

**NDLA Webinar: Building Capacity with New Allies  
July 14, 2017**

Great Lakes ADA Center Moderator, Claudia Diaz: I'm going to introduce Karen McCulloh, the moderator for today's session. Karen you have the microphone.

**KAREN MCCULLOH:** Thank you very much Claudia. Good morning, to those of you who are on the West Coast, in between and good afternoon to those of you who have joined in the east.

I am Karen McCulloh, the Director of the National Organization of Nurses with Disabilities, an organizational member of the National Disability Leadership Alliance Steering Committee. Let me first share some information about the NDLA.

The National Disability Leadership Alliance is a coalition of 15 cross disability organizations that are consumer driven and led by people with disabilities. Today is historic for NDLA as this is the first ever webinar we have initiated. We meet during monthly conference calls and ensure ongoing communication via a listserv while addressing current and emerging issues and legislation confronting the disability community nationwide.

Every NDLA organization has their own mission but we collectively join in collaboration to develop strategies that result in strong advocacy that addresses threats to our community. There are also threats to groups and organizations that are not specifically disability directed and there is tremendous crossover of disability issues in the services and advocacy provided by organizations that are non-disability directed.

NDLA Steering Committee overall summary include member organizations that are associated with people who are blind, who are deaf, who have significant hearing impairment, who have spinal cord and neurological conditions and then other cross disability oriented organizations plus we

have a couple of specialty organizations like Not Dead Yet addressing physician assisted suicide and my organization National Organization of Nurses with Disabilities.

There is a second slide that continues the list of NDLA organizations, including four of us who are on this webinar that are steering committee members.

The national coalition of mental health is one that I did not mention and I think that's a very important Steering Committee member for the input that they offer.

Building Capacity with New Allies, the title of this webinar is not a new idea. We know that numerous committed minority groups and organizations have been addressing building capacity for many years. What precipitated the direction of this webinar was that since January Executive Orders and legislation and the rhetoric of intolerance has promoted even greater racism and introduced threats to communities across the country. The threats run specifically deep within minority communities, including women, persons of color, members of the LGBTQ community, formally incarcerated individuals, immigrants, refugees, members of religious groups and the disabled.

Today we have one hour to address diversity and inclusion and to amplify the effect of protecting independence, safety and self-determination. It is critical that we organize within and outside of the disability community so that campaigns are built by a diverse and inclusive collaboration of voices. The NDLA Steering Committee is committed to supporting and strengthening in any way we can intersectional efforts and believes that if marginalized communities that play such an important role in advocacy directed to their constituents join forces with more local state and national organizations, together, we can be a greater force to be reckoned with in Washington, D.C. and around the country. This takes time where many groups have been working on building capacity for several years. Today we have two presenters that have models represented by two

organizations that are members of the NDLA Steering Committee where both models are inclusive. One providing a model of activism and the other taking the initiative in rural America. Our guest speaker will be addressing race and exclusion and I think it is very important, it is one minority area that we are bringing today to the forum of this webinar but it is not the only issue that needs to be addressed. The bios of our presenters are available on the registration page. It is now my pleasure to introduce to you to Bruce Darling, an organizer and a main leader within the ADAPT community. Bruce take it from here.

**BRUCE DARLING:** Thank you so much. I want to publicly thank Karen McCulloh for fearlessly working to move NDLA to the next level. It was not an easy task to get us to do this webinar and to take action. I want to thank you for doing this. I want to thank Vilissa for joining us. So I'm going to start with ADAPT.

ADAPT is a national grassroots community organization that engages in nonviolent direct action to assure the civil and human rights of people with disabilities to live in freedom. So ADAPT is not your typical top down organization. We are not your typical organization in general. We are a collective, a grassroots community. There are two primary things that we are focused on. It is organizing, our community organizing building groups of folks at the local level and the activism that we do which is nonviolent but it is direct action which does include protest and civil disobedience that provides the opportunity for us to advocate for ourselves. ADAPT is organized through chapters that do direct action and advocate on local issues. As I said direct action does include civil disobedience and public accountability sessions, street theater, anything where groups of people get together and confirm power directly. Some of the local issues that folks have dealt with, one of my favorites is out of El Paso where their campaign one summer was to make every Dairy Queen in El Paso accessible. They moved from Dairy Queen to Dairy Queen to make them accessible. In Rochester, New York we had a group of folks that fought to oppose the fare increase. Folks used street theater, public protest and even singing the 12 days of paratransit during the holiday season to get the message across

that these fares are going to be far too much. We had a chapter do a protest at an adult bookstore to make it accessible.

