LONG HAUL PAUL ASHLEY FIOLEK WATERMELONS ARE NOT STRAWBERRIES CROSSWORD PUZZLE EVENTS/CONFERENCES

ABILITY

SENATOR ★ SOLDIER

TAMMY DUCKWORTH

ADVOCATE ★ MOTHER

Blockchain, NFT, Metaverse & more

STORIES FROM THE STAGE

Patricia Alvarado and Brandon Kazen-Maxwell

+ Improv-Yes and...
Arlene Kanter
Tricia Malowney

corinne FURMAN



Actor, Advocate and Ukrainian Dog Rescue Volunteer



amara

A Revolution in Captioning & Subtitling Web Video

- Join Ted Talks, PBS NewsHour, Udacity, Mozilla, and many other organizations
- Drastically reduce your cost of captioning
- Engage your community *or* tap into Amara's
- Access the easiest way to caption web video

Get in touch - Enterprise@Amara.org

FCC Winner
AAA Chairman's Award for Accessibility

People with disabilities are at least twice as likely to be victims of violent crimes and are sexually assaulted at rates up to 7 times greater than the general population.

BUT WE ARE NOT ALONE

Victim Services Programs are Here to Help

Victim services advocates work with individuals to reduce the effects of trauma. They help by guiding individuals through the legal system and directing them to organizations that provide important services like:

- counseling
- help getting property back
- support when going into court
- filing compensation claims
- and many other important services

Victim services are FREE of charge. Your well-being matters and victim services are there to help you.

For information about victim services in your area visit:

www.thearcca.org/victimservices

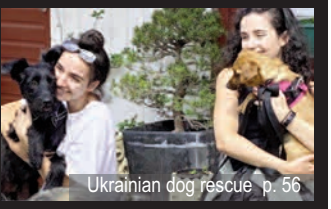
Cal OES
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

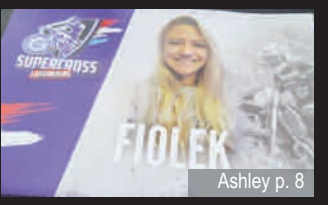
This publication was financially assisted by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES)

The Arc
California


Senator Tammy Duckworth p. 18


Brandon Kazen-Maxwell p. 32


Ukrainian dog rescue p. 56



Ashley p. 8

CONTENTS

6 **ASHLEY FIOLEK — Europe is Calling**

8 **HUMOR — Squeaky Train Wheels**

10 **LONG HAUL PAUL — Go West Old Man**

14 **IMPROV — For Life**

18 **TAMMY DUCKWORTH — Senator, Soldier, Advocate, Mother**

26 **SANDRA BACCHI — "Watermelons Are Not Strawberries"**

32 **STORIES FROM STAGE — Patricia Alvarado & Brandon Kazen-Maxwell**

40 **GREG PARKER — Blockchain, NFT, Metaverse and More**

50 **ARLENE KANTER — Global Disability Rights Advocate**

56 **CORINNE FURMAN — Actor, Advocate and Ukrainian Dog Rescue**

68 **TRICIA MALOWNEY — My Journey Empowers Others**

74 **CROSSWORD — *ABILITY*'s Puzzle**

78 **MARKETPLACE — Products and Sevices**

ADVERTISING

For advertising information e-mail advertising@abilitymagazine.com 949.854.8700

ABILITY Magazine is published bimonthly
8941 Atlanta Ave. HB, CA 92646 (ISSN 1062-5321) All Rights Reserved

Send address changes to *ABILITY Magazine*, Attention: Subscriptions Manager
PO Box 10878, Costa Mesa, CA 92627; Tammy Duckworth Issue Oct/Nov 2022

Published in USA

DISTRIBUTION

Faxon-RoweCom Library Services
Ebsco - Library Services
Swets Blackwell

MANAGING EDITOR
Gillian Friedman, MD

MANAGING HEALTH EDITOR
E. Thomas Chappell, MD

HUMOR WRITERS
Jeff Charlebois
George Covington, JD

EDITORS
Melissa Ancheta
Paula Fitzgerald
Pamela K. Johnson
Sylvia Martirosyan
Lia Martirosyan
Josh Pate, PhD
Maya Sabatello, PhD, JD
Karina Ulrike Sturm
Mekiya Walters

HEALTH EDITOR
Larry Goldstein, MD

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Ashley Fiolek
Eileen Grubba
Geri Jewell
George Kaplan
Regina Hall
Myles Mellor (Crossword Puzzle)
Itto Outini
Paul Pelland (Long Haul Paul)

WEB EDITORS
Marge Plasmier
Karina Ulrike Strum
Bob Williams (Interactive Puzzle)

MULTI-MEDIA
Karina Ulrike Sturm

GRAPHIC ART / ILLUSTRATION
Scott Johnson
Melissa Murphy (Medical Illustration)

PHOTOGRAPHY
Jeff Vespa
Paul Pelland
Nancy Villere

TRANSCRIPTIONIST
Sandy Grabowski

TRANSLATOR
Jing Hu
Emily Deng

MARKETING/PROMOTIONS
SOCIAL MEDIA
Faith Chrishelle
Lia Martirosyan
Tamay Shannon

ABILITYJOBS.COM
Lori Daly
Vicky Dupree
George Kaplan
Marge Plasmier
Casey Mims
Denise Miller

EDITORIAL
editorial@abilitymagazine.com

PUBLISHER / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Chet Cooper

The views expressed in this issue may not be those of *ABILITY Magazine*

Library of Congress
Washington D.C. ISSN 1062-5321

© Copyright 1990-2022 *ABILITY Magazine*



LISTEN TO TEXT
ANYWHERE,
ANY TIME,
on
ANY DEVICE

Sign up
for a
FREE trial

RATHER LISTEN THAN READ?

Read aloud tools give those with reading difficulties **autonomy** and better **understanding**, whether it's a web page, a document, an image, or even text as it's written.

Try ReadSpeaker TextAid for yourself with our free 14-day trial.

ReadSpeaker
THE POWER OF SPEECH

HTTP://TEXTAID.READSPEAKER.COM
+1 (703) 657 7801



Whew this month has been crazy for me! I raced in the Ride Cake finale in Sweden and when that was finished I got back home for just a couple of weeks and then headed back over to Europe again! We traveled to Belgium and Luxembourg. Belgium to visit racing friends of mine that I have known forever and Luxembourg for their first supercross race!


Ashley and Supercross fans

Serge is the guy who hosted the whole Luxembourg race and he wanted some familiar American race faces over there to help promote the whole race. He was very kind and he bought me and my wife Lindsey's tickets to be at the race and also he let us arrive a week before so that we could visit with my second family the Gooverats!

The whole trip was pretty wild, I'm used to traveling overseas for racing, but this trip seemed very complicated and confusing! It was wild because we had to take a train from Paris to Belgium and no one can help us because they don't speak English and obviously they cannot sign haha... also our plane was very delayed so we had to change all of the train reservations that I had. The Gooverats actually wound up picking us up at one of the train stations so we didn't have to take the whole train trip!

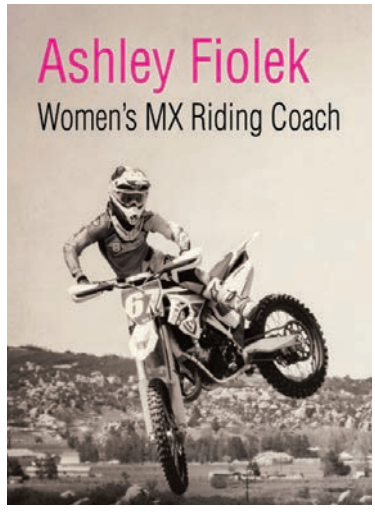


The family also planned out a little trip like we were local's which was a great experience. It was like we were not tourists just local Belgium people! We got to stay at their house and hang out. My friend's son Jace had a blast with us and we played with him at the house all the time.

We had to travel to Bouillon for Gino (he is the Father of the family) he was entered into an enduro MTB race and it was awesome to cheer him on since he used to be my mechanic back in the day when I used to race in Europe! That is how we met and then I became close to his daughters. We also got to drink some amazing beers and gin cocktails and got new tattoos too.

When our trip in Belgium ended we drove to Luxembourg, it is only about 2.5 hours so that was not bad at all. It was very cool to be part of their first super cross ever. I got to have an autograph session and I was lucky that I have a bunch of great sponsors who gave me plenty of cool giveaways to all of the fans there. Everyone loved it! Serge did an amazing job with his first experience to host a supercross race. All of the set up was amazing and I feel like the fans loved it and had a great time. I hope there will be another super cross event there next year.

■ ABILITY



ashleyfiolekmxcoach(at)gmail.com
instagram.com/ashleyfiolek_67

YOUR SUCCESS BEGINS HERE

amazon

Building and supporting an inclusive workforce

Amazon is hiring near you.

Paths to employment - We have an entire team ready to help you with the application and interview process. If you have a disability and need an accommodation during the application and hiring process, contact our Applicant-Candidate Accommodation Team. You can reach us by phone at **888-435-9287** Monday through Friday, between 6 a.m. and 4 p.m. PT. Visit **amazon.com/AJ2** for more information.

Guidance and accommodation - We offer services to help you maintain and return to work with career counseling, matching your skills to job duties, discussing technology needs, and maybe even finding a new role that is a better fit.

PwD Affinity Group - Meet and network with a group of your peers to help each other thrive and create a more accessible Amazon, for customers and employees.

Learn more

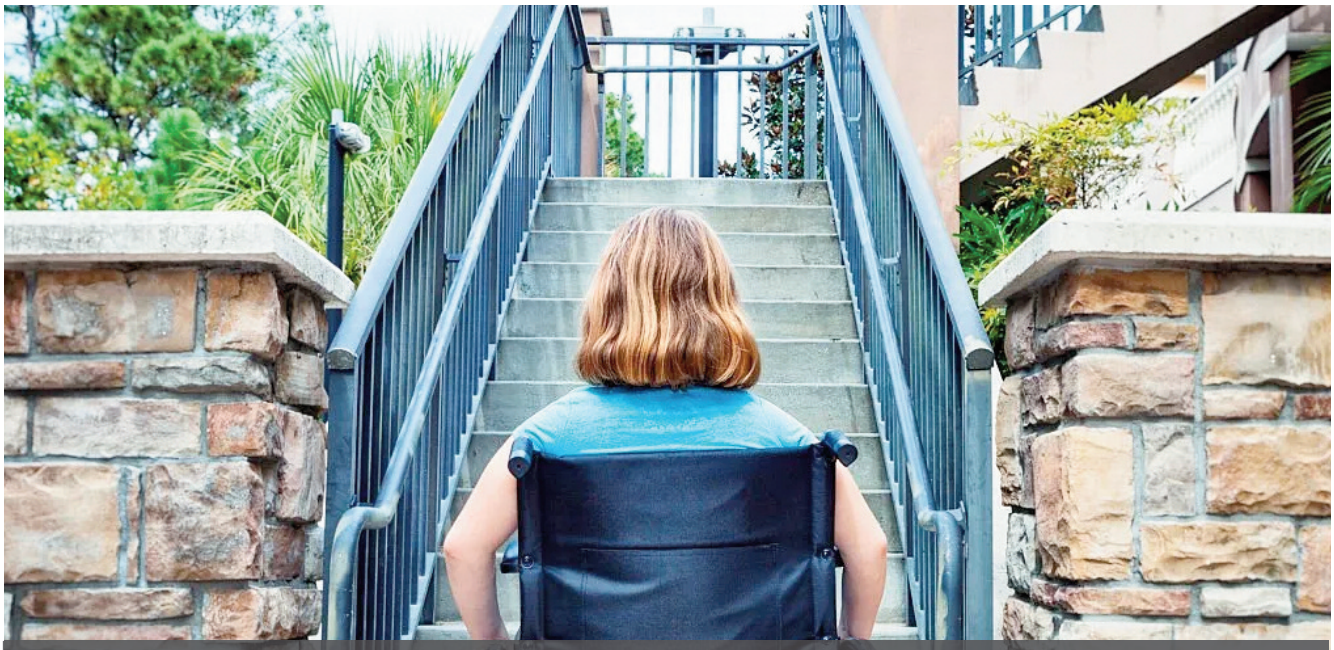
Find the right opportunity. Visit **amazon.com/AJ2** to learn more or text **PWD** to **77088** to sign up for alerts from Amazon.*

* By participating, you agree to the terms and privacy policy at **sms-terms.com/amazon** for recurring autodialed marketing messages from Amazon, to the phone number you provide. No consent required to buy. Message and data rates may apply. Text **HELP** for help or **STOP** to end.

Amazon is proud to be an equal opportunity employer.



the SQUEAKY WHEEL



This Small Town Girl in a Lonely World Couldn't Take the Train Going Anywhere Because It Wasn't Accessible and Now She's Stuck and It's Midnight

It seemed like it was too good to be true … because it was. The girl, 19, was eager to embark on an exciting Journey, a fantasy of limitless possibilities. However, her dreams were crushed upon realizing that the train platform wasn't accessible by wheelchair, leaving her stranded there in the middle of the night.

"I assumed, since my town could afford a train that runs ANYWHERE at midnight, that they could afford an elevator or ramp and that the train station would be accessible, but I was wrong," she said. To make matters worse, the lack of accessibility information available online meant she didn't realize it was inaccessible until she had already been dropped off via her town's accessible transit service.

"I was stuck at the bottom of a long flight of stairs, surrounded by a pile of broken wine bottles and something that smelled like bad perfume."

She opened the accessible transit app to request a ride back home before remembering that all rides must be scheduled 24 hours in advance. She then tried to call an accessible Uber, but there were none within her radius.

With limited options, the girl resorted to taking the bus, but the nearest bus stop was roughly two miles away.

She carefully drove her wheelchair past some sketchy strangers walking up and down a busy boulevard and finally made it to the bus stop beneath a couple dimmed street lights.

The first bus that came had a broken lift, and on the second bus the driver didn't know how to operate the lift. The third bus driver just drove by her altogether.

"Then the fourth one came but there was already a wheelchair user in the only wheelchair space on the bus. The problems just kept going on and on and on and on."

Fortunately she didn't stop believing, and just as the sun began to rise, a fully functioning bus arrived that took her home.

While this multitude of problems may seem extreme, it is a reality that many disabled people face, and not only in small towns. In fact, sources are reporting that on the same night, the same thing happened to a boy who was born and raised in south Detroit. ■ ABILITY

by Steven Verdile

the-squeaky-wheel.com



ABILITYJOBFAIR

ABILITY SOLVES ACCESSIBILITY
with Live Video Career Fairs



join the **ACCESSIBLE** revolution
with a COMPLIANCE evolution

With the support of abilityJOBS and *ABILITY Magazine,* ABILITY Job Fair presents an interactive face-to-face video career fair technology to corporations, governments and non-profits so that they may actively recruit candidates in the most efficient way. This is the first platform to emulate the live career fair experience accessible for tens of thousands job seekers with disabilities.

Live Video • Screen Reader • Speech to Text • Sign Language Interpreters • Text Based Messaging

abilityjobfair.org


CHASING
THE CURE



Go West Old Man

It isn't very often I get free travel days to ride my motorcycle wherever I want. All of my travels are going to charity events or to motorcycle industry trade shows. At rallies I am usually sharing my story of living with MS or delivering a seminar on what to carry in your saddlebags to stay away from tow trucks. All of the miles on my motorcycle are commuting and business related.

Every year I get to hang out with my sponsor Yamaha at the Sturgis Rally in the Black Hills of South Dakota. It is always a great event, not just because of the people I get to talk to, but because the area has some of the best roads and scenery in the entire country. I usually try to sneak away very early one morning to get some great photos for my annual calendar. The Badlands at daybreak is one of my favorite places to be and never disappoints. Needles highway and Mount Rushmore are right around the corner as well. Although I usually work each of the ten days, I always find a few hours before or after to get some great shots!

This year was a fabulous exception. The charity I have been raising money for, MS Views and News, was putting on a MS patient educational event in Rapid City, SD the weekend before this year's Sturgis Rally. Of course, when they asked me to give a presentation, I agreed! Getting to South Dakota is a 2000 mile ride from my home in New Hampshire and despite the speeds I tend to travel, still takes me two full days. There was no way I could ride to Rapid City, speak, go home and then ride right back to Sturgis in less than a week, so…….

I would have three full days to play around in the wild west!

The MS event in Rapid City was great, I met a few local riders and shared my story to a





brand new audience. After the event, I hurried to my hotel room to route out the next three days. I knew I was heading to the Badlands National Park, but I also wanted to ride through Custer State Park, Needles Highway, Mount Rushmore, Thunder Basin, The Grand Tetons and Jackson Hole, Wyoming. I also thought I would revisit some of the great mountain passes in Idaho like Lolo Pass and if I had time, possibly head up to Glacier National Park and the famous Going to the Sun Road. It was a large amount of backroad miles for three days, but I will never regret the 2200 miles I spent this year getting lost riding out west!

My accountant will see I spent three long hot days taking photos for social media. I certainly took enough amazing shots to fill all 12 months of the 2023 Chasing the Cure calendar, so technically it was still work related but…..

If they ever hooked me up to a lie detector, I would have a hard time admitting it wasn't fun!

My Limited Edition hand numbered and autographed calendars are available each Fall on my website and feature 12 of the best photos taken each year. Join my Patreon community and you can get your calendar FREE every single year!

■ ABILITY

Longhaulpaul.com/calendar
Patreon.com/longhaulpaul

NutOnaBolt.com
LongHaulPaul.com







Improv

Hi Folks,

My name is Melinda Chilton.

I live in Los Angeles, where I have been studying, performing, and teaching improv for several years. I have a question for you to ponder.

Have you ever wished that when you woke up in the morning, there would be a script for your day lying next to your bed?

Wouldn't you like to know exactly how to ask your boss for that raise, have a scene cleverly written to humor your roommate into taking out the garbage once in a while, maybe a list of the people and characters you will be dealing with that day? Well, that's not exactly how life works. Life is one big improv and you are the star improviser.

Improvisation in the performing arts is a spontaneous art form that requires no script or prior preparation. Studying the art of improvisation can free a performer from nerves, self judgment and allowing the artist to truly trust their talents and instincts. Many actors, musicians, stand-ups, and speakers use the basic rules of improv to strengthen their craft. But, the benefits of improv go far beyond the stage. Improv skills can also help an artist better communicate with their agents and managers. Improvisation is a strong tool used when collaborating with a creative team. Most importantly, improv in life can reduce stress, build self esteem, and raise your level of joy.

After studying, performing, and teaching improv for several years, I started to realize that I wasn't just using the rules of improvisation on stage to entertain an audience, I was also using those same improvisational rules daily in my personal life. 'Give and Take', 'Listen', 'Be in the Moment', 'Be Willing to Let Go and Change' are just a few basic improv rules that I use daily.

My Father was diagnosed with Alzheimer's several years ago. I have personally found myself using improvisational skills to help me better care for my Father. The improv rule, 'Yes and', has helped me to accept that my Father has Alzheimer's and doesn't always know who I am. Acceptance is a powerful tool. Once my family was able to accept my Father's illness, we were then open to making choices that could better serve him and our family.

My Father is a retired real estate agent. His Alzheimer's often makes him believe he is still selling real estate, his kitchen is his old office, and I am his secretary. The initial response was to tell my Father he was wrong. He is not a realtor anymore and I am not his secretary. I am his daughter.


REC
Julie Cordell-Seamons
Melinda
Larry Sr
Lorraine Watson
Adam Watson
Mira Wilder
David Uchansky
Tracy Townsend
Jerry Jaffe
William Paden



This approach only created additional frustration, stress, and hurt feelings. Instead of denying my Father's current reality, improv has taught me to accept it and add something to it. Ok, today my Dad is a realtor. I am his secretary. We are going to write up a sales contract and I will present it to the buyer first thing in the morning. Now my Father and I are connecting, communicating, and having a little bit of fun.

The improv game 'New Choice' helped me to overcome a childhood stutter. I stuttered the first 29 years of my life. There were some sounds and words that were more difficult for me to pronounce than others. Improv taught me to think quickly and use substitution during conversations. For example…The letter 'M' was difficult for me to pronounce. If I was about to ask someone for 'money', I would quickly substitute the word 'money' for another word that was easier for me to say. I would ask for 'cash'. My stuttering was a result of painfully low self esteem. Improv slowly helped to build my self confidence. I learned to trust my instincts and discovered talents and strengths I never knew I had.

The good news is anyone can learn basic improv skills. Like any skill, they just need to be practiced, strengthened, and implemented. That's what we do in my "IMPROV FOR LIFE" classes and workshops.

During COVID, I began teaching my classes on Zoom. The response has been terrific. Yes, the human connection can definitely be made on the internet. There is a lot of improv that can be taught and performed virtually. My online classes have students in different time zones and countries. One of my students referred to the friendships made in my online classes as modern day penpals.

Recently I have also begun teaching private improv sessions on Zoom. Virtual privates are very convenient. As a teacher, it allows me to really zero in on the exact needs of an individual student and help them strengthen



Past Improv buddies, John Ritter and Andy Goldberg

the improvisational skills that will benefit them the most.

Expect a visit from special guest teacher, Andy Goldberg, author of "Improv Comedy" and director of "Off the Wall", the longest performing improv group in Los Angeles.

Best of all, learning improv is a lot of fun and a lot of laughs.

