

Holly: The intro is just a series of ways of me trying to entrap Kate. I managed it once and so the intro of the episode is just me being like ...

Kate: Talking about intros.

Holly: Yeah.

Intro music: Turn out the light. Open the curtains. Go and do useful things, you win. Oh, I said it. You win.

Holly: Hello. And welcome to Diversify. My name is Holly.

Kate: And my name is Kate.

Holly: And we are here on this wonderful winter's evening to talk about stuff. So as is becoming tradition with Diversify, something stressful has just happened to Kate. Previous listeners ...

Kate: Previous listeners will remember the incident with the phone stealing.

Holly: Where Kate shouted, "You're going to hell," as he sped away on a moped. So why not tell us what awful fate has befallen you this evening.

Kate: I just want to talk about sometimes, when you're a freelancer and you go through freelance hell because you have to be in this part of London at this time and then you have half an hour to get somewhere that's two hours away, and you get stuck in traffic, and the bus keeps stopping and then you have to do that four times, and no one has any sympathy for you, because of course they don't realise you have to do it four times a day.

Kate: And also not having time for lunch. Everyone's grumpy when they don't have lunch.

Holly: That's very true. But I did feed you.

Kate: You did feed me, marmite on toast, which I was very grateful for.

Holly: We had one order of marmite on toast and one order of peanut butter on toast-

Kate: Ordered by-

Jack: Me.

Kate: Hello, me.

Holly: Who are you, sir?

Jack: I'm Jack, Jack Silver.

Holly: And what do you do?

Jack: Lots of things, but I'm mainly a writer and theatre director.

Holly: Now, Jack, you also run a theatre company, don't you?

Jack: I do, yes.

Holly: Called Tramp. Tramp have a special place in our hearts at the moment, because they are sponsoring this podcast to enable us to get transcriptions for every single episode of season one. Whoot! But we have another very special guest, the first time in Diversify, six episode history, to have four people being recorded in the same room at the same time. Our big fourth guest, well, our remarkably petite fourth guest is-

Libby: Me.

Holly: I love how your introduction is like, I just want you all to know exactly who I am. What's your name and where do you come from?

Libby: I'm Libby Welsh and I come from Redding.

Holly: That's nice.

Libby: Absolutely not, no.

Kate: Sorry if any of our listeners are from Redding.

Holly: So far we've insulted actors, lobbyists, people in recruitment. So Libby, what is it you do?

Libby: Really, I just stand around being disabled and talking about it. Sometimes I dance, and I do a bit of acting. That's basically my life at the moment. I'm deaf, I'm bilaterally profoundly deaf and I consider myself to be big D deaf.

Holly: Now this is a perfect segue, unlike most of my segues, this is a perfect segue into a question. In the D/deaf community, there is big D and little d.

Libby: Yeah.

Holly: Which I don't think really people outside of the D/deaf community have mostly heard of, and certainly don't understand. Can you kind of explain to us what the difference between big D and little d is to you?

Libby: To me, I feel like big D, Deaf, is a term that you can refer to yourself as when you consider yourself to be a big part of the D/deaf community. Little d, deaf, refers to the condition, or the diagnosis. So if you refer to yourself and you identify as big D/deaf, it means that you consider yourself to have a large active part inside the D/deaf community, it's a big part of your identity, that kind of thing. It's kind of your life, basically. Little d/deaf is when you maybe have the condition, but you don't really consider it to be a big part of who you are. Typically people who are little d/deaf but not always, have hearing aids, or they consider themselves hard of hearing, along those terms, whereas big D/deaf is sign language, and native BSL users, that kind of thing.

Holly: That's really interesting. Kate, had you heard of it?

Kate: No, I hadn't heard of those two definitions. It's pretty interesting.

Libby: Though I really do feel like it depends on who it is, because the definition of both kind of changes from person to person. Within the D/deaf community, it can be a really, really touchy subject, just because there are some people who consider themselves to be big D/deaf who are typically native BSL users who kind of believe that anyone who has hearing aids or cochlear implants to not be deaf at all. There is obviously a lot of people that disagree with that, and they consider themselves to be big D/deaf while having cochlear implants, like I do, or hearing aids, or maybe they don't have hearing aids, but they speak, and they consider themselves to be hard of hearing, or big D/deaf. It changes from person to person. Honestly, I don't think it should be that big of an issue. I feel like you identify how you identify, and you shouldn't get mad at people.

