

Stories from the brainreels podcast transcript

December 4, 2017

Introduction

[upbeat theme music]

CHERYL: Welcome to Stories from the brainreels, a podcast about brain injury, disability, and neurodiversity with a focus on art, culture, and disability pride.

This is the series finale in the Stories from the brainreels podcast, and in honor of that, I wanna to tell you how this podcast started and why it's ending.

How and why the show started

[catchy, goofy music]

Years ago, I started listening to a call-in show on the streaming Brain Injury Radio Network. It's low-fi, all internet-recorded phone calls. A friend mentioned to me that she wanted to start her own streaming radio show and asked if I could teach her how to do it.

"Sure! I love the tech stuff. I'll send you some instructions."

I start writing the instructions. And I realize I can't tell her how to start a show because I've never actually started a show. Why did I agree to do this? I mean, I'd only listened to someone else's and called in once or twice. So, I create an account so I can create a fake show. What'll it be? What should I call this? Who cares. I'm not really doing a show.

I finish up the instructions and send them off to my friend. And I realize that hey, wait, now I have a show. Maybe I should actually do a show.

I had used my made-up word, "brainreels." I had it just sitting around. It's a handy term I made up after I started making short comedy films about my brain injury back in 2011. It's an ineffective portmanteau of brain and film reels. I don't know if you can really make a portmanteau out of three words, but I did. OK, I thought, I'll do a radio show where people tell stories about making art after brain injury. I mean, that's what the show is, right? It's me making art after brain injury. And a lot of people make art after brain injury, and they will all want to tell me about it. And it can be Stories from the brainreels, and no one will listen, and it will be fun anyway.

After a year or a couple years or something (I don't remember), I learned how to actually record and edit audio and got gear that was fancier than a telephone plugged into the wall. Remember phones plugged into the walls? I had mine until 2016.

[rotary phone dials]

When I got the gear and the know-how, I moved the show to being an interview podcast. By that point, it was never conversations about film reels and often not at all about brains or brain injury. The show was interviews with artists and activists with a range of disabilities and a range of disability experiences, and occasionally, the non-disabled person or two. And it just keeps developing from there. It's always been political. I've tried to not be focused on injury and recovery stories or stories that frame disability as the triumph of an individual over adversity. I won't share miracle recovery advice because recovery is so tied to each person and their community and resources. One person's miracle is too expensive or weird or hard to reach or culturally irrelevant to some other person. And I don't know. I just don't think that recovery is the only interesting topic. So, I stick with talking about isolation, stigma, ableism, and also art, comedy, politics, and yes, stories. OK, animals too. Stories about animals are good as long as there's some tie to disability in there.

Why this show is ending and the new show, Pigeonhole

This show has reached the end of the line at episode #65. I've gone as far as I can with a word no one can understand, a word that sometimes gets typed out as "brainwheels," a word that I made up on a whim, and a word that doesn't at all describe anything that I do. It kind of never did, but it was cute for a minute while I put together those streaming radio instructions for my friend. And I think creating audio and transcripts for 65 episodes of something I wasn't even planning to do isn't too shabby.

[ambient electronica]

Coming soon, you can continue to get interviews and stories by, from, and about disability communities on my new podcast, Pigeonhole. Just like this one, text transcripts are always released along with the audio for every episode at the blog, WhoAmItoStopIt.com. I'll keep all the old transcripts up there, and the audio may or may not go into deep freeze. Pigeonhole will have lots of encore presentations of interviews or excerpts from this podcast, like the Disability Olympics with Rick Hammond where we pit blind versus TBI for some nearly impossible mental athletic tasks. Spoiler alert: I'm pretty sure—if I remember—that I lost all of the events. Go, team blind. Also, TL Lewis talking about the relationship of ableism to racism and Deaf and disability justice in the carceral system; and Sara Acevedo on neurodiversity. And we'll also have brand new stories and conversations that explore disability identity, activism, and pride through the arts, always centering the people telling the stories and the communities they come from.

Follow the blog at WhoAmItoStopIt.com for news when the podcast is out, or pop over to iTunes in January—or February to be safe (or maybe it'll be ready this month, in December)—and subscribe to Pigeonhole. I'll be so happy if you do.

Thanks to everyone who followed me on the long journey of DIY streaming radio to DIY podcasting. Oh, and while you're waiting for this new series to start, please subscribe to and download the Disability Visibility Podcast by Alice Wong. The Disability Visibility Podcast is a production of the Disability Visibility Project, an online community dedicated to creating, sharing, and amplifying disability media and culture. All episodes including text transcripts are

available [at disabilityvisibilityproject.com/podcast/](https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/podcast/). I've been audio producing and editing for that series along with Sarika Mehta and Geraldine Ah-Sue. They've all motivated me to seriously up my game, tighten my focus, and make sure that no matter what, no one puts me or my beloved disability communities in a pigeonhole.

Wrap-up

[upbeat theme music]

CHERYL: Thanks for joining me for another episode of Stories from the brainreels. Find more info on brain injury and disability art and culture and transcripts of all the podcast episodes at WhoAmIToStopIt.com.

Music in the episode:

“[Pigeon Strut](#)” and “[Sneaker Chase](#)” by Podington Bear. (Source: freemusicarchive.org. Licensed under a [Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/).)

“[What True Self? Feels Bogus, Let's Watch Jason X](#)” by Chris Zabriskie. (Source: freemusicarchive.org. [Licensed under a Attribution License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/).)