

CRIPPING CAPITALISM: DISABILITY FEMINISM & THE CONTROVERSY OF WORK

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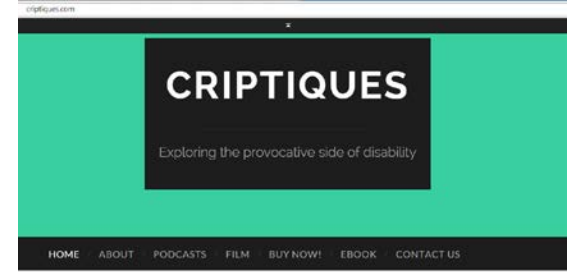
The Presenters

Caitlin Wood

- Disability culture trainer
- Editor of Criptiques anthology

Cheryl Green

- Media arts and accessibility
- Brain injury rehab and culture trainer



The Nondisabled Dilemma

FEBRUARY 6, 2015 / 3 COMMENTS

"I am regularly faced with the dilemma of how to make stories about disabilities resonate outside the disability community?" Journalist David Perry, aka @collardfish tweeted yesterday. Perry is one of the few nondisabled freelancers I know of who regularly reports on disability issues in major media outlets and I greatly respect his work even if I disagree with him occasionally. (He also tweeted that in terms of the negative reactions nondisabled people have toward disabled people, pity was preferable to indifference, which I'm not so sure about.) That aside, I'm a big fan of his, and am happy to see a savvy nondisabled writer "get" or even care about disability.

Get your Criptiques swag!



Agenda


- Presentation: overview of relationship of feminist activism, capitalist exploitation, race, and disability
 - Small group discussion: human value and work
 - Large group review
 - Call to action
-

PRESENTATION



Disability
justifies
discrimination;

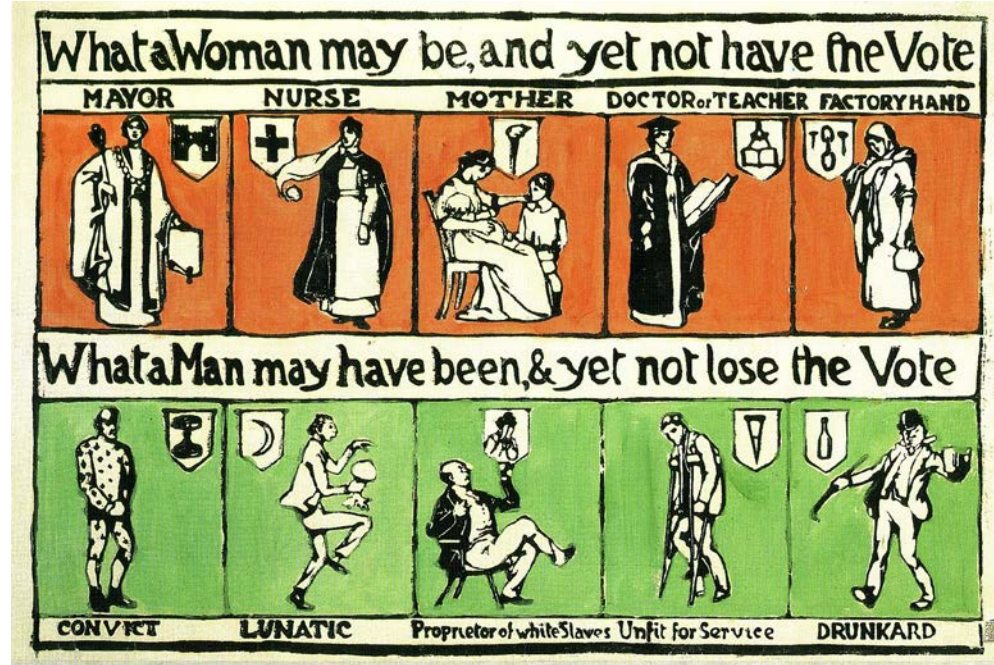
Attributes of
disability ascribed
to non-disabled
people

- Women historically excluded from public sphere (work, civic engagement)
 - Supposed cognitive and emotional inferiority
 - Supposed physical limitations and fragility
 - Ethnic minorities receive more disability labels
 - Feminism might argue women equal or superior to men
 - Just rejecting inferiority supports ableist rhetoric that limitation/challenge justifies exclusion
- 

OUR HISTORICAL
ROOTS



NOT a call
for
suffrage
for all



What does
it mean,
“I am not
like them”?

In many states women are classed, politically, with idiots,
convicts, the insane, and Indians—**not allowed to vote.**

Women do not, however, escape taxation.

“Taxation without representation is tyranny.”

“Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God.”



(Copyright 1911 by Henrietta Briggs-Wall.)
American Woman and Her Political Peers.

