**Down to the Struts**

Season 2, Bonus: Meet the DTTS Team

Host: Qudsiya Naqui

Guest: Avery Anapol & Ilana Nevins

Transcript by Ilana Nevins & Qudsiya Naqui

For more information:[www.downtothestruts.com](http://www.downtothestruts.com)

**Introduction**

[jazzy piano chords, bass strumming with smooth R&B]

Qudsiya Naqui:

Hi, this is Qudsiya Naqui and welcome to a bonus episode of Down to the Struts. At the conclusion of every episode, I remind all of you that this podcast would not be possible without Avery Anapol and Ilana Nevins. Today, Avery and Ilana have generously agreed to step out from behind the microphone, and have a conversation with me about the creation of this podcast and our vision for its future. I'm so excited to share Avery and Ilana's insights, talents, and creative genius with all of you. Also, stay tuned in a couple of weeks for a special sneak peek into some of the conversations that you'll be listening in on in season three. In the meantime, give us a follow on Instagram and Twitter at Down to the Struts. You can also join our Facebook group Down to the Struts podcast where I'll be sharing exclusive content and building community with listeners interested in disability design and intersectionality. Thanks as always for your support. And here's Avery Ilana and me getting down to it about Down to the Struts.

Qudsiya Naqui:

Can the two of you introduce yourselves a little bit for our listeners who hear your names all the time in the credits, but don't know really who you are.

Avery Anapol:

So I'm Avery Anapol, I am a white Jewish woman with a round face and long brown hair. I was born in Wisconsin, and now I live in London, my pronouns are she her and my background workwise and just interest wise has always been in journalism, editing, Social Media Communications. And most recently I did my Master's in Applied Linguistics. So I've always just been interested in doing something in the realm of storytelling.

Ilana Nevins:

I'm Ilana Nevins and I also use she her pronouns. I am a white Jewish woman also with a round face, but with curly, brownish, blondish hair. And I'm from California originally, and now I live in Washington, DC. And I've always been interested in storytelling first as it related to like environmental policy, and tribal peoples rights. And then I got into international journalism, and then worked with a local storytelling organization and throughout that kind of got more and more interested in podcasts, and just how powerful they are for storytelling, from the people whose stories they are about.

Qudsiya Naqui:

Awesome, thanks, guys.

Avery Anapol:

I'll just talk a bit about what I like about audio, you really get that, that personal sense like you're listening in on good friends. I mean, I've so many podcasts that I listened to that I feel like are my audio best friends, just because you learned so much about a person, when you can hear them speak and the different mannerisms they use from a linguistics perspective, I'm always interested in how people communicate to know how they talk to each other, how they interact with each other when they're in a conversation. And that's something that you just don't get in print journalism or even on TV really, when interviews tend to be more staged, or you have the questions in advance sometimes, yes, just a natural flow of conversation. I really like

Qudsiya Naqui:

Yeah. And Ilana, I know you were working with storytelling for Story District, which is the DC based organization that's very similar to The Moth for people who are familiar with that New York organization that does live storytelling. So I'm curious about what your thoughts are about like kind of like those different mediums like doing storytelling live versus like the recorded audio?

Ilana Nevins:

Oh, yeah, well, so first, so I also fell in love with audio storytelling when I was in California, but even more so when I moved to DC and felt like really lonely and kind of confused and was working through some of my own like mental health challenges and like found that being able to listen to stories, whether it was like people who I could relate to or just like something that was distracting felt so comforting. I mean, I think storytelling is so powerful and how it could really help people understand where someone else is coming from. So I first had been approaching it from working in nonprofits. The power that the platforms that really focusing on storytelling can give live storytelling was such a joyful experience experiencing the story with hundreds of other people at the same time. And that's such a special opportunity. And like, you just feel the energy. But I feel like there's something like kind of similar when you're just listening to a podcast, like it's much more. It's actually similar and how intimate it is, especially now that there are so many people that listen to so many podcasts. Like, I feel like there's still a lot of community around audio storytelling.

Qudsiya Naqui:

Yeah. And that's kind of what drew me to this medium as well, I love I was a story district performer myself, that's sort of how you and I met the first time, then we met again, a second time. I always love this medium, and I find it so universal and so accessible, and which is why I sort of chose to pursue this path for what I was trying to accomplish.

