

AT Banter Podcast Episode 310 - Ableism Part 4

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SPEAKERS

Rob Mineault, Lis Malone, Shawn Marsolais, Ryan Fleury, Amy Amantea

R Rob Mineault 01:38

Hey, and welcome to another episode of AT Banter. Hey, this is the podcast where we talk with advocates and members of the disability community to educate and inspire better conversation about disability. Hey, my name is Rob Mineault. And joining me today, Mr. Ryan Fleury.

R Ryan Fleury 02:04

Hello.

R Rob Mineault 02:07

Miss Lis Malone.

A Amy Amantea 02:08

Hey there.

R Rob Mineault 02:10

And no Steve Barclay. We're not sure where he is. But he's doing something very important. Yeah, hey, you know, what? Can I tell you guys a quick story before we dive in?

R Ryan Fleury 02:31

Sure.

R

Rob Mineault 02:32

So I want your guys's honest opinion about this, because I think when I say my name, do I do you think it sounds like I'm saying Robin?

R

Ryan Fleury 02:43

No

L

Lis Malone 02:43

No

R

Rob Mineault 02:44

Really? Okay. So I had to leave a message from my landlord about some like leakage happening my bathroom and I had to leave a phone message for him yesterday, and told him my name. And then he emailed me back and he's like, "Hey, Robin". And then you know, when I do the transcripts, every week, the computer algorithm takes the audio and transcribes parts of it. It always calls me Robin as well. So now I'm all non kind of freaked out about the fact that people people in my life think my name is Robin,

R

Ryan Fleury 03:21

What I'd be more concerned about is how long have you had this landlord? He should know who you are by now.

R

Rob Mineault 03:25

Well, he's a new land newish landlord. We haven't had an interaction really yet. He's only been here a year and here's a you know, you talk to your landlord unless something goes wrong. I live in a 10 storey building.

L

Lis Malone 03:39

So you know, you might need to put a just a slight hesitation between your first and last name.

R

Rob Mineault 03:45

Okay, we'll see. This is the feedback that I need. So okay, so let me let me Okay, let's try this real quick. Okay, ready? I'm just gonna say normally. Hey, my name is Robin. Oh, oh, you're right. That does sound like Robin doesn't it?

L Lis Malone 04:00
You gotta you gotta just, you gotta take a little hesitation.

R Rob Mineault 04:05
I gotta apologize to our guests. Because now now I'm going through some sort of a life change trade, but we're rolling with this. So okay, so let me try it one one last time, then we'll bring our guests on. So hi, my name is Rob Mineault. Better. Yeah. All right. Yeah, write that down. Write that down.

R Ryan Fleury 04:24
Okay, well see how the transcript comes out.

R Rob Mineault 04:30
All right. Good. Well, now that we got all the important work out of the way, let's have some fun.

L Lis Malone 04:36
Okay, I'm gonna leave on a high note. I solved Rob's problems, I'm out of here.

R Rob Mineault 04:40
That's That's true. Your work is done.

L Lis Malone 04:45
I'm done. That's right.

R Rob Mineault 04:46
It's just like quantum leap. You just leapt in solve my problem, and you're just leaping out. Okay, Ryan, why don't you tell the fine folks at home, what the heck we're doing today.

R Ryan Fleury 05:02
Today, we are finally able to wrap up our series we had began earlier this year on ableism. And

so joining us again this week is Shawn Marsolais. Hello, Shawn.

S

Shawn Marsolais 05:17

Hello.

R

Ryan Fleury 05:18

And our guest back again to educate us is Amy Amantea. Welcome, Amy.

A

Amy Amantea 05:25

Thank you, everyone. Happy to be here.

R

Ryan Fleury 05:27

Glad you all could make it.

R

Rob Mineault 05:30

Yeah, it's a big day around here. Clearly, because you know why? Because my name is Rob. Mineault. Just discovered myself. Say goodbye to Robin. Okay. Let's let's, let's dive in to this conversation. So we're continuing on with the conversation about ableism. But we're talking about a really interesting aspect of this, and it hadn't been something that was really on my radar until Amy mentioned it last time we all we all got down and sat together, which is sort of this idea of of hierarchy of disability. So rather than me butchering it, Amy, can you kind of give us a little bit of an overview of what we mean when we say that?

A

Amy Amantea 06:21

Yeah, I can give you like a line like a Webster's Dictionary logline of disability hierarchy, obviously, not written by reps of Webster's Dictionary. But so disability hierarchy is a social construct, that makes certain kinds of disabilities more acceptable than other kinds of disabilities. So when we think about how, you know, this, these four episodes of conversation around ableism, and internalized ableism, and all of these things. Ableism, of course, as a reminder, for folks is the idea that the able bodied experience is the only experience of value, it is the right experience, and everybody else who doesn't have that is not living life properly, essentially. So if under ableism, disability is seen as a negative, right, so in the disability hierarchy, the more non disabled you appear, the higher up on the hierarchy you actually are. So it's kind of within the disability community, how we peg like wheelchair users versus blind folks versus folks with cognitive disability versus, you know, autistic folks and all of that. That's the the hierarchy.

R

Rob Mineault 07:34

So now, is this something that manifests mainly in the community? Or is this something that can sort of show up outside of the disability community as well?

A

Amy Amantea 07:44

Yes. So like, literature tells us that culturally speaking, this hierarchy was actually created by non disabled folks, able bodied folks, as a way of looking at us like, well, you know, this person has, and really, I think a lot of this in the language we're using today is privilege, along with a lot of this boils down to privilege. But what has happened is, I think with it's, it's alive and well, within the disability community, I'm seeing this right now in a program that - I won't name the program - but a program that we have students of cross disabilities, who are they don't experience the same disability in sort of a learning environment. And some of them don't want to work with others, because they can't, in air quotes, rise to the level of somebody else. Right. So like, think about this in the context of somebody who has a cognitive disability, and somebody who doesn't, and maybe you're doing, I don't know, a partnered presentation, somebody is going to carry more of the workload than the other because they're not peers intellectually. And that's part of the disability hierarchy. So the, you know, there are folks on this on this hierarchy that are are looked at as more capable, therefore higher on the ark on the hierarchy. And those who are looked at as less capable are lower on the hierarchy.

