Amy James:

(singing).

Jade Taylor:

Hi everyone. Welcome back to episode six of The Women With Disabilities Australia with WWDA Youth Podcast. Today we're interviewing Margherita. She is a youth activist in the disability sphere in WWDA's new youth development officer. I will start by acknowledgement of country acknowledging that I'm calling in from the Gabby Gabby and that this land was stolen and never exceeded. I would also like to acknowledge our elders past, present and extend that to any indigenous listeners. So Margherita, could you tell us a bit about your background and how you got involved with disability activism?

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Thank you, Jade. And thank you so much for having me on today. I've been a big fan of this podcast, so it's kind of exciting to be on it, of course. I quickly wanna acknowledge the [inaudible 00:01:13] people, which are the traditional custodians of the land on which I'm calling in from today. Um, so I don't know, I like a little bit about me, didn't know what to say exactly. I'm originally from Italy. I didn't really get involved with disability activism later in life, 'cause culturally, I guess it's a really big taboo.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

And um, until coming to Australia where I saw a lot of people being really open about it and proud, I was like, oh my God, I can be this as well. So I started my disability activism through opportunities here and there, youth advisory groups, uh, and kind of began educating myself on disability rights issues. And then, um, here comes with a role in, um, which is where I kind of got my starting point. Um, and through with a, I kind, I attended conferences, meetings. I met so many people and got so many opportunities. Uh, and now I'm here as the youth development officer.

Jade Taylor:

Well big congratulations on getting the role. I think you'll do well in it.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Thank you.

Jade Taylor:

Why did you start getting involved in particularly with youth disability activism?

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Um, a really interesting question. I guess I wanted to get more heavily involved 'cause not only did I find this really strong community in person and through our beautiful Zoom that we now use for everything. Uh, but I realized the impact of, I would say disability activism in numbers and also activism in general, yeah.

Jade Taylor:

It definitely works better when there's a lot of us banding together.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, exactly my thoughts.

Jade Taylor:

And us girls at WWDA, we all just, we've all found each other and we all get along and you know, it's amazing to have someone else there that you can turn to and you can be like, “Hey, did you guys see this today?” You know? And I've met some amazing people like yourself and Claire and you know, like friends and it's given me a platform that I previously didn't have either.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, no, I completely agree. And I think that, um, you just realize how much more you can do when you agree as a group and you do things together as a group. Uh, and also like I think I kinda realized that we constantly talk about like, you know, feminism and like woo-hoo, gender equality. But so many of those conversations don't include women with disabilities. So if it's not us, who is it gonna be kind of thinking if you know what I mean?

Jade Taylor:

Exactly. Like everyone that I've talked to through doing this podcast, it's all been about leaving our little footprint on the world and I guess one person can make a big change. So if we're that one person, if we can band together and be one person, then our voices are gonna be louder.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, exactly. And I also, I always hear that, um, you know, that like really not very nice phrase, it's like, I wanna speak for people that don't have voices and it's so often used in the context of people with disabilities, especially women, but it's like, women's [inaudible 00:04:15] do have voices. People just aren't listening. Like you can't, y- you know, I think, um, that's why it's so important that as you said, our voices are louder together.

Jade Taylor:

Exactly. And that's what I wanted this podcast to be about, was about, you know, giving a space where people's voices who are out there saying it, but it's just not being heard.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, exactly.

Jade Taylor:

Because they are out there talking, but it's just not being heard well, loud enough anyways, (laughs).

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, oh yeah. You know, people just aren't turned onto it. Like once you start getting into the movement and the communities, you see how many people that actually are involved and um, even just like things that happen when I talk about it with, uh, other family and other friends who aren't as involved, I, they're like, wow, I didn't know that was happening. Wow, I didn't know this was going on. I'm like, well actually if you just pay attention.

Jade Taylor:

Yeah. If you look more than just on the front, there is a lot of people behind doing a lot of great things for the world.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, absolutely.

