



**Season 1 Episode 4:  
What is the intersection between race and disability?**

Candace Coleman

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[Upbeat intro music]

Nicole:

Hey Sarah, how's your week going?

Sarah:

My week has been really good. I am here in Chicago for my fieldwork placement. I'm in school to be an occupational therapist. We do these 12-week rotations where we work at different settings as an occupational therapist, but we have really intense and very mentorship. So my clinical instructor is really amazing and she's very fierce and just believes in OT so much and she's very like on it and has been teaching me so many really wonderful things and really having me like think deeply about everything which I love and I appreciate it and I feel like I'm such a better therapist as a result of it. So she's really cool! And so I'm hanging out on her hanging out. I'm working in the surgical floor. So it's sort of a catch-all for all of the individuals who have just big surgeries and then we go in and see how their body is moving so it's an acute care placement and then we help make recommendations on like, how can we best support them? Like do they need adaptive dressing strategies or bathing strategies or do they need different tools to kind of help them just to maximize their independence which is how beautiful OT is. So it's been really cool and then I had Friday off because I had worked the Sunday before so I spent an entire day at this really wonderful coffee shop, which you had recommended called Everybody's Coffee.

Nicole:

Woop woop Uptown Chicago

Sarah:

and it was so beautiful to any it. It's so cliché to say it but like everybody's coffee really had everybody in there and it just was so cool that I was working on things for this podcast and I was just so happy. I was so happy but like there's me with my limb difference friends one of the women like I just I saw a gentleman who had a leg amputation it was using a wheelchair and I saw another gentleman that had like a neurological condition just basement on his movement patterns, and then I saw a

couple of older adults that were street engaged and then I saw some like younger people and it was just people of all different like ethnic backgrounds like all different socioeconomic status and just that everything. Everybody was there and it's like these are all the people that should be here and it just was so just really beautiful to be there and work on my project work on this project and I just was so happy. So my heart is like warm and filled and thank you for that recommendation and just wasn't happy there and the food was great and the tea was great and I'm just really happy

Nicole:

The fun the fun thing about everybody's coffee is that it's run by a specific group here in town. It's a religious group that runs it and a member of the group within that organization. They actually have a daughter with one hand that I very often going it hot chocolate with at Everybody's Coffee. So I also was at everybody's coffee this week because I ran and I got hot chocolate with the girl from my neighborhood. Who is I guess my mom always calls them my "minimis". So that's what I do salt and call them these lovely adorable children who I've now had the honor of watching grow up. But yeah, it's a really beautiful part of our neighborhood and a part of the community. And they serve delicious food and drinks. So it's a win for everybody. Yeah. Yeah cool. So today we are diving into a topic that yet again. Sarah and I are so excited to talk about and to bring to you as we get more into talking about these deeper topics. And if you haven't gotten it yet based on the first couple of episodes disability rights are civil rights.

Sarah:

Yeah. They are

Nicole:

I'm going to say it one more time. Disability rights are civil rights. Yeah, and what's fascinating is that if you go through history and there have been people who have done this homework and I'm not giving it to you in stats or data, but generally if you're looking at it, you can see the different flows here in the United States in particular the different flow of Women's Rights Race Rights, LGBTQ rights and Disability Rights and it goes in that order and you can the wave of how they work and how they work together and what they play off of each other and we're so excited to have with us today. Somebody who can speak directly to the intersection of race and disability together. Today we are excited to have Candice with us and Candace Coleman is going to talk us through the intersection of race and disability and just looking at another part of our community from a different lens in another part of our community that that is just added layers and deeper layers of different stigma that maybe we don't pause to think about if we are not in that particular intersection.

Sarah:

I think it's important to really acknowledge that people are complex beings. Yes, like people are not one thing or another thing and that like, of course people can have a disability people can have multiple disabilities and people can have other like other

minority groups like race like LGBT and and perhaps an individual could be all seven of these things together. And what does that look like if they have all these different minority groups and stigma and oppression in like intersecting and relating impacting them all at the same time.

