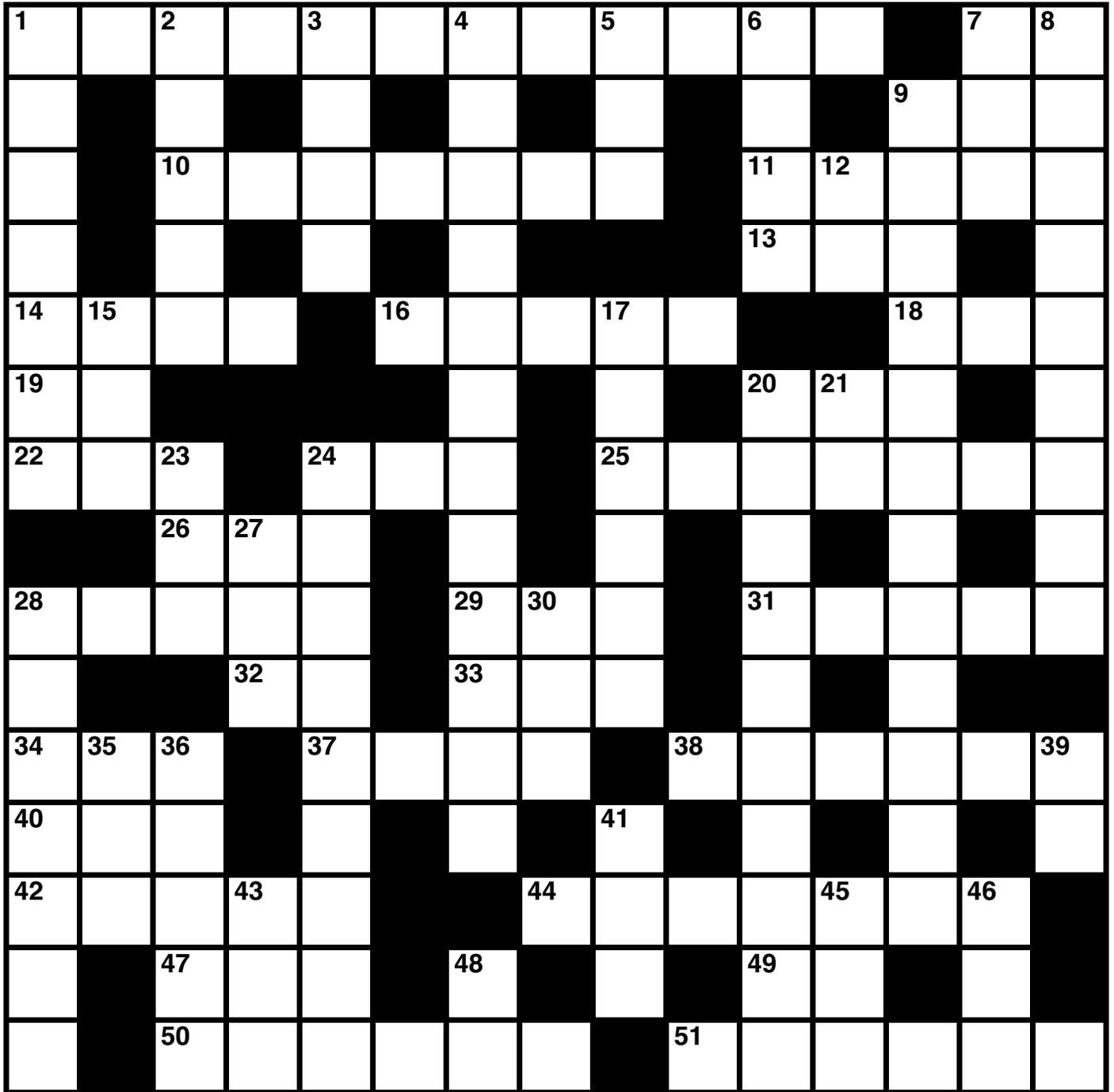
(laughter) ■ ABILITY



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# ABILITY'S



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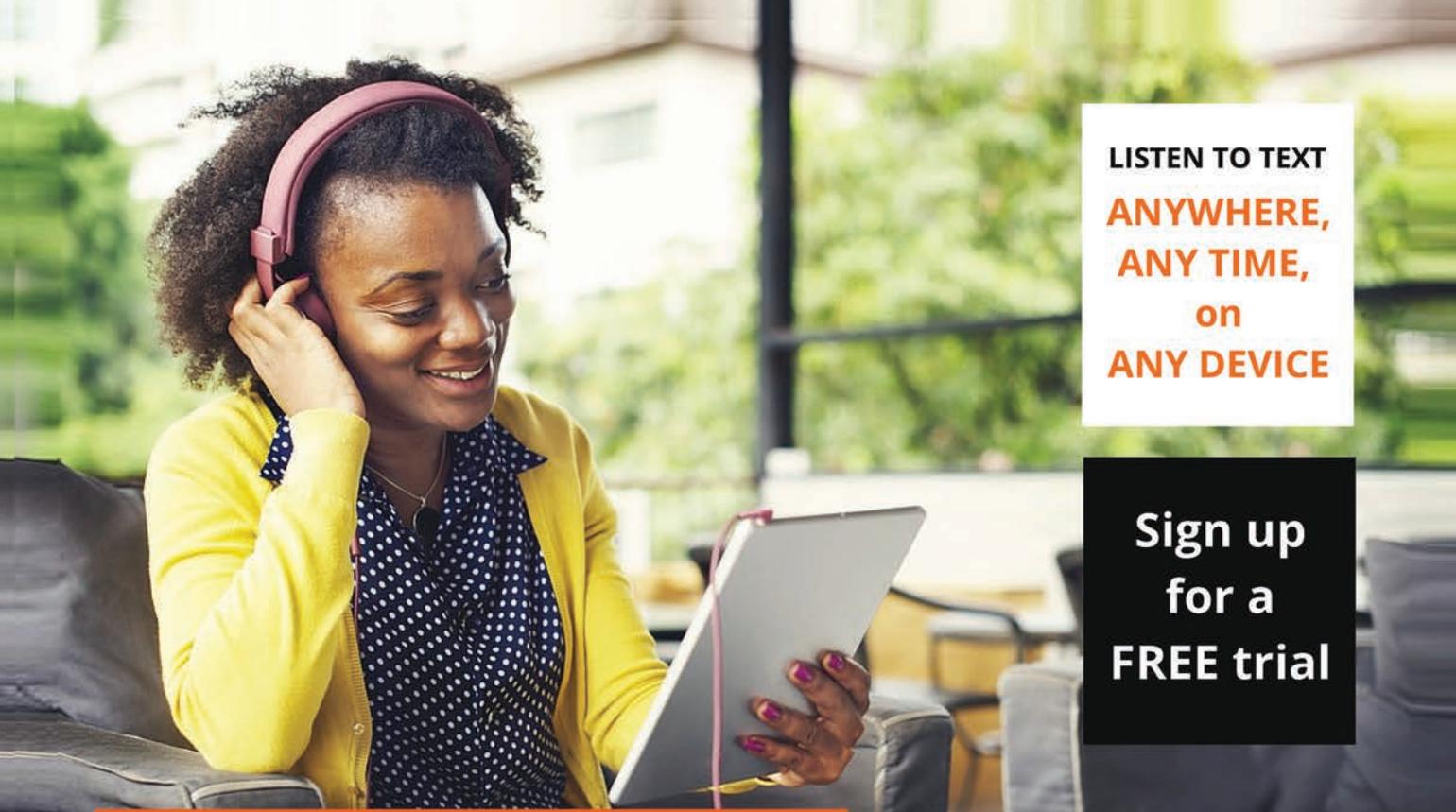
1. "Switched at Birth" actress plays a deaf teenager, 3 words
7. Alien too good for earth
9. Top poker card
10. Chinese art teacher who runs the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts for people of special needs, Guan \_\_\_\_\_
11. "You're So Vain" singer
13. Two cents' worth
14. Literary inspiration
16. "Superman" actor a champion for those with disabilities
18. Collector of nectar
19. "The coast \_\_\_ clear!"
20. McCartney or John
22. "Big Bang Theory" character
24. Curly-tailed pooch
25. Elsa was one
26. The Sun Devils, for short
28. CSI setting
29. Purpose
31. Oscar winner for "Tootsie" and "Blue Sky"
32. Acidity factor
33. "\_\_\_ stop, wet day, she's there I say..." The Hollies
34. Mr. Turkey
37. Any of the Bee Gees
38. "Love to Love you, Baby" singer
40. Course setting, for short
42. Traffic cop's tool
44. Fun in the sea
47. Pledge of Allegiance ender
49. Mr. \_\_\_ (horse)
50. Despite an accident and a paralyzed arm as a kid he became a champion Iron Man contestant, Jason \_\_\_\_\_
51. Josh who performed "The Prayer" with Sarah Brightman

### DOWN

1. Led Zeppelin song
2. Michener book
3. 'Almighty' one of film
4. Actress who plays edgy roles in "Game of Silence" and "Sons of Anarchy" and fights prejudice relating to people with disabilities, 2 words
5. Hawaiian wreath
6. The supreme Supreme
7. Green as a prefix
8. Great Smoky mountains state
9. "Judging Amy" star who supports and advocates CHIME, for inclusive education, 2 words
12. Des Moines locale
15. "The Star-Spangled Banner" land
17. Moral standards
20. 2011 movie about people with disabilities who overcame them, riding the waves
21. Popular
23. Forerunner to NCIS
24. Sundance reality TV series chronicling the lives of 4 girls over coming disabilities, 2 words
27. Tree juice
28. Former military member
30. Type of sandwich
35. \_\_\_ dare, 2 words
36. Award of honor
39. Memo starter
41. Place to buy a pint
43. Guinness e.g.
45. Wedding vow (2 words)
46. Student score
48. "\_\_\_, myself and I" De La Soul

answers on page 62





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[www.mylifewithoutlimits.org](http://www.mylifewithoutlimits.org)

