

Ep. 11 - How to Be a Disability Ally in the Entertainment Biz with Christine Bruno - Transcript

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Welcome to Brian Breaks Character. I'm so glad that you're here. I'm welcoming to the show today, Christine Bruno who is an actress and an activist, and actress I put first because I think that when you have such a powerful platform as activism, it can sometimes get the headline in your life. When we know as an artist, that is also a really big freaking headline for you. So I want to make sure I underline both of those as I bring her on today. Christine, welcome to the show. Oh my gosh, thank you so much for having me, Brian. I'm so excited to be here. Good. Yeah. Okay. So, Christine, I want to just before we so give us first give everybody a rundown of what you do in your life, including acting, I want to keep saying that, because I know when we're multi-hyphenate acting, some kind of gets the last thing we're say. So I want to make sure that we underline that for you,

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for sure. So I think, you know, again, I am a multi-hyphenate, I wear lots of hats. I'm an actor. I am also a teaching artist. I'm a disability inclusion consultant. I have a an MFA in acting and directing. So I do a bit of directing I, I sort of didn't choose that path after graduate school, but it is one of my hyphenate. Yeah, I feel like I'm, warrior should be a hyphenate too.

01:19

Oh, I love that. And you know, and you and I will say, Christine, I spent quite a bit of time with your website and your materials and getting to know you a little bit more before you even came today before we actually met each other even. And warrior is a word that I would ascribe to how the work that you do, and you do a lot of work. And I know that a lot of it is thankless, and people aren't even seeing the work that you're doing behind the scenes. And what we're here to talk about today is primarily the DEI work that you do, and to just kind of help this audience which is mostly creatives understand, they may not even know what DEI stands for, they may also totally know and might not know that disability is one of the things that we want to talk about in that category. So my hesitation in this is I bet Christine, you have to say the same things over and over and over and over again. I see you laughing Yeah. And a lot of times, it's to the same people over and over. We are going to be really attentive listeners today. So you can say to us once Okay, so what are the like the top three things you have to say, when you are going out as a DEI expert, that are the things you want people to hear?

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Well, first of all, I should probably make it clear that I am a I'm an activist and a disability inclusion consultant specifically to the entertainment industry, arts and culture organisations. So I'm not I don't do advocacy or inclusion work for like, say, corporations, I mean, I will if they want me to come and talk to their employees or something like that, or do an an audit an accessibility audit of their space. But my piece is really the industry. And that just comes from being an artist

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myself, you know, building off of my own my need to advocate for myself. So I say that only to bring it around to answer your question. The thing that I would want people must know, is that disabled people are America's largest minority. I'm going to say that again. Because many people don't get that disabled people are America's largest minority, by law, America's largest minority, I mean, that one in four people in this country identify as having a disability, one in four, that's approximately 25% of our population and 65 million people. Wow. So right there, like that. If you take nothing else away from this conversation, take that away.

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And Christine, what that brought up for me is two things first, compassion so much for the stranger. person you don't know cuz you haven't. Like we say, you know, you have no idea what anyone's carrying on their back or their warrior in their life. They're all right. And then the other piece that came up for me is how invisible it seems. When we see representation, and that must be supremely frustrating for you, as you think about this. And then in disparate, meaning, you know, when you are a person of colour, we can see it probably maybe I don't know, that's not true for everybody. So I'm not gonna make a blanket statement. You're right. But there's a way to identify there are boxes to check off. And there are places to write. So can you speak a little bit around? You talked about this a little bit when we spoke before, around the idea of it, like the movement has a little bit of a, it's like on plates that are moving around doesn't have as quite of a face if that makes sense.

04:34

Yeah, that makes total sense. It's a it's a great way to put it. Because you know, disability is, and this is one of the other things that I wanted to say that I want to leave people with is the two other things in there and they're kind of like catchy phrases, their sound bites, great. We'll remember them even better. Yeah, I do that purposely. One is disability is not a technical skill. It's a lived experience. And that is specifically as it relates to our industry. Right. And I'm sure we'll talk about that more as we go want to go deep on that? Yeah. And the other one is a piece of knowledge that I that I drop a lot. And I'd steal this phrase from my dear, dear friend, Lawrence Carter long, who's one of the most amazing disability activists that you'll ever meet. He said, disability is the only club that anybody can join at any time. So just like let that sit for a second. So if you are, if you think this doesn't apply to you, it might not right now, it definitely applies to somebody within your inner circle. If we take the Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon, right, and the one to four ratio, it definitely will apply to somebody in your inner circle. And the chances are, if you live long enough, it will eventually apply to you. So

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yeah, that grasp that grabs you right away when you say it that way. So when you as and I appreciate you framing this to make sure that we're hearing we're specifically speaking, because that's where the expertise is in this in the entertainment industry, and creative people,

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right? So as you're in this way of being and this is like, this activism is part of what's come part and parcel for you, as an actor, let's be really, really clear. Because as an actor, you're advocating for yourself all the time, all the time. And so can you just give me the genesis of it feels murky to me where you're like, I'm going out there, and I'm putting myself as an actor, and then I'm also having to like advocate for every single actor in the world who's disabled at this point, like, how did that come to be? Can you give us a little bit of the actual story of that for you?

06:35

lately? So it's, it's funny, because it's, it's very, it's a very specific point in time. And whenever I'm talking about this, I can, you know, so I've always been an artist, like right out of the gate, like I started studying piano and voice lessons at five years old. And I was always the only person I knew that was disabled. Certainly the only person I knew pursuing a career in the arts, I mean, I grew up, I'm not going to tell you my age, but I did not grow up living under the benefit of Ba da, which has its problem. But I did not grow up with that being the default. Right. So everything I did was was sort of under the umbrella of Okay, the world is not built for me. But I'm going to force my way in, which is what I did. So I took the typical trajectory of any actor. I studied, studied, studied, I went to undergrad I did my undergrad at Skidmore. And I was a double major theatre and political science, because my parents wouldn't allow me to just be a theatre major, though, like, you know, typical story. Yeah, when I did that, so I graduated from Skidmore with honours. And then I went to San Francisco. And I worked in the theatre and various for various theatres for five years. And I started teaching when I was in San Francisco. And then I decided I wanted to come to New York, I wanted to come back east because San Francisco is I'm a very, if you haven't figured it out already. And I my energy, I'm a very East Coast person, my energy is very direct, very east coast. Not that I didn't love living in San Francisco, because I did. But I'm just my fire is faster. You know, and I think more demanding and more direct. So I lost patience with living in Northern California. Okay, even I'd love it. So I came to New York, which is what I always wanted to do, but my parents wouldn't allow me to, because at the time that I was going to college, New York was not a place that you wanted to be as a young woman, a particularly a young woman with a disability.

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Yeah. So I want to pause myself there because even as I say, yeah, and that moment, I actually don't know how to empathise with that experience more than understanding you saying a young woman that disability, can you really paint the picture of what that would what that's like, like where I would love if you could help us there?

