APSE Conversations: Intersectionality, Movements, and the Ongoing Fight for Civil Rights

Introduction: Hi, this is Jenny Stonemeier with APSE. We're launching the APSE: Employment First, Employment for All Podcast to continue to provide updates, real-time advocacy alerts, and information related to all things Employment First. Make sure to subscribe so you don't miss an episode and thanks for listening.

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

intersectionality, people, disability, employment, community, employment specialists, conversation, advocating, support, jan, organization, person, hear, policy, question, important, families, understand, conference, individuals

SPEAKERS

Wesley Anderson, Kie O'Donnell, Jan Dougherty, Jenny Stonemeier

00:09

Hi, this is Jenny Stonemeier with APSE. We're excited to launch the app suit Employment First employment for all podcast as a new way to connect with you. And as a way to provide updates real time advocacy alerts and information related to all things Employment First, be sure to subscribe so you don't miss an episode. And thanks for listening.

Jenny Stonemeier 00:38

Welcome to the closing panel presentation for the 2020 APSE a virtual conference on behalf of the National staff Erica Belois-Pacer, Kari Tietjen, Christa Rainwater, Erynn Pawlak, Sarah Manley, Julie Christensen and myself. I want to thank you for your enthusiasm and participating in new ways. Your Grace as we know Learn and implement at the same time, and your eagerness to try new things at a time in our history when being still may feel like the safest option. The virtual conferences illustrated in so many ways that the APSE community is strong, determined, creative, flexible, and most important committed to making Employment First reality. Since we began this conference, we have witnessed again, another moment when systemic racism and inequalities are part of our collective realities. I do not mean to suggest that these barriers disappear from our society, quite the opposite. I mean that it shouldn't take a

tragic death, like those of Trayvon Martin Philando Castiel, Brianna Taylor, Freddie Gray, Derrick Williams, George Floyd, and so many others in society for us to take action in June absolutely issued a statement of solidarity that reads actually has always supported and will always Support equal rights and fair treatment for everyone, both in the workplace and in the community. As our community has demonstrated time and again, voicing your dissatisfaction through peaceful protesting is a powerful tool. Protecting the right is essential. FC stands proudly in solidarity with those brave individuals currently engaged in peaceful protest against inequity in justice and racial disparity. But issuing a statement is not enough. As Jenny Hatch and Jonathan Martinez reminded us at the beginning of our conference, we must take action. Likewise, as Senator Harkin, Assistant Secretary Schultz and Barry Whaley reminded us we also need to understand our roots. With me today, our three apps the national board members to help us frame a conversation about how we put Employment First into a holistic context. None of us alone has the answer. answers, that we firmly believe that together we are more likely to find the next steps in understanding our work in a deeper, more complete way that overtly addresses intersectionality, the term originally coined that can really Crenshaw of the African American policy forum. Today I'm joined by APSE National Board members Kie O'Donnell, Wesley Anderson and Jan Doherty. And by this time, I hope everyone knows that you're joining us in a live presentation and we look forward to engaging with you in the chat box. I'm going to dive right in and start at the at the top and ask the question of the three of you what is intersectionality? And how does it influence the Employment First movement?

Kie O'Donnell 03:52
Thank you, Jenny. This is keto.org forward ization called the Fogarty center out of Rhode Island. And I would say intersexuality very much like The term is how you approach the intersection. So first understanding where people stand on certain issues or things, many times we might see this reflected in policy operations. But ultimately it starts with people in finding their passions, causes and experiences may find common ground. And beyond that intersection where operationally speaking, people might not just be able to agree upon that they have common cause but actually act upon those common causes, which benefits both parties coming into that intersection.

04:36
Is there anything to add?

Jan Dougherty 04:42
Yes, this is Jan Doherty. Yes intersectionality it can occur unpredictably, which can create possibilities for neutral transformation and recognition to change amongst all of us in the field. It calls us to think about the macro level implementation. Input implications and how the silo initiatives that we develop across our systems, to advocacy and policy and to one another, as we work together to advance the Employment First initiative.

