



ADA Live! Episode 110: Ensuring Equity in Employment: A Celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)

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Host: Barry Whaley, Project Director at the Southeast ADA Center

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Wally Tablit:

Hi, I'm Wally Tablit and you're listening to ADA Live!

4 Wheel City: Yo. Hi, let's roll (singing)

Barry Whaley:

Hi, everybody. On behalf of the Southeast ADA Center, the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University and the ADA National Network, I want to welcome you to ADA Live! I'm Barry Whaley, I'm the director of the Southeast ADA Center and listening audience. If you have questions about the Americans with Disabilities Act, you can use our online form anytime at adalive.org. This year and every year in October, we celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month or NDEAM, recognizing the important role that people with disabilities play in a diverse and inclusive workforce. This year, our NDEAM

theme is Disability: Part of the Equity Equation. So to celebrate the contributions of workers with disabilities and to showcase supportive inclusive employment practices and policies, we're honored to have as our guest today, my friend and colleague, Wally Tablit. He is a Senior Director of Policy and workforce Development with Respectability in Washington state. So Wally, I want to welcome you to the show.

Wally Tablit:

Thank you. Thanks for having me, Barry.

Barry Whaley:

So let's start with, what is Respectability? Can you tell us a little bit about what you guys do?

Wally Tablit:

Respectability is a national disability organization and we look at ending stigmas, advancing opportunities for people with disabilities along three, forefronts. The role that I play is around our policy and workforce development, both on the state and federal level. And we also have an entertainment end use media division, which seeks to portray more positive portrayals of people with disabilities in entertainment, as well as our faith inclusion and belonging and looking at how disability intersects with ideology and faith. So those are the things that we do as an organization.

Barry Whaley:

Wow, that is far more broad than I realized. Thank you.

Wally Tablit:

You bet.

Barry Whaley:

We mentioned that it's October, it is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, NDEAM. So I'm curious, why do we need an NDEAM, Wally?

Wally Tablit:

We need an NDEAM because unfortunately disability as a conversation continues to be something that is not a big part of the conversation, especially when we look at equity, diversity, inclusion. I think a study that respectability did with employers about two years ago, disability continues to fall fourth or fifth. And not to make it a competing factor, but when we look at the things that come first, race is typically number one, and then we have gender, and then we have sexual orientation or gender identity. Disability falls fourth or fifth. And the problem or issue with that is that disability intersects with all of that. At any point, any of those populations can include someone's disability or that any point someone of that population can become disabled. So when we start kind of separating that out, and if we're not building coalition and looking at the things that we as employers or that the workforce development system can do, and we look at disability as a component of that, it helps to have a recognition celebration.

For example, I identify as a gay Asian man with a disability and people ask me, why do we continue to have a pride month, a pride celebration? And for that very reason to remind people about that population that was historically marginalized, excluded, and to say, "We are still here. We're still a big part of the conversation." And same thing with NDEAM, that employers and our workforce development system need to realize that disability and people with disabilities are a big part of that. So we continue to highlight, spotlight, celebrate, and bring awareness to people with disabilities in the workplace.

Barry Whaley:

Wally, as you said, you identify as a gay Asian male. Let's talk a little bit more about intersectionality. This idea that people have more than one identity and those identities are inherently combined. And how is that concept important to inclusive employment practices? Can you expand on that?

Wally Tablit:

Yeah, absolutely. And so when we look at that, and it's not like a layer, I don't say I peel off and my gay identity sits over here and my Asian identity and culture sits over here and my disability sits. It's all incorporated with that. And so when we look at that from employment, what are your practices and how are they incorporating all of that? Especially when we look at this work of supporting people with disabilities, when you're doing a person-centered plan, we focus so much on skills, abilities that we forget some of the other things that make up that person. What are some of the cultural considerations when we're looking at employment? If you're working with a black individual who identifies as being transgender, what are some of the considerations when you're looking at a workplace? Are you looking at bathrooms? So I think when we incorporate all of that person that's going to lead to more successful outcomes.

