

It's Ableism - Live at Mach with music

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Ableism, public transport, accessibility, wheelchair user, autistic comedian, live audience, transport challenges, platform information, ramp issues, infrastructure, hidden disabilities, spatial awareness, transformer wheelchairs, job performance, predictability.

SPEAKERS

Speaker 1, Rafa, Audience member, Another audience member., Aiden, Miggy Barker, Cerys Bradley

Cerys Bradley 00:03

Hello and welcome to It's Ableism, a podcast about disability that tries to understand why ableism shapes the world around us.

Miggy Barker 00:10

I'm Miggy Barker. I am a writer, performer and a wheelchair user,

Cerys Bradley 00:14

and I'm Cerys Bradley, an autistic comedian and writer.

Miggy Barker 00:16

Today we are going to be talking about public transport,

Cerys Bradley 00:18

and we are joined by Rafa Nicolai, an actor, performer, clown and writer based in London, who is originally from Switzerland, and also a wonderful audience who can make noise. So basically, we'll tell you a little bit about how the podcast is going to work, and say thank you very much for coming and everything like that. But before that, we thought we would start with just a quick description of ourselves, because this is ultimately going to be recorded and listened to by people. So I'm Cerys. I am a white 30 ish, non binary kind of like masc looking scruffy kind of kind of guy. I've got the floppy hair and pink corduroy shorts, which I think are very fitting for my vibe.

Miggy Barker 01:11

Yeah, that works. I'm Miggy. I am a white wheelchair user. I am in my 20s also, well, not also, I'm in my 20s. Sorry, I've aged you down. I'm wearing like a tartan blue shirt and jeans, and my hair is pink and green.

Cerys Bradley 01:28

Watermelon vibes.

Miggy Barker 01:29

Watermelon vibes.

Rafa 01:30

There's definitely more colors there.

Miggy Barker 01:32

I can't count them.

Rafa 01:34

That's an experience.

Cerys Bradley 01:35

Full Spectrum

Rafa 01:36

weave into each other.

Miggy Barker 01:38

Yeah.

Rafa 01:40

Hi, I'm Rafa. I am a Black mixed race, 30 something, femme. I'm wearing my mum's leather jacket, which I'm sweating in profusely, and an electric blue shirt and jeans, I've got round, glasses on my face, short hair, kind of a frohawk that's growing out, but, yeah, haven't got time.

Cerys Bradley 02:04

So that's us. We we're gonna be talking about transport today, but we like to start each episode off with a little competition. And in the competition, we share something ableist that has happened to us in the week. And then, because I'm too competitive for my own good, we decide who wins, which is a thing, which is like you can do actually, you can win your experiences of ableism. We're gonna we have a little competition to see who has experienced the most ableism.

Miggy Barker 02:29

And because we have you guys today our live studio audience, we want to include you in that. And if you have any stories you want to share with us, you will be given that opportunity in a minute.

Cerys Bradley 02:39

Yeah, so Miggy, because we're talking about transport, and you had to travel from London to Machynlleth, I'm just going to go out on a limb here and say that you experienced some difficulties in your journey on the way today.

Miggy Barker 02:54

So shockingly, not really like the one time. However, yesterday was a nightmare, so I'm going to tell you about that. So I all I was trying to do was go home. I got one I was trying to get one train, and then I was getting to a station that I was then getting a taxi the rest of the way home. So I wasn't spending 80 pounds in a taxi to get home on my train journey, the first train I got on. Firstly, I waited 20 minutes to get onto because the access people didn't know where the ramp was, and then had to call ahead, and then called ahead on the wrong train. And then when I was on the train, it immediately terminated at the next stop. The next stop wasn't step free, so they didn't have a ramp available, so they had to, like, carry me off, and then back onto the next train. And then that happened again, like, four stops later. And then when I finally got to my station and got out, I ordered a taxi, and the taxi driver drove up and picked up other people and left thinking they were me, because he didn't check that. I said, I'm a wheelchair user, so wasn't looking for me, and drove them to my house nearly because no one decided to go. Yeah, we want to go to this other place actually, like, no one checked anything. And so I lost my taxi. Yeah, it was just a bit of a mess.

Cerys Bradley 04:18

Okay, great. So does anyone think they can top that?

