

Phil Dallmann: Hello inclusion believers, and welcome to the Access Champions podcast. I'm your host Phil Dallmann for this weeks journey into the galaxies of accessibility, diversity, and inclusion. Uh we have another great episode for you this week, James Bagley, a disability lawyer from Rhode Island joins us uh for a, a great conversation, um and one that I feel like continues a little bit of a theme that we've been talking about, um about being an ally. Um, uh, for communities that we're not necessarily a part of. Um, he's you know obviously in the legal world, uh doing great work and, and lifting people up. Um, and uh you know all of us can look at our skill sets and see what we can bring to the conversation, bring to the movements um, you know.

Phil Dallmann: And it may not be you know what, one of us may perceive as a, a giant, our biggest skill may not be what it is, but maybe you know um it's something smaller, maybe it's, it's a, a passion that you didn't realize could be very practical um, in, in some of these movements. So, um really excited to, to share that with you guys. Um, want to give a, a quick shout out to our transcript sponsor, uh C2 captioning, uh, very grateful for that. Uh our transcripts are provided by uh Rev.com every week, and I do my best to, to edit them and make sure that they're as correct as possible. Um, but I do want to put it out there that if anybody has any issues with them or if there's something that we could be doing better, um please reach out to us.

Phil Dallmann: Uh, we're available via email accesschampion@gmail.com. Uh and across social media at [accesschampion](https://www.accesschampion.com). Um, always down to, to chat and we're constantly trying to improve. In that same realm, we are um, working on the video aspect of this podcast, um, we're hopefully moving forward uh, you know a lot of our conversations are over the phone, um as people are across the world and across the country, but uh, you know for the interviews that we do in person, that you know there could be some practical video uh that could happen and in that realm um, hopefully uh we'll be able to add some sign interpreting um, for, for the, for folks who uh prefer that over uh, a transcript.

Phil Dallmann: And, that's, that for this week not a, not a whole lot of other business to take care of. Um if you don't already follow us on social media please do. Would love for uh anyone who's enjoying this to take uh, if you can 30 seconds uh, and give us a, a, a little review on uh, on Facebook and if you please feel free to share uh the podcast uh if you do enjoy it, um and hopefully if you are listening and you have enjoyed it, with your friends and family. Um you know, we're, we're really enjoying this, this is episode 30, I can't believe that we've, we've made it 30 episodes, uh weekly, um, and that, uh is not a solo effort. Uh and I know I thank them at the end of every episode, but I just want to thank them at the beginning here.

Phil Dallmann: Which is our producer Matt Kerstetter, who actually provided us our guest, our guest this week. Uh he and James Bagley uh know each other a little bit through the improv world, and uh, our champion intern is Kelsey Rose Brown who



handles our, all of our social media and so many other things. And, and guest research and, and all of that. You know they're both this, this podcast doesn't exist without both of them. So um, want to give them a, a quick shout out again at the beginning of the episode, because um, I, I value uh ... I literally just knocked over a most of my equipment.

Phil Dallmann: Uh, and uh, I only know how to use most of this equipment because of Matt. If you can't tell I would have been lost without them. So uh all that being said, thank you to all around, thank you to our listeners, uh 30 episodes and, and, and going strong. Uh, so without further adieu, Access Champion, James Bagley.

Phil Dallmann: All right, we are here with James Bagley who is a disability lawyer in Rhode Island for the law firm of Audette Cor- Cordero, and Violet. Uh thanks for joining us James.

James Bagley: I'm happy to be here so thanks for having me on.

Phil Dallmann: Uh you are I believe are our second uh direct guest uh who knows our producer, uh, the, the wonderful Mart Kerstetter. Uh-

James Bagley: Yeah.

Phil Dallmann: So um, how, how did you meet Matt?

James Bagley: So um, when uh, when Crisis the Improvised Comic Book uh, I think they came to the Providence Improv Fest in maybe, I think they've been there every year but this was 2013 or 2014. Um, and I was going through the levels of the Providence improv at the Guild at the time, having taken several years off from improv. And when I saw what they did with their like scene paint and the page by page presentation, and I'm also a huge um, comic book fan and you know a lot of their graphics are inspired by like uh Infinity Gauntlet, and uh other Marvel characters. So I like fan boy'd very hard and reached out.

