

Lateral

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Roundtable: Crip Student Solidarity in the COVID-19 Pandemic

by Sohini Chatterjee, Keely Grossman, Rachel Jobson, Kristen Kowlessar and River Rossi | Crip Pandemic Life: A Tapestry

ABSTRACT This roundtable shares the first-hand experiences of five crip, disabled, Mad, and/or neurodivergent doctoral students navigating academia in so-called Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic. While we discuss and theorize our experiences of ableism, structural oppression, and inaccessibility in the academy, we also highlight the world-building experiences of solidarity that have emerged for us in crip community, and in particular among fellow crip graduate students. We consider the ways that crip students open up potential for new ways of learning and being by challenging dominant norms of academic productivity, and we also consider what is lost when these students are pushed out of academic spaces. By engaging in “collective refusal” of the conditions that harm disabled and otherwise marginalized students, new possibilities emerge for connection, community, and radical change. The virtual conversation transcribed here took place over Discord, email, and Google Docs in autumn of 2021 and early winter 2022. This piece embraces multi-tonality, that is, a range of different voices and ways of writing, speaking, and communicating. It is a conversational piece that intentionally blends varied approaches to knowledge-sharing: polemic, citationally-grounded, and personal anecdotes drawn from our diverse lived experiences. There are a number of different themes woven throughout the text, including anecdotes and personal history, solidarity, ableism in the academy, pessimism/failure, community/interdependence/intimacy, and utopia/futurity/demands for the future. While not intended to provide policy guidance or step-by-step instructions for changing academic culture, we also begin to sketch out some of our dreams for an alternative future for disabled scholars. We discuss imagined futures and possibilities, and ask, is a truly crip and/or accessible academic institution possible?

KEYWORDS solidarity, crip, academia, COVID-19, mad studies, graduate students, ableism, roundtable

The following is a lightly edited transcript of a virtual conversation that took place over Discord, email, and Google Docs in autumn of 2021 and early winter 2022. All five participants are crip, disabled, Mad, and/or neurodivergent doctoral students navigating academia during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a roundtable, this piece embraces multi-tonality, that is: a range of different voices and ways of writing, speaking, and communicating. It is a conversational piece that intentionally blends varied approaches to knowledge-sharing: polemic, citationally-grounded, and personal anecdotes drawn from

our diverse lived experiences. While not intended to provide policy guidance or step-by-step instructions for changing academic culture, we also begin to sketch out some of our dreams for an alternative future for disabled scholars. There are a number of different themes woven throughout the text, including anecdotes and personal history, solidarity, ableism in the academy, pessimism/failure, community/interdependence/intimacy, and utopia/futurity/demands for the future. Taking advantage of the virtual format, we use highlighting and comments in the margins of the PDF version of this article to name and draw your attention to these various thematic concepts and ways of knowing as they emerge throughout the conversation.

Rachel Johnson: The already oppressive emotional and physical terrain of academia is compounded by our personal experiences of navigating institutional and interpersonal ableism and saneism (often intersected with racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression) within it, often intensifying the impacts of already exploitative research practices, increasing negative health outcomes, and fostering hostile atmospheres of isolation and disconnection. What role has crip/Mad/neurodivergent student solidarity played for you in navigating academia? How has this shifted due to COVID-19?

Kristen Kowlessar: Crip/Mad/neurodivergent student solidarity became a lifeline that I wasn't expecting, especially during the thick of the pandemic. My academic experience and solidarities prior to this were largely in racialized/queer/neurodivergent spaces, but in October 2020 I was diagnosed with two chronic illnesses, and while it made a lot of things make sense for me, it was also a huge wake up call as to how inaccessible and, frankly, uncaring academia can be. I was navigating a new normal where my mind and body couldn't operate at the capacity I had been used to pushing myself to before, and the shift wherein I started to actually accept my own limitations and prioritize my mental and physical health seemed to give people the impression that I lacked a solid work ethic, which really made me second-guess my life in academia. Connecting with other students and seeing them practice such kindness and patience for themselves and others, and finally being given that grace myself, gave me hope when I was so, so close to the end of my rope. This solidarity was offered to me at the exact time that I needed it, and I'm so thankful to be in a place now where I can offer that same understanding and patience to others. This space within academia has been healing and protective.

