



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

S6E18: Stop, Pause, Remember Your Tools with Monique Clark

Published:

Monique Clark: [00:00:00] We cannot fight or do this work for anti-racism, we cannot do this work for social justice without including deaf and hard of hearing, without including those with disabilities and accessibility. You know, it's DEIA, but I think people forget what it looks like or what it means to include the accessibility.

Sam Fuqua: That's Monique Clark, and this is Well, That Went Sideways! A podcast that serves as a resource to help people have healthy, respectful communication. We present a diversity of ideas, tools, and techniques to help you transform conflict in relationships of all kinds. In this episode, we talk with Monique Clark about many different facets of accessibility and about her experience as a CODA, a child of deaf adults. She's a speaker, a [00:01:00] consultant, and the Chief Operating Officer of SignGlasses, a remote interpretive service for deaf and hard of hearing people. We spoke with Monique Clark at the 2026 White Privilege Conference.

I'm Sam Fuqua, co-host of the program with Alexis Miles. Hi, Alexis.

Alexis Miles: Hi, Sam.

Sam Fuqua: So pleased to be joined today for this episode of Well, That Went Sideways! by Monique Clark. Welcome.

Monique Clark: Thank you. Hello.

Sam Fuqua: Uh, well, let's start right in as, uh, your experience as a CODA, a child of deaf adults. Alexis and I both heard you speak, uh, yesterday, as we're recording this, at the White Privilege Conference. Very powerful. Can you talk about your experience growing up with your deaf parents, and contrast that to how you observed your deaf parents in the world?

Monique Clark: Yes, there's a lot of difference there. I realize how much [00:02:00] power I have and privilege I have with communication, um, just by living vicariously, if you will, through my parents. Um, seeing that they were not afforded access at all, seeing how other people process out loud about my parents. Oh, deaf, mute, mental retardation, you know, these, saying these things, or you, can you have kids? Are you supposed to have kids? Can you read? Do you read braille? Those types of things. I learned that by the way people interact with my parents with such a young age, and I realized it was important to what I had, my capabilities. It was important to what tools I had in my toolbox so that I could provide that access for my parents, or convey audibly what around in the environment to my parents. I often had to interpret things that little kids would never really interpret. Um, you know, doctor's appointments, deaths in the family, eviction notices, [00:03:00] jobs, that you're no longer going to be, have this job, you know, to my parents, things like that, six, seven, eight, 10 years old. So, had to grow up really fast.

Sam Fuqua: Communicating through American Sign Language? Other...



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

S6E18: Stop, Pause, Remember Your Tools with Monique Clark

Monique Clark: Through American Sign Language, yes. ASL. Um, and I'll probably refer to the, to American Sign Language as ASL going forward in the conversation with us.

Sam Fuqua: Would you be willing to share, uh, the story you shared at the keynote yesterday about being in that situation with your mother, who is trying to accomplish something with a person behind a desk, and there's a long line of people, and a lot of tension. So much pressure on a six-year-old girl.

Monique Clark: In the talk that I did yesterday, I helped people understand ways that they can show up most authentically. So, I did talk about The Three Selves. It's by Ritu Bhasin. Um, authenticity principle, and the three selves, [00:04:00] um, being your most authentic self, your adaptive self, and your performing self. And so, I used that framework, um, to help people understand the story, right, and the characters in the story. And then I asked people to just call out or remember where these characters in the story were showing up their most authentic self, their adaptive self, or their performing self. And just real quick, your most authentic self is who you are with no consequences, right? And it's your, you feel most free, you know, right? And that, no holds barred type of thing. And then your adaptive self is you choose when you are going to, you know, show up. You, you choose how you're gonna show up, whether is it gonna be your performing self maybe a little bit there, or are you just showing up your most authentic self. And then your performing self is you don't have any choice. You just, you show up as, you know, maybe someone has told you that this is how you're supposed to be. The author talks about how she [00:05:00] didn't really want to be a lawyer, but that was her, her family had told her, "This is the track you're gonna go." So, that's an example, just to give you an idea of, of a performing self. She realized later that, "No, this is not what I wanted to do," so she got out of that and did something else.

