is no need to keep "sociable drug use" on the long list of unspoken hiring requirements.

We Are Here to Crip That Shit: Embodying Accountability beyond the "Word"

Cody A. Jackson
to come

Christina V. Cedillo
to come

"Fuck you, settler. Pay me."
—Les Hutchinson, "Performing Chicana Cultural Futures"

If you bristle while reading this essay, then perhaps this essay is about you. We write to you as people who have to live with academia's refusal to hold itself accountable to students, faculty, staff, and communities that it claims to champion (Cedillo; Jackson) and your/our complicity in academia's privileged and privileging structures. After all, all *isms* and *phobias* are structural, or so scholars have been claiming for decades. Yet, social inequity isn't simply toxic ideologies but the material conditions that make those (our) lives difficult to live.

What happens when a "structure" is a person, organization, or set of practices? What happens when a "structure" is a set of meetings that continues to cycle back and forth without any accountability? What happens when we specify our critiques at the level of the body in relation to space? To put this another way: *Who* is held accountable and *how*? If accountability ends at the mention of "structural" issues, how can we reframe accountability politics as a profoundly localized, embodied endeavor (Mingus "Dreaming Accountability")? We cannot, we won't, tolerate any longer your throwing your hands in the air and deeming injustice beyond your control.

Everyone in our discipline performs complicity with/in its structures in some way. Some of us do so to gain access to professional spaces. With that access, we conspire to enact change, a form of resistance to the damage wreaked by policies decided for us without us. Some of us do so to gain access to professional spaces where we conspire to enact change in resistance to the damage wreaked by policies decided for us without us. We do

g87-117-Sept2020-CCC.indd 109 7/14/20 2:54 PM

so to practice *survivance*—survival and resistance to colonial forces—and to build alliances crucial to our physical and mental well-being (King et al. 7; Powell).[5] In contrast, some scholars practice complicity to reap their rewards by speaking *over* us as though they speak *for* us.

Conferences, for instance, often prove inaccessible to marginalized communities; disabled people face a mountain of barriers to participation in our fields. If readers recall the ephemeral moment of CCCC 2019, they may remember the sticky note protest that disabled activists initiated in response to a poster advertising the conference's "accessibility." The sticky notes were each an iteration of a kind of accountability politics we're gesturing toward. We're moving toward more capacious understandings of accountability that go beyond words and toward action. In Audre Lorde's words, "Where does our power lie and how do we use it in the service of what we believe?" (6). That's what we're asking here.

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If we are serious about implementing the principles of disability justice in our everyday personal, professional, and academic lives, we would do well to follow Sins Invalid's lead and foreground leadership by those "most impacted." As the Sins Invalid collective states, "We know to truly have liberation we must be led by those who know the most about these systems and how they work (16). Othered people enter places already hostile to our bodies via designs that never included us; then the assertion of "centralized privilege" by non-Othered colleagues compounds the damage by reminding us we don't really belong. Centralized privilege includes the "rights to space and the very privileged assertion of comfort in said spaces" (Martinez 223). You don't have to assert these claims deliberately. Indeed, you do so most often without ever talking to us.

Certainly, nondisabled scholars can write about disability, non-POC (People of Color) scholars can write about race, and cishet scholars can write about queer or trans issues. Many do so well, but *they also do the work*. In the words of Jay Dolmage, "space and institutions cannot be disconnected from the bodies within them, the bodies they selectively exclude, and the bodies that actively intervene to shape them" (Academic Ableism 79) not only in words but in deeds. They mentor, make space, and speak out. They

g87-117-Sept2020-CCC.indd 110 7/14/20 2:54 PM

have our backs, even when it's not convenient or comfortable. They do not make our presence a diversity retrofit. They call others out and in. They take risks.

