Raisa Habersham 0:00

So it sounds like you two have sometimes political differences.

John Reese 0:05

Sometimes we have political differences. I would say most of the time, would you?

Fred Pinson 0:10

Most of the time.

Raisa Habersham 0:20

Welcome to Hidden Voices, I'm your host Raisa Habersham. Join me on my journey to learn more about the experiences of Georgia residents with developmental disabilities guided along the way by my co-host and mentor, Derona King.

Meeting Garrick and Nazir on the last episode made me hyper aware of how many assumptions I didn’t know I had about people with disabilities. And it made me wonder how many of those assumptions have been influenced by my own experiences. What kept replaying in my mind from that conversation is how Garrick and Nazir navigate dating. I had assumed that they practiced talking to women so they could make sure they were approaching them with respect. But hearing that they practice speaking to women because they want to be seen as people who love? People who have sexual desires? That was an eye opener. How did I not consider that before? I’m realizing that I should be more careful about jumping to my own conclusions. My conversation with Garrick and Nazir left me with a lot to think about around the idea of love. For me, for the longest time, love was something I only associated with my family and friends. It wasn’t until my first relationship, that my views changed. I started to understand why we all need someone, a person to lean on. For me, a relationship meant having emotional support. For others, a relationship may satisfy the need for physical intimacy. And in a pandemic, touch is off the table for so many people. And without those physical connections, it can be hard to develop a relationship. When I talked to Garrick and Nazir, I learned that creating those physical connections is even more difficult for people with developmental disabilities. I spoke more with Derona about my thoughts on love and the conversation I had with Garrick and Nazir.

After speaking with Nazir and Garrick I learned that the idea of love is obviously different through different lived experiences. When Garrick discussed how he talks to Nazir about speaking with women, you know, he talks to them and he says, Hey, ladies, how are you doing? Have a nice day. My mind immediately went to Okay, he's encouraging him not to catcall women. But when I asked Garrick why he did that, Garrick's response was, well, people assume that people with disabilities don't have feelings. That they're, you know, they're adorable, or they're being cute, or they don't understand the concept of love. And that never crossed my mind.

Derona King 3:17

Given what you're processing, what's changing?

Raisa Habersham 3:21

I think, for me, just being a bit more open-minded. Being a bit more compassionate as well. It's also ironic saying this aloud, because, as a journalist, that's usually what I bring myself into in my work. So I'm learning a lot about, you know, my own bias, or how my own personal experience can get in the way of that. But beyond my work, you know, my— in my day-to-day interactions with just people.

Yeah, it's, um, it's challenging to face our own assumptions, especially when we begin recognizing they may be negative assumptions, right? And the ones that we have, we really inherited from our, our surroundings, our culture, our society. The notion of love as it is, people rarely think about love, and not just familial love. But romantic love, and thinking about the lives of people with disabilities, you know, why would we assume that if we—itif everybody else has, has sexual urges and desires for, you know, physical touch, and, and just, intimate relationship, that people with disabilities somehow do not?v There are reasons why our culture has gotten there. The assumptions around the love and intimacy for people with disabilities is really based upon the attitude from society that people with disabilities are somehow asexual or if they are sexual, it's almost considered deviant or perverted? That's a real big issue for people with disabilities, which really gets in the way of expressing and having a model of how you express that you are attracted to someone without it being perceived as something wrong. We have really low expectations as a culture for people who are perceived differently. And I think one of the things that our conversations can do is maybe raise expectations. We think about the the absurdity of you know, like, special problems, where people with disabilities get matched with other people with disabilities on the dance floor, and that somehow held up as an example of how people can love what can be held up is that a person gets drawn to a person, and they have an opportunity to have experiences together. But that's not the case. There's almost, there's almost this poverty, of experiences around relationship and love for people with disabilities, because it just doesn't get held up to happen.

When you mentioned the prom, it reminded me of a story I wrote about a young woman who became prom queen. And my editor, in part wanted me to write this story, because she had a developmental disability. You know, in that moment, I was like, Well, is it fair to write this story? I know that at the end of the day, that story was written to generate clicks.