Phil Dallmann: (laughs). That's awesome.

James Bagley: And it, it, it, it turned out eventually that I got onto a house team and then uh got onto teams that would go to local festivals, so I would run into them at Hartford, and run into them in Providence. Um, almost every year and we'd just make it a point to stay in touch and you know generally like each others Facebook stuff and be supportive.

Phil Dallmann: Nice. That's fantastic.

James Bagley: Yeah.

Phil Dallmann: Uh, so we've established you do improv. How uh, did you end up in the world of disability law?

James Bagley: Uh, so um, direct connection, I, I had uh, I was in the New York City at the time, I'd moved out of Rhode Island, I was um, a pretty successful uh salesman, and I was uh, taking improve classes at the Magnet Theater.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Bagley: And I was very dissatisfied with my life in general.

Phil Dallmann: Okay.

James Bagley: Um uh so I, I took the LSAT's while I was you know just working, and I did pretty well, and then I took uh, oh I took a practice one, and I took the actual one and then I decided you know, why don't I go to law school? This would be a way that I could actually like make a difference in peoples lives versus just kind of you know convincing them that they have a need for a thing and convincing them to pay for that thing. Which is more or less sales you know so.

Phil Dallmann: That is true. Uh, so you just uh, take an LSAT on a whim?

James Bagley: Uh, sort of. I mean I feel like a lot of people who are attorneys uh, and a lot of people who aren't attorneys, parents told them that they should be attorneys because they were argumentative.

Phil Dallmann: Oh yes.

James Bagley: Um, so that, that uh voice was always kind of floating in the back of my head, my fathers uh, an attorney uh, he was for the Navy.

Phil Dallmann: Oh.

James Bagley: Um, and, and so, like I knew that genetically there was possibly a, a predisposition and, and I knew that because of my constant like arguing with my mother, she was pretty convinced I could be a lawyer, so. It was, it was kind of like a, a childhood reinforced whim that led me to take the LSAT's.

Phil Dallmann: Fair enough. All of our listeners out there that are still arguing with their moms, turn it into, into something productive, go ahead and take them LSAT's, see what happens.

James Bagley: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Um, and, law school was, was absolutely transformative for me because uh undergrad I was a theater major-

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

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James Bagley: Um, I did not have to work very hard. Uh, I, it took me about five years to get out of that and then I, and then I had to work for a living. Sales and rental cards, and waiting tables, and things like that. So when I got back to school, and they were like yeah your job is just to read and write stuff, and I was like really? This is great. So I just I like I leaned in super hard, and uh, and, and realized that I was like decently good at it, and that it was giving me skills where I could actually like help people. You know.

Phil Dallmann: That's fantastic. And what, what then you know, uh you go through law school, you finish that up. Uh, what leads you into the world of uh disability?

James Bagley: So, well first I had to, I had to you know get a job.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah. Not an easy thing.

James Bagley: No not an easy thing and, and so, um, while I was in law school, I had uh, I created uh, sort of a program where law students would go to the Bristol Veterans Home, which was near the campus, and play bingo you know one night a month, um-

Phil Dallmann: Cool.

James Bagley: On like a Wednesday night. Because some of the guys uh didn't have the um, the uh, manual dexterity to slide the plastic over the thing, or to, or to necessarily record if they were winning. So we'd go and do that. When I moved to Providence, uh, I'll step back for a second. Rhode Island has a phenomenon about driving.

Phil Dallmann: Okay.

James Bagley: Uh, people don't like to drive. Uh, the states about 45 minutes long, so if your commute to a place is more than 20 minutes, it's a legit excuse for people in Rhode Island to be like that's too far.

Phil Dallmann: (laughs) okay, uh, that's uh, that's very diff- well you know what I would say that's different than New York, but if I, if I see a subway commute is more than 45, I uh, I, I, I often am averse to it, shout out to all my friends in Brooklyn and Queens who I don't see as often.

James Bagley: (laughs). Or you go to get on to a letter train, that's a, that's an entirely different-

Phil Dallmann: Oh god no. (laughs).

