

Stories from the brainreels podcast transcript

May 1, 2015

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Introduction

CHERYL: Welcome to Stories from the brainreels. I'm your host, Cheryl Green, from StoryMinders up in sunny Portland, Oregon. This is a monthly podcast about brain injury and disability with a focus on art, culture, and disability pride. Contact me at info@storyminders.com with questions or topics and guests you want to hear on an upcoming show.

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CHERYL: This month it's back to disability arts and one of my favorite topics: disabled people having a life purpose besides inspiring non-disabled people! I'll be talking with Nina G. Comedian today. But first, some news and info.

The documentary film, "[Who Am I To Stop It](#)" is well into editing and post-production. We're still looking for sponsors to support the costs for creating Closed Captions and Audio Description. So contact me if you'd like to become a sponsor We've hired [Celia Hughes of VSA TX](#) to do the Audio Description. I'm really excited because Celia is the person who first got me involved in disability arts. I worked as the VSA TX summer intern about 13 years ago. How wonderful to come full circle and get to hire Celia to do this project with me.

In June and July, I'll be working at VSA TX as a teacher at a film internship for young adults with disabilities. The interns will learn everything from developing story ideas to audio and video recording to editing and producing. The whole project will culminate in a film festival on July 12th down in Austin, TX. More details as we have them for this exceedingly exciting opportunity. I'll definitely be recording a lot of podcast episodes while I'm down there to fill your minds over the summer.

In local disability arts news, Disability Art and Culture Project's Inclusive Arts Vibe Dance Company bi-annual dance performance is coming up this May 8th through 10th held at Zoomtopia in SE Portland. Please visit their Facebook at facebook.com/DisabilityArtandCultureProject or their website at DACPHome.org and visit the Inclusive Arts Vibe tab and the Authenticate page.

Lastly, if you like what you hear or read here, please be sure to subscribe. You can follow the blog with regular updates by email when a new post comes out at WhoAmIToStopIt.com/blog. You can listen to the podcast and read the accessible transcripts right from that site. Subscribe to the podcast through [iTunes](#) or [Stitcher Radio](#). And, this is the one that feels the silliest to say: if you're on Facebook, please pop by and give the film or StoryMinders a quick "Like." Facebook.com/WhoAmIToStopIt and facebook.com/StoryMinders. Don't worry, thanks to Facebook's ever-changing algorithms and machinations, you won't get your newsfeed flooded with updates. They make it pretty hard for businesses to do that to you! But your "Likes" really do add up and make a big difference in building confidence in the work.

Enough from me. Let's meet Nina G. Comedian, my friend and instigator of many laughs.

The Interview

CHERYL: Nina G. Comedian, welcome to the podcast.

NINA G: Hey, how are you?

CHERYL: [giggles] I'm great. I'm glad to have you here. How are you doing?

NINA G: Good.

CHERYL: I would love for you to give a little introduction to yourself. But then also, let's not forget to talk about the fact that your new one-woman show opened on April Fool's Day,

NINA G: Yes.

CHERYL: which is hilarious. But let's start with an introduction.

NINA G: Sure. So my name is Nina G. And I am America's only female stuttering standup comedian that I'm aware of. And just like you said, April 1st was the release or the premiere of my one-person show, "[Going Beyond Inspirational](#)." And I premiered it again on the 3rd. And then I've also done it at a few colleges and stuff like that too. And then I'm traveling it around this July and booking it in the meantime. So doing lots of neat stuff with that. And then also, on May 1st, the [Comedians with Disabilities Act](#) and Friends album is coming out.

CHERYL: I especially love the name of your group, the [Comedians with Disabilities Act](#).

NINA G: Yeah.

CHERYL: It is such a clever name. I think, in some ways, that Americans with Disabilities Act is a little bit laughable itself. Wouldn't you say?

NINA G: Oh, yeah. There are elements. And you know, anytime that you involve the government in anything, there are laughter possibilities, so.

