

You First Podcast Episode 40: International Disability Media and Advocacy

Keith Casebonne: You're listening to "You First -- The Disability Rights Florida Podcast." On this episode, we're connecting with Kenyan journalist, Alan Herbert, about international disability media, advocacy, community, and accessibility efforts.

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Keith: Hey, there, I'm Keith.

Maddie Crowley: I'm Maddie.

Keith: We're the hosts of You First. Thanks for tuning in. Our podcast has grown so much in the past year. We're really excited to have you joining us today.

Maddie: Definitely. Today's guest is Alan Herbert. Alan is a passionate journalist, social inclusion advocate, and behavior change communications professional based in Nairobi, Kenya. He brings a wealth of experience in inclusive media practices, leadership, and advocacy.

Alan currently serves as a prime time TV host at Signs TV, Kenya, and is a founding member and the chief executive officer of Black Albinism, Kenya.

Keith: He is also an inclusive communications consultant who has worked with organizations to develop inclusive employment learning modules. Alan's also worked on a documentary about the Kenyan government's plan and commitments to the disability community at the inaugural Global Disability Summit.

Maddie: Needless to say, we're thrilled to have him on. We connected with him last year when Alan was in the States for his disability fellowship program, and we stayed connected ever since. We're excited to share the interview. We hope you enjoy.

Keith: Hey, Alan, thank you so much for being our guest today. If you want to just jump right in, and tell us a little bit about yourself.

Alan Herbert: All right. Thank you very much, Keith. I am excited to be on here now. My names are Alan Herbert Onyango, but I like to go by the names Alan Herbert. I am out of Nairobi, Kenya. I'm a journalist and also an advocate for the human rights of persons with disabilities.

Little description for myself. I am a pale white male, what you'd call albinism. Right now, I am wearing eye glasses. They are blue and black or floral. That's how they are designed. I am dressed in a purple shirt. Behind me is a wall that is painted with a shade of green. That's me.

Maddie: Now, we're so excited to have you on. We've been looking forward to this. You mentioned that you're a journalist, and you've been a journalist for a minute now. Could you tell us a little bit about why you studied and pursued journalism in the first place, and maybe what led you to focus in on disability in journalism?

Alan: Yeah, [indecipherable 2:44] that question. This is a question that I would say I never get asked often [indecipherable 2:51] . When I look back and check why I particularly decided to do journalism was growing up, I never heard many stories about disability, though my interest at that particular time was more about albinism.

Then I was wondering, "Why am I not hearing about any stories about disability, and particularly, albinism?" That bothered me while I was growing up. I asked myself the question, "Why are there no persons with disabilities or persons with albinism who are journalists?" Then that concretized why I had to go and study journalism.

Unfortunately, after high school, I did not go straight to college. What I did, I found somebody within the community that already had the skills of media. They tutored me. I got a basic know-how of operating a camera or writing scripts and all of that. That even exacerbated my interest to be now a professional journalist.

When I got the opportunity to join journalism school, I was like, "This is the time to do what's right." Later on, why I decided to narrow down to disability was because not many stories of persons with disabilities are told. If a story about a person with disability gets told, then it will be told in a manner of diminishing. That's how I looked at it then.

All the stories that I engaged with about disability then, they were more of pity-centered. I was like, "Aren't there any other angles that we can use to report about disability?" That's how this whole journey of studying journalism and centering particularly on disability, that's how the whole journey started.

Maddie: That's incredible. It sounds like this lack of representation and really need for someone to tell authentic stories about folks with disabilities was the reason that you originally thought about pursuing journalism in the first place. Not having that representation or seeing authentic stories as a kid, as a teen.

Then that is what brought you back to the space as you began pursuing school. That's really interesting.

Alan: It's interesting. Then I found out while I was in journalism school that unfortunately, I wasn't going to be the first person with a disability who decided to do journalism. There were already other persons with disabilities who had done journalism. Then a question got triggered within my brain, is, "Why have I never heard about these journalists?"

Then there within was another problem. How are we mentoring people who want to come into particular fields, where not so many persons with disabilities are in those fields?

Actually, one of the projects that I want to do this year, or even thinking back about the project that I am supposed to be implementing that gave me the opportunity to travel to the States, is that how can we enhance participation of persons with disabilities in the media space?

