Bryn Transcript

00:00:02:12 - 00:00:18:24

Bryn

It sounds like a bit of a joke, you know, [laughs] the vision-impaired decorator. But it wasn't a joke. And I could paint and and, you know, I could do it. And so they just can't have that assumption around what I can and can't do.

00:00:18:26 - 00:00:44:17

Chloë

Welcome to Broadcastability, a podcast by, for and about people with disabilities. During these past two seasons, we've focused on disability-inclusive work. Broadcastability is part of the PROUD project, which is a research and advocacy institute. PROUD is a Canadian registered charitable nonprofit. It is also affiliated with the University of Toronto Scarborough. You can find out more about the PROUD project on our website.

00:00:44:19 - 00:00:51:21

Chloë

www.theproudproject.ca

00:00:51:23 - 00:01:20:14

Isabelle

The PROUD project is based at the University of Toronto Scarborough, which is on the traditional ancestral territories of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Isabelle Avakumovic-Pointon works on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. We would also like to acknowledge the other Indigenous lands across Turtle Island, where we conduct our research and record this podcast.

00:01:20:16 - 00:01:45:28

Chloë

Hi, I'm Doctor Chloë Atkins and I'm the lead investigator of the PROUD project. I'm a political scientist, actually a political and legal theorist, at the University of Toronto, where I do work in health equity, anti-ableism, bioethics, and human rights. As a person with an episodic disability, I also have lived experience with employment and disability.

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Isabelle

My name is Isabelle Pointon and I'm a research assistant for the Proud project. I'm also a PhD student at the University of British Columbia, where I research disability history. I identify as a person with invisible disabilities.

00:02:01:28 - 00:02:12:26

Isabelle

In this episode, we're joined by Bryn Anderson, a senior accessibility specialist in London, England. In this episode, he shares his work experience and his career path,

00:02:12:28 - 00:02:20:20

Isabelle

from a youth mowing lawns up to his position currently, dealing with digital affairs and accessibility.

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Chloë

Yeah, he's

00:02:21:13 - 00:02:43:00

Chloë

an, he's an interesting person. First of all, I think he's quite charismatic in the way that, in the manner he speaks, he's got a lot of energy, sort of a very unique, sort of energy to his voice and the way he presents himself. And one of the things, in which I can’t help but identify with him is, he has a disability, he has albinism, which is evident if - he does look different,

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Chloë

But, if you don't know much about albinism, you're not going to know that, in fact, he might have, that he has problems with visual acuity. And so he's always treading this ambiguous territory about whether people grasp that he has a disability, whether he himself actually declares that he has a disability, even acknowledges it himself, and, whether he's able-bodied, because he can at times sort of pass as able-bodied if no one really notices it.

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Chloë

And yet his vision is actually pretty bad, right? And so some of his stories, in a sense, recount this difficult navigation between having an evident disability that isn't quite so evident and hasn't perhaps been fully accommodated. And I think actually that has had an effect on his, his education and actually, in the end, on his career trajectory, both in negative effects but also in positive effects.

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Isabelle

Yeah. And one thing I found really compelling about Bryn’s story is just the sheer number and variety of different work experiences he's had. And often things that people without albinism or vision impairment and doctors and employers, might say, “Oh, you can't do that.” He has a lot of stories where people have said, “you can't do that.”

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Isabelle

And he's like, “yeah, I actually can.” And so it's it's an interesting, example of, yeah, it challenges our stereotypes about, albinism and vision impairment and also demonstrates the wide range of jobs that people can do.

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Chloë

Yeah. No. And you're absolutely right. You were really good at getting him to share those things and sort of probing those details during the conversation, and, which I appreciated. And it was just sort of like, even him discussing how he might vacuum a room when he doesn't see well or how he might paint something, which, you know, immediately you say, “Oh, well he can't do that.”

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Chloë

or... but he figured out how to do it.

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Isabelle

Yeah. And it just, it sort of makes me question like, how much do we actually use vision versus how much we think we use vision? Because he says, “I mean, I'm going to have to vacuum the whole room. It doesn't matter if I can see the specks of dirt, like I should vacuum the whole room anyways.” And I mean, not wrong.

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Isabelle

so so the question of is the work we do based on like visual input or on method? and like which way is more thorough? Is it... or, it's raised some really interesting questions for me about how I do my own work.

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Chloë

Yeah. No. And I think that, sort of, his, as he grappled with what type of work he could do, I think he probably brings that quite effectively into his role now as sort of an accommodation specialist, is that ability to kind of see things slightly differently or in an adaptive, flexible manner because he's taken that approach the whole way through with him in terms of his own career development.

00:05:37:17 - 00:06:12:17

Bryn

So my name is Bryn Anderson and I am a senior accessibility specialist. I'm from the UK, born in the UK, born in London, live in London. I was born with albinism, myself and my elder sister. I’m one of five siblings, but just myself and my older sister have of albinism. And there are some common vision impairments that come with that.

00:06:12:19 - 00:06:42:25

Bryn

I think namely the, I mean, the most kind of obvious thing is that I don't see... I struggle to see detail, both far and near, which I think is caused by my, my eyes, [chuckles] my eyes move sort of side to side rapidly. So if you imagine, like a picket fence, right?, then, those, those slats kind of would, would blend into each other kind of seamlessly.

00:06:42:25 - 00:06:50:14

Bryn

So I don't notice it until I sort of tilt my head the other way, in which case then the blurring happens on the vertical, not the horizontal.

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Chloë

00:06:51:15 - 00:07:08:19

Bryn

And the other thing is, is, is only being able to, to sort of... monocular, having monocular vision. So I'm looking at one eye or the other, not being able to look at both means judging distance, distances, three dimensions, is challenging. Yeah.

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Chloë

I love I love hearing how you have adapted, and adapted in terms of the strabismus, it's called strabismus.

00:07:15:13 - 00:07:16:09

Bryn

That’s right, yeah, yeah.

00:07:16:13 - 00:07:25:05

Chloë

Since it's sideways, like you've adapted. So to check by turning your head so you're like, oh no, that's not quite right. I mean, it's just, you know, human nature.

00:07:25:11 - 00:07:45:03

Bryn

It’s a very strange thing, but it’s a very natural thing for me to do, to try and read something like, if you're in the, you're doing the, the eye test, you know, and I, I'll just go like that [tilts head sideways] naturally and I'll, I mean, you know, when you, in the, in your teens in that you kind of maybe you go, “Ooh that’s a bit weird, probably should stop doing that.”

00:07:45:03 - 00:07:54:12

Bryn

But it is just a really natural reaction. And then when you get a bit older, you don't care so much what other people think. You start doing it again. [laughs]

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Chloë

[laughs] So tell us a little bit about, you know, family of five, wow. Your parents were obviously, pretty energetic in terms of handling five kids. So tell us a little bit about your upbringing, your educational background, sort of, because that sort of launches you into a career.

00:08:08:22 - 00:08:37:19

Bryn

Yeah, that's a good point, yeah. So, so my dad, definitely. You know, he was an animator, stop frame animator. So. And, he, he's, you know, he came from a background of, of artists, really. And my mum was in fashion. They'd both gone to kind of art, well, she’d gone to fashion school my, my dad had gone to art school.

