JUSTICE SHORTER:
Greetings, phenomenal folks, and welcome back to another episode of Disability Inclusion Required. I am your host, Justice Shorter. Now, before we begin, I want you to take a beat and breathe into the most creative corners of your bodies and minds because today we're going to have an incredible time talking about the artistry of philanthropy. We're joined this show by Michael Greer and Jen White Johnson as President and CEO of Arts Fund, Washington State's largest funder of independent, unrestricted arts and culture. Michael leverages his experience to create community solutions through the arts. His background spans financial services, manufacturing, performance, arts, and philanthropy. Michael has an academic foundation in economics, mathematics, and education, as well as an MBA from the Wharton School. Michael applies interdisciplinary knowledge to foster healthier, more connected communities. As a recognized community leader, national speaker on the role of arts and civic life, he champions the transformative power of creativity to enrich lives and strengthen society.
Jen White Johnson is a distinguished Afro-Latina artist, activist, designer and educator whose creative expressions delve into the intersection of content and caregiving with a profound interest and focus on reshaping ableist visual culture. Jen, an artist educator grappling with Graves disease and ADHD, brings a heart-centered approach to disability advocacy. Her invaluable contributions to these movements manifests through powerful art and media that simultaneously educate bridge divergent worlds and envisions a future reflective of her autistic son's experiences. Jen's activism extends to collaborations with notable brands and art spaces such as Coachella, Target, and Adobe. Her photography and design work have gained recognition in esteemed publications like Art in America, Juxtapose Magazine and Afro Punk. She has contributed insightful essays to publications like After Universal Design, the Disability Design Revolution and An Anthology of Blackness. You can find some of Jen's work permanently on display and archived at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the National African-American Museum of History and Culture. With an MFA in Graphic design from the Maryland Institute College of Art, Jen resides in Baltimore with her husband and son. Michael, Jen, thank you both so much for joining us today. How you doing?

MICHAEL GREER:
I'm doing great, Justice. This is Michael, and we're really happy to be here today.

JUSTICE SHORTER:
That makes me smile. Jen, how are you doing dear?

JEN WHITE-JOHNSON:
Yeah, I'm just thankful for this opportunity to just be in community with both of you. So yeah, to echo all the feels and the vibes in the Zoom room, I'm just so excited. So excited.

JUSTICE SHORTER:
Likewise, likewise. And I'm excited to launch us into this conversation with this first initial question. So tell me now, if there was a piece of art that you could live in for a week, what would it be and why? I'm thinking movies, visual art, plays, theater, what piece of art would you live in for a week? Michael, kick us off.

MICHAEL GREER:
Oh, you're going to make me go first. Michael Greer, he, him pronouns. I'm really excited to be here. A visual description, I'm a light-skinned black male with no hair, wearing some black chunky glasses and a blue button-down shirt sitting in front of a blurred background. And I thought long and hard about this question, but I just kept coming back to the same answer, it's got to be Miles' Sketches of Spain. Every time I listen to that album, I think, I don't know where that place is specifically, but I want to be there, I want to live there. There's a certain amount of mystery to it, but it goes in and out of being slightly lighthearted and kind of really deep and intense. I was thinking about it a little bit more because you kind of prepped us with this question, and I was thinking about, there's not enough mystery, in my opinion, in the world today.
We live in a world of the internet and Chat GPT and all these different things where I feel like information is just so readily available that there's not enough unknown, there's not enough mystery, there's not enough suspense out there as to what is available and what's coming next, in my opinion. And so art to me a lot of times can take me back into that world of mystery, of the unknown, just a place where I'm thinking about the immediacy of everything and not having all of the pieces of trying to put it together. And I don't know, Sketches of Spain really does that for me in a way that it takes me to a place that I would love to spend a week or more.

JUSTICE SHORTER:
Well, I got my playlist. I'll keep [inaudible 00:05:46] tonight. I'm one to definitely take a listen. That is splendid. Jen, coming on over to you. Where would you live for a week?