Wesley Anderson 05:19

Hi I'm Wesley Anderson, to me intersectionality I guess not just me, but intersectionality is taking what is easy for us to do as humans, which is to categorize things and to identify things conveniently. And say saying that a person is more than just one thing. A person is more than just an African American. It's more than just a woman. It's just a man and saying, if we can agree that that's true, then different societal influences different Disadvantages in different privileges would affect those people differently. And you're not adding these on top of each other, it is just who we are. So as a black male, I might experience the world differently than a black woman. And if an individual has a disability, you should enter that into your equation as well. I was about to say add, but I just said don't do that. So and how it intersects with Employment First, I think everybody defines themselves partially by what they do and what they're able to do. And so if a part of your life is being held back from you, if the opportunity to engage a part of that is being held back from you, it's worth asking the question, why, and if there's more than one reason why it's worth addressing all of them.

07:00

So as I hear you, the three of you each frame this issue of intersectionality, I also hear that it's kind of the outward manifestation of the outward interaction of our own identities, the many, many layered identities that we each have. Some of them are some of them, we are apparent to others, others, our identities are not apparent to others. And it's how those identities interact sort of in the in the outside world, right, like the in with systems and in communities and in our day to day interactions is that as a concise way of an accurate way to try to make concise this really complex issue of intersectionality.

07:52

I would agree and probably pair that, you know, part of intersectionality is that which we know and the other Part of intersectionality is that which we don't know. So I feel that approaching, really informing is part of true intersectionality. Because certainly we can say, yes, that means something to me. But if we don't, and aren't fully informed on how it might mean to somebody else, you know, again, we're going to be limited to our own perspective perception. So I think a large part of intersectionality is how we approach provide information as to our own perspective, to then inform, to best understand where that crosshatch exists. Others

08:36

Yeah, it's really a it's really a framework for viewing the work that a lot of us do. It's not necessarily a solution in and of itself, but it is a really useful way to be able to draw our attention towards injuries that we might not recognize. And and people Who might be injured that are on or in our communities? That might not feel like they are because we haven't made a place for them.

09:12

So I'd like to go, thanks, Wesley, I'd like to go to sort of the other side of this coin of our conversation of intersectionality and talk about employment, specifically employment for people with disabilities. What does employment have to do with intersectionality?

09:35

Can you hear? I think really when you look at the impact of say things like socio economic downfalls, when you look at poverty, when you look at the way things, let's just say were not intended to turn out, that's where I think when you start to find pockets of where you might find people that are affected The same thing to Wesley's point, who then have some common ground and may not even know it. In the sense of safe again, things like socio economics, when we're talking about access, we're talking about resources when we're talking about social capital and the things that we know to be very true for people with disabilities to not just get great jobs, but have great careers and lasting life as a result of that. Inclusion is hard to come by, if you don't understand what is being negated. So I'd probably say, you know, really looking at socio economic barriers and how they might affect varying populations is a great starting point to be able to magnetize who might be those types of people also affected.

10:46

Jan, you're a national board member, you're also a professional in this field. And then you're you are also a mom, you're a parent of a young person with a disability. So I wonder if you could take that question. when you answered my question of what just employment have to do with intersectionality?

Jan 11:06

Oh, yeah, I was thinking about what she was saying. And I'm thinking about all the, just from a mom standpoint, advocating for my son who needs very much a high level assistance in that area. I've always come with a high expectation and belief of what should happen and an understanding, but yet the disappointment then from the other end from the system and how people viewed our expectations and felt that they were too high. Or that, you know, we should lower our expectations, expectations and beliefs and that and settle for what the system gives us and that and it's all based upon a person who happened to disability. So you come to the crossroads. So that intersectionality and you have to make a decision on which way you're going to go and how you're going to handle things along the way. So, um, it's a challenge. And I know I see the struggles of other people that bring other things just besides the disability to that, that, you know, whether it's race or any other thing that is part of their life and just compound those challenges. I just can't imagine that because it's just the struggle for the disability piece of it in that so do I look back at his life this conversations interesting, as I was thinking about all this past couple days, over the past day or so on these questions, do I think because he's a male, a white male that he was given up on that versus someone else? I don't know. Maybe, maybe he did. And so I mean, those are things that I'm starting to think about now how that all played into that, which I never really thought about before. So,

Jenny 13:08

Wesley, how about you? What, what does employment first have to do with intersectionality?