S

Shawn Marsolais 09:03

I think it even happens within a disability. Right? Like, if you have slightly more vision, you may be perceived as better than someone with who's totally blind, for example.

A

Amy Amantea 09:15

Absolutely. Both both from the outside world, the like the sighted world and from the from the blind world.

R

Rob Mineault 09:24

But it's some of that it's like steeped in a bit of utility, like, like, and what I'm thinking of is, say, sports, for example, right? Where you have the different categories of a vision in order to place people you that make sure to make sure that the playing field is level, because some of that makes sense in some contexts.

A

Amy Amantea 09:47

Yeah, I would say that that's not a part of the disability hierarchy.

S

Shawn Marsolais 09:51

 Shawn Marsolais 09:51

Yeah, I think that's just trying to make it fair.

 Amy Amantea 09:55

Yeah. You're talking outside of the hierarchy. The hierarchy is a lot for me, it's a lot about like internalized ableism, right. You're like well, Listen, I'm a wheelchair user, I don't have a cognitive dissonance. This is an example, right? This is a real life example that I'm experiencing recently, where a wheelchair user said, literally in air quotes, there's nothing wrong with my brain, I can't work with somebody who, who, you know, can't make two plus two equal four. And that internalized, right, so the wheelchair user in this circumstance is looking at the person with the learning disability as not valuable, what they have to contribute is not valuable. And then they don't want to associate with these folks. Because it makes the wheelchair user look like they're less capable to like there's all of these dynamics that happen. I mean, in the blind community, we often this is like, I don't know if this is like the never ending joke, you know, in the gay community, they say, Hey, you're gay, and you're gay, why don't you date? In the disability community they say, you're blind, and you're blind, why don't you to date? It's like, it doesn't work that way. Just because we're blind doesn't mean we're friends. And I think the hierarchy plays into that too, because as Shawn pointed out, sometimes it's like, oh, I don't know, I have some partial side, I don't know that I can work with this person who's never had sight. So we tend to do this, on the autism spectrum, there are some people who are who are have more complex experience with autism, and some people who have more of a mainstream experience, right, and everybody's afraid of being painted with the same brush.

 Rob Mineault 11:17

Well, and is part of this just sort of a symptom of how varied the, quote, disability community is, because if you're, if you're really just painting with that one brush, you're talking about a huge amount of different types of disabilities, and then, you know, subcategories of those disabilities. So you're, you're talking about an incredible amount of, of people with various degrees of, of needs. Is that some of the problem?

 Shawn Marsolais 11:50

Definitely, I think that lumping disability all together in the first place, when we are so diverse, it's the same as lumping any culture together as all being the same. They're not. So the disability, yes, so varied. And we don't want to be misunderstood. And we already are misunderstood. So if you're going to see that one blind person, and then consider that I'm the same, or that one person with a disability, and and then, you know, see me as that as well, that's kind of scary, right?

 Lis Malone 12:28

I think there's a couple of different angles, that when you're talking about the hierarchy of disability, that you have to relate to, in order to kind of wrap your brain around it. Because I think that it's such a big topic, that in one hand, I think, because I think we were all talking

about things and but we're we're we're kind of having all of these dialogues, even happening right now, they're kind of all sort of intersecting or running parallel. And I think that the one point that I would just at least like to make about this topic is that the hierarchy is so based upon the perception, whether it's the perception of the able bodied community about their stereotypes, and things that they perceive about the disabled community. And then there's also the aspect of within the disabled community, and the internalized ableism that shifts our own personal perceptions about ourselves, how we feel and how we project maybe even onto other members of other parts of the disabled community. So there's different ways in terms of how the hierarchy is viewed based upon where you stand. And I think it is very similar in terms of at least in terms of construct, when you look at some of the different minority groups. For example, so members of, of the African American community, well, sometimes you'll hear stories about those who are of lighter complexion, maybe being perceived as having more privilege, and maybe they are and I'm not saying but there's also the perception that maybe if you are a darker complexion that you are considered more ethnic or you are more, you know, more stereotypes might be applied by somebody who maybe is just not one who is living within a diverse community, for example. So it's, it's all coming down to the perception and then where you stand in terms of where you are in the discussion of disability.

A

Amy Amantea 14:36

Yeah, and I would say like, you're absolutely, sadly, perception seems to be everything. Like all of these, all of these, these constructs, these social constructs -- this disability, the disability, justice, stuff, it all intersects as you point out, it all relates sort of back, one to the other. There's a movement right now called Radical Inclusion, which is to Shawn's point. This is anybody with a disability is welcome in this space, doesn't matter what the disability is, but nobody's taken into consideration what the access needs are of those individuals. So for example, when we put deaf folks in a space with hearing folks say blind folks, you know, blind folks need audible deaf folks need visual, right? Are we conflicting access needs? If we have people that have, who are neurodiverse, who have maybe complex learning disabilities, and they're in a space with people who don't have complex learning disabilities, what is it that we need to provide them with access to whatever that whatever it is we're doing to participate? So that they can, so we can meet those folks at their level, but also meet other folks at their level. But there are two different levels. So this idea of radical inclusion, while in theory, I feel like, it could be Utopia if it were to work, but we're not there yet. And what tends to happen is organizations who may be familiar with one type of access need, like let's say physical disability invites folks with mental illness into a space but they don't know how to properly care for those access needs. And then you have chaos. Nobody gets what they need in an environment, nobody can learn what they need to learn in that environment. And then and then you go into this question of like, okay, do we silo people do we now say, this is a function just for blind folks, and this is a function just for wheelchair using folks. And this is a function just for it, autistic folks. And I would say that there are many folks in the community that I am learning about who wanted like radical inclusion, experienced it and went actually, you know, what, I'm actually better just to do like, this thing with, with the people in my sort of, not, I don't know, disability category, because I feel at home.

