Speaker 2

Hi guys, welcome to another powerful episode of the Eclectic Podcast. My name is Eloka Oduah. This July marks the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, a landmark civil rights law that transformed the landscape of accessibility, inclusion, and equality in the United States.

Today, we're diving deep into what the ADA has accomplished, where the gaps still remain, and how we can all move forward towards true equity. This episode, as always, is brought to you in collaboration with the Rotary Club of World Disability Advocacy. Joining me is a remarkable guest, an anti-ableism and accessibility trainer, associate safety professional, ADA coordinator, and a diversity, equity, and inclusion educator.

With years of experience working in federal government public health and safety, our guest is also a board member with ChurchEar, Audible Talkers Toastmasters, and the Rotary Club of World Disability Advocacy. She's the editor of the 2023 publication, Stories, Statistics, Solutions: Towards Understanding and Engaging People with Disabilities in Faith Communities, a resource that blends data with lived experience to foster meaningful inclusion in often overlooked spaces. She is none other than Angie Fuoco.

Welcome, Angie.

Speaker 1]

Oh, thank you for that beautiful introduction, Iloka.

Speaker 2

Thank you so much for making out the time to join us. I'm super excited to have you. What with your rich blend of experience in disability advocacy.

Speaker 1

Oh, awesome. I am so delighted to be here. Thank you for having me today.

Speaker 2

So, without wasting much time, let's get straight into this conversation. I did mention in the introduction that you are an ADA coordinator. Now, in commemoration of the 35th

celebration of the ADA as it turns 35, briefly tell us about its history and the struggles it took in order to get this piece of legislation for the American people with disabilities.

Speaker 1

Oh, yes. I sure will be glad to. First of all, the ADA precipitated worldwide disability laws springing up all over the world because it was really the first disability civil rights law out there known to the world.

And it's also inspired Disability Pride Month, which is July, which was the month of enactment of the ADA, the Americans with Disabilities Act, 35 years ago this July. But it truly wasn't the first civil rights law in the United States. There was something that precipitated it called the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 17 years earlier.

That only the federal government that we have here in the United States and importantly, programmes that were funded by the government, even if they received $1 from the federal government, they had to comply with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. So really, it's the unsung hero behind the ADA. So and interestingly, because I worked for the federal government, that was the law that applied to me as a federal employee.

So what happened between 1973 and 1990 was a big civil rights struggle for people with disabilities who were not given civil rights under the American Civil Rights Act of 1964. They were saying, hey, we're still left behind. So after 1973, when the Rehabilitation Act was enacted, a lot of federal buildings, spaces started to have to comply and realise this was before the internet and electronic communication that we have now.

So we're talking about physical spaces. And so there was this 1977 about 150 activists took over the Department of Health, Education and Welfare building at that time, in San Francisco, California. It was a peaceful protest.

I don't know if the same thing could happen today. But literally 150 people with varying disabilities, including deafness, walkers and wheelchair users, climbed several stories to get in front of the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare at that time, and demand that 1973 law be enforced. That happened.

Then later, there were crawls in our capital, where adults and even children would get out of their wheelchairs and crawl up the steps to show them look, we can't even get in to our own capital, which is, you know, a symbol of freedom. And we aren't free if you don't make it accessible to us, if you don't put a ramp in so that we can get in this building, like other US citizens. That got the attention of President Bush, and he signed the ADA of 1990.

So yes, there was an incredible struggle, but it resulted in one of the greatest laws that impacted really the whole world.

Speaker 2

Fantastic. Interesting hearing how the American people had to demand for these rights to be implemented, and the willingness of the President to have actually signed, you know, signed that law into existence. However, it's been 35 years.

How would you assess its impact, you know, so far since its enactment 35 years ago?

Speaker 1

Well, definitely, it's changed the landscape, the physical landscape of the United States. It's also changed the attitudes to a large degree, and behaviours and understanding of people with disabilities and their needs. The important thing about us navigating in society, out of our homes, is, are we going to be able to interact with the society that's out there, and use the physical spaces out there?