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Yeah, sure. You know, just logistically, I have, I think I said at the beginning, I have cerebral palsy, which is a mobility disability, the way that it manifests itself for me, is as a mobility

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disability particularly affects the way that I walk. So it's not easy for me to get around the city and when I first moved here, for the first Okay, so I've been here 25 years now. So for you know, for the first 14 years, I lived in apartments that were not accessible. And so that meant that I walked everywhere. Now I use a mobility scooter only because I now live in a building that has an elevator. So I'm able to do that. I wasn't able to do that for most of the time that I lived here. And I also didn't do that in San Francisco. I went back to San Francisco. Gatlin, I've been back many times. But one time in particular, I went back, I think it was 2009. And I didn't have the scooter. And I said, How the hell did I do this? I'll do this for five years. Wow.

As I was 20 years younger, sure, yeah. I myself that that's how I did it. But yeah, getting around this city is not friendly to disabled people, particularly, well, any disabled people, I don't care if you have an intellectual disability, or you're deaf, or you have a mobility disability, it just is not friendly. To me. It just isn't. It's not physically accessible in a lot of ways. You know, people New Yorkers are great. But I don't mean to get political here at all, but like, agencies are not great. Cops are not great, if you have to, but at least in my experience, I have not had a good experience with people that are paid to protect and serve. They're not protecting and serving me.

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So and when you experience that, are you experiencing like a total lack of understanding? I don't want to get too far for tangent here. But I want to also I want to I also want to make sure we don't miss this piece of your experience.

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You know what, it'd be one thing if, if, if what I said was that it was a lack of understanding and it ended there. Like that's one thing. They don't care and they don't want to know. But I'm not. I'm not, I'm generalising. Sure. Sure. I think we are we get that we get that you're generally right and right. Just want to be clear, particularly in this day and age, I don't want to I want to not paint anybody with a broad brush.

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Right? And for you, and then you're in the Guinness and specific experience of that would be, is it like just to give us a picture into what that would look like for for you for Christine? Oh,

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I mean, simple, trying to take the bus and having cops or FedEx or post office or UPS parked in the bus stop, which makes it impossible for me to get on the bus because the bus has to pull over to the curb to let out the ramp in which I can get on the bus. And they're not allowed to stop in the middle of the street, obviously, because it's had this so they will not stop at all. Yeah, I

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have mentioned many altercation with a policeman or policewoman and ambulance driver, a FedEx driver, this is the downside, or the upside, depending on who you are. If you're my mother, you would say it's the downside of being a very direct, outspoken person. I have no compunction at yelling at the cops to do their job.

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And also what I'm just noticing Christine and my own, I'm not a cop, right? So it's not necessarily my job to know what you just described. But as a human being, I would like to know what you just because I rode the bus when I was in New York City, of course, when I lived there, and like I would not have unless you were standing next to me or on your scooter next to me, I would know that that was what you needed and be able to witness I would have had to have a life experience of seeing it to be able to think that way. So that's part of why you know we're having this conversation today is to just wake us up

a little bit more to places where you might be missing, and also to tap into yourself as who how you've done this as an actor. So I know I took you off a tangent here as we were talking about getting to New York. So as you got to New York, you're pounding the pavement in the way that you pounded the pavement and how did it become it became clear?

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Yeah, yeah.

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Yeah. It was, to be honest with you, as these things are often are completely by accident. Okay. It was serendipitous. I was participating in in 2000. I guess it was 2005. Yeah. 2005. Wow. So 15 years ago, I was participating in an event that was being co sponsored by an organisation called at the time it was called non traditional casting project, which was an organisation that advocated for actors of colour and actors with disabilities and nonprofit. And they were partnering with at the time after the American Federation of Television Radio Artists on an event that was called I think it was called creativity and assistive technology. So it basically was how do some disabled artists use assistive technology in their creative practice? And as part of that event, they had a like a showcase component. Okay. Oh, they had auditions and six of us, you know, I did well six of us got picked to be part of this showcase. And we did scenes you know, was a little bit of a as it always is a dog and pony show. Sure, sure, sure. Necessary dog. pony show, right? And so after that I never forget, I was in Northern California, funnily enough, visiting friends, I was at school, I was staying in this beautiful house of this people with the guy I was with in one country. We had a phone call from the executive director of non traditional casting project, who said, You know, I was very impressed by you, during this thing that we did, you're very articulate, and I and I have this position, that's a part time disability advocate for the organisation that are brought. And the person that I did that was doing the job is not an artist

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and had to leave the job. She was also a person with a disability, I think she might have been blind had to leave the job for for government reasons, because because she was in danger of losing her benefits if she continued working, which is a whole other. Yeah. Right. So she left the job. And she said, Is this something that you would be interested in? Because I find that while there is a good awareness around representing artists of colour and full inclusion for artists of colour, there's, there's still people need a lot of industry professionals need a lot of hand holding, when it comes to the understanding of the inclusion of disabled artists. So I feel like it needs to be its own its position. And I said, Yeah, having no use, I have no idea. The job is almost like a job entailed. The only requirement I had is I said, Yeah, I'll jump in, I have no idea what I'm doing. I'll jump in, provided you understand that. First and foremost, I am an artist, and Trinity comes along, because the job was part time, I said, if an opportunity comes along, for me to practice my craft, I need to be allowed to do that. And part of the great thing about this organisation was they maintained a database at the time, it was artists of colour, and artists with disabilities. Now it's just artists with disabilities, which we'll get to later. But because they were the only organisation at the time doing that, because the internet was fairly new house in 1995, they developed a website where artists of colour could, you know, put their headshots and was like now casting or like, you know, yeah,

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that's right.

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And where industry professionals could, could come to find them. So they had their sort of like own username and password, and I would access the database to, to find folks, I said, so provided that I am able to include myself and whatever pool goes out to any great professionals Good job advocating for yourself. I'm all about I love that so good. And so that was the start of a 12 year job until it ended in 2000, at the end of 2017, when

18:08

that organisation unfortunately folded and so did you become educated as just being someone who worked there? Or did you just have Did you just were you sound like a sponge? Or were you like I'm reading everything? Or Well, how did that kind of just to give us a sense of how you got like your education around the beyond living the experience the education around? How do I do this piece of advocating because so many people who are listening, you know, when I'm talking to actors, especially in recently, are really tied to their acting, having an impact and not just doing any old acting job and wanting to change the world, which is what I think it's been given to us as an art form in the first place to do and so hearing this will really help us them to see how that happened for you. Because I think the educated piece, you can just like I'm an activist, and now I know what I'm doing. Like, there's a piece there's history behind you, please. And so how does that how did you get that education? I would say,

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I think, you know, it's interesting, because some of it is just my personality. Like I didn't know it, cuz I never like thought of it in this framework until I started doing this work. And even when I was doing this work, I didn't really think about it, but like now one of the things that I stress when I teach workshops for disabled actors, but anybody from from a marginalised community is like, you need to be your own self advocate. You You have to say that for any any buddy, but particularly people from marginalised communities. Because if you're not in your own corner, no one is going to no one knows better than you do what you need, and you have to speak up, you can't expect people to know what you need. Right? And can I'm sorry to interrupt you, but

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what I'm hearing in that inside of that is doctors are already asked to advocate for themselves and you're saying and you have to advocate even mo even mo so you gotta be you gotta go harder into it. So what when you're saying that to i'm gonna i'm making the story that this is a young actor you're talking to but it might not be but like You're saying this, when you're saying that, what are you hoping that they will do? That's maybe different than you might see from enable? Is that what we call? I use the word non disabled? Great. Yeah, yeah. just unpack that

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for a second. Because a lot of people do use able bodied and yeah, you know, I don't, that's not one that I'm willing to get on my horse for, there are certain terms that I will get on my horse for that is not one of them. But I use non disabled because able bodied carries with it an assumption that quote unquote, ability is the standard, right? The default standard, non disable that takes away that, you know, it makes the least it gives it less weight.