Kate: As I understand it in other communities, there aren't these monopolies.

Holly: There is a considerable issue with that in the LGBT+ community to do with self identifying, or whether or not intersex should be allowed in, whether or not ace people, which is asexual, should be allowed in. On both sides you have a bunch of people trying to tell everybody else what it means to be in the community.

Kate: Can I say something as someone who experiences a very small amount of oppression in comparison? It just sort of sounds a bit like divide and conquer within divide and conquer. It's the way you phrase it, not allowed in. It feels like a clique almost. It's just baffling.

Holly: I think the whole thing is ridiculous to be honest. I think if you're a deaf person, and you want to wear implants because that's how you want to live your life, and you feel like it allows you to be part of society in a bigger way, then great. If you're a deaf person who actively doesn't want to do that, because you feel real pride and distinction in part of your community, then fine. But you're not going around forcing implants on people who don't want it, or taking them out.

Libby: Yeah, definitely. I really do feel like when you are disabled in any way, you have a small community of people who are just like you. When they go about things in a slightly different way, then it's kind of ... It almost feels like an insult or almost feels like you're being betrayed by your own people. I don't feel like that's a comment on anyone's identity or personality. I feel like it's the result of years and years of systematic oppression, really, that causes people to tear each other down. I feel like it's internalised ableism that stops people from really getting on, and attacks other people for how they identify.

Holly: So Jack, you are a straight, white, cis-gendered male, is this true?

Jack: That is true, yeah.

Holly: Welcome. You're our first.

Jack: Thank you.

Holly: What made you interested in particular in working with Libby, but also disabled communities in general rather than what most straight, white male creatives do, which is hang out with other straight, white males?

Jack: First and foremost, I'm a human being, and that's how I class myself. So I don't automatically gravitate to people that happen to share particular criteria with me. I think it's probably less interesting, apart from anything else.

Holly: You heard it here folks, sometimes straight, white guys don't want to just hang out with straight, white guys.

Jack: I literally have very few straight, white male friends, actually. People whose stories aren't like my own I find more interesting. Also, just on the disability thing, when I was younger, I worked as a teaching assistant, worked with special needs kids in a secondary school, did lots, and lots, and lots, and lots of different jobs, including in tech, and I got heavily involved in accessibility there. Particularly helping make websites accessible to blind people, things like that. Then I was in a long term relationship with somebody who had various different hidden disabilities, and then I was a carer for an autistic guy for about a year.

Jack: Yeah, so there is a lot of times throughout the past however many years that I've had to advocate on other people's behalf whilst I obviously didn't have the lived experience of having those disabilities. What I did have is a lot of experience of seeing obstacles that people had put in front of them, and realising that more times than not, actually the issue isn't the disability, it's the way the world is designed to not make it easy. A really simple example would be a design agency I used to work for, I had a chat with my boss, and I was like, we should probably do something about disabled loo, because we don't have a disabled loo. He said, yeah, we do. I was like, it's down a flight of stairs. The door to those flight of stairs isn't large enough to go through. It's not accessible.

Jack: I say this as someone with a background in design where you make assumptions about whether something is easy to use based on your own experiences. But then there is times where you just realise that actually it's more than that. It's not just the disability thing, it's with various different things, you realise that people are just making excuses, and it's kind of getting frustrated on behalf of other people, and frankly on behalf of myself, because it's like, I would just like to be able to go to the cinema with my girlfriend, not have to worry about the fact that the lifts aren't working because some idiot has decided to park all the stock in there. So we can't actually use them, so now we've got to walk up three flights of stairs, which she can't do.

Kate: We started this conversation saying here is a straight, white male, and then you blew our minds with your ability to not be a stereotypical straight, white male. It's so simple. The answer is just hang out with lots of different people. It made me think, my friend directed me to this article the other day about an "Eaton disorder", people who go to like, posh private schools, and then they leave, and they're too scared to hang out with other people, so they only hang out with people like them, or they go and put on a fake accent and pretend they never went.

Holly: All right, governor, I just come from the chimney sweeps.

Kate: Why can't we all just make sure we hang out with lots of different people? It would just fix all of the world's problems, guys. We don't need to make any more Diversify podcast, I just fixed the world.

Holly: We've got it.

Jack: Episode six, sorted.

Holly: Wow, that was quick. I like myself, but I would be really, really bored hanging around with seven of me.

Kate: So can you tell us a bit about navigating life as someone with profound hearing loss?

