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AFRICAN AMERICAN CONFERENCE ON DISABILITIES

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OPENING SESSION

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>> Good morning, everybody. Welcome to the African American Conference on Disabilities. The Opening Session. Please feel free to type in the chat where you're coming from. We have participants from all over the country. I was looking at the registration and I saw some folks from Syracuse, New York. So please type in the chat where you're coming from.

Atlanta. Iowa. Awesome. We will do our best to monitor the chat for technical questions. If you are speaking at any point, please be sure to speak slowly as there is an English captioner and ASL interpreters working diligently. And hosts may remind presenters to speak slowly. Most presentations do not offer continuing education credits. But two sessions will offer CLEs. The session provides CLEs, the presenters will give those details during the presentation. If you have any questions about continuing education, please be sure to contact Renaldo Fowler. His contact information is listed on the website and I'm sure we'll post that in the chat as well.

If you would like to ask a question or need attention using the technology, raise your hand by using the reactions tab at the bottom of the screen and click raise hand. If you are on the phone, please dial star 9 to raise your hand.

>> Jeff, we're having a couple of questions or comments that the volume is low.

>> Volume is low.

>> Might be a good adjustment to make on your computer while we're talking to see if you can get your volume up. Otherwise, an adjustment on speakers to get closer to the microphone.

>> Thank you, John.

Okay. Am I missing anything with this intro? I got kind of thrown off track.



>> JJ RICO: All right. Good morning. I'm JJ Rico, I'm the CEO for the Arizona Disability Law. And I don't know how to express my excitement for not only the conference but for you all to be with us today. To see where you all are coming from gives me great joy because this is our 10th various of the conference. Due to COVID, we are providing this virtually. Please be patient with us as we deliver the content in a different manner. The material is just as good as every year. And the one benefit is we get to have such a broad range of participants and people joining us this year. So welcome. The Arizona Center on Disability Law cohosts the conference with the Arizona Center for African American Resources. This is the 10th year of the conference. This was a collaborative conference created by Renaldo Fowler who you will be introduced to along with David Carey. And if it wasn't for their idea for a conference that discussed race and disability and the intersection of both, we wouldn't be here today. So they deserve a lot of credit for every year putting on this great event. And this year, showing the flexibility to put the material out there on the worldwide web and Zoom technology. If you are registered beyond today, you will have the opportunity to participate in eight total workshops in the month of February. So please feel free, if you haven't registered for others, things that might be of interest to you, something you can learn new, again, we have a great list of speakers. This morning is no exception to that. So please, please join us. We do have a hashtag. I show my age when sometimes I'm not sure of what are hashtags but if you are on Twitter verse or Facebook and you want to use a hashtag, the hashtag we created is #AACD2021. So hashtag that. And also tag speakers or friends or speak to join us. We really welcome as many folks as we can. It is free. I think we almost have a thousand participants for this morning's session. Just a quick touch on ACDL in case you are wondering who is this as center for disability law. We are the protection advocacy for Arizona. In your state, it could be disability right Mississippi, if you need resources related to legal rights information, we have them, but all the other agencies have them as well. If this is the first time you've been introduced, welcome. We want to make sure that people with disabilities are included. Have a voice. And that's one of the reasons we put this conference on.

So last thing I'll say is I need to recognize our sponsors. I want to thank the conference speaker for sharing their expertise and support. And join us February 12th for a mid-month session. And our conference sponsors this year are Valley Toyota Dealers, the DD Network, our Governor's Council and our UCEDD for Arizona. And we would like the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, bringing the CART and sign language interpretation to you this month, the Arizona Statewide Independent Living Council, Mark's the Spot Barbershop, and Valley The Sun United Way. Enjoy your time not only today but the



month. Let's celebrate African-American History Month together, take that information out into our communities. I would like to introduce Jacy Farkas who will introduce our first keynote speaker of the morning. Jacy.

>> JACY FARKAS: Thank you, JJ. And for those out there who aren't familiar with UCEDDs, the University Center for Excellence and Disability, I'm at the University of Arizona and on behalf of the planning team for the conference, I welcome you all. We're so excited for today. And I have the great pleasure and honor of introducing our keynote speaker, Dr. Britney Wilson. She is a civil rights attorney at the National Center for Law and Economic Justice where she focuses on issues of racial justice. She's also the incoming Director of the Civil Rights Clinic at New York Law School, an advocate for communities of disabilities. And I was fortunate to learn of Britney and her work through the association of university centers on disabilities last fall. And we knew we had to invite her to join us this year. So I'm thrilled that she's here to kick-off our month-long conference and joining us all the way from Brooklyn, New York, Britney, I turn it over to you.

