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SPEAKERS

Ryan Fleury, Rob Mineault, Steve Barclay, Keisha Anderson, Juna Gjata, Lina Coral

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R **Rob Mineault** 00:20

Hey, and welcome to another episode of AT Banter.

R **Ryan Fleury** 00:25

Banter, banter.

K **Keisha Anderson** 00:31

Banter

R **Rob Mineault** 00:31

I likeit because the show needs a little bit of ad libbing. I love it. Hey, this is of course the podcast where we talk with members of the disability community to educate and inspire better conversation about disability. Hey, my name is Rob Mineault. And as you can tell, there's, there's there's new things afoot in this episode. But hey, look who it is - it's Mr. Ryan Fleury.

R **Ryan Fleury** 01:05

I thought you're gonna say it's a gaggle of geese today.

R **Rob Mineault** 01:09

No geese. And hey, we have a very special guest host on loan from the Blind Beginnings Limitless podcast. Hey, it's Keisha Anderson.

K **Keisha Anderson** 01:25

Hello. Thanks having me today, guys. Yeah, hello.

R **Rob Mineault** 01:29

Hey, listen. Thanks for getting up at the crack of dawn to help with the show. Listen, we do 8am shows occasionally. And I think we've done two in the last like three months, which is unusual for us. So yeah, if if we sound slower than usual, that's why. Even getting into the Zoom Room this morning, everything was taking longer than they usually does. Like even my email, like was just like really slow to open. Everything was slow at eight o'clock.

K **Keisha Anderson** 01:36

So early.

R **Ryan Fleury** 02:12

Well, the day can only get better.

K **Keisha Anderson** 02:15

Yep.

R **Rob Mineault** 02:16

Hey, listen, the day's going great. It just takes us a while to get there, but we get there. Hey, so should I ask how you guys are? Because I'm sure that I know the answer to that. Did we all have a good sleep?

K **Keisha Anderson** 02:32

Yeah, actually, yeah. I woke up at five though. And I was like ready to roll. But then I knew that that was not going to be the case for long. So then I went back to sleep and then I wasn't ready to roll.

R **Ryan Fleury** 02:44

We should do a 5am podcast on time and to see how bad it is. Oh, yeah. train wreck episode.

R Rob Mineault 03:00

We have an anniversary show coming up. So maybe instead of recording in an evening, maybe we'll we'll record at 5am

K Keisha Anderson 03:09

At Rob's place.

R Rob Mineault 03:14

It would be a podcast of one because no one would show up. Well, hey, okay listen, I don't want to waste any more time on any banter ...

K Keisha Anderson 03:29

Because that would defeat the point of this whole banter show.

R Rob Mineault 03:33

Yeah. But we do have a method to our madness. There is a reason why we've invited Keisha onto the show. And maybe I think instead of asking Ryan what the heck we're doing today, I'm going to go to Keisha. I'm going to change it up. Keisha, can you tell the fine folks at home just what the heck we're doing today and maybe why you're here?

K Keisha Anderson 03:58

Yeah. So I'm really excited about this podcast episode. Because as people probably know, Rob and I both, you know, work at Blind Beginnings and so I was, you know, doing my work on my computer. And then I was like, trying to find a podcast. Actually what happened was I think it was during my lunch break that day, I looked on Blind New World, which is like this page that I like love because it has like really cool blindness news that's like actually very positive and very empowering rather than like, oh, wow, a person put pants on today. It's just always really great, awesome news. Really cool, inspiring, like blind people. And I say inspiring as a blind person, meaning actually inspiring not just like the typical oh, you're inspiring for existing. So yeah, so I was on there and I saw them kind of promote this podcast that just came out called Blind Girl Chat. And I was like, oh, this looks really cool. And I went onto Spotify and I started listening. And the whole premise is that the two hosts, Lina and Juna are supposed to kind of sound like your blind older sisters. And I immediately felt that as a young adult blind woman, I was like, this is so cool. This is like the conversations my friends and I have, very close friends. And sometimes my set of friends even well are down to have these sort of conversations with me. But yeah, it was just really relatable, really funny. Just really like awesome, personable conversations that really delve into some pretty deep topics in a really relatable way. And I was like, okay, I should pass this on to Rob. So I immediately call Rob, and I'm like, okay, you should interview these two. So yeah, and then I should come on the podcast. So that's why we're here. So I just, I just wanted to introduce Lina and Juna, who we are actually interviewing today. Welcome, welcome.

L Lina Coral 06:18

Hi, guys.

J Juna Gjata 06:20

Thanks for having us.

R Rob Mineault 06:22

Yeah. That was that was next level introduction, Keisha. Well done.

L Lina Coral 06:29

Keisha, that was pretty in depth.

K Keisha Anderson 06:33

Yeah, I mean, I'm excited. And I just, I really wanted people to know and I want you guys to know like, how the impact that you're having. You guys are pretty new in to your podcast, but I just immediately felt like what you guys are trying to do. It's, it's totally working, like that whole older sister thing I love it.

J Juna Gjata 06:55

Oh, thank you. So, so nice. That's, that's our goal. So we love hearing that. Thank you.

R Ryan Fleury 07:02

And I'm retiring from the AT Banter podcast. Thank you, everyone. Good night.

R Rob Mineault 07:08

Get ready for more 8am shows, Keisha.

K Keisha Anderson 07:10

What did you think I was gonna do? Just be like, yeah, here they are.

R **Ryan Fleury** 07:16

That's the AT Banter way.

R **Rob Mineault** 07:21

Right now our listeners like whoa, wait, what?