Wesley 13:15

Uh, I think if we truly believe Employment First and we truly are advocating for it, I feel compelled. I feel like not having the conversation about how, how gender, about how race about how gender identity, sexuality, all of those different highways that that we're on as people, parental status, legal status, all of these things. They are all potential roads where we know that there's discrimination on and they can run alongside disability And if that's true, and we are advocating for Employment First, we either have to make a choice. Are we also going to advocate for the people on those roads? Or are we just going to make the road better, which doesn't necessarily mean that people will get to their destination, our single lane highway? And, and I, I really feel like when I do trainings for providers in the state of New Jersey, when we talk about best practices, and and when I hear the employment specialists and talk about their successes, it's very, very rarely that it leads with this person has a disability, they talk about the person's life, and they talk about what's great about the person and how they love the families. And that's, that's intersectionality. The question is, does it apply to our policies in our organizations the same way that it applies to our personal practices

14:59

so As, as we're working in this field supporting individuals to find secure move forward in competitive integrated employment, if if that individual is also living in a residential setting, Wesley, what you're suggesting is that's the intersectionality of it, that our our work is focused on the employment and yet they go back to a segregated, non self determined life that they have little control over. And there's there's tension in that. It What am I hearing you correctly?

15:38

Yeah, you are. Let's, I used to be an employment specialist for for quite some time. And we commonly create accommodations around things like that. So let's grab it even more. An individual nowadays, you need an email to apply for a job right? You need an email to apply for all applications. You need a phone, person does not have a phone or they don't have an email. You could put yours as the employment specialists on there. But we know not to do that. So we make the person an email, and we fake it. That might get them in the door, but they're not any better off. They're not any further down that road towards being able to independently apply to a job because they don't know how to use your residential examples similar. It's not just the persons living in a residential facility, but we know that that will make it more difficult for them to find employment, find transportation, to be able to manage their finances on their own, etc, etc. So it's not just about the social justice of it. It's also about the practicality of it as well.

16:52

So let's shift a little bit and move towards that that part of this conversation because we have a certain Don't have time to have this conversation. And we all have to just be entirely clear about the fact that we're not going to get to all of it. But we do want to hit on what some of the bigger issues are. So Wesley talked about some of the policy work. And I think that's one component of it. But then there's also the practical, and how do we provide supports? How does this world provide supports to individuals with disabilities? And what are the supports that employment service agencies and other provider agencies are providing to the folks who were, who are who

are responsible for those supports, and understanding what intersectionality looks like he you your work primarily brings you into this provision of services and I wonder if you might talk a little bit about that. You're muted.

18:00
Yeah, I think we're we're talking about intersectionality,

18:03
especially as it relates, I'll just say immediately to COVID. And I'm going to dovetail off of the residential example. You know, we see certainly there are providers of services, that variety of different things. But when we're talking about, I think the conundrum of keeping people safe in residential settings, and supporting people in their right to work, especially essential positions in the community, it creates quite a bit of a conundrum. And many times we'll have different either providers or organizations or what you want to call them, focusing rightfully so on different areas. But to kind of go back to technology and also one of the keynote presenters for this conference, Shea Tanis as she really talked about disruptive technology, feel that there's a lot of opportunity, when we might be able to, I think enhance some of our language that we use and supporting job development and really as the population at large of job seekers that represent as a advocacy organization have embraced disruptive technology. So I think when we're looking at, you know, practical application, it really is also a continuation of us being a little bit more business mindset and forward and in turn taking things that may have been historically barriers that technology may have helped with really looking at those as assets and platforms to actually not just meet performance standards and indicators, but to really exceed them, and to provide really much needed input to an ever shifting business market right now.

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Jan, looking to you, what are your thoughts about the practical implications of services for individuals with disabilities in this intersectional reality?

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So thinking on a couple comments that were made

19:59
one In particular about the cell phone, you know, do we give people to the specialists give people their cell phone numbers, their emails and, and in reality for the majority, probably for a lot of people that probably would not be a great idea to do that to have the person set up their own email and things like that. But and I run across this on a daily basis that we tend to put people all in one bucket, as if they all have the same disability, as if they all can manage a cell phone and email and that that they they that they can patent application Not everyone can. And so they need, they may need someone's email someone's cell phone to help get them to that next step to the application process to someone to fill that application out for them. And that so I really guard against the whole all the disabilities Put in in one bucket in that if we're going to be person centered, and I believe that's an overused word in our system, we really have to look at

the person and each and every person individually in order for each and every person to be successful and employment.

