[tail end of news report on food justice from Counterspin for first 1 minute, 45 seconds]

KRIS: It's 6:00, and you are listening to KBOO Portland. Up next we have a few announcements followed by Bread and Roses.

[Ad for KBOO programming with jazz music in background]

[Ad for Red Umbrella Film Series]

KRIS: And this KBOO program has been made possible, in part, by KBOO Foundation members and a grant from People's Food Coop, a community-owned, values-driven cooperative striving to provide access to whole foods customers can trust. People's features farm-direct, organic produce, bulk foods, a weekly year-round farmers' market, and everyone is welcome. Located on SE 21st and Tibbet Street, between Division and Powell. More information at Peoples.coop.

[Bread and Roses theme song]

[bass rhythm is audible through the first 15 minutes, coming from the next studio]

Introduction

DELPHINE: Welcome to Bread and Roses, feminist news and public affairs. I'm Delphine Criscenzo, and our engineer tonight is Kris DeMaria. Bread and Roses is a collective of women-identified radio activists. We give voice to those working for social justice and equity, globally and locally, and we strive to challenge systems of oppression. All of this, and we have lots of fun doing it. And we always welcome new collective members. No experience necessary. If you are interested, you wanna find out more, you can email KBOO's Volunteer Coordinator, and her email is Volunteer@KBOO.org.

Well, make sure to like KBOO Bread and Roses on Facebook if you'd like to get updates and see behind the scene photos. We are also on Twitter @breadrosesradio and on the web at KBOO.fm/breadandroses. There you can listen to past shows, and you can even leave us comments or show ideas. But you can also email us some suggestions. Our email is breadandrosescollective@gmail.com.

Tonight on Bread and Roses, we have a conversation about disability work grounded in social justice and civil rights. We have activists Caitlin Wood and Cheryl Green. We will talk about the crossover between disability activism and feminist activism and discuss how feminism can become inclusive of disability rights and justice. Of course, we'll also talk about art as activism and about the art that they've done together. So we are joined this evening on the phone by Caitlin Wood. Caitlin is a disabled activist, performer, writer, and the editor of the cross-disability anthology called "Criptiques." "Criptiques is a ground-breaking anthology of disabled writers exploring the provocative sides of disability." And you can find more online. The website http://www.criptiques.com. That's www.criptiques.com.

And we are also joined by Cheryl Green in the studio. Cheryl is a disabled media and performance artist focusing on disability culture, satire, and challenging ableism. She gives presentations and trainings on disability identity, arts in brain injury rehabilitation, and disability representations in the media. And she provides Closed Captioning and transcription services to make streaming audio and video more accessible. She's on the Board of Disability Art and Culture Project and served on the Board of Brain-injury Information Referral and Resource Development (also known as BIRRDsong). She worked with VSA Texas and volunteered with Portland Commission on Disability and the National Black Disability

Coalition. Her upcoming documentary film is "Who Am I To Stop It." And you can find out more about the film and its making at http://www.whoamitostopit.com.

Well, welcome Cheryl and Caitlin, to Bread and Roses. It's a pleasure to have you both.

CHERYL: Thank you. It's great to be here.

CAITLIN: Hi!

DELPHINE: Hello, Caitlin. It's great to have you on the phone [giggles].

CAITLIN: Thank you! I'm happy to be here.

Disability work grounded in social justice and civil rights.

DELPHINE: Yes. I'd love if we can start talking about disability work, the disability work that you do, which is grounded in social justice and civil rights. Caitlin, would you go first?

CAITLIN: Sure. So I have kind of a wide range, I guess, of projects that I've worked on. A lot of them have been with Cheryl, but I edited the anthology "Criptiques," which is a cross-disability anthology of essays by all disabled people talking about disability issues from a politicized perspective. Cheryl and I have also collaborated on some short films, and I've done trainings and presentations. And I guess my work has just kind of run the gamut in terms of the media that I use.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm. Great. Cheryl, what about you?

CHERYL: Sorry, what was the question?

DELPHINE: [laughs] Tell us about the work that you do around disability work, especially the fact that it's grounded in social justice and civil rights?

CHERYL: Right, yes. I got so distracted. It was so lovely to hear Caitlin's voice.

DELPHINE and CAITLIN: [laugh]

CHERYL: I was just listening and oh, I'm here too. OK. I think maybe one of the biggest things that I try to do is look at disability through culture and identity and really try to open up a space where we are not telling stories about impairments and telling stories about crashes and injuries and rehab. And I want those stories to be out there, and there are a lot of spaces for them. But I'm finding, especially in the brain injury world, there's not many spaces for the other stories, the stories of your intersecting identities, the stories of social justice and discrimination, and heavy bass coming from the next room [chuckling].

DELPHINE: [laughs]

CHERYL: Sounds like my heartbeat! And so I primarily work in film, blogging, and podcasting. And then I do a lot of training and public speaking, and I do a lot of presentations for speech therapists and occupational therapists with some really radical ideas about...include your patient in their rehab!

DELPHINE: Mmhmm. That's radical.

