

00:00:04:08 - 00:00:30:13

Speaker 1

Hello, my name is Vanessa Fernandez Cruz Pronouns she/her/ella. I currently reside in the unceded lands of the Tongva vanquished lands colonially known as Los Angeles, California. My image description. I am a Mexican American woman. I currently have my dark hair down. I have caramel skin. I'm wearing some white makeup with some super fun glasses. Beaded red earrings. I'm wearing a long sleeved black shirt, and I'm in front of a white wall with some lines. I am a disabled dance artist, choreographer, dance filmmaker. I also do a lot of writing. And I am also a disability justice activist. I do a lot of my work activism work at through tank dance artists, national collectives. Some of my consulting work I do. I'm currently at home, based in L.A., California, where they do site specific work, and I'm currently helping them manage how they can make all these different performances that they do in various locations more accessible. And additionally, I also do a series of workshops that I have been cultivating. Two of them are called Dismantling Ablism in Dance, and the other one is called Accessibility at the Forefront of Dance Making, focusing on dance films, doing audio description and captioning.

00:01:44:13 - 00:01:46:14

Speaker 1

And I'm going to go ahead and pass it over to Beth.

00:01:47:22 - 00:02:15:13

Speaker 2

Thanks, Vanessa. Hi, all. My name is Beth Prevor. My pronouns are she/her. I am a white, mature, disabled woman with short gray hair, wearing a kind of blue striped shirt sitting in my home office with a blurred background. I'm the executive director of Hands On Sign Interpreted Performances. We do interpretive performances primarily in New York City, where I live.

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Speaker 2

I'm also an accessibility consultant with several different organizations, the Alliance of Resident Theaters of New York, the New Jersey Theater Alliance. I'm I am on the steering Committee of the Museum, Arts and Culture Access Consortium, which is a group of New York City cultural organizations. I'm a member of Culture three, which again, is another group of cultural organizations in New York, and I'm the co-chair of their Disability Justice and Accessibility Working Group, and I'm a retired administrator at the New York City Department of Education, where I was the director of Sign Language Interpreter Services.

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Speaker 2

That's me.

00:03:01:20 - 00:03:34:20

Speaker 1

Yeah. So budgeting for accessibility is something I have been interested in for a while, given a lot of my activism work is navigating how we can call in organizations in helping to make their then use more accessible, their dance spaces more accessible and what that looks like. So for me, I feel like one of the main things is planning for accessibility.

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Speaker 1

At the very beginning of any project, any dance work or anything that requires planning ahead of time. It's never too late to start, but it's always a good start to have it. At the very beginning of any planning that you're doing. And so what it really means is striving to making sure that we are catering to our communities that haven't had the chance to be in the spaces that you were that you have.

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Speaker 1

And so a lot of disabled folks don't usually have access to the arts because of various reasons, and one of the reasons is because of inaccessibility. And so oftentimes we hear like, oh, we don't have the budget to make our spaces accessible. Well, the thing is, like any city planned ahead of time, it needs to be at the very front of like when you're doing your fiscal budgeting and all of that.

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Speaker 1

Yeah. So I'm going to go ahead and ask you both, like, what do you what is accessibility and budgeting mean to you?

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Speaker 2

Well, I wrote down intentional planning, so I think we're kind of both on the same track with planning. I think that's the number one point that you have to make in terms of budgeting for accessibility. I mean, I work, I work with sign language interpreters. And you know, from the get go, sign language interpreters are an expensive accommodation.

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Speaker 2

And, you know, it's it's something that nobody really wants to talk about a lot because we cost a lot of money. And and so the planning element of it is is just it's so important to plan. But the other thing I, I want to bring up only because I mean, this this kind of workshop came together like really fortuitous for me because I've really been thinking a lot about this idea about budgeting because because we work with organizations that have to raise the money to do an interpretive performance.

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Speaker 2

There's so many elements of doing a good job versus doing a less good job and what's a better job but doing a less good job. And a lot of that has to do with not only the planning element of it, but the information part that people don't do. They don't know. They don't they don't know what things cost.