As an employer, if you are not crafting your onboarding, your mid-boarding, your language and your marketing to speak to the person as a whole, then you start separating. And that is a dangerous narrative because then they're saying that this one part of you is the only thing we're going to pay attention to. The fact that you might be from the BIPOC community or that you might be gay. And it's an exciting time for this conversation around equity, diversity, inclusion for employers, but also as being mindful about how we do this intentionally and what are the things that we need to do as we start looking at including. We talk about universal design in our work. I think there's something we can do about universal welcome as we create spaces for people to come and join a workplace.

Barry Whaley:

That is a wonderful concept and you've really expressed it so well, this idea of universal welcome. And you're right, we do tend to categorize, we carry these labels with us. And what that does then is just reinforces those unconscious biases that employers have and coworkers have. Wally, one of the reasons I wanted to invite you to be on our show this month, not only to celebrate NDEAM with us, but truly you are one of the recognized leaders in the field of supported employment. You're a staunch disability rights advocate.

And as we emerge from the pandemic, we're beginning to see a rebound in people with disabilities going to work. And is that rebound on pace with people without disabilities?

Wally Tablit:

That's an interesting question and I think it can be to answer that question. I think more people with disabilities are back in the workforce than never before because they'd never left it as much because they were always seen as essential. And I think how we make sure that that continues to happen is that we have to pay attention to some of the things that we learned, the lessons learned. And I never like to use the word luxury during a pandemic, but the pandemic gave us the luxury to slow down and say, "What other things are we doing? What other things are we missing?"

Sometimes you have to slow down to speed up. And I know for the work that I've seen in Washington state, people learn to, number one, that gave us the opportunity to make sure that the staff, the direct support staff, the employment consultants were getting the training and support they needed, that we got the kind of tools to ensure that people with disabilities were getting the supports whether that be technology, the kind of virtual component and pivoting as we go. I think that's the biggest thing is how do we sustain this. I mean sustaining momentum. Momentum can be seen as like you're pushing a heavy block and there's still movement, but momentum should be about rolling a ball and how do we make sure we do that.

So as we emerge and continue to maybe go back or reemerge from the pandemic, we have to pay attention to the things that got us to those successes. And that's a struggle, because as we look at the field as a whole, direct support professionals and the people who do the work, we see them leaving and we have to ask ourselves, why is that? And that's a bigger conversation because as more people with disabilities want to get back to the workforce, as more employers want to continue to hire people with disabilities, we have to make sure that we are in the right place to ensure that that continues to happen.

And that's a big conversation. And I want to answer your question directly, Barry, but I think those are the things before we start looking at data is making sure we say, how do

we keep the things we have in place? One of the great mentors in this work, David Mann, taught me, and people love or hate this quote, but they say, "The main thing is keep the main thing the main thing". And the main thing is to make sure that people with disabilities are in their jobs, are being supported in whichever shape or form that manifests and is most successful. So I hope that answered your question.

Barry Whaley:

And you're right. I mean that your answer indicates that we need to look beyond the metrics, right?

Wally Tablit:

Yes.

Barry Whaley:

We can't look at simply what's workforce participation, what's the current unemployment rate for people with disabilities compared to somebody without a disability. Southeast ADA Center, and some other researchers have been looking at, speaking of the metrics, looking at how are people with disabilities doing compared to the non-disabled population in terms of earnings capacity, in terms of benefits, in terms of healthcare, a number of metrics. I was pondering this morning that one of the things that we have not looked at yet is this whole issue of the 14(c) sub-minimum wage certificate and how does that impact outcomes for people with disabilities and earning potential. All of our social welfare systems are designed to keep people in poverty. We have the ABLE account and stuff like that. But I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about 14(c) and those states that have eliminated sub-minimum wage and where do we go from here?

Wally Tablit:

First of all, congratulations to the states who have done that or are starting the conversation because it's a big one. And I think it's an interesting thing because when you hear the topic of 14(c) and sub-minimum wage, it's still divisive. And I wonder about that sometimes. And I think to myself going, if you work in this field and you work in this work

and you talk about creating parity for people with disabilities, that should be the first conversation you have. And I think for myself, and I've seen this, is that states, in any organization that is looking to you do that, you need to have a plan because that's the first point of success. Congratulations hurray, party we ended it. But then, how are we ensuring that the people who may have been ended it and they may be transitioning out of that former existence earning sub-minimum wage, et cetera. What is the plan in place to make sure that they are then moving into community integrated employment?

