

Philip D.: Hello Inclusion Believers and welcome to the Access Champions Podcast. I'm your host, Phil Dallmann, for this week's journey into the galaxies of accessibility, diversity, and inclusion. Uh, we got another great episode for you this week. Uh, one that kind of came out of nowhere. Happened to be on, uh, uh, a phone call, um, talking about a couple of, uh, potential future things with, uh, Ruth Starr, who's over at the Cooper Hewitt Museum, and as she was sort of recounting, uh, things happening, uh, or that have happened at Cooper Hewitt and I- I stopped her mid sentences ... uh, mid sentence, and was like, "Hey, uh, this actually would just make for a great episode on the podcast. Uh, I'm in my office. There's a studio here. Do you mind if I just plug you in and, and let's do the thing?," and, um, she was super down.

Philip D.: And, uh, we ended up having just a really great conversation and, um, she a- as always, I find it just so fascinating, uh, each individual's journey, um, into this work of, like, overall con- inclusion, um, a- and how they get there and, uh, you know, a- and what they take from each step of the journey. So, um, I'm really excited to share that conversation. Really, uh, really fascinating stuff, um, and, my, my sort of New Year's resolution for the podcast was, um, to engage, uh, more folks in the museum world, and, uh, other parts of culture. We were, you know, in our first year maybe a little theater heavy. (laughs) Uh, given my background, uh, and, and who I knew in my little Rolodex.

Philip D.: Um, but, uh, uh, you know, there's just so much great work happening out there across all cultural institutions, and, uh, so that's, you know, that's really great. Um, and, so we're on our way to upholding our New Year's resolution. Or we're like everybody that hits the gym and January and just doing it in January. Only time will tell. Really excited to announce that I will be and the podcast will be in Chicago February 19th to the 22nd. Um, we'll be doing, uh, hopefully a ton of interviews. Um, if you're in Chicago and you work in Access and Inclusion, I want to chat with you.

Philip D.: If you are in Chicago and you, uh, just happen to know other people that work in Access and Inclusion, uh, tell me who I should be talking to. We're going to have a blast. I'm really excited about it. Um, again, if, if you want to shout out to the podcast, um, we are, uh, at Access Champion across social media and we, uh, our email is [accesschampion@gmail.com](mailto:accesschampion@gmail.com). Always down to chat. Um, always looking for recommendations. Please share articles with us, um, uh. Our champion intern is [Kelsey Rose Brown 00:02:47] is all over, uh, social media, but, you know, we miss things sometimes, so please share with us, um, cause we always want to chat about it. With all of that being said, um, we're going to keep it short and sweet this week, um, but here we go.

Philip D.: Access Champion, Ruth Starr. All right. And we're here with Ruth Starr, the manager of Accessibility at the Cooper Hewitt Museum, here in New York. Thanks for, uh, jumping on the call, Ruth.

Ruth S.: Yeah. Super excited to, to talk about, you know, our work, and to, to speak with you today.



Philip D.: Yeah. I, um ... For our listeners at home, uh, this was fun. Uh, Ruth, uh, just called and we were just kind of t- talking to each other and, and, uh, chatting about various things and I was, like ... Y- I stopped her mid sentence cause I was, like, we should ... this should be an interview right now.

Ruth S.: (laughs)

Philip D.: So, uh ... Luckily, I was in my office with the studio so we were able to just plug in a- and dive into this interview so, uh ... I'm excited to, to share ... You know? I only got, you know, maybe a minute and a half of the pitch of, uh, the history of the Cooper Hewitt Museum. But what I- what I'd actually like to start with, um, before we, you know, give context to, uh, Cooper Hewitt, um, I'd love to hear a little bit of how you ended up in, in this field of Access and Inclusion.

Ruth S.: Yeah. Um, you know, I- I always think the origin stories are really fascinating for all of us. My background is actually as an ASL interpreter.

Philip D.: Okay.

Ruth S.: Um, I went to school to study translation and, uh, one of the things when you go into school working with the deaf community, the original question that you get when you meet people for the first time by way of introductions is, you know, who are you, what's your name, where are you from, and then, like, how did you get into this line of work, essentially?

