

Transcript

00:00:00 Speaker 1

Welcome to Independent Perspective, a public affairs presentation of Western New York Independent Living (WNYIL). Our guest today is Dr. Michael Rembis, associate professor in the Department of History at the University at Buffalo and director of the Center for Disability Studies. I'm your host, Ernie Churchwell. Welcome to the program, Doctor.

00:00:21 Speaker 2

Hi. Hello. Thank you, Ernie.

00:00:23 Speaker 1

It's our pleasure to have you because you're you've got all the lowdown on this exciting new program called Communities of Care. I gather that's been made possible by a grant.

00:00:37 Speaker 2

Yes. Yeah, I do have all the lowdown. You're right. And this is an exciting project. It's a collaboration between the Center for Disability Studies on the UB campus and the Gender Institute. The formal name of which is the Institute for Research and Education, and Women and Gender. It was formed back in in 1970.

00:00:57 Speaker 2

The Center for Disability Studies more recently, but we've collaborated, and we've received this \$2.5 million Mellon Foundation grant with this project that we've called communities of Care, which will at the center of the project, is really providing the means for people to tell their stories to us.

00:01:17 Speaker 1

And although it's not solely for people with disabilities, I gather they'll be playing a predominant part in providing the stories that you're going to be gathering for this project.

00:01:30 Speaker 2

Yes, indeed, this people with disabilities, broadly defined to include all sorts of folks with chronic conditions, diseases, mental health concerns and other disabilities will be foregrounded in this study, and we're going to be gathering their stories and asking them about their own communities of care about their own support networks, about what, how

they survive and thrive in the community. What, who do they rely on, what kinds of, if they use services, what kinds of services do they use? What?

00:02:04 Speaker 2

And just generally, how do they take care of one another and how do they live in these, especially trying times of anything, part of this project was the more immediate sort of impetus for this project was the COVID crisis, which really exposed a lack of care in the country, especially people with disabilities, and then the tragedy at the Tops market and the way that people sort of rallied around the survivors of that tragedy to really support them. And then, of course, the terrible blizzard that we had and the ways in which people worked to support one another during that, and also that also revealed that people with disabilities were especially vulnerable during that crisis as well.

00:02:47 Speaker 2

Those three sort of more immediate concerns motivated this project, but it's also more deeply motivated in the long history of isolation that people with disabilities experience, the marginalization they experience. We really want them to tell their stories and to think about how they survive and thrive in the community. To help one another to do so.

00:03:11 Speaker 1

Once these stories are collected, how do people who are interested access them?

00:03:18 Speaker 2

So, anybody can participate in this study. We're paying people for their participation. With their consent, of course. And once and the goal of this project, one of the main goals is to create a permanent digital archive. So, these stories will be available permanently digitally in an archive that will be searchable.

00:03:40 Speaker 2

The web space that contains the archive will also have curated exhibits, so will feature people's stories and it will be available to anyone who wants to access it, including researchers, students, interested people in the public, and eventually ultimately down the road will work out a way where people can share their stories, remotely and digitally through the website, which will be curated and moderated, and those stories in the future will be added into that archive as well.

00:04:11 Speaker 1

I guess we've been having fun because time has flown. I'm sure people will have some questions about this program. How can they reach you?

00:04:22 Speaker 2

They can reach me at my work email, which is marambus@buffalo.edu, and I'll just say really quickly that we're doing interviews and writing groups and poetry and art-based expression as well. So, it's a really broad way to share stories.

00:04:38 Speaker 1

Thanks so much for being with us doctor.

00:04:40 Speaker 1

Thank you.

00:04:42 Speaker 1

You've been listening to Independent Perspective, a public affairs presentation of WNYIL. Our guest today was Dr. Michael Rembis, associate professor of the Department of History at University at Buffalo and director of the Center for Disability Studies. I've been your host, Ernie Churchwell.