>> BRITNEY WILSON: Hi, everyone. Thank you so much, Jacy for that introduction. You gave me a promotion, I'm not a doctor but I'll speak it into existence. Thank you for inviting me and Renaldo as well. We are in the middle of a blizzard here in New York City. Hopefully, all goes well. I've been thinking about the fact that as of today, February 1st, 2021, I've been in some form of quarantine for exactly 328 days. Almost a year. And in a way, that's become such a routine thing that I've started to get used to some of the strangeness of that fact. And I don't think that's a good thing. I don't want to lose sight of the weirdness and the strangeness of what we're experiencing, a pandemic. And particularly the fact that a year ago, the word pandemic was something that I vaguely heard about in a global history type of way in high school, something I read about in the world news section of a newspaper. Words like social distancing were something I did discreetly with people I didn't necessarily like or didn't want to be associated with and not family and friends. But yet, this has become our reality.

I remember that I was a columnist for the college newspaper, I wrote a column on Halloween where I discussed the irony of the holiday because people hid behind masks every day. And I had no idea that one day that sentence would become literal. So I started to reflect on what it means to live through a pandemic as a Black person, as a disabled person, I was born with a Cerebral palsy. As an attorney, an advocate, as a civil rights advocate, someone who does this work every day, as a family member, as someone who has lost relatives to COVID. I have a great aunt who we lost who lived in a nursing home. So she's one of the two-thirds of the people who died of COVID and died of COVID in nursing homes. I know this conference is



usually based in Arizona. I have distant relatives in Arizona, three of who have died in COVID. So I didn't want to lose sight of how real this crisis is and how I'm living through so many aspects of my identity.

And I wanted to hope that we all gain something from it, that it doesn't just become some strange event that we talk about 10 years from now, 20 years from now that's in our children's and grandchildren's history book or the subject of a historical fiction novel but that we get something out of this tragedy. And that we don't go back into society the way that we came in. Because if there's any time for us to recognize the issues of racial justice and disability as central to our everyday lives, it's during a global pandemic where People of Color and Black people in particular are disproportionately affected.

So I talk a lot in general, anyone who knows me about having to reconcile my identity as a Black person and as a disabled person, both personally and professionally. I've talked about my experience at a HBCU, historically black college and university and how that made me aware of my disability and the need to advocate on behalf of myself and others. With the hope and emphasis of affirming my identity as a Black woman, which it did, but I talk about me similarly going to law school because I was interested in learning how to advocate on behalf of myself and hearing no mention of disability, almost no mention in law school or in my school's curriculum. And having the same experience as a civil rights attorney, accidentally discovering how siloed the quote, unquote traditional civil right spaces are from the quote, unquote disability rights space. And having to always be the disabled person in the civil rights spaces who said and people with disabilities and people with disabilities and being the person in the disability rights spaces that had to remind people that I'm also black and People of Color with disabilities have a range of experiences and additional concerns that aren't always addressed or understood in disability rights spaces.

So this pandemic, I hope we come out of it realizing that we can't separate these issues anymore. That they're an aspect of our daily lives and that if we take anything else from it, we have to do better because the issues are linked.

So I'm going to speak on behalf of Black disabled advocates everywhere when we would like to say, we told you so, repeatedly, we told you so. And although it isn't always acknowledged, I feel like the Black community has always understand the relationship between race and disability. For example, many have heard the expression when white folk catch a cold, black folk get pneumonia. So we know that they are linked, and the CDC has validated that theory. In an article for "The New York Times" magazine on race and COVID-19, Linda reported that 90% of the most serious COVID-19 cases involve underlying health conditions,



hypertension and cardiovascular, obesity, diabetes, and chronic lung disease, conditions that are more common and more deadly in Black Americans and strike at younger ages. The rate of disability is 66% higher in Black, the rate of diabetes is 66% higher in Black Americans than white Americans and an investigation found that Black people are more likely to have their Olympics amputated without being offered alternatives and also the rate of hypertension is 49% higher for Black people than white people. The average life expectancy for a Black American is 3.35 years shorter than a white American. And the health outcomes for Black Americans are more on par of people in more immediate include underdeveloped countries and these statistics persist no matter the income level or education level in Black America.

