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Crippin' Jim Crow: Disability, Dis-Location, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline

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Introduction

This chapter describes the removal of marked bodies from public generative spaces, such as schools, to restrictive spaces of isolation, violence, and shame, such as prisons. I argue that it is urgent to deploy a more complex analysis of these removals that have brutal consequences not only for those "removed" but also for the possibility of imagining a more inclusive radical transformational politics. The title of this chapter "Crippin' Jim Crow" references the historical practice of legalized removal via separation that was extended to an entire society based on the social category of race as theorized in contemporary analyses in Critical Race Theory and that I now bring to bear on a more recent analytic, "crippin'" from the relatively younger field of Critical Disability Studies. "Crippin'" according to disability studies' scholar Robert McRuer (2006) refers, in part, to critical analytic practices that explore how "cultures of ability/disability are conceived, materialized, spatialized, and populated... [within] geographies of uneven development [and] are mapped onto bodies marked by differences of race, class, gender and ability" (72). In referencing the term "crippin,'" McRuer also marks its coincidental association with the Los Angeles-based street gang Crips, whose members often become disabled as a result of gang violence and who are often also confined in incarcerated spaces like prisons. As such, the title of this chapter, "Crippin' Jim Crow" marks the transhistorical confluence of the legacy of plantation slavery and Jim Crow with the more contemporary violence of mass incarceration to foreground a complex intersectional politics of race, class, and disability where incarcerated bodies become profitable commodities in the neoliberal prison-industrial-complex of late capitalism.

In this chapter, I am not just bringing race and disability together in an analytical marriage of convenience, nor am I arguing that racial oppression is like disability oppression and vice versa. Rather, I argue that "becoming disabled" (Erevelles 2011) or "coming out crip" (McRuer 2006) is an historical event with different implications for different bodies that foreground almost simultaneously the painful antagonisms and promising alliances that emerge out of these historical continuities/discontinuities of removal/segregation/incarceration. More specifically, in

the latter section of this chapter, I discuss public schooling—that much celebrated space where children are presumably nurtured into productive and accomplished young adults ripe with the promise of our collective futures. But this chapter, once it crosses the threshold of the schoolhouse door, rather than tripping lightly toward a rosy optimism, takes a dismal turn to follow a more brutal trajectory—the school-to-prison pipeline—that emphasizes what La Paperson (2010) has called the "dirty work of schooling" (8).

The school-to-prison pipeline is a "multidimensional process that funnels large numbers of minority students from the classroom into the adult prison system" (Aul IV 2012, 180). This trajectory maps out the problematic continuities between mass schooling and mass incarceration, where one subset of students located at the complex intersection of race, class, and disability find themselves as social outlaws for almost the entire span of their lives in school and thereafter. Here, I invoke the school-to-prison pipeline not merely to refer to the education and criminal justice systems but also to a complex network of laws, rules, and policies supported by the exploitative political economy of late capitalism that Michelle Alexander (2010) has called the New Jim Crow.

Throughout this chapter, I mark the significant ways in which the social category of disability animates this analysis of mass incarceration in its casual insistence on "compulsory able-bodiedness" (McRuer 2006, 2). Compulsory able-bodiedness, just like compulsory heterosexuality, insists that what is both moral and desirable in the neoliberal social contexts of late capitalism is necessarily heteronormative and nondisabled. In these contexts, disability is required to be simultaneously hypervisible and yet invisible in the medicolegal measurement of social and moral worth, serving as the yardstick that resurrects social difference only to hasten its instantaneous disappearance. Therefore, I map out the oppressive consequences of disability's disappearing act on "outlaw" bodies by invoking the transgressive analytic of "coming out crip" or "crippin'" as described earlier.

In the first section, I make the case for "coming out crip" in the confining contexts of mass incarceration. I then follow with a description of how race and disability as historical constructs "become" pathologized via the violent practices of plantation slavery and the subsequent enactment of Jim Crow laws within the exploitative political economy of a burgeoning capitalism. Next, making an analytical leap into more contemporary times, I draw on Alexander's (2010) book, *The New Jim Crow* to mark the historical continuities between the Jim Crow laws of yesteryears and the more contemporary "postcolonial ghetto" (La Paperson 2010) as spaces that continue to outlaw bodies located at the intersections of multiple difference. Arguing that mass-incarcerations are not limited to large institutional settings such as asylums and prisons, the last section describes how disability becomes the animating logic of dis-location that hustles racialized youth along the dreadful trajectory of the school-to-prison pipeline via the everyday normative practices of schooling. Finally, I briefly discuss the implications of this analysis for transformative praxis.

"Coming out Crip" in Incarcerated Spaces

Disability has been rarely mentioned in the context of mass-incarcerations, except for very few exceptions. One such exception is Liat Ben-Moshe's (2011; 2013) scholarship where she points out that discussions relating to mass incarceration seldom include institutions for people with intellectual disabilities or psychiatric hospitals.

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Ben-Moshe, however, is careful not to conflate the prison and the asylum together, and in doing so points to their contrary differences. The prison, though punitive in nature, nevertheless has protections in place like due process and sentencing limits, however imperfect they may be (see Chapman, Ben-Moshe, and Carey, this volume). On the other hand, the asylum, although purportedly for rehabilitative care, is involved in the involuntary confinement of its inmates justified by a medical diagnosis that includes an indefinite time of confinement often accompanied by painful treatments such as extended periods of isolation, physical restraints, and electric shock "therapy"—none of this with the inmate's consent. Moreover, even after the spate of deinstitutionalizations that began in the mid 1950s and that closed down mammoth-sized institutions/hospitals, the smaller community living arrangements that have replaced the large institution continue to warehouse their disabled clients in isolated communities. Ironically, many former institutions have now been reopened as prisons, inadvertently reaffirming the painful relationship between institutionalized rehabilitative care and mass incarceration (Ben-Moshe 2011).