And I think we've seen some organizations and some states will point to the fact and say, we haven't figured it out. And they're still in that space. And so that's that first point of success. But how are you making sure that you continue, again, momentum, that you have a planning place to make sure that they're not sitting in that space of limbo and going, okay, that is ended now one. I think there's some things that we can do, and I'm approaching this from multi-facets. I think there's an opportunity for states who want to have this conversation about how they end it. How can we learn from the states who have done it and done it well and done it early? Because the states who have done it successfully or "successfully based on their numbers" or what they're seeing as positive outcomes, there is an opportunity there to say, if you as a state, let's say Ohio as an example, I think they just started that conversation, they're moving towards that.

What can the states who have done it well, like Washington and Oregon, Hawaii that just did it, there is an opportunity there for us to learn because we never want to feel like we're doing this in isolation or on our own. And again, I will always quote High School Musical, "We're all in this together". I'm not going to do the dance or sing for you right now, but there's an opportunity there because that should be a conversation. There's what, 13 states that have passed it, 14, there's more, but there still is so much more. And so we have this great responsibility and opportunity to see how that creates those connections for other states to have those conversations. I think we're missing an opportunity here, and I know that fires me up to think about what other states are doing and how they're introducing it. And I'd love to see what other states are next. That excites me.

Barry Whaley:

It is a very nuanced conversation, which I think leads to that it's divisive. Because it's not an easy answer.

Wally Tablit:

It's not.

Barry Whaley:

What happens next? We can enter the argument or the fight or the conversation with good intention, but if we don't have a plan in place, we're done.

Wally Tablit:

Yeah, yeah.

Barry Whaley:

Now Employment First and the Employment First movement, that's a way that states can begin this conversation.

Wally Tablit:

Absolutely.

Barry Whaley:

I wonder if you can talk a little bit about that.

Wally Tablit:

Employment First, I'm proud to come from Washington state where we were one of the first states to have that conversation. And I remember when we did it, it was a scary thing. We realized we needed to do it. We needed to stop languishing in our traditions or perpetuating this idea that people couldn't work. And so having legislation or policies or Employment First where employment is the first choice that I always talk about, informed choice and uninformed choice. Employment First gives people the opportunity to try

employment to say what are the things you're good at, what are things you're going to do, and that creates those opportunities for success. I think, unfortunately, a lot of the kind of systems, if they don't have an Employment First policy, you're just kind of jumping around and you're staying in a place that you haven't had the chance to fully explore and identify what you can be great at. And creating that system, again, that perpetuates people being stuck in places they don't want to be.

So I know when we look at states who have an Employment First office, Employment First policy, and again, just having a policy is one thing, but again, how are you manifesting that? It goes back to that same thing. Yeah, policy is one conversation, how are you acting on it? What are the intention of movements to create that? I know in Washington state, we saw our data when we introduced it was first called the Working Age Adult Policy in Washington state. And then we tracked the data 10 years later from 2006 to 2016, we looked at the number of people who were working that I think quadrupled or tripled, and then the people making minimum wage or higher that tripled or quadrupled. So the data is there to show that Employment First policies and actions and intentional kind of movements work.

One of the things that our state did, and not to keep bringing up Washington state, but that's my strongest point of reference, is when this was introduced, we gathered all the kind of integral players in this, the county's VR and the employment agency saying, "What are the things you're afraid of? What are the things that you think is not going to work? What are the strategies then?" And there was a two-day gathering, and I remember being part of that going, "This is exciting." And there were some great actions that happened. There was a multi-county, your organization collaboration that said, "Hey, the individuals that we've struggled with the placement were afraid of, how do we do this together?" And so all these great things came from that difficult conversation. And I think we can say great ideas come from those difficult conversations, so don't be afraid to have that difficult conversation because you will reap the benefits of that. So props to all the states set up an Employment First policy in action.

