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Interviewer(s):

Respondent(s):

**INT: Welcome to the Ramps on the Moon podcast. I'm Michele Taylor, director for change, and I work to elevate the place of disabled people in the mainstream cultural sector. In this second series of the podcast, I've chatted with some brilliant disabled actors as well as non-disabled allies from arts organisations who, with the support of Ramps on the Moon, are embedding anti ableism into the work they do. Each episode makes sense on its own, but do go back and listen to the earlier episodes if you haven't already. Join us as we change the world. So welcome to this episode of the Ramps on the Moon podcast. And today I am joined in my virtual studio by Rachel Sharpe, who is the head of co creation, creative learning and engagement at the Royal Shakespeare Company. And if like me, you're really curious about what that means, don't worry, I'm going to ask her. But, welcome Rachel.**

RES: It’s so nice to be here, Michele. Thank you for having me.

**INT: It’s such a pleasure. So, Rachel, you and I have known each other for almost exactly a year now, because you’re on the Ramps on the Moon cohort.**

RES: I absolutely am, yes.

**INT: Brilliant. So, tell us about your role at the RSC. Co creation, creative learning and engagement. What’s that all about?**

RES: What does that mean? So, I'm really genuinely fortunate to work in the creative learning and engagement departments at the RSC. So, there’s over- I think it’s 29 of us. It’s a massive department that work internationally, nationally, regionally, locally. And my work focuses on Stratford. It focuses on those local relationships, local connections. But as part of that team, I get to work and see all that amazing stuff that goes on globally and nationally and regionally. But my main focus is around working with people from across all of the programmes that we have. So, I’ll give you an example. One part of my job is to work with the collection. The RSC has an incredible collection of costumes, props, artworks. It’s groundbreaking. And that collection is in Stratford, and we have a permanent exhibition called The Play’s The Thing. And we co curate that exhibition every year with three groups. And we work with an international group that we’re working with, and this year when it reopens on the 26th April, which is Shakespeare’s birthday, which is his birthday celebrations. You will see costumes selected by Uzhhorod, which is an amazing theatre company in Ukraine who we worked with to do a version of King Lear in Stratford last year. So, that’s our international group. A wonderful group of young people from Bradford College, the ESOL group. And a local group, Welcome Here. All of those groups have experience of they are all refugees. They have experience of very different worlds, countries, situations. And they came to our collection to select costumes. But what’s wonderful about that is the conversation. It's about working with people who have got completely different lived experience talking about the collection, talking about Shakespeare stories, and it's the lens that we use to have those conversations. But what comes out of that is about the people's own life experience and what these stories mean to them and how stories connect us globally. So, through that co curation process, we utilise the RSC's really powerful platform to spotlight other people's experiences and how they connect with the Royal Shakespeare Company. And it's an absolute honour to do that work, to open those doors, and that's what my job's about. My job is about finding different ways through the collection, through the development of artworks, or sometimes we call those art puts. So that's working with creatives to create something that has an output, but the output really is focused on that co curation process. So, my job is to open the doors, and my job is to work with an incredible group of practitioners. I'm so fortunate, the people I work with. And really inspired, awe inspired by them. My job is to open the doors. It’s to open the doors to all of those practices and to develop practices to open those doors further.

**INT: And when you say open the doors to those practices, what practices are they? What are you actually talking about? What might I see if I came to watch some of that work?**

RES: So, you will see installations. So, for example this summer, we're creating a sculptural trail that goes through the gardens, which is a way into the story of The Two Gentlemen of Verona. You will also see different trails that go through the building about discovering things about Shakespeare and his stories. You will also experience a welcome space. So, in the RSC, we have a building that is completely dedicated to communities. You can come and you can spend some time in that welcome space, do workshops in the welcome space, create artworks in the welcome space. You might do workshops in our Clore Learning Centre. But from a co curation perspective, you will work with a member of the team to think about using a different creative practice to create an artwork. And that artwork will be something inspired by Shakespeare stories.

