

**Transcript for “Not So Special Language” presentation by Lydia X. Z. Brown
NHCDD Full Council Meeting March 8, 2023**

At the table, but you are welcome to move somewhere else so long as you are not invading somebody else's personal space.

No personal space invaders, please. So, I wanna talk to you all about a couple of pieces of grounding information, because in my experience, when we open a conversation about language, we end up opening a conversation about language, we end up opening not just one can of worms.

But like the entire back of a pickup truck full of worms, which, if you've never seen, is actually a thing that can happen.

It is disgusting, horrifying, and basically material for a horror movie waiting to happen like, just imagine the pickup truck and the truck bed is just full of worms like that's the amount of worms that we're open.

And as some of your questions have alluded to or suggested, when we talk about language, it's really easy both for us and for other people, that we're talking to, to interpret the conversation as an accusation.

Of accusing each other, or people in our lives of being bad advocates, or worse being bad people, because they're not using the language that seems more current or more polite or more respectful.

So when we talk about language, it is important for us to understand that language does not exist outside of context, language about disability and language in general.

The language that we use shapes the ideas that we hold, and it reflects the ideas that we hold.

For example, when we talk about seeing the light or being left in the dark as metaphors for learning information, for changing your mind, becoming more informed or conscious, adopting a position that is more agreeable to the person making the description, that is more agreeable to the person making the description, or conversely staying in the dark

as a metaphor for somebody being ignorant choosing to stay ignorant, believing in falsehoods, or at the very least believing in information that's not as useful or not as precise.

We are conveying a value statement with that language, that type of language, the metaphor to see the light or to stay in the dark, assumes that everybody knows what light is, and that everybody knows what

Dark is. This is language that historically is rooted in ideas about sites, as being a primary, if not a predominant, way of knowing information and learning information.

I use this as an example, because when we think about our language in this way, it helps us recognize that our language is shaped by shared as well as majority experiences, the majority of people are cited and not blind for a blind person depending on what type of blindness they experience they may or may not be, able to differentiate between light and dark. Some blind people who are low vision, but not totally blind, can see the difference in gradation of lighter and darker.

Other blind people cannot tell the difference between light and dark, but the majority of people aren't blind at all, and so it makes sense that for the majority of people we have this common metaphor available to us to describe becoming more knowledgeable, becoming more educated, becoming wiser, or more conscious as

opposed to the metaphor of remaining in the dark for ignorance. We're being deceived or accepting or believing falsehoods.

Our language reflects our expectations, assumptions, and values, but it also serves to shape them.

Really common slang used to describe being cheated or shorted out of money uses antisemitic and anti-Romani language.

I'm not going to say those phrases out loud, because they're horribly offensive.

But if you know the phrases that I'm referring to, then you know what I'm describing.

Why am I mentioning this as an example? Because the use of antisemitic or anti-Romani language as shorthand for being cheated or shorted out of money or not being treated fairly, reflects societal values, particularly in a European and European descendant context, that paint Jewish

and Romani people as untrustworthy, deceitful, liars and money grubbers and a lot of people who use this slang that I'm referring to don't necessarily know where it comes from, because most people who aren't at least here in.

The United States. If you're not a Nazi, you probably aren't holding the thought of I hate all Jewish people, and I hate all Roma people, and that's why I want to use this language.

Because I'm trying to insult every single Jewish and Roma person.

That's probably not what the average person using that language is thinking.

But when our everyday slang in our everyday language comes straight out of racial and ethnic slurs for marginalized groups, it reflects generations of social and cultural values and attitudes about people in those groups and helps to at least in a small way perpetuate

the continuance of those attitudes, the continuation of those attitudes.

Our language cannot be removed from social context, and likewise our social context is at least in part shaped by the type of language that we use, and that is true even when we're not talking about slurs.

And even when we're not talking about language that encourages violence, when we see about disability and language, the language that we use to refer to disability and to talk about disability, to think about disabled people as well as to think about the experience of disablement, that language, itself, will always be informed

by, the societal and cultural values of ableism.

Now those of you who've heard me speak to you before, which I know some of you have have heard me talk about abroad, and I define Ableism very specifically, and indeed as much more than just prejudice, or by us ableism is not just a bad idea as about people with

disabilities. But Ableism is also a value system, or set of attitudes that teach all of us, even people with disabilities to be afraid of disability, to be ashamed of disability, to hate disability, and to want to distance ourselves, from disability.

We are taught even, and especially those of us who are disabled ourselves, that the worst possible outcome is for someone to be or become disturb in a new or more pronounced way.

Then the person might have been before we are taught to be afraid of old age, because of the fear that when you age, we might acquire aging related disabilities.

You may become incontinent, you may develop mobility, impairments.

You may need assistance with activities of daily living like eating and bathing, changing, and transferring.

You may develop a cognitive disability because of dementia and related neurological disorders.

There are many reasons that aging often brings with it the development or intensification of a wide range of disabilities and creating illnesses, and even those of us who are already people with disabilities are taught to be afraid of becoming older because of the fear that with age comes greater disability we are taught to

be afraid of disability, and that that is why certain public health marketing campaigns about drunk driving or texting, while driving or using certain types of drugs prey upon a fear of disability.

And we'll say, you know, if you drink and drive, you could end up in a wheelchair for the rest of your life, or if you smoke, you could end up needing a ventilator for the rest of your life, and the idea behind these campaigns is that people are already, and should be afraid

of becoming disabled, and that's what should be enough of a motivator for people to wear their seatbelts, only drive sober and avoid smoking cigarettes instead of like.