Derona King 6:34

It is one of those consistently wounding experiences for people with disabilities, that their lives are, are made trivial, or their lives are trivialized around the things that people with more accepted disabilities, or abilities would never accept, right? That's painful, that's harmful.

Raisa Habersham 6:55

You know, the thing that I wonder, you know, most is how do you navigate finding that person, especially in the pandemic? You know, you can't really go out and meet someone, you know, how are you navigating this? Are you turning to online dating? You know, is that what someone with a development of disability would navigate as well? there? Is someone out there who's created a dating website. For people with developmental disabilities, it does that segregate you from a population of people that you deserve to date as well. And then adding to that, you know, what, if you identify as LGBTQ plus.

Derona King 7:40

Those are questions that the entire population is probably wrestling with. And the approach, for example, the citizen advocacy approach is going to still be what is the most typical, what's normative. And it's the same for people with disabilities. And the assumption you brought up this, would there be a disability dating site? So that plays into some of the same old assumptions that people with disabilities only want to be around or need to be around other people with disabilities? When the reality is people want to be around diverse people. It's not a disability issue. It's a it's a love issue. It's a it's a it's a need and desire to be around other be with and around other human beings. So an answer to how does that best happen is through people, it's usually not through systems.

Raisa Habersham 8:37

You know, what about, you know, if you want to have children?

Derona King 8:40

Well, it typically happens the old fashioned way. Right? You know, there's just there's really one way that that baby gets produced, so that some sperms has to meet the oboe. So, people with disabilities again, should have the opportunity to do the same, you know, people may adopt children, but the conversation should not be one that's thwarted or discouraged when someone who might be interested in and caring for a child. People are told they shouldn't have children, people with disabilities, they shouldn't have children. The eugenics movement is is no longer a movement, but the ideas of eugenics is still practiced women. We don't see eugenics in the same way where people are just routinely sterilized. But I do know that young women particularly say in the foster care system, who have disability labels are immediately at puberty given birth control pills. Wow, that's mind blowing. So it's complex. We don't have answers, right. What I do know is that people should have the experiences they can make the The choices that they want for their heart.

Raisa Habersham 10:03

This really disturbed me. The thought of someone controlling my body, my choices, my reproduction. I couldn't imagine someone deciding whether or not I'm fit to raise a child. I couldn't shake how violated. I felt at just the thought of that. Derona suggested I meet with Emily Seabury, and artists and mother to newborn Jacob. Like many new moms, Emily couldn't stop talking about Jacob, the bond she has with him, and the joy he brings her.

Emily Seabury 10:31

So I just had a baby, his name is Jacob Burley Seabury. And he's the sweetest best well behaved baby that I've had. He is four months old now. And he's talking up a storm and baby talk. And he knows how to do a lot of things he's supposed to be doing in his milestones this age. And he loves his mommy and daddy. He never takes his eyes off a mommy and he starting to never take off of daddy. He was seven pounds and two ounces. And it was very amazing to have him out and to be able to see what he looked like and to be able to bond with him and be with him. It was kind of hard for me for the first few months. It took me a while to realize that I was a mom. I was actually a mom and then I'm actually have a baby that I'm going to be taking care of the rest of my life. He's mine.

Raisa Habersham 11:21

I heard that you're also a bit of an artist. Can you talk to me a little bit about your artwork?

Emily Seabury 11:26

Yes, I'm a very multi talented artist. I've done things with jewelry, making necklaces and bracelets and stain glass mosaics, which I had more access to when I was in the church program, or now they're close because of Coronavirus. I've done paintings, acrylic paintings. I'm planning to start a small business somehow doing, making either making candles or sugar scrubs or both. I have a candle making said that my dad got me for my birthday. And so hopefully I can learn how to make those.