Nicole:

Yeah. So I mean, I feel like we talked a lot about the fact that even if our disability is different than another person's disability. We still experience stigma in more or less the same way. Well, yes that might be true. But you add gender on top of that you add race on top of that you add all of these other, yet again, this intersectionality of things and suddenly the experience is something that's different. So it's important to acknowledge that and realize that and yet again, we only today we're only just going to like dip our toes into what that means. We're not doing any kind of deep dive but just want to get people thinking about the fact that first of all disability rights are civil rights and second of all that their intersections of different things and you can be in multiple boxes of these multiple intersections and that's beautiful but also that means that your flavor maybe isn't strawberry and might be strawberry lime or whatever, you know. So without further ado I would love to introduce to you today Candace Coleman is the racial Justice organizer at access living and her group Advanced youth leadership power focuses on anti-bullying the school and prison pipeline restorative justice police brutality and disability Justice. Candace has dedicated the last six years of her career to teaching disabled youth of color to take pride in all aspects of their identity. She has served as the masters of Ceremonies at Chicago's disability pride parade, and she has spoken around country we are so thankful to have her here. Candace welcome and thank you so much for being on our show with us. Today. We're going to go ahead and actually hop right into the first question. So without further Ado here we go Candace.

Sarah:

What are the big broad-stroke topics that we're currently experiencing here in the United States in 2019 that are the intersection between disability and race.

Candace:

Well broad strokes. It depends on where a person is focus on for for example ways that we talk about race and disability could be the women and girls reproductive Health through the school-to-prison pipeline through policeman disability through Healthcare the through education. So just very various areas that people have to live their

Sarah:

Nikki just ask the question and she said she's wondering what are some of the barriers the additional barriers that people face when they have both the disability and that they identify with minority groups.

Candace:

one is lack of community supports a lot of times in different communities of color having a conversation around having disability and I didn't is not had so usually it's

only talked about in terms of how to get you support or how to get you medical treatment but not necessarily as a whole spectrum of you as a person. So that's the conversation itself is not had, another level is because of that people don't have access to what they need in order to participate fully in society. So a lot of times it starts off and education systems and when people understand who you are what type of environment you in and what I support you you usually don't get the full experience that she could have if you had access to resources and accommodation and that plays out a lot when we were growing up and trying to get everything that we need as far as education working social life and gaining employment. So if you're not having the conversation at the very beginning level, it could just follow you for the rest of your life.

Sarah:

Absolutely. I hear that Community aspect and I know something that Nikki and I both are experiencing is that there is sort of the disability Pride community in that like if someone has a specific disability, then they can perhaps find others with that different disability. And then I believe that there's also a lot of like ethnic group and like sort of racial Pride with those different communities, but I'm hearing that that that one community of being someone that is a part of a racial group and is a part of a disability that what are the things that they navigate and what are the resources in there that they're not able to have access to because that's a that's a sort of a very specific group of people to and then I'm hearing that lack of education and I know that through some research that I was reading that individuals with disability in general have lower employment rates than their non-disabled peers when they graduate high school, so being able to both find and secure long-term employment and then have that, you know be actually money that can be able to support them throughout their lives and the things they need. but then I also saw that particular individuals that had like various minority groups in addition to the disability that they even had employment rates when they graduated high school, and then that also makes me feel that and then both people with disabilities in general having lower graduation. From high school to in not that makes me feel that individuals with disabilities being able to navigate the whole health care system in general because they're trying to access different goods and services. They need that those are big barriers that they're experiencing and not being able to get the equipment that they need not being able to make it to different doctors appointments those types of things.

Candace:

We're now seeing a lot more people with disabilities in various sectors such as authors entertainment and media, but for most of us who were growing up in is that was unheard of and so even culturally just not being able to not have to check one of your I didn't do that the door because you're not having the conversation around disability.

Sarah:

Yes. We I really like that phrase not having to check one of your identities at the door. Nikki just asked what are the parallels between the civil rights movement and the disabilities rights movements.