Audience member 04:20

So I really struggle with, like, access stuff around longer meetings and like, sitting still and focus and all of that stuff. So I'd really psyched myself up for a day that was like 10 till 310, till four already, and then at like, five to four, the person organizing the meeting was like, Is everyone okay if we keep going and but, but also with no, kind of just keep going, like, infinitely, like, and I was just like, like, No, it's not all right. And I did it in a very autistic way, and everyone looked really shocked. But then afterwards, were like. Well, thank fuck. Like we but I was like, there was an agenda. I thought we were going to the agenda, and, like, We never spoke about it not being the agenda. So, like, no!

Cerys Bradley 05:10

First of all, meetings shouldn't be that long. That's horrible. And then secondly, you can't, you can't, you can't ask a question that it is socially unacceptable for you to then assert your access. I think that's bullshit. But then also everybody else in that room relying on the autistic person being the person who is confrontational. So that's that's a triple threat, that is. Rafa, we brought you on to judge. What do you think wins the ableism of the week for this one?

Rafa 05:39

I'm gonna go Miggy. I mean, ableism sucks.

Cerys Bradley 05:44

very much the theme of the podcast.

Miggy Barker 05:46

This is brand new information. I thought we were all playing a game. Okay!

Rafa 05:51

I'm gonna give it points to make it a little bit, yeah, 10 points for Miggy and eight points for a participant in audience. It's close.

Cerys Bradley 06:02

Participant in audience, do you think that's fair?

Audience member 06:08

Will you take seven?

Rafa 06:10

Seven and ten, yeah.

Miggy Barker 06:12

Good, good negotiation.

Rafa 06:13

Is it ableist that I don't know which platform I have to go to until 10 minutes before the train leaves?

Cerys Bradley 06:30

Yes, yes, yes. It is yeah.

Rafa 06:32

I thought so.

Miggy Barker 06:33

shockingly, yeah, the answer is usually yes, but yeah.

Cerys Bradley 06:36

you know, like because the trains, they're programmed, right? And so they go from the same place every time, exactly, and you so you can that information does exist, and unless you know, sometimes the trains have come into different platforms, and then you have to do a platform change. And I appreciate that that can be confusing, but I don't understand why that information isn't made available to people. Available to people who might need it earlier than everybody else.

Miggy Barker 07:07

I have. I have a fun I have a fun tidbit for this, which is, if you have to book access, like I do, to, like, get the ramps and everything, to get on to the trains when they're actually useful and do their job. And it works. I go to like, this little room where you say your name, and they go, Yeah, you're on our list. Great. They know from that point where the train is going, so I know what platform I'm going on to, but I'm not allowed to go there without their assistance, and that's usually about 40 minutes before the train leaves. So they do it, but only for some people, not for all the people.

Cerys Bradley 07:48

We could just have, like a there could be, like, a little autistic, like screen that only we know about.

Miggy Barker 07:55

like, special glasses,

Rafa 07:56

gate keep,

Cerys Bradley 07:58

or maybe they just don't tell us, because they presume that we know the train schedules.

Rafa 08:04

No, that's no, that's not what happens. I just I it happens everywhere else in the world. That's not a fact. I'm just assuming. But in other places, other countries, you know days in advance, you can write your little itinerary. If that's your style, and you just know you can kind of measure like, do I have enough time to go to the kiosk? Sorry, different country already off license, whatever a shop, or do I have time to have a fag? If you're a smoker, I'm a smoker, yeah, just plan ahead. It's good to know

Cerys Bradley 08:46

I like, I like it when, in some places, like in Euston, they tell you like when they will be telling you when the platform will be announced. I find that helpful.

Miggy Barker 08:55

There's something there.

Cerys Bradley 08:56

but the thing that I read recently is that when, so if your train is delayed, I don't know if you know if you know this, but if your train is delayed, and the train is delayed by like, eight minutes, that is a fictional amount of time, because eight minutes is, like, short enough that no one will be like, Well, I feel like I have to, like, I want to go pee or whatever. I've got enough time to go do that, but it's long enough that you won't notice if it stays eight minutes for multiple minutes, because it's not like, like, five minutes. People know this has been too long.

Miggy Barker 09:24

How did you learn this?