**INT: Rachel, what’s Shakespeare got to do with a theatre company from the Ukraine or an ESOL group from Bradford? What’s Shakespeare got to say or contribute to the lives of people in those two groups?**

RES: Brilliant question, Michele. So, that’s about those groups telling us what Shakespeare means to them. And so just to take the theatre company from Ukraine, they performed King Lear in Ukrainian in June last year. It was incredible. At The Other Place, which is one of our theatres in Stratford. But at least a year before them- Just getting my times a bit mixed up. It was a long time. We had an email from a gentleman who is from Stratford, but is an aid worker that was working in Ukraine and met this company of people from all walks of life in Ukraine. One of the companies was a professional museum worker. There were care workers. The director was a professional director. There were actors. But people from all walks of life that had come together and they were- How they described it was using the spirit of Shakespeare to get them through. And they selected King Lear. They had created this incredible production in the middle of the war, this incredible production and contacted us and said, “Please can we bring it to Stratford?” We were like absolutely. So, that was a really complex project to understand how to get people from a war zone into Stratford and how to get them back from Stratford. That was a visit. But also, to think about all of those processes to make sure there was safeguarding processes, linguistic processes, getting translators in. How do we make this as accessible as possible? What was really interesting about it is- I'm going to admit this now, and I'm going to say it on a podcast. I’d never seen King Lear before. I’d never seen a production of King Lear before. And the first time I ever watched a production of King Lear was in Ukrainian and I got every emotion and every word. So, because of that company’s commitment to the storytelling and how, you know, a playwright who died hundreds of years ago still resonates with people, as those stories hold something which is so inspiring and special. It’s almost magic. You can’t explain it. But that brought us all together. And my job in that was how do we then- So we created a film around that experience, which you can see in the exhibition. We also worked with the company for them to select items that they wanted in the exhibition. And then the really hard part of that is that that company go back to that. So also finding ways to take care of the company and the staff that have worked so closely with that company. So, a lot of my practice is around trauma informed practice and how we create the safest and most creative spaces that we can.

**INT: I can’t imagine that moment of saying goodbye to them and knowing what they were going back to.**

RES: I think it was the interesting thing and part of the way through developing that project and that process. And actually, so much of my job is the setting up of things and it’s the magic of the what if. How do we make this, how do we work together? The word I want to say is the art of the possible. So much of my job is the art of the possible and working with incredible practitioners. Incredible. And we thought long and hard about this. And I reached out actually to an ex-colleague whose name is October Bishop, who I’d worked with at the National Trust. Because we had worked on a really big project around- When I was working at the National Trust a few years ago called what is home.

**[00:10:03]**

 And it was an exhibition about people who had lived at a certain property who had a really challenging lived experience. So, we worked out a way of co curating and a way of asking questions which always kept people safe. So, people were sharing what they wanted to in a natural way. We were never pushing it past that boundary. And actually, October's a qualified counsellor. So that process was all about finding different ways to keep people really psychologically safe. Whilst also on the other side, you've always got two things. Keeping people really psychologically safe. It's actually three. Finding ways to reach people that organisations find really difficult to reach. But also thinking about what’s the creative practice to then develop whatever that art put is going to be. And in this scenario, we knew that was bringing a play. We knew that was creating a film. We knew those things. So, I worked with October to create a risk register. That sounds really dry. But actually, it’s those practices which make creativity possible. So, we worked on a risk register to then create a safeguarding plan to then think about what does that co creation look like. What are we uniquely placed to do and what isn’t our work to do? I think that’s really important as well to draw those boundaries. What’s the best you can do to support people? So, that’s what we’ve done. But going back to your question of what that was like. It was really tough. But working with some amazing people who also know the toughness wasn’t on us, you know? We were pure and safe. I think it's about you can only do what you can do and you can do the best with what you can do. But it's that concept of what’s within my power, and I really worked hard with the team to say this is what’s within your power. Genuinely, and we pushed everything we could that was in our power and got so much support and help. But also, being really clear of what’s outside our power. Sadly, we can’t heal that situation. But we can do the best we can do in the scenario we had.