CHERYL: Definitely. And when you have a bunch of non-disabled people writing legislation for disabled people, man, you're gonna get some good jokes. One of my favorite being--I forget which George Bush it was--but one of them referred to it, in a public presentation, as the Americans For Disabilities Act. And I'm like, woohoo! Go disability!

NINA G: Oh my gawd. That had to be Bush II [laughs].

CHERYL: Probably. Probably.

Interviewing disabled people

CHERYL: OK. I found this [really nice interview and article with you](#) from this site, pricenomics.

NINA G: Yeah.

CHERYL: Which, it's actually just a little bit over two years ago. And it was such a great interview. And I thought it summed up so much of what you're about. But one thing that really stood out to me was that

the person who interviewed you didn't seem to add their own commentary about how inspiring and special you are. Did you notice that?

NINA G: Yeah, well, and actually, that's somebody who knew me. And that could be part of it [laughs], is that once you get to know a person with a disability, kinda the inspiration wears off. And I think that's where we need to get in America, where the inspiration wears off so that we're just like people.

CHERYL: Yes, just like people. I've seen plenty of people with disabilities being interviewed, and they're allowed to speak in their own voice. But then, the journalist always puts some little commentary that I think undermines them. So I'm glad they didn't do that here.

NINA G: Yeah, no, that's great. And that's great feedback for him too

Nina G.'s comedy, disability humor, and "Going Beyond Inspirational"

CHERYL: Let's talk about "Going Beyond Inspirational," which premiered at probably your favorite place in the world, the Pacific Pinball Museum.

NINA G: Yes, that is where I do a monthly show. And the people who run the place are really awesome. Plus, I love pinball. And plus, the Friday night show, one of my good friends, Darren, DJed it. So we had dancing afterwards. So it was just all around really great. And yeah, and you've been transcribing a lot of my stuff. So you got to hear the show. I forgot about that! [laughs] So you're more than intimately familiar.

CHERYL: You know, I will admit, sometimes I will go to my partner, Andy, and say, "Listen to this joke that I got from Nina cuz I just transcribed it." So it's a pleasure to be able to transcribe your performances and rehearsals and different iterations of this because then I get, I get the jokes before anybody else does!

NINA G: Yeah, totally!

CHERYL: It's so fun. Yeah. You said you're at the Pinball Museum every month? Is that right?

NINA G: About like yeah, sometimes we miss a month. But we usually try to do a monthly show there. And it raises money for the museum. So it does that. And it makes the comics a little bit of money too, which is always nice. Cuz we don't always get paid.

CHERYL: Which I think might come as a surprise to a lotta people that you're mostly volunteering your time for that. Are there other performers with disabilities who do that monthly show?

NINA G: It all depends on who I invite. But on May 1st, we're also having the premiere party for the Comedians with Disabilities Act and Friends CD. So there'll be all kinds of disabled comics that night on May 1st.

CHERYL: Oh, that's awesome. Would you say in general your audiences tend to be mostly disabled people, or is it mostly non-disabled, or just anybody?

NINA G: No, it is mostly non-disabled or mostly people who think they don't have a disability, I think, is more accurate [giggles]. And that's why it's so great to do the Comedians with Disabilities Act show cuz on occasion we do have shows where people come, and they're part of the disability culture. But that's five times a year or something like that, if that. And so it's so nice when that does happen because like

when I've done stand up at the [National Stuttering Association](#), when I've had shows during the conference, people get my jokes. And like I don't have to explain them. And people laugh at the right parts. And it's just so nice to have that cuz I rarely get to have that. But most of the time, it's non-disabled people. And on top of that, being in the politically correct Berkeley area, people will sometimes have a difficult time laughing because they're taught not to laugh at the disabled. And then when like, the disabled person is asking you to laugh, then they still don't laugh. Which then shows me that you still have your ableist attitudes because you're not willing to go there with me. So that's always interesting to me.

