Speaker 1:

The Disability and Philanthropy Forum presents D'Arcee Neal, disability rights activist.

D'Arcee Neal:

The bottom line is that ableism is the belief in the value of a non-disabled body and that our entire culture, all of our systems of power and production and the way that we work and make money is in relation to this. However, I would also say that ableism doesn't just come from the outside, it affected me personally and directly because growing up as a child with cerebral palsy, a black child, you already know you're black, your parents tell you're black. And so therefore we know that our value is lessened, but ableism then follows up with that and it told me that I shouldn't even attempt to do better because there were no black disabled people that were trying to do better. When it comes to disability within the black community directly, the disability part is erased. You are basically a living ghost inside your own community.

D'Arcee Neal:

It exists, they see it, but only tangentially. And a lot of that has to do with the fact that we have not kind of taken up the mantle of embodiment, the way that we taken it up with race. It might make people angry and upset to say it, but in my viewpoint, the way I view it, embodiment supersedes race, because how you get up in the morning and how you feel in your body does not dictate whether you're black, white, Asian, or otherwise. And that part, the black community just has not come to terms with. We understand that black is beautiful and we've spent 50 years drilling that into our children. But when we talk about embodiment and also loving your own body, my parents hated the fact that I was a wheelchair user until I was like 25.

D'Arcee Neal:

They fought very valiantly to keep me on crutches and a walker because to them being ambulatory was far more important than everything else. And their argument was always, you have enough on your plate. So instead of really thinking about it in terms of me being a whole person, it gets compartmentalized into sections and then we start ranking. But like I said, I think that the key answer to this is embodiment. We have to take up the mantle of embodiment and put that as high or higher than race

Speaker 1:

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