Jade Taylor:

Um, could you tell us about what you do more at WWDA?

Margherita Dall’Occo:

So, um, I would, I was actually kinda thinking about this question and I think that I've only been on for, you know, a month and a bit, um, almost two months now, but I think what, um, I'm kind of aiming to do and what is one of my favorite things is really just facilitating young women with disabilities to, as we say, use their voices, to be able to be confident in activism, in pursuing what they wanna do with the support of WWDA. Um, I'm kind of like, I wanna think that I'm a little bit behind the scenes doing the social media, the newsletters, those things. But, uh, I really, I guess going into this role a little bit further, I wanna be kind of a point where young women can say, “Oh, I'd really love to do this thing.” And WWDA says, “Yeah, I would love to support you to do this thing.” And then I bridge those gaps.

Jade Taylor:

Well, that was exactly what happened with this podcast. Was I just messaged Heidi and I was like, Heidi, um, what about a podcast? And Heidi's like, yeah, I'm sure we can look at something, you know, put something together and now I'm getting to live out a dream.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah.

Jade Taylor:

Like it's amazing

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Exactly. And so I just wanna, I think we can keep doing that. I think there're so many creative and like just sounds so weird, but beautiful minds that we have where people have so many different skills and interests and you know, connections. And I really want the new year to bring, uh, I guess where, oh yeah, we might not be able to do this, uh, straight away, but let's start planning it. Let's start looking into it. Where can we start kind of thing.

Jade Taylor:

Yeah, exactly. What is the best thing about advocacy and being a young person in this space?

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Uh, I wanna say community like, uh, the wonderful people that I've met, uh, and also clearly, you know, you'd think that after years of advocacy in the disabled movement, you would, you get some successes, which I think we have had. And that's inclu- being able to see more inclusion, representation, accessibility, all of that. Like when I go to an event and they've already thought about the accessibility, I think this is such a win, like woo-hoo celebrating. Uh, and I think that, that's something that's so yeah, just wonderful. And also seeing other young women just achieve and be a part of things and be successful and follow their dreams and follow what they wanna do. Like I always feel so, I feel like a proud parent in the midst of all of these like wonderful people. And I always feel like I'm glowing with how excited I am for their opportunities and just to see disabled young women succeed because that's just, yeah, that's just what I wanna see all the time.

Jade Taylor:

Well, one of the big things this year that happened in my- my eyes was, um, we got the independent assessments for the NDAS pushback.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Exactly.

Jade Taylor:

And that was huge. And if one person had been out there going, “No, I don't want this.” they wouldn't have took any notice, but you know, we all banded together and we all said, no, we don't want this, so they took notice.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah. And got politicians and other organizations involved. And just like the reach that, that had and the constant, like clearly it was a very stressful situation because the implications were intense. But, um, when it happened, it was like, wow, this was such a strong community that was able to make it happen. And it continues to happen with things like, you know, every time, even a small thing, like even a local thing that happens, it's just so, um, just so wonderful and such a, like a small part of a bigger picture. That's just really, really great.

Jade Taylor:

Exactly. Um, what are the challenges in being a youth's activist? Oh, I'm sure you've got most of them, (laughs).

Margherita Dall’Occo:

I mean, clearly there's loads. I think we all know that there's so many. Um, but I think the big one, if I was to really put it down to something, is that it's hard when you're a person with a disability, like underrepresenation, inaccessibility, all the things that we fight for impact our day to day lives. So it's kind of, I fo- I find the biggest challenge to be when can I take a rest from activism and from constantly wanting to fight against these things when there're things that impact my daily life. Like, you know, it's kind of that thing where you're like, oh, I'll take a day off of work or activism or any projects. But then I go to the shopping center and I find it difficult because you know, either my, the doors aren't automated, so someone with a wheelchair can't get through or the ramps are super steep, you know, things like that. And you're like you can't ever like get away from it. Not that I wanna get away from it, but more that just there's, it's really hard to find that balance I think.