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Bryn

and my mum had kind of, you know, sort of given that up, if you like, to, to to to raise us.

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Chloë

Given that your parents had two kids with albinism and, and the accompanying sort of visual problems, what was their expectation of you in terms of jobs? And what was the school’s?

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Bryn

Yeah. Well that’s a really good question. Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. Yeah. Great question. And it does feed into the job, but it, but it... So. So let's try and talk about that. Yeah. So, so my parents didn't make a an issue with with the sight and the albinism, from my perspective, there were no, never any blockers put in the way. But there was still, we did go, we went to the albino fellowship thing at some point, sort of slightly terrifying experience. [laughs]

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Bryn

But, but, but I did because, you know, I'd never seen so many blond people. It was a bit weird, you know, for me.

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Chloë

That's something like your own little group in society.

00:09:36:13 - 00:09:55:07

Bryn

Yeah. Yeah. And, and parents that weren't blond and, like, what? You know, what on earth is going on here? At a young age. So there was there was, like, and I know they, you know, they tried to, there there there was... it was it was the spectrum of things, you know. But so they were attempts to correct the squint, you know, the crossed eye,

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Bryn

for me. Mine was more pronounced than my sister’s. But there was, but it was, it was... No, there was never any shame around it. Never any shame around it, I think is the important thing that I'm trying to get. But we went to local school. I don't remember any challenges with impairment with with my eyesight

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Bryn

at that early age, like kindergarten, like toddler. So I would have been, up to the age of five, six, around that. Six is is probably when I... Even then I don't remember things. Well, actually, I tell a lie. I remember being taken out of the class at the age of probably four or five, five, to do some touch typing,

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Chloë

Right.

00:10:39:07 - 00:11:00:04

Bryn

things, I don't remember what it was on. Like, if it was, it can't have been a typewriter. It must have been a, I'm not that old [laughs] It was, it was probably in ‘83. So, it was, it was on, it was on a computer. I remember being taken out of class, but there were other kids in there.

00:11:00:04 - 00:11:11:13

Bryn

I don't remember who they were or what they were doing there or whatever, but. But that was the first. That was the first kind of...

00:11:11:15 - 00:11:35:23

Bryn

where I was like, “Hmm, okay, being treated different.” But I could tell you something, what happened from an early age is, is is this growing, realization that that I am different and society is not geared towards me. So I'm always, I'm going to be on the outside. It's going to be, there's going to be conflict, you know. Like, I have to, I had to stand up for myself from an early age.

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Bryn

I had to explain myself to people from an early age, you know. “Why can't you do this? Why can't you do that? Where your glasses. What's wrong with your eye?” You know. I also remember, like, causing trouble and getting into trouble was a thing early on there. And that would carry on throughout, throughout my education.

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Chloë

Is it your personality do you think? Or do you think in part because, you would you were getting less visually?

00:12:01:14 - 00:12:01:21

Bryn

Yeah.

00:12:01:21 - 00:12:04:22

Chloë

In the classroom, and it's a lot of visual stuff at that age, right? It’s a lot of visual stimulation.

00:12:04:24 - 00:12:35:09

Bryn

I couldn't tell you at that age, but it, it was a trend that that carried on through. And so, so I don't remember... I remember candle making, for example, I remember that. I don't really remember much else, right, from, from what we were learning. I remember being, listening to stories, you know, being read stories in a group, but I don't remember any kind of learning because like you, right, rightly say any any kind of blackboard whiteboard reading stuff, you know, was going to be really difficult for me.

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Bryn

00:12:36:09 - 00:12:38:15

Chloë

It must have been exhausting.

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Bryn

Oh yeah. Yeah. I mean, well, I mean, I was gonna say, “Oh, yeah, it is.” I don't think of it as that, it is just what it is. But reading, that that that, you know, that movement that my eyes have, does make reading, as letters bleed... You know, people with dyslexia, they talk about stuff jumping around on the page. So I kind of feel like I've experienced that.

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Bryn

And I've had several dyslexia, dyslexic, dyslexia, dyslexic tests when I was younger, because I think everyone thought, “Oh, you know, there must be a problem,” because I wasn't reading very well, wasn't spelling very well. But when I was reading, you know, it's like, you know, there is this movement. Just... so possibly similar to, to to how someone with dyslexia, dyslexia might feel.

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Bryn

But, yeah.

00:13:25:04 - 00:13:31:29

Chloë

It's interesting because you have a disability that is not necessarily evident unless you're really noticing, right?

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Bryn

Yeah, yeah, yeah!

00:13:32:16 - 00:13:39:24

Chloë

And so you look like this blond haired, you know, little kid being a troublemaker. And the first response would be like, “You need to get back in line, kid.”

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Bryn

Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

00:13:40:26 - 00:13:46:03

Chloë

“Stop hassling,” you know, “stop being disruptive. Can you sit down and do your math lesson.”

00:13:46:03 - 00:13:53:01

Chloë

And, I can see that that might have been, also got in the way a little bit. That you sort of can pass it sometimes, right?

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Bryn

Oh, man. Yeah. I mean, you you've hit the nail on the head. And that has been, it's been a real kind of identity conflict that I have. Is this sort of... or, one foot in both camps, you know, whatever you want to call it. I even tried to, tried to get this into a presentation I did once

00:14:12:01 - 00:14:29:24

Bryn

at a conference, you know, in kind of I think I scrapped the idea because it was it was too clever. [laughs] It's too weird, the concept. People... there's not enough people in both camps, I feel, you know, or the society are aware of. That we don't talk about it enough. But it really did feel like that.

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Chloë

Oh, we could talk for hours about this because Isabelle and I have been thinking about this a lot. About what defines you in one camp or the other, because we have this binary system, and I'm not convinced it's that great to be... And I'm, I can pass like you at times and then I can’t at others, and so

00:14:45:12 - 00:14:45:24

Bryn

Yeah!

00:14:45:26 - 00:14:48:02

Chloë

It is it is interesting.

00:14:48:02 - 00:15:06:02

Isabelle

And at the same time, you talked about the aesthetics of it. And often albinism, the aesthetic aspect of it is visible, but people don't necessarily associate that, if they don't know, with, you know, vision impairment. And so there's it's like sort of visible but not and yeah that's a very very interesting.

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Bryn

But even in that there's this ambiguity around, well what, you know, “Are you, are you like...?” with albinism, you know. Or people don't dare ask. It was only when I was fifteen that I saw my eye cross in the mirror. I'd never... I didn't know, I mean, I even... I understood the language, but I hadn't seen it, so I just didn't know it was an issue.

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Bryn

And it hit me like a ton of bricks. Do you know what I mean? Like, it really did that age. I was blown away.

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Chloë

Can you tell me, why were you blow away? What was going on there?