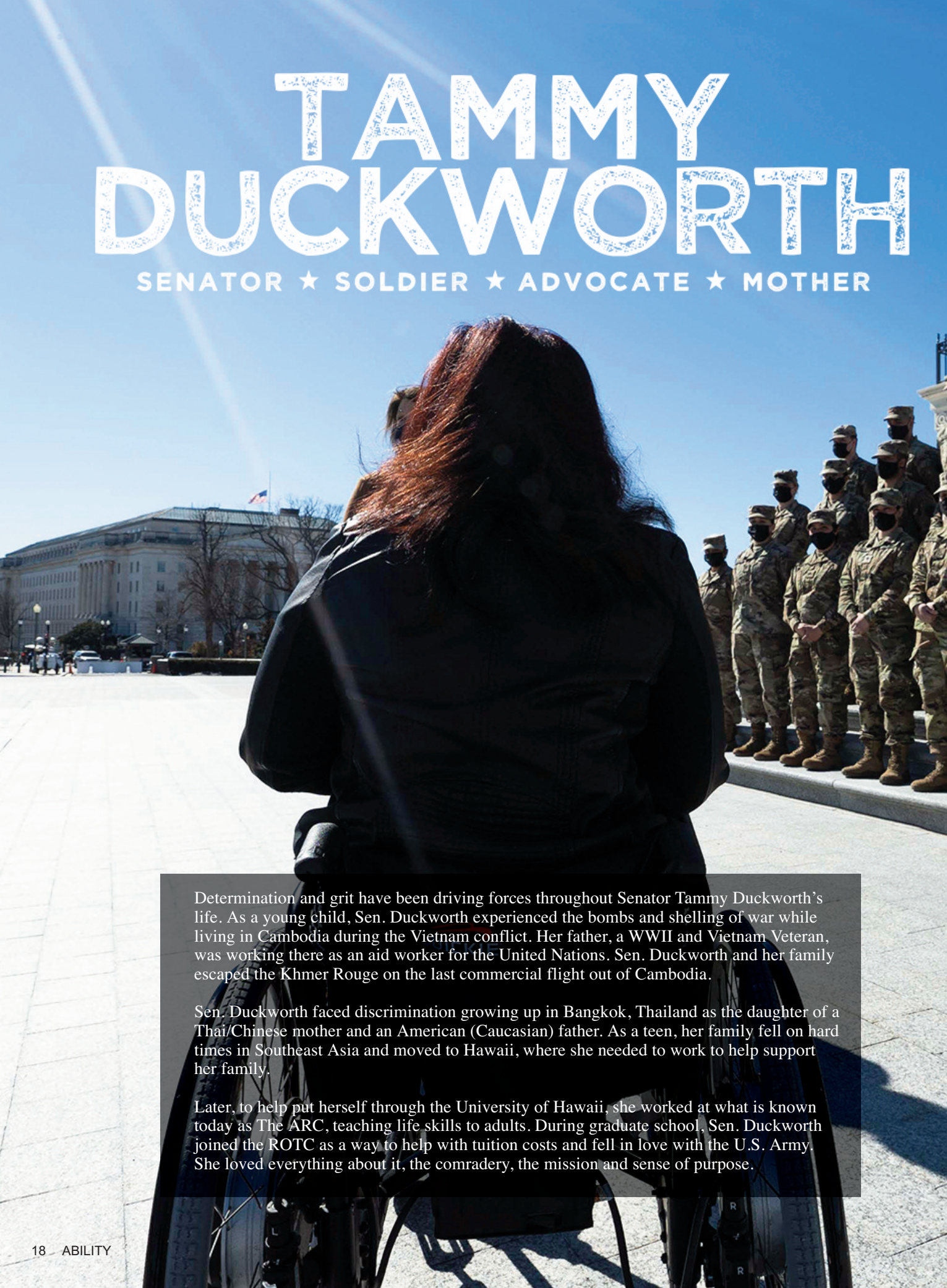
If you're interested in learning more about how you can improve your life and career with improv, please visit my website. And all of the abilityE family I have acting improv classess. ■ ABILITY

MelindaChiltonImprov.com



TAMMY DUCKWORTH

SENATOR ★ SOLDIER ★ ADVOCATE ★ MOTHER



Determination and grit have been driving forces throughout Senator Tammy Duckworth's life. As a young child, Sen. Duckworth experienced the bombs and shelling of war while living in Cambodia during the Vietnam conflict. Her father, a WWII and Vietnam Veteran, was working there as an aid worker for the United Nations. Sen. Duckworth and her family escaped the Khmer Rouge on the last commercial flight out of Cambodia.

Sen. Duckworth faced discrimination growing up in Bangkok, Thailand as the daughter of a Thai/Chinese mother and an American (Caucasian) father. As a teen, her family fell on hard times in Southeast Asia and moved to Hawaii, where she needed to work to help support her family.

Later, to help put herself through the University of Hawaii, she worked at what is known today as The ARC, teaching life skills to adults. During graduate school, Sen. Duckworth joined the ROTC as a way to help with tuition costs and fell in love with the U.S. Army. She loved everything about it, the comradery, the mission and sense of purpose.





U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) standing near the cockpit of her helicopter during her military service.

At a time when there were very few opportunities for women to serve in combat, Duckworth was determined to be a platoon leader and get as close to combat as possible after she became a commissioned officer in 1992.

Her plan? Join the Army Reserve Air Defense and become a Blackhawk helicopter pilot. With one Blackhawk spot available for reservists in her flight class of 80 soldiers, she persisted in course work, an extra-3-hours of flight simulator practice each night and going the extra distance to be top of her class to make that feat a reality. She did it!

She returned to Illinois to pursue a PhD in political science and transition to the Illinois Army National Guard. Duckworth was deployed on multiple missions around the world, including aid support in Africa. When 9/11 happened, Duckworth was on high alert and prepared to fight. In 2003, at the time she was transitioning as a new unit leader, her former unit was called up to Iraq. Having prepared years for this moment and angry about being left behind, she volunteered for deployment in Iraq, Operation Iraqi Freedom, as an assistant operations officer.

It was in Iraq, while returning from a transport mission, a rocket propelled grenade ripped through the Blackhawk helicopter she was piloting, vaporizing her right leg and crushing her left. Miraculously, her co-pilot



Senator Duckworth speaking at the FDR Memorial on the 31st anniversary of the ADA

was able to land the damaged helicopter–She had just minutes earlier turned over the controls. – Her blood-soaked, injured crew was able to retrieve her body, not knowing that she was still alive.

Duckworth woke up engulfed by intense pain in the ICU of Walter Reed National Military Medical Center after several days of being connected to life supporting machines. She endured multiple skin grafts and surgeries reassembling what was left of her body. For more than a year, she dominated her recovery and physical therapy, or as she says, "owned her suck".

Her path to recovery and experience inside the veterans' health care system made her an excellent candidate for Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs, where she worked to normalize mental health support for returning troops and to improve access to health care and housing for veterans. Later, as an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Duckworth worked to end homelessness and to improve services for women veterans and Native American and younger veterans.

Duckworth continued her path of service in the U.S. House of Representatives, and then the Senate, where she is today, relentlessly fighting for veterans, women, healthcare, people with disabilities and all Americans.

As a woman of many firsts, Sen. Duckworth is the first U.S. Senator to give birth in office as well as the first woman to bring an infant on the floor, while pushing to change the Senate rules. At that time, she skipped maternity leave to be able to vote on important legislation.

ABILITY Magazine's Chet Cooper spoke with Sen. Duckworth via Zoom during a busy day of voting and committees, continuing her commitment to service. They began speaking of Sen. Tom Harkin's retirement and his passing her the "baton" in the marathon of the fight for disability rights and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Chet Cooper: Are you the go to ADA advocate?

Senator Tammy Duckworth: It's just sort of fallen to me to champion ADA issues, being a wheelchair user. And when Senator Harkin was retiring and I was in the House and running for the Senate, he called me over and he said, "Tammy, I'm handing the reins over to you." (laughs)

Cooper: (laughs)



Senator Duckworth with her two daughters, Abigail and Maile Pearl.

Senator Duckworth: "I'm handing the torch to you. You need to be the torchbearer and you need to really represent the entire disability community because you, frankly, wouldn't be here had the disability community not been there before you became disabled." And he was absolutely right. The ADA was passed at a time when I was still serving in the army.–Actually, I wasn't in the army yet, but at a time when I never would have thought that I would need the ADA. So, I found myself being the go-to person on a lot of the ADA issues as they come up in Congress.

Cooper: I talked to him about that. I asked him if he would ask you. I don't know if you know, but Senator Harkin wrote for a column in *ABILITY Magazine* for over 14 years.

Senator Duckworth: Oh, really? No, I did not know.

Cooper: I had asked him if he would ask you, and he said, "I'm going to see what she says, yeah." So you said yes, apparently.

Senator Duckworth: (laughs) I said yes. I was honored. To be able to be handed the mantle from Tom Harkin was quite the honor. I don't know that I can fill his shoes, but I try every day to make sure I do my best to represent the community, and also to fight for basic common—This is what I did in the army. I fought for freedoms, for people's rights. This is a basic human right if you want to access the life that you want to access and live the life you want to live and not be confronted by barriers at every turn.

Cooper: It makes me feel like I want to ask now if you did any work along with the advocacy work that Jon Stewart was doing for the veterans and burn pits.

Senator Duckworth: I have been working on burn pit issues for a very long time. It started from my own experience being exposed to the burn pit in Iraq, knowing what the environment with the air was like. We used to fly into Baghdad. We were stationed in Balad, and we would fly into Baghdad, into the green zone. And if you were on the ground looking up, the sky always looked a little overcast. It didn't look, you know, ominous. But flying through a 50-foot, 100-foot layer of brown skies, it used to burn the air crews' lungs when you'd go through there. It was like, "Oh, man, my eyes are watering, my lungs are burning, we're coming through this." And we used to think,

"Boy, those poor suckers who are stationed here! They're breathing this and they don't even know!" Because you look up and you don't realize that that's what it is.

Senator Duckworth: I had always thought there must be some respiratory illnesses. I started working on Agent Orange issues within the VA, and it was under President Obama and Secretary Shinseki that we finally granted benefits to veterans based on presumptive benefits. So, if you develop systemic heart disease, if you develop leukemia B and you were in Vietnam, we're going to presume that it's because of your Vietnam service. We no longer force veterans to prove that their illness was caused by Agent Orange. We just presume. That started me working on burn pit, after we were successful with the Agent Orange campaign. It's pretty much been continuous ever since, and I'm really glad we got the PACT Act passed. There's more work to do, but it's a great, great, great, great first start.

Cooper: The publicity of Jon Stewart really helped push that along. Sometimes you need outside celebrity status and really vocal, smart people pushing issues.

Senator Duckworth: Look at how long it took to get benefits for 9/11 first responders. That was where Stewart first got involved, right?

Cooper: Right. I don't know if you noticed, but in our last issue of the magazine we interviewed Transportation Pete. That's what we're calling him now. (laughs)

Senator Duckworth: (laughs)

Cooper: You were working with him in some degree. Can you talk about that, what you were doing with him, accessibility issues, etc.?

Senator Duckworth: Yes. I wrote a piece of legislation called the ASAP Act, the All Stations Accessibility Program (ASAP) Act of 2021, the purpose of which is to make all of our transit stations accessible. I wrote this piece of legislation and introduced it in the Senate coming out of my experience with the CTA, the Chicago Transit Authority. I was invited by the CTA when I was a Congresswoman on the 25th anniversary of the ADA. We're at the 32nd anniversary, so seven years ago they invited me to a ribbon-cutting at a CTA station, and they were really proud–really, really, really proud that they were announcing that they were going to begin this program to make 100% of the Chicago Transit Authority stations, whether it was bus or rail, fully accessible. I said, "This is great! When is this going to be done?" He said, "It's a 25-year plan." And I looked at him, Dorval Carter, who's the president of the Chicago CTA, and I said, "So you mean a half-century after the passage of the ADA?" (laughs)

Cooper: (laughs)

Senator Duckworth: "That's when we can count on this?" And he went, "Well, when you put it that was, it sounds terrible!" I'm like, "Yeah, it is terrible! When you say it's great that you're doing this, why are we here, 25 years later, and they're still not accessible?" I still to this day don't use the El (elevated train) in Chicago because not all stations are accessible, and you never know if one will be or not. He said, "Well, it's because we have a limited amount of money, and ADA accessibility has always been a priority for us. It's always been in the top three. But we only have enough money for the top two. And when I have to choose between safety and buying a new train car or safety equipment for the train car, versus building a ramp, I'll choose buy new safety equipment for the train car." And I said, "What will fix that?" He said, "We need money that is sectioned off, that cannot be used for anything else other than accessibility, and that would allow us to do this faster."

Senator Duckworth: So then, I wrote the bill at the federal level. And when we were trying to work—when President Biden was sworn and Mayor Peter–sorry, Pete Buttigieg–

Cooper: (laughs)

Senator Duckworth: —was appointed, —I had known him from previously—I said, "Listen, we've got to do this. We have to do this. Let me tell you what I'm trying to do." I invited him out. And he toured one of the CTA stations with us, and I explained what we were trying to do,. I said, "We can make this happen in 10 years if we fund this. In the bipartisan infrastructure deal, we ended up losing half the money, but we've got the first five years funded. We need your support." He supported it. It was grea because he elevated—Like you said that we need to get somebody famous, right? ––He elevated it to be a priority, and I was able to make it stay, even though I lost half the money in the bipartisan infrastructure bill instead of it getting dropped. But it came out of Dorval Carter, head of the Chicago CTA. I just took it to the federal level.

Cooper: I'm glad you asked the question. When is the rest of the network going to be accessible? If he hadn't said that, it wouldn't have dawned on you, like, "This makes no sense."

Senator Duckworth: This will be nationwide. We put aside federal dollars that first off, for the legacy systems. But all transit systems can apply to get those dollars to help them make all their stations accessible. And not just for wheelchairs, but it's got to be vision, hearing, cognitive disabilities as well. When you have to buy a ticket and it's all touch screen, that doesn't help somebody who has a visual impairment. Cognitive is, if you don't make your app, the cellphone apps, something that is friendly for those with cognitive impair-



Senator Duckworth joined Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and colleagues condemning the Republican proposal to establish a nationwide abortion ban.

ment, then it's not accessible. This covers the full range of disabilities.

Cooper: I'm glad you mentioned that. Too many people think in one aspect when it comes to accessibility. It's so much broader than most people understand or realize.

Is anything happening in DC? Could you say something about the political nature, What do you see happening in the Senate, seeing the transition since you've been there, at least it seems that there's been a big transition.

Senator Duckworth: It's certainly more partisan. After January 6th, it's been difficult, especially compared to my time in the House, where I had a lot of bipartisan work. I will tell you, though, that I've been able to be very bipartisan since I've been here in the Senate. My first piece of legislation I passed at the 64-day mark, which is more than any Senator had done it since the '70s. And I did it with Todd Young of Indiana, my next-door neighbor. It was very bureaucratic, cutting through red tape. It had to do with municipal building projects. We got that done and President Trump signed it into law. I passed legislation to support veterans in becoming entrepreneurs. That was bipartisan, and President Trump signed that into law. That will also reduce costs for taxpayers.

Since January 6th, though, it has become even more partisan here. You really have to work to find people to work with, and sometimes you find folks to work with you that you never expected to. I just passed the Public Safety Officer Support Act, and my partner in that was Senator Cornyn, Republican leadership from Texas. I don't have a lot in common with him, but it came out of January 6th, where we have—Officer Smith was one of the officers, and we have him on record on body camera footage being beaten and receiving concussive events at least three different times, two of which he passed out, and it's on camera. He went back to work two weeks later, got time off, was told, "You're fine," went back to work two weeks later, and within days ended up dying by suicide. That's when I found out through his widow that for our first responders, like the police forces, the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program is not allowed to consider post-traumatic stress as being a result of their job.

Senator Duckworth: So, because he died by suicide, even though the coroner said this was because he had a concussive event and had post-traumatic stress, he had damage to the part of his brain that controls emotion, and that his death by suicide was as a result of what happened on January 6th, his wife still lost all her benefits. And she found out she lost all of her widow's benefits standing in line at CVS to get prescription medication. I said, "That is absolutely wrong."

I talked to John Cornyn, and he joined me in it. So, we passed it in a bipartisan way. A pro-law enforcement, pro-first responders, drawing on my work from the VA. When I went to John, I said, "Here's what I know about post-traumatic stress from my work at the VA. Will you work with me to help our first responders, our public safety officers? This is crazy, that they can't claim PTSD as being a result of their job duties." And he supported me. We had a couple of folks who tried to shut it down on the Republican side, but because Cornyn is Republican leadership we were able to work our way through it and get to a yes. I had to stare down one of my Republican colleagues and threaten to make him defend his position against public safety officers on the floor of the Senate, and he backed off. I won't tell you who it is. (laughs)

Cooper: (laughs)

Senator Duckworth: But he didn't want to be on record doing that on the floor, so we got it passed. We can get things done. (Sen.) Cynthia Lummis (R-WY) helped me work on water infrastructure. I wrote the drinking water and wastewater portion of the bipartisan infrastructure deal, and that included significant dollars to get lead out of the drinking water supply grant programs. She is on the same committee. I went to talk to her and said, "What do you think about this?" And she said, "You forgot all the people who are on well water. This grant program you've written allows municipalities to get reimbursement and get some dollars to fix these programs, but what about people who are on well water? Don't they deserve to not have lead?" So, I said, "Absolutely! Let's write that in." So, we specifically wrote in the well water piece. And we got 89 votes on the floor of the Senate because of it.

Later on, I come to find out that I actually have people in Chicago who are still on well water. So, it wasn't just people on well water across Illinois, which I knew about, but I even had people in urban areas who are still on well water. And that was bipartisan. She made the bill better. She listened to me. Even though we rarely vote the same way on a lot of things, we got 89 votes on the bill. I'm really proud of it.

Cooper: That's incredible. It shows that there's hope.

Senator Duckworth: (laughs) There's hope, there's hope, yes. Maybe fewer cameras watching us, and people don't have to play up for the cameras. (laughs)

Cooper: Yeah!

Senator Duckworth: We'd get more done, you know? Fewer people are needing to do this.

■ ABILITY

duckworth.senate.gov



Sandra Bacchi's photographic memoir navigating motherhood in the face of food allergies and learning challenges.

Bacchi's monograph, "Watermelons Are Not Strawberries". The imagery is a photographic memoir about the ups and downs of parenting and the surprising lessons about acceptance and healing we can learn from our children.

THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT
Sarah Kennel

Since the earliest years of the medium, photography has relied upon the hidden presence of mothers to render childhood visible. In the mid-nineteenth century—a time when infant and child loss was common—the invention and spread of photography enabled parents to capture the faces of their beloved young children. Photographic portraits provided precious evidence of a child's beauty and vitality; in the eventuality of death, they also offered tangible focus for grief. Because the lengthy exposure times of early photographic processes required portrait subjects to hold still without wavering, floppy babies and fretful children usually needed physical support to maintain their pose. Enter the "hidden mother." Whether totally shrouded in black, artfully draped in vibrantly patterned cloth, partially hidden behind a curtain, or simply excised from the negative by various








VIKING



figures served multiple purposes: they held children still during the exposure, provided a familiar source of comfort, and ensured, to the extent possible, a cooperative subject. Although intended as a practical solution, these "hidden mothers," at once embedded into the picture and erased from the scene, have left us an evocative and unsettling image of motherhood: vigilant yet invisible, neither fully separate from nor comfortably merged with their offspring, occupying an indeterminate space between.

With the advent of faster lenses and more sensitive photographic materials, the "hidden mother" phenomenon of early photography disappeared, but the mass production of snapshot and other relatively simple cameras paved the way for new dialogues between photography and the construction of motherhood. Instead of holding up babies for the camera, women increasingly held the cameras themselves, simultaneously becoming observers and participants in the intimate lives of their children. Even as Kodak marketed cameras to women as recorders of family life, new generations of professional women photographers from Gertrude Käsebier to Sally Mann claimed the territory of the family and the subject of childhood as their own, bringing to it a keenness, rigor, and insight that merged professional craft and personal experience. And yet, the concept of the hidden mother—at once within the frame and separate from their children—has stayed with us and shaped how we see and understand pictures of children taken by their mothers.

Inheriting and transforming this tradition, Sandra Bacchi has used her camera to both see and understand the lives of her children and, by extension, her own life. Like many female photographers who serve as primary caregivers to their young children, Bacchi discovered that her best subjects were close at hand, and since 2014, she has made more than four thousand photographs of her home life, focused in particular on her daughters, Ana and Vitória. Here, necessity was the mother of invention, or at least inspiration. Each of Bacchi's daughters suffered from significant challenges, including multiple food allergies, and then later, related learning differences. To protect her daughters thus required constant oversight and hyper-vigilance, a form of intense and unwavering observation that Bacchi channeled into her photography.

What can be more inspiring and resilient than listening to a five-year-old girl who spent her life until then struggling with severe multiple food allergies, saying that when she couldn't eat strawberries, she pretended that watermelons were strawberries?

The visual experience of moving from chaos to clarity is both vulnerable and relatable, giving the viewer a window into what it means to find peace and a little bit of hope. ■ ABILITY

yoffypress.com/catalog/watermelons





Storytelling with Brandon Kazen-Maxwell and Patricia Alvarado

"As an able-bodied person, I'm, like, hyper-able-bodied. I dance and speak all the languages. But I facilitate communication and I come from the deaf community. It's something that's very deep in my heart." muses Brandon Kazen-Maddox, a multidisciplinary artist whose work is powered by ASL. Fresh from the 100th episode of Stories from the Stage, *ABILITY*'s George Kaplan interviewed the featured Kazen-Maddox and executive producer Patricia Alvarado to discuss the episode and their work.

George Kaplan: How did you get involved in working with Brandon?

Patricia Alvarado: Well, let me just tell you a little bit about the series before I get to how I got to Brandon. We started from the stage. The series started in 2017. It was initially an event of WGBH,



STORIES FROM THE STAGE



Patricia Alvarado

now GBH, in Boston. My co-executive producer, Liz Cheng, saw the potential and the importance of bringing stories to television. We never even imagined that the series was going to be this popular. We reach people all over the country in multi-platforms. These stories really reach a lot of people, and what we believe is that there is definitely a great appetite for storytelling in our world, and if we make a space for people and their stories, we make a space for empathy, for understanding, and a place for humanity to connect. That is what moved us to continue with the series.

In 2022, we celebrated our hundredth episode. This is when we met Brandon, through Cheryl Hamilton. Cheryl has been working with us as a curator and an amazing coach. She has connections with everybody. I say that she's the mayor of New England. We work very closely with her. She is the head of the Stellar Story Company. She has been working with the series since day one. We wanted to have a very special 100th episode, so by saying 100 episodes, I'd say 300 stories that we have featured.

We met, we got together, and it's like, "What will make these episodes incredibly special?" and Cheryl knew Kevin, right, Brandon? You tell that little part of the story.

Brandon Kazen-Maddox: Of course, yeah! I have a partner, a life partner, partner in business. His name is Kevin Newbury. He is wonderful. And he and Cheryl have a very close relationship from childhood. Kevin and I were commissioned to do this series called SOUL (SIGNS), an ASL playlist. It's kind of a love letter between my grandmother, whom my story is about, my white, deaf grandmother, and my black hearing Nanna from New York. My Nanna taught me about music and my grandma taught me about sign language. This series was about translating songs by black women into American sign language. That had a lot of visibility. It had a New York Times article and a lot of other wonderful things. Up Until Now Collective, that's who made that happen with Broadstream, and then Cheryl Hamilton saw that and was really congratulatory to Kevin and me. That's how I was brought to Stories from the Stage.

Kaplan: That's a great connection! You're lucky you had that partner, you have that partner.

Kazen-Maddox: I do have that partner! I am very lucky to have him! He's a good person.

Kaplan: Give us a little bit more background about yourself.

Kazen-Maddox: My grandparents are deaf on my mom's side of the family. I have seven deaf people in my family. They were all from a certain era. My grand-

ma was born in 1950, her brother was born in 1946. This was a time period when there was no penicillin. My grandma was born hearing but got scarlet fever and was deaf from the age of three on. And her brother, my uncle Jim, he was deaf from a little kid, too. And my grandmother on my mom's side was born deaf, as was her sister. There are a lot of deaf people in that era of time.

I grew up with all these folks. My mom is a CODA, a child of deaf adults. Her first language is American sign language, because of my grandparents. My mom has two sisters and a brother, so there are four of them who all grew up in the same household as my grandparents, and they were all teenagers when I was born. And then there I came, and naturally I learning sign language along with everyone else, because that's how we were all communicating. That's a brief back story of it.

Kaplan: You became also an acrobat? Were you a gymnast before?