Jade Taylor:

Yeah. I totally agree. Like for me, I will constantly be walking through a shopping center. Like it's not the first time I've gone into a Woolworth and I have anaphylactic allergy to latex.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Mm.

Jade Taylor:

So if there's balloons, I'm like, okay, no going to that Woolworth today.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah.

Jade Taylor:

And nine times outta 10, like I went, a Woolworth the other day and I walked in and there was balloons all through the place for Christmas. I'm like, when did we start putting balloons up for Christmas? (laughs).

Margherita Dall’Occo:

You think it was for birthdays, right.

Jade Taylor:

Then I was like, can we just not do that, that would be really great 'cause then I had to go to like three other Woolies to find one, to, that didn't have balloons. So I could just grab three items and I'm like, yeah, this is like, you can be accessible but that's not accessible to me.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah. I didn't even think that there were Christmas balloons, I didn't think that was a thing.

Jade Taylor:

No, no, no. There is and-

Margherita Dall’Occo:

I guess we could make celebrations out of everything.

Jade Taylor:

Yeah, yeah, we sure do. It's great.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, yeah. But, and I guess also the other thing was, um, which I honestly, um, love this podcast for and especially since it's something that's a little bit different from normal, like 'representation' and whatnot, it's like, especially when you're young people tend to think that you're not capable or you're not smart or you're not creative, or you don't have interests outside of activism and outside of, um, you know, doing all of those kinds of things. And so the other challenge I would say is really just trying to convince people that you can be young and really successful in the activism sphere, but also, um, I don't know, have a favorite hobby that might be something really random like gardening or, you know, things like that.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Um, and that in so many spaces, especially young have also tend to have more than one, like activism, like maybe they like climate activism or political activism or whatnot. And so like I've entered so many spaces where like, oh, gee, you're disabled. I guess you take all the disability activism things, and you take all of that. And even though I love doing that, it's also like, I am interested in other activism and yeah, so I guess it's partly also that.

Jade Taylor:

Yeah, no, I totally agree. Like for me, um, it's looking about like climate change and all that, you know, like that's- that's also affects us.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, yeah, exactly.

Jade Taylor:

You know, just because we have a disability, we're not like, oh, climate change doesn't affect us.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah. Or it doesn't mean we're not interested in it, or I don't know. Even like things like, um, something that I really loved recently is movements of disabled women being sex positive and disabled sex workers and disabled, Um, you know, all of this stuff that I think is just like finally people are tr- are acknowledging that disabled women are sexy and beautiful and can be all of these things just like everyone else.

Jade Taylor:

Actual, I kinda have a story around that. So my husband, James has been with me for 11 years, right? And we were at, um, shopping one day. I don't know what we were doing at the time 'cause it happened a while ago, but the lady was like, “Oh, you know, it's so nice of you to be with a- a- a disabled girl.” And I was like-

Margherita Dall’Occo:

No.

Jade Taylor:

... you know, it's, I'm more than just my disability. Like I hate that, I hate that. Oh, you're disabled you can't do anything idolization. And this lady got talking with James anyway, she turns around and she said, “Oh, it must be so hard for you.” James was like, why? And she goes, “You know, not being able to do everything you could do in a normal relationship.” I know and James was like-

Margherita Dall’Occo:

What?

Jade Taylor:

“Um, thanks for that. I appreciate that. But actually, you know, that doesn't affect that.” But I was, I was just so annoyed by it and yeah, I totally agree. I am so far behind that movement right now.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

It's just like also the other thing with that is like you would, I know everyone says it, but a random stranger would never comment on a nondisabled person sex life in public. Like that's just not how it, no one would do that.

Jade Taylor:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Margherita Dall’Occo:

And so I don't know why they, it's that back like what I'm so happy is happening is that disabled women are taking back their autonomy in- in being sexy and you know, all of that but really like things like that, stories like that, unbelievable.