Barry Whaley:

So to link Employment First and 14(c) together, I think one of my biggest concerns with how language is being crafted in some states is this notion of people with disabilities would be paid no less than the federal minimum wage. But if the federal minimum wage is \$7.25 cents an hour, and McDonald's, Kroger, whatever, is hiring people at 15 and \$20 an hour, as policy, internal policy, isn't this a defeat? Rather than saying, and I want your comment on this, rather than saying at least minimum wage, say prevailing wage. And just wondering what your thoughts are.

Wally Tablit:

I agree. I think prevailing wage is the conversation. I will say for some states who have struggled with that or afraid to do that, that could be a good starting point. It's that kind of conversation you have about someone who's been at a job. It should be a career path, right? Yeah. You don't say you find someone a job at Arby's and "Hurray", let's celebrate. They had a job at Arby's for 15 years. Well, if I was at Arby's for 15 years as the dishwasher. Great, if they work at Arby's for 15 years, but we need to see the career advancement.

Barry Whaley:

Yes.

Wally Tablit:

If they started as a dishwasher and then they were a shift worker and then they were assistant, we see that trajectory. The same thing could be about that wage. In some states and there's an entry success or celebration point from sub-minimum to minimum, and then the conversation doesn't end there. There's that momentum again, then that should go to prevailing.

I would love to see the policy started prevailing, but I understand why it doesn't. And I think if you just celebrate that one stop success, it shouldn't be that stop where it's minimum, federal minimum. It should be prevailing. So there's two schools of thought on that. I think it should be, but I also don't want to take away with the fact that people have

moved. You may not be where you want to be, but you're in a much better place than you used to be. So you can look at it that way.

Barry Whaley:

Yeah, that's a very good point. I've always used the term stranded because you're stable. You're low maintenance, you're not an issue. Then you end up being on the inspiration porn top 10.

Wally Tablit:

Oh yeah.

Or like you said, you forget like, "Well, Tommy's got a job. He's fine." And then we got to find the other people jobs.

Barry Whaley:

And some of that is the stressors of the work, Wally.

Wally Tablit:

Of course.

Barry Whaley:

You have to temper with career. If I am an employment professional and my boss is saying, "Hey, I've got three other people that need work." Who gets the least amount of attention?

Wally Tablit:

And it's a capacity issue like I talked about earlier, all of that. But like you said, but when you do your plan, your annual plan or your six month plan, however you're structured, that should always be consideration. You should always be looking at what else is there. And yeah, I agree. There's always so many components and I hope we get to the place that we're not having to worry about those kind of things. You know what I mean?

Barry Whaley:

Yes, exactly. Wally, we're going to pause for a moment, ADA Live! Listening audience, if you have questions about this topic or any other ADA Live! Topic, you can submit your question online at adalive.org. Or you can call the Southeast ADA Center at 1-404-541-9001. And let's pause for a word from this episode. Sponsor

Voiceover:

Respectability is a diverse, disability-led nonprofit that works to create systematic change in how society views and values people with disabilities and that advances policies and practices that empower people with disabilities to have a better future. Their mission is to fight stigmas and advance opportunities so people with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of community. For more information about Respectability, go to www.respectability.org.

Barry Whaley:

Thank you, Celestia. Welcome back to our discussion on inclusive workplaces with our guest Wally Tablit. So as we have emerged from the pandemic, Wally, what we have seen is a very alarming employment gap. The Washington Post says that there are 11 million job openings currently, but only 6 million unemployed workers and employers are struggling to hire enough people to fill those positions. And at the same time, we know that people with disabilities across all age groups were less likely to be employed than those people with no disabilities. And so I'm wondering what you see as are opportunities and are challenges for disability employment.

