IL-NET, a project of ILRU presents

Disability, Diversity and Intersectionality
in Centers for Independent Living

August 20, 2019
Atlanta, Georgia

Review of Day One
Presenters: Stan Holbrook, Susan Dooha, Kim Gibson

STAN HOLBROOK: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Morning!

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STAN HOLBROOK: Yesterday we received one card with a question concerning outreach to immigrants, and I know that one of our presenters ‑‑ well, a couple of our presenters said they would like to address that. So, we want to do that first.

First, we'll have Susan, and then Kim Gibson after that address that question.

SUSAN DOOHA: Hi everybody. Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

SUSAN DOOHA: It's really great to be with you. I wanted to make a suggestion. There are a lot of Centers here who work with people who are immigrants, who are migrants, who are asylum seekers, who are refugees, in communities across the country. And many of the Centers do work with people. At my Center, we have people on staff from many places around the world.

We thought that we might want to do a little Happy Hour together. Doesn't have to be drinks. Can be.

Can be coffee. Can be water, whatever is your pleasure. Purely voluntary, to come on back in here around, say, 6:00, and to sit and have some sharing about our experiences, to see what we can learn from each other.

Not a lecture, but a sharing among colleagues. Does that sound fair?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

SUSAN DOOHA: Can I get a sense of how many people might be interested in this kind of conversation?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

SUSAN DOOHA: Oh, isn't that lovely. Oh, that's very encouraging. Terrific!

Anybody have any comments or any special questions about things you'd like people to be prepared to talk about?

Okay.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: We have a lot of immigrants where we live, but they don't trust the government. We're farming country. And I'm just curious how to break down those barriers to let them know that, like, we're here to help, and I'm not concerned about your citizenship status. So that's what I'm curious about is how to break down those barriers and gain their trust.

SUSAN DOOHA: That's an important conversation to have. We'll be sure to talk about that, and we really ought to talk a little bit about what's going on now.

Yes?

JESSE BETHKE GOMEZ: I won't take too much time here, but I want to mention three things. I have worked on immigration issues for a very long time, helped to establish the 46 consulates of Mexico in the United States of America in Minnesota, having worked at the American Red Cross, there's three things I want you to think about. One, is that it is the standard of international rule of law that we're given obligation to understand about the international person and families in the United States. Two, that people who are newcomers have legal protections by the consulate, the Geneva Convention on Consular Activities. So, that means connecting the dots with the persons in the consulates. Let me say one other thing. There are two major rules of law that guide us, the standard of civility, one, is international human rights law, the protections for children, in particular, and families.

And two is international humanitarian law. And both apply to notably children who are detained on our southern borders right now, so I want to provide the legal framework and context of our work in working with people who have disabilities and people who are international persons, that we have a moral and legal obligation at the international standard and the rule of law. I'd be happy to talk about that later on, too.

SUSAN DOOHA: That's a terrific offer, and I know there are other experts here. Kim?

KIM GIBSON: This is Kim. And I also would suggest adding the refugee population as you're talking about the immigration population.

SUSAN DOOHA: Absolutely, people with all statuses need discussion.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And I think what will help is that we're from different sections of the country and we are from different populations, and in my area, we're not a very large population, but in our high school, we have about 90 different dialects that are spoken, and so that I think it will give us a cross‑section of the country and how people are dealing with it or addressing it in many situations.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: My name is Deji Morgan. I work with Everybody Counts, Northwestern Indiana. Maybe you can tell from my accent I wasn't born here, although I'm a citizen of the United States. But I think one thing is very important, peer counseling. This is about people's experiences ‑‑ I just want to talk about peer counseling, how important it is in addressing the issue we're talking about. People have a lot of experiences, different experiences. For me personally, I think I would be very useful in giving my own experiences to immigrants, refugees, and other people that come to the United States.

And also, we can do that by telephone? I don't know. If you don't have that kind of resources, you can talk to other CILs and they can provide the services.

SUSAN DOOHA: You will be a wonderful resource for this conversation. I'm delighted. I want to thank you all.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you. Good morning. I'm Anita from Rochester. I wonder if part of that, can we talk about some of the effects of ICE? I live in Rochester, but we are close enough to the Canadian border that I've been present when ICE have boarded, like, Greyhound buses and stuff, and kind of the fear that that ‑‑ because that affects folks, too, you know, who ‑‑ and certainly if that's affecting folks who are not disabled, imagine the effect of that on people with disabilities.

[ End of Session ]