James Bagley: So, so when I moved to Providence, um, going down to Bristol didn't seem palatable. There's a VA hospital in Providence, and I planned to volunteer there,

but it just, they um, you know the application was 12 pages long and nobody ever called me back and, um, I later on found out that this, this is pretty typical for when you're interacting with uh US government bureaucracy, but at the time I was a little bit dispirited.

James Bagley: But I had my bar license now, I wasn't just a student, so I started taking pro bono cases.

Phil Dallmann: Okay.

James Bagley: For uh veterans of the armed forces. And there was just an overwhelming common um theme with a lot of these cases where that, there was an undiagnosed or a missed you know mental illness.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Bagley: Uh, that had gotten them to a situation where they were no longer able to meet their obligations, or where their fight or flight reflexes were so fried that they were constantly fighting you know.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Bagley: Um, and so and I, I began to, like work with them, and help them, and realize that like besides being an attorney and paying the bills, there were still things I could do that made me feel good and that I liked. And so my career kind of kept going and evolving, and I went through a couple of different firms, until I landed with Audette, Cordero, and Violet who not only were supportive of my pro bono work, but already practiced disability law, which I hadn't encountered before.

Phil Dallmann: Okay.

James Bagley: And when I started doing it, um, I kind of had found my like calling I guess, because it's a thing that I'm good at, it's a thing like the world needs, it's a thing I can make money off of. Um, and uh, and, it, it kind of, it makes the world a better place. Like a, a lot of lawyers are like contractors that build prisons. You know like you do a thing and you can make money off it, but you're never like hey look at the work I did, like I helped those people fight over their dog, I billed \$5,000 for it. You know?

Phil Dallmann: Yeah.

James Bagley: Um, but when you're, when you're helping people on their social security disability program, you're helping people that you know are trapped in their own bodies or their own minds or somewhere in between, and when you can get like a smile and a hug from someone with like phobic social anxiety, or like you know paralyzing back pain.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Bagley: It's uh, it's the most re- most rewarding thing I've ever encountered in my life. And so now I just I leaned in hard. Um, nobody like my age really wants to do it, nobody uh, the, the clientele have a lot of challenges.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Bagley: Um, and a lot of people don't want to work with that clientele. A lot of people believe the rumors and other things that disparage people that have to go onto disability benefits, and so I just found an opening where I can kind of step to the forefront and try and help as many people as I can you know.

Phil Dallmann: I think that's incredibly important. Um, I mean we've been talking a lot on this podcast about uh, ally work. Uh-

James Bagley: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Phil Dallmann: And, and those of us who, who maybe don't identify uh, as a, a particular demographic in this case it's having a disability, but the work that we can do for that community uh, and lifting them up through you know, either our skill set or our privilege, or what have you, um, I, I think that's, that's important. And I, I commend you for, for finding sort of uh, your way of, of with your skills uh to help folks. I think that's tremendous.

Phil Dallmann: Um, so you're, I imagine you're, you're, you deal quite a bit with the ADA.

James Bagley: You know, surprisingly, um, I don't.

Phil Dallmann: Really?

James Bagley: Uh, we, I run into it, I run into its shadow.

Phil Dallmann: Okay.

James Bagley: Um-

Phil Dallmann: That seems even more ominous (laughs).

James Bagley: Well yes, so, so I run into people that have been effected by it, that could've had claims under it-

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Bagley: Um, but for the most part the people that I deal with are no longer working uh, because of their conditions. So-



Phil Dallmann: Okay.

James Bagley: Uh, there, there, they're past the point where they're looking for the kind of accommodations that are required under the A, uh ADA.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Bagley: To the point where there are not reasonable accommodations that can be made.

Phil Dallmann: Gotcha.

James Bagley: Um, because, uh, the, the government has pretty rigid standards on it, and if you qualify for an accommodation that would allow you to still work full time, then you would not be eligible for disability benefits.

Phil Dallmann: Gotcha, that makes a lot of sense. That uh, that phrase reasonable accommodations is, is often the bane of my existence. Uh-

James Bagley: Yeah.

Phil Dallmann: Consulting for specifically usually in the arts. Um, uh, and, and sometimes in the world of commercial theater. Um, because decided what, what is reasonable is a super gray, uh-

James Bagley: Yeah.

