

ROUGH EDITED COPY

DRAWING ON DISABILITY: COMICS INCLUDING DIFFERENCE

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captioner standing by.

>> LISA DAMICO: Good afternoon and welcome to Drawing on Disability: Comics Including Difference. This is the last webinar for this year's season. I'm Lisa Damico from the Office of VSA and disability at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. If you would like to view a live stream captioning of this webinar, you can follow the link on this slide and on the chat box in the control panel located on the right side of your screen. Before we get started, let's take a moment to make sure you're familiar with the go to webinar control panel on the right side of your screen. This panel can be hidden by clicking on the orange arrow in the top left corner. If you need to leave the webinar early, you can exit out of the program by clicking on the X in the upper right corner. A recording of the webinar will be available afterwards to catch up on any parts you missed. Make sure you selected telephone or mic and speakers to correspond with how you are connected to the webinar. You have the ability to submit or answer questions which is especially encouraged this in this webinar in the chat pane located at the bottom of the control panel. If you prefer to see the questions instead of typing it you can click on the raise your hand icon and I will unmute you. Your questions will come directly to me and during the designated question-and-answer time I'll lay them to our presenters. I want to emphasize that in the week following today's presentation, I will send out a follow-up email with a link to the recordings of today's presentation, a copy of the PowerPoint, a helpful handout and a copy of the transcript. This means that you don't need to take notes during the presentation. As I mentioned earlier, today's webinar is the last webinar in this year's season. We're in the final stages of creating next year's lineup. Once it's finalized, I will send it out to the VSA mailing list and it will be posted on the Kennedy website. That's coming out the first week of October. If you're active in social media, I invite you to connect with us using the hashtag #VSAWebinar. You can connect with us on Facebook at VSA international. You can also join us on Twitter as my social media intern Courtney will be live tweeting today's webinar. Please say hi to her. Our Twitter handle is VSAINTL. You can also join us on Instagram at VSA international. And with that, I will turn it over to today's presenters, Karen Keifer-Boyd, Michelle Kraft, and Veronica Hicks. I will enable your webcams so everyone can see you. And then I will turn it over to Karen. There you are, Karen.

>> Karen: Get the PowerPoint up there.

>> LISA DAMICO: I just sent you the request.

>> Karen: Okay. There we go. Well, good afternoon. I'm just really thrilled. It's exciting. I saw the list of people. You're from all over the country, it's wonderful that you're here and I'm going to imagine I'm talking to Eugene, Oregon and all over Florida and so on. I'm Karen Keifer-Boyd and with Veronica Hicks and Michelle Kraft, we're pleased to share with you teaching strategies applicable to K through 12. Our teaching studies are with comics that, as you can see on the slide here, use humor, parody and metaphor to explore identity, experience, strengths, difference and capacities, challenge and reclaim with that disability means. And deconstruct disabling systemic social construction. Our two characters, you can see, the hamster

and the elder, they are going to help us present our ideas. Right now, you can see they're both thinking of these five main points in the introductory slide and these points do focus our presentation and they will be unraveled as we continue in our presentation. These ideas, I would like to point out do draw on disability studies on comics that include difference. Veronica, what defines narrative in comics?

>> Well, the important thing to remember is that multiple panel comic's tell a narrative of connection, and is bridged by the artists and reader's imagination and that's why we find it so useful and such a wonderful way to share stories with people labeled with disabilities. So students with disabilities can utilize the comic medium to aid in discussion and possibly even analysis of events that happen outside of school. For example, if a student on the autism spectrum is learning about conflict or conflict resolution by people, by seeing it drawn in a comic strip is an effective way to discuss and analyze a topic compared to learning about it through a theoretical discussion or talking through the student or it might be even more comfortable than acting out a situation of conflict resolution. That might be very disturbing. Instead, we use the comic medium as a successful way to communicate narrative and tell the story that the artist wants to convey. And what's being depicted in the slides you see are three small panel drawings of an activity in a physical education class depicted through comics and this actually happened with one of my students in the high school setting who was wearing a prosthetic arm. And as you see, they were able to participate fully in the beginning but then had a bit of a struggle at the end. And this is illustrated very cleverly through these three panels.