Cerys Bradley 09:26

An autistic person told me.

Miggy Barker 09:30

This is how we fix everything.

Cerys Bradley 09:32

But that's, that's what I've been told, that if your train is delayed by eight minutes, it means they don't know how long the train is delayed by, and they're trying to giving you a fictional number to keep you placated, so you have to rise up, my friends, and not not accept it anymore.

Rafa 09:47

Be wary of the eight.

Miggy Barker 09:48

Yeah, well, I feel like the the main thing we're getting at here is that, like having the information beforehand is kind of important and necessary for a lot of people for different reasons. And especially if you're at like, a big train station that's not just two platforms to get from one to another. You don't have you don't even have to be you don't even have to be physically disabled to not be able to run from one end of a station to another in time. If they're telling you a few minutes before the train leaves where your train is.

Cerys Bradley 10:20

I find it very, very stressful, stressful when they release the platform and, like, obviously everyone is there at the train station at the same time. And so it means that you then get this, like, mass group of people, and then you have to go there in a large crowd, which I do not enjoy or want to participate in, and then you've got to stand behind people as they go through the little tap. And then they haven't got it ready, they haven't got their app ready on their phone, and they're not prepared for this thing, which we all know how to do, which is to get your ticket, like on the train, and then they're messing around with that, and then it's not working, and then they try to have the conversation with the person who is the ticket person, like whilst they're stood in but what you actually need to do, you need to if your ticket doesn't work, that doesn't mean that my tickets not gonna work. So can you not just go to the side and have the conversation, instead of trying to have the conversation in front of everybody? And then nobody knows what like they also haven't prepared which where their like seat is, and so then they come onto the like, the platform, and then everyone walks like so, but I know where I'm going, and I just want to be on my seat. But then, for some reason, people like, have their bags like out to the rather than trying to keep everything, and so they take up way more space than they need to take up. And then people like faffing getting on and off the trains, whereas, like, if, if I knew, then I could just be on the platform before everybody else, and then I wouldn't have to do any of that

Miggy Barker 11:38

access!

Cerys Bradley 11:39

Yes, that would make me feel a lot better.

Miggy Barker 11:41

I yeah, when people are by the the barriers, and they do that thing with where they don't have the right card, or they don't know what they're doing, and they try and talk to someone that is a hate crime, that is, that is actually a hate crime. And I don't just mean that in relation to, like, the one door that's big enough for me, the like, the wheelchair specific one.

Cerys Bradley 12:02

Oh my goodness, people don't, if you don't need to go through that door, don't. Why are you using the wide barriers when you have no reason to? And it makes me so annoyed, particularly when you're on platforms where, like, Those ones are multi directional, so you can come either and then you can see that I've got, like, loads and loads of suitcases and just and you're coming in the other direction, and now I have to wait, why? Just look at the people around you, and who needs to use those doors!

Rafa 12:28

Spatial awareness, man, yeah.

Cerys Bradley 12:29

Sorry, this is actually gonna be quite a triggering episode.

Miggy Barker 12:35

Yeah, you were saying no, but it that exactly that. And it's like, whether you basically, you could look like you're struggling. You could look like you're about to fall over with the weight of everything that you're carrying. You could be literally sitting in a wheelchair and unable to go anywhere else about it. You could be with a member of staff who's waiting for there to be a gap in people coming through, and people still won't move because, like, Yeah, but I need to get through, and we're going on the same train that way. And the trick is, if I'm going on the same train as you, the train can't leave until I'm on it. So actually, get out of my way, and we can leave on time, actually, maybe for once.