R **Ryan Fleury** 07:23

We got eight years of doing it that way.

R **Rob Mineault** 07:26

That's what this podcast sounds like when somebody knows what they're doing. Now, right, well, so. Guys, thanks so much for joining us. We really appreciate it. And we're, we are excited to talk. But maybe, you know, and I have plenty of questions for you. But maybe let's just start by by giving a little bit of background on on each you and how you met.

L **Lina Coral** 07:51

Um, so Juna I originally met when we were like, 12, at a summer program for blind kids here in Massachusetts. And we like became friends, but we didn't really keep in touch. So then we met again, four years later, when we were like 16 and we were roommates. We were paired up as roommates randomly. And we just like, hit it off. And I don't know, we just became really close that summer. And this time, we did keep in touch.

J **Juna Gjata** 08:26

I think we've always had conversations about blindness, basically, like, we have pretty different jobs that we do. And we've like gone to different colleges and stuff. So physically, they've always been different locations, and had kind of different life paths. But we always had so much to talk about in terms of the common experience of what it was like being blind. Because as I'm sure you guys know, a lot of like, funny stuff happens to you, a lot of not so funny stuff happens. You talk about it a lot. And Lina at some point, I think Lina had mentioned starting a podcast about this a while ago. But I don't know why, it just never crossed our mind to like, do it together. And then yeah, I would actually started we started recording last year, it took us a couple months to get everything out. But we came out this March. And it is basically just recorded versions of conversations that I feel like we have all the time anyway. Because at least for me growing up, I didn't really have anybody, like I never encountered anybody like me in media, whether it's podcasts and TV shows, or movies, whatever. I just haven't seen anybody talk about like the relationship around disabilities in those spaces. So I guess we just wanted to provide that like real authentic conversation. Not in like a manufactured script written by sighted people about what it's like to be blind when they like don't have any idea if that makes sense.

K **Keisha Anderson** 09:43

Well, and yeah, and I just quickly add to that, like I'm sorry, I know this is your intro, but like I wanted to really like say how that really does come through and like it's just like you guys, you know, I agree like it's hard with the media because it's always so construct by sighted people. Or it's always so like, you're either a hero or they really emphasize the disability. And I just like, you know, I love that you guys are just a couple of normal ladies having a chat. Yeah, and it just, it really is relatable.

L **Lina Coral** 10:19

I really wanted it to be relatable because I don't know about you all in, in your you're all located in Canada, I think. So I don't know how it is in Canada, but in the US, at least, I feel like, even amongst the blind people, I always felt like, there's kind of a certain level of judgment that people get. It can kind of sometimes feel scary to open up with other blind people about some of these topics, because it's like off like, what are they gonna think of me? Am I not doing things right, as a blind person, or how I how I should portray blind people or whatever. And so I really wanted it to be a safe space to just talk about these things and not feel judged or whatever. So, yeah, so that was kind of the goal.

R **Rob Mineault** 11:14

Well, you know, that's the the amazing thing about the podcast platform - the fact that, that it's the entry point to podcasting is so low. I mean anybody with a mic and a modicum of a few free software programs can actually record a podcast and, and distributed. And I think that that's really powerful, especially for the blindness community, because even though we have these big organizations, and there are, you know, sort of social connections that you can have on social media and stuff, on a day to day basis a lot of times, blindness can be very isolating. You may be the only person in your immediate area that that is in the blindness community, and that can feel isolating. So podcasts like this, I think are really important for people to to be able to listen to and to not feel so isolated.

J **Juna Gjata** 12:09

And yeah, I think you're totally right. And when we were growing up, because we're in Massachusetts, there are so many blindness programs and opportunities for blind people to get together. And I remember when I was growing up, I would feel kind of resentful of that and be like, why do I have to all these programs, I just want to go to see, my friends, I'd be so annoyed about it, right. And whenever I go to these programs, all the blind kids like they would come from all over New England, because they were literally the only blind person in their entire school in their entire district. Like, oftentimes, they hadn't even ever met other blind people before. And so I totally took it for granted that I have known blind people ever since I came to America when I was five years old. Like, I've met other blind people, I've had friends that are blind. And I guess I just really underestimated what emotional support that was, even if I wasn't seeing them all the time. Like, I knew there were other people like me who had similar struggles. And so to me, one of the greatest things about the podcast is that we're able to be that friend for people that don't have other blind people in their districts. Like when we're in their headphones, they can kind of hang out with us and know that there are other blind people who are dealing with the same things.

R Rob Mineault 13:14

Yeah, and I think that that's, that's really important, me, because I think that, that the other thing is that you guys are talking about topics that don't necessarily come up in terms of official organizations. Stuff you guys are talking about, on the ground level things that are important to you, you know, everything from, you know, dating and the trials and tribulations of using your cane and when you want to use your cane, and even ableism which which you don't hear a lot about and just your own experiences with that. That can be very personal.

K Keisha Anderson 13:49

Well, and to add to that, like your, the premise of like it being a girl chat to, like, I know, like as a, you know, young teen or whatever growing up, there was questions that I had as like, even a teen girl. like I know, dating was definitely, you know, part of it. And then you know, I'm excited to see where you guys go. But you could ask your mom or you could ask, you know, other sighted girls, but there wasn't a lot of like, like, I think I had like one blind girlfriend at the time who I was comfortable enough to be like, how does this work when you're blind? So yeah, I think that's an even more exciting niche to fill. There's a lot of people who are hesitant to talk about certain topics when when they're when they're blind or or you know, there's there's like taboo topics to talk about. So like I can't wait.

L Lina Coral 14:47

Yeah, we we really want to talk about all the all the taboo topics. I'm really excited to continue to do that.

