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One in four adults in the U.S. lives with a disability, but you don't know about it, given the lack of representation in the workforce, Hollywood and the media. On the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Voices of the Disabled celebrate real stories, not stigma or stereotypes about this dynamic and dynamic community.

Disabled: adjective. impaired or limited to a physical, mental, cognitive or developmental condition: affected by disability. Black: Noun. or related to the African-American people or their culture. Girl: Noun. A grown woman. (Source: Merriam Webster)The Quarantine Chronicles: Week 9 Tired of Lindsey Adams. Image description: Illustration by Lindsay Adams of a woman lying on her side with her arm outstretched. My name is Lindsay Adams. I am disabled, Black woman, artist, strategist, champion and friend. I can bring this up now that in my nearly 30 years, I've become comfortable with this skin I'm in - embracing its problems and features while leaning on its jewel. Over time, I realized that my personality is multifaceted and interconnected. No part of me is separated from the other. Everyone comes with their own difficulties, but beauty always wins. Being disabled has shown me how strong and resilient I can be and also reminds me of the importance of kindness. Being a black woman taught me resilience, focus and courage, and showed me a love of sisterhood and connection. As a disabled woman, Black Woman taught me patience and perseverance. Although in many ways, it made me use my tenacity and strength even when things get particularly complicated. Essays from Lindsey Adams' coffee series. Image caption On the left is an image of Lindsay Adams smiling, with her hand holding on to her chin and black nail polish on her nails. She is wearing a white tank neck scoop. On the right, Lindsay holds one of her figures on her lap. She is dressed in lightly washed ripped jeans. The painting she holds depicts two female shapes. I had cerebral palsy (CP), a disorder that negatively affects movement and the ability to maintain balance and posture since I was born - two months earlier, weighing 2 pounds 12 ounces. And while my CP is very much a part of me, it is not immediately visible to others. My personal case caused a half-severe speech defect. I say semi-heavy because it depends on who you ask and the stress level I'm under on a certain day. Some days, I sound clear as a whistle, other days are more challenging. I have delays in my fine motor skills, and seemingly simple things like putting on jewelry and doing my own hair don't always translate well (which can be quite frustrating when I try to gather a look). I found ways to adapt, mostly from survival. I learned new things every day about my specific needs or problems as I navigate into adulthood. But as I grew up, I tried to all the strength to hide behind behind about me that shone. My disability seemed to be something I could hide - except that there was no case at all. From left to right: Gouash on paper, Contemplation and Oil on Paper by Lindsey Adams. Image description: A picture of Lindsay Adams depicting a female shape with blue, orange and brown brush ointments. On both sides are two abstract paintings with gray, blue and green strokes. I was academically gifted, creative and about personal. I didn't think I realized how much CP had affected my outlook on life until I wrote about it in a series of personal essays for a high school English class. I thought of all the stumbles, cuts and bruises and falls. I remembered many times when I had to repeat myself, or lay things out for someone to understand what I was saying. I recognized the anxiety I would feel every time I walked into a room where I would have to speak or introduce myself out of fear of how someone would look at me or look, trying to figure out why I sounded so. Now in my maturity, I realize that there was room for all this. Although I had CP all my life, I didn't say the word out loud until I was in my early twenties. I don't think I even noticed that I was doing it until I spoke to some people who knew me best, but they didn't know I had it. Right: Juneteenth Lindsey Adams. Image caption Left is an image of Lindsay Adams standing in a park in a black spaghetti jumpsuit holding a woven bag with a bucket. She smiles, and the sun shines brightly on her. On the right is a picture of Lindsay's brushes and an illustration of a woman in a full white dress with a hat. After college, when I joined the workforce, I wasn't sure where or how my disability would put me. I didn't always know what kind of housing or support I needed. As I found myself and unpacked my problems, I also started unpacking my privilege. I knew that people could not say that I was disabled by looking at me (which is the case for many people with invisible conditions or problems). I had the opportunity to talk about my CP, or just references to speech impediment and preterm birth when asked. I thought it created ease and simplicity in spaces where I didn't have to explain myself. I quickly found out that he didn't do any of it. I'm just hurting myself without embracing all the parts of me. Not giving myself grace and space to be my full and authentic self, I put unreal pressure on myself and I suffered many inner battles capable, anxiety, and depression. Serene Solange by Lindsey Adams. Image description: Illustration by Lindsay Adams of a woman standing in a medium length yellow dress with a bouquet of flowers. The woman has brown curly hair and green earrings. While I don't owe anyone an explanation as to why and how I like me, I found it liberating to share. I learn so much and I am able to encourage others by sharing my story. Disability I've never brought me gifts and blessings far more than I could have imagined. My disabled hands produce some of the most exciting color stories and figures. And my voice, though muted, allowed me to speak not only for myself, but also for the communities of which I am a part. My art has been a consistent and therapeutic release for me from a very young age. When I felt misunderstood or alone, I turned to my canvas to free myself. Communication is not the only one thing, and I think I have been able to effectively express that through my choice of means. I knew I was drawn to drawing and painting at an early age, and every change I got, I'd dig a little deeper and try something new. In some of my darkest and most isolating moments, my albums have provided me with solace. It was an area of my life where I had complete control. Between my natural talent and diligent skill, which I developed, I each time turned to my art. As soon as I could, I announced myself to drawing and painting a major in high school. When deciding to conduct international research at the University of Richmond, I wouldn't let the art escape me and I got Studio Art Minor. When I studied abroad in Spain, I captured the scenery, figures and experience in my albums. When I started working in consulting right after graduating from university, I quickly realized that I needed art then too. Adulthood came with its struggle, its lessons, its suffering, and its triumphs, and my art was with me and a part of me every time. When I tried to escape from my art, or neglected it in some seasons of my life, he found me. Art equally nurtured me as I brought it up. My art is my world and my protest. It's my grounding and my rise. That's my voice and my vice. Some of my free moments came from the beginning of the flower sketch. It's really lucky for a man with a minor motor delay to twirl the brush as much as I can. I am eternally grateful for such a gift and the opportunity to share it with others. Things that make us different bring us closer together. They give us space to learn, change our minds, and be better versions of ourselves. If I could go back to my younger self and give her a hug, I'd say: Being a black woman would get harder before it gets easier, and being a disabled Black Woman is going to come up with a lot of crap you didn't ask for. Be true to yourself, be patient and kind to yourself and others, and when in doubt, remember that you can always be you - freely. Left: The Quarantine Chronicles: Week 11 Unusual Flowers by Lindsey Adams. Image caption Left illustration of Lindsay Adams about a woman sitting cross-legged in a white mini dress. She holds sunflowers and has brown curly hair and gold earrings. On the right, an image of Lindsay twirling in the park wearing a black spaghetti strap jumpsuit. The back stands in front of the camera, and she is waving her woven bucket bag in the air. Over time, I realized how everyone my life eventually helped me create my own definition of who I am: Lindsay: The Man. Complex, diverse, capable, adaptive, beautiful in composition, rare and capable. (Source: I) Find more of Adam's work at Lindsay-Adams.com.Voices Disability edited by Kelly Dawson, a disability attorney who was born with cerebral palsy. She talked about her disability on the popular podcast Call Your Girlfriend, and wrote on the subject for Vox, AFAR, Gay Mag, and more. Find her work in kellymdawson.com. kellymdawson.com. cerebral palsy a complete guide for caregiving pdf

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