Avery Anapol:

Yeah. How long have you been thinking about doing a podcast or a project like this? And what was sort of the impetus that got you to act on it this past year?

Qudsiya Naqui:

Honestly, it's something I had kind of toyed with, but not seriously until the pandemic, to be really honest, we were all kind of locked down. And we couldn't go anywhere, you know, travel socializing activities that I normally did, I couldn't really do anymore. And I was working from home. And I was just thinking, on the one hand, this is really hard. And it's been a really hard year for all of us, in so many ways. But I also thought, Okay, how can I take this opportunity to use this gift of time that I now have all this free time to do something positive and make a contribution. I’m a lawyer by training, I'm not a disability rights, or Disability Justice lawyer. In terms of a disability perspective, all I had was like the framework of my own experience. But one thing I really observed is, I felt like there was all this amazing work being done in the disability community to bring attention to these issues. And I wanted to really and I know that you know, there's a lot of really phenomenal content being created by and for disabled people. So Ellis Wong's Disability Visibility Podcast, Thomas Reid’s, Reid My Mind Radio, Cheryl Green’s Pigeonhole. So there was so much content that's for and by the community. And I think that's super valuable. But what I really wanted to do was create a bridge between the disability community and others who may not be as familiar with those issues. And as someone who had like sort of a degenerative condition, or someone who became disabled over time, I felt like I always kind of straddled these two worlds, which is a false binary, right? disability is a continuum, we all experience could potentially experienced disability in our lives. And I always felt kind of like, there are my blind friends and my disabled friends. And then there was my non disabled sighted world that I lived in with my family and stuff. And I wanted to kind of use this medium to create a bridge between those two spaces and really build awareness and bring people together, but in a way that felt, you know, authentic and felt true to my community, which is the disability community. And so like, that was the idea. And you know, I'm really interested in policy, data, and research. And so I wanted to blend together the idea of telling people's stories, but then also bringing their expertise and knowledge to a particular issue that relates to disability, and trying to show people how disability affects or is affected by so many aspects of our lives, whether that's policy, whether that's education, whether that's the arts, whether that's sports, so to kind of bring a lot of different issues together, and also to lift up the voices of disabled people, particularly disabled people of color into conversation. And so that was really kind of my impetus for starting the podcast. And I'm an idea kind of generator. And I'm so fortunate that I'm surrounded by really creative, really talented people like the two of you, and I love working in a team. I just think anything is better when you have a collaboration or different minds coming to the table. People who have different perspectives, different skill sets, different life experiences that they can bring to bear on something. And so you know, when I had the idea to launch off the podcast, I know you know, Avery, you and I have known each other for a while through our tandem cycling adventures. And so you kind of raised your hand and jumped up and then Ilana I met you both through Story District and through running and you both were like so in, and then I reached out to my college--shout out to Barnard College--and enlisted two students, Anna Wu and Adrian Kong, who came on board to do some audio production and web design and then some transcript creation. And so yeah, that's how I kind of like brought a little team together because I just think everything is better in a team and you know, that's kind of how we all connected, I guess I wanted to throw it back to you guys to talk about a little bit about, you know, what interested you and why, why you have gotten on this train with me and have stuck with me for so long, which I so appreciate and what motivated you to do it and kind of talk about your creative processes. You know, Ilana, you've done incredible audio production on the podcast. And Avery, you're like our social media maven. So I'd love to hear about what brought you to this work and what it felt like to kind of build our process and develop the podcast from your perspective. Well,

Avery Anapol:

you already mentioned our tandem cycling club in DC, which was how we met. And before that I had never, I don't want to say I never knew any disabled people. But I didn't have that lens as a part of my life. And I've learned so much just from that experience. So I knew it was an important topic. And I knew how much that I had learned about disability and accessibility. And you know, with everything, it's difficult to strike the balance between wanting to know more not wanting to put the impetus on someone to teach you and do your own research. But I was excited when you brought up the podcast and talked about wanting to bring some of these conversations, public and to a wider audience, because it's just exposed me to so many interesting perspectives and people and resources just from listening to the show before even getting into, you know, working on it with you. So thank you for that. And like, as you said about wanting it to be educational. I think that's a lot with a lot of the feedback we've gotten on the podcast so far has said that it is educational in a way that is not talking down to anyone or it's you know, it's very engaging, and there's so much just intersectionality and different perspectives to share that you've been doing.