Libby: Well, I mean, I pretty much go around my entire day, and most of it, I'd say 85%, I go around feeling completely alienated from what I'm doing. It's the little things that you wouldn't really expect. It's things like just being at home, and say you've had a really stressful day, and you just want to sit down, you just want to watch TV. You put your favourite TV show on, and the subtitles are really late, or they're really horribly messed up, or they just don't come on at all, despite the program saying that it does have subtitles. Then that's kind of your evening, being like, well, okay. I'm just not going to be able to watch that. It's turning the news on in the morning, trying to have a cup of tea, get on with your day, and the subtitles are horribly, horribly late on it.

Libby: That kind of thing, the TV, and then there is just being around the dinner table at Christmas, and your family is all happy, and they're all speaking amongst each other, and there is conversations having across the table. Really, it's the loveliest of things, it's really beautiful to watch. But in the D/deaf community, I feel like ... We have a word for it that I literally just discovered earlier on today, I think it's called the dinner table syndrome, where everyone around you is kind of having a good time, and talking, and chatting, and you're just sat there being like, I'm not a part of this at all, because most deaf children in the UK are born to hearing parents. It's likely that those hearing parents are part of a hearing family, like I was, basically. So I spent my childhood not speaking to anyone over Christmas. Which sounds really depressing, which it is. But it was okay.

Jack: You should meet my family. It wouldn't be depressing at all.

Kate: It's totally depressing, but-

Holly: That's the name of this episode, it was depressing, but it was okay, with Libby and Jack.

Libby: My family are lovely people, my parents always tried to include me and everything, but it was kind of one of those things where no matter what you do, you're always going to feel a little bit out of it, alienated. So you spend the evening having dinner with your parents, gotten pissed off at the TV for the subtitles being late, and how you've got to go and get to work, right? I have a bone to pick with TFL.

Libby: Being on transport for London is kind of like playing Russian Roulette, but it doesn't matter how early I wake up, how organised I am with my travel. Me and Jack call it deaf time, where no matter how early I am to wake up and go to something, I'll always be late for it, just because I'll get onto TFL, and then something will happen. Like, I'll be sitting down, daydreaming while I'm on the train, and then I won't hear the announcement, and I won't be able to see the sign at the station, and I've just missed my stop, or the train has diverted route without informing the passengers, with it being written down instead of over a tannoy.

Libby: That kind of thing. Also, terrifyingly, I was once coming back home on the DLR, there was a beep noise, I was like, okay, that's probably the door beep, I'll ignore that and make my way out of the station on my own time. I got out of the station, there was a huge crowd of people waiting outside, and flashing lights and sirens. I was like, okay, bloody hell, what's going on here? So I kind of turned around, and I basically went up to the least threatening person I could find who was on the same train as me and said, hey, would you mind telling me what's going on? She said, "Oh, there was a tele announcement telling everyone to evacuate the station." I was like, oh my god, I had no idea. What would have happened if I had decided to take the lift or something? I would probably just be trapped in there.

Jack: It's one of those things where I was talking about earlier, about realising that so much of it is to do with how the world is designed. You work somewhere, every Tuesday at 10 o'clock they'll have a fire alarm test. If you've got your headphones in, you can't hear that. Now obviously I can take my headphones out. If you're deaf, you can't hear that, full stop. How else do they notify you? You go onto the train, and they decide to change the route. They have an announcement, which I struggle to hear, but Libby literally can't hear. If you're lucky, they might have something, once, on the automated notes board, but most times not.

Jack: There is no other way of getting that information across. That's just examples from one disability. You'll have the equivalent for blind people, and then you'll have the equivalent for other disabilities. Some muppet like me, who is making these decisions and deciding what do we need to ask for when we get new trains, or new tunnel assistance, or whatever, doesn't think about these things. It's also one of the reasons, just onto your earlier question, about why I care about diversity, other than I'm a human being, which, frankly, I think should be a good enough answer.

Holly: I agree.

Jack: But one of the reasons is when you have the entire population of the UK and only a small sliver of those get opportunity, and a smaller sliver still get the top opportunities, those are the Muppets that are running TFL. Those are the reasons why I might as well not bother to read the time table, because it is a work of fiction better than anything Chekov ever wrote. It is utter nonsense. But part of the reason is because the people that are in charge of running those services don't use those services, generally speaking. Then also, as well, the fact that given that they are, they don't think to ask anybody else. If you only allow people that look like me, you're making all of the services that we use worse. You're making all of the companies that we use worse. Also, it's a shitty thing to do to other people.