JEN WHITE-JOHNSON:
So yeah, just to kind of continue on this sensory journey, I'm an autistic woman and also I live with ADHD. I'm a caramel skinned Afro Latina person and I'm wearing a gold headband and I have these gold bamboo earrings. Shout out to hip hop culture. And I think for me, where I would live for a week is in Motown's Studio A. I just had the privilege to visit Hitsville USA last week in Detroit, and in studio A, they give you the full tour where you can just exist in the studio where Stevie Wonder recorded and Marvin Gaye, you can see the original Congos that were played on What's Going On, and they have images of The Supremes and Diana Ross and everyone, even the original piano that Paul McCartney had restored after it had been just run down. I would just want to live in Motown studio A for a week listening to Stevie Wonder sing. As a fellow blind, disabled, amazing artist, I would just ascend to the heavens. And he just celebrated his 75th birthday, and my dad is 75, so I feel like Stevie's kind of like that father figure of so many of us, like cross generations of beautiful artistry, and his presence and everything that he really represents and just the soul. Even for deaf folks, we could feel the vibrations of the beat and the funk. And just everyone, no matter where you are on the spectrum of disability, the music has hit us on so many levels. So that's where I would live, Studio A listening to him perform.

JUSTICE SHORTER:
Oh man, that sounds extraordinary. We literally just caught Stevie in concert last year in

Baltimore where you reside and his concert was exceptional. It was so, so good. And I had to ask you this because you know people do this at the White House all the time, or at least they used to try to get away with little mementos, the things that they took away from the place. I'd have to ask, did you take anything from Studio A? Do you have a pen or a rock or anything that...

JEN WHITE-JOHNSON:
Oh yeah. I mean, I documented so much of... I have a selfie of me and Stevie, the early era before the braids and before the funk era. So it's like an old cover of Jet Magazine that they have vinyl on. It's like when you walk into the Hitsville USA like museum entrance, they have this really beautiful photo mural of all of the artists past and present, from the Stevie Wonder, Queen Latifah, like Boyz II Men, everyone. It's like I had to take my selfie right in front of Stevie. So yeah, I have that as a memento. It's like him and I were together just in that little moment.

JUSTICE SHORTER:
But you didn't steal a drum or piano and that's good. You're better than me. No, I'm joking. That is wonderful. That is so great. I want to set the stage a little bit for today's conversation. When the two of you hear phrases like the artistry of philanthropy, what does it bring to mind for you? How would you define it? How would you describe it? Michael, let me come to you first.

MICHAEL GREER:
Yeah. I mean, when we talk about philanthropy, I think we get caught up a lot of times in the science of philanthropy when we're looking at, what are the metrics that we're using? How are we measuring impact? How are we creating algorithms to distribute equitable funds? And what are the numbers when it's comes to impact of that philanthropy within certain geographies, certain demographics? And I think the artistry is the counterbalance to all of that. We live in a world, again, of big data and we have access to a lot of different metrics and numbers in ways that I don't think we've ever been able to bring all that together. But at the end of the day, there's a human lens that needs to be put on how we are creating impact and affecting change because not only is that data that we're using... And this goes to all types of data, but that data that we're using is influenced by imperfect inputs and by historical preferences that are rooted in ideologies that are counter to what we are trying to see in our communities and the effect that we're trying to make.
And so that's where I think the art of philanthropy comes into play because when you get individuals that are experts in their fields, they are members of their community, when those folks are processing all that data and then putting a human lens on it and putting a community lens on it and basically looking at that data and applying it to what they know is true, then that's where I think you get the biggest impact. In just using the data that we've got available just as it is, we run into the potential of amplifying decades or centuries of harm that have been integrated into that data. But if we can take that data and run it through the lens of individuals that are part of the community and are part of as close as possible to the impact that we're trying to have, then I think you get a lot of potential good from that data. And that to me is the art behind the art and science of philanthropy.