Well, using that framework, I helped, uh, people, like, use that to walk through the story. So I'll say, I know I was about six years old because I have a dress that I love. It's a rainbow dress. My mom later talked about, like, how she had to hide that dress for me to, so for her to wash it, you know. So I, I just remember that. That helped me remember, like, I was six years old. Um, and if you can imagine a six-year-old today, fresh out of kindergarten. So, one day we are going to, to get some services. You know, we grew up pretty, you know, poor. You know, the, my parents have disability, right? Both my mom and dad, they're deaf. [00:06:00] Everybody in my family is deaf, actually, except for myself, my brother. I have a handful of cousins. Everybody else is deaf or hard of hearing. So, when they have a job, they have means to provide for us food, shelter, clothing, and then they lose their job. Then they get their job, then they lose their job. So, there's that cycle, right?

So, the story that I was sharing is at a point where we needed some additional assistance for, you know, just survival, basic needs, housing, food stamps, things like that. So, we're on a bus one day, and we're going. We grew up in Northern California, so in the suburb of Northern California, very hot in the middle of the valley. So, this day was really hot, I remember, and we're on the bus. So, we get to the social service building. And there, we walk into the big building. I remember it's really hot out there, so I'm pushing the door, heavy, getting in there, and then there's a long line of people. So, my [00:07:00] mom goes up to the red, um, you know, ticket holder, get a ticket, have a number, and we wait, wait, what feels like forever. You know, as little kids, we're playing

around. Every now and then my mom's like, "You know, stop. You, you're being loud for the hearing people. Be quiet," kind of thing. Um, uh, the number calls, and so, it's us. We go in. We go to the front of the counter, and my mom, I have to tell you, being deaf, she always had a pen and a paper with her everywhere. So, that's how she's gonna communicate with hearing people, right?

So, she already had her script written down, the things that she needed, and so she shows it to the lady behind the counter. The, the woman behind the counter takes her, her number and then says, "How can I help you?" And my mom has it written down, and she's like, "Here you go." And she's smiling, and she's tapping her ear that she can't hear, and shaking her head, and showing her the paper. And the woman looks at the paper, looks at her, and says, "Go to the back of [00:08:00] the line in the corner over there. You see that red phone? Pick up the red phone, and you can get an interpreter. Me, I don't have time right now. You see this long line of people? I don't have time. I don't have time to help you." And my mom obviously doesn't hear what she's saying, so she taps her ear, her ear again and look, points to the paper. "Please read the paper," you know. And she's like, "Listen, I don't have time for this. You need to have another appointment. Go down there. You see that red phone down there? Pick up the red phone." And now she's enunciating with her mouth "Pick up the red phone and, and, you know, have somebody help you." And my mom is like, "Excuse me," like, "Please help me."

And me, I see the distress is happening, and I'm, and I'm like, "Help my mom. My mom needs some services. Please help my mom." And she's like, "Oh, no, I really can't help you. You really need to, you and your child, you really need to go to the back of the line. Go, go use that phone and get an interpreter. I don't have time. There's a long line here. I don't have time." And, I'm just so [00:09:00] upset with her because she's not even taking the time to try to understand what my mom needs. So, I bang my hand on the table, on the counter, and I'm like, "Help my mom. Read her paper. She's deaf. She doesn't understand you. She knows how to read and write. She taught me how to read and write. My mom's not stupid. She just needs you to read her paper." Now the lady is like, okay, this kid is yelling. I can't, you know, I have this long line, and I, I, I don't know what to do kind of thing, you know. Then she's looking, and my mom is, like, telling, she doesn't know what I'm saying. She just sees my angry face, you know, and she's like, "Shh, what are you saying? No, no, no. Be quiet." And, uh, and then, "I'm so sorry," and she's smiling to the lady. "I'm so sorry. I just can't hear. Please read my paper," and telling me, "Be quiet," you know. And I'm here still screaming, you know, out loud, "Help. Help," you know.

And then a woman behind the counter comes around, and she says, "How can I help you?" I assume that's a [00:10:00] manager or something, you know, to come to support, supervise or something like that. And the first initial woman was like, "Well, I don't, I don't know. The, the little girl's screaming, she's crying, and I just told her, the mom, to go use the phone back there, um, to call an interpreter." And the lady goes, "Please come over here." She took us aside and, and walked us in through a, a, like a cubicle and says, "Come, come here and I will help you." So we go inside, sit down, and she takes, very gently, the paper from my mom. And that made me feel like, okay, somebody's here to help us, you know? And she reads very kindly the paper, very gently, and smiles at my mom and says, "Okay." And she takes a pen and starts writing back and forth to my mom. My m, I see my mom smiling. She's smiling, and I'm like, "Oh, someone has saved us." You know. Someone's saved us. They're gonna help us. She's taking the time to



[00:11:00] read my mom's paper. It's gonna be great. So, they continue writing back and forth, and every now and then, you know, there's a break in the communication where maybe the la, the woman didn't understand my mom or something, and I will insert something interpreting, oh, my mom means this, or, oh, this is what she said. Or I will tell my mom, the woman said this, you know, signing back to her.