00:06:09:03 - 00:06:37:17

Speaker 2

They they're coming in kind of after the fact. They're thinking about accessibility after rather than, you know, this whole idea of planning is just is so important in every aspect of this conversation, because the tendency, especially in what we do, always seems to be after the fact. It always seems to be something that somebody thought about while they're doing the show and go, Oh, wouldn't it be nice if we did this?

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Speaker 2

They have no idea how much it costs. They had no idea whether they have the money or they don't have the money, and they have to go try to find the money. And, you know, it's so it's always this kind of backtracking and it's not part of the their initial concept. It's not done when they do their their budget for the year or it's not done so much in advance.

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Speaker 2

It's always done after. And that's the you know, if if one thing can come out of this conversation because we both just said it and is that you have to plan, you can't and we don't want to be an afterthought. That's the other part, too, is that to do it as an afterthought also doesn't feel good from how you're doing.

00:07:22:00 - 00:07:39:04

Speaker 2

It's like, Well, why didn't you think about this before? Or when you were planning your budget and planning your programs? Why didn't this get part of the of your plans? So planning, planning, planning, Yeah.

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Speaker 1

This has been a so speaking I kind of want to add on to that. I think while we say planning, I do want to bring in to the conversation of like quality versus quantity of like what happens in the planning phase has to very much to do with like understanding what ASL looks like. I understand what audio description looks like, what understanding what closed captioning, open captioning, all of that looks like to ensure that disabled folks are getting the quality of any performance or event that a non-disabled person will get.

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Speaker 1

And so I think that's so important to think about, which I want to reel in this aspect of disability justice and like how understanding that framework can really help understand and or help the organization understand why it's important to plan ahead. Right. One thing like yes, plan ahead that why are we planning ahead and understanding that the different marginalization and oppressions that happen in our communities, understanding that and really putting that at the forefront is so important.

00:08:53:16 - 00:08:54:04

Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:08:55:02 - 00:09:18:03

Speaker 2

And that well and I and I think to, you know, this idea of of understanding, you know, I think there's has to be like an acknowledgment sometimes on our end that well, I mean the field that I work in is very specific to the field and I don't make the assumption that people who are not in my field know what my field is or should know what my field is.

00:09:18:08 - 00:09:49:05

Speaker 2

But they have to ask. And again, I think this whole idea of understanding and researching and really kind of listening to other people and listening to people who know more about this than you do they do is also a really it's a it's a part of inclusion that I think is just a really important aspect of it, is that we want to be included in the conversations and the questions and to at least be acknowledged to just go.

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Speaker 2

We know what we're talking about. So if we're talking about interpreters, we know what a good interpreter is. We know what it, you know, a quality interpreter is to bring a quality performance of your piece of art. So it's got to be a joint conversation, not just you've raised the money and you're going to do it, and you had no idea.

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Speaker 2

You had no idea how to do it, but include us in the conversation to work with you to make something beautiful and work well and be inclusive to the community that you want to serve.

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Speaker 1

Yeah, absolutely. That's kind of brings up this this thing I was thinking about, and I feel like some organizations have been doing it is hiring an accessibility consult consultant and putting that in your budget. So I think I think people get overwhelmed with the amount of accessibility, how much access, how much energy is put into accessibility. And I feel like working with a consultant allows those that consultant to cater to what your organizing organization is.

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Speaker 1

If you're if there's a small organization, they can cater to what what your budget is and like how you know, it's like baby steps, right? We can't we can't expect every organization, especially the smaller ones, that don't have a big budget to include everything. But at least there is an effort to get towards that end goal for the bigger organizations.

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Speaker 1

Yes, absolutely higher. And accessibility consulting, then really do everything in your power to make sure that your your events or performances are accessible and that.

00:11:37:04 - 00:12:09:24

Speaker 2

The other thing that I've been thinking about and again, and because I've been thinking about this idea of budgets like before this conversation, I thought it would be really interesting to bring up because the thing that I've been thinking about is that there there really is no well, I don't want to say this here, but I mean, there's it's not that there's there's there's not a lot of money for access sometimes that it's it's there's not there's not a place because I think part of the questions in this conversation was, you know, what are the resources?