I don't know. Experiencing physical pain, putting other people in danger, experiencing the possibility of an earlier death like those are things that I would be concerned about, and I think that everyone, perhaps should be concerned about.

But these public marketing campaigns really rely upon a fear of disability that it's not you might die younger, or you could kill somebody.

But it's you could become paralyzed. You might need a ventilator.

These are stoking fears of developing a disability.

That's what those campaigns do. And so, when I think about able to, as a system of values and beliefs, this helps me to understand how our language both reflects ableist attitudes values and beliefs, and how are language helps to further entrench ableist values and beliefs and the example that we're

from today the use of the word special and its various forms to refer to people with disabilities exemplifies exactly this phenomenon.

Referring to programs, practices or people with disabilities, using the word special to differentiate between those who are disabled and those who are not between programs or policies that are targeted at people with disabilities versus those that are not entrenches the idea that discipline is something other the disability is something

embarrassing, the disability is something we should distance our cells from that.

We don't want to be associated with. We don't want people to think of us as having a disability, or to have a reason to think of us as having a disability.

But in turn, the more that we use language like Sp. Oh, somebody is not muted.

Yeah, yeah, it's a big hat. And Samantha.

I'm not sure who that is.

Okay, I think that whatever it was is has been turned off, or other euphemisms, which is language we use to avoid saying something directly.

So, instead of saying, people with disabilities, saying people with different abilities, or people with other abilities, I've also heard specially abled, differently abled.

Other agencies, and exceptionally able. These are all other examples of euphemisms, ways of talking about disability, where we all know that if someone says that phrase, what they mean is, people have disabilities.

But they're trying to avoid saying the word right so they're using this other language instead that tries to make it sound cute and not bad because of the assumption that the word disability is bad.

That's part of this assumption that the word disability is bad, because a disability is bad, because how a disability is bad.

So let's use any other word instead. And then we come up with these tortured expressions of exceptionally able.

I've even heard phrases like individuals with exceptionalities. Right?

That they use of this language reinforces the idea of that we should be ashamed of disability cause if somebody says, and I've seen this in the screen context, even individuals with exceptionalities, we all know who they mean we know who they're talking about.

And we also know that they're using this language to overcompensate for their existing belief that to have a disability is shameful and embarrassing.

It is a more awkward and tortured way to refer to people than just saying students have disabilities or disabled students.

In contrast, we don't usually expect people to describe me let's say, just using myself as an example, as an individual of an Asian American experience or an individual living with the experience of transgenerness.

Most of us would probably at least, I hope, not refer to me in those ways, and I think it's because we understand that if you were to describe me with those very tortured phrases, that's a way of just showing your uncomfortable was recognizing who I am that you are

uncomfortable with my identity or my experience, and so you don't really wanna say it.

And you wanna separate me from these descriptions that help you to understand, or could help you to understand who I am.

And how I move through the world. So we talk about this disability.

Our language, reflects societal ableism, and helps to reinforce it.

When we describe disabled people as something other, we tend to imply or attach a value statement that other equals lesser.

When we separate education into general and special, we are stratifying education into for the normals and for the specials we reinforce the idea that students have disabilities should belong in segregated classrooms should have segregated curricula, should perhaps even have completely segregated schools

as is still true in every single state there are entire special education schools, and that differentiating education for students with disabilities has to come with an assumption that a student with a disability is a lesser person who is not, as is capable as competent or as worthy of support as a student who does

not have a disability, I believe very firmly, as someone who has been teaching for years as well as someone who has been a special Ed lawyer myself, that when we are teaching children every single student should have individualized education whether or not they have a disability every single student learns in a different way every student has

different strengths and different weaknesses. Every student has areas where they have natural still in areas where they struggle, and every student learns and grows at a different pace.

Every student will gain skills and every student will lose them.

So for all of you in the room, whether you have a disability or not, thinking about your classes in school.

Think about the last time you took a math class. If you're not in school now, if you were given it test in that class now, would you pass, or how well would you do if you took language classes?

Would you pass a test if you were given a test in that language today?

Maybe I don't, you know, want to assume perhaps some of you are fluent in 5 languages, and you'd be fine, but I know for me I was an Arabic language major in college, and if I was given an Arabic exam today, I would absolutely flunk, I would not pass that exam

I it. It would just be embarrassing.

Frankly, and I think of a very capable person, but every single person on the planet will gain and lose skills.

The problem is that because of ablest values, we attach an additional value.

Judgment on people with disabilities for what we struggle with, what we need support for, and the skills that any of us might struggle with or might have lost in a way that we do not put that value judgment on, non-disabled people.

I know many colleagues and friends who have a variety of disabilities, who, just in the last few years have been in situations where they earned graduate degrees, and some cases master's degrees.

In some cases law degrees. In some cases, Phds. And they are struggling with all of their ads.

They're struggling to eat, some of them are struggling to ever remember to pay bills.

One person I know has been evicted. Another person I know was kicked off of their health plan, and has not been able to get back on Medicaid like these are people who in some level would be considered by society to be quote-unquote successful but are really struggling and don't have

access to the right support, and in part because there's this extra value, judgment placed on a disabled person, where, if a disabled person struggles with something or loses a skill, we reinforce that that means something is wrong with the person, and when we use language that describes disabled people

as other, and therefore as lesser, we reinforce the idea that it is normal and desirable to treat disabled people as completely incompetent as well as as undeserving of support.