CHERYL: That is. And it's an experience I have too. There was one time when I did a film screening that was, I'd say like, 99% disabled people. And the rest were family members. I think there was one therapist there. I showed one of my comedy films. And they laughed from before the film started; they just started laughing. And they didn't stop laughing for the entire 13 minutes. And you never actually heard a single word of the film because people were laughing so hard. So everyone experienced the film through captions.

NINA G: Oh, yes!

CHERYL: Yeah. When I have shown the same exact comedy film for an audience that's mostly college students, mostly speech therapy students, crickets! It's absolute crickets. And sometimes, I'll start to laugh out loud to encourage them. And they still won't laugh.

NINA G: Yep.

CHERYL: And I notice there are times in your routine where you say, you know, "I'm America's only stuttering standup comedian. You can clap for that!" And you know, you often tell audiences this....I totally forgot what I was gonna say.

NINA G: No, but I think I know what you're going to.

CHERYL: What was I going to say? OK, you say it then.

NINA G: OK. I think what you were gonna say is that you have to like coax them along to be comfortable. I've timed it. And at a minute and a half, that's when they start to get adjusted to me. And that's why I also do kind of a fake stutter at first when I do my stand up where I'm all, "Somebody asked me my name, and it's Nnnnnn" because I'm like, OK, you can look at it now. We're gonna get it out of the way now. I'm gonna stutter really hard on this. And then we're gonna move on! Then that's it! Now, other stuff.

CHERYL: Right. And you have a great joke about that too that I have to tell you this now because otherwise you're gonna think, does that girl know she sounds like that when she's talking?

NINA G: And that's when I was doing the Berkeley audience [laughs].

CHERYL: That was Berkeley? And that was The Moth Radio Hour, right?

NINA G: Yes, it was filmed in Berkeley. And yeah, I kind of had the feeling that if I didn't talk about my stuttering--cuz my story wasn't on stuttering. But I knew that if I didn't, they'd be like, oh my gawd. What's going on? Is this real? Is this fake? What's going on and duh duh duh duh? Do I laugh, do I not? So you really have to get people. You know, like in comedy it's always getting people on your side. But

it's also, I think, when you have a speech disability, you have to get them on your side, and you have to get them acclimated to what's going on.

CHERYL: Mmhmm. Well, and it's interesting because it tells you how uncommon it is for a disabled person to be in the media and be present with their disability.

NINA G: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: Because anytime somebody shows up, and you see a wheelchair or you see or hear some sign that speaks to disability, then people assume the story has to be about that disability. Oh my gawd. Why's that girl in a wheelchair? How about doesn't matter? How about you just listen to the lines she's speaking the same as you're listening to all the other actors? And you maybe are never gonna find out why that person uses a wheelchair. Although, for the most part, the media plays into it. And if they have a disabled character--or much more rarely, a disabled performer--then the story line just seems to have to revolve around that. And you don't play into that.

NINA G: Yeah, no. And I really try not to. Although, you know I do feel like if I'm doing straight stand up, a lotta times I will have to frontload my stuttering jokes. But then I try to move on past those into my other jokes. And hopefully, that acclimates the audience. But you know, if it's at an open mic, I've gotten to the place in my comedy or in my development as a comedian that like, I'm just gonna do it. And maybe I'll say one thing about stuttering. But then, I try to move past that cuz it's my time to practice, not theirs. If they're paying for it, then it's different. Then I try to do my good stuff. Cuz my stuttering stuff is also some of my best material cuz it just kinda writes itself.

CHERYL: [laughs] Yes it does!

NINA G: So.

What is up with Berkeley?

CHERYL: So help me, if you could, understand this Berkeley thing. I live in the Pacific Northwest. I am not close to Berkeley. All I know of Berkeley is this is the place where the Independent Living Movement started. And this is where Ed Roberts fought to be allowed to access his education. And I think of Berkeley as being this total cripp-family everybody's welcome. But then you talked about how it's so PC and people won't even laugh at your jokes about your own experience. What am I missing about Berkeley?

NINA G: Well, it's like Portland.

CHERYL: Oh, it's just really, really, really nice.