Candace:

The other parallel comes from the fact that in the Civil Rights Movement. It was bringing forth like for black people to be treated equally in society in order to gain access to voting to get a job to navigating the world wherever they could go and not being discriminated against. The disability rights movement got inspired from the civil rights movement because having a disability should also be a human and civil or having laws and protections for also be a human and civil right for the disability community of it is of being a person of color. So the movement. The Civil Rights Movement inspired the disability rights movement in a way that people with disabilities should have rights as well.

Sarah:

I was living in a house in Philadelphia and the woman who had originally bought the house was an artist and she had developed a disability that it was a degenerative disability. It could have potentially been a mess. I'm not entirely sure which it was in general but she was using a wheelchair and she became a big activist in trying to make the city of Philadelphia is voting buildings accessible for people with disabilities, and then she had since past when I had moved in but she had a lot of her artwork was in one of the closets. I was opening up and moving some of the things out and I saw her protest posters and one of them said "I use a wheelchair now, but you may use it later like" you know, make this accessible and I just I just thought that was really powerful. Yeah, I just yeah, I stopped there. I thought that was really powerful in how important it is for people both of color and of disability to be able to vote and have say on what the policies are that are happening.

Candace:

It is really powerful because a lot of people I find this a lot when I talk to people about this is really cool. A lot of people were fighting for access for people with disabilities. It usually act provides access for everyone and so within the disability Community, I agree regardless of where you are in age or where you are in life. You can easily be born with a disability acquire one and some point in time and the things that were fighting for for Access just us live for life does not stop a person who already has access from using it. So for example, I'll use the curb cut without curb cuts we wouldn't have access to sidewalks and people with disabilities help get that put in place, but you don't avoid the curb cut if you are walking on it or if you're using a stroller or you're tugging your luggage like you get access to the curbs just like a person who needs it for wheelchair access or other mobility disabilities. And so when we're fighting for Access for us, we're fighting for Access for all.

Sarah:

That's that Universal Design to and it's something that I thought was really interesting when I really started this research on what disability is is that it's sort of

the social construct that it's like if we build a more inclusive world, then we wouldn't have all of these big barriers to disability and that are things as simple and that's an air quotes as making curb cuts Like That is a change that we can make is a society and make that as a standard that then provides access to all so there's lots of different ways that we can both change our societal perception and change our physical environment in order to be able to provide access to everyone.

Candace:

Absolutely. I say a lot. It's not us people with disabilities in our bodies that's the problem, is the way that our environment is set up. It creates barriers for people to be who they truly are.

Sarah:

Absolutely and those environments are changeable. I think is the important part to highlight that too. Yeah.

Candace:

They definitely are changeable. I mean, we we create technology and we create all these things for everything else, but we should use the same brain power in the same Community, too work together to be more in community with each other regardless of who we are whether you have a physical disability or an invisible disability

Sarah:

agreed agreed and it comes to with that. I think that social understanding to that we understand why this is important and we understand why we all need to be seated down at the table and not just a select few of people. So that's what we're hoping to do with this podcast is to help broaden that understanding and to help really challenged and break down that barrier on stigma. Nikki just asked she's wondering too Candace, what do you what do you wish that people in the disability Community understood about the intersection between disability and race.

Candace:

Our society is built on on racism and a lot of the barriers that we face as people of color. Exist whether we are knowledgeable of it or not what it would take for a person who is African American to walk through a door walk wall and to be completely free to be who they are and have access and not just think about the survival mode of what's going on, but actually have loans to dream and to live and to be free. That is a luxury that we don't have. and so they create access and to think about intersectionality you're thinking about the barriers and how to alleviate a lot of those things from the person could come in the room with their full selves, with their ideas dreams and able to say what that actually access needs are and actually being met

Sarah:

and be respected. I hear that being respected and being welcomed to the room.

Candace:

So the biggest of my job is creating this space regardless of who you are and what you identify with and how you see yourself in community.

Sarah:

Nikki just asked what are the biggest problems that you see in that intersectionality. And what do you want in the future? What was it again? What do you where do we go from here?