>> Illustrations offer visual contextual cues to help decipher meaning. Graphic novels have an easy-to-read accessible format. Graphic novels and manga comics can portray race, ethnicity, disability and body shapes and body identities in a different way than prose or poetry can. And that makes some stories incredibly powerful. On slide three, the titles of graphic novels by artists who have experience with disability are listed here. These stories are about everyday life, their challenges with environmental barriers and social stigmas. It's about their finding value in themselves as unique individuals and in being part of a community. Follow Me Home is a love story of two adolescent step siblings who hold together amidst Schizophrenia, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, and family breakdown. The dialogue is very realistic and scenes are like familiar places to high school students, such as the parking lot and throughout the school. And there's also within these spaces, it's like high school can be, there is hope and foreboding. The art and page design achieves a mood of desperation that the main character Ruth feels and how at moments her obsessions can actually look like genius. So there's this play of this hope and foreboding. It's a 216 page graphic novel and it's appropriate for grades 7 through 12. Real is a whole series that began in Japan as manga and there's 14 different volumes in English between 2008 and 2015. On handouts, I have some links with the creators of each of these three graphic novels that I'm discussing. [Away from mic] features three male teenagers. One has dropped out of high school. One is an amputee who now plays wheelchair basketball and another is a paraplegic after an accident. And the three of them find themselves marginalized by society. And they are united by a common feature, their desire to play basketball and no place to play it. This particular story deals with the reality of their physical disabilities and their psychological sense of inferiority that

they struggle against and they breakthrough their psychological barriers bit by bit, which is sometimes the stereotype but the realism is so strong that we do start to see that it is environmental barriers and social stigmas that are the greatest challenges rather than themselves. *El Deafo*, by Cece Bell is a story about a girl with hearing loss who has to navigate middle school with a hearing aid which gives her this new ability to hear lots of things. She chronicles her hearing loss at this young age and her experiences with this devices, the phonetic ear and it's very powerful at this time and the kind of device that she had at her age, in this time period, was very awkward, it was large, and as the story goes, I will tell you in her words how she describes it. But just for you to imagine as I read from her words, the characters are rabbits. I wore it stopped on to my chest and I had cords with earpieces that went up to my ears. This hearing aid worked with a teacher's microphone and basically the microphone amplified my teacher's voice and made it really clear, really loud, just for me. And soon after I got outfitted with it, I discovered that not only was I hearing her wherever she was in the classroom, but I could hear her wherever she was in the entire school building, the teacher's lounge, everywhere. So it had a lot of power and it was awesome. And she talked about herself as feeling like she had this disability but then this disability was this kind of power that switched for her. So what's different about this is it's not a stereotype but from her unique and real experiences. So given the power of graphic narratives to tell stories in an accessible form about lives that are only often invisible or stereotyped in popular cultures portrayal and Michelle is going to share a teaching strategy with her experience.

>> So I want to go back to some of what was in the earlier slides, how Veronica talked about the importance of narrative, especially when you're coupled with images. As Karen said, that ability of graphic novels and comics to combine visual image with narrative gives a much more powerful representation than perhaps [Away from mic] powerful tool and allowing for the sharing of stories and those shared experiences. And another way to represent is through perhaps a more iconic form of self-representation in comics. So we have got two different ways to approach it. This narrative unfolding and perhaps a singular empowering iconic sort of description. And that goes back to kind of what Karen was saying about Cece Bell and her use of the phonic ear. Suddenly she begins to see that as a super power and something she had that was different. So recently I'm teaching right now this fall a secondary pedagogy class, one for art educators and we recently invited the group to the campus for a meet and greet from an autism center. And these students represent a chronological age of about 18 to 30 and probably of intellectual age of maybe early elementary or even primary school in some cases to add lessons. So I wanted to come up with a project whereby we could meet each other, begin to formulate community and get to know each other and share or strengths and powers with one another on a stage or forum. When we went around the room and introduced ourselves one of the things I said when we get to you I want you to tell not just your name but something that is a strength of yours. We went around the room and everybody introduced themselves in this way and later in our class period together, think back and I want you to see what that strength you discussed if you parlay that into a super power, if you amped up the power, the thing that you were good at and made it into a super power, how would that look. And then if you were to

