

Disability, Inclusion & Rewriting the Inspiration Narrative

with Nico Calabria
5/17/23



**MOVE
UNITED**

Overview

- My story (abbreviated...)
- Amputee Soccer
- Media Case Studies
- Inspiration Porn
- Rewriting the Narrative

Essential Question:

How do we remodel narratives around disability sports to bring positive intentions to meaningful change?

Intent
≠
Impact

Powerade Commercial (2014)



Nico Calabria (M.Ed.)

Pronouns: he/him/his



Teacher

Coach

Athlete

Advocate





*Nico as Nugget
(2001)*



Nicolai Calabria, a history teacher at the Concord Middle School and captain of the USA National Amputee Soccer Team competed in the Region Amputee Soccer World Cup Qualifier Tournament last week. *Courtesy*

World Cup Qualifiers, San Juan de Los Lagos, Mexico (2022)

Amputee Soccer

“The Fastest Game on One Leg”

- 7v7 on a $\frac{3}{4}$ size soccer pitch
- Two 25 minute halves
- Field players have one leg and play on forearm crutches
- Goalies have one arm and cannot leave goalie box
- No offsides
- No slide tackling
- Unlimited Substitutions



European Championships, Istanbul, Turkey [2018]

60+ countries

Thousands of players

The fastest growing disability sport in the world



Organizational Goals:

- Regional Programs
 - New England, NYC, Mid-Atlantic, Columbus, Chicago, Texas, Colorado, LA
- Women's National Team
- Youth Program
- National Championships
- Sustainable Funding



New England Revolution Amputee Soccer Team



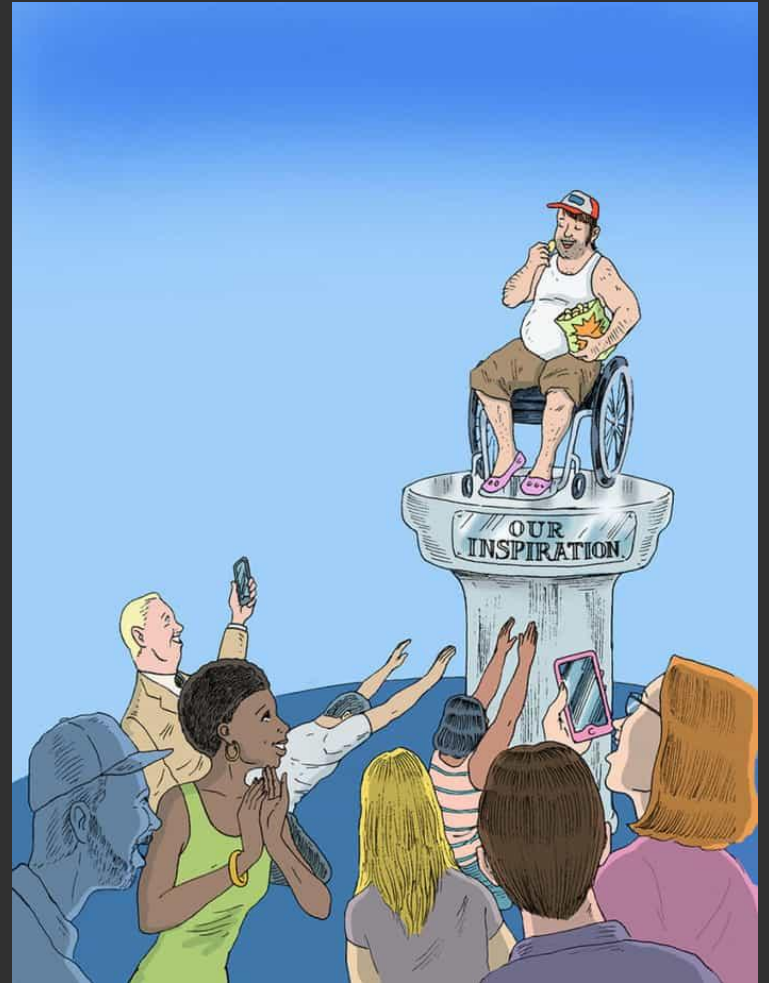
How does our society
speak about disability
and disability sports?

ACCESS +
INCLUSION

Pity or Inspiration

How can we improve
the narrative?

Inspiration Porn



How To Avoid “Inspiration Porn”

Andrew Pulrang Contributor ©

Exploring disability practices, policy, politics, and culture.

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Nov 29, 2019, 07:12pm EST



Listen to article 9 minutes



“While disabled people don’t always agree on what exactly makes a disability depiction *helpful*, most have experienced a certain discomfort with what are supposed to be ‘positive’ stories about disabled people. They know these stories and images are meant well, but to most actual disabled people, they feel embarrassing and demoralizing.” - Andrew Pulrang



Your excuse is invalid.



“The only
disability
in life is
a bad
attitude.”