**INT: I think I'm so impacted by that notion that things like risk registers and policies, which very often get a status, don’t they, in the work that we do as a sector of being an end in themselves are actually tools to keep us safe. And we lose sight of that sometimes, don’t you think?**

RES: I really do, I really do. And I think- I suppose in my job now, I get quite excited about risk registers. It sounds really boring, doesn’t it? I think if you’re really clear on what’s working, what’s not working, where are the gaps, where are the grey areas, what do we need to do? Then you’re working in a way that you’re making issues and challenges transparent. And the more you can be transparent about those challenges, I think the more accessible the work is. If you don’t go through those processes, it’s really easy to go, “Yeah, we did all we can.” I see those processes as different lenses and different ways into a situation. So, we’re always going to have things that are outside of our view. There’s always going to be those things. But if you can use those tools and I'm really interested in that concept of the wisdom of crowds. How many people you can bring into a conversation and in that- So that was bringing an external person in to have the conversation. But then also sharing that with the team, and the team looking at that risk register and adding to that risk register and, you know, that plan of all the different mitigations of what we did and how we did it, that was all collaborative. There's always someone who has to drive the risk register because believe it or not Michele, people aren't as excited about risk registers as you and I are. There’s always going to be-

**INT: Wait a minute. I don’t think I ever said I was excited about risk registers, Rachel. I think I said I noticed you are. There’s quite a difference there.**

RES: You will be by the end of this conversation. But there’s always got to be someone to drive those processes. I think it’s about how you’re bringing people in, but also how you’re holding that space. So particularly with the Uzhhorod theatre company, all of those processes were really important around how we made the space as safe for everyone as possible, how we made it as creative as possible. Also, I think for all of us, it’s going to be quite an emotional day on the 26th April. It’s actually Shakespeare’s birthday is the 23rd April, before anyone-

**INT: It’s St George’s Day, isn’t it?**

RES: Is it? I didn’t realise.

**INT: 23rd April? I think it’s St George’s Day.**

RES: I think you’re right, yes. But we celebrate it on the Saturday, whichever is closest to it. And I think on that day it was really important with the theatre company that- One of the things they said at the very start was we want there to be some sort of legacy. What’s that legacy? And within our power and within the department that I work in, those were the levers that we could pull. So, I think that physical legacy of the exhibition and the film that’s not just in the exhibition but also will be online, those are things that we have been able to create. It would be wonderful to have had the theatre company here to perform again. But this was where we’re at. And on the 23rd as well, sadly we can’t bring them back to Stratford. We would love to, but we can’t. So, what we’ve done is we’ve sent them a care package with biscuits and with party hats to celebrate Shakespeare’s birthday and banners and a copy of their film so that they are- When we open the exhibition, we always have a private view. And that private view, the most important people are there and that’s the participants. And we celebrate their work and there are speeches where they talk about what they’ve learnt and how they feel. We share those ideas. And when [unclear 00:16:25] wouldn’t be able to be part of that, but what we have done is asked them to send us some words that we’ll read on their behalf. But also hope that they're having a really nice party day. The best they can in the situation they're in. Those were tough conversations actually, Michele. I remember when we were thinking about it last year, you know, the conversation was we can’t get them back, what can we do? We can send them something. And then from our very privileged place, we’re thinking would it feel condescending, would it feel odd sending them cake or biscuits or something? Should we do that? We were like hang on a minute, no matter where you are everyone enjoys a biscuit. We shouldn’t let those things get in the way. Sometimes we do. Sometimes for wanting to make sure you absolutely do the right thing, you don’t do a thing. That’s going to be really emotional on the 26th when we land the exhibition.

**INT: That sounds extraordinary. It sounds absolutely extraordinary. Congratulations. I mean, that’s quite something to pull off. The whole relationship so far.**

RES: It’s a massive team of people that did that. And that is the incredible power of the RSC, to be able to work on all of those different levels and have all of those different practitioners to be able to do that work. It’s a really special place and a special platform. And that’s why this work as well is so important, because it would be very easy to see the RSC as a very traditional theatre company and, you know, just does Shakespeare. It doesn’t. It does so much, and it does so much to engage with people where they're at and find a way to bring those stories back and bring those stories out. But it’s a really exciting place to be.