Ilana Nevins:

Qudsiya, , as you said, we met briefly at Story District. I remember your family coming in to watch the show that you were in, which was the last show before everything shut down. It was the Women's History Month show. And your family was so proud. They were like, We are Qudsiya’s family, we are here to watch her on stage. And I was like, Oh, these were it was just like this group of like very glamorous women. And then yeah, we started running together through a mutual friend Bridget. And that also has been just such a grounding experience. For me throughout this whole time. I think it was probably on an early run that you floated this idea of a podcast, and I had already done a bit of audio editing and production. And I'm always looking for more stories, like important stories. And I think yours personally, and I think the guests that you have had on the show are like really important stories, audio storytelling just has such an opportunity to humanize people, as a listener, you are given this gift, but hopefully it is like an enjoyable experience for the folks who are also having the conversation. So I've been doing audio editing for most of the episodes and Anna kicked off all the audio editing. And it's just been so fun helping to make sure that they just like sound polished, and the way that I imagined they would want themselves to be represented. So it's like an honest representation of their stories and what they're saying. But also just smoothing some things out, I take that responsibility very seriously, I want to make sure that what is being represented is authentic. And I've really enjoyed working with you, Qudsiya, on like, going back and forth and troubleshooting various things around the audio when talking through stuff and making it as compelling of episodes as we can.

Qudsiya Naqui:

Yeah, it's really it's a really tricky thing. And you want like you said, you want your the message and the power of the interviewees voice to really be heard. And I agree with you, I take such a responsibility, and I don't take it lightly at all. And I feel that in you I've had such a good partner in doing that. Because you are the same, you have the same ethos of this is very serious. This is somebody's voice and their message. And we need to convey it as authentically and as responsibly as possible. So I really appreciate you as a thought partner in that regard. And in the same vein, I feel like before I started the podcast, I'm a reluctant social media user, I have a very specific set of parameters for myself about the way in which I will use social media and I have a very strong ethic around how I will use it. And I was on Facebook, but I had never used Instagram or Twitter. And in particular, I find Twitter rather daunting. You're putting your voice out there and you're putting your spin on something and you're and you're giving your take and people will receive that differently and that feels really scary in this environment. And so I was really nervous but I felt that having some presence on social media was really important in terms of achieving my goals. ultimate goals, which was to get this content out to as many people as possible and to as diverse of an audience as possible. And Avery, I really feel so fortunate that you raised your hand and said you wanted to work on this because you're someone I really trust in this space as someone who really understands how social media works. And and not even just that, but that you understand my ethics and my ethos around how I want to use social media and what the important values are to me. And I think you share a lot of them. And so I feel like it's been such a great experience to figure out how to develop the website, how to create our Instagram and Twitter and how to use them effectively. And I'd love to hear your thoughts about what thought process you were going through as we were working on that together and like what it was like, from your perspective.

Avery Anapol:

Yeah, I share a lot of the same reservations. And I don't really post all that often on my personal Twitter, Instagram, and even now going back and looking at things and seeing how cringy they were, you know, even if it's not something that would get me cancelled, it's not necessarily things that I want out in the world. But yes, I agree with you that it's so important to have this out there and be part of the conversation. And just on the topic of storytelling, Twitter is a place where very quickly one thing can be turned into a completely different narrative because of someone's commentary or something being taken out of context. So I definitely understand the hesitancy about putting out your your take on something but I think also what it's shown is that it's such a good place for connecting with not just like minded people, but people with similar experiences who might be coming at a topic from a different lens, it's a place for people to connect to may not have had another chance to meet each other. So for example, the Crip Pod Squad hashtag I had no idea there were so many podcasts out there by disabled creators and that's Twitter and Instagram is a place where I've been able to connect with them really easily. And also just reach new audiences for people who the algorithm might be serving them stuff that Twitter thinks they want to click on or Instagram thinks they'll like And so trying to break through those barriers is one of the challenges of social media but it also is kind of a fun game so whenever we get new followers or have a new person retweet us or share the link to the show that's always really exciting.