J Juna Gjata 14:55

What I was gonna say I feel when you're blind, you are almost was not allowed to be a teenager in certain ways. Because then there's so many bigger problems you have. I feel like everybody else, you're allowed to just like, be worried about the boys they like and whatever. But it's like, you're like, oh my gosh, like, how can I get all the materials at school? Like, how do I find which classroom I'm gonna go to? How can I make so there's all these like, huge problems, and you also have crushes and stuff, but it's like, and you have all these people helping you, like you have teachers of the visually impaired, you have people in the state, whatever. And I don't know, there's almost like no one that you can talk to about like normal teenager things. And it's almost like you don't really feel like you're allowed to have those problems. So I know, at least a lot of the blind people I know, like, they didn't really have a normal experience of dating in high school. And I don't think that's like has to do with just being blind. I feel like a lot of it is like the way blindness is treated in society. And so I guess that's another reason we wanted to be really open about it. Because I think it shocks sighted people sometimes that blind people are able to have relationships and date, and like get married and find love and whatever. I don't know why it's so surprising to them. But yeah, that's why we want to talk about that for sure. Yeah.

R **Ryan Fleury** 16:10

Yeah, I think that's definitely a larger conversations, definitely not limited to just the blindness community. There aren't many podcasts, if any, that I have found in the eight years that we've been doing this show that really dive into sex and relationships when you have a disability, it seems like it's still a very uncomfortable topic.

K **Keisha Anderson** 16:35

Yeah, we were just talking about this the other day, because I was like, oh, this is such an untouched place. And like, I find like, I mean, this is a way deep conversation, but I find that there's a certain degree, with some - at least in the blind community - there's a certain degree of young people who are lacking some education in that department and could really use it. And, and it's kind of sad, because it's like, they're kind of overlooked. And they could really benefit from some support in that area.

R **Ryan Fleury** 17:02

So maybe that's the missing link, is the education part of it.

K **Keisha Anderson** 17:06

In a way that's not like, you know, so scientific, it's like, Hey, this is a life thing.

J **Juna Gjata** 17:12

Yeah I think sexuality among people with disabilities makes people without disabilities very uncomfortable. Lina and I talk about this a lot on the podcast, how we felt very desexualized growing up. Like, all our friends, we would go to family events, like my sister would always ask my other sister like, do you have a boyfriend? Like, are you dating anyone? And they would never ask me. And I was like, why are you just ignoring me? Like, why am I not? You know what I mean? And then it also made me very uncomfortable. Like, if I ever was dating someone, I like, never wanted to tell anybody because I just felt weird and embarrassed because they don't think I can date people. I don't know. So I think you're it definitely extends to the people disabilities in general. But, I mean, the more like role models, we can talk about it openly. Like

I've recently read a really good modern love piece written by a woman in a wheelchair, and even was so educational to me to learn how her experience was similar, but also different to ours.

K Keisha Anderson 18:07

Yep, definitely. Well, I think that, like, another piece that plays is just like, infantilization. I don't know, like treating adults with disabilities like they're children. Like, that's just weird man.

L Lina Coral 18:25

Like, yeah, like, really is the mindset. And I think that that's why like, as teenagers, it's like, you know, it's really tough, because it's like, if you don't have a blind adult in your life or something , I find that it's rare that sighted parents are really going to educate their blind kids about that. So, it's just, it's a lot of things. And I also really want to explore, like, differences between how, you know, people of different genders experiencing. Like, I always wonder about that. Do have this like, blind girl experience, but I'm like, what is it like for blind guys? So I feel like that is something that we really want to explore too, because I'm sure that there are, there's even more nuance to it than, than what I'm aware on.

K Keisha Anderson 19:29

And like teen boys are so hard on each other, like, imagine throwing yourself into that.

J Juna Gjata 19:37

Well, we were also talked about how gender roles, at least now are still like fairly traditional in the sense that like, men are supposed to be seen as the protector in a relationship and the provider and like, they are supposed to be handy and all these things. And I guess, being like needing help with things all the time or asking people for help, I know blind women that kind of play into that. And other people might very much be like, I don't want to be that type of person, I want to be very independent. I think me and Lina kind of skew more towards that way. But I never even thought about the fact that like, if you're a blind man, like, I wonder if there is this hesitation in ever asking for help, or ever seeming like you need help, because you're supposed to be the man in a relationship or like in the world. So that's something we want to talk about on the podcast and invite some guys and do blind boy chat.

R Rob Mineault 20:34

Again, you know, going back to podcasting, I mean, this is why it is so important because you know, even within the the community, there is sort of these, these blind spots, no pun intended.

K Keisha Anderson 20:54

Keisha Anderson 20:54

The blind spot, nice!

Rob Mineault 20:58

So there there is all of this opportunity to educate even each other within the blindness community and really open up a lot of really interesting conversations. Because I think, really, when it when it comes down to is in the mainstream public just has so many misconceptions about what the what the blind lived experience is like, that. It just, you know, puts them into this space, where willingly or not there is there's really these ableist attitudes where they just don't even really, they can't even connect with somebody who's blind and creates this awkwardness.

Lina Coral 21:41

Yeah, absolutely. I'm just thinking about how, you know, how just sometimes just in daily life, like, out and about, I'll like, ask, you know, someone for help at the store or something, and you can just tell that they're feeling so awkward about it. Like, you know, they're just like, to your right, I mean, left, ... they're just like, so like, flustered and everything. And it's just like, I don't know how the alleviate their awkwardness, but it's just so hard. And, and sometimes, you know, other people's awkwardness fuels my own awkwardness, because I'm like, I didn't think this was awkward before. But now, like, you're making it really awkward.