Philip D.: Yeah.

Ruth S.: So, uh, I always think that it's a great way to, to meet people. So that is really, you know, I academically was really interested in ASL. Professionally, I was really interested in, in it to, uh, working with this community. Um. I've been, you know, learning the language most of life at this point, so it's ... it becomes even part of your identity. Uh, when I was in school, I went to school at the Rochester Institute of Technology.

Philip D.: Okay. Yeah.

Ruth S.: Which also has the National Technical School for the Deaf. Uh, they're on campus too. Um, so I was studying as an interpreter and, um, by the time I kind of reached my second year, I started really being interested in, in wanting to learn more.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ruth S.: Uh, so I went to, you know ... as a career or as a college [inaudible 00:05:35] or, you know, college of ro- Liberal Arts had their sort of I- table fair where all of the majors could pitch to you why you should study criminal justice or psychology or whatever it was and, uh, the university happened to have a museum studies program as well ...

Philip D.: Oh.



Ruth S.: Which, uh, I la-

Philip D.: Awesome.

Ruth S.: Which I later learned, very small.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ruth S.: But I was quite interested. I'd always been an artist, um. I've been an artist my whole life, uh, and so the idea of working in a museum with something I was really interested in I certainly never had any kind of imagining that these two parts of my world would, um, collide or have anything to do with one another until, you know, I got more into the museology, sort of, studying and practice and, and discover that there was this whole world, really, of looking at kind of the deep history of barriers that exist within institutions and the principals that many, uh, cultural organizations were built upon being exclusionary and then thinking on, you know, relevancy and all of these other ideals.

Ruth S.: So, it kind of reached the point where I was like, "Wow. All of this is so aligned and I really didn't plan it, but it seems that I would have." (laughs)

Philip D.: (laughs) yeah. It- I mean it's, I think it's really funny. There's so many people I talk to and, and this includes myself, um, that, uh, e- ends up with interest that you're ... you look at and you go, "Nah, there's probably not a, a cross section of this." Um, only to discover there absolutely is. Um, and it's incredibly rewarding work. So, yeah. I- I was similarly, uh, you know, my background was in playwriting and theater, and then, sort of, kind of, the inverse there. I w- I was looking at, um, you know, the world of disability after, kind of launching a, a, you know ... or landing in some survival jobs, um, that le- lived in that world and I was like, "Well, you know, I'd love to do both but that probably doesn't exist."

Ruth S.: Mm-hmm (affirmative). [crosstalk 00:07:30]

Philip D.: Um, only to, like, immediately find out that, yes, it absolutely does exist. (laughs) um. That's amazing. So, so ... Uh. You know, you ha- The light bulb goes off. You realize that this happens. Uh, what's the journey ... Or this exists. Uh, what's the, the journey from there?

Ruth S.: Yeah. So I ended up, um, as an intern at the Museum of Modern Art, uh, and their accessibility team [crosstalk 00:07:56]

Philip D.: I love MoMA. They're doing great work. [crosstalk 00:07:58]

Ruth S.: It was such a privilege, really, um, and such a formative experience to work with their team. And they have had such a long history of, um, doing this work and one of the projects that I just kind of personally became interested in when I was there ... You know, it was a summer internship and I had a lot of learning to do. It's such a massive,



you know, organization, but one of the things I was interested in was sort of looking back at the organization's history of, you know, when did they start, how did they start, how did it grow, and all of those things, because I was really curious.

Ruth S.: You know, u- In my studies, then, you know, many New York institutions are renowned as, kind of, the gold standard, or, sort of, on the cusp of really leading the way, and so I was really curious, "Well, what is the history of an organization look like in order to kind of chart that path forward." So, um, I just became really fascinated with that. Ended up working, you know, my undergraduate thesis kind of focused on the idea of disability inclusion in cultural organizations. Specifically art museums.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ruth S.: Um, primarily, uh, and then, you know, graduated. Went back there for a little bit, and then a position opened up at Cooper Hewitt in their education team and, you know, the irony of it all is is, like, I really wasn't hired for accessibility. I sort of ... I came to the museum. I was hired in their education team to kind of help out really broadly across the department with adult workshops or their summer camp program, and I kind of looked at it for myself as, "Oh, like, this will be me stepping out of, kind of, the access space." Like, uh- You know, they ... This museum doesn't really do a lot in it and, um, this will be a nice way ... I'm new in my career. I just graduated and now I can kind of work really broadly and just see all these different functions.