JUSTICE SHORTER:
I'm so happy you mentioned the expertise that comes from witnessing because so often people with disabilities, what we know to be true in our bones and in our heart and our flesh and our blood has been discounted, it has been dismissed, it has been demeaned both in a court system and on the streets and boardrooms. All around the world, people have had similar experiences of saying, "Hey, there's something wrong here." Or, "Hey, we want to amplify this issue," And people disregarding the things that we know to be true, things that we have become very expert just based on the proximity to some of these problems that we endure on a day-to-day basis, so I appreciate you for raising such issues. Jen, I want to come over to you. How would you respond?

JEN WHITE-JOHNSON:
Yeah, and thank you for that, Michael, being able to kind of find the balance because I'm looking at a definition of philanthropy right now, and it says that at its core, it's a form of altruism focused on improving human welfare and the quality of life. So welfare and the quality of life, it's like the word human is integrated into that definition that I'm reading, but often we forget that being disabled is a very human experience. They're constantly trying to remove us from our humanity, from our identity, from our joy, from our presence, our communities, just all of what you were saying. And I feel like the art of it is, how can we lean more and let disabled folks kind of lead those conversations? Because I feel like so much of it is rooted in, oh, what can the non-disability community do for you as a disabled person? How can we fix you?
How can we fund you? How can we be that hope and that savior for you, the non-disabled savior so that we can put in all this work to make you seem less disabled and less at risk or less in need? And it's like, no, our disabilities define so much of who we are and define our leadership skills and our liberatory practices, so why can't you just fund our opportunities for wellness and art, our opportunities for joy?

JUSTICE SHORTER:
Both of you have touched on this, but I want to give you all space to cook up even more. Answer this question for me, what do you say makes the sector, that being philanthropy, breathe and brim with creativity? And actually more importantly for the purposes of this conversation, how can that energy be channeled in ways that directly benefit those people with disabilities that you're talking about? Jen, just expand on that a bit more.

JEN WHITE-JOHNSON:
Yeah, and this is such a great question because like I was saying, I feel like so much of the conversation is based on what can we do for you? How can we talk at you? And it's so reductive instead of letting us lead. So I'm more... Like to me, that brim of creative energy comes from what happens when we continue to let the disabled community lead, especially the black disabled community, because we've always very much been leaning on and building these conversations of access and joy, where we've been building [inaudible 00:15:19] so long and we are the original stewards of justice because of our civil rights that have been completely upended throughout or just broken down throughout the year. So like I said, we're so used to building these forces and these revolutions of justice, and they're always viewed as divisive and

violent.
And it's like, no... Like the Black Panthers, we were feeding people, we were building our own schools, our own institutions of liberatory learning, and I feel like that creative energy to me comes from honoring those who've paved the way for us and brimming those new ideas of hope or just kind of reclaiming those ideas of hope that have already informed so much of the work that we're doing. So I feel like how can we just look to the past to continue to usher in the conversation?

JUSTICE SHORTER:
Michael, I would presume that you agree, but do you have anything to add to this?

MICHAEL GREER:
Absolutely. And thank you Jen for setting that stage. At Arts Fund, where I'm at, we work specifically within the creative sector and we work with about a thousand arts and cultural organizations through philanthropy, so it's kind of woven into what we do, but I think very specifically, and this harkens back to the conversation that Gail and I had around how artists are kind of the stewards of a cultural narrator. And Jen, as you were talking about, that narrative is defining not only for the people, for disabled people, but it's also defining for those that are engaging with people with disabilities, right? So is it a savior mentality that you approach the disability community with? Is it a deficit mindset or is it one of abundance or additive? I mean, one of the things we always talk about here is that diverse perspectives, whether they be race, whether they be ability, whether they be gender or orientation, are additive to all conversations, whether they're within arts and culture, whether they're in the corporate space, whether they're in the political space, the world is made up of a lot of different people.
And as a CEO myself, I want as many different perspectives giving me honest feedback on how to move forward with my decisions as possible. And I think that within art and culture, if you are resourcing, and philanthropy, bringing it all together, but if you are resourcing those that are creating and stewarding the stories that are being told and the way that we see ourselves as a people, then you really have a lot of influence in how you are bringing together all the voices of a community and making good decisions. And so I think that it's just incredibly important to be resourcing through philanthropy and other, and public and private funds as well, the artistic side of storytelling. And that is 10 times more important for any type of community that does not have the voice of the dominant culture, and that is specifically applicable to people with disabilities.

