

'Interview with Keri Gray'
Keri Gray Consulting Group
International Disability Rights Affirmation Conference 2023
November 10

[2023/11/10 11:28] Elektra Panthar: Hello everyone.

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Voice-to-text transcriptionists provide a translation of the key ideas discussed, NOT a word for word transcription.

Voice-to-text services provide an in-the-moment snapshot of ideas and concepts, so that those who are unable to hear or to understand the audio program are able to participate in real-time.

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Transcription is provided by Virtual Ability, Inc.

The transcriptionists are:

Carolyn Carillon

Elektra Panthar

The speakers will be identified by initials as they speak.

The following initials in the transcription record will identify the speakers:

KG: Keri Gray

[2023/11/10 11:35] Shyla the Super Gecko (KriJon Resident): Welcome to IDRAC 2023.

My name is Shyla the Super Gecko, and I am standing in for the wonderful Suellen Heartsong who can not be with us today.

When I was asked if I could fill in, I found reading Suellen's introduction we have a lot in common. We are both members of VAI, Suellen having the privilege of being the "editor" of the VAI Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/VirtualAbility/>

We both have diabetes, degenerative disc disease and PTSD.

Suellen is a retired 911 dispatch supervisor in the physical world, and I served as a volunteer emergency responder until my disability.

Keri Gray is a cancer survivor, entrepreneur, speaker, and facilitator. She is the CEO of the Keri Gray Consulting Group, LLC, where they strive to create professional communities of understanding through disability and racial justice education.

She is also founder of the National Alliance of Melanin Disabled Advocates (the NAMED Advocates), which creates spaces for disabled leaders of color and BIPOC allies to gather, learn, connect, and grow around racial and disability justice.

Keri's work has been featured in Teen Vogue, the New York Times, People Magazine, Time Magazine, PBS NewsHour, Madamenoire, and the Diet Coke campaign #Unlabeled. We will have a question and answer time at the end of our interview. If you would please hold your questions for Keri until then. Keri, What things do you want to share with the conference attendees today?

[2023/11/10 11:38] Elektra Panthar: KG: Thank you so much for having me and the introduction!

I'm happy to be here with you
The work I do is intersectional
I identify as a black disabled woman
A little context, I come from Texas
I've always loved community spaces, being surrounded by people and nature
I also grew up on the other side of the railroad tracks
I saw the disparities
I knew advocacy has to be a big part of what we do
I was diagnosed with cancer at 8 and I didn't have a lot of representation
I wasn't sure how to navigate my identity
I was used to hide it until in college I found the disability community for the first time and I was blown away
I fell in love and knew the racial justice advocacy I was doing needed to intersect with disability justice
When we talk about politics, identity is complicated
So it's important to educate people to help them understand
So I wanted to find a way to talk about both and not isolate either identity

[2023/11/10 11:43] Shyla the Super Gecko (KriJon Resident): What is NAMED Advocates and how do you help others?

[2023/11/10 11:44] Elektra Panthar: KG: we actively believe in liberation of black and brown people with disabilities from the oppressive systems

We've seen how people are affected by growing up in places that don't offer opportunities, or that don't allow disabled people access

Around 2020, the notorious year, we saw that people started to reprioritize disability and access

2020- it was the uprising of the BLM movement as well

We were wrestling between the need for safety vs. the need for revolution

2020 was a scary time

It was important to be safe, but at the same time people were in the streets demanding justice and revolution

Another activist and I got together to talk about this and we made a call to our community on June 6th, to come out and protest

We had an in-person team and a virtual team

We were amazed people showed up, in front of the White House as well

The whole community came together

Commitment to cross community organizing is very important to us

We wanted people not to have to choose between racial or disability justice

For us it is about creating spaces and create political power - how can we collaborate as diverse groups?

What are the causes that are going to bring us together?

[2023/11/10 11:51] Carolyn Carillon: Shyla: anything else you want us to know?

[2023/11/10 11:51] Carolyn Carillon: KG: I want to talk about a call to action

Where are we going in terms of disability advocacy?