Holly: First off, I love the idea of Chekov trains. Still more likely to get to Moscow quicker than Southern Rail. But that is the problem with the conservative economic idea that trickle down politics works, that capitalism is actually better for the many, because they don't have to worry about how good the trains are, because they're still making the money, because even though it makes you late for things, and it sucks, you still need it. Otherwise you're going to be literally five hours late because you're walking everywhere. So they have us by this choke hold. That's why, in my opinion, privatisation doesn't work.

Jack: The only thing I would say to that, and I don't disagree with anything you said. But I don't think this is a new problem that's just happened in the last parliament. I think that when the railways, as a good example, were not privatised, it wasn't like getting on as a deaf person would have suddenly been better. Again, it's, I think it's really easy to vilify Tories, and it's really easy to vilify people that went to private schools, and I'm neither, but on the other

hand, part of the problem with doing that is it lets everyone else off the hook, because it just becomes like, oh, it's other people that are the problem. Other people are racist, other people are sexist, other people are homophobic, other people are ableist, rather than going, actually, even though generally speaking I like to think of myself as a good person, sometimes I might be the cause of these problems, even though I don't mean to.

Jack: There is obviously, without naming names, Jacob Reese Mogg's of the world, that just hate anybody that isn't like them. I think that's not unfair to say. But then there are other people how are like, you know, they think they're good people, they want to be good people whether it's on disability, or whether it's on misogyny, or whether it's on LGBT, it can be the people that self identify as being the good guys who actually can be as problematic a lot of the time. I think not a fan of capitalism, I think there is issues with that. But also, I don't think if you went to a more left wing European country you'd suddenly go like, oh, ableism doesn't exist here. Most people literally don't even know the words. I think part of it is just being open when you're called out on it, and being able to spot ... Also, telling other people about it.

Holly: Being open to being told that you've made a mistake. That's something that is really hard to hear, but also really hard to be the one to say it. That's honestly why we need more straight, white men, and women, allies.

Kate: It's a lot easier to stand up for someone who is experiencing oppression in one way when you're not experiencing it. If you're experiencing it, it's a lot harder to hold back the anger and not go away with your day ruined.

Holly: Yeah. Also, you might not have the power. I'm often the only woman in my spaces, and I'm so aware that I am that gobby lesbian feminist. It doesn't stop me doing what I do, and saying what I say, and what I think needs to be said most of the time. But sometimes I can see them going, oh, well, that's Holly, because she's the political feminist. When you have one of my straight white male friends who does go, actually, I think Holly is right in that respect, literally my day can be turned around.

Kate: I've been in the workplace where that's happened to someone who you would consider to be pretty clued up, you know, someone who will teach very good lessons about identity and all that sort of stuff, has still been like, you're always the one to point out this and that and everything, and not realise they're doing it.

Jack: I think it's the same issue I have with the word ally, where I don't think you should get brownie points for doing something you should fucking be doing anyway. I don't go into Tesco's and they give me a round of applause for not shoplifting. Right? It's not a thing. I think that people generally tend to give themselves rounds of applause for things that frankly are nothing. It implies that there is an us-and-them them, it implies that you're either a minority, or you're an ally, or you're the enemy. The thing is, you can be all of those three things. It

tends to put you into this space where you go, well, you must be wrong, because you've called me out on something and I'm one of the good guys. I'm an ally.

Kate: Or it's the opposite of that, and it's about shaming culture, someone points out something you did wrong. That can really hurt when you realise you've made that mistake, when actually it shouldn't necessarily have, because these are ideas that have been instilled in use throughout society, and now we're learning, and everyone learns at their own pace. If no one has pointed it out to you before ... Someone at a party the other day said a word. She said, ponce. Someone went, should we say the word ponce? She went and looked it up, and she was beating herself up about it, like, oh god, what have I done, what have I done? It was in the dictionary as just being a bit flouncy. She was like, did someone think that I meant gay in a ...

Holly: I realise I am the wrong gender of gay, but I'm just going to speak for all of us, because that's what minorities say, by saying it's probably not the best word to use, but it's really not that big a deal.