CHERYL: It's radical! It really is. And I come from this perspective of elicit storytelling from the person in the room with you rather than write the goals and put your goals on them and do your goals on them. And then also, kind of reframing rehab, like why is it that we have to be rehab-ed to be reintegrated and accepted in society?

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: Why can't we just be happy disabled people and accepted as we are, right Caitlin?

CAITLIN: Right.

DELPHINE and CAITLIN: [chuckle]

How do most people understand disability in the US, and what's wrong with the approach?

DELPHINE: And so I think this is gonna be a great transition to the next question cuz I'd love if you guys could spend some time describing a little bit, how is it that most people really define or understand disability in the US, and really what's wrong with the approach?

CAITLIN: Sure. I think that most people, when they think of disability, they come at it from what's called the medical model approach. And that is looking at disability as a medical issue and not a societal or cultural issue. And so that is obviously very dehumanizing and reductionist, and that it doesn't take into what is going on around us, how we view disability, how we value disability or devalue disability as a culture.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CAITLIN: So I think when you're talking about disability, most people you know, you don't get disability history in your textbook, and you don't hear about disability rights in schools. You are, if you're non-disabled, you're taught to view disability from a very medical perspective. And if you're disabled, you're often taught that as well. So I think that is the first thing that's wrong is that we take a complex identity and something that can be very positive and empowering, such as the disability identity, and we reduce it to a medical diagnosis.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CAITLIN: Cheryl?

DELPHINE: [laughs]

CHERYL: Why thank you, Caitlin.

CAITLIN: [laughs]

CHERYL: Just, I mean, to obviously second everything that Caitlin said. And I would add that something that I feel that is wrong--and I know Caitlin will agree with this. I'll just speak for you for a moment, Caitlin.

CAITLIN: Please.

CHERYL: Which I can because you're disabled.

CAITLIN: Yes.

DELPHINE: [laughs]

CHERYL: What's wrong is the media representations.

CAITLIN: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: And so things around, well, Delphine, you and I were just talking about the fast food restaurant employees who have taken it upon themselves occasionally to feed a disabled customer who was having trouble eating on their own. And they're like the biggest heroes of United States history. And if you come in and say, "Hey, I have a problem with this photograph and this video being shared online, especially because it was done without consent of that disabled person, who was just there having a day. And why are we not arguing about the fact that Qdoba doesn't have an accessible door, which the ADA says that they should?"

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CAITLIN: Right.

CHERYL: I doubt this was a historical building Qdoba with no money to put into door openers.

DELPHINE: [chuckles]

CHERYL: We don't, in the media when you come in, and you try to critique: "Hey, let's talk about this person's privacy. Let's talk about protecting their identity. Let's talk about why is it that you praise this person for doing something as simple as helping someone eat?" And by the way, they don't know her name. No one's ever asked her name.

DELPHINE: But they know her order. That was weird.

CHERYL: They know her order very well.

CAITLIN: Of course.

CHERYL: Why is it that when people from my community and Caitlin's community, when we come in and we try to argue that this feels dehumanizing and devaluing, and treating our community as props to make you feel better about yourselves as non-disabled people, when we make these arguments, oh, the backlash! "Stop raining on my parade. Why are you always so angry? This is so heart-warming; why did you have to ruin my day by critiquing?" And we're like, "But the door isn't accessible in 2015, and back in 1990, it was supposed to be accessible. But more importantly, what is it about our society that it's OK to know this person's order by heart and not know her name? And then this worker who fed her or helped her eat in some way, still didn't even ask her name."

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: And I think, to me, when you look in the media, you are constantly seeing these "you're pitiful. You're too pitiful to eat. You're too pitiful for us to install an electric door. You're inspirational. How lovely that you left the house. Oh my gawd. And then you're a prop for me, as a non-disabled person, to feel better about myself cuz I helped you. You're courageous; I'm brave. Everybody's shocked."

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: I bring up these two examples because we were just talking about them, but you see this in every TV show and books.

CAITLIN: Uh-huh.

CHERYL: You see it in every movie. I hear it on the radio. I hear it on podcasts. It is revolting how inspiring we are simply for being alive and yet--We're inspiring, and yet nobody wants to make the ADA enforceable.

DELPHINE: Yeah.

CHERYL: Nobody wants to actually ever provide the public schools the funding that the IDEA mandated decades ago for special education. Or what about, how about no special education? What about actually integrating disabled students into the classroom, which has also been kind of mandated for decades?

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: We're inspirational, but we have to keep our trap shut and not protest. It's very paternalistic and very condescending and really gross.

DELPHINE: Yeah, it really is.

"Cripping Capitalism" at Lewis & Clark and historical exclusion of women and people with disabilities

DELPHINE: And so you guys recently were at a symposium at Lewis & Clark. It was a women's studies symposium, and you did this amazing presentation called "Cripping Capitalism." And you really look at why is it that this is where we are at today? Why is it that we consider disabled folks this way? And so if you could start talking a little bit about really historically what the exclusion looked like. And if you could parallel this with the exclusion of women, for example, and what were some of the justifications for excluding women? And what are the parallels between the exclusion of women and that of disabled folks from the public sphere?

CHERYL: Mm.

DELPHINE: Who would go first? Caitlin?

CAITLIN: Whoo! I will try. That is a really good question.

