

When Belo Miguel Cipriani, Ed.D. was a boy in the 1980s, he saw his city of San Jose, CA morph before his eyes. “The orchards and open fields began to vanish,” he said, “and big buildings began to appear everywhere.”

Out of all of the structures that popped up during those formative years, there was one building that stood out from the pack. Cipriani shared, “I used to take the bus to school every day, and as it entered downtown San Jose — the glimmering Adobe building saluted me. I wanted to go inside to explore but knew I could only enter if I worked for the company.”

“So,” he continued, “I asked one of my teachers about Adobe, and he introduced me to their products. Shortly after, I was using Photoshop and PageMill and started making websites, which then led me to immerse myself in other technologies.”

And immerse himself he did, with jobs after college as a Unix administrator and in software sales. However, Cipriani found his footing in technical recruiting. “I liked the feeling of helping people find their dream job,” he said. “But I also liked that this experience allowed me to become a thought leader in resume writing — a service I could donate.”

“In fact,” he said, drawing a deep breath, “I had taught a resume editing workshop at a nonprofit that funded scholarships for women earlier in the day when I was blinded.”

In the spring of 2007, Cipriani was assaulted by a group of former friends in San Francisco, CA. He received multiple blows to the head, which rendered him completely blind. A time he describes as one of the toughest in his life.

“Obviously,” Cipriani began, “losing my vision was very challenging. It tested me in so many ways. And for a while, I was angry. But as I met other blind people and learned to do things in the dark, life became exciting again.”

While he was able to quickly learn to use assistive software for the blind and travel with a white cane and later a guide dog, he mentioned that he faced a lot of challenges due to digital access at his various job sites. He said, “I had no problem landing jobs. I had a strong resume. It was keeping the job that was the issue for me. Many of the software tools my employers used were inaccessible to my assistive tech. So, after many failed attempts at trying to make things work for me, I was let go. I must have gone through four jobs in 2009 alone.”

After losing his sight, Cipriani was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and a therapist encouraged him to journal — an activity that pushed his life in a new direction. “Journaling got me to write,” he said. “And the pieces that I shared with others got such a positive reaction that I enrolled in a master’s degree program in creative writing. So as my corporate career faded away, I saw a glimmer of hope in the writing field.”

Cipriani made quite the splash in the national literary scene with the publication of his memoir, *Blind*, which author Amy Tan called “Riveting and suspenseful.” The title also received

Honorable Mention from the [Eric Hoffer Book Awards](#) for Best Culture Book and an Honorable Mention from the LGBT Rainbow Awards for the nonfiction category. The success of *Blind* also brought lectureships at Yale, University of San Francisco, Holy Names University, and University of Minnesota, as well as columns with the [San Francisco Chronicle](#), [Bay Area Reporter](#) and a correspondent position with the Ed Baxter Show on Clear Channel.

Although he had achieved high levels of success with his writing, Cipriani is quick to note that his happiness was brief, as a familiar foe reappeared in his life.

“Whether I was covering a story for a newspaper or lecturing at a university,” Cipriani explained, “I kept running into access problems with my assistive tech. And once again, I found myself not having work contracts extended.”

Tired of being pushed out of the workforce by accessibility issues, he decided to be a part of the solution. Cipriani said, “Whenever I informed companies that I couldn’t use their products or services, I was often met with confusion. I realized that companies needed help with building accessibility and saw an opportunity. I went back to school for my doctorate and launched my consulting firm.”

Cipriani is the creator of the Digital Inclusion Sphere — a model that helps organizations operationalize digital access — as well as the founder of [Oleb Media](#) — the go-to accessibility resource for course and content creators. He also runs the disability press [Oleb Books](#) and is Community Faculty at Metropolitan State University. A prolific writer, he is a frequent keynote speaker at tech and diversity conferences around the world. He is also a model and is represented by Los Angeles-based agency KMR Talent.

When asked how he manages such a busy schedule, he said, “Meditation, meditation, meditation. I wouldn’t be as productive without my spiritual practice.”

“In fact,” he continued, “without meditation, I don’t think I would have been able to do half the things I completed over the last couple of years. It’s also been super helpful with dealing with the pandemic.”

Cipriani lives in the Twin Cities of Minnesota with his husband, James.