Or are we going to have problems? For instance, there are curb cuts that are the norm now. And I guess you call them the same thing there.

They are, you know, when the pavement is flat and smooth, not having a curb over it, that a wheelchair cannot go through. So these things are out there. We need to work on some things like making sure that pedestrian crossings are safe for people who either use wheelchairs, or have other mobility issues, let's say getting across the street, or who are blind, and need help with that.

We also need to work on services in the physical spaces for people who are deaf and hard of hearing, because we know that that is the most often used communication mode, oral communication, or talking. And for some deaf people, though, they use sign language. And that means...

So the, definitely the impacts you can see if people who, let's say, died in that year of 1973, would come back, or in 1990, when the ADA was enacted, 35 years later, they would see a lot of improvements.

Speaker 2

Very, very interesting. And quite notable that you mentioned the improvement that would be noticed. But I want to ask specifically with regards to the improvement and the impact the ADA would have had on the lives of Americans with disabilities.

Oftentimes, when we talk about impact of legislation, especially with regards to disabilities, we focus majorly on physical attributes, you know, physical barriers, you know, how to take away those barriers to improve inclusion. But then again, barriers go beyond physical, right? You rightly mentioned, you know, people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and you mentioned blind people.

These are sensory impairments that would require, you know, different sets of solutions to getting them embedded into the society. So with regards to those aspects, right, what would you say is different now compared to before the piece of legislation was enacted?

Speaker 1

Okay, great question. So the ADA did not envision digital accessibility, because it was written in 1990, and the internet developed along later in the 90s, and got widespread. So actually, going back again, in 1998, the first law that I spoke to you about, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, was amended in 1998, after the internet had been developed, to require digital accessibility.

But that, again, was only for federal government agencies, and those that are supported by our federal government. It was the 1990 ADA that affected states and cities, towns in our country. So right now, the move is, of course, even what, 2017, I'm not quite sure, years on, 27 years from the 1998 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, they stated that digital accessibility must be present in all of our electronic communications.

So that means even the telephone, that means this Zoom meeting that we're on, that means a podcast, that means videos that go on government websites. Now, it doesn't include YouTube and all those videos. But the great thing is that people looked at that set of standards that was written in 1998, for the digital accessibility standards, and they said, well, let's go, let's make it accessible for everybody.

Let's put captions on our videos, because deaf people see talking heads when they look at a video, unless you put the captions out for them, or if in some cases when they need a sign language interpreter. But as I was telling you earlier, hearing loss is so prevalent, it's one of the most prevalent conditions throughout the world, that one out of five people lose some parts of their hearing throughout their lifetime. And this is the way we're connecting to people and communicating.

Blindness is also a large issue in many places of the world, too, where even glasses aren't available for people. And in those cases, those people need hearing accessibility. There are things they can do, like hear through a screen reader what is shown on a screen.

So these accessibility measures to make things accessible for people who are blind, deaf, or hard of hearing, people who are low vision, people who have cognitive impairments, and people who have physical impairments, also, that will prevent them from interacting with a computer or an electronic communication device. These are all regulated in that 1998 amendments called Section 508 in the United States. And they are a wonderful barometer, too, that has shown the world, hey, this is what we all need to fall in line into in the digital space.

And it's slow. It's not perfect. But it is happening.

And we can be thankful for that and just continue to educate like you are fostering today.

Speaker 2

Fantastic. Interesting to hear that it's there. There was an amendment, and this gives room for progressive impact, helping to ensure that as things unfold, as we develop, get new ideas, new advancements in technologies, all of these can be taken into account.

And persons with disabilities can live a more fulfilled and inclusive lifestyle. Now, we've just spoken about, you know, accessibilities. And I'm interested to know, as a trainer and ADA coordinator, you know, what are the most persistent accessibility challenges you encounter in your work, given that we've just spoken about some of these accessibility needs?

Speaker 1

The digital? Yes. I don't need to rehash that.