One reason disability is seldom mentioned in the context of mass incarceration is the implicit assumption that such confinements are medically necessary for people with intellectual and psychiatric disabilities. In fact, two recent mass killings in the United States in 2012—the shooting deaths of 12 people in an Aurora, Colorado movie theater by the 24-year-old James Holmes and the shooting deaths of 20 children and 8 adults that included the shooter, 21-year-old Adam Lanza at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut—has resurrected a heated public discussion on dangerous stereotypical representations of people diagnosed with mental illnesses/disabilities. Margaret Price (2011) in her book, *Mad at School* describes similar representations of the undergraduate student Seung-Hui Cho who killed 30 people at Virginia Tech University in 2007 and Steve Kazmierczak who killed 6 people at Northern Illinois University in 2008. Although the media downplayed the fact that at least three of these shooters were young white men with easy access to assault rifles, much was made of the allegation that all four men were presumably diagnosed with a mental illness/disability. Price insightfully points out that in each of the public discourses surrounding these mass killings, mental illness/disability appears as the dividing line—the fearsome Other—that sign "of deviance that will separate the killers from 'us'" (151).

Even within radical social theory, disability continues to be perceived as the natural site of abnormality and fearsome difference—the "abject." Drawing on psychoanalytic theory, Julia Kristeva (1982) argues that the abject threatens our illusory notions of the autonomous, normative Self because it represents those terrifying aspects of the Other (disability) that "disturbs identity, system, order" (4), so that we actively repress all memory of its existence from our consciousness. Similarly, Tobin Siebers (2010) describes normative associations of disability with "an aesthetics of human disqualification" (23) where disabled people "are disqualified... found lacking, inept, incompetent, inferior, in need, incapable, degenerate, uneducated, weak, ugly, underdeveloped, diseased, immature, unskilled, frail, uncivilized, defective, and so on" (23). Fiona Kumari Campbell (2009) explains that this negative ontology is propagated via the structural practice of ableism because the "presence of disability upsets the modernist craving for ontological security" (13). Thus, it is no surprise that even radical social theorists of difference distance themselves from any thoughtful discussion of disability because disability remains the acceptable line of separation between "us" and "them." One could also argue that a similar negative ontology is used against criminalized people

where the very real walls of the prison serve to separate the "moral us" from the "depraved them."

That disability is implicated in the uneasy alliance between race, class, and criminalization may be apparent in the narrative I will now share with you. As the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) president in my daughter's elementary school—a Title I school (where at least 60% of its students are from underprivileged families and are eligible for either free or reduced lunches provided by the state)—I organized a monthly activity where parents relieve teachers from lunch duty and supervise students in the cafeteria. To most precocious students, the sight of a substitute promises limitless possibilities for fun, and so, to put it simply, we parents had our work cut out for us. And so one afternoon, in the process of trying to gently encourage a little decorum at the table, I called on one of the more boisterous fourth graders (who happened to be African American) and asked his name, which he proceeded to give me to the immense amusement of his classmates. The words were barely out of his mouth when one of the support staff—a "nice" white woman challenged the boy, "That's not your name. Jeremiah is your real name. That's a lie (and then turning to me continued in the same loud voice)...He's lying! That's not his name. They learn to lie about their names from their parents. They see their parents lie about their names at home to get away from creditors and from the police and then their kids do it in school too. It's like what they do in their community. It's something they are used to doing."

I was too shell-shocked to find words of rebuttal. In less than a minute, the "nice" staff member had transformed a popular student antic into proof of the pathology of the individual student, his parents, and even his entire community. I call it "pathology" rather than "labeling" because she was doing much more than just remarking on his misbehavior. Rather, she was—as the act of pathologizing demands—marking the origins, causes, developments, consequences, and manifestations of deviation from some imagined norm. This is what Foucault (1980) called "bio-power"—"an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations" (140). Here, unlike sovereign power that is based on the threat of death, biopower is exercised in an attempt to preserve (normative) life by deploying "the power to qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize" (144) via the social institutions of law, medicine, and education, among others.

Disabled people know full well the horrors of this enactment of biopower that has historically associated disability with a dangerous pathology. For example, the deployment of the medical model of disability has justified the continued segregation/removal/incarceration of disabled people to special education classrooms, alternative schools, asylums, and segregated residential institutions. Similarly, people of color are also painfully aware of these horrors through their own experiences of segregation/removal/incarceration via the Middle Passage, slavery, lynchings, Jim Crow, reservations, barrios, urban ghettos, segregated schools, boarding schools, alternative schools, and ultimately the prison-industrial-complex. But even at this moment of shared experience, I want to mark the very real painful antagonisms that keep disrupting any easy possibility of alliance as we carefully sort through the problematic relationships unearthed in our analyses of criminality, danger, disability, class, and race.

This relationship between disability, criminality, class, and race is fraught. Most radical scholars have traditionally conceived of disability as a biological category, as an immutable and pathological abnormality rooted in the "the medical language

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of symptoms and diagnostic categories" (Linton 1998, 8). Disability studies schol-ars, on the other hand, have described disability as a socially constructed category that derives meaning and social (in)significance from the historical, cultural, politi-cal, and economic structures that frame social life (Erevelles 2011; McRuer 2006; Oliver 1990). In fact, disability exposes the "implicit assumptions inherent in cre-ating the social hierarchy that invest the list [of social categories] with meaning, [in the first place]" (Kudlick 2005, 60) and as a result, disability can be theorized as constitutive of most social differences, including race (Baynton 2005; Erevelles 2011; James and Wu 2003).