**INT: That’s so great to hear. And I'm really curious, because I think as I've got to know you a little bit over the last year Rachel, I have so much respect for you as a person who makes connections. And I mean that in all sorts of ways. Connections with people and also kind of conceptual connections. And you connect up everything that you do and feel and that is important to you, it seems to me. And also, someone who's very porous to being impacted by what's going on around you. And so, I'm really curious about the connection, if there is one. Let's not assume, because I don't want this to be contrived. But the connection between everything that you've been talking about and the work that we've been doing in the Ramps cohort and the work around anti ableism. And I guess my sense is if anyone can make a connection, it's Rachel Sharpe. So, talk to me about is there a connection and what is it for you? What is the connection for you? Why are you passionate about the work of anti-ableism? I was going to say alongside. As part of the passion that you’ve already clearly demonstrated around the engagement work that you do at the RSC.**

RES: I think I'm a bit of a magpie, in the way that I'm not afraid to steal with pride. I think that’s the thing which was drilled into me when I worked at the National Trust. You know, if you see a good idea, tell someone it’s a good idea, tell them that you’re going to be using it and building on it.

**[00:20:00]**

Bring them in to build it with you. That actually, if we’re going to change the world, we’re going to do that together. We’re not going to do it on our own. That’s not going to happen. And we've got so much to change and do everywhere in the world. I think I should say here Michele, as we talked about before, I am a carer. So, I have two wonderful children. I say children, one's an adult now. She’d go mad if I called her a child, but she’s my child. So, I've got 20-year-old Connie and I have a 16-year-old Stanley. And my son Stanley is marvellous, same as Connie is. And he happens to be profoundly learning disabled and autistic. And so, the last 16 years, I've been on this journey of discovery. You think you know how challenging and difficult the world is for people, but you don’t. I think that before Stanley, I had no idea how the world in itself is a huge barrier. So, for me, there is nothing set up. So few places. I think I've shared this with you. In my world with Stanley, there are so, so few places we can go to that are set up to enable him to thrive. I suppose the connections for me is around there is so much opportunity to tell stories and share stories with everyone. And as someone who is a carer, I've been on lots of different brilliant courses and had lots of different brilliant conversations about disability. I met you Michele, and I started to have a very different conversation which was anti ableism. That switch is massive. And for me, that is lifechanging. As a carer of 16 years, I have talked about my son’s disability. I have talked about how a place is inaccessible. I have talked about inclusion. I have talked about all these words that are all about, “Please let us in. Please let me and Stanley come to this. Please, you know, allow us to do this. If you don’t mind, could you do this?” And all of a sudden- It was one of the first sessions, Michele. I think I had like a weird public epiphany where I got quite cross about things. I said to you-

**INT: You did, I remember.**

RES: I did. And also, I've got no poker face at all [unclear 00:22:38]. And I said to you at the time, I said- I couldn’t articulate it. And you said to me, “I’m not sure what’s happened to you and I'm not sure if you’re ready to talk about it, but something’s clicked.” And it wasn’t something, Michele. It was everything. It was everything clicked. It felt- It was so odd and beautiful and scary and all of those things. Because I just sat there, and it was like I watched in my mind all of the different scenarios I've been in, fighting for education, the right education for Stanley. Fighting, you know, the right for private rooms in hospitals because he can’t cope on a ward. All of those conversations where I'd been saying, “Please could you help?” And I just thought it's not us, it’s the world. That felt so big and scary and important, but not in a way that- And just something clicked. And it wasn’t long after that that we ended up in A&E with Stanley for something. And normally, I’d be- Actually, I completely changed what I said. I just politely went to the receptionist and said, “It’s really challenging that your hospital is not set up correctly. It's really challenging that this space is completely inadequate.” And I didn’t say for my son and I didn’t say, you know, is there an accessible space? And she was like- And I wasn’t horrible. I wasn’t rude. I was polite and we had a conversation. We had a conversation around how the space wasn’t right, and that is the first time in my life as a carer that I haven’t had to say my son’s not right. I've had to say the space isn’t right. And all of a sudden then everything, you know? It was like literally the conversations were about the social model of disability. They were about a social model, not the medical model. It was all about- It just gives you a power like nothing I've been given before as a carer. What I've been given before as a carer is make sure you say your best or your worst day in different scenarios. Talk about the labels. Talk about this. And of course, when you’re having those battles, knowledge of someone’s situation is important. But boiling them down to a label has been dehumanising for 16 years. And I had genuinely- I really mean this Michele when I say it. It was like just scales fell off my eyes. I saw things in a different way and I saw my son in a different way. I saw him in a different way in that we are going to go there and we are going to do this and we’re going to have a conversation around why that place isn’t correct, not why there’s something wrong with you Stanley. Why there’s something wrong with the world. So, for me, it’s been- Just talking about the personal first, personally lifechanging. I also realised that as carer and a carer of 16 years in a care situation that very few people have. So, Stanley’s one of the very rare one percent of the world’s population to- This is how he’s been described. To his level of challenge with autism. And actually, switching that round and going, “So actually, he’s a really special person.” So, if we can get the world right for him, we can get the world right for everyone. Instead of seeing Stanley as a deficit, which in so many ways I have had to speak of him, seeing him as an asset and seeing that very precise sensory world that he lives in as a space that we can all learn from. That was something that I really took away from the last year.