create a super hero around that, how might that look? I gave an example of I love to walk, with or without a backpack. So I thought, okay and she would be -- would her name be Strider or Walking Woman? The ability to walk anywhere—vertical surfaces, across water—walk anywhere that there was a surface, so I talked about designing a character around that. We each went around the room and designed our own character over a few minutes and we had to think what's the costume going to look like and the name going to be and we shared them with each other to reinforce that talent or power or thing that we're passionate about. So the example you're looking at right there is PC man. This is the individual, one of the adults on the autism spectrum, who was very good at technology and I knew that he was very good at it. He designed PC man as a very powerful figure. You see he has a monitor where his head goes, and he's staring at us menacingly through that wearing these strong black gloves and in his hands he holds computer components as weapons and he's in a very powerful position. He's ready for combat. In this way, the student was able to share a little bit of himself in a very empowering sort of way what his strengths were. And to use metaphor and some of those different aspects pictorially to convey himself and what that talent was. I'm going to turn it back over to Veronica.

>> Karen: Actually you're going to turn it over to me. So I want to talk about recognizing the social tropes or clichés in comics. Just as a Bechtel test with its three questions, are there at least three female characters in this story who talk to each other about something other than a man, just as that test draws attention to the systemic problem with representation of women in films and other forms of popular culture, media, dominant -- representation of disabilities can generate long lists of comics identified by students. This is where I begin is asking of the films, the graphic novels, the popular culture, what the students are familiar with. This pedagogical approach shifts analysis away from specific comics and toward discussion of systemic social constructions. To begin, I would ask students to create a list with students -- I would ask to create a list with the students I'm working with of the comics, the manga, and the graphic novels that they are familiar with. Then I would ask is disability portrayed in the story? Often, it's absent. That is one stereotype in disability. According to the world banks statistics in 2011 approximately one billion people experience disability. So the fact that it may be invisible is a problem and we might need to have representation. If a person with a disability is in the story, does that person have agency? Is that person unique? Historically, disabilities have been looked at rather than been embraced. Stereotypes of those in comics, and this is in a lot of studies I've looked at and come up with a grouping of words to help put that in front of the students when you're talking about their comics and the graphic novels that they're most interested in to see if there are other story lines than this list that you see, pathetic or that you can hear -- pathetic, evil, invisible, Supercrip, joke, non-sexual, non-human. These are the stereotypes that come up time and time and time again. So there has to be other story lines. After discussion about the stereotypes as they arise in the comics that students mention, we set goals and criteria with students for the creation of a comic. And with this, I'd like to -- one of the things I talk about is in teaching is beginning with what does this idea of ableism mean? And how is ableism perpetuated in comics and graphic narratives? How does the work address ableism? Ableism is privilege able-bodied people over people's whose bodies are differently-abled. According to