It is in this context that I invoke the analytic practice of "coming out crip." McRuer (2006) argues that "coming out crip" entails "coming out as what you already are (but not repeating the dominant culture's understanding of that faith-fully)...[as well as] coming out as what you are apparently not" (70–71). I argue that this analytic practice is critical to a radical analysis of mass incarceration, because it chronicles the disruptive emergence of disability not in its expected role as abject deviance, but rather as the animating force at the intersections of multiple differences. Here, mass incarceration represents for a terrified public the reassuring barrier between the mainstream population and its outcasts in its fervid project of policing "compulsory able-bodiedness." This was witnessed in the aftermath of the shootings in Connecticut (that I referred to earlier) that highlighted an unusual agreement between many quarters of the political left and conservative right regard-ing the active policing and possible institutionalization of those saddled with the questionable diagnosis of mental illness/disability.

"Coming out crip" in discourses of mass incarceration is not, however, a resur-rection of disability as merely the by-product of brutal oppression. If "coming out crip" celebrates the transformative potential of disability and queerness to unsettle and radically rewrite abject identities (McRuer 2006), I argue that to even rei-magine these discursive possibilities necessitates an engagement with the social conditions that constitute disability in relation to other categories of difference. I, therefore, situate disability not as the condition of "being" but of "becoming," and this "becoming" is an historical event, and further, it is its material context that is critical in the theorizing of bodies at the intersections of multiple differ-ence (Erevelles 2011). Specifically, my analysis focuses on the historical contexts in which the body "becomes" a commodity of exchange in the neoliberal prison-industrial-complex of late capitalism, and on how this "becoming" proliferates a multiplicity of discourses of disability, race, class, gender, and sexuality. It is to this analysis that I now turn.

Crippin' Jim Crow

In her thought-provoking book, *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander (2010) describes how the relentless focus on the War on Drugs by the US criminal jus-tice system disproportionately targets underprivileged, poorly educated African Americans who are basically warehoused in prison and who are then released to face lifelong job discrimination, elimination from juries and voter rolls, and even disqualification from food stamps, public housing and student loans. The nearly one million African Americans behind bars (NAACP 2014), with even more experiencing legalized discrimination and permanent social exclu-sion as a result of a criminal record, has produced what Alexander calls a new

racial under-caste, relegated to the margins of mainstream society. Alexander argues that this new racial under-caste now occupies a political and social space not unlike Jim Crow—the legalized racial caste system that emerged in the Southern US states, post Reconstruction. This "New Jim Crow" (56), she argues, has "functioned relatively automatically, and the prevailing system of racial meanings, identities, and ideologies [are naturalized and]...explained in race neutral terms" (56–57). As a result, Alexander argues that much like their grandparents before them, many poor African American communities continue to be legally subject to an explicit system of control and social and political exclusion, even among incredulous assertions that the United States is now a postracial society.

Although Alexander claims that this group is defined largely by race, I argue that this group is defined at the crucial intersection of race, class, and disability. Interestingly, Alexander almost intuitively gestures toward such an analysis. In marking the historical continuities between Jim Crow laws and mass incarceration, she writes that, "the degraded status of Africans was justified on the grounds that Negroes, like the Indians, were an uncivilized lesser race, perhaps even more lacking in intelligence and laudable human qualities than the red-skinned natives" (25). Here, Alexander seems unaware that disability as deviant pathology is utilized to assign African slaves a degraded self-worth. This unawareness results in her nonrecognition of the constitutive relationship of race and disability where racialized bodies became disabled and disabled bodies became racialized within the specific historical conditions of a burgeoning capitalism (Erevelles 2011).

In her essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: Notes on an American Grammar," Hortense Spillers (1987) locates the "origins" of African American subjectivity in the (trans)Atlantic slave trade that starts with the unimaginable violence during the Middle Passage, continues through the dehumanization of slavery, and finally concludes by exposing dominant conceptualizations of the contemporary "Black Family" as a tangle of pathology. However, just like Alexander's book, Spillers' essay, detailing the historical practices that enabled the black body to be pathologized, is as much about disability as it is about race, even though the word "disability" is not mentioned once in her essay. I find this startling because the "scene[s] of *actual* mutilation, dismemberment, and exile" (67) that Spillers' describes in her essay produce disabled bodies—black disabled bodies without gender, without genitalia, without subjectivity—who in an ironic turn are transformed into commodities that are exchanged in the market for profit. I call it ironic because it is in this "becoming" disabled that the black body is at the height of its profitability for the slave masters and it is the historical, social, and economic context of this "becoming" that I foreground.

But profitability in colonialist/protocapitalist contexts has its even darker side. If profits could not be realized from the enslaved body, then of what value is the body? In the introduction, Chapman, Ben-Moshe, and Carey draw on Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell's work to argue that "both English and German sources during the eugenics era portrayed...the death of disabled people as a benefit to the nation" just as enslaved black bodies were deemed a benefit to the nation so long as they represented a valuable labor force. Thus, in a curious complication, although on the one hand "becoming disabled" as described in Spillers' text rendered black bodies as profitable to slave masters, this profitability was only temporary because it "overlooks the mortality that always accompanies slave systems, particularly for human chattel who become disabled as a result of inhumane labor and living

conditions or for those killed after being born with a disability on slave planta-tions" (Snyder and Mitchell 2006, 122).

To the ship crew of mostly European men undertaking the Middle Passage, those bodies, "black as Ethiops, and so ugly, both in features and in body, as almost to appear (to those who saw them) the images of a lower hemisphere" (De Azurara as qtd. in Spillers 1987, 70) were nothing more than cargo to be trans-ported to the New World by sea and to be traded for unimaginable profit because of their obvious "physical" impairments. Here, the conceptualization of black subjectivity as impaired subjectivity is neither accidental nor metaphorical. Rather it is precisely at that moment when one class of human beings was transformed into cargo that black bodies become disabled and disabled bodies become black. Further, it is also important to note that blackness itself does not stand in for skin color. *Black* and *disabled* are not just linguistic tropes used to delineate difference, but are, instead, materialist constructs produced for the appropriation of profit in an historical context where black disabled bodies were subjected to the most brutal violence. Spillers describes the brutal violation of black flesh with "eyes beaten out, arms, backs, skulls branded, a left jaw, a right ankle, punctured; teeth missing, as the calculated work of iron, whips, chains, knives, the canine patrol, the bullet" (67).