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Yeah. And, you know, I wanted to say something Christine, and I were going to use register. But one of the things that Christine and I agreed to, before we did this is that I gave her full permission to correct me, instead of educating my we did some education with me beforehand, but so that she has the opportunity to correct me if I am not using a word that is the one I want to wear, which is a word of being supportive and not being a jerk, basically. So okay, so back to our question, which is around this idea of what would you want that young actor to on that extra advocacy? What does that look like that You would? What is it like to say something directly to casting? Is it to their manager? Or is it to their agent is it well, I

21:16

definitely feel like having an honest conversation with your agent and manager, if you if you are fortunate enough to have that kind of representation, like you need to be straight up honest about what you're expecting, from them, just like their I mean, it's, I mean, and this goes for any

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actor, like when you're a new actor, or even even not a young actor, that's just starting out, you're like, you're just so happy to have somebody who's like, sitting you in what you do, and willing to invest time and resources into you. Right? I mean, that you just go Oh, yeah, I'll just take whatever, I'll take whatever, whatever you give me, I'll go on whatever crappy audition that makes me appropriate somebody else's culture or, or, or puts me in a role that I don't feel comfortable with, because I feel that it's appropriate or offensive. Like, we've all done that, you know, we've all done it. And what I'm saying is, you know, I'm not trying to push people to be me, or like me, I'm just trying to say, like, figure out what works for you so that you're not shortchanging yourself, you might not be the most outspoken person that might not be comfortable for you to go into a casting director just now this is specific on let's actually it's not specific to disabled people. But there are certain things that casting directors are not allowed to ask you. And most people don't know that.

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Now. I please give us some of them. What are some of the ones that you encounter? So like, what's your disability? What's wrong with you with were wrong with you? No human being is allowed to ask that, my gosh,

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where are you from? Like the I'm going outside of my own experience. Really? Where? Oh, yeah, I have a friend colleague in the industry who's been in the industry for decades. And she is a well known

person. She's not white. And she says, she she would go into auditions and some would say, so where are you from? should be like, I'm from New Jersey. Where are you from? I'm from New Jersey. Where are your parents from? They're from New Jersey. Well, they will try to find every way possible to let you know.

23:37

Yeah. And I don't mean to laugh. I'm laughing at the I don't know what I'm laughing I guess I'm laughing at the incredulous pneus of someone continuing to push that hard. Okay, so as we're as we're talking about the is this are these things kind of she said as part of your personality? Was that your your? Because you're always advocating in that way? And then how else do you think you also gained that like, knowledge? Was it practice hands on of giving?

24:00

The definitely hands on? Definitely. I mean, I think I have to give credit to to my old boss, Sharon Jensen, because honestly, I think she saw something in me that went, Oh, yeah, this makes sense. And this is that, you know, this is something that I think needs to be cultivated. And, you know, the good for her and good for me. Yeah, yeah. And I think she recognised that

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so so I say that just only in answer to your question. To say that I don't think this work is for everybody. Like in terms of going Oh, yeah, I can wear this hat as well as wear my creative hat. Mm hmm. No, I don't think it's for everybody. But I do think as an artist, especially an artist from a marginalised community, you need to have some sort of activist advocate practice in your toolkit. You just need to Can you say that again? Because I thought that's so good Christy and say that one more time, I think for Every artist, but particularly for artists from marginalised communities, you even if even as if full on activism is not your thing you need to have, you need to have the skills of an advocate and activist as part of your toolkit to be an artist to be effective in this business. Because nothing if you're not a straight, white, non disabled, man, you're not, nothing's gonna be handed to you, even in this time when diversity when, quote, unquote, diversity, and I really hate that word, but I use it because it's the word write, even now that people are actively looking for folks from marginalised communities, you still are not going to, you're still going to have to prove yourself. You still are, how many? I can't tell you how many times I have heard people in writers rooms, producers say, you know, you'll go Oh, well, do you have you know, this story? Is this story written by a person of colour or, you know, you talk about telling stories, and they go, Oh, yeah, well, we tried that last year, and it fell on its face. So like, we're not going to do that again, like, like, literally, you know, to quote Hamilton, like, I'm not throwing away my shot, we literally do get one shot as to where, you know, a white dude is going to get as many shots as they want. So I mean, and maybe I'm being a little hyperbolic now in this day and time. But I say that very deliberately to say, like, Look, think of it like, this is the shot that I get to make myself undeniable to whoever I'm from whoever I'm in front of in that moment. Whether I'm, you know, in front of a casting director, whether it's a callback for the director, or producer, whether I'm in the writers room, you know what I mean?

26:54

Yeah, yeah. And what I'm hearing your sales was, like, know how important that shot is. And that's why that's why you're going to advocate for yourself, because that shot is so important. So I wanted to get back to something you said in the beginning, which is so important, I think, where you said, and I'm probably gonna mess this up. But we were talking your definition of your your explanation of why we shouldn't see non disabled actors playing disabled characters, can you really go deep on this so we can understand, because I'll tell, I'll just be very explicit, like my boyfriend who's not an actor at all right? He's like, I don't understand why does it matter and like, and I understand, and he's very woke person raised by two therapists, whatever, but I understand why he doesn't get that right away. And I think this is a part of our education, where we as acting is acting is the period at the end of that sentence. And your the way you explain this, to me is so clear, and so helpful. So help us really get this.

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Sure. So so this is probably, again, when I started, when we started this conversation, I said, one of the big takeaways that I always want people to get is disability is not a technical skill. It's

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a lived experience, right? So if you just tie, I think I said to this to you in our earlier conversation, and sometimes this ruffles, feathers, but if you really sit with yourself, and you take the emotion out of it, if you get ruffled by this, if you sit with yourself and you think about what I'm actually saying, you'll see that it is the truth. That 99% of what I was saying about the disability community and disabled performers, applies to all marginalised community 99% of what I have to say. So with that being said, What I'm talking about is the same thing that we went through 3040 years ago with I'm going to choose black actors, right, because we're still going through with other communities as we know, right? But it's the same thing. black face was very common. Right? Very common. So that is the clear appropriation of somebodies culture and lived experience. We don't do that anymore. We don't have blackface anymore. So what I'm saying is, it's the same thing. If you are engaging and appropriating disability lived experience and culture, you're engaging in what we call crip face or some people call disability drag, right? When people were, you know, performing and minstrel shows and stuff. People call that acting too. Why is that not acting now? But this is acting? Why is it acceptable to put someone in a wheelchair who doesn't use a wheelchair? Why is it acceptable to CGI? like Ryan Murphy just did it in his new show. And and this is one of the things that I was saying earlier that with my sharing on facebook i and I'm gonna just call it out because I'm pleased please

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do it. I would love you to tell us this Ryan Murphy thing. Cut it out, too. If you know I'm not even cutting out you're saying you can cut it out.