21:19
Definitely, I am sorry, Jenny. No.

21:23
I definitely agree with that. I think I think sometimes we have like an exception based philosophy. Like if there's an exception to the rule, and I using rule very loosely, if there's an exception to the rules, and the rule is wrong, when I think it's just an exception. The world right now is moving towards that disruptive technology that he was mentioning.

21:52
And

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the individuals it needs, whether it's disability based or whether it's societal based I think all of that factors into any practitioners decisions. The question is, what's our default? Is our is our defaults that this person can, even if it's difficult, and I'm going to work my hardest to help that reality or is it? It would be quicker, more efficient for the outcome that I want the end outcome to skip steps or to not ask as many questions. There was a study in 2016 a prison study where a person had to call psychotherapists and had to make it very clear what their race and their gender was, and and identify the black working class man had to call at therapists before he was offered a weekday evening appointment, versus a middle class white woman only had to call five And so when we're talking about how accessible are our organizations, we have to look at the entire thing. Are we projecting an image that people who are not going to be the ones to readily access our services? Still can't access our services? Some of that is working to get past those technology barriers, I think as well.

23:27
I want to ask a follow up question as it relates to this notion of, of disruptive technology and, and frame it in terms of what's next. How do we, what needs to happen in order for us to continue to push these issues, but also to say, who's a part of this conversation so far and who's not a part of those conversations and, and how do we make more seats at the table because it seems like this notion of disruptive technology if it isn't a Inclusive movement from the beginning, it's going to run out of steam and hit a barrier because it hasn't been inclusive. Right? That the nothing about us without us kind of kind of notion. So I, I want to look at it from that lens, who's at the table now, who isn't at the table? And how do we get people there? How do we support people to get there? That's the right way to phrase that.

24:24
I think, um, a lot of times, the same people are asked to be at the table, the same family members, the same person with disabilities. They're the ones that are, you know, there's a,

there's a habit that the same people get called to be at the table and to participate, when there's a whole field out there, of people just waiting to be asked that can bring a whole different perspective to the table and that so I think I'm the system itself needs to be very open and inclusive. Right, more family members there, all the way down to scheduling the meeting for being a part of the conversation to accommodate differing life circumstances so that other folks can can be there. And then the transparency after that, um, where what happened at the meeting? And where are those meeting minutes? And where can I follow up on this? So if I'm not able to be there, for whatever reason, how can I still participate and get my input and feedback?

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right time?

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I couldn't agree more with with Jan. And I think again, it calls to not just how you know who's at the table, but how do we get to that table? What's that table look like? Where, when's that table open, you know,

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whose table is

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right? so to speak, and and, you know, not just to To Jan's comment and again, agree fully that those who require volunteer telling do and those who volunteer do consistently. So instead of you know, and I really look at, you know, things like community forums too often are they a real narrow scope lens where we assume who those stakeholders and players are? I think really, if you're talking about wanting to be able to maximize that that funnel approach, you need to cast that net out wide. And if anything, assume your target audiences are the ones who did not think would be valuable and needed at the table initially. And that's really how I think you magnetize people to be able to be a part of a culture that's developing and not to the overarching point, something that's so established by experts are the same people to Jan's point that had been facilitating these types of conversations that many times get started with all good intentions, and rarely, especially with some type of fidelity model, have follow up and execution.

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I think I think both of you just brought up such important points, the from the accountability standpoint of Yeah, we're going to say that we are going to do this big thing. who's holding us to that? To? How are we welcoming people, I think a really important thing to keep in mind are the, like invisible and visible power dynamics of the culture that you're trying to broaden. A lot of the times we talk about, we want to invite more people in, we want to be more inclusive, and we do welcome people into our spaces. But that doesn't mean that it's their space all of a sudden, or at least that they feel empowered to make it their space, it is their space. But we have to let go of some of our pre established privilege to use a loaded term in order to show other people that

they have it as well. So Yeah, maybe you run the organization and you want to have a community forum. And you feel like it would be the right thing for you to run it. That might be true from some optic. But is it the most beneficial way to get people to feel comfortable hearing the message? A very common one. For instance, for training, I do consultations, as I said, Sometimes

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a lot of the time, managers are not allowed.