Kazen-Maddox: Yeah, that's right. I've always been a very visual, very kinesthetic, hands-on learner. I've always been a lover of aesthetic beauty when it comes to dance and ice skating and diving and gymnastics. When I was four, I started gymnastics because I wanted to be a Power Ranger.

I told my grandparents that and they put me in gymnastics. They worked at the Post Office when I was growing up, 30 years for my grandma and I think 40 years for my grandpa. Through their working at the Post Office, they helped pay for my gymnastics from the time I was four until I was ten. So, I owe the gymnastics to them, and I also owe the dancing and entertainment ideology to my Nanna from New York. She was the one who taught me all about That's Entertainment and what Broadway is, the Apollo Theater and all that stuff. I tumbled, I've always tumbled, I still tumble. I went to circus school when I was 21, after I graduated from college.

Kaplan: Patricia, same question. Tell us about your background.

Alvarado: I am originally from Panama. I came to the U.S. over 25 years ago. I worked in public media in Panama, and I came here to grad school, and after grad school I started working at GBH in Boston. I have the gift of being able to produce very, very different series. I had Neighborhood Kitchens, that was about food and chefs and communities. I had all kinds of series. This is my latest production. What we have tried to create with this show is a very inclusive stage. We had, for example, of all these 300 storytellers, refugees, immigrants. I am an immigrant, so the voices of immigrants are very important to me. We had a lot of LGBT different stories. In other episodes we had, for example, someone who talked about the experience of visiting museums in Europe versus visiting museums in the U.S. as a blind person.

We had a deaf and blind storyteller who talked about something that was incredible, that was moving through the city on a very, very late night coming from school, her difficulty accessing the library, an incredible perspective. We had an Olympian speed jumper who suffered an accident and his life completely changed. We had an Afghanistan woman who had polio as a child and had to deal with all this in her journey to school and to the U.S. We also have presented learning disabilities.

For us, for me, I have a love for this series, because sometimes we have a lot of people who send their story submissions to us, and Cheryl will help us find people like Brandon. I have always been in production. It has been my personal goal to always create series that are inclusive and that show different perspectives and open a window to our audience. Every time they watch one of these series, they connect and they learn. That's what I have been doing for all these years. They have been an incredible journey, a personal journey for me.

Kaplan: You both have great backstories. The videos that you're doing, Brandon, with the sign language, can you talk about that?

Kazen-Maddox: Yeah, of course. It's our SOUL (SIGNS) series. It started out with the "SOUL (SIGNS)" in the ASL playlist to honor black singers whose music some of us know, but many people don't. And they've been around for so long. For example, Gladys Knight and the Pips, Nina Simone, Tina Turner, Janet Jackson herself. And then our last one, the last iconic black female we worked with is a woman named Lachi, a newer artist. She's blind and she's a songwriter and a singer and she plays piano. We thought, why not also include and incorporate an iconic person who is burgeoning? So, what we did for that ASL music video, the song is called Bad Choices. We're editing it right now. It's very exciting. Lachi has her fingers in so many pots. She works with the Grammys, she has an organization called RAMPD. I think she would be a perfect Stories from the Stage participant as well. We work together to uplift and to spotlight all of these folks. And we uplift each other.

What we did which was so special is, we were talking about these bad choices. It's kind of subjective. If you're drinking or you're taking medication or drugs, does that make you a bad person? Not exactly, I mean, no, but how you ingest and how you temper and how you put those things into your body and how you make those decisions sometimes might be good and sometimes might be bad. But it doesn't make us bad people. And it also goes to show that everyone, able-bodied, disability community members, everybody needs something for their lives to destress, to take anxiety away, or have fun, whatever.



Brandon Kazen-Maxwell

What we did which was so special is, we got six deaf women together with three blind folks, and Lachi herself is blind, and then a deaf-blind man, and I curated all the deaf part of it all, and then I worked with the director of artistic sign language to translate the songs that were Lachi's words. And then I worked with a deaf person to in real time translate Lachi's music into—like, I did the sign language and then the deaf person watched me do it and they did it into the hand of the person who's deaf-blind. We got all that on film. It's this artistic beautiful thing.

The other aspect of SOUL (SIGNS) is SOUL (SIGNS) Opera. We just finished three opera ASL music videos, a commission by a few opera companies. They feature deaf artists and hearing artists and a collective awesomeness.

Kaplan: And how do people find that?

Kazen-Maddox: All this is produced and created by Up Until Now Collective, which you can find on our website, UpUntilNowCollective.com. the SOUL (SIGNS) and ASL playlist lives on Broadstream, which is at Broad.Stream, and then the ASL opera music videos live on Operabox.tv. Those are the two places where you can find the SOUL (SIGNS) series.

Up Until Now Collective, which is our nonprofit that Kevin and I and two of our co-founders founded in 2020, we focus on creating—making work that is joyful, necessary, and inclusive, but it's not only for one community. We create for everybody. We tell stories that need to be told and bring people together who wouldn't normally be brought together. The work we're doing with Up Until Now Collective is so poignant and special. It's just at the beginning, and we've already done so much.

Kaplan: We know Lachi well. She's been in the magazine a couple of times.

Kazen-Maddox: Oh, yes.

Kaplan: It's great that you're working with her.

Kazen-Maddox: She's a spitfire. She's awesome.

Kaplan: She's very motivated, and like you said, she has her hands in a lot of things. George, I kind of took over, sorry.

George Kaplan: No worries! Also, I wanted to congratulate you on the New England Foundation for the Arts grant. Can you tell us more about your intentions for your ASL WILD PARTY project?

Kazen-Maddox: Yes, for the New England Foundation for the Arts grant. Thank you for that congratulations. Recently, in the cycle of 2022, I was awarded the Creative Capital Award, which is so special and so prestigious. People apply for that award for seven years in a row and don't get it, and I got it on my first try. Which is very special, and it also goes to show you how special this particular project is. The ASL WILD PARTY is basically a reimagining of Andrew Lippa's WILD PARTY. I got to sign that in 2015, back when I lived in San Francisco when I was a circus acrobat. When I signed that musical, I was like, "Oh, my gosh, deaf people need to own this. They need to own this show." Not just have one deaf person who's, like, being drunk, but rather like, what does a deaf party look like? Because I know deaf people and they can party, for sure!

A big motivation for the ASL WILD PARTY is education around what it is to let loose and go wild and also how to do that responsibly. Also, to shine a light on what it looks like when deaf people are in a place where they're very comfortable to do all of those things.

Right now, we're in our second workshop. It'll have a work-in-progress showcase at Little Island, New York City, on August 21st, which is very exciting. Hopefully, our third workshop will be at Lincoln Center, which is in the spring of 2023. The really special part about this particular reimagining is the fact that we're incorporating haptics technologies, wearable technology that will vibrate in different places. It's with the Music Not Impossible organization, they have all these vests and they work with the deaf community. They're very special. My goal is not to replicate the music and make people feel the music, it's rather to use these vests as cueing devices, so that deaf people can be onstage and we can have five different places where the vest vibrates, and if you are Queenie, one of the characters, and you vibrate here, then if you're not vibrating there, that means you're not onstage or you're not delivering your line. It's a cueing device.

Though it is a musical, I have decided to take the voice away because I know that when deaf people are onstage with hearing people who are singing, the deaf person always has to rely on the hearing person. They don't get to experience the music for themselves. How to make that happen is, take the hearing person away, let the deaf person just be onstage, give them the tools that they need, whether it's captions that they can read on the monitor or specific cues from the other people who are onstage or someone who's in the audience feeding them and they have the choice to look at them or do their own thing. We have taken, like I said, the voice away and we're replacing the vocal lines with live instrumental music. The live musicians, instrumentalists, will live onstage alongside the deaf actors, and it'll be a wild, wild party.

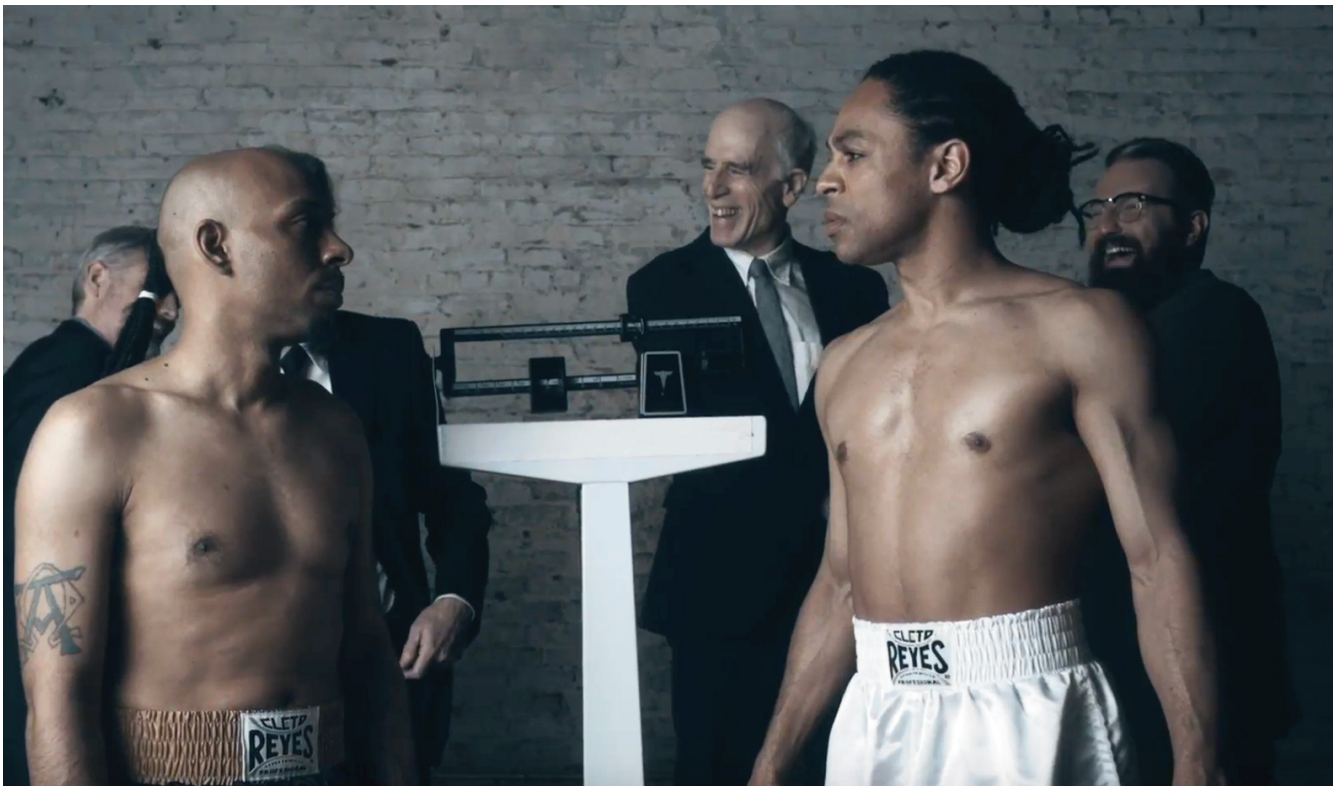
Right now, we have Kurt Crowley, who was the music director for Hamilton. He will be our music director. He's rearranging all the music with his own beautiful thing. One of my big goals is to take the WILD PARTY and not just tour it around the U.S., but take it to Japan and Korea and all these places where there are deaf people. It's so wonderful that we can use ASL as the platform of things, and we can also adapt and take on Japanese sign language to show them respect. And also we have the idea of subtitles, titles, where we switch to Japanese, and there you are.

Kaplan: You were also cast on The Good Fight. Is there anything that you can tease us about your upcoming role or at least tell us about your time on set?

Kazen-Maddox: Let's see. Hahaha! Well, how can I— I'll put all of this in the best way that I can. I was on The Good Fight. I think there were three days of filming. The first day, I'm such a staunch advocate for directors of artistic sign language, period. The disability community has the idea, the motto of "Nothing about us without us." So, if a television show wants to have sign language, they need to bring someone who is a director of American sign language or a director of artistic sign language as the consultant and as the person who has their deaf eyes and hands on the work. The first day I was there, they didn't have that director of artistic sign language. They had a deaf actor and they had me, and they did have an interpreter, which is great. But the interpreter is not the director of artistic sign language, and the actor is not that person, either. The actor isn't supposed to be like, "Well, I guess I would say this," and the interpreter isn't supposed to do that either. You have to have someone in that role.

The deaf actor had been there for two days prior, and on their first day they had an interpreter, but they didn't have a DASL, and then the second day was when I came, and I was like, "Where's the DASL?" and they were like, "We don't have one." So, the third day that I was there, they brought a director of artistic sign language, which was great, and it was much easier, because the day I was there, there were moments of the directors asking me and asking the interpreter and asking the deaf person for advice on what deaf people would do, when that's not our job. That was really interesting.

But in juxtaposition to the fact that when we did have a DASL, everything was beautiful, really nice, very



comfortable. The stress and the pressure of getting it right or whatever wasn't on us. And that's the point of a DASL. That's the cultural and linguistic sensitivity, the bridge, between the deaf community and the entertainment world. I felt good advocating for that. And it goes to show you how much fighting we have to do when those really important steps are not in place. We don't want to have to fight like that.

Kaplan: Where do you get that fight in you and that drive for equality and for equity in these spaces?

Kazen-Maddox: The fire comes from my family and my friends and the advocacy that my mom has had to put forward as a CODA for her parents and how much I've had to work for my grandparents on making sure I understand stuff. And also, my friends who are deaf. I'm like, "You're amazing." My deaf friends do amazing stuff that even I wouldn't do the same way because I'm not a deaf person. It's so amazing what I've been able to learn from deaf people regarding music and theater and dance and film just because of their perspective.

Alvarado: Brandon, I will be eternally thankful because you were open to work with us on your story, on the beginning, the end. You had to tell the story in seven minutes. So, it took a little process to put it together, and the fact that you also guided us in the process. Because when you and I had that first conversation, you were like, "Patricia, these microphones won't work here, they have to be here." All those things, like, even the lighting has to be a little different, everything has to be a little different to what we usually do for the show. And I was very excited, and the entire team, to have you. I hope that other storytellers feel like this is their stage, too, and that they submit their stories and they come to our stage. I am very excited that so many people are paying attention to your story in Stories on the Stage. So, thank you.

Kazen-Maddox: I'm excited, too, and just to follow up on what you're saying, Patricia, is that what I'm so grateful for for this particular platform was the ability to communicate in the way that I communicate, which is legitimately with my voice and with my hands. I often say it, as I said in my Stories from the Stage, I think with my hands. I think in sign language, and typically my words are just kind of along for the ride. They're interpreting what my hands are thinking first. This platform gave me the permission to do that, because also as an as interpreter, a certified, registered, nationally certified ASL interpreter, I don't get to talk like this. I have to turn my voice off and sign for deaf people, or voice for them and take my personality away and give my voice to deaf people in order for them to have a voice, a voice that other hearing people can hear. They always have a voice, but does everyone understand their voice? That's kind of the thing.

I was able, because of the content of the story, because it's about my grandma and our relationship, because it was about me getting pulled over and having to simcom, simultaneously communicate, with the officer and my grandma, that gave me the permission to express myself in the way that I naturally do. You would be so amazed at how often I have to explain myself and defend myself and justify myself for being who I am. It's really, really something. You gave me the opportuni-



ty to show the world who I am. This is reason behind who I am, but I don't need to apologize for it. You don't apologize for how you grew up. I'm so grateful for it.

Kaplan: I'm sure your family must be proud of you and how represent them.

Kazen-Maddox: They are, they are very proud. I live in this world that they don't really live in. My mom's an accountant, and no one in my family is in show business. I'm the one who left home for college and never came back and the one who feels comfortable onstage. You asked about the passion, the fire. It comes from people having tried to tell me what I can and can't do. If you knew my mother, you would understand that nobody tells me what I can and can't do. And that story comes from my grandma and my mom and our family, but it's the worst to know that you have these gifts, sign language is a gift, and I can use it how I want to use it, because I have the privilege and the right to do so. When there are people who see me who are threatened by—I don't know, maybe the color of my skin or my preferences in sexuality or my intelligence, a lot of the things that make up who I am. When there's a threat or a fear for the reduction of their power or their influence, and they try to make me not who I am, that's why I've worked so hard with so much fire and passion. It's frustrating to be told that you can't be who you are.

Cooper: Are you familiar with Omnium Circus?

Kazen-Maddox: I am familiar. A little bit about Omnium Circus. I was one of the people who helped create it.

Cooper: We did an article a couple years ago.

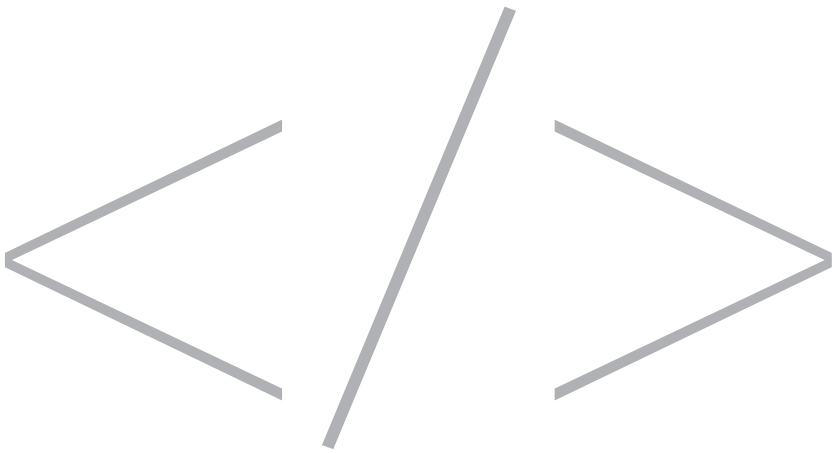
Kazen-Maddox: Yeah, that's right. In 2019 is when I met Lisa Louis, who is the founder. She and I sat down and were talking about—because I interpreted for Big Apple Circus. I said, "I'm also an acrobat, a tumbler, I was in the circus, I really want to make something that is a container that I can live in." Because I don't, I still don't. That's why I'm making the WILD PARTY, so that I can fit somewhere in this world that I straddle, but I can't actually set onto anything. But Omnium, I was going to dive deeper into that. I created a character called The Poet. I created that character because I know that I could do it. It would be a person who's a storyteller, who tumbles, who dances, and whose voice is represented by a musical instrument. And that came initially from the WILD PARTY.

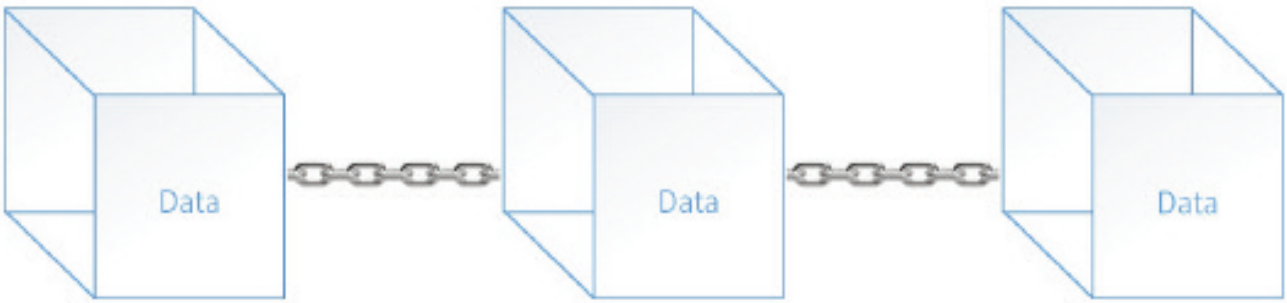
But then I became very busy and couldn't be a part of Omnium, so I gave that role to my friend who is deaf. Her name is Anna Gichan, and she's awesome. I just watched her at Queens Theater this weekend, where I was also interpreting, and she killed it.

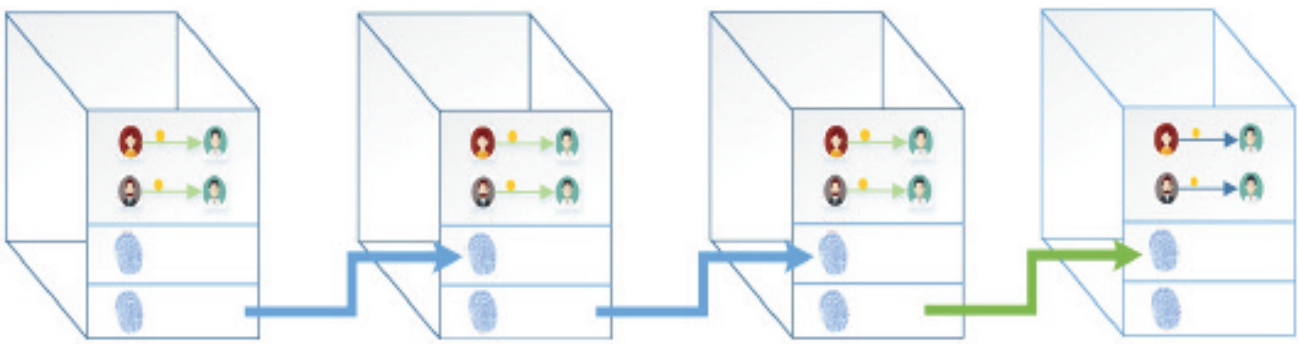
Cooper: That's great. Any more you'd like to say?

Kazen-Maddox: Again, I am so grateful to Stories from the Stage and Patricia and Cheryl to be able to have had this platform to express myself in the way that I do completely, which is with my voice and with my hands. Thanks for giving me the permission. ■ ABILITY

upuntilnowcollective.com




Data
Data
Data



Blockchain, Bitcoin, NFT, Metaverse and More!

A few years ago, *ABILITY Magazine* sat down with Greg Parker about his company Raketu and his work creating new Deaf communication applications for Sprint. Greg is a software entrepreneur, astrophysicist and pioneer in many technologies. Greg has been busy and we now chat with him about his work with blockchain, NFT, Meteverse and cryto trends.

Marge Plasmier: How did you get into blockchain?

Greg Parker: I basically got into blockchain before it was blockchain. I think you're aware that I hold the patent for peer-to-peer networks here in the U.S. and the EU. Fundamentally, the blockchain is a peer-to-peer network. It's called a trust-less network. I can explain that in a little bit.

In 2006, I co-founded the Raketu project, the first mobile video calling app with messaging. That was based on a peer-to-peer networking, but also cryptography, in a big way. When I say peer-to-peer, think of it like mobile phone to mobile phone, not person-to-person. It may manifest itself that way, but when you talk to tech people and talk peer-to-peer, they mean a computer to another computer.