Cerys Bradley 13:11

So one of the bits of research that I looked at when I was researching this episode, one of the things I was reading about was a case study of a person in Australia who has an intellectual disability. And so one of the things that she really struggles with is ticket barriers, because they're often different in different places, and like understanding when you're meant to use your ticket and things like that. And so she has for the Australia transport system, she has a pass, which means that she doesn't have to pay, and she is able to show that pass to a security guard, and then will be let through the barriers. And basically the kind of the article that I was reading is talking about how this is kind of one of the emblematic problems of public transport and access, and because what it does is it places her ability to use the transport system in the hands of the security guards, and so what it should be is that she shows her pass and then they open the gates for her. She doesn't have to pay. She doesn't have to deal with the ticket. She doesn't have to know whether or not her card has got enough money on it. Work out how to put money on the machines, all of these kind of things, but because you've then got a person who is looking at her and essentially deciding whether or not they think she's disabled enough to have that pass. And she is not physically disabled, she's intellectually disabled, and people, if they can't see your disability, often presume that it's like not there. And so actually, what happens is that every time she wants to use public transport, she takes out her lanyard, she shows her card to the guard, instead of that person flipping her through, they say, like, what is your disability? Where did you get that card from? And immediately start the conversation as if she's using it dishonestly, like, as if she's stolen it and like, obviously barriers are like, they're designed to prevent people who don't have tickets from getting access to trains. The whole point of them is to keep people out and to have a system that lets

some people in and not others. But then it's kind of the same with with access, like there's always this element of it where you then become reliant on someone else to do that thing for you that you can't do. And as soon as you introduce that element, you introduce this opportunity for ableism, where people presume that you're lying, presuming that you don't actually need the help and support that you're getting. And I think for a lot of people with hidden disabilities, like like this person in Australia, that then becomes really fractious, and it makes using public transport so frustrating and unpleasant.

Miggy Barker 15:41

It makes me think a lot about because we were talking a lot about trains, and I've realized, actually, as you were telling that story, that I was I did experience ableism today. It was just so much earlier in the day, I forgot about it, which means something, I guess, but in terms of like, so at least I don't know about it here in Wales, but back home in London, the bus system, our ramps are electronic. They don't like flip out. They're not manual, which, in itself, is a problem a million times over, because they break all the time or don't work. And the driver never seems to know that, even though there are mirrors, I've checked so they can check, but they don't. So half the time, like the ramp will come out a little bit of the way and get stuck, and then I'm there, like, well, I can't use this, and then they fight me on it, which, again, feels like that it's that idea of like we're not trusted to know what we need in that situation, or that we're just trying to cause a problem, which is hilarious, because I just want to go where I'm going, I'm in a hurry. It's London. Everyone's in a hurry. You know, like, it doesn't make sense, but more specifically, like the the idea I watch, because I where I have to sit on the bus is right next to that ramp. I watch people get on and off the bus that should have extra support, even if that's just the driver not closing the doors immediately after opening them. People who are on crutches or like older people, elderly, elderly people with walkers or lots of baggage or suitcases, or whatever it is like, there are many reasons why you might need a ramp to get off, even if you're not using like a wheelchair specifically, and even if they use the the like ramp button, they don't normally get it, or they'll shout and be like, driver, can you just give me a minute? And they usually don't, yeah, and it's just that thing of like, putting the, it would be lovely in an ideal world to be like, yeah, putting the like, the fate of disabled people into the public's hands. Of like, oh, well, this person just needs an extra minute, so I'll give them an extra minute. But then when that comes to like, people in any sort of position of power, really, just giving them any sort of leverage. It then becomes a game, nearly. It becomes like, Well, I get to decide, and you don't look like, yeah, you need this, or, Oh, I don't care, or I'm in a hurry, or whatever it is.

Cerys Bradley 18:13

Or, yeah. Like you're a bus driver who has to hit your route at specific times, and you actually don't. And then disabled people become like a like a huge burden, which is, is kind of like, it's very frustrating that, like when you ask for access, you're treated as if you are like an inconvenience, like you're asking for the ramp. Great, now we will have to wait for the ramp to come down. But then also, so much of accessibility around transport is like, it asks more of disabled people using that transport than other people. So there's this idea of anti time by a philosopher called Langan who talks about access options, where your access option is less convenient or takes more time. So if you want to use the lifts at a train station or, like on a tube station, or, for example, you often have to go down like, a long corridor to like, access it. Like it's not, it's not the general route, like, when the kind of routes for how to get to the platform were created the most the one that every, like, most people are using, is the quickest one, and then the disabled one isn't. So you have to budget so much more time into like, accessing the platform.

Like, everything takes longer for you. Like, we're expected to do that and to make that sacrifice. But then if you ask for, like, the extra minute for the ramp to go down, then you're holding up everybody. Like, no one is expected to wait for you, and you're expected to take yourself out of the way, out of sight, in order to be able to use stuff.

