Dancing Disability Lab

Wednesday, July 15th, 2020

*\*\*\*This transcript provides a meaning-for-meaning summary to facilitate communication access. TypeWell speech-to-text service may not be a fully verbatim record of the proceedings.*

Vic: Am I the host of this meeting?

Georgina: I think there are multiple hosts.

Vic: Or is it Ryan?

Stephanie is here. Jerron, welcome. All, welcome. Wow.

Well, this is Vic. Hi, Stephanie. Hello, everyone.

There may be a few more people coming, but I think we can start.

Ryan: This is Ryan. Wendy, would you mind, or one just putting the link to the captions in the chat?

Wendy: No problem. Posting in a moment.

Vic: I have put the agenda in the chat, for those who would like to see it. I'll share the agenda out loud

Today, our framing device is the question: What's a body?

In the agenda, I would like to start with everybody just greeting each other. I thought maybe we could begin with the question, where are you at as a body today?

The second thing on the agenda are a few updates. If you are looking at the chat, my indentation didn't work, but two updates in particular, one on access and one hopefully from Alice on agreements from us.

Then a presentation by Rosemarie. Then a brief discussion and a break.

Then my hope is that when we return, we can discuss the excerpts from the work we got to look at. In order to better understand, amplify nuance, or add complexity to the experience of being a body. With the assumption being that artists theorize ideas through their work.

That's so we can learn from everyone here as we expand and think about the contributions we all make, that you all make, to what it means to be a body.

Then the last thing on the agenda is a suggestion for what we do after the meeting. Then we can talk about that at the end.

Okay! With that in mind, -- oh! And Keke, welcome! I am so glad you are here. Just along those lines, before we greet one another, it's very very very very early tomorrow morning where Keke is.

Starting next month, we will all be meeting 1 hour later, thanks to everyone for reorganizing your schedules so Keke can at least get one more hour of rest!

So, let's popcorn our way around, just to check in. How is your body today? I would like to suggest, like, a few words only.

Me? My palms are sweaty and I'm nervous but excited too of course!

Popcorn to Stephanie!

Stephanie: Greetings! I'm exhausted, lack of sleep but excited for everyone to share.

Passing to Dominic.

Dominic: Hi. I am Dominic. I am recovering from a flare up. So, I'm pretty tired. I will popcorn to Jerron.

Jerron: Hey everyone. I am repairing and hyped.

Sorry! Amelia.

Amelia: Hello! I'm a bit sore. I did a bit of exercise today and I'm hungry because it's dinner time here. But I'm good otherwise and I'm excited obviously. Passing to Alice.

Alice: Good morning everyone. I am exhausted from the fight and embrace for more to come.

I pass to Jen.

Jen: Thanks Alice. I'm feeling tense and uncomfortable. I will pass to Rafi.

Rafi: Um, hi. I'm Rafi. I am in a lot of pain. I am really excited to see everyone.

I will pass it to Lauren.

Lauren: Hi. Lauren here. I have been doing lots of emotional work with people, and talking to people. So, I feel like my body is holding lots of people's frustration and anger and hate right now. Passing to Ms. Rosalia.

Rosalia: Hi! I'm sore but happy and excited. Passing it to Pia.

Pia: Hello, everyone. I'm sweaty palms, hungry and need caffeine.

To Georgina.

Georgina: Hi. I just made coffee if you want a cup. I am feeling curious about my right foot which seems to be swollen and I don't know why. And I will popcorn to Rosemarie.

Rosemarie: I'm feeling a combination of dread and comfort. The dread is about whether I can carry out my obligation to you, to bring the insights of critical theory in useful ways and comfort at being here with you.

And I will popcorn, which is an embarrassingly new term to me, to -- I'm sorry -- Vic have you had a turn yet?

Georgina: Vic started.

Rosemarie: Pia?

Jerron: Ryan hasn't gone!

Rosemarie: Okay! Ryan.

Ryan: Hi everyone. Ryan here. I am feeling transient as I am beginning a move today and I feel excited to move in with my partner and begin that journey.

Keke, have you gone?

Keke: Yeah, hi. I have sweaty palms too and I feel exhausted from lack of sleep and my eyes feel itchy.

Am I the last person to go? Lauren?

Lauren: I think all went.

Vic: I think so too.

Well, in all the ways we bring ourselves together, and this is Vic, welcome.

Next on the agenda today, I am unfamiliar with being a host. So, I am learning about this. I welcome your feedback and support and help.

I think that we are learning a great deal about how to come together and access. I just wanted to take a moment to ask Georgina to speak a little about this. In part, because Georgina has been instrumental in framing the notion of access as a crucial part of the Dance and Disability Lab.

