

APSE Conversations: Keynote

Emily Ladau

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Julie Christensen

Hi this is Julie Christensen with APSE. We're excited to launch the APSE employment first employment for all podcast as a new way to connect with you. This podcast is 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.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Welcome to another podcast episode with National APSE. Over the next few weeks we'll be meeting with and highlighting keynotes that we'll have with us during our national conference in Denver, and also with some of our sponsors that will be with us for the conference. We're pretty excited because we are back in person in Denver, Colorado. In June, we will be in Colorado Monday, June 13 14th, and 15th. So I'm guessing that quite a few of you listening today are going to be joining us, we will have a virtual pass with access to a few things throughout the conference. But we're hoping that we'll see most of our friends right in person. So today, I have Emily Ladau with us. And she actually lives in the same state as me is in New York. So Emily, do you still have snow? I know we were getting snow yesterday.

Emily Ladau

Oh, goodness, you must be a little bit further up than I am. Because we have a lovely sunny day. It's just very cold out.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Yeah, we actually have sun today near Central Western New York, which is exciting. But yesterday there were snowflakes which I'm, I'm about done with winter. I'm not sure about you.

Emily Ladau

I agree. It's spring. I'm over it.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Absolutely. So Emily is going to be one of our keynote speakers, and she'll be talking with us on Tuesday. We're really excited. And I wanted to kind of give a little sneak peek and have Emily introduce herself and give us a little background about what she does, both professionally and maybe in her free time and highlight her book. So she has written a book that I know many of our members and people that just go to FC events have already read but I'm hoping that a few more can read it beforehand, or maybe pick it up at the conference. It's called demystifying

disability. So Emily, do you mind introducing yourself and just a little background on where you come from?

Emily Ladau

I'd be happy to so as you mentioned, my name is Emily Ladau. I am a very passionate disability rights activist. I'm a wheelchair user, and I am an author, a speaker, a communicator, everything that I do, I do with a focus on making the disability experience more accessible, and understandable and relatable. And so the current focus of my work is really on connecting with people around my book, it's demystifying disability, what to know what to say and how to be an ally. And it's meant to be a way to bridge the gap for so many of the times that we have had uncertainties and feelings of hesitancy or discomfort around disability. And so instead, we shy away from talking about it. And I want to meet people where they're at. And I want to say, Here you go, here's some of the information that you need to begin to have these open and honest conversations. And it's okay if you make mistakes along the way, because we're all learning together. And I always give the caveat that my book is not meant to be the definitive guide to all things about disability. It's not the Bible on disability, the Encyclopedia of disability, I am not some kind of soul expert or authority. I'm one person who cares very deeply about starting conversations about disability. And so this book is my way of offering of a starting point to do just that.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Thanks, Emily. I think this is just something that actually happened recently with my family. Emily, I was gonna mention this. I have a sister in law that actually is a journalist in the country of Portugal, but she does a lot of interest stories around the world and she often does interviews was and research on people that might have overcome different things, or just she focuses a lot on women's rights and different things like that. But she also tends to meet with people who do have disabilities in different countries. And she picked up your book, when we were on vacation and started reading it, and asked if she could take it home with her to share. So I, you know, I agree with what you said, you know, it's not the end all be all, but I think it is very helpful. You know, just to get that conversation started, make people feel comfortable. And, you know, it led to some really nice discussion within my own family, which I was not expecting.

Emily Ladau

That is exactly what I'm hoping to hear. I am such a big believer, not in trying to create these very broad sweeping changes, but rather to start where we are, and recognizing that even one person having a conversation can really have a positive ripple effect. And we create change by starting at this individual level, and then expanding out from there. And so every time I hear that someone has read the book, and it sparked the conversation, that is the best possible thing I could have hoped for.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Absolutely. So Emily, I know in addition to writing books, and being speaker, many places, you do a lot of other things, do you mind sharing just a little bit of what else you do in your, I guess, work life and free time?

Emily Ladau

Well, as for work life, I joke that I am a professional disabled person, it's pretty much disability advocacy 24/7 around here, and it's because it's so inextricably linked to who I am. It's a part of me, it's not just a professional identity, but it's a very deeply personal identity. And so all of the work that I do, I do through a disability lens, and I consult for a lot of different organizations around disability representation and accessibility. And currently, one of the biggest things that I'm working on is that I am the digital content and community manager for a resource called the disability and Philanthropy Forum. And it's an emerging philanthropy serving organization, that's meant to really provide education materials for funders, and grant making organizations so they can learn more about why it is so vital to include disability in all of the grant making work that you're doing. And so I'm really, really excited to be a part of that team. And then in addition to that, I focus a lot on writing on finding ways to engage with people about disability through social media platform. And I am so lucky to say that I love what I do. And when I'm not focusing on work, you'll probably find me going to theater, I am such a big fan of any kind of theater, whether it is a small production in a tiny little room or a big Broadway show. I really do enjoy just being able to get outside and spend time outdoors. I'm a big fan of trying new restaurants with my friends and my boyfriend and my family and just, you know, spending time trying to be away from the rush of it all.

Erica Belois-Pacer

I would have to agree. I think I tried to do the same thing. But I agree. I feel like oftentimes in this field, your work definitely goes into all aspects of your life. So sounds like you're the same. Oh, goodness. Well, I don't want to give too much away, considering you are the keynote and I'm really hoping that people will not only you know, join us in Denver, but if they're not able to, they'll be able to see it if they do the virtual pass because we'll be live streaming your keynote, which is exciting. But is there anything else you'd like to share or maybe some suggestions on where people can find your book?

Emily Ladau

I will just say that I am so excited to be able to connect with so many people who are similarly passionate about this field of work and in terms of where you can find the book. I highly recommend if you're going to purchase it supporting a local bookshop whenever possible. You can also find it on a website called indiebound. Or you can find it on a website called bookshop. I really love supporting local and independent businesses through the purchase of the book. And as for a little bit of a sneak peek of what's inside, it's got conversation about the concept of disability and how we talk about disability, the language we use. It's got some US History of Disability, some stuff on media representation and etiquette. There's just a whole lot packed in there. But even so, as I mentioned before, it's really only meant to be a starting point. So I hope that if it's the first thing you're picking up on your learning journey, or if you're already well on your way, and reading it as a refresher, that you will keep learning and keep going.

Erica Belois-Pacer

Thank you, Emily, I really appreciate you taking the time to be with us today and look for a number of other podcasts that will be coming your way over the next few weeks. And I would say, Emily, I think you're very approachable. So I think that when we are in Colorado, you would be more than happy to talk to our attendees and answer questions that they have right there at the conference show.

Emily Ladau

Absolutely. Please come say hi. My favorite part of speaking at conferences is not actually the speaking part. It's afterwards when I get to be in conversation.

Erica Belois-Pacer

I agree. Well, thanks again for joining us and hopefully it will be a little bit warmer when we are in Colorado together.

Emily Ladau

Thank you for having me. I can't wait to meet everybody.

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