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So here's the thing when Let me just be clear, because I want to make sure that I answer the question in the way that that people get what I think you want me to say, which is, when I'm talking about not appropriating disability culture, and that it's more than just acting, I'm saying that I'm talking about a history of exclusion. I'm talking about if the playing field were level for everybody. If everybody could play any role, then we wouldn't be having this conversation. What I'm saying is there's such a history of

exclusion for disabled artists that oftentimes we're not allowed to play ourselves, right. So that's, that's the distinction that I'm making when your boyfriend says, I don't get it. And I understand why people don't get it. But it's, I mean, if you look at the trans community, it's the same thing. They're just they, for some reason, and I know, I think I know what some of the reasons are, like 10 years ago, we weren't hearing about advocating at, you know, appropriation of the trans community, and they have an AI uses expression, I don't know why, but they have have leapfrogged over the disability community in terms of their advocacy and their visibility, and I'm thrilled, but I, I'm sad for my community, because they no longer think that appropriating trans culture is acting, but they still think that appropriating disability culture is act. You know,

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Christine, this is so powerful, and I cannot wait to tell Jake what you've said, because I think he will. So get what you've just described. And I hope that alpha listeners or as you're listening to this, you're getting that the appropriation, isn't that what's so interesting, as you say, this is I go back to what you said in the beginning, that beautiful quote you gave about that this is the only club that everyone could what is the quote that you said earlier, so good, that anyone can join it anytime. And so and we and that belief in ourselves, there's something around to me, there's some kind of sneaky belief is, well, I could be disabled. So that is why I might feel like it's okay for me, because I know what it's like to have a limp when I stubbed my toe. No, that is not what this is because this is a like you said a lived experience, right? And is not the same whatsoever. And so we said that is so beautiful, it makes me also think of like when Mickey Rourke, I think is playing an Asian character in reference Tiffany's right totally unacceptable would never happened today. It's like the most it's offensive, really offensive. And we how it's so easy to not write that same. appropriation on it's so powerful. So I have another question. This I'd be challenging. So does a disabled person have to play only their disability? Oh, hell no. Right? Because you've experienced that would be like saying to a black actor, you're only allowed to play, I don't know, like, this kind of you have this kind of job. So you can only have this kind of job or something, or

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the ultimate goal is that we play anybody, because we are anybody if we if you if you agree with the notion that we're 25% of the population of this country, then we should be able to play anybody, we should be able to play doctors, lawyers, the friend, the you know, the mom, the whatever the teacher, the asshole, like, like, it's like people with disabilities are put in and also all other marginalised groups are put in such stereotypical because we don't have writers in the writers rooms, who are writing from that lived experience. And we should all operate from a principle. Here's another quote from my friend Lawrence Carter long that the disability community in the 80s or maybe it was the 70s coined these two South African dudes in the 70s coined this term, nothing about us without us. And disability community has been using that for a long time. But a few years ago, my friend Lawrence car delong, and my other friend, Jim labrecque, who is the director of crip camp, shorten that to say nothing without us, meaning that we should have a seat at every table, whether or not the conversation is about our community. Yes, 100% Yes, every community so if we've got a diverse quote unquote, diverse and inclusive and an equitable and equitable writers room, then all this crap word seeing as particularly in film, like, I will say that theatre and television are doing a much better job.

34:22

Are they Okay, I was gonna ask, I want to ask you, can you tell us who were some places where you're seeing this being done? Well, where you're saying, like I can say, like they have done,

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this is good work, or this is there to get the right kind of representation. Where do you see that? Right?

34:33

Well, let me just let me just drop another factor. Okay. And then I'll and then I'll talk about that. So for folks who don't know, only 5% of characters on television, I'm talking specifically television. Only 5% of characters on television are disabled characters. Only 2% of those 5% of disabled characters are played by disabled that Wow. So that show if we're America's largest minority, our greatest public platform, which is the media is throwing us under the bus at every chance it gets. And it's no wonder that people like your boyfriend say, Well, I don't get it.

35:18

Yeah. So and so for me, it feels like a mistake of omission. Do you understand when I say that, for whom? for disabled people, that mistake of omission, right. So like, as we talk about inclusion, right, that they're not they're being omitted from story because there's no one there saying, This is part of the story of our fabric of our country. This is part of the story of what it means to be a person, whatever country actions matter for this country. Now, this is what it means to be human being that they're being omitted, because no one is, like you said, they're not the writers, and they're not producing better than I understand. And the other piece that I heard you, you kind of you got around this cover is that they can be you can be stereotypically cast.

35:52

Yeah. Oh, yeah. I mean, again, that goes with any other community. And then let's not forget about the intersectionality of communities. Right now there are black disabled people do. There are I mean, the something else we talked about, like age. Okay, so we know that age is a huge factor on our industry for women. So think about if you come from a marginalised community and you're a woman of a certain age, you're going to work less, just straight up, you're going to work less like what was that documentary by Rosanna Arquette was called searching for Debra Winger, which at the time, I don't know if people have seen it. I'm old enough to remember when it came out. Right. But or if you even know who Roseanne our cat is? Yes, yes,

36:37

yes. And, yes. Our cat

36:39

is right. So Rosanna is her sister who was acting before. You know, she's a little older than Patricia. She's still an actor. But she made this documentary called searching for Debra Winger. Because Debra Winger dropped out of the industry. Yeah, around 40 ish, right. And it's just interviews with all 40 plus women talking about, you know, and and I believe, if I'm not mistaken,

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they're all white women, which is an interesting, right. But all talking about, like the fact that once they turned 40, like they were persona non grata from 40 to 60. And then after you turn 60, you the parts start coming again, if you haven't been so, you know, demoralised by the shitty part of our industry, right? Hmm. Think about if you come from one or more, if you identify as one or more of those groups, right? The more groups you identify with the lower down on the ladder, you're going to be Yeah, yes.