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Speaker 2

Where should we tell people to go to look for money? And, you know, I thought about that is like, I don't really know. And I you know, to be completely honest about that, I can say, oh, you should go to ABC Foundation or ABC. They do access. I think it's one is I think it's it's it's a research project about how you how you look for funding for accessible city.

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Speaker 2

I think sometimes to this conversation about planning is that sometimes it just becomes a general part of your budget. It's not you know, it's not necessarily looking for specific money for assigned interpretive performance, but it's part of your overall plan. And that plan is there because you value inclusion. And that's that's part of your mission and part of your organization.

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Speaker 2

But the thing that I've been thinking about and I would love to hear your thoughts about this, Vanessa, only because we're having this conversation is I mean, I think that there should be a pot of money somewhere. I think all these foundation and all these big foundations should kick in big bucks and put this pot of money there for organizations to use for access issues.

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Speaker 2

And I think specifically because what we're seeing in our field is there's a lot of deaf artists out there getting a lot of work, which is fantastic. But if a deaf artist goes into an audition, not for a deaf role, just for just to audition for a play, and people go, Oh wow, they were great. Let's let's cast that person.

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Speaker 2

Suddenly that person costs money, whereas no other performance performer costs money. If you have a group of actors, they don't cost additional money, but a deaf or disabled person is going to cost money. And so where do we get this idea that people are not being hired or being hired because they cost money? And so we have to figure out a way to take money out of the equation so that money doesn't become the issue.

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Speaker 2

And I'm only kind of bring this up because this is what I've been thinking about lately, and I don't know how to do it except to go, say, go to the big foundations of the country and let everybody put this pot of money together for access issues. You know, because maybe if we take money out of the equation, we level the playing field a little bit more for everybody so that it's not like somebody is coming in to audition and saying, can I hire this person or not hire this person because of the access needs of this person.

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Speaker 2

So I'm just kind of throwing that out only because I don't know how to do this yet. But I think that we as an arts community have to start kind of bringing this to the forefront of foundations because we, you know, we've been we ask people to be accessible, but we don't give them the finances to be able to do it.

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Speaker 2

And I think somehow we have to figure that out.

00:15:32:02 - 00:16:04:23

Speaker 1

Yeah, this is Vanessa speaking that that's a big question and a very important question. Right. As someone who has been navigating, auditioning for different dance gigs or even quite erratic work, I think one of the ways I work for dance are this national collective that we have put in place, like these audition guidelines. And one of them is asking the choreographer to find a location where it's actually accessible.

00:16:05:06 - 00:16:33:12

Speaker 1

So it's not necessarily that if you hire a disabled person is quote unquote expensive. It's finding the venues ahead of time. It's finding these things ahead of time. I think if we navigate our own resources, we have Zoom now. A lot of the accounts are free from most of them, right? Most of the accounts that they have listed on their plans, we have Internet, we have technology.

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Speaker 1

Can we have can we zoom in a ASL interpreter for this audition? What does that look like? Can we host auditions via Zoom? I seen certain dance companies offer that it will be amazing if more dance companies do that option. I feel like, yes, we need more money, but also I feel like we can still utilize resources that we do have at our disposal to implement access and act on that in a way and through my accessibility at the forefront of dance making workshop where I'm talking to individual dance artists about their dance films.

00:17:13:24 - 00:17:41:00



Speaker 1

So they're not necessarily disabled. And I tell them like, Look, we can actually make our dance films accessible by creating audio descriptions. This is I have created a template like this is how you develop your own audio description. I acknowledge that it's labor. I think that's something to absolutely acknowledge, right? If you're doing your own access for your work, it is labor and it's something to keep in mind as you grow as an artist.