At the same time one of my close friends describes this scenario, for many of us who have disabilities as the disability double bind.

If you are seen as capable of doing something, people won't believe you when you say you need help with something else.

And, on the other hand, if you are seen as incapable of doing something, people won't believe you when you try to exercise your option, and when you state you are capable of doing something real world example, my partner, who is also autistic, and I were in an airport together, when my partner had a

meltdown, which all of you who either are autistic or no autistic people yourselves know, is an extremely distressing and debilitating experience.

They had a meltdown, and the staff in the airport spoke to me as if my partner, who is older than I am any trial attorney, was a 3-year-old.

They asked me if I could control my partner and make them be quiet and go wait over there while they talked to me, as if my partner was an inconvenient toddler, and they spoke to me as well as if I was not even someone who is partnered with them were married but as if I

was a paid caregiver, which undoubtedly was also racism, because my partner is white.

And I'm an East Asian person. They spoke to my partner and to me about my partner as if they were a toddler, which is highly offensive, but also reflects that real experience, that if you are seen as incapable in some way, then no one will believe you if you try to assert your

economy, if you try to make choices, if you try to state that you are capable in some way, and simultaneously, I know that when I was in law school myself and I recovered a accommodation, I was denied those accommodations, I was not provided support and in part that was because of the

other side of the disability double bind, I was perceived as capable and competent, and therefore the assumption was, I didn't really need support.

I was making it up. I was asking for special treatment that I didn't deserve, and that would be somehow taking away something from somebody else who, it was implied, would truly have deserved it.

But that I certainly did not need, because I was presumed to be, and perceived as capable in one way.

So the language that we use helps to shape as well as to reflect the values and beliefs that we hold about disability.

And this has been true for generations, and it continues to be true today, and as you all have discussed and already had some conversation about our language will continue to change, and the words that we use today may not be considered the right words to use in 10 years from now or 20 years from now or 100 years from

now. But that's also true. Looking backward, the words that we use today weren't fathomable.

5,000 years ago, words that today we might consider widely offensive.

We're considered neutral and clinical even just a few decades ago, for example, today we commonly hear as playground insults the words idiot, moron, an imbecile.

And some of us who have a bit of disability, education.

No, that these words are referencing people with intellectual disabilities.

But 50 years ago, a half century ago, these words were not insults for people intellectual disabilities.

These words were considered neutral, objective, clinical, and significant.

Today a person might have a diagnostic evaluation.

That assesses them as having an intellectual disability with significant support needs in certain areas.

It might state examples of impairments in mobility. It might state experiences of cognitive processing, delay.

There could be a number of link number of phrases and types of language used in a person's neuropsychological evaluation.

Today, a half century ago, these other words might have shown up in the very same evaluation, because those words were considered the appropriate and neutral terminology, to use.

But today, when those words are no longer considered clinical or scientific, their Because we devalue people with disabilities. And again, we assume that the worst thing that can happen to you other than dying is being or becoming disabled.

And so we might call somebody one of these words, because even if the average person using it isn't explicitly intentional thinking about disability, they have been influenced by the societal attitude, that insulting someone by insulting their intelligence and implying that they have some type

of mental disability is a sick burn to use, like, you know, really clear language about it.

Right like this is. It's a devastating insult to insult somebody's intelligence or imply that they have a type of mental distability.

That's where those words are now. But other language that we use to talk about disability isn't necessarily as obvious as saying, here's some outdated terms that aren't used clinically and are now used as insults.

You should probably avoid using which you should probably avoid using those words.

If you can make an effort to not use those words as insults, I think that is a very basic act that many of us can work on.

If we're not already doing so. But a lot of language around disability is more complicated than that.

And the language takes forms of asking questions about as many of you asked what is actually respectful and what isn't respectful.

One of you asked, how do you know what language a particular individual wants to use?

And I have to tell you all right, like as one person who is disabled here, and I know that there are many of you who are part of this meeting, who also are disabled, or have a disability that I do not speak for every single person who is disabled.

I understand, and I advocate for the general preferences of a majority of disabled advocates.

But no group is ever a monolith, literally none like, if you ask the vast majority of Asians here whether the word Oriental is offensive, the vast majority of us will tell you that that word is offensive, and you should not use it to describe things like or types of food or our clothing for example, to

say oh, yes, I'm at Lydia. Lydia is some kind of orientation that is offensive, and the vast majority of us will tell you that.

But I am sure you can find a handful of Asians.

Who would tell you I'm not offended by that.

I don't have a problem with that language. They do not represent the majority of us, but they exist right?

And so for anything that we talk about in relation to disability and language, you will be able, if you try, to find at least some people with disabilities who don't agree with the majority, you will always be able to find people.

However, there are 2 principles that I find really helpful.

We think about language that resists Ableism. One is, if we're thinking about referring to specific people, use the language that's generally preferred by a majority of the community unless you're told otherwise, or no otherwise, for a particular person.

And secondarily, if you wonder what a particular person wants to be called, just ask them, and if you can't ask them, then that's an indicator that you don't have a good enough relationship with that person to really know what is respectful or not that goes for talking about people in general like if I want to ask somebody what is an appropriate way to describe your dietary needs, or what pronoun should I use for you, or am I calling you by the right name?

I, pronouncing your name right, or if I'm describing you for the purposes of this grant application, what link around race or ethnicity?

Do you feel comfortable with? Because I for example, don't ever call myself Asian American?

I say East Asian, very specifically, I don't find Asian American offensive.