So with that in mind, I would like to discuss a few ways that I think COVID-19 has illustrated how we can more explicitly and strategically link our already inseparable causes of racial and disability justice for the good of all of our advancement in the midst and wake of this pandemic.

And there are three basic things that I want to discuss. The first one I'm going to call name and it claim it, shout out to the Clark Sisters if anybody knows that song. I think one of the barriers to the collaboration or inclusion of disability and the fight for racial justice is reluctance of some people labeling chronic illnesses, underlying conditions and other health outcomes as disabilities in the first place. While I understand that people have a right to identify as they choose, we also know you can never truly address anything until and unless it's been named. And as Black people, we understand some of the reasons people might not want to identify as disabled. In 2016, I wrote an article for "The Nation Magazine" about the need to talk about race and disability when addressing issues of police brutality. I critiqued the tendency to label the killing of a Black person with a mental illnesses like Deborah denar in my hometown of New York City as the killing of a person with a mental illnesses or disability as being separate or distinct from other deaths mentioned broadly in the Black Lives Matter movement. In discussing the race and disability, I summed up the issue by saying when you have one perceived strike against you, few people are willing to sign up for two. As Black people, we deal with stereotypes and assumptions about our character and capabilities daily. We were brought to this country literally because of them. So we understand the stereotype have concrete impacts on our quality of life and our physical safety and well-being. And it's why while not ignoring my disability, my family has emphasized what I could do instead of it and not because of it. It's why a spent a portion of my life trying to downplay my disability, trying to prove people wrong. At the same time, access to appropriate medical care for diagnosis and services is a barrier for many people, for many Black people so that's another reason why even people who might want to



identify as disabled aren't always able to.

But we have to because if we can name a thing, we can begin to work with it and fight for what we need and deserve. What if instead of allowing the media and even politicians to dismiss the importance and severity of this pandemic by emphasizing that it only really kills people with quote, unquote underlying condition, we emphasize the disproportionate effect on People of Color and the fact that the country is allowing People of Color to die. Imagine the power of calling a thing a thing.

Then perhaps we could have gotten what we really needed to address it, national mask mandate, national lockdown, et cetera. In the disability community, we call that reasonable accommodations.

And imagine the power if we framed COVID as a racial justice issue and not just a public health issue. If we acknowledged that the blatantly white supremacist then commander in chief was simply allowing People of Color to die at disproportionate rates and a greater population of someone not People of Color was dying as a result of this disease, we could have had a completely different response to it. Imagine the power of calling a thing a thing.

Speaking of reasonable accommodations, I know that some workshops are being offered during this conference talk about reasonable accommodations and the process of requesting them during COVID both in school and in the workplace. And one of the lessons that I hope we learn from COVID and one of the things I hope we take with us moving forward is the fact that this pandemic has single-handedly prove that the accommodations that many disabled people have been asking for decades were in fact reasonable and not a quote, unquote undue burden. Remote work as a regular option. I personally used to use or had to use the New York City paratransit service to get to and from work. That was anywhere between two and four hours out of my day spent traveling the city, unreliable rides that sometimes didn't show up, just to get to and from work. I haven't had to do that in a year. And imagine how many other people with disabilities have had barriers to employment removed because of the possibility of remote work. And imagine how many people we've denied employment and education because of those barriers in the past and now within months, we have proven that none of it was necessarily at all. At the same time we know that the benefits that remote work provides to some people with disabilities, it provides challenges to other people with disabilities. So we need to make sure that remote work options are accessible and that people with disabilities have the accommodations they need who at home or in the workplace.

Accessibility is also shown itself to be valuable in other venues as well, not just the professional place or school. We have seen the accessibility of concerts in the past year, I have



gotten front row seats to John Legend concert, things that normally I would have had to pay hundreds of dollars for a ticket only to still be upset when someone stands in front of me, blocking my view. Now, everyone can log in and have access to entertainment from the comforts of home accessibly. These are things, these are options that we need to keep with us when this pandemic is over. Access for all.

Greater flexibility doesn't just benefit people with disabilities, it benefits single parents, people who have to take care of family members, non-traditional worker, students in general, all populations that we know are People of Color. This creates greater financial freedom and opportunity for all of us. We need to take advantage of the spirit of accommodation and flexibility that COVID has introduced and ensure that everyone is accommodated.

