



Transcript

Episode 24: Inclusion Through Images and Storytelling (52:57)

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Dean Askin 00:03

You Can't Spell Inclusion Without a D. The podcast that explores the power of inclusion and why disability is an important part of the workplace diversity, equity and inclusion conversation produced by the Ontario Disability Employment Network with your hosts, Jeannette Campbell and Dean Askin. One of the most famous photographs in modern history was the one taken by Associated Press photographer Nick Ute in 1972. At the height of the Vietnam War, it's known as "napalm girl", that famous photo of a young girl named Kim Fuk and other children running terrified and naked towards the camera away from a napalm attack. It told a powerful story. It made such an impact that it changed public opinion about the Vietnam War. Hi there. I'm Dean Askin, and this is episode 24 of You Can't Spell Inclusion Without a D. Wondering where we're going with this episode? Well keep listening.

Jennifer Crowson 01:05

In the same era between 1969 and 1971, during the last two years of her life, famous American photographer Diane Arbus photographed people who have intellectual disabilities in the environment they lived in. She focused on state-run homes and institutions in New Jersey. Hello, I'm Jennifer Crossan sitting in again for Jeannette Campbell. The famous series of photos is called the Diane Arbus Untitled it was the first environmental portraiture of its kind of disability.

Dean Askin 01:36

The series was exhibited in its entirety for the first time in 2018 at the David Zwerner gallery in Manhattan. New York Times art critic Arthur Lubow described the work as some of the most mysterious and haunting pictures made by Diane Arbus during her too-short 15 year career.

Jennifer Crowson 01:56

Whether the Untitled series was artistically inclusive, or helped perpetuate myths and stereotypes about disability is of course open to interpretation. How disability is broadly viewed and perceived can depend on how it's seen through the photographer's mind, eye, viewfinder and lens.

Dean Askin 02:15

If you've ever looked for a stock photo portraying disability to use in a blog post or on a website page, you might find yourself thinking they all look the same. They all look contrived and they don't authentically portray disability in all its diversity. Hilary Gauld is on a personal mission to make sure her photographic work portraying disability is inclusive and authentic, that it tells an inclusive story about the person. She's a commercial and portrait photographer in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario.

Jennifer Crowson 02:45

She's photographed multiple series of images for the Canadian Down Syndrome Society campaigns and full disclosure, I'm the current Chair of the Canadian Down Syndrome Society, and I'm very familiar with Hilary's work, and also very fond of it. Hilary says working with an inclusion coach is helping her to stay on mission with her photography. That inclusion coach is Jenny Jay. She builds herself as a creator, storyteller and educator. Hilary Gauld and Jenny Jay, welcome to You Can't Spell Inclusion Without a D.

Hilary Gauld 03:16

Thank you.

Jenny Jay 03:17

Thank you so much for having us.

Jennifer Crowson 03:19

Oh, it's a pleasure. Okay, I'm gonna kick off with the first question. It's really directed, I guess, to you, Hillary, you know, you've been a family portrait photographer for 16 years, and you've done some commercial work, too. What motivated you to start doing personal projects, photographing people who have a disability?

Hilary Gauld 03:39

I actually get asked this question quite often, because of the, you know, how much the work has grown, the body of work has grown. And I wish I could tell you some, you know, elaborate story of how this all really came about, but it was just simply that one of my friends had a son born with Down syndrome 10 years ago. And she, Caleb actually almost didn't live at birth. And I followed that journey. We had been friends for a really long time. And then she brought Caleb into my studio one day when he was about six months old, and said, they were looking for a photographer for their yearly calendar that they had

photographed. And it was used for fundraising purposes. And the money going back to the community group there to find programming and support. So I said, Yeah, we'd love to do this, because I just felt tied to her story. And I think her journey and watching this little boy be born and it was not something that they were aware of before Caleb was born that he had Down syndrome. And, you know, I just think it's one of those things that, you know, we all have our lived experience, which I'm learning so much more about every day and obviously through my work with Jenny about what that actually means. means, and that, you know, my lived experiences certainly didn't encompass anyone with Down Syndrome and my close circles. And so when I took on this assignment at the time, I think I was just so surprised at so many different things, which I'm sure we'll get into when I first met these families in this community. And just understanding that, you know, my lived experience, then, you know, it's cliché, but I guess I had a narrow lens, and obviously worked with a lot of neurotypical children and families and that kind of thing early in my career. So, yeah, I think that, that, you know, this is that's what led me to do all of this, Caleb was that sole inspiration. But obviously, from there, it's grown into something so much more

Jennifer Crowson 05:49

Amazing and, and how did you then become involved in with the Canadian Down Syndrome Society and shooting all of those incredible series of images that you've done for them?