Sohini Chatterjee: I found my crip community while working for a student advocacy organization in my first year in graduate school during the pandemic when we were battling isolation in specific ways. We felt accessibility was not centered in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) work, as disabled people are hardly represented in positions of power and are rarely allowed to occupy decision-making roles. As disabled graduate students, we wanted to push for accessibility at every turn. The meaning of accessibility for me changed owing to this space that we nurtured for/with each other. As someone who is queer, racialized, and lives with trauma-induced disabilities, it is only in the company of disabled, neurodivergent graduate students (who are also queer) that I feel seen, heard, and cared for. Disabled people experience casual cruelty in the everyday, which includes

but is not limited to exclusionary rhetoric and gestures, abandonment, dismissal, inaccessibility, indifference, withdrawal/denial of affection and care, violence by virtue of neglect—I could go on. The threat of both violence and exclusion exists, most prominently, in spaces where ethics is not centered and disabled voices are either not heard or are silenced by the skepticism of non-disabled people. Advocacy spaces offered possibilities for me to witness disabled wisdom and agency, allowed me to learn from it, and made me whole. I was seen as both queer and neurodivergent. Solidarity came in the form of disabled students showing up and working towards making accessibility an intersectional issue and offering care in the process.

My own positionality and the crip kinship I have experienced in the form of disabled and neurodivergent student solidarity makes me think about accessibility as an everyday commitment during COVID-19 and beyond. When someone accuses me of being “slow,” my friend E jumps in and says, “She is on crip time.” When my neurodivergent friend ensures that they make care accessible for me even when they are grieving, I know that my courage to carry on and claim space is made up of moments when access to care is not arbitrarily denied and exclusion is not normalized. I am comforted by the knowledge that my difference is not undesirable because of this solidarity in the form of care. If I can take up space knowing my difference is critical and helps reimagine academia, advocacy, expertise, intellectual labor, and collaboration, it is because I have experienced solidarity as care and as affection (and sometimes as valuable difference). I am secure in this knowledge because I bear witness to the different ways in which my crip, Mad friends are navigating academia, battling academia’s rigid social and intellectual standards, creating new possibilities through everyday intimacies and resistances (and forging intimacies as resistance), and working towards disability revolution on the daily. This embodyminded knowledge is what we cultivate in community and this is what sustains us against the structural and everyday ableism and sanism of the world.

RJ: I like how you highlight the uncaring nature of academia, Kristen. So much of my own work is centered around care, and how care can be reimaged outside of the capitalist, institutional, and colonial boundaries we typically frame it in. I can’t help but think of my own experiences in undergrad, when I first got really sick and was navigating an academic space that didn’t leave much room for someone who couldn’t keep up with the demands and deadlines of conventional academia. I had this one professor who was really committed to putting whatever supports I needed in place so I could finish my fourth year and graduate, without ever making me feel like a burden. And that little bit of extra care made all the difference. It not only influenced me in terms of allowing me to finish my studies, but also shaped my pedagogy and politics as a graduate student who now teaches undergraduate students. I don’t know if this particular professor was disabled himself, but he made it clear to me that my capacity (or lack thereof) to keep up with the ableist demands of academia was not in any way a reflection of my capacity for doing important work. If I have one overarching goal for my time in academia, it is to be that person for others. It is my hope that we can move to a space where responding to access needs with wholehearted embrace becomes the rule, not the exception, but we are not

there now, and in the interim, I know that having even one person who shows that kind of care can be transformative. While that experience with my undergrad prof does not necessarily fall into the category of *crip student* solidarity, it did set the foundation for my understanding of what solidarity can look like in practice now that I have returned to the academic world over a decade later. It shapes how I interact with my students, my classmates, and my colleagues.

Keely Grossman: My own idea of *crip community* has evolved over the years. I attended a residential school for the blind from age eleven to eighteen, where I would live from Sunday until Friday, coming home on weekends and holidays. During my time at the school for the blind, before I knew what “*crip community*” was, there were little ways we as students would try to build our own communities under an oppressive institutionalized system. My idea of *crip community* changed again when I started attending post-secondary and was surrounded by sighted people who I felt I couldn’t relate to, and vice versa. As such, a friend from the school for the blind (who started post-secondary at the same time as me) and I built our own *crip community* with each other without even realizing it. We built community care together—albeit from afar as we both attended different universities—because we were both *enduring academic ableism* and struggles with mental health, while sharing similar academic goals and interests. For years, we were each other’s *crip community*, and we supported each other virtually, utilizing the power of virtual connection before COVID-19 started to normalize it. While I had engaged with critical disability studies in both my undergraduate and master’s research, when I started my PhD during the pandemic, I had the opportunity to take a critical disability studies class where I learned more about disability identity, activism, Mad Studies, and other theoretical areas. In that class, I also learned about *crip community* as a concept and its significance.