Kate: Yeah. She got told off, like hugely. I swear to you, the next day, she was telling me about this, like, I haven't been able to stop thinking about it. I feel absolutely terrible. I think there is a cut off point where you go, okay, I've learned something today, I'm not a bad person for using that word after three beers and not realising what it meant. Great, I'm a better person now.

Holly: Right. I've got a new hashtag, it's called #TooWokeToCope. It's for everyone from Kate's friend, to people like Rachel Dolezal who were just so obsessed for not being racist. She now genuinely thinks she's a black woman. That's going to be my new hashtag.

Holly: Right!

Kate: So Libby, can you tell us about the performance work that you do?

Libby: I really like to keep my base wide in terms of being a performer. I always grew up with acting and dancing in my life. That kind of stayed with me up until college, where they were kind of like, okay, now you actually have to choose what you're going to do, come on. So I was like, okay, well, being a dancer has an expiry date, so I'll just go with that. So I auditioned for a bunch of dance schools, you know, Northern School of Contemporary Dance, Chichester University, Trinity Laban. Somehow miraculously managed to get into all three. I still brag about that. It was a full two years ago now, but I still brag about it, because it's one of the best things I've ever done.

Kate: So exciting.

Holly: We all brag about our acting degrees and our dancing degrees all the time, it's the only thing we have.

Libby: Yeah, right?

Jack: We don't have careers.

Holly: I haven't been employed in nine years, but at least I went to Rada. I didn't go to Rada.

Kate: At least my school had a royal title to it.

Libby: I can't wait to graduate and then start my career in retail, while being ...

Holly: You're training now?

Libby: Yeah, I'm training now. I'm currently in my second year.

Holly: At?

Libby: Trinity Laban. So that's fun.

Holly: What do you do to bring your passion for your community into the work that you do?

Libby: With a lot of difficulty, mainly. I actually have this thing against using sign language in the D/deaf community and what I choreograph, not because I don't feel like it should be in choreography, just because I don't want people to see me as a one trick monkey who kind of goes up and does a piece of choreography about being deaf, and then goes up in another month and does another choreography about being deaf, you know? But I definitely, I do try and incorporate the D/deaf community and my identity into everything that I do, because, you know, making art is kind of working with what you know and being deaf is what I know. I think it goes back to that internalised ableism where I don't want everything I do to be about being deaf, and people kind of being like, okay, well, yeah, we get it. You're the deaf chick, congratulations. It kind of feels like, oh, well, I can be a normal person like you.

Libby: I don't know. I don't need to do sign language to be worthy for you, I can speak like a normal person, in quotation marks. There is definitely a lot of work going around right now that incorporates more of the D/deaf community. Mark Smith, he's a really, really good choreographer who taught me this way of choreographing that uses sign language as a choreographic tool, where you take words from BSL, or ASL, or any other signed language and you exaggerate it to the point where the entire movement goes into your body, and then that is your movement for that section. So yeah, it's really interesting. It's like painting by numbers. I like doing that with a lot of my choreography. But, in short, it's tricky

to try and incorporate the D/deaf community and my identity into my work in front of hearing people, and in front of people who aren't disabled for fear of them kind of misinterpreting it, or belittling it, which I feel is kind of pointless, we shouldn't feel that way at all.

Holly: It's sad that you do. It's great that you feel like you can do more than that, but it sucks that you seem to be struggling with ... Like maybe even wanting to be able to do stuff, and then not.

Kate: I had this moment, I was watching a show, quite a few months ago this year, and there was an actress with dwarfism, and she was absolutely amazing. She had the whole theatre in the palm of her hand. This old couple in front of me were like, oh, she's so cute, isn't she? I just wanted to pour my beer on their heads, because I was just like, she is an amazing actress! Why are you adding this thing onto her, and going, oh, she's doing really well for a ... What do you mean for ...?

Holly: Kate just died.

Libby: No, I completely see what you mean. Disabled people want to be seen as being good at what they do, because they are good at what they do, and not because they have this other thing that might have stopped them from doing what they're doing.

Kate: But then it's also part of your identity, and why should you try and shy away from that and push that away? It sounds like a huge conflict to have.

Libby: Yeah. Absolutely.

Jack: I think, as someone that literally never gets that, I don't. To me it seems similar to, you're a really good actor, for a woman. It's in spite of, rather than just being like, Libby is a phenomenal actor, that's it. With a lot of minority groups, and particularly with disability, that is so much in our thinking. It's so much in our thinking because of things that most people don't even realise, like the language we use, there is the stories that get told, and the tropes. There is things like Tiny Tim, right? Tiny Tim is not a person, Tiny Tim is an excuse for Scrooge to become a better human being. Richard the Third is a villain, you can tell he's a villain because he's got a hunch.