S

Shawn Marsolais 16:45

That's totally making me think of times when I've participated in a group like that, where it's for anyone with any disability. And I often feel the most disabled, because they're still all looking at

print material that I can't read, or we're still, you know, I was in an Adapted PE class in high school, and we're still playing volleyball and badminton, like, we're making the ball softer. So when I get hit in the head, it doesn't hurt as much, but I still can't do the thing. So and then you become kind of resentful, and or you're experiencing the hierarchy for real, like, I feel more disabled here than I do with my sighted folks. So there's a problem.

A Amy Amantea 17:25

And and I think if we look at even hiring, right, like, if we look at employment, if we look at education, we look at this, the privilege that somebody gets, if you're a wheelchair user, let's say. And your barriers are mobility related. Manual wheelchair users who are still operating their own wheelchairs, have more power, have more privilege, sorry, than Power Chair, users who may have limited dexterity. So when we look at the you know, privileges really means that they have the availability to do more things within their within their lived experience. So the folks that are in the disability community that are getting the most jobs at the highest pay rate are folks that are using like manual wheelchairs, and not folks that are autistic. And you can I mean, like, logistically and intellectually, you can kind of go, hmm, maybe I can understand that. But then like, your IQ meter goes up and goes, Oh, how ablist is that? And this is the example of why ableism is, is everywhere. It's everywhere. And it's so interesting. I was in a workshop, learning, learning, because I'm constantly taking workshops on myself about people's different experiences, different experiences of ableism as it relates to disability justice, and some of the things I was thinking, yeah, I get that, but I'm willing to give it a pass, right? Like somebody who uses the accessible bathroom that doesn't have a disability. That's ableism. And you're like, huh, okay, but when I'm in line at, you know, I don't know, the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, and there's 20 bathrooms and 400 people, like, somebody's got to use that bathroom. But under disability justice, you leave that bathroom alone. And it's just for the privilege of folks who need the accessible bathroom. So your brain, my brain, it feels like a piece of of like, I don't know, playdough sometimes it's being stretched in all these different ways where I'm like, ha, I can see both sides of this coin, and I don't know where I fit in my thinking.

S Shawn Marsolais 19:28

Yeah, because we don't necessarily need the accessible washroom, but technically we qualify to use. Although it is handy, you don't have to find everything. It's all in one room.

A Amy Amantea 19:39

Well, exactly. And then I think about like, the parent with the baby stroller who doesn't have the disability, but it's also convenient for them. And they're often the folks that are using it when it's like hello, I need to pee, you know, and then I think about like the quadriplegic who needs to go in and use that bathroom and is waiting because all of these other able bodied folks are like no, we just like the extra space. And it's like, yes, but that extra space was built for them to transfer. And you got to find yourself like in the middle of this somehow somewhere, right? I mean, I don't think it's I don't think it's of any. I think we all know what I'm saying is I think we all know that if you don't have a disability parking placard and you parking to an accessible spot, that is ableist. We seem to have no problem calling that spade a spade when we recognize that somebody's like, oh, I'm just running into for my coffee, I'm sorry, I'm

just parking in the accessible spa, that that is highly ablist. But when it comes to the bathrooms, you're kind of like, huh, where's the gray area? So I think that's why I think these conversations are so interesting. And so full of gray area, that if you look at it as a continuum, each person for themselves has to kind of decide where they are, in their thinking on this stuff.

S

Shawn Marsolais 20:55

Is it ableist to take an elevator if you can take the stairs?

A

Amy Amantea 21:01

That's a good question. I would say, I don't know. I don't think that elevators were built specifically for wheelchair users, whereas accessible bathrooms were okay. Big elevators, probably at some point when they were built were probably built for convenience of carrying heavy loads. Right? I bet you the freight elevator was probably one of the first elevators.

S

Shawn Marsolais 21:21

I mean, yeah, that makes sense. Yeah.

A

Amy Amantea 21:27

That's me. I like the elevator.

S

Shawn Marsolais 21:30

Elevator.

A

Amy Amantea 21:31

But then, you know, if it was ableist, we'd be like, well, we, you know, we we check that box. Yeah. I'd like to keep my teeth in my face, which is always my joke, no tripping downstairs, like to keep my teeth in my face.

R

Rob Mineault 21:47

You know, it's, it's kind of fascinating to me, I just feel like this is, this is really what makes us unique as a species, I feel like this is a very human thing. And I was I was talking to Ryan about this earlier today. Because it just, it just doesn't, it doesn't seem to matter, you put a group of people together, no matter how big or small the size is, and you're always going to get the splinters of, you know, everybody wants to feel like they're right. Their attitude is right, or that their situation is somehow special. I feel like that's just part of being human. And it, I think it does take a little bit of work and a little bit of self reflection to really think through some of

these scenarios to really sort of push through some of these, these, you know, we'll call it here, we'll call them ableist because that's kind of what we're talking about. But it could be anything, it could be any sort of ism. It just is sometimes we as humans, we just have trouble putting ourselves in other people's shoes or really being self reflective. And I think that that's, that's where some of this stuff comes from. What do you guys think?

A Amy Amantea 23:01

I would say, Rob, my slight pushback to that is that I think the only people not that don't want to be right, but that are fighting for these isms, are folks that come from equity seeking backgrounds. That's a whole other conversation about white privilege. Like we could get, we could go in into all sorts of those things to believe this system or not, but you know, I as a white person, disability or not, if I went into the hospital tomorrow and said, I'm in pain, they'd likely give me morphine. If I was a person of color, or an indigenous person with a disability, they probably look at me as I as if I was seeking, right? Like there's a certain amount of privilege as white folks that we have, we get given the benefit of the doubt. So isms play off, I think, a big role in this. If we weren't equity seeking folks looking for equity, we wouldn't have to fight and say, Wait a second, what this is, what you're doing here is wrong, it's racist, or it's ableist or it's, you know, whatever any of the lists slash isms are. So that would be my only pushback.