37:39

So as you think about that, where do we? So I'm gonna go back to the question I had before, which I know you're about to answer, which is like, so where do we go from here? And where do you see it? modelled? Well, where do you actually see? And I would love it, if you and you might be able to do this, Christine, but I might press it, we might be able to figure this out is where like, Are there certain production companies or networks or places where you know, there are real advocates where you can say that is a model of someone who

38:02

Yeah, so I would say first of all, I'm going to give a shout out to the casting Society of America. And a lot of people don't know this. And I'm just going to say this as a general rule for all actors. And I am saying it, wearing my actor hat, but also my advocate hat because I know this, because I have deep and ongoing relationships with many, many casting directors in this industry, because of my advocacy. Please know that casting directors are your friends, please, please know that they're your friends, particularly if you identify as coming from a marginalised community. They are working so hard, particularly the CSA, the casting Society of America, these folks are working so hard to get us in these rooms, because they recognise that the pipeline needs to be fed. If we go to our same and I'm talking to you agents to if there are any agents on this call, we're talking to you to you need to and I'm going to I'm going to be specific about the communities that are really victims of this, which is the disability community and probably the Native American community. And maybe to some extent, the trans community is like, we're out here, we're talented. If you don't have some of us on your roster, you are doing yourself a disservice. Because there is money to be made. There is money to be made from us. We have skills. Like I said, I have an MFA. I know so many talented disabled actors. If you don't have, you know, I'm not even going to ascribe a number to it. But if you're not representing talent with disabilities, then honestly Shame on you your your way, doing yourself a disservice. Because right now, there is one agency and one department in particular that has the lion's share, and I would say probably 90% of the disabled actors with representation of in this country are represented by one small department of three people who are amazing. But it's a department of three people in one agency. I happen to be represented by them. They're fantastic. But, you know, you'd like to see it in more places is what I'm hearing you say? Yeah, yeah, yeah, they're gonna be around forever, right. And they and part of their their style, too, is they don't they want to see their clients go to other agencies as well. They're not trying to be

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proprietary, and hold on to that. So I think we need to do about that the industry needs to do a better job, right? Any industry people who are not actors on this call, you need to do a better job of understanding the community. Talk to people like me, talk to the disabled talent, you know, if you don't know any disabled talent, email me, I'll put you in touch with, like, I'm speaking to a writers room next week, they reached out to me because somebody in somebody who works on the team knows somebody who knows me. I mean, that's, that's how it happens. I used to be very wary of sort of leaning on the financial on the business side of things, the cut and dry bottom line side of things like, yeah, there is the moral imperative of hoping that people want to do the right thing. But in this day and age, like, I don't give a shit. I don't, I really don't, I don't care why you would just do it. And the fact of the matter is, in terms of disability, disabled people have \$21 billion of discretionary income to spend, just like any other community, they're more likely to spend their dollars where they see themselves adequately and accurately and authentically represented.

41:54

perceive, can I ask a question just as a as a business owner, as a man who is trying to make sure that people feel included in anything that I'm offering, right? It can. And so for me, I'm going to make this very particular as like my marketing is to click, you're going to have photos and images and things like that, when I want to make sure that a disabled person feels included in my community? How, how would you suggest that I do that? I know that you say you don't work with corporate, but how just so we can kind of start noticing and the rest of us listening? How do we see it? How do we look for when people are doing a good job of this right?

42:28

Make sure that you're I'm going to go back to answer. I'm going to put a pin in that only because I didn't answer like who's doing it? Well, let's go let's do who's doing well forget about me for saying, Hey, I just want to call a CFA out that they are doing it well. Great, right? And just so any casting directors out there know, CSA has a database, they did an open call, they've got a database with an open, they didn't open call for transactors and open call for disabled actors. And I think they're doing another one. I don't know what this one is. But they're doing another one soon. Okay, that's awesome. Well, they've got stuff. Yeah. So if you're a CSA member, go to them. Even if you're not a CSA member, if you're an independent casting director, they might, you know, give you access to the database. So there's that. So I think, like I said, film is still lagging behind. Desperate, desperately lagging behind TV is doing much better. And the shows in particular, you'd point us to, yes, I will say, Well, obviously speechless is not on on the air anymore, but like special. I don't know if anybody heard of special, special? That's great. I've watched all of it. There's actually I'd say Netflix is probably at the moment, doing better than anybody else overall. Okay. Because there are some offerings. There's a, you know, some Autism is a big a big thing right now. So there are shows now coming out, you know, and you know, what show is doing really well. And he's going to kill me for not mentioning him right out of

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the gate. But New Amsterdam, is probably I would say, the best example that that I can think of right now of equity and inclusion for disabled actors, because not only they have they had a smorgasbord of disabled actors

and guest star roles. They have, to my knowledge, it might be more by now, but they have to disable actors in recurring roles of medical professionals. They're not stable. So they're non-descript, which is what I was talking about before. It's what we call non-descript roles, non-disability specific roles. Well, New Amsterdam is kicking it in that sense, and that is directly related to the work of their casting. Wow. Caffarelli Otis to cast that show. No, I love David. I've known Dan since I first started acting in New York City. One of our biggest champions really great, you know, and then there's there's other things like the production of Oklahoma, where am I Dear friend, Ellie Stroker won a Tony for an iconically sexy role, where you would never think nobody would ever think that, you know, yeah, that but a disabled woman wheelchair user would play out. Oh, Annie, Like who? You know,

45:19

right. And so Christine, I'm challenged by this idea that I heard that I read in Robyn D'Angelo, his white fragility around Jackie Robinson. And the way that we say it is, a black man broke the colour barrier. And what we really are saying is, white people actually find a black man in his there. Right. And so and we talk about Allie Stoker's stories like that, where it's like, a Tony Award, and he does it. How does that fit into the narrative for you? And you're saying, put us in any role you have? And then there's like, a meteoric like, Oh, my gosh, look what she did, it becomes very meritocracy kind of thinking about things. Right. How does that fit into your advocacy?

45:55

it good? That's a very, very good and nuanced question. And loaded question. Yeah, sure. It's great for Allie. It's fantastic. I mean, it's, you know, it's like, what we all want as individual artists, right? We want that thing that's going to be life changing for us, right? And for careers. And hopefully, if you're somebody like Allie, it gives her a platform to speak out and make a difference for everybody else. And that I would say is the why the more representation we can have the better. But if we've got folks like Allie, who, whatever meteoric rise, she's had she, it depends on what people do with their advocacy. I mean, there's like Maysoon Ziad who I don't know, most people might not know, she's a comedian. She's also an actress. She is also she has cerebral palsy. And she's a Palestinian. Right. And she has the most watched TED Talk ever. Wow, like 10 million views. Wow. Yeah. So I mean, I think the more people break through, the better it is, but I but I'm here to tell you that there are lots of us appearing shapes, sizes, disabilities, colours, you know, whatever, gender identities, were out there, and we're ready to work. And we, I mean, we do this as a culture anyway. It's not it's not just with disability, but we tend to like, you know, the one person who breaks through their leg, you know, then we

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everything is that like, everything is Marilyn Monroe discovered walking down. Everything is great.