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Bryn

Well I was like, “Fucking hell, is that what I look like?” I've got this, like, crossed eye, you see all the whites of my eye. Like, I didn't know I looked like this. Although I knew I had it, I just hadn't seen it. And it was really challenging. So, so in many ways, I discovered, you know, going back to your question, it was... it's been... I discovered how disabled I am over time because my parents didn't make a big issue of it, you know?

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Isabelle

Can you talk about like, your early, your first experiences of work in your, well, in your teens?

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Bryn

Yeah. So I think the, the first job... I mean, my dad, I think he, he would have given me a bit of money to mow the lawn. And I, and I, and I, I remember that even, you know, like, trying to keep the line straight and and, you know, because I was crazy about football, and I always sort of, you know, amazed at the these pristine, perfectly mowed, you know, football pitches, this curated kind of pattern, checkered pattern, you know. And I, so when I... that was about, you know, so I did mow the lawn, you know so I wanted to make it look a like football pitch, and it sort

00:16:51:16 - 00:17:04:27

Bryn

of baffled me how they kept these things so straight. Obviously they weren't doing it with these handhold mowers, you know. And... but but I wondered, “Is this my eyesight?” You know, “It's causing me problems here. Like, is that a challenge?” And whatever.

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Isabelle

So, your, you know, your job, you were, you know, mowing the lawn and even that you could see how there was some... some of it may have been your vision, some of it may have been the environment and the tools you're working with, which is a really good example. And then from there, how did you, did... What was your first like experience of work outside the home?

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Bryn

Yeah. So my first experience of trying... Hmm. So I can't quite remember the order in which it came, but I, I applied for a job at Pizza Express, which is like, you know, what, fast food. No, it's not fast food. It's just a chain. A pizza chain. and I applied to do a, as a cleaner. It’s

00:17:45:04 - 00:18:16:11

Bryn

a bad joke, isn’t it, right? Yeah. So. And and I think I done that because my sister had done a cleaning job at the hospital, so it was kind of like, “All right, well, if she can do, she can be a cleaner at the hospital, then I can clean the Pizza Express.” But then confronted with the, “Well, do I disclose the fact that I don't see very well?” And I, I, I, I think there were two interviews.

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Bryn

Or was it just one interview and, and and I kind of said, “Oh, you know, oh, by the way,” you know. I felt like I had to do it, you know, I felt I felt like, yeah, I felt like obliged. I don't know, I, I think it's probably that is me needing to explain myself and needing to come clean about stuff is is a common thread throughout my life there.

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Bryn

And not wanting to hide but also wanting to hide. I said, “I've got this vision impairment,” right? And and try to explain that, you know, I mean, it doesn't matter even if you if you, if you, if you've got, if you're a doctor and you explain that to this bloke who's, do you know what I mean, a manager of the local pizza shop. I think he just, you know, that moment he was just like, like, “this doesn't make sense to you can't have a, you know, what are you talking about?”

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Bryn

So. And I didn't get the job, so. But then I did get a job as a cleaner for like a community center. But through a friend of my mum's, you know. So there was, that was the, that was the “in.” It was, I guess, having someone to vouch for the fact or just kindness, I don't know. And I used to clean there, hoovering the floor, you know, this big old room hoovering the floor and being like, “I can’t see a fucking thing here.”

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Bryn

You know, “Am I cleaning anything or not?” [laughs] You know what I mean? Like, I, like how, how do people, I mean hoovering... is everyone aware of all of the specks of dust and dirt that they're hoovering up, or is it just a methodical kind of, you know, thing? I don't know, but I couldn't see what I was doing, but I could feel, you know, dirt with my hand.

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Bryn

And obviously the bigger it was or, you know, big fluff thing, I could see that as well. But just it was just a weird thing, you know, spending time... and I wouldn't, I wouldn't... because I couldn't see it didn't mean that I would try and rush past it. I would do it methodically.

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Chloë

Having had that experience with the pizza parlor, did you then disclose in the future? What impact did that have on your practices in trying to get a job and your next jobs? If you could talk about I.

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Bryn

Yeah, yeah, sure. Okay. So I did leafleting, for for a local supermarket. That might have come before the pizza thing. I can't remember. I mean, I, you know, not not being able to see all the detail on the leaflet didn't matter. I was just going door to door, putting it in, right? So after leaflets

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Bryn

I did... I worked, I did, I washed up in a kitchen, I enjoyed that, but I didn't do it for very long.

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Chloë

More cleaning!

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Bryn

More cleaning, yeah, yeah, yeah. And, you know, and with that, it'd be like, the chef would come and give me a pan, you know, or I was just working through. It’s a methodical thing, you know?

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Bryn

It's like there's a process here. You can get all the dirt off by covering all of the surface, and you can make sure you rinse the soap off by running under, you know what I mean? Like, it didn't require that fine inspection, you know? and it felt great to be part of a team, you know? There was jobs in, in doing manual labor.

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Bryn

So I worked in a brick factory for a bit of time. It was desperately boring, moving bricks from A to B. But, you know, I could do it, do you know what I mean? And then I did, like, working on building sites. That was terrifying. And I got, and I started getting kind of like, called out, you know, people taking, taking the piss out of me, you know, picking on me for, for, for being... for the albinism, you know, for all the other men on the, on the building site. I really didn't enjoy that.

00:21:58:18 - 00:22:18:09

Bryn

And then, so then after that, I did the decorating, I decorated, I learned to do painting, decorating with, with, with just some local guy. You know, he didn't seem to care. D’you know what I mean? He smoked a lot of weeds and like, we did jobs. It was fine, d’you know what I mean? But I told... I remember going for an eye test once,

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Bryn

at one of the eye hospitals, in Brighton, so I was down in Sussex at the time, and, I told him what I did, and he's like, “What, are you up ladders on roofs and things like that?” And I was like, “Yeah, yeah.” And he’s like, and he, you know, technically I shouldn't be doing that, you know what I mean?

00:22:32:08 - 00:22:42:07

Bryn

But he didn't say, “You shouldn't be doing that.” He said that, “I really strongly advise you to not do that. It’s very dangerous for you.” You know, that that sort of thing.”

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Chloë

Did you listen? Or did you...

00:22:43:15 - 00:23:02:16

Bryn

No! Because it didn't, it wasn't, it didn't make any sense. It wasn't my lived experience of doing that work. It's a contextual thing, danger, isn't it? Dangerous for who and in what... you know, like, he doesn't understand all of my coping mechanisms for, for getting around the 2D, you know, limitation of how I experience the world and all that, you know?

00:23:02:18 - 00:23:06:04

Isabelle

So was this like during high school or after high school?

00:23:06:09 - 00:23:15:07

Bryn

So I would have been, I would have been like, sixteen now. All those jobs that I talked about must have been thirteen, fourteen up.

00:23:15:13 - 00:23:33:06

Chloë

So given that experience, both good and bad, did that drive you in a certain way in your education to do something? Like, I'm interested how that evolved and how what you... You know, that's the stage where you're sort of thinking about “How am I going to move into the world?” So what were you thinking at that point? And what did you do?