Margaret McLean, a disability studies scholar, discrimination on the grounds that being able-bodied is the normal and superior human condition. In contrast, being disabled is linked to ill health, incapacity, and dependence. These understandings become institutionalized and create barriers to equitable [Away from mic]. With understanding ableism, what we're trying to do in the creation of comics is how can we disrupt, challenge, create counter narratives to the stereotypes and the clichés that I talked about in the prior slide. With this, I would give viewing and reading prompts such as what are the ways that exclusion or inclusion are sustained or disrupted? How is a disability marked or signified? Has the graphic novelist, comic artist experienced the disability portrayed in the comic and is this relevant? How is disability defined or represented in the graphic novel? How does this differ from ADA definitions? What are the concepts of normal and abnormal in the comic? Is there a counter narrative that can test and trench language and ideas of normalcy in a way that [Away from mic] social inequities. Inclusion, signify relevance and counter normal askew to remind people what it is we are talking about, can we create a graphic novel that deals with inclusion in which the disability is basically dealing with how the disability is marked or signified so these are my prompts to help remember those ideas. Now, we see, as this little hamster says, we need to see ourselves represented in learning materials. So part of that, when I talk about inclusion and how is the disability person experiencing disability signified, that's really important to see role models. So there's a set of criteria here to think about. Is the person experiencing the disability presented as a valued person? Is the person presented in a unique way rather than stereotyped or clichéd? Is the person experiencing the disability a contributing member to a community, a small group? Are they part of something? Rather than isolated. These are ways that we can create a graphic novel from listening to like story and we can put ourselves into that story. Another thought is we could make characters as animals or personified objects. I've had incredible stories just with the use of pencils, an orange pencil and a blue pencil. Fourth graders and the emotions that they feel from even a story like that. We can visualize locating a memory, a feeling valued unique and contributing member and trying to find that time and placing. And we can create a graphic novel in how not to be complacent in perpetuating. We think it very important to define disability from a disabilities studies perspective, to make it clear the difference between impairment and disability, and to ground our work in disabilities studies. So you can see or hear on the slide here that impairment is defined as, and I quote from -- these are all definitions from the center for disabilities studies -- impairment is injury, illness or congenital condition that causes or is likely to cause a loss or difference of physiological or psychological function. Disability, according to definition from the center for disabilities studies is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in society on an equal level with others due to social and environmental barriers. And it is that that I want to stress and try to create an image there that helps us to think about that, the difference in impairment is this looking at this lack, this something is wrong with the individual, where the disability terminology from a disabilities studies perspective, the problem is with the environmental barrier and the social stigmas. And that what we see here are these stairs with dog and person trying to make it up there and then down at the bottom of the very steep stairs and difficult for many people to navigate, that there's a door that's also sort of creating barriers and the person is not mobile. They're sitting in what appears to be a wheelchair and that really would not work if there is not some kind of ramp or alternative way to get to the top. That is an

environmental barrier. It's not about the dog or person, it is about the environmental barrier and sometimes those barriers are attitudes which are social stigmas. So here's an idea for an activity for a four frame story activity, we've all used it in our teaching with all ages and differences. And so here's the four frame comic activity. And I have four different frames here to kind of show what that might look like. So the first is show a time when you were disabled. Thinking a time, our bodies change and most of our abilities are temporary in the span of one's lifetime. So showing a time when you, personally, were disabled is a way to bring this putting themselves into the story. The second frame is to now decenter expectations of normal. And so I use the hamster as one. Here's this hamster with a little red sweater looking at us, gazing at us, not scampering away and afraid. This idea of male, female, race, ability, any of those expectations, I don't know, and because he's wearing a sweater and such, we probably don't carry expectations of hamsters or at least that's disrupt or decentering those expectations as normal. The third frame, if you're asking your students to do this, now do a parody of showing that time when you were disabled and these decentering expectations of normal. Show a close up through humor or metaphor, your identity, experience and strengths and capacities. So the Elder woman here is faded in the image and this is to convey how women, when they look or appear old, often are dismissed or ignored. So this is actually a metaphor of that with the fading of her face there, her whole self-there. And the fourth frame in this comic is to deconstruct disabling systemic social constructions. And this fourth frame, we see stairs, which are, as mentioned in the prior slide, they're inaccessible to some. And this red organic shape is beginning to redesign it another way to -- another way to traverse this environmental barrier with red organic movement. I'm not quite sure what the structure is, but it looks like its inclusion and it's organic, and one can move and slide and move through the space. And even the sharp edges are smoothed down by this organic wrapping there. This is an abstract way to talk about deconstructing disabled systemic social constructions. I have given this activity to classes, different ages, and with very simple examples like this, they really think about, well, what are expectations of normal? How can I show something different? They are able to work with this. It just depends. The more you have examples of others, I know a lot of times people, all they really want, are some kind of prompts to get them thinking and that's sometimes the way to get one going. Michelle, we'll move to you.