Jack: Last year, Shape of Water, you have a film that gets 13 Oscar nominations with an able bodied actor playing a disabled role. Nobody would possibly find her attractive, except this fish God. She falls in love with this fish God, and then has to flee from humanity in order to find happiness. Millions of people who go to the cinema, don't even spot that. I think it's something where because it's so inbuilt into our literature, and it's so inbuilt into our language, even things like phrases we use, oh, that's so lame, don't be dumb, things like that. Gender blind

casting, colour blind casting, and I realise I'm doing a white man thing, I'm speaking on others behalf.

Holly: That's all right, I've just done it for the whole of gays.

Jack: All right. But it is this thing of something that's so innate in the way that we're conditioned growing up. Part of it is that you're taught from a young age, and you don't realise you're taught from a young age, but you're taught from a young age as an able bodied person that if you want to insult somebody, okay, when I was a kid, you'd call somebody a spaz. Yeah? That was an insult. Okay, yes, we've moved beyond that, most people have now.

Holly: Yeah, but we're still on retard.

Jack: Exactly, yeah. We're still on dumb. You'd say the Tories are crippling the economy, and it's similar to phrases that get used with, you throw like a girl, or don't be so gay. For me, as somebody that never gets that, I never get that. It comes back to my thing earlier of being like, I'm a human being, and if I don't have to put up with it, why the fuck should anybody else?

Kate: Can you tell us about what you're working on at the moment?

Libby: Well, we just finished this play called Blow, which was really, really interesting. Super layered. More twists and turns in it than NASCAR, and it was only 20 minutes long. But it was really challenging to do, because he was asking me, as a disabled actor, to take on the role of an abled bodied person who is playing a disabled actor.

Jack: Which, by the way, is a world first. Libby is the first person in the world to ever do that.

Libby: Yep, very first.

Kate: What?

Libby: Yeah.

Kate: Amazing and frustrating at the same time.

Libby: I know. But it was quite ... It was equally parts frustrating, and confusing, and therapeutic, because we kind of, together, came up with a lot of things that I had to deal with. A lot of misconceptions about deaf people, a lot of misconceptions about how you should treat deaf people, and deaf stereotypes to be able to come up with the role of Hannah. Yeah. I had to really, really delve deep into my pet hates that I've just kind of buried and decided to ignore because it's easier that way. People coming up to me and saying, hi, can you hear me? Am I speaking ... That kind of thing. Just shoving as many of those

things into the script as possible. It was difficult because it wasn't bad acting that I had to be, it's easy to act like a bad actor.

Libby: But it's really difficult to go on and basically betray a complete stereotype of who you are. But it was even more difficult knowing that everyone in the audience would not pick up on the fact that I am blatantly playing a really super amplified version of what the deaf stereotype really is. Kind of seeing things happening on stage that are so clearly obvious that you don't need any noise cues for, and still being completely like, oh, what's going on? What's happening, guys? That kind of thing. So that was interesting and very difficult. So that was really fun. Then at the end...so we did the whole play, and the whole play was amazing. At the very end, Jack asked me to keep a massive secret, from not just the rest of the cast, and most of the people involved in putting the production on, and doing a whole alternate ending to the play, by myself, with the techies and no one else.

Jack: Which you wrote.

Libby: Yeah. Well, I mean, I just kind of ranted and you wrote it down and said learn it. But, well, I knew ... We literally wrote it the day of the show. By now it was before. Jack was like, tell me that story about how your teacher stopped you from doing this acting thing.

Kate: That's devising...

Jack: Why don't you tell the story?

Kate: Please do.

Libby: Why don't I tell the story? Let's go into my trauma. Okay, how long do you have? Well, basically I was probably about, at this point, seven or eight years old. We, as a class and a school had gone on a huge school trip to this big theatre, with a couple of other schools as well. So me, my class, and these other schools were in a huge auditorium, looking at a stage with...this theatre for children company were doing a production of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Just before the interval, they asked the audience for volunteers. As a kid, I loved Shakespeare, I loved acting, my parents were in an am-dram group, and I would constantly go to rehearsals with them. So when they asked for volunteers I was like, oh my god, amazing, best day ever.