Hilary Gauld 05:59

So through the work at the Waterloo, Wellington Down Syndrome Society, and you know, the series that we would do each year, some, you know, the photos started to filter around the internet, and amongst other Down syndrome, community groups in Ontario. And so the committee and the president of the Canadian Down Syndrome Society took notice of the imagery we were creating in that space. And so, you know, I kind of gotten had heard that, oh, they wanted some of our images. And they were really interested in what we were capturing, and that kind of thing. And so my first real interaction with my guests was just Yes, go ahead, please use the photos, we would love to see them in wider distribution. So I was thrilled, obviously, that they were noticed by the larger umbrella organization of Down Syndrome Community. And then about, I'd say, three or four years ago, outside of just them using those images, I had always had a couple things in mind that I would have liked to photograph. But obviously, that didn't necessarily fit the group I was working with locally, because the group we work with locally is babies straight through to children, teens, and to adults. And some of the things that I noticed amongst this community, I was like, I'd love to tell these stories, but they didn't fit within kind of that, you know, the calendar, you know, scenario we had. So I talked to those back in my head, and then I just, I kind of just reached out one day and said, You know, I have this idea that I'd love to photograph adults with Down syndrome in love, and what love looks like to them. And, you know, in whatever shape that may be, whether it's platonic love, friendship, love, romantic love. I'd like to see what that looks like. Because again, that at that time was not something we we saw represented in a great way online, and in mainstream media. So that was kind of my first attempt to work with them in a larger way. So I went to them, I presented the concept. And I just said, regardless of whether we partner or not, I will I want to produce this. And they came back and said, we'd love to partner and help produce this series. So that was my first big national kind of portrait campaign that myself and obviously, Jenny was really involved in a lot of that messaging and crafting our plans with that. So that's kind of how that got started. And then the the following year, we did here I am. So Laura said, you

know, she's the director, she said, I'd really like to see adults with Down syndrome, aging. And so of course, I was on board for another series. And another amazing success story with that one as well, educating people on what that looked like to age with Dravet Syndrome and to break down further stereotypes around, you know, people with Down syndrome, living a lot longer than what probably most people understand their lifespan is. So that's kind of the early introduction to them. And then, you know, every year that I do the photos for the Waterloo, Wellington Down Syndrome Society, I was offered those to the Canadian Down Syndrome Society to use those. And then they've hired me for a few other things, if they have specific needs to photograph, you know, children or parents or caregivers so that we can better tell that story on their platform.

Dean Askin 09:20

You know, I want to jump in here because, you know, photography is one of the things that I do as well. I mean, I don't make my living at it, but I you know, I do it creatively and it's been part of my career and I have exhibited art shows and one of the things I I love to photograph is environmental, you know, portraits of people and I'm curious, tell me what it was like about the first time you photographed a person who has a disability mean? What was that like? You know, what was going through your mind as a photographer, when you were setting up the shot and looking through the viewfinder and trying to figure it out?

Hilary Gauld 09:56

I think as this year has been a really reflective year for all of us, because we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of doing this series. And so it has really taken me back to it really sit and think about, you know, what was I feeling in that moment? And what was that? How did this really all begin in my mind? And I think probably, again, my lived experience did not have anyone with Down syndrome close to me. So I think I was, I was I remember being quite taken aback. And I think it was just simply, you know, the connection of the kids with their families, I think it was just understanding their abilities. And I think, you know, that is probably one of the biggest learnings is that not to underestimate anybody, and to assume what they can and cannot do. And so I think that's what I've learned most because I, you know, can get stuck in my own head. Are they able to do this? Will they, you know, this the first year we were outside in a park. And then the second year, I wanted to move them into the studio. Simply because I think because I didn't see imagery that was really kind of captured in that way. And so I remember thinking, will this be okay, will this work, and now I just don't, I would know that they were going for anything, no matter where we'd want to photograph that everyone would be fine with it. So I was able to push my own ideas. And I think, you know, it challenges your own misconceptions. But I think in general, it just broadens your understanding of, of this community and what disability looks like, and the invisible challenges and the visible challenges and all of this. So yeah, I definitely go back to that. And I think more than anything, I was just quietly learning, and taking it all in and understanding that, you know, each child or teen had a different way of communicating with me. And yeah, so you just really had to listen, and you had to respond in the way that, you know, relates to them and that kind of thing. So yeah, it was it. It was huge learning. I've taken that all the way through. But I would say if someone asked me, What's your number one, it would definitely be around just ability and not assuming what they can or can't do in front of a camera.

Dean Askin 12:11

All those things, you were talking about it? You know, it's it's all about awareness, isn't it? I mean, how would you describe your level of disability awareness as a photographer, before you started doing this compared to now?

