

"Ableism and Its Many Intersections"
Erica Mones, Disability Activist from the US
International Disability Rights Affirmation Conference 2021
November 26

[2021/11/26 15:57] Carolyn Carillon: Hello everyone.

Today's presentation is being transcribed so those without audio or who require text only can participate in real time. The presenter may also use a teleprompter (speak easy) in local chat.

A little explanation about this service.

Voice-to-text transcriptionists provide a translation of the key ideas discussed, NOT a word for word transcription.

Voice-to-text services provide an in-the-moment snapshot of ideas and concepts, so that those who are unable to hear or to understand the audio program are able to participate in real-time.

You will see the transcription in local chat.

Transcription is provided by Virtual Ability, Inc.

The transcriptionists are:

Carolyn Carillon

LoriVonne Lustre

The speakers will be identified by initials as they speak.

The following initials in the transcription record will identify the speakers:

EM: Erica Mones

<<transcription begins>>

[2021/11/26 16:01] Alisa Farshore: Welcome to Virtual Ability's 10th Annual International Disability Rights Affirmation Conference (IDRAC).

I am Alisa Farshore a relatively new member of Virtual Ability.

I've been in SL for twelve years, and my passion is I love to decorate.

I was born and raised in Canada. I currently reside in Kamloops, British Columbia

I am a diabetic which has affect my vision and caused cognitive impairments. Since my accident each year I have seen a growth in my mobility issues.

Today Erica Mones will be joining us.

She is a disability activist from United States.

Erica is a graduate of Loyola University in Maryland. She earned her Bachelor's in Classical Civilizations and Writing

She is currently pursuing a Master's in Disability Studies from The City University of New York (CUNY).

Erica is a 24-year-old YouTuber, blogger, and freelance writer.

Erica will be speaking about "Ableism and Its Many Intersections"

Gentle Heron will be Erica's voice today.

We ask that you please hold your questions and comments to the end.

It is with great pleasure that I would like to welcome, Erica Mones.

[2021/11/26 16:04] ericamones Resident: My name is Erica Mones and I'm a writer and YouTuber with cerebral palsy.

Today, I am going to talk about ableism, which is something I've experienced firsthand as a Disabled woman and have also studied in my graduate program.

Slide 1:

Ableism is the discrimination/oppression of people based upon disability or perceived disability. It intersects with and compounds other forms of oppression.

Slide 2:

Systemic ableism is ableism in its broadest form. It informs all other aspects of society.

Slide 3:

Institutional ableism can look like denial of life-saving medical care, sub-par education, lack of affordable & accessible housing, job discrimination, and more. It is more concentrated than systemic ableism because it describes specific institutions rather than the larger systems that inform them.

Slide 4:

Interpersonal ableism occurs between two or more people.

It can come in the form of microaggressions like "You're smart for a Disabled woman!", social isolation, and hate crimes.

Many instances of interpersonal ableism are well-intentioned, but because ableism is so pervasive in our society and disability is often viewed as inherently negative,

people tend to not realize that the beliefs they take for granted as truth are informed by ableism.

Slide 5:

Internalized ableism is when Disabled people absorb and begin to believe the ableist messages society teaches them about disability.

Disabled people may also exhibit lateral ableism, which is negative attitudes towards those with disabilities different from their own.

For instance, many physically Disabled people have prejudices against those with intellectual disabilities.

Slide 6:

Ableist Stereotypes in the Media

The media can either combat or perpetuate ableist stereotypes.

Here are some ableist tropes commonly featured in movies:

- pitiable & pathetic (e.g. Joseph Merrick in The Elephant Man)

In the film, Merrick is pitied for his facial differences and chronic bronchitis, and is depicted as innocent and childlike.

A Christmas Carol's Tiny Tim is the most recognizable character who serves to be pitied.

The pity Tiny Tim incites makes Ebenezer Scrooge change his ways. In this way, Tiny Tim is a plot device rather than a character with agency.

- Supercrip (e.g. Forrest in Forrest Gump)
Gump literally outruns his disability in the beginning scene where his leg orthotics fly off. He goes on to become a national hero.
This sends the message that Gump could only become important once he overcame his disability.
It is also believed that Forrest has an intellectual disability, which makes him even more of a supercrip.
The problems with this trope are that it's unrealistic for most Disabled people to overcome their disabilities,
and most importantly, they shouldn't have to shed their identity to be seen as valuable.

- sinister, evil, & criminal (e.g. Doc Oc in Spiderman)
Many Marvel villains turn to evil after an accident leaves them Disabled and angry at the world.
While the ableism Disabled people face can make them angry, it is harmful to paint Disabled people as monsters
because it only reinforces fear, misunderstanding, and bigotry.
Why is it that Disabled people are depicted as monsters rather than nuanced human beings that are both good and bad at times?
Why must we be either the saint or the devil?
The oversimplification of Disabled characters in the media can be dehumanizing.