I just don't use the phrase to refer to myself, and you can ask somebody what language is preferable to them and use it.

I think it's very, very straightforward and if you don't know, then aiming to resist, able to exposing your will on display people or furthering the belief that disabled people, or furthering the belief that disability is shameful or embarrassing or negative you're probably

gonna be moving in the right direction. If that's where you begin.

So I want to pause for a moment, because I'm seeing there have been a few comments in the chat, and I've been talking for a little bit.

So if you are on camera, can you give a thumbs up if you're like? This is resonating.

This makes sense. If this is working for me.

And can you give an extremely dramatic, confused expression if you're like?

Nope, I'm confused like, really dramatic.

Okay. I'm not seeing any dramatic expressions of confusion, but I do want to give you a chance to add again to our chat.

What other questions do you have? What else is bothering you?

What else is on your mind? Because I know that there are a lot of questions, and I want to make sure that our time is responsive to them. So, while you're writing questions, I want to take and respond to a few of the common themes that I saw which were about the distinction between language use in

the law and language that we might use as advocates that diverges from legal standards.

14:13:45 There's also, before I proceed to that, there's a hand from the room. I don't know who that is.

Hello!

Okay. I'm Debbie.

There is always a comment from the various groups like you say we're not monolithic, but there's like the people's first language, and others.

I myself don't identify with people. First language, I will say I am on the spectrum.

I am on tested, and my daughter, who is dead. We say your death, and that is a disability.

So you know, it's okay. But how do you get around trying to figure out respectfully respecting somebody's language when it's not flipping into?

So I really appreciate the question that you ask, and I feel like this also reflects some of the other themes that came up in the questions other than so I'll come back to the questions about differentiating between language that we use in language and legal standards and take this question now because I'm seeing a lot of questions on this theme as well. So, the question essentially is, I'm understanding.

It is. How do we navigate where our choice of language might differ from what somebody else considers?

How was your game?

That was their game. But.

Respectful or appropriate, and in particular, if we are talking to another person who has a disability, for I think one is unmuted, I'm going to mute her.

Okay. I'm muted, or if we are speaking to someone who has a disability themselves, or someone who is a family member or parent about their child, and that person might be using language that we don't agree with, I feel very strongly that you should never correct somebody about the language they used to refer to themselves under any

circumstances, even if someone is using language to talk about themselves, that virtually everybody else finds offensive, they're talking about themselves.

They can use whatever language they want to talk about themselves. But if they're upsetting other people, then certainly I think it is more than fair to let somebody know like you know, I don't wanna tell you what you can and can't call yourself.

But when you use this framework you're making me uncomfortable.

Is there any way that you would consider, maybe saying it less?

At least, if you're around me, just because this is affecting me, and you know I don't feel comfortable with it, like, you know, if you feel great about it.

That's fine for you. But I really hate when people say that word about people like me, and I really think that's something that primarily someone who has a disability would be in a position to say if you don't have a disability and a disabled person is using language that you think is offensive and even

if everyone else is offensive. But they're talking about themselves.

I don't believe that you have a place to tell them.

You can't say that, because they're talking about themselves.

And you don't have a disability. If you do have a disability, then I think it is again more than fair to be able to tell somebody like you know.

Say, whatever you want to about yourself I don't feel comfortable.

Hearing this word around me, and I would really prefer, if you would be willing to try to use it less if I'm in the room, because, you know, people call me that like it is really triggering.

It is really activating. It reminds me of like different abuse that I've experienced.

It is a word that has always been used to tear me down, and I do not feel comfortable hearing it from other people, and so can we find a way to deal with that.

But if you're talking to say a parent, because I've seen that question come up a lot here, and a parent is using language sort of to their child that most of us would say, that's offensive language that you probably shouldn't be.

Using. And you know, I really encourage one leading by example, just not using that language, not repeating it, not mirroring it, modeling, using language that is more accepted and respected by people who actually are disabled.

And if someone challenges you on that and says, well, why won't you say specially abled?

Or why won't you say that this child is mentally challenged when that's the language I'm using? You know.

That's an invitation to have a conversation, but I do not believe that just telling someone how you're talking about your child is bad is probably going to be productive it really isn't going to invite them to think through why they are using the particular terminology.

That they are using, and it might, in fact, shut down conversation.

Now I'm saying this in regard to phrases that are offensive, but not slurs.

If somebody is referring to their child using slurs, I think you should absolutely interrupt them and tell them that is not okay.

You should not be using the r word to refer to your child like what's wrong with you?

You're using the R. Word to talk about your own child.

I would like to slap you with er rotting fish, although I also don't really want to touch a rotting fish.

So there is a bit of a complication in being able to do that.

Hey? So, I'm seeing questions, too, about editing on people.

First, language and passing that from one generation to the next, and some else asking, how do you help a child at Downs?

Syndrome to develop language, to describe herself to others.

You know. I think that all children and all youth go through developing their own identity and may go through using different types of links across their lives and throughout their lifetimes.

And encouraging your child to explore what feels right and have permission to change her mind about what feels right or not.

Is one of the best things that you can do, because too many of us do not have the opportunity to make choices or be allowed to change our minds when we are children.

So to the question that was asked that this came from Tammy in regard in regard to using people first language and teaching about it, I didn't want to talk a little bit about the histories of people first language and identity.

First language, because this is something that trips up a lot of people.

And I think it was Deb's comment in the room, who also asked about this, and mentioned person on the spectrum or person who is deaf as language that's being used within that family, and I wanna talk a little bit about this history.