Raisa Habersham 11:59

Emily has multiple labels that affect how she is viewed by society. This affects her access to employment, health care and her ability to start a family without excessive oversight. This has resulted in a lot of anxiety for Emily. Emily's support system usually consists of her fiance, William Smith, her stepmom and her extended family. Since the pandemic though, Emily has had to rely a lot more on her fiance, which makes me think about how much I had to lean on my husband for financial support when I quit my job in July 2020, mid pandemic. In relationships, there always comes a time when we have to lean more on our partner, Emily and William are no exception.

Can you talk to me a little bit about you know how your fiance has been supportive of you through this process? And can you also tell me you know a little bit about how you two met?

Emily Seabury 12:54

You know, me and my fiance have known each other for over 10 years, at least 10 years or over. We've met through the Holy Comforter Episcopal Church, Friendship Center. And we've been off and on off and on so many years, we didn't really think it was going to work out. We've broken up got mad together, broken up getting back together. It's just like a non stop love and hate relationship. Once the baby was born, like I had gone to a fortune teller, my friend from the church, one of my friends from church would take me there and paid for my, my reading. She had actually told me that William was going to be the one in my life. I didn't believe it whatsoever. I was like there is how on earth is she going to be in my life when he doesn't do anything nice, but he needs to do he doesn't take care of himself. And lo and behold, when I had the baby, he was on top of everything, his whole personality changed. He has been so responsible. And so on top of everything, so nice, so sweet. So you know, he's such a great dad with the baby. He's such a great fiance with me. We're gonna get married sometime next spring. And he's planning to adopt the child and also been getting counseling with me and him just in general with their own mental health services. And that's helped a lot, too. The more I realize things that need to be changed and the more work on changing them for the better for both of our relationship and also for the well being of the baby. The main thing is is even though I got pregnant by another person, his love for me is so strong he'll do anything for me including marry me even though the child was not him is his including everything that he's done for me and been there for me no matter what His love is very strong for me and my love is growing a shame and I appreciate everything that he has done for me ever since the baby's been born. All I can do is appreciate and be grateful and tell him how much I love him and how much I appreciate him and try to remember the good things that he's doing. I feel a difference in how I feel about the whole relationship. And what really woke me up is when he actually was the one who stepped up to the plate. He was the one who was the father since the baby's been born. He was the one who's always been in my life.

Raisa Habersham 15:00

Like many new mothers in the pandemic, Emily is navigating the challenge of having limited access to her doctors. On top of that, Emily has had to deal with prejudice from people within the healthcare system because of her disability.

Emily Seabury 15:15

Well, to be honest, somebody already called DFCS on me in the beginning, before I even had a chance to take care of the baby like I was, I took him to his first appointment at the pediatricians office. And of course, I was going through changes as a new mother and my anxiety was sky high when I was in the office, of course, because it's new territory and my first appointment with them and I don't know my baby and still get to know him and stuff, you know, all this new stuff in the next couple of days, DFCS knocks on my door and says that there's allegations against me, but some sort and they need to do checking in or whatever. And basically, they they kept an eye on me for a couple of weeks until they had no proof that anything was going wrong. And they closed the case. They had to prove that I had a support system because of my mental illness, I guess.

Raisa Habersham 16:02

I want to ask you, you know, what would you want people to know about having a child as a person with a disability?

Emily Seabury 16:11

Because they did that it made me feel like they don't even give people a chance. When they just have a baby, of course, they're gonna be going through mood swings and stuff, they're gonna have anxiety, it's normal for you to go through a lot of hormonal changes after you have your baby. Just because you're going through a lot of hormonal changes, if you have support that you need, you're going to be okay. And they can't judge you like that. Just stay cool, calm collected, because that's the only thing that got me through defects leaving me alone is basically staying calm and collected my call my mom for support, because they come right after my daughter, mom left. And so I had to call my mom and say, you know, defects, you showed up, I don't know what to do. I was kind of panicky, and she should just stay calm. Tell them what they need to know, but not too much. And they'll let you learn what it feels like for you to have DFCS called on you like that. I was scared. I was scared that my child was going to be taken away for because I'm mentally ill. And it's like a very judgmental thing. I mean, just because I have struggled doesn't mean I can't be a mom. I've gone many years through stability before I got pregnant. And the reason I decided to keep the baby is because I knew I was doing well and I knew I could do well.