JUSTICE SHORTER:
Come on now, I could not agree more. I also want to add a quick explanatory comma for folks who may not be familiar with the incredible force that is Gale, but for folks who might not have caught the reference when you mentioned Gale's name, Gale is the creative director at DPF, so I just wanted to shout her out and to make sure that folks knew her name. I want to stroll on out to center stage for a moment here and shine a spotlight on disabled artists and artists projects, so let's give you both an opportunity to shout them out. Are there any disabled artists or specific projects that involve disabled artists that you both would like to amplify in this moment? Jen, I'm going to start with you. Shout them out.

JEN WHITE-JOHNSON:
Yeah, so many. The first person that comes to mind is Amina Mucciolo, who runs A Rainbow in your Cloud. Amina is an amazing queer, black, autistic artist that just creates these really vibrant illustrations that really amplify autism acceptance, autistic joy. So whether they're designing interior spaces that encompass so many beautiful sensory rooms and spaces and interiors, or if they're designing graphics for TV series and opening credits, I feel like there's this really gorgeous aesthetic that autistic artists uphold. There's no singular colors. A lot of times folks ask us, "What are your favorite colors?" And I'm like, "I love the full spectrum of the rainbow." It depends on the day. It depends on the day. I may love blues and purples one day, but then the next day I'm fusing it into oranges and pinks. And so I love how Amina incorporates all of these vibrant colors that really paint our own conversation of autistic revolutionary joy. So definitely check out Amina Mucciolo.

JUSTICE SHORTER:
Michael, over to you. Any folks you want to shout out?

MICHAEL GREER:
This is a dangerous question because we fund about a thousand organizations across Washington state. I try not to name names. I will say there are organizations that are doing great specific work. I'm thinking of works like Death Spotlight out here run by Patty Leong. I'm thinking of AIM Seattle, Adaptive Inclusive Movement Initiative. These are organizations that are run by people with disabilities for people with disabilities, and uplifting that narrative around how the lived experience of people with disabilities intersects with others that may not be as familiar with the community and how it influences their life and their everyday well-being.
But I will also say that I think we should continue to pay attention to those organizations and those initiatives, whether they're artistic or political or corporate, that are being run or led by or have senior leadership from people that are disabled, that are not necessarily organizations that are focused on disability or focused on disability culture or community because I think that is equally as powerful for us, and by us, I mean people with disabilities, to be in spaces that are not necessarily disability focused, but bringing that lived experience, bringing our own experience of disability into spaces that are not walled off for the "disabled community". And I think you find that a lot of times also with the black community or with the LGBTQ plus community, it's like, "Well, great, y'all can do your work in this space and then we'll take that out," But I think it's important to recognize, in your own world, look around and see who is leading organizations with the perspective of disability. And they may not be doing it, like I said, within a "disability organization", but they are bringing that lived experience into those decision-making rooms, and I think we need to uplift that and recognize when that's happening around us.

