
Participants:

Holly Carmichael
Michael Murray
Liz Weintraub



[Audio Length: 0:33:00]

RECORDING BEGINS

Introduction:

A garrison is a safe place where an army gathers. In the same way, the Disability Garrison Podcast is a place for the army of disability rights advocates to gather and discuss complex issues. We are unafraid to identify problems in our world and have difficult conversations about them. But we are not just here to complain. We spend our time brainstorming solutions with generals in the disability rights movement. Together, we take action to make positive change and lead the fight for justice and equality.

Holly Carmichael:

My name is Holly Carmichael.

Michael Murray:

My name is Michael Murray. This is the Disability Garrison.

Dan Carmichael:

Here are some things you shouldn't say to a person with a disability.

Male:

Looking at you, you can't really tell you have a disability. That must be kind of nice.

Female:

Excuse me?

Male:

Oh, hey, you get the handicapped parking. Lucky.

Male:

Oh cool, are you training for Special Olympics?

Female:

Sorry, what?

Male:

Now you're not planning on having kids obviously, right?

Female:

We already have children.

Male:

Genetically, that works?

Male:

I wish there was something I could do to fix you.

Female:

To fix me?

Male:

I completely understand what you're going through. I twisted my ankle once.

Male:

How are you doing?

Female:

I'm fine. Thank you.

Male:

Are you?

Male:

I'm real happy to see you here. What you're going through, I could never do that.

Male:

What is that supposed to mean?

Male:

I know you got a disability, but at least it's not cancer, right?

Female:

What?

Male:

Oh, hey, you guys have the Wilford Brimley disease, right? The diabetes?

Male:

What's wrong with you?

Female:

What do you mean?

Male:

Hey, are you guys together?

Female:

Yeah.

Male:

That's so cool. Like a social security racket thing. I dig it.

Male:

Do you guys have to wear this all the time?

Female:

Yep.

Male:

That must be terrible.

Male:

You're different, and I respect that.

Male:

What?

Michael Murray:

As Dan Carmichael just pointed out, there are things you just should not say. Unfortunately, those of us with disabilities are too often met with offensive statements that undermine the value that we bring to the world. These statements, even when well-intended, pity us, criticize us, and question our value.

In fact, research on neural pathways suggests that there's a substantial overlap between the experience of physical and social pain. When offensive statements are made, the regions of my brain that would be activated are the same as for physical pain. So if you wouldn't punch me in the face, you shouldn't be saying things that are offensive.

So today we will explore the impact of language and how to create inclusive environments utilizing respectful and welcoming dialogue. I'm so excited to have Liz on here. She's a dear friend and a wonderful human being to be a part of the *Disability Garrison* podcast today. Holly, tell us about Liz.

Holly Carmichael:

Liz is pretty awesome. She has a very long history of leadership and self-advocacy. She's been on many boards and advisory positions across states and national organizations. Right now she serves as a full-time member of AUCD's policy team. She hosts another awesome podcast called *Tuesdays with Liz* which I was honored to be a guest on. Michael, you were as well. I think you were a guest, right?

Michael Murray:

I mean, so Liz, we got to ask you, which podcast did you enjoy more? Mine or Holly's, doing the interview? You don't have to answer that.

Liz Weintraub:

Every interview is unique, and everyone is special in their own ways. But I have to say yours, Michael, when you were jumping up and down is something that is memorable.

Holly Carmichael:

Yes, yes.

Michael Murray:

I do enjoy jumping up and down. Holly's smarter than I am, but I bring the energy.

Holly Carmichael:

No, yeah. For those of you who don't know, Michael's very energetic, and he brings a ton of energy to his advocacy which is huge and impactful as Liz can attest to.

Some more awesome things about Liz, in Spring of 2018, she served as a Fellow for Senator Casey from Pennsylvania, working directly in DC. She has called attention to a lot of different needs including the need for accessible supports and services for students and employees with disabilities on college campuses that ended up resulting in a bill that got passed. She has done just an amazing group of things. Senator Casey says about Liz that she has shown the Senate how important it is to have staff members who have developmental and intellectual disabilities. She helped us reshape the culture of the Senate.

So Liz Weintraub is with us today to talk a little bit about language and how we can think about the things that we say. And how those impact those around us and make people feel, and maybe ways that we can get better at that.

Michael Murray:

Liz, I want to talk a little bit about your advocacy career, but let's start with the title that you have right now in this organization and what it's like to lead policy. Because you are not a token member of the staff. You are leading pushing for policy and at the head of tables. Not just sitting at the table, at the head of the table leading the policy discussions.