>> Michelle: So this is another example from that experience that we shared with the adults on the autism spectrum. And this drawing here, we're going back to the idea of using humor and metaphor to represent our own identities and ourselves. We're looking at an example here of a war machine and city bus. And this was a student who felt he knew so much about cars and there was a lot to know about cars. So he created these almost discreet, disparate ideas and mashed them together into a car and represented his own passion. Christina Munus is an art therapist and she talks about art and health and as you're self-representing with these images, there is a working through of identity in creating these images, even when we're not always aware that's happening. In this way, this war machine and car and city bus sort of come together to represent this student and his passion and his strengths. So at first glance, it may seem that it's not really a portion of himself as a superhero but it really is. Turn it over to Veronica.

>> Veronica: So we asked the question now, why identify narrative perspective? What's important about perspective? Perspective establishes a student's story or anyone's story, the preservation of that story, and sometimes it could be the preservation of an oral history could take the form of this visual narrative way through the merger of art and text found uniquely within comics. Remember with the comic medium, it's a form of both literature and a form of sequential art. That means the overlap of those two combinations is different ways to acquire meaning, different ways to communicate oneself and different perspectives from maybe different selves or from an outsider perspective. This is allowing someone who is not very close with the student to understand things they're trying to communicate. As we see in the image on slide 10, this image is nifty for this particular slide because it shows a person kneeling down and getting on the level, or perspective, of a young student, a young school girl. So that's illustrating why it's so important to use the comic medium to wrap around these different ideas and perspectives. And with perspective, it says also on the slide that the narration of a story tells the thoughts and feelings of a character and also the sequence of events. And we'll talk more about sequencing in comics a little bit later.

>> So there are different ways in comics that you can accomplish the narration. You -- combination of text and a combination of imagery, which is something unique to illustrating through manga and graphic novels and comics. In this case, the text really reinforces what you see happening in the image. On the other hand, could stem from well-orchestrated sequencing. And this can tell a deeper narrative using the images and watches the events unfold. And it leaves the reader space to fill in the gap of the story. In looking at this one example too from that class, we see that this individual knew a lot about firemen and about fire stations and firefighters and so he decided that that was his talent. That was the thing he knew really well. And as we look at this image and try to fill in the gaps of what's happening, the student had to think about the setting, this individual surrounded by fire and he comes out very strong in this particular image. The firefighter in this case, the student was very detailed in providing the mask for the firefighter and the black boots and gloves and all the things that the firefighter needs for protection. Even though verbally, the student could respond when prompted in perhaps one word responses, what he was able to convey in his drawing unfolds a larger narrative in representing himself and his knowledge about firefighters. It was really interesting to see that. And the other thing that I want to mention is in so many of these examples, when these individuals shared these superheroes, they used the first person I when talking about the examples. There were only one or two when talking about him or her. They internalized what they were doing and referred to this as I. I am super mom. And shared those semantics. It was really interesting to watch that connection occur between the images they had created of self-with the amped up super powers and how they internalized it into the descriptions of characters and relating these characters to themselves. It was really, really wonderful to see. Back to Veronica.