JUSTICE SHORTER:
Absolutely am in alignment with you there. The one thing that we often mention is that representation is great and it is necessary work, but we also want that reputation to be rooted and community rooted in culture, rooted in a lot of these collective experiences that we've been having. And so having people in high positions but who may identify the way we identify, but

who don't reflect or recognize a lot of the issues that we're dealing with, therein lies the problem, but when you have someone who can more seamlessly merge those perspectives into the work, the policies, the reach of said organization, it is incredibly powerful. So I hear you on that one.
I'm going to also go ahead and just throw out a couple of things here if I can. We put out recently, one of course being EMPrints, that's spelled E-M-Prints, and that is over 20 disaster justice themed coloring pages, activity pages, journal pages, all free and all centering people of color with disabilities.
I said this is going to be a conversation where we stroll center stage, while EMPrints is all about putting people of color with disabilities center page, especially when we're having conversations about racial justice and disaster justice issues. The last project that I will mention is Portraits and Portals, which is a project so near to my heart. I have been working on it for over two years. And the whole purpose of the initiative is to bring eight different disaster survivors with disabilities, who are people of color, together with eight disabled artists of color to put together projects that amplify issues at the nexus of disaster justice, disability justice. We'll premiere later on this summer, but the artists I want to uplift who are involved in this incredible project are folks like Fred Beam, Sarah Young Bear-Brown, Deshaiman Solomon, the Open Door Poets, L and Var, Thomas Reed, Tyree Brown, Johnny J, my girl Yanez Gonzalez Gomez, who I love, who goes by Gogo. All of them are extraordinary.
You can find their profiles up on the website, portraitsandportals.com, and the actual project will premiere and the artwork will premiere on the site later on this summer, so I hope you all will go check that out as well. Michael, I'm coming back over to you because I know that you have a background in mathematics, so I have to ask this question. If you had to create a formula for inclusive philanthropy, what would it entail?

MICHAEL GREER:
Yeah, that's a great question, and I'm going to respond without responding because I think that formula is better left to people far smarter than me, but I think that one of the things that I've been kind of harping on here as we've been talking, Justice, is around the ability for us to get data in ways that we've just not been able to do ever. And so I would say that when we are looking at creating algorithms or creating formulas to figure out how best to both identify the need that are in community and to disperse funds in a way that addresses that need and to create that impact, we are trying to take data from as many different sources as possible. And I encourage folks that are in philanthropy, whether they're in disability philanthropy or any type of philanthropy, to use the data that you have to its fullest.
Figure out what are the data points that you think are going to move, and what are the data points that tell you the stories of the communities that you're trying to serve? So that can be numbers around representation and how do people identify that are in leadership positions? How do people identify that are being served by the organizations you're trying to support? What is the geographic distribution of those that you are, A, trying to serve, and B, that those organizations are serving? How do you look at the number of dollars that are already flowing into these organizations? So I think there's a lot of different metrics that are readily available, and us as leaders in philanthropy need to also be stepping up our games quantitatively to be able to understand and process this data in a quantitative and a statistical way that makes sense and is on par with a lot of other quantitative sectors that are out there today because the

data's available and it does help guide.
Now again, I will say, what would that formula look like? And this is integral to the way that we run our processes at Arts Fund, is we take in as much of this data as possible, we create algorithms, we work with people that are incredibly way smarter than I am at Microsoft and other big quantitative corporations that are out here. But at the end of the process, we always have a panel of human experts that are attached to the communities that we're trying to serve and attached to the field to process that data and process the results that come from that data. So the formula itself is not, in my opinion, as important as how it is being interpreted by those that are making the final decisions. And I think we live in a world where everyone... I love Chat GPT and Co-Pilot as much as anybody, but you've got to have somebody at the end of that process that can interpret it in a way that is meaningful to the people you're trying to serve.
And if you don't do that, I think the algorithms and the data and the metrics, all of that, it's just a regurgitation of, quite honestly, all the crap that we've been dealing with for generations, and we don't want to encourage that. We want to make sure that it is being seen and processed in a new light, a new light that pays attention to the needs of community, particularly disabled community, communities of color, and communities that have been historically marginalized.