Wally Tablit:

That's a great question and that's interesting. It's a sad dilemma to hear, but I think there's opportunities. Two things, when we look at this. I think organizations have to look at, talk about capacity again and getting more people into the work and into the field in regards to being employment consultants and support. Here's an opportunity to look at your own recruiting tactics and recruiting techniques, and that is that equity piece as well. One of

the conversations I had, and I watch a show called Naked and Afraid, and I won't tell you why I watch that show, but I watch a show called Naked and Afraid. And what I watch is that there are people, and it's a survival type show, the people who wait, they lay a trap and they hope for a bird or a squirrel or something to come through their trap, and maybe they're successful.

The ones who are the most successful is they go to where they see the bird's nest or where the boars and you go to where your need is. And I think, unfortunately, we're trapped at doing the same things for post an ad in a LinkedIn or et cetera, and hoping for people to come, as opposed to say, we want someone who comes to us and represents a certain demographic or community because they bring a certain skillset in need, or we need someone who speaks Spanish. You're not going to do this we hope. And when you say people of color or people with diverse backgrounds are encouraged to apply, you should be going out there and say, Who in your community, who are your community representatives or brokers, go to ... If you want someone who speaks Spanish and go to your local Spanish supported community based organization and say, "We want you to be part of this work."

There is power in invitation and I think we underestimate that. Placing an ad is not an invitation, that's a notification. And we all know the work that we do is not transactional, it's relational. So the same way we do build relationships with workforce development boards or legislators or employers, we should be doing the same for people who want to come work for us. So there is that piece. And then looking again, that equity piece, how are you creating that piece of universal welcome?

I attended a workshop and there were people, recent graduates, students of color from local universities, and they spoke to what it is they look for when they go to a company. They want to look for people who look like them. They want to look for organizations that have a true mission and true action around equity, diversity, and inclusion. They want to know that their organization has impact in community, that they have a role in it.

Because these students said, If there's no one who looks like me in leadership and that shows that there is no place for me to grow.

Barry Whaley:

Yes.

Wally Tablit:

So that is a big piece of it. Again, challenging the way we've always done our job, where again, it's the traditional, let's put it an ad in, let's fill out an application. How are we approaching the different things and continuing to push that conversation, going back to the initial conversation we had that disability as part of the NDEAM theme, disability is part of the equity equation. And a lot of it, this is an exciting time in the sense of employers are looking for that. They want to hire more diverse and have more diverse representation and making sure that whoever you're connecting to, whether it be through the HR department, a lot of organizations now have a diversity and equity inclusion specialists. Talk to them, reach out to them and say, How are you incorporating disability to that, because if you're not, then maybe that's something to think about. So those opportunities are there.

The challenges, the second part of your question, Barry, is I think it's a challenge with the workforce in general. Nobody's working right now. People aren't applying for whatever the case might be. And we have to look and say, "What are some things that we can do differently?" I know we talked about from a policy and in different states, how do we make sure that that workers, direct support professionals, are getting paid what they're worth? Because it'll be hard for people to come into this work when they see Starbucks or McDonald's or a local burger joint in my neighborhood paying \$25 an hour and they'll pay for tuition as well. And I know you can't compete with big corporations the same way, but what are we doing as a system to make sure that we put value around this work? So that is the challenge from a bigger picture thing and many more.

I think we can look at the opportunities first and then say, how are we both as a system, but also as each organization looks at, and besides recruitment, there's that retention piece.

Barry Whaley:

Yes.

Wally Tablit:

There's something to be said. And this is a thing that I've done in my state along with my state's technical assistance and training entity, WISE, which is the Washington Initiative for Supported Employment, called Recruit, Cultivate, Retain. There are some people like myself who stayed in the field for 25 years and then people leave after one or two, and we have to figure out why that is. And we have to figure out and say, "How can we continue to show your growth the same way we look at growth for people with disabilities in their jobs?" And we talked about that. How are we intentionally looking at that for the people who work for our organization? So challenge and opportunity. So I hope everyone looks at that challenge to say, how do we meet it?

Barry Whaley:

One of my sons is a direct support professional working in New York City, and just his frustration of his loyalty to the people he represents, and then all around him, he sees people leaving the field. And you're right, it's money, it's benefits, it's commands versus what the most important workers are being paid.