Our chapters are bound together however on a focus on our national issue which is the community integration of people with disabilities and the fight for our lives and liberty. So we oppose any force that institutionalizes us. It runs deep and starts with ableism and a summons that we can't do what we need to do to ourselves but it is embedded in policies and procedures that force folks with disabilities into institutions. Whether it is the opposition to the owners of the nursing facilities and other institutions or organized labor that would prefer to have us all clustered together where they can organize the workers, we are fighting every day to free our people.

The foundation of ADAPT is trust and connection. Unlike other organizations that have membership cards and dues we are all about trust and connection. So the first thing is our focus on our collective purpose and cause. The thing that you notice when you come to ADAPT action is that we are laser focused on dealing with the issues that we need to address. Some folks describe it as a kind of a military approach. But it is not quite that because we value and respect everyone who joins the cause. If it isn't military it is an all-volunteer military. The focus on our cause binds us together and we respect and appreciate everyone who joins an action. I think one of the exciting things for me as a person in the movement who is helping lead some of these actions was an action a number of years ago where Claire came to us from Arizona. She came with some folks. She was a transwoman and we were at the end of the line walking along and she pulled me aside and shared, I never entered in to a group where I was immediately accepted for who I was. Sad that that is the world we live in but happy she found acceptance with ADAPT. We are not perfect on how we can address issues that are emerging for us. One of the things that we are working on now is to try to figure out how we can better address the issues faced by Muslims in America without getting sort of bogged down laser focus on is language so that we can be affirming of them and people can actually understand this. This is an area we are working on. Clearly, we have not as yet gotten that done. The intensity of our work pulls us

together as well. So think about trust exercises. You fall into the arms of someone and you are supposed to build trust. Is your advocacy surrounded by security guards and capital police? There is recognition that all of us together achieve our goals. We celebrate our victories and our big meetings when we are talking about the day everyone is encouraged to share the work that they have accomplished and to be recognized for their contribution.

Leadership comes from the collective. Our publicly identified leaders are organizers who advantage the collective. Our representatives from the individual chapters make up the decision making body of ADAPT. I'm actually in Denver right now where that collective is going to come together and talk about making decisions for moving forward. We have multiple levels of leadership. There is not a set group of people who lead what we do. It is always rotating and moving around. We are deliberate in making sure our leadership is representative in these actions. We have strong thoughtful protocol about who is actually going to lead. We make sure that we are representative of the community, not just of the individuals who are at the action but of the broader community as well. For me, I think I came on following an action in California before ADAPT was criticized for not having people who were non-visually disabled. A good friend of mine who is a Trans man, who is in leadership already, mentored me. So this is like, you know, the early '90s when I was actually being brought in to leadership within ADAPT and that was a very positive experience for me having someone mentor me. But we work to mentor leaders in our movement; within ADAPT. Between the actions, the national work is done in work groups and chapters. So that's sort of how the work happens in between. You hear a lot about what we do but that's the big push.

What we do is through our actions. We are fighting structural ableism and internalized ableism. So one of the things that people don't recognize is that people with disabilities who receive long term services and supports generally fit within a different franchise in our movement and society. One of the things that's difficult about co-organizing is these issues are not necessarily in the forefront of most people with disabilities' minds, at least

until the Republicans decide to pull services out from underneath all of us. And we have the internalized ableism that we are dealing with. So many have sucked up the ableism that some disabled people can't live in the community or need to be placed in nursing facilities to be safe or that some people are less than. One of the things that is difficult for some to acknowledge is that the folks who are locked up in institutions makes the world unsafe for all of us. That said, the change that happens when we do actions isn't just between the ADAPT and its target but it changes how activists see themselves. I have watched people fighting this fight view themselves differently and as much more powerful, and it changes how others see us. Clearly the recent actions have demonstrated that we are more than what people assumed we could be.