- better-off dead (e.g. Will Trainor in Me Before You)
After Will is paralyzed in an accident, he is so distraught by his newfound disability that he opts for assisted suicide.
Instead of receiving suicide prevention services, Will is aided in his decision.
It is also worth noting that it is implied that Will is a burden on his personal attendant turned love interest, Louisa.
He dies hoping that Louisa can now live a full life.
A person's life is not worthless because they are Disabled.
Feelings of worthlessness are often the result of living in an ableist society, lack of access to appropriate resources,
and may even be indicative of underlying mental health issues.
Disabled people who experience suicidal thoughts should be afforded the same suicide prevention as their nondisabled counterparts.

- maladjusted
- their own worst enemy
- burden (e.g. the mother and brother in What's Eating Gilbert Grape)
Gilbert's mother who is fat and his brother who is intellectually Disabled are depicted as holding Gilbert back.
Again, marginalized characters are used as a plot device to serve a purpose in the nondisabled protagonist's story.

- unable to live a successful life
Films often imply or even outright say that a Disabled character is unable to function in society.

The issue with this trope is that it usually fails to address the systemic issues Disabled people face that put them at a disadvantage. Instead, it places the problem within the individual, allowing nondisabled audience members to feel comfortable.

Slide 8
What next?

[2021/11/26 16:15] LV (LoriVonne Lustre): EM: Click the box in front of the podium for a list of the resources on this slide

[2021/11/26 16:15] Carolyn Carillon: Any questions for Erica?

[2021/11/26 16:15] Gentle Heron: QUESTION - Erica, I'd like you to discuss a bit more about the relationship between the medical profession's hierarchical ableist attitudes towards people with disabilities and our own lateral ableism among people with disabilities. For instance, while rehabilitation experts will talk with men with spinal cord injuries about sexual activity, they often do not do so with women spinal cord injuries. And within the broad disability community, males with SCI are viewed as having more social status than are females with SCI. Are these aspects of the same problem, or are they different problems?

[2021/11/26 16:17] Carolyn Carillon: EM: I think they're part of the same issue
And I think sexism plays into that

Men are often afforded a higher social status than women

That plays out in the disabled community

GENTLE: So you're saying there's overlap between kinds of isms?

EM: yes

I definitely think they overlap

And that further oppresses marginalized people

GENTLE: On your YouTube channel, you have a wide variety of articles

One of the things you emphasize a lot is exercise

Why?

EM: I think it's really important to have representation

When I was looking for YouTube videos for exercise for disabled people, I mostly saw ones made by non-disabled people

[2021/11/26 16:19] LV (LoriVonne Lustre): Erica's YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/ericamones>

[2021/11/26 16:20] Carolyn Carillon: EM: and they didn't take into account different people's level of mobility

For example, only people who are paraplegic

But my arms are weak

That's what I need

GENTLE: can you tell us some of the other topics you talk about?

EM: I do a lot of commentary videos

Some are social commentary

Or what's going on, on YouTube

Sometimes storytime videos about things that I've experienced in my life

GENTLE: So making these videos is how you advocate for people with disabilities?

EM: yeah, I definitely think everything I do as a disabled person is advocating for disabled people
I can't detach my identity to what I'm doing
No matter what I do ties back to disability

[2021/11/26 16:21] Varahi Lusch: QUESTION: Can you tell us about any nervousness you had about appearing on YouTube and how you dealt with any apprehensiveness or nervousness about expressing yourself so directly as a disabled woman :)

[2021/11/26 16:22] Carolyn Carillon: GENTLE reads Varahi's question

EM: I was definitely nervous

But I think the good thing about YouTube is that you don't see the reactions of people in real time

So it's just me talking to my camera

Being on YouTube has helped build my confidence

Before that, I couldn't even listen to the sound of my own voice on tape

Now I need to edit

I have no choice but to listen to my voice

[2021/11/26 16:23] Varahi Lusch: nods a lot! "thank you"

[2021/11/26 16:24] Carolyn Carillon: GENTLE: How did you learn the tech?

I know little about this

[2021/11/26 16:24] Orange Planer: Trial and error!

Nobody is tech savvy in the beginning!

[2021/11/26 16:24] Carolyn Carillon: EM: I just learned as I went

In the beginning, I couldn't edit

As I've been on YouTube for a few months, I've learned different tools

I've improved

My editing skills

I'm not a tech savvy person but I'm learning

GENTLE: me either

[2021/11/26 16:25] Orange Planer: We were all new once. :)

[2021/11/26 16:25] Carolyn Carillon: GENTLE: how long does it take to make a video?

EM: usually a few hours

First I'll plan what I want to do

Then afterwards, I'll edit it down if it needs it

Like if there's an empty time where I'm not talking

I upload it

The next day I put in subtitles

[2021/11/26 16:26] Pecos Kidd: Hi Erica - are you new to Second Life? If so, what are your impressions so far of this virtual world?

[2021/11/26 16:26] Carolyn Carillon: EM: I think SL is really cool

It reminds me of the SIMS

I play it on my tablet

I like it because I get to be different characters

That's really fun

[2021/11/26 16:27] Pecos Kidd: Cool! All of the characters here are real people!

[2021/11/26 16:27] Carolyn Carillon: GENTLE: Sometimes people forget all the characters here are real people

I wonder how many people in our audience play the Sims

[2021/11/26 16:27] Shendara Destiny: Never have.