“Defectives” side by side

- 1800s saw rise of U.S. freak shows
- Only legitimate way disabled people could earn money
- Intersection of race, disability, nationality



Capitalism
designs
Immigration
law:
exclusion of
those unfit to
work

- Act of 1882 prohibited: “lunatic, idiot, or any person unable to take care of himself or herself without becoming a public charge”
- In 1917, added: “persons with abnormal sex instincts”
- Exclude suspected feeble-mindedness, mental disease, less than superior physique
 - Language barriers
 - Ascribe disability to anyone to exclude them automatically

HAVE WE LEFT
THOSE HISTORICAL
ROOTS?




Disability & employment

- 2012 data for disabled people 21-64*
 - 20% received SSI
 - 28% lived below poverty line/15% for non-disabled
 - 20% employed full-time/full-year
- 2014
 - Unemployment: 6.8% non-disabled, 13.3% disabled (16-64)
 - EEO complaints: 6, sex; 16, disability
- Stats leave out people in institutions
 - Over 56,000 just with ID/DD

*Disabilitystatistics.org data may vary from Census Bureau data

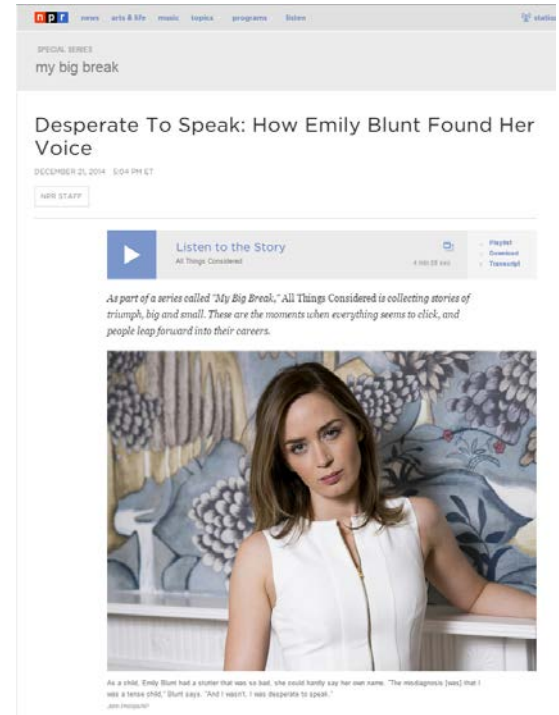
Should inclusion require assimilation?

- Women encouraged to act more like men
 - Embody behavior of those in power to achieve power or status
 - Black, Brown, immigrant communities
 - Demand to speak English (white, middle class, aka “Standard English”)
 - Disabled people demanded to assimilate
 - Get rehab to “cure” issues or train to act and communicate in “standard,” accepted ways rather than changing standards
 - Reproductive health denied many: deemed incapable of decisions, childcare + forced sterilization, don’t pass on those genes
- 

Work if you
assimilate:
“I’m normal, too.”

On screen, Blunt is a natural. So you'd never guess that, as a kid, she could hardly say her own name — she grew up with a severe stutter.

She says her parents tried everything, from relaxation therapy to listening to audio recordings of dolphins or the soothing voice of a woman on a cassette tape.



The image is a screenshot of a web browser displaying an NPR article. At the top, the NPR logo is visible on the left, and navigation links for 'news', 'arts & life', 'music', 'topics', 'programs', and 'listen' are on the right. Below the navigation is a 'SPECIAL SERIES' section with the title 'my big break'. The main article title is 'Desperate To Speak: How Emily Blunt Found Her Voice', dated 'DECEMBER 21, 2014 5:04 PM ET'. A 'NPR STAFF' button is located below the date. A prominent blue play button icon is on the left of a 'Listen to the Story' section, which also includes the text 'All Things Considered', a duration of '4:00:00', and options for 'Play/Download' and 'Transcript'. Below this is a short paragraph: 'As part of a series called "My Big Break," All Things Considered is collecting stories of triumph, big and small. These are the moments when everything seems to click, and people leap forward into their careers.' This is followed by a photograph of Emily Blunt, a woman with long brown hair wearing a white sleeveless top, sitting in front of a wall with a floral pattern. At the bottom of the page, there is a small caption: 'At a time, Emily Blunt had a stutter that was so bad, she could hardly say her own name. "The magnificent jewel that I was a little girl," Blunt says. "And I want, I was desperate to speak." — NPR.com'.

Wanting work: "disabled are just as capable"

Ms. Smith has been looking for a job.

"I want my own space. I want to gain that independence."

Ms. Smith receives \$733 each month in Social Security benefits. "I don't want to be on disability," she said. "I want to better myself."

The job she is seeking, she said, would be in a day care center. Ms. Smith helped raise her younger siblings.... She would, however, need a special license to be eligible for such a job.

"I don't give up," Ms. Smith said.... "I keep trying to overcome my disability."