Developing allies: so our actions get us to the table and what we are looking for is respect for those where we can get together. For example, years ago we took over the Senate finance committee hearing room; although we had a very tough action to get there it was the work we did after that, that solidified our ally-ship. Great place for collective voices for people with disabilities and it is very exciting. We are still finding our way and determining where we move forward. Particularly thanks to Karen now. But this is really a unique aspect of our community because this is a voice of the organization run by people with disabilities and we are doing it with no money. The diversity of ADAPT members opens doors and leadership opens doors. I want to point out it is not securing or getting allies, it is about being allies. Our on the street experience with police in ADAPT, so we probably have more experience on the street than most people with disabilities; we need to know what the hell is going on when you are dealing with police just for our own safety. We are thinking about issues of people of color, immigrants, LGBTQ folks, there are clear Trans folks but we turn that into ally-ship. I'm thinking through our experience in taking action in Little Rock. We took the opportunity to express support for the protests that were happening in Ferguson. We were in proximity and the framing fit. When we were in Columbus a lot of folks saw some difficult pictures of folks being pushed out of their wheelchairs and that opened up conversations on the ground in Columbus with black lives

matter folks. We talked about how we could work together and leverage what the stories were coming out of our protests to basically address what is the long-standing issue with the Columbus police in terms of black lives matte, and their attacks on people of color. So moving to the next slide, with mobilization, we are really working to leverage the recent actions to transform the disability community. There has been a myth that we can't mobilize people. I think that myth has been "busted." The assumption -- what is wrong however is or has been difficult is that the messaging wasn't right. We have now had more than 30 actions in more than 30 cities and sustained activity for multiple weeks fighting this Republican bill. But that is just the fight against something. What we need is to fight for something and I think we are trying to help Democrats understand that the framing of our fight is life -- is fighting for life and liberty isn't about just opposing this bill. It is about something that resonates far more deeply. As we are moving forward, we need to have messages that resonate with our grass root that's intersectional in both message and messenger. We are working hard to make sure our messengers are intersectional and we need to highlight the power we have and includes specific asks and we are pushing Democrats to speak and fight for us and give us the tools we need to fight for them and pull out the vote. Now that's the political sort of focus of this. We are in a struggle to achieve social justice.

**BRUCE DARLING** continues: Thank you. I'm finishing up. So in a just world we strive for will only be achieved through solidarity, with other marginalized communities. As a community, we need to listen to them, learn from them, and we need to act accordingly. We need to understand that there is a toll that comes with being multiply marginalized; there is nothing that stings more than being marginalized by people you are a part of. So I call upon us all to look to people who are multiple marginalized and help advance them as leaders within our movement. Karen I will turn it over to you now.

**KAREN MCCULLOH:** Okay. Thank you very much, Bruce. Anyone who is on this webinar that hasn't heard about ADAPTers in all these cities with their protests have missed a lot of heartwarming activity but also

recognized the struggles with issues that are going to impact us particularly on Medicaid cuts and caps.

**KAREN:** It is my pleasure now to introduce to you our guest speaker Vilissa Thompson. She is calling in from South Carolina. Vilissa is the founder and CEO of Ramp Your Voice! I hope you had a chance to read her bio. She will be talking about intersectional efforts because there may be some people on the webinar that doesn't understand this and specifically focusing on race. So Vilissa, thank you very much and take it from here.

**VILISSA THOMPSON:** Thank you so much Karen. I am so glad to be here. About what I specifically focus on in my work....when I started Ramp Your Voice! almost four years ago, I started a big gap and when it comes to the way that we address race and the inclusion of disabled people of color. When I became a part of this work, I realized that we also have a big gap in our group to build bridges, not only within members of our community but also outside of the community as well. We harp on the concept of other communication background work issues, and allies and saying what is their experience all about. But we cannot expect those things until we are able to reciprocate these efforts within our community and outside of that. We have a very big problem with showing solidarity when it comes to issues that marginalized people endure in this community, particularly addressing race, LGBTQT issues, et cetera, and I wish we would do a better job of bridging those gaps because we can't see bridging gaps solidarity as a one way street unless it exists. We have to step up and see a better role in that. Some of the issues that I have seen are particularly narrowly focused on disability within our circle that hesitate and demonstrate resistance to discussing identities and oppressions outside of disability. This narrow tunnel vision harms as it is, equally oppressed based on disabilities. I like to say for myself in particular that you cannot separate my disability from my blackness and my blackness from my gender or one identity and not see the whole me. So really when we have that narrow field and we ignore the other identity of the past we

are not having a completely whole picture of that person and the oppressions that they endure.