The second thing that I hope we learn from COVID is leadership by the most impacted. This is something that organizers and advocates talk about all the time. But COVID has illustrated that we need disabled People of Color not just in the room, not just at the table, but deconstructing the table and leading the fight. Disabled people invented the creativity that was forced on the rest of the population during the pandemic. It's how we live our lives. Who better to get to the root of issues of medical bias? We heard from a black doctor who died as a result of medical bias. If nothing else, COVID has shown us that we need to listen to the patients who have known it all along. They cannot and should not be an afterthought. Instead, crisis care hotlines put people at risk and at the end of the line for emergency care. For example, my office the National Center for Law and Economic Justice in conjunction with disability rights New York filed a lawsuit filing the New York state ventilator allocation guidelines, particularly the portion of the guidelines that consider reallocating chronic ventilator's user personal ventilators to people who have a quote, unquote a higher likelihood of survival based on a score. We filed this lawsuit after like in other PNAs filed complaints challenging the rationing healthcare guidelines and unlike in other states, New York didn't come to the table to talk about changing the language, so we filed what I believe is the first lawsuit of its kind in the country challenging these guidelines. So we've stepped up to the plate to prove that disabled people do not need to be an afterthought, we need to be at the center of the fights and during this pandemic.

And disabled people are needed for more than our expertise on healthcare. Black people had to March for our lives during this pandemic, putting our health at risk in the process. We watched the police officers knee on George Floyd's neck for more than eight minutes. That's why I'm really excited to see that there are workshops coming up in this conference about the importance of accessibility at protests. These are issues that affect our lives, and we need to be able to participate in them freely. The same thing applies when it comes to the accessibility of



elections. This election cycle we similarly saw Black people and Black people with disabilities and underlying and chronic conditions have to stand in line for hours risking COVID in order to vote. We saw challenges to curbside voting and other things that showed that people know the power of the disability voters in this country. Not just voters of color but black disabled peek of color. The third thing is not one of us is free until all of us are free. The same way I talked about the issues of accessibility benefit people with disabilities, you know, the accessibility of a concert or the ability of people to attend a concert without having to pay hundreds of dollars for a concert ticket benefits people who can't afford a concert ticket, whether that person is disabled or not. We need to use the pandemic to illustrate how accessibility for one of us is accessibility for all of us. So that we combine our fights to get what we truly need. And with that in mind, I want to thank you all again for this opportunity. And say to you that we need to leverage this fight. We need to leverage the lessons that we have learned from this experience. And take them with us as we move forward. Thank you so much.

>> This is for the ASL interpreter, we had a comment that said the virtual background is hard for her to see or to see your signing.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Britney, thank you so much. Hi, everybody. I'm Natalie Rose. I am the communications and outreach manager. I want to thank all of you for coming. We still have plenty of time and really appreciated Britney's words. So if you have any questions, please put them in the chat. And we'll start a dialogue.

A lot of thank yous in the chat, Britney.

>> BRITNEY WILSON: Is there -- are you going to read questions for me? Or should I --

>> NATALIE ROSE: I can read questions for you. If you would like.

>> BRITNEY WILSON: Sure.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Here's one. Thoughts on how the Biden Administration is doing so far?

>> BRITNEY WILSON: I mean, I think we've seen promising signs. We've seen a lot of Executive Orders overturned. I would like to see some that turn into legislation rather than just Executive Orders that can change depending on the administration. I'm happy to see what looks like the inclusion of many advocates from the disability community in his administration. From the office of management and budget to people in Fair Housing who have ties to the disability community. I don't know how many of those people are disabled People of Color, but I see promising signs. But we have to continue to hold our electeds accountable, we can't just exhale and say all is well now.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Great. Next question is it okay for CVS for ask for -- I feel it should



not have been there at that time.

>> BRITNEY WILSON: Is it okay for who to ask about race?

>> NATALIE ROSE: CVS, I'm assuming that's the drugstore.

>> BRITNEY WILSON: You mean during for the vaccine? Like and for your race data when you're trying to get vaccinated?

>> NATALIE ROSE: I believe so, yes.

>> BRITNEY WILSON: So I think different locations are doing that because they want to keep track of any potential disparities and who is getting vaccinated. Here in New York, they have been releasing data saying that Black people have not been being vaccinated at the same rates as everyone else even though we are disproportionately affected by COVID. So I think that's they're asking for that information, you don't have to give it if you don't want to, but I think that's probably the reason.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Okay, we've got a lot of questions coming in. What could colleges and universities do better to hear -- it went up. What can college and universities do better to hear the voices of individuals of color who are also individuals with disabilities?