And so, I just felt like, oh, I'm, I don't have to work here, and I'm being saved, you know, and she's gonna help us. We're gonna leave with the appointment, the things we need. So, after some time, the woman walks, um, gets up, rather, and she says, "Okay, your appointment is at such and such a time. Your services are this, and come back next week," or something. And my mom is like, "Oh, thank you." You know, so the results that she was looking for was met, rather. You know? So we, we walk outside and we're, my brother and I are, like, skipping [00:12:00] along. We're just gonna go back outside and, you know, go home, and I'm feeling great about the thing that happened with my mom. Like, this is great. We're walking out of the c, cubicle, and I'm looking to where that mean lady, and throw her a mean facial expression, you know. Mmm. We got this, you know. We got this taken care of, and you were not helping, kind of thing, you know. I want her to see my face because she didn't help my mom, you know. So, we, we walk out the, back out into the hot, and my mom taps my shoulder, and I turn around and I look at her. I'm surprised because she's crying.

Let me tell you something. I come from, um, a long line of strong Black women, deaf, hard of hearing, have fought their way, you know, for their rights and, and things like that, you know. Which means we don't, we're not a lovey-dovey, we are, but not, like, an affectionate, physical way where, you know, I go to my friend's [00:13:00] place, you know, my, my white friends, I would say, and they are lovey-dovey, you know, cuddling up, things like that. Well, where I come from, you know, they're, they're in survival mode, so there's, they didn't, there's no time for that. It's just, like, are you fed? Are you clothed? Do you have shoes today? You know, let, let's go. Keep it moving. Pull yourself up and go, you know. So, when I see my mom, like, tearing, there's no funeral, there's no wedding, there's no, you know, what, what did, what happened? I'm, and again, I'm six, so everything is catastrophic to me, right? And I'm like, "What's happening to my, why is she crying? Like, we just, what did I do? I mean, did I not do this right? Did I break something? I thought I fixed this. Everything is fine. Like, what happened? Oh, no." And she says to me very gently, and her eyes are filled with tears, and a tear trickles down her face, and she says, "Thank you. You helped me." And she puts her hand on her chest, [00:14:00] and then she does a 'I love you sign' on her chest, and her other hand she towards out, puts out towards me and says, "I love you. You helped me. You're deaf just like me. You have a deaf heart just like me." Oh, man. You know, and she hugs me and says, "Thank you. You understand me." Oh. And you know, I was like, okay. You know, just I helped her, we did this. And at, at that moment, I call it my coming of age story because at that moment, that small little first grader, six years old, um, I understood what my calling was.

I thought when I was that age, you know, I'm like, it is, I'm here to save deaf people against hearing people, you know. And then the added layer of her being deaf Black woman, you know, I'm here to save her against the mean hearing white people, you know. Six years old, everything's catastrophic for me. That's the story that I told, um, at, as the [00:15:00] keynote, and I used the authenticity principle, the three selves, to ask people, "What do you think was in people's

toolbox? The characters, what do you think was in their toolbox? What a part of the three selves? Which one?" So I, I say, "The woman behind the counter, what tools do you think she had? Which of the three selves do you think she was showing up as? Her most authentic self, her adaptive self, her performing self?" It's magical what people say, you know. Um, and then my mom as the character. What tools do you think she had? People are very, um, colorful with their thoughts about what tools they think she had. And, and the woman, the, maybe the manager, the supervisor, I don't know, like, what her role was, but she came around the counter to help us. What do you think she showed up as, and what tools do you think?