Because we need to see more people with disabilities in this space so that those who are growing up with disabilities can say, "If somebody's doing it, then probably this is something that I can

also do." That's why this whole need for me to do journalism. Also, the energy and the love that I always had when I had that one gentleman telling people stories, that how it all got corporatized.

Keith: When you're dealing with journalism, media, television, that sort of thing, the intersection of that and disability often comes down to making that media more accessible for the viewers and listeners who they are interested in that content. Tell us a little bit about that.

Along with that, tell us about Signs TV Kenya, and how you implement accessibility practices there at Signs.

Alan: Funny thing, when I was in journalism school, I did not know that some media stations such as Signs TV existed. I think, I was participating in a particular contest, and Signs TV came to cover that event. When I was doing my audition, the talent development manager was like, "Ah, that guy looks interesting. I will reach out to him."

He reached out and introduced Signs TV to me. There and then, I had not gotten an opportunity to join the organization. I did not join the organization as the talent development reached out.

In terms of practicing media, and practicing journalism particularly and making it accessible, one thing, at the beginning, I did not give it much thought because when I look at my journalism course, there wasn't disability studies that was packed into the course to make me aware of what is waiting for me when I go out to the market.

In journalism school, I was trained to be a journalist. I was not trained to be a journalist who is centering and focusing on disability. All of these skills and being aware about disability, accessibility, awareness and advocacy, I got to learn more about it when I joined Signs, because now, Signs TV is an organization. It is a TV station that focuses on telling stories of people with disabilities.

If you're going to tell stories of people with disability and your major audience is people with disabilities themselves, then you have to figure out how do you make your content more accessible. Also, for me, when I was starting up, it was a learning process. After joining Signs TV, I also got to learn on the job.

There are things that you are not supposed to use on air. There are phrases that you cannot use around disability. There are phrases that you cannot use to explain a concept about disability. Slowly by slowly, I got to learn. After six months within the position, I was like, "Alan, there is a probability that I am not doing this right."

I set myself on a journey to go out there and learn more. That's how I landed on YouTube and on different search engines. I searched out, "accessible media," "persons with disabilities doing YouTube," "persons with disabilities in the media space." That's how I started to discover, "Ah. These are the things. These are some of the things that I'm supposed to be doing."

Actually, that's how I got to learn that to make a broadcast more inclusive, you can do your visual description, so that also a visually impaired or blind viewer can also be a part of that particular broadcast because, saying how are you are dressed, that gives them visual representation of somebody who is listening. They might not have sight.

It was a learning journey for me. Right now, after interacting with a number of professionals in the field and also getting to do different trainings, I would say, I am doing a pretty better job at making sure that the content that I'm providing is accessible, and it can be consumed as many people with diverse disabilities as possible.

To your question about telling you a little bit about Signs TV, the concept of Signs TV is interesting because 70 percent of the employment at Signs TV is persons with disabilities. The broadcasting team, 70 percent of it is persons with disabilities.

This reassured me and it gave me an answer to my initial question, why are there journalists with disabilities, but we have never come across them? Signs TV provides an opportunity to persons with disabilities who wants to be in the journalism space, but your conventional media or your mainstream media is not providing them these opportunities. That is number one.

Number two, what is unique about Signs TV, the founder saw a need of providing entertainment and information for the deaf people. He looked across the country, and there wasn't a channel that was dedicated to provide that sort of entertainment. He said, "This is where I am going to innovate." That's how Signs TV started.

When you look at a screen, it has three thirds. Two thirds are designated for the host or for the person hosting a particular show. The other third, the whole of it is designated to a sign language interpreter.

When you look at the media landscape in Kenya, all the news bulletins at around 7:00 PM and 9:00 PM, there is a sign language interpreter, but then that sign language interpreter is placed at a corner where it is very small, a small square around the corner of the screen.

As we all understand, sign language is a visual language. It was also, or sometimes it is also hard for the deaf person to follow what that sign language interpreter is doing. That is why that particular side of the screen was left entirely for a sign language interpreter.

Every programming that is put out by Signs TV, it must have a sign language interpreter. That is the in-house style of Signs TV. Predominantly, that's what Signs TV is all about, and also providing opportunities for people with disabilities to tell their stories, one, to amplify their voices, two, and to give information to people with disabilities in the accessible format to them.