Although Spillers (1987) describes these markings on the flesh as "the concen-tration of ethnicity" in a culture "whose state apparatus, including judges, attor-neys, 'owners,' 'soul drivers,' 'overseers,' and 'men of God,' apparently colludes with a protocol of 'search and destroy'" (67), I argue that these same markings on the flesh, quite simply, also produce impairment. Here, impairment is not just biological/natural, it is also produced in a historical, social, and economic context where the very embodiment of blackness and disability "bears in person the marks of a cultural text whose inside has been turned outside" (p. 67). Here, the histori-cal conditions of a nascent colonialist transnational expansion of capitalism are responsible for the violent reconfiguration of the flesh such that it becomes almost impossible to even imagine the sovereign subject, now mutually constituted via race, disability, and gender as a dehumanized commodity. Thus, rather than posing a simple causal effect (viz. that slavery produces disability), I argue, on the other hand, that both disability/impairment and race are neither merely biological nor wholly discursive, but rather are historical materialist constructs imbricated within the exploitative conditions of transnational capitalism.

A similar imbrication of race and disability can be observed in the historical context of Jim Crow. Interestingly enough, one story of the origin of the term "Jim Crow" describes how in 1830, a white, minstrel show performer, Thomas "Daddy" Rice, blackened his face with charcoal paste or burnt cork in imitation of a crippled, elderly black man dancing and singing the lyrics to the song, "Jump Jim Crow." Here, yet again, is an often unremarked intimate association of race and disability that materialized into legal statutes that "enforce[d] and reinforce[d] the compulsory crippling and enfeeblement of entire 'colored populations'" (Schweik 2009, 186). Here, yet again, black bodies and disabled bodies are inextricably intertwined in the punitive patrol of bodily boundaries.

Alexander (2010) locates the origins of Jim Crow in the backlash against the gains earned by the former slaves during the Reconstruction Period enacted by the southern elite plantation class. Following the civil war, the dearth of social laws and customs to maintain white control gave rise to white elite fears of a possible insurrection by an angry mass of black men. It was in this context that vagrancy

laws and other laws accusing African Americans of "mischief" and "insulting gestures" were utilized to incarcerate large numbers of African American men who then became part of the convict labor force and who thus reentered into yet another system of extreme repression and control. Moreover, the severe agrarian depression of the late 1880s and 1890s enabled an unlikely alliance between poor /working class whites and African Americans in the south. Thus, it was around this time that the white elite fearful of a possible challenge to its social and economic power proposed a slew of segregation laws intended to drive a wedge between poor whites and African Americans—laws that later came to be known as Jim Crow. Thus, by the turn of the century, every state in the South supported laws that sanctioned racial ostracism in virtually every aspect of social life that extended to schools, churches, hospitals, prisons, cemeteries, asylums, etc. (Alexander 2010). Jim Crow, therefore, enabled even lower class whites to maintain some sort of psychological superiority over African Americans.

In many ways the vagrancy laws just described above appear to be the precursor to the "ugly laws"—public ordinances that were proposed in the late 1800s that barred any "person who is diseased, maimed, mutilated, or...deformed, so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object" (293) to remain in public view or else be to fined or imprisoned (Schweik 2009). Schweik argues that these unsightly beggar ordinances were used to define a certain form of despised whiteness—disabled white trash—and therefore functioned as an "allegory of identity" (185), fleetingly exposing the very real class antagonisms and ableist assumptions in an already racially stratified society. Recognizing "ugly laws" as part of the same project as Jim Crow, Schweik observes that such ordinances reveal an oppressive "investment in, the disciplining of, the anxious management of skin...loaded with social as well as medical significance" (187).

Alexander (2010), in marking parallels between Jim Crow and mass incarceration, echoes Schweik's observation when she argues that

> what it means to be a criminal in our collective consciousness has become conflated with what it means to be black (193)...For black youth, the experience of being "made black" often begins with the first police stop, interrogation, search, or arrest. The experience carries social meaning – *this is what it means to be black* (194)...For the [racial caste] system to succeed...black...[youth] must be labeled criminals before they are formally subject to control...This process of being made a criminal is, to a large extent, the process of "becoming" black. (195)

Here, Alexander describes "becoming" black as a "'body-based' disqualification" (Snyder and Mitchell 2006, 400) that presumes an in-built inferiority/ deviance that being biologically encoded would therefore be almost impossible to transcend. What Alexander misses in her analysis is that disability serving as the "master trope of human disqualification" (Mitchell and Snyder 2001, 3) is deployed to give oppressive credence to this flawed equation: criminal = black youth. Here, remapping the historical continuities with earlier times, the simultaneous process of "becoming black" AND "becoming disabled" described uncritically as "natural" deviance foregrounds a complex intersectional politics of race, class, and disability that is used to justify the incarceration of "outlaw" bodies that eventually become profitable commodities in the neoliberal prison-industrial-complex of late

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capitalism. Furthermore, the historical continuities between Jim Crow, the ugly laws, and the contemporary context of mass incarceration mirror in many ways eugenic ideologies that imagined a "uniquely modern utopian fantasy of a future world uncontaminated by defective bodies — either disabled, racialised, or both at the same time" (Mitchell and Snyder 2003, 861).