NINA G: Yeah, like everybody wants to do the right thing. And everyone wants to say the right thing. And then, once you kind of offer a paradigm that is different, then they're like, oh my gawd! What do I do? And also, I think when you own your disability, then people don't always know what to do.

CHERYL: Mmhmm.

NINA G: And it's like I have a preconceived notion about this. And whatever preconceived notion I have about your stuttering is what I'm going to convey and to keep. What I've learned through a lot of the performance stuff is that if you don't own your disability, somebody else will. So you have to own it before them. Because then, they will take it. And they'll appropriate it, probably in the wrong way,

probably in a way that is not cool with you. And I find that both in comedy but just in everyday life that you really need to take charge of it and figure out how you will take charge of it. Because if you don't, other people will. And that's where it's like, OK, are you a "person with a disability," or are you just a "disabled person?" Like, that's where it gets all kind of muddled up because where we are now in our society, you have to take ownership because someone else tell you what to do and how to act. So it's a weird process. And what do you think about that?

CHERYL: I agree that's a weird process. And I still kind of can't get past the irony. I mean, I agree with you about owning it and letting people know where you stand with things. But then, it sounds like in Berkeley--and definitely in Portland--and probably a lotta places that that desire to do the right thing is kind of in a way just lip service. Because if they really wanted to do the right thing, and you said, "Here's how to be an ally to a stutterer," then they would try those things you said. Or if you said, "Here's how my stuttering plays a role in my life. And I want you to laugh at this next joke," then they would say, "OK. She wants me to laugh. I'll laugh." But so it's so ironic. And that to me is the epitome of political correctness rather than truly trying to be sensitive and respectful to the person. In political correctness, you, like you said, have a preconceived notion. And you don't change it no matter what the oppressed or marginalized person says.

NINA G: Mhmm.

CHERYL: So they wanna do the right thing by you. But they won't actually take your suggestions or your opinions as valid even when they're about yourself. So I'm never coming to Berkeley. [Both laugh.]

NINA G: I thought we were going there on Sunday [laughs].

CHERYL: Um. You know, I have no sense of geography. All I know is that I will be in San Francisco, California on Sunday. Where you and I are gonna meet, I have no clue. But if there's a bus that takes me to Berkeley, I'll meet you in Berkeley. Alice Wong said I should go to Berkeley. But yeah [laugh], you can drag me there kicking and screaming.

NINA G: OK [laughs]. We should do like vegan food in Berkeley in like the most politically correct way that we could possibly do it and then do something obnoxious there [laughs].

CHERYL: Well, it sounds like we'll eat in complete silence. And then afterwards, we'll just simply speak and that will [laughs] throw people off enough.

NINA G: That will be enough [laughs].

CHERYL: Oh my gosh.

Media shouldn't always be about inspiring non-disabled audiences or consoling disabled people

CHERYL: So you have this fabulous press out: Comedian who stutters goes beyond the punch lines at Pacific Pinball Museum. And I love that: "goes beyond the punch lines." And your piece is called "Going Beyond Inspirational." I like that. I hadn't noticed that at first. One of the things you have in your press release is you talk about a world where people with disabilities are often portrayed solely as being inspirational or are otherwise presented through the filter of perceptions of people without disabilities and that you offer a refreshingly authentic representation. In your press release, I can't help but notice a

really fabulous joke that you put in there that all of your stand up and presentations of this piece that I've seen and heard, people love your light bulb joke.

NINA G: Yeah, thanks to you!

CHERYL: Well, it was my idea to collect a bunch of disability how many people does it take to screw in a light bulb jokes. I started that idea. I collected a ton of them. But then, there were scheduling changes, and I never--I edited them into a video. But I never actually released it. It didn't happen. But thank goodness your joke has taken on a life of its own. And I want you to tell it, not me. Would you? Would you?

NINA G: Sure.

CHERYL: OK.

NINA G: How many disabled people does it take to screw in a light bulb?

CHERYL: Um...how many?