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Speaker 1

But yeah, I just feel like I personally don't know any foundations are catering to just giving money to organizations for access, although I do feel like here in the West, in L.A. or California specifically, I have seen some grants for organizations for access, which I think is really exciting, which is why I was onboarded for HomeAway. It was thanks to that, to that grant that they received.

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Speaker 1

Yeah. So I feel like there's different ways in viewing access and it's never going to look one way. I think that's important to think about. There is no short cuts. It's not a checklist, it varies.

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Speaker 2

And not a one size fits all. I mean, that's the other fact that it's disability is not, you know, homogeneous. It's not. So it's not you know, it's not like if you do it for one, you're kind of covered for everybody. So that's that's the other thing. And again, I think everything that you're saying too goes back to this idea of of planning and information seeking, which I think are the two aspects of this I about how you do anything about how you do, whether it's audio description or a sign language interpreting or looking for accessible spaces or using, you know, situations like Zoom or using different technologies that we've kind of found during the

00:19:12:16 - 00:19:38:03

Speaker 2

pandemic to say, you know, you can you can adjust certain things and how else can we do it, you know, kind of working with the disabled performer, you know, and getting feedback about, you know, other options that that are available. I mean, I just I just think again, and I'm I'm being very specific to the area that I work with, which is just an expensive area.

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Speaker 2

And it's so it just gets really, you know, also where I'm trying to like look at like the arc of, you know, especially like a performer, like what what's involved in a disabled, a deaf or disabled artist from beginning to end. And the in terms of the accommodations and really being thoughtful and intentional about, you know, just because somebody gets in the room for a reading, it's that's just the beginning of the process.

00:20:09:12 - 00:20:37:05

Speaker 2

And the process goes through till closing night and and how do we really not give the short shrift to a person and just say, well, I can give you an accommodation for this aspect of it, but there's, you know, the arts are, you know, there's A to Z and, and you really, you know, when somebody is in, you don't want to say, well you can get in but you can't really get to, you know, part two, you can only get here.

00:20:37:11 - 00:21:07:18

Speaker 2

So really what what's involved and and so I think it's it's probably this combination of planning and really thinking through things, which is planning. So, I mean, I think it's I think planning is just it is just so important about it. Like everything so the, you know, the planning, the budget and really understanding in advance everything that's involved is is the other part of this too.

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Speaker 2

Because again, if you if you plan for the, you know, the heart a of an artist's work, you really don't want to not give them full access to the whole situate, you know, the whole situation of the whole experience. So you have to plan through to the end and it's yeah I mean that that to me is the most important thing you know in the planning includes with whatever research you need to do to look for, to look for the resources, to look for, you know, the service providers in that, you know, in that area that feel that you need to find.

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Speaker 2

And again, going back to interpreting, people don't know how to find interpreters. People don't know what a good interpreter is versus and not the interpreter. So there's there's so many things that if we work together early on, rather than after the fact, that would be so much better for everybody.

00:22:10:01 - 00:22:50:19

Speaker 1

Yeah, this is speaking. Yeah, this kind of reminds me of an initiative I started at my university in 2020, 2021 pandemic. You know, we were that we did a virtual show for the first time, which is really exciting. I was part of the committee and I decided to do what the Disability Accessibility Committee. And so from the very beginning, I led the department to not only plan ahead but also implement access needs.

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Speaker 1

And so I, I developed the audio description template for them. I also help bridge their ASL department with them to incorporate them for their virtual show. And it was a really you know, it was a stressful time, I will say it was very stressful, but it was really exciting to see it all come together and the quality in which we did it was really amazing.

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Speaker 1

And for me, that comment that really gave me hope that there is a way to really make things accessible that looks like art. I think that's so it's just so beautiful and that's what happens when you plan ahead of time. And I really am excited that, you know, there's organizations that are beginning to do that and we need more now.

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Speaker 1

Yeah, I just wanted to share that. I feel like it's just so relevant to this aspect of budgeting for accessibility.