Keith: I love hearing about how much y'all prioritize the sign language content because you're right, it's so often relegated to a small corner. If someone's looking at this media on a smartphone or something like that, it can be hard to see and not very helpful. That's great. That's a huge step to making media more accessible, I'm sure.

Maddie: Definitely. I think, honestly, media organizations all around the world could benefit from following in y'all's footsteps, and taking in stride the accessibility practices that y'all prioritize. Even in the States, we don't have sign language interpreters, just mandatory on news. We have them in some press conferences and things like that, but it's mandatory.

In other countries, in their news, they have the small square in the bottom-right corner where there's an interpreter. Again, like you said, that's not actually accessible necessarily for folks who are trying to engage with this visual language.

I also wanted to touch on something you said as well. In this experience, in navigating and exploring journalism, joining Signs, and things like that, you really are speaking to a big issue, which is that we're not only not represented in media, we're not represented in education, we being the disability community, as someone who's also in the community.

People with disabilities aren't in those spaces to create courses about accessibility, whether that's a journalism major to educate about how to effectively communicate about disabilities or other identities, or just to have the media itself, for example, like a sign language interpreter, be large enough on a screen.

Those conversations just aren't happening in mainstream education unless you personally experience disability and have a certain affection or interest in learning how to make it accessible. Like you said, learning from folks on YouTube, other people with disabilities, and other people that have paved the way.

It emphasizes the fact that we're looking out for each other, and we have the knowledge that we need to make our world more accessible. As you fill this role and are the representation that you wanted as a kid, that's going to only further amplify for future generations. It's exciting to hear about y'all's work and the power that has moving forward.

Alan: Given education available, one of...I'm not really a resolutions person, but one of the goals that I've set out for myself this year is I want to go back to the college that I went to school to.

Dealing with the people that I have interacted with, I want to go back to the college that I went to in journalism, give a proposal to them, and ask, "As a college, I would want to show you the importance of teaching all the students that go through this college what disability is all about."

I am hoping to introduce a disability studies program at that particular college. I am hoping that it will go right because it is important for educators to educate students, and more so professionals who are going out in the world, who are going to interact with a person with a disability at one point of their profession.

It is very important for them to interact with disability at that point of their education. One thing I know is it is supposed to come a little bit earlier when a student is developing, or probably even at the lowest level where a child is joining school. If that is not possible right now, then there is nothing wrong about making it available in the different colleges. That is one.

Two is I'm now making it a point, a case of my own, to reach out to different universities and colleges, and telling them, "I have expertise in this particular field. Can I talk to your students about disability awareness or disability advocacy?"

Not really to turn them into advocates of rights of persons with disabilities, but to make them aware of the needs that people with disabilities have when they get to interact with some of them in the society.

If I pick up the mantle, and another person picks up the mantle, the other person picks up the mantle, before we know it, we will have created a ripple effect, where slowly by slowly, we are making our societies more aware about disability.

Maddie: Definitely. Thank you for taking on that advocacy. It's going to be so important, especially if these opportunities work out and you're able to reach these folks, that's going to have a lasting impact on them for the rest of their lives.

Like we're recognizing right now, accessibility is such an untapped important concept and frame of focus in media and all sectors of life. It's just so exciting to see, hear, and know that this is going to become more and more common knowledge and accepted by more folks.

Thank you so much for talking about Signs, how you got into journalism, and things like that. You don't only do journalism work, and you don't only do some of this media stuff, you also do lots of advocacy work. Could you tell us a little bit about your experience and your advocacy work, particularly around albinism?

Alan: Yeah. One thing that I've always told myself or just a fun fact, whenever I want to throw in the towel and say, "I am done with advocacy, I am done with pushing this particular agenda." I only ask myself, "If I don't do it, then who else is going to do it?" Because not many people have the zeal.

I'm not saying that I'm supernatural or anything. I'm saying not many people have the willingness to push through the obstacles, to push through the nights where you're asking yourself, "Is this going to pay off eventually?" Not many of us out there in the world.

That is why I do what I do, knowing that if I don't do anything about it, then probably nobody's going to do anything about it. Then it is going to create other "I'll-never" habits as they are growing up. That would make it even a little bit harder for them to participate fully in the society.