R Rob Mineault 24:09

The the interesting part of it is, is just how it manifests within a community, which, but I think that the disability community maybe is sort of, I think, what differentiates it from from a lot of other equity seeking people is that it is so so varied. And I think that that lends some issues here that sort of are unique to that community. But I also think that like part of it is, is this idea of everybody's competing for sort of limited resources, which is a problem in and of itself, but when you're in a community that that has to sort of advocate for your, your needs and and to advocate against whatever barriers that are put up in place and those work against some other community that are working, you're working for the same means. That's I think that's kind of when you, you have bumping of heads within the community.

S Shawn Marsolais 25:08

Maybe. I think I'm just like, trying to figure it out for myself, but I'm thinking, I really feel like internalized ableism plays a role. I'm thinking of early on, in my 20s, you know, just in groups where there were people who were blind. And I had a bit more vision then and, you know, I had this, I think I felt it, I felt like, well, I'm, I'm not as bad as them or as bad off or just saw myself differently, or wanted to be perceived differently. Like, wanted to prove that I was different or better in some way. And I don't thankfully feel this way anymore. But you know, that as part of my own journey of like, don't, don't, you know, I hid my blindness for a really long time, wherever I could, right. So it's like, I can get by without looking blind. And as long as I don't act blind, whatever that means, you know, I'm going to not, I'm not going to feel around for the thing in front of me, because that looks blind. And then I'd be like, those people who are actually blind.

A

Amy Amantea 26:28

So Shawn, how do you in your work with Blind Beginnings try and empower folks around blindness and low vision? Like, I'm curious?

S

Shawn Marsolais 26:47

It's, it's really trying to, first of all, normalize the experience of blindness. And, and point out that it's not, that we're not less than, where we just experienced the world differently. And maybe even, maybe we're even a little more interesting, you know, like trying to spin it. Like, we we do life differently. That's not a bad thing. And look at all these other great cool blind people doing great, cool stuff, right. So trying to sort of, I guess, like, erase the stereotype of blindness. Of blindness, equating to helpless and, and trying to see like, look how different we all are. Look at all the range of talents and skills we all have. And we all just happen to be blind. So clearly, blindness does not equal any particular thing. And you don't need to be ashamed of your blindness. I mean, they're not just going to not be ashamed, because I told them not to like, but hopefully they've encountered -- I didn't know anybody who was blind when I was growing up. So my stereotype was the stereotype of like, the blind man begging on the corner. And I don't, I knew I didn't want to be that. But I see it within the kids, I see this hierarchy playing out with, you know, kids who have low vision versus the kids who have no vision, and almost this kind of lording their vision over sometimes, like, oh, I'll do that for you. And, well, you're not going to be able to do that, because you're blind. I'm not really blind. I'm not totally blind, like just even that the language that they use.

A

Amy Amantea 28:24

Does it come from parents, do you think? I mean, it's got to come from the outside world, right?

S

Shawn Marsolais 28:28

Yeah. And I, you know, could be it could be even in a well meaning way of like, trying to talk to the child about their vision and saying, but you're not totally blind, you still have vision, or maybe not wanting to use the word blind, in reference to their kid because that's too hard. Like not wanting to acknowledge it. I don't know. When I was a teenager I remember going to summer camp with other kids that were blind and I was allowed to go in the pedal boats with without a sighted person, I had enough vision. So they made a list of the kids who were you know, you could you could go in the pedal boats with a staff person or with these particular kids. And I was one of them. So that the organization also set it up there was a hierarchy there was like, I have guiding privileges I have voting privileges and you don't because you're totally blind.

A

Amy Amantea 29:26

And that's the only reason as opposed to you're an adult and you're a child right right?

S

Shawn Marsolais 29:33

S

Shawn Marsolais 29:30

Nothing to do with my ability to swim or my capabilities in the boat or anything, just you have this much vision so you're okay.

A

Amy Amantea 29:37

The other such stigmatization around disability they knew I was, you know, these things I intellectually know these things, but I don't experience the experience them as a as a white settler. But I was taking an Uber the other day, and the man who was driving was an Indo Canadian man and he was very lovely to me in that a lot of times when I tell Uber drivers, because I now have to tell them that I used to tell them that I was blind. Now I tell them I hold a white cane just because if they don't know what the white cane means they'll at least see a white cane. Because I was getting canceled on all the time. And that was like jeopardizing me getting a ride. So I just said to this, this guy that in my text him, I have a white cane, you know, and I'm standing on the corner of whatever, whatever. Okay, so he picks me up. And he doesn't say anything for a long time. And then eventually works up the courage to, to ask me about blindness. And, and he is an immigrant to Canada. Him and his sister. He's here and his sister has two children who both have an eye disease. He couldn't name it. What do you what he was telling me was, right now they're like, heavily involved in the medical system, putting these kids through all sorts of different surgeries, trying to save their sight, because in their community, disabilities is very bad. And I said to him, you know, I said, I lost my sight as an adult. And I said, there was a bit of a learning curve. I said, But life is not impossible. And life should be embraced and lived. And these kids can do beautiful, wonderful things, if they have the right community around them, to be able to learn how to embrace who they are. And then I said, like, you should check out this Blind Beginnings organization, right? Because I just thought, like, I'm sure there are other people from a cultural perspective, or like, I'm gonna lock my kids behind a door, nobody's gonna need to know that my kids are blind or low vision, or need a wheelchair or have cerebral palsy, whatever it is, right? And then what kind of message does that send to those children? I mean, talk about ableism, and then internalized ableism. And then what happens to those children when their family has passed on? Then they're in a world where they can't, they can't be independent. They don't know how, they don't have skills, they don't have confidence, right? Like the importance of allowing young people to feel like who they are is good enough. Any young kid whether you have a disability or not, but you know, it's more profound when you when you live with some kind of disability that you are told that you're not enough? Anyways, I hope that they reach out to you, Shawn. Yeah. I think that maybe they're not there yet. You know, but I just thought, Oh, my God, I don't know the age of these of these children, whether they are, you know, five or 12, you know, because all of those things make a difference. But just the effort, he was talking about the, because really what he wanted for me, was what doctor can I send my kids to, to save their eyesight. And what I like clearly said to him, was, I had five surgeries, nobody could save my eyesight. But I don't mind living the life that I have now. Like, that was for me, it was like, you know, the world looks at the fact that I lost my sight. And I look at the fact that I gained a gift. It takes a while to get there. But that's how I look at that's how I frame it now for me. And I bet you still when I say that out loud, other people like what how does that work? But that's how I want to frame it. Yeah, frame it all sorts of ways to live my life. But that's how I want to frame it.