Liz Weintraub:

Yes, I am. And I don't like to brag on myself.

Michael Murray:

That's all right. We love to brag about you.

Liz Weintraub:

I work for AUCD, and I'm the senior advocacy specialist. I'm advocating for everyone. I'm advocating for everyone. And I think that part of the issue a lot of the time and a lot of my friends will say self-advocate and you'll hear the word "self-advocate." And I think that people try to put a label on it. And I learned that when I used to work for the Council for Equality and Leadership, my previous job and I loved that job. One of my jobs was to do a focus group for people, and they said, well, those self-advocate, those self-advocate. It's a nicer word than the R word, the C word. And I wonder whether what the C word is?

Holly Carmichael:

Yeah.

Liz Weintraub:

Well, the C word means client. And those are words that I don't like. Those words are bad. And so they use self-advocate as a nicer word, but I don't know whether they're advocating for themselves. And I am truly advocating. I go up on the Hill. I go to talk to people, whatever I do.

Michael Murray:

Absolutely. And I think it is so vital to recognize that the language that we use around folks and the way that we identify them and allow them to identify themselves has a huge impact on how and what we're able to say at the table, especially for those of us with disabilities. We often get so much pity, and it's wrapped up in all of this language that on its surface seems like, oh, it's okay, they're just trying to be nice. And we'll talk about some of these really irritating terms that get to me that are just wrapped up in this pity. But it's unhelpful, and we need to help recognize things like disability is not a bad word. I'm a disabled person, and I'm proud of that fact.

Holly Carmichael:

Yeah.

Liz Weintraub:

I'm very proud of my disability.

Michael Murray:

Right.

Holly Carmichael:

I have to tell you too, Liz, you really gave me a different perspective on that C word, the word client. Because I have, of course, in my years of work come across that well, that term can come off as offensive. And I was looking at it from the angle of professional services like a lawyer or you're a client of a lawyer. And you brought up a really great point on I think in an article that you wrote about that. Client is used in professional services. But when that lawyer sees you in the grocery store, they're not saying "oh there's my client."

Michael Murray:

That's right.

Holly Carmichael:

They're calling you Mrs. Weintraub or Miss Weintraub or hey, Liz. Whereas in the world of disability professional supports providers just saying there's my client, it's a different tone. It's a different meaning. And I think that was really eye-opening for me. So thank you.

Liz Weintraub:

You're welcome.

Michael Murray:

So Liz, I want to go really quick to there's so many points in your career that we could highlight. But you were asked to speak at the Kavanaugh hearings for the Supreme Court, and it was incredible. For those who haven't watched it, you got to watch it. And all of the other testimonies, Senators were in and out, they weren't paying attention, they were on their phones. When Liz was talking, y'all, every person in the room was paying attention. Everybody's phone was down, and every Senator regardless of which side of the aisle they were on was completely focused on what Liz has to say. Because what she has to say is so powerful. What was that like?

Liz Weintraub:

It was very scary. It was very humbling. I was honored to do it. I was proud to do it. On the other hand, after everything was happening and when the decision was made, that nominee, and Kavanaugh's Supreme Court nominee got on the bench, I came out of a pet store on a Saturday morning and I heard the news. And I just cried. I just cried because the reason why I wanted it, and I should back up by saying the night before my testimony, and maybe I have a big head, whatever. But I thought that by my testimony, they would listen to me, and they would change their minds. They would listen to me. Because people have said that I'm powerful. Michael, you even said that I'm powerful. Maybe I do have a big head. So when I heard that they, so I dreamt that they would change their minds and they would say, oh yeah, maybe we are doing the wrong thing. And when he got on the Supreme Court, I just cried because why am I doing all this work? I'm not doing this work for praise or for being on the podcast. I want to make real change.

Holly Carmichael:

Yeah, yeah.

Michael Murray:

Yeah. Liz, today we're not going to have time to jump into the hearing and all of the issues around that. But I wonder if you could just talk about when you were there, how it felt to be there and if there was one line that you said that you felt had the biggest impact, what line would that be?

Liz Weintraub:

All means all.

Holly Carmichael:

Liz, I have to tell you, even though it wasn't in your mind a win, you were going there to advocate for change that didn't happen, I think one lesson that I've taken away from my work in advocacy is that a river cuts through rock not because of its power that one time. It's the persistence. It's the continued messaging, continuing to raise that point of view, continuing to make sure people are listening. And just because it wasn't a win that day doesn't mean down the road, people heard that message. People heard all means all.