CHERYL: Just pull up the PowerPoint that we did. It's all there.

DELPHINE and CHERYL: [laugh]

CAITLIN: I know!

CHERYL: Did I just say that out loud?

DELPHINE: That's OK.

CAITLIN: So one, I think we need to always, when we're talking about disability, keep in mind that this is a very heterogeneous group. And that includes people of all races, genders, ethnicities. That includes women and women with disabilities. So when we're talking about parallels, we're still talking about women. We're still talking about women. And in terms of being excluded from the public sphere, we had legislation from I think it was the early 1900s, the so-called Ugly Laws. And that's what they were called, where it was actually illegal to be disabled in public if you were maimed or--you know, they used really nasty terminology. But you would literally be banned [chuckles] from the public sphere for having a disability. And so that's written into our society even on a policy level.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CAITLIN: So you know, this goes back forever, basically. And I'm not sure I'm even answering your question correctly. But in terms of parallels, if you're talking about people with disabilities and any other minority group--because disabled people are the largest minority group in the world. We make up 15% of the population. There is always exclusion. There's always oppression. And you're gonna find that with any marginalized culture, and for whatever reason--obviously Cheryl and I have done our research, and we have a lot of opinions on this, but--disabled people have been excluded systematically. And it is an institutional oppression that disabled people face and have faced, I think since pretty much the beginning of time. Because there have always been disabled people, there will always be disabled people, and you find disability across any culture. So of course, you're gonna find parallels there because we encompass everyone. There is no identity that does not have disability as a part of it.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: Yeah. And to go back, talk about like policy stuff, and to go back: when you look at the early immigration laws.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: OK, so let's just say super white supremacist and capitalist.

DELPHINE: Yes.

CHERYL: But the guidelines that the immigration officers at Ellis Island or wherever were given were rooted in sniffing out signs of disability.

CAITLIN: Yes.

CHERYL: And you were allowed to also make them up. So for instance, well, this person has just arrived in this country. I think that they're too short and too physically weak to be a productive member of our capitalist society. Therefore, they're crippled. They can't come in.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: And we know that that really is just racism and white supremacy. But they used disability as their just go-to, easy, unexamined default. And I mean, you can't move to Australia with a disability from any other country.

CAITLIN: Right.

CHERYL: You can't even get in.

DELPHINE: Wow.

CHERYL: You cannot get in because you are automatically perceived to be a burden on society, you are going to take resources and not give them. Well now, if we had more accessible work environments, a lot more disabled people could actually produce and earn money and pay more taxes and not live so much off of benefits. Different discussion. But you see this intense intersection of race and class and disability, whether real or perceived or just made up willy-nilly. You see that embedded in our immigration policy from the very beginning, and you see those intersections still happening. And where I see a shortcoming, maybe, in the way a lot of feminism is done is that we might, for example, say, "OK, I'm a woman. I am not inferior to a man. I'm just as smart as a man. Therefore, I should be respected as much as a man."

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: OK, maybe on the face of it that sounds really good, and maybe it's true. But then, I didn't say anything about what about people who do have a lower IQ or are perceived to have a lower IQ? So, I should be up there with the dudes, but it's OK to leave that person in the dust. "I'm not inferior to a man because I'm just as strong and physically capable." OK, well then, what are you gonna do? Now you've left people with physical impairments or mobility impairments or any kind of physical weakness, left them in the dust. Don't worry about them. And I truly, for the most part, do not see feminists including disability. I see people defending women and defending femaleness and not ever examining these arguments that we use to say that we are equal to or better than men, we're dropping disabled people left and right.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: Which is bad cuz then you can get hurt, and you can get another disability.

DELPHINE: Yes.

DELPHINE and CAITLIN: [laugh]

DELPHINE: And this is gonna be the core of what we're gonna keep talking about as we move forward with the show. But I'd love to take a short musical break. You're listening to Bread and Roses. I'm Delphine Criscenzo, and tonight we have Cheryl Green and Caitlin Wood on the phone, and Cheryl is right here in the studio. And we are talking about disability activism, and we are talking about feminism activism and the crossover. We're gonna go to The Sisters of Invention. This is a great song called "This Isn't Disneyland." We'll be right back.

The Sisters of Invention "This Isn't Disneyland" music break

[music and lyrics:
"You learn something new every day, new every day, till the day that you die.
I left school years ago, school years ago, thought you should know.
And although there's obstacles, struggles and fall, besser brick walls,
I'm not saying you're mean, but there are some things you haven't seen.
This isn't Disneyland.

I'm not a novelty.
This is as real as it gets.
Brave new ideas begin to fill all the detail in.
I am as real as it gets.
I won't let go of the hope that I'm holding when trouble's unfolding.
It's stand or crash land.
I'm not a, I'm not a, I'm not a novelty.
I make my way in this world, using my voice, no other choice.
Just give me what I need, all that I need, to live and to breathe.
You may think I'm out of my mind, out of my mind, but I'm not that blind.
Because people just cannot know what they don't know until they're shown.
This isn't Disneyland.
I'm not a novelty.
This is as real as it gets, real as it gets.
Brave new ideas begin to fill all the detail in.
I am as real as it gets.
I won't let go of the hope that I'm holding when trouble's unfolding.
It's stand or crash land."]