R

Rob Mineault 33:28

Well, I'll have to say is next time you take an Uber, you should really tell them about the AT

Banter podcast.

A

Amy Amantea 33:40

Here's a here's a side funny thing. I got I got contacted after we did the first episode of this Ableist Series by a gent who is writing an algorithm about ableist language. He listened to us talk about ableism on the web, reached out to me to say are you interested in helping consult on this algorithm. And the algorithm is supposed to be for like job postings, and catching ableist language jobs post job postings. And it's so interesting because all three of these these PhD these doctoral PhD, I think I swear to God, they feel like they have triple doctorates me. They're all doctorates in language, none of them have a disability. All living in India, one man and two women. And, and the the extent to ableism that they're talking about is again, like it is beyond what like hands on experience, getting your foot in the door, that those are people as microaggressions because not everybody has hands, right. And it's like, so where's the extreme? We talked about this a lot. Where's the extreme, but they're trying to look at these things from a job posting perspective so that when folks read this, I mean, one of the things I always see in a job posting is you must have a driver's license. And it's like, well, I don't. And that's not my fault. And so like, how do we reframe that? So it's not like you're cutting a bunch of people out of the equation, right? It's just totally interesting stuff where these conversations are going. And that's all due to AT Banter.

S

Shawn Marsolais 35:17

Wow

A

Amy Amantea 35:19

You have people that are listening to you in India, there you go.

R

Ryan Fleury 35:22

Invite them on the show.

S

Shawn Marsolais 35:25

Yeah, that's interesting.

A

Amy Amantea 35:29

Is that I'm like getting up at 4am for Zoom meetings, because the time right, this is ridiculous.

S

Shawn Marsolais 35:36

Awesome. It's great.

L Lis Malone 35:37

Well, we look forward to getting our commission check on this.

A Amy Amantea 35:42

I mean, I haven't been paid for anything so...

R Rob Mineault 35:48

Clearly, we need it we need to sign a contract before people come on the show.

L Lis Malone 35:52

The AT Banter job board. If you would like to hire Amy, we will just take a small cut, but she's all yours.

A Amy Amantea 36:03

I would actually welcome that. I would welcome the finder's fee.

R Rob Mineault 36:06

There you go. All right. Well, could happen. Anything else to say about the hierarchy of disability? Like, where does where does this really, where's the problem? Is it an internal within the community problem more so or is it an external problem? Does one need to be addressed before the other can be? What how do we see this sort of being mitigated? I guess, quick, somebody solve the world's problems?

A Amy Amantea 36:36

I think so this is what I say when I do this work. There's no finish line in this work. That's the truth of it. The problem is the attitudinal barrier. And that's a problem that everybody has. So I think what it takes is those of us doing the work, learning what we don't know, and then finding where we can be allies to other folks, so that that's the same whether we're doing work in ableism, or racism, or around LGBTQ experiences or decolonization, right, we're asked to be allies of other communities in which we don't have lived experience, because we need those folks to be allies of our community as well. So that attitudinal barrier is big. And if we remind folks that you can be a member of the disability club at any time. Why are we not looking at things like access and inclusion, and ableism on a broader spectrum? Because tomorrow, it

could be you could be your spouse, could be your child could be your mother could be your sibling, right? So if we are all sort of open to this experience of disability, why are we Why do we sit back on our heels and do nothing about it? That would be the end of my thought.

R

Rob Mineault 37:51

Well put.

S

Shawn Marsolais 37:53

Yeah. And I feel like doing the learning, trying to understand I, I learned recently that unless you're actively, you know, to be an ally, or to not to be ableist, for example, you got to stand up for the people with disabilities. If you don't have one, you got to do the work, do the learning. Like, work on understanding, you can't just say, oh, I don't have a problem with disabled people. So I'm not ableist. Like, I don't have a problem with people of color. So therefore, I'm not racist. Well, you you're still racist if you're not actively speaking up when you see it. A wrongdoing. So it's the same with with ableism.

R

Rob Mineault 38:44

That's fascinating. Yeah, I never Yeah, you're right. You're so right. So many people are used to being sort of passive and not being ally. I think this, this idea of being allies, I think, I feel like it's a new. It's a new concept that's just now sort of beginning to gain some traction. And so I have high hopes that that, you know, this is something that can spill out into the mainstream and sort of wake people up and make them realize that you're absolutely right, Shawn, that just not having a problem with somebody is is isn't good enough anymore.

L

Lis Malone 39:19

And I think that we have to also address the fact that we within the disabled community have to face our own stereotypes or our own ableism that we might have towards other groups that because just because we have our disability, which we live, we breathe we face every single day of our minute of our lives. We can't assume that we understand the lived experience of a person of different disability and sometimes we might think, Oh, I have a disability so I'm, I can't be able to stick out it's other people's disabilities. And it, it does happen quite a bit. And you know, some a lot of what Shawn had said, it really referenced how we try to be inclusive. And we can't always think of everything, but the effort is there. But we as a community have to also acknowledge some of our own stereotypes that we that we hold.