My work, it pertains to advocacy around albinism because this is the disability that I understand in and out. Myself, I'm a person with albinism. I understand the challenges that a person with albinism goes through. What better place to put more of my energy into that particular space, and create awareness, and focus about it?

My approach is rather interesting. The organization that I run is called Black Albinism. Our biggest mantle, or our driving force, is we want to champion social inclusion. When you look at historically, how people with albinism have been included, we have this on politicians in our country. We have seasoned entrepreneurs in our country.

Then, when you look closely about around entertainers, we do not have many of them. When you look closely about sports men and women, we do not have many of them. When you look about fashion and all these people that interact with things to do with social interaction, we are not many of us. I asked myself, "Why aren't there many people with albinism in the social space?"

When I was creating Black Albinism, I was like, "This is going to be a place where we are going to champion for social inclusion, and improve the identity, and improve the participation of people who are discriminated because they are of different identity." We do this through, just as I mentioned, we have a fully fledged football team, where, we use it to go out there.

There's community football games. Once the community football games culminate, we create awareness about albinism.

Also this football team is a very important tool for me and for other members within the team to have a person that they can talk to if they have any challenges, or if they are going through any particular situation. Growing up, personally, I hardly had anybody like me and particularly, to be particular a man like me, to be able to talk to.

I looked at this football team as an opportunity for mentoring young boys who were coming up with albinism, but also not boys alone. We are also slowly building a team for the girls where we could replicate what we're doing with the male team so that it we can also trickle down to the ladies and girls with albinism.

Away from the football team, we also do awareness media which is my forte. Another thing that I have set out to do this year is how can I put more stories about people with albinism out there in the universe. What we're going to be doing this year, we are launching a YouTube channel and a social media movement that gives focus to persons with albinism.

We are going to be doing a bit of recruiting and find talented persons with albinism who we can put in front of the camera and talk about different issues. Amongst some of the team members, we have really talented football commentators. We will be giving him an opportunity and providing a platform to them commentating football.

We are looking at people who can really cook well. We want to start up a food content so that we can put it out there. We are not putting out this content because it does not exist. This content already exists, but it does not exist with the face of a person with albinism and that is what is very important to me and to the organization.

Another thing that we are doing is that currently we are implementing a project along climate change wherein we go into the science of albinism and the lack of melanin, that it makes our skin the most susceptible to be affected by skin cancer. Given that we are from a part of the world where we are used to the harsh weather, little awareness is available about climate change.

This project is about getting awareness about climate change, and telling stories about the people with albinism in the advent of climate change. Training them and making them aware that this is available, and these are the risks that are available to you when you do not protect yourself a little bit more.

There is something funny that...funny, interesting, but also sad at the same time. When we've been talking to respondents through focus discussion groups, the particular program that we are implementing, we have identified that people with albinism struggle with...Why?

To some extent, albinism is considered to be beautiful in its own. People who have albinism want to display and show off that beauty that they possess, but then the more they show, the more they are affected or they are sunburned.

We realized that the reason they will still lie between wanting to live beautifully in the society, but also you wanting to protect yourself from the effects of climate change. Then from a creative perspective, and our team members, we are like, "How about we come up with an apparel brand that puts these things into perspective?"

It is an apparel that can give you protection, but also, it can be able to allow you to showcase beauty. These are some of the things that we continuously walk around and strategize. Not necessarily reinventing the whole wheel, but finding the voice.

How can we apply them, specifically albinism, and in the long run, create advocacy and awareness, and also make lives of persons with albinism in Kenya more enjoyable? Though my goal is to take the organization to be able to cover the whole of Africa, but first, we need to make sure that these models work here in Kenya, so that now we can extrapolate them to other parts of Africa.

What a person with albinism goes through in Kenya is next to 99.9 percent the same challenges that a person with albinism goes through in Uganda, South Africa, Mozambique, and all other African countries.

Keith: That's interesting. I love hearing about this broad advocacy work. A couple of things that you specifically said jumped out to me. One, I love the idea of using sport to help bring people together and build that connection. I think that's important.

Then the other thing, so you mentioned climate change in your response there. That's a great lead into the next thing I wanted to ask you. What would you say is a popular news topic out there that's not getting the disability perspective that it really needs, it really deserves to best understand the issue?

It doesn't have to be climate change, as you mentioned that, but there are other options, refugee crisis, etc. Any thoughts on that?