47:33

And then again, I'm gonna disarm just our industry a little bit like people tend to be lazy. Industry professionals are lazy. I can't tell you. And this is nothing against Dolly. And she knows this because I've we talked about it. But as an being on the other side of the table. I see it all. So I can't tell you how many calls. Once I started raising How many? We want Ali Stroker. We want Ali Stroker. I asked Ali Stroker. We want Ali Stroker. I'm like, but Ali Stroker is not available. And like there are a lot of not, you

know, look, I can throw a rock out my window and hit five actors, right? I'm aware of that, that the the pool of disabled actors is infinitely smaller right now. But the only way that we're going to grow it is a blue stop. Like being we want a flavour of the month. And we want to jump on the bandwagon of valleys. Stroker like Ali Stroker is the only one. She isn't. And she isn't. And she's too damn busy. She doesn't want to do everybody's you know what I mean? Yeah, projects down. So I think that's important. I also I want to, if I can for one second, I really want to go back to this thing about Brian Murphy. Yeah. Because it's bothering me. And I and I'm hoping that somebody who's listening to the podcast can help me. And I mean, this sincerely. And I say this with the caveat that several of my friends have worked on Ryan Murphy shows, alley included, and their careers have been very, very help, you know, helped by being on a Ryan Murphy Helms project. Right. So great, fabulous, fabulous. So Ryan Murphy has had a complicated what what I see is a complicated relationship trying to be very diplomatic here. Okay, you know, view data if we were sitting in my living room, and I was, you know, had a couple beers in me I'm like, but I'm trying to leave it. Is that a complicated relationship with disability as I see a very uneven relationship with disability so so I asked this question, and I asked it the other day on Facebook. I really want to know what, Ryan the way I put it in my post was What does Ryan Murphy believe in? I don't know if that's the way the right way to put it. But the reason I say that is because For those who follow Ryan Murphy shows, sometimes he's great with disability, authentic casting storytelling. Like my friend Ryan Habad is in the politician. He's a recurring in politician, an amazing character allows him to show like all of his incredible gifts, and he has many incredible gifts. Right? So apparently that role was written for a guy with cerebral palsy. So Ryan, perfect, great, right? He also happens to be Lebanese. So you know, so that's great. But then, the other night, I'm watching ratchet. And I'm just gonna be honest, and say like, I don't always love Ryan Murphy's stuff, whatever it is, some of it I adore. And other I don't like Glee, obvious for obvious reasons. I have no interest in glee. You know, but that was early in his career. I mean, maybe not early in his career. But early, that was like such an explosion, where the disability community came out in force and was like, You represented every other community appropriately and authentically. Why did you stick a guy in a wheelchair? So we thought, Oh, great. He Ryan Murphy is somebody who's going to keep pushing product out. He's going to keep making TV. So hopefully he'll learn from this. So I get very disheartened

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when I see on the one hand something like politician, which is, you know, diverse, and has Ryan in it, or something like American Horror Story freak show, which has my good friend Matt Fraser in it in a you know, a starring role. Amazing, right? But then you get something like ratchet, which I've stopped watching, I'm full disclosure after the beginning of Episode Three, when I saw a quadruple amputee, that was CGI, and this person has a big is playing a big role in this series, presumably, I assume, just by the nature of the storyline. And also the storyline is so sensational. It's like grotesque in a way. The way that it's set up without I mean, look, you know, I don't want to be what am i spoiler, right, no spoiler word bilities placed in that show, in a way, at least within the first, you know, the first three episodes placed in a way that it's made to be a device and the disabled person as the quote unquote wronged party. So it ends up taking this grotesque, like a like I'm a job.

52:35

Yeah. thing. I'm curious about your thoughts on For example, we don't know the show. I have no plans to watch that show, because it got horrible reviews. But if there are flashbacks with someone who is at the time non disabled, how do you Where do you live in that land? How do you how do you live in that?

52:52

Look, what they did his legs in his arms? In this episode three that I was just talking about? What are they did? Oh, they made them disappear? Right. I mean, they cover them up. Right. So why can you make them appear? Yeah. Yeah, it's, it's the forrest gump thing. Yeah. Dan could them you know, it's CGI man. It's, you know, just you're like magic, whatever, whoever's doing that. Yeah, we've got the technology. If we get the technology to wipe them out, we

53:22

got the technology is so smart, so smart in such a way we don't think that's again, reminded me of that idea of the omission thing that I was talking about earlier. Right. Right. So just to so I want to give our listeners a really great takeaway, and you have a really beautiful takeaway that we're gonna make sure everybody can download if they want to, which is like the top 10. What do we call this thing? The top 10?

53:40

I think it's called the language of disability top 10 do's and don'ts or something I

53:45

don't Can you give us a highlight of one or two that you see? made every day a mistake made every day?

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What I like to do and I have this conversation is, is to make people look at it and tell me if there's ones that you don't, that you're confused by? Like why is that on the list? Sure.

54:01

I mean, there's certain ones I know, never say these words, I think which is like when it said I mean, I'm not gonna say the words. Am I supposed to say our word, right? Yes, the M word. What around round comes in little, little persons. And then can you help me understand wheelchair bound confined to a wheelchair user uses a wheelchair, I mean, I would never say wheelchair bound necessarily. It's, it's weird to

54:25

do it all the time, all the time. And sometimes you will use wheelchairs. And this is where it gets tricky. Because I've just had this conversation with a dear friend of mine the other day who's blind, like we disagree on language all the time. people disagree with language all the time. So let me first say that,

and if I'm talking to you, and you're a disabled person, and you tell me that you prefer one thing that I that I would not use, I need to defer to you because I'm talking to you. So whatever you want me to use to refer to you. I'm going to give you the respect I use it, even if I hate it, it's happened. And it's I always throw up in my mouth a little bit when it happens. But, you know, I have to put my money where my mouth is and be respectful of the person I'm talking to. And I'll give you an example that I think I'll use the one that I use with you the other day. So like, deaf people. If someone is deaf or hard of hearing, you do not use the term hearing impaired deaf people who are hurt, who have some hearing are considered hard of hearing that hearing impaired. However, I find this a lot with older folks who lose their hearing, they prefer the term hearing impaired to hard of hearing. So if you are interacting with an older person who says I I prefer to be called hearing impaired, then just call them hearing. Knowing that, you know, the community preference is hard to hear right hearing

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it hearing is different than death is what you're saying. Because Deaf is no hearing is what you're saying.

56:02

Yes. Right. Oh, okay. So wheelchair bound. So wheelchair bound is interesting. Because if you say and this is like, if you just think about that, again, I'm gonna I've had over the years, it seems like I've come up with so many of these sound bites are rolling around in my head, and I don't realise that their sound bites until I say them out loud. So here's another thing, and and this will help anybody who is, is trying to navigate language around disability, before you open your

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mouth realise that most terms to describe disabled people were coined by non disabled people. Does that make sense? Most terms that are used to describe disabled people were coined by non disabled people, which means that the terms were thought up through using a non disabled lens, right. So to go back to wheelchair bound with Am I bound by my wheelchair? No, my wheelchair is a tool for independence. Right? Any assistive device is exactly that a hearing aid, crutches, a wheelchair, eyeglasses, those are assistive devices to help us do what we need to do, right? If I don't have my glasses on, I'm wearing my glasses, even though they're unflattering on camera, because it's easier for me to see you if I have my gun. Right? Yes. It's not rocket science. But I also have this funny anecdote again. I keep sorry, Lawrence, I keep quoting you. My friend Lawrence always says, think of the term wheelchair bound. Like you should never use the term wheelchair bound, unless you're talking about some kind of sexual something. So it's purposeful, right? Using the wheelchair wants to be bound for a wholly different purpose. Right.