So language has always been political for people with disabilities for a very long time, and the use of both people first, and identity first, language.

Each have history in disability, activism, self-advocacy and politics.

And unfortunately, there are a lot of people who are not disabled who believe that they know what is best for people to disabilities, and that they should tell us what language we should use to describe ourselves, or to talk about disability, and they don't know the history, they don't know the history, of where

the first language came from, and they don't know the history of where people first language came from.

People. First language came from self-advocates with intellectual and developmental disabilities over the last half century, who fought against institutionalization and the worst kind of abuses in these institutions as a way of saying, rather than using horrifically dehumanizing language to refer to

us as things and as problems. Essentially, you need to see us as people first before you see any other thing that we are struggling with.

We are people, and so to use people first or person. First, language acknowledges the humanity and personhood of people with disabilities as people before anything else, that's where the history of people first, language comes from, and it still remains the general community preference for most people with intellectual

disabilities, and many people with developmental disabilities, identity.

First, language arose separately in a few other communities, notably in the deaf community, in the blind community and the autistic community.

As a way of saying, essentially, if there's nothing wrong with being deaf, team one or being autistic, then why should it be offensive to say that I'm an autistic person or a deaf person or a blind person?

If I'm not a person with Asianness, or a person with gender queerness, then why would I be a person with a disability?

Hold on a minute. Just heard some weird noises.

Oh! There's a human outside that would explain it, and if you have to use linguistic gymnastics to separate the word person from the word referencing disability in order to remind yourself that we are people or persons that it really seems like the problem, is you and not

us. The problem. Isn't that you're using the wrong language.

14:23:26 The problem is that you have a belief already that we are not people, and that you had to convolute your language to remind yourself that we're paying. I.

Eve was at a conference once, about 10 years ago, where a non-disabled person interrupted me while I was speaking, which she literally interrupted me when I was describing myself, and said, You don't mean that you're autistic you mean that you're a person with autism.

Don't call yourself autistic. That's offensive, and I was just like, I'm sorry.

Did you have the to try to tell me what language should have offended me when talking about myself?

But is that what's happening here like that is a level of hootspa that I was not prepared for, and I was just so taken aback like you just interrupted me to tell me that I'm wrong to call myself what I call myself, and so unfortunately there are some

non-disabled people who talk about people first language, as if it was invented by people without disabilities, as a way of being respectful to people with disabilities.

When the history of people first, language comes from self-advocates, not from non-disabled people, and when neither identity first nor people first, language, are universally used by everybody who is disabled or has a disability nice is universally used they reflect different values and different experiences and that is why the entire time that we've been together today you've heard me use both.

You've heard me use both person first language, and you've heard me use identity first language you will always hear me use both.

Because there are different groups of people with disabilities who use each one.

The history of respectful language is actually just. The history of respect.

How do we engage with one another to practice the values we believe in?

What does it mean to promote justice, and how we speak to and about each other?

What does it mean to promote? Kindness? I don't mean niceness, I mean kindness.

What does it mean for us to promote access in? How we speak to and about one another?

What does it mean for us to cultivate a trauma?

Informed environment or an environment that is access centered. What is it mean for us to honor one another's experience, even if there is tension, we're disagreement, as they're so often is like another example of how you're not going to get a universal list of here.

Are the terms that you should never, under any circumstances, use, and here are the terms that if you only use them, you will always be correct and not able us.

That doesn't exist. I can't give you that list.

I know that everybody wants it. Everybody wants to know. Here is the list of 5 things you can do, and you're never able to stick, or here's the list of 5 things not to say and you're always respectful, and I cannot give you that list.

But what I can tell you what I can emphasize to you is the importance of supporting and making room for the multitude and diversity of our experiences, that there are many ways to resist ableist values and beliefs that our language can help us to resist some of these police can help us avoid

reinforcing some of these beliefs and can help us practice or in develop practices of respectful engagement with each other.

But there is not a single list to give on this topic while we're still here.

James asked, what if a parent doesn't have a disability?

But they're child does, and the non-I think you mean the non-disabled parent language is triggering them or their child.

Would it be appropriate for the parent who doesn't have a disability to say something?

Then are you talking about a situation, James? Where there are 2 parents and one of them is saying something that's upsetting to their partner and their child.

Is that the situation that you're describing?

No, no, you described earlier, Lydia, about how some people, when they identify themselves, may use words that are offensive, right?

Or maybe perceived to be offensive, and you had mentioned that if somebody doesn't have a disability, they probably shouldn't say anything about it. Good idea!

Good advice, I'm just wondering. Well, what if you have a young child who has a disability, and the person who you know there's a third party not involved with the parents that's talking about themselves and saying things like you know, say they have down syndrome, and they use you know, a Slur

for down syndrome would it be appropriate for the parent to say something in that instance, even though the parent doesn't have a disability?

But they're child does.

I think it would be appropriate for the parent to tell their child that other people might be upset by the language they're using, but not to say you can't use that language.

Does that make sense so like? If a child, say an autistic kid, decided to refer to themselves as the R.

Word, just as an example, this autistic kid says, yeah, so basically, I'm the R word, you know, like, I don't think that you should say you are never allowed to use that word to talk about yourself.

But I think it would be the place of the parent to say, if you use that word in public, people will be really upset if you use that word where other people can hear that is a word that is extremely hurtful to a lot of people, and you shouldn't say that in public unless you are prepared for people

to be angry at you and be hurt, and not want to talk to you because you use that word.