The New York Times

N.Y. / REGION

Driven to Push Past Her Disabilities and Achieve Independence

JAN. 13, 2015



Tashiema Smith, 28, at Brooklyn Community Services, which helped buy her clothes for job interviews. She has had many short-lived jobs and is working to find something more permanent. Sam Hodgson for The New York Times

Work; lose benefits: Independence penalized

CAREERACCESS



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The Bureaucracy of Being Disabled

[ourcareeraccess](#) [August 5, 2014](#)

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By Alice Wong




While I was an undergraduate, I worked less than 10 hours/week so my income did not impact my SSI very much.

This all changed when I moved to California for graduate school....[W]hen I started working as a research assistant part-time, this is when my troubles began.

About a year into graduate school I received a letter from the SSA saying I was overpaid \$2000 and had to pay it back.

The right
to not
work;
Sunny Taylor's
response to non-
working guilt

- Capitalism: paid work “productive” and unpaid work “unproductive”
 - Paid workers valuable and unpaid workers not valuable
 - Disabled = inferior to non-disabled is a social construction, not truth
 - Why is the right and opportunity to perform wage labor considered the ultimate freedom?
 - Reject this “right” and choose a sense of liberation in not working
- 

GROUP DISCUSSIONS



Grab your quotations and timelines!

Examine each quotation as if were written about women, people of color, gender and sexual identity minorities, or people with disabilities.


Does the intent or the message change if you change the population?

What assumptions come up when you change the population?

Can you find the ableism, racism, sexism, classism, and other forms oppression in each statement?

How does the language of disability connote inferiority?

How can you respond in an inclusive, equitable way to the quotations?



The quotations

- Frederick Douglass: African-American, escaped from slavery, leader of abolitionist movement, orator, antislavery writer


“The true basis of rights was the capacity of individuals.”

- Rebecca Sandford: young bride and suffragist

“Our intellect is as capable as a man’s to assume, and at once to hold, these rights.”

- Matilda Gage: Native American activist, abolitionist, suffragist


“Obedience to outside authority to which woman has everywhere been trained, has not only dwarfed her capacity, but made her a retarding force in civilization.”




CALL TO ACTION



Take-home messages


- How can feminism embrace the disability community and not distance women from disabled people to prove women's value? Disabled people aren't granted opportunities for financial independence feminism works toward.
 - Most disabled people who want to work are not hired, not accommodated, work sub-minimum wage, are shut out of opportunities in education or training, or can't work because of losing benefits and health insurance.
 - Disabled people who don't work aren't valueless because they don't earn a wage. Benefits recipients should not be shamed.
- 

Our call to action

- Learn about oppression in communities you aren't in. Share what you learn.
 - Recognize the social construction of disability mirrors that of gender. Question essentialism and universality.
 - Ensure feminist events are accessible (physical, emotional, sensory, transportation, cost).
 - Question capitalist notions that define which humans are valuable.
 - Boycott Goodwill
- 

Resources

disabled/public_html/fwd/wp-content/plugins/hybrid_hook/hybrid_hook.php on line 121

**FORWARD** FWD (feminists with disabilities) for a way forward

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Mission Statement

FWD/Forward is a group blog written by people with disabilities, some of whom are feminists and some of whom work in solidarity with feminists. It is a place to discuss disability issues from an intersectional approach and people do not need to identify as feminist to be welcome at FWD although antifeminists and MRAs are encouraged to get their jollies elsewhere. The content here ranges from basic information that is designed to introduce people who are new to disability issues, feminism, or social justice to some core concepts, to more advanced topics, with the goal of promoting discussion, conversation, fellowship, and education.

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DID I STUTTER?

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Stuttering and Sexism

2/19/2015

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SUBMIT



The conceptualization of dysfluent speech as ugly or unpleasant is an effective tool in the marginalization of stutterers. It is particularly salient for women, who face intersecting and compounding marginalization in patriarchal society. The appearance, behavior, and speech of women are much more heavily policed. Norms of emphasized femininity dictate that appropriate roles for women are submissive, docile, and aligned with specific standards of physical appearance. Understanding gender-based oppression is critical to discussing the ways that women experience speech discrimination and their role in activism.

Patriarchal society praises women for behaving and appearing in ways that accentuate their vulnerability and diminish their confidence. The misconception that stuttering is caused by shyness, anxiety, or low self-esteem is used to reinforce the belief that women are intellectually, emotionally, and psychologically frail in relation to men. A woman's response to her own stuttering is more positively sanctioned if she expresses shame, and women much more than men are encouraged to suppress stuttering, even at the expense of communication and expression.

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DidIStutter.org

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Thank you

FEMINISM
is not simply a struggle to

END MALE CHAUVANISM
*or a movement to ensure that **WOMEN** have*

EQUAL RIGHTS

*with men; It is a **commitment***

TO ERADICATING THE IDEOLOGY OF DOMINATION
that permeates Western culture on various levels~

SEX RACE CLASS
to name a few

*and a commitment to **reorganizing***

U.S. SOCIETY *so that the*

SELF-DEVELOPMENT
of people can take precedence over

**IMPERIALISM
ECONOMIC EXPANSION
& MATERIAL DESIRES**

~ bell hooks