00:23:33:08 - 00:23:59:27

Bryn

There was a lot going on. I wasn't really thinking beyond, you know, the, the sort of the short term. I also I, you know, I was going to football a lot and I felt a like a sense of belonging there. I was drinking, I drank a lot, drank a lot of alcohol, you know, in this sort of social context, but still. And, like, that was my identity.

00:23:59:27 - 00:24:20:14

Bryn

You know, I went to football and I drank and, you know? And jobs and work and all that was like, whatever. And school, it was just, it had to be done, you know? The only... So what was happening in education was I had, I was doing arts and I like, I’ve always liked doing art and, and, you know, it's it's a personal thing, isn't it?

00:24:20:14 - 00:24:42:07

Bryn

You know, you draw art and people go, “Ooh, you know, it's not my thing, but it's still valid.” You know what I mean? So. So there was that, there's the non-conformist element of creating something which which obviously lends itself to someone who sees things and does things or experiences the world differently, right? And then there was, media studies, which I really enjoyed.

00:24:42:07 - 00:25:07:09

Bryn

I had a strong teacher, who, who encouraged me to be more critical and to question and things like that, which is essentially what I was, was doing all the time. I just hadn't had a platform to do that. So I was I was constantly coming up against things in life, but I'd, no one had given me a framework to kind of like critical analysis, I guess, or critical thinking.

00:25:07:12 - 00:25:35:11

Bryn

I'm, I'm using big words, probably without really understanding them. The point was, you know, there was a, there was a... She was saying, “Here's a topic, like the media, advertising ,film, tell me what you think about it.” You know, it wasn't “Conform to the way that this thing is done.” It was a different type of thing. So it encouraged this a personal experience or take on something, as did art.

00:25:35:13 - 00:25:38:27

Bryn

And that was always going to lend itself to me, you know? Yeah. So where are we now?

00:25:38:27 - 00:25:41:21

Chloë

What did you qualify? What, what did you qualify?

00:25:41:21 - 00:26:02:07

Bryn

So I got expelled from a school and then I... But I went and completed my... in the UK you have GCSEs, they are things things you get at sixteen. I didn't get many of them, but I did complete them. For my GCSE... so at sixteen I had already, I was at a point where I had, I'd been kicked out of school by this time, and I needed all the help I could get.

00:26:02:07 - 00:26:10:28

Bryn

So I did get extra time to, a third extra, to do the exams, and it definitely helped get my... what the GCSEs that I did get.

00:26:11:01 - 00:26:12:29

Chloë

That was your first bit of accommodation.

00:26:13:02 - 00:26:16:00

Bryn

That's the first bit of accommodation. Yeah that's correct.

00:26:16:07 - 00:26:18:19

Chloë

So you never had that at school on tests or anything like that?

00:26:18:19 - 00:26:18:25

Bryn

No, no, no.

00:26:18:25 - 00:26:20:09

Chloë

No wonder that was frustrating.

00:26:20:09 - 00:26:50:20

Bryn

It was a big, you know, printouts and just stuff that's impractical like just doesn't... it didn’t... You know, that never... it was just... No, I don't remember anything meaningful. So extra time was the first meaningful thing. And then I, I, went to, a college instead of doing, going on to do my A-levels. So I went to a college to get some more points in order to do A-levels.

00:26:50:22 - 00:27:09:02

Bryn

I think it's this way round. And then I did my A-levels, and so I did two A-levels, in art and media studies. And I, and I got, you know, I, I did it fine in them. Like, I think I got an A and a B in them or something like that. So, you know, so it was good. For my A-levels,

00:27:09:02 - 00:27:30:11

Bryn

Not only did I get extra time, I also got a typist for my media studies exam. So I dictated my my A-levels, which was great. You know, I felt, I, I felt... I was pacing up and down, you know, like with my hands behind my back, like a sort of a scholarly... It was incredible. It was very empowering thing, you know?

00:27:30:14 - 00:27:46:27

Bryn

Yeah. And then I went to university. I had a break. I did more decorating work and earned a bit of money and got drunk a lot and went to football and ate lots of kebabs. And then I went to university. [laughs] So yeah.

00:27:46:29 - 00:27:49:15

Chloë

I like how kebabs really... you emphasize them.

00:27:49:17 - 00:27:51:17

Bryn

Oh yeah, it was a real, like ,it was... d’you know what I mean?

00:27:51:17 - 00:27:57:21

Isabelle

Yeah, it's an important part of being eighteen, nineteen, is eating a lot of kebabs.

00:27:57:21 - 00:27:58:17

Bryn

Oh mate, yeah, exactly. A lot of kebabs.

00:27:58:20 - 00:28:01:15

Isabelle

I did the same thing. Midnight kebabs.

00:28:01:17 - 00:28:25:09

Bryn

[laughs] Yeah, yeah. So, So. Yeah. So then I went to university in Bournemouth. So I did interactive media production. I'd wanted... My dad was keen for me to do this versus the film and television course, which I was sort of... I always felt destined to be in film, because of what he'd done as a director, an animator, and also director of live action stuff.

00:28:25:09 - 00:28:41:26

Bryn

So, my mind was always thinking in that way anyway. But he kind of talked me into the the interactive media production. It felt a bit more kind of like, you know, new age, like games and development and things like that. Web development.

00:28:41:28 - 00:28:45:18

Isabelle

And at university, did you have any accommodation as you went through that?

00:28:45:21 - 00:28:53:15

Bryn

I got some financial support for like a Mac. I got a Mac. You know, them weird, the weird, like colored, colorful, sort of boxy.

00:28:53:17 - 00:28:54:11

Chloë

I remember those!

00:28:54:11 - 00:28:55:05

Bryn

Yeah. Yeah,

00:28:55:08 - 00:28:57:11

Isabelle

I think that's before my time.

00:28:57:14 - 00:29:17:28

Bryn

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. It's a good thing, too. Like, you know. But the, those were cool. And I got one of them and I got some software that I don't remember ever using. You know, the sort of. I don't mean it in a negative way, but kind of like, “Well, you’re vision impairments, so , you know, generally maybe you want a screen reader.” Didn’t need one.

00:29:17:28 - 00:29:28:05

Bryn

But I got the software and all that stuff, so and and and help. There was kind of like you know these... they have approved software, d’you know what I mean?

00:29:28:08 - 00:29:32:00

Isabelle

So it's like a one-size-fits-all package for everyone with vision impairment?

00:29:32:00 - 00:30:00:24

Bryn

Not entirely. I wouldn't... I, look, I don't know enough about it really, to to to be able to say. I know that there there was money available and there was support through through the university that that I... And there was, you know, a personal engagement that, you know... I got to speak to someone about it. There was some touch-base sort of cadence there, you know, like there was... It wasn't like, you know, figure it out.

00:30:00:24 - 00:30:30:21

Bryn

It was good. It was really good. And I actually used my vision impairment to get accepted onto the course. in, in in two ways. One, I one, I was aware that there will be that there'll be quotas, you know, so I definitely was going to disclose my vision impairment, but also the nature of the work, the course being being a visual medium, new media, new media type thing.