And, there's a new character that I started [00:16:00] introducing into the story just recently over the last couple years, the little girl. You know, what tools do you think this little six-year-old girl had? The parentified little girl, the language broker, the, the person who has the control. If you think about it, she's six years old, and she has the control and the power of communication. Making the decisions on the fly about which part of the communication should be shared or conveyed to my mom and, and, and explaining things that I just don't understand at a six years old, six-year-old, you know. To, to take it further, like, I remember times where I was interpreting my mom, for my mom at a doctor's appointment, you know, for her colonoscopy. I'm, I'm eight or so, eight or nine. I don't even know how to spell colonoscopy, you know. [00:17:00] Or, telling my dad, who is very strong dad, you know. I looked up to my dad so much, you know. He, in deaf school, he, Berkeley School for the Deaf, he was an avid, um, a champion wrestler. Even went to the Deaf Olympics as a wrestler. He, this is how, like, look at my dad, he's a superman. He's so strong, right? Well, one day we were at a family reunion, and he was looking for his favorite aunt. His aunt who, in his family, he was the only deaf person. No one knew sign language at all, not even his own parents. But this aunt knew how to spell in ASL, and so would communicate with him, you know. Um, you know, people knew how to gesture and make up their own home signs to try to communicate with him, but very surface level. But his favorite aunt knew how to spell and, and a little bit more sign language, [00:18:00] you know, than the rest. So, he was looking for her.

And so, I'm interpreting to one of my cousins or aunts, the, the adults, for my dad, "Where is, where is my aunt?" She says, "Oh, she passed away." She passed away. And I have to tell my dad that. And my dad's like, "Wait, what? Why didn't you tell me? I, when was the funeral? W, w, what day is the funeral?" "The funeral happened." "What do you mean? You didn't, no one told me?" "We, we, we didn't wanna worry you." Which later I think, you mean you didn't know how to communicate to him. But, I tell you that because I just said that, you know, how strong I thought my dad was, superman, you know. Here he is, I'm delivering some messages to him about how his favorite aunt is not at the family reunion because she passed away, in which no one communicated that to him. And watching my dad be really sad, and [00:19:00] just crying, belting out a, a cry I have not heard my dad do, and how small he must have felt with me as an eight-year-old, and I have to tell him this, you know. And then take care, take care of everybody in that situation. Those are just some glimpses.

There's lots of things, um, you know, I also talked about microaggressions, although I like to say macroaggressions. Because to me, it's like death by a thousand cuts. Are your parents mute? Do they know how to read? Oh, you're here, great. You can interpret for your parents. Wait, what? Oh, y, well, you were born into the deaf family, so, I mean, your, your, your, your purpose here is

to be an interpreter. That's already decided for me. You know, I'm, I, and I don't think my parents ill or anything. I don't think ill of my parents or anything. They did the best that they could with the capacity that they had, the tools that they had. [00:20:00] And I've done a lot of healing around the parenting that I wish I had and, and things like that, or the, a lot of healing around hearing people communicating their thoughts about how my parents' disability is, you know. Um, just hearing all that. And a lot of times I didn't share that with my parents, 'cause I seen how sad they are, and, you know, how disappointed, and how depressed they are. Well, looking back, I, I do understand my, my mom experienced a lot of depression and pain, and oppression, and discrimination, and she was hurt by that.

And a lot of times, I'll, if I'm honest, um, when I was younger, I thought I caused a lot of that. I thought it was my fault because maybe I didn't interpret clearly, or I didn't know how to spell certain words, or I didn't know what they were talking about. And I thought maybe it was my purpose to make sure that I knew how [00:21:00] to communicate so that my parents can get the outcome that they needed. And that turned into the little Black kids on the playground don't wanna play with me 'cause I'm talking too white, or I'm talking too bougie, or they think I'm a little fresh or something. Then, so, the white kids on the playground were my friends. But they also let me know every day that I was Black and I didn't all the way fit in. So, I've done a lot of healing around that. But just as a little kid, it's like you talk about identity and community, and it's like, where do you go? Today I'm very proud to be a CODA. There are a lot of positive things about being CODA. You know, the community, deaf culture is very much in my veins. It's who I am. It's, it's who I am first. And a lot of beautiful things, like we can talk to each other through windows. We can talk to each other through, in different cars on the street. Hey, and we're talking to each other in sign language. [00:22:00] We can talk with our mouths full. Those types of things. Um, and then there are some macroaggressions we experience with all the questions and thoughts about who we are.

Alexis Miles: You talk about being a child, a child who's still developing, you know, mentally, emotionally, having to make some big decisions. Do I let my parents know what I'm hearing or do I withhold that because I know it's gonna hurt them? Um, th, that's a big decision for a child to make. Um, and you talked about having to have counseling and things to, to cope with that. How do you think that impacts how you show up in the world today?