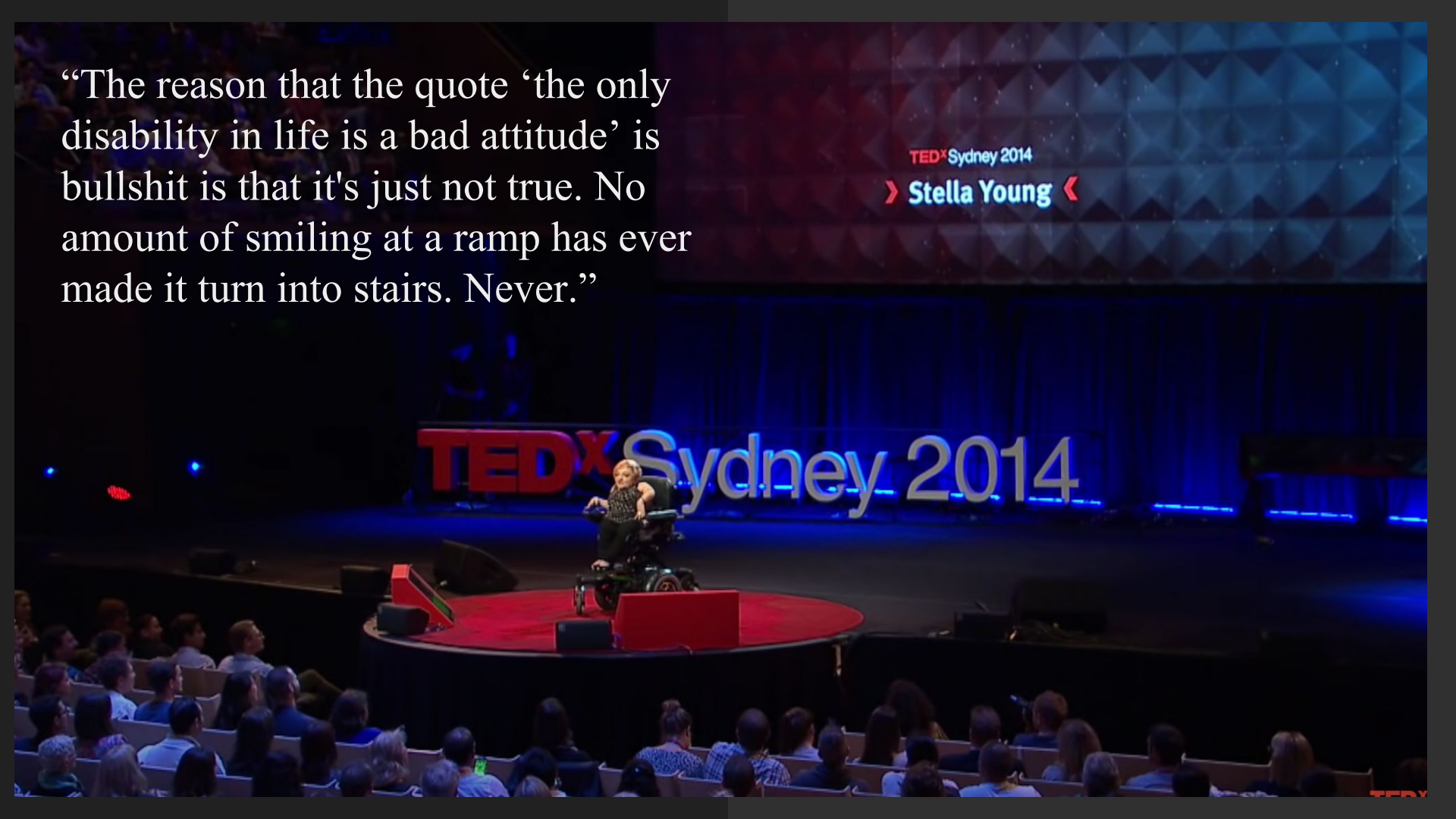
Scott Hamilton

“The reason that the quote ‘the only disability in life is a bad attitude’ is bullshit is that it's just not true. No amount of smiling at a ramp has ever made it turn into stairs. Never.”

TEDx Sydney 2014

> Stella Young <

TEDx Sydney 2014

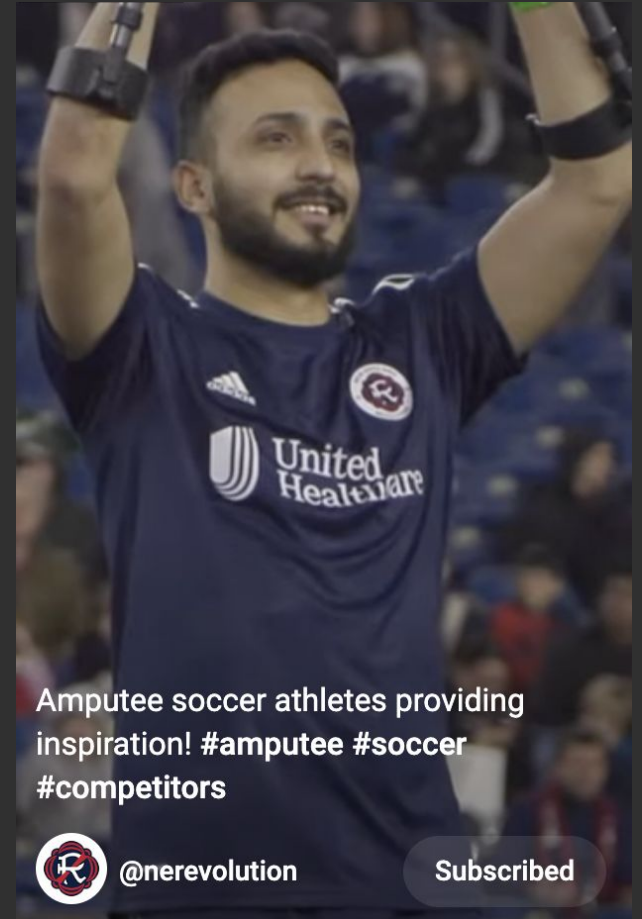


ABC News [2012]



New England Revolution [April, 2023]

“Amputee soccer athletes providing inspiration! #amputee #soccer #competitors”



Amputee soccer athletes providing inspiration! #amputee #soccer #competitors



@nerevolution

Subscribed

Interview with FOX 5 NY [March, 2023]



Closing Thoughts:

How do we remodel narratives around disability sports to bring positive intentions to meaningful change?

1. Define success for your team/organization in media coverage
2. Focus on ACCESS + INCLUSION
3. Review news media prior to publication
4. Send media teams information on how to avoid inspiration porn



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