So, could I pass it to you, Georgina?

Georgina: Yes. Thank you.

I just wanted to say a few things. Because I am reflecting on the new implications of access in everything I do these days. I spent yesterday and the day before in a 2-day conference on remote teaching. It was illuminating, infuriating, upsetting and inspiring in equal measure. But it was an occasion for me to think about the new demands of the way we exist in the world.

So, I am bringing that reflection here today. I will make a little speech that I have been making continuously since March about Zoom as one aspect of the new way we are being in the world. That's to say, maybe what's obvious to everyone, is that Zoom is a technology created by human beings with certain types of people in mind.

Basically, the ideal user of this platform, this environment, are people who can hear, see, speak, type, have a robust and stable internet connection and who believe that multitasking is both possible and desirable.

If you are a person who can't tick off the majority of those boxes, then you are disabled by this environment.

Now, for most of us being experienced disabled people, we come to this with an advantage. From my perspective as a blind person, when I enter a new environment, whether that's physical or technological, I go into an assumption that it's going to be inaccessible. Then I think strategically about the aspects that don't work for me, what workarounds are available, where do I go to point out these flaws to others?

Okay. So that's been constantly on my mind and it continues to be as I look ahead to teaching in the Fall using this medium. And I'm thinking in advance about the students on the other side of the screen, and how they are possibly disabled by this platform, what are the barriers?

But on top of that, as a member of the Dancing Disability Lab, I am thinking about this medium and how we are learning to use it, and communicate with it. We are talking about and making and experiencing dance. Which typically we think about that as happening in real space and real time.

Obviously as a blind person being asked to look at videos of dance performance is challenging [smiling; almost laughing.] In some sense I feel limited in my ability to respond to anything beyond the texts that you provide. Those I found interesting and I can find different things to say about the strategies different people use to describe or comment on, or preview, the work.

But I knew in advance that I wouldn't have complete access. And I don't know what complete access would mean. I recognize if we were able to meet in real time or real space in Los Angeles, that this would have been an issue for me and for others thereto.

[Switching transcribers.]

And I understand theoretically the strategies I would have used if we were in real time and space. I'm still learning what strategies I need to employ in this new context.

But I'm going into it with the hope and expectation that we as a group can explore this together. To recognize that there are going to be barriers to some of us some of the time. And sometimes removing one barrier is going to create a barrier for someone else. Yes, we need to communicate that to each other. And think collectively and creatively because we are all creative people. About how to make that work.

This is sort of an elaboration of something I said on the first day. But now that we're beginning the work of our time together, I thought I'd state it again. I think that's all I wanted to say. Is there anything else I should address, Vic? [Laughing]

Victoria: Only I think we got some great feedback from some of you about access.

It's very useful. I didn't do it right now-- to say your name before you speak. Also let everyone know when you're done speaking. It just helps with the transitions.

We're working on getting ASL translation for our monthly meeting. That will also help. I don't know if there are other concerns that want to be mentioned right now. Or you can send messages to the Dancing Disability team and we'll work on them. Other thoughts? I'm done.

Amelia: Amelia here. Can I just jump in? We have a similarity in sensory experiences, I'll piggyback off what Georgina said. I assume this would be good for the group to think about. Having guidance on how we describe visuals.

What's nice about what people put on the website is people did it in their own voice, quite differently. That's nice, that gives a tone if you can't see. But some of the descriptions left me unsure of what the visuals were. I think that's just about practice and guidance. I don't know how much people have interacted with audio description and that kind of stuff either. I thought we could think about that more actively, so when people submit something, they know what they put is as clear as possible so it does the thing they want it to do. That's all I wanted to say.

Victoria: This is Vic, thank you Amelia. Absolutely let's take up these questions about description throughout our time together.

One of the key questions is what is perception. We really want to follow that through.

That's it for me.

Stephanie: Hi, this is Stephanie. Thank you for that Amelia. I was first of all fascinated with the audio descriptions I was reading. For me I'm new to this, it was a whole thing in itself. I'm a person who'd like to know about the structure or key points to hit. I want to make my description accessible too. I'd like to learn any structure that entails audio description.

Jen: This is Jen. I think that'd be really important. Like Amelia was saying, having guidance for folks for audio descriptions as well as captioning. I noticed there were only some works with auto captions, which are something but not complete. Some folks tried to include captioning information in the space for audio description, which is not quite the same thing.