I would say that there's another narrower set of circumstances where, if the child is using this word and again in my example, there's an autistic kid using the R word to talk about themselves because they are trying to put themselves down so this is not a situation, of reclaiming which I think is

separate they're not reclaiming it like for poetic or activist reasons.

They're just insulting themselves because they heard other people call them that then I don't think that it would be appropriate or helpful to say never use the word but to lift up your child and say, you know, why are you calling yourself that you know like you deserve to be treated more

respectfully like, I want you to be treated respectfully.

I try to respect you and you deserve to treat yourself respectfully, because the problem isn't the word by itself.

The problem is that this child has been taught to hate themselves.

And they're using that word as a weapon against themselves.

In that example, in the example where the child is using the word basically to reclaim it and I've seen some adult activists do that.

It's not common, but I've seen it done a few times where adults with intellectual developmental disabilities, autistic or otherwise, have used that word in a reclaiming context, usually in an activist context, you know, like the trial could do that but again, I think it would be

appropriate for Parent to say, you can do that, but you need to be prepared that a lot of people will not know.

Yeah.

That's what you're doing. And they will be angry and hurt and upset, and I think that's you know, it's the same thing as if a child was using any other term to refer to themselves that other people in public could interpret really, badly.

And again, this is part of why, I believe I don't have children currently, but I've worked with a lot of children, and if I ever do have children, I believe that teaching and supporting children by explaining will always be more effective than just telling someone don't do this or don't say that, like the child needs

to know why you're saying. You know it's not that saying this word makes you bad, and that you should be punished.

But if you say this word, people will be upset at you.

If you say this word, people will think that you believe some really awful things if you say this word, people get really happy, and people will think you're insulting them.

So you shouldn't use this word unless you want people to be angry and hurt or upset, and public.

Does that make sense?

Oh, yeah, oh, I think you missed us in saying his question.

I think, yeah, asking is the other, don't.

Oh, that is a disability community, the is it?

Okay for the Per of the disabled child to say something.

Tuesday, and though.

But I'm still confused then, because I thought this question was about a child using offensive language.

No, I don't think so, is it?

Thank you for clarifying Kathy. No, no, Kathy's absolutely right, thank you, Kathy.

Can you explain it better?

Sure, so I'll use the example you just gave Lydia.

So somebody with an intellectual disability an adult is not related to this family, or is walking by, and if they use the r word to describe themselves, you know the parent of the child with an intellectual disability may be very upset about that would it ever be appropriate for that parent to i'm not

saying that a parent would say, don't ever say that!

But could they say something cause? From what you said earlier, it sounded kinda like a blanket ban about if you don't, if you're not experiencing a disability, you answer my question at earlier.

I think I really think that I really think, yeah.

Anyways, I think what you said earlier was perfect, so I'll stop holding up the group. Sorry.

I've I really think we're rules lawyering this.

Do you know that term rules lawyering? Does anyone know what I'm talking about? Rules?

No, no!

Lawyering is a term that comes out of the gaming community like video games and tabletop role playing games.

And it basically means when a person is trying to think of every possible exception or loophole in a situation and just go into every possible variation of a situation.

Sure!

And I think it's unnecessary. There's literally an exception to every possible situation like, for example, I say it is wrong to restrain a disabled person like engage in restraint, like restraint and seclusion, but there's exceptions, to that if a disabled person

is actively wielding a knife and about to stab someone.

I really hope someone restrains them. And tries to grab the knife, but I think that you should have the same response.

If the person wielding the knife doesn't have a disability as well.

That. Yes, that is actually the scenario that is the hypothetical emergency that teachers who engage in restraint and seclusion are always citing of saying, but what if it's an emergency?

Well, that's an actual emergency. Of course, there's an exception to the rule that I would say the general rule is no restraint in seclusion or harmful abuse of practice that should not be condoned or used by schools or any other people working with people with disabilities but

there's exceptions, right? And I think if we're trying to dwell on either, assume that a rule applies universally, and there's literally no exception to it or trying to spell out every possible exception that I don't think that's a good use of our time, and I don't think that's really helpful

to us, and understanding Ableism, because the problem we talk about able is isn't exactly when and where can a person who is disabled versus does not have a disability save something?

But rather the problem is the general assumption that people without disabilities are assumed to always know better than people with disabilities.

And so, if a person does not have a disability in general, they shouldn't be trying to correct people with disabilities about the language that people with disabilities use for ourselves.

Are there any other exceptions to this rule? Sure, I think there's exceptions to almost every role in the plan.

I say almost because I'm like, okay, surely there are some rules for which there are 0 exceptions.

But I think then we're talking about things like genocide and murder that like there is no exception to wait.

Should this ever be allowed? No, that is absolutely not a situation where there's an exception to the rule.

But we're talking about language, or we're talking about how.

In what way should people without disabilities interact with people, with disabilities?

You know, that's a totally separate type of conversation. There is not ever going to be a list of universal rules right?

That's the point that I made a few minutes ago.

There is no universal list of completely applicable rules that have no exceptions, that if you only follow these 5 rules you're never doing anything wrong I don't think that's true.

I think that finding the right in a situation can require a nuance, and that there are also many ways to be wrong in a situation.

They're both true. So, I don't think that it is as important or useful in the conversation to try to spell out every single situation where a person without a disability should say something about a person with a disabilities language use but rather to call our attention to the underlying problem of the

assumption that people with disabilities are always incompetent, and that people without disabilities always know better than us.

