

# Lori Frisher Creates A More Inclusive World



## An Insider's Guide to The Cherry Creek Fashion Scene

PHOTOGRAPHED BY ESTHER LEE LEACH

WRITTEN BY KOYA NYANGI



**Koya Nyangi:** Lori , you have lived a very fascinating life and getting to know you has been amazing. I think to understand more of your story, we need to go back to the beginning.

**Lori Frisher:** Imagine your child as a newborn being diagnosed with hearing loss. Imagine the years of not hearing another child's voice or even their own, or kids playing Marco Polo in the pool, or the sound of a fire engine approaching. I can; that was my childhood.

I could have attended a special school and communicated through sign language, I relied almost exclusively on hearing aids and decided along with my family to be mainstreamed. I worked on overcoming the obstacles. I attended the University of Hartford, where I played Division 1 tennis as a walk-on, without ever hearing the racket hitting the ball. Later, I became the first student selected as a commencement speaker with a disability. After graduation, I used my learned creativity to work around my disability and launch an advertising and marketing career. Yes, I missed out on things and got frustrated. But I gave my all and compensated in other areas in my life.

Despite my personal success, I was socially insecure. I never put my hair up; instead wore it down around my face to cover up my hearing aids. And having conversations in busy group settings like bars, clubs or restaurants was always challenging. I spent most of my entire adult life feeling like this in social environments.

If that weren't enough, in my late twenties, I developed melanoma. The disease returned in my late thirties. Interferon reduced my hearing and qualified me for a cochlear implant on one side. Noises like boiling water remained silent to me. How many people take sound for granted? Or bring able to hear, speak and understand at the same time?

**KN:** In 2010 you were implanted with an invisible hearing aid using a cochlear implant. How has this trajectory encouraged you to create inclusivity in the fashion and creative worlds?

**LF:** After wearing hearing aids for 30+ years, I was the first person in the world to receive an Esteem implant (an invisible hearing device) with my Cochlear implant. I never imagined this technology would happen in my lifetime. The adversity and gifts in my life have made me passionate to use my creativity through my work, art, and love for people.

During the early days of my career living in New York, I worked for the first lifestyle media company for people with disabilities. As an associate publisher and fashion editor, I used my creativity to give others like me a voice through what was the first "Town and Country" lifestyle magazine for people with disabilities. Promoting this untapped market, which is now 1.2 billion people with disabilities, who have the same dreams of wearing designer clothing and traveling the world. I had the incredible opportunity to work with world-renowned photographers, stylists, and make-up artists to learn to look at beauty through a new lens. We challenged agencies and national advertisers to think outside of the box in their marketing, to tap into this diverse and overlooked market. This was one of the best jobs of my life! Unfortunately, our downtown Manhattan offices were forced to close as a result of the tragedy of 9-11.



CHERRY  
CREEK  
FASHION

STYLE // BEAUTY  
CULTURE // LIVING

**KN: As one of the most stylish people I know, how did you fall in love with fashion? And how has thinking outside of the box guided you to become who you are?**

**LF:** From the time I was a little girl growing up in the suburbs of Manhattan, my father would take me to the dressing rooms of Bloomingdale's to try on Ralph Lauren sweaters and designer jeans. I would walk the streets of SoHo early mornings with my family when I was little and browse the local designer boutiques. I remember my sister and I shared a fabulous Moschino jacket, and I had this denim Ralph Lauren jacket with the American flag. My father taught me to buy quality products that would last for years. My mom, who is an incredible fashionista, always took us to local boutiques to get the best clothes and warm-up outfits to play tennis. My best friend growing up ended up working for some of the biggest designers in the world and I would get some great deals at sample sales, which were always fun.

**KN: Lori, I know that inclusivity and representation for people with disabilities in fashion is something that is close to your heart. Let's talk more about that and how your identity has influenced your experience in fashion?**

**LF:** Clothes gave me confidence. Having done some modeling when I was in college, I wanted to inspire others with disabilities to dream big through my work in publishing and advertising. I had an opportunity to build awareness in the fashion industry to design beautiful clothing for people with disabilities. I was one of the first to hire models with disabilities to advertise products in a national magazine. I worked and learned alongside some of the most innovative artists and advertisers to push the envelope for inclusivity and representation. This is the work that I am continuing with Ready or Not Media.



**KN: I got my first sign language class from you at the Clayton Members Club & Hotel and for that I thank you! How can think companies be more supportive of people who are living with a disability and/or have an invisible disability?**

**LF:** I so enjoyed sharing some signs with you. As I continue to learn this beautiful language, it's an incredible honor to broaden the engagement with sign language at the Clayton Hotel & Members Club and as a board member for Clayton Contributes Fund. I am proud to spread disability awareness to the community at large.

The deaf community is becoming more centrally included in many communities and this is thrilling and about time! Marvel just celebrated its first deaf superhero Lauren Ridloff, in the film Eternals. And more directors are beginning to tell the many different stories of people in deaf communities like in the Sound of Metal. Crip Camp, which won the Audience Award at Sundance, and in this year's film Coda, which is up for an Oscar for Best Picture.

workplaces. We perform all types of jobs at all levels regardless of whether we have a visible or invisible disability. We are entrepreneurs, innovators, and community leaders. Disability is diversity and is a key component of workplace diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

[@lorifrisher](#)

ADVERTISE IN THE MAGAZINE

SUBSCRIBE TO THE MAGAZINE



PREVIOUS

[TV Host Erica Cobb Inspires Us To Keep Coming Back](#)

NEXT

[What To Wear Now: 3 Spring Looks From TOMBOI by C.R.LEE](#)



## An Insider's Guide to The Cherry Creek Fashion Scene

Search