Because, yes, I experienced that at work and in the marketplace. Thankfully, we have AI captioning, which actually I'm using right now on zoom. So I'm very thankful for all these things.

But sometimes it's not there. It's not perfect. And I need more.

But we're learning, okay, in that space, the space, I'd like to say, which is really challenging, is the individual behaviour and the individual responsibility. We all have a certain level of

abilities, every person on earth. And we need to look at each other in just saying, Oh, they have a different need than I do to access, let me help support their need.

That's it. It's really that simple, on an individual level. And if we could extrapolate it to governments to just say, Hey, we need to support our citizens, whatever their needs are, well, that would be easy to and we would have world peace probably, but we're not there yet.

So what I want to say on the individual level is, when someone asks you to help them, whatever it is, here, see, get through a door, let's say, if there's no door opener, please, please just be a kind human and help them. And I want to say, as a person with hearing loss, who has been speaking all of my 60 plus years here on this earth, I'm, I'm very used to, and I think you see, I'm pretty well spoken in having conversations with people. But when they make fun of me, if I don't hear something well, and I interpret it the wrong way, that really hurts, that gets to ableism.

And also, even interestingly enough, people can deny me the need to hear in a certain way. For instance, if they insist on turning away from me or moving while they're speaking to me, I have to say, Look, I cannot hear you until you are still because when you move around, that voice changes through the space, what gets to my ears, your voice doesn't really change. But what gets to my ears, my impaired ears changes.

And I can't hear or interpret that sound the same way. And I will be like, all over the place not understanding you. So please make the conditions right for me.

And help me here. And that's a really simple one. But, and it's something that I need to ask people all the time.

Hey, don't call me in the car. Because I hear the road noise. It's too much going into my cochlear implant and hearing aid.

And it's all that road sound and you're moving and I want you to be safe too. I don't want you to focus on helping me here. Because I have impaired ears, even though they might be able to call someone else and have a fine conversation and be safe with them hands free.

But for me, it's different. And so that's the thing where I need people to understand. And with hearing loss, it's definitely the challenge of conversation, every conversation that I have, I need to make that person aware of my hearing loss and what I need.

For instance Eloka, this is a podcast and I'm not seeing your face. But if you were less articulate than you are, and you are very articulate, let me compliment you. And you didn't pronounce your words very well as you do. Or if you had a very thick accent that I couldn't understand, no fault of yours, none of that would be. But I would have to say, I need video for you.

Because I need to read your lips. You see, and that's an access need that I would have to say, Well, I have to have this or I can't hear and understand what you're saying correctly. So the thing I want to say is be kind to people when they ask things like that.

Don't make a big deal out of it. Just do it. You know, I wouldn't ask you if I didn't have that need.

I wouldn't ask to impose on you. And take it that people aren't asking to impose on you. They're just wanting to connect like you are and be part of friendships, relationships, society, the same way everyone else is and they have to accommodate their needs.

Speaker 2

That's very interesting and a different perspective you've actually really shared with us. And what I'm hearing, really, is that beyond the laws, equally as important is people's attitude towards certain things.

It's all great to have all these laws. But then what's your attitude when you meet with a person who has access needs down the street, in the office, at the hospital, wherever it may be? What's your attitude towards these people?

How empathetic are you in ensuring that they have as close to an experience as you have while interacting with your environment? So that's actually interesting.

Speaker 1

Yes, that's a beautiful observation. And if I could add, it's not just attitude, then it's the action that follows.

Speaker 2

Yeah.

Speaker 1

I'll give you one more example of a hurt that I experienced at work one time, where we now have these beautiful things like zoom and teams. In the government, we use teams by Microsoft, and they have automatic captions. And they also have phone lines, in many cases, that accompany the meeting, just like the zoom one does.

In one case, there was no phone line to the team's meeting. And I asked the person for the next meeting that he was going to schedule. Of course, I didn't find out until that meeting happened.