DELPHINE: You're listening to Bread and Roses. And so we were listening to "This Isn't Disneyland," The Sisters of Invention. And so tonight in the studio, we have Cheryl Green, and we have on the phone Caitlin Wood. And both of them are disabled activists, and we are talking about disability activism, the work that they do, but we are also talking about feminism activism and some of those crossovers. And so I'd love, Cheryl, if you could talk a little bit about The Sisters of Invention for people who are interested in looking them up.

CHERYL: I would love to. I am so desperately in love with The Sisters of Invention.

DELPHINE: [laughs]

CHERYL: If y'all are listening, please come be on my podcast. So The Sisters of Invention are a band out of Australia. All of the members have disabilities. Many of them have learning disabilities or intellectual disabilities. And as they were getting their band together, they were told, "Oh, you girls are really good musicians, and you'll do great making music for children because that's really all you can do."

DELPHINE: Mm.

CHERYL: And I mean, if you were listening to that song, this is quality music. These are skilled musicians.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CAITLIN: Right.

CHERYL: And that's why they wrote this song, "This Isn't Disneyland." And they say, "We're not a novelty. This is as real as it gets." And these are a bunch of young women saying, "No. We are not a children's act." Nothing wrong with being a children's act, but they aren't. And they are completely aware and vocal about the fact that it's their disability status and whatever assumptions people make about their capabilities, it's that is what made somebody say, "You will make a children's act." And I just love them. I listen to their album. Is that what they're called these days?

DELPHINE: [laughs]

CHERYL: I got it off of iTunes. I don't know what it is. I listen to their record all the time on my iPod.

DELPHINE and CAITLIN: [chuckle]

CHERYL: And I just can't get enough of them and the message that they have around that. They're yeah.

DELPHINE: Yeah. Thank you for that, and thank you for suggesting the song. I would invite you all to go check out, also, the video that goes with it. It's very entertaining.

CAITLIN: [giggles]

What's wrong with the feminist approach that women are not inferior to men?

DELPHINE: So before we were listening to that song, we were talking exactly about that, about what is wrong with the feminist approach that women are, in fact, not inferior. So you started explaining, Cheryl, what's all wrong with it. Would you continue?

CHERYL: Oh!

DELPHINE: [giggles]

CHERYL: Can we rewind the tape? What did I say?

CAITLIN and CHERYL: [chuckle]

CHERYL: Caitlin, can you--I'm in another era with my record albums and my tape.

DELPHINE: [laughs]

CHERYL: Caitlin, do you wanna pick up where I was where I think about where I was?

CAITLIN: So well, I thought you summed it up very nicely first of all in terms of one, we're sort of projecting this outdated paradigm that one, men are what we need to be aspiring too.

DELPHINE: Yeah.

CHERYL: Lean in, Caitlin [chuckles]!

CAITLIN: Yeah, exactly. So you know, this is very much like corporate capitalistic white feminism like Sheryl Sandberg of Lean In saying in order to succeed, the goal of feminism is to make money and become a businesswoman. And there were stories about her where she refused to meet with Latina workers in the hotel that she was staying at who weren't even making a minimum wage who didn't have the privilege of leaning in like Cheryl--I'm sorry if my dog is making a lot of noise.

DELPHINE: [laughs] That's all right.

CAITLIN: He is very happy tonight. So that's kind of the crux of it is just when we're looking at that I guess it would be second-wave feminism really, of reducing it down to this binary of women and men, and it's always assumed that it's gonna be non-disabled, white, straight women and men, and that the goal is to make money and be middle class, and blah blah blah blah. When that's just not people's reality these days.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm [chuckles]

CAITLIN: And I'm trying to think if there was anything cuz Cheryl, you really did a good job. And I'm trying to think if there was anything else I wanted to add about that.

CHERYL: Can I add on to what you were just saying, cuz I loved it?

CAITLIN: Yes!

CHERYL: You know, we say we live in some kind of--Well, I don't know. Somebody, some people say that we live in a meritocracy, and some people try to be really progressive and liberal and pro-disability and say things like, "You should be judged on your accomplishments and your capabilities, not the way you look or the way you move." Well, but we are systematically--my community is systematically--held back from having jobs, from producing. When you are in a place where no accessibility is provided to you, let's say that you don't communicate verbally, and you're not given access to either writing tools or an iPad or something where you can communicate exactly what's on your mind, and you're being judged for what you accomplish, but you're not given the tools to accomplish anything, it's really quite a bind. And I think I hear a lot of women who say, for instance, are promoting women in STEM--science, technology, engineering, and math--"Whoa, yeah. This is great. Let's get more women involved, more women involved." But I don't ever hear anything about "Let's get more people with disabilities involved."

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: Why wouldn't you want that? There is so much erasure, and I think I mean, there's plenty of erasure that happens to women. I think women--and...I'm using the word "women," which is part of that binary.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: But I don't subscribe to the binary. I just can't think of another word to say at the moment.

DELPHINE: Another word. Yeah, it's hard.

CHERYL: Yeah.

DELPHINE: You're in a very difficult situation now, these days.