>> BRITNEY WILSON: I think for one thing, we need to have spaces I think that one of the difficult things for me in college was that I didn't know of or at least see many people who I knew or at least visibly disabled. Like there wasn't an affinity group for students with disabilities that I knew about. I think we need spaces. We need organizing strategies, and we need support. A lot of what I found is every time I had an accessibility issue, you know, it was me fighting administration or because I had made friends, my friends would support me in that. Or people who knew me. But it needs to become an administrative priority. You need staff members with disabilities who push for these things and push for changes. But it needs to be an administrative priority, from the top down and we need to make sure that students are included in those conversations.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Next question. Can you name one thing I can do to encourage people with disabilities to protest? How can I make it easier for them?

>> BRITNEY WILSON: I think that's a tough question because there are so many different types of disabilities. People with disabilities need different types of accommodations in order to participate in social actions or protests. I think if you're planning a protest, inquire about people's accessibility needs in the planning. It needs to be pre-planned in advance and don't necessarily just tap your disabled friend and say, hey, you want to come with me to the protest? Plan for them in advance, think about them in advance, consult with them. And I think there's more than one way to protest. Me personally, while I support Marchers and as an advocate,



you know, I think that my space is not necessarily at the March but for me, I advocate legally, I advocate by helping people organize. So I think if people, disabled people want to protest, we need to make sure those spaces and options with accessible to them but recognize that there's more than one way to affect change.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Thank you, okay. We're going to keep going on with more question, Britney. Hi, Britney, thank you so much. I am a sexuality educate we are people with ID D in Massachusetts. I work with medical students to give them a little information about disability and sexuality. Like your experience in law school, they get almost no introduction. Thank you for highlighting this. Any suggestions for advocating for this?

>> BRITNEY WILSON: Yeah, we have to reinvent the curriculums. I don't know anything about the current med school curriculums but there need to be -- they need to be taught about disability, be taught about ableism and how it affects people with disability, how it affects society and permeates every aspect of society because it's kind of baffling to me that you could be trained to be a doctor, literally someone who's services people with health condition, disabled people and not be taught about ableism or people with disabilities or biases against them. And that goes for every aspect of one's identity. You're going to have to treat and interact with people, so you need to be aware of issues that affect them. So we need to push for changes in curriculum. We need to push for residencies that include inter-actives with people with disabilities, exposure to people with disabilities so that they're not encountering us for the first time out in the world when they see us this their offices.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Next question. What recommendations or thoughts do you have for school districts considering returning to in-person school to use positive lessons from pandemic school to better support Black students with disabilities?

>> BRITNEY WILSON: Lessons from the online experience that we would take back? Yeah, that's hard for me to say because I haven't been educator in the pandemic yet. So I'm not sure what necessarily the benefits would be unless they're ones that I talked about like the benefit of if you have a mobility disability, not having to transport as much. I would need to talk more to people who have had to educate people during this pandemic about what they thought worked well, what they thought didn't. And what they should facilitate if their classrooms in person.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Great. Next question, thoughts on reports that early vaccination rates among People of Color are lagging dramatically compared to whites?

>> BRITNEY WILSON: I think that makes sense. I think I haven't seen what the reasons are in those reports. I would hope that the rollout strategies that their vaccination sites in



communities of color and any barriers to access like when the vaccines are offered or scheduling or things like that, that might disproportionately affect People of Color are being worked out. I know we have heard a lot of the reluctance of People of Color to get vaccinated because of government misuse and distrust. And I think some of that is definitely valid, sort of packaging the disparities and the numbers along with those fears but I think that it's actually deeper than that. I'm a little annoyed by like the celebrity campaigns. I have heard a lot of politicians say, oh, we're going to do ad campaigns and we're going to have influencers like taking the vaccine and telling people that it's safe. I think that's stereo typical in and of itself. Just because a rapper tells me he got the vaccine or mainstream, people think that Black people would respond to gets the vaccine doesn't mean you're going to convince someone to get the vaccine. I understand the impetus behind it, but we have to acknowledge that people's reluctance is valid because of what's been done to People of Color in this country. And a lot of people want to see what happens first before they're not necessarily reluctant to being vaccinated, they're reluctant to being vaccinated in the first batch. Given who just came out of the White House, I understand that as well. So I think we have to give it time, we have to be persistent and make sure that other access barriers are not part of the reason that People of Color aren't being vaccinated at the same rates.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Next question. I oversee accessibility services with 30% diversity. To-date, 250 students that are register ready white. How can I outreach to students of color to step forward for academic support?