And there was nothing I could do. And the reason I need a phone line is because I hear directly to my cochlear implant and hearing aid through the phone line. And it does not connect the same way to the government computers audio.

So I couldn't get any audio, even though I can with my helpers here. If there was a phone line. So I asked the gentleman, I said, Please, for the next meeting, will you make sure there's a phone line, use this one system, I told him what to do, use our system instead of the other agency system, problem solved, I will have a phone line, the team's meeting calls me or I call it.

And boom, I hear directly to my hearing aid and cochlear implant, like I'm hearing right now. Come a week later, that gentleman just did not do that for me. It was so disappointing.

It was so easy. It was make a simple email or phone call to the person hosting the meeting and say, Hey, can we do it on this other our system versus yours. That's it.

And a simple re request of the meeting to make sure I heard in it. And it was so hurtful coming in to that next meeting thinking he was going to do this. And he didn't.

And all of a sudden, I only had access to captions. And what I want to tell you is captions isn't even always a solution. Because sometimes they're not great.

And in that particular meeting, I had to do other things I had to learn a system and learn by doing and moving a mouse if you can imagine that learning a programme online and without hearing component, I was missing so much of the content of that training that it was just a wash. And it was just a simple request that was refused to me. So that's the kind of stuff that people get away with.

And you can't really enforce under the law, which sometimes it's more important, or just as important.

I hope that helped putting things into perspective?

Speaker 2

certainly makes it a little bit more clearer, and calls for, you know, people to, like I said earlier, be more empathetic in doing some of these things. Now, we've been speaking a lot about the ADA. And it's very common.

Well, in Nigeria, where I am, for people to actually mis represent what exactly is in the Disability Act. So I'd like for you to tell me, you know, some of the common misconceptions people have about the ADA scope, you know, or its intent. So like I said, back here in Nigeria, there's a lot of misconception as to what the Disability Act is meant for, and what it covers.

Speaker 1

Okay, there are many misconceptions about ADA here. First of all, the whole definition of disability is pretty clearly defined in the ADA, but sometimes it has to go through lawsuits to make sure that people fully understand it. But that is one thing.

And disabilities, I want to mention, are fluid because there are new disabilities that pop up as time goes on in our world. For instance, COVID-19 or long COVID was determined a disability here in the United States. Nobody had heard of that prior to 2020.

And so, that's one thing to remember in every country. Just because it's the state of our health and the state of our being as humans, the definition of disability and disabilities in people's lives will change. Disability prevalence in your country, let's say Nigeria, which is measured at 15%, I understand, may change.

And the disability prevalence of the United States, which is even higher, may change. So, one thing to remember is that. The other thing, the ADA does not regulate houses of worship, religious institutions, and private organisations, as well as state and local governments that are fewer than 15 employees.

We do have a few of those in rural populations in the United States. But so, a common misconception, especially across the world, is that, let's say, religious institutions, such as a

church or a synagogue, are required to help their people here. They're required to have, let's say, a ramp and mobility accessible congregation in the physical space.

That's not the case in the United States. And that's kind of why I wrote the book, co-wrote the book. And then also, you look at other countries.

I don't think Nigeria covers religious organisations. Maybe you can tell me. But in Europe, they are covered.

And so, in Europe, I walked into churches, and they would have this beautiful sign that said to me, this church has an assistive listening system. And all I need to do is, I'm over here in the United States normally, but I'm visiting over there in Europe. And all I need to do is hit a button on my hearing aid or cochlear implant, set them so that the streaming that I talked about through the phone line that I use, comes right to my ears.

And I don't have to struggle to hear in a, let's say, a congregation that has high ceilings in the church, or a soft spoken pastor, or maybe I can't hear even strong enough through the microphone. This is an additional benefit that I get. So, yes, unfortunately, ADA did not cover those things.

And like I said, that's the book. And this is why I like to travel and see things that are different, and in some cases more advanced than other countries.

Speaker 2

Interesting. Now, speaking about your book, your work, you know, bridges disability justice with faith communities. So what inspired Stories, Statistics, Solutions, and what has the reception been like?