I want to shift gears for a minute, Wally, and talk about a bill that was introduced in the House a month or so ago, or maybe it was earlier this month, regarding language. The intent of the bill would be to replace that language that people with disabilities find offensive in the US code. And I wonder if you could comment on that bill and the message that this sends.

Wally Tablit:

Well, I think this bill and the message around language in general, what it sends is that we need to be comfortable and talk about how language represents, and again, we talk about any diverse group, we have to be respectful. And language is important and how we say it. For example, there are some examples when I talk about equity, diversity, inclusion work, I use EDI because equity is the driver. Some organizations will use JEDI,

like justice, equity, diversity, inclusion. For me, on that regard, I don't care what you call it as long as you do it. However, in other language and pieces, I have a problem, personally, I have an issue with the word special needs, because why are you afraid to say the word disability? What is the thing that is stopping you from acknowledging the fact that this person who will proudly say, and I proudly say, I am a person with a disability.

And so language will speak to the fact that if we create this space again that says these are things that are respectful, unacceptable, and how do we move and transform? Language is consistently evolving and we have to evolve with it. When we look at the language around race, when we look around language around the gay and lesbian community, because if you think about it in terms, and I'll use that as a reference LGBT was, oh, it was just a gay and lesbian. And then we identified and said, there's other parts of the community that we're excluding from this. And so we added the transgender community. But what a minute, if you don't identify as a transgender, if you're inter-sexed, then we have to make sure we include that. And so we've evolved as a community and culture to be respectful about the people who are also part of that community.

When we look at the pride flag that evolved to include transgender individuals and the BIPOC population. And so when we look at language around disability, we have to make sure, are the movements going to be a value add? Are the movements and the actions that we're requesting going to be beneficial to the community that it's intending to support? I'll use an example as sports teams. It drove me nuts or it made me frantic, like the Braves. And I thought to myself going, I understand from a corporate cycle it's going to cost us too many to change and change the mascot. But I thought, if the people who are sustained the most in the Native American population are saying to you, this is harmful, your response should be, "Oh my goodness, thank you for letting me know that. What is the restitution and things I need to do to ensure that this doesn't continue to happen?" That should be the first response.

And so I think those are the kind of things when we look at language, when we look at evolution, we have to say, "What is the community?" At Respectability, I lead our policy department and I say this, I will never create a policy unless it is informed by people with

disabilities and you telling me what is important to you. Otherwise then it's my policy agenda or Respectability's as opposed to people with disabilities agenda. And that's the way I look at it. And I hope that answered the question.

Barry Whaley:

Oh, it very, very much so. Just kind of reiterate your point, terms like special needs or whatever that truly are offensive. But it seems that people, they talk in euphemism, it's as if they treat disability as a dirty word, when disability should be celebrated.

Wally Tablit:

Yes.

Barry Whaley:

Disability is part of the human equation. It's part of who we are. That's just the whole argument of identity first language-

Wally Tablit:

Yes.

Barry Whaley:

Person first language, that's the root of that, right?

Wally Tablit:

Yep. Absolutely. Absolutely. And it goes back to the whole kind of thing around and the conversation, and I think understanding the difference between diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice and belonging. And it's like when you think about language, belonging encompasses all of the things around diversity, equity, inclusion, social justice, belonging says, is everyone secure? Recognize, affirm, supported and accepted equally so that we can fully participate. When you start ignoring being so careful to say, Oh, well they're special needs, it's person with disability. Or if someone said, "Well, Wally, has a

husband." I'm gay, I have a husband, let's just say it. Let's be clear. And I know there's some things that the person is owning and is proud of that, then you should be able to celebrate that too without having to find something in your language to make yourself more comfortable. And I think that's the thing that we have to be mindful of.

Barry Whaley:

So to kind of wrap up, Wally, we've come a long way in our fight for inclusive workplaces, for greater diversity, for being truly inclusive. And I'm wondering, what's next? What are our challenges? Where do we go from here?