>> BRITNEY WILSON: I think have you reached out to the affinity groups? Black student Alliances? Other services that might service students of color? It's difficult, without knowing sort of the specifics of, are you reaching out the teachers? I think you don't necessarily want -- you want to be careful not to do it in a way that suggests that Black students sort of are lacking in something, but I think you want to do outreach to spaces that are known to students of color, to teachers. I think you want to advertise. And I think you might want to present it not necessarily, again because of the stigmas that I identified, a lot of people don't even recognize the difficulties that they might be having as disabilities. They might have struggled reading their whole childhood and never gotten a diagnosis of anything. So maybe finding ways to describe the services that you offer and the support that students might seek in ways that aren't necessarily medical language or traditional disability-based language because a lot of people don't necessarily identify themselves that way. I hope I answered your question. If I didn't, let me know.

>> NATALIE ROSE: This is from Selia. I'm going to repeat a question. How can white



advocates for name and it claim it and continued accessibility?

>> BRITNEY WILSON: I think by honestly not being or I think relinquishing power in ways. And I realize that might be a controversial statement, but I think like there are People of Color or disabled People of Color who need to be in leadership positions. We need more white allies to recognize that and be willing to give those people those opportunities. When I say leadership, by the most impacted, that's what I mean. So giving us those access to those leadership opportunities and listening to us. I think what we find a lot is even people who give lip service to the idea of disability needing to be racially inclusive space or more diverse still want to be the ones in charge. And I think we're going to need to see a real shift of the balance of power which actually means not just people telling us what to do and saying, oh, yeah, racism, but actually giving power to People of Color and listening. When we make recommendations and have suggestions and letting us lead and step ago side in order to let us lead and amplifying our voices when they need to be amplified.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Next question from William. Will parents be able to get compensatory services for their children that were missed during the pandemic.

>> BRITNEY WILSON: What sort of -- I'm not sure I understand --

>> NATALIE ROSE: Will parents be able to get compensatory services for their children for services that were missed during the pandemic?

>> BRITNEY WILSON: Like educational services or -- I'm not sure I know the answer to that. If your student get services through online learning, will there be like remedial services when they go back to school?

>> NATALIE ROSE: I think that's the gist of it, yes.

>> BRITNEY WILSON: I'm not sure. That's something that would vary according to the State and school system. I definitely think it's something that parents should inquire about and insist upon if it's necessary, but I can't personally speak to that.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Okay. Next question. Do you think that police should first -- should be first responders to mental health calls? And if not, what changes do you think should be made?

>> BRITNEY WILSON: No, I don't I do not think that police officers should be first responders to mental health calls. Here in New York, they're trying to work it out where a person who has experienced mental health crisis responds to those calls along with a health professional so that police aren't the people who go to those calls. And I agree with those approaches that are trying to decrease police interaction with people in mental health crisis. So



the peer method that many advocates have been pushing is one that I would ascribe to as well.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Okay. Next question from Shannon. Have you had clients with disabilities and of color that have been discriminated because they were denied to gainful employment?

>> BRITNEY WILSON: Definitely disabled, person, black disabled clients, not necessarily in the employment context although I do recognize that impacts peoples an employment prospects. A do a very particular type of work, I do mostly federal civil rights class action litigation. I can't say that I've done a case that tacks that issue but definitely had Black disabled clients who I've seen how racism and ableism impacts their experiences just in the justice system in particular, whether that be the criminal justice system or what have you.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Okay. Thank you for that one. Next question, Britney, do you know if there are bills or issues relating to minorities with disabilities that were overlooked by the past administration that will be reintroduced for a vote with the current administration?

>> BRITNEY WILSON: I don't know about bills that specifically have to do with disabled People of Color but in general, things that we need federal priorities that we need this administration to focus on that would benefit disabled People of Color are increasing Medicaid, increasing funding for home and community-based services so that people with disabilities can live in the community especially because we know just how deadly congregate settings like nursing facilities have been to People of Color in this pandemic. And those disparities persist across race. So even Black disabled people in nursing homes are more likely to die than other races in nursing homes so. In terms of federal priority, if not legislation, we want to see the expansion of Medicaid and stimulus money for People of Color, people with disabilities in particular is really important.