Ruth S.: Cooper Hewitt is much smaller, of course, then MoMA and some of these other large museums so I thought, "Oh, a great opportunity to really be a younger lower level employee and kind of run around and get a good handle on a lot of different, you know, sorts of, sort of hats or roles and things like that, that ...

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ruth S.: And then, two years later I never would have foreseen the ... Of course, that wasn't exactly how it went down. (laughs)

Philip D.: (laughs) That, that's great. And, um, what vision on your behalf, uh, straight out of college to, to, to know that ... I- I- I mean, the ... And again, I don't mean to presume that you knew this but I- I think it's really great when you have the opportunity to touch, um, as many aspects of an organization as possible, um, before you end up in this work. So, if you understand how the machine works, you understand how, uh, programs can be launched, and how to get money diverted to your programs, and, um, you know, who, when they say no really means no, and wh- who, when they say no, means like, wait six months.

Ruth S.: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Totally.

Philip D.: Uh. And like, either that's ... I think that's so important and, you know, good on you for, for being able to, uh, land there, ah- in such a role and also I- You know, I feel like more



often than not Access ends up kind of growing out of either. You know, there's a kind of general audience services role, um, or it's the education department.

Ruth S.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Philip D.: Um, so that makes a lot of sense to me. Um. So that's amazing. If you can, um, give u- If you can, give us a little bit of context of what, um, Access has been a- and where it is now, um, at Cooper Hewitt.

Ruth S.: Yeah. Yeah, so I- You know, as I was mentioning, kind of when we started talking about Cooper Hewitt and everything and our history, the interested the- the interesting thing for us that's unique from a lot of other, you know, our p- of our peer organizations here in the city is that we are a Smithsonian Museum. And I said, you know, we sort of started out and our museum was closed for a number of years. In our relatively recent history we've reopened back in 2014 ...

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ruth S.: After a fair amount of time being closed for renovation. And, you know, I wouldn't say that accessibility wasn't taken into consideration, because of course, we're a federal organization, we're Smithsonian. I think all of, you know, the policy standpoints were certainly taken into consideration, but from a, kind of, robust staff and design opportunity standpoint, I think Smithsonian in general, you know, is a behemoth of a cultural organization, and, uh, many of the 19 museums ... I would say all of the 19 museums rely on a centralized accessibility office that, um, you know, does incredibly work, but only can do so much. Uh, so for Cooper Hewitt, when I came, you know, there were a lot of your standard sort of policies in place around, of course, ASL interpreters could be requested with X number of weeks in advanced and all of the facilities were generally ADA accessible via the standards, and there were the Smithsonian guidelines for exhibition design, which are, you know, still widely used among the field.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ruth S.: So, you know, it's not to say that when I arrived Cooper Hewitt wasn't doing anything for accessibility, but I would say it wasn't a really intentional effort on the part of our museum specifically. I think, Smithsonian had a lot of programs that were in place that we tried to tap into where we could, but of course, there's, you know, the geographic distance of DC to New York, and, um, u- and all of, all of that. So, um, then I came onboard kind of accidentally when I was hired was also a period in which, you know, the museum had been open for four years, and they really started thinking about who are the audiences that were welcoming, who are the ones that were not saying in the doors, "How can we, you know, rethink who are constituents, who are communities are?" Uh, and so accessibility was becoming a really large focus.

Ruth S.: Two of my colleagues are head of visitor experience. [Kathleen Kane 00:13:47] and our deputy director of education, [Kimler 00:13:50] [inaudible 00:13:50] had been tasked to as, kind of, co-chairs of championing accessibility.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ruth S.: Uh, and they did, you know, a lot of the, sort of, foundational work. They started an advisory committee, and started going to [lead 00:14:04] and other conferences and really ...