Libby: So my hand shot up, I was like, I do not care if I do not get picked, I am going on that stage. Miraculously I did get picked. So I stood up in front of these couple hundred odd people and started walking towards the stage. But before I could get anywhere close, my teacher stood up, grabbed my shoulder, and pushed my back down into my seat, and in front of all of them, in may I just say, quite a loud voice as well, announced to the people on stage, oh, I'm sorry, she's deaf. She can't hear you, she won't know what to do, you have to go and pick

someone else. So I just kind of like ... I remember the expression on these poor actors faces like it was yesterday. They just looked so awkward, they had no idea what to do.

Libby: So they just kind of went okay, let's go backstage and just never talk about what just happened. I kind of just looked at my teacher and was just like okay, just kind of sat down and accepted it. That put me off performing for quite a while, because I thought, when you're a kid and a teacher says that you can't do something, you kind of just go with it and believe them, because why wouldn't you? So yeah, that's basically the story. I wrote a list, when I was about 10 years old, of careers I'd never be able to have because, at that point, my teachers had already put so much ableism on me, and already put me down for doing so many things.

Libby: I was like, okay, I need to make a list of all of these things, because there is no way I'd be able to remember them all. So on that list I was putting things like, you know, pilot, dancer, actor, lawyer, those kind of things. Just put them on a list so I'd remember them. I mean, clearly, the list was wrong, and I was wrong for writing it. But no one stopped me. No one helped me to believe that that wasn't true, and that I could just do anything that I wanted to do, because no one was aware of what was happening, what was going on, and what they were telling me and what they were teaching me was not okay. Yeah. I don't know where that list is, but I'm pretty sure I still have it in my house somewhere.

Kate: Burn it.

Libby: Yeah. Yeah.

Holly: Or you could just keep it forever, and just tick them all off. Then on your deathbed it'll be like the world's first deaf actor, lawyer-

Kate: Pilot.

Holly: Pilot. Dancer

Libby: Absolutely. That's definitely what I'm going to do. Yeah. But I could tell you so many stories of how my experiences of my childhood has shaped the way that I see the world. You know, that happens to everyone. What happens in your childhood stays with you for the rest of your life. Unfortunately, I had a lot of toxic people who didn't realise how ableist they were, that were surrounding me. So I've grown up with a lot of internalised ableism which has taken me a very long time to get rid of. It's taken me a very long time to come out of my shell and say, hey guys, this isn't how you should treat disabled people, can you stop being an asshole? Can you stop being a prick?

Holly: How old are you?

Libby: I'm 19.

Holly: I mean, you're doing pretty well.

Kate: Oh my god.

Holly: 19 is the year I came out. So bearing in mind that, I then still had years of internalised homophobia to deal with. The fact that you're doing the work you're doing, at 19, and going on podcasts and speaking about it so eloquently, and honestly is astounding.

Libby: Well, I mean, unfortunately, it's kind of the result of years and years of sitting in front of a mirror and doing a really dramatic monologue to all of the people that I hate and have let me down before in the past. But it's kind of ... When you've been put through a similar kind of situation where, for some reason, it's always been like public humiliation of people saying, hey guys, this person is deaf, just leave her alone. Just kind of get rid of her, don't let her do this. Just save yourself the effort.

Holly: I bet they thought they were helping as well. That's the worst thing.

Libby: Exactly. Every single person who has done something like that, that has given me the most trauma to deal with, has always thought they were being the better person and has been helping me in some way. Unfortunately, that's just kind of a learned skill where you learn how to be articulate, even when inside you are silently dying and you know you're going to go back home and cry in the shower for a couple of hours, and then you're going to get out and just eat an entire pack of biscuits. But hopefully through doing work like this, going on podcasts, working with Jack, doing as much as I can just to change the reality for disabled people.

Jack: I think it's important to say, as well, I don't think Libby has been unlucky in the sense that I don't think her experience is abnormal. I think it's typical. I think you'd be very unusual to have gone through life and been like, no, everything has been pretty fine.

Libby: I completely agree on that. It's kind of a repeated story. Whoever you are, if you have a disability, this is kind of your life story. You shouldn't have to expect, but kind of do anyway.

Jack: Having to fight every single day for your actual human rights. These aren't privileges, these are rights.

Kate: Every situation I've ever gone in, meeting someone new, even going on blind dates, I've kind of said to myself, is this person going to hate me for my existence?