Phil Dallmann: Um, well that, uh, I'm happy for you to an extent. That you don't uh, you don't have to encounter uh that incredibly gray document uh too often. Um-

James Bagley: Yeah.

Phil Dallmann: So, you know what, what are some of the over arching themes that you, you're navigating right now?

James Bagley: So, so I, and, and I guess I'll, I'll harp on, on this particular thing again and again and again. And I guess first I'll disclose that I, I'm, I'm in treatment myself for um, like trauma, developmental trauma as a child. Uh, and anxiety with occasional panic attacks, which aren't fun.

Phil Dallmann: No.

James Bagley: Um, uh, so, so having disclosed that, what I run into a lot is, is, is pushback um, sometimes uh culturally from men in their mid to late 40's through early 60's who um, have been conditioned is my theory-

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

James Bagley: To think that uh mental illness is, is weak, that um, not having control of your emotions is, is weak. That feeling fear is weak. Um, and so part of my job sometimes is, is like letting these tough, you know blue collar uh, thick knuckled traits, that like it's okay that you feel sad, that you can't work anymore. Like I almost have to help people realize that the physical problems that they have, have, have traumatized them to an effect, have had, have taken a toll on them. Um and that their quality of life uh, you know would be improved by looking into you know treating that.

James Bagley: And a lot of people say like hey that makes sense, but the group that pushes back and that, that overall, that undiagnosed mental illness and the like cultural pride in, in thinking that needing help uh, is, is like a personal um like mishap, or like something to feel ashamed about. That's like one of the biggest issues that I have. And I'll, I'll have people with crippling you know social anxiety who, who won't admit it. Who will you know um, in, in, in the north east, when someone says how you doing? You're supposed to just say fine. You know that, that, that inquiry is, is not actually deep.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah.

James Bagley: And, uh you're upsetting a social mechanism if you actually say not good, you know. Um.

Phil Dallmann: No we-

James Bagley: But what I-

Phil Dallmann: We've, we've talked about that-

James Bagley: Sorry.

Phil Dallmann: No, you're fine. Uh, we've actually, we've actually talked about that a decent amount here, we had a, a group on, well, or, well a woman on uh named Carlita, uh who's leading a group called Darkness Rising here, uh, helping remove the exact same sentiments that you're talking about. Uh from the black community.

Phil Dallmann: I don't know if you're familiar uh, as, as a fellow that came out of the magnet, um with Aaron Gold's show, uh, You Are Not Alone?

James Bagley: Uh, I am.

Phil Dallmann: Joyful improv about depression. Yeah, so Aaron was on here speaking about that as well, and kind of removing that same, same stigma uh, from in the world of, of um, you know improv comedy or comedy in general. Uh so I, I think that

those ideas of, of it being fear and weakness, uh, are systemic in, in so many communities.

James Bagley: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah.

Phil Dallmann: Um, and it, I think you're right, it is conditioning, um, people are raised a certain way and, and taught that. Um, or told that. And then, they stick with it and then I imagine that uh, it incredibly difficult as you're trying to navigate um getting someone what they need.

James Bagley: Yeah, yeah it, it, it can be. Um, and, and not, not to go off too far but you, You Are Not Alone is amazing. Um, uh, a fellow named Mike Amarol who's at the Providence Improv Guild was uh involved with Improv Boston and found out about that show. Uh, got permission for us to do it, and actually the last time I was one of the essayists.

Phil Dallmann: Oh awesome. I love that.

James Bagley: Like just, it's incredibly cathartic, uh, and um, sort of rewarding. Uh to, you know sob hysterically in front of an audience but then to know that like other people who are going through something similar are now, now feel their load a little bit lightened.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah, absolutely.

James Bagley: You know. Um, so I'm sorry, because I forgot what you originally asked me-

Phil Dallmann: (laughs).

James Bagley: Because I wanted to get that You Are Not Alone thought out.

Phil Dallmann: No, no, that's fine and I'm sure Aaron Gold will appreciate that. Uh, uh, when you're, you know navigating that, that, that field or navigating those um, this you know systemic ideas, of, of mental illness. Um, that's got to make things complicated as, as you're trying to help people.