A

Amy Amantea 40:21

I would offer one more thing, which is just just plant a seed, I suppose in folks' minds is each person I think needs to think about the impact versus the intent. And in our friends who are working on, you know, Black Lives Matter and changing, changing the narrative around anti black racism, no longer look at the intent. They're all about the impact. Those of us in the

disability community are still largely like, Well, I think they're coming from a place of good intentions. And we look less on we think less about the impact of what that thing is. That has happened, right? And I think we need to re examine that when I when I think about the disability experience, which is, it's all fine and good if you have good intentions, but what learning did you do to try and to lower the impact of what your actions were on somebody, because that can do some real self harm to a human being when when they're experiencing these things over and over and over and over and over again, on a daily basis. So how do we as humans support each other? I mean, I think about that in terms of pronouns, right? And I got a good, some good friends in my life who are using they/them pronouns, and they're constantly being misgendered. And in that situation, it's like, you know, I could performatively be an ally and say, no, you can't call them that. Or I can refrain, I can reframe the narrative. And I can say, you know, well, they are a great friend, you know, like, change the sentence, but use the right pronouns. Do you know what I mean? So that I'm not, I'm not actually causing the other person harm by outing them by saying, you know, by disrupting the situation. But by being an ally in a support by using the right pronouns, maybe having a conversation with the person who's, you know, not using the right pronouns, for example, outside, not in front of that individual, so that they don't feel like they're othered. So impact versus intent, I think is something that we don't give enough consideration to around the disability experience.

S

Shawn Marsolais 42:27

Oh, that totally makes me think of I've ranted on Facebook, about people grabbing me, strangers grabbing me and you know, SkyTrain stations and trying to like push me on to the sky train to be helpful. And people have sort of pushed back. Wait, I post about it. I'm really angry about it. I'm not angry to the person in the moment, I might say, I'm fine. Thank you. I don't like have a big tantrum. But I feel like supposed to be friends on Facebook. So anyways, and people, even other blind people will be like, well, maybe you're being too sensitive, and they're just trying to be helpful. And so many sighted people will say that as well. So it's kind of like, okay, yeah. But when you've been grabbed a lot of times, it, it does have an impact, and I don't like it. And I'm allowed to not like it,

A

Amy Amantea 43:21

You're allowed to not like it. Yeah, absolutely.

R

Rob Mineault 43:28

And not only that, like, you know, attitudes are never going to change if people aren't called out on that if there isn't some sort of an educational component if we're not encouraging people to to think differently and to consider impact more, then nothing's ever going to change. And you're always just gonna have well, their hearts in the right place. But you know, they still grabbed Shawn and threw her on a SkyTrain that was going the wrong direction.

A

Amy Amantea 43:54

Or the I love this one, too, because it happens to me too, all the time. Drives me bonkers, which is like I'm looking for something like Oh there's the mailbox now I know where I am And they

is like, I'm looking for something like, Oh, there's the mailbox now. I know where I am. And they think, oh, she's gonna get trapped in a corner. Pull her out of that and it's like, leave me the freak alone.

S Shawn Marsolais 44:10

These are my landmarks. And I'm checking where they are. So I know where to go next.

A Amy Amantea 44:14

Yeah, right. Yeah. And nobody would do that to another sighted person.

R Rob Mineault 44:19

So this has been a pretty epic series. And I want to thank you guys for joining us, because I'm actually, Amy, I'm really thrilled about that story about somebody reaching out and finding you and, and actually helping build that algorithm because that's actually really cool. If that's something that that happens, I mean, we can we can say that AT Banter and a little bit of part of that. Hmm, so yeah, see, we're making the world better.

L Lis Malone 44:50

Oh, screw that. We want to we want a piece of it. Come on. It's hard cash.

R Rob Mineault 45:01

I feel like I've learned a lot. I hope our audience has learned a lot. Do we have any wrap up thoughts in terms of ableism? Everything that we've talked about? I don't know, do we? How do we see these things being resolved? I mean, nothing's solved overnight. You know, there's there's all kinds of issues in the world today. But I don't know, where do we where do we see this? Any closing thoughts?

S Shawn Marsolais 45:30

I keep thinking, if there is a person with a disability in your life, get to know them.

A Amy Amantea 45:40

Take a risk and get to know somebody who isn't in your life.

S Shawn Marsolais 45:42

On that too, for sure. But I guess what I mean is like, don't assume you know. I think that can be

Or that too, for sure. But I guess what I mean is like, don't assume you know, I think that can be also offensive this like, oh my uncle is insert disability, so I understand. No, you don't actually,

A

Amy Amantea 46:00

I broke my leg once. I had a disability.

S

Shawn Marsolais 46:04

Yeah. So I just think like, ask the questions, find out what what is offensive to them. And do they experience ableism? Is there something you that you do that is uncomfortable for them? Like ask the hard questions.

R

Rob Mineault 46:23

Yeah, I love that. Just not at a bus stop.

S

Shawn Marsolais 46:26

Yeah, I guess that's why I started with someone you know, because I don't really want to get into it with a stranger.

A

Amy Amantea 46:35

It's not what I meant by making friends with a stranger. But often we're in environments with people, like we're in a workshop. And there are other people like this happens to me all the time. When I'm in a workshop, nobody comes and talks to me. And I think that must be because of my it must be matched with blindness. Come say hello. So that's what I mean. I don't mean sit on a bus with somebody and say, so how did you become blind, you know, that is not something that we invite, we should invite in our lives.