This is a hostile environment for marginalized identities to discuss their particular experience. I know that in certain circles that resistance has really silenced people and have them see that they are not safe to discuss the issues that matter for them and that right there is an invisibility issue that we all need to be aware of. There are several reasons for the tunnel vision mentioned but I wanted to discuss three that are common in my work and that I had experienced personally. Micro aggression, action and over-whiteness. And for those who may not know micro aggression is regarded as an incident of indirect subtle or unintentional discrimination against members of marginalized groups such as racial or ethnic minority. I asked the question that pertains to black disabled women about an experience that we have and I find it very peculiar that white people jump in to that conversation and that action of jumping in to a conversation that was not directed for them is a micro aggression. Because it is -- it makes them the center of a discussion where they are not the target audience of that discussion. And it is those little things like that that may seem very minute to the person committing that micro aggression but to the person on the receiving end it is yet another example for us to why they are silenced, why they are still invisible and their voices are not heard. It is a big issue that we need to pay attention and how we engage with each other when we see conversations going. Is it best for me to just be a bystander and look at the conversations, maybe learn from what is being said and not intercede my opinions when it is not being sought after? How we engage with each other so that we do not unintentionally offend someone because we may be a little ignorant to the conversation at hand or ignorant how to properly engage with members of our community.

The over-whiteness in our community is seen everywhere, particularly in our disability or advocacy spaces, discuss the topic of interest and fighting against inequalities. This over-whiteness is why we see push back, particularly that from disabled people of color and that tunnel vision that narrow focus that I mentioned as to why the resistance when we talk about racially based issues in the community and receive that push back is because we have leadership that has these privileges that have this

minority experience who may not understand why discussions need to occur. The privileges that I mentioned are something that I really harp on in the work that I do. And I really feel that disabled white people do not understand that they are -- their disability does not nullify their white privilege. I want to say that again. Their disability does not nullify their white privilege. I think that's a very key concept, that white people have trouble understanding because some of them have ideas that I'm disabled; I don't have privilege. We all have privileges. We have oppression but not all disabled people experience oppression the same way. The quote by Peggy McIntosh is one of my favorite quotes to use when I discuss privilege -- the privilege is to social workers, disabled communities, et cetera, and it says privilege exists when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to, rather than because of anything they have done or failed to do. Access to privilege doesn't determine one's outcomes but it is definitely is an asset that makes it more likely that whatever talent, ability and aspirations a person with privilege has will result in something positive for them.

Basically we define privilege as a set of unearned benefits given to people who fit a specific social group. Society grants privilege to people because of certain aspects of their identity, aspects of person's identity that include race, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, geographical location ability and religion. Treated like to be bigger impression on you than being treated fairly. Privilege is basically the opposite of oppression. Privilege groups have power over oppression. What I encounter is -- it is the failure to understand that the privileges you experience it is just as important as the oppression that you experience and understand how this privilege or white privilege may not have been something you asked for but it is something that you benefit from to say what. To disabled people to have the same disability down to the "T" have the same experiences down to the "T," one is white and one is not. The way that this interacts is completely different and that's a fact and not an opinion.

One of the things that our community takes issue with is intersectionality. Intersectionality is important because it is part of the dynamic of a person's

world, invisible and visible, understood and overlooked. You cannot focus on one aspect of a person seeing and proclaim to see the whole person with oppression when marginalizations are in place; seeing the whole person is essential to understanding their full human experience. And that's why the meaning for those of us of color have concerns about the over-whiteness and micro aggressions and the privileges that have shaped the history of this as those voices who have deemed as -- that do not get the recognition that they deserve because they are of color and disabled. And this term that you see on the slide is coined by Kimberly Crenshaw a black woman who has created this term, that hones in on how we need to do better and understanding that we may have one particular common trait but it does not mean that we all experience the world the same way.