>> NATALIE ROSE: All right, next question from Matthew. And my apologies for missing it, if I haven't asked your question, please feel free to push it back into the chat. There's a lot coming in. So I will try to get to it. Britney, I appreciate your statistics about how we as Black people in the country face disparity at higher rates and how biased viewpoints perpetuate these facts. As Blacks are often diagnosed with more severe mental health diagnosis as whites if the same symptoms. I see this add to the bias when it comes to labeling Black parents as unfit. Do you have any suggestions on how we can better protect and advocate for Black parents with disabilities who have their children removed by child welfare systems?

>> BRITNEY WILSON: Yeah, I definitely know about the disparities in the placement of Black children in foster care and how perceptions of disability and disability influence that.



That's not my specialty but I think that similarly we need people of color, we need disabled people in those spaces making those decisions. We need social workers to be educated on disability, on ableism, on racism, on their biases. So that they recognize that just because they wouldn't do a certain thing a certain way, it doesn't make a person unfit. We need more legal challenges that challenge these placements or removals along racial, on basis of racial discrimination and disability discrimination. So we need our advocacy to be broader we need the people who make the decisions to be Black disabled people or disabled People of Color. And we need to change that we operate.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Thank you. More questions. You did mention some people with disabilities getting appointed into the president's cabinet and Biden did say his cabinet would look like America. People with disabilities are the largest group of underrepresented group and we haven't seen any people with disabilities in the cabinet.

>> BRITNEY WILSON: So I think we have seen, at least I know of a few, I don't know how we're defining quote, unquote high level but at least for me, I know that Sam who is known as a disabilities rights attorney was appointed in the office of management and budget which I think is a big deal because that's the office that makes determinations about funding and budget and we talk about home care and more money for Medicaid and things like that, to have someone in that role who understands the implications of these things is really important. So I think at least we've seen not just him but other people as well, some people from the disability community represented by no means am I saying that the representation is sufficient. Like I said, I don't think -- that I know of, know people with disabilities are in the administration. And also, I want to acknowledge that I don't always know if people are disabled themselves, all disabilities are not apparent or not visible. So there may be people I don't know about, but we need more but I think it's at least a step in the right direction that we know a few. And that at least this administration mentions people with disabilities and includes people with disabilities which is, you no, the bar is on the ceiling which is a really low standard but it's more than we've seen. In the past and I think that's a direct result of disabled organizers advocacy.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Okay.

>> BRITNEY WILSON: Someone asked what HBCU went to, I'm a proud Bison --

>> NATALIE ROSE: A couple of those comments in the chat. And I'm going to connect this question to the one that you just answered. Somewhat similar, does Kamala Harris' Vice Presidency offer you hope that not only People of Color issues will be addressed but those with disabilities as well? And how would you define tangible progress by the administration one or two years from now?



>> BRITNEY WILSON: Kamala Harris, I definitely hope that her Vice Presidency means improvements for People of Color. I don't know much about her track record of people with disabilities. I do know, I don't necessarily agree with all of her previous actions, you know, with respect to her political and professional life because we know the criminal justice disproportionately harms People of Color and disabled People of Color because she was a former prosecutor, but I hope and trust that she understands the implications of her actions and the nuances of these systems and that she'll want to do more to improve our lives going forward. But like I said, I don't know much about her track record when it comes to disability in general. And priorities -- what was the other part of the question?

>> NATALIE ROSE: How would you define tangible progress by the administration one or two year ins now?

>> BRITNEY WILSON: Oh, that's so hard. Hopefully, this pandemic is over. That's the first priority. And I think I would like to see economic relief not just in the traditional ways of job recovery and that sort of thing, but like I talked about economic opportunities for people with disabilities, changes to the barriers that limit their employability and the amount of money that they're able to maintain for themselves without risking access to healthcare and benefits and things of that nature. So I think those are two priorities that I would identify. And just hoping that we don't lose Congress in another two years in 2022.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Okay, well, switched gears a little bit. From Marcy Jackson. Did you feel properly advocated during your K-12 years? If yes, what went well? If no, what would have made a difference?

>> BRITNEY WILSON: I mean, I think my experience, one of the major issues that I had was transportation. So that was always an issue. My mom fought the Department of the Board of Ed in New York all the time about my busing and busing being late and not showing up and things like that. So I think that -- from a structural standpoint, people recognizing issues with that and that I felt the bias in that every day. Like I felt they didn't think that my education was a priority, that it wasn't something they took seriously, the people who served us on the buses, you know, it wasn't always safe. People weren't being -- wheelchairs weren't secured the way they should. So just the general level of understanding of the importance of the services, the educational services that are provided to people with disabilities are important. That's one thing. The main thing that stands out for me. But there's so many other things.