Engaging with material in the critical disability studies class brought forth so many emotions: grief, joy, and healing to name a few. Growing up in an institutionalized context surrounded by peers who were also part of the blind and visually impaired community gave me an understanding of the *power of community* at a young age. I feel like in academia, without having the language to articulate it until I took the critical disability studies class, *crip community* has been something I’ve been longing for. In academia prior to my PhD, I have felt like I had to be apart from my disability, and from my disability identity, and my disability identity has been something I’ve grappled with and even resented. While taking the critical disability studies class asynchronously because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was able to share articles and concepts with my peers from the school for the blind, particularly my friend who I built my original *crip community* with for all those years. After taking that class, I was able to not only recognize that what my friend and I had built for each other was *crip community*, but also other instances of *crip community/solidarity*, like when a current colleague in academia texts me image descriptions of visuals I might otherwise miss in class or social situations. Most importantly though, the pandemic has highlighted different, more accessible ways of building community, and with the knowledge I have now, I strive to be a part of fostering *crip community* and solidarity both inside and outside academia.

River Rossi: The other day I was talking with a potential lover about needs that we each have and how/if they can be met in order for us to establish a sense of trust and connection in our relating. We do these check-ins because we want to co-create the relational trust necessary for us to be open, receptive, curious, and present in our potential relationship dynamic. While this is a common conversation many non-monogamous queers have about relating, this particular conversation traversed into a discussion about academia, pedagogy, solidarity, and the importance of establishing trauma-informed relating in all spheres of our daily lives. It really became clear to me how necessary crip/Mad/neurodivergent student solidarity has been for me in navigating academia, especially during COVID-19, as this solidarity created rare space for me—and, importantly, many of my colleagues, comrades, and friends—where we can feel heard, seen, valued, and respected. I would even go so far as saying that these spaces exist because of our collective refusal to sustain the conditions upheld by academia. Student solidarity, for me, has been the most powerful when collective experiences of oppression are given room and space to be shared, listened to, and held together. This is often the time I experience a sense of connection in academia the most. After all, if so many students are experiencing systemic oppression in academia because of its racial capitalist values to extract, produce, compete, individualize, and neglect our connection to ourselves and each other, then we are not moving through academic environments where learning, connection, and curiosity are even psychosomatically possible. How can we be present, curious, and engaged in learning when we are functioning in survival mode because of ongoing systemic violences? Our bodies respond to threats by going into states of fight, flight, freeze, and fawn—or they shut down entirely. Curiosity and learning are not possible in any of these states. Yet, as graduate students, we are expected to model standardized forms of professionalism and success; if we do not perform well in our learning environments, then we are responsabilized for our own failure.

Like all neoliberal institutions, Canadian universities are grounded in extractive violence, professionalization, and individualization.¹ Wendy Brown describes the neoliberal university as aligning with the purpose of “building human capital” where “the market value of knowledge—its income-enhancing prospects for individuals and industry alike—is now understood as both its driving purpose and leading line of defense.”² Brown, for example, links neoliberal entrepreneurialism, debt-financed investment, and risk management assessments to current metrics for graduate students’ academic success. She writes,

Graduate students are professionalized through protocols and admonitions orienting them toward developing their own toeholds in their fields. This professionalization aims at making young scholars not into teachers and thinkers, but into human capitals who learn to attract investors by networking long before they ‘go on the market,’ who ‘workshop’ their papers, ‘shop’ their book manuscripts, game their Google Scholar counts and ‘impact factors,’ and above all, follow the money and the rankings. ‘Good investment’ is the way departments speak of new hires, and ‘entrepreneurial’ has become a favored term for describing exceptionally promising young researchers; it is deployed to capture both a

researcher's capacity to parlay existing accomplishments into new ones and the more quotidian business of grant getting.³

If graduate students do not meet these arbitrary standards, in other words, then they do not receive institutional investment by way of future funding, opportunities, and support. To not mention the presence of neoliberalism within Canadian university institutions is to depoliticize the way that these public institutions are currently structured by, and enact, the current economic order's financialization of higher education. Canadian universities are, and always have been, violently extractive institutions—oppressing and harming body/minds marginalized due to systemic experiences of anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, racial capitalism, cisheterosexism, ableism, saneism, and classism. This raises the question: What does it mean to fail in these institutions? This question opens up the radical possibilities of collective refusal, possibilities that make us rethink what it means to succeed in them.