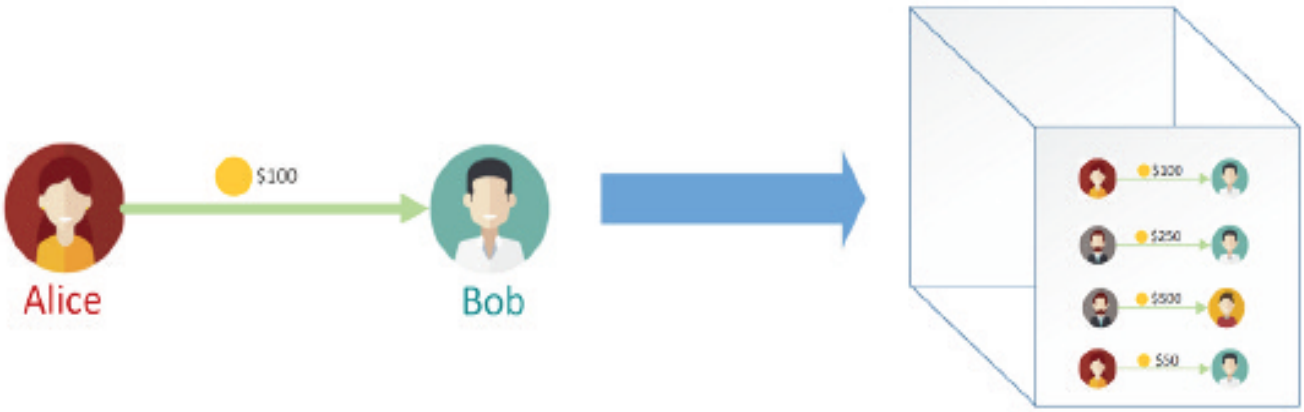
With Raketu, in partnership with Sprint, we created the world's first real-time voice-to-text mobile applications for the hearing impaired. It allowed them to use a regular mobile phone to make calls where they could speak and the person on the other end of the call would talk and their words would be displayed for the caller in real-time. We had over 98% accuracy of voice to text.

Also, in my history, I co-founded a company called Brainium.com, which was in multimedia children's education streamed on the Web. So essentially, kids played games while they were learning. It was all curriculum-based and data-driven. It goes back quite a few years. I got a lot of experience with gaming-type environments.

Plasmier: And how did you transition to blockchain?

Parker: When the initial Bitcoin paper came out, which was roughly 2008-2009, the blockchain itself was really a culmination of peer-to-peer networking meets cryptography meets gaming. For me, when I read that white paper, I thought, "Wow, this is right up my alley." So, I started to get involved about 12 years ago in the whole blockchain movement, quite hands-on. I began looking at the algorithms and the code that was doing the consensus algorithms for the blockchain itself.

After that, I spent a few years doing that, kind of, as a project, including mining some Bitcoin back in the day. I then went on to what we called the alt-currencies, the alt-chains, which are like Ethereum, for example. Any chain (cryptocurrency) that is not Bitcoin is considered an alt-chain. However, Ethereum is now considered mainstream. So,



technically, you wouldn't say that was an alt-chain anymore. But if you lived through the whole blockchain era, you'd call that alt as well. But anyway, that's neither here nor there.

Parker: I did that for a few years. Later, I guess around 2016-ish, 2017-ish, I started to get more involved directly with blockchain projects specifically, dealing with bits and pieces of authentication, trusted group, things like that, using Ethereum and Solidity, primarily in the Solidity side. Solidity is the language for smart contracts on Ethereum.

Lots of people around the world are using cryptocurrency like Bitcoin to make purchases, instead of using money. This is done using blockchain. So, what is blockchain exactly?

Think of blockchain is an application that keeps track of transactions. It is a chain of blocks that are linked together into a ledger. A block is a collection of transactions. So we have transactions in blocks and the blocks are linked together to form a ledger.

Think of the ledger like a spreadsheet, if you will, where we have transaction after transaction after transaction written out somewhere on the Internet, in multiple locations. It's termed a distributed ledger technology, or a DLT. That means that there are multiple copies of the identical ledger that exist in multiple geographic locations around the globe for any type of blockchain. Those identical locations are called nodes.

If one of those nodes that holds this ledger disappears off the network, it won't affect the network. The network can still continue on with the other nodes.

A true blockchain is a trustless environment, which means these nodes have no idea who the other nodes are. They just inter-communicate with each other and they do some mathematical work to reach what is called the consensus. When a new transaction comes up, it's sent out to these nodes, and the nodes go to work on what's called mining to reach consensus.—I'm simplifying this a little bit.—They work together to form a consensus on what should be written next to the blockchain.

When they arrive at consensus, they've done mathematical work. And that work is rewarded through transaction fees. Then it's written out to the blockchain, and everybody's ledger is updated.

Plasmier: Is that where the term "mining" comes in?

Parker: Yes, the nodes (computers), "mine" the transactions with complex math computation. It's a race to validate the transaction. The fastest computer to complete the block of transactions, gets rewarded in cryptocurrency.

It's some very complicated math that goes on in there because each one of these blocks that are written to the blockchain is linked mathematically to the previous block in the chain, and the next block will also be linked to the chain.

If somebody tries to tamper with any of those transactions that have ever occurred historically, they will not be able to because you will not be able to verify that chain of blocks. That chain will be corrupt. You cannot deviate—this is why it's called immutable, which means not changeable. Because once it's written to the blockchain, you have had consensus and many copies of the ledger exist.

Chet Cooper: You mean people can't hack blockchain?

Parker: People have tried it. They try to hack the chains. Very few have succeeded. But one of the big things about this trustless environment is the assumptions on the number of good nodes there are versus bad nodes.

The assumption is that you'll always have enough good nodes that will outweigh the bad nodes, the bad actors. So, you will always have a good and valid blockchain. And again, I'm simplifying this a little bit. But essentially that's what happens.

Plasmier: How does cryptocurrency work?

Parker: The cryptocurrency side of the world is really just a bunch of these "coins" out there, like Bitcoin or Ethereum or whatever the coin may be. And the transactions of those coins are tracked in the ledgers, which are in the blockchain. That's really what those blockchains are, at a certain level. So, for example, I'm a user, user A, and I want to send one Bitcoin to user B. I put that out onto the Bitcoin blockchain, and it's picked up. Consensus is reached, it's written out there, that transaction exists that user A sent one Bitcoin to user B, and that's immutably written into the blockchain forever.

And it is, to a certain degree, anonymous. The only way it works is by what's called an address or a wallet. A wallet contains a public-private key pair, but basically, it contains an address in it. That address is my address. It's unique, and I send from my address to a different address, I send a Bitcoin, and the Bitcoin shows up in the receiving address. If they open up their wallet and they look at that address, they will see that they received one Bitcoin. That's kind of fundamentally how it works for Bitcoin, Ethereum, everybody, on the coin side of it.

Cooper: We notice more and more people are creating artwork online and selling them using blockchain. They call them NFT's. Can you talk more about that?

Parker: An NFT is a non-fungible token. How does it differ from a fungible token? A fungible token is like the Bitcoin itself or the Ethereum's ETH, the Ethereum coin itself. Those coins are called fungible tokens. They're interchangeable. There's nothing unique about an Ethereum coin, or a Bitcoin coin. I can send my one ETH that I have sitting in my wallet right now to somebody and it doesn't matter that it's the same ETH.

Non-fungible tokens or NFTs are unique. They have what's called a token ID. They have something that makes them unique. They can be one of ones, which means, I can create a smart contract which creates one NFT that is a one of a kind, so the token ID would be one, there would only be one, the smart contract would say, "Do not mint any more of these."

Minting is the term that means to create an NFT, by the way. Burning is to remove an NFT from the chain. The contract in that example would say, "Hey, mint me one NFT, and that's all there will be. That's the limit. There's only one NFT. Mint it." I mint that NFT. It is unique. It is one of one. That's it.

Parker: I can also create a contract that says, "There will be up to 10 of these." I can create 10 of them, each one has a unique token ID, and they can be the same visually, as all 10 of them could have the same artwork, for example. But what differentiates them is the token ID. My token ID would be number one, user A's token ID would be token ID five, and user B's would be token ID nine. That's kind of how the NFTs work.

Cooper: Why did they create NFTs—what's the purpose of NFTs?

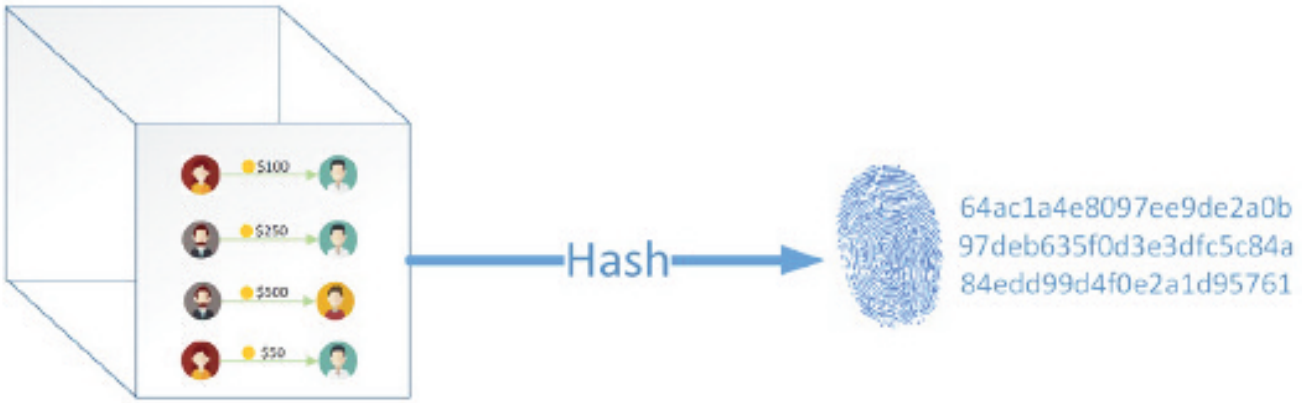
Parker: The NFTs—I'm going to say originally there was work that we were doing some years ago which didn't really involve artwork, but just for the sake of this discussion, they became known for the association of artwork to the blockchain. We could take an NFT and we can point the NFT, that token itself, that unique token, to a piece of artwork also somewhere out there on the Internet. Whether or not the art is on the blockchain doesn't really matter. The artwork doesn't have to exist on the blockchain, but it should exist somewhere on the Internet in some sort of permanent storage, and be immutable.

Basically, you point the NFT to that artwork, and then when the user who owns that NFT opens the NFT, they can actually view that particular artwork that's associated to that NFT. Let's say it's the Bored Ape Yacht Club. It's an ape, I don't know if you're familiar with those. That's probably one of the most successful NFT collections out there. Essentially, I have an NFT that points to a picture of an ape. It could be a picture of a squirrel, or a cat, Crypto-kitties, Crypto-punks. It could be a lot of different things. It could actually be artwork by Monet. I can talk about fractionalization in a moment. But basically, it could point to that art.

You may be thinking, "So what?" The NFT is intricately related to the original contract. Once the original contract is created by the artists themselves, then that NFT you have is associated back to the original contract. So, we have provenance (origin). We can tell that this NFT came from the original artist, and it points to this particular piece of art. So now what I have through all of time, because it's immutable, I have a link that takes the original artwork provenance that I received in the NFT to the actual digital artwork. So, I have this link that will last forever.

I can also sell the token. I can go to what's called the secondary markets, like OpenSea or another marketplace, to sell it. When a person purchases that token, it's moved from my wallet into their wallet, and they have the NFT. They can look at that particular piece of art, and they have the provenance to prove that it is in fact their artwork and where it came from. A lot of work has actually been going on in the background with NFTs, but the art was the side that really sort of took off.

Cooper: What other uses do NFT's have?



Parker: What's been happening more recently is what's called NFTs with purpose and NFTs with utility. The thing is that it's fine if you have an NFT that has artwork on it, that's great and wonderful. But what if you could use the NFTs so that they had some kind of utility for somebody. Because we have proof of provenance that it came from a particular contract. It doesn't have to be an artist. It could allow you to enter into a Metaverse or something like that.

The Metaverse creates a contract, it creates a whole bunch of NFTs. I purchase or get one of those NFTs. What can I do with it? Maybe I could use that NFT to actually gain access into some private areas of the Metaverse? Or gain access to playing a game or watching a Netflix movie or gain access into you name it? Could I actually use it so it actually has utility? And the utility, maybe it's a reward utility. Maybe I get rewarded for doing something, so I'm actually earning some kind of ETH for holding that particular NFT. NFTs are becoming more founded into the concepts of utility and purpose, along with the artwork.

One of the things that is typically written into these NFT contracts is what's called royalties on secondary sales, which means that after it's originally sold, when it's minted or created or put into my wallet, if I take it and sell it to somebody else, the contract will enforce certain royalties being distributed back to certain other individuals. For example, the original artist can say, "Every time this is resold, I want to get 5% royalties on it." You can put that in the contract. If I take it and I want to sell it to user A on the secondary market, when I sell it, 5% of whatever that sale price is will go to the original artist.

When we talk about the utility and purpose, other things have happened, for example the ability to take that royalty and split it amongst different accounts. Perhaps if it's an artist- type NFT, perhaps the artist gets 4% and their favorite charity gets 1%. That goes on forever. They can be funding different charities, different programs and things like that, Save the World, whichever it may be, environmental things or whatever, that you wish to donate to. You can actually put that into the contracts, forever. For every time one of your NFTs sells, if you have that in the contract, you'll be rewarded with your royalty, and you can distribute that to other people or organizations as well.

The NFT is evolving in a big way. There are a lot of different uses for NFTs. I'll just touch on two more of them. One is for identities.

There's the whole idea now around what's called the soul token. This reference being sort of the individual's soul. Having an NFT that is an identifier of the individual, and not just like a single NFT. This is where we get to concepts like an NFT of NFTs. You may have an NFT that holds multiple NFTs, which in some way describes you. And they can be protected and private, of course. You don't want to make all the information that's contained on these NFTs public, but some of it you will and some of it you won't. And some of it you'll choose to actually expose during certain times.

One example is you go to buy a bottle of wine and in your State, you need to be 21 years of age. Today, you show them your driver's license, which has a lot of information that is not relevant to this transaction. It has a picture of you, your home address, your birthdate, expiry date. It has whatever is associated to that particular license. But all they need to know is that you're over 21. So, one of the concepts that's being worked on now as part of this identity type of NFT is things like your driver's license or portions of it will be verified by an external source like the DMV. And when you go to purchase a bottle of wine, you just bring up your mobile phone and they'll be able to have a QR code. They scan it, and it will get a response from the trusted oracle, in this case the DMV, saying you're over 21. But they don't have to let them know your age or your birthday or any of that other information. You'll just be able to swipe it and away you go.

It's things like that that are being encompassed into it. It's also the ability to gain entrance into things, to watch

movies, get into Metaverses and games on the Metaverse side, lots of different things.

One thing I did mention was fractionalization of NFTs. I'll use the art as an example as well, but it could just as easily be real estate. A Monet, for example, is a pretty expensive piece of artwork. Perhaps you'd like to have a thousand people who want to join together and own a Monet. That will be difficult to do in today's world. But you could fractionalize a digital image of the Monet. Take a digital image of the Monet and divide it into a thousand different squares. Each of those squares is going to be an NFT. You can give them away or sell them. Basically, they will be distributed out to a thousand people, and each one becomes a partial owner of the Monet.

Now, the assumption here is whoever created that contract is the owner of that Monet and basically can prove provenance of that, and we can write that on the chain as well, into a smart contract. We would have a smart contract that handles all this kind of stuff and creates a thousand NFTs. When you buy one of those NFTs, you are technically part owner of that Monet. That's one way of doing fractionalization. Another way is a little bit more complicated, where the actual NFT itself becomes fractionalized, but we probably don't need to get into that at the moment.

I think I covered an awful lot there.

Plasmier: You mentioned two types of block chain, Ethereum and Bitcoin. How do they compare?

Parker: Ethereum is probably not the most valuable chain–Bitcoin obviously is–but the second most valuable from the perspective of dollars. Ethereum is the most valuable chain from the perspective of development. I think we'll see that going forward.

Ethereum is not unique, but certainly, when it arrived on the scene back eight or nine years ago now, it was the first to do complex smart contracts. Smart contracts are very, very powerful. That allows us to do many things like create NFT's and fractionalize NFT's, like I mentioned previously. It's important because without smart contracts, we wouldn't have NFTs, we wouldn't have a lot of the contract work that's going on now. All the different coins that exist within the Ethereum network, we wouldn't have any of that.

Cooper: Can you talk more about smart contracts?

Parker: It gets a little complicated here, but essentially, that's a bit of code that can be executed on the chain where that contract code will be immutable. It's actually written to the blockchain, just to be clear. Smart contracts are written out into the ledgers on the chains. They can be executed over and over and over again. Think about it like a small section of programming code, whether that is to create a new coin or whether it is to automatically at a certain date to send one coin or multiple coins from one wallet to another. Most chains do have smart contracts on them, or something like smart contracts. Ethereum actually has the vast majority of smart contracts out there, and most NFTs out there are written on Ethereum, although that is changing. But still, that's kind of where that is.

Plasmier: So, all this information travels quickly around the world?

Parker: ZoomYes. In particular, with Ethereum, it does get bogged down because of the way it was architected in the first place. The transactions take longer and longer to execute on the chain when it gets busy. You can be waiting minutes to have transactions execute on the chain, where if there's no traffic, you can get them done in let's say three to five seconds, which is still a hindrance. I mean, these transactions we should be able to get done sub-second. So, there's been a lot of different technology working on ways to fix up the transactional throughput. Other chains are much faster, and Ethereum 2 addresses some of these issues, more on that later. But yes, it all travels quickly around the world.

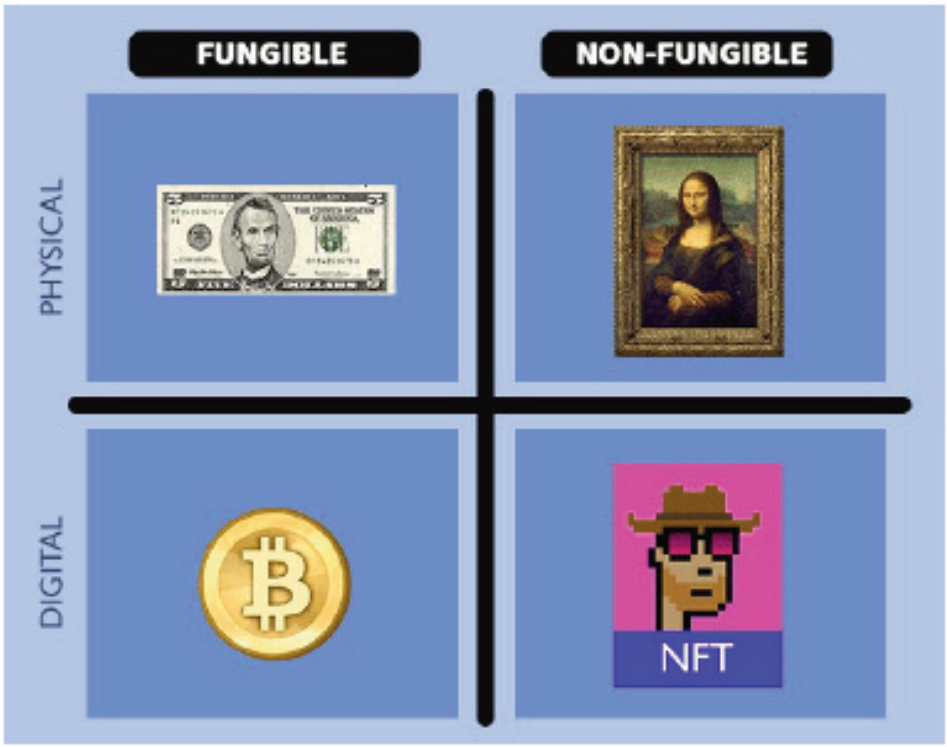
Plasmier: What are all the costs involved?

Parker: There is a cost, which called "gas" in the Ethereum network. The gas is the fee that the transaction originator pays to use the blockchain. That gas fee is paid out to the miners, the ones who actually take that transaction, run the algorithms, validate and verify that transaction and then propose the block being written to the chain. When accepted it gets written to the chain, and the miner gets the gas fees. But the gas fees go through the roof when the Ethereum chain gets congested. So that's another area that a lot of different blockchains are looking at solving. It's transactional throughput as well as the cost of the fees. They're interrelated together.

When you mint, you're creating an NFT. It costs money. You have to pay transaction fees. And they can get very expensive. Make no mistake, a transaction fee – gas fee – on the Ethereum network could cost you $50 or $60, for a single transaction. In fact, the gas fees have gone up to $600. Actually, over $1,000 on very rare occasions. But, as you can imagine, to do a transaction that costs that much money, it has to be a multi-million-dollar transaction or it's not worth it.

But Ethereum is coming out with Ethereum ETH 2. That's sort of what we call it in the blockchain world. So, it'll dramatically increase the throughput, which will result in a reduction in the gas fees. It also changes fundamentally the consensus algorithm that's used.

A consensus algorithm is that algorithm that is used between these "miners" that basically determine how



some transactions, the block, are fit or suitable to be written to the chain permanently. And that algorithm is changing. It's moving from what's called "proof of work", which is very energy-intensive, to becoming proof of stake. Fundamentally, it means that it costs less to actually write a transaction to the blockchain and uses less energy.

Cooper: We keep hearing about the energy that it's taking for crypto. Can you talk about why it takes so much energy and it's potentially causing so many environmental problems?

Parker: Currently, the reason Bitcoin and Ethereum use so much energy is because of these algorithms that the miners run in order to gain consensus and win the block, to write the block. It takes an enormous amount of energy because these computers are running full-out just doing mathematical computations that consume a tremendous amount of energy.

Ethereum 2, the new version of Ethereum, which is expected to ship out later this year, changes the way that those algorithms work. It reduces the energy consumption somewhere on the order of 90% to 95% reduction over what the Ethereum chain uses today, as well as speeding up the transactions and lowering the gas fees. It's addressing the three big hurting points, if you will, for any blockchain.

Cooper: You mentioned that creating blockchain, you have multiple sites around the world, and when you input data into this ledger and then it multiplies that content into multiple ledgers, all identical, but they're anonymous, you don't know where the ledgers reside. But somebody had to set it up. Somebody had to know where those computers would reside somewhere in the world, right?

Parker: Originally, yes. When the blockchain launched, yes. They needed to know that. But then they provided software that other people could just install on their computer and begin mining or participating in the blockchain, in that specific blockchain. Each one of these nodes are only specifically for one blockchain.

Cooper: And as they ship out, they basically replace the units that are there now? That would take some time, but that could change a lot around the energy consumption around the world?

Parker: Yes, definitely, new mining software is shipped out, which takes very little time to disseminate. In fact, the Ethereum network is running a parallel network right now using the new proof of stake. They will soon flip the switch from the current network to the new network. Now, there isn't this kind of hope for Bitcoin. Bitcoin is a different one, and the last time I looked there were discussions on different ways to optimize things here and there, but it's not as dramatic a type of change as Ethereum is undergoing. They may be able to tweak it somewhat on the Bitcoin side of the world, but it's not quite the same. This is a fundamental change.

Cooper: Where does blockchain sit on the Web? I hear about Web 2, Web 3. Can you explain that?

Parker: I'll take you back a bit. There's a lot of confu-

sion and misnomers out there with respect to the terminology used when we talk about the World Wide Web, Web 2, Web 3. Let me start at ground level.