Rob Mineault 22:33

So yeah, well, a lot of people who will ask the questions, oh, well, how do you do this? Or how do you do that? Or what is what is this blind lived experience, like? And usually the answer is, it's like, oh, it's like everybody else's.

Keisha Anderson 22:46

I like that. You guys made a comment. I think that what your producer said on your podcast or whatever about like, it's, how sighted people do it. But different. Is that what the quote was? I can't remember.

Juna Gjata 23:02

Yeah I think he said, blind people can do everything sighted people can do just differently or something. Yeah, true. Yeah. I mean, I think when I was younger, I used to get really offended when people would ask me questions, because they'd be like, why do you think I can't do this by myself ? I used to get so mad. And as I've gotten older, like, okay, people are just ignorant, and they just are curious. So I feel like the more open I can be about the way I do things, then the more educated people will become. I do think like when people assume you can't do things is where I still struggle in like, keeping my patience. Like I was at the airport last year, and this lady tried to put my shoes on for me, and I got really upset. So I was like, woman, I'm 20 years old. Why do you not think I can put on my own shoes? Like, it's just really, there's such a lack of education, I think. And another program I did for a while I was a speaker for three years, going around to new public schools. And I would talk to third grade classes, as part of this program called Understanding Our Differences. And every month, they would have a person from a different disability come and talk to them. And so I would speak on the blindness unit, and they would have all the kids put on blindfolds and try using canes and then feel Braille. And I loved doing that so much, because first of all, nobody ever came to my schools and explained how blind people did things. Like I had to explain to everybody. And second of all, the kids had so many questions that I had never even thought about. And I was like, if I can answer these questions for them now when they're eight years old. Imagine like how many awkward interactions it stops from happening later on in life and how much open and understanding it'll make them have classmates and other people they encounter in the world. And so I feel like we just need more blind people out and about in society, educating people, because it really does make such a difference. And I think you would make a difference in how people are perceived and how they're included in society.

R Ryan Fleury 24:59

Well we will leave that to your generation because we're done educating.

R Rob Mineault 25:05

No, but it is really true. I think that, you know, that's where it fuels all these misconceptions. I think that sighted people just, they'll do things like just close their eyes and then trying to walk around their apartment and be like, oh, my God, I would be screwed if I was blind. I couldn't get to the grocery store. I couldn't do anything. And then they put that on there. And it's like, well, yeah, you probably couldn't rebuild a car engine. And why can't you rebuild a car engine? Because you don't know how - because you haven't been trained on how to do it. They don't put that missing piece together, that people who are blind like they, learn skills? Like, there are skills involved there, there's experience that has to be layered on top of that, you can't just close your eyes, and magically just be able to navigate the world.

L Lina Coral 25:56

Yeah, exactly. And also, I mean, you know, yeah, it's very different to have a disability for, you know, years. And, you know, versus like closing your eyes for like, a minute in your apartment. So yeah. But also, I was just thinking with what you were saying about getting annoyed with people asking, what how we do things. I, I think I've noticed that, for me, I get more frustrated or annoyed if it's a question that's very vague, or, I don't know that, like, sometimes, I really try to answer people's questions, and it doesn't annoy me if it's, you know, genuine Kerak curiosity, and they just want to, you know, learn how I do things, or whatever. But sometimes they're very vague questions that I don't know how to answer. Like, once somebody asked me, like, how I feed my dog, and I, like, didn't know how to answer that. I was like, I put the scoop in the bag, and I scoop it, and I put it in her bowl. Like I didn't know, what do you mean? So I think like, just having, like, questions that are specific enough, or like a part of the process that you're that people are, like struggling to understand or something. But yeah, I just think that that's like, an important part of the puzzle for me.

Rob Mineault 27:23

Well, you know, and it really does tie into this idea of ableism. You know, I really, I really loved the the episode that you guys did about ableism. Because it's, on the one hand, it's really, it's really frustrating. I feel like ableism really is one of these isms, that's doesn't get nearly enough attention. And, you know, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. And we you hear this all the time where there's these ableist attitudes out there, but when you call people on them, you get this pushback from people saying that, oh, well, they're just trying to be helpful. Them grabbing you and, and pulling you across a crosswalk that you didn't actually want to go across, or just grabbing you and just assuming that you need help, or things like that. It's like, well, people are just trying to be helpful. They're just trying to be nice. But that is that's ableism. And that's a problem. And if we can't push back on these behaviors and educate people, those those are just going to continue.

Ryan Fleury 28:28

Yes, if I did. person did that to another sighted person, that would be assault.

Juna Gjata 28:33

Lately, I recently had this experience, I don't know if I talked about this on that episodes, I know talk about on the podcast, but where I was going to the gym, and I've been going to the gym for four years. And the manager was like doing this really funny joke. Funny, where you'd be like, oh, should pretend you're not here to everybody at the desks, they would all be quiet. I wouldn't know they were there. And they were extremely uncomfortable. And obviously, I did not like it and I let it slide once I let it slide twice. And then he had done it like 10 or 12 times. And so I posted a TikTok video about how he had done this and it went pretty viral. And so then every the gym, like the two guys who I know about the desk were like, mad at me for posting that video like, oh, why don't you just talk to him. That's not how he meant it. He wasn't doing it because you're blind, blah, blah, blah. And so like another part of ableism is invalidating people's experience of ableism looking like you have never been blind. You don't know how he meant it. You haven't been here every time when he's done it to me. And it's not your place to tell me. And yeah it's funny because we had we just recorded an episode with Lina's boyfriend, Evan. And something that he said that really stood out to me and he cited was that he was shocked by the amount of discrimination ableism that we face on a daily basis. And he was like, I literally had no idea and it's so infuriating sometimes and like it makes me so angry. And that was just a good reminder to me because I feel like I've become very desensitized because it happens so often that if you're getting angry about it all the time, you're just gonna be miserable. So I kind of don't. But I do think it is important to remember that like, these things are things that are not okay. And just because they happen all the time doesn't mean that we should be allowing it to happen all the time.