When we acknowledge and listen to the many different experiences of oppression within the current neoliberal university structure, we can also acknowledge that the institution is a failure—rather than bouncing back from its failures—we acknowledge that it is an inherently violent institution. As a starting point, I think that shared pessimism creates room for collaboration amongst those who are considered to be higher education's "bad investments," and those who, I argue, experience the brunt of its failures. These collaborative spaces are indeed possible; they presently exist in our shared struggles and our support for one another. We may need to move sideways, rather than forward, through these messy, and often violent spaces.⁴ This, however, makes solidarity and radical care all the more necessary. Our strength is in our collective refusal, not our individual potential to become "good investments" and "human capitals."

RJ: Building off of this idea of moving through messy and often violent spaces, in crip discussions of disability justice, there is often much talk of "imagined futures" and the importance of thinking through the otherwise, that is, the world that is not yet here.⁵ Thinking of this in the context of the crip student experience in academic institutions, do you have visions for what a truly crip and/or accessible academic institution could look like? Is this possible, or even desirable? Has the pandemic shifted or influenced your thinking on this?

KK: I truly think that a progressive academia is a new one. Like, abolish this whole system and start over kind of new. Current iterations of academia are so white-knuckle, focused on our productivity and fitting our lives into academia instead of the other way around, and I feel like we need to rebuild from a much more human framework to even consider any of these futures we speak of.

SC: To my mind, an accessible academia is one where disabled students are heard and our needs are centered, there is attention to intersectionality (and how it compounds vulnerabilities of variously marginalized disabled students who inhabit multiple stigmatized identities), where accessibility does not depend on disclosure⁶ (making even non-disabled

or currently abled-bodied people better off because our access needs seldom remain static), there is no dearth of accountability, where conditions are created for those disabled students to thrive who have not “overcome” their disabilities and are simultaneously fighting battles on multiple fronts owing to socioeconomic disablement, sanism and ableism, racism, xenophobia, classism, casteism, queer and transphobia, and the scourge of colonialism induced structural violence and dispossession. I want the academy to be invested in meeting the needs of disabled students in the present. Promise of a just future that we might not live to see is insufficient.

Furthermore, I want to see not just disabled students who have cultural capital and class privilege thrive in the academy, but also those who are first generation learners/college students, who are working class, racialized, trans, Black, Indigenous, and have been repeatedly told that their disabilities would not allow them to realize their full potential. I want them to have a place in the academy even if the **academy's perception of their potential remains unrealized**. I want success to be redefined in academia because normative standards of achievement gravely hurt disabled people. **I want the academy to create a more level playing field** by paying critical attention to equity and justice that historically excluded disabled people deserve and have long been demanding. The pandemic has shown how disabled people are rendered disposable in the everyday. Disability justice means valuing disabled people's lives and aspirations over productivity, normativity, and profit. I dream of a future when all disabled people will be truly seen, heard, and understood and not just those who have been supercripped and valorized for being abled-proximate.

RJ: This is interesting to me too, because it leads me to think about how this idea of mis/fitting academia into our lives rather than the other way around could dramatically shift methodology.⁷ What kind of insights could we gain through study that occurs within communities, study that is led by those communities, rather than siloed off outside of them and simply using them as “subjects”? How can we have non-exploitative research that centers crip experiences and knowledge if crip students aren't able to thrive or even survive in the current system? If being an “academic” requires conformity to **punishing standards of productivity that exclude disabled people almost universally**, isn't our knowledge subjugated as a result? Many of us will be familiar with Mia Mingus's work on access intimacy, and it is such an important part of how **solidarity among crip/Mad/neurodivergent students** has functioned for me. Mingus writes, “the power of access intimacy is that it reorients our approach from one where disabled people are expected to squeeze into able bodied people's world, and instead calls upon able bodied people to inhabit our world.”⁸ While Mingus highlights that access intimacy can be hard to concisely define,⁹ it occurs when we encounter situations where **our access needs are deeply understood, welcomed, and met by others without being framed as a burden or obligatory task**. Access intimacy can be experienced with anyone, but often emerges as a form of crip solidarity experienced between sick, Mad, disabled, and/or neurodivergent people whose lived experience has given them a complex understanding of access.¹⁰ Critically, when it occurs between crip folks, this solidarity/intimacy emerges from a deep