NINA G: One to screw it in, and five able-bodied people to say, "You are such an inspiration!"

CHERYL: [laughs] I mean, I've heard you tell it a dozen times. And it cracks me up every time.

NINA G: Yeah, because you've transcribed it like ten times by now.

CHERYL: I have, but it still makes me laugh every time because it's so true. You can't do anything without commentary about disability. And it's always this supposed compliment. Like, oh how terrible that you have a stutter. I better console you. It's like, ack! I don't think you talk about that in "Going Beyond Inspirational." But what is that thing where people are constantly trying to console you about your disabilities?

NINA G: Mmhmm. Well, and I think they try to console in different ways. I think one is to tell me that it's not that bad, that, "Oh, I barely even notice that you stutter." Or, "Oh! Your stuttering seems really good right now."

CHERYL: [laughs]

NINA G: Or when they call me up, and my voice mail doesn't stutter. And they're like, "Oh, good job on not stuttering on that!" Not knowing that it took me like 15 tries to get a halfway fluent voice mail just in case a job opportunity calls, and I'm trying not to like get discriminated against or something like that. So like, people don't see the background stuff. And so there's the consoling like, "Oh, well no, you're almost like me! You're not quite like me. But you're almost like me! So good for you!" And also what I, and this is also cuz I have the learning disability, I think people don't wanna believe that I have a learning disability cuz if I have a disability and I'm smarter than you are, what does that say about you? [both chuckle.] Do you find that with the brain injury, too?

CHERYL: Oh, oh yeah. I mean, what I get all the time is, "Well, I can't remember such and such, and I don't have an excuse like you do! Ha ha!" Sometimes, when I'm feeling very angry, which is 90% of my day, I will say, "I don't have an excuse either. I would say that forgetting things now and again might be

the most natural function of being a human that there is. It's almost impossible to be a person who never forgets."

NINA G: Yeah.

CHERYL: And so, and a lotta times when I forget things, I just say, "Help me out. I can't remember what that is." And then they blow it up into this whole thing. "Oh yeah, well you've got this excuse." You know like, shut up. Actually, I used to forget that kind of thing before too. Like, people will bring it up. And they definitely console me. They definitely tell me I'm doing a good job. But usually, they are much more focused on themselves and saying things like, "I can't believe I just tripped! I don't even have an excuse like you do." Someone said that to me once. I'm like, "I don't trip."

NINA G: [laughs.]

CHERYL: What the hell was that about? I am not someone who trips very often. And yet someone tripped in front of me and made this big hullabaloo. And I'm like, you know, you seem to have in your mind that there is the perfect human and then there's us broken people like Nina G. and Cheryl...G. But I don't really go by Cheryl G. But my name does start with G. We seem to be this broken model, this, we're the exception. And then there's some standard. But it's just BS. Can we just be people in a room together?

NINA G: Yeah.

CHERYL: Except, I say that. But then, when people are like, "I hardly even notice your stutter," well, it's one thing to erase someone's disability and erase all the experiences that go with them. That's totally separate from just being people together where I accept that you have a disability, and I don't have to cry about your disability.

NINA G: Yeah, well, and also what it's like is like the whole color-blind thing

CHERYL: Ugh!

NINA G: around race.

CHERYL: Yeah.

NINA G: And it's like, well, I don't see the person's color, which OK, then you don't see the discrimination they experience. Then you don't see the culture. Then you don't see the resiliency that they have because of everyday microaggressions. And disability kind of falls into that same kinda thing.

CHERYL: I'm glad that came up again cuz I wanted to mention: you said when you record your voice mail--and maybe you're being a little bit flippant and jokey, but I think you're being at least mostly serious--you record a voice mail, you want it to be basically fluent because somebody might call with a job offer. And you don't want that discrimination to start right off the bat.

NINA G: Yes.

CHERYL: But you didn't say, "I wanna sound fluent because that sounds better." I think some people might not readily pick up on that distinction.