Miggy Barker 19:41

This is a funny podcast.

Cerys Bradley 19:42

Yeah, we're having a nice time. We're having a really nice time. So we did want to, like, it was really exciting to be able to record this live. And we thought, you know, we're gonna get a whole bunch of people who are interested in this topic, or didn't know what they were coming to, which is also fine, in the room together. And we want to hear about, like, not just our own experiences. So we were wondering if anybody here had any like thoughts about this, because I think we've said a lot of the stuff that we wanted to say, yeah,

Aiden 20:10

hi, I'm Aiden, it/he. This didn't happen in the UK. It happened in France. I was on holiday. They have lifts there in the stations, which is good because I was on crutches at the time, because I'm disabled, what a shocker. No, um, and the lifts weird. One lift would go down, one lift would go up, the lift that went down that had a sign on it saying, please leave for people with luggage, push chairs, wheelchairs and such. It dropped you off on a landing between two whole flights of stairs, and you couldn't get back in.

Miggy Barker 21:01

so you just got stuck.

Aiden 21:02

I, I... luckily I was on crutches. I could, I could still walk down the stairs, but luckily I found it was still a landing, but there was another lift that got me back up, so I got to go back down to the next one down. It was another, it was more flights of stairs.

Miggy Barker 21:22

Oh, my God.

Aiden 21:23

It had a sign specifically saying, Please let wheelchair users use this. I'm still questioning what at that point, what they how they thought that would work.

Miggy Barker 21:34

Could nothing capture...

Cerys Bradley 21:37

It's the thought that counts, right? You only have to do the access...

Miggy Barker 21:40

Don't even joke about that. Oh, my god, but, but the thing is that that's so much thought into something so wrong, yeah? Like, because you have to make it making a lift, you don't just throw them into something right, like that is a built thing. It takes time. They have to make a door that opens on that level. Yeah, to nothing. Why did no one notice that?

Cerys Bradley 22:07

I think it's one of those things where, like, like, if no one in the room who's doing the planning is disabled, then the engineer, like, sets up the lift, goes down to the landing, and then goes up the stairs. And was like, great, great, everyone. The lift works, and it just doesn't like,

Miggy Barker 22:28

I think it's more than that. I think it's on I think it's on purpose.

Cerys Bradley 22:30

You think it's like a child snatcher-esque, like, we trap them on this platform and then we put them in the crate.

Miggy Barker 22:36

It doesn't... okay. Maybe not child snatcher. I'm not saying that specifically out loud, but like, it's like nearly, it's like spiteful, it's like a practical joke or something like, the amount of times I've gone into like, an accessible toilet, and it's big enough for me to get into my wheelchair, and it has like, handrails and all that. But like, the paper towel dispenser is, like, nearly on the ceiling. It's so high up that, if you were standing, it would be too high above your head. And it's like that was done on purpose. No one - what Giant was in this room, and if they were, their head would have hit the ceiling and that would have hurt, you know, like something happened to make this go wrong so badly, like, that level of incompet=. Oh, you know that thing about like, like, new parents and the dad does everything wrong?

Cerys Bradley 23:28

weaponised incompetence?

Miggy Barker 23:29

Yeah, that's what's happening. That's what I'm saying.

Cerys Bradley 23:31

Yeah, people are so people are deliberately making access so badly that we will stop asking them to make access.

Miggy Barker 23:36

yeah, well, like, it's fine. We'll just go sit in a corner and read or something. Thank you.

Cerys Bradley 23:42

But that is the thing with infrastructure, like when it's a centralized thing, so infrastructure dictates who gets to go where, and if the access only takes you to the halfway platform, it doesn't take you to the platform, then you, as a disabled person, no longer get to take the train. And so if we decide that we don't want disabled people to be in specific places, I don't know an analogy might be, if we if we don't want trans women to be in specific places, then we might say that they're not allowed to use toilets anymore. And we've done like, a whole episode, which is about toilets, but like, if you don't, if you if you don't let people use the ramp on the bus at peak times, then those people don't get to get the bus to be able to get in for 9am which means that disabled people don't get to work a nine to five, which is one of the reasons why disabled people are disproportionately underemployed in the UK in comparison to non disabled people. And so never gain financial independence, and so don't get to advocate for better access in order to be able to get to these places. So, like it is, it definitely is malicious, like you can control where people go by not providing the infrastructure. And then it's also completely thoughtless, because if you don't ever see disabled people working jobs, and so you never think that they will want to go into the center of town during peak times, then it doesn't occur to you to make that thing accessible, because you don't think that they need it. You think they want to be hiding in the corner reading. Does anyone, anyone else in the audience like have, have any thoughts also?