Apart from family, Emily also gets support from her citizen advocate Lynn Witten, who has become somewhat of a role model in Emily's life.

Raisa Habersham 17:31

How did your citizen advocate come into play?

Emily Seabury 17:34

So she also was hooked up with me through the church. And so the Citizen Advocacy director Derona King had come to the church and she was coming to the art program, and I was working on a piece art at the time. And Derona, somehow she always knows how to make matches with citizen advocates. And she hooked me up with Lynn Whitten.

Raisa Habersham 17:57

At what age did you meet her? And how has she helped you navigate life?

Emily Seabury 18:01

To be honest, I don't know exactly what age but it was at least in my mid 20s. Right now I'm 33. She's been like a best friend that is able to help me with support and she'd also helped me financially a couple times. She's awesome and cool to look up to and you just have somebody extra to talk to outside of everybody that already is close to me. And she's she's like a, an extra support system.

Raisa Habersham 18:38

While Emily's family has supported her and making her own choices. The story is a bit different for Fred and Tony Pinson, a couple that lives in Stockbridge, Georgia, a couple of dated long distance before Tony decided she wanted to get married against her family's wishes. Fred and Tony met his children. They both went to school for people with cerebral palsy. They reconnected many years later on a dating site specifically for people with disabilities. Hearing about Fred and Tony's romance reminded me of my own love story. My husband and I first met in grade school and reconnected on Facebook. 10 years later, I wanted to know more about Fred and Tony's life together. So I sat down with Fred and citizen advocate john Reese to talk about the marriage.

Fred Pinson 19:21

We were six or seven when we first met.

John Reese 19:34

Did you say six or seven?

Fred Pinson 19:35

Yeah, six or seven.

John Reese 19:38

And that's when you met when you guys were both at therapy sessions at school?

Fred Pinson 19:43

We were actually in the same class.

John Reese 19:47

You're in the same class, okay.

Fred Pinson 19:49

We did not get back together until four years ago.

John Reese 19:56

And that was because of the dating site or on social media. The dating site.

Fred Pinson 20:01

Dating site, yes.

John Reese 20:04

And then you saw each other or started to communicate again for the first time after four decades?

Fred Pinson 20:10

Yes. She, she recognized me immediately. I used my real name on [inaudible] that site.

John Reese 20:18

As you reveal, your use your real name, so she recognized that.

Raisa Habersham 20:32

Fred told us that Tony was recently hospitalized for an illness that was not COVID related. During this trying time, the couple had to address Tony's Do Not Resuscitate order. While this was a tough experience for them to go through, Fred says that getting married to Tony gave them the agency to make these difficult decisions for themselves.

John Reese 20:53

Are you willing to talk about the decision that you had to make when Tony was hospitalized?

Fred Pinson 20:58

Well, I had to tell, she has a Do Not Resuscitate order. That means if she goes into cardiac arrest, [inaudible]. Not do CPR, let her die.

John Reese 21:13

So having to acknowledge and having to verify for the doctors that she had a Do Not Resuscitate?

Fred Pinson 21:19

Right. Thankfully.

John Reese 21:31

It did never move that direction. Luckily, yeah.

Raisa Habersham 21:35

So if I'm understanding correctly, Fred would have made the decision whether or not to resuscitate Tony.

John Reese 21:43

You and Tony had had that conversation before, correct? Before she was ever hospitalized?

Fred Pinson 21:50

Yes, She knew what I wanted. I know what she wants.

John Reese 21:59

And that was a time when you were in a position as her spouse to actually have the authority to make that call. Right?

Fred Pinson 22:06

That was, that was one of the reasons she wanted to get married.

John Reese 22:11

Why?