>> Veronica: So as Michelle mentioned, relationships are what build the comics' stories and narratives. We are going to talk about sequencing and closure. And I'm going to reference Scott McCloud who wrote *Understanding Comics*. Scott McCloud mentions the phenomenon of observing parts but perceiving the whole as closure. In other words, closure is the act of mentally filling in the area between separate panels. This is why comics are such an important medium to use with students with disabilities. It's more than drawing, more than story line, lots of rapid fire things going on and they all get illustrated in a beautiful setting of comics. The slide that you're seeing now has two sections on it. And we are going to start talking about different ways to create this closure or sequencing. And we are talking about maybe one panel comics, two panels or three. Most of the ones you're going to see coming up are two panel comics. So that means that we have to fill in what's going on in the gutter, which is the space between the two panels. So the first type that's featured is moment to moment. Now, this can be literally a blink of the eye, the flapping of a butterfly's wings, something so minute, but it could -- could show something else going on. It has probably a bigger connotation to it than when you first see it. It really makes you stop and look. What's featured on the first section of the slide is an image that was co-created with a past student, now graduate of mine, one who wears a prosthetic arm normally in her daily life. And so you see here the bedroom scene with the lights on before she goes to school, and then in a moment, the light is switched off, and you see one arm extended to close the door. It happens in a moment. The next part of the slide you see is the section called action to action. So action to action is very distinct, it's usually a single subject, very direct, to the point, usually you see it in superhero type comics. Action to action takes up a lot of comics. What is illustrated here is just a little fox jumping in the air presumably at a mouse hiding in the snow. And then the next scene is just the fox's tail and back end sticking up out of the snow as he's buried in it. Very to the point. These are just two examples. There's more to go on. I just want to mention that, as we continue, for students communicating with a goal in mind to talk about a narrative in the story, there are many different types of sequencing, but the reason why we're using these in particular is because they seem to best exercise three different things: The closure or progression of an idea, the reader involvement using their imagination between the gutter, and also the transitions that set an aspect of an idea or mood. So these are higher order of thinking things that we want to happen so we're sharing these in particular. The next is a slide that features two scenes. One is subject to subject and the other is scene to scene. For subject to subject, this is one panel of the comic moves the reader from one essential area to the next. Subject to subject can include a high level of meaningful reader involvement to connect the two panels. The example here is a woman watching the lottery numbers being drawn on television and we see some text up top, presumably by the announcer that says and the winning lottery number is and they rattle off a number. The next panel is an extreme zoom out of the Earth and just a very large bubble that says jack pot. We are making the connection that the woman has won the lottery by that. We are making that in the gutter. That's a really important skill formed here. The next panel is scene to scene. Scene to scene, we see the gutter, we see the spaces between the two panels, and that is the area for transition. The gutter here transports it is reader across a significant distance whether it be place or time. So here we see a scene from Ancient Greece where the two people featured are saying now everyone will know, and there is an image of a sculpture holding up the image of unicorn saying unicorns are real. And the other is saying

this is present day and now we'll never know. And the woman's sculpture is the one we tend to envision, which is kind of Tattered, no arms. And we're filling in the gaps there and that is really, really significant. Continuing on, aspect to aspect. So this is when a bypass of time is featured. For the most part, this is the same exact scene, but just a different viewpoint, if you will, a different camera angle or wandering eye. Nothing happens at all here. It is literally the same thing but from a different angle, but it establishes a certain mood in that location or certain idea surrounding that location. So the example we have here is one panel has a very extreme close up of a flower and to be sitting on a petal of that flower. And the next panel is a zoom out of that and you see a very serene landscape with a river and lots of little flowers and a tree and very tiny bees buzzing around those flowers. There's a connection but it's establishing a place and mood and idea. And the last one is non-sequitur. It's totally out of the realm and a very useful point of connection for some students. This is when two panels are totally seemingly not connected but in fact there is a relationship, but it really, really counts on the viewer/reader to make that connection. So two panels that totally look like they are not related but there is a connection and it's up to the reader to find that connection. So with this technique of sequencing, with this technique of storytelling, we're using that now to talk about coming in, at least from my outsider perspective of what we might find challenging as a person labeled with disabilities. You hear different labels of handicapped disabled. Using the comic medium is a way to study these perspectives, a way for students to feel empowered by this perspective. And they're accomplishing maybe goals in your school of literature and visual arts schools but they're going about it in a different way. We want you to see comics can be that way. It may not be that way for everybody but I think it's worth a try. And you know your students best and hopefully this will be something that they can prosper from. We're trying to change forms of ableism, and student bodies. As you see in the image, this was co-created with my now graduate, the hardest part of her morning, we were talking about that in an interview. And of course my outsider perspective, maybe putting toothpaste on your toothbrush was the hardest part. She could do that very easily even when she wasn't wearing her prosthetic arm. We'll talk about what the most challenging part was soon enough.