Jade Taylor:

Yeah. And like it's not the first time it's happened I'm very sure it won't be the last, but you know, I just have my little, well actually-

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, (laughs).

Jade Taylor:

How can other young women be involved in disability inclusion?

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Um, okay. Love this question. I feel like I've said it about four times, but finding a community, even if it's like, I know I've been to a lot of, um, WWDA, other organizations, webinars or information sessions and people have said, oh, I didn't realize that I could find a community in sharing my story or in just, you know, finding out things. So it doesn't have to be like, oh, I'm going to specifically look for a group that wants to just talk about these things, but you can really find community anywhere. And that's where I think is the best place to start also, 'cause it's really fun and you get to meet a lot of really fun people.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

And um, for example, you mentioned Claire as well before who honestly shout out to Claire, just such a funny person and just everyone in the youth network is so exciting and fun and I love hanging out. So I think it's- it's first community, but also to do it with safety. Uh, it's also like, you know, it's sometimes emotionally heavy to get involved and you confront a lot of things and you also get backlash or you get, you know, other people saying comments or whatnot. And so to just look out for yourself first and you don't have to dive head first into, you know, whatnot.

Jade Taylor:

Yeah. I mean, that's exactly right. Like it is a really heavy subject to be around.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah.

Jade Taylor:

And sometimes it's not super, I don't wanna say draining because that's a bad word, but it can be in that aspect as well.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah. No, and I don't think it's bad for something to be draining because it really like when you have to put your own, like one of the things I thought about was that the most, the strongest thing we have is our experiences and our stories. But at the same time, having to share those constantly having to put yourself on the line and having to put yourself out there can be extremely hard. And you know, even we're not even talking about cultural norms and other things that make it hard for various different types of diverse women. Like there's other groups that so many women are part of that sometimes, yeah, I guess it's just making sure that we're looking out for each other and ourselves in this space.

Jade Taylor:

Yeah, very much so. And it's having each other's backs a lot.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, exactly. And realizing that, so I think so many people forget is that most people are really just trying to do their best. Like no one is purposely trying to say wrong things or say things that they didn't know were a 100% correct or have bad discussions. I mean, sure, there are those people. But a lot of young women with disability are really just doing their best. And a lot of the times it comes from misinformation. It comes from not being involved in activism, in disability activism in also not knowing your identity a lot of the times because you know, a lot of people, I would say by my definition are disabled but don't identify with it until later in life. So all of that as well.

Jade Taylor:

I was very much so trying to pretend like I didn't have a disability for a lot of years that did not go so well.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah.

Jade Taylor:

Um, but now I'm rocking it and I'm like, okay, I have this that I can't outrun it. So I need to, you know, appreciate and love it for what it is. And self-love is a huge part when you have a disability, like I cannot say how much you need self-love when you're in that environment.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Oh yeah. And- and also just appreciation and care for other people. Like there's so many times where I've thought, oh, this isn't right. But then I think, you know, I don't, I don't think this person is purposely making this wrong or- or purposely trying to say something like that. Um, because again, we're just trying our best and you know, I'm sure, you know, the (laughs), the long laundry list of health complications, doctor's appointments and all of that, that arise that make that activism and participation so much harder as well.

Jade Taylor:

Yeah, very much so. What was your favorite project this year?

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Um, so I won't say all of them, but that is not the question, (laughs). Um, it's actually one that isn't finished yet and I'm sure you know of it. Which is the sexual and reproductive health resources and the survey that we're putting out. I'm literally so excited to make these resources and to hear these survey responses just as we were talking about before, one of my big passions is, um, disabled woman taking back their sexual and their you know, their autonomy over their own sexual and reproductive health. So I think like it's gonna be a really great project. I think it's gonna ho- I mean, I hope that it would empower young women to talk about sexual and reproductive health. Uh, 'cause I know it's such a taboo. I know there's still even like separated sex ed classes in schools and things like that which shouldn't happen instead, everybody should be getting inclusive education. But um, yeah, I'm just so excited about it 'cause I think that it's such a great opportunity to involve young women in a way that is really meaningful and also in a way that is really needed.