First of all, there's this thing called the Internet. The Internet is really the infrastructure that allows all these other things to work. It is the network that allows these computers to connect to one another. Whatever those computers are doing is irrelevant to the Internet. That's the way you should think about it. It's an infrastructure layer. That's how my computer ultimately communicates over this call to you.

There are layers above that, we'll call them the Web 1, Web 2, Web 3. That's a layer that sits on top of the Internet. It allows a certain access mechanism for people to interact. It's like a user interface, the browser. We had Web 1, which was a very rudimentary type browser, pretty bad, frankly. Web 2 came along, and although it was seen as a money-grab by big corporations, that Web brought us a rich browser environment.

Essentially Web 3, if I can summarize it, takes the browser Web technology and bolts it into the blockchain in decentralized way. That's kind of what it is. But it's also a movement. The movement is decentralization, away from the huge corporate entities, putting power back into the hands of the users. Web 3 encompassed two fundamental things. One is the tech bolting on of decentralized technologies, and the other one is decentralizing companies or applications.

Cooper: Will there be bolted browsers?

Parker: (laughs) No, they're the same browsers, currently. It's just a lot of the plumbing that you don't see in the background is enabling this transition from Web 2 to Web 3. There's a lot of plumbing that goes on in there. The idea is not to change the browser side of it, other than to make it better, 3d and decentralized.

The point is there needs to be distinction made between what that Internet is and the Web 2s and Web 3s of the world that we have today. How does the blockchain work in that environment? The blockchain is a bunch of nodes, computers, that are running applications that access the Internet and communicate directly with one another, peer-to-peer. They aren't on the Web, so to speak. All the communications, all the ledgers, all that other stuff, are communicating with each other, consensus is reached and communicated through the Internet itself.

The ledgers reside on these individual computers, the nodes that are out there. Remember, it's a distributed ledger, so there's many copies of it. It exists on many of these different computers, and those computers are running application code that communicates with the other computers through the Internet.

Plasmier: How would you as a human access Ethereum?

Parker: You could go through a Web browser. For example, you would bring up a website called Etherscan. And what that does in the background is it has applications that interface into the Internet to get to the ledgers. But what you see in your browser, they bring that back, "pretty it up" and put it on your browser for you. You get to see the transactions that have occurred for that wallet or that address. You don't have to install an application. You don't have to be a node to interact with it. There are applications, like wallets, that have been built so that the user and Web browser can interact with Ethereum or any of the chains.

Plasmier: Does a user always need to use the coin of the particular blockchain? For example, if I created an NFT of my dog?

Parker: Typically, if you create it on Ethereum, I would give you Ethereum to purchase that particular NFT. But it doesn't have to be that way. You could use US dollars as the purchase mechanism to purchase that, and you would then transfer that token that you created, the picture of your dog, the NFT, to the person who purchased it.

Plasmier: Is there any kind of crossover in the different blockchains, transactionally?

Parker: Yes. There are bridges, they call them bridges, which go between chains. You can do cross-chain transactions.

Some people refer to it as swapping, at a certain level. For example, you can swap Ethereum coins into Polygon coins. That goes through what's called a bridge. It takes Ethereum from the Ethereum chain and brings it over onto the polygon chain. And you can do vice versa with that as well. There are also exchanges where you can buy sell from one coin to another.

Plasmier: Who decides the value and the exchange rate?

Parker: That's the free market. Totally.

Plasmier: Does that change daily, minute-to-minute?

Parker: Second-to-second, minute-to-minute. It changes all the time. It's freely traded, 24 hours a day as well. It's not like a normal stock exchange. There are exchanges that run 24 hours a day that exchange crypto coins, yep.

Plasmier: So, you know what you're paying at the time of purchase? And tomorrow it will be different.

Parker: An hour later it could be different. Yeah. It totally could be different.

Plasmier: What types of projects have you worked on with blockchain?

Parker: In 2016, a small group of us created a new blockchain with a focus on privacy, speed and scalability. We built it from scratch, using concepts of zero knowledge proofs, sharing, anonymity, you name it. We were addressing things like proof of age without having to show your driver's license with all your data, but rather just show a proof of being over 21 for example.

In 2019, I started to get involved with more of the social networking aspects of how we can use the Ethereum tokens and things. We began playing around with different ways of using NFTs in a social context and how that could be used.

I think culminating last year, about a year ago now, with the concept of an NFT that can hold multiple NFTs. We call it an NFT of NFTs, which is a very cool concept. It's a much more user-friendly way to deal with and address a multitude of distinct NFTs that can be under one "collection," if you will. They can also have utility. That's conceptually what we were doing with that.

We also got into the concepts of DAO, which is the decentralized autonomous organizations and how they would be structured, how they would use the blockchain, how they can write governance rules to the chain and how people can participate in the governance by holding the coins. We also (worked on) concepts of DAO of DAOs. Think about it like a fund of funds and how DAOs could interact with each other and collectively collect up different revenue. In a simple form it would be transactional fees that could be used for funding charitable organizations or things like that.

I got involved with the Metaverse side of the world as well. Now, the Metaverse doesn't necessarily have to be blockchain-related. I got involved with the Metaverse, I guess a long time ago, but it wasn't called the Metaverse. But certainly, in the last year and a half to two years in a big way we looked at how to bolt the Metaverse into the blockchain world and how to utilize NFTs within that construct and obviously the NFT of NFTs is another one. How to use that so that you can really use it for benefit inside a Metaverse. It's not just like a game, but it actually has utility.

Cooper: What kind of policing is going on front-facing for the public to get into potential blockchain sites that are real?

Parker: What would the user want to do?

Cooper: If we as a nonprofit wanted to mint something and see if we could put something together as a fundraiser and connect with the idea that we sell something and 5% continues to come back to the nonprofit. If it's being sold beyond in secondary markets, how do we know we're in the right place and we aren't giving information to some organization that's created a front-facing platform that looks good? We don't know what's happening behind the scenes.

Parker: (laughs) That's a really good question. Because unless you know, then yes, you could be scammed in a way. And there are scams out there with the NFT marketplace. You need to be cognizant of who you're dealing with at the other end. It's early days still, so do your homework if you want to embark on something like that.

Let's say you wanted to buy an NFT in a primary sale which is usually called an NFT drop. You go to the well-known marketplaces to buy it or to the source, They're the original ones. That's when the NFT gets minted.

There is a crypto NFT community where everyone there knows about all the drops that are going on and the utilities of the NFTs. But if you want to buy a secondary market one, then you would go to a known marketplace, like OpenSea, for example. OpenSea is the largest secondary marketplace for NFTs. You could then take a look and see what's for sale and purchase it through OpenSea. OpenSea exposes the original contracts so you can actually just click on that and say, "Where did this original contract come from?" You can get information about that. You can make your own assessments, if you research it as to whether or not it's legitimate.

OpenSea makes great effort to ensure there are no scams on there. I can't vouch for them. They do have issues occasionally. There are other ones. There's Superrare. There's Magic Eden. There's Makers Place, a bunch of different well-known marketplaces, probably 10 or so. That's primarily for purchasing on the secondary markets. They do original NFT drops as well, but primarily for secondary sales. If you want to purchase on the primary markets or the original NFT drops, you do have to know about that.

And if you want to actually do an NFT drop, that's something that is, in my opinion, where we are in the industry, allowing anyone to do NFT drops. You'd need to do that through people you've become acquainted with and you know will do that for you or the marketplaces. They will build the smart contracts for you. The marketplaces also offer to create NFT drops for you in an easy way.

Cooper: It's that early in the game that for the NFT minting part, it relates to who you know?

Parker: Yeah. Well, there are places you can go and set up the NFTs, and you can mint them. OpenSea and other marketplaces do minting as well. You could go on there and say, "I'm creating a collection. Here's a collection of 20 different NFTs. I want them minted."

ZoomAnd you can send people to OpenSea to see your collection on OpenSea and purchase it right from there.

Cooper: How do these partnerships work? Do they get a percentage? Is it a fixed rate?

Parker: Typically, there's a small up-front cost, which covers their hard costs, and then they get a percentage of the raise from the drop, 1%, 5%, whatever seems appropriate or if you're using a marketplace, they have a set fee.

Plasmier: I've heard discussion of this being the next place people will be building in their applications, on blockchain.

Parker: Yeah, well, they call them "dapps." Decentralized applications, dapps. It's hard to answer that question. Not everything can be written on the blockchains. They just aren't meant for that. So, when you have a game or something like that, your game will be an application that's not necessarily written on the blockchain, but it talks to the blockchain.

Plasmier: So potentially racking up points, or if you're selling tokens from your game or log-in type of information, those kinds of connections?

Parker: Exactly. You may need a certain tool to go through this particular part of the game or whatever. The Metaverse will be using that, too. The Metaverse is in some ways like a game, but it'll be more real. There will be real environments, replicas of real life that can then manifest themselves differently because you're in the virtual world. It's not really gaming, but it's using a lot of the gaming tech, coming at it from a different angle. The Metaverse is the next thing that will be coming out.

Cooper: I don't quite understand having space in the Metaverse.

Parker: There's a lot of confusion out there. These people selling virtual real estate, like an island, for example, that isn't linked into a Metaverse today. That's an NFT token. They'll build a Metaverse and they'll link that stuff in. That's an NFT with utility. That's exactly what that's going to be. Like I said, not all of them, but a lot of the NFTs are moving that way.

The Metaverses themselves are being built out, and they're very expensive at the moment. It's a virtual world you can go in and be yourself. You can take 3D virtual scans of yourself and place yourself into the Metaverse space. Or you can choose to be an avatar. You don't necessarily have to physically be yourself. You can choose to look like somebody else. You interact with AI-type of other "people" who are in there. But there will be other live people in there you can also interact with, whether they're real images or avatars or whatever is a decision of the other individual.

You'll be able to do lots of different things. The two of you could be painting, creating music together in the Metaverse, playing a game, watching a sporting game, having a beer in virtual space.

Plasmier: Are there accessibility features for people, let's say, if they're blind? It sounds like right now it's a visual-auditory interaction. How would people who are blind navigate through a Metaverse?

Parker: I don't have an answer for that. You're absolutely right. This is early days.

Plasmier: It's exactly when accessibility needs to be built in.

Parker: I totally understand. The focus is getting one out the door, which may not be the right focus. I totally agree with you. Because it's still a proof of concept. That's where it stands. But there are things like—I mean, there will be obviously the visual side of it, for sure. But you won't necessarily need VR glasses, AR-VR, you don't have to have those. The experience will be better with that. And obviously there will be auditory stuff as well. But there are other things being built out, too. Sense, the ability to smell things in the Metaverse, taste. There are people working in different areas to bring as much reality as they can, but I understand what you're saying.

Plasmier: Tactile, any type of the sense of touch would go a long way.

Parker: That is a big part of some of the new stuff that's being developed, for various reasons.

Cooper: Is there any connection with holograms?

Parker: Yeah. (laughs) I'm not sure I can disclose any of that at the moment. Yes, free-standing holographic interactive images, yes.

Cooper: Many years ago, I got an email from a scientist researcher from Tehran. He was asking if we'd be interested in talking about some research they were doing in holograms that also provided smell. That was many years ago. I always thought that if you could get olfactory senses connected to whatever it might be, whether it's Web or entertainment venues. Bringing Zoomsmell in a theater as you watch a movie opening a sensory experience within the story being told.

Parker: Absolutely. That's something they've been working on for years. And the taste, too. I don't know about licking my mobile phone. (laughter) ■ ABILITY

linkedin.com/in/greg-parker-457903b7



Interview with Professor Arlene S. Kante

For over 40 years, Arlene Kanter's been leveraging laws to combat institutionalization of persons with disabilities. She founded the Disability Law and Policy Program (DLPP) at Syracuse University, one of the largest, most prestigious disability law programs in the world, and participated in the negotiations of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Having "been in the room where it happened" and penned several publications on the CRPD, she has some strong opinions on the treaty—and disability rights generally—which she shared with *ABILITY Magazine*.

Itto Outini: How did your career in disability advocacy and law begin?

Arlene Kanter: Throughout my life, I've had neighbors, friends, and family members with disabilities, and I've always seen myself as an ally. I witnessed firsthand how children with disabilities weren't just treated differently, but actively bullied as well. I tutored students with disabilities in high school, and it really bothered me to see how they were cordoned off from the rest of the class and taught in separate rooms. At that time, not many students with disabilities attended public schools. Many were sent away to institutions.

During high school, I volunteered at a summer camp, one of the oldest residential programs for children with developmental disabilities in the US. I remember coming home every night and feeling upset because I was having dinner with my family, but the kids I'd been playing with all day didn't get to go home. They had to live there, away from their families.

I took those memories with me to law school, but at the time, there was no such field as disability law. There were no courses, no lawyers specializing in the field--not even any textbooks!

The only established field with any relevance at all was "mental health law." For instance, the insanity defense

had been well developed, and a body of law existed for criminal cases involving competency to stand trial, but that's about all. Even the disability rights movement was only just getting started.

Around the time I finished my JD, I learned about two legal organizations that focused on disability rights. One was in California and focused mostly on physical disabilities, and the other was in Washington, DC and focused mainly on the rights of people with mental disabilities, particularly their right to leave institutions and live in the community.

Itto: Was that around the time of Judy Heumann? Was she involved with either of those organizations?

Arlene: The organization in California was the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF), and yes, Judy Heumann worked with them, as part of the independent living movement. That's where the disability rights self-advocacy movement in the US began, with Judy and others at the helm. If you haven't seen the film Crip Camp, please watch it. It tells an important but not well-known story about the movement's history.

Itto: And the one in DC?

Arlene: When I worked there, it was called the Mental Health Law Project (MHLP). Now it's the Bazelon Center on Mental Health Law. It began when a group of lawyers who'd worked on prisoners' rights cases got funding from the federal legal services program. They started applying the legal theories developed in prisoners' rights cases to cases involving people with disabilities who were involuntarily detained in institutions. We brought the first of those cases, Cleburne v. Cleburne Living Center, to the Supreme Court in 1985, arguing that people with disabilities should be protected under the equal protection clause of the Constitution, just like racial minorities. The court disagreed.

As soon as I graduated from NYU, I applied for a job at MHLP, but they were a not-for-profit organization and didn't have the money to hire me. I went and got a fellowship from Georgetown to pursue my LL.M instead. That's where I brought my first case to the US Supreme Court. The case involved homeless people's right to demonstrate by sleeping in a public park.

When that fellowship ended, I went back to MHLP and asked them to hire me again. I told them, "I'll work as a waitress and volunteer on nights and weekends if I have to--please, just hire me!" And they did! That's where I got most of my hands-on legal training, working with the most amazing lawyers and board members. Many of the people on the board were labeled "mentally ill" and were constantly dealing with prejudice and stigma. I learned so much from working with them.

Itto: Like what? Can you give some examples? What did you learn from them that couldn't be found in textbooks?

Arlene: For example, one of the leaders of the self-advocacy movement at that time, Howie the Harp—he's since passed away, sadly--coined the acronym TAB (Temporarily Able-Bodied). The point was to underscore that, although some people have disabilities right now, the rest of us are only temporarily able-bodied. Anyone can become disabled at any time. Almost all of us will experience some form of disability sooner or later. Disability's a natural part of human diversity and should be treated as such.

That insight deepened my perspective at the time, and it took on new relevance for me years later, when I went through treatment for cancer. I got to experience first-hand how people are treated when they have disabilities. Many people weren't sure what to do, so they defaulted to pitying me. I didn't like that at all.

Itto: How did you go from working on domestic disability advocacy to international disability law?

Arlene: That transition started in 1993, when I got invited to teach the first course on disability law at Hebrew University in Israel. In that class, there were students from all over the world: Jews, Muslims, and Christians from Israel, Palestine, the US, the former Soviet Union, even China. They really opened my eyes! They'd all learned about international law in law school. In the US, no such courses are required.

As soon as I returned to Syracuse, I immersed myself in the field. I realized that focusing only on domestic disability law was far too limiting for me and my students. When we study different countries' legal systems, we get introduced to new ideas that we can use to improve our own.

As it happened, that was also around the time that the ADA was coming into effect. It's an important law and has become a model for many other countries, but it's not the only one out there, or even necessarily the best one. International human rights law provides a much broader perspective.

Itto: Can you share some concrete examples? What have you learned from other countries' legal systems?

Arlene: I'll give an example from Israel, where I've spent a bit of time. After teaching there, I went back in 2010 on a Fulbright scholarship and came to admire many aspects of their disability laws, including how they regulate accessibility and infrastructure. In the US, buildings have to be accessible if they were built after the effective date of the ADA. But even if a building was built earlier and isn't accessible, it can still be legally occupied and used. The owners are only required to make it accessible if a person with a disability sues under the ADA and wins. That takes money and time.



Arlene and students

In Israel, on the other hand, buildings have to be inspected and receive a certificate of accessibility before they can open. There's even a program that trains people to become accessibility experts. These experts must certify that a building is fully compliant with the relevant accessibility regulations before it can be occupied. If the building meets the requirements, it will open. If not, it won't. Personally, I think that makes a lot more sense than requiring someone to bring a lawsuit, especially after the building's already been open for years.

Another example comes from my work in Vietnam. Some countries decided to ratify the CRPD and then amend their domestic laws to comply, but in Vietnam, they did it the other way around: they revised their domestic laws first and then ratified the CRPD. I was among several experts from the US who were invited to help write their domestic disability law.

Unlike the US, Vietnam doesn't have a history of institutionalization. I should state up front that institutionalization is something I oppose on principle.

Itto: Why is that?

Arlene: There's a tremendous body of research at this point revealing that they're breeding grounds for abuse and exploitation, especially for women and children. Even clean, well-staffed institutions deprive people of autonomy and can do them real harm. One organization I've worked with for decades, Disability Rights International (DRI), has done a great deal to bring attention to these issues. They've exposed a lot of horrifying things.

In Kenya, for example, during our last visit in 2019, we witnessed children with disabilities living in the most horrific conditions in orphanages after their parents were convinced that they weren't capable of caring for them in their homes. These orphanages often get funding from well-meaning groups from the West, whose donors likely have no idea what kinds of practices they're funding.

Thankfully, many wealthier countries, such as the US, have been on a trajectory toward de-institutionalization in recent years. COVID's shown why this needs to happen like never before: people with disabilities who live in institutions and nursing homes have been dying at three times the rate of non-disabled people.

Itto: But you said that Vietnam doesn't have a history of institutionalization. What have they done instead?

Arlene: In Vietnam, as in many other countries, families have always been expected to support each other. During my meetings with Vietnamese colleagues, I learned that children with disabilities couldn't legally be registered as citizens at birth because of the stigma. What did the parents of those children do, you might ask, when they returned home after giving birth? Usually, they would hide their children out of shame.

At the same time, we learned that the Vietnamese government runs an extensive support system for seniors. It's actually illegal for a child to refuse to take care of their parents. The government provides them with services and resources so they can take better care of their

elders. That program's completely accepted by just about everyone. So, we thought, "What if we use that same framework to support the families of persons with disabilities?" It's not perfect--people are still get stigmatized, mistreated and abandoned in Vietnam because of their disabilities--but it's made a big difference, providing financial support to families.

Itto: Is there a comparable program here in the US?

Arlene: Not at all. The government doesn't help families take care of their children with disabilities. There's no federal fund to help them make their homes accessible, purchase specialized equipment, or access necessary services. We don't even guarantee any kind of paid leave for family members of persons with disabilities! Nor does the ADA provide any accommodations to the family members of persons with disabilities. We just expect everyone to fend for themselves.

Working in countries like Israel and Vietnam introduced me to other ways to approach problems confronting people with disabilities and their families, besides what's offered under current US law.

Itto: What would you like the US to do differently?

Arlene: We could start by ratifying the CRPD! The fact that we haven't makes me furious. Absolutely furious.

Itto: Why is ratifying the CRPD so important? I mean, why not just pass new domestic laws?

Arlene: For one thing, it's embarrassing that we haven't ratified the CRPD. I go to other countries and help them rewrite their laws to conform to the CRPD, and that's more than my country has done! I mean, who do we think we are? 183 countries and the European Union have ratified the CRPD! It's embarrassing.

On top of that, the CRPD establishes some basic human rights that we don't recognize here, like the right to live in the community, with supports if needed; the right to an adequate standard of living, housing, education, medical care and supported decision-making; and the right to physical and mental integrity. No international law had ever recognized those rights before the CRPD. They're not enshrined in our federal laws, either.

Itto: Do you think there's any possibility that the US might still ratify the CRPD?

Arlene: I certainly hope so. But these days, with such a divided Congress, I'm not optimistic. President George W. Bush said, right out of the gate, that his administration wouldn't sign or ratify the treaty, even while his people were participating in negotiations at the UN! President Obama signed the CRPD during his first term, publicly recognizing that it would extend ADA protections to Americans living and working abroad, but the



Senate refused to ratify, not once but twice. Senate Republicans blocked the law and, during debates, totally misrepresented what it says and what it stands for.

Itto: Where do you think the reluctance to ratify the CRPD comes from?

Arlene: Frankly, it's hard to understand, especially considering that the CRPD's modeled after the ADA. There are certain profound differences, of course, not just in terms of specific articles, but at a much deeper level, so I think that's probably why. The CRPD rests presumes a very different role for the federal government in protecting fundamental rights and freedoms, and I think that some people feel that ratifying it might threaten the philosophical basis of our legal system.

Itto: How so? Can you elaborate?

Arlene: US civil rights laws, including the ADA, are written to focus on the the rights of the individual. They're based on the view that if you work hard, you'll succeed, regardless of systemic barriers like ableism.

As a consequence, under the ADA, whenever someone needs accommodation, they have to reinvent the wheel. For example, in order for somebody with a disability to get a workplace accommodation, they first have to prove that they're disabled using medical diagnoses as the criteria. Then the employer has to decide if their request is "reasonable," which basically means, "Will it cost too much?" Then, even if the employer agrees to provide the accommodation, it's only for that one



Arlene speaking in Japan

employee! If another employee with the same disability needs that same accommodation, they have to go through the process all over again. The most charitable thing I can say about the system is that it's inefficient.

In the same vein, for the ADA to be enforced, individuals have to sue. To do that, you need a lawyer, you need money, and you need the stamina and will to spend your time fighting a legal battle that might take years and years, when maybe all you wanted to do in the first place was go shopping or have a meal at a local restaurant!

There's also the issue of guardianship. The CRPD enables something called supported decision-making, whereas we've got guardianship laws in every state. With supported decision-making, people with disabilities are empowered to choose who's going to support them, how and to what degree. Meanwhile, we appoint guardians to make decisions on their behalf. In other words, under the ADA, we systematically deny many people with disabilities the right to make decisions about their lives. That's what's at stake in the recent case involving the famous pop star Brittany Spears, so for anyone who's been following it, these issues might sound familiar.

Itto: What about education? How would the CRPD affect educational opportunities for Americans with disabilities?

Arlene: That's a good question. The CRPD recognizes the right of all children and adults to inclusive education. In the US, there's not even a constitutional right to education, much less to inclusive education, where children with and without disabilities are taught in the same classroom. The Individuals with Disabilities with Education Act requires only a "free appropriate education," not an inclusive one.