**INT: Wow. Thank you Rachel for sharing that. Yeah, thank you.**

RES: So, connecting it to the course and connecting it to the work. I think it’s all about anti ableism for me. It’s that change in language that instead of including, instead of put this here, we’ll do this, we’ll do that. It’s about having a question that says this is ableist. This is somewhere where we are creating space or a project or a hotel or a play park. You know, a place where we’re literally saying you can’t come. And I think switching that, it’s just a very different conversation.

**INT: For me, I think there’s something- I was talking to somebody earlier today actually and found myself saying for me, there’s something about the language of ableism that has within it the acknowledgement that at some point in the past, somebody made a decision to build in that barrier. To build in that challenge, that thing that wasn’t going to work for everybody. Where if we talk about creating access, it’s like this is inevitably how it’s going to be. This is inherently what this play park needs to look like. So, we’ll create a way in for other people. And it’s really different, isn’t it?**

RES: Yeah. If at the heart of whatever is created is there for all, is suitable for all. Just change- Because you don’t then have to have a ramp. You don’t have to have this or that for audiences. You’ve got something. You’ve got a really special offer, and I use that term- You know, a really beautiful offer that anyone can be part of. And I think it’s really interesting. So, have you ever heard of a Snoezelen?

**INT: I have actually.**

RES: They're amazing.

**INT: Tell us what it is.**

RES: Incredible sensory places where you’ve got like all these different bubble tubes and like playmats and a really wonderful space. And my son Stanley goes to one every week. And it’s so interesting, because over the years I've watched him go there. When we started to go, all little children and all children with disabilities. That’s how it was described at the time. And you see, it’s really interesting because I'm not there with my language yet. But I find it now difficult to say those words. And I've noticed like the last year or so going to them that there are now people there, there are adults there who are obviously people who have Alzheimer’s. And it’s so interesting that I don’t think necessarily you would have had those places built for people who have Alzheimer’s.

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You wouldn’t have had that. But someone’s gone, “Actually, that really works.” And I just find that cross fertilisation of how do we make these spaces that are so accessible, and then you get these natural cross fertilisations of different communities using and coming to these places. I find that fascinating, and I think if we could think of the world as a Snoezelen and think about how- And we’ve all got such a long way to go. How we create these spaces that you- It’s just no matter where you are in life, no matter who you are in life, that place can meet your needs and that place can be an inspiration for you. What I find- So, I always- You know, when I was little, my nan always told me loads of stories. My mum always told me loads of stories, you know? That’s what really inspired me, storytelling. So, working in a place where the house playwright is like arguably the greatest storyteller in the world, what’s been so interesting over the past year has been how do we make that somewhere, a place, a thing, a project, whatever it is, that anyone can enjoy. Anyone can be part of. And also, as well Michele, I think I've said this a couple of times to you that I'm a pragmatist. So, when I came on the course, straight away I was like what can we do, how can we do it? And then I've been really lucky that on the course I've been with Kate Sirdifield, who’s the director of people at the Royal Shakespeare Company, and Chris O’Brien, who’s the director of estates. So, we were having brilliant conversations and at the same time all realised it’s not this kind of course. It’s not a course where you come away and you go, “Right, we now know how to do this, this, this and this.” It's actually a life change. And we had conversations recognising that. And I certainly have with my director, who’s Jacqui O-Hanlon, who put me on the course and I'm forever grateful to her for doing that and said, “I think this is something that you’ll really want to be part of,” and I absolutely do and did. But actually, for me, I gave myself a bit of a pass in the way that I said, “Right, I'm going to sit back a little. I'm going to do what I can, but I'm going to finish the course and get through the course.” It’s not a course. It’s a programme, isn’t it, sorry. I'm going to go through it and I'm going to let myself be changed by it. And I feel that at the end of the year now, there are so many conversations, connections, networks, things we’ve learnt, things we’ve thought about, that I feel a little bit now like rolling up my sleeves and going, “Right, now we start.”