Philip D.: [crosstalk 00:14:04] Oh, you know we love lead on this show. (laughs)

Ruth S.: [crosstalk 00:14:09] You know, really building that institutional awareness. Kind of that first step of just understanding what do we even ... Like, how do we even come to understand the landscape or getting started. [crosstalk 00:14:20]

Philip D.: That's so good. That's so good. Should be standard and you would hope it would be, but there, there are so many places that don't start with, um, accessing what's actually going on, and also creating things like an advisory committee. Uh, I always say, like, let's ... You know, when I consult, that's generally my first step, uh, is like, let's get an advisory committee together and figure out what's actually needed. Um, and it's so good to hear that. I- It never gets old.

Philip D.: You know, we've had it a couple of times in the podcast where people were, like, "Yea, we started with this," and I'm- J- I just can't be more emphatic about that being the absolute correct first step.

Ruth S.: Yeah.

Philip D.: So, good on you guys for, for, for doing that.

Ruth S.: No, absolutely. And I think it really speaks to the generosity of our field in that, you know, if these were to, um, professionals who had been in, you know, the museum sector for a long time, but neither of them had any substantial experience working in disability or accessibility inclusion. So, you know, they relied a lot on our peer organizations and on, you know, Smithsonian's recommendations and, um, I really credit them to laying a good foundation.

Ruth S.: So, while they were kind of going through these really early steps, I was sitting on the sidelines, kind of listening and k- advising where I could, you know, if there were moments like, that it felt, you know, appropriate, that I might suggest some language here or there. Um, but then I think it got to the point where I was sitting on the sidelines and they were really trying to move some projects forward and it just seemed like it made a lot of sense for me to, sort of, step in and, and bring the background that I had to the work that we wanted to do.

Philip D.: Absolutely.

Ruth S.: So, then all of that ... All of that (laughs) [inaudible 00:16:08] happening, you know, um, I would say, "Here we are."



Philip D.: Well, and, and I want to note [crosstalk 00:16:12] one of things that you said is, is there is ... there is quite a bit of generosity in your field. Um, especially in the city. I mean, I- I- I'm sure there-

Ruth S.: Yes.

Philip D.: And I know that there are other local networks around the country but, um, the museums in particular here in this city, um, the amount of knowledge they share, um, through things like the Museum Access Consortium, MAC. And we've had members of MAC here on the show. I just think is ... it's wonderful. Um, and it really speaks to, uh, you know, organizations remembering that they want to serve the community. Uh, and so not necessarily being proprietary with this kind of knowledge or these resources. Um, and, and remembering that, you know, if we all help the community they're all going to want to come to all of our institutions and, uh, you know, it's a, it's a big city.

Philip D.: So there are, there are plenty of people to go around, uh, to, to, to share and, and visit, you know, various museums and other, other organizations, so, uh, you know, I think that is, that's wonderful as well.

Philip D.: Uh, so, so you land there, ne- now, uh, Accessibility Manager. Uh, tell me, tell me what's, uh, actually going on at Cooper Hewitt right now.

Ruth S.: Yeah. So, I mean, there's always a lot going on, I think, at every museum and every cultural organization. Especially in New York. You know, we had an exhibition. Um, that was one of early kind of areas of exploration when it comes to accessibility. It was called [Access+Ability 00:17:43] and it focused on contemporary product design for people with disabilities, primarily. Uh, so that exhibition is now traveling, um, and I still kind of wear a, a small hat in the traveling of that show, thinking around the language that we use around it and when it arrived at cultural organization doing what I can to, you know, support.