JUSTICE SHORTER:
Problems that we've been dealing with for generations. Makes me think of problems that we don't want to continue dealing with for generations in the future. And I think about in connection to environmental degradation and all of the concerns around AI trying to discern and always keeping front of mind how we continue to move forward with technological advancements. Jen, I want to bring you on in here. Can you talk to us a little bit about how disabled folk have used art as an intervention?Especially when it's in connection to injustice, how do these types of artistic acts possess the power to help keep our people safe?

JEN WHITE-JOHNSON:
And this is an awesome question because I love that you mentioned an indigenous artist earlier in your roundup of amazing artists that you respect and folks like Johnny J and Sarah Young Brown. And I want to be able to really amplify the original stewards of the land like disabled, indigenous artists and designers and media makers, and there's also crushing colonialism like the work of Jen Deerinwater and where Jen is constantly amplifying environmental injustices and specifically how they're brought upon disabled indigenous artists and media makers in terms of folks that are really reclaiming narratives and really amplifying the fact that disabled indigenous folks, again, before printing presses and before graphic design, before all of these things were enacted, they were constantly advising us on how to take care of the land, on how to rely on the environment to allow for us to feel safe, where they understood following the buffalo and how all of these things were intertwined.
Nature itself was like an artistry and learning it and understanding it, and I love the work that they do with being able to, again, rely on natural resources and textures and all of these things that, like we can make by hand to really amplify the conversation of injustice. So I love that we can rely on them for keeping those indigenous stories alive. And I feel like because that community continues to deal with atrocities like environmental injustices, conversations on missing women and conversations on, again, their perspectives not being prioritized because

they're subjected to different spaces that don't always have internet equity and whether they're living in food deserts, and so they're always sounding the alarm in terms of what we need to continue to prioritize in terms of conversations when it comes to amplifying their perspectives and how that, again, impacts the work that we do.
And then, of course, I think of Lois Curtis, and may she rest in power and may she continue to be such a revolutionary light for us in terms of how Lois not only used her advocacy, but she used her artistry and she used her own autistic joyful aesthetic in terms of the portraits that she painted of her friends and of folks that she really wanted to just amplify. And so I feel like every time that you're willing to kind of use the work to create radicalized conversations on our disabled authenticity, especially our neurodivergent authenticity, I feel like that in itself is the revolution that we want to continue to see, that we've been waiting for. Back to that statement, we are the change that we've been waiting for, and so I feel like if we continue to just allow our communities to just show up in full on authenticity and solidarity, again, I'm always going to go back to the conversation with disability leadership because we've always understood how to kind of build these infrastructures that work for us instead of against us.

JUSTICE SHORTER:
Stimulating and steering these radical conversations that you mentioned are not without risk. So talk to me about how funders can protect disabled artists, especially when artists are faced with very real threats, like loss of funding, loss of work opportunities and doxing.

JEN WHITE-JOHNSON:
Yeah. I mean, it's happening now. Even within the names that I just mentioned, there are events that are completely being canceled and ways that we're having to create our own spaces of fundraising and where a lot of artists are donating their own artwork to help fund opportunities and events. And so whether we're relying on artist residencies or artist grants to, again, provide or any kind of fiscal sponsorships that we're relying on to continue to keep the flow of equity going through, I feel like it's a really scary time because... But again, we have to continue to lean on each other, and that just goes back to the principles of disability justice where interdependence and collective access and this anti-capitalist politic, it's like, let's be real. Those spaces have never really been supportive to our needs, so as long as we can continue to come together and to rely on each other and justice to fund because we've always been really taking care of each other.
Even going back to in 2020 when we first met and where we rallied and we were amplifying black disabled lives that are no longer with us, and we supported. I had artwork, I brought posters, we had Day Al-Mohammed who was able to come in and do filming. We already had such a strong internal structure of just justice makers that we knew just one phone call or just one text, and we could just all rally together to, again, continue building this revolution. And I feel like now more than ever, we just have to continue to just lean on each other and not be afraid to plan our own events and plan our own kind of revolutions. And a lot of us are doing it.