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Speaker 2

So and this is bit like I totally agree with everything that you say. And I also think too is people should not don't do more than you can do to start with. That's another thing is, you know, I mean if you're looking at budgeting and you're looking at your budget and what you can do, do what you can do, do, and I think that's another part of the whole budget planning part is don't try to do everything all at once and not do a good job.

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Speaker 2

Do do what you can do with the budget that you have the do a really good job and that that will be so much better than just trying to do more than you actually can do. So really be it again. And I think in an intentional and again part of the planning process, do as much as you can do.

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Speaker 2

And I think, you know, another point too, is, you know, work with the disability community on you know, on on getting into the into the community, getting advice from getting resources, from getting, you know, that information from the community also, I think is incredibly helpful. You know, whether it's going out for a budget or not. But I think just in terms of learning what the needs are of the community and where to get the resources from the community, that will at least put whatever money and budget you have to the best use rather than kind of just having money and just not not working with the community to get the right advice.

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Speaker 1

Yeah, I absolutely agree with you. Yeah. For a lot of my own personal learnings I have learned from Alice Wong, I have learned from a kinetic wide Alice Shepherd, Kayla Hamilton, I have learned from various other amazing badass disabled artists in the field that are also doing this kind of work. And it's just so important to really hone in on the community.

00:26:13:11 - 00:26:19:16

Speaker 1

We know so much and we're always happy to help just to make sure that you're.

00:26:20:02 - 00:26:45:12

Speaker 2

And we're always happy to share. I mean, that just in kind of anything, what you're saying is that it's not you know, it's not only to learn the things, but I think the resources and the sharing of the information within the disability community is very open. So I think that if you have questions, you know, if you ask somebody in your community with a disability, if they don't know it, they probably know other people.

00:26:45:12 - 00:27:11:22

Speaker 2

I mean, you just kind of like ticked off like five people that are going like, I know Alice, I know, you know, I mean, yeah. And if I don't know it now, I can contact you and say, Vanessa, can you reach out to this? You know, I mean, I think that people are so kind of interconnected that it's it's would be such a great help to organizations that you're not doing this on your own and that, you know, we want to work with you.

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Speaker 2

We like we want to you know, we want to make your organization and and help you make your organizations more accessible. So just ask.

00:27:22:15 - 00:27:52:14

Speaker 1

Yeah. Some last thoughts. We've done all this planning, let's say, with dental planning. We're in it. We're doing it. We're in the thick of it. The number one thing to remember is advertise. Please advertise that you have ASL, ADA, accessible venues. I have seen some artists do the work, but then when they start advertising, it's nowhere on their flier.

00:27:52:14 - 00:28:22:04

Speaker 1

The Instagram caption you have to go to get up. It's just extra labor for disabled person who wants to go see her events. So please advertise that you have all these amazing accessibility components for your program. Yeah, I'm really happy that we had this conversation that this is so important. There's just so much more to talk about. So yeah, Beth, if you have any last words and yeah, now will being.

00:28:22:05 - 00:28:46:23

Speaker 2

Here, I think, I think that was a great wrap up And you know, the old adage, you know, if you, if you build it, they will come. No, I mean, you really have to let people know and you have to reach out to the communities and I will also say that you with talking about budgets and how, you know, potentially costly certain services are, you really you don't want to do it for nobody.

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Speaker 2

You really want to work with the communities and you have to reach out. And that and that's the part of this that you never want to do. Like, you know, especially in a says accessible service that needs a an audio describe or a sign language interpreter or caption operator. You don't want to do it for nobody. You really want to let the community they need to know.

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Speaker 2

So you just you need to kind of look at this community as a new community that you want to invite into your spaces. And you have to do the work just like you would do with any other new community that you want to bring in to your organization and go go out to the community and let them know that you want to invite them in and welcome them in.

00:29:32:15 - 00:29:53:23

Speaker 2

And that's really important. With all this talk about, you know, what things might cost, you don't want to do it for nobody. And it's got to be a relationship between you and the community. So I, I think that that's a great ending to our to our conversation.

00:29:53:23 - 00:29:56:00

Speaker 1

Thank you, everyone. We hope to see you soon.