[2021/11/26 16:27] Orange Planer: As long as it isn't The Simpsons.

[2021/11/26 16:27] Carolyn Carillon: GENTLE: Is that a game [The Simpsons]?

[2021/11/26 16:28] Orange Planer: No, it's a cartoon TV show.

[2021/11/26 16:27] Pecos Kidd: What has most surprised you about the virtual world?

[2021/11/26 16:28] Carolyn Carillon: EM: The most surprising thing is when I was first trying to go on here, I accidentally took all the clothes off my avatar, and I didn't know how to get them back on

I didn't expect it to be that complicated

[2021/11/26 16:28] Carolyn Carillon: GENTLE: But you figured it out

All of us have had the "instant nudity" issue!

[2021/11/26 16:28] Pecos Kidd: Now *that* is a universal experience here!

[2021/11/26 16:28] Shendara Destiny: Happens to all of us at least once, Erica.

[2021/11/26 16:28] Alisa Farshore: lol oh I still have that issue 12 years later :)

[2021/11/26 16:28] James Atlloud (Lloud Laffer): I know I've experienced that too!

We all have.

[2021/11/26 16:29] Elektra Panthar: 'affectionately' called 'wardrobe malfunction' ;)

[2021/11/26 16:29] Varahi Lusch: my hubby had to be told to wear clothes in SL :-p

[2021/11/26 16:29] Shendara Destiny: Certain sims permit nudity.

[2021/11/26 16:30] Varahi Lusch: oh yes.. but my hubby thought he might be able to be a nudist anywhere

[2021/11/26 16:29] Carolyn Carillon: EM: That was hard because I had no idea how that happened

I looked at my screen and I realized my avatar wasn't wearing clothes

[2021/11/26 16:29] Orange Planer: Right, and without being used to the interface it's hard to figure out where to go.

You can't put your clothes back on from the menus.

[2021/11/26 16:30] Mook Wheeler: But just like editing your videos, you will learn everything you need to know about Second Life! :) It will come. :)

[2021/11/26 16:30] Alisa Farshore: smiles

[2021/11/26 16:31] Shendara Destiny: Don't be afraid to ask for help, either.

[2021/11/26 16:31] James Atlloud (Lloud Laffer): I quickly found someone to help paint underwear on my avatar.

[2021/11/26 16:31] iSkye Silvercloud (iSkye Silverweb): The best thing about SL is that it isn't a game with levels or quests or competitions - you can find those within SL but it's really an open platform for you to express your own creativity and who/what you want to be in SL

[2021/11/26 16:32] Shendara Destiny: Hear Hear!

[2021/11/26 16:32] Orange Planer: In other words...

Second Life is a place where you can learn to be who you want to be.

[2021/11/26 16:32] iSkye Silvercloud (iSkye Silverweb): and do what you want to do

[2021/11/26 16:33] Alisa Farshore: Yes if you can learn what you want to do lol

[2021/11/26 16:32] Carolyn Carillon: GENTLE: What do you mean by that Orange?

[2021/11/26 16:33] Mook Wheeler: Orange means growth is a learning process, even learning who you are... right Orange?

[2021/11/26 16:33] Elektra Panthar: that's true, one can explore ways to explore / express their identity in a safe way

[2021/11/26 16:33] Orange Planer: What I mean is...

All of us find ourselves in situations that are uncomfortable. Being in Second Life gives us an opportunity to get comfortable with those situations and learn to handle them on our own terms.

Without regard to disability, ability, or other -bility.

This includes me in a HUGE way.

[2021/11/26 16:34] Varahi Lusch: yes I can see that :)

[2021/11/26 16:32] Carolyn Carillon: GENTLE: here we are teaching Erica about SL on her first session here! (laughs)

OK, we should thank Erica

She's been brave to open her life to us

This may have been more nerve-wracking than making a YouTube video!

We hope you'll come back

[2021/11/26 16:34] Mook Wheeler: Thank you Erica!

[2021/11/26 16:35] DrShoo Resident: *clapping*

[2021/11/26 16:35] Shendara Destiny: *.*.* (*.*.* ♥ *.*.*) *.*.*.*

[2021/11/26 16:35] Shendara Destiny: .*♥*.*.* APPLAUSE! *.*.*♥*.*.

[2021/11/26 16:35] Shendara Destiny: *.*.* (*.*.* ♥ *.*.*)`*.*.*`*.*.*

[2021/11/26 16:35] Eme Capalini: Thank you! Great job!

[2021/11/26 16:35] iSkye Silvercloud (iSkye Silverweb): Thank you Erica

This was fantastic to have you come and talk with us

[2021/11/26 16:35] Varahi Lusch: /me claps her hands

[2021/11/26 16:35] Alisa Farshore: Thank you Erica and make sure you all check out her YouTube and Articles.

[2021/11/26 16:35] Carolyn Carillon: EM: thank you for inviting me here

GENTLE: I'm hoping the audience will click on the box by Erica's feet to get the resources she's provided

<<transcription ends>>