understanding of how ableism has shaped our lives and experiences and a desire to push back against that collectively. So when I think about access intimacy in my own life, and in particular in my academic life, I think about those moments of deep understanding and connection with other crip and neurodivergent grad students I have had the great joy to come to know and collaborate with. To borrow from Muñoz, **utopia is quotidian**, and the everyday moments of solidarity and gentleness and accountability that we offer to each other matter.¹¹ Recently **I attended an online info session for a large, prestigious scholarship that shall go unnamed**. For reasons that are unclear, the hosts of the info session did not have captions enabled and insisted that there was no way to activate them after the session had started. Faced with this inaccessibility, several students in the session **came together spontaneously to fashion some "DIY" captions and a transcript**. One small group collaborated on live transcribing everything the hosts were saying into text in the chat. Two others created a shared Google Doc and shared the link with everyone so they could follow along on the doc in real time. One of them took screenshots of each slide that was shared and added image descriptions and wrote out the text from the slides in the document so it was legible by screen readers. Another copied and pasted the DIY captions that were being typed into the chat by others onto the Google Doc under each slide so that all of the verbal information was translated onto the written document. By the end of the session, we had a document that at least attempted to fill the gaps in accessibility that ableism created. I have had so many moments like this where an initial experience of infuriating ableism is countered by crip creativity and problem-solving. Should we have to do this? No. Is the solidarity and commitment to collective access nonetheless meaningful? Yes.

KG: I believe that a truly accessible environment in academia is both possible and desirable, and **there are tangible steps we can take now**. For example, to make academia accessible, disabled people need to be directing their own access needs and should feel safe being in staff and faculty positions. Additionally, disabled/Mad and other marginalized people from diverse contexts need to be invested in *before* they enter academia. There should be more mentorship programs that mentor disabled students both before they enter academia and while they are in academia led by fellow disabled students, faculty, and staff. That is, disabled people should be invested in so that they can achieve their dreams/goals. As Fritsch and Kafer outline, disabled people are often perceived to have inadequate futures by those who are non-disabled.¹² Investing in disabled people would help reshape that narrative. Additionally, everything on campuses should be accessible. For example, the use of braille and tactility in all aspects of design. Websites should be screen reader accessible, including all websites pertaining to, or relevant to academia and scholarships. Course material should be provided in multiple accessible formats, including screen-reader accessible formats. Finally, I want us all to be able to be ourselves, and to be safe, supported, and accepted for the way we are.

RR: In "A Manifesto," Yasmin Nair stresses the importance of **pessimism and the inevitability of failure** in thinking about the future:

Manifestos aren't about hope—a word that has been denuded, stripped, corrupted of its meaning by the last ruler of this country¹³—but about pessimism. Like **the utopias they bring forth**, manifestos are birthed in the possibility of failure. They succeed not in the audacity of hope but in the audacity of despair. What is the present and the future we need to keep imagining? What is a utopia? What is the nature of our utopias? Do we still dare to have any?¹⁴

Nair's passage raises an important question in the context of the neoliberal university: how do we make room for failure in a university that continually reminds us of the perceived need to bounce back from it? Resiliency discourses are increasingly prevalent in universities across Canada. These discourses tell us that we can bounce back from our problems. Resilience is entwined with **the imperative of academic production**, wherein scholars are expected to keep up with unrealistic timelines and churn out articles, conference presentations, and books at an ever-increasing rate. The problem with neoliberal resiliency narratives, however, is that they obscure the structural causes of the stressors experienced by those most marginalized within, and outside of, university walls—colonialism, anti-Blackness, whiteness, racial capitalism, ableism, saneism, cisheterosexism, and classism.¹⁵ I think it is important that we are continually reflecting on how **pessimism is a form of resisting and refusing neoliberal logics**. Contrary to resilience, "happiness," and "wellness" discourses, acts of collective refusal create the conditions necessary for **radical enclaves of solidarity and collaboration** amongst those most marginalized by the university. Our relationship to one another is personal, collective, and political. How can we be happy while we are experiencing systemic injustices? We need solidarity and connection to heal and resist continuing harmful legacies of oppression.