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Because if we're trying to troubleshoot problems and come up with solutions, the last thing that everybody needs is the boss looking over their shoulder. And that's like a rough example. But the same thing applies when you're trying to open up inclusive spaces. Make sure that you check your power at the door.

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It's a discussion of stakeholder engagement gets brought up a lot when we talk about systems change, and we talk about this policy implications and this policy levers. Within moving the work of Employment First forward, and I think that that's this this conversation of who's at the table, who's not whose table is it, all of those things are, are so critical in terms of making stakeholder engagement meaningful, and also getting out of the way so that it can serve not a foregone conclusion of an outcome that that the outcome of the stakeholder engagement can be written by the group of folks who were, who are the stakeholders and who were the ones being engaged. And it also just makes me realize, in my previous career, I worked in special education and I was the designated parent representative from the community and was the voluntold stakeholder representative of parents. And I was a white middle class woman and I was the mom of A kid with a disability and worked very, you know, doggedly in the advocacy world and yet I represented a single, you know, sliver of society. So it's that same notion of who's here and who's not here and that constant reminder of who's not a part of this conversation who needs to be a part of this conversation. But I wonder if we can switch to talk a little bit about we talked sort of about the practice and practical aspects of using disruptive technology and and understanding intersectionality and I wonder if we can move to some of the policy components of things and and talk about it from from that perspective. So what are the strategies of taking a an intersection perspective to policy work in this environment.

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I would probably say

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politicians, lawmakers and legislators are people too. We are constituents and we have leverage and power, but only when we choose to inform. And I think, for many years, many advocates would kind of be on the outside shouting in two places like state houses and where folks vote. But I think that we found more so than not going in those doors. Working informing

others has led towards more lasting results. So I'd probably say ultimately, understand the people who are being voted in, don't help influence them to get votes, or your votes for that matter, help influence them so that they might be able to be agents of change themselves. Ultimately, that's what people run to office for. So I would say certainly when we Look at policy standpoints. And I'll use one recent one from example from from National Lab. See, there is because of covid, an extension for some of the terms and tenants of policies such as the home and community based settings rule, where I think certainly we as advocates have to be very firm to say that we don't support the extension of these Because ultimately, as many wheels are being redesigned, that is how they're going to roll long term. So being able to take this point in time, truly leverage people by way of their responsibility in government, and by way of informing them sometimes during election years are the most potent, really helping hold them accountable by way of what policies that they're voting on and their track record.

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In key that's a really difficult space for families to jump in on and feel comfortable with and that and and, you know, We in Ohio have some very strong trade associations that have the policy and the money to back in to influence those legislators for their cause, and that, and we hear from families across our state all the time, the frustration like we need for this to happen. But yet, when we tried to encourage them about contacting their legislators and getting into that space, there's an uncomfortableness about it. And to peel confidence and comfortable about that is really hard for families to do that. And to understand that in the language, it's like another whole set of language that they have to learn to be part of that movement, but it's an important space for them to be in because I think, you know, their voices are way louder. Probably then. You know, if they jump in, can get more things done and accomplished. So

34:06

yeah, I think I think that when it comes to advocacy in general, and policy, we, as a culture, we tend to consider it a zero sum game. And and each single issue is vying for feels like it's fine for a very limited amount of space, and a very limited amount of funding. And that leads to undermining other related causes and issues in out of, almost unintentionally, subconsciously, in order to be first in order to get the win for the people who are standing right in front of you. And I think that that is dangerous because the people that you're fighting for are not just people in front of you, most often. The people that you're fighting for are the ones that don't even know that you exist. that haven't been able to access your advocacy organization. So an important question to ask yourself when you're organizing advocacy efforts is what is the broadest articulation of what of this problem that would embrace more than just the interests of the most advantage to people in that group. And then ask yourself whether or not you're willing to take the time to build that community, that real community. Ask yourself if your images are representing the safest, most palatable version of your cause, which typically happens to be a straight white male who presents either with no disability or with a wheelchair or Walker has no significant mental disabilities and is not in trouble with the law as yourself, if that's your default image, and then ask yourself if using that to advocate is working towards our guests or cause things like that.