Hilary Gauld 12:25

So I think when I think about this, I really do picture in my head a lens. And I think it was a narrow focus, when I really think about the world that I grew up in. And the world of people that I interacted with, and friends and family, I think I just realized how narrow my lens was. And so I love how wide my lens is now, and how I, you know, am able to respond to people and anticipate needs and how to speak to people with disability and how to respect their boundaries and what they're comfortable with. So I would say that, you know, my narrow lens has widened a great deal in the last 10 years. And it will continue to do that as I expand into other disability spaces with photography, which is, you know, a big goal of mine to continue to produce imagery in an authentic way. Has we still have a ways to go? But yeah, I would just think that it was fairly narrow, I think, and then think of today that banded to other groups, other thoughts? And I think my mind is just so much more open.

Jennifer Crowson 13:35

Thanks, Hillary, I have to say, I have a big smile on my face, you know, because I just I love the words that you're saying and how you're describing it. And, you know, when you and I were talking, before we did this show, I was really taken with how you were telling me about how you've worked really hard actually to make sure that the images you create are intentional, authentic, and inclusive. Can you talk to us a little bit about how you did that? What's involved? And and what were maybe some challenges that you faced in doing that? And? Yeah,

Hilary Gauld 14:07

Well, I do remember when I first started this, that I did do a Google search and looked for imagery because I was interested, because who I'd met in person did not match with what I saw online for the imagery, just in general, there was a lack of imagery to begin with. And secondly, the imagery tended to be not high quality imagery, and what I felt really fed some stereotypes within the community. And so I feel like you know, that's where we've worked hard to fill those gaps. Sorry, totally forgot your question.

Jennifer Crowson 14:46

It's really we're interested, we're interested in, you know, in terms of this idea of making your imagery more intentional, authentic, inclusive, you know, how challenging was that? and what's involved? And I think the way you started it actually around the kind of Google searches a great one, right? Because hopefully people will start Google searching and come across your images, right?

Hilary Gauld 15:11

Yeah, so I noticed a gap in that imagery. And I remember thinking there's a disconnect between who I just photographed. And what I saw online. And there was one series at the time I saw that really captured my eye. And that was kind of the only one that existed. So I felt that there was a, you know, an opportunity to grow the imagery within that community. And I also just really wanted to see people with Down syndrome, somewhat in the same light as everybody else. Because it feels like sometimes

the most beautiful best light is reserved for the most able bodied, beautiful people in the world. And I just feel like I wanted to put literally put that light on these people. And I feel like that it just when you take away all that other stuff that allows you to really see the person. And so I just, I knew that it was going to kind of shake up that imagery scene, when I did that, like just doing really strong portraits, and showing an array of emotion, I think that's another big thing and array of clothing choices, and an array of posing and just allowing them to be themselves in the in the images. So like I said, I feel like the original images I saw online really fed certain stereotypes. And I'd say one of the big ones is that people with Down syndrome are always happy. And I just feel sometimes I've come to learn, or this is just how I feel is that it just makes people feel more comfortable, if they see them always happy. Right? So it's like if they always want that big smile, or that goofing around, or being silly, which is a part of, you know, all of us. But it's like there are serious sides, there are quiet sides, not everyone with Down syndrome is always laughing are always smiling. Sometimes people with Down syndrome are quiet, and they you know, look away a little bit from the camera, or they look down or whatever. And some of them do like to, you know, play around with the camera and have a lot of fun. So I just wanted to do a greater array of photography. And I think the one big thing that always stands out with me is that Down Syndrome itself is such an is carries, to me one of the heaviest stigmas within the disability community. So it is just something that it carries a stigma that is hundreds and hundreds of years old. And there was a time that people with Down syndrome. And other conditions too, were not integrated into communities, they were, you know, housed in different areas and not a part of our general community. And so I think that in itself was so powerful to me, and especially as a photographer, and again, using that figurative language of bringing someone out of either a shadow or bringing someone out of that sort of heavy stigma, and making space in the wider community as kit children with Down syndrome are integrated more into schools and, and the honestly, there's so much work to do with integrating them into workplace and community groups and things like that. So yeah, there's all kinds of interesting analogies and interesting kind of visions in my head as to, you know, how to kind of show this community in a way that's far more authentic than it was 10 years ago.

Dean Askin 18:27

Jenny has been listening to the conversation intently here, I want to bring Jenny into it now. You know, Jenny, urine inclusion coach, and he'll reuse said before the show that Jenny's helped you enormously in making sure your work is intentional, authentic and inclusive. I mean, first off, and whoever wants to start off here, I mean, for those who may not have heard the term before, what is an inclusion coach, and how, as what you two have done together, helped Hilary achieve her mission.