Monique Clark: Hmm. That's a great question. I have three children, so I think that I have maybe, hmm, I don't wanna call myself a helicopter mom. I've been told a tiger mom. I mean, it's not that. It's just that [00:23:00] I wanted to make sure that my children did not grow up the way I grew up. In the twelve years of schooling that we get here in America, my brother and I went to nine different schools. Nine different schools. And, it was because my mom always thought, like, you know, each time we were put in a speech class, or each time there was no interpreter provided for the parent-teacher meeting, and then we were forced to interpret that, you know, those things, my mom was like, "Oh, this is not for us. We're moving." Moving schools, you know. So, I made it a point to, my children will go to that same primary, that same junior high, that same high school, all in the same school district, you know. And, wanting to make sure they had everything that I couldn't have, the materials, but also, like, the programs, music lessons, [00:24:00] languages. Not sign language, 'cause they are very, uh, skilled in sign language. They are very fluent in sign language. Um, and, and just making sure that they had all of the systems

and, and privileges that I didn't have growing up. You know, I think that has maybe caused over-parenting, if that's a word, just because of my experience, you know. And it wasn't until the oldest one was about 16 where I realized, oh, I needed to heal the parent in me. No, I, I don't blame my parents, you know. I, a lot of us CODAs don't, you know. I don't blame my parents. I understand their disability and I understand, um, the way the world views them and the lack of resources and availability to them and opportunities, you know. But it caused me to build a, a shelter for myself. And it wasn't until later in my life where I needed to, I saw the way [00:25:00] that my kids were interacting with myself in their own environments where I was like, "Oh, that's a dir, direct reflection of me. I need to change something." And so, then, I went on the path of healing.

Alexis Miles: As you were talking about your childhood with your parents, it's like the world was seeing your parents one way, as these defective people, and you were seeing your parents as these people who were smart and had some skills, who did have a disability, but you had a totally different perspective on who they were. Could you just say a little bit about that?

Monique Clark: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. In my home, oh, man, my, my mom and my dad were just so well-equipped with their skills. You know, my dad was a chemist, and my mom was a teacher, and she can write very well, and, you know, they had goals for themselves. And in my home, they were the [00:26:00] smartest. You know, in our community, they were well looked at. You know, they were looked up to very well, you know. It wasn't until we'd go outside of our community, outside of our home, I understood how people looked at them. They looked at them as they were dumb. They looked at them like they were not as powerful as I thought, or not as I thought, as they were to me. They're no disability at home. They don't have a disability. I still look at them and not really feel sometimes that they have a disability, you know. I know they can't hear, but just because they can't hear doesn't mean that they're dumb or stupid or that they can't do things, you know. But the world looks at them very differently, and that had a big, profound impact on my life.

The cultural mediation was tough sometimes because I wanted to let them know, like, "Society's looking at you like this. These people are saying this." And they're like, "Mm, I don't care [00:27:00] about that. Keep it moving. Keep it moving." You know. And I'm like, "No, you need to understand," you know. The world does not look at my parents the way we look at our parents. They are beautiful humans with so much skill, so much to offer, and they always just wanted to be able to provide for their babies, you know. They just wanna build a home. They have a goal of building a home, just like all of us do, you know? They make sure that they can go out and work to, for basic needs or have a basic foundation for their children. And, in an insider home, they were so loving and, you know, just, just great humans. And then we step outside, and that's where the fear and the angst and it makes, made me feel like I wasn't, wasn't confident in myself, you know, growing up. I wasn't sure of my identity, you know. In, in home, I'm, I'm fine. I step outside, wait a minute, I'm questioning everything.[00:28:00]

Sam Fuqua: So, compared to those experiences you shared when you were a girl, what's changed and what hasn't changed for, for deaf people in the US today, and for people of color who are deaf?

Monique Clark: Today, there is great access for deaf and hard of hearing. You know, there's ADA that passed, and so then there's laws and regulations for interpreters. Today, I work in providing accessibility to deaf and hard of hearing through interpreting services. The story that I told when I'm six, when I'm six years old unfortunately happens in a very smaller scale around the nation, but there is, um, great access. A, a deaf person can go to a government building and, and request an interpreting services, schedule it out. Someone will come, and you will have adequate interpreting services. Um, you go to the doctor. You know, you make an appointment, and you also click a [00:29:00] button to say, "I need services. I need accessibility services." And then there's a dropdown, who, what do you need? ASL? An interpreter shows up. You can go to school. A deaf person can go to school and have interpreting services. The interpreters are provided.