**KAREN MCCULLOH:** Two minutes.

**VILISSA THOMPSON:** Thank you. So what can be done? So here are a couple of ideas of what I believe can be done today to really get our community where it should be when it comes to intersectionality and building those bridges within the community. I believe that this work starts at home for folks and then outside of the community and connecting with other marginalized groups. First is understand though may be in struggle together but we don't struggle the same way. It is my experience in the world similarly. We support work of multiply marginalized disabled people. That's very important because our disabled advocates of color, several -- who do incredible work and do not get the recognition that we have in the community and it is time to recognize the work and highlight the services they offer and to give them the space to do the work that is needed. Take ownership of the over-whiteness issues within the organization's advocacy work and look around and assess and ask have I created a culture that's white dominated? If so, how do I correct that? What can I do to get more intersectional voices and faces in this organization in the work that we are doing? Make it a priority, communication, fact that anyone can

become a member throughout the lifespan and that's very important for us to remember. Any of us have become disabled which means that -- always make it a priority to be intersectional and welcoming a safe environment for people to be a part of. Give us time to do the work that is needed to become the allies in which to have. We cannot wait for tomorrow. It starts today and I want our community to do a very serious step inventory as to how we can held more accountable and strategize how to be in true solidarity and build up bridges to other groups. And on my last slide of the presentation, I have listed several advocates that have been doing the intersectional work of the community such as TL Louis, Lydia Brown, Anita Cameron, Alice Long. All of these persons are people of color and all of them are doing the work. I am very happy to call everyone on this list friends, colleagues and I really want to see organizations really give them the space to do the work that is needed, to support them and hire them and to make the disabled community better than what it is right now.

**KAREN MCCULLOH:** Thank you very much Vilissa! I think that your presentation will be helpful for people to understand more about intersectionality.

It is my pleasure now to introduce Billy Altom who is the Executive Director of the Association for Programs of Rural Independent Living. I am glad to have the rural point of view included in this webinar. Billy is calling in from Arkansas. Will you take it from here?

**BILLY ALTOM:** Absolutely. Thank you. What a pleasure to be on this webinar with all of you today and having the opportunity to present with Bruce and Vilissa. I hope I can live up to the performances that they just gave. But what I want to talk about today is casting a wider net while taking inventory of your community, and making the first move. What I can do first is tell you who APRIL is. Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living is a national organization dedicated to advancing the rights of people with disabilities in rural America. This is a whole new challenge when you get out in to the wide open spaces of America. But as a membership organization providing training and

technical assistance to our rural members, this is a critical component of the services we offer. One of the things that we are probably most known for is our peer to peer programs. Independent living got its foundation from peer support of a person with a disability mentoring with another person with a disability. So we took that and moved it to the next level and looked at how could an organization mentor another organization if they are struggling and that took off and we have been doing it now for just over 15 years with this program. Over the last few years, we have decided that we needed to branch it out a little more and look at statewide independent living councils and if they could mentor another statewide independent living council. So that program has taken off and we are doing well. We also have a rich history in transportation advocacy. We have done a lot of stuff through the years to try to always be at the table when policy is being written that would impact people with disabilities. But equally important to us is ensuring that young people with disabilities are involved in all facets of our program development and delivery. We try to be committed to the mantra, Nothing About Us Without Us. Having said that, we incorporated two new youth spots on our board of directors and we have incredibly active youth directory which is incredibly diverse. They probably do a much better job of being diverse than a lot of other programs that we have. But -- and also at our conference each year, we have a youth conference that has been attended by generally 80 people over the past years, growing a strong group of youth to take over in leadership roles. And in that regard my training and technical assistance director, Mary Olson got her feet wet as a youth for center of independent living and became part of our youth group at APRIL and from there I saw how wonderful she was and gave her an opportunity to be a national trainer and technical assistance director. I want to put my money where my mouth is. I want young people in positions where they can make decisions that impact themselves and their brothers and sisters. But what I want to do today is look at issues through a transportation lens but there are going to be some similarities in what we are talking about. The title of my piece is casting a wider net, taking inventory. So why would you take inventory? This can also be