NINA G: Yeah, no, that's a really good observation [laughs]. That's, that's exactly. Yeah, no. And it's not that I, you know, no, that's so astute that I'm still even processing it [both laugh].

CHERYL: Well, I don't understand why it's taking you a long time to process. I mean what, do you have a brain injury? Geez!

NINA G: [laughs] No, I don't have an excuse like that. I have a learning disability, so [chuckles].

CHERYL: Oh, shoot!

Impromptu Disability Olympics

CHERYL: OK, wait a minute. I can't figure out where on the ladder learning disability would be compared to brain injury. That's really tough. Cuz you started out with yours. I didn't get mine till later cuz I have trouble making decisions. You know, I came to it late. I didn't know.

NINA G: Well, no, I mean I was raised with it. So I've acclimated throughout. And it still fucks me up, so [both laugh]. So I couldn't imagine not having those skills all my life and then all of a sudden.

CHERYL: Yeah.

NINA G: So.

CHERYL: Here's a funny one. If we're trying to rank TBI versus learning disability, right?

NINA G: Yes.

CHERYL: I'm gonna throw you for a loop. Are you ready?

NINA G: Yes!

CHERYL: I had...I'm trying to remember what it was. Hold on! It was, it was, oh! No, it was, I had an incident in my martial arts class. I used to play capoeira. And I had an incident that involved someone's foot and my head and then my head and the ground. And I stuttered for a couple of months after that. Does that get me more points or less points?

NINA G: Um, it is what I would say....Well, since it passed you, I think it was like temporary, you know? It's like having a broken leg.

CHERYL: Yeah. Damn it.

NINA G: Ha ha ha!

CHERYL: So it's almost like--

NINA G: I win!

CHERYL: You win. I had the points. But I lost them. And in fact, by bringing up the story, I lost even more points probably [both laugh].

NINA G: Well, and also I have Crohn's, which I don't talk about a whole lot. So I have three things. So that probably trumps you big time.

CHERYL: I could tell you about my collagen.

NINA G: Really?

CHERYL: Yeah.

NINA G: What's that?

CHERYL: It's like not there. My connective tissue in my body is whacked.

NINA G: Hmm!

CHERYL: And so my knees dislocate a lot.

NINA and CHERYL: Ew!

CHERYL: It's disgusting!

NINA G: I know. That would freak me out!

CHERYL: So, but I don't think--Yeah, it is pretty freaky especially when you're walking down the street, and you're just standing there, stuck in the middle of the street like, I can't walk cuz my knee won't bend! I don't know. I think Crohn's tops dislocated kneecaps.

NINA G: I don't know. I'd rather have shitting issues, I think.

CHERYL: Yeah, yeah. You'd rather have shitting issues than shitty knees?

NINA G: Yeah, I think so. Oh but, you know, this is a thing on disability is that whatever you get, you're like, yeah, yeah, that's OK. But then you know, if you add to it, you're like well, no, that would be really hard. And then you get like all that ableism about that thing. And that's where it's so different than other minority groups because it's a hierarchy is constantly there. And we're like, well, at least I don't have that, and at least I don't have that, and at least I don't have that, so.

CHERYL: [giggles] Right. And we are being really silly. But I do wanna say on a serious note, this is really interesting. And tell me if you've experienced this. So I do have a masters in speech-language pathology. So I was, I didn't going into that field. But I was going to. And for several years, I was really immersed in that world. And I noticed something really interesting about parents. So in the adult world, I'll often hear non-disabled adults say about disabled adults, "Oh, I bet they wish they didn't have that disability. Nobody would wanna have a disability." But when it comes to parents whose kids have a disability, I would hear them very often say maybe they wished their kid didn't have such and such. But they never wished their kid to be non-disabled.

NINA G: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: They would pick some other kind of disability. And I always found that so interesting that, and it's not like they were picking like, I really wish my kid had this. But you know, kinda joking around the way we were: oh, if I could trade dislocating kneecaps for a stomach issue, hmm. I think a lot of adults assume that everyone would choose fully non-disabled. But when people are really in the disability world, you find that we don't actually do that. We do kind of pick a different disability.