CAITLIN: Yeah, it's nuanced.

DELPHINE: Yeah.

CHERYL: It's nuanced, yeah.

Empowered Fe Fes, policing bodies, and sexual/reproductive health in the disability community

CHERYL: But women and female bodies and people who identify as women are so policed in public. And I was thinking back when Caitlin, you said the Ugly Laws, and thinking about the policing of what certain bodies are wearing and how they're moving. And that also intersects across race and class. And that kind of policing just happens so much with disabled bodies too, regardless of gender, but especially women with disabilities. The policing that happens and the silencing that happens. You know, you have people, first of all, we still have forced sterilization of people with disabilities. And then you have, on the other side or the same side of it, you have inaccessible doctors' offices where there are women who can't get an annual exam because the doctors' office, they're not making their office accessible for different bodies to get access to healthcare. And then you have women with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities routinely not allowed to participate in talking about their own sexual and/or reproductive health. Not even allowed to.

DELPHINE: Yeah.

CHERYL: Or it's all put on a caregiver, a care provider. Everybody talks, "Well, they wouldn't, they don't have an interest in sex. They wouldn't want to. Why would they--? They don't have--?" These assumptions. And this is another spot where feminism is leaving out the disability community. People with disabilities are just as likely to be sexual and want to know about their reproductive and sexual health as somebody without a disability. Or be asexual.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: But what happens is the disability community is desexualized. We don't even talk about reproductive health. We don't even talk about masturbation. We don't talk about contraception. And women with disabilities are severely at risk for abuse and sexual abuse.

CAITLIN: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: And they're not given the tools to talk about their bodies, to talk about consent, to talk about, "Don't rape me."

DELPHINE: Yeah, and we just pretend they don't have. It's easier.

CHERYL: Yeah. And I don't see feminists picking that up and saying, "We need to include all people with all disabilities in these conversations about sexual health, reproductive health, sexual safety." Caitlin, did you recently read the article about the Empowered Fe Fes?

CAITLIN: Yes! I love the Empowered Fe Fes out of Chicago.

DELPHINE: You have to tell us about this.

CAITLIN: It's a group of young women with intellectual and, I think, developmental disabilities. But they created a, I guess, pamphlet. Cheryl, would you call it a pamphlet?

CHERYL: Yeah, it's a curriculum.

CAITLIN: About sexual health and reproduction. Yeah, curriculum. That's a much better word. And the Empowered Fe Fes have been around for a while, and it's mostly young, disabled women of color, and I think it's from Access Living in Chicago. Am I correct?

CHERYL: I think so, mmhmm.

CAITLIN: I remember seeing them when I was in college, a video about them, and just being blown away because there's such a huge problem with one, a lack of sex ed for disabled people. Two, the lack of addressing the horrific rates of sexual assault against, particularly, women with disabilities. It is horrible, especially if you have a developmental disability, you are extremely likely. And like Cheryl was saying, that doesn't seem to ever get addressed. We have talked, and we have read, I know I read so many articles in the past couple years specifically about rape culture.

DELPHINE: Mm.

CAITLIN: And I never see disability mentioned at all.

DELPHINE: Yeah.

CHERYL: Nope.

CAITLIN: Ever.

DELPHINE: Mm.

CAITLIN: And so that's obviously something that is in dire need of being addressed. But one thing I wanted to add on when we were talking about the policing of disabled bodies and just bringing it back full circle to the beginning of the show when we were talking about the Qdoba incident. It's this lack of consent where it's OK. Because this is so tied into what we're talking about now, this lack of even thinking that, "Hey, maybe I shouldn't post a photo or a video of this disabled person doing an everyday task." You know? It doesn't occur to people to ask someone, "Do you want to be on Facebook and be shared as a source of inspiration to a zillion people?" It's that issue of consent.

DELPHINE: Yeah.

CAITLIN: If you are a disabled person in public, you are this spectacle, but you're also this anonymous spectacle.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CAITLIN: You don't have the right to participate in the consent of your own representation.

DELPHINE: Yeah. Yeah, and in this particular incident then also, straight up objectification because--

CAITLIN: Exactly.

DELPHINE: Yeah, this person has no name, yet they are being fed.

CAITLIN: Right! And yet we know what they ordered. We know that they wanted like a burrito or something.

DELPHINE: [laughs] Yes.

CAITLIN: But somehow, no one bothered to find out their name.

DELPHINE: Mm, mmhmm.

CAITLIN: Or ask them if it was OK to take their photo. That, to me, is appalling.

DELPHINE: It really is.

How do we move forward in how we value different human beings?

DELPHINE: And so, how do we move forward from this space of trying to move this conversation forward so that the objectification doesn't happen? I mean, how did we even get to this place of having different values attached to different human beings?

CHERYL: Whoa! Those are two very heavy questions.

CAITLIN: [laughs]

CHERYL: You know, to try to address the first one, I think a lot of it starts with--OK, you go back and look at different civil rights legislation, and one of the reasons the Americans with Disabilities Act didn't come out until 2 1/2 decades after the Civil Rights Act was because of an ingrained belief that no matter what, people with disabilities are inferior and don't deserve full civil rights. And you have people, you know, bit by bit coming around saying, "Oh, you know what? Different races and different ethnicities, they are actually human." Like, it's still a process, and not everybody agrees with that.