applicable to any other programs such as housing or your youth programs. But mainly the reason to take inventory is because each community is different. If you are going to have different services, different organizations, different types of programs that are there, you want to try to bring on or identify some like minds and build some friendships. I am looking at this again if you are going to define those folks, collaboration is sometimes a lot more than money, and you have to build respect. You have to build that respect within your community. Sometimes your word and your reputation is all they have to go on, especially in rural America. I think it is true across the country. But certainly so and some of the smaller areas when we don't have a lot of money, your word is gold. Some examples when you are thinking about transportation and again collaboration, one of my favorite things to tell folks, collaboration is not just a good idea. It is a law. Thankfully in the FAST Act for transportation or Surface Transportation Bill requires folks especially our human service providers to collaborate. Whenever I am looking at folks I tell them look around at some of your general folks who are going to be your area agency on aging as they are always providing some type of transportation services. Churches in rural America or a lot of churches have either a van or some type of transportation that they have at their disposal that generally sits through the week. We need to figure out ways to collaborate and coordinate with those folks. Sometimes United Ways may have either some vehicles or some money. And, of course, the obvious is cab companies. We forget a lot of times about incorporating cab companies in to our business. On a national level, too, at schools, one of my favorites is not on the slide but schools. We need to be working a lot closer with our schools. We do this with our youth programs and getting in to those schools and identifying those young men and women who have a disability and turning them on to the independent living philosophy. On a national level, we also have looked at it with APRIL joining other groups like the Equity Caucus, America Walks and Rails to Trails. I know that folks always ask me and share that it is interesting that I am working with America Walks and some of these other groups. They are advocating for transportation and sometimes they are

advocating for the built environment. I like to be involved with these organizations to raise awareness that people with disabilities enjoy Mother Nature as well. We like to get out and walk and do the trails. Be mindful as they are being advocates to include all of us. Also, we have worked a lot with Center for Rural Strategies who works on a lot of different issues but had never really thought of disability issues. I am always trying to get my foot in the door with groups that traditionally don't work with people with disabilities and getting involved with them so they are aware of who we are and what we are trying to get accomplished. This creates some new allies. Because a lot of times it is not what you know but who you know in order to get things accomplished. So one of the things that I always strive to do is meet people where they are. And by that I mean a lot of times, they are not going to come to you. If your inventory communities and learn who all these folks are as players, you go to where they are and meet them where they are.

My contact information is on this last slide, and at the bottom there is the old slogan if you are not at the table, you are on the menu. This is said in D.C. a lot. One of the things we try to add to that is if you are not at the table you are on the menu, we want to set the table and that way we can have a little more control on the topics that are discussed and the input that is provided. I think I blew through that in a hurry. I wanted to say thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to present with such a great group of fellow presenters and Karen I will turn it back over to you. Thank you.

**KAREN MCCULLOH:** Thank you very much Billy. I'm glad that you are addressing transportation because we know that transportation is such a challenge in rural America. I can relate to that because I come from a small town where I can't even get to and if I did get there, there is no taxi, there are no buses. So this is a huge issue, particularly for paratransit and jurisdictional issues. I'm going to turn this over immediately to Gary Arnold who is also representing Little People of

America to address some questions. He will probably identify one of our presenters to address questions. Gary, do you have questions?

**Gary Arnold:** Hello. Thank you Karen. Thank you to all of the presenters today. Just a reminder in the chat section of the webinar you are able to submit questions and I will try to get to everything. We have got a little more than ten minutes for questions. I want to start off though with a question that -- open up to all three presenters. Anyone feel free to chime in if you have input. Question: What would you identify in your experience as one of the significant obstacles to building partnerships with groups that traditionally don't partner with disability groups? And how do you address that obstacle?

**VILISSA THOMPSON:** I can start. This is Vilissa. In my particular work I focus on social workers and the black community. And with social workers, social work typically engages with disabled people to provide services and supports. My focus with social workers is to reshape how we understand disability. In our programs we teach person first language and focus on teaching-- why first language is preferred in our community. I have the understanding from -- my experiences of disabled black people, people of color. I focus on issues of disabled women who seek sexual or reproductive services, how to make their clinic and facilities more accessible in both the content and language issues and reduce the ableism that exists. When it comes to the black community, I focus on the way that we look at disability and some of the negative connotations in identifying with being disabled and really open up the discussion for people who are black and disabled to really share their experiences and to talk about the stigma and the ableism that exists. To also allow people to understand that it is okay to be disabled and to be socially and politically disabled. The educational piece is one way that I have shaped my words to really bridge those gaps and connect with members who either are not very knowledgeable about our experience and/or are knowledgeable to an extent and to upgrade what they know so that it is more accommodating and accepting and current. A lot of languages and ideas are very

outdated. That's kind of what I do in my particular work, that is bridging those gaps with communities that don't focus on disability as disability affects everyone, whether directly or indirectly and how to be aware of the ableism that you may hover and how to learn, ideals about disability.