In higher education, too, students have to prove their eligibility for accommodations based on a doctor's evaluation. That can get expensive pretty quickly, and even after making those requests, many students don't receive the accommodations they need. And if they do, they're often ridiculed by classmates and faculty.

Why not do it differently? Why not create a classroom according to universal design? In such a classroom, everybody would be able to see and hear from anywhere in the room. Course materials would be made accessible to everyone from the outset. Students who need individualized accommodations, such as extra time on exams, would still get them, but that would make a lot of those piecemeal accommodations unnecessary. In the long run, it would be less cumbersome for everyone.

As far as I'm concerned, the issue boils down to a simple question: "How can we best teach our students?" I think about this question all the time. Personally, I try to ensure that every student gets a chance to excel. As far as I'm concerned, my job is to support them and enable them to do their best, not to put stumbling blocks in their way. I'm thinking of a quote--I'm sorry, I don't

recall the author--but it goes like this: "If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn."

Itto: Speaking of teaching, can you tell us a bit about the Disability Law and Policy Program at Syracuse?

Arlene: Of course! The program just celebrated its 15th year last year, as the ADA celebrated its 30th. We've collaborated with International Programs to launch the first international law program where lawyers from countries around the world can come together and study international and comparative disability law. With funding from the Open Society Foundation and others, we've attracted highly qualified lawyers committed to human rights and disability law to our LL.M class each year, as well as our new S.J.D. program this year.

Every single year, I'm humbled anew by the challenges these international students face in completing their LL.M. or S.J.D. studies away from home, in a second or third or fourth language, and often with disabilities. Many of our international students who're blind have told me how much more accessible Syracuse Law is than the schools in their home countries. They're often impressed by how many more books, articles and resource are available to them in alternate formats. It's deeply gratifying to me that we've been able to build that infrastructure into the program.

Itto: What big projects are you and your colleagues at Syracuse currently working on?

Arlene: Right now, the City of Syracuse is preparing to host up to 200 Afghan refugees. Maybe more. Lawyers in our community are gearing up to help these refugees in a variety of ways. One of my current students, a Fulbright scholar from Afghanistan, will be collaborating with me to develop training materials about conditions in Afghanistan for people with disabilities. These materials will be used by local lawyers to better represent Afghani refugees in their claims for asylum.

Itto: Is that a new initiative? Or is it building on work that you've done in the past?

Arlene: It's a new initiative, but I've been interested in the intersection of immigration and disability law for years. The field is full of fascinating and infuriating contradictions. For instance, historically, the US has explicitly excluded immigrants with disabilities. We have laws that say, for example, that if a person who's seeking to enter the US would be dependent on government assistance, they can be denied entry. However, if a person's facing persecution in their home country, that exclusion doesn't get applied--or at least it shouldn't, in theory. Those individuals are eligible to apply for asylum, or to not be removed from the US.

In 1999, along with some other lawyers, I brought a case on behalf of a man from Mexico who sought asylum on the grounds of disability-related persecution. That case was the first of its kind. The Board of Immigration set a precedent by holding that people with disabilities may constitute a "particular social group," which is one of the requirements for claiming asylum. Since then, people from many different countries have sought asylum in the US due to disability-related persecution. And yet, those cases are still very difficult to win.

Itto: Why is that?

Arlene: It can depend on a number of factors. The case often turns on whether the conditions in the country of origin meet the formal criteria for persecution. In some countries, people with disabilities are systematically confined to institutions, where the death rate is very high due to poor conditions, and in those cases, asylum may be granted. In most cases, though, persecution on the basis of membership in the "particular social group" of people with disabilities is difficult to prove.

Itto: This seems to be a very fraught moment in global history, with international conflicts, natural disasters, wars--events that leave lots of people with disabilities and also drive migration. Can you help us put this moment in perspective? What changes have you witnessed in the last 50 years in terms of disability rights and international law? What, if anything, gives you hope?

Arlene: When I graduated law school in 1981, there were only two organizations in the entire country that provided legal services to people with disabilities. Now, there are hundreds in the US alone! There's an international treaty that recognizes the rights of people with disabilities, even if we haven't ratified it. Children with disabilities are now going to school and becoming lawyers themselves. Actors with disabilities have been nominated for Academy Awards. That's progress!

Yes, discrimination and ableism are still with us, but things have improved, and I think they're still improving. Internationally, the CRPD's promoting changes in countries around the world. People with disabilities are demanding and getting more seats at the table. It's not mission accomplished, but those are very consequential things.

Itto: One last question: what are you most proud of having accomplished?

Arlene: It's not what I've accomplished. When I see my students, including those with disabilities, graduating from law school, landing great jobs, and keeping the pressure on societies and institutions around the world to protect and expand rights and access for people with disabilities, that's what makes me most proud. ■ ABILITY

linkedin.com/in/arlene-kanter


corinne
FURMAN



British actress, Corrine Furman, wants “the younger generation to dream big, to learn that anything is achievable, no matter what disability someone has.” Furman struggled to be successful in the UK’s education system and was frustrated that her test scores did not reflect her knowledge. Furman focused her education in the performing arts and made it to university. In her final year of college, she was diagnosed with dyslexia. And then, Furman said, “Everything made sense.”

Furman’s burgeoning career is off to a great start with two recent feature films. Furman plays Paige in “Fisherman’s Friends: One and All” that recently premiered in the UK. She is starring as Hope in the soon to be released, “The Hunting of the Snark,” a film adaptation of the Lewis Carroll poem.



Furman: Center with cast of *Fisherman's Friends 2*

ABILITY's Chet Cooper met with Furman via Zoom to talk about her promising film career, her life before the dyslexia diagnosis, as well as her volunteer work with rescue animals from war-torn Ukraine and Hungary.

Chet Cooper: First thanks for reaching out to share your story with *ABILITY Magazine*.

Furman: Thank you. I think for me, I'm always so passionate about what I do. I want to make the life for myself that I want. It's great having an agent, having people behind you to support that, but I also want to be doing what I can to get to where I want to be. I think it's quite easy sometimes to just kind of sit back and let other people do the work for you, but I just want to do it for myself.

Cooper: Have you always been self-motivated in everything you've done growing up?

Furman: I think with acting, yes. But there are things, obviously, that I don't find as interesting. (laughs) Like all those subjects at school which I found really, really hard because of the dyslexia. No interest, no motivation. (laughs) But if I love it and I believe in it, I'll go in guns blazing.

Cooper: Did you have any teachers who sparked that part of your mind to say, "This is great and I'll dig into this?"

Furman: I think not necessarily teachers, but my mom. My mom has definitely been my biggest supporter and my biggest cheerleader. She's always the one to tell me that if I dream it, if I believe it, and if I work hard enough, then I can get to anywhere I want to be. Through the ups and downs of having loads of acting work and having no acting work, she's always been the one to keep me going. And if I'm feeling demotivated, thinking I'm not getting anywhere, I haven't had a job for a while, she'll say, "It's coming, it's coming. You're putting the work in. It's coming." I don't know, she's the main person for me who makes me feel like it's possible.

Cooper: That's great to have that support.

Furman: I think it's rare as well for parents to be as amazing as she is, especially when it comes to a kind of unsecure job in the sense of you don't know when your next day of work will be, when your next paycheck will be. But to have a parent who fully supports it and believes in it as much as I do, if not more, I think she believes in it more than I did. I think that's really, really special, yeah.

Cooper: She's on the other line right now asking me to ask you questions.

Furman: (laughs) She's like, "Keep going," hon? "Tell more about her mom." (laughs) She's great, by the way.

Cooper: (laughs) What does she do?

Furman: She is a yoga teacher. We both work for a dog rescue charity. So, when I'm not acting I work at the dog rescue charity. She also works for the dog rescue charity. And funnily enough, she's actually a dyslexia teacher at my primary school. She teaches children who are severely dyslexic, and she didn't know that I was dyslexic. I found out really late. Being a dyslexic teacher herself, she didn't realize. And she kicks herself every day.

Cooper: Isn't there a saying that the cobbler's children don't have shoes?

Furman: Yeah.

Cooper: Do you know anything about the methodologies she's using for really extreme dyslexia?

Furman: She does all sorts. She teaches it right back-to-basics. Kids who are unable to pronounce the alphabet and string a sentence together. She's the other end of the spectrum. But now, putting all the pieces of puzzle together, it's very obvious that I'm dyslexic, but I think just because she had been so rooted in the opposite end. It just didn't click for her.

Cooper: So, when you were not doing well in school, she just thought you needed extra help?

Furman: The thing is I went to a school that wasn't that academic. I don't know how you guys do school things over there, but when we're in secondary school¬— That's year 7 to year 11. —And throughout that time, I struggled a lot with math. I had to do extra math classes, extra math tutoring. Math was something I really struggled with, but not to the extremity of some of the other students there. And then it was my two years after that, they call it AS-levels— I'm the sort of person, I'm a very visual learner. I had posters all across my bedroom wall of everything I needed to learn for all of my exams. My mom would quiz me every single day until I knew every single answer to what she asked me. I learned it all.

I did my exams, I absolutely smashed them. Done this, in the bag, done, done. I got through those, read my results, and every single one of my written exams I had failed. I was so confused. I was heartbroken because I had put in so much work. I didn't know what had happened, if they had marked the wrong paper. I was gobsmacked. Obviously now, understanding that my writing doesn't necessarily make sense—kind of explains it. So, it was around then that things really started to change. Even when I was really little, I've hated reading since I was five years old, hated it. But I never thought that there was anything to mention with that. I'm not really making sense.

When I read, the sentence doesn't string together to form a sentence. I have to read the same line over and over again, and then it finally strings together to make a sentence. For me, reading was a chore. It wasn't enjoyable. I never enjoyed it as a child. I thought that was normal. I couldn't understand why people liked reading. I never explained it to anyone in that way. So yeah. I then, obviously, failed all my written AS-levels. I did a B-tech in performing arts. Here, a B-tech is kind of like a more practical course. There wasn't really much written work. It was acting, singing, dancing, and lot more doing rather than writing. That was how I got into university.

I went to quite a good university. I remember my first day at university. It was my first-ever lecture. I sat in the room and I was gob-smacked. I felt like the most stupid person in that entire university. I didn't understand anything anyone was saying. I didn't understand how they had annotated the notes that they did from the texts that we were given because the texts didn't make sense to me. I remember phoning my mom after my first-ever lecture, saying, "I don't think that university is me. I shouldn't be here." It was weird because obviously at school, I was the brighter half of the students. But then going to such a good university, I was at the complete opposite end. It hit home then, like, maybe something isn't right.

And then the more practical side of stuff started. I did drama at university, following on from that. The next week we did the more practical side, and everything was fine. I felt like, "I can do this, I can be here." We had a lot of essays to do on our course. Every single essay I did, I had to sit with my mom. I would show her the stuff I had written, and none of it made sense. I would say the essay and my mom would type it. Even if I'd read something back, if I'd got it in my head that that's what it said, that's what it said, even if that isn't actually what it says, if that makes sense.

I remember we were at the theater one night, and it was really funny. My favorite program is "Drag Race." Have you ever watched it?

Cooper: No.

Furman: It's "RuPaul's Drag Race."

Cooper: Oh, "Drag Race." I thought you meant a car show. Yes, I know what you're saying now, but no.

Furman: It's basically about drag queens. And there was a drag queen on the program called Sum Ting Wong. We were at the theater seeing the drag show, and it suddenly clicked. I had watched six weeks of this drag queen on the TV, and I went, "I finally get her name! It's like something wrong, Sum Ting Wong!" And my mom was like, "Corinne, what do you mean, you've only just got that?" And I said, "It's like anything. I read



it. I read it again, and it doesn't make sense. It doesn't form a sentence." My mom looked at me and she said, "You need to get tested for dyslexia." And it suddenly all just clicked in her head. Everything that had happened previously all made sense. And we thought, "Uh oh. We have been stupid. We've missed this the whole entire—the whole of my education."

So, it was in my final year at university that it got tested for dyslexia, and—yeah.

Cooper: And here we are today!

Furman: (laughs) Here we are today. I remember, the lady who tested me, I remember her being so rude and demoralizing. I was so upset by the situation. —Like I shouldn't have been, but it is a big thing. —And I remember at the end of the test, I said to her, "How did it go? What do you think of the outcome?" She looked at me and she went, "Hmppph. You're dyslexic." I was like, "What?" Kind of a shock, heartbroken, taken aback. Obviously, the result came back I was dyslexic. And I was upset. But things made sense. It reaffirmed to me that I wasn't stupid, it's just that my brain works differently to other people's.

Cooper: I'm always wondering how actors who have dyslexia memorize their lines. What's the process, especially if it's a fairly difficult thing to study and to read and memorize? What do you do?

Furman: It's funny. Even in my acting classes when I was younger, I remember we would always sit in a circle, and we would all get a scene. And I would be sweating, I'd be so nervous. I kept saying to myself, "Please don't be first, don't be first to read." I was so nervous that if my teacher did choose me to read first, I would say the words wrong, I would get words scrambled. It was a massive panic. Now, obviously, knowing that I am dyslexic, I think for me, I'm a very visual person.

With scenes, because I'm so passionate about it, it obviously takes me a little bit longer than most people to get the gist of things. I even did a tape the other day, and I had completely misjudged what the scene was, what was happening. It just wasn't in my head how it was written. I think now I know that I need to take time, to not stress. I can obviously make people aware that I'm dyslexic so it may take longer for me to get used to things.

But when I read a script, after the first initial few times, it's like it comes to life. And I can see it play out in front of me. I think that's quite similar with a lot of dyslexic people. They're very creative and very visual people. It's like I can see how it's meant to happen, how the actions play out. It's not then so much about the words that are written on the page and more like a choreography. I remember the emotion that happens with each action, where I'm meant to be facing. It kind of makes into more of a dance in a way. That's how I remember it. It sounds a bit weird and wacky, but I guess it's not focusing so much on the words and more about what emotions follow after one another, what action happens, the interaction between the other actor and the way that made me feel and triggering what happens next in the scene.

Cooper: I'm not sure if this is the right term, but is that method acting?

Furman: I think method acting is more in the sense of getting into character. Say, for instance, I was playing a super-angry character, I'd go to a boxing class and really delve into all of my emotions from childhood traumas that made me super-angry and stuff that I hadn't dealt with and put it into action. Whereas with this, it's more creating a choreography with the emotions and the feelings and the actions, if that makes sense.

Cooper: Let's come up with a new term: method choreography acting.

Furman: (laughs) Corinne's method, yes.

Cooper: I have dyslexia, so—

Furman: Oh, you do?

Cooper: So, everything you said was just spot-on for me as well.

Furman: Oh, really! I find it so interesting. I feel like a

lot of people I've met have said the same thing. If you don't realize you're dyslexic, you just thinking you're a bit crazy, but actually there's a lot of us out there.

Cooper: There is talk about people with dyslexia having more creative capability.

Furman: There's a really interesting book all about people with learning disabilities and how their minds are so much more creative and how some companies search for people with dyslexia or dyspraxia to be part of their teams because they bring that creative flair that other people just don't have in their brains.

Cooper: We see employers looking for that creative mind.

Furman: I can finally say I'm dyslexic. It took a while to get used to it and to finally be able to say it, but I think it has helped me in a sense. For example, I did a table read, do you know what that is?

Cooper: That's where you're reading while having dinner…

Furman: (laughs)

Cooper: For people who don't know it, I would say it's where actors around a table read their lines for an upcoming show.

Furman: Yeah. I did a table read a couple of months ago. It was for a TV series. They gave us the whole episode. The script was huge. It was all the cast, the potential cast, ready to read it. And just me being able to say, "By the way, guys, I am dyslexic. It's not that I'm not prepared or that I haven't spent time on this, I haven't learned what I meant to. It's just with this amount of words in front of me, I might fumble, I might trip over my words, I might get some of the words wrong." It gives that reassurance that I'm not just uncaring or I haven't put the work in or I haven't prepared. It's just not the case. When it's something like that and you are nervous and stress, it makes it so much worse. Just being able to say, "FYI, I'm dyslexic. Just give me a second," is more freeing. It makes you feel more comfortable and takes, for me, anyway, that bit of stress off the situation.

Cooper: It does. It gives you agency.

Furman: I think it takes time to get to that stage where you're happy and open to talk about it. I'm sure anyone who's going through a similar thing, it's about the same. When you get to that stage when you can be proud of it and you know that your brain is beautiful and creative, just different, and you can speak about it openly, I think it's an amazing thing. But I think it's a journey to get there. It's not something that everyone can get to or want to speak about.

That's why I think what you guys are doing is such an amazing thing, giving people the opportunity to realize that they're normal, and that's fine, and people's brains work in different ways and not everyone is the same. I think what you guys are doing is great.

Cooper: How did you find out about us?

Furman: Just online, actually. I always like to research other actors who are dyslexic as well and how they cope with and deal with things, and other people with general disabilities. I like being inspired by people and learning from people. I just stumbled across you guys, and you guys are fab! (laughs)

I was thinking of coming over to the U.S. for pilot season at the beginning of next year. I've had a couple of people say to me, "Oh, there's no way. If you've got dyslexia, you cannot do pilot season. Don't do it. You won't be able to do it." I want to prove that you can do it. Why shouldn't I be able to do it? Why should I not have that opportunity just because some things take a little big longer? It's surprising that people still think like that.

Cooper: If you're anything like me, then you would go. (laughs)

Furman: It makes you want to do it more, doesn't it?

Cooper: What does it mean for you to be in LA during pilot season?

Furman: It's a lot bigger scale, a lot more opportunities. You meet a lot more people. Even if you don't get the job, it's more practice. it's getting your brain trained again to learn all these lines and be fast-paced and be under pressure. It's super-challenging. I love to challenge myself. But it can also lead to amazing opportunities as well.

Cooper: How do you network when you're here?

Furman: That's a good question, one we're all figuring out.

Cooper: (laughs) Oh, OK.

Furman: You have to start preparation a long time in advance. You couldn't, say, for someone who lives here, just get on a plane and expect to get in the room every day. That's just not what's going to happen. You need to be proactive, working hard months in advance to have those contacts, those connections, have things lined up for when you're there, hopefully. Take it as it comes and see what happens.

Cooper: Would your agent or manager help you with that navigation?



Corinne and sister Roxy at the Hungary Hearts Dog Rescue in the UK.

Furman: An agent would help, but I think you would need to put a lot of work in yourself.

Cooper: Do you have an agent now?

Furman: Yeah. They're amazing.

Cooper: And they're on board for you to come out for pilot season?

Furman: I think it's a great opportunity for anyone, and if you're passionate enough, driven enough, I don't know anyone who would say no one should do it, apart from those people who think if you're dyslexic you shouldn't do it. (laughs)

Cooper: (laughs) Do the agents there work well with people here? Do you also have to work with a local agent?

Furman: Not necessarily. If you were staying in America and working there, most people have a US agent and a UK agent. But for something like pilot season, not necessarily. They just help connect you to their contacts in the US, the casting directors they're friendly with. It's like an extra push behind you, in a way.

Cooper: Do you have pilot season in the UK?

Furman: No.

Cooper: Oh, interesting. When does pilot season start?

Furman: In January-February.

Cooper: Hopefully your agent is hard at work trying to figure out how to line things up for you.

Furman: Yeah, I think I'll see how the next couple of weeks go. Obviously, I've just had "Fisherman's Friends" come out.

Cooper: Tell us about that.

Furman: That was my first job coming out of university, which was a huge opportunity, something people don't expect to happen to them for their first job out of uni. I remember doing my self-take, sent it off, thought nothing of it. A couple days later I heard back saying that they wanted to give me the part of Paige. I couldn't believe it. I didn't realize the scale of the film. I didn't even realize it would be in cinemas or the cast that I'd be working alongside with. I found out more about it, went down for filming, and the rest is history. (laughs)

Cooper: For people who haven't seen or know about the film, can you tell us about the film and your character?

Furman: Sure, "Fisherman's Friends" are a real-life band from a little seaside town in the UK. It's basically a true story following their journey. They end up playing at Glastonbury. They still play there nearly every year now. They're a normal group of everyday people who have just stumbled across fame. The first film came out a couple of years ago, and this is the follow-on from that. It's got a bit of romance. It's a very feel-good, happy, English, funny film.

There's a really important story line in the second film, advocating men's mental health and normalizing it and showing that men have struggles, too. And then shows the family that they all are and the support system they have and getting things back on track with their music career. Struggling through loss and heartbreak. It's a really beautiful story. My part, however, is not so beautiful. I'm just kind of a bit of fun, a feel-good, young singer who is a bit obsessive herself. She loves to selfie.

Cooper: Is Paige part of the band?

Furman: She's completely separate from the band. I'm signed to a big record label that did have the Fisherman's Friends on board. Through their struggles, they kind of messed up a bit in the public eye, and the record label are dropping them. I'm the one who's come in, the record label's new focus and new drive, and the Fisherman's Friends are earning back the record level. Without giving too much away, that's kind of the vibe of it all.

Cooper: I won't go any further. I don't want to give it away. From that, did the phones start ringing because of that part?

Furman: They haven't quite started ringing yet. However, when we had just finished filming, I made a really good friendship with one of the main actors, Ramon Tikaram. He's done "Game of Thrones," "EastEnders," all sorts. We were in the car, riding back together from base one day, back to costume, and he said to me, "I know this is your first job, I really want to help you." He was in another film. One of his close friends is the director, and he knew that they were looking for a young woman to play the part of Hope. He put me forward to the director. I got the part. And then he and I did another film together. That was a couple of months. And then I got another job following on from that. And now "Fisherman's Friends" is out, it's only been out for two weeks. I don't know how many people have gone to see it in the cinemas yet, but hopefully when more and more people see it, that will push things a little bit for me.

Cooper: That's really good. Maybe the phone didn't ring, but your ears were.

Furman: (laughs)

Cooper: Is that film international or UK-based?

Furman: It will come to the U.S. eventually. The first one did really well in the US, so I know that the plan is to get the second one out there as well. At the current moment, it's just in cinemas in the UK and then will be on a streaming service and go out to the U.S.

Cooper: So, it's not streaming yet?

Furman: No. It's just in cinemas in the moment.

Cooper: That's too bad.

Furman: (laughs) The first one's on Amazon Prime, but the second one is not out on streaming services yet.

Cooper: You didn't name the other movies.

Furman: The second film I did with Ramon is called "The Hunting of the Snark," which is a Lewis Carroll poem. He wrote "Alice in Wonderland." Our lovely director is Simon DaVison. Ramon plays the lead. I play a character called Hope. It's a rendition of a Lewis Carroll poem. It's not your average poem. It's called a nonsense poem. It's a bit of a weird and wonderful film, something a little bit different. It's very true to Lewis Carroll and how he wrote it. It's very exciting.

Cooper: Where is that now?

Furman: That's not out yet. It will be out in the months to follow. And I did a Netflix series, a teenager's, children's drama. It's called "Rebel Cheer Squad." It's season two of something called "Get Even." So, they call it "Rebel Cheer Squad, a Get Even Series." I play a character called Maya who's a teacher. There's speculation around the school about one of the students having a girlfriend. They turn heads to me. They've found love letters. It's safe for children, so it's still very PG, only love letters. But it turns out it's not me who's the love interest.