Sam Fuqua: This is a little bit of a technology tangent, but I think it's really neat, the technology you work with in your company, SignGlasses. Can you explain what that is?

Monique Clark: Yes. SignGlasses is, um, an interpreting service where we provide interpreting services remotely, VRI, video re, remote interpreter, and we stream the interpreter through any type of off-the-shelf conferencing platform or devices, uh, through glasses, through smart glasses. It's, I'm really excited about that. I get really excited when I talk about this. B, it just gets me excited every day to go to work and with this beautiful team. You know, one thing, um, we're able to provide our [00:30:00] services through our own platform, and we have, uh, learning tools there for deaf and hard of hearing, where you don't need a note-taker. You can take your notes right there on the platform. You can click a button and bookmark it and go back to it after the session's done and watch your entire session with the interpreter there. I mean, that's, I wished my parents had these types of accommodations when they were going to school and learning and in the workplace and things like that. Um, there's so much we can offer today through technology to support the communication access for deaf and hard of hearing. There's so many people in my family who've been passed over. They have multiple degrees, my mom, passed over, you know, or wasn't able to, uh, utilize these types of services in the past. But today, it's readily available for them.

Alexis Miles: I'm trying to visualize, well, [00:31:00] there I go using one of that, visualize what that looks like. Well, let's say your parents are being interviewed by two people who don't know sign language. How would your technology help them to be in the interview using the glasses, the smart glasses?

Monique Clark: Using the glasses. So, we would schedule the interpreter. The interpreter will be offsite at their home office or something, and they will have their, on their computer screen, they will see the environment, and they will hear the environment. And the deaf person will be here in front of you with the glasses on, and you ask a question, and they will receive the interpretation through the glasses while looking at you, and they will be able to interact and communicate with you. Traditionally, an interpreter is always in person and near the deaf people. So, a deaf person, if you think about it, in an auditorium or a, a [00:32:00] big class or the planetarium, they are, have to sit in one designated area so that they can receive the access from the interpreter. It's not great always because maybe the, the instructor's writing on the board, and they're looking at the content on the board, and they have to go back and look at their interpreter. Or at the planetarium, you know, they're looking at the stars, and then they look down, way down at the

bottom over there where the interpreter is sitting with the low light setting. Well, when you put on the glasses, the interpreter is always in your line of sight, and anywhere they look in their environment, the interpreter is with them. So, that's like next level technology there.

Sam Fuqua: Does the interpreter, the remote interpreter, see and hear what the deaf person is seeing and hearing via the glasses?

Monique Clark: So, they will be connected to a device, so their phone, an iPad, tablet, laptop, and that is where they will see the interpreter. And the [00:33:00] interpreter in the glasses will hear the environment through a mic or through the device. Once they hear it, and then they produce the, the sign language interpreting, the deaf person receives it through the glasses. And when they wanna talk back to you, they will talk back to the camera that's on the device. Uh-huh. That's the two-way communication there.

Sam Fuqua: In the fight for social justice, racial justice, are issues of accessibility placed where they need to be placed?

Monique Clark: I'll first say that we cannot fight for social justice without including disability and accessibility. Just I'll say it one more time. We cannot fight or do this work for anti-racism, we cannot do this work for social justice without including deaf and hard of hearing, without including those with disabilities and accessibility. You know, it's DEIA, but I [00:34:00] think people forget what it looks like or what it means to include the accessibility, right? It could be mobile, it could be, uh, mobility, it could be neurodivergent, it could be invisible disabilities, you know, it could be someone autistic. Insert the, the, the, the name there, right? But, we cannot do this work without thinking and including and in talking about creating space for accessibility.

Sam Fuqua: If the A in DEIA is sometimes overlooked or neglected, why is that? And I think it's, it's not in their frame of reference. They've never had to deal with this at all, and they see it sometimes, they're, they go into their fight or flight or freeze, you know. They're like, "Ooh, I don't know how to handle this." So, they pass it off or they do what's they think is good enough. You know, I've, I've added artificial intelligence subtitles [00:35:00] to my presentation. I'm great. There's more that you can do, you know. I've put on the information that there'll be an interpreter for the keynote only, not for the whole workshop, not for the whole conference. That's not accessibility.