Jade Taylor:

Yeah. Well I know my niece, um, she had a divided sex ed class-

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Mm-mm (negative).

Jade Taylor:

... and she messaged me because we're super close and I was like, what?

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, I know, right.

Jade Taylor:

Why, why, why?

Margherita Dall’Occo:

And like the majority of the times when they divide it, it's not even like inclusive. Like it's not even the same kind of education that you're getting and then it's not inclusive obviously I know. Everyone knows that we're kind of behind especily at certain schools that have different values and that's, you know, clearly something to wo- work towards, but even like just general talking about it and general, you know, young women being able to feel like I'm so glad that your niece was able to come to you and talk to you about it because that's the kind of people that we need.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

We need young women to feel like, okay, if I think something isn't right, I'm gonna trust my gut instinct and I'm gonna talk to it about some- I'm gonna talk about it to someone I'm gonna bring it up. I'm gonna question and be curious. It's really that curiosity around sexual and reproductive health, which I think is so important. And as you can see, I really love this topic because it's like, I just, yeah, I think it's so important. And uh, I think it's, it can be so damaging not being curious when you then go on later in life.

Jade Taylor:

Yeah. Wholeheartedly. And like she came to me 'cause she knows that I go through it and she was like, was that like you, was that like it for you? And I was like, no, that's so weird. And she is now going to the school that I went to. So it's only recently that they've decided to do these divided classes and I was like, that's even weirder again in my opinion.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, yeah.

Jade Taylor:

So no, what are you hoping to achieve for 2022 personally?

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Um, so, a bit random, as we were talking about, I find it very hard to divide between activism and other things I'm into, because I just can't help myself being in a space and being like, no, this needs to be more accessible. Like you need to do this. Or, um, I went to a university like listen to this, right, you're gonna, you're- you're gonna flip. I went to a university, (laughs), um, human rights, like how to be a, not how to be, but like stories from human rights practitioners and lawyers and people who are in the human rights sphere.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

And I was like to the organizers, I was like, “Hi, could you please turn on closed captions because I can't follow along. Like, it's just not working for me.” Um, and the message I got back was, “Sorry, I didn't know you could do that.” And I was like, I thought we were trending with the closed captions. I thought it was this, you know, auto generated even. I know they're not the best, but it's something that way I could at least follow along. And I had to completely like, I couldn't even watch the recording because I couldn't, I just couldn't follow along. And it's simple things like that. Like I find it so hard to go into a space and not be like, I want, this needs to be more accessible.

Jade Taylor:

Like I wholeheartedly agree, like even down to like not- not in a professional aspect, but in a fun aspect. Like for me, my friends are like, wanna go do this and then I've gotta find out where we're going. If I can go, is it accessible?

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah.

Jade Taylor:

Like we went bowling for my, um, my birthday at the start of this year. And when we rang the place, they originally told us that there was no parties on that day. So we were like, okay, cool we'll go on a Tuesday afternoon.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah.

Jade Taylor:

Because who's gonna have a party on a Tuesday afternoon, next thing, this party arrives and they have like a big, huge balloon display and they put it down beside me.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Oh God.

Jade Taylor:

In the lane next to us. And I like was there for two minutes before I nearly stopped breathing because it's that quick for me.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, yeah.

Jade Taylor:

And it comes down to the littlest things like closed captions, just looking at your books and being like, yeah, okay, we don't have this or okay, we do have stairs. How can we help you get into a place?

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Exactly, yeah.

Jade Taylor:

You know, but you think a human's rights place would understand.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah. I know, like-

Jade Taylor:

Understand, (laughs).