JUSTICE SHORTER:
I'm holding back and fighting the urge to get into a stirring rendition of Lean On Me. I'm not going to do it because I care about the listener. I'm not going to do it. But Michael, I am going to

come on over to you. Can you give me two things that funders could do to contribute to the creation of more job opportunities for people with disabilities who wish to work in arts and entertainment? There's so many jobs, there's so many things from lighting, from sound, to writing, to production work, and of course the actual act of acting or being an artist. So can you just give me two things here that you think funders could do to support folks who want careers in several different pathways?

MICHAEL GREER:
Absolutely, Justice, and I'm going to give you one specific and one more theoretical. I think first and foremost, funders can look at specifically what is the composition of the organizations that they're funding in terms of disability representation. So you can ask your grantees, how many people in leadership identify as having a disability? How many people in your artistic or your programming, and then you can adjust your funding criteria accordingly, or you can at least present those numbers to your panels or to your boards or to those that are making the final decision with the intent that if the goal of the program is to move forward, the number of individuals that are working within the field that identify as having a disability, then here, we have the data, so we can fund accordingly and send that message to our grantees or to those that are in the community that this is important to us and that funding decisions will be made in a way that will move forward that specific type of impact. So that is one specific thing that grantors can do...

JUSTICE SHORTER:
Got it.

MICHAEL GREER:
Is measure and fund accordingly. And then more theoretically, we can continue to voice the idea that lived experience is a skill. It's a skill like having a doctorate or having a law degree or having an MBA. If what we are trying to do is to put more people with disabilities in positions of power and positions of decision-making, then we need to identify in our hiring processes and in our search functions that that lived experience is a skill that we are hiring for. And we need to be explicit about that, and we need to let our grantees know that that is something that if they are telling us that they have a focus on increasing the amount of representation in the organizations that they fund, that those grantees need to be treating that lived experience as something that they're looking for and hiring for.

JUSTICE SHORTER:
I sometimes say put your metrics where your mission is. People have these beautiful, flowery missions that we care about inclusion and diversity and equity, but when you look at the numbers, they don't reflect it in terms of their staff, their board, the community sometimes that they've even working in, all of the above, so I hear you on that. Jen, I want to come over to you and ask for two. Can you give me two things that funders could do to make art more accessible and available for people with disabilities? I'm thinking about folks who cannot get out there to art gallery viewings and movie screenings, concerts or other types of pop-up art events.

JEN WHITE-JOHNSON:
Yeah. My friends over at the Critical Design Lab, what they do is they host these remote access parties that really amplify what a Crip nightlife gathering can look like. So they have a DJ come through, like DJ Who Girl, Kevin Gotkin, who runs the Crip News newsletter, and it's an amazing space where we can just all keep updated on what's happening in disability culture. And so Kevin will come and DJ, we'll have poets, we'll have artists who will share artwork online, and we'll do live poetry readings, we'll do myself, Dr. Aimi Hamraie and Alice Wong, we were able to come together to launch the Society of Disabled Oracles, where there were all of these artists that came in and did their incantations of what they can conjure up as disabled folks that are always sounding the alarms to things that we need to be insightful about like economic injustices and environmental injustices.
And all of it was done through Zoom and we had 150 people show up, and folks were able to submit things ahead of time, things that they wanted to be read online about just their oracular truths in terms of the disabled future that they want to see and envision. So they've had a ton of remote access parties that have different themes, and it's just been phenomenal to know that, again, virtual online spaces or spaces where we can make radical revolution happen as long as we're kind of put in charge of all of the access conversations we have, whether it's deaf raves that are happening through virtual spaces, there is so much beauty happening that can transcend so many different artistic presences.