Jenny Jay 19:01

I've been really enjoying listening in on this conversation. So I wear many hats, and I am and like ethical storytelling coach and consultant. And a lot of that is with digital marketing and visual media. Because that's the background that I come with. And as someone who is in that space, I have been so frustrated and am continuously frustrated with how tokenistic sometimes digital marketing campaigns can be media campaigns can be and like the visuals that are supposed to be there to tell individual and community stories don't actually center and include the communities that are that are being spoken about and talked about. There's been so much to change that in the last year. 10 to 15 years and their incredible community storytellers and creators and folks like Hillary, who are doing with the utmost care and intention. But also with the way social media and our digital landscape has changed, there are a lot

of folks who aren't necessarily coming in with that same lens. So that's kind of how I got into the space of consulting, in this work, especially because I have a background in in film and creative writing in media and journalism. And a lot of those spaces have also been primed to think about telling stories in a way that isn't necessarily inclusive to the communities that they're supposed to be about, and can be a lot more extractive in nature. So and, you know, Hilary and I met, when I was running, running workshops online in terms of how to create and share inclusive communications and an online space. And thinking about things that shouldn't should be like common knowledge, like, even when you're thinking about like, website and social media accessibility, thinking about your colors, thinking about when you are looking at a photo, who is in the center of it, who is quite literally taking up the most space, in the images that you use, and the places that you put them on your sites and the campaigns that you're creating. And so our conversation where it started from that place, and started, like really like unpacking a lot of Hilary's work as well. And also like being able to challenge and ask like, Well, why is this project or these projects really important? Who is included? And who hasn't been included? who continues to be left out? And for what reason? So, yeah, that's all of that, my bread and butter.

Dean Askin 21:48

So in Hilary, how would you how would you say, sorry, Jennifer,

Jennifer Crowson 21:52

No, no, no, carry on.

Dean Askin 21:53

How? Hillary? How would you say? How much? And tell me a little I want a little bit more about how much Jenny has helped you and the evolution you've seen?

Hilary Gauld 22:08

Well, I try to remind Jenny a lot, especially when we do our coaching, I made sure she knows how grateful I am. For her and her knowledge and the commitment she has to this space. It's changed my work enormously. Do I think I was on a positive path and an intentional path to begin with? Yes. But were there ways in which I could improve that story? Absolutely. And so, to me, this journey has been the greatest gift to this space and work, not just, you know, obviously, I can take the photos and the portraits, but how those stories are actually told, has really changed. And again, I'm gonna go back to that lived experience and narrow lens, I am very aware of my lived experiences, and my narrow lens. And I think that Jenny's experience, and her background and her her lived experience, continues to widen for me on the storytelling end of it. And so, yeah, I think it's it's changed things immensely. And, you know, I did, I think there was a time mid project or mid kind of in this decade, that I was starting to feel like, perhaps some of the work I was doing, or just me as a photographer was starting to be centered. And I really wanted to work. I said to Jenny, straight out, like, I just want a way to dissenter myself from this story. Because when you're working with media, and they're looking at the story, often times they were looking to me, as you know, this thing I've put together and and I just really wanted to understand how do we shift that in the media so that they are centered in the story. And so Jenny was also there to really help me with that, because that piece didn't always sit well with me. You cannot choose always what the media will pick out of your story as the headline or the main story. But at least I went in with more of an understanding of how to position, the press release and our messaging so that I

became less the story. And the people in the series became the story. And that is a part an important part of this evolution is just even guiding the way that you present your things in the media. So the right stories are tools. So I was even starting to recognize that. And again, I think I just got to a point where I realized also that the work was becoming bigger the stories were being so well received. And I was like we actually have some weight in this space. And so it's important for myself, being the photographer and leading helping to lead the committee in our messaging. I have a I have a responsibility to that. And that's really, really important to me. And I think the more sponsible we are and the more inclusive we are and aware of these things. I think that's how you start to build a bigger community. And that's when you start to widen that. So again, that analogy about the, the wider lens, like I am so aware of my lived experience, and I'm so aware of those lived experiences not being everybody's experience. And so my commitment is to learning about those experiences and making space for those stories in the photographs.

Dean Askin 25:27

And you sort of kind of kind of sort of alluded to this, but I'm wondering, you know, do you feel successful with this, you know, when you go and do a shoot now and you shoot a disability search, you go back, and you'll look at your proofs and your images? Are you at the point where you always say, Yeah, I got it, that's intentional, that's authentic and inclusive? Or are you constantly striving for the next photographic goalpost?