Holly: I've got to say, I feel when you're telling your story, not to say that I had nearly as bad a time, but little gay me is going, oh my god, I've felt like that. Only...I can't tell my gayness off, but basically I'm straight passing. So you were talking about your experiences, and I was like, that's a universal experience for anyone who is in certain minorities, internalised ableism, internalised homophobia, all these things that you're saying about the D/deaf community. I see myself in them.

Holly: Except, I can walk down the street, and if I'm not actually holding my girlfriend's hand, nobody sees the gay on me. For you, it's absolutely everywhere, all the time. It's not even people hating who you are, it's the world actively doesn't allow you to do it. So yeah, it's been so great hearing your story and seeing bits of myself in there. But also being like, oh god, and the little things that you wouldn't even think of, like ... Yeah. It's been so enlightening. It's been a real pleasure.

Kate: Yeah, really. I cannot wait to see what you do next. We've got some questions. When, if ever, do you turn off your activism?

Jack: I don't consider myself an activist, I consider myself a human being. When do I turn off being a human being?

Holly: Great.

Libby: I feel that I'm constantly fighting for my human rights and other people's human rights as well. But I feel like I turn it off only when it gets to the point where I am actually losing it, and I'm actually going a little bit stir crazy because it's kind of getting to the point where, oh my god, life is so horrible, everything is so dreadful, there is so much mess to clean up. That's when I, you know, we don't need to put the world to rights right now, you can go have a shower, you can have a bubble bath. I don't know, you can make yourself a cup of tea. Like, it's fine, nothing is going to get ruined while you're doing that. So, yeah. I think it's about balance. You never stop being an activist, but you still need balance in your life.

Kate: Yeah, you need to look after yourself before you can look after anyone else.

Libby: Yeah.

Holly: If you can't love yourself how are you going to love anyone else? Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Libby: Can I get an amen up in here?

Holly: Amen.

Kate: That was our bit of sunshine. Very important question that we feel is a window into someone's soul. What is your favourite Disney movie?

Holly: What is your favourite Disney movie?

Jack: I mean, I really want to say Tinkerbell now, because she's basically Tinkerbell now.

Libby: Tinkerbell isn't a Disney movie, though.

Jack: Is it not a Disney movie?

Libby: No, it's a character in a Disney movie.

Jack: But there is a Tinkerbell movie, you amateur.

Libby: Oh, I'm sorry.

Jack: There is like three or four-

Kate: They're not classics. And I don't say that in a ... I say that in a very specific labelled way.

Holly: Also, too woke to cope thing to be like, well, I'm sitting next to a Tinkerbell so I'd better say Tinkerbell.

Jack: But I would have to say, probably Moana.

Kate: Yeah, Moana is amazing.

Holly: What about yours?

Libby: I think it might be Pixar, but Lilo & Stitch.

Holly: Pretty sure it's Pixar. That's all right. I'll forgive you. What's the one after millennial?

Kate: Generation Z.

Libby: Excuse me?

Holly: Moving on, see what happens when you pick a fucking Pixar? The whole world implodes.

Libby: I'm sorry, I'm sorry, but Pixar, Disney.

Holly: I feel like we end with a little bit of sunshine, but I feel we had some nice bits of sunshine in here.

Kate: So much sunshine.

Holly: It's amazing that you now feel like now is your time for empowerment, and it's nice to have people with privilege who are excited about telling stories that aren't heard. I think that whole thing is a nice little ray of sunshine. We are on Twitter @diversifypod. We are on Instagram @diversifypodcast. Or you can go online to [www.wearetheq.com](http://www.wearetheq.com), and there is loads of cool content going there. Kate?

Kate: Kate, Lois, Elliott-

Holly: Two Ls, two Ts.

Kate: Yeah.

Holly: I'm @ourteamq on Twitter, that's our, as in all of us are better together, team as in support Arsenal, as I say every time, and q as in the letter. What about you Libby?

Libby: I think I'm libbydancing on Twitter.

Jack: Underscore.

Kate: You are.

Jack: @libby\_dancing.

Libby: Yeah.

Jack: So I am @jacksilver on Twitter. My theatre company is @wearetramp on Twitter.

Holly: So Tramp Theatre company is our sponsor. They are enabling us to get every single episode of season one transcribed. Thanks to them, thank you so much for coming, Libby and Jack, and Kate, I mean, you had to be here.

Outro Music: [Instrumental]

Holly: There you go, Kate. You don't have the least amount of oppression for once.