Fred Pinson 22:13

So that we could make those calls and decisions for each other.

John Reese 22:21

That was that was one of the reasons she did want to get married.

Fred Pinson 22:24

Yes.

John Reese 22:25

So that you could make those decisions for each other?

Fred Pinson 22:28

She's a sweetheart. She's a really loving and generous person.

John Reese 22:37

She's a sweetheart she's a loving and generous person. Does she have a sense of humor? Do you have a sense of humor?

Fred Pinson 22:51

I think we do.

John Reese 22:58

And y'alls politics are also similar aren't they?

Fred Pinson 23:01

Yes. She once told me that she agreed with almost everything I post on Facebook.

John Reese 23:16

She agrees with everything you posted on Facebook, almost?

Fred Pinson 23:19

Almost everything.

Raisa Habersham 23:22

Like any marriage, Fred and Tony's relationship isn't without its own challenges. I get it. For years, my husband and I had to work very intentionally on spending time together because we have conflicting work schedules. But Fred and Tony's challenges are more about the physical side of their relationship. What has been I guess the most challenging part about marriage so far?

John Reese 23:49

What has been the most challenging part about marriage so far?

Fred Pinson 23:55

I would say, it is—she would argue, because now she is [inaudible]. We lay in bed together. We mostly just talk.

John Reese 24:27

So is that really one of the most challenging things to you is being able to sort of be intimate with each other the way you want to be?

Fred Pinson 24:34

Yeah. I love hugging, kissing and hugging, but she is turned off of that.

John Reese 24:44

So, is that mean that honeymoon phase you think of hugging and kissing has sort of diminished?

Fred Pinson 24:50

I don't know what it means, really. I know that [inaudible] hugging and kissing and doing other things too.

Raisa Habersham 25:06

But even the honeymoon phase had its obstacles, mainly because initially Tony's family didn't want them to get married.

Was there a lot of support for your relationship with Tony?

Fred Pinson 25:18

Well, before we got married, our family was set against it. [Inaudible] but most of them, especially my nieces and nephews, had completely accepted me. [Inaudible] my sister, [inaudible].

John Reese 25:49

So, all but really one sister has not come around. But the others have been supportive?

Fred Pinson 25:55

Yeah. Yes. Now that [inaudible]. Yes.

John Reese 26:00

Now that you're part of the family?

Fred Pinson 26:13

Well, [inaudible] I don't know. I think they had their mind set on always having her with them.

John Reese 26:18

They have their mind set on always having her with them.

Fred Pinson 26:20

Yeah. Especially her mom.

John Reese 26:23

You think that they put other family members needs before Tony's?

Fred Pinson 26:26

Yes.

John Reese 26:28

And that's why they were worried about her getting married?

Fred Pinson 26:31

That's why they were against our marriage.

Raisa Habersham 26:39

Why did you and Tony want to get married?

Fred Pinson 26:44

We wanted to live as normal a life as possible. You just can't do that when it takes about $600 to go see each other.

Raisa Habersham 27:08

Before they got married, Fred would travel to see Tony in Alabama where she lived with her family. A trip to Alabama meant Fred had to hire a driver and an assistant to travel with him. The cost of traveling prevented them from being able to see each other as much as they wanted. Even though Fred is now married, he and john have stayed pretty close the two methods citizen advocacy and have some pretty funny back and forth.

John Reese 27:34

She says she understands that you sort of have a career as a writer, you're a bit of a writer. And she'd like to know what you'd like to write about.

Fred Pinson 27:49

[Inaudible] I don't agree with [inaudible].

John Reese 28:00

So you're an equal opportunity critic?

Raisa Habersham 28:02

Yeah. I love it. I love it. So it sounds like you two have sometimes political differences.

John Reese 28:13

I would say most of the time, would you?

Fred Pinson 28:15

Most of the time.

Raisa Habersham 28:17

Yeah. You know, there are friendships that sometimes don't stand the test of time because of that. How do you to make it work?

John Reese 28:26

How do we make it work that we disagree politically?