Hilary Gauld 25:53

No, I think I'm starting to feel like I'm contributing positively, that in like an ethical inclusive way, that my commitment to that work is now just a part of my everyday work. So it's not just within the disability community itself. It's against any client that I'm working with, I just know that I take this mindset and everything I've learned from Jenny, and I'm applying that across all of my work, because it's not just this community that needs a wider lens, it's just humanity in general, that needs a wider lens, whether it be a cultural, you know, cultural backgrounds, or invisible disabilities, visible disabilities, that lens that wider lens is helping me in every segment of my work. So yeah, I definitely am feeling more aware, better equipped, and feeling you know, good about the images when they come out. And I think to the, the feedback from a lot of the parents is very positive. And I think they're also seeing some traction within this community in the last 10 years, because there has been so much movement and growth. And so I think that, yeah, it's just helped build that community's confidence in general that, you know, the future for their children is looking more hopeful all the time. Fantastic,

Jennifer Crowson 27:11

Jenny, you know, I'm really where it was really taken an interested in what you were describing in terms of your role as an inclusion coach, you know, when what do you think are the keys to making sure photographic stories, storytelling about disability is intentional and authentic?

Jenny Jay 27:28

I think there's so many layers to that piece. And you know, Hillary and I talk about it a lot. There is obviously the subliminal messages in the photos themselves afterwards. So like I mentioned, who is front and center, if it's a group photo of folks who's taking up the most space? How have they been positioned? and for what reason, and there's so many subliminal messages that get shared in each and

every photograph. But before you even get to that point, especially when you're thinking about how to photograph folks with different disabilities and understanding. And understanding that disability is such a broad umbrella term, right? There are so many different experiences that come underneath the umbrella. And access needs for folks who have disabilities is actually the experience when they're coming into the space. How do they feel? And are they allowed to show up and be their full selves? And are they allowed to have the same access? Or the right equivalent access? As someone who would be coming in who might not have a disability? And do they feel respected, they feel valued? Do they feel like they get to show up in that same way? And then when they are looking at the pictures, does it feel like a truly authentic representation of themselves? versus, you know, folks who are from different marginalized communities know exactly when a picture is tokenistic? And sometimes you can break it down and say, these are all the reasons why technically, like you can tell. You know, it's a picture for that or, or sometimes you just know, and I think like being able to really incorporate the feelings that are really important to honor in the process of saying like, okay, this person is coming into my studio, and they have Down syndrome, and they also are deaf. And so, do I have interpreters here? Do I understand that I need to speak to the person and not the interpreter like what will that experience be like, Where will they be? Do I have enough time allocated for what this process is going to look like? Now when I'm going to be sharing the images, if they're invited into an event is that also going to be accessible so that they can fully participate and thinking about that full participation of a person? Separate to this is what the final image is going to look like, that's what actually including someone at every single stage will look like, and make them involved in the process. So, you know, they're not just subjects at the end of the camera, there's, in one of the very first spaces that I was a part of that was like a documentary fellowship that I did out in New York. That was something that we talked about a lot in that space, where a lot of racialized marginalized folks have been subjected to other people's cameras and gaze for a really long time. So when you've seen the constant feature on the other side of a camera, but you haven't actually been given the full permission to show up as yourself, what does that also mean for the next time you get asked to be in front of the camera? What is your relationship with that? And how can you trust the person who's telling your story, especially if they're not from your community to do you justice, because there is also mistrust. So also thinking about like that trust building with community. And you know, Hillary, I think is a really great example, because she's done a lot of that work in the trust building, which is why it doesn't feel tokenistic. And you can sense that when you see the images, even if you can't pinpoint Well, why do these images feel different? Versus someone else? Just saying, you know, what, I would love to do a project on folks with Down syndrome. And you can tell like, there are projects like that, and you can, you can almost instantly tell, but something is different about it. And, but really like thinking about those, those pieces of like, well, how do I fully participate? How do I allow folks to fully participate? And how are they integrated into this process? So it's a conversation, not just, here's the end goal, and how I get to be congratulated about it. And Hillary keeps that top of mind a lot, which, which is something that I really appreciate in her opinion. Yeah,

Jennifer Crowson 31:55

No, I totally agree. And it's really interesting to hear all that all that front end stuff that goes into creating the conversation that we're talking about, and I'm gonna flip us to the other side, in terms of impact, let's talk about impact for a moment, you know, what's the impact when it's done? Right? And that there's intentionally authentic inclusion in imagery and photographic storytelling? And how can you feel

the authenticity when you look at that image? And, you know, I'm thinking, I mean, we're talking about lots of images during this conversation. You know, at Odin, our interest is in supporting individuals who have disabilities into employment. So thinking about even imagery within that space and everything you've told us, I don't know, Hilary or Jenny, whether either of you want to contribute to, to thinking about impact, how do we know we're getting the impact we're going for? Um,