**BRUCE DARLING:** This is Bruce. I would like to jump in. In terms of the connection with the LGBTQ community, living in both communities one of the things that strikes me is we have incredibly similar structures. So my acculturation to the disability community was easy because everything looked very familiar to me in terms of how we families of choice that type of thing just sort of those internal structures. But it is the overriding value that we have that are very, very different and I think it does go back to ableism within the LGBTQ community. There is a lot of focus on physical ability, physical beauty and disability is seen as not -- unless you with reason a certain group of folks you are just -- you struggle within the LGBTQ community and we have just worked very hard to -- just to get basic access to events. When we have gotten access, things have really turned out well. I know that we fought to get access to oddly enough an event locally called Stronger Together which was going to be held in an inaccessible location. As we were introducing ourselves it took a guy from our group because folks were saying hi I'm John. I'm gay. Hi I'm Sara and I'm bisexual and had got to him and he said my name is Joe I am tri sexual because I will try anything twice. That humor broke through and connected us in a very real way. So that was a real positive thing and sort of building those connections although it might be difficult to get this to the room. sometimes, I think it is the human connection that you make afterward Ultimately I think some of the issues we had because there are a lot of people in the LGBTQ community who are service providers. They bring that kind of client approach to working with us and we struggle against that as it does come down to ableism.

**BILLY ALTOM:** I would like to build on what Bruce said. As a person with a physical disability, built environments are sometimes one of big obstacles. I have been invited to speak places and you can't get on the

stage and that changes the optics of what that group was trying to accomplish when they realize that the person they invited to speak that they can't get them up on stage and you are not going to pick me up on anything because I am not going to let you do that. Sometimes an embarrassing moment for them can really open people's eyes when they have been embarrassed, especially if there happens to be media in the room. There is nothing like a little public shaming.

**KAREN MCCULLOH:** This is Karen. May I add something?

**Gary Arnold:** We do have questions coming in. If you can do it quickly.

**KAREN MCCULLOUGH:** Go ahead Gary.

**GARY ARNOLD:** In a way this question kind of follows up on and addresses topics that presenters have brought up, but a question is that it seems that sometimes it is hard to build alliances with senior citizen advocacy organizations because seniors sometimes don't want to identify as people with disabilities even when they may share some of the same needs. They might reject alliances with disability groups. Do you have any insights on how to address this issue? Again, this is open for all participants.

**BRUCE DARLING:** Actually my husband did a participant action research project of elderly individuals in nursing facilities and they had a disability consciousness. We are talking to older individuals who are on the approach to disability and we are not actually talking to folks on the other side of that. And a lot of things that are happening are an age issue within that community where it is younger older folks who are speaking for people as opposed to allowing them to speak for themselves because of ageism. Cutting through ageism is going to be important for us. I was surprised at the level of sophistication and consciousness. It really amazed me.

**GARY ARNOLD:** Karen let's go back to you. I apologize before for cutting you off.

**KAREN MCCULLOH:** That's okay. I was going to address a totally different topic on the first question that came in. I'm a health care professional and I worked in community health for 7 years in the city of Chicago. When we are talking about creating alliances with organizations that are not disability specific, I wanted to comment that when I visited so many of my patients in their homes or apartments, I would walk in and probably go to refrigerator to see if they had their medication and I would see there was half eaten food in containers. I will tell you that creating awareness that there is such a direct connection with the disability community for Meals on Wheels and I'm just identifying this one connection, because if it was not for Meals on Wheels many of our seniors, people with chronic health conditions and disabilities living in their homes would not have any food. And so creating alliances like that and creating the awareness of how closely we are connected is another way that we can address creating those alliances. Thanks, Gary.