Margherita Dall’Occo:

... what do you mean? And you know what you're so right like when you point out that it's not just about like, whether, 'cause sometimes people haven't, buildings haven't been built to be accessible or things haven't been built to be accessible, but it's about being truthful about it. I know this doesn't relate to the question I'll get to you in a second, but it's about being truthful about it. Like if there was a party or if there are stairs, don't say it's accessible. Say it isn't and we're really sorry about that, but what can we do to help you access this place? And it's still infuriating that it isn't accessible, but it there's no point wasting someone's time and energy to, and even excitement, like you get so excited to go someplace and then you can't access it.

Jade Taylor:

Yeah. I have had that so many times with concerts and gigs and stuff like that, where I've gotten excited to go and gotten there and realize there's three flights of stairs.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Exactly. And it's like, why- why can't you just tell me, it's not like, I'm, (laughs), I'm not gonna call up the prime minister and say, hey, this specific [inaudible 00:26:33], like, you know, just be honest about it so I can plan my night somewhere else.

Jade Taylor:

Or like they sell wheelchair ti- tickets and then you just have to get up through [inaudible 00:26:42] wheelchair tickets.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, exactly. Or it's like, oh yeah, we have a wheelchair seating like in the cinema or something. Uh, but actually our elevator's out of order. Well what, like, how am I meant to, you know what I mean?

Jade Taylor:

Yeah. It's so, it's so frustrating and uh, 'normal' because I don't believe there's ever such a thing as normal, but a normal person, like doesn't realize just how much effort it goes into spend a night with your friends.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah. And how many nights do you end up spending like just at home watching a film, ordering food, because it's so exhausting to do anything else?

Jade Taylor:

Literally you're speaking to soul, (laughs).

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, yeah. Um, and I guess personally, but I also kind of involved in this is, um, I'm directing a theater show this year and I just, I want it to go well and I want it to be accessible for people disabilities. And I want to kind of, uh, I don't know how to say it, but I want, I guess the theater 'people', theater people, uh, and the- the kind of environment to be aware that actually people with disabilities can be funny. Can-

Jade Taylor:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Margherita Dall’Occo:

... be, as I said before, creative can have skills can, um, can do things successfully that are outside of activism.

Jade Taylor:

Yeah.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

And also can enjoy theater shows and can enjoy going out and can enjoy doing all of those stuff.

Jade Taylor:

Well, I love doing all that stuff. Like that's where I get my, that's where my rest brain is, is going out to concerts and gigs and shows because I found around type of people, they don't go, oh, you have a disability we have to treat you so differently.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, exactly.

Jade Taylor:

Because they're, you know, they've even know someone with a disability or they've been around it before, so it's a little bit like, okay, I feel a little less disabled around these people. So I tend go back to them if that makes sense.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah. And to think about it even like specifically theater communities and music communities have always been so diverse and have always, I mean, some more than others, but music and theater is like a shared language that can, goes beyond what people see from and what people, um, you know, kind of want to believe about you. So I think that it's such a great place to, a- as you said, rest, but also just enjoy it and- and do exciting, fun things and experience the world like everyone else. So yeah, personally, I really li- I want that theater show to go well and I want people disabilities to enjoy it. And I want, um, I want also the theater community that I'm around to be more aware of the fact that people disabilities can be just as participating as everyone else.

Jade Taylor:

Yeah. I very much so agree. What are you hoping to achieve in 2022 in activism and at WWDA?

Margherita Dall’Occo:

So, um, huge question. Um, I think one of my fa- one of my favorite, no, one of my biggest goals, which WWDA youth network has been trying to achieve for the last couple of months, well we haven't gotten there yet is, uh, I wanna start connecting universities to WWDA a bit more, I think, um, and schools and, you know, [inaudible 00:30:08] and every like just in schooling institutions, because I think that, uh, it's such like, I don't know, there's so many communities and there's so many times I've gone around my university and people have been like, oh, you know, we've been talking about WWDA and then they'd be like, "Oh my God, I'd love to join the community."