Qudsiya Naqui:

Yeah, and I know you've you filled me with some bravado I remember I think it was on Instagram you you had an Instagram influencer named Hitha Palepu, who Who curates the newsletter, five smart reads, and you really, you know, you really love that newsletter. And you saw they had posted something related to disability and you reached out to her directly. And then you know, I was able to become a regular guest curator by the way everyone should check out #FiveSmartReads subscribe, I love it, you get five really interesting articles that are beautifully curated in your inbox every day, and also by guest curators, including myself. And then also of course Hitha, who is brilliant, and you learn about things you would never learn about, you know, you really emboldened me to take those risks and reach out to people and connect with people. I remember my big moment, I think, I think I messaged you about this Avery on our on our whatsapp group. And I was like, I sent a DM to Judy Heumann on Twitter, and I'm so proud of myself, I felt really empowered. Because you know, we were kind of in this together. And you know, we were you were giving me ideas that I was kind of executing and vice versa. And we kind of did it together and it felt less scary.

Avery Anapol:

you do have that kind of access to really influential or famous people.

And, you know, I think it's always worth shooting your shots not always gonna work out. But sometimes it can lead to a great connection, like with Hitha, and now you have a platform of however many thousands of people every week where you can say, these are the five things that I found really interesting and important this week. And you know, a lot of spaces like that disability is not something that is always part of the conversation. And that's not to say that, you know, everyday you should be the one telling everyone what to read about disability, but it just shows the effect of what happens when we have more diverse groups of people in publishing or in newsletters or just in media in general?

Qudsiya Naqui:

Yeah, you know, and props to people like Hitha, and then the newsletter Girls Night In which the podcast was featured in as well for, you know, recognizing the lack of representation and bringing that voice and perspective into sort of a more mainstream outlet. And I hope that there are going to be many, many, many, many disabled creatives behind me who do the same thing and are accepted the same way and that’s absolutely true.

[Musical beats]

And so here we are about to embark on our third season. And I know for example, Ilana, you and I had conversations about how we can really stretch the storytelling of the podcast through the audio production and stuff. And I am curious about the two of you like what your hopes and dreams are for the podcast moving forward and what else we can kind of do together on this platform.

Ilana Nevins:

As you just said, I think there's a lot of creative storytelling that we could do beyond structuring the episodes as an interview. We could pull in some other types of sound design some other types of audio clips that could just be engaged. In dynamic in different ways, so I'm excited for the podcast and also personally to like kind of like get my hands dirty a little bit in terms of like, playing with other types of audio. Also very excited for all the guests. But there's a big get guest at the very beginning. That's just so exciting. And hopefully that will lead to like more folks learning about this podcast.

Qudsiya Naqui:

Yeah, absolutely. I totally agree. I'm so excited. I'm so excited about trying new modes of storytelling and new strategies to get people's voices out there and more voices, and stuff like that. I'm really looking forward to that and to diving in and getting my hands dirty with you. But yeah, Avery, what are your hopes and dreams for our social media collaborations moving forward? Yeah.

Avery Anapol:

So I'd love to continue to build some of those relationships that we've started working out. And what's something I wanted to say before was that what I love about the podcast, and I think this is a testament, both to your interviewing skills, Qudsiya, and also to your editing, Ilana, the conversations are so wide ranging, you know, I can send an episode to a friend who's interested in racial justice or a friend who's interested in education. And they just cover such a broad spectrum of topics and people, you allow them to go on tangents and talk about different things that relate to their perspective on disability and accessibility. So I hope really, that that resonates with people, it has the impact of broadening their understanding of intersectionality and marginalization. In the past year, there have been so many great conversations happening around the world about, you know, prejudice and racial injustice. And there's so much that we can all learn about different areas of social justice that extend beyond that. And I think the podcast is a great tool for that.

Qudsiya Naqui:

Yeah, I completely agree. And I hope we can add to those voices. There's so many already in the field. I feel like when I started getting into this podcast world, I was in very good company. So I'm really looking forward to seeing how we can play and expand our audience and add new different topics that we haven't covered yet and reach more people. I totally agree with you. This was a super fun chat. And I love that both of you I met through sports. I feel like that's very telling.

Avery Anapolz:

If you told me that 10 years ago, that would have been ridiculous.

Qudsiya Naqui:

And hopefully Avery we do another amazing tandem trip like we did in Quebec and Ilana, let's sign up for that London Marathon and then we can go visit. I think that's a wrap Avery!

Okay, we did it. You guys are awesome!