



ARTIST STATEMENT HUY NGUYEN

I am a humanitarian engineer, advocate for people with a disability, entrepreneur, traveler and portrait artist. I was born in Vietnam and contracted polio when I was 18 months old. At age six I moved to Australia with my family and grew up in Canberra. We came to this country as refugees. I spent many years using a wheelchair that did not support me properly, which worsened my condition, leading to the eventual need to have major surgery on my spine. But I don't perceive it as a disability; I just use a wheelchair to get around.

I have a passion for international development work, particularly addressing the challenges of minority groups such as people with a disability. Recently I was

involved in a project to address the water, sanitation and hygiene needs of people with a disability in Timor Leste, and in peer group training for wheelchair users in the Solomon Islands with Motivation Australia.

My own physical challenges has given me a unique mindset when approaching real world engineering problems, allowing me to address them on a more personal and empathetic level. My diverse interests have culminated in my current work as the founder and CEO of Greatvenue.

Greatvenue is an informational website that removes the social and technical barriers that can prevent people from going out more (www.greatvenue.info). We provide specific information about venues to enable people to decide whether a particular venue is accessible for them. Greatvenue's guiding principle is based around the social model of disability. That is, an environment, whether physical or social, can exclude people. I started Greatvenue as a way of breaking down those barriers.

Greatvenue is a vehicle for social inclusion that encompasses both the accessible venues in our community and the virtual sphere where people can come together. Wherever I go in the world, Greatvenue is my common ground – it's something I share with, and that helps me to interact with, the diverse people I meet.

MOTIVATION AUSTRALIA MARCIA SOARES TILMAN

My name is Marcia Soares Tilman, I am 27 years old and I live in Lahane Oriental district in Dili, East Timor.

My parents knew that I had this disability since I was one year old; however I was seven when I first realised that I would not grow up to walk like other people. My siblings could walk and go everywhere they wanted to, but myself, I could not walk. If I want to go somewhere I needed someone to help me get in and out of a vehicle and someone to push my wheelchair when I got there.

I've never been to school. It was because my parents thought that people will laugh at me and look down at me. My parents never think that people like me could go to school - although I really wanted to go.

I felt upset being disabled because I thought being disabled meant I couldn't do anything – but in fact when I watched TV, people with disability could perform music, sing a song, and play sport. From this moment I realised that I can be like them and do things too. But I didn't know where I should go to have practice or training.

My siblings have always helped me, but this year I received a wheelchair from ASSERT which also helped me a lot. I can now move by myself a bit in the house, but I need an assistant to push my wheelchair if I want to go outside.

I want to be a journalist and radio reporter; it's hard to achieve that (although I can read & write) because I have never been to any formal school. I will try my best in learning if I am given an opportunity to have training in this area so I can make my dream comes true. Since, I received my wheelchair from ASSERT, I have managed to be more involved in the community. I have begun to work with the local radio talk show program. They have offered me more work as a host, which I love to do.

Marica's shared her story with (ADDC member) Motivation Australia when they were conducting wheelchair service workshops with ASSERT (National Rehabilitation Service in East Timor).