Jenny Jay 32:45

I don't know, I'm, I'm just like a big fan of the community will tell you when it's done. Right. And they will also tell you when it's done wrong. And, you know, there are a lot of folks in different communities across disabilities who, you know, will say, certain disabilities don't have enough racialized representation, like where are all the indigenous folks who have cancer from mercury poisoning and grassy narrows? And where are they in the images? When we're talking about certain, you know, cancers and conditions? Were like, you know, there are folks who are from racialized communities who might have different survival rates for different disabilities. And when you're looking at the pamphlets, and you're looking at, like the entire experience, where's the, like, the imagery and the messaging that says your experience is different. And we will be here to support you through that. But we understand that it's unfair, that it's different. So I think in a lot of ways, it's been done a lot better. More recently. I think when you have photograph ers photograph-ers, I think when you have photographers who are part of the communities and who are intentional in that way, you can tell by virtue of who is in front of the camera, and how like, real that feels versus staged. And I think the people who are missing, at least now in this digital age are loud enough to say, we could have done this better.

Jennifer Crowson 34:24

We could have done it better. And Hillary, would you add anything around impact?

Hilary Gauld 34:30

Yeah, I think you know, listening to Jenny impact is closely tied to trust. It just is you can't have the authentic impact without trust first. And I think you know, when people think about photographs online, because there's so many of them, they you know, anyone can do a photo post anytime. There's no credentials as to you know, whether or not you've done your your homework or your research or your learning behind but it is so true impact happens when trust is built between the community and the person that's going to be relaying that message. And I think that's the big thing within my creative industry in my creative space, that obviously, my commitment to that is, is absolutely the top of my mind in every job that I do. But I think the industry as a whole needs to continue to understand what their impact is, and how positively they can impact or how negatively and it's so true that community will tell you. And so, you know, of course, you know, it can be, I guess, frustrating sometimes, because, you know, I have heard of experiences that haven't gone so well, you know, between photographers doing images of people in these different spaces. And I just think it is time for this creator, you know, creators like myself to become responsible and understand the impact of this, and how that will impact the community. And even if it impacts the mind of one person in a negative way, you continue to perpetuate all that we're trying to actually change. So yeah, I love that, you know, that, that thought around that trust, and it goes a long way. And it is, that is what you're able to get out of photos, the comfort, the trust, these are people's lives, that you're that you're portraying, these are their lived experiences that you are putting out online. And to me, I do not take that lightly, I probably wake up, like, like, half my

days, the first thoughts in my mind when I wake up, especially when the when the series are heading out to media, it is a little stressful when they're going out every day, and I'm checking the headlines, and what are they going to send her? And are they doing it in the right way. And I understand that, you know, the media itself isn't always responsible to these things, either. But I just know that I've done, you know, I am doing the best that I can to make sure those messages when we send them out they are you know, they're authentic, and they are true to that community. And you just hope that you're also helping guide media with what you're doing.

Dean Askin 37:16

You know, however, you touched on a little bit of, of what I wanted to ask, you know, when when there isn't that intentionality? I mean, you know, what are all the, you know, negative impacts of that. And, you know, what does the photography industry and photographers need to understand about the impact that they can have positive or negative? I mean, I keep thinking about all that stock photography that's out there, you know, and I've, you know, tried to, you know, look for some of it myself, you know, to illustrate a blog post, and you go from one site to another, and you see the same, you know, contrived images on, you know, five or six different sites? I mean, what impact does that have, when that kind of imagery? That's not well thought out? And intentional, is being used on websites and blog posts? I mean, what what impact does that have on community on, you know, on, on employment and society in general?

Hilary Gauld 38:15

Well, I think, number one, it breaks the trust between that community and then the greater community at large. So I think it just makes the part or, you know, we consume pictures, we consume film, we consume media, all of these kinds of things. And I think that, you know, it just, it just doesn't help further the community. It just doesn't, I just think that's the thing. It's just that simple. It just doesn't help them. I think that it can leave people stuck in what they think about people, and then they treat them based on what they see. And so I think that, yeah, I think it can definitely have a negative impact. And I, you put yourself into someone else's experience, and when you know, you're not being represented properly, it just doesn't do anything positive for your own mental space. As a person in that group, it just continues to make you feel like you are, you know, stuck in a look or a box that someone's put you in that you know, you don't belong in.