Keisha Anderson 30:10

So, yeah, and that's how we're making waves and change. I really, I noticed, like, I remember, you guys said, like, something along the lines of like, this is the one like unspoken ism and like it, because I think about the progress that like the LGBT community has made with receiving it, because I think about the progress that like the LGBT community has made with receiving more acceptance over the last decade or so. And I'm so proud of them. And I'm just like, This is awesome. And I'm like, and, you know, you even see a lot more like queer characters in like media, and they're portrayed as, like these cool, you know, awesome people. And I'm like, I want that.

Lina Coral 30:48

Yes, absolutely. I think, I think it's just really, you know, frustrating for me, because, um, because people with disabilities, I think, in the US are the largest minority group, but I feel like are still behind in, you know, any kind of recognition, like about ableism, or anything like that. And so it's just, like, I think that's the frustrating part for me. But yeah, it's, it's really great that the LGBT community is getting so much more attention, because then I'm like, well, like, you know, then it's all obviously is possible for the disability community to also get that. So hopefully, you know, over time, that will, that will be the case.

Juna Gjata 31:37

I've wanted to transition into the entertainment industry in the next couple years, literally, exactly because of this. Because I feel like now if there's a hit show in the US that doesn't have some sort of LGBTQ character, it would be a weird show, like every show has characters of color, and has LGBTQ characters, and like, characters that have different struggles, and it's totally normal. And yet, like, having a character, disability on a show is strange, it's not that common. And second of all, when they are, it's like their entire personality, like, there's no character beyond their disability. And I think it's a rare TV show or movie that really has like, a real portrayal of a person with a disability. Which is why I want to go to business school and go into entertainment exactly for this reason, because I feel like it's a movement that hasn't really happened yet for us.

Keisha Anderson 32:29

So,

Rob Mineault 32:31

Yeah it's true. And we talk about this a lot on the podcast, where it's just like, you know, this disability community, it's one of the only minority communities that that really hasn't had their moment yet. You know, and you're absolutely right, you can you can look at the LGBTQ community and the the movement that's been made, even in, I would say, even in the past six, seven years. We've gotten to a place where the idea of an all gender free bathroom was foreign, like, they were nowhere and now it's a heck of a lot more common. So that movement, that social change can happen. We know it, it's just a matter of like, how do we how do we get there?

Lina Coral 33:21

Yeah, yeah, for sure. I think it's really tough because, like, there's people in the disability community that that can't, you know, can't advocate as much. And, you know, because, like, the disability community is so broad, like, it encompasses so many different disabilities, and some can advocate more than others. And so, you know, I think, I think that that, you know, might be part of the reason why it is like, you know, just not as represented, but I think that yeah, like, I think it is important for there to be education on like, all disabilities, because it is so broad, and I feel like it would be really good for there to be media attention for, like, all these different kinds. So, yeah, yeah, for sure. Interesting.

J **Juna Gjata** 34:10

I've heard multiple people say to me, like, it hasn't happened for us yet. And part of me is like, we're all waiting for it to happen. And I think that's the problem. We can't all just wait around and be like, when's it gonna happen? Guys like, who's gonna go forward? Somebody has to take charge and like, alright bitches. This is it. We're gonna go.

K **Keisha Anderson** 34:33

That's actually so funny because I did my minor in theater and I've always thought, like, I've always loved musicals and my majors tourism management, really different. But anyway, and I thought, like, how cool would it be to like, write a really dope musical about this experience in like, and just like, I don't know, like, have some, you know, real life situations, but like, just make it real. Really fun and really relatable and really awesome. Gotta make the change for sure.

J **Juna Gjata** 35:08

Yeah,I thought that's the thing about TV shows. I want to write a TV show by a blind person. Of course, I've never actually done it. But that's always been what I've wanted to do.

R **Rob Mineault** 35:14

You know, I've often said that, you know, the arts will save the world. And, and, you know, I think that all joking aside, I think that the media is a huge component of that. And, you know, we're still, you know, we still got a ways to go. I mean, what was on Netflix show - All The Light You Cannot See. Everybody made such a huge deal about that, because, the actress, she's really blind. And it's like everyone's mind's blown. It's like, Well, why is that a big deal? That makes sense. Like, why why wouldn't you do that? In some ways, like, it's great, don't get me wrong, but it shouldn't be as cutting edge as it is.

J **Juna Gjata** 35:20

I mean, first of all, I just want to say like, how many people in this country have like, never encountered a gay person in their community, but have gotten to know and or accepted the LGBTQ community because of the characters in their favorite TV shows? Like, I feel like I have learned so much about so many communities, just from TV and movies and social media. And it's like, nothing. That's why to me, I mean, I don't have the budget to make a TV show or movie yet. But it's like, that's why posting TikTok videos about being blind and what my experience is like, and what it's like to learn how to snowboard blind, what it's like to learn to do gymnastics, blind, like all these things. I don't do it because that makes a click baity video to say like, I'm blind. It's more that like, people don't even know that blind people do these things. And so the more it can come up on people's feeds, the more educated people will be. And like you said, like we would never have, like, you're not allowed to cast a black actor to play a white character or a white character play a black character, right? Like, that doesn't make sense. Of course, you're always casting for the character. But up until recently, like sighted characters would always play blind characters and TV shows and movies. And it's I mean, it's just always been very unfair, I think disability community to have authentic representation on screen, it's just never been a part of a consideration. So that it's hopefully starting to turn.