Candace:

It's so many one of the biggest problems that I see in this is also rooted in racism. Is that a lot of a lot of the standard of what is considered "good" or "great" or the "best" is usually view Through The Eyes of very white and privileged ideas policies and the way things go and because of that it could be a challenge to do this work and well, I would hope that it would go is to uplift more people of color and I meet people where they're at so that we can create a space to uplift everyone.

Sarah:

There's a quote that came out at our conversation with Adam Ballard who I know that you know and work closely with and he had said that "if you're not at the table, then you're on the menu" and that's something that I think about a lot in that like who are the people that are making decisions and of course people are who are making decisions are going to be the ones who are making the best decisions from their perspective. Right? So if people are not in that room if they're not at that table if they're not they're making those decisions to and providing input being like "Oh, wait, hang on this actually, it would really hurt this community that I'm representing. In XYZ way, so let's alter this let's change this so that we can make sure that it's equally respectful and it's going to be a best decision for everyone that sitting at that table" then that would you know be better so that is important that everyone is sort of sitting at that table and like, how can we change that table? How can we build that table to be more inclusive of everyone to and make sure that people with all within all these different communities are in fact, there sitting at the table making those decisions and it's not sort of a small group of people.

Candace:

I always say that the one with ever progressing it just depends on who comes in the room and usually someone is not there and so just always aiming and striving and next time you create a space that you invite or add or actually support people have access to this place before example, even though we're not in the same building right now. Like I'm talking to you on the phone or through the internet, so creating access for people to participate and being welcoming and creating space for people to say how to feel comfortable being a part of contributing their voice. I ask that question every time we have a meeting or event. Who is not in the room and how can we get them here?

Sarah:

I love that was not in the room and how can we get them here? Yeah, I'm going to summarize what Nikki just said she said that we both acknowledge Nikki and I are both in our sort of late 20s were both white women and that we are really

appreciative to have conversations with experts like yourself that are able to come in and provide this Dynamic to because making and I do represent this sort of small portion or piece of the puzzle that it's really important to make sure that we are inviting them. We are welcoming everyone to be a part of this table. So we're really appreciative because you are an expert in all of the work that you're doing. I am wondering to, you know of any legislation or policy that's currently in place to help benefit people that are living in this intersection.

Candace:

There are things brewing but I can't point you in a direction. Are you saying intersectionality and disability?

Sarah:

Yes, Is there any sort of policy? Or anything that's happening to help benefit this particular group of people.

Candace:

I can't point to a policy per se right now, but I think about it later, but I do know this there are conversations and strategic plans and boards and various things that are becoming more inclusive of different voices of people of color with disabilities. So I think the policies will flow out of those things that are going on right now. And if I think of something later, I'll let you know. But right now I just know that there's a lot of things coming together.

Sarah:

Yeah, which is good Nikki and I also want to make sure that we are being respectful of your time and sort of for our last question here. Nikki asked Candace. What do you see as the most important part of your job day today?

Candace:

Creating space for people to be who they are also empowering them to make the choices that they want. Is there anything else you want to share that we didn't sort of talk about or that would be good for us to know. What can I do for you on that? Yeah, absolutely. So, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to us and I appreciate the work that you're doing. It's a really important. It's really valued and we need you and we need experts you know in this. What can I say? I don't know what guess yeah, I appreciate you and we want to make sure that you know that you're invited to that beer as well that we love to actually meet you in person and to sit down actual table. It says more metaphorical table that we're sort of sitting at now and would love to meet and talk with you. So we will plan that in the future.

Candace:

Sure. Thank you. Great

Sarah:

Thank you very much. Candace have a wonderful evening. We want to give special



thanks to our Network public-house media for our intro beats Jason Barnes. It's cybernetics for our logo art Patrice. You can find them at normal person's.com and Matt Meldrum and Ryan Louis are two handed technical team. Bye. Subscribe on Apple podcasts or Public House media.org follow us on Twitter at disarm disabled follow us on Instagram and Facebook at Disarming Disability and check out our website disarming disability.com. See you next week. Bye.