I also wanted to bring up one of the issues around that that level of family engagement in terms of advocacy. And there are families who are very comfortable advocating. And also to say that there is a there is a responsibility for those families to support and train up other families and as much as they've got the bandwidth and the capacity to do that, but that there's got to be that continuous cycle of, okay, we did a coat we trained a cohort of families or self advocates or whatever group the subset is. We trained them to advocate at the public policy level. Now we're done. check that off. But who is the next group? Whereas the next cohort? Where is the the next, the next group of grassroots advocates and maybe it's not at the statehouse that they want to support them that it's at the community level that we want to go into school board meetings are going to advisory group meetings, but there's there's always there's that positive application and use of power as well as that as the power that becomes a barrier between groups and and I think it's really important to use that power for good and in this conversation and in this work as well.

One thing that I found very helpful to enable families to be a part of that conversation and really, sharing that has been the AFC take your legislator to Work Day model. Now when we talk about stories, certainly I think we've focus too much on the shiny end product and I'll reference a young woman who I've helped become successful employments successfully employed was featured in intelligent lives. Naomi, who, you know, in working with, the filmmaker wanted to say, Okay, now here's someone who doesn't just have a disability and those barriers affiliated with it. Many socio economic barriers comes from a family that recently immigrated from Haiti, where they're certainly some language challenges, but they have one awesome brother who's very much connected and was the catalyst to her life. So I think as we take those opportunities to kind of bring the hill or the state house to you, it's important not to just focus on that shiny end product, but really talk about the strategies to success, the struggles to success, because that's really where families are able to very much keep it real in the conversation, and in turn, compels and forces, legislators and lawmakers to really keep again how those boots on the ground sound in their communities that they are very much responsible for. But I agree fully with, with what Jan raised as a support and sense that we have to be looked at less as the experts, but more as the people who are willing to shine, light and attention on people who really carry the expertise. And those are the people who live with and are affected by disabilities

themselves. As the organization gets gets bigger, at least as its reach gets bigger, it's very easy to flip the model from the go for finding our voices and the communities to come to us. And I think that once you have like the framework of whatever your culture is, that's when it becomes stagnant. Once it gets big enough, that you don't need to necessarily go reach out to other constituent groups. It would be nice if you did but you could still exist if you didn't. That's where culture stagnate. He just brought up the siblings. Are we going out to sibling support groups and organizations? Are we going out to the PTA? Or are we using our technology to blanket a

message not necessarily knowing if it'll reach people that couldn't get it anyway? I think it's really important to consider, especially for parents,

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as they're answering all the questions about needing to be asked. I wanted to put the additional give another moment to the consideration of the question of what are the important issues facing Employment First movement moving forward? And I think that we've touched on some of them. We've talked about the need to be inclusive in our application of this disruptive technology. We've talked about the need to constantly re evaluate our intent around stakeholders. engagement and understanding who our constituency is in terms of providers to borrow from the policy language and and to constantly talk about army army who's done a part of it and who's not there. But I'm wondering if there are other issues that you see that are facing implement first, as a movement, looking into the future that you you think we need to be responsive to?

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Last I'll start with you.

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Oh, oh, I was I was I was gonna I want to hear what Jen had to say. Actually.

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I defer. I defer that to Jan. Tiger it.

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You're so Hi. Thank you. Can you repeat the question, please?

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One of the important issues facing the planet first movement going forward. So we've talked about sort of some we've identified some of them but what what haven't what's on your mind that we haven't talked about that we need? have on our on our horizons.

42:03

So I think one of the things that we always talk about in Ohio when it comes to employment first is we implemented this good cause, okay, it got put in, it got put into rule. It went through this initial implementation stage. And then it kind of stopped. So, we don't even hear the term Employment First mentioned, it gets embedded under community integration, community engagement, all that which is just as important. But when we stop talking Employment First, we start I've been hearing like provider agencies saying, oh, no one talks about that anymore. That's a thing of the past. You know, we're on to now just community integration, getting people just integrated into Meaning people in the community go and play cards with them. So it's almost like it got put into the back seat. So how do we get back to that? And then move it forward and to keep pushing it and keep challenging those boundaries to keep keep it forward

to because Are we really at the end game where we want to be? I don't think so. So I think we need some benchmarks now. To lay down and meet those to get to the end game. If, but there may not be an endgame. I think Employment First should be forever. So it's

a really, it's a really excellent question, Jim. Which I hear it as how do we define success? Yeah, in in Employment First, how do we know when we've achieved it?

