# Transcript

## Standing together video

### Kramer

Growing up in the Islands, disability or you know, people with impairments are not viewed nicely.

You know, they think you're crazy or you have mental health.

In the Cook Islands, they call it Pakipaki tai. And you know that’s usually mental health or they’re kind of crazy.

I’m a bit of a fruit salad you know, different blend of cultures.

I'm Samoan-Italian, but I consider myself Cook Island because that's where my heart belongs, where I was born, and that was the culture that I was brought up with.

I was born and raised on the beautiful Island of Rarotonga.

Lived there for about 15 years until I had an accident.

Diving off a rock into the sea, smacked my head onto either the sea floor or rock, and from that it dislocated my neck, fractured and tore apart my nerve systems.

Which is why I'm in a wheelchair today.

But currently here now in Aotearoa, I had to come over for surgery, rehab, just never went back because the Islands aren’t as accessible as NZ. So that’s the reason I stayed here.

Now hate is a very strong word because, you know, automatically you say hate to me, I'm thinking like the strong angle you know, resentment towards someone.

Hate comes in lot of various forms; disliking someone, talking behind their back.

Like, for me, I see that as hate.

I’m grateful for the family that I have not once did they ever, see me as disabled.

They saw me as, you know, a person first.

They get mad at others for how others view me you know?

Some of the challenges that I faced, definitely around the stigma around disability, like, how people view it.

Like, for instance, I'll just use myself as an example. Because I come from a Pacific family, not my own family, but like, you know, extended family members, because of the lack of understanding of disability, they think that I should be sheltered.

They see I'm going to work everyday kind of thing, but then they look “oh why is he going to work?”

“Shouldn't he be staying home?”

He can't do this, can't do that.

My main job is I work for Vaka Tautua as a service lead there. I've been there for about four years, but I also work at PHAB Pasifika, PHAB New Zealand as well.

So they are a youth organization that provide weekly youth groups. So for me that's where it's all started.

You know, breaking that shelf, who Kramer was by attending all their weekly youth groups, it allowed me to open up and, you know, break out of that stuck place that I was,

you know, once, once I had the accident.

One of the things I love, like, you know seeing in people's faces is because they don't really understand what disability is, I love seeing their faces when I'm able to prove to them that I'm able to do this, do that, just that expression that they make, like

they've seen something new for the first time.

Too often we are sheltered. We have people talk for us instead of to us.

So like, I even faced that challenge myself with, my own family or my brother

who's my support person, you know, we go to the airport instead of the lady talking to me where, like, I'm the one that organises everything and when I go to the front of the counter or to anywhere they don't see me, they see my brother or the person I'm with, and they turn the question to them. Even though I approach the counter.

Too often with our disabilities we’re excluded from our own culture.

Disability now is like there's a lot more awareness of it now, because there's been a lot of promotion around it. But there's still, again, that stigma around when they see the disabled person, they just look the other way, or they just stare from afar because,

you know, they don't understand.

You got the rare few who come up to you and ask for, for help and all that stuff.

But like, how I would want to be treated is just treat me as a person.

Because, you know, I'm a person before the disability.

Disability or the chair’s just part of the condition.

And the chair just helps me get around.

I would just say, come up to me, have an engagement, just talk.

Too often we have people come and engage with us and engage with the youth, but they just take what the youth says, but don't come back.

For both youth and youth from the Pacific sector definitely I want them to be at the table, be the forefront of the change for youth with disability.

Allowing their voice to be the platform for change.