Michael Murray:

That's right.

Holly Carmichael:

And it was impactful.

Michael Murray:

And it was the most repeated slogan of and still has a life today.

Holly Carmichael:

Yeah. It's a rallying cry for disability rights.

Michael Murray:

It's a rallying cry. All means all. Yeah. And it had an impact, and it will continue to have an impact.

Liz Weintraub:

Well, a lot of people have said that. So thank you.

Michael Murray:

All right. Liz, so we're talking about language today, and I thought we could do a fun little exercise where we're going to go around and one of us will say something that you shouldn't say. Because there are just some things that you shouldn't say. And we're not here to criticize people. We know that a lot of times, as you were just saying, people are trying to be nice, they're trying to do their best, and it's okay to

make mistakes. But today our goal is to help you understand why some of the things that people regularly say to those of us with disabilities just aren't right and you just shouldn't say them. So we want to give you some perspective, and we want to help you understand it.

And so I'm going to take a turn with something that you shouldn't say. Holly will take a turn. Liz, you'll get to take a turn of something that you just shouldn't say to people. And then we'll all comment on why you shouldn't say that. So I'm going to start. "At least you have your health." Anybody ever heard that? And why shouldn't you say it? Holly, you go first.

Holly Carmichael:

Oh gosh. At least you have your health. It brings this assumption that you're lesser than if you have a health issue. And I know it's meant well. I know it's meant well and comes from a good place. But it can be so offensive to somebody who it demeans of like you don't have it that bad. It kind of goes along those same lines. Liz, what about you? Why does that ring wrong for you? At least you have your health.

Liz Weintraub:

To me, it's demeaning. Nobody else has said at least you have your health. That means that we have different kind of health as anyone else. We all have to be healthy. We all want to be healthy. We all go to the doctors. So what's the difference between my health and your health? Nothing.

Michael Murray:

Yeah. Well, and I mean it's so silly because if I were to say, and the reason you've never heard it, Liz, is because it's a Southern thing. And so as a Southerner, we say that all the time. Oh bless your heart and well, at least you have your health. But really would you say that about any other population? Well, at least you're not a woman. I mean really? At least out of all the people in the world you could be like at least, you're not a person with a disability. And that affects our hiring, it affects the way that we engage with each other. Those kinds of pre-loaded language has a huge impact on how we view the world and the way that we do things. All right. Who wants to go next?

Holly Carmichael:

I'm curious, Liz, if you've ever heard this one before because I get this or I hear this for individuals is, "you're married? How can you get married?"

Liz Weintraub:

Oh my God, I hate that.

Holly Carmichael:

Have you heard that?

Liz Weintraub:

Yes.

Holly Carmichael:

Yes.

Liz Weintraub:

Well, why can't I get married? I love Phil.

Michael Murray:

I love Phil too.

Liz Weintraub:

And I can get married because—I'm an adult. We have something in common. We want to get married. We want to spend the rest of my life. I actually have heard the term well, you can't have kids. You can't have kids. Why?

Michael Murray:

Right.

Holly Carmichael:

Yes. You mean when you have a disability, you can't shut that love portion of your humanity down? Like there's still some human in you?

Michael Murray:

And the reality is it's like Liz and Phil are an incredible couple. Like I love you guys. Y'all are so awesome. And the world benefits from both of you separately but also really benefits from you guys as a couple.

Holly Carmichael:

Everybody wants connection and belonging and love. And yes, I hope that Maggie gets married, right? Isn't that like your little girl getting married?

Michael Murray:

Oh, it's going to be so cute.

Holly Carmichael:

If she wants to I should say. If she wants to. But I think she will.

Michael Murray:

All right.

Holly Carmichael:

What about you, Liz? What's another one you've heard?

Liz Weintraub:

“Special needs.”

Michael Murray:

Oh stop.

Holly Carmichael:

Your needs are so special.

Michael Murray:

My needs are not special. They're just needs. That's the worst. This is the worst.

Holly Carmichael:

Yes. Maybe different needs or sometimes it's just the same needs. And you know what? Everybody needed that.

Michael Murray:

Yeah. I've got another one. You ready for this one? “You're not disabled. You're differently abled.” It's meant well. I know that they mean well. But like I would never, it assumes that one is better than the other.

Holly Carmichael:

Yeah.