We must cultivate a politics of risk and such a politics is necessarily what some disabled disability justice activists call a "prefigurative politics."[6] In the words of Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, "Prefigurative politics is a fancy term for the idea of imagining and building the world we want to see now" (149). As disabled scholars, we're attuned to the ways our field, and our institutions, present accessibility and justice as projections into obscure horizons of futurity. In other words, if those who maintain the status quo continue to have their way, disability justice will always be a distant shimmer on the horizon while the lived realities of disabled people in the *here and now* are disavowed. Resisting this projection and deliberate delay (see Ahmed's "The Time of Complaint"), a *prefigurative politics of risk* requires able-bodied scholar-teachers to productively and generatively take up space in conversations about access, discrimination, and ableism in the discipline and in their departments. In other words, "Vulnerability is how we experience precarity, it is our response to institutional infrastructure" (Passwater), but be aware that that "vulnerability can manifest in resistance" (Ho et al. 138).

With divergent manifestations of vulnerability and resistance in mind, how can we reshape our approaches to vulnerability, risk, and politics in ways that transform our discipline as well as local contexts? Who has the privilege of avoiding risk, and to whom is risk and vulnerability an imperative for participation in academic life? How can we transform our conference going and structuring to carve space for explicit conversations about disability justice in real time, in our departments, and at our "home" institutions that so often refuse to be held accountable for the violence they perpetuate on the bodyminds of disabled people, women of color, and BIPOC (Black and Indigenous People of Color) scholar-teachers?

Cripping our discipline requires a politics of risk—one accountable to and *with* disabled people at both the macro and micro levels. Accessibility may well not itself be disability justice, but the only way accessibility work is oriented (Kerschbaum) *toward* disability justice is by centering and foregrounding work by disabled disability activists. In other words, conference sessions, planning groups, and campus organizations whose mission is "accessibility" should be led, facilitated, and directed by equitably

g87-117-Sept2020-CCC.indd 111 7/14/20 2:54 PM

compensated disabled disability justice activists. Anything else is another example of "talking about us without us."

We know who takes action and who's just acting. Survival makes us hyperaware.

When the strategizing happens, you're not there. Your name doesn't even come up when we discuss coalition building or the need to gather around vulnerable peers.

We need you to ask yourself: why do you research us but refuse to work with us? And, again, if you bristle at this question, or have no answer, or refuse to justify yourself, you should ask yourself why.

You don't know we exist except as tenure fodder or nuisances, and your "tolerance" serves as "charitable justification" (Price "Access Imagined") that proves you are proactive and our disciplinary spaces are supposedly "progressive." We need you to ask yourself: why do you research us but refuse to work with us? And, again, if you bristle at this question, or have no answer, or refuse to justify yourself, you should ask yourself why. After all, if institutions value your voices over ours, as has been proven time and time again, perhaps it's also past time to reorient the economic inequity that is fueled by who and what entities get funded at the expense of expelling and excluding disabled people from the profession altogether.

Conclusion: Notes toward Creating a Culture of Access

Through their insights into in/accessibility in our shared conference spaces, our contributors offer us a gift. Their writing highlights ableism and other interlocking systems of oppression, and in doing so it not only center issues of accessibility but moves us toward a culture of access, not only for disabled bodyminds but for all people (Yergeau): As Mia Mingus writes, "disability continues to push the envelope and challenge us in our thinking of what justice and liberation mean" (qtd. in Withers et al. 181). Through their essays, our contributors help us—as a field—begin to challenge unjust norms.

By approaching the Disability Caucus's response to the 2019 "The CCCC Convention is accessible!" sign through the framework of Ahmed's feminist snap, Simpkins offers a lens through which our field might better understand the critiques and complaints of those bodyminds that are *not* abled, cisgender, white, and otherwise privileged. Simpkins nods to how the work of creating a culture of access will be an ongoing, unfolding project and how conference organizers and others in the field will need to meet