R

Rob Mineault 47:00

Don't don't do that. I mean, really, honestly, the best way to do it, you go volunteer. Put in some volunteer hours at your local, whatever. You know, that that's, that's the best way to really interface with, you know, different communities. So and you're doing good, you know, you're doing some good work and helping some nonprofit organizations out if you want to, if you want to volunteer for Blind Beginnings, you know, go to www.blindbeginnings.ca

S

Shawn Marsolais 47:25

You get a three hour blindness, one on one workshop, if you volunteer for Blind Beginnings, so you'll learn some basics about blindness.

R Rob Mineault 47:32
Right.

L Lis Malone 47:34
Well, three hours of fun.

S Shawn Marsolais 47:36
Hey, it's pretty fun, right Amy?

A Amy Amantea 47:39
It's pretty fun.

S Shawn Marsolais 47:41
I actually did one last week, and somebody said it was the best workshop they've ever been to. It's interactive. There's activities. There's like, it's it's pretty good. I think.

A Amy Amantea 47:51
On Sunday, I taught a introduction to disability justice and sighted guide training for VocalEye, it was a five hour workshop. But the survey we got we had a survey afterwards. And people were like, yes, please want some more of this. So there are folks. And I will say a lot of these folks are of retirement age, and they're like, white retirees, and they're like, huh, the world is changing. How can I be a part of this change, which is nice to see, there's a lot of that in BC, we could do more we could do with more of it. But when I go to a province next door where my family lives, there not a lot of that seem to be going on. I am just I am just a person of no value. So I don't want to go there very often. You know what I mean? You're I feel empowered with the exception of, you know, things that happen in provinces over I don't feel that. So do the work. Find some folks, you know, then take some workshops, volunteer, gosh, yep.

R Rob Mineault 48:56
Lots and lots of different ways. Shawn, we're gonna have to talk we have to add two hours to the Blindness 101.

S Shawn Marsolais 49:01

I don't know much about Disability Justice, honestly. So that's okay. We should have those extra two hours, I need to go to Amy's workshop.

R

Rob Mineault 49:14

Some workshop or workshop hierarchy going on here.

A

Amy Amantea 49:20

This is different in different contexts is all it is different context. There you go.

R

Rob Mineault 49:27

Ah, all right. Well, listen. Before we let you go and release you guys back into the wild, why don't you tell us a little bit about what you guys are up to a little bit of where people can find you online and what's going on?

S

Shawn Marsolais 49:44

Sure, well, you can find Blind Beginnings at www.blindbeginnings.ca. You can also listen to the Limitless Podcast and that is anywhere you listen to podcasts, but also on the blind beginnings website. If you want to sign up as a volunteer, you want to contact me, you can do all of that through www.blindbeginnings.ca.

A

Amy Amantea 50:03

I'm a self employed person, so you can find me in lots of places. But I do a lot of my work with VocalEye at www.vocaley.ca. We describe arts and cultural events for folks who are blind or partially sighted. But I also, you can follow me on Facebook under Amy Amantea. And email me at amyamantea@hotmail.com So there you go. So, yeah, I mean, I'm doing lots of cool things. And right now I'm gonna go actively into rehearsals for a new show that I've written called The Disability Tour Bus, which will be set on a city bus. Yeah, in July of 2023. So we're working on the script and we're going into rehearsals for that. And I'm working on my own my very own solo project called Through My Lens, where I talk about the intersection of art and my intersection of blindness and photography. And I have folks describe to me my own photos, which I've never done. But I have to tell you all that Through My Lens got fully funded - \$150,000. I don't get to keep that much money, just so you know, to put this show together, and we've now been invited to Kingston in 2023, June of 2023. And Ottawa Fringe, and I'm going to do something with Carleton University online in March, which is out of Ottawa as well. So there's a whole bunch of folks who are interested in this little touring project that I may be traveling with, which is I'm super excited.

R

Rob Mineault 51:44

That's amazing. Yeah, congratulations on all that

That's amazing. Yeah, congratulations on all that.

A

Amy Amantea 51:47

Thank you. So we'll be teaching about blindness and disability art and all that kind of stuff. Everywhere I go, it seems to be the hat I wear. i That's how I like to wear. I like it.

S

Shawn Marsolais 51:58

Yeah, hence the gift.

A

Amy Amantea 52:00

The gift, Shawn Thank you, hence the gift. Anyways, I digress.

R

Rob Mineault 52:06

Okay Shawn, so we're gonna start working on your play.

S

Shawn Marsolais 52:08

I know and I'm realizing like wow, where you can find Amy was so much more interesting there where you can find me.

A

Amy Amantea 52:15

We should do some work. Oh my gosh, on let's get a group of the blind beginnings kids together. Whatever age!

S

Shawn Marsolais 52:21

Yes.

A

Amy Amantea 52:24

We will talk about that offline? Love it.

R

Rob Mineault 52:28

Look at this show, bringing people together...

S Shawn Marsolais 52:29
I can't wait for the Disability Tour Bus. Like that sounds I think great. I can't wait can't wait for that.

R Rob Mineault 52:39
Super cool.

S Shawn Marsolais 52:41
Front row seats please.

A Amy Amantea 52:49
The whole different contexts on a bus

R Rob Mineault 52:55
When in Act 3 when some guy asks somebody on the bus how they have sex when they're blind.

A Amy Amantea 53:01
Yes, I actually got asked that again, not too long ago. I did make a piece about that for the Vines Festival this year. I wrote, like dear diary entry. Incredible.

R Rob Mineault 53:20
Start taking different buses. Take the long way.

A Amy Amantea 53:23
Nobody on the disability tour bus is gonna ask. And I know that like I hesitate on trying to be the person who's like, I got my earbuds in. I'm ignoring you. But I think I have to do more even that I just have to take more and more Ubers as they don't ask me that question in an Uber.

S Shawn Marsolais 53:45
Okay, wait, is the disability tour bus like educational about disability? Or is it all the crazy things that happen to people with disabilities on the bus?

that happen to people with disabilities on the bus.