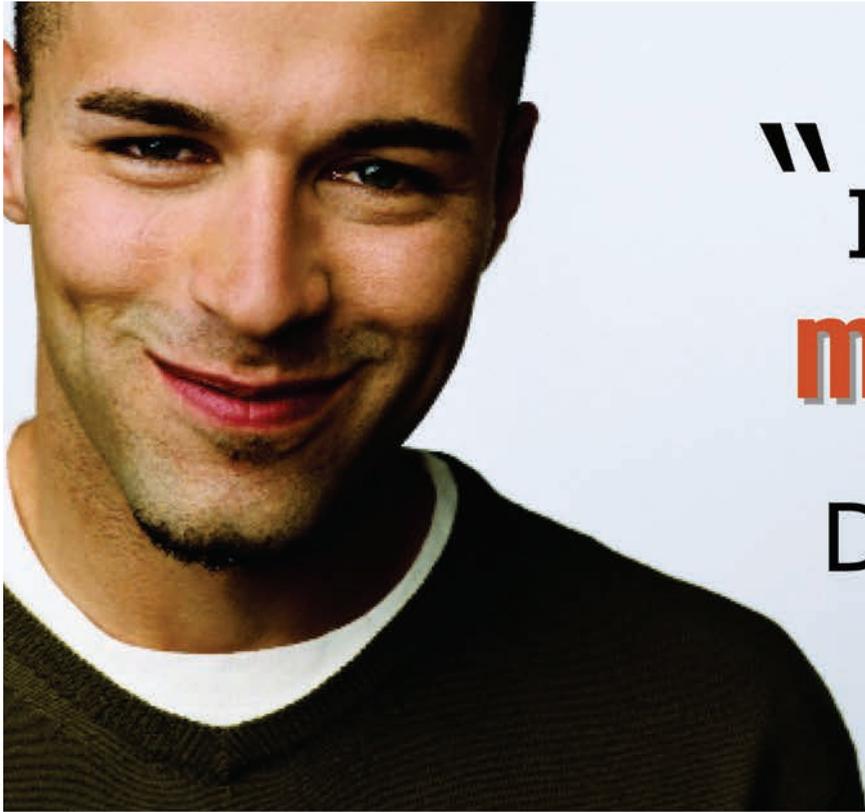


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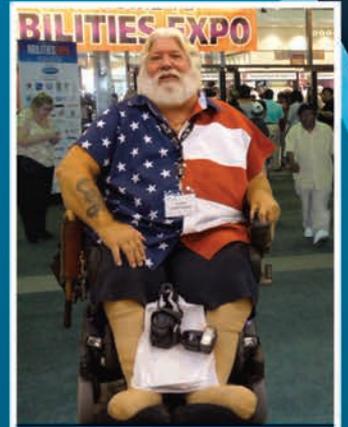


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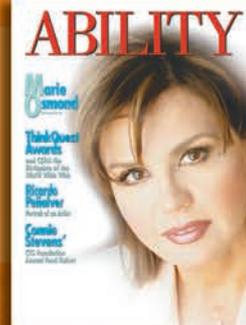
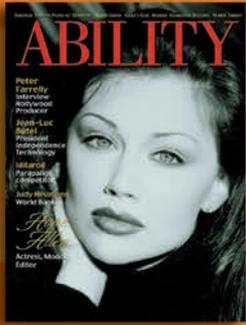
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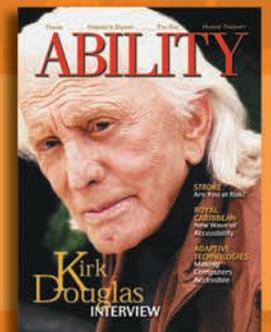
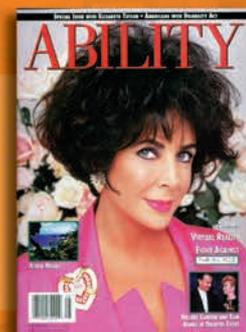
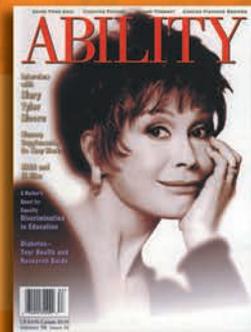
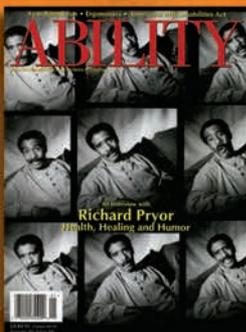
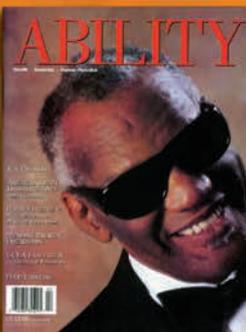
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