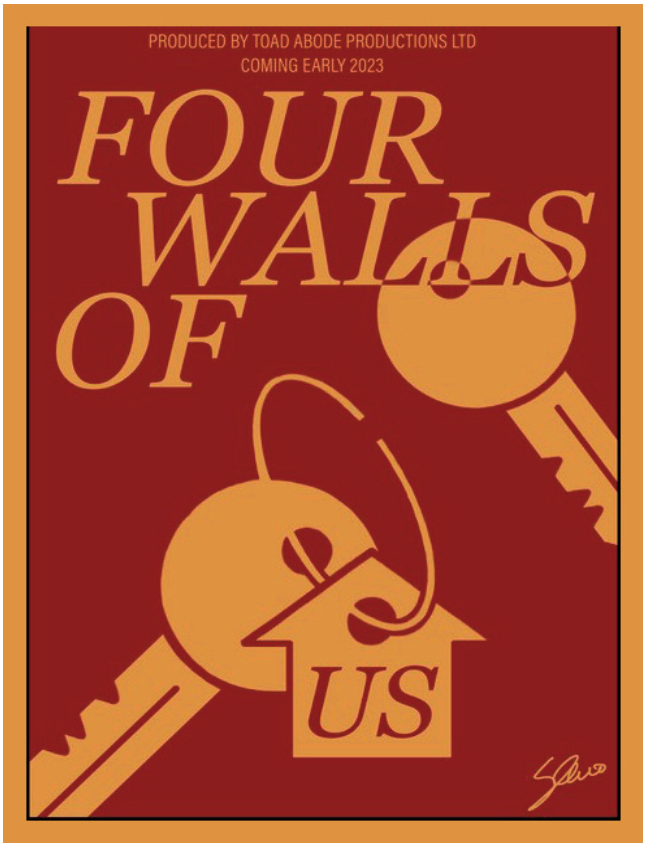
Cooper: Are you a regular? Do you show up more than once in the series?

Furman: One episode, a small part again.

Furman: I got a main part in a short film, which is really exciting.

Cooper: Can you talk about that?

Furman: (laughs) It's a little film called "Four Walls of Us," directed by a lovely director,
Rhys Freeman. I'm playing the lead role of Joyce. It's the story of two young lovers getting divorced. My parents kind of split up, and we're going to use some method acting, and we're going to channel my inner emotions and hopefully get a performance out of it. (laughs)



Cooper: (laughs) That's good. I wanted to talk to you a little bit deeper is the work you're doing. At one point you mentioned charity work with the rescue dogs, is that paid or volunteer?

Furman: It's volunteer work, for the charity, volunteer-based.

Cooper: How did you get into that? And is your mother doing this as well?

Furman: We've always been a very big animal-loving family. We're all vegan and we're a bit animal-loving to the extreme. Anyway, we were in lockdown, and our previous dog, our family dog, had died a few years back. I was really, really struggling throughout lockdown. I found it really hard on my mental health. I kept saying, as a family, "We need a dog! We need dog! A dog would make everything better!" And slowly and surely, I started to talk everyone around.

My mom saw an advertisement of my current dog, Bobbie. There was a bus that was coming over from Hungary. —That's where the dogs were rescued from.— And it was arriving the following day. We had seen this photo of him, and we found out he was coming. The next day there were three dogs on that bus who didn't have homes.

I saw a photo of him and I literally knew that he was my dog. I know that sounds really crazy to say, but it was just something in his eyes. And I thought, "Right! That is the one for me!" I said, "Look, guys, I'm going to adopt this dog." My sister also fell in love with one of the other ones. She said, "I'm also adopting a dog." And my parents couldn't really do anything about it. So, the next day, we went to the charity and picked up my lovely dog, Bobbie, and my sister's dog, Lina.

From that day, I've become more and more involved with the charity. I got a second dog from the charity about six months after getting Bobbie. They do such incredible work. They are the most caring people I've maybe ever met. They have such big hearts. They have literally dedicated their entire lives to saving dogs. They've transformed their family home into a big dog sanctuary in Hungary. They bring 20 dogs over to the UK every two to three weeks, so they're literally saving dogs all the time.

They find dogs either on the streets or in killing stations in Hungary. And we get them ready to come over to the UK. For instance, neutering them, spaying them—We didn't want any more puppies in the world because that was part of the problem. We vaccinate them, give them their worming treatment, their flea treatment. We give them their vet checks and then we bring them over to the UK to be homed.

Part of that process is home-checking people, checking that their garden's safe, asking what prior experience they have, finding out if they have cats. You name it. It's a long list of questions we have to go through. Basically, we try to match up the best dog to the best family. That's a huge part of what I do. We're literally saving dogs all the time. It's really sad to see them in the situations that they find them in, but it's one of the most beautiful things to see them happy, following their journey down the line and seeing how much they change and how much happiness they've brought a family, how they come out of their shells and start to become confident. It's literally a very useful thing to do, and I'm really passionate about it. That keeps me going when I'm not doing the whole acting thing.

Cooper: I think there's a lot of therapy that goes on when you volunteer, but then there's a connection now with an animal that you're supporting. So, there are multiple levels of wellness that are happening.

Furman: I do genuinely think that my dog Bobbie is literally my therapy dog. He pretty much saved me throughout lockdown. I'm sure a lot of people also were struggling with mental health at that time. He got me out of the house. He made me meet new people on dog walks. He changed things around for me. I do believe that therapy dogs are a thing.

Cooper: How did this organization expand to also supporting Ukrainian dogs?

Furman: Hungry meets the Ukrainian borders, and the

family—It's a family-run charity, a nonprofit. —When everything in Ukraine started to happen, obviously, it had a big impact on ppl's pets as well. They would drive over to Ukraine, risking their lives every single time they went over, and tried to save as many dogs as possible. They had people bringing them, saying, "We need somewhere for our dogs to go to keep them safe. We can't look after them anymore because we're living in such dangerous conditions." They'd find dogs on the streets in Ukraine and it started happening that way as well. They're literally the most selfless people I've ever met. They're just incredible.

Cooper: The news doesn't cover what happens to people's pets.

Furman: Yeah, the families have to put their families first, the kids, the human beings. It's not that they don't care about animals any more, it's just such dangerous conditions that they can't physically help everyone. So having a charity like Hungary House, who are literally going in and risking their lives to save people's pets as well, they're just incredible.

Cooper: Do you think they understand that the word "Hungary" in the English means—

Furman: (laughs) I don't know! I think my dogs do know. When I'm feeding them, I go, "Are you hungry?" And they eat like crazy. So, I think they do.

Cooper: (laughs)

Furman: Oh, it's definitely a play on words, yes.

Cooper: So, they speak English?

Furman: It's run by a lovely couple, and their daughter, Hilda, she's the lady who runs everything from the UK. Her parents, who live in Hungary there, don't speak any English at all, and Hilda speaks Hungarian and English. So, she's the point of contact between the volunteers we have in England and her parents who are looking after the newly rescued dogs in Hungary.

Cooper: Do you think the name of the organization came from the parents or from the daughter?

Furman: I think they came up with it together. They're a very close-knit family, they're very close.

Cooper: When I first heard it, I thought it was maybe a food bank or a dating service.

Furman: I think as soon as you type their name in, they have dogs everywhere, and you think, "Oh, Hungary Hearts, dogs are always hungry, Hungary." I think it's quite clever. (laughs)

Cooper: You could do that to so many charities in Hungary, using the word Hungary first.

Furman: (laughs) Exactly.

Cooper: Who knew that you had an acting bug first, you or your mother?

Furman: I'm going to have to say my mom, just because I've always been the child from a very young age to perform for my parents and to do impressions. Even when I'm explaining things sometimes I'll act them out. I guess my mom, but the real passion I think came from me first. I started dancing first. Dance was my main passion. I then went from straight dance school to a performing arts school, and then they introduced me to singing and acting. Within a couple of lessons I completely fell in love with acting. I think it's an art that's so much more freeing in the sense that it's open to anyone, whereas with dance, you have to look a certain way, you have to be a certain way, your career finishes by 30. In acting, you can be whoever you want to be, short, tall, fat, skinny, ginger, blonde, you can be anyone and there is a part for you. So that was why I fell in love with it initially.

I love performing. I love being able to tell important stories. I love how you could have the same scene in front of you and do it with two different actors, and there would be a different outcome. There's never a right or wrong, whereas with dance, it needs to be in line at the same time, your leg needs to be at this level. Whereas with acting, it's completely different. Everyone's interpretation of the scene is completely different. It's so much more freeing. For me, getting to channel my emotions and stuff that I've gone through in life in a way to tell a beautiful story is really special about acting as well.

Cooper: So, from your early childhood you've always had that intrinsic nature to perform?

Furman: Yeah. I mean, when I was little, I used to be quite an (entertainer). I loved making people laugh and do a little show for them. I think I just had it in me. Now it's not just the acting that I love. I love being on set. I find it thrilling. I literally come off set with such a buzz, such a high. I love meeting new people every day, doing something different each day. I love it all. I love seeing everything that happens behind the camera. I love seeing the months of hard work finally all coming together and seeing the finished product. There's so much more to acting than just the acting, if that makes sense.

Cooper: Absolutely. Without a doubt. You talk about leaving the set alive. You probably get energy just heading toward the set.

Furman: Oh, I do. I'm so excited. Costume fitting, I'm over the moon. I get excited by all of it, all of it. I love it. I absolutely love it. I love every single part of it. It's



literally what I want to do forever, and I hope that with enough hard work and determination, that's what can happen.

Cooper: Anything else you could share? We've said a lot. Sometimes I might hear something I didn't even think about talking about. Is there anything you want to share that we haven't talk about yet?

Furman: I'm not at this stage yet, but I want to be sharing my story and telling people that if you want something and you dream of it, then go for it and don't be scared that it might fail, because if you want it and you work for it, then—fingers crossed, it will happen. I think that it's important to not feel held back by a disability. If you love it and you dream of it, what's stopping you?

■ ABILITY

hungaryheartsdogrescue.co.uk
instagram.com/corinnefurman
Imdb.me/corinnefurman

ability Entertainment

disABILITY Talent in Front and Behind the Camera

abilityE

disABILITY Talent Source for the ENTERTAINMENT Industry



Tricia Malowney (left) with her fellow disability advocates

Tricia Malowney — Now My Journey's About Empowering Others

Tricia Malowney formally retired in the year 2000, but today she's the Chief Accessibility Advocate to the Department of Transport in Victoria, Australia and a member of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Independent Advisory Council. "I still do this work because I want to work," she said. "I'm already empowered. Now my journey's about empowering others, passing that on to the next generation." Ms Malowney holds a Bachelor of Arts, and was awarded the 2018 Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) General Division. She is an inductee of the 2013 Victorian Honour Roll of Women and 2018 Victorian Life Time Achievement Honour Roll, and a 2016 National Lesley Hall Disability Award finalist.

Itto Outini: Can you tell us about your new job with the Department of Transport in Victoria? What does your position involve?

Tricia Malowney: Yes, of course. I've recently been appointed Chief Accessibility Advocate to the Department of Transport in Victoria, Australia, and it's been great so far! There's no job description; I basically get to do whatever I want, whenever I want. I can talk to anyone, internally and externally, and I can look at any document or any project to make sure accessibility's included. I'm also including women's safety in that portfolio, which I can do because I get to set the agenda.

Itto: How did you first get involved with disability and gender advocacy? Can you give us a brief overview?

Tricia: Oh, I'm always happy to talk about me! I contracted polio the year I was born, 1954, before those vaccines were available. My parents were told, "Leave this one in a home and have more children," and they said, "Well, we're not going to listen to the first part!" They kept me and had eight more kids.



During that time, most people with disabilities were routinely institutionalized. I didn't know anybody with a disability growing up. I went to mainstream schools. My parents had the same ambitions for me as they had for my siblings: get an education, get a job, then leave home. I did all those things.

I couldn't go to university because I had a disability. Back then, the attitude was sort of like, "Oh, what can you do?" I started working at a bank instead and then took a position in the Northern Territory, which is the most isolated part of Australia. I was stationed 2,000 miles from home in an Aboriginal community that had no phones, no roads, no electricity except for generators, and when I heard about the job, I was like, "Well, why not?" I did that for a year. Then I came back to Melbourne, and from there, I went to the US for five months and traveled around by bus, on my own. That experience was really good.

After that, I came back to Australia and got a job in the railways. They wouldn't let me be a railway clerk back then because I'm a woman; I could only be a clerical assistant. I fought them on that, but instead of getting promoted, I ended up going to the university parttime. That enabled me to get a position as a researcher and policy writer for the police in Victoria. One day, the Chief Commissioner asked me to be a Disability Liaison Officer. I said, "I don't know anything about disability," and he said, "Well, but you've got one!" Those experiences started me on the path to where I am now, working on disability and gender.

That's me in a nutshell!

Itto: What types of resources are available to people with disabilities in Australia? Is it the same everywhere, or does it vary depending on which part of the country you're in?

Tricia: I live in the city, so I've got a lot of resources available to me. I've got a bus stop by my door, I've got a train station not far away, I can call a taxi whenever I need to. Transportation's not an issue for me. Also, the government will provide me with anything I need because of my disability. If I need a new bathroom because mine's not accessible, I can apply to the government and have it built. I wear calipers, and if I need a new one, I can apply for them to provide me with a new one under the NDIS. That's a big deal. On paper at least, it doesn't matter if you live in the city or someplace rural--though the resources are scarcer in rural areas.



Tricia and parents with Commissioner Rhonda Galbally, who uses a wheelchair, when Tricia received Medal for her work on women with disabilities

Sometimes there're shortages of support workers or therapy services. Still, in terms of government support and accommodation, Australia's doing comparatively well.

The harder part is finding employment, especially if you live in a rural area. But that's true for nondisabled people, too. There's currently a big push to get broadband into rural areas, though, and that's exciting. A lot more people are getting access to wifi--although everyone still has to pay for their own, which can be tricky when you don't already have a job and need the wifi to look for one.

Itto: Speaking of, you must've witnessed a lot of technological changes over the course of your life. Can you talk about that? What was it like to grow up before smartphones and now live in a world where everything's virtual?

Tricia: I remember when I was working for the railways in the early 80s and we got our first computer. It was a giant TV screen that took up one whole corner of a room. You had to load it with a cassette tape, which took about four hours, and we'd all stand around waiting. Most of our work was done on telex and punch tape back then. You'd literally punch holes in a tape to create a record, and then you'd send it to the head office, and three days later, you'd get a printout back so you could check your work.

I remember, one of my best bosses was sort of a tech guru. In his car, he kept a fax machine. He carried one of the very first mobile phones, about the size of a small suitcase. We used to think he was crazy! With time it shrank down to the size of a small walkie talkie, and he started seeming a little less crazy, but even he wouldn't have believed the technology we have now. My phone's in my hand all the time because we're never off duty anymore.

When I worked for the police and my health started failing, they allowed me to work from home. That was back in the late 90s, and it was considered really, really crazy. They set me up with a computer in my house and had me dial into the system using a telephone. They gave me my own phone line! It took ages. You could go and cook lunch while that thing dialed. That was considered "high-tech" in those days.

Itto: So, you've been working from home for longer than any of us! [laughter]

Tricia: Oh, yeah. I've always loved to travel, and I've always hated missing meetings, so even back in 2016, 17, 18, I'd call in from meetings wherever I was. Maybe the Heathrow Airport.

Itto: Has the pandemic affected your work, then? Or not so much?

Tricia: It's affected my ability to travel, but I will say, if we had to have a pandemic, I'm glad it happened now, when we have all this telecoms technology available. I've been working from home since March 13, 2020, and it hasn't really affected my professional life at all. I've basically set my own schedule for the last 20 years.

I miss traveling, though. I did go up to our capital for 10 days to annoy politicians between waves, but that's about all. My last big overseas trip was in 2019, to a UN conference on sexuality, sexual rights, child marriages, etc. in Nairobi, Kenya. At those big events, I've noticed that I always tend to congregate with other people with disabilities, especially women. We find each other. I'm still doing that online, thanks to technology.

Before the pandemic hit, I was setting up a training program for people with disabilities who want to be entrepreneurs. We were going to do it face to face, so we had to think on our feet when everything locked down. We ended up running it online, which actually made it easier and more accessible for the participants. Some people were coming from rural areas and would've had to stay in hotels, or they would've had to get up really early to get there on time. Doing it online made it easier for everyone. All those people are now running businesses.

Itto: How does that work? I mean, to start a business, you have to have access to money and resources.

Tricia: Absolutely. For that training, we were planning to fund participants' travel for that very reason. These days, we're hosting more events overseas, in places like Malaysia where the issues tend to be things like access to technology and internet connectivity. For those trainings, I try to fund participants to purchase wifi or devices when I can. I do feel very lucky, living in Australia: we're not perfect, but I can usually get resources when I need them.

Itto: What were you doing in Malaysia?

Tricia: An advocate there contacted me and asked if I'd run a training program, and I said I'm not really a trainer, I'm not really qualified. They asked if I'd just come and talk to some folks about gender and disability, and I was like, "Sure! I'm not really qualified, but those are my passions. We can have a conversation."

It started with some blind and visually impaired people, men and women. Then they asked if they could invite some physically impaired people, too, since some of them had family members with physical impairments. Then they asked if we could bring in some human rights lawyers to give a little more clout to those conversations, and I said, "Sure."

Anyhow, it ended up being an eight-week conversation, starting with gender and disability and then moving on to colonialism, then to basic human rights, then to sexuality. It just organically evolved.

Itto: Apart from making online events like that more normal, would you say the pandemic's had any other positive effects?

Tricia: I'm saving three hours a day just on commuting. I'd call that a positive effect. I get to multitask and hang my washing when I'm in a meeting. And I'm not the only one. I know so many people who've benefited. Parents are finding out that they can save money on childcare. I've been in meetings with kids, partners, dogs, birds, all sorts of things, and it doesn't make any difference. It's all fine.

I think it also gives people flexibility to live wherever they want when they're not worried about commuting. I've got a friend who's blind and lives out in a rural town, and he used to travel by bus to the train station, and then by train to the city--that's another hour's journey--and from there he'd have to find his way to work. Working from home has been great for him. His wife's working from home, too, so every so often, she'll bring him a cup of coffee or something, which brightens his day.

I've also found that, for so for many people with disabilities, especially women, the pandemic's finally helped us access things that we've been asking for, for years. Like, "Can I work from home, please?" "No, you can't." "Can I work flexible hours?" "Of course not, no!" Now, everyone's saying, "Please, don't come to work! Work from home!" I think some of the bosses have been amazed to find out that their employees are actually doing the right thing. Everyone's working hard.

Itto: Why do you think it's taken a global pandemic for so many managers to realize it's not only possible to work from home, but also beneficial for a lot of people?

Tricia: I think because it's forced everyone to actually run the experiment, and now the bosses are waking up to the fact that their employees are actually trustworthy. The ones who aren't coping well are the ones who need to micromanage everything. The bosses who've been doing really well are the ones who trusted their staff from the beginning. They're seeing that the work gets done, and that's enough for them. I spoke to a senior



manager about this the other day, and he said, "I'm not worried about where people do their work; I just care about the outcomes. And I'm seeing the outcomes I'm looking for." I think people are even starting to realize that when you're relaxed, you're actually more productive.

Itto: Have you heard any managers talking about how it's actually cheaper to build accessible digital infrastructure than to make physical spaces accessible?

Tricia: I've been joking about that with my sister, actually! We both work from home, so we've been joking about how all I need these days in terms of accessibility is flat entry and accessible bathrooms.

That said, we can't walk away from the making public spaces or workplaces accessible. I'm lucky because I don't have to go to the office, even now that the government's encouraging us to adopt hybrid schedules; I can work from home as long as I need to. But I'm also a people person; I like having time between meetings to share meals and get to know my coworkers better. I wouldn't want that option to go away.

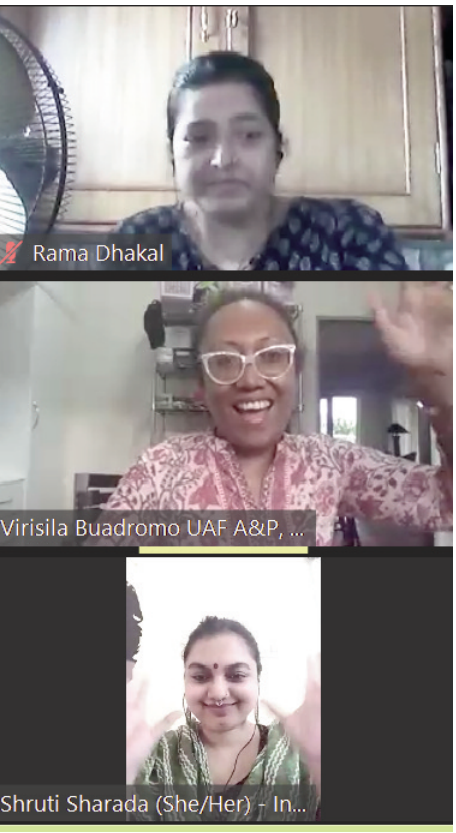
Also, our gig economy's really struggling. Restaurants and cafes are suffering since everyone's eating at home. We can't leave the people in those industries behind. Physical accessibility can't get lost.

Itto: You said earlier that employment's still an issue for persons with disabilities. How do you think the pandemic's affected that? And how does it intersect with issues like gender, employment and education?

Tricia: Well, we all know that men with disabilities are more likely to have paid employment. We know they're more likely to have education. We know they're more likely to be independent. I mentioned the NDIS earlier, and it's an amazing program, but only 38% of the participants are female. I'm on the NDIS Advisory Council, and let me tell you, I'm like a broken record in those meetings: "Why are only 38% of NDIS participants female when that doesn't match the disability-gender distribution?"

I personally know a lot of women with disabilities who've applied and been told they're ineligible. I think one of the problems is that NDIS still requires a medical diagnosis instead of fully embracing the social model. That really annoys me. The diagnoses themselves can be biased. For example, most people with autism who are enrolled in the NDIS are male because they use an early intervention screening tool that misses most girls with autism. Society expects different things from boys and girls: girls are supposed to be good, quiet little things sitting in the corner, whereas boys are supposed to be loud and boisterous and running around climbing trees or whatever, so if a boy's quiet, it means it's time for a checkup, but that's not the case with girls. That has some really profound consequences. A lot of women with autism aren't considered eligible for the support they need.

Itto: Is that trend consistent all over the world?



Tricia: I suspect so, though there's not much data. Autism's a relatively new diagnosis. In many societies, it's still not even recognized, or only recognized in cases linked to extreme behavior. I think it'd be an interesting thing to look at, though. I personally know some women with autism who've been trying to start those conversations.

Itto: What other trends have you witnessed, working internationally? Like, which countries are making a lot of progress? Which ones have good laws for persons with disabilities, or good implementation?