A

Amy Amantea 53:53

It's kind of a mixture of both.

S

Shawn Marsolais 53:55

Oh, I love it.

A

Amy Amantea 53:56

Oh, it actually starts out as a tour of Vancouver. And it breaks into a play with characters because I live with disability and the other character is a wheelchair user. And then there's a character that doesn't have a disability and sort of the power dynamic of that and a little bit of a love story. Kind of like an *Affair to Remember*. So that little bit of that so there's a lot of stuff going on there.

R

Rob Mineault 54:20

A love story on a city bus?

A

Amy Amantea 54:24

Maybe not on the bus

R

Rob Mineault 54:26

We have completely different transit experiences

A

Amy Amantea 54:34

One character is trying to get to a destination on a bus. And that bus doesn't take them and they need to oh, I'm giving it all away. There might be a hijacking on the bus. It could be all sorts of things. Yeah.

R

Rob Mineault 54:46

Listen, I'm excited.

S

Shawn Marsolais 54:47

 Shawn Malcolms 54:47
Like Speed? Sandra Bullock?

 Rob Mineault 54:48
Yeah, that's great. Throw in everything.

 Amy Amantea 54:53
There's a bomb was triggered We can just do speed on a bus like the wheelchair ramp lowersand it's all over.

 Lis Malone 55:09
I think Amy just said she wants to do speed on the bus. I'm clipping that, sorry, we got it on tape. Oh my god. She's doing that speed on the bus.

 Amy Amantea 55:27
I have to write that into my character every once in a while she tried to dip in a baggie and snort or something. I don't know. I don't even know how you do speed.

 Lis Malone 55:35
That is pretty it's pretty specific.

 Amy Amantea 55:46
What kinds of movies have I been watching?

 Rob Mineault 55:48
Ok, we gotta get this podcast under 50. All right. Well, listen. Once again, thank you both for helping us out with this. We're gonna do this again. We think we're gonna do a couple of these roundtables like maybe a few times a year. So who knows? Maybe you guys might make another appearance when we come up with another topic to talk about. And yeah, best of luck with it with everything. Amy, we want to have you back when you when you're when you're doing the play. We'll we'll have you back and talk about it.

 Amy Amantea 56:29
Great. Love that. I'll let you know. All right. Okay. Thanks, everyone.

S Shawn Marsolais 56:34
Bye. It was fun.

R Rob Mineault 56:39
That was fun. While I was there you go, man. Four episodes, four hours of that. How did we all feel?

L Lis Malone 56:49
Oh, I was I was absent for two of them. So I yeah, I was. I was on the first one. And then this one, but the other. The other two? I had scheduling conflicts. So I only had half the fun.

R Rob Mineault 57:02
Well, it's still it's

R Ryan Fleury 57:04
Can always go back and listen.

A Amy Amantea 57:07
Oh, I heard them.

R Rob Mineault 57:10
No, it's you know what, it's a fascinating topic. And it's, it is one that's really important. But it's just it's so in some ways, you know, it makes you just feel like, oh, it's so overwhelming. But I like I really like how we capped it off. And I think that that is really valuable advice is the the best way to combat this is just, people just need to educate themselves. They need to get to know get to know somebody, in any given disability community, go volunteer or something and learn, learn a little bit of you know, of perspective. And I think that that can go a long way.

L Lis Malone 57:44
Well, I think also, just like in any recovery process, you have to admit that you have a void that you don't understand it before you're going to seek these things out, is to just be honest with yourself. Right? So I think that those are all very good suggestions on how to learn more and

self educate and, and have broader experiences and expand your knowledge. But it's all well and good unless people are going to actually admit that they're they have feelings of ableism or acknowledge that there might be some ableism.

R Rob Mineault 58:28
There. Yeah. All right. Well, hey, Lis.

L Lis Malone 58:35
Yeah, Robin?

R Rob Mineault 58:36
Been waiting for that. Where can people find us?

L Lis Malone 58:43
They can find us at www.atbanter.com

R Rob Mineault 58:47
They can - Hey, listen, anyways, Lis...

L Lis Malone 58:53
That's Batman to you.

R Rob Mineault 58:56
You went through a whole name thing too. I bet you a lot of people call you Liz.

L Lis Malone 59:01
Yeah. All the time. Well, also. So Alexa She calls me Lise. Really interesting. Yeah. And so. So Siri, who I'm sorry, she is slightly brighter. She will say my name properly. I was able to teach her. She was schooled and she says my name correctly. But Alexa, she's no, I'm Lise forever.

R Ryan Fleury 59:40
I think you're probably the first person to say Siri is smarter than any of the other

I think you're probably the first person to say Siri is smarter than any of the other.

R

Rob Mineault 59:49

Yeah, I think you are.

L

Lis Malone 59:53

Well, I have to I have to tell you that. She and I have not been getting along. She does not seem to I start to wonder, do I have a speech impediment? Is she not understanding? You know what I'm asking of her? I, I can't get a correct the correct answer ever. Well, I don't know. How are you getting along with Google?

R

Rob Mineault 1:00:21

Sometimes, some days, some days are better than others. So yeah, I know it's, it's gonna be a thing. Wait till they put arms and legs on these things and they're, they're mobile and they, you can tell them to go do things, you just wait. And then we'll just be a matter of time before they just rise against us. And then we'll I'll be in cages. And they'll be like, hey, Lis!

L

Lis Malone 1:00:46

No hey, Lise.

R

Rob Mineault 1:00:48

Alright , right, let's get out of here. Where were we? Hey, they can also drop us an email if they so desire at cowbell@atbanter.com.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:01:07

And they can find us on Facebook and Twitter for now unless we bail like 90% of the other disability population over to Mastodon, but we haven't yet so you can still find us on Twitter.

R

Rob Mineault 1:01:21

All right. I think that is most definitely going to do it for us this for this week. Big thanks, of course to Amy and Shawn for joining us, and we will see everybody next week.