Another audience member. 25:13

So I'm an architecture student, so I'm just going to apologize for my kind constantly fucking us all over. But like, something that's interesting about, like, what we're talking about, like, long corridors, like to get to lifts and stuff is the kind of, like, adjacencies with safety as well. So it's kind of like you're already getting fucked over because you can't get to where you need to go, and it's longer and it's harder, but then you're also like, like, less safe, basically, especially like women and like ,inority genders. It's like, you have to go down this really long, dark corridor to get to a lift that's going to be like, just you. And then it's like, if there's like, somebody in that corridor, you're just like, you know, it makes it, like, 1000 times worse, which is, you know, just adding to the issues, really.

Cerys Bradley 25:38

Yeah! if you, if you, if you, if the infrastructure strands you on a platform to the point where you have to ask someone, you then become vulnerable, because you are now dependent on that person to be able to get you off that, that platform. Oh, yes, tell us good examples.

Another audience member. 26:16

I can't remember. It's probably like, it's probably on the Elizabeth line somewhere in London. The new ones where it's like the escalator, and then the lift is like, it goes up next to the escalator.

Cerys Bradley 26:28

Farringdon!

Another audience member. 26:29

Yeah. And it's like glass, so it's like, your experience is basically the same as if you're on the escalator, yeah? So, like, it's getting better, maybe?

Miggy Barker 26:38

no, 100% so this is the thing. It's really nice to see that happening, because, from what I understand with the underground, the reason why the lifts are down a random corridor, or like you have to go from one end of the station to the other, which can take literally 15 minutes to travel. It's just because the way in which the underground was originally made because it's not new what, but it's because the basically adding lifts in any closer to be, like more accessible or easy or whatever, would then get in the way of a rail line, like above or below it. So it's literally just it physically is not possible to add them in, because there's already stuff in the way any system. When you keep the old stuff for long enough, even when it doesn't work, it's gonna ruin the new stuff that you're trying to make better and accessible. And we need to just let go of some things, but we won't, because it's all listed and stuff like that.

Rafa 27:39

Strange how colonial remnants just have really negative impacts on our day to day life nowadays. It's strange.

Miggy Barker 27:48

I don't know. I don't know what you mean. Rafa, say more.

Speaker 1 27:51

I don't think I should, because there's a lot to say. But yeah, just just funny that really.

Cerys Bradley 28:04

we can start talking about what people think is access, which definitely isn't access. You've got essentially two, two different kinds of access which are quite flawed. One is where you then become entirely dependent on another person. So, like, access is better when it's something that it makes it easier for you to do the thing yourself. It means that you get to function the same as everybody else. And that's not a particularly that's not how we think about disabled people in society. So those kind of solutions are just, on the face of it, less popular as they don't appear as much.

Miggy Barker 28:30

Yeah, because there's also this thing, this assumption that if you are disabled, you are always going to be with someone who isn't disabled that's looking after you, and if you don't have that, then that's your problem that you've created, ignoring the fact that like carers and PAs and stuff are expensive, and, you know, using like family members doesn't always work. Or, you know, maybe you're actually like, the most non disabled person in your circle of friends or your family or anything like that. Or maybe you want to go somewhere with those disabled people, and there are just a few of you together, and that suddenly is a problem. You know what I mean? Like, there is no understanding that, like disabled people can also go out into the world by themselves, and that should be okay and safe and allowed.