James Bagley: Super complicated, super, super complicated because one of, one of the things you run into a, like I'm, I'm meeting someone who has um, who has endured something horrible.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Bagley: Uh, whether it's living with an undiagnosed mental illness, whether it was a work related injury, whether it was a genetic condition, either way, um, you know if you're sitting in that chair across from me you're already going through a really tough time. For me to do my job, I have to drag you through that tough

time in minute detail so that I can advocate on your behalf for what your actual like limitations and restrictions are.

James Bagley: Um, and, and then on top of that we've got things like toxic masculinity, and um you know misogyny and, like homophobia and, and, and all these other systemic problems that are getting in peoples way of getting help or accepting help, um or identifying their problems so my, my, my um, my job uh you know my responsibility as their advocate is to try and help them across all of these areas, but these are all things that develop over a long lifetime.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah.

James Bagley: And so it can be, it can be incredibly frustrating. And not to mention you know, substance use.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I'm sure.

James Bagley: It's just, it's it's, it's very tough uh, the rules are very rigid, it's very black and white, and social security uh, as an administration uh is not really interested in, in the um, the details that people think they are.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Bagley: Um, and it, it's, it's just frustrating, people will try and navigate the systems themselves. Uh, some are capable, some are not, but the administration uses different forms, questionnaires, uh, and methods of obtaining information that seem um, harmless and benign, but later on will be the reason that the denied you is because they said hey can you do laundry and I said yes. But what I didn't say was well I can't carry it down the stairs because of my knees, and I can't pick up the basket because of my wrists, but my husband throws it all down the stairs and when I'm down there I use a grabber to put it in one piece at a time, it takes me three hours. You know.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah.

James Bagley: If you've got, if you've got uh, if you have a representative who has really questioned you in detail about how it is you can do those things, then that gets reflected in social security, but if you don't you're doing it on your own, they're allowed to assume that because you could do laundry, you could work A, B, or C job and they just deny you.

Phil Dallmann: Uh. Uh. I, I wish I had a more elegant uh response than uh. Uh, but that's, that's uh terrible, uh in a lot of ways, um.

James Bagley: Yeah.



Phil Dallmann: Shifting uh the gears a little bit, um, I, I know obviously from, from what you said earlier you, you continue to do improv in addition to practicing law.

James Bagley: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Phil Dallmann: What's that balance like uh because uh you're, you're also a family man I believe right?

James Bagley: Well, sort of. So I, I live, I live with um Melissa Bowler, she has a five and a half year old son named Luke-

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Bagley: Uh, Luke Monsloe, and he is a joy, uh we all live together now and uh I've been in his life for a couple of years, so I, I've taken on some, some, some father figure like role in his life. His father is still very active in his life, his fathers a great, great person.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Bagley: Um, they have a great relationship. Uh, and they're doing a great job co parenting him, but I, I get this, I have like this privileged role of being like a grownup friend to him who gets to explain things to him like who the Punisher is and who Silver Surfer is, and you know who Obi Wan Kenobi is-

Phil Dallmann: Those are incredibly important things to, for any young child to learn. I uh-

James Bagley: Oh I, I think so too, and, and we get into nuanced conversations like is Green Goblin always bad, and you know.

Phil Dallmann: Oh yeah.

James Bagley: Then it's like yeah he's pretty much always bad, but sometimes all the villains and the good guys get together to fight an even bigger threat, and, and you know it's just, it's, it's, it's just a huge joy in my life. Um, so, so I have the privilege of having the problem of having like a job that's rewarding you know, a home life that's rewarding.

James Bagley: Uh, uh, a comedic career which is like rewarding, and then I do, I train martial arts on the side too.

Phil Dallmann: Oh no big deal.

James Bagley: I, I just, I, I uh I'm lucky to have these problems.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah, uh, just because I'm curious, uh, what specific type of martial arts?



James Bagley: Uh so it's, it's Brazilian Jiu Jitsu currently, I've, I've, I've gone through a couple of things-

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Bagley: Uh and I was training more like of a mixed martial arts path before but it took a bit of a toll on my body, so now I just like to pajama wrestle.

Phil Dallmann: I, I think that's, that's fine. That, as we get older the, the cage is not meant for us.