**INT: Wow, I love that. I mean, for so many reasons I love what you just said Rachel. One of the things I love about the whole way you’ve been talking over the last half an hour or whatever is- I don’t quite know how to say this. I'm going to say it and then decide if it’s true or not. There’s something about- Obviously, I feel very strongly about the place of disabled people in mainstream culture, obviously. But this isn’t just about disability. This is about far more broadly how we work, what our structures are, what our systems are. And that isn’t to say that my focus is being dispersed or anything like that. But I guess what I'm saying, what I'm struggling to come to is it’s really music to my ears to hear you talk about this is part of something much, much bigger. And that that view isn’t overwhelming, it’s energising and it’s galvanising. And I love that. And somebody asked me a question this morning and I'm going to ask you the same question off the back of that in a way. How do you remain positive and optimistic?**

RES: I think that is the only way that we’re going to build the world we need to build. From my perspective, and other people may feel very, very different. I think there’s a time to feel very angry about the world and about wherever you are in that. How exclusive that can feel, and certainly as a carer I've had my very angry and dark moments. And recognise that that isn’t where I was in my power. That isn’t where I got things done and got things changed. That was where I found lots of challenges and barriers and felt they were immovable. And there are so many challenges and barriers that unless we create a passion for the work, unless we create a space where we can build together and we can create things together and we can collaborate and do all of those things that need joy, energy, positivity, we’re not going to get anywhere. I genuinely think that sometimes as a carer, I've been pushed into being- And that’s a lot about the medical model actually. Pushed into being really cross. Pushed into being, “Well, I can’t do anything about this.” Because if you feel you can’t do anything about it, you’re going to stop. But if you feel there might be a way, if it’s there a little bit of light, if there’s a bit of air, if there’s a bit of oxygen, if there’s something you can work on, then you can keep going. And also as well, Stanley is one of the most positive people I know and I find that really interesting. So, Stanley doesn’t have words, but he has sound. He doesn’t have what a lot of people would see as the traditional communication, but I know what he’s communicating to me. And I also know that he’s- Like I said, he’s one of the most positive people I've ever met. So, why shouldn’t we be? Why shouldn’t we celebrate and why shouldn’t we find- Because otherwise we’re going to run out of oxygen. We’re going to run out of the want to make the change. I don’t know if that answers your question, Michele.

**INT: Yeah, I think it does. And the phrase that’s going through my head as you speak is a phrase you used earlier, which is the art of the possible. If we lose a sense of the possible, then we just end up in despair, don’t we?**

RES: We do. And there’s so much to despair about. You know, take your pick what you want to despair about. But I think if you can find- And Ramps was that for me. It was really interesting, because also of course People Make It Work have been part of this programme. And I've just come off the back of the creating transformations programme. I feel these two have sat really, really well together because all of it is about the art of the possible. All of it is about finding different ways to make positive change.

**INT: Yeah. So, different ways to make positive change. You said that you had decided to sit back and let yourself be changed by this year with Ramps and then roll up your sleeves. So, what’s next? When your sleeves are rolled up, what are you up to? How are you going to take this forward?**