Compulsory Able-Bodiedness in the Postcolonial Ghetto

McRuer (2006) has argued that the recognition of compulsory able-bodiedness as an organizing practice in social life enables us to "question the order of things, considering how and why it is constructed and naturalized; how it is embedded in complex economic, social, and cultural relations; and how it might be changed" (2). Compulsory able-bodiedness is brought to bear on the body via the *normate* (Garland-Thomson 1996, 8), the cultural Self whose boundaries are marked by its opposing twin—the disabled other—the very embodiment of corporeal differ-ence. The material effects of these ableist practices result in the removal or erasure of disability or both, even in social practices that purport to be inclusive. In fact, conditions for the inclusion of disabled people in mainstream society require their assimilation (via special education, rehabilitation, and assistive technology), their removal (via segregation, institutionalization, incarceration) or their complete anni-hilation (euthanasia, abortion of disabled fetuses) (Campbell 2009; Siebers 2008; Snyder and Mitchell 2006). Disability, therefore, becomes "the boundary condition that resides just on the other side of hope…the condition one must escape rather than improve" (Ferguson 1987, 63).

Shifting the locus of analysis from the individual to the social, compulsory able-bodiedness becomes the ideological and material means to separate mainstream society from its dangerous outcastes. Here, pathological discourses of disability are used to justify the oppressive binary cultural constructions of normal/pathological, autonomous/dependent, competent citizen/ward of the state, and the social divi-sions of labor (Erevelles 2011). In the context of Jim Crow, Alexander (2010) points out that the continued need to "prevent the 'amalgamation' with a group of people considered intrinsically inferior and vile" (27) perpetuated the current stereotypes of black men as "aggressive, unruly predators" required to be forcibly separated from the general population. Thus, while the US South was patrolled by Jim Crow laws, the more liberal US North East was safe guarded-via the ghetto—"a third vehicle [the first being slavery and the second Jim Crow] to extract black labor, while keeping black bodies at a safe distance, to the material and symbolic benefit of white society" (Wacquant 2009, 202).

Wacquant (2009) likens the ghetto to an "ethnoracial prison" and the prison to a "judicial ghetto" (205). He theorizes both these spaces as "socio-spatial device[s] that enable a dominant status group…to simultaneously *ostracize and exploit* a subordinate group endowed with *negative symbolic capital*" (204). Although the ghetto serves as an "urban condom" (Richard Sennett qtd. in Wacquant 2009, 205) protecting urban residents from the polluting intercourse of its outcasts, the prison cleanses the urban space from the pollution of natural and dangerous deprav-ity. Moreover, the concurrent loss of jobs in the inner city and the gradual retrench-ment of social welfare in response to the neoliberal policies of less government

intervention and their corresponding association with social stigma have created a breakdown of the social order in the inner city. Here, the ghetto and the prison combine into a single carceral continuum that has entrapped "a redundant population of younger black men (and increasingly women)...in a self-fulfilling cycle of social and legal marginality" (207). Here the trajectory from the ghetto to the prison is one of circularity (akin to a hamster's wheel) and as a result functions "as an ancillary institution for caste preservation and labor control" (Wacquant 2009, 207) in US society.

La Paperson (2010), on the other hand, theorizes the ghetto not as "a fixed sociological space...[but rather as] a dislocating procedure" (10)—that draws on the "apparatus of empire" (21) to exclude, contain, and control the proliferation of excessive bodies. According to La Paperson, the ghetto is constituted by three critical elements: "(i) *walls* that serve to contain bodies; (ii) legal and civil *divestment* that ensures educational, social, and economic deprivation of those contained, and (iii) *racial marking* where minority status is assigned to those bodies that are contained" (10). To these three elements I would add a fourth—the signifying practice of compulsory able-bodiedness that is the wellspring of these dis-locations.

Compulsory able-bodiedness as a practice of dis-location is the cornerstone of the ghetto, both hypervisible and yet invisible in its workings. For example, La Paperson argues that the ghetto is not where black people live but rather where blackness is contained. Here compulsory able-bodiedness patrols the boundaries of the ghetto to maintain this racial isolation such that the ghetto "becomes" the excess of white/pure space—"that which is left over, the matter out of place" (13). Here, liberal discourses point to the racial and economic isolation in the ghetto as nurturing a culture of poverty (a "natural" state of hopelessness). This is contrasted with the place of "universal rights" that exists outside the ghetto where rational and "normal" enlightened subjects apparently exist. The ghetto is also imagined as a "zone of violence" even though violence occurs not because of what "happens" in the ghetto, but rather because of what "is done" to the ghetto and its inhabitants (La Paperson 2010). Moreover, because of its feared pathology, there is also always the move to destroy the ghetto, to always shift its inhabitants someplace else—such that it becomes a space that is always open for continuous dispersal; of going "nowhere for good" (21). Thus the "ghetto" is not just a space but "a portable status that can be cast onto bodies—some are temporarily and selectively branded, others inescapably so (19)...[such that if mapped]...it would be a palimpsest, a map of absences — of what used to be there — or perhaps a map of the condemned" (21). See Abbass and Voronka (in this book) for a description of how institutions for those labeled feebleminded also represent a palimpset—a trace of past dis-locations.

In La Paperson's (2010) vivid conceptualization of the ghetto, disability is both hyper visible, yet invisible; its (re)appearances/disappearances dependent on the capricious practices of compulsory-able-bodiedness. At one moment, it shows its hand in the social construction of dangerous and depraved pathology (disability) assigned to underprivileged bodies of color (race and class) located within the exploitative political economy of late capitalism; at another moment it disappears into obfuscating discourses that represent this pathology (disability) ascribed to these raced and classed bodies as innate/natural. In either case the dis-locating context of the postcolonial ghetto ultimately results in foregrounding "a map of the condemned" inhabited by bodies (at the intersection of race, class, and disability) branded (temporarily or permanently) as so dangerously criminal as to require

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Reading the School-to-Prison Pipeline via Crip Politics

In this section, the locus of analysis shifts to public education where I draw parallels between the dis-locating practices of public education, the postcolonial ghetto and the segregational statutes of the New Jim Crow. I argue that the "New Jim Crow" naturalizes racial inferiority in educational contexts such that students located at the critical intersections of race, class, and disability are conceived of as "public enemies" (Winn and Behizadeh 2011, 156) subject to the unforgiving authority of zero-tolerance policies. Zero-tolerance policies were instituted when Congress passed the Gun-Free Schools Act in 1994 requiring any state receiving federal funds to suspend or expel, for at least one calendar year, any student who brought a firearm to school. More recently, zero-tolerance policies have evolved into a "nondiscretionary approach that mandates a set of often severe, predetermined consequences to student misbehavior that is to be applied without regard to seriousness of behavior, mitigating circumstances, or situational context" (Aul IV 2012, 182).