Alexis Miles: When we talk about equity, you know, inclusion, which requires us to see people as fully human. They aren't less than. They're, they're fully human. And it, it so, it seems related that just the way people don't look at us and automatically assume that we are as complex, as nuanced, as glorious as any other human, that people feel that same way about, in this particular case, people who, with limited or no hearing. Could you say more about our inability to see people as fully human?

Monique Clark: Yeah. I think people look at, at deaf people often and [00:36:00] just think that they're broken, you know, and they don't know how to interact. I think I, I often invite people to just stop, breathe, I know it sounds really basic, but when you take a breath, you're able to assess the situation and draw on the tools that you do have, and then make a better-informed

decision. How do you wanna show up? Do you wanna be intentional of the ways that you show up? You know, I, I think a lot about intent versus impact, right? People don't mean to be, you know, negatively impact the situation, right? But when they take a time to just breathe and assess their situation, "Oh, I can take out a piece of paper. Oh, the deaf person is trying to relay some communication to me with a piece of paper or a phone with their text message." How often I see deaf people trying to communicate with a hearing person through their phone saying, "Oh, I wrote a text here," and they're just like, "I don't know what to [00:37:00] do." Well, stop and breathe. When you're often faced with a phone, what do you do? Basic, right? You read it. Okay, now you can grab the phone again and text back if you, or you can write back, you know? But I think people are just afraid. If you never had to deal with something similarly to racism, if you've never had to interact with someone different from you, or if you've never were discriminated against, then you're like, "Ah, that doesn't happen."

In order to see someone as a whole human, as you were saying, some, somebody that's whole, I think you, you have to empathize with people. You have to be able to just draw within. You know, Resmaa Menakem talks about body practices. That's what it is, you know. It's like you go to the gym, and you, you work on your body to make sure you do these reps, so you can have the, you know, the outcome on your body, your physique that you want or stay healthy. It's the same thing, um, with working with [00:38:00] people with differences, you know. You confront something that you've never experienced before. Stop, pause, remember. Where is this showing up on my, on my body? Okay. I'm tensed right now. Let me drop my shoulders. Let me drop my tongue from this roof of my s, my mouth, and let me just look and assess the situation and respond in a way that I, that I would want to, uh, ordinarily respond in. As I go around talking about being a CODA and what it means for me, it's, I cherish being a CODA so much. It's so much of my identity. I think for me, I just really want people to understand that if you are confronted with someone or you meet or interact with someone that's different from you, maybe you've never seen someone who's deaf, or maybe you, you haven't invited someone from a different ethnicity in, into your space and have a conversation, I just want people to understand that we're all beautiful humans. [00:39:00] Humanity first. Humanity first. You know, I think a lot of people show up in their frames of reference and they're afraid, and that's okay. Or maybe they think, "I don't know everything and I can't handle this." That's okay. You don't need to know everything. But what you really need to do is stop and pause and remember that you do have tools. I think when we're mindful, you know, when we, when we practice mindfulness, we can just make the world, it's so cliché, we can make the world a better place, you know. Just practice mindfulness. Remember the tools that you do have, and go learn the tools you don't have.

Sam Fuqua: Monique Clark, thank you so much for spending time with us.

Monique Clark: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Sam Fuqua: Monique Clark is a speaker, a consultant, and Chief Operating Officer of SignGlasses, a remote interpretive service for deaf and hard of hearing people. You can find them online at signglasses.com. [00:40:00]

Thanks for listening to Well, That Went Sideways! We produce new episodes twice a month. You can find them wherever you get your podcasts and on our website, sidewayspod.org. Our site



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

S6E18: Stop, Pause, Remember Your Tools with Monique Clark

has information on our guests, interview transcripts, and links to more conflict resolution resources. And, we encourage you to sign up for our newsletter. That's at sidewayspod.org. Our production team is Mary Zinn, Jes Rau, Norma Johnson, Alexis Miles, Alia Thobani, and me, Sam Fuqua. Our theme music is by Mike Stewart. We produce these programs in Colorado on the traditional lands of the Arapahoe, Cheyenne, and Ute nations. To learn more about the importance of land acknowledgement, [00:41:00] visit our website, sidewayspod.org. And this podcast is a partnership with The Conflict Center, a Denver-based nonprofit that provides practical skills and training for addressing everyday conflicts. Find out more at conflictcenter.org