>> NATALIE ROSE: And a question from --

>> BRITNEY WILSON: No, one more thing. I think also I didn't necessarily, I didn't



know, what's the word that I'm looking for, like I didn't know about accommodations. Like I didn't know, services that I probably would have been eligible for, I didn't know that I was eligible for. Like I don't think I got a testing accommodation until law school, you know? And you had to submit paperwork and stuff and even for the Bar Exam, to get time accommodation, they ask you about your history of previously getting accommodated. And no one says to you, this is how you do this, or this is what this means, or this is what you're eligible for. So there needs to be a lot more education about accommodations available, how to do it, services, things like that. I think the testing processes and those things in general are not accessible and not the way they need to be. Hopefully, that answers your question.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Next question from Pat, you may have addressed this, I'm wondering about your thoughts about diagnosed bias related to children and youth of color. Biases towards more behavior really disorders versus learning disabilities, autism, ADHD, et cetera.

>> BRITNEY WILSON: Yeah. I can't speak to that with too much specificity. I do feel that we know that People of Color with disabilities don't, we don't often get, it's a doubled edge sword. On one hand, we are overly diagnosed or everything we do is sort of characterized as a disability or some sort of criminal -- or criminalized honestly, you know, a Black disabled student or a Black student period can have a tantrum and the police get called and that doesn't happen for someone else. But at the same time, we know that we're under-diagnosed. So while the police might get called, it might not get recognized as a disability. Both sides of the same coin, over-diagnosed and everything characterized as a problem or some sort of -- they don't often character as a disability, it's characterized as like something deviant or something wrong which often leads to students of color being caught up in the criminal justice system or we don't get the services and the supports that we need. So we're often not given the benefit or the opportunity to be viewed as disabled or in need of help or services or support. And when we are, it's criminalized.

>> NATALIE ROSE: How do you address those promoting health equity help realize that they need to include advanced equity?

>> BRITNEY WILSON: That's yeah, that's strange to me that health wouldn't automatically include disability as part of health. There needs to be direct advocacy. There needs to be, you know, outreach and communication between disability, advocacy organization, and healthcare advocacy organizations the same training that I talked about that needs to happen for med students' needs to happen for public health students about ableism, about disability so that they think of these issues as one in the same.



>> NATALIE ROSE: And next question, I think we're getting -- I'm going to go through this real quick to see if I've missed anything. There's a couple that you sort of already answered. Thank you Britney. Thoughts on queer black disabled community and how to bring in more inclusive voices?

>> BRITNEY WILSON: Yeah, I think when you talk about intersectionality and the intersection of race and disability, that's every identity and same thing when we talk about police violence. A lot of the people that are leading those fights are queer, disabled, Black disabled people. Like I said, we're not free, none of us is free until all of us is free, that's every aspect of identity. So I think just recognizing who is leading these fights and a lot of those are Black, queer disabled voices. And making sure that leadership by the most impacted, like I said, that everyone who has more experience is based on their identity are the ones leading the fight, are the ones deconstructing the way we approach the fight, is important instead of all of these separate fights.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Okay. Well, we are just about out of time. And I just wanted to thank, there were so many questions and thank you to everybody that got that in. Got your questions in. We will have the chat available, if you would like a copy, we can email that to you and definitely to you Britney so you can see more of the questions and anybody that you might want to be able to reach out to. We have our next session tomorrow, same time, but this time until 11:30, tomorrow Tamara Goode. And I posted the link and he's posting it right there. We are going through the month of February, last one, today it was first one, the last one is on the 26th. So you have plenty of time to register and be part of this exciting event. And again, I wanted to thank Britney today for this really fascinating discussion. I'm sure we could have gone on a whole lot longer. And also thanks to our sponsors, Valley Toyota Dealers, AzCAAR, ADDPC, Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, UCEDD, United Way valley of the sun, Mark's the Spot, diversity incorporated, and Arizona center for disability law. If you have questions, you can always email Renaldo Fowler. Or me, Natalie, and I am putting both of our emails in the chat. And again, thank you for coming. And we hope to see you again tomorrow.

>> BRITNEY WILSON: Thank you for having me.

>> NATALIE ROSE: Thank you.