Rob Mineault 37:25

Yeah, I think so. And, you know, I really do think, you know, in terms of, you know, why the disability community, you know, really hasn't had their moment. And I think the answer to that is complicated. But I think part of it is, you know, generationally, the disability community has been a very passive group. And that's, that's not because of the people involved. It's just that that's what's been drilled into their heads over years and years of like, things like learned helplessness, or people telling them all you can't do this, or you can't do that. And I think that the new generation, the next generation really needs to break out of that mindset. And I think that things like social media platforms, as you know, as and as much as we have a love/hate relationship with with social media, I think that those are really important pieces of that, because all the posting to Tiktok and Instagram, to Facebook, about things that that people in the blind community are doing and can do, I think is such an important message to be sending to everybody.

Lina Coral 38:33

Yeah, I think, unfortunately, I think people with disabilities kind of get this message to like, you know, kind of be grateful to get what you get kind of thing. I don't know. Yeah.

Rob Mineault 38:45

Totally.

Lina Coral 38:48

Yeah, I can totally relate to that kind of passive way of being. But yeah I don't think it's like our fault, necessarily. It's, you know, it's how we're kind of socialized.

Ryan Fleury 39:03

Well, we were segregated. We were institutionalized. We were sent to blind schools, right? We

Well, we were segregated. We were institutionalized. We were sent to blind schools, right? We weren't a part of mainstream society. And so there's still a lot of negative connotations to disabilities. And that is slowly changing, as we're seeing in mainstream media and mainstream products, but we still got a long way to go.

Rob Mineault 39:27

Yeah for sure. And you know, this is a really frustrating piece of it - like you told the story in your in your ableism episode about looking for an apartment that just made me furious. And I might might get you to give us the brief snapshot of that, because it really does illustrate the fact that people who aren't educated about about blindness can really have like really negative effects on other people.

Lina Coral 40:00

Yeah, yeah. So basically just a quick recap. My boyfriend and I were looking for an apartment, we fell in love with one. And we didn't get it because the landlords were nervous about having a blind person in an apartment with stairs, basically. And it was so infuriating.

Keisha Anderson 40:21

I've had that happen before - it's sucks.

Lina Coral 40:24

Oh, yeah. It's terrible. I don't think people understood why I was so upset. But it's like, it was disappointing to not get the apartment, but I think it was also just the injustice of it. Like, it feels like you're being basically are like wrongfully accused of something. And it's like, no, like, I don't know, I was so upset. It's just something that I have, like, in the back of my mind, now, whenever I, you know, we were just looking for apartments again. And it's just something that I think about now, because I, you know, I was, like, expecting to be denied an apartment because of my dog. And maybe that was part of it, because they didn't know I had a guide dog. So maybe they just didn't want to say that. I don't know. But, but it never occurred to me that it would be something like the stairs, like, that was so out of the blue. It was very shocking.

Rob Mineault 41:30

Well, and the other really infuriating thing about that is that if I understand the law correctly and the ADA and stuff, like that's just borderline illegal. You can't do that you can't refuse someone an apartment based on the fact that they have a disability.

Keisha Anderson 41:44

People find ways to hide it and make it seem like that's not why they're discriminating, right? Like, all the time I see that with employers, I see that with landlords or anything like that.

Like, all the time I see that with employers. I see that with landlords or anything like that.

Rob Mineault 42:00

Well, and then, yeah, I think that systemically that's really frustrating, right. I feel like there's something wrong than with the the enforcement mechanism on the ADEA and, you know, where we have the same issues here. I mean, we just recently got federal disability legislation that that's similar to the ADA. You know, there's obviously something wrong if people still feel like they can just straight up tell you no, I'm not going to rent you an apartment because it's got stairs and I don't want to be liable. And you know, you might you might fall down or something.

Juna Gjata 42:43

Right. It's like we've had a Supreme Court case, one of the biggest Supreme Court cases in the past five decades was somebody refusing to make a wedding cake for somebody because they were gay. And they didn't want to make a wedding cake. Like, to me like this certain court case, like refusing an apartment because you can't see is the same thing like you're being discriminated agains. It was so infuriating. I remember Lina was so upset. And she was like, I don't know, like, I don't know, people will get why I'm so upset. I don't want to sound like I am complaining, whatever. I'm like, This is insane. This is like the craziest thing I've ever heard. And not only that, but like do they end up, why people don't use steps out in the world? Like, do they think that you just have to navigate only on ramps?

Lina Coral 43:38

Like, that is that is the reality for some people, though, like, people don't use steps, you know? So, but yeah, I don't understand what the link is between, like being blind and and not being able to use stairs. Like, I don't know why sighted people think it's that connection.

Keisha Anderson 43:56

It all must tie back to that whole like sighted person closing their eyes for a few seconds in there where it's like, oh, I would never be able to figure out how to do stairs. But like, and not comprehending that we have the tools. We have the skills, we've been doing it for, you know, potentially years.

Lina Coral 44:16

Yeah, for sure. And I think there even is a thing in the ADA or somewhere where it says that it is also illegal to make assumptions about what a person's abilities are. And so, yeah, that was so you know, clearly an assumption. And I think I think that is the probably the biggest issue with with ableism is just like the assumptions people make without even asking.