**BILLY ALTOM:** (Comment to what Karen shared) Here, here.

**BURCE DARLING:** I think the LGBTQ community in dealing with HIV came to the realization that you didn't need to self-identify as gay to get the services and supports. Doing the same for seniors, letting them come to acceptance of disability but still being open to them and talking their language is really important as well.

**GARY ARNOLD:** Thank you, Bruce. I think we have time for one more question before we will close it up. But Vilissa I want to go back to you with a question. In talking about privilege, have you recognized any of your own privileges within yourself and how is that impacted the way that you understand intersectionality? We will give it to you Vilissa and then if others want to, feel free, but Vilissa you first.

**VILISSA THOMPSON:** I am very aware of my privileges. I have education privilege, heterosexual privilege and neuro typical privileges. In understanding the privilege is (inaudible), it is not privilege that I had asked for, except for the educational privilege that I have. The rest are those that I (inaudible). But understanding my privileges, I understand how each of those separately and combined together has afforded me an opportunity that others may not have had and because I may present in a certain way due to my makeup, I know there are concern opportunities afforded to me than others. Having that very firm grasp of what why privileges has allowed me to experience physical experience than other people who may have similar types as myself, it makes me see that intersectionality has greatly shaped how the world interacts with me and I how I interact with the world and see how the world interact with those who do not have those same privileges, who may have similar privileges than myself but may not have certain traits or certain characteristics that their experience is quite different. For me being aware of my privileges not being ashamed of those and understanding that there certain things that are "(inaudible)" are outside of my lane and understanding my range so I won't over step and try to talk for people or over people, who would be better than me to talk about certain issues. Like today during this webinar, I published a quote about a person who is autistic and black. So giving people an opportunity to share their stories who are either new or divergent, who have other identities of blackness that I don't have, giving them the space to tell their stories or their perspectives about why a particular character or situation affects them greatly is given that space and not overstepping and not over talking. That's how I look at my privileges and understand intersectionality of how I project out the work I do.

**GARY ARNOLD:** I'm going to hold it there. I have one more question and we are at the point where I am supposed to turn it back over to Karen but Bruce if I can address it to you and if you can take 30 seconds to try to answer. The question is what about uniting with people in the deaf community, there is a lot of resistance I have noticed with not wanting to be a part of other organizations that might be thought of as "hearing only". What does ADAPT do to create an inclusive environment and for people

who are deaf and hard-of-hearing and what outreach do you provide to that community?

**BRUCE DARLING:** We have strong deaf contingent within ADAPT particularly because we are from Rochester. So we do provide the access and encourage folks who are deaf. Within the actions we take there is an amazing process that happens where we are translating what we are doing in English in to ASL. So there are a number of things that we are doing. So if there are folks who are interested in that, we have had a deaf individual lead our communications team. There is a lot that we are doing there. If folks are interested, they should just reach out to us by e-mail.

**GARY ARNOLD:** Great! Thank you so much Bruce and thank you everyone for participating. And for joining the call and I'm going to turn it back over to Karen.

**KAREN MCCULLOH:** Okay. Thanks a lot Gary. Great job! I want to thank everyone who has joined this webinar today. I wanted to just pick up on a few things. The NDLA Steering Committee while in the process of setting up and getting ready to conduct this webinar have had many lessons learned and it was interesting when the announcement went out about this webinar there were people on the NDLA general listserv that provided comments. We recognize this webinar has not brought all the people to the table that represents all the marginalized groups that we talked about. Religious groups, formerly incarcerated people, etc. but this is a start for us. We have set up a task force on racism. So we want to make sure we have the right people at the table. It is a start. There is a resource list that's available and it was downloadable on the registration page but once this session is over the resource list will go away. The resource list will be put on to the [www.NDLA.org](http://www.NDLA.org) website along with the audio and a transcript once available. Thank you to Bruce Darling, ADAPT, to Billy Altom from APRIL and especially to Vilissa Thompson as we really appreciated your input. The information you provided was very valuable..... and to Gary Arnold for fielding our questions. We have accomplished a lot in one hour. We know we have

more work to do and Thank you very much to the participants for joining the webinar. At this point I will adjourn. Thank you and have a great weekend