Frank. I think you've been trying to raise your hand to speak.

Do you have a question?

You're muted.

So you need to unmute for us to hear you.

Do you know how to do that?

Hey may need to ask for help for that.

Frank, is there someone with you who can help you with unmuting?

Frank when she says unmute. We can't hear you talking, Frank.

Whoever is the meeting host, they can go to the participants, panel and ask Frank to unmute, and it will pop up with a little window that he can click.

Yes.

Can you click the yes, button, Frank?

We can't hear you, Frank. We can't hear what you're saying.

Can the moderator on mute?

I don't think the moderator can force and unmute.

They can't. No!

So, frank. You will have to ask someone for help then to unmute because we can't hear you. So I don't know what you're saying.

Video while Frank asked for help. If you could address the issue about the language and the law as an attorney.

That's you know, who's talking to parents almost daily.

I think that's a big concern for me where the law literally discusses a child's rights in terms of language that we're talking about as trying to avoid.

So you know it. That is, I'm just curious sort of what your thoughts are around that because even trying to say appropriate education or FAPE. FAPE is defined as special education and related services under the law.

So I'm curious if you could address that question, because I know we only have a few minutes left.

Yeah, so that was also, I think, the other prevailing theme of questions that people had was, how do we deal with the conflict between language that is stipulated and legal requirements and standards and language that we might feel comfortable with as advocates and for me?

I having been in practice before a, though not an active practice.

Now there are some times and places where you have to use link.

Yeah.

Language that's specifically with law. Oh, Frank, we can hear you now.

Hi! It's on! Now!

Yes.

Yeah, I was saying that people have disability as well as getting an education and the job also, people with disability.

Are entitled to be famous like other people. Yeah, being discriminated where I wasn't.

And people with disability were not treated by. They traded people with disability they didn't wanna change anything.

For people with disability. They only wanna teach the brighter people and I don't think that was right.

And I was there for 3 years, and call me at say so, and that was the first.

Institution has been closed down by the Disability Rights Center.

Hey? Because they were not taking care of people with disability. Right?

Right. So, the institution that you're talking about is, I'm really glad it's not there.

And that one's a personal situation. They fall down. No, Hamster.

Yeah, and unfortunately, there are still institutions throughout New England, even though many now have been closed.

But I am really glad that you got out, and you're not there anymore.

And so your comment on people disabilities deserving not to be discriminated against and deserving the same treatment in society, is related to the questions about language that we use in the law, because, unfortunately, some of the laws that guarantee people with disabilities certain rights use language that now many of us

would consider at the very least not ideal, if not outright, harmful.

And so you know, for legal advocates, if you are writing a brief to a court, or you are writing a memo to policymakers, you may need to use the exist language that is in the law, because you have to do so to accomplish a certain end.

But if you are not writing a memo to a court that has to quote a specific legal standard found in legislation in a statute, or found in regulatory authority, or that was written in a court decision, then you don't have to use the same language that the law, does and there's

no requirement that you do so. If you're having a conversation with a school, as people mentioned in another common in the chat, for example, you don't have to say students who qualify for special education services, you can say students of disabilities, you can say students who are eligible for an IEP or students who should have a

504 plan you do not have to use the same language that comes out of the statute, or students who should have a 5 or 4 plan. You do not have to use the same language that comes out of the statute or the regulations, and you know there's not a requirement.

To do so, you should use the language that affirms your values, and that furthers your purpose.

And I do that in a lot of spaces that I am in like I do not use, for example, the language of racial minorities.

I think that language is mildly offensive.

I don't think it's a slur. I find it mildly offensive, and so I just choose not to use it.

I choose to use the language that reflects my own values, and that furthers my aims as an advocate.

And so that's also true for us when we think about disability, access, and advocating for disability rights.

I you know again recognize there's always going to be a time where you might have to use the language in a particular statute.

It is not avoidable, but if you are writing your own documents, giving testimony, communicating to a school, speaking about your own needs, and advocating for yourself, you should use the language that affirms your own values, that reflects what you would like to be referred to as if you are a disabled person.

yourself, or that reflects what people in your community have told you that they would like to be used in reference to the, and I do not believe that there is an inherent conflict at all, because most of us don't use legal language in everyday life.

Anyway, like, I don't know anybody who's going around having conversation about assumption of liability and a dumification on a daily basis.

Oh!

So if we're not doing that, then.

Well, so I am a member of the Dd.

Council, and I am a number of people, parts of New Hampshire and self.

Well, I'm glad that you're able to be here, and that there are many people who are from New Hampshire's deed Council, and people first who are present.

I think you're not the only one here who's from people first.

So that's great as well. So in any case, I guess the last point that I wanted to make on that topic was just that, you know, we can use the language that we know in our communities know, reflects our values and reflects the values that we want to further, entrench in society, and we

don't have to use the language that we know is harmful, or that we know would be hurtful.

Are there any other last questions that folks have in our remaining time?

Awesome. I also am a member of the United Nations.

Console 1 12, and I am a Catholic.

Hmm!

I don't actually know what the UN. Council is, but.

And then with a family in Manchester, a family home.

That's good.

Betsy asks, do you see a way forward in making changes in the legal terms used in the idea?

The idea has already been changed. Right when it was originally passed in 1973.

It wasn't called idea. It was called the Eda. It was called the Education for all Handicapped Children Act.

Thankfully. We don't use that word anymore in the law.