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Like I didn't realize there were that many women and, you know, non-binary people and feminine identifying folks in this community that I can relate to, that I can find, that I can, you know, so at WWDA I'd really like to grow that and to connect with these universities a bit more, which is, you know, I think it's gonna be a bit of a hard start, but, uh, I think we can do it. And also in, uh, that's connected to activism as well. Uh, but I would really like to, I guess, in activism as well as clearly the- the connecting universities and things like that. But I would like to do, I guess, write more about activism and about, um, my experiences and stories, I did it for a while in 2020, but then I kind of dropped off. So I'd like to do that.

Jade Taylor:

I would love to see that more.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah. I think we need, we need like, again, we need more people disabilities creating and making and writing. And um, I already know we have some really wonderful writing, writers on the youth network, like is, and I think it's just really great to- to keep doing that and to keep, I guess, being able to see their successes and yeah.

Jade Taylor:

I was, uh, when you said writing I was thinking of is actually-

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, yeah.

Jade Taylor:

... I was like, we got, w- you know, is this, is this a fantastic writer?

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, yeah. And I just love, like, I love to see it because it's such like, at least in Australia, I think that news and writing and articles are perceived by a wide audience. You know, there's young people who like to read those articles and then there's the older generation who is used to that reading and who's, that's their go to way to get information and news. And so I think it's such a great platform, uh, that can be utilized so well.

Jade Taylor:

And I mean, that's what I love about WWDA too, because like, so for me writing something is a, is a no go zone. Like I'm just not very good at putting my words onto a bit of paper. It's not my strong point that's to do with my disability, but I can sit here and talk all day.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, exactly. So it's even that like just, I guess, creating more and being able to have women with disabilities, just have their media, whatever form it is, uh, be shared more like, I know that there are so many amazing media creators that have disabilities including you and so it's just really great to see that as well.

Jade Taylor:

I'd love to get like a big group of people together like that all do like together in the media-

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, [crosstalk 00:33:15].

Jade Taylor:

... do like one thing, (laughs), that's a, that's a brainstorm [inaudible 00:33:19] together, (laughs).

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Huge brainstorm. But again, just, you know, I- I don't know if this, it's just me, but I think that even if it doesn't happen now, it can always, like, I don't think, um, you can ever really put something, uh, to the side permanently, uh, 'cause as you go on, even in five, 10 years, there's ways to do things.

Jade Taylor:

Exactly. And with technology, we're just getting more and more closer to-

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Oh, yeah.

Jade Taylor:

... being able to do things like that. And it's so amazing. Like technology can be very frustrating, but it's very amazing at the same time.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah. But even all this Zoom usage, like, um, I was talking with a friend the other day and they were talking about, they were like, oh, do you still use Zo- Zoom? I haven't used it since, you know, everyone, everything went online for the pandemic and I was just thinking like I do. But also I do because it's such a great tool to connect to people who are on the other side of the country or who are international, which we just didn't do before. Uh, and also, you know, I know it's not always super accessible 'cause you know, we talked about the captions. We talked about people who don't [inaudible 00:34:24] and all of that stuff, but in terms of fatigue and in terms of, uh, yes, acknowledging Zoom fatigue, but not having to get ready, like start getting ready and everything. Then plan my day out then. Oh my God, what if I get tired halfway through and have to come home? Like all of those things has also been incredibly, uh, helpful and opened the door to being able to participate into, in things more.

Jade Taylor:

Yeah. Well it's very much so like I- I can't 110% guarantee that tomorrow when I wake up, I'm gonna be able to go outside the door, but I could sit in front of my laptop quite easily.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, exactly.

Jade Taylor:

So Zoom has just given me that opportunity to participate in more things when I'm not feeling well.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, e- exactly. And even if like, uh, I turn my camera off and my microphone off and I use the chat to at least I was able to come for a certain amount of time and say a couple of things as opposed to if I had to go somewhere, I would probably have to make the whole day out of it or-

Jade Taylor:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Margherita Dall’Occo:

You know, things like that.