It is interesting to hear you talk about your experiences, you know, with religious centres when you travel outside America. However, what really inspired you co-authoring that book?

Speaker 1

Yes, Stories, Statistics, Solutions, for its understanding and including people with disabilities in faith communities, was inspired by my co-author, Dr. Luke Bobo, who was a professor and encountered a deaf couple for the first time, truly deaf, not aided by cochlear implant or any other devices, and users of American Sign Language. And he saw that they experienced ableism in a very profound way here in the United States. So he began a book of stories, and I was included as part of the stories.

But then I realised I needed to help Dr. Luke, my friend now, understand ableism a bit more. So we went through that in the book, and we came to the point where it's now a good tool, if you get and read the book, to convict pastors and leaders, rabbis, leaders of church congregations, really, leaders of local civic organisations, too, these private organisations that are not required by the ADA to have accommodations and accessibility for their patrons. So it's a great book, because it gives the solutions, a tool of different things to look at, kind of assessment that people can use to make their private organisation, church, synagogue, whatever have you, accessible, so people can worship in these, or engage in these non-regulated spaces.

That was really the purpose of the book. And it convicts people through wonderful stories, and some of which I gave you, how we've been excluded from working in church, in conversations, and just in life in general. And then it gives you a set of solutions that you can implement, starting with the easy ones.

A lot of them are easy and free, and then some do cost money, and I just advocate for people of all abilities to be worth it, especially in churches and synagogues, and other houses of worship where the spiritual dimension is on the line. Do we love these people like our neighbour, like we're told to do? And do we love them enough to buy an assistive listening system and make that a priority in our congregation, to make sure there's a ramp so people can get in, or make sure if there's a second story and we don't have enough funds to build an elevator, to at least make sure everything's done on the main floor when all are invited or when that person who's a wheelchair user needs to be there.

It's just common sense and love, really, is what accessibility distils down toward. Empathy and love for your neighbour. Do you really love them enough to do what it takes to include and engage them?

Speaker 2

That's quite a very inspiring story you've shared, and you've mentioned ableism a number of times in responding to this question. So as an anti-ableism and accessibility trainer, can you briefly explain the concept of ableism and how it impacts on accessibility?

Speaker 1

Ableism is like any other ism. It's when you don't let another person into your space, into your interaction with you, or into your society, or into the world, really. I mean, I'm talking broad stuff here, but I want to note something that is unusual with ableism.

It's unique. I'm sorry, that's the word. Unique to ableism versus any other ism or exclusion of any other person on any characteristic except ability or disability, and that is this.

With ability and disability, by definition, there is some difference in the function of a person, whether that function is moving around in society, getting from the sidewalk to across the street, or whether it's hearing or seeing. It's some daily life activity or function, which is how the ADA describes things, actually. If you, as a person or as a society, limit my capacity to function based on my ability, if you do not power my disability into becoming an ability, then you are expressing ableism in that unique, ableist way.

So, it doesn't matter what colour or background I'm from, if I need captions, and you do not put them on your videos, let's say. And there are many news outlets in the United States that do not put their captions on their videos.

Why? Because they're not regulated by the ADA to do so, but it's the right thing to do because I can't get all that dialogue when you have a reporter in front of noisy, bombing situations or whatever they may be. I can't get all that dialogue, even through my hearing, that I have direct into my ears. In those situations, if the captions aren't there, it's just not accessible to me.

I gave you experiences earlier when a person would not use another option, another line, that would give me a phone line so I could both hear and read captions and look at the information and connect and move the information in the training programme I was doing on. I needed all the tools available, and he was withholding that hearing tool from me by not getting me the team's option that would give me the phone line. To me, that's just cruel.

Why would you want someone to have work expectations built on that and then not accommodate their need when it's free and easy? So, I call it a FUSS. So ableism is the only ism, if you will, that has a problem when a FUSS is made.