Jenny Jay 39:18

Yeah, I just had a thought. Something that I think about a lot is, who were the creators of the stories that we've been consuming all this time. And when I say who were the creators, like, who had access, who has access, and who now will have access, and if you think about who, typically in the last 110 120 years, with cameras typically have been the storytellers it has disproportionately not been the people who have been photographed. And so the impact is all of these ideas that we have about different groups of people. A lot of them has been reinforced by media narratives that were never told by the communities themselves, right, you have an entire era of like, World Vision type of marketing, you have entire, like, eras of essentially like the stock imagery, photos that we've seen, like that's been what has been there for so long. Because the people who were featured in the, in the photographs themselves, like aren't the ones who have access to DSLRs, and cameras and film equipment and the ability to just pull out and say, like, here's the story, here's the truth. Here's your authentic version of what this

actually looks like. And you have so many gatekeepers in these industries who work inside of these marketing spaces and communication spaces and campaigns, because you also need money to further research, right? You need the images to help further research and impact and what a lot of like, really great organizations are doing. But because there have been so many barriers into who gets to be the one to capture all the different communities across disability gender, like race, like folks who are disproportionately impacted in this country. You just have, what you see is the world that we live in now, where you have to do so much unlearning. And you have to re write these ideas and stories, you're like, where did that idea even come from? And you're like, yeah, like maybe like all the years of watching those ads in the 90s. Like, that's where those ideas came from. And we didn't realize the subliminal messaging that it was telling us about, you know, folks with Down syndrome are always happy. And you know, you should be grateful because you don't have a disability. And, you know, like all the I think of like, the what is it the TV shows that used to like, center on like, making entertainment out of folks with dwarfism, like, you know, like, that's what our media has been for so long, because it was all made foreign by people not directly impacted. So yeah, those are, those are the VODs.

Dean Askin 42:16

I just want to jump in here with a with a follow up, because you've you've made, you've got me thinking as you were talking, Jenny, you know, in the introduction to this episode, you know, I was talking about Nick Ute, you know, the photographer who took that famous napalm girl photograph. And maybe that's one of the reasons why that photograph was so powerful because he, as the photographer, was from the community, he was born in Vietnam, his his older brother was a photographer and was killed in combat. And that's what spurred him to want to become a photo journalist. And then ultimately, he had that photograph of those Vietnamese children running away from the napalm attack

Jenny Jay 42:59

The level of trust that would have taken for him to be in that situation in that place in that context to take it in the first place. Like, would that have happened in another context? Maybe not?

Jennifer Crowson 43:11

Well, I feel like I could listen, I could listen to this all afternoon, you know, this is so interesting, you know, but I'm gonna kind of combine the next two questions and ask you both the or either of you, in terms of, you know, what would be your main message to photographers out there who are thinking about how do they portray disability in their photography? And and the kind of second part of that question, for those of us who are out there looking to use images that may or may be available, you know, for a blog post or for a business web page? How do we make sure that people like what's the advice, I suppose for people in terms of how to do that a little bit more authentically and intentionally, Hilary or Jenny, whoever wants to kind of kick us off for both of this.

Hilary Gauld 44:01

So I think I would start within my own community, to really make sure that photographers and creators understand their power and their impact. It's not it's never just a photo store photos, tell stories. And we know that from the history of photography, there are photos that have lived on in our history and our, our in our brain forever. And so I think that we as a community have to understand our power and impact. And I, I do do Jedi uses that term on learning. I think there's a lot of unlearning that needs to be

done. decentering in terms of, you know, we are the photographers, but we're not the stars. We're not the main characters. I think that's really important on learning, and understanding the community understanding your impact on that community. And it's not just as simple as that, as Jenny said, I'm going to photograph some kids with out syndrome because they're fun to work with. And I could put it online and people are going to comment and that kind of thing. You need to be intentional, you need to be intentional because that camera is a powerful tool. And you have the ability to hurt a community, if you're not being authentic, and you're not being aware of your impact and aware of how your imagery comes across online, I think that that, to me is very important. And to really, if you're going to enter a space that you do not have that experience in, you need to learn about that space, you need to understand, you know, the to build that trust, we need to understand what that community's goals are, and what things they what messages they want to get out. That's what makes it a powerful space, when that comes together. And I do believe there needs to be more education, more unlearning, there needs to be more awareness by creators in general, in that space. And I think once you understand that, you will never unsee that, again, it doesn't matter what client you are with, you will be looking for all those cues. And it may be as simple as you understand that the person standing in front of you has anxiety, and that there's something that could be underneath that or there's a there, they're standing in a certain way that you're like, there's something more going on here, you become a lot more intuitive, I think, I know, that's something that's always come very naturally to me with my with who I'm working with as an intuitiveness in terms of, you know, people's comfort or things they may be thinking or they a lot of past experience will come up for people in photos, it can be traumatic for some people. So depending on, you know, things people have said to them about how they look in photos over the years, those kind of things. So I think it also helps to make you more intuitive. And, yeah, because the last thing you want is someone to leave and feel as if you know, you've either fed a stereotype or you've said something to them, that feels uncomfortable. But obviously, everyone's going to not always get it right. But I think the most important thing is that you're learning and you are trying to get it right.