DELPHINE: That's true!

CHERYL: But it is pervasive how often disabled people really don't deserve civil rights because they're not full humans. And partly, it's the capitalism; they're not contributing to the economy. But even aside from capitalism, you see the utter devaluation of unborn babies: we should just abort that because it's disabled. You see the devaluation of children, you know, babies and children in schools. Delphine and I looked at a bunch of pictures of children being brutalized in schools by police officers because they are Black and have disabilities.

CAITLIN: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: And so I think if we're gonna move forward from where we are now, yes, policy, legislation, I will never say no to that.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: But I think that the sea change that we need is to stop just passively agreeing that if you have a disability, you're automatically inferior. We have to just simply stop that all together.

DELPHINE: Yeah, yeah.

CHERYL: And I think that that kind of attitude change will, "Oh, well, I don't want someone just sharing a video of me in a vulnerable moment. I deserve respect and privacy. Oh, so does that disabled person at Qdoba. Oh, I get it." That's, I think, the change. Without that attitude change, we won't get enough legislation, and we'll still get plenty of whiners: "It's too expensive to make your accommodation. I don't want to."

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: We won't get anywhere with legislation. We have to have that attitude change, I think.

DELPHINE and CAITLIN: Mmhmm.

CAITLIN: I absolutely agree with you. And you know, as much as I can say great on legislation and policy, I don't think that that's what is gonna take us to where we need to go. Like Cheryl was talking about, it's these attitudinal barriers. And I think it's a very complex issue on how to actually affect and foment the change that we need because it's been such a long time coming, and disabled activists have been working so hard for so long. And yet, their histories have been systematically erased. But I think one thing, one tangible thing that would help effect change, is for non-disabled people to read up on disability issues, to examine their own privilege, to look at their own attitudes, see how they might be contributing to ableism. If they don't know what ableism means, it's prejudice against disabled people. And I think because they are the majority, a lot of the change is up to them to really examine their own prejudice and biases and to look at that and make changes. And that's really hard to do when you've been completely indoctrinated to think a certain way.

DELPHINE: Yeah, but Cheryl and I were also talking about other things we used to believe and how we've changed.

CAITLIN: Mmhmm.

DELPHINE: So we know that change is possible!

CAITLIN: It's is possible. I think it just takes a lot of courage to change.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CAITLIN: And we don't necessarily give people--Well, that's not necessarily true. I mean, the disability community is extremely active online. There are blog, and there are books. It is out there.

DELPHINE: Yeah.

CAITLIN: People are out there, and they are trying to get attention. I feel like we've been saying, "Look at me, please! Pay attention to me. This is really important."

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CAITLIN: And we've been ignored. But I'm not even sure where I was going with that, but I really do feel like it is often up to the majority to examine their own prejudices and look at that and really--I know even I can do that, like examine my own privileges. As a white disabled women, I have certain privileges. And it's not about--Cheryl and I have had this conversation--it's not about your hurt feelings when you realize that you have more privilege or whatever.

DELPHINE: Yeah. Yes, it is hard work. We're working on it here at Bread and Roses.

CAITLIN: [laughs] Well, thank you.

DELPHINE: Yeah! Hopefully, we are on the right track. And so we're gonna move on to talk about your guys's art, and in fact, what you are contributing to the culture out there. But first, let's take a short musical break because Cheryl shared another amazing song with me today. It's called "People Pleaser," and it is by Toni Alikah Hickman. And so we'll take a short musical break and come back. This is Bread and Roses. We have Cheryl Green and Caitlin Wood with us tonight. We're talking about disability activism, feminism activism. We'll be right back. "People Pleaser."

"People Pleaser" music break

[music and lyrics:
"You don't have to change your ways, for them to accept you, child.
If you do, let it be for you,
Make them respect you, child.
You're beautiful, amazing.
Like a fire in disguise, you are blazing.
I hope you don't let this world put your fire, put your fire out.
Go ahead and be great.
Go ahead, go ahead.
Go ahead and do you.
Go ahead, go ahead.
But no matter what you do, my love,
Please don't be a people pleaser.
People pleaser, people pleaser.
You don't have to follow them,
Just make them follow you.
You don't have to be a bad person, and trust your instincts too
See, you're beautiful, so amazing,
Like a fire in disguise, you are blazing.
And I hope you don't let this world put your fire, put your fire out.
Go ahead and be great.
Go ahead, go ahead.
Go ahead and do you.
Go ahead, go ahead.
But no matter what you do, my love,
Please don't be a people pleaser.
People pleaser, people pleaser.
See you're beautiful, amazing."]

DELPHINE: "People Pleaser." This is Toni Alikah Hickman. What a powerful song. I mean, this is one of the most uplifting, empowering messages I've heard in a long time. Don't be a people pleaser, whatever you do, my love. [laughs]

CHERYL: Ugh. I've listened to this song many times.

DELPHINE: Yes.

CHERYL: I captioned her video for her. So I listened to it a bunch then.

DELPHINE: Oh yeah.