Wally Tablit:

What's next is to keep doing what you're doing, but to elevate it. I always say when I'm looking at organizational change or organizational advancement is ask yourself these three simple questions. What do I need to stop doing? What do I need to keep doing? And what do I need to start doing? Because when you look at this work, you can easily say, "Hey, we need to stop the way using our language and our webpage or whatever that disability porn and these images that we use." Okay, what do we need to keep doing? What we're doing is doing really great and we're reaping the benefits of that, so let's make sure we keep doing it. I also continue to check and say, if that's the same way we evolve, keep saying, "Okay, is this still working for us?" And then what are the things we need to start doing? When we look at the work of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility with that is, ask yourself, what conversations are we missing? Because the biggest fear is that this becomes the flavor of the month.

Barry Whaley:

Yes.

Wally Tablit:

We see all these organizations after the racial, I don't even want to call it reckoning, because reckoning means to say that something's already happened and something's already changed. It's a racial awakening to say, we need to do something. And with the

best intentions, organizations created a diversity, equity, inclusion officer or DI specialist, et cetera. But then that was it. So you had this person and it was like, what is their job? Well, we don't know, but we created it. With as opposed to saying. So it can't just be that you have someone in there, it has to be intentional. I get asked a lot for jobs on LinkedIn or to join boards because I check a lot of boxes. I'm a gay, check. Asian, check. Man with a disability, check. And I'm also an immigrant, check.

I'm also fabulous and bald, but that's an extra benefit. And with that, people assume that we've done our job. He checks a lot of boxes. The danger with that is that then it becomes something that is just for your own PR as opposed to things that are actually making changes. And people think that the work of equity inclusion is a training and representation. So we have a person of color representative and then we did a one hour training. I call them drive-by trainings where you drive by, you're like, "Hey, I'm here. Let me talk to you about our equity work." And you're there for two hours and you drive by and you never speak of it again.

Barry Whaley:

Sure.

Wally Tablit:

So to continue that, we talk about momentum. Ensure the work you're doing on equity, diversity, inclusion is continuous. Continue to include your staff in that work. Make sure that you're including leadership in that work. It shouldn't just be the people who are of marginalized and excluded communities who are doing the work, because you're then asking people who are the most affected to fix it for you.

Barry Whaley:

Right.

Wally Tablit:

And ensure you can't say you are a disability justice or diverse organization if you don't have a person of color, a person of other lived experience or a person with disability on your leadership team or on your board. Before you do, be. Look at your organization, look at who you are, reassess and ask, "Why are we doing this? Why do we need to do this?" And then your actions will come to you fruition. I always say the difference between being a part of something and being apart from it is a space. And I ask everyone to say, "What space are you in when it comes to this work, and be in this space that you want to be a part of it."

Barry Whaley:

Wally, thank you so much for speaking with us today. Listeners, as a reminder, you can access all ADA Live! episodes with archived audio, accessible transcripts and resources on our website at adalive.org. We invite you to listen to the SoundCloud ADA Live! channel at soundcloud.com/adalive. You can download ADA Live! to your mobile device, go to your podcast app and search for ADA Live!

If you have questions about the Americans with Disabilities Act, you can use our online form at any time, adalive.org, or you can contact your regional ADA center at 1-800-949-4232. Those calls are always free and they're confidential. ADA Live! is a program of the Southeast ADA Center, the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University, and a collaboration with the Disability Inclusive Employment Policy Rehabilitation Research and Training Center.

We also invite you to tune into our companion podcast, Disability Rights Today for an in-depth discussion of important court cases that shape disability rights and the Americans with Disabilities Act. You can learn more and listen to Disability Rights Today at disabilityrightstoday.org. Our producer is Celestia Ohrazda with Beth Miller Harrison, Mary Morder, Marsha Schwanke, Chase Coleman, and me, I'm Barry Wiley. Our music is from 4 Wheel City, the Movement 4 Improvement. Thanks for being with us. We'll see you next episode.

(singing)

Our producer is Celestia Ohrazda with Beth Miller Harrison, Mary Morder, Marsha Schwanke, Chase Coleman, and Barry Whaley. Our music is from 4 Wheel City, The Movement 4 Improvement.

See you next episode.

4 Wheel City: (rapping)

[End of Transcript]

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