00:30:30:23 - 00:30:54:29

Bryn

There was this... There was a strong art element. It was a very practical degree. 60-40 practical, practice to theory. So I talked about my work and my unique, vision and experience of the world and how, this this, you know, is something that, you know, you need to have me basically, because I see things differently. This is unique, you know.

00:30:54:29 - 00:31:02:24

Bryn

So so I started playing on... That was the, the, the first, time I sort of used it.

00:31:03:01 - 00:31:04:20

Chloë

So you played on it as an asset, then?

00:31:04:21 - 00:31:05:26

Bryn

Oh yeah. Yeah yeah yeah.

00:31:05:27 - 00:31:06:26

Chloë

Yeah yeah yeah.

00:31:06:28 - 00:31:32:15

Bryn

I had a really difficult time at university. Really challenging time. So... Not through, not because of my vision impairment, necessarily. Well, actually, I think it was a media and business school, so.... It's, that's like, its ego and and, you know, big egos and like, you know, you've got to look a certain way, dress a certain way, all that shit.

00:31:32:15 - 00:31:52:00

Bryn

And, and I didn't, I just, I've never fitted into that. So a bit like school, I went and sought out all of the, you know, the people on the periphery like the, the, the nutcases, you know, the, the the the, the, the, the, you know, the people that maybe didn't fit in or didn't care to fit into that.

00:31:52:02 - 00:32:00:16

Bryn

And um. But I had a really difficult time there. Yeah. It just it was very, very like very, very challenging time in my life.

00:32:00:22 - 00:32:05:17

Isabelle

So you you did your studies in media. Did you work during your university time?

00:32:05:18 - 00:32:06:02

Bryn

No.

00:32:06:04 - 00:32:10:03

Isabelle

And so what did you do after, after you finished your degree?

00:32:10:06 - 00:32:37:20

Bryn

I went, I, I moved to, to Austria, to Vienna actually, very soon after. I'd met a girl in, in the first year of university, and she was Austrian. We had a long distance relationship for the remaining two and a half years, and I moved to Vienna. So I was in Vienna, didn't speak German, I’d just got my degree.

00:32:37:23 - 00:33:22:10

Bryn

So I looked for English-speaking jobs. There is a big expat community there. I started looking for web design work, and, you know, I got like, dribs and drabs of of stuff doing stuff, doing, like, flash, you know, animations. If you know what that is. It’s a horrible piece of software. Anyway, so... it doesn't exist anymore. And, and then, and then I reverted back to, like, the, you know, I went to a pub, I met people, I went to football, I got... you know, did all that thing, carried on that, that life, that identity thing that I had. And I, and I did building work and like kitchen work, I

00:33:22:10 - 00:33:40:04

Bryn

worked as a chef, worked... I mean, not a chef - cook. You know, and I did, yeah, I did like building work, over there for a while and web design work, and like... And Vienna is that type... it's not London. Like you can't, you can't float along in London, like it will eat you alive. But in Vienna, you can do that.

00:33:40:04 - 00:34:08:00

Bryn

And, there's good standard in life and, yeah. So that's what I was doing. I was there for six years, but that relationship ended sometime into the, into that time, probably about four years into my time in Vienna. I went and I met another, another woman who's my wife now. She's Romanian. We we both worked briefly at a newspaper together.

00:34:08:00 - 00:34:30:28

Bryn

I was doing the website. She was a, she was journalist there. And, and she. Yeah. So we met in Vienna, and then we... She got accepted to do a Masters, and she, I think she had a couple of options. And London was one of the options. And so she was like, “Right, let's go somewhere else. I'm done with Vienna.”

00:34:30:28 - 00:34:54:02

Bryn

And I was like, “Ugh, no, I don't really want to go back to the UK.” Like going back to the UK felt like a failure for me. but anyway, we moved back to London, and, umm, and it was great! We had a really good time, and it was, it was just all sort of positive. And then I got a job, I applied, was applying for jobs, still doing web design work,

00:34:54:02 - 00:35:16:11

Bryn

I was an awful web designer. I mean, I have no business head on me, right? And I'm not, I'm... Not because of my eyesight, I'm just not very good at at at that kind of type of design work. It’s just not really my bag. So I needed an out, really. And, we were fortunate with rent, so we weren't paying masses, but I needed a job, so I started applying for jobs.

00:35:16:11 - 00:35:40:29

Bryn

I started applying for project management roles. I didn't know what that was. I just thought it sounded like I'd be good at that. Right? Anyway, the, I think the recruiter that I'd got in touch with was, was basically kind of like, “Okay, yes, yes.” And then he gave me other jobs that weren't project manager jobs because he probably knew I didn't know or have any skills or, or experience in that.

00:35:41:01 - 00:36:05:19

Bryn

So then I got a job for... I went to an interview for a company I wasn't particularly interested in, but I'd read, in preparation for the interview, the last thing on there was this accessibility testing tool that they have. So they're like, analytics this, SEO that, d’you know? Quality control, d’you know what I mean? Like website checker, you know what I mean?

00:36:05:22 - 00:36:31:25

Bryn

And... but then there's this thing about accessibility, and I was like, “What is that?” I didn't know what it was. And I started looking up on it and I'm like, “What? What is going on here? How have I not come across this, you know, like, this is bonkers, this is.” And possibly because I had been so determined not to be disabled that I was just closed off to this whole... I was trying to get away from this don't want help or to be helping.

00:36:31:25 - 00:36:52:27

Bryn

Like it's just, you know. So it's a weird thing. But of course, I needed it now, you know? How convenient, you know. So I was like, “Well, I'll have some of that.” And, and again, I can play the, the cards, you know, I can like, of course I'm going to get this job because, like, how perfect a person could I possibly be?

00:36:52:29 - 00:37:14:11

Bryn

Not only do I have this broad insight into, you know, web technologies through my degree and all that stuff, I have a disability. And I design websites. Like, come on, I'm going to be overqualified. And I did get the job. I got the job. They offered me more than it was advertised for, for whatever weird reason.

00:37:14:13 - 00:37:38:01

Bryn

And that was it. And I stayed working there for seven years. For the majority of the time I was working that company, I worked off a small - and when I say small, it was like a 23 - or was it 25-inch? - monitor. And like, I am... what I have, I have like a 42-inch monitor here now, so.

00:37:38:04 - 00:38:01:00

Bryn

And that's comfortable for me. But I just didn't know anything about accommodations. I was happy to have a job. I said to my dad, who bought me a suit for the interview, you know, like, you know, like, “This is it, I made it!” I didn't have any more goals. I had a girlfriend that I was madly in love with. I was back in the country I was born in, but feeling good about it.

00:38:01:03 - 00:38:07:28

Bryn

And I had salary. Like... I'm not meant to... I was not, you know, I was not meant to get this far.

00:38:08:05 - 00:38:18:11

Chloë

So can you talk a little bit about your experience now? You're, you're... You said you were a senior disability specialist, right? Or accessibility specialist.

00:38:18:13 - 00:38:23:20

Bryn

Accessibility specialist. Yeah. Because no one knows what it is, right? [laughs] Must be special.

00:38:23:20 - 00:38:30:01

Chloë

Tell me a little bit about what you do in that role. You're... you've moved.... Like, you moved on from your first firm.