Rob Mineault 44:45

Yeah, no, I think so. as well. You know, which kind of leads me to, to the idea of, of advocacy and self advocacy. You know, we've talked about on the podcast before how in a way it's very unfair like you when you're in the blindness community, just by default, whether you like it or not, you are kind of an advocate. You're you're constantly having to advocate for yourself. And, you know, when you're interacting with, say somebody in in the general public you're kind of a representative for the community. That can be that can be a lot of pressure.

Lina Coral 45:26

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

Keisha Anderson 45:27

Well, and I find like, lately, I've gotten a lot of people being like, well, you know, you're the first person, so just bear with me. You are the first person who is blind who have who have dealt with, so just bear with me. And I'm like, this is an everyday thing for me. Like, I'm always like, I'm often the first blind person anyone's ever met.

Lina Coral 45:47

So like, it's always bearing with everybody.

Juna Gjata 45:50

Yeah, Lina and I talk about this a lot. And I think like, it can be kind of exhausting. Because you always know you're the only blind person most people know. Oh, so you represent all blind people to them. And it's like, that pressure of like, I always have to be on my best behavior. I can't look stupid. I can't look like I can't do something. I have to like, be poised. I have to be patient, I can't get mad then there think all blind people are rude. Like, it's just a lot of pressure. And it's more pressure than most other people have to face in their day to day life. Like, I always feel like I'm representing the blindness community. And like, some days, I just don't feel like it. Like some days, I just want to be pissed off because I mean, in a good mood, I don't want to pretend to be the good mood because I know on this like, I don't know, I guess it's also some similar thing of how I think like famous people feel sometimes where like, they can never be in a bad mood. They can never look bad, because they're always being judged. Like we're also like that. Yeah.

Keisha Anderson 46:57

It's so funny that you say that because it's like, I have often thought it's like a whole different level like when you're famous. But I've often thought like this the level of attention or like weird behavior you get is like, like, I don't know, sometimes I feel like this paparazzi like chasing me down. I'm like, don't like when when I hear someone like running up. I'm like, oh my God, are they gonna grab me? Like, and it's just like, this must be what it's like. Yeah.

Lina Coral 47:27

Like you always stick out. Like, I just feel like, you know, sometimes I don't want to have attention drawn to me. I don't want to be fussed over, whatever. And it's just like, oh, like, yeah, like, somebody's gonna make some comment.

Rob Mineault 47:43

Yeah, I mean, you're, I guess you're always sort of balancing that out? Like, it's like, yes, I, you know, I, I need to advocate for myself. And I'm trying to educate people about the lived experience of blindness. But you know, sometimes I just want to get from point A to point B, withou it being a hassle. And everybody's like that. But, you know, again, people hold people in the blind community to a little bit of a different standard. And I don't know that that's necessarily fair.

Ryan Fleury 48:12

Yeah. And that's why we have a podcast so we can rant.

Juna Gjata 48:20

I know Lina is always saying, she's like, do you think we're being too mean? Are we just complaining? Which I was like, oh, no, we don't complain enough. There's nowhere else to complain about this. Like, it's, it's not complaining. It's also like, people need to know what it's like, because I don't think anybody else thinks about this.

Rob Mineault 48:35

That's right. Yeah. 100%. And, you know, it is such an important piece of this, because I really think that in order to really drive things forward, ike it or lump it, advocacy needs to be a thing. We have to start making noise about things, we do it ourselves or we do it organizationally. Keisha, and I work for an organization up here in Canada called Blind Beginnings. And, you know, we have we have this payroll software. And the idea was, well, maybe we can we can use this payroll software and have everybody be able to sort of log into it and use it in order to request vacation days and stuff like that. And so, they they asked me to go in, and with Ryan's help, we went in to see if it if the software was going to be accessible for screen readers. And as it turned out, no, it wasn't. And you know, the really frustrating thing about it was like 90% there. There was just this one button the one the screen reader wouldn't read it. So, you know, we sort of went oh, okay, as an organization, we just shrug our shoulders, man, okay, I guess we will we won't do that then. And, you know, it made me think we really should have went to tthe makers of the software package and complained and been like, you know, your software is not accessible, it needs to be accessible, you should be accessible. You know, but we didn't. So, you know, I think that this attitude of just sort of taking it and walking away, you know, is really pervasive even on a macro level.

Lina Coral 50:21

Yeah, for sure. I mean, it's tough. Juna and I were talking about this, I think on an episode yesterday, or something that like, it also just sometimes, like doing all the advocating just gets so exhausting. And it's just like, you know, like, with Ubers, and the lifts and everything, like, I'm like, I can't be calling about every single time that I get discriminate. Like, I just feel like that would just make me so miserable. It'd be so bad for my mental health. That, you know, like, sometimes it's like, it's just kind of like, alright, I'm just gonna shrug this off, I think. Yeah, like, it's hard to balance that because, you know, I only call for like the particularly egregious ones. But, you know, it's like, I don't know, it's just hard to balance out with with one's mental health that it's like, oh, I'm just so tired of doing this all the time.

Keisha Anderson 51:15

Yeah. And additionally, I think that sometimes it's just like, I don't want attention. I don't want to be, you know, congratulated for anything, I don't want to mention, like, for example, like, in my community, there's like a bunch of businesses that don't have Braille labeled doors. So I've started going around with like, my little sticky braille tape and I've like been labeling them without anyone knowing.

Lina Coral 51:38

Oh my God, good for you.

Keisha Anderson 51:41

But I guess I don't want people to be like whoa, you're so great. And I just want to be like, hey, I just want to not go into the men's washroom.