One problematic outcome of zero-tolerance policies is that everyday student infractions have now become criminal offenses that cause referrals to the juvenile justice system. Zero-tolerance policies also infringe on students' rights to due process because student explanations are not heard before an impartial official, and these "hearings" are often held without parents being present. More troubling, when transferred to the alternative school system, students cannot challenge these transfers on the grounds that they are being deprived of public education. Further, the Supreme Court has not come to any conclusion about how the right to not incriminate oneself (also known as Miranda rights in the United States) is to be applied when school officials question students (Aul IV 2012). Thus, zero tolerance policies are a fast track to being committed involuntarily to the school-to-prison pipeline.

Alexander (2010) describes the school-to-prison pipeline "as numerous interinstitutional actions that collectively undereducate and overincarcerate students of color at disparate rates" (104). For example, Smith (2009) reports that although blacks and Latinos each accounted for 17 percent of US K-12 enrollment, they respectively comprised 30 percent and 20 percent of all twelfth-grade suspensions and expulsions. Before twelfth grade, black students were two to five times more likely than whites to be suspended at a younger age leading some researchers to name this the "cradle-to-prison track" (Heitzeg 2009, 2). The repercussions for moving along this track are immense. According to Smith (2009), 69 percent of all incarcerated adults never finish high school, 75 percent of juveniles in adult prisons fail to complete tenth grade, and 33 percent of all incarcerated juveniles do not have a fourth-grade reading level proficiency. Most critically, high school dropouts are three-and-a-half times more likely to become incarcerated than high school graduates.

The overrepresentation of black and Latino students in the school-to-prison pipeline is justified by invoking Jim Crow ideologies of black men as innately dangerous and depraved. For example, even though school security and zero-tolerance

was beefed up in the wake of the mass shootings in April 1999, perpetrated by four suburban white male students at a high school in Columbine, Colorado, the excessive policing and punishment as a result of these policies has been directed mostly at inner city African-American and Latino youth. This is because echoing Jim Crow laws of an earlier time, African American and Latino youth continue to be represented as dangerously depraved and mentally imbalanced as a result of their "aberrant biology."

Michelle Jarman (2012) has drawn conceptual yet contrary connections between the violent practices of white-on-black lynchings and eugenic castration during Jim Crow. Although both lynchings and castrations enacted similar barbaric mutilations that operated outside the law, white-on-black lynching was the murderous public spectacle consumed as a communal cultural event, whereas eugenic castration was administered by white medical doctors to white "feebleminded" inmates behind institutional walls. Jarman, argues that notwithstanding their differences, both modes of sexualized violence had the collective effect of normalizing and legitimizing each other because "each responded to...a culturally produced fear...of a threat animalistic and sexual, to the sanctity of normative white heterosexuality" (100). Thus, the logic of disability (feebleminded) as dangerous pathology also implicated in the construction of black men as dangerous (sexual) predators justified the most violent practices of Jim Crow and eugenic criminology. Similarly, Ferri (2010) explores the "the entangled histories of racism and ableism embedded in the construction of mental deficiency" (134) that continued to place African American students in segregated special education classrooms because they were perceived as threats to the "normal" practices of schooling (Erevelles, Kanga, and Middleton 2006).

A similar logic operates with the New Jim Crow. One example in contemporary contexts is represented in this quote from *The Weekly Standard*:

> On the horizon, therefore, are tens of thousands of severely morally impoverished juvenile super-predators. They are perfectly capable of committing the most heinous acts of physical violence for the most trivial [reasons]...They fear neither the stigma of arrest nor the pain of imprisonment. They live by the meanest code of the meanest streets, a code that reinforces rather than restrains their violent, hand-trigger mentality. In prison or out, the things that superpredators get by their criminal behavior – sex, drugs, money – are their own immediate rewards. Nothing else matters to them. (DiIulio qtd in Farmer 2010, 371)

Here, the intersecting discourses of race and disability as pathological deviance are deployed to create "moral panic...the means of orchestrating consent by actively intervening in the space of public opinion and social consciousness through the use of highly rhetorical and emotive language, which has the effect of requiring that 'something be done about it'" (Farmer 2010, 372). Margaret Price (2010) describes a similar "moral panic" around people diagnosed with mental illness in the aftermath of recent mass shootings. So pervasive is this pathological rhetoric that in November 2003, in the racially diverse Stratford High School in Goose Creek, South Carolina, officers in SWAT team uniforms and bulletproof vests raided the school and forced students as young as 14 years old to the ground in handcuffs at gunpoint while their bags were searched with gun sniffing dogs.

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I was surprised how easily discourses of moral panic drawing on the rhetoric of black pathology and the practices of compulsory able-bodiedness were the part of everyday conversations of liberal middle class parents at my daughter's elementary school with students from diverse race and class backgrounds. In a recent conversation with some of these parents, moral panic ruled the day in the obvious terror the parents felt about sending their children (especially their young daughters) to the same middle school with low-income pre-teens of color—the very same students their daughters were friends with in elementary school. When I asked the parents how it was that we could promptly transform these inquisitive, gentle, fun-loving children into potential criminals within the brief moments of a conversation without any proof of their potential for violent notoriety, they assured me that this was inevitable because of the presumed pathological deviance in their families and their communities. Furthermore, many parents assured me that the effectiveness of the tracking systems (ability grouping) in public education would prove to be the first line of defense in separating "us" from "them." Perhaps, especially telling is that the parents showed no reticence in this conversation with me (a woman of color)—a situation that painfully demonstrates that these parents assumed that our class alliances (us) would trump any and all racial alliances (them) that I might have claimed with the racialized other. Thus, in this way, discourses of racism and ableism intersect within the broader social logic of class antagonisms to segregate even within a presumably free, equitable, and democratic public education.