00:38:30:03 - 00:38:30:17

Bryn

Yeah, yeah.

00:38:30:19 - 00:38:37:29

Chloë

And I'm interested in how it relates to, how you think it relates to, sort of, general equity and diversity inclusion efforts.

00:38:37:29 - 00:38:49:28

Bryn

Right. Yeah. Okay. Well, we should, you know, we should have started here! Because this is, this... [laughs] So my role really is, is...

00:38:50:01 - 00:39:29:27

Bryn

It's, it's, you know, you could say I'm there to remind people not to forget about people, right? My goal is to kind of be ever-present, if you like. And I'm, I'm, I'm also there to try and introduce and formalize the approach to not forgetting about other people, right? And I can do that through, bringing the, the, the, the people, the forgotten people, you know, to life, you know, but I don't have a budget and I don't have a team, so I can do that through myself,

00:39:29:27 - 00:39:37:01

Bryn

Right? I can bring my struggle to the forefront to, to, as representative for a group of people.

00:39:37:04 - 00:39:59:02

Chloë

So, just, I mean, I had a very similar experience when I served on a government board for, for disability. And I discovered after having gone through like 18 months of interviews for this time, that was so difficult, there was no budget for the office. Like it was.... And so, so in essence, you're saying the accessibility for whatever place you're working, the budget is basically your salary.

00:39:59:04 - 00:40:43:28

Bryn

Yes it is, but but, but but actually and this is where it gets really interesting is that because it is, not only is inclusion a marketable thing, it is a feel, it is by nature a feel good thing. I think, to get into... there, there are some really challenging discussions or topics within disability, you know, some really difficult, meaty things that would be great to talk about, you know, the, the that are like the us and them, you know, the mortality element of it all. Disabled people are that much closer to death and like, you know, and like, you know, and our whole problem, our challenge with, or people’s, society’s problem with death in general

00:40:43:28 - 00:41:14:07

Bryn

and, or not being fit or being unfit or looking different, not fitting in all that stuff. But there, but, you know, there's a feel-good factor about about feeling like you're doing the right thing. Aside from the the the inclusion, like people are generally good natured and good willed, you know, in my experience, or my outlook is, it is that if you give people a reason to be good-willed, they will be good-willed, you know, and they're not all selfish.

00:41:14:10 - 00:41:42:22

Bryn

d’you know what I mean?, self-seeking. But. So, so, so, so, so the company that I work for, there is a lot of time and resource and money spent on accessibility is just not part, it doesn't come from a central budget under a strategy, a defined strategy for for accessibility. So it's pretty amazing in that respect. Right. You know, you'd think corporate, just cut-throat,

00:41:42:25 - 00:41:58:10

Bryn

you know, ”Why are you, why you doing that?” You know. But people actually don't question why we're doing it. The problem is, when you have like a, you know, like a a good-willed approach to things, is that,

00:41:58:27 - 00:42:32:14

Bryn

when you, when you need to do something that is harder to achieve, it then kind of starts to fall down a bit. But but I have to stress that nothing has fallen down in, in, in this environment. And in many ways, they’re far more plugged in to this than the company that sold the accessibility tooling, right? So. It's again, impossible to talk about any one company without the greater context here.

00:42:32:16 - 00:42:47:03

Bryn

So I think it's, it's a, it's a, it's a maturity journey. And accessibility is young. And because I work in it, I forget that. And because it impacts me, I forget that. But it is actually...

00:42:47:05 - 00:43:08:13

Bryn

Yes, yes, there should be equality and there should be inclusion for all. But do you, have you actually stopped to think about what that means? You know. Do you even understand what that means? Businesses are ready to market that, but they don't understand what it means. And the people in the industry, like myself, also struggle with understanding what that means, you know, as as an outcome.

00:43:08:15 - 00:43:10:03

Bryn

00:43:10:05 - 00:43:10:18

Chloë

Right, I mean...

00:43:10:21 - 00:43:11:08

Bryn

You know, yeah.

00:43:11:10 - 00:43:13:17

Chloë

I mean, hinking about you... Go ahead, go ahead.

00:43:13:19 - 00:43:25:01

Isabelle

Oh, sorry. Just, yeah, just to clarify your responsibilities as an accessibility specialist, are you dealing with accessibility of products or accessibility of the workplace for staff or accessibility for customers?

00:43:25:04 - 00:44:01:08

Bryn

Yeah, well, hmm. Well, I think, I think if, you know, like I look after customer and colleague, or I support, I don't look after, I support customer and colleague web and mobile applications. But but actually I'm I'm used beyond that. Right. So marketing, emails, internal comms, whatever, you know, I can give opinions on and things like that. So the majority of my job, I see, is sort of helping designers think about thinking about their end users beyond the, you know, for want of a better way of saying it, just themselves. And they’re generally sort of able-bodied, right?

00:44:01:11 - 00:44:12:15

Bryn

Then... And engineers, who are just not... it's not they're not capable, they're just not aware of, or they, they haven't been trained to think about you know, that stuff. So I sort of sit in the middle, is what I'd say.

00:44:12:17 - 00:44:22:28

Chloë

So how do you think we might be able to change that? So, your role here is to is to remind engineers. So, should it be happening at the universities where they're training

00:44:23:01 - 00:44:44:23

Bryn

100%. It should happen, it should... Oh my God. Okay. So it happens, it has to happen at universities. Like I cannot believe that it does not happen more university. And we get, you know, young engineers through. And they really don't know much about it. It does happen more and more. It is happening more and more. But it didn't happen when I was growing up.

00:44:44:25 - 00:45:11:17

Bryn

But education is changing as well, right? Pandemic definitely did something there in terms of like, “Ooh yeah, everything's got to be digital now. How are we going to do that? What do you know, that's maybe more accessible for for people that have really struggled in those physical brick and mortar stores, uh places, environments.” So, so I think...

00:45:11:19 - 00:45:30:22

Bryn

So I think that there is, there is, that there is change, but it takes time. So there’s data out there to, to say there is one in five, but if that is not your experience, it is, it's really hard. Like I said, I'd never experienced my crossed eye before, until I saw it in the mirror at fifteen.

00:45:30:25 - 00:45:55:11

Bryn

But yeah, I talked about it every time I met someone: “Oh yeah, I can't see very well, my eyes cross, and there’s a squint, strabismus, bleh.” Didn't know what it meant until I experienced it. So that is, that is the barrier. You... It's a theoretical one. In the same way poverty is, in the same way racism is. You've got these, these things you understand rationally, you know, intellectually, but they're not in your face,

00:45:55:13 - 00:46:24:07

Bryn

so why would you care about them? Why would you think about them? You know, and that is the problem. So in that respect it's young, it's immature, it's new, you know. And progress has has been really swift in some parts of the world. In my lifetime, I have seen attitudes change massively from when I was a kid. So so it feels that it's still defining itself, or evolving.

00:46:24:09 - 00:46:34:17

Bryn

So so that's what I mean. It just doesn't feel like it's matured in that respect. Whether it ever matures fully, I dunno, you know.