It's a pivotal time

We know what 2020 was like

We had to shift and pivot

Now we're entering 2024 and we're entering a new wave

We're thinking about how much time we'll spend in the office and virtual spaces

We're thinking about our commitments to racial and disability justice

We are shaping the future

We're not going back to before COVID

They're closing offices

So I want to encourage people to do a couple of things

First, find a political home

We have an election

Civic engagement is important

AI legislation

Lots of things are being shaped right now

Go to the places that talk about racial and disability justice

So you can be in tune

So find your political home

Secondly, create a culture of care

When I got invited here, people were so caring to me

Thank y'all

The environments we create is key

The final thing is to bring innovation to the disability justice movement

We're behind

Compared to other movements

Disability still isn't talked about or understood enough

We need innovation

People need to think outside the box

To catch up

And really be integrated into society

I'm excited about the future

And thank you for having me

[2023/11/10 11:56] Itico (Itico Spectre): Thank you for being here.

[2023/11/10 11:56] Eme Capalini: Great job and welcome to Second Life from a fellow Texan!

[2023/11/10 11:56] Gentle Heron: Keri, I bet this is your first time being interviewed by a gecko! Welcome to the virtual world. QUESTION- I know you have presented to large physical audiences, and also on platforms like Zoom. Can you compare an SL presentation with a physical world or Zoom audience?

[2023/11/10 11:57] Carolyn Carillon: KG: it's interesting

When I think about 2020, everything went virtual

Especially in my world

Pre-COVID I was constantly in person

When 2020 hit, everything became virtual

And it was great in a lot of ways

More people were able to participate consistently

Virtual convenience made it more accessible

AI generated captions made it better

To convene and talk to folks

I love a good virtual and digital space

I will say there's a lot of power in the physical world

And seeing people in person

Being able to build relationships

There's something irreplaceable for me

We're in this phase of hybrid realities

Pre-COVID about 30% of our work was hybrid

Now it's over 50%

How do we have this model so we can use these spaces in addition to in person connectedness

[2023/11/10 11:56] Faith Frances (Roxie Marten): I would like to see marriage equality for disabled people. You don't lose your benefits if you get married

What have you heard of removing the marriage penalty from disability benefits?

[2023/11/10 12:00] Carolyn Carillon: [11:57] Mook Wheeler: QUESTION: You asked: "Where are we going in terms of disability advocacy?" Would you consider bringing that movement into Second Life, and the other virtual platforms that make up the 'metaverse'? In my opinion, many of these virtual platforms actually harbour a high level of prejudice, because many users simply see it as a 'virtual space/game', a place where people (and their feelings) are not 'real', and as such, they do not need to 'behave' (like moral humans) here.

[2023/11/10 12:00] Gentle Heron: And that needs to be a SHORT answer! We need Keri to come back and talk more.

[2023/11/10 12:00] Carolyn Carillon: KG: Interesting

I wish we had more time to dig in!

I agree with your sentiment

It's imperative to build communities across virtual spaces because that's where our world is going

That's not going away

As much imagination as we put in, there's so much about the virtual space that replicates the physical world

So virtual spaces will still require advocacy for accessibility

We need to think about representation

Can I be disabled in virtual worlds?

[2023/11/10 12:02] iSkye Silvercloud (iSkye Silverweb): I am - being deaf is not something I can really hide here ...

[2023/11/10 12:02] Carolyn Carillon: KG: all the tools we're building

Will they be accessible?

We need access

And rights

I love how you talk about how people can discredit the virtual space

There's a lot of education that needs to happen about virtual realities

There are generational gaps

Some haven't been on it as much

I love to spend my time in spaces that are open

Open-minded

I want community

There are enough of us out there

[2023/11/10 12:03] iSkye Silvercloud (iSkye Silverweb): (and in here!)

[2023/11/10 12:03] Carolyn Carillon: KG: we just need to find each other

And connect

Thanks again!

[2023/11/10 12:04] Eme Capalini: Great job and welcome to Second Life from a fellow Texan!

[2023/11/10 12:04] Buffy Beale: Thank you, very inspiring and welcome to the wonderful world of Second Life!~

[2023/11/10 12:04] Gentle Heron: Great job, Keri and Shyla

[2023/11/10 12:04] Itico (Itico Spectre): Thanks for all you do.

[2023/11/10 12:04] Orange Planer: .-''-. APPLAUSE APPLAUSE .-''-.

[2023/11/10 12:04] Lady Tigress Bonded (pet Karu): thank you Keri

[2023/11/10 12:04] Lady Kirsten McLeod (KirstenMcLeod Resident): claps her hands with wild enthusiasm

[2023/11/10 12:04] Minka Angel (Saraminka Nova): **applause**

[2023/11/10 12:04] Shyla the Super Gecko (KriJon Resident): Keri - I really want to thank you - this has been very informative and motivating. Up next is the Arts Panel.

[2023/11/10 12:04] Carolyn Carillon: <<transcription ended>>