Additionally, La Paperson's (2010) conceptualization of the postcolonial ghetto is especially critical to describe how outlaw bodies are excluded, contained, and controlled in special education, alternative schooling, and the school-to-prison pipeline. Unlike the overseas colony that served as "imperialism's outpost," the postcolonial ghetto serves "as imperialism's outcast: the alley and the underground of imperial outlaw" (21). In these "ghettoized zones in schools...the rights of students are suspended, and state agents are allowed free reign to implement any set of neocolonial educational and disciplinary tactics...violence that would never be permitted in their privileged counterparts" (18). Here the shift to the ghetto is not an "accident of discrimination" (8), but rather a deliberate act of dis-location by the school system.

It is easy to see how self-contained special education classrooms and alternative schools in US public education serve as postcolonial ghettoes. Here, definitions of disability as intransigent pathology are used to justify segregation along the axes of race and class under the questionable guise of "special" education and rehabilitation. Claiming or passing as normal while maintaining a distance from the "real" aberrancy of disability is amply rewarded in educational contexts. Put simply, "we" MUST try really hard not to be like "them." To all those who cannot pass for normal, there is always quarantine—the condition of temporary enforced isolation. To quarantine requires space, preferably secluded, but also one that can easily be patrolled to protect the outside from those on the inside.

In the moral geography of schooling, one such quarantined space is the alternative school where students who are deemed at risk for school failure are forced to attend (Lehr, Tan, and Ysseldyke 2009). It is a little terrifying to note that according to 2001–2002 data, the numbers of students isolated in these quarantined spaces exceeded more than 613,000. Students are banished from regular

classrooms because they are perceived to be at a higher risk of substance abuse, suicide, sexual activity and teen pregnancy. Nearly twelve percent of the students who attend alternative school are identified with emotional and behavioral disabilities and have IEPs (Individualized Educational Plans). Yet, many of these alternative schools privilege the punitive over the pedagogical or the therapeutic, becoming the dumping ground of at-risk students whom teachers are too terrified to teach. In this way, disability serves as an "outlaw ontology" used to justify the exclusion of individuals in the postcolonial ghettoes of public schooling.

Additionally, I argue that "becoming" black and "becoming" disabled are not merely discursive events but are material constructs shaped by the political economy of educational opportunity and social segregation that frame the lives of those students on the fast track to the school-to-prison pipeline. The harsh reality is that most of these low-income students of color are caught in what Fine and Ruglis (2009) have referred to as "circuits of dispossession" fueled by economic practices that systematically funnel public education funding to private enterprises; swell the profits of testing companies, private vendors, and textbook publisher professionals; increase the police-in-school and military recruitment budgets. As a result, low-income youth of color slowly disappear from educational spaces that could offer them an alternative to the numbing promise of lifelong incarceration. This sorting process is further exacerbated by housing policies that ghettoize those perceived as deviant, rampant racial and class segregation in public education fueled by regressive economic policies of school funding through property taxes, and through the pedagogical practices of tracking that disproportionately place minority students in underachieving schools and classrooms (Smith 2009). Most significantly, these low-income schools are also organized via a prisonlike atmosphere with little motivation to build and sustain relationships among students and their peers or between students and teachers or school staff—all of which are becoming secondary to budget line items assigned for the management of Black and Brown bodies (Smith 2009; Winn and Behizadeh 2011).

I argued earlier that "becoming disabled" is an historical event mediated via the political economy of the social. This is also true in schools. Steele and Aronson (1995) have argued that low-income students of color wrestle with the historically derogatory threats of being viewed as innately deviant and constantly live in the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype. They call it stereotype threat. In the specific context of zero-tolerance policies and its associative practices, the very act of surveillance serves as a physical representation of a threat whether or not students are actively conscious of it (Farmer 2010). And contrary to popular belief, the threat of constant surveillance does very little to reform the soul or normalize conduct; rather it has led to increased raids, confiscation of student property, interrogations, zero-tolerance suspensions, and ultimately juvenile detention centers and prison.

Additionally, many incarcerated juveniles are often diagnosed with questionable labels such as disruptive behavior disorders (e.g., conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder), substance abuse disorders, schizophrenia, psychosis, and self-injurious behavior. Conservative estimates claim that about ten percent of juvenile detainees have recently thought about suicide, with ten percent having attempted suicide over their lifetimes (Abram et al. 2008). Moreover, as many as many as 79 percent of juveniles labeled as mentally ill are thought to meet the criteria for multiple disorders, with 60 percent believed to be displaying symptoms of three or more disorders. Most of these children receive little or no interventions with the

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likelihood of treatment increasing if the juvenile is a non-Hispanic white, younger detainee, processed as a juvenile rather than an adult, and with a past history of treatment. In a case study of the New Orleans schools, it was reported that both pre- and post-Katrina, students of color with disabilities lacked resources for intervention programs that should have been illegal under IDEA—The Individual with Disabilities' Education Act (Tuzzolo and Hewitt 2006/2007).