James Bagley: Mm-mm (negative). No, and no, and with what we're learning about traumatic brain injuries, and, and, and things like that, the cage might not be for anybody.

Phil Dallmann: No, CTE is very, very real. One of my very best friends, uh, has studied, he's a professor at Temple, um, and, and has uh studied quite a bit in that realm. And uh, it pretty much ruled out football for my children. And by pretty much I mean completely. Uh-

James Bagley: Oh yeah.

Phil Dallmann: It uh-

James Bagley: Oh yeah.

Phil Dallmann: We're done there. Uh, unfortunately, uh, but or fortunately actually.

James Bagley: That's fine you know and I mean it's a conversation for a different podcast about which United States cultural institutions have been damaging generations after generations of people, but you know.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah that's a, that's a (laughs). That, that is its own uh it's own uh, maybe a five part episode right there.

James Bagley: Oh yeah.

Phil Dallmann: Uh so, uh, I always like to look a little bit forward as well. Um, I'm an eternal optimist. Uh, and uh so I'd love to ask you like what, what, you know specifically kind of in the world that you're dealing with um, in getting folks services and, and helping folks out, what would you like to see the, the future of disability law look like?

James Bagley: Ooh, I would love more accountability on the other side.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).



James Bagley: Um, I would love for there to be a, a mechanism for addressing um, abuses of power or of um, of, of, of power dynamics by administrative law judges. I would love to uh, you know like, to step back. If, if you were in a car accident and I represented you, uh you were injured by someone else, I sued them, and they uh, agreed to settle the case.

Phil Dallmann: Okay.

James Bagley: There are laws passed about how long they can take to get you that money. If they go past a certain amount of time that they don't get you that money, you're allowed to sue them and, and make you pay them, make them pay you a lot more you know.

Phil Dallmann: Okay.

James Bagley: So there's like a level of accountability there.

Phil Dallmann: Right.

James Bagley: In social security um, and you know I can't go into details but I won a case-

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Bagley: Uh in July for someone who, um, was uh, homeless at the time. Uh, and in dire need. Um and actually heading into surgery and so we'd won the benefits, we let them know that there was a dire need, which is its own category of request where you, you know hopefully pray that they'll process it faster.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Bagley: Um, and she didn't get those benefits for three months.

Phil Dallmann: Ugh.

James Bagley: And, and you know homeless in surgery, like, uh, no resources, and she made trips down to the social security office, she was very patient, she called our office, we called supervisors and, claims managers. And their bosses, people were on vacation, and people made promises. But at the end of the day she did not get her money for over three months.

Phil Dallmann: That's-

James Bagley: Um and, and there's nothing I can do about it. There's nothing, there's no, there's no law, there's no letter, there's no petition, I could, I could, I could write a letter to a legislator, but I, I've found that to uh, not have um, you know, any, any reaction that, that you can see. Um, at this point. So I would love, I would

love for there to be a system where the government was held accountable for any mistakes it makes, because it's allowed to hold the claimants very accountable for any mistakes that they have.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah, it should, it, it needs to be a two way street.

James Bagley: And not to um, you know I, I dream big.

Phil Dallmann: Oh no go for it.

James Bagley: Optimistically I would you know at just, as each generation is kind of more woke and more uh, and, and the toxic vestiges of, of what is considered masculinity for most of my life fade away and people are more comfortable, I think we'll actually see some of these mental illnesses be less debilitating.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Bagley: Uh, and I'd like to see the people that suffer from them punish themselves less for having them. But that's, that's a um, that's something that has to be addressed at a much broader level than I'm capable of even you know thinking about.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah, but you, you're clearly a part of that solution and doing your, your bit and using what you have at your disposal to help move that forward. And I think the more folks like you um, and like Carlita, and like Aaron uh, out there that are helping remove that stigma, and uh, help folks seek services, um whether they're readily available or not is a, is another part of it. But uh, you know I think that's moving us in the right direction, whether-

James Bagley: Thank you.

Phil Dallmann: Again it's not, not an overnight solution and we need more allies in that realm doing that kind of work, but I think-

James Bagley: Right.

Phil Dallmann: You know, each person counts and, and I'm, I'm also one uh to celebrate those kind of small victories that you know as we add folks that are, are doing that work, I think it's worth you know commending and celebrating to, to some extent.