Ruth S.: And because I do think from a topical standpoint, it definitely was something that we had to grapple with where, like, we were launching an exhibition in a lot of ways that we may not have necessarily prepared for. You know, we didn't have a lot of the accessibility accommodations that we do now have in place. We didn't have a lot of the awareness at the museum that we do now. So it's been a huge learning process there for us as well. Um, so I'm continuing, you know, the exhibition just traveled to the World Economics Forum, uh, so it's continuing to travel, which is really exciting, so I'm wearing a hat there. But then I would say, you know, the other areas that Cooper Hewitt is specifically interested in is really looking at this from a design standpoint.

Ruth S.: As a design museum we, I think, bring a really different lens to inclusive practices than a lot of the museums that I've, you know, seen working in this space, so right now we're collaborating with some of our peers down in D.C. on a project looking at alt text and image descriptions for websites, uh, and thinking around how is that being t- How are ... Is training happening, what are the guidelines and standards that we're setting? Cooper



Hewitt, specifically, has a collection that is digitized of 210,000 objects that all have images on our website.

Ruth S.: Some of those have descriptions, some don't, so I think we're really interested in looking at, you know, the intersection of, sort of, digital accessibility, um, museum practice, and all of that. So, that's kind of one project that is particularly, um, of mind right now.

Philip D.: That's ... Yeah. That's fantastic. And, and needed. Um, for, for those, uh, new to the podcast ... cause we did cover this with [Christina Trivino 00:19:48], which was, I believe, episode ... I don't know. Four or five. Um, uh ... What, uh ... What can ... Dive into a little bit of ... if you can, dive into a little bit of what alt text is.

Ruth S.: Yeah. So, I mean, alt text in, in general is, uh, the specific language that is coded into a website that would be readable via assistive technology. So anything from voice over on your iPhone, to other screen reader devices, and as a user clicks through it would read, um, whether it's a button, uh, so that an individual knows, you know, the difference between if the button says, uh, Calendar Tickets or if it says Membership Options for a museum's website. Uh, or to, um, Gallery Images of other types of images.

Ruth S.: So there was recently ... Actually, on Hyperallergic I saw a lawsuit claim made against several galleries here in New York, uh, for the inaccessibility of their site, and that specifically, is, I believe, referring to, um, of course, the images on many of our, you know, many cultural organizations. Especially art organizations. We have lots of beautiful imagery on our site's. Photographs of events that we have, of artworks that we, you know, represent, and so if those are not described, uh, then that is content that's inaccessible to a visitor that is trying to, you know, access that information.

Philip D.: I believe also Beyonce is currently being sued for her website not being, uh, accessible. So, uh, not just museums, but also Beyonce, everyone.

Ruth S.: (laughs) That's right. I mean-

Philip D.: I mean, I don't want the ... I don't want the bee hive coming after me. This is ...

Ruth S.: (laughs)

Philip D.: This is a, a, a, you know, a thing, and I'm sure, uh, Beyonce, uh, was not in charge of her own website design so this is not her specific fault. Uh, but ... (laughs) I- uh ...

Ruth S.: Yeah, but certainly demonstrates, I think, the importance of it and the need that so many different types of organizations aren't, you know ... I think it's the ramps, the ramp challenge of one day where there was, you know, that architectural barrier that many, you know, organizations had to kind of rectify. And I think now, in a lot of ways, the kind of 21st century challenge of today that so many fields are grappling with is this kind of how do we exist in a digital space. Museums, of course, don't know how to answer that or are figuring out how to answer that in, in a lot of senses, but, um, then to



look at it from the lens of accessibility I think is, is even more kind of this open space of really seeing and figuring out.

Ruth S.: So, and yeah ... It's been a, a great project. We have been working with [inaudible 00:22:28] Access Consulting, [inaudible 00:22:29], and then, of course, uh, the Museum of Contemporary Art of Chicago, um, that have done expensive work in this area. Um, and it's been a great learning moment of we did a workshop at the museum back, uh, in November, and to hear, you know, the discussion around the language we use to describe an object or a image. So if we have an image of three people, um, we broke up into groups during this exercise and we all worked in groups to describe the same image.