00:46:34:19 - 00:46:44:14

Chloë

Given the change you've seen, what would you advise, like a young person who has a disability now, if they're going out looking for work. Do they disclose? What do, what do, what do they do in order to get work?

00:46:44:19 - 00:47:05:14

Bryn

Well, okay, yeah. I mean, I, I think it would... It's, it's a journey isn't it, for the individual. So advice is like, it’s only good enough when you're ready to hear it, right? I don't think I would take the advice I'm about to give. I would, I would look for businesses and industries that have requirements to cater for people with disabilities.

00:47:05:16 - 00:47:30:09

Bryn

That would be the number one thing. Like, pride, put it to the side. Like, you’re not... So, so actually, you know all that, “Oh you can be whatever you want to be.” I say bollocks to that. That's not true. You know, like you need to get on. You need to accept that, that there are barriers, you know, and, you... and actually by knowing yourself and accepting who you are, you can have a lot less friction in your life.

00:47:30:12 - 00:47:50:21

Bryn

Just because you can't be an astronaut or a racecar driver doesn't mean you're gonna have a shit life, you know what I mean? And it just means that you can't do those specific things. And I think that that's really important. Just need to accept that. I think it's incredibly difficult thing for someone to hear, who's not ready to hear that.

00:47:50:23 - 00:48:08:20

Isabelle

And and you said you've seen a lot of change over your own lifetime. Where do you think the UK will be in like ten years? What do you, what do you see, based on the trends you're seeing now or just your own hopes or fears, I guess. What do you imagine?

00:48:08:22 - 00:48:42:24

Bryn

Yeah, hopes and fears. Well, yeah. Yeah, definitely. We’re in the age of data, and data is, doesn't give a toss about, you know, the people, it's just data. And that I find quite scary, you know. And, and ironically, I've been really obsessed with data, in my role, and wanting to, to show the, the significance, the contribution through data, of people with disabilities, like, “Look, they spend money, look how many there are on our website, it’s 1 in 5, blah, blah, blah,” you know. But, but the flip side of that is, from the 1 in 5,

00:48:42:24 - 00:49:04:25

Bryn

how many of them are using a screen reader? D’you know what I mean? So. So an overly data driven world is is is is a is a scary prospect for minorities within the, within the greater minority. You know, people like myself, they’ll just be consumed up into the, the, the general population. But the real people on the edges,

00:49:04:25 - 00:49:27:14

Bryn

well I don't know what happens to them. Yeah. Gosh, it’s very dystopian. I've never expressed that thought before, so I don't know, now that, now that I've said it. But yeah, but yeah, I don't know. That is very dystopian. I think, I think another reason for, for having a slightly negative output is that the UK does not belong to the EU anymore.

00:49:27:14 - 00:49:55:29

Bryn

It, it, it has complete control over itself. It's autonomous in that respect. It doesn't answer to anyone, really. And that is, That is dangerous for me, you know, in any context, in the same way that the US does that. It's a dangerous thing, to have that level of autonomy in a new age with all this new stuff going on, you know?

00:49:56:01 - 00:50:01:28

Chloë

So in some way, the regulations that are coming out of Brussels for the European Union,

00:50:01:28 - 00:50:02:03

Bryn

Don’t apply.

00:50:02:09 - 00:50:14:02

Chloë

which, you know, don't apply, and they, and they.... many people resented them. But at some level, if you're a minority and you want your rights secured, that they were, they were, they're more helpful than they might, then what might people...

00:50:14:02 - 00:50:22:11

Bryn

Yeah. Yeah. I don't... but people are not... yeah I don't... that's just not part of the discourse around the EU, you know, the protection of minority groups. That's not, I mean, no one’s talking about that.

00:50:22:18 - 00:50:23:11

Chloë

Yeah. Yeah.

00:50:23:12 - 00:50:23:28

Bryn

You know?

00:50:24:01 - 00:50:42:05

Chloë

So, we're gonna finish up soon, but I was just wondering whether you have any thoughts about how, given you live in Britain, and the UK, what government, what large industry should be doing in an ideal world, not in a in a dystopian world, in in the best world possible, what about that?

00:50:42:07 - 00:51:14:05

Bryn

Yeah yeah yeah. What does, like, minimum requirements look like? You know, I, I came from a workshop this week where we've got two people from two, who have different disabilities, saying contradictory things about what they need from a service, right? That is the challenge with inclusion as a goal. And I think that that a regulator or a government body needs to, needs to understand that first and foremost.

00:51:14:08 - 00:51:43:12

Bryn

And then think about how to, how to create something achievable. Because the ambiguity of, of of being accessible is, is, is sort of coming a little bit unstuck. There needs, there needs to be clearer definitions. The Equality Act in the UK already is ambiguous, you know, and and you know, maybe looking at that I kind of start to understand why, right?

00:51:43:14 - 00:52:21:05

Bryn

Because it's extremely difficult to just tarnish... to take something like so individualistic, individualistic, right, and then just apply one thing. So, so it is really about the relationship between the individual and the thing that they're dealing with. So. So how do you accommodate that? You know, there’s so much variation. I think looking at the, the US, for example, a lot of people, you know, lord that up and say, “Well, it's better over in the US, you know, because of the, of the, the sort of the legal system around it.”

00:52:21:05 - 00:52:45:18

Bryn

I'm not convinced that that is the right way. It maybe drives a different behavior, like a compliance-driven approach to accessibility. So I don't think... It’s like, it's a layered cake isn't it? Compliance might be the absolute base level of any framework for achieving accessibility, but but but actually that's not, I don't think that's what people have in mind when they talk about inclusion.

00:52:45:18 - 00:53:04:02

Chloë

Well, I mean, I've done some work in the US thinking about this, and the physical access in the US is very good, and those parts of the ADA have been very good, but actually the employment portions.... And I think that's really about attitudes and creating environments and culture and communication policies, and they, it gets much more sort of detailed and nuanced,

00:53:04:02 - 00:53:18:15

Chloë

and that has not been so good. And there’s this, there's a, a, a spirit of individualism. There's a belief where the employer controls, it’s their workplace, they have the freedom to fire at will and things like that, and I think that's been an impediment in the US.

00:53:18:15 - 00:53:22:29

Bryn

Yeah, very good point, yeah. I haven’t though about that. Yeah.

00:53:22:29 - 00:53:40:02

Chloë

So, in Britain, it seems to me, when we talk to people, that because you have aids for work, you have different programs, there are... I mean, and we talked to someone in, during our research, a number of people in Scotland that if, you know, there's certain jobs that if if somebody applies with a disability, they're actually required to interview them regardless,

00:53:40:05 - 00:53:40:18

Bryn

Yeah. Yeah. That’s correct.

00:53:40:18 - 00:53:46:11

Chloë

that there’s certain, sort of, things like that. Yeah. And so those don't exist in some places. What do you think about policies like that?

00:53:46:18 - 00:54:24:07

Bryn

Yeah, I think that those policies are helpful for, you know, they're great for getting people in the door. I think what, what what I've experienced, you know, with other people, less myself, that you need this ongoing support, right? And this is this assumption that your your impairment and your disability will remain stable. and so I think that things need to go a little bit further and, and also there, there isn't...