Michael Murray:

So like I would never look at you, Liz, and be like, “you're not a woman. You're just differently gendered.” What did I just say? I said one gender is better than the other, and the other one doesn't even deserve the recognition of it. So for me personally, I know a lot of people have another view on this, but “differently abled” is one that I could throw out the door today and never see again and be super happy about.

Liz Weintraub:

We're all the same. I wake up just like anyone else. I try to put on my shoes just the way everyone else does. I go to work just like anyone else.

Holly Carmichael:

Yes. There's a great video, I'm just like you. I don't know if you've seen it, Liz, but Annette Downey and her group put it together that's just really, really great and powerful.

Michael Murray:

We'll put it on the website.

Holly Carmichael:

Yes, yes.

Michael Murray:

You got another one?

Holly Carmichael:

Oh gosh. How about when you hear, “well, it could always be worse. At least, it isn't cancer” or insert other condition that they feel is...

Liz Weintraub:

No one knows who I am. No ones knows what I deal with every day.

Holly Carmichael:

That's right.

Liz Weintraub:

No one is in my party.

Michael Murray:

Yes, I've got some more too. How about, “Liz, you're such an inspiration.”

Liz Weintraub:

Oh my God. I'm not here to be your inspiration.

Michael Murray:

I'm not here to be your inspiration.

Holly Carmichael:

Yes, yes.

Liz Weintraub:

I'm just who I am. And it reminds me of, I had to get, a few weeks ago, somebody asked me why I do what I do. And I don't do what I do because of honor. Yes, I am honored to be on the *Disability Garrison*. I am honored to get all the awards and other praise. But that's not why I do what I do. You know why I do what I do? I do what I do because if I want to help Maggie. I want to help Isaac. I want to help Ellie. Isn't your daughter named Ellie?

Michael Murray:

Yep.

Liz Weintraub:

I want to help the younger generation. I want to under help them understand that disability isn't anything bad.

Michael Murray:

Come on.

Holly Carmichael:

That's right. I realize, I don't know if we should mention, but you brought this up initially, Liz. It should go without saying that the R word is hate speech. Like we didn't even bring that up in our discussion because it should not need to be said. But I have seen on social media some memes using that word and that's really where we should be beyond that as a society. And when we're talking about language, I just want to make sure we recognize that that's never okay. If you see it, say something to that person.

Liz Weintraub:

Have you ever seen the video with Liz Plank? It's a video on YouTube. It came out just like within the last two months. Because there's all kinds of words. There's all kinds of ways to say that retarded. Say, that retard is short or that retard, someone will say, oh, you're retarded because you can't do directions or you can't do this or that. Well, that's hurtful.

Michael Murray:

It's very hurtful. That's right.

Liz Weintraub:

And maybe domain is in the way we think other. But hearing the R word still hurts. It's just as bad as the C word.

Michael Murray:

I think it's really important for all of our listeners to recognize you may not mean when you say the R word to demean a person with an intellectual or developmental disability or the rest of us with disabilities. But it does. It hurts. Stop using the R word period.

Holly Carmichael:

Yeah. Well, and Liz, I'm curious too, what should people say if they find out a friend of theirs is disabled or if they happen upon someone just going on the subway or going through the grocery store? What should you say?

Liz Weintraub:

Can you just say my name?

Michael Murray:

Yes, that's it. That's it. How about hello?

Holly Carmichael:

How are you?

Michael Murray:

Nice to meet you.

Holly Carmichael:

How are you doing today? It's a lovely day.

Michael Murray:

This isn't hard, people. Yes. So good.

Holly Carmichael:

I'm just like you. I think you said that really well, Liz.

Liz Weintraub:

I'm just like you. Everyone has a disability. Everyone. There are things that I'm sure we all can't do. Like English, lots of people can't spell. A lot of people can't do math. Lots of people can't do this or that. So what's the difference between my disability and theirs? I have a label. I have a label. That's stupid. Just call me Liz and get to know me. And if you get to know me, you'll find out that I'm a good person and I'm a fun person and I can go to the park and play ball with you.

Michael Murray:

I love it.

Liz Weintraub:

And have dinner with you and your son.

Holly Carmichael:

Yes.

Michael Murray:

Yeah, that's right, that's right. And host an incredible dinner party. You guys don't know this. Liz hosts, we've been in the middle of COVID so we can't do it, she hosts great dinner parties with some awesome quiche. That quiche was so good. I still remember it.

Holly Carmichael:

Oh wow.

Michael Murray:

Right. It was so good.

Holly Carmichael:

Any other lasting thoughts?

Liz Weintraub:

I just also want to say I have a right to fail. Let me fail. Let me fail.