And I,

I have my own answer, but I I it's a really important question that communities probably need to consider so that it doesn't get ignored. That's a it's a great point. Thank you.

And I know people say it's a person by person thing, which it is. But it's also needs to be a business by business thing. I think if I walked into any business in my community, the community I work at and say, and just ask them, Do you know, have you heard of Employment First, they probably would be like, I don't know what you're talking about. So, um, so we have, we have some challenges I had, um, we've done great things we, you know, a lot of work. I think if it wasn't for APSE as an organization, I don't think we would be as far as what we are.

Here, mostly other important issues facing Employment First.

Sure. Again, I think that we're in an unprecedented time where unfortunately, we We found a very convenient way of being able to minimize people's rights and we're calling it safety. I think we really need to understand, yes, from a person by person perspective, but collectively, what are those trends? And how are we really minimizing opportunity and diminishing equity with folks, I did a recent self survey, you know, at my organization. So by way of output, really showing what resources were placed where versus really my demographic information and found that there was some imbalance. So it's about being able to first understand the problem, understand the history that got you to that problem, and then being very real with setting yourself at some pretty high goals because one thing that we know about goal setting is we set the bar here we end up here. So why would we want to start a conversation when, for example, APSE isn't about starting conversations on anything. We're about advancing that movement. So when we do believe, really to to my colleagues that have shared their feelings today How do we not just agree upon something but actually act further beyond it? So, although that wasn't specifically what else really is affecting Employment First, I think that when you look at again the challenges whether they present themselves as socket socio economic or not, you look at those

issues and then that many times you can backtrack and navigate your way towards what your common cause truly is.

46:28

I think

46:30

there are so many.

46:33

I think that sometimes we as a as employment support says, supported employment, think that they have been forced into a position where they need to make something happen. And we are used to externally advocating that sometimes we forget that our field has to also advocate for itself. And I worry about things like internal structures for agencies, I worry about how they are finding staff, where are they going? How are they retaining staff, and a lot of this turnover conversation, I think, if you were to ask people who have left organizations, you might be able to point at the culture. And not by any fault of the ages necessarily, but we know that there is limited progression for employment specialists, right. We also know it's one of the most complex, complicated jobs that you could possibly have. Nobody knows what an employment specialist is when you agreed to do it. took me three years to figure out what I was doing. Maybe. So are we creating and hiring and training and reinforcing the culture that we want in our agencies because if we're not, it's going to be very difficult to push those practices. Externally, if you're collecting a group of diverse advocates and all of your staff are the same, it there's a dissonance there. And it starts to feel like tokenism, which is something that we definitely want to avoid.

48:16

So the final question for each of you, we've talked to sort of like what are the issues in the field? And the final question, I want to put that, that context into absolute as as a community and and ask you each to give your thoughts around. How can ab c as a community, and as a professional association that we are, how can we continue to approach hard topics around intersectionality and Employment First.

48:57

I think it's easy to say like As starting this conversation is important, and to Jan's previous point about accountability, I think that the strongest thing that we can do is to force ourselves to be better than our governments Air Force or certainly better than our institutions. And so hold your organization's accountable to the promises that they make, and to the statements and philosophies that they say they support. If your organization says it supports Black Lives Matter,

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make them show it

or call their bluff. If as a community as FC, I've been protesting for quite some time, I love to death. If the organization does not speak to what matters to me. I will be here. It continues to and I think that that is a worthwhile, meaningful, reciprocal relationship. It's not just about being Because I like the cause I do, I believe in it with all my heart, but it has to also put its money where its mouth is so to speak. I think if we as a culture can do that, as a, as a community, I think we'll continue to be as strong as we are.