00:54:24:10 - 00:54:49:04

Bryn

There's the big challenge with having any policy is the people it's meant to benefit. These people, the marginalized people, they they have, they've spent their whole time hacking around stuff, you know, not being upfront about what they need, right? Because in order to do so, they've so often been punished. So there needs to be a... whatever framework there is,

00:54:49:06 - 00:55:11:03

Bryn

it also requires... it's a contract. It needs, there needs to be some kind of contract. It can't be: “Here's this new framework for the benefit of those people that I'm never going to deal with,” d’you know what I mean? There needs to be some kind of meeting in the middle. And I know that is abstract, and that's because I don't, I don't want, I don't have a clear idea of of of of what,

00:55:11:04 - 00:55:40:15

Bryn

of what good looks like. But I could say, I could say that we, you know, with gender, with gender equality, you know, initiatives like or requirements to, to, to publish, you know, your, your, your, your pay gap and you know, your employment rate, you know. Those things have seen the balancing of the books, but... you know... So that that that's good to an extent.

00:55:40:15 - 00:56:01:13

Bryn

So could we start to see a requirement on people to, on employers to say you, you know, what's the disability employment gap for the business, you know. That's definitely a possibility. But that would also require everyone to identify if they have a disability or not. You know. And what does that do?

00:56:01:16 - 00:56:03:11

Chloë

Yeah. Identifying is an issue, isn't it?

00:56:03:12 - 00:56:29:05

Bryn

Yeah. So so you know, in many ways it's, there's a bit of a standoff about the individual wanting to protect themselves, right, and their rights, versus actually wanting the benefit back, if you know what I'm saying. Like in, in, in, you know, sort of, in a crude example is I am disabled. You know, I say this when I go to the art gallery, “I'm disabled.

00:56:29:05 - 00:56:53:24

Bryn

Can I have a discount?” And they they look at me and they're like, “Yeah,” you know? I don't have to show them anything, you know. That is, that's not a system that is open to abuse. That's an... and it works in a in an art gallery setting. But it doesn't work in a, in a societal setting. So how do people, are disabled people ready to identify themselves as disabled people d’you know what

00:56:53:24 - 00:57:15:06

Bryn

I mean? And and to be part of the policies and the frameworks that, that they would essentially benefit from. Or whether... or not? D’you know what I'm saying? So so there's a need for, for a change, there’s a need for a policy change to, to to to bring it up in line with race and gender and all that stuff. But there's also, you know, there also need, we need to, the people need to change as well.

00:57:15:06 - 00:57:19:06

Bryn

They need to meet them halfway there, you know, at least, type thing.

00:57:19:09 - 00:57:46:04

Chloë

One of the things I found, I said this at the beginning, that Bryn has a really unique voice and an energetic voice that captivates you, you you kind of want to know him and know what he's talking about, to know what his life is like. And so that compels you to keep listening. But one of the things that I became aware of as a political scientist is that, that his, he is the specialist in terms of accommodation, but he's seems to be the only person doing it.

00:57:46:07 - 00:58:04:05

Chloë

And, so he doesn't have, like, a team. And it seems to me that he works for quite a large organization. So you're aware of the fact that he exists. He an important, you know, he does this work. But, how much can one person actually undertake in an organization that large? Now, he doesn't comment on that, but it's something I wonder about.

00:58:04:05 - 00:58:31:27

Chloë

And, you know, finally, and I've experienced this when I've been asked to do disability specialist type things, there was actually no budget accorded to to the actual things he does. He he indicated that he gets money when he asks for it and he get it, gets to do the things that he feels needs to be needs doing. But the fact that there's no formal budget, I think, also indicates the sort of this liminal state that disability still exists in for many organizations.

00:58:32:00 - 00:58:53:22

Isabelle

And one thing I really that really struck me was a lot of the people we've talked to, both in our podcasts and in our research, have have a pretty set career path, a pretty linear one. People get an education, work in one area, and tend to stick around for a long time in the area they're working in.

00:58:53:24 - 00:59:16:24

Isabelle

And that sort of there's more quantitative data on that as well, especially for disabled folks. But Bryn did not do that. He worked in every kind of thing. He moved to Austria, he came back, he got all kinds of different jobs. And that sort of is a really good challenge to our assumptions about how disabled people work,

00:59:16:27 - 00:59:43:23

Isabelle

and what sort of supports employers and governments and societies need to put in place to, to support people. Because if we're if we're thinking that, you know, disabled people always go for one job and want to keep working in that job, that's not necessarily the case for everyone. And it also, as a historian, broadens, sort of, the places I'll be looking for disabled workers, if that makes sense?

00:59:43:25 - 01:00:08:22

Isabelle

He talks about working on a construction site and how that was a bad experience for him, mostly because of social attitudes. But normally when we're looking for disabled people in history, we're not looking at manual labor. We're not looking for, as he said, a blind painter. And so he sort of puts the lie to a lot of assumptions about where disabled people are in our workplaces and the paths they take.

01:00:08:25 - 01:00:31:24

Chloë

That's fascinating. Yeah. No, I think you're right. He, it's, he's led a colorful life, right? And, and I think all the people we speak to have led a colorful life, but it's particularly apparent in terms of the leaps he's made and jumping around. And I think in part because he wasn't fully identified as disabled until quite late or he himself didn't take it on.

01:00:31:26 - 01:00:52:27

Chloë

The other thing that struck me is that his dad was in the visual fields. And what struck me is that that Bryn seemed to also have quite a visual imagination, even though he may have been visually impaired. And so, you know, I was thinking about, I was reading about, a visually impaired artist the other day who does art through tactile things, through tactile painting.

01:00:52:29 - 01:01:12:17

Chloë

And it made me realize that, again, looking... I would never have thought of a like, literally, he talks about painting houses, but if you're looking at a visual painter, why would you think there could be a blind visual painter? But they exist and there are blind photographers, and there is a visual imagination and creativity that exists, even if people's eyesight may not be the same as everybody else's.

01:01:12:17 - 01:01:23:11

Chloë

So I think your point is really well taken is, is trying to, understand that the the human realm is actually far more diverse. How we behave with our traits is far more diverse than we imagine.

01:01:23:13 - 01:01:27:20

Isabelle

Absolutely.

01:01:27:22 - 01:01:41:02

Chloë

Thank you for listening. We hope you've enjoyed this episode of Broadcastability. You can find us on the web at broadcastability.ca and theproud project.ca. You can also find us on social

01:01:41:02 - 01:01:46:15

Chloë

media at The PROUD Project on LinkedIn, Facebook and YouTube. And we are

01:01:46:15 - 01:01:50:21

Chloë

The PROUD Project CA on Instagram.

01:01:50:24 - 01:02:15:12

Isabelle

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01:02:15:15 - 01:02:18:01

Isabelle

We would like to acknowledge the University of Toronto, Scarborough

01:02:18:06 - 01:02:39:13

Isabelle

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