CHERYL: And I think that it's really important to watch the video. I...I say that because I've never cried listening to that song before today.

DELPHINE: Mm.

CHERYL: Part of the reason I'm crying is because just earlier this week, I bought a license from her to play that song in my documentary film.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: And it just like...it means so much to me to have that song. And it means so much to me to have been able to pay her for it because she wasn't expecting little me, disabled, independent filmmaker to pay. And I really needed to pay this Black woman with a disability for her work.

DELPHINE: Yeah, amazing work.

CHERYL: And then, now I hear it! If you just listen to it, you're like, oh! There's a woman singing to other women. Or you know, like Black Girls Rock. It's a Black woman singing to other Black women. You have to watch the video.

DELPHINE: Yeah, the video's great.

CHERYL: Everyone in the video has a disability

DELPHINE: Mmhmm. And is a genius also, like has lots of potential, the folks that she features, yeah.

CHERYL: It's so, it's, it's, I just love it. And Toni, like me, has acquired disabilities. So she didn't come up thinking about these things the way Caitlin did. And I just so appreciate, I appreciate Toni's work, I appreciate that song so much. I can't believe I'm sitting in a radio studio crying over a song that I've listened to before, but yeah.

The role of art in your lives and your activism

DELPHINE: [laughs] Well, and so let's talk about this because this is where art becomes so powerful as activism. Caitlin, I'd love if we could start with you. Share a little bit about the role of art in your life and in your activism.

CAITLIN: Sure. I guess I look at art as a really powerful and also fun way of working with activism. So Cheryl, she and I have collaborated on some projects together where activism doesn't have to be dry, academic.

DELPHINE: [laughs]

CHERYL: What?!

CAITLIN: It can be fun. You can have a sense of humor with it. And I think using comedy and using just interesting media and artistic media can be a really powerful tool for doing what you want to do in a way that is non-threatening to the majority, which I think is actually like a really sneaky and powerful way of [chuckles] engaging in activism. But Cheryl and I, we made some films, we did Criptiques on Film, where we were really interested in just kind of making art for art's sake and making art with a disabled audience in mind, not a non-disabled audience, which, I think in itself is pretty radical.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CAITLIN: So to me, I've always enjoyed political artists and appreciated people who use their platform to engage me and to teach me in a way that is fun or creative.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm. And so, talk a little bit more about Criptiques and what the project is, how it came about, where people can find it or read it.

CAITLIN: Sure. So Criptiques came out of a lot of different things, but I think the overarching reason for wanting to do--It's a book, I guess I should say, of essays.

ALL: [laugh]

CHERYL: It's a lifestyle.

CAITLIN: Yeah. Criptiques, it started off as a book. Now, it's actually a multi-media project, but it started off as a book because I was so sick of reading about disability from non-disabled people.

DELPHINE: Mm.

CAITLIN: I wanted to have a book where it was a bunch of political, disabled people, crips, especially disabled people of color, trans disabled people of color: people who are extra marginalized in the disability community. I wanted to hear their voices. I wanted to get their experiences out there because I personally benefitted so much from taking Disability Studies classes in college. Well, not everyone gets that opportunity, you know? Number one, it's not really offered in the majority of places, and we need to just have these resources available and for free. So Criptiques is a book; it's an anthology of essays. You can go to Criptiques.com, and you can purchase a book from Amazon or from the website. You can also download it from the website. But that ended up evolving into wanting to do more and take the spirit of the goals of that book and wanting to show people crip culture, and also celebrate that as sort of like a gift to other disabled people that you're not alone, and let's connect and build community. So Cheryl and I ended up doing some short films together, and I did a few podcasts. There's a blog. And so it kind of just metamorphised--is that the right word--into a multi-media kind of platform, I guess, with the goal of promoting and celebrating disability culture and rights.

DELPHINE: Wonderful [laughs]. No, it's amazing, and I would love to encourage people to actually go check out the videos that Cheryl and I have--Cheryl and you, Caitlin have made.

CAITLIN: [laughs]

DELPHINE: I'm just appropriating the work right now! I'm like, this is so fun. I wish I'd come up with it! There's this, my favorite was the video when you come up with a different sign for disability than the one that's most commonly used, of a little symbol of a person in a wheelchair.

CAITLIN: Yeah, right.

DELPHINE: So I really, really enjoyed that particular skit [laughs].

CAITLIN: Thank you very much.

CHERYL: Oh, good, thank you.

DELPHINE: Cheryl, let's go to you. Talk about art as activism for you, and then talk more about the project "Who Am I To Stop It," the film that you just mentioned "People Pleaser" is gonna be part of.

CHERYL: Thank you, Toni, for that song.

DELPHINE: [laughs]

CHERYL: Um...oh boy. It feels abstract. Um...art as activism....Uh-oh. I've drawn a complete blank [giggles].

DELPHINE: Well, how do you like arts, and how do you like activism [laughs]?

CHERYL: They're both so much fun. I'm not sure why I'm drawing a blank in being able to describe this right now. I have pictures in my head, which is actually really rare.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: I usually have just a big, blank vat in my head, visually.

CAITLIN: [laughs]

CHERYL: I think, well, [chuckles]. Caitlin's like, yes, yes, the big empty vat in your head. Of course.