And the definition of fuss, spelled F-U-S-S, is when a function, for me, becomes unwelcome in a situation or setting. Just like I said when I was in the training class or when I walk into a church and I say, do you have an assistive listening system? And they do, but the batteries aren't charged.

They're in a drawer somewhere. They're not ready for me. And so that's the other thing with situations with people with disabilities.

You always have to be ready for when a person comes in who needs that. Oh, we don't have any deaf people or hard of hearing people in our congregation, so we didn't worry about the

assistive listening system. But now I come in as a guest and I need it and that's the unwelcome situation or setting that I cannot function in.

So you see where I'm going with this?

Speaker 2

Yeah. It's quite… I don't want to say disheartening, but it can be very discouraging to have those kinds of experiences, really. Because as a person with specific types of impairment, you would hope against hope that people actually would have you in mind.

And when they talk about inclusion, they actually really practise the things they say and not just say it for the sake of seeming to be inclusive. So for want of time, I have two more questions for you and I'm going to merge those two questions and hopefully it wouldn't be so much for you to handle if you could answer them briefly, right. So we had earlier spoken during, I think, some parts of this conversation when we talked about the progress the ADA has made.

And then we touched on things like attitude and empathy. So beyond the laws, what advice would you give organisations or individuals who want to go beyond ADA compliance and embrace true inclusion, bearing in mind that you actually really need the right attitudes to be able to have these inclusions and accessibility needs really implemented? The second question would be what lessons can countries like Nigeria, who is only in her sixth year of implementation of the Disability Act, learn from their American experience?

Speaker 1

Okay. Those are good questions to talk about together because I do believe that one principle for every person, all 8 billion of us on this earth, to think about every day when we wake up in the morning is this. What abilities do I have today and what abilities might change even throughout this day?

Disability happens at any point in time of a person's life. It can happen suddenly, it can happen progressively, and you don't even know it. Laraba, who was on your previous podcast, she knew she was having a hearing problem throughout the time.

I didn't know, mine was so insidious. It crept up on me that I didn't even know.

My people close to me had to tell me. So it's quite interesting about disability, but if people in governments would realise, hey, as they sign laws and so forth, and as they enact things,

this could be my daughter, this could be my son, this could be my wife, my husband, or this could be me. Tomorrow, who might need this service?

So that's one thing for governments to always keep in mind on a personal level and for people to keep on the personal level that, hey, you know, I'm doing this for someone else, but I have so much privilege. That's one thing that's talked about in the DEI space quite a bit, but you don't hear a lot of people talking about ability. Privilege.

Every ability we have is a privilege, and guess what? Disabilities can be too, if you leverage them, and so people need to realise how privileged we are to live, and you can stop at the word live every day, just to live, to breathe, without a machine, let's say. Some people with disabilities have to have assistance breathing.

So every ability we have, seeing, hearing, walking, moving, limbs or no limbs, all of it is just incredible, incredible gifts from God that we have to be thankful for and realise that we need to prepare ourselves and the world. As we age, disability happens more and more. Almost no person in this earth goes out of the earth without a disability, unless maybe they're a very young, healthy teenager who gets killed in a car accident, God forbid, but truly accident situations, because there are children and teenagers who die of cancer, and that's a disability, and of other things.

So anyway, those are the deep spiritual lessons I'd love to share with people, and then on the very global sense, like you're talking about a country like Nigeria looking at the ADA, and I noticed that your law, I looked at it before our interview, is modelled very much after the ADA, and that's a good thing. I laud your country for doing that, but Nigeria can look at it like we need to still look at it too. Leaving us out is not only the wrong thing to do in giving people human rights, giving all citizens human rights in your country, it's also a drain on your economy.

It's a drain on, it's a waste of resources, because most people with disabilities are not completely functionless, I should say. They have a reason and a purpose to be in this world, or God wouldn't have them here in this world, and many of them have amazing talents that can be put to work in making society better, and they would love gainful employment, if only the government wouldn't hold it back, and wouldn't withhold silly accommodations like I told you about with the phone line, or even the more costly ones like putting in the door openers for them to get into work by themselves, and so forth. If they realised what a financial benefit it would be to their country, and Nigeria, I would say that to them, realise that it's an economic thing, not only an empathetic thing to do, it's the right thing to do for each individual person, but it's also the right thing to do for your country for so many of those reasons.