Jennifer Crowson 47:13

Fantastic. Thank you, Jenny, did you want to add to that?

Jenny Jay 47:16

Um, I was just gonna say, in the documentary film world, when you're applying for grants, and doing the process, something that a lot of places ask you for is an impact statement. It's one of the very few industries that asks for, do you understand the impact of your work? And what will it be? Or what are you hoping that it will be? And I think that needs to extend to documentary work as a whole, including photography. And if we ask that question of ourselves, as creators, documenting people, real lived experiences, I think that would change so much of like, the the work that we see exist now.

Dean Askin 47:58

So many powerful photographic insights from both of you. You know, we've we've, you shared a lot of insights we've talked about a lot. I mean, just before we wrap things up, is there anything we haven't talked about that you think is important dimension? I always have to ask that question. That's always the the the essential question to ask at the at the end of every podcast.

Hilary Gauld 48:23

I think that this is honestly the beginning of the conversation. I feel like there is, as Jenny said, like, I could honestly talk all day about this as well. It is the beginning of the conversation. I don't even feel within my own industry. Other photographers are talking amongst themselves about impact. And how like Jenny said, how they're positioning people in photos and what story that tells and, and those kinds of thing. I think that yeah, I just feel like this is actually the beginning of this conversation. Jenny, any thoughts?

Jenny Jay 48:55

In agreement with Hillary? And I think if there is one question I can leave with other photographers who want to do this work, ask yourself whose gaze is it for? And that usually answers a lot of question about why you're doing a project in the first place.

Jennifer Crowson 49:12

Incredible, ou know, and I think Hilary to pick up on what you said, and Jenny, I hope this is the beginning of this conversation, you know, because I'm finding it really interesting and really insightful as somebody who who doesn't come from the photographic world and, but is somebody who is really interested in making sure that the work that I do is inclusive and authentic. So I really appreciate this and, and this idea of how images, they're not just they're never just a photograph, I was really taken by, by that comment. They're not there. They're a very powerful tool. They're a tool that can shift and create narrative, you know, as Dean has talked about, in terms of some of the photographer's that he's pulled on, you know, in terms of this conversation, and, and obviously we are we are here to kind of shift that narrative about how we think about it. People who have disabilities and the contributions they can make to their communities and employment. So I really have really appreciated this conversation and I want to thank you both for coming on the show, and giving us your perspective on how to make disability. Photography inclusive. I'm Jennifer Crowson, and once again third time this season. It's been fun and great co-hosting with you, Dean.

Dean Askin 50:23

Well, I saw your LinkedIn post about how you were really starting to enjoy co hosting the show. I want to thank you again for sitting in for jet for this episode, then a great one, and Episode 21 and Episode 20. By the way, be sure to catch those two episodes. If you haven't yet listeners, Episode 21, about disability inclusion on university campuses, and Episode 20, about ableism in the workplace. Those were both great conversations Jennifer and I had with our guests and this has been another great conversation as well. So thank you for me as well to Hilary and Jenny, for coming on the show.

Jennifer Crowson 51:00

Next episode is another segment of our making the journey series, isn't it, Dean?

Dean Askin 51:06

That's right, Jennifer, instalment number two of the occasional series we launched last year during National Disability Employment Awareness Month. co host Pawnaa Perinpanayagam and I will be talking with a small-business owner who's just starting the disability-inclusive hiring journey. Surveys

have shown that over half the small businesses in Canada have never hired someone who has a disability. That's episode 25, coming later this month on July 23.

Jennifer Crowson 51:31

And that's it for this episode of You Can't Spell Inclusion Without a D. And for me this season. Once again, I'm Jennifer Crowson.

Dean Askin 51:39

And I'm Dean Askin Thanks again for listening wherever, whenever and on whatever podcast app you're listening from. Join us each episode as we have insightful conversations like this photographic one, and explored disability inclusion in business and in our communities. From all the angles You Can't Spell Inclusion without a D is produced in Toronto, Canada by the Ontario Disability Employment Network. All rights reserved. Our podcast production team, Executive Producer and Host Jeannette Campbell Producer Sue Dafoe Associate Producer and Host Dean Askin audio editing and production by Dean Askin. Our podcast theme is last summer by Ikksen. If you have feedback or comments about an episode, contact us at info at odnetwork.com. That's info@odnetwork.com. Join us each episode for insights from expert guests as we explore the power of inclusion, the business benefits of inclusive hiring and why disability is an important part of the Diversity Equity and Inclusion conversation. Listen to You Can't Spell Inclusion Without a D on Podbean or wherever you find your favourite podcasts.