Lina Coral 51:49

Yeah. And taking matters into your own hands.

Keisha Anderson 51:53

Yeah. And if someone else can get benefit from it, that's excellent. But yeah, it was a little bit. I was like, oh, this is getting really old. Like, yeah,

Juna Gjata 52:03

I was gonna say, I totally agree that like, it can be exhausting. But I mean, I don't know how often this has happened to you guys. But like, I have reached out to companies before. Companies I really like. Like, I use this product all the time. And I've been tried to be very nice

Companies I really like. Like, I use this product all the time. And I've been tried to be very nice. And like, hey, sorry to bother you. Like, just FYI, this app is not accessible at all. But I'd be happy to help you make it accessible for free. Like, I will consult you and help you do it. I just want to let you know, and like, I have been met with crickets. They just like don't care. So I'm just like, why am I taking my time to find the person responsible in this company, find their email, send them the message. And my time for free. It's like, this is something I should be paid for anyways. And it's still like, they just don't care. And that's always like, so disappointing. So I'm like, I loved his product. And I was using it all the time. And now I just, I don't even want to use it. Because you clearly just don't even care about anybody who has a disability using your product. Yeah, yeah. It's tough.

R Ryan Fleury 52:58

I think that's part of the big issue is, you know, education. We are consumers with billions of dollars as a community to spend on products and services. And if you're not going to make them accessible, you're not going to get our dollars. You know, you knew you were just talking about dealing with a company or an app. I have a guitar amp here made by Boss, I'll call them out, that has software that's not accessible with JAWS or NVDA, or anything else I throw at it. . So just like you, I offered to beta test for them with their developers. And again, it was pretty much crickets. So yeah, it's unfortunate.

L Lina Coral 53:38

That is unfortunate. It's so unfortunate that like, it's just so annoying when you know, there's so a cool app out there something that, you know, my sighted friends will tell me about, they'll be like, oh, you should try it. And it's always like, like, I'm like, yeah, but in the back of my mind, I'm always like, but will I actually be able to use it? You know what I mean? And it's like, so unfortunate.

R Ryan Fleury 54:06

Yep. We'll have to have you back for Part Two.

R Rob Mineault 54:11

For sure. In fact, I've come up with another podcast idea. I think we should all like, gather together and we can just make a Rant Cast. Yeah, we'll get to work on that. No, listen, guys, we don't want to run out of time before you have a chance to plug the podcast because I absolutely adore the podcast. I recommend everybody check it out. Where can people find the podcast?

J Juna Gjata 55:01

The podcast is called Blind Girl Chat. And you can find us on all podcast platforms on Spotify, Apple Stitcher, everything.

L **Lina Coral** 55:10

Yes. And you can follow us at Blind Girl Chat on Instagram or Tiktok. And you can email us at blindgirlchat@gmail.com

R **Rob Mineault** 55:19

And we will include all those links in our show notes. Thank you, ladies for coming on. And especially so early in the morning, although I guess it's not too early for you. But it's been an absolute delight. Please come back anytime. We'd be happy to have you back because I think we there's plenty more conversation to be had.

L **Lina Coral** 55:43

Thanks for having us. It was so fun.

J **Juna Gjata** 55:49

Great idea Keisha!

K **Keisha Anderson** 55:52

I'm so happy we were able to connect. This is so awesome. So thank you.

J **Juna Gjata** 55:57

And write that musical. We want to see it!

R **Rob Mineault** 56:06

I smell a collaboration. All right. Well, thanks, guys. Let's stay in touch and we'll talk to you again soon.

L **Lina Coral** 56:18

Okay, bye.

J **Juna Gjata** 56:21

Bye.

Rob Mineault 56:22

Wow, that was that was so great.

Ryan Fleury 56:24

A lot of energy and passion, trying to make the world a better place for everybody. And their conversations are definitely open and honest and approachable.

Rob Mineault 56:40

And you know, and it's that energy and that it's that real desire to advocate that's what the community needs. It's what we need to drive things forward a bit. We need to be more vocal.

Ryan Fleury 56:51

So yeah, I'm glad it's not left up to us anymore. Yeah.

Rob Mineault 56:57

I was thinking about that. During this during the show. I was just like, man, you gotta have we gotta have more of these a young energetic people on more often because we can just like throwing a topic and then just sit back and put her feet up and let them go. Absolutely. wind them up and let them go.

Ryan Fleury 57:13

Fire in the belly.

Rob Mineault 57:14

That's right. But no, it's great. And it's and it's a great podcast and we need 1000 more of these. We really do we need more like that and less celebrity podcasts. I would love to have them back and have a conversation about some stuff so maybe we'll do this again, you know, and Keisha was great. So you know I have Keisha and girls on and we'll we'll get them on with the Rare with Flair gang and we'll just go.

Ryan Fleury 58:24

That'd be really interesting roundtable discussion on whatever we want to talk about.

R Rob Mineault 58:29

That'd be good. Yeah, be interesting. Okay, well, interesting idea. But anyways, sir, we got to get out of here, we are running late. So Hey, Ryan. Yeah, Rob? Where can people find us?

R Ryan Fleury 58:46

www.atbanter.com.

R Rob Mineault 58:46

They can also email us if they so desire at cowbell@atbanter.com. They can also find us on Facebook and Instagram and Mastodon. All right. Well, hey, I think that is going to do it for us this week. A big thanks, of course to Keisha for helping us out big thanks to Lina and Juna and we will see everybody next week.

R Ryan Fleury 59:36

Bye.

S Steve Barclay 59:39

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