>> Just as the example that Veronica shared illustrates a focus on capacities and strengths and also make questioning those ableism -- also from that class period where we drew ourselves as strengths and heroes. We have the reading fascinator that was an individual that was their talent; they could read really, really quickly. The imaginator, she found self-worth and strength and talent through her artistic ability. And as she talked, she mentioned her high school art teacher quite a bit and what a force he had been in her life. In this particular comic, we see a close up of a girl and she's making a sketch, and as she's working on her drawing, she's using her imagine creating her sketch and her super power is anything she imagine or sketches comes to life. And we see that here. She too is using metaphor to share her self-identity, her strengths, her experiences and her capacities. And to really reclaim what disability means in her experiences and her cases. Really as we look at trying to encourage all students towards full participation, one of the things that we see implicit in law dealing with disability is this idea of empowerment through difference. And that's true through any piece of Civil Rights [Away from mic] that

whole idea that difference is central to the law and the full participation of all through their difference and empowerment through difference is part of that key. So such empowerment occurs then in concert with community. We have been talking all along about collaboration and identifying self within others. That I in tandem with the we of community. And with all of our students, whether they are typically abled or experiencing alternative abilities, being able to teach them how to critically reflect upon the visual images with which we're inundated every day and to question those with the same types of questions that Karen was posing earlier and how we identify with the stereotypical images. [Away from mic] and just creating that strength of community that can only be found in bringing our differences together. Turn it back over to Veronica.

>> Veronica: So we have been talking about honoring these students' stories. And to continue that, we have to ask ourselves as teachers and students and as learners, what are we valuing? What are we contributing? And are we conditioning our environment to be an enabling one or one where we are not feeling enabled? This image that you see here was also created along with my student and now graduate. We are talking about reflections of the school environment. Not only do the students talk about their own history, things that happen all the time, bullying, generate issues, these things can be demonstrated through the comic medium. We hope we can - getting them out, being able to deconstruct them with a professional, with an educator like yourself is a way to disassemble these systemic social constructions. And have you been following my own narrative yet? The last slide, a few slides ago, I had asked you -- I had pointed out what do you think the hardest part of her morning was? We are going to talk about it right now. My student's hardest part of her morning was leaving her two year old daughter at home while she went to school. If you notice, on the first panel on slide 18, even though there's a star spangled bed spread, there's still a lump in the middle of the bed. When you turn the lights off, you can see that lump clearly. That lump represents her daughter sleeping in her bed. She says that getting ready for school, putting on shoes and uniform, that's all stuff she can do with no thought at all. The hardest part of her morning is saying goodbye and kissing her daughter goodbye and leaving for the day. This was something that shocked me as an outsider perspective. But I think it's an important thing to realize, it's not her prosthetic wearing that is the issue. The issue is love and connection. And that's what came out through this narrative.

>> When Veronica first told Karen and me that story with her study when she was -- I think it was from your Master's degree, that was such a moving story to hear because our albeit perceptions would be that it would be some sort of physical capability that would be the difficult part of her day, but that connection that occurred because she shared her story and because there are so many people who can connect on balancing family and education and work and those stories of love, that is something that is the power of narrative and the power of narrative within comics being able to share these things pictorially. These two examples are interesting to me because both of these individuals who created these drawings recognized the role of self in this larger community. We have on the left Superfriends and this person she labored over her

drawings so much. She's the one wearing the cape. In relationship to her friendships and the other people around her. And she is a strong friend and that is her strength and it's something she offers within the community. Also super mom, here was an individual on the autism spectrum, she identified herself first and foremost as a mother and she talked about herself. Her super strength would be -- balance the needs of family and work and all of the things that need to be done. That sharing of strengths and empowerment and recognizing their own strengths and capacities that way in the relationship with others and in the community is what we see within these drawings. They're helpful in deconstructing some of those disabling systems [Away from mic]

>> Okay. Well, I just want to conclude by saying that, as our friend hamster says, comics are found in everyday life and it's true, they're everywhere. Whether it be when you are crossing at the cross walk and you see the hand blinking stop and right next to it is a panel of a person walking across the street. Students are going to create comics with or without you, as illustrated in the left hand lower panel. That comic was done by a seventh grade girl, me, and I didn't have instruction for that. There it is. That's evidence of the fact that even though there aren't words, that's communicating something and I can still laugh about it to this day and I do. Be there for your students. If they want to use comics to express themselves. Hopefully the comics will be prosperous for you and them.