Pessimism has the potential to bring about collaboration and complicated forms of **solidarity**, though not immune to the complexities inherent to working across differences; it fundamentally casts doubt upon the neoliberal university, which opens up space for critical discussions amongst those who doubt it. Political listening is critical to this process. Anna Tsing argues that we should practice "arts of noticing"—that is, moments of looking around as opposed to the capitalist practice of looking forward. Tsing links "latent commons" with Beverley Brown's argument for political listening.¹⁶ Like Tsing's arts of noticing, Brown defines political listening as the detection of **"the traces of not-yet-articulated common agendas."**¹⁷ These practices of noticing evoke the need to recognize sites of solidarity through the hints of not yet fully elaborated "common agendas."¹⁸ Ultimately, Tsing puts forth "latent commons" as an alternative to capitalist progress narratives, such as what she critiques as the "hope that progress will lead us to a redemptive and utopian commons."¹⁹ The premise behind Tsing's conceptualization of latent commons is the recognition that worlds are messy, complex, and uncontainable, whereas institutions try to contain, and separate out the complexities of the world, which Tsing argues must be shared in common. When students are expected to bounce back in order to adapt to and withstand the impacts of systemic violences experienced within higher education spaces, we forego the necessity to care for students without the capacity and/or resources to do so. The radicals among us, however, will recognize this as a






moment to refuse capitalist progress narratives that leave so many behind and extend—rather than remove and eradicate—care, connection, and solidarity.

RJ: Thank you all so much for sharing these generative thoughts and ideas. I know there's so much more we could say, but time and word limits demand that we wrap up here. Having the opportunity to collaborate with my fellow crip/disabled/Mad/neurodivergent colleagues and fellow students always renews my sense of hope for future possibilities. In solidarity.

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Notes

1. Neoliberal/neoliberalism is a term that can mean many different things depending on field, context, or geographic location. For the purposes of this discussion, neoliberalism refers to the practice of applying economic analyses to all aspects of life; Carolyn Hardin, "Finding the 'Neo' in Neoliberalism," *Cultural Studies* 28, no. 2 (2014): 207, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2012.748815> <<https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2012.748815>>. This understanding of neoliberalism is often associated with Foucault, who states that in a US context, neoliberalism refers to the practice of using "market economy and the typical analyses of the market economy to decipher non-market relationships"; Michel Foucault, Graham Burchell, and Michel Senellart, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 240. In the context of the university, this often refers to practices that include (among others) treating students as consumers and education as a product, institutional priorities that focus on profit and productivity, and tying measurements of "student success" to future employability. 
2. Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 187. 
3. Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 195. 
4. Joshua St. Pierre and Danielle Peers, "Telling Ourselves Sideways, Crooked and Crip: An Introduction," *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* 5, no. 3 (2016): 2. 
5. José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: NYU Press, 2009), 1. 
6. Disclosure is dangerous for disabled people when life-affirming supports are lacking or absent, when disclosing a disability leads to exclusion and stigmatization, rendering the disabled person vulnerable anew. When accessibility and disability justice are centered, and our access needs and need for differential supports are met, we will not have to depend on disclosure to survive and live. Disclosure also demands disabled people make their life/medical histories, quotidian lived realities, and their pain available for consumption. The demand for disclosure also can be rooted in the belief that disabled people are not entitled to their privacy. Disabled people's

narratives can be taken up to disadvantage them and their communities when such disclosure becomes compulsory and a necessity rather than a choice. ↗

7. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Misfits: A Feminist Materialist Disability Concept," *Hypatia* 26, no. 3 (2011): 593. Garland-Thomson's concept of "misfitting" is valuable here. As Garland-Thomson explains, a misfit is someone who is out of place or out of sync with their environment or circumstances (593). The built environments we interact with and the systems and norms that shape our daily lives are typically created with non-disabled people in mind, thus rendering disabled people misfits (594). While "misfit" is often understood with negative connotations, Garland-Thomson explains that misfitting can highlight social injustice and be a productive way of disrupting normative understandings of the world that create barriers for disabled people and other "misfits." This experience of misfitting can generate solidarity among those with shared experiences of exclusion, leading to a more liberatory politics (597). She states, "When we experience misfitting and recognize that disjuncture for its political potential, we expose the relational component and the fragility of fitting. Any of us can fit here today and misfit there tomorrow" (597). This highlights the importance of the relationship between people and their environment (and the unfixed/changeable nature of that relationship) to our understanding of justice and inclusion. ↗
 8. Mia Mingus, "Access Intimacy, Interdependence and Disability Justice," *Leaving Evidence*, April 12, 2017, <https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2017/04/12/access-intimacy-interdependence-and-disability-justice/> < <https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2017/04/12/access-intimacy-interdependence-and-disability-justice/> > . ↗
 9. Mia Mingus, "Access Intimacy: The Missing Link," *Leaving Evidence*, May 5, 2011, <https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/05/05/access-intimacy-the-missing-link/> < <https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/05/05/access-intimacy-the-missing-link/> > . ↗
 10. Mingus, "Access Intimacy: The Missing Link." ↗
 11. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 22. ↗
 12. Kelly Fritsch, "Crippling Neoliberal Futurity: Marking the Elsewhere and Elsewhen of Desiring Otherwise," *Feral Feminisms* 5 (2016): 11–26; Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013). ↗
 13. In this quote, the country Nair is referring to is the United States, and the last ruler is President Barack Obama. ↗
 14. Yasmin Nair, "A Manifesto," *Evergreen Review*, <http://evergreenreview.com/read/a-manifesto/> < <http://evergreenreview.com/read/a-manifesto/> > , para. 18. ↗
 15. Phillips, Janet. "From Containment to Resilience: A Genealogy of the Governance of Mental Abnormality in Canada" (PhD diss., University of Alberta, 2017), 192. ↗
 16. Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015) 254–55. ↗
 17. Tsing, *Mushroom*, 254. ↗
 18. Tsing, *Mushroom*, 255. ↗
 19. Tsing, *Mushroom*, 255. ↗
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Keely Grossman

Keely Grossman is a Sociology PhD student at Carleton University, which is located on unceded territories of the Algonquin Nation. She is white and a member of the blind/visually impaired community. She is interested in crip theory, disability justice, blindness studies, and activism.

[View all of Keely Grossman's articles.](#)

Rachel Jobson

Rachel Jobson is a PhD candidate in Sociology at Carleton University on the unceded territories of the Algonquin Nation. She is a white, settler, queer, physically disabled and neurodivergent student researching the socio-legal construction of the nuclear family as the only sanctioned site of care outside of paid care work and institutionalization. She is an active member of the Disability Justice and Crip Cultural Collaboratory, a research lab that brings together disabled scholars, artists, designers, activists, and community members doing work on crip and disability art and culture, politics, technoscience and design, accessibility, and justice.

[View all of Rachel Jobson's articles.](#)

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Kristen Kowlessar is a PhD candidate in Sociology at Carleton University, located on the unceded territories of the Algonquin Nation. She is a Black, lesbian, mentally and chronically ill person researching the ways in which Thunder Bay, Ontario operates as a site for cultural meaning-making, expression, and identity formation. Their work also addresses how Thunder Bay's racial order might be reproduced or disrupted in spaces meant to celebrate multiculturalism and what the implications are for the quality of life that Black, Indigenous, and other visibly racialized people are able to have in the city. Additionally, Kristen's work engages with critical race conversations and whiteness, put broadly. Their work is community-based and is grounded in a decolonial antiracist feminist praxis. Additionally, she is a co-founder of the CEDAR Care Collective.

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River Rossi

River Rossi is a white, settler, trans, queer, Mad, and neurodivergent PhD student in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University. They hold an MA in Sociology from Carleton University, and a BA (hons.) in Women's and Gender Studies from the University of Alberta. Their past work has examined intersections of disability and AIDS activism in Canada, trauma and memory studies, and queer phenomenology. Their doctoral research expands on their work with the Anti-69 Network by contextually grounding the ways that settler colonialism, imperialism, and racial capitalism intertwine to produce the Canadian nation-state formation's ongoing regulation of gender, sexuality, and disability. More broadly, their research resides in the fields of critical disability studies, Mad studies, critical trans studies, sexuality studies, settler colonial studies, anti-capitalist social movements, and social philosophy.

[View all of River Rossi's articles.](#)

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