58:02

It so then I have another one going on here. So and this is one I think that people can fall into very easily which is overcoming inspiring, brave, courageous. Yep. Yep. Tell us the date. Tell us how do we rather than tell us the danger? I think we get the danger right? Can you tell us the better the alternative? Maybe but go for it. Go ahead. Tell us

58:21

cuz I don't even often think I because I have this argument a lot with people who are really in love. Oh, yeah. Like they don't understand why what problem I have with overcoming brave courageous, inspiring, right? Because those words in and of themselves in a vacuum are fine words. Yeah, they sound like good compliments great things. Yeah. They're not fine if they're not earned. You know what I mean? They're not and often in media those things are not earned. Like they'll slap on a you know they'll slap on the brave inspiring courageous for anybody inspiring story of that another that for anybody who has a disability. Right just because by the sheer nature of the fact that the person is disabled people feel badly for them for you know what I mean? Yeah, and and society is so built on the they're by the grace of God go I which is bullshit, right? It's just bullshit. And like, particularly again, quoting my friend Laura t as a funny thing about the word inspire, like the word inspire, comes the word inspiration comes from inspiration. All it means is to breed. Right? So if you're calling me inspiring, but you don't know me, like you don't know that I've done anything to earn the term inspirational or inspiring. Then you are putting that on me because I get up in the morning and I breathe. That doesn't make me inspiring.

59:57

Yeah, so I guess and this is where I'm getting the channel. piece right? So when you talk about you being a young lady living in New York City and dealing with your disability while being in a city that doesn't deal well with disabilities, particular right? To me, it sounds like you overcame

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something during that time because you overcame crappy no ramp. Nothing. Like I have to go up and down stairs. That sounds to me like so I can ascribe to that story and overcoming what you're saying is it's not my job to die that for you.

1:00:26

That's right. That's exactly you got it. Exactly right. Yeah, I didn't overcome just living my life. What I overcame was that asshole, who, you know, I mean, yes. If anything is inspiring, it's the fact that I stand up to polls.

1:00:45

Yes, and it sounds like what these words are is these are broad strokes and you're saying you need to look closer. If you're going to try to describe my story. You're going to try to describe it you need to

1:00:56

write you need to lean in, you need to know the person you're talking about. The broad strokes are not helpful, particularly if they're saccharin. You know, a lot of these terms are saccharin or euphemistic shit like differently abled, and what the hell is that?

1:01:15

I'm gonna give SP That's it, it makes me think of like, oh, get laser. Right away. Hey, I'm disabled. And that's a word that I will say we had a conversation, I didn't know how to use the word disabled, probably you were really great. And clearing the up to like that is the word you use?

1:01:31

Well, it's the same as being like nobody, like disabled is not a like, we all know that that term is problematic. Like everybody in the disability community knows that. That's not the perfect term, but it's the one we have for now. And so what we've chosen to do is similar to the queer community, we're taking it back, we're taking it back. It's an it's an identity first model. So I'm not ashamed of my disability. I'm taking it back. I'm identifying. That's why I identify as a disabled person and not as a person with a disability, although I use those terms interchangeably when I'm working. But my personal identification is as a disabled person, you don't hear people go, Oh, I'm a I'm a person with blackness. I'm a black person.

1:02:17

Right, right. Right, right. Right. Right. I love the way you say that. Yeah. It also feels like it's also it feels pronoun related, because it feels like it is you're choosing the word you're wanting to be described as. Right. Right. And to be more careful around that

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totally pronoun. And then there's one more on that list, probably that you are questioning. Yes. Yeah, especial and especially because we talked about the show. That is why I hate the name of that show, because that's not the name of his book, his

1:02:41

book, what I wondered about the show. So have question, though, because the show feels like it is you don't watch it. You don't know this. But it feels like it is saying it feels like it's a play on the word of special. Right? Would you have to see it to get it? You have to see it. It's again,

1:02:56

exactly. His book is very clear. It's not that it's something like special and other stupid words that people use to you know, it's the makes it very clear that it is a play on words. So in terms of the word special, and the reason why I'm want to bring it up is because people use it all the time. And it's still widely used in education. So if there's anybody on this call that as a kid, who's disabled, or as a teacher, in the school system, a teaching artist in the school system, they force you to use these terms for anybody who's writing a grant, they force you to use these terms, right? And so special needs, like my needs are not special. Right? I need to do the same as your needs the my name, my name, I need to eat, I need to have friends. I need to breathe air, I need to do what I love, I need to get an education, right? those needs are not special. So they should not be considered special needs. It's like the again, I'm dating myself. But in in the early in the mid 80s, Eric Stoltz again, appropriation, played a character named

Rocky Dennis, where he played a boy a teenage boy with I don't know what the actual condition was, but he had a mask the movie mask right? Right there. And I always remembered and this is long before, you know, I was I was a kid where she walks into the principal's office. And the principal, of course, is saying, Oh, you know, he's special needs. I think rocky should go to a school that is better suited to his needs. And she says, teach math here to teach English here. Do you have Jim here? And he goes, Well, of course she goes, Well, those are his needs.

1:04:42

Now. I mean, it was me now even as you tell us, I mean, I remember that that movie from my childhood and of course didn't know all of these other implications, but that that's speeches, exactly. We're saying you need to be able to get in the building. You need to be able to go up the stairs or whatever they get up to. Right, exactly. Yeah, those are those are many. So what we're saying is like that word is very clearly comes from From the able bodied mindset not able bodied, we don't say able bodied, what do we say? I'm disabled? I guess I actually wanted to say cuz I wanted to disparage them for them, right. But that part of it right?

1:05:11

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So let me just be clear, don't beat yourself up if you if this is all new to you and you're like, Oh my God, my head is spinning. I don't say the wrong thing I say the wrong thing. Like don't beat yourself up because people say the wrong thing all the time. The only thing that we ask is if you say the wrong thing, be willing and open for somebody to correct you. Right? And if your table person and you correct with I'm not saying that we don't have a right to be angry, because I'm angry all the time. Right? And I often get and I often get what she's such a bitch, right? But you know, and then that's another conversation. But in terms of language, like if somebody says the wrong thing, either correct them, but correct them in a way that it's going to make a difference. So they don't walk away going, Oh, those people because I've heard that too. Those do not. So then they're going to go off with a bad taste in their mouth. And like, Look, we're all we all are allowed to have bad days. And that's another thing about people from marginalised communities, particularly disabled people, like we're all supposed to be happy and, and thankful that, you know, the world lets us in. So like, I'm not allowed to wake up on the wrong side of the bed. Like when people say, Oh, man, she's so angry. I say, Well, okay, did you just have a 45 minute fight with a cop? Because you get to get to work. And now you're an hour late? Because you couldn't get on the bus? Did you just, you know, Miss an audition, because, you know, somebody ran over you in your scooter. And you know, you were what just happened to me, like, my scooter knocked over in the middle of the street. And I was on my way to an audition. Like, again, take a second to think like, Oh, you don't know if that person has anybody you know what that person's encountered? So don't lump everybody into one group of people, just because someone's had a bad day.

1:07:05

Yeah. So it's broad strokes, even though we were talking about before? I think so, like you said, or that we said, if so just as we wrap up here, because I feel like we've First of all, thank you for both education

and patience, as I learned this, and I'm sure some listeners are learning this. I'm sure those ones who are know more about this than I do. But then probably many that are listening that learning this along with me. And both, I think waking us up to something that we knew we wanted to be better at a times and could be better, and also knowing how we can really be an ally. And is there anything that you would wish for those of us out here who are listening to be better allies? And is there anything that you would give us as an edict or something to run with to take away today?