CAITLIN: No, that just made me laugh.

CHERYL: I'm glad that made me laugh cuz I'm about to cry now cuz I--

CAITLIN: No, no!

CHERYL: So...you know, I, activism in the form of, say, going to a protest doesn't work for me sensory-wise, cognitively, energy-wise. But I don't want to make art that is educational! Oh, how inspiring! What message would you like to teach us with your special movie? I wanna do some kind of activism and....Wow! You know. My cat had surgery recently, and she didn't sleep through the night. And it's been like six weeks since I've slept through the night.

DELPHINE: Wow.

CHERYL: I'm gonna use that as my excuse for why I have no brain power right now. So when it comes to making media and telling stories and sharing stories publicly, the disability community, like many other, or lemme say all marginalized communities, we consume substantially more than we make.

DELPHINE: Mm.

CHERYL: And when you do that, when you don't make it, and you don't get it out there, then it--And I'm not blaming people for not making media.

DELPHINE: No, for sure. You're not represented.

CHERYL: You're not represented. And when you're not represented, then non-disabled people like, "Well see? They can't. Otherwise they would've." And I hear that. I mean, even the Vice President of some department of HBO recently said we need more people with disabilities in the movies. The disability community needs to get louder about this. And I'm like hitting my head against my computer monitor reading this. I'm like, dude. We are amazingly loud. You have never Googled us. Like Caitlin said, we are out there, not just online but all over the place doing all sorts of activism and advocacy and education. And this is the hallmark BS attitude of non-disabled people: well, you know, if they could produce, and they could mobilize and get together and organize, then they'd produce something. But we are. And Toni Hickman is part of the Krip Hop Nation, which is a global movement of disabled hip-hop artists and other musicians. They're there. They're global. They have CDs.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: They're there. But...but the argument that non-disabled people will make is, oh they can't. That's why they haven't. No, you haven't gone looking for it. And you haven't sought it out, and it's very easy to find.

CAITLIN: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: And so, I feel like in terms of making art. Aw man, I'm more of a technician than an artist.

DELPHINE: [laughs]

CHERYL: So in terms of making media--film and the blogging and the podcast that I do--it's about saying this community needs to be making more media. And what can I do to be a content creator? But also, I do a lot around having a platform for other people to share their content. So the Who Am I To Stop It blog sometimes has guest bloggers. It's hard for me to find guest bloggers, but they share their own art. Sometimes I do features of different kinds of artists and people making political statements. And it's a big point of mine to be an activist on my blog in that you don't read about crash stories of TBI. You don't. You cannot find them on my blog. You find the other stories, and that's part of my activism: we are more than patients, we are more than crash stories, we're more than interesting and weird and creepy impairments.

DELPHINE: Mmhmm.

CHERYL: We're actually human.

DELPHINE: Yeah.

CHERYL: Anyway, so "Who Am I To Stop It" the documentary is a feature-length documentary focused on three artists in the Pacific Northwest with traumatic brain injury. And the focus of the film is on isolation and art and transformation. And I have to be clear--and we're running out of time, but I have to be clear--that the transformation, this is also a point of activism.

DELPHINE: Yeah.

CHERYL: Everybody thinks that the transformation has to be you go to rehab so that you can get more normal again. And I struggled with using the word "transformation." The transformation I'm talking about in this film is the community transforming to stop being so judgmental, to stop being so lackadaisical and not caring at how isolated my community is. It is substantially isolated. Whole disability community is. And the transformation, I think, can come through art because what happens in the film is you see that these people who have a lot of self-doubt and a lot of isolation, when they practice their art, it creates a bridge within themselves, back to that sense of value and self-worth and pride. It also creates a bridge to the community: Oh, they can do things. Oh, they can produce interesting things. Oh, I forgot; they are valuable people. So the art can be that bridge toward transformation of appreciation and embracing and accepting and equity, frankly.

DELPHINE: Thank you so much [laughs]. Thank you, Cheryl, and thank you, also Caitlin for joining us this evening.

CAITLIN: Oh, sure!

Wrap up

DELPHINE: Thanks everybody for listening. So again, learn more about the anthology "Criptiques": http://www.criptiques.com. And then the film documentary and blog whoamitostopit.com.

You can like Bread and Roses on Facebook, also on Twitter, Bread and Roses Radio. Email us: breadandrosescollective@gmail.com. Next week, Pamela Santos celebrates Filipino-American History Month, which is the month of October on Bread and Roses: a celebration that will continue until midnight as KBOO airs music, interviews, and live programming that give voice to Filipino-American contributions to American culture and historical moments. Have a great week everyone. Thank you, Kris, for engineering. And we're gonna end with Erykah Badu. This is "Certainly."

[music and lyrics:
"Who gave you permission to rearrange me?
Certainly not me.
Who told you that it was all right to love me?
Certainly, certainly not me.
I was not looking for no love affair
(And now you wanna fix me)
Was not looking for no love affair
(And now you want to mold me)
I was not looking for no love affair
(And now you wanna kiss me)
Was not looking for no love affair
(And now you wanna control me)
Hold me
I know you're tryin' to get creative with my love
And that's alright"]