Here, Jan, what what can absolutely do to come

from appearance? I remember when I first heard about APSE, in that I had always thought about employment for my son and I had this vision in this, of where we were going to be, regardless of who said no, we're not going to reach that that um, that it was pie in the sky or you know, I should be thinking this way more towards state programs, you know, we got offered institutionalization and things like that, that. So, when I when I heard about APSE, and was introduced to APSE, he I literally thought I fell in to another planet, that there's actually a group of people out here that think this about employment first and, and people with disabilities that can work. And I think that was the hooks for me that just brought me in hook line and sinker. And I hope that we continue to, to have that for families and people with disabilities and that and I think we need to have constant conversations about employment, they have to be ongoing. They just can't come up during conferences or, you know, when we, you know, during an ad is coming up, and that so I'm sure we're going to be blasting our airwaves, all of us on employment stuff. It literally has to be every day of the week. It has to be out there and front and center. For people in that, and I don't think APSE has lost its mission and mission and vision from the time I was introduced to it. So I still believe in it. And I still like the cause. But I'm with Wes, if you know, if it goes in another direction, it's not something you buy into, like anything else you're going to, you're going to go find that place, um, find another spot, but

for Chico's kind of just add something on to gin. As we talked about, you said something so awesome about, like, how your love of FC and how it made you feel included and welcome. I love that and continuing to challenge it to be better. I would caution all of us to just keep in mind that it gets exhausting to be the naysa you know, not the naysayer, but the but what about this guy? It does and so we need allies be that out there. In the room that looks at your colleague and sees maybe this might be one of those intersections that hits them, it doesn't hit me. And maybe this time, I'll say the thing that I think that they're thinking, that'll go a long way as well.

I'm going to reference a 1970s animated film called the point. And it was about a person who was born with a very pointy head and no one around him had pointy heads. And lo and behold, he found kind of to John's point company of people who had pointy heads. But that wasn't the

importance of the film. The importance of the film was that that person had gone back to his original community of people with pointy heads, and had such a profound impact on that community that everyone wanted to have pointy heads. So I will say in very simple terms, we need to have more people wanting to have pointy heads, and my apples to apples would be the difference of inclusion. And integration, I think too often, and certainly take it from a person that works in a state that's in a federal consent decree. Inclusion is a numbers game. It does not entail inclusion. I'm sorry, integration is a numbers game. It does not entail inclusion. And I think to Wesley's example, we can certainly have representation of different populations and say that we're being equitable. But how does that actually translate into say, in organizations, decision making capacity? What role do those positions actually play in the greater picture and I think when you really start to measure that output, that's going to be a great, much better indicator as to how far we're moving forward. And the best part about APSEa is, at least to me, I found a community of people that are not happy with putting up their feet and saying we're done digging. It's been us constantly challenging each other and certainly wasn't I take you up on that challenge and appreciate that. I have people like you in this group, and certainly I think we have each other. But if having each other was enough, we wouldn't be having this conversation. You need to be able to really bring more people to this and not just have the conversation but see how they might be able to spread that conversation back to their communities of Roundheads.

55:26

When I was brand new as the executive director, and absolutely, we had been planning the conference, delta layout, gave a keynote. And when we were in Florida, and I over and he presented the numbers of employment of individuals with disabilities of unemployment of individuals with disabilities and those who were not participating in the labor force at all, and that labor participation rate is always that biggest chunk of that of that pie. I overheard somebody afterwards saying I was at a conference a juggler gave that same presentation, you know, years ago and and I turned around and said that's because the numbers haven't changed, like, we need to give, like Dale needs to be able to give a different presentation because the numbers need to change. And I think that this conversation that you all have helped frame but that we have also been, you know, trying to get into as a community and as individuals that make up that community is, is about asking different and deeper questions about why aren't those numbers changing? Is it because a person isn't accessing services because they don't feel like they can work with anybody who understands their circumstances or their realities or is it because there are no service is available to them because they live in a community that is is underserved or not served at all. And the complicated reasons that contribute to that giant chunk of the pie being the labor participation rate and the number of individuals with disabilities who are not employed, not seeking employment and are simply unengaged is this next step in the intersectionality conversation that I want us to have? I have said it in a couple of different contexts that this is a necessary first step for us as an organization, but it's not sufficient. This conversation is not sufficient for us to pat ourselves on the back and say, Oh, we we addressed it. And so I want to thank the three of you, as representatives of the National Board, for being a part of this conversation, for helping absolutely as an organization To do better in this work, and to have some really, really overt conversations around what needs to take place to address

these complicated issues, because bottom line, our values don't change, and that Jim can say that and say that without, without hesitation is incredibly important. And that's, that's the foundation that we have to build on to continue to do this work. So thank you, Wesley. Thank you, Keith. Thank you, Jan, for being part of this. And we will continue to work together.

58:38
Thank you so much. Thank you.