1:07:44

Yes. So look, one of the things that I pride myself on and I again, I have to credit, my time and inclusion in the arts is I feel like I'm an ally for other communities as well. Do I know as much about those communities as I don't as a my own community? Absolutely not. But I don't know as much about a bunch of disability communities either because I don't belong to them, right.

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Whenever I speak. I always have every other community in mind. Always, always, always, always. And so I would ask anybody on this call who comes from a marginalised community, one or more marginalised communities? Please keep in mind when you're speaking about your own community, that there are other communities, who, because we're only as good as our whole, right? We can only really, really make change with each other, like, and also the disability community. And we've talked about this yesterday to Brian, is that because we are so like you said, shifting plates, because we're so fragmented as a community because there are different disabilities, right. We don't have the galvanising public face and I'll say this with the exception of the deaf community, Deaf community because a lot of deaf people don't consider themselves disabled that deafness is its own culture. So they are a particular community that is very galvanised and speaks speaks, I use that in quotes with one collective voice a lot of the right, so other disability communities, we don't have that. So we really, really, really need people from other marginalised communities and also people from that marginalised communities, we need straight white cisgendered folks, non disabled folks to be our allies for us too, because we can't be everywhere at once. Right? So if you're in a conversation about Ed and I equity, diversity and inclusion, if you're in a room, look around, if you don't see a disabled person in the room, or if you think you might not, I mean because a person could have an invisible disability so they might not know. So it's always good to ask, Is there you know, book where I don't see Everybody adequately represented here, we should have representation from every group. If you're an actor, and you're asked to audition for a role of someone who's disabled, then you identify as non disabled. Now, I'm not saying this gets sticky, because it's everybody's purse. Everyone wants to work, right? I get it. But all I'm saying is if you decide to take that audition, know what you're doing, just have the knowledge and awareness that you are taking a potential opportunity away from someone else. I'm not judging and saying, you know what, you're wrong. You're well, you're not you're not yet. Yeah. Do it at least do it with the knowledge that you're doing. Right? Mm hmm. And if you choose not to do it, which is my hope, you say, look, I mean, there are examples of this. There. JOHN Hawkes, who did the sessions, where the Matt Marquis played Marco Bryan, who lived in an iron lung. He did say, I don't think you know, there's another story about whether or not the team did its due diligence and trying to look for an actor, a disabled actor. I know they didn't. But john Hawkes said, I feel very uncomfortable about taking this role. And you must assure me that you have done your due diligence to find a disabled actor for this role. Right.

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And that's an opportunity that we can have. And if we can say, Oh, I see that I got this audition, I actually want this to go to a disable that.

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That's right. That's right there, people are doing it, people are doing it more and more. And look, like I said, I'm not trying to legislate anybody's morality, I'm just saying be aware that you're taking an opportunity away from someone else.

1:11:45

And if you're gonna leave us with a sense of what you want to see next. And know you kind of earlier you said like the, you know, that the trans community has had this sudden feeling seemingly sad. And let's just say that, right? Because, right, like you got very public. And notice, if you were if you were going to have the hope for what's next for disabled people in this arena, what would that be for from you specifically?

1:12:08

Well, you know, I want to see more disabled people appear everywhere, in nondescript roles everywhere in film, Theatre, Television, especially in film, because it's so lagging, although I, I have information about a couple of projects that were supposed to come up this summer, that we're supposed to be released this summer, which will hopefully shatter a bunch of stuff, which is awesome. Break off, because there are big blockbuster movies, right. But that's the first thing is I want industry folks to understand

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that.

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It's not just about getting us to play ourselves. It's about understanding that we are people, we are citizens of the world. We do other things. We don't have to be playing disabled person, our characters don't, he doesn't have to have anything to do with disability instead of you know, what's New Amsterdam, and you'll see like the recurring folks on New Amsterdam, they're nurses, doctors, when the doctors a little person, he happens to be a little person, the story isn't about him being a little person. Yes. Well, that's number one. Number two, is dammit, we need disabled people, we need disabled creatives in every single room every time. So we need more disabled people in the writers room. We need more disabled casting directors, we need more disabled producers, we need more disabled direct, we need more disabled everything is the same exact thing that I said earlier, that 99% of our issues are other marginalised community issues. So we need black people in every room. We need black artists in every room. We not let next artists and Native American artists and trans artists and LGBTQ artists, we need artists of size. So yeah, so it's the same thing. I'm sorry. I'm like I you know, and I haven't eaten today. And I'm surprised. No, I

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think what you're saying is, I mean, we you are saying what we want, we need to hear this is what we need to hear. And, and for us to I think I love that you've given us a place to go in terms of our ally ship where we can actually find places to speak up. And I just want to thank you for, you know, educating us. You know, I think that it shouldn't be your job to educate us that you're in. Right. And so I really want to know, for you to hear that.

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It is Yeah, I think I think you and I know that that you know that the bipoc community is experiencing the same thing. And and I've been, you know, I have done it as well, in terms of my bipoc friends having to edge my bipoc disabled friends having to educate me. And so that's something that I'm going through now too, so I get it. I don't mind. Here's what I'll say about education. I don't mind educating folks, because if I don't do it, somebody else might do it or they might or they might not do it. And you know, so I don't mind doing it. What I do. Do you mind is that if I have to continue doing it to the same people, if I tell you something, like absorb it, and do it, or don't do it, like I said, with casting, if you choose to take that audition, do it with the knowledge that you are, that you have the knowledge that you're taking away an opportunity from someone else, right? If you're a casting director, why, you know, if I tell you something, and I help you with something, then assume that I'm gonna say the same thing next time, when you come to me, and I don't want to hear the same, you know, if I, if I tell you when I'm talking to you, you shouldn't use the word wheelchair bound. When you're auditioning with folks in wheelchairs, just be careful with your language. And then you turn around and you call me a month from now and you start using wheelchair bound. That's not going to sit well with me. I'll answer you. I'll say the same thing I said to you last month. But I don't want to waste my breath.

1:16:02

Right? And yesterday, so listen to this pod. Listen to this episode, again, you guys is what Christine say, like, hear this to hear this twice if you need to, to let it sink in. And I want to say the accompanying download with this podcast has all this language on it so that you can go a little deeper in this. And we've asked and I've got a few questions there to ask yourself, to position yourself as an ally and to help you deepen your understanding of this. So I just want to thank you, Christine, so much for being such a gift for us. Thank you for just getting us. And so if people want to stay in touch with you, Christine, what's a great place to find you. You can find me at Bruno disability inclusion, calm all one word. Perfect. And I will put that that's a long website. So we will put that on that sheet for you guys. So you can download that as well. And anything any last thoughts you want to leave with us before we take off here?

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This that I want to give a shout out to SAG-AFTRA because I'm on the New York local board and I chair the New York performance with disabilities committee. And you know, they they have been really great about trying to make space for their disabled members and for these issues and becoming better ambassadors can teaching members how to become better ambassadors for the community. And yeah, and we did a we did a great webinar last month in honour of the 30th anniversary of the ADA, if you're a SAG-AFTRA member, you can go to the SAG-AFTRA YouTube channel and find it.

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Thank you so much again.