>> In closure, I want to reemphasize the importance of being aware of ableism and the strategies offered in this presentation to critique stereotypes of people with disabilities. The pathetic, the evil or invisible or atmosphere, background. Supercrip, that's also a stereotype. Whiner, the burden, when you work this activity with your students, you will see as they name the comics in the graphic narratives or film, that these stereotypes happen over and over again, first being able to see that or critique that but gives a motivation to try to create something different. Michelle?

>> The other thing in examining the stereotypes and some criteria for creation might be is the character who is experiencing the disability, are they valued within the story? Are they portrayed as being unique from the other characters but also contributory? Are the strengths within that story, the comic books and the an may that you examine created with other individuals, valued, unique and contributory are the way each one of us would want to be portrayed in comics and it can be such a unique and rich experience with students drawing from some of their own experiences and using their own stories in text and images.

>> With that we would like to share our appreciation to Lisa Damico and the office of VSA and accessibility at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts for supporting this webinar and we want to thank all of you for attendance and at this moment we would like to turn it over

to you and invite questions and comments and to share your experiences using comics to include difference.

>> LISA DAMICO: Thank you. We've already had a few questions come in throughout the presentation, so I'm going to share some of those. So Heidi wanted to know, she says she's interested in how manga attracts ASD, as Asperger's children and teens. What are your thoughts?

>> I would think in my limited experience in working with individuals with autism and knowing what I know, I think there's a wonderful level of detail that any one of us could get lost in in trying to portray and read a story. There's so much wonderful detail in a lot of those graphic novels that is just engaging to everyone. So I think it can be an immersive experience and I think that's what we see at play with working with individuals with autism and as Asperger's.

>> Karen, Nadia would like to know are your ideas about using comics, just for people on the autism spectrum or for any disability? Can I use these ideas with comics with people with intellectual disabilities as well?

>> Absolutely. As Veronica said, it's not going to be for everybody, but certainly a wide range of differences and disabilities and we'll talk about one of the things like I mentioned dyslexia, but because of those ideas of the contextual cues -- so comics and graphic novels are actually very accessible for understanding and whether you can read the words or not, there's a story that can be told. And whether you're creating it or you're teaching something through the graphic narrative. So this is really a wonderful thing to actually -- this is a way to create community or partner people up so there's like how can I teach something? How can I teach something that includes you, my partner, includes you and me in that story? So really the social aspects and the stigmas of that person can't understand, all these kinds of things, can breakthrough those barriers because it is an accessible -- accessible in many ways, because of the visual cues, the context, because of the short -- like Veronica was talking about, the space between the making meaning. So like even that non-sequitur idea, you see the one baby image with the Mickey Mouse kind of ears on it. And when you look at the other image, you think how does that relate? That begins an exploratory kind of process that a range of investigation at different levels of thinking or different levels of abilities can actually enter in. So really, it's very approachable for a wide range of difference.

>> And I want to piggyback on that. Some of the examples that we looked at in this presentation were from adults experiencing autism, but that's only because that was my most recent experience so I brought that into this discussion. All three of us have worked very extensively

with individuals and with classrooms where we have a wide range of learners. And the thing that Karen said earlier, about that core idea of how am I going to teach this and in a way that includes everybody is the core question to anything we do in the classroom, but I also want to emphasize the relational aspect. What is the role of narrative if not to share? Setting up scenarios in the classroom and setting up activities in the classrooms where everyone is collaborative, where everyone is having the opportunity to be the individual within a community and is contributing to that community in that way. Those things don't happen accidentally. They have to be orchestrated and set up that way.

>> Thank you. I think we have just gone past our 4:00 ending time. So I'm going to take back control from you, Karen. And I'm going to ask you, our webinar participants, to remain on the webinar a few moments longer after it ends and complete a short evaluation survey that opens when you close the window. I read through everything you write and share them as feedback with the presenters and you taking the time to share feedback is definitely valued. With that, I would like to thank you for joining us today. If you have any questions or comments, you can reach out to me, Lisa Damico, at LVDamico@Kennedy-center.org. And I hope you will keep an eye out for next year's VSA season and join us for the seminars. Thank you, bye-bye, everyone.

>> Thanks, everyone, for coming.

>> Thank you.