Speaker 2

It's the right thing to do for your country. Those are really powerful words that you have ended on, and I truly appreciate them, because oftentimes people see disability issues and inclusion as charitable ventures, rather than seeing them as human rights-based ventures, you know, things as economic as you have rightly mentioned, and I'm truly glad that you actually said that, really. So, thank you so much for sharing all this knowledge with us.

It's been truly enlightening and very interesting having this conversation with you, but before we wrap up, really, finally, there is just one more question I'm going to ask, and that's what we usually would round up here with, you know, just for a bit of fun, if you would share with us, you know, what has been your most embarrassing moment as an individual?

Speaker 1

Oh, well, that will take another podcast.

Speaker 2

Oh, dear.

Speaker 1

Eloka, I'm sorry, but I will mention to you what it was, because it resonates with what we've talked about today.

Speaker 2

Okay.

Speaker 1

Fourteen years ago, when I was just losing my hearing as an adult, I experienced a very unfortunate incident where I was put into a Southern holding jail for eight hours, and I don't know if that was the most embarrassing point in my life, or four weeks later when I went before a judge and he said, I can't see that you did anything wrong. And I said, sir, I can't either, because I really didn't. But what it had to do was with my hearing loss, my in access to my hearing aid, I did not have a cochlear implant at that time, and things they were doing to me that kept me from accessing my hearing aid.

So it was really them not following the ADA. But I didn't know about it. I had just lost hearing, and I didn't know what to claim as my rights.

They took advantage of that and took a day out of my life that gave me this very interesting story to tell. Like I said, the telling of it all would take an entire podcast. But the great lesson is that which I just spoke beforehand, for every person, realise disability can strike at any time.

And it probably will strike if you live long enough. You actually want it to strike. Because the alternative is ending of life if you don't experience some disabling, let's say, of certain abilities as you go through life.

I mean, we all know, older adults, especially when we get towards 100, which is more common these days, is our functions decline. And it's all okay. It's part of life.

But like any other part of life, we just need to be prepared. So it will be helpful for your Nigerian citizens to know what's in their Nigerian Disability Act as well. And anyone throughout the world, just know that it can happen to you.

Be the empathetic and kind person. Go all the way. Just be kind.

And love your neighbour as you would yourself. And I think those things will take us all the best way forward.

Speaker 2

Fantastic! Thank you so much for sharing. And your embarrassing moment comes with a lot of lessons to learn.

So very much appreciated. And at this point, I would ask you to kindly let us know if you have any final words to share with us. And then we can call this a wrap to a very great conversation.

Speaker 1

Oh, I think I just gave you the final words. Love God, love your neighbour as yourself. That's it.

Speaker 2

Love God, love your neighbour as yourself. Thank you so much, Angie, for making out the time to speak with us on this very crucial topic and educating us on the ADA and what the

various misconceptions have been, what the challenges are, the progress, and all the impact it has made on the American people. Much thanks.

I'm so grateful for all of that.

Speaker 1

Thank you, Iloka. And best to you and all these beautiful, Eclectic Podcasts.

Speaker 2

Thank you so much. So guys, we've been speaking with Angie Fuoco. She is an ADA coordinator.

As we commemorate 35 years of the Americans with Disabilities Act, today's conversation is a reminder that accessibility is not a destination. It is a continuous journey towards justice. Our guest has challenged us to reflect on what it means to truly include people with disabilities, not just in policies, but in practise, community, and culture.

If today's episode resonated with you, take a moment to reflect on the accessibility of your own spaces, be it your workplace, faith community, or digital presence. Share this episode using the hashtag ADA35 and let us know how you are doing with inclusion. Until next time, stay Eclectic.