I note here that members of the psychiatric survivor movement have protested the excessive control medical practitioners have on the lives of people diagnosed "mentally ill" and have argued that many of the treatments used have deprived them of their autonomy, respect, and human rights (Mollow 2006). This perspective, however, is challenged when brought to bear on those living at the intersections of race, class, and disability. For example, Anna Mollow's (2006) insightful analysis of Meri Nana-Ama Danquah's memoir, *Willow Weep for Me: A Black Woman's Journey through Depression* foregrounds how this memoir complicates disabled people's critiques of the psychiatric model of mental illness because, for African American women with depression, the problem does not lie in the involuntary administration of questionable treatments, but the lack of access to any form of treatment at all.

In school contexts, McWilliams and Fancher (2010) point out that the failure to evaluate for disabilities while in school, contributes to a demonstrated racial "suspension gap" that negatively impacts communities of color—the black community in particular. They describe what they call a manifestation review where a team of school officials are required to decide (1) whether the conduct in question was caused by or had a direct and substantial relationship to the child's disability; or (2) that the conduct in question was the direct result of the school's failure to implement the IEP (Individualized Education Plan). McWilliam and Fancher report that in affluent school districts black students, often poor, are denied the support that an individual behavior plan can provide because the predominantly white administration assumes these students are *choosing* to act out. The matter is further complicated by the tendency of teachers and school officials to define disruptive white youth as in need of medical intervention rather than suspension under zero tolerance policies. This occurs in a context where social class, insurance coverage, and race are key indicators of who receives treatment and who is disciplined. In this way, it is the reality of political and economic factors that deny low-income students of color with disabilities not only corrective and educational supports but also enable schools to refuse to reinstate students expelled due to zero tolerance policies. Thus, when youth get in trouble and the school refers them to alternative schools or the juvenile criminal system, they experience a kind of "civic death" (Wacquant 2005), where they are made unable to fully participate in school processes (Farmer 2010, 376) and also in civic life later on.

Low-income students of color when labeled with a disability are, therefore, caught in an oppressive yet contradictory logic. Put simply, as per the illogic of the manifestation review, for African American students being labeled a potential superpredator foregrounds a biological determinism that is absurdly couched in a language of choice. In other words, he is a natural born killer and so he "choses" to kill. On the other hand, assigning white students with a disability label also implies a "natural" deficiency, but one outside the realm of "choice" and therefore worthy of pedagogical or other intervention. Clearly, as per this logic, "coming out crip" in public education has different outcomes for different bodies located at the intersections of race, class, and disability.

Conclusion: The Political Economy of Crip Politics

Michel Foucault's (1977) *Discipline and Punish* has drawn analogies between the birth of the prison and the social organization of schooling in the eighteenth century. According to Foucault, institutions such as schools regarded the student body as both an object and target of power and utilized various technologies of discipline so as to make the body completely docile. Those whose bodies challenged the rigidity of this discipline and proved to be "unruly bodies" (Erevelles 2000), came to be known as "social outcasts of education" (Noguera 1995, 194), and student populations who are designated as social outcasts of education are not just disabled students, but also include nondisabled students of color who are labeled "at-risk": pregnant teens of color from low income neighborhoods; students who exhibit low English proficiency who are also seen to skew performance scores and are often excluded from these evaluations; and some gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual students who are deemed emotionally unstable and socially isolated.

There is rarely a "biological" basis for these labels (disability, at-risk). It is also generally understood that the assignment of these labels are arbitrary—I would say historical—rooted in the very American Grammar book that Spillers (1987) discusses in her essay. The material consequences of these assignments are horribly damaging—students move from segregated classrooms to alternative schools to becoming school dropouts to becoming completely alienated from the labor market and the wider social world and eventually many find themselves in prison—a humiliating passage along the school to prison pipeline. This phenomenon reproduces what I call the (post) modern version of the Middle Passage/Jim Crow that continues the historical tradition of transforming children of color into "diseased, damaged, and disabled Negroes deemed incurable and otherwise worthless" (Goodell as quoted in Spillers, 68), commodities used to feed the prison industrial complex and served up again for consumption via the media (through TV shows like COPS, Oz, and the news) in another brutal conflation of pleasure and profit. We now have the production of another social pathology blamed on the violent historical construction of the special education student living in the postcolonial ghetto still bearing the wounds of broken flesh marked by the violent lashes of history.

Although this pathologization is most definitely unwarranted in that it presumes that deviance is endemic to black bodies, there is another complication to this argument. Many authors in both education and legal studies have noted that the material conditions of poverty/inferior educational resources and structural racism actually create conditions for both diagnosed and undiagnosed learning disabilities/emotional challenges and mental illness. Failure to be identified with these disabilities prevents these students from gaining access to services/resources/supports that would enable them to tentatively traverse the very treacherous terrain of schooling. It should be noted also that these learning disabilities/emotional challenges and mental illnesses are not the sole purview of low income youth of color. And while almost all students with disabilities have experienced navigating the special education systems in public education as a nightmare, those from upper middle class families have avoided the one-way road to lifelong incarceration—as a result of ardent advocacy/access to outside resources and sometimes just simple class and race privilege.

Going back to the incident in the cafeteria, this should have been a simple reprimand (laughingly given to the mischievous child)—one that I have often seen happens to students from more privileged race/class backgrounds. "They're feisty! Boys

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will be boys! He's a special one!" But what little Jeremiah received was no simple reprimand but a public pathologization of an entire population. Terrifyingly, this is not an isolated incident but a general strategy of power enacted against low income students of color, as documented in the considerable literature both in education and legal studies that have sought to explain the removal of African American males, in particular, from regular classrooms via in-school suspensions/alternative school enrollment/expulsion and finally prison.

I want to end on a more positive note. The possibility of a radical coalitional politics for transformative praxis can only happen if we are open to complex understandings of the embodied experiences of disability, in a continuum from the most desirable way of being in the world—a radical crip politics—to the more sobering reality of how it can be experienced in very painful and terrible ways. The difference lies not in discursive meanings of disability per se but in the historical contexts in which it is manifested—and it is our relentless focus on those conditions that may enable us to move toward more transformative praxis.

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