Alan: If I said there is a particular angle of news that we need to give focus to in the disability perspective, then I would be taking sides. I believe that it is important to tell every particular story of a person with disability. If it is about sex and disability, that story is important to be said. If it's about employment and disability, that story needs to be told.

I cannot single-handedly isolate and say, "It is more important to talk about this particular topic," because if then we start isolating particular stories and say, "We are going to talk about this," then Alan Herbert was growing up, and there were no stories about journalists with disabilities. That I grew up without having any role models that set the trend for me to become a journalist.

If my resolution wasn't hard enough for me to become a journalist, probably, I would have never become a journalist. I don't think that we need to focus on a particular story. We just need to find a balance and say that we need to tell all these stories, but in a balanced way.

That does not directly answer your question, but that will be my quickest response that I would give to that particular question.

Keith: No, that's fine. In fact, I think that's a great answer. It shows a perspective that I hadn't considered specifically when thinking through this. No, I appreciate that answer. I think it's a great answer.

Maddie: You talked about how we need to be considering all of these identities and narratives, and not only focusing on one issue.

In centering the disability community in your news is important in better connecting with the disability community across the world, like you just were in the States, is something that's invaluable as we continue to push for disability rights and justice moving forward.

I'm wondering if you have any thoughts about how the disability community advocates, etc., can better connect around the world, kind of how we are right now.

Alan: That is a very interesting question. I want to go back a little bit on Keith's question. Not to go back on my answer, but give a life example on what I'm doing currently at Signs TV.

When I got the opportunity to work at Signs TV, Monday to Friday, I was given time. "From this particular time to this particular time, you're supposed to be onscreen and you're supposed to be onscreen from Monday to Friday," I was told, "Go do your thing."

When I went and sat down, and asked myself, "What am I going to do?", I almost fell into the trick of talking about the same thing over and over again. Then I realized there are so many things that we need to cover around disability. I sat down and said, "These are the things that we need to cover to talk about disability, and this is how I'm going to schedule myself."

I'll give you an idea, a rough idea, of how my schedule ran. On Monday, I get to talk about matters politics, advocacy, and everything about disabilities, but also bringing in that disability perspective and also bringing in a holistic perspective of people without disabilities.

On Tuesday, I narrow it down to inclusion, what is happening in the inclusion space. I call my segment Inclusion One on One because inclusion is not supposed to be...It is hard to talk about inclusion in a room of 10 people. No. It would be a little bit easier, and it would sink a little bit faster if you're talking on a one-on-one basis with somebody.

I found naming the segment Inclusion One on One would be more interesting. It would be more eye-catching or ear-catching to a viewer when they are listening [indecipherable 29:16] .

Then Wednesday, we do a segment called Come Talk. We just about issues that affect us as with disabilities. Say education, marriages, controversies here and there, pep talk. Let's have the conversation.

On Thursday, then I focus about lifestyle. As a person with a disability, how are you supposed to show up at your workplace, to your friends? What are you supposed to be eating to keep in shape? If your disability is related to not eating particular foods, then what can you do?

Then on Friday, it's about entertainment. We have deejays with disabilities on set to show off that, "Yeah, I can also go to a nightclub and have a bit of fun." That's all. It shows a holistic point of view that it is important to tell every particular disability story.

Now to go to Maddie's question is how can we be more there for ourselves? Just what we're doing right here is reaching out to those who we feel there is something that we can teach them, that they are not doing, but we are aware of. I think that's where the goldmine is. How can we be available for each other? How can we support each other, not only in, let's say, a more holistic manner?

Also, one of the things that I would mention that limits disability inclusion, and probably this might be on the African continent, but I would not also like to generalize, is that the resources that are directed to disability inclusion sometimes they are very minimal. The general inclusion in our country sometimes it is not fast-paced as compared in other countries.

We might have the policies. We might have the legislation to say that, "This is supposed to be this way. This is supposed to be this way." We all understand that for policies to be implemented, there needs to be budgets attached to these policies for them to be implemented. That's where we're falling short.

I think, if us, as the disability, through different organizations that exist around the world, how can we make sure that in the different countries or in the different continents there is that balance of budgets to make sure these particular countries can be able to drive their disability agenda, but also, not to limit everything against resources? Knowledge is also a resource.