NINA G: Yeah, well, and also there's the magic pill thing, which I'm sure you've had lots of conversations about.

CHERYL: Yep, yep.

NINA G: Yeah. And like, to me it's such a waste of time because it's like why spend time on something that's never gonna happen that is still part of me? And if I did have availability to a magic pill, like I would want the magic pill to make me money or like send me on a nice vacation. Because those are the things I want more than to be "normal" in terms of the able-bodied world. And you know, maybe the magic pill could be like not being screwed over when I order a drink. But even that, I can take that. I want some free stuff. That's what I would want the magic pill for.

CHERYL: [laughs] And I know so many disabled people who would agree. When people ask you that, "Well, if you could take that magic pill and get rid of your disability," why do you keep assuming that life with a disability is so awful? Now, disability discrimination and prejudice and ableism and systematic denial of access and accommodations? Those things are terrible. But that is not the fault of having a disability. You know, but people just assume that that's the problem, you're the problem.

NINA G: Well, and if we're the problem, it's a lot easier to fix those things.

CHERYL: You know, that's true. If you would just get outta your wheelchair and learn to walk, we wouldn't have to build that ramp. And that ramp's expensive. Yeah.

NINA G: Yeah.

CHERYL: Yeah. So all you wheelchair users out there in podcast listening land, go ahead and learn to walk. That's gonna help out capitalism quite a lot. A lotta small businesses will benefit because they won't have to put in accessible bathrooms, ramps, elevators, that kind of thing. You'll really be helping out small business and helping the economy grow.

NINA G: Unless those small businesses are construction. Then perhaps not.

CHERYL: That's a really good point. Hmm. Well, we got a lotta work to do, don't we? [both laugh].

"Going Beyond Inspirational," Disability Visibility Project, and storytelling

So talk to me a little bit about "Going Beyond Inspirational." It's a one-person show. What does that mean, artistically?

NINA G: It means that I get up in front of a crowd, and I tell stories and jokes. [laughs] That's what I--is that the answer you're looking for? Or is there something more intellectual [laughs]?

CHERYL: Nope. That's exactly. So I know that you've got a lotta jokes in there. But it's not a standup comedy routine. There's so much storytelling in there that may or may not get laughs, but it's meant to go deeper than your stand up material usually does.

NINA G: Yeah, yeah. And I really wanted the opportunity to kind of have the stories, joke about them, but then also kind of say why they are significant. Because I don't think people always connect the dots. And that's also where I forget all the time that people don't connect the dots because I'm kind of, you know, entrenched in my own disability culture that I forget that people just don't know what words to use and that kind of thing.

CHERYL: Speaking of stories. You did the Disability Visibility Project storytelling, right? Do you wanna talk about that real quick?

NINA G: Yeah, and I actually did two. I did one with my parents. And I did one with Alice, which was just me. And so I had both of those experiences. And I really wanted to get my parents on there because on my dad's side, I'm fourth-generation disabled. And on my mom's side, my mom's mom had polio and has some interesting stuff. I don't know if you read that!

CHERYL: I...oh yes! That was funny.

NINA G: Yeah!

CHERYL: That was some funny stuff. Don't mind me and my neck brace today [both laugh]. Honey, could you find that eye patch for me? I'm going out.

NINA G: [laughs]

CHERYL: That's just how I imagine she talked about getting her accoutrements.

NINA G: No, no, but it was more like, "Oh! I need my eye patch! Where's my eye patch?! Oh, I have to go out! And ! Ah!" It was more like that.

CHERYL: [laughs] Mm. People will have to come to see the show to hear the whole story about your grandma.

NINA G: Yeah. Yeah, and my stuff on my grandma isn't even worked out yet cuz there's so much. I have no idea where to go because I think she may have had a medicalized fetish.

CHERYL: Mm, oh!