And we change the name of it so sure we changed it before we could change it again.

Do I think we're very likely to. Of the current Congress being extremely divided politically, probably not.

I think that if Republicans proposed changing the language that a lot of Democrats would say Oh, Republicans are just trying to do something superficial instead of dealing with real issues, and I think if Democrats proposed making the change Republicans would say this is a woke radical agenda of trying to make up offensive language. So, you know, I don't think that right now.

It probably is likely to be changed, because if either of those parties proposes it, I think that the other one would instantly be annoyed.

But we changed it before. Yeah.

Maybe when it's reauthorized, maybe when it's reauthorized.

One day.

Perhaps then, but even then, I think that a lot of legislators who might otherwise be amenable might be confused, because the word special, for example, like, I think we just know from today's conversation.

It's not as widely recognized as being offensive, as you know, calling the law handicap children or using the R word like, I think more people know that those

are terms we shouldn't use. I don't think a lot of people think of the word special as a problem.

So!

Yeah, so I do think it's possible it could be changed at that time.

But I don't necessarily think that there's a big movement in that direction.

There's a question for Tammy. Tammy says I was thinking of making a book with the rest of people. First, New Hampshire and team salt members about is self-advocacy, leadership team.

Yes.

Oh, great! I got that right about how to put plain language to good use, but I also think it will be super.

If we could make a toolkit about proper use of language.

Yeah, those sound like great ideas, and I hope you're able to do them.

Cool.

Are there any other last questions?

Just to let you know. I just couldn't resist thinking outside the box.

All right. That's Tammy. Yeah.

Hmm!

Uhhuh. Yeah. I always approve of thinking outside the box. We should all do more of it.

Well, if there are not other questions, I hope that this time has been helpful to you all, and thinking through some questions and difficulties around language, as well as giving some background and context, to why language can be important and what it reflects societally so thank you all for allowing me to join you for this hour or

so of time, and I hope you have a fantastic rest of your day and eat something wonderful and delicious.

Soon.

Thank you. Thank you. Hey?

Hmm, thank you very much.

And thank you to everybody who joined us. There was a lot of people online, so many that my computer get proud of.

Good. Welcome. Yeah. So for all of the people left in the room, and anyone who's on the Dd.

Council. That's online. We have collaborated with the DRC.

The Disability Rights Center and the Institute on Disability.

This frequently ask questions, call. Don't call me special.

We have some hard time copies here. It has really good question, some of which Lydia did cover, and this stuff in this.

The ability to ask questions in real time and get feedback from individuals with lived experience about what might be right for them and what might be right for others.

I appreciate the fact that there is the discussion around. There's no one answer for everybody.

And that we're all just doing the best we can.

And it's important that we encourage language that is included.

And, you know, not able to support people with disability.

But we don't want to browbeat people when they make a mistake, because that's not gonna help.

Get the changes that we want to see in the world.

We want to encourage them with kindness and with grace, to try and be more respectful, and do better.

When they can. So it is, is the very intentional, mindful action that we all need to take to make changes in the words that we use to be more supportive and inclusive.

And it's gonna take time. So, we're we're excited about the commitment that we are going to make around this topic and around this issue.

And we will be working on a press.

Release, and some like media release about this topic and hopefully get other organizations to sign on and to really be a part of this commitment, to use work that are not offensive or it's empowering.

Yeah, I think for all the other council members who are connected to organizations like, now is the time to start thinking and asking about that like, would would you join us with the DRC.

The console the lv. To make this commitment not to say we're gonna be perfect, because we know we're not to really do that.

We, we're hoping to have another training with Lydia that's gonna be open to the public, and I think that'll be probably sometime in April. We don't have final day set with them yet.

But it. We're working through that process and we want to be able to say that we, along with a lot of other groups and organizations, have made this event so Kelly and Isadora and I have talked about trying to start to reach out to people and ask them to sign on to a statement or

pledge or kind of a commitment to this, and then, before the training to actually announce it and say, you know, 20 organizations across the are 100 organizations.

And I'm thinking they have signed on to make this commitment that we're not gonna use these for today.

So, yeah, so the more people in groups organizations, you know, people.

First they have family voices, the area agencies, all of them individually, C environment services and reputative education.

All of these could be good sign on if they would be willing.

Thank you. Anybody. Have any questions or final thoughts, or anything that they would like to share before we close.

Information being shared with the group is information, and they are available for paid speaking engagements.

They have a fee structure we can share with you as well.

And yeah, I think that they're fantastic at what they do and really are able to make a point in ways that resonate with a lot of different people. I know the DC.

Has one that this account will have a one pager on language on their website.

So what we did is we collaborated the 3 organizations, collaborated together on this F. A.

Q. That is, around this particular language change that we would like to see happening, and.

Other than that the Dd. Council has always had one pagers and pamphlets around like words to use, instead of other words that are available.

That's what we're looking for well, you know, the reason I'm saying is, sometimes I'll say the the I'm saying.

Is. Sometimes I'll send the DRC. That's sometimes I'll say the counsel just need to know. Wanted to know.

Yeah. What? Direction to point? Do we have other resources? We traditionally have messaged because that we are Uhhuh.

That's funny, I think, to what individuals who lived experience have said.

They prefer, and again, like Lydia, shared.

It's not everybody, but we also listen carefully. If someone corrects us and prefers to be referred to as a person, and prefers to be referred to as that, and prefers to be referred to as a person that is identified, whatever you need okay, I like to make an

announcement. I just want to let everybody know that.