How are we making sure that resource is available? Knowledge is available for folks who are working on their own disability advocacy. I think that is one of the things. Those are two of the things that we can really look out for and say that we are going to be able to work towards and be able to support and have a holistic sort of a disability movement which is global.

I like what the United States has done where it has a hashtag called Disability Twitter. When you type that hashtag into the search engine of Twitter, it will give you people who are talking about disability in the United States. These are some of the things that people in different countries and different continents are supposed to be doing, but do we have the knowledge to do such things?

When people from developed countries or even from a disability Florida, if you can identify a need and say, "We're going to reach out to these people, and based on the resources that we have then we're going to be able to share those resources," even if it's knowledge.

Some people just need a bit of knowledge to spark their thinking, to think about things differently so that this agenda of disability advocacy can go ahead in our countries or from a global perspective.

Maddie: Yeah, definitely. I love your answer and the emphasis on taking care of our community and looking out for our community. Whether that's in your backyard or across the world, keep sharing resources, sharing information, and just general support for one another. That we're going to all get through whatever we're going through in our individual spaces together and looking out for each other across the world.

I think that's a really powerful answer.

Keith: Yeah, indeed. Well, Alan, if you could give advice to young disabled people listening who may want to pursue journalism or another media career, what would you tell them?

Alan: Very interesting is, one, if you are looking for people like you who are in the space or the thing that you want to do and that you are not finding any, probably you might be the first in that particular space. Do not lose the hope. Just soldier on.

As when you have that conviction to do that particular thing, along the journey you will find people who will be able to hold your hand and walk you through that journey that you have decided to walk. If you do not start, then definitely that journey you're not going to walk it, and you'll not find anybody along that journey to help you to bring your dream to fruition. That is one.

Two is be your authentic self. Embrace your disability. One thing that I always told myself is even when the kids my age, when we were still young, they picked on me, how I made the resolution was, "Alan, by the way, there is nothing that you're going to do about your albinism. This is something that is with you."

It might sound a little bit brutal, but I told myself, "It's either you pick yourself up. Absolutely nobody is going to be able to pick yourself up. You have to show up for yourself."

Also, I would like to give credit to my grandmother who inculcated that mindset into me. That, "Alan, there is nobody like you. You are a one kind of a human being." Whenever I felt down about myself, that voice of my grandmother always ringed in my brain. I was like, "There is no way I'm letting that old woman down. I've got to soldier on."

Also, one thing I would agree is that sometimes persons with disabilities we grew up in dismantled families. Probably not by design, but because you were born with a disability. I'm not cutting slack out for our parents that they were not ready or they are also learning through the process, but you should not be hard on yourself if you find yourself in that situation.

Rather, look around you because a million people or people around you, not everybody's going to be against you. Not everybody's going to discriminate against you. If you identify that one person who will be your shoulder whenever you have a problem, whenever you need to talk to somebody. Identify that one person who could be able to push you throughout that journey.

Unfortunately, I did not have one, but the voice of my grandmother always made sure that whenever I fell down, it always ringed my brain and I would always soldier on.

Once you get there, once you persevere, once you show up, and once you do what you want to do, the other advice I would like to tender is, carry other people along on the journey. There is a particular time that you are not going to be able to do what you are doing currently.

When I decide to settle down, have a wife and have children, and I happen to have a child with albinism, I do not want them to go through the struggle that I went through to find belonging. I want to build a community where every person with albinism want to belong in and find belonging.

Why it's important to carry other people along the way, you will share your vision with them. If you are not able to continue with that vision, they will be able to continue with that vision because you share the same disadvantages or challenges. That would be my advice to anybody who want to start, or to any child, or to anybody who is listening to us, live.

Keith: That's great and very empowering. It's people like your grandmother, and those are the people that are out there supporting those with disabilities. It's very important. I'm glad they're out there, and there's someone for everyone, right?

Alan: Definitely.

Keith: I think it's a beautiful answer.

Maddie: That was such a good span of advice, everything. Having people with disabilities who are powerful role models and have such important messages to share with young disabled people are so important. Like you mentioned at the beginning of this, we didn't necessarily have that as kids.

I think, frankly, just listening to this kind of got me choked up. I think you're a really powerful person, and you're moving mountains with the work that you're doing.