RES: I mean interestingly, I think my sleeves were rolled up actually. I mean, I work directly for Jacqui O-Hanlon, who is going to make things happen. Which is fabulous. So straight away, although I was thinking I have allowed- You know, Jacqui immediately it was about for the department. Instead of having an inclusion policy and that sort of thing, what’s the inclusion plan? So, we have an inclusion plan. Each department does. But these are all action based. So, we’ve looked at what are the barriers in our current practice? How can we mitigate against those barriers? So, there are our risk registers again. So, using all of those risks and those challenges to think about, “Right, what’s the action plan? How are we changing things? What training do people need? What conversations do we need to have? How are we building better networks?” And that’s another thing that’s been phenomenal about the programme. The networks of people, the conversations. You know, it’s a bit like, “We’ve got this here, you’ve got that there. Can we borrow a bit of that? Can we understand that?” So, we have been rolling up our sleeves and doing things. But for me, I think it was about as well- How do I describe this? I think it’s about taking a moment with the incredible people that I work with who are all so behind this work. You know, using the term anti ableism, really pushing things, really thinking about things. But taking a moment to go, “Right, this is what we do and this is what we’ve done. This is how we’re adapting, adjusting, creating, moving, solution finding.” So, that’s there. But then what is the next step? The brilliant thing. And I think the next step for us Michele is- And I said this I remember in one of the groups. Creating something that’s so brilliant, everyone is so jealous of it. Something that you’re like, “Oh my god, I wish I’d have thought about that.” You know when you go and see something and you’re like, “That is just so wonderful. I never want to look at it again because I haven’t made that.” We want I think to create almost professional, social, whatever. That feeling of just we all want to do that. And that’s one of the challenges. I’d like us all to do something that is so incredible that Stanley could go and see or do or be part of and that we all want to be better than each other in that way and, as my mum would say, up the ante.

**[00:40:00]**

It’s like each time you’re getting better and better at it. Because then I’ll have loads of things to go and see and do Michele, and that is my whole purpose around this.

**INT: Brilliant. Honestly Rachel, I could sit and talk with you all day. I have one last question. One piece of advice that you would give to somebody working in the mainstream who wants to take anti ableism forward in their company or organisation.**

RES: Do it.

**INT: I love that. Just do it.**

RES: Just do it. Because A, it’s something we should all be doing anyway. We should be doing it. But B, if you don’t do it you’re going to get left behind. Because thank goodness, the world is moving forward. There are changes. There are new learnings, new understandings, new- All of those things are growing and developing. Why get left behind? Particularly if you’re a creative, why would you want to be left behind? Why don’t you want to be part of that? It’s just do it. And I think actually quite a lot of that can be fear. And I think as someone who’s been a carer for 16 years, like I've said in this, I know there are words I will say wrong. I know there are things, because language is moving all the time. And one of the things that you’ve taught us Michele is that’s okay. It’s okay to know that you’ve got to learn things and do things. What isn’t okay is to go, “I’m not going to do it.” That’s what’s not okay. And I've had the best time, Michele. I have adored getting to know you. I have absolutely loved every moment on the course. It’s just been- You know, you kind of leave each day and your cheeks are hurting because you’ve been smiling so much. Obviously, you know, you’ve had some really challenging and wonderful conversations. But with literally the best group of people I've had the absolute honour to be with for a year. It’s just been an absolute treat. Thank you.

**INT: It’s been a privilege to be in the room with those people, hasn’t it?**

RES: Yeah. It really has.

**INT: I've learned a lot for sure. Yeah, definitely.**

RES: That’s what’s wonderful about you as well, Michele. You set up the whole programme as a learning experience for everyone, and it’s not like a chalk and talk thing. It’s a movement. It’s a change programme. It’s coming into the room and all saying, “Right, this is the thing that we’ve got to tackle. How do we tackle it together?” And I've found that so energising and inspiring. So, I would like to say thank you to you because that’s been lifechanging for me.

**INT: Thank you Rachel. Thank you so much and it’s been a privilege to get to know you. Genuinely brilliant.**

RES: Ditto.

**INT: So, I'm going to draw a close to this conversation for now and just say thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me this afternoon. Thank you for your insights and your passion. They're both so infectious, which has been fantastic. And I really hope that we continue this relationship.**

RES: Absolutely. Try and get rid of me, Michele. You won’t be able to.

**INT: Brilliant. I won’t try and get rid of you. Thank you Rachel, very much.**

RES: Thank you. Thanks ever so much.

**INT: Thanks for listening to this episode of the Ramps on the Moon podcast. Don't forget to subscribe and to let us know what you think. Thanks to PodTalk, our podcast production company. Technical production and editing by Mark Mason. Executive production by Zanna Hornby.**

**[Audio ends: 00:43:51]**

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| **Key**  |
| [unclear] – unclear audio[s/l] – sounds like[ph] – phonetic | [overtalking] – to an extent no conversation can clearly be heard[audio distorted] – connection issues/other noises which results in no conversation being clearly heard |