Ruth S.: Uh, one was the portrait of First Lady ... former First Lady, Michelle Obama.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ruth S.: Um, which is in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery, which of course, is also at Smithsonian Museum. Uh, so, lots of discussion around the emotion that should be the descriptive emotion that should be used to describe her body positioning or her face of is she dignified, is she, um ... Does she have a neutral expression? Does she have a ... You know? So, really good, um, conversation- [crosstalk 00:23:34]

Philip D.: I think she just has ... I think she just has bad ass lady, uh-

Ruth S.: I know. Yeah.

Philip D.: All over. (laughs)

Ruth S.: Powerful. But then we open up all kinds of questions of, you know, would we use the same language if we didn't know that it was Michelle Obama.

Philip D.: Oh. (laughs)

Ruth S.: Like, if she was a neutral person would you still say- [crosstalk 00:23:49]

Philip D.: No, that's true.

Ruth S.: Woman has a powerful face, and what does that look like. Like, is that actually describing anything or is that s- too subjective to actually be meaningful if you don't actually see the, the image. So, really good, yeah ... conversation there around, you know, the being intentional with language usage and, and how we prioritize the information that we share around images. Which for, you know, a visual organization largely it's, it's super critical.

Philip D.: Yeah. A- absolutely. Um. That's great. Um, so I- Mo- Kind of touched on it. You can just, uh, you know, paint a picture either, er- the what's i- in motion or what you'd love to see for the, the future or Access and Inclusion at, at Cooper Hewitt.

Ruth S.: Ooh. That is such a big sort of thing to look at. I mean-

Philip D.: Dream your dream.

Ruth S.: I think- [crosstalk 00:24:39]

Philip D.: Dream your dreams. If you can't dream your dreams anywhere, it's got to be here.

Ruth S.: Yeah. Well, you have to put it out into the universe, right? So that it can make a sway.

Philip D.: Hmm.

Ruth S.: You know, I think for me, what's really important is just that there is the building of this kind of holistic practice, which I think we're really coming to as an organization. You know? That awareness has happened. We started to make those adjustments as an organization. And then, now I think we're really getting into the, the place of really implementing across the institution. These different projects and, and the modifications to some of our practices. So I think, for me, you know, the most important thing is I would love to see, you know, all of our platforms, all of our ... the different types of experiences that we provide at the museum.

Ruth S.: You know, considerate of the various modes in which people interact with them, um, and, and just more, sort of, mindfulness around, uh, who are the voices guiding conversations and participating, and then, as they're developed, I think, a big shift for us has been, you know, as we were speaking on the advisory committee, uh, that we formed ... Thinking around, well, what really should that role look like, and how active can it be?

Philip D.: Hmm.

Ruth S.: So it's not just, you know, convening a group to discuss, but how can we bring users or visitors from our galleries to be involved in projects, you know, throughout their development and, and then, you know, after their born? You know? How do we bring them back in to give feedback and continue to development upon, um, sort- really rooting ourselves in what people's experiences are rather than assumptions or, um, what, you know, we the few people in a room thinking, uh, our visitors would want, or ex-community might want.

Ruth S.: so, I read a great book, um, [Kat Holmes 00:26:33]. She's a good friend of the museum who is formerly at Microsoft.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ruth S.: Uh, she just wrote a book, Mismatch, which looks at, kind of, the ethos of inclusive design. Um, and I think, that, for me, is really critical. Is how do we make a sustainable model for ourselves that bring in people with disabilities or people of all different backgrounds? You know, people who are non-native English speakers, people from



different socioeconomic backgrounds. How do bring them into every project that we work on and make sure that, you know, we're really considering throughout the stages. Not just, like, our assumptions around, like, "Oh well, a blind visitor probably would rather have it this way," but really rooting it in, um, actual, kind of, experience and not, you know, as its always changing. So I think that, for me, is what I really, you know, dream, dream that we'll get too.

Ruth S.: And I think we're making those shifts, but, but to really solidify it is ... You know, it's, it's a lot for an organization to come to.

Philip D.: Oh, absolutely.