JUSTICE SHORTER:
And Michael mentioned this before, right? Listening, learning, replicating things that are being done and led by disabled folk. You talked about this also at the very beginning, Jen, so I love that you mentioned that because to your point, there is just so much exquisite beauty taking place all around us, irrespective of whether or not people refuse to acknowledge it, it is still happening, it is still in existence, it's still in the world, and that is beautiful. Can each of you dream us out by way of this prompt? What will art free us from next? What new artistic inspired awakenings would you most wish the world to experience? Michael, I'm going to start with you.

MICHAEL GREER:
Yeah. Art frees us from ourselves. I mean, that's what it does. I think that we are living in a world in which technology is taking this space for so much of the day-to-day that we have had to physically contribute over centuries, and maybe millennium. And we are going to look back at this time and say, over the past 30, 40 years, technology has allowed humanity to look forward in a way, this is my personal opinion, but in a way that we've never been able to and say, well, how do we dream about our future? How do we dream about our own humanity when we don't necessarily have to be farming for our food tomorrow, and we don't need to be looking as much at the day-to-day necessities, as we did, say, a hundred, 250 years ago? And so that's where I think art comes in, is that it's going to be more and more important for us to have vehicles from which we can self-actualize and try to rationalize, what is our purpose?
What is our purpose for ourselves? What is our purpose to community? What is our purpose to the future of humanity? Etc. And that's what art does. It gives us tools in order to focus ourselves on bigger questions, bigger topics, and particularly around how we interact with each other as humans. And so that's what I hope art will continue to do as we become more and

more unshackled from the day-to-day necessities of life that I hope technology can continue to free us from.

JUSTICE SHORTER:
I just want you to know that at the end, the last few sentences, what was playing behind you in my mind was Mary, Mary, take the shackles off my feet so I can dance. That's what's going in the back of my mind. But indeed, indeed, indeed. Jen, what say you? What will art free us from next?

JEN WHITE-JOHNSON:
Yeah. Well, I believe that art is already freeing us from ableism and oppression and injustices and racism. I feel like art can free us from so much of that, and it continues to do that because as justice makers and art activists, which I identify as, we are always in that space of, we do this until we free us, like Miriam Cava says. Let this radicalize you, let the revolution radicalize you. And I'm just excited of just the communities that I'm already a part of. I was just at Coachella a few weeks ago with Harry Gray, who's a mutual friend of ours, and we were out, we brought an entire cohort of emerging disabled artists and designers and media and cultural influencers that want to make sure that Coachella is a safe space for them to just experience the festival culture, and what a true space of liberation and freedom can look like through our disabled lens.
And so we had a ton of artists shadowing, set designers and marketing folks and musicians, and we were putting amazing disabled folks, like deaf folks, blind folks, in so many different spaces to get a sense of, hey, I can actually be immersed in this festival culture experience, and I can actually lead these shifts of reclamation and of culture. So I feel like the revolution is already happening, it's being televised, it's being... Yeah, the revolution is now disabled artists. We are the moment. We are the moment, and we're making these cultural shifts, and we've been here, we're not going anywhere, so just stay in tune with just the radical spaces that we're building. Because we've made so many amazing spaces for folks, if we just have just the standard resources to just kind of keep our revolutions moving, then I feel, like Michael was saying earlier, it's going to be a really beautiful balance.

JUSTICE SHORTER:
We are the moment, we are the movement, we are the reason, we are the revolution. Jen, Michael, thank you both so much for joining us. It has been an absolute pleasure.

MICHAEL GREER:
Thank you, Jen. Thank you, Justice. Yeah, amazing, amazing conversation.

JUSTICE SHORTER:
Absolutely.

JEN WHITE-JOHNSON:
Yes. Thanks for having us.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

If you want to keep your learning journey going, visit the disability and philanthropy forum at disabilityphilanthropy.org. I'm Justice Shorter, and this has been another episode of Disability Inclusion Required. Thanks so much for tuning in, and join us again next time.