NINA G: Cuz she would love to give enemas. When she went to the doctor, she would say stuff like, "Oh! I'm going to the doctor's. I have to put on my doctor panties!" Really odd stuff. Like, parts of her house almost looked like a medical dungeon in an S and M club because of all the stuff she had [laughs].

CHERYL: Wow! Well, I'm seeing a sequel

NINA G: Yeah.

CHERYL: I'm seeing a sequel to "Going Beyond Inspirational," yeah. "Grandma's Dungeon: Beyond Inspirational" [both laugh].

Finding Nina G. online

CHERYL: Will you tell folks where they can find you online, in the many, many places, as well as where people can come and actually go to "Going Beyond Inspirational?"

NINA G: Well, you can go to BeyondInspirational.com. And I have a list of the places that I'll be: in Tallahassee, Florida on July 25th is one that is coming up. And it's a benefit for [Ability 1st](#). So I hope everyone checks that out. And then there's a couple other places that I'm doing parts of the show but hoping to get it booked more. So please contact me for that. And then also, my regular standup comedy

NINA G: Well, and these four plus three of our friends. So it's me, the three guys who are in the group: Eric Mee, Steve Danner, and Michael O'Connell. But then also Queenie TT joins us along with Loren Kraut and Steve Lee. So we have many voices on there, different experiences in the disability community and world and all that stuff.

CHERYL: OK. And just one quick technical detail, is it an album like a record.

NINA G: Yeah!

CHERYL: It is?

NINA G: Well, but it's a download.

CHERYL: Oh, OK. OK.

NINA G: So [it's available on iTunes](#).

CHERYL: Oh great. OK. I plan to get it because I saw that, well, I made Closed Captions for it, that little promo video you had where there were snippets from each of those five or twelve, however many people you just named. Funniest shit in the world.

NINA G: Thank you! [both laughed]

CHERYL: That cracked me up. I tell you what. I make captions for a lotta people. And it's not always the most enjoyable job.

NINA G: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: But captioning your comedy stuff is downright hilarious.

NINA G: Thank you.

CHERYL: And I enjoy it. And yeah, so I will definitely be getting that album, especially now that I know it's not a record. Cuz I don't have a record player. I'm just stuck. When I hear the word "album," I can't think of anything besides a record, so. That's just me.

NINA G: Yeah. I would've loved to have had a record cuz the first album that I ever bought was a comedy record. So I would love to have that. But yeah, that's not it. That's not what we do now [laughs].

CHERYL: Aw! We don't play records anymore, Cheryl [both laugh].

NINA G: Some of us do. But mostly, no [laughs].

CHERYL: Right. All right. Well, Nina, I can't thank you enough for coming on the podcast and talking about your show and talking about your work. I'm really excited to post all the links and get people really jazzed about what you're doing and how fabulously you do it.

NINA G: Great.

CHERYL: [whispers] It's very inspiring [laughs].

NINA G: Thank you! You're inspiring as well.

CHERYL: [laughs] Damn it! Now we're competing again. OK.

NINA and CHERYL: [laugh]

NINA G: Just wait until we see each other Sunday [laughs].

CHERYL: Oh man! I'm gonna bring my javelin. Just letting you know. Just letting you know. But in truth, you had a dream to be a standup comic. You thought you couldn't do it because we don't have a cultural landscape where people with disabilities are encouraged to be performers. But you went, and you did it. And that's fantastic and hopefully a really powerful role model to other people who can come to realize your disability is not a limitation. It's people's limited expectations of you that cause the limitation. And then you can just, you know, kick their expectations in the buns and do some standup comedy anyway.

NINA G: Yes.

CHERYL: So thank you for kicking the world's buns [chuckles].

NINA G: That's my hope [laughs]

CHERYL: All right!

NINA G: Thank you so much!

CHERYL: Absolutely. I'll see you in a few days then!

[music]

CHERYL: Thanks for joining me for another episode of Stories from the brainreels. Find more handy info on brain injury and disability art and culture on my disability arts blog, WhoAmIToStopIt.com.

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