James Bagley: Excellent, thank you.

Phil Dallmann: Of course uh. You know we uh, we try to wrap up we like to, to spread the love. Um, is there anyone else out there or any organization uh that you would, you think is doing you know great work and you'd like to shine a little bit of light on?

James Bagley: Yeah, I would. I reached out to a couple um, organizations in Rhode Island that have to do with, with um mental health support, and uh Mental Health Association of Rhode Island uh, executive director named Ruth Fedder-

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Bagley: Ruthie is uh, she's one of those executive directors that is uh, supposed to be a 20 hour job-

Phil Dallmann: Right.

James Bagley: But, but really works like 60.

Phil Dallmann: Uh huh.

James Bagley: She's, she's a, she's a one person army lobbyist, uh advocating on behalf of people with mental illness in Rhode Island, and she's doing amazing, amazing work, um. Uh, prior to her effort, uh insurance companies were you know not held accountable if they, uh you know you enter into a contract with you. You say hey I have a need, I'm on this medication, can you give me insurance and supply it and they say yes. Um, they're allowed to three months later be like hey we can't supply that anymore, it's not covered in your network, we need you to go to a generic.

Phil Dallmann: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

James Bagley: Uh and she's made efforts so that they're not allowed to do that. So that um, so that a therapist or a mental health advocate doesn't have a \$90 co pay when a PCP's covered for free. She's requiring the insurance companies to treat people more fairly, to get um, therapists accepting insurance and to make sure that there's more support available for the people that need it. Uh because one of the most common things I hear from clients and friends is they wouldn't take my insurance, I got frustrated, I tried nine different people, and then I gave up.

James Bagley: So that she's working to make that situation less likely uh, means that I would love to give her all the props in the world um, you know for doing that kind of work, because it's really great for people.

Phil Dallmann: That's yeah, that's, that's incredibly important, and it is really, really tough. I, I'll say I navigated that a little bit uh, coming out when I left uh, my uh, job at TDF and kind of became freelance in the world of consulting and, as a contractor etc. Uh finding a therapist that would take my insurance was uh incredibly difficult. Uh, so-

James Bagley: Mm-hmm (affirmative).



Phil Dallmann: Uh, that's really, really important and um-

James Bagley: Yeah.

Phil Dallmann: Shout out to Ruthie, uh doing uh tremendous work.

James Bagley: Yeah she is.

Phil Dallmann: Um, well thank you again for, for joining us James, and thank you for all the work that you're doing. Um, it, you know as I said before it's important um, and for those of you listening, you know I think this is a great example of uh, an ally out there using uh, their skills, uh using their degree, using their, their chosen field uh, to do good in the world. Um, and to help other communities that may not be their own, uh and continue lifting them up. So, uh, thank you James for being a, an Access Champion.

James Bagley: Thank you very much Phil, it was a pleasure talking to you today.

Phil Dallmann: Thanks again to James for joining us this week and for a great conversation, and for all the tremendous work that he's doing uh in Rhode Island and, and uh, you know hopefully um people can see that work and be inspired by that, and, and, and find more empathy um, and again we can all move forward in you know removing some, some of these systemic ideas about uh, disability and about mental illness.

Phil Dallmann: Um, and, and just become a more compassionate society. I know that sounds super hippy dippy, but I, you know we're why not, like why not lead with love? Um, and, and compassion. It just it takes the same amount of effort as uh, you know being combative and, and disrespectful. So, um, I, I, I always choose to lead that way and I hope everyone else does as well. We'll be back again next week, thank you uh, again uh, I know we thanked them at the top of the episode, but double thanks uh to Matt Kerstetter, our producer for making us sound great each and every week, even uh when my dog makes sounds in the background or the neighbors dog is barking outside, or um, I knock over my equipment in the middle of recording.

Phil Dallmann: Uh, you know he, he, he salvages it, and makes me sound somewhat professional, uh which is, uh, no easy task. Um, and thank you to our champion intern Ms. Kelsey Rose Brown for everything she does, and of course uh, Mr. Eric Walton for that fantastic theme song. We'll be back again next week, and remember inclusion believers, never stop running through that brick wall.