Ruth S.: But-

Philip D.: Uh, but it definitely sounds like you guys are well on your way to that. Um, which is fantastic. Um, so that's great. And, and, I- I'm- I'm always ... I'm- I'm very happy you can dream your dreams over here. You know, and, and, and I always like to wrap up, um, you know, with the spreading the love a little bit. Um, so if you can, uh, share with us who, if there's any one person, organization, slew of people ... it- it's been every which way on this show ... Um, who you think are doing great work and who you really respect.

Ruth S.: Oh, there are so many ...

Philip D.: (laughs)

Ruth S.: I mean, amazing people working. Really, there are ...

Philip D.: [crosstalk 00:28:05]

Ruth S.: I mean ... Yeah.

Philip D.: That's why I have a guest every week. (laughs)

Ruth S.: (laughs) Yeah. There's no shortage. Amazing people, amazing organizations. I mean, one of the ... a- One of the partners that, that we love, you know, at Cooper Hewitt is [Realabilities 00:28:17].

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ruth S.: Uh, so, um ... I don't know if they've been on the show yet, but ...

Philip D.: They have not yet. Not yet.

Ruth S.: Yes. Def- definitely should, you know. And I think, for me, as an artist, thinking about, um, the organizations that are really bolstering representation and, and also, um, the, the platform of how our artists with disabilities able to be in this arena, you know,



through their own creative voices, and that, for me, is something that's really critical. So, uh, you know, I- I've loved, you know, working with them. I've loved attending screenings and seeing, um, the stories that are told. I think it's always eye opening and, and film as a medium just does such a powerful, um, job of really making, you know ... resonating with human experiences, and, and, sort of, translating that.

Ruth S.: Um, other people. I- You know, one of th- the museum's collaborator, [Shaun Horn 00:29:15], I love dearly. Um, she is a speaker with cerebral palsy who is, um, works in fashion. I think she works in every, you know, every possible sector of inclusion but I really just admire her spirit and optimism and, uh, yeah. So, lots of ... lots more people that I could ...

Philip D.: (laughs)

Ruth S.: You know, look to, but no shortage of inspiring people in the sector, for sure.

Philip D.: Uh, absolutely.

Ruth S.: Um, but ... it's really just been a privilege, I think, for me to be able to step into the role that I have, and, you know, use the resources of this great organization to, to do this work.

Philip D.: Well, uh, one, I absolutely agree. Um, and, uh (laughs), um, and, and also I, you know, thank you. Th- a- You know, thank you for taking the time to chat with us. Thank you for sharing, um, all the ... all those history lessons. Um, and, uh, also, um, thank you for all the work that you're doing and, and continuing to do. Um, you are truly an Access Champion.

Ruth S.: (chuckle) Thank you.

Philip D.: Thanks, again, to Ruth, for taking the time, uh, spontaneously, uh, to chat with us. Uh, it was a real blast and, uh, thank you for sharing so much of your journey and, uh, all the exciting things happening at Cooper Hewitt, a museum I still need to go to. Um, I've walked by it a million times and the one time I was supposed to go I got the flu. Um, but that was very long ago and so I have no excuse. So, uh, other commitments for 2019, I will go to the Cooper Hewitt Museum.

Philip D.: Um, a reminder from the interim. Uh, I will be in Chicago, February 19th to the 22nd, with the podcast. All my equipment we- we're gonna check a bag. It's gonna be expensive and we're gonna get there and we're gonna do that thing. Um, so, if you're interested ... if you're Chicago based and, um, you, uh, haven't, uh, been frozen by the, uh, by this, uh ... What is it? Polar Vortex, uh, please come through a- and let's have a conversation. Um, and have a good time and, and talk about the amazing things happening in that city, um, because there is to much amazing happening in that city.

Philip D.: Um, and, it's gonna be great. Um, thank you, as always, to our producer, [Mac Hurstader 00:31:30], for making us sound great each and every single week. Um, always indebted

to him. Uh, Eric Walton for that fabulous theme song. And of course, our champion in turn, Ms. Kelsey Rose Brown, who continues just to kill the game, uh, all across the board, um, with this show. Wouldn't happen without her. So, uh, we'll be back again next week, and remember Inclusion Believers, never stop running through that brick wall.