Jade Taylor:

I very much so agree with you in that statement.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, yeah.

Jade Taylor:

Who do you look up to?

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Um, so talking about sexual and reproductive health, uh, one of my, I guess one of the favorite, my favorite people who I follow, um, is Alex Stacy. I think we might have talked about her before. Uh, who's also known as Wheelchair Rapunzel on socials and I just love her. She talks about disabled sex appeal and she makes all of these videos about, you know, beautiful disabled bodies. Uh, unfortunately she has been, uh, I don't know how to say it, but like censored by TikTok and Instagram who clearly have a vengeance against disabled bodies in some way because her videos get taken down, even though they're like way less, um, exposed or showing anything compared to other videos. You know what I mean? Like it's just-

Jade Taylor:

Yeah, yeah, I know wholeheartedly what you mean.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Like I don't, you know, they get, her account gets taken down, but then a weird video with like everyone's butts out, stays up and gets millions of views and doesn't get taken down. So, you know, I love her. I think she's a wonderful, um, creator. And, but also someone that I see is really showing that disabled bodies can be sexy. And uh, she's like an ambassador for a couple of lingerie bands as, uh, brands as well, like, um, Savage X Fenty, which is Rihanna's one. And I just, yeah, I just love her. I'm a huge fan. And I think that it's really, um, she's the kind of people that we need in these spaces and also her followers and her, um, community and supporters as well, show us that, uh, actually people [inaudible 00:37:15] what is our sexy, first of all. And uh, there is so many people out there who- who wanna see sexy, disabled people. And the other thing is she really fights against this kind of, um, charity. Oh, oh, I feel so bad for you. Oh, you're so, oh, you know.

Jade Taylor:

I hate that.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Right, um-

Jade Taylor:

I hate that so much.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

... so terrible. And she really goes against it. She's like, I'm sexy and I'm disabled. I'm not like you don't have to feel bad for me. You don't have to force yourself into thinking that I'm attractive or whatever, because you think, oh, sucks for her, she's disabled. Like, or, oh my God. Um, so she has all these videos of her with like her guy friends and they might be kissing or whatever, like he's carrying her or things like that. Um, and people are like, oh, the same thing that happened to you, people are like, oh wow, like he's so good for doing like, wow. Like, he's so good for doing that, when in reality that's not how it is at all.

Jade Taylor:

Yeah. And it's really frustrating.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah, exactly. And I think it's- it's just a wrong representation of how, I mean clearly, uh, media does influence and change a lot of things and clearly media has often negative effects, but uh, I just think she's using it to the be- in the best way possible and yeah, I'm her- her biggest fan, woo-hoo.

Jade Taylor:

(laughs), no, I follow her a lot on Insta and TikTok when sh- her accounts stay up. Um, and they don't get banned or shadow banned. Um, I guess that's the other thing, like we look at all these media platforms that are like, yes, be you. And it's like, we be us. And they're like, no, don't be you. And it's like, yep, thanks for that.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Exactly. It's like, which one do you want us to be? But I think she's just such a great role model in- in that actually she can be whatever she wants to be. And she can have videos of her with guys and being sexy and in lingerie because why can everyone else and why can these like big models post them half naked, but she can't like things like that. So, yeah. It's really great.

Jade Taylor:

No, I totally agree. Thank you for talking with me today, Margherita.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

No, thank you for having me.

Jade Taylor:

I very much appreciate it and I look forward to working with you in 2022.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Thank you. I'm so excited for e- I'm so excited for the remaining of this podcast. I think it's gonna be amazing and I can't wait everyone else to see, everyone else you interview

Jade Taylor:

And shout out to everyone at WWDA. Thank you very much. You know, even the littlest things, you do, we all appreciate it.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Yeah. I second that.

Jade Taylor:

Bye.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

Bye, bye.

Margherita Dall’Occo:

(singing).