

NARRATOR:

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum presents Eman Rimawi-Doster, Founder and Executive Director of Diversity Includes Disability and Senior Community Organizer at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest.

EMAN RIMAWI-DOSTER:

And so one really great proactive thing I would say is go out there and look for people. If you're looking for folks to fill whatever jobs you're looking at, whatever the job is, don't just go to the places that you always go to; go to some different places. Work with your local independent living centers, for example. Go to your local community board meetings. There's a lot of elders and a lot of disabled folks who go to community board meetings. I know that because I've been to every single one in New York, including Staten Island. And make sure that you're meeting people where they're at. Don't just say, "Hey, we want to hire people with disabilities," and then hire them to clean the bathroom. And then granted, there's nothing absolutely wrong with that at all. At the same time, those are not the only jobs that we're qualified to do.

When I went through a whole bunch of wild stuff with my health about 15 years ago and I stopped working full time and went to do the freelance stuff to survive, it was incredibly difficult. And then when I rejoined the workforce, y'all, when I tell you that was so difficult, I got no support to do that, and I had to basically do it all on my own. I don't want to shout on anyone and get Disability & Philanthropy in trouble, but the folks who take care of returning back to work, they didn't like that I found my own job. They didn't like that I had resources already that I could say, "Hey, you guys, I'm rejoining the workforce. Want to look at my resume? Got some things." They didn't like that.

And so I would say for folks to make sure that they, again, meet people where they're at. Go where the people are. Make sure that you're not just going to some big wig Ivy League University looking for folks to apply for your jobs. Make sure it's diverse. And also don't just hire a white guy in a wheelchair. There are so many other folks with disabilities out there like myself, like Zakiya, like anyone else in the world who can work for you and do an amazing job. Don't discount us for whatever weird reason you're discounting us. Yeah.

NARRATOR:

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