Tricia: I can really only speak to the countries I've been to, or where I have connections. My husband's from Sri Lanka, and I recently met a great woman there, Manique Gunaratna, who's doing some truly amazing work. I was last in Sri Lanka in 2018, and thanks in large part to the work she's done, that country's made some really amazing progress. When I first went in 1994, and then again in 2004, it was completely different. People with disabilities were hidden. The only ones who got any support were those who'd been injured in the Civil War, which was still going on. They would talk to me and ask, like, "How come you're traveling?" And I'd say, "Well, I'm working." That shocked a lot of people. I don't think it would anymore.

When I was in Kenya, I met people from all over the world, and a lot of us have kept in contact. I think there's an international community of women with disabilities that's emerging. We're all in different places, but we're talking about the same things: access to health, justice, education, housing, and freedom from family violence.

I do some work in the family violence sector, supporting women with disabilities who are trying to leave violence. That's the same all over the world. It doesn't matter where you go. Sometimes, people think it must be better in Australia, but no: people are the same.

Itto: How do you support women fleeing violence, exactly? What does that work involve?

Tricia: I'm connected to a couple of family violence services. If a woman with a disability comes through any of their programs, they'll call me, and I'll help make sure she gets the help she needs. It's hard to leave a violent situation no matter what, but it's much worse when the person who's violent is the one who gets you out of bed in the morning and you don't have any other access to accommodations.

Where I live, in Victoria, the state makes funding available to women trying to escape those violent situations. There's additional funding earmarked for women with disabilities so they can receive support until they get enrolled in the NDIS. Still, even with that funding, though, it's not easy. Women with disabilities aren't always believed. That's one of the problems we still face here. Men who stay with women with disabilities are seen as heroes. People aren't

We have a great organization here called Women with Disabilities Victoria, and they do some fantastic work researching violence against women with disabilities and highlighting their concerns.

Itto: Are there any other resources for persons with disabilities you'd like to highlight? International organizations, maybe, since we have an international audience?

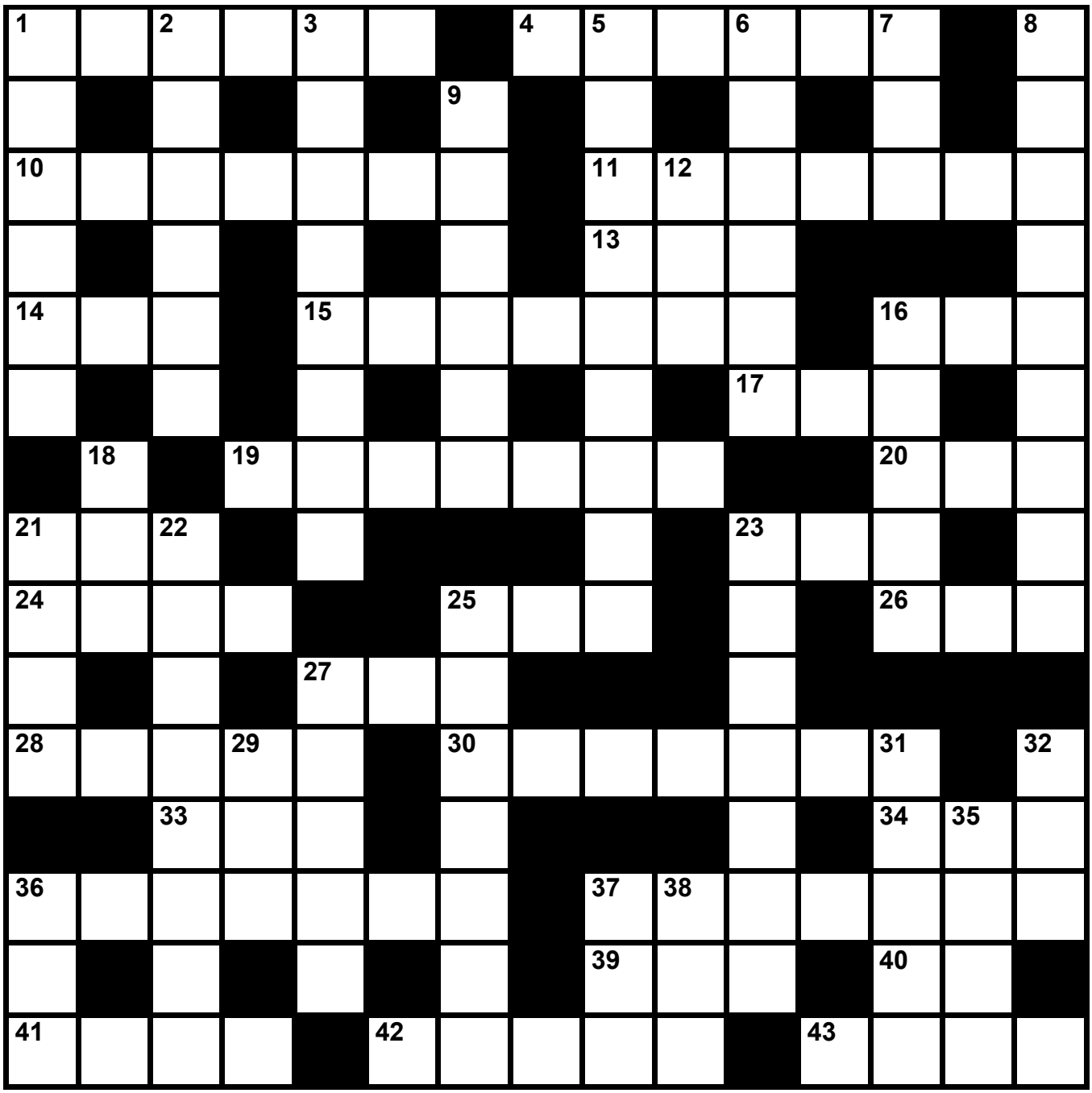
Tricia: There's the Disability Leadership Institute (DLI), of which I'm a member. It was started five or six years ago by a woman named Christina Ryan, who's now the CEO. It's a place where people with disabilities can come together, talk about the issues they're dealing with and share resources. We have a business directory with a job board, and we offer training programs. I think a lot of people are tired of organizations run by non-disabled people, or really privileged people with disabilities, telling us what to do. They've been wanting something like this, run by and for people with disabilities. We're gaining quite a reputation in Australia, and we have membership in over 20 countries. Anyone can sign up for the newsletters and learn what's available and what's going on. The trainings are online, so you can attend those from anywhere in the world.

Itto: Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Tricia: Yes. I want the world to start recognizing and appreciating that women with disabilities have valuable skills. In short, I'd like to put myself out of a job--because that's what happens to advocates when the world's fixed, right? [laugher] But really, it's time for us to take our rightful place alongside everybody else. I want people to acknowledge that we're experts, that we know what we're doing, that we know what we need. Service providers and families are fantastic, but we shouldn't need to speak through others. We should be able to speak for ourselves and be heard. ■ ABILITY

wdv.org.au
triciamalowney.academia.edu

ABILITY's



Crossword Puzzle

HERC
Higher Education
Recruitment Consortium

Find Jobs at Smart Places

Find your ideal job within our national network of 700+ colleges, universities, hospitals, and labs working together to promote *equity* and *excellence* in the higher education workforce.

Visit www.hercjobs.org to access free resources and manage your career:

- Search 30,000+ faculty, staff, and executive-level jobs
- Create a free account to save searches, upload your resume and get job alerts
- Get career advice from higher ed professionals including advice for professionals wtih disabilities

To browse jobs or become a member institution visit www.hercjobs.org



ACROSS

1. Chinese girl who was almost blind from a childhood accident, now an award winning musician, Zhou ____
4. She was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis but started her own non-profit, Colie Creations, to advocate for patients using storytelling, ____ Kohr
10. Decipher people's words without hearing, 2 words
11. Essential item to be able to use electric cars
13. Hollywood filming locale
14. Oprah's network
15. Testimonial
16. Fathers
17. Like deserved recognition
19. Neighbor of Cameroon
20. Make a knot
21. John Travolta starred in it, "Wild ____s"
23. Golfer Michelle
24. Saga
25. Chess pieces
26. Managed
27. Grazing area
28. Vampire slayer
30. Disabled actress appeared as guest star on "Glee", Ali _____
33. Row boat equipment
34. "Aladdin" monkey
36. The Squeaky Wheel brain-parent, Steve ____
37. Disabled actress in "Coronation Street", Cherylee _____
39. Scrap from the table
40. __ Capitan
41. Crosby, Stills and ___
42. Disabled actor George Robinson's character in "Sex Education"
43. Bookie's quote

DOWN

1. Color in a Beatles album title
2. Managing under difficult circumstances
3. Green type of vehicle
5. Letting people join in
6. Spoke publicly
7. Breakfast staple
8. First blind justice elected to the Michigan Supreme Court, Richard _____
9. Marvel at
12. Very popular
16. Actor with dwarfism who played Tyrion Lannister in "Game of Thrones", _____ Dinklage
18. 45-minute flight, say
21. Basil, e.g.
22. Former US House of Representatives rising star who survived an assassination attempt and continues her public work, Gabby _____
23. Exercise routine, 2 words
25. Winter Paralympics gold medal winner, Oksana _____
27. Line in a song
29. Craze
31. Gave stars on Yelp
32. Thriller in which a disabled actress Kiera Allen stars alongside Sarah Paulsen
35. Fearless
36. "Brown Eyed Girl" singer Morrison
37. Group in charge of condominiums
38. Mythical Tolkein monster

Crossword Puzzle

answers on page 78

Crossword Puzzle



American Cancer Society®

We're here to help you through every step of your cancer experience. Visit **www.cancer.org** or call **1-800-227-2345** anytime, day or night.



Information

We can answer your questions about cancer, including prevention, diagnosis, treatment options, and clinical trials.



Day-to-day Help

We can help you with everyday needs like transportation and lodging during treatment.



Emotional Support

We can connect you to local and online support groups for both patients and caregivers.

abilityJOBS.com

ADA - Affirmative Disability Action

CLOTHING
ENGINEERING
CONSTRUCTION
AGRICULTURE
GOVERNMENT
AUTOMOTIVE
MILITARY
FINANCE
MANUFACTURING
ART
PUBLICATIONS
LEGAL SERVICES
HEALTHCARE
TELECOMMUNICATIONS
TRAVEL
FOOD SERVICES
REAL ESTATE
ACCOUNTING
COMPUTER
ELECTRONICS
BROADCASTING
ADVERTISING
BANKING
BUSINESS
RETAIL
EDUCATION
ENTERTAINMENT



Scan this code with your smartphone to download the app.

APP.ABILITYJOBS.COM

Prepare for Power Outages & Save Money

GENERAC®

PWRCELL

SOLAR + BATTERY STORAGE SYSTEM

PWRcell, Generac's fully-integrated solar + battery storage system, stores solar energy that can power your whole home during utility power outages and save you money on your electric bill.

REQUEST A FREE QUOTE!

ACT NOW TO RECEIVE A $300 SPECIAL OFFER!*

| (877) 665-2693



$0 DOWN FINANCING OPTIONS!**

*Offer value when purchased at retail.
**Financing available through authorized Generac partners.
Solar panels sold separately.

Need help Getting Social Security Disability Benefits?



We can help!

FIGHTING FOR YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY BENEFITS FOR OVER 25 YEARS!

You Could Be Eligible To Receive:

- Steady monthly income depending on your paid in amount
- A lump sum payment of benefits owed from back-pay
- Annual cost of living increases

- We simplify the process & strive for quick claim approval
- Starting the process is easy and takes only minutes to complete

BILL GORDON & ASSOCIATES

877-243-3499

Helping thousands get the benefits they deserve

Bill Gordon & Associates, a nationwide practice, represents clients before the Social Security Administration. Member of the TX & NM Bar Associations. Mail: 1420 NW St Washington D.C. Office: Broward County, FL. Services may be provided by associated attorneys licensed in other states.

DIRECTV

DON'T JUST KINDA TV

DIRECTV



- **ACCESS 70,000+ SHOWS AND MOVIES ON DEMAND.**
  Requires subscriptions to top-tier PREMIER programming. Other packages will have fewer shows and movies.
- **DOWNLOAD YOUR DVR RECORDINGS** to your devices at home and watch offline anywhere.**

- **THE MOST LIVE SPORTS IN 4K HDR.**
  Limited 4K HDR programming available. CHOICE Pkg or higher required for most 4K HDR live sports. 4K HDR compatible equipment, minimum programming, 4K account authorization and professional installation required. If 4K TV does not support HDR, content will be viewable in standard 4K. Other conditions apply.
- **STREAM ON UP TO 5 SCREENS AT ONCE.**

Available only in the U.S. (excl Puerto Rico and U.S.V.I.). Req's compatible device. Live streaming channels based on your TV pkg & location. Not all channels available to stream out of home. To watch recorded shows on the go, must download to mobile device using Genie HD DVR model HR 44 or higher connected to home Wi-Fi network. Rewind and fast-forward may not work. **Limits:** Mature, music, pay-per-view and some On Demand content is not available for downloading. 5 shows on 5 devices at once. All functions and programming subject to change at any time.

SIGN UP AND *GET DIRECTV AND GET FIRST 3 MONTHS OF HBO MAX, CINEMAX, SHOWTIME, STARZ AND EPIX INCLUDED!*

Access HBO Max only through HBO Max app or hbomax.com. HBO Max also includes HBO channels and On Demand on DIRECTV. Online account registration required. Data rates may apply for app download/usage. **EARLY TERMINATION FEE OF $20/MO. FOR EACH MONTH REMAINING ON AGMT., $19.95 ACTIVATION, EQUIPMENT NON-RETURN & ADD'L FEES APPLY.** New approved residential customers only (equipment lease req'd). Credit card req'd (except MA & PA). [See offer details]

Contact your local DIRECTV dealer!

IV Support Holdings

888-905-1337

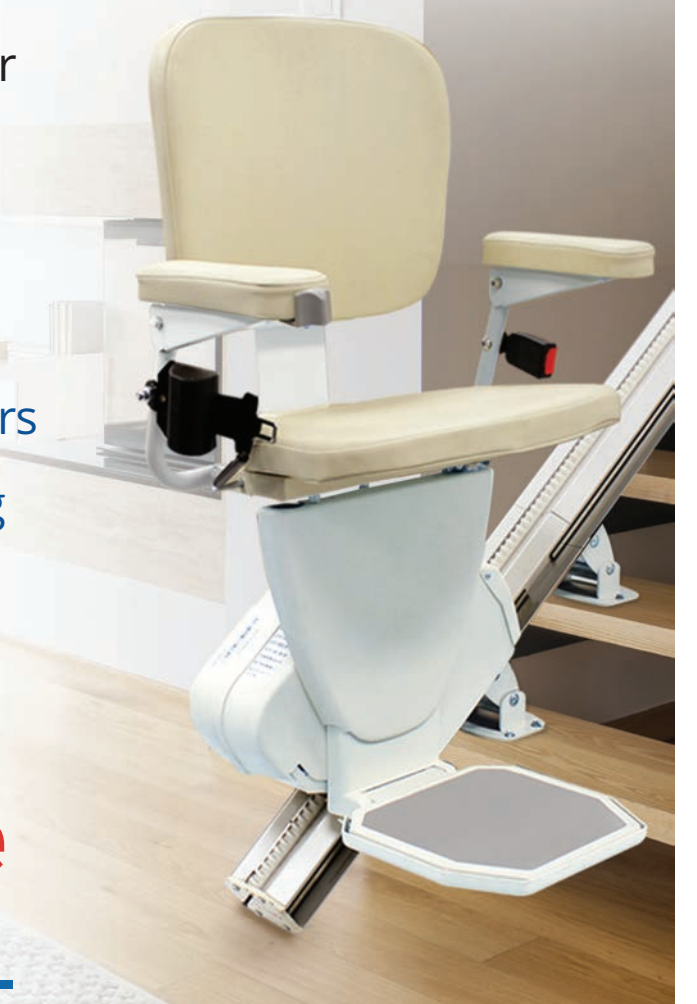
DIRECTV DEALER

DIRECTV SVC TERMS: Subject to Equipment Lease & Customer Agreements. Must maintain a min. base TV package of $69.99/mo. Programming, pricing, terms and conditions subject to change at any time. ©2022 DIRECTV. DIRECTV and all other DIRECTV marks are trademarks of DIRECTV, LLC. All other marks are the property of their respective owners.

Contactless consultations, installations and delivery available!

Don't let the stairs limit your mobility.

Discover the safe and affordable way to regain access to all of your home and allow you to use your stairs safely.



The Rave 2 stair lift is the ideal solution for anyone:

- Who struggles using the stairs
- That is worried about risking a fall on the stairs
- Who wants to access ***all*** of their home

Call now to save on a Rave 2 stair lift!

1-844-471-2346

AmeriGlide
ACCESSIBILITY SOLUTIONS

WELLS FARGO

Who we are:

Wells Fargo & Company is a diversified, community-based financial services company with $1.9 trillion in assets. Wells Fargo's vision is to satisfy our customers' financial needs and help them succeed financially. News, insights, and perspectives and perspectives from Wells Fargo are also available at Wells Fargo Stories (https://stories.wf.com).

Key Facts

70M Customers

26.7M Mobile Banking mobile active users

1 in 3 Households

32.9M Wellsfargo.com digital (online and mobile) active customers

$161.8B Market value of stock*

**Based on sales, profits, assets, and market value as of March 31, 2021.*

Diversity and inclusion

At Wells Fargo, we believe that diversity and inclusion is key to being one of the world's great companies. We strive to build and sustain a diverse and inclusive culture for all Wells Fargo team members – one where they feel valued and respected for who they are as well as for the skills and experiences they bring to our company.

What other people are saying about us:

- ***DiversityInc*** magazine has ranked Wells Fargo No. 7 on the list of the 2021 Top Companies for People with Disabilities. ***DiversityInc*** also ranked Wells Fargo No. 25 on the Top 50 Companies for Diversity, No. 17 on the list of Top Companies for Employee Resource Groups, and named among the Top Companies for LGBT employees.
- For the tenth consecutive year, readers of ***CAREERS & the disABLED*** magazine recognized Wells Fargo as one of 2021's Top 50 Employers of people with disabilities.
- ***Equal Opportunity*** magazine ranks Wells Fargo No. 15 on the 30th Annual Top 50 Employers 2021 list.



Wells Fargo helps strengthen communities through:

Diversity & Inclusion:
Ensure all people feel respected and have equal access to resources and opportunities to succeed.

Economic Empowerment:
Strengthen financial self-sufficiency and economic opportunities in underserved communities.

Sustainability:
Accelerate a just transition to a low-carbon economy.

Accommodations and accessibility assistance for team members and job seekers: wellsfargojobs.com/accessibility

Accessibility at Wells Fargo: wellsfargo.com/about/diversity/accessibility

Relevant military experience is considered for veterans and transitioning service men and women.
All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, or status as a protected veteran.
©2021 Wells Fargo N.A. All rights reserved.

PROTECT YOUR HOME 365 DAYS A YEAR

LeafFilter® GUTTER PROTECTION

BACKED BY A YEAR-ROUND *CLOG-FREE GUARANTEE*



THE NATION'S #1 GUTTER GUARD²

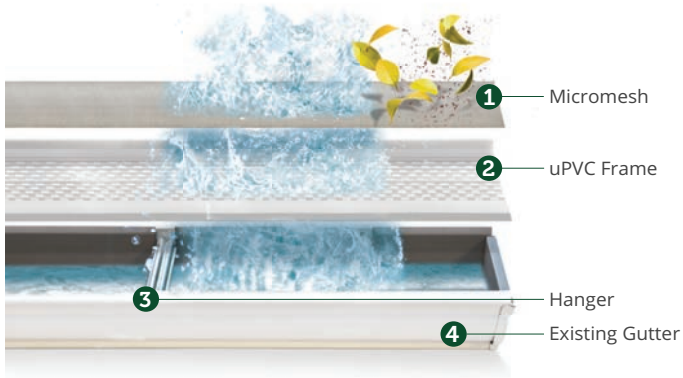
INSTALLS ON NEW & EXISTING GUTTERS

Trustpilot

BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS

LIFETIME WARRANTY

A COMPANY OF LEAFHOME





"LeafFilter was a great investment for our home."
–Bill & Jan. ★★★★★



Keeps Out All Debris
Completely sealed system protects your gutters — and entire home — from damaging debris.

EXCLUSIVE LIMITED TIME OFFER!

20% OFF YOUR ENTIRE PURCHASE* + **10% OFF SENIORS & MILITARY!**

FINANCING THAT FITS YOUR BUDGET![1]

ASSEMBLED IN THE USA

[1]Subject to credit approval. Call for details.

Promo Code: 285

FREE GUTTER ALIGNMENT + FREE GUTTER CLEANING*

CALL US TODAY FOR **A FREE ESTIMATE**

1-877-505-0577

Mon-Thurs: 8am-11pm, Fri-Sat: 8am-5pm, Sun: 2pm-8pm EST

*For those who qualify. One coupon per household. No obligation estimate valid for 1 year. **Offer valid at time of estimate only. 2The leading consumer reporting agency conducted a 16 month outdoor test of gutter guards in 2010 and recognized LeafFilter as the "#1 rated professionally installed gutter guard system in America." Manufactured in Plainwell, Michigan and processed at LMT Mercer Group in Ohio. See Representative for full warranty details. Registration# 0366920922 CSLB# 1035795 Registration# HIC.0649905 License# CBC056678 License# RCE-51604 Registration# C127230 License# 559544 Suffolk HIC License# 52229-H License# 2102212986 License# 262000022 License# 262000403 License# 2106212946 License# MHIC111225 Registration# 176447 License# 423330 Registration# IR731804 License# 50145 License# 408693 Registration# 13VH09953900 Registration# H-19114 License# 218294 Registration# PA069383 License# 41354 License# 7656 DOPL #10783658-5501 License# 423330 License# 2705169445 License# LEAFFNW822JZ License# WV056912

Abilities EXPO

Serving the Community Since 1979



"I always come to the Expo. It's where I learn something new every year!" - Maria M.



Up your game and…

- Boost independence with latest products & tech
- Learn tips and tricks from community experts
- Get moving with adaptive sports & dance
- Build relationships with your community
- Find solutions for all ages and abilities

FREE ADMISSION



Miami	Dallas	Los Angeles	New York Metro
Nov. 4-6, 2022	Dec. 2-4, 2022	March 10-12, 2023	May 5-7, 2023

Chicago	Houston	Phoenix
June 23-25, 2023	August 4-6, 2023	Sept. 8-10, 2023



Abilities.com • Register online today.

@AbilitiesExpo @AbilitiesExpo @abilities_expo



Walmart Family Mobile's Truly Unlimited Plan makes it easy to stay ahead. Choose from accessible Android and iOS phones, or bring your current phone with you, and keep your phone number.

At $49.88 per month, with no contracts or activation fees, the Truly Unlimited Plan is the best way to stay connected, and stay ahead.

Walmart
FamilyMobile
Powered by T-Mobile



Image does not depict coverage

If congested, customers may notice reduced speeds vs. T-Mobile customers that may be further reduced for a small number of customers who use more than 40GB. Terms & Conditions at MyFamilyMobile.com

Walmart Family Mobile is a registered trademark of TracFone Wireless, Inc. ©2020 TracFone Wireless, Inc. All rights reserved. All other trademarks, service marks, and trade names referenced herein are the property of their respective owners.