Cerys Bradley 29:22

Last year, my partner and I went to Canada on holiday, and we were in Vancouver, and we were on the bus, and a school got on like a class, and all of the kids who were kind of like age ranged from like maybe 11 to 15 all had various different kinds of disabilities. And I think I feel like, in the UK, it would have been very much like, there would have been like, four incredibly shouty adults. Everyone would have been wearing high vis, and someone would have been screaming for them to, like, be in a

crocodile. And it would have been really, really fractious for everybody that was involved. Whereas this group there was, like, there was, like, there must have been, like, at least 10 kids, and I think there were, there were, there were three adults with them, but they were so chill. And so, like, these kids got on and they could sit wherever they wanted on the bus, like they didn't have to all sit together. And one of them was, like, I pressed the button, I pressed the button, and the person was like, great job, we're not getting off next. But it's really good that, you know where the button is. And they just got to, like, explore the bus in their own kind of way, and do whatever they wanted so that they like, learned what the bus is, how the bus works. It wasn't just like, like, I was on the tube last week and I saw a class get on and there was a girl who was being told that she had to sit with the teachers and they wouldn't like she wasn't super steady on her feet, and she was finding the tube quite overwhelming. They wouldn't let her stand up until they told her that she could stand up. So there was no like, she doesn't get to learn for herself how she what happens is that every instinct that she has, she was just being told to sit down and be quiet and be still, and so then, like, she's just learning that everything that she's doing in public, like being physically disabled in public, is a thing which is enough to get you yelled at. And in comparison to like, the experience that we had in Canada was just like, they just let these kids loose on the bus, and they were having a wonderful time, but it meant that they got to feel like they're entitled to be in that space, which is such a, like, big part of demanding that kind of access for yourself, like actually feeling like you deserve to be there, I think makes a big, big difference.

Cerys Bradley 31:29

We like try to finish on something positive, and I was like, I'm gonna keep that Canada story in the back. Then the Canada story reminded me of the thing that I saw on the tube, and that was actually quite bleak. So does anyone, anyone have anything positive that we can say?

Miggy Barker 31:40

I actually do. I was just in America. I was in the States, and I had to use the busses in two different states that I was in, and for both of those places the, so the ramp, while electronic does, like, this flippy, outy thing, and it looked really cool, and like, made me feel kind of like a transformer.

Rafa 32:00

I was just gonna say that.

Miggy Barker 32:01

It was actually kind of fun, but it wasn't the fastest thing in the world. But, like, it was great. It also has a fail safe, so if the electronics break, it comes manual, and that just filled me with such hope and joy. And then also, when I get on the bus, so you actually speak to the driver, and they like, get out of the driver's seat

Cerys Bradley 32:28

and let you drive the bus

Miggy Barker 32:32

Exactly!

Rafa 32:33

That's such a good story.

Miggy Barker 32:37

But so he the driver got out. Like, every single time the driver gets out, like, asks first, like, Do you need help? I, like, get driven to the like position, and then I get strapped in to the bus, which sounds dramatic, but actually on busses kind of really important. And that is not something that we normally have, like, I normally have in London, you just kind of get shoved into a corner, and then if the bus goes fast and you skid, you then get told off because you moved, but my brakes are on, I don't do anything. You're driving too fast, you idiot. But this was, like, they actually, like, took the time to do it. And then also the few times where I was only going a few stops, and I was like, actually, it's okay, like, we'll just hold it. They believed me, and let me just do it ourselves. And it was just so refreshing. And again, I think I was saying this, like, when I leave London, I do feel a little bit better about access in general. And I think that was the thing. It's not like these were just really genuine, good people that were trying their best to help me. It was just that was their job, and they were doing the job that they were supposed to be doing.

Cerys Bradley 33:42

I think that predictability is really nice, because that is something that definitely stresses me out. Like, you just don't know, and if you can't guarantee it, like, if you've got somewhere important to be, then you just can't take the risk that the public transport will be bad. Yeah. And so, yeah, like, it being part of the job, you being trusted, uh, not panicking, and therefore everything taking way longer, because people aren't just, like, doing the thing, and everyone knowing what their job is, and then it being the same every time, I think is the kind of, like, it's how you make really good access.

Miggy Barker 34:17

That's a good note to end on. We did it.

Rafa 34:20

Yay!

Miggy Barker 34:30

You've been listening to it's ableism.

Cerys Bradley 34:32

I've been Cerys

Miggy Barker 34:33

and I've been Miggy.

Cerys Bradley 34:34

For more information about our guests and the topics covered. Check out the show notes and our reading list.

Miggy Barker 34:40

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