Fred Pinson 28:29

We just accept our differences.

John Reese 28:33

We just accept our differences. And I get to tease him mercilessly.

Raisa Habersham 28:42

The two may carry on like old friends. But as an advocate, John makes an effort to help Fred feel seen and heard when talking to other people.

John Reese 28:51

Fred had an issue where an apartment neighbor upstairs was making some claims about his staff, which Fred felt were untrue, and it was generating some ill will. Is that fair to say?

Fred Pinson 29:06

Very much. Yeah.

John Reese 29:08

And so you spoke and asked for a meeting with the apartment manager. And you asked me to come and just be present, right, for that meeting.

Fred Pinson 29:21

Yeah. To help her understand me.

John Reese 29:26

To help her understand you. Yeah. And it was one of the it was the first time that Fred had asked me to do something like that. And it gave me the opportunity to sort of help direct the manager's attention to him. I was there to help with any communication challenges in terms of understanding him but he was very clear about what was happening and what he thought should happen and what he was wanting her to do. And I think if I recall, she kind of kept looking at me didn't she? She kept looking at And addressing me. That's the way they do.

Raisa Habersham 30:08

I imagine that being in those situations is pretty upsetting and frustrating.

Fred Pinson 30:15

My former doctor's staff do that all the time.

John Reese 30:23

Your former doctor stuff would do what all the time?

Fred Pinson 30:28

Talk to my assistants, not to me.

Raisa Habersham 30:34

Wow. And so John, you know, how do you when you notice those situations, what do you then do?

John Reese 30:41

One of the first things I do is to stop making eye contact with whoever's talking directly to me so that they start to feel awkward. And so I want them to feel awkward, because they're really not there to be talking to me. And then oftentimes, I'll just look at Fred, you know, so that they see that I'm directing my attention to him. And I would want them to direct their attention to him as well. And I do realize, and I think Fred realizes, would you say, Is it safe to say, Fred, that, you know, that when people don't understand you, it makes them self conscious. And so sometimes they look, because they feel self conscious, because they don't understand what you're saying. And I would say it took me a little while, wouldn't you say at the beginning, it took me a little while to understand you?

Fred Pinson 31:26

They don't try.

John Reese 31:28

 They don't try.

Raisa Habersham 31:34

I understand Fred's desire to live a normal life. But for me, what constitutes normal is finishing work at 5pm. And going to bed at a reasonable time. I haven't had to worry about my parents telling me I could not date or get married. I also have never even considered preparing a DNR for a relative or myself, I had to tell the Derona about how I felt.

Thinking about Fred, in particular, the conversation about him and Tony, you know, when she was hospitalized and her having a Do Not Resuscitate order, it took me back to the Terri Schiavo case. And that was widely discussed, it was a case out of Florida. And her parents want to keep her on life support for her husband, who I think had the final say, wanted to take her off. And so you know, I'm thinking about the fact that they are a newly married couple, and six months in, you're having to decide, you know, make this series decision for someone who you've reconnected with, have love and want to spend the rest of your life with to that you also thought about the fact that they connected through social media, but not in the way that say my husband, and I did my husband and I reconnected through Facebook. Whereas Tony and Fred, we connected it through an online platform specifically for people with disabilities. And so those things were very eye opening to me, especially the part that they connected on a website for people with disabilities, because I had no idea that even existed.

Derona King 33:12

Actually, right. You thought I didn't know that they connected on a segregated site, as well. And I would imagine that there are people who that makes it easier, just like, you know, there are sites for any number of demographics correct. Thinking about being married for for just that, you know, five or six months in the midst of a pandemic, experiencing this medical crises. The DNR question? I've been there a long, long time and with the that question has never been an issue outside of, you know, your normal to go to a hospital have surgery, and the question might be there, but never at the beginning of my marriage. Was that a question? Not that it's a bad question. But it becomes a completely different issue for Fred and Tony to have had to struggle with these kinds of questions for their entire existence. Did you know that most people who it is assumed anyway for most people who enter into medical facilities or maybe are in state one hospitals, if there has not been an overture by a family member, for example, there's an automatic DNR.