I think each generation after you, whether that's your family, whether that's your friends, somebody you don't even know, is going to be better for it just having you in the media space. We're really happy to have had you on the show. Unless you have anything else you want to share, we would love to do a send-off.

Alan: Thank you very much for obviously...Obviously, the first thing that I would say, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity. I remember how this all started out. It started out as a community. That is why it is important for people with disability to be there for each other.

If it wasn't for Professor Beth Haller who connected me to you, then probably we would not have been having this conversation. Also, knowing people in the space that we are in and also being able to share these networks, that is very important.

Thank you very much for having me on. I hope that anybody who would listen to this would find value out of it. It would touch a life, and it would be able to change or create a light bulb moment in their minds to do differently in their lives.

What I would like to reinforce, I think, Maddie, it's you who spoke about this, is when you have an opportunity to plug into supporting any work that's around disability or any work that's around advocacy, please reach out to those organizations that you have found that information through so that we can be able to find ways of how to keep the work that we do and sustain it.

That would be my rallying call and my closing remark. For a person with disability out there, it's never easy. It has never been easy. It will never be easy. You only have to create a comfort in your brain and [indecipherable 39:56] this work. You sort of find a middle ground.

What I also tell people basically in my football team, you cannot be at loggerheads with people all the time. You have to find a common ground where everybody needs to bring something onto

the table. I'm not saying disability inclusion is not important. For us, for disability inclusion to thrive, everybody needs to contribute to this journey so that we can get there a little bit quicker.

If I sit back and say, "Keith, you're supposed to be disability-inclusive, you're supposed to be disability minded," and I am not showing up to the table to talk to you about it. Definitely, there is nothing that you're going to do on your end.

Let us find a middle ground. We are not supposed to be at loggerheads all the time. Let us make sure, for the generations that will come after us, they will find a world that is more disability-aware and more disability-inclusive minded.

Maddie: Definitely. Thank you for that wonderful sendoff. Keith and I are wondering if you'd be willing to teach us a disability related phrase in Swahili or nice sendoff phrase that we can close our episode with?

Alan: [laughs] Unfortunately, when I saw that last question, I thought about it. Then, I realized, in Africa, and in our local dialects, disability terms are derogatory. In our local languages, there hasn't been a development for disability language.

Unfortunately, I do not have one for you because I will be reinstating the same derogatory terms that we are speaking against, we are raising awareness to demystify. What I would say is, "Asante sana and kwaheri." That is meaning, "Thank you very much and bye-bye."

Maddie: Awesome. Can you repeat that one more time?

Alan: Asante sana. Kwaheri.

Maddie: Asante sana. Kwaheri.

Alan: Kwaheri.

Maddie: Kwaheri.

Keith: Asante sana. Kwaheri.

Alan: Yeah. Something like that.

Maddie: We'll work on it.

[crosstalk]

Keith: We are not going to be the expert quite this quick, but very cool.

Alan: All right.

Keith: Thanks again, Alan. The wonderful conversation, so happy to all the work you're doing on your side of the world, and so glad that we've met and can continue this relationship. We really do appreciate everything you're doing.

Alan: Thank you. I'm also starting a podcast of my own. That's why I moved into the News space. Probably, I would also be inviting you, one of these fine days, to give us a perspective because it's been about me. Then, now it will be about you and some of the concepts that you're using to implement a disability advocacy in the States.

Keith: Cool. We're looking forward to it.

Alan: All right.

Maddie: Thanks so much.

Keith: All right. Thanks, Alan.

Alan: Bye.

Keith: Thank you, Alan, for being our guest on today's episode. It was great to chat with him and be able to continue connecting with the disability community worldwide.

Maddie: Definitely. If you liked today's episode, please help us be found by more folks by considering sharing this episode with a friend or giving us a like, review, or rating wherever you're listening. We want to keep making content and podcasts that you enjoy. That will definitely help us do so.

Keith: It definitely makes a big difference. We also have some big stuff coming in the next few months, so stay tuned for new episodes real soon. The best way to be notified when new episodes drop is to subscribe. We're on Apple Podcast, Spotify, YouTube, Google, Amazon, almost anywhere you get your podcasts.

Maddie: For more information and transcripts of each episode, visit our website, disabilityrightsflorida.org/podcast.

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