g87-117-Sept2020-CCC.indd 112 7/14/20 2:54 PM

criticisms and critiques of inaccessibility with acceptance and a willingness to change. The importance of this willingness to continue to adapt our approaches to access to create a culture of accessibility is highlighted by Anglesey and Cecil-Lemkin in their critique of the misuse of quiet rooms. They establish that simply setting aside the space isn't enough, but that a culture of access demands that we continue to attend to access needs. In taking up the unethical reduction of accessibility to a cost/benefit analysis, Fink, Butler, Stremlau, Kerschbaum, and Brueggemann refigure the concept of accessibility. Their insight demonstrates how it is not simply *their* access to conference spaces that is blocked when proper accessibility measures aren't provided, *but* everyone at the conference is denied their perspective. The supposed access-neutrality of our professional spaces—and attendant concerns about the politics of likeability—is challenged through our Anonymous contributor's critique through their position in recovery. Anonymous's insight about how centering social events around alcohol creates extra labor and unequitable, untenable positions for those in recovery demonstrates how creating a culture of access inherently means challenging our field's culture. Jackson and Cedillo urge *all of us* to take stock of how we are complicit in the ableism of our field, pointing to how talking about disabled people *without* committing to material and risky access work is meaningless.

Our contributors offer us the opportunity to collaborate toward a culture of access—both in our conference spaces and in the field more broadly. Throughout this symposium we have focused on issues of accessibility in our conference spaces, though we neither mean to belittle the labor of conference organizers *nor* do we mean to imply that this is the only (or primary) space we need to create a culture of access in our field.

Our contributors offer us the opportunity to collaborate toward a culture of access—both in our conference spaces and in the field more broadly. Throughout this symposium we have focused on issues of accessibility in our conference spaces, though we neither mean to belittle the labor of conference organizers *nor* do we mean to imply that this is the only (or primary) space we need to create a culture of access in our field. Creating a culture of access isn't just about putting a quiet room sign on a door or using inclusive language in a conference program. Creating a culture of access requires a change in our own values and practices. A culture of access requires us to understand, as the disability justice performance group Sins Invalid reminds us, "able-bodied supremacy has been formed in relation

to other systems of domination and exploitation. The histories of white supremacy and ableism are inextricably entwined, created in the context of colonial conquest and capitalist domination" (18). As a movement, disability justice has been created through the labor of queer, disabled, femmes of color (Sins Invalid, 12). Creating a culture of access means reckoning with how these same legacies of white supremacy, of colonial-capitalist domination and exploitation, are interwoven and replicated in our field. Creating a culture of access means *more than* coughing up the funds to provide CART and ASL at our events—although it definitely means doing that, too. Creating a culture of access means dismantling the interlocking systems of oppression that center frameworks that rely on neoliberal cost/benefit analysis of human connection. Creating a culture of access is messy, difficult, and unending work.

And it *is* work. But it has to be work *we all* do, not just those among us who face barriers to access for any reason. In Asao B. Inoue's 2019 Conference on College Composition and Communication keynote address, he spoke about racism in the field. An important thread of that conversation was that *good intentions* are not enough: "If our goal is a more socially just world, we don't need more good people. We need good changes, good structures, and good work that make good changes, structures, and people" (356). To dismantle the interlocking systems that prop up oppression in our field, we need to move toward these good changes, good structures, and good work that a culture of access—that is, access for *all* bodyminds—demands.

Notes

1. Black disabled activist Vilissa Thompson started the trending hashtag #DisabilityTooWhite in 2016 to make visible "erasure of people of color within our [disability community's] history and what we do as [disability] advocates" (qtd. in Blahovec). The tweets within the hashtag chronicle the intersectional oppressions disabled people of color experience in their day-to-day lives.

2. Ruth Osorio photographed and transcribed the sign and the notes, which are found at "Accessibility at #4C19," https://www.ruthosorio.com/accessibility-at-4c19/.

3. Deep pressure therapy is a common psychiatric service dog task where the dog uses its body weight and warmth to relieve symptoms and ground an individual.

4. See Teresa Blankmeyer Burke, "Choosing Accommodations," for more on the complexities of sign language access.

g87-117-Sept2020-CCC.indd 114 7/14/20 2:54 PM

5. We necessarily invoke colonialism since academia's Eurowestern knowledge-making "structures" have made some of you fully human at the expense of our humanity.

6. Helen Rottier, PhD student at the University of Illinois at Chicago, addresses "prefigurative politics" in her work and disability justice activism. See her work and portfolio at www.helenrottier.wordpress.com or on Twitter (@HelenRottier).

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g87-117-Sept2020-CCC.indd 117 7/14/20 2:54 PM