Raisa Habersham 34:26

Oh my God. Oh, my God. Why is that?

Derona King 34:30

Because we do not as a society think that people with disabilities deserve to live and we don't believe that anything, you brought up Terry Szabo, the doctors call it persistent vegetative state. There should never be a time for any human being that they are considered non-human. So, Tony and Fred have the art people who have had their lives experiences of having developmental disabilities. I'm sure this discussion from even when they were born was a discussion of whether or not they had a right to live or should be entitled to the things that he meant being should be entitled to. And DNR s are a way that that's played out for people with disabilities from the time they were born.

Raisa Habersham 35:23

The thought of an automatic DNR being placed upon you at birth because you have a disability stayed with me. How could anyone think that was okay? And why does the health care system consider people with disabilities as people who aren't worth saving? also can't let go of the idea that Tony's family was against her marriage with everything Fred and Tony have been through as a couple, especially with their family, I find it incredibly brave for them to sneak away and alone. But then Derona helped me understand why I might reconsider calling them brave.

I mean, I guess I say brave, because, you know, there are a lot of people who take into consideration, you know, things about how their family thinks, and just ignoring it and tossing it out the window, I think, says a lot about that person. It says to me that you want to be able to have the freedom to make your own decisions without somebody dictating that for you and what that looks like.

Derona King 36:26

That's part of a larger issue, which I think we might have mentioned, exploitation, certainly disability porn for people, that people become heroes, somehow, who have disabilities, just for doing what people do. And until we get beyond that accrediting, almost like this, oh, superhuman, extra special, overcome all the odds. When people with disabilities do what people with disabilities don't do, then we haven't moved that pendulum of what our assumptions are. They aren't heroic. They are people. People in love. Doing what people in love had done for 1000s of years.

Raisa Habersham 37:20

And never thought about that. They may not want to be considered brave for what they're doing. Because is it considered brave to you know, fight for, you know, equality or fight for what you know, you deserve. That's probably what they don't want to be called. They just want to be acknowledged as people who make decisions and people whose decisions should be respected. Going forward, they want to have the say in what they're called. So I shouldn't put that adjective on them. I noticed that a common theme between Emily and Fred is that they were segregated at a young age through the school system.

Derona King 38:02

As a culture, we have determined that segregation is wrong, right. But somehow we still accept this form of segregation for students with disabilities. During COVID-19. This this children's school had experience this extreme segregation. You're already in a separate classroom, sometimes in a separate part of the building or doing things on a completely different schedule than the student body population. Atlanta's shut down March 12. Everybody was sent home. I mean, it was a pandemic. Now the pivot for students mainstream the pivot was okay, they got it together, they were beginning to send work home their virtual learning started happening. For most students with disabilities. None of that happened. For most students with disabilities at March 12, nothing happened.

Raisa Habersham 39:01

Join us for the next episode of hidden voices, where we'll talk about the segregated special education system in Georgia and how special education programs are navigating the pandemic.

This podcast is a collaboration between the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities, Resurgens Impact Consulting, Citizen Advocacy of Atlanta and Dekalb and L’arche Atlanta made in partnership with FRQNCY Media. I’m your host, Raisa Habersham and Derona King is my co-host. Our Executive Producers are Irene Turner from The Storytelling Project and Michelle Khouri from FRQNCY Media. Enna Garkusha is our Producer. Matthew Filler is our Editor. Hidden Voices is sponsored by the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities. This vision is a state in which all persons are included in all facets of community life, have choices while exercising control over their lives and are encouraged to achieve their full potential. GCDD advances social and policy changes that further and integrated community life for persons with developmental disabilities, their families, friends, neighbors and all who support them. This podcast grew out of their larger GCDD Storytelling Project. You can find out more about them and their great advocacy work for and about people with developmental disabilities at GCDD.org.

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