Holly Carmichael:

That's right.

Liz Weintraub:

I want to fall and like make a joke about that I don't want to fall. I fall a lot. Let me fall and let me pick myself up. I want to learn how to pick myself up.

Holly Carmichael:

Yeah.

Michael Murray:

So good.

Holly Carmichael:

Yeah.

Liz Weintraub:

Because if you don't teach me, if you rush over and pick me up, then how will I ever learn? How will I ever learn?

Holly Carmichael:

Yeah.

Liz Weintraub:

The other word that I would like to leave people with is nothing about us without us. And that means if there's a discussion about me or my friends, then I demand to be at that table. You were asking what is the most impactful of my own testimony and I was trying to think nothing about us without us. And then you whisper all means all. Because I really believe that part of the testimony was making decisions without me, without my friends. You, as a parent, you as a parent with your husband will make a decision about Maggie. And for such a long time, people like Maggie haven't ever been involved.

Holly Carmichael:

That's right.

Liz Weintraub:

And you'll do the same thing for Isaac and Ellie. And I hope that parents will understand that we deserve to be at that table.

Michael Murray:

Yes.

Holly Carmichael:

You do, you do. Both my kids, Liz, have an IEP, both Dexter and Maggie. And I'm working with the school, and they should always be at their IEP. They're the I for goodness sakes. We can't be making goals without them or without their input or what supports they need.

Michael Murray:

Absolutely. And for my IEP, my dad insisted that I was always at the table. And even from a very young age, we're talking like kindergarten because it wasn't that I could understand everything, but I had to be a part of that process.

And your advocacy, Liz, brings those of us with disabilities front and center, ensures that we always have a voice, ensures that all means all, and that nothing about us without us is the way that we live our lives. That's the way that we do things here at GT Independence. That's the way that we do things personally. And to have you as an advocate and a friend alongside us in this fight for justice and equality gets me so stoked.

Liz, thank you so much for being on the podcast today. We are so grateful for you.

Holly Carmichael:

That's right.

Liz Weintraub:

Thank you. And have a nice day and remember all means all.

Michael Murray:

All means all.

Holly Carmichael:

All means all. That's right.

Liz Weintraub:

Well, thank you.

Michael Murray:

Wow. Liz was such an incredible guest today. We all have a responsibility to use respectful and welcoming language that leads to inclusive environments. So as we always do, we're going to leave you, our dear listeners, with some simple things that you can do to join the Disability Garrison in our quest for justice and equality.

Number one, what can you as an individual do? Treat everyone like a person. Some terminologies that were common 10, 20, 30 years ago are now outdated and possibly even offensive. If you hear someone using an outdated or offensive term, correct them. Even if there isn't a person with a disability around, use it as a teachable moment to better our society. It is everyone's responsibility to make everyone feel welcome and included in every space.

And on that same note, are you about to ask an offensive question? Well, maybe you should just check yourself and not ask that question. Sometimes you just need to say, hey, does this really need an answer? Every person is deserving of the kindness and respect that we would all want.

Number two, along with something that you can do as an individual, we love to give you guys actions that you can take that can have a more systematic impact. One thing that we've seen that has a huge impact on language and people's use of language in various environments is diversity and inclusion and training specifically in the workplace. So ask your workplace to hold a disability etiquette training for all employees. Ask that those trainings be hosted by people with disabilities. They have lived experience that is incredibly vital to making sure that these trainings are useful. It also amplifies our allyship and gives voice and platform to those of us with disabilities. Also, pay the people who are hosting the trainings. They deserve it.

Number three, we always like to leave you with a worthy organization that you can donate to. Today we're highlighting the Center for Disability Inclusion. The Center for Disability Inclusion is your trusted resource for workplace solutions that educate the business community on proven strategies to advance disability inclusion. They cultivate relationships that advance disability inclusion, and they elevate inclusive practices so that businesses can become an employer of choice for people with disabilities.

So again, we encourage you to go to GTIndependence.com/podcast to find more resources on this episode and more information on our podcast. Thank you so much for listening. Thank you for being a part of the Disability Garrison. We look forward to talking with you again soon.

Conclusion:

Thank you for listening to the *Disability Garrison Podcast*. My name is by Bahija, and I direct my own services here in North Carolina through GT Independence. What I like most about directing my own services here is having the opportunity of selecting a trustworthy caregiver of my choice that would handle the vast majority of my personal affairs and needs. For the Links and resources mentioned in this episode, go to GTIndependence.com.