Some guidance about those being two separate processes. One provides access for folks with vision loss. One provides access for folks who are deaf and hard of hearing. What's the process for that? The process needs to be given a little more attention. I notice as we go through the questions for the week, "what is access" is addressed quite late. I'm wondering if there's a way to bring the question to the forefront to make sure everyone's included. I'm feeling some missing voices right now. And wanting to ensure everyone has access to everything as early and complete as possible. That should be a priority to me. That's the end of my thought.

Victoria: This is Vic. Jen, thank you. We can move the question forward in time in our sequence. I want to acknowledge that we're missing Shay. And I think it's particularly challenging without ASL translation. So, we're going to try to get that going as soon as possible.

Any other comments?

Alice: This is Alice. I think what I'm hearing, and maybe this is not what I'm hearing-- or what I'm discerning or perceiving-- is a distinction between the theoretical "what is access" and "how do we make access in order to function together."

And it seems that we can certainly structure what is access forward in the conversation on this, but the question of how we make access to do it. Even if we discuss we still need to make access. I'm detecting a gap between what is access, and the practicalities of we are 17 people on a screen hoping to talk about videos, how do we do that?

In which case, I'm seeing some nods and from Jen in the chat saying yes. In that case if I can continue, where do we do that, and how do we do that? Is it in email from us as facilitators? If it is, I would be happy for that to happen in that way. Writing yet another email! Even before we did that, there's a further leg of thinking or strand of thinking or thread of thinking about the gap between, what do we know about access--. For example, a ton is known a priori in theory about audio description. The desirability of that ton is very much under question, and should be under question. I wonder if there's a way to both-- hang on.

I wonder if there's a way to both put in the space that which is thought to be known, and that which is questioned by your specific insights and perceptions of those 17 people gathered on the screen. In which case do we need to put aside time sooner today, perhaps, a discussion before the monster access how to do caption, ASL email. Finishing thought.

Victoria: This is Vic. Alice, thank you. I think you've really pulled apart some of the threads of this in a really productive way. My sense is in the immediate we need to address some basic access issues. Then in the moment to moment general, as we continue together, to continue to invent, challenge, resolve, create opportunities that we as a group can find together that will help us to innovate in terms of the ways in which description can function. For example, for one.

I see this as part of our creative process as well as a necessity for our engagement together. Finish thought.

Amelia: Amelia jumping in quickly. I don't know if this is more practice. On a practical level related to things that have been said. If people are new to audio description, I'm happy to offer help. I don't know if it's clear from what I sent-- creative audio description while making things accessible is my jam. I can help people with how I think about stuff. With the caveat this is biased from my experience. It might not work for the group but it's a place to start.

With the provocations there's the idea, maybe a couple of us go away and talk about the thing we're going to respond to. Can we do a watch party that had the ability to say, describe what their piece was. There could be clear boundaries. It could be harder than I'm saying. But we could watch the thing. It could be a couple of us at a time. A small group. The people who need access like audio description could be in that room virtually. Then we could have a way of interacting with this stuff in a little more practical way. The other thing with the description is reading the text of something is not the same as watching the video. I can play the video alongside it and still have no idea what the video is. It can be hard to connect what's written to what's shown. That's an offer and thought if that might be a thing that works.

Victoria: This is Vic. Amelia, that idea of watch parties is so exciting. Maybe thinking about small groups, we could have multiple watch parties between now and when we meet. What is a body, and the upcoming question of what is disability being the framework with which we have a conversation about the work. One person's work or all the people in the group's work. Talking about it. That can be a great follow up to this meeting. Thank you for that idea and I'm finished.

This is Vic again. Are there more thoughts about access for now? I ask that with the strong belief that we're not done with this conversation. It is the excitement of being together that we'll be continuing this conversation. More comments in the immediate? Finish.

Jen: I appreciate what Amelia said about people saying their thing in their own voice. That makes a difference. If we have watch parties. The creator of the work can be the lead of the description, that would be really cool. As well for describing auditory access. I'm sure folks would most often have some type of loose script available. Making that transparent to the group would help provide the auditory access if we can't at least embed the captions. That's the end of my thought.

Victoria: This is Vic one more time.

I'm wondering if maybe Jen and Amelia can coordinate or direct or help us. Maybe on the website it would be something to do. To give us some frameworks as you've described them. It sounds like you're shaping an idea of this. So, we can join in. Would you be willing to do that Jen, and Amelia?

Amelia: Sure.

Jen: Sure, if you let us know where you'd like that.

Amelia: Also, if we do a watch party, do we need our own account, etc.? It goes down that sticky road.

Victoria: This is Vic, happy to work on that with you.

[Switching transcribers]

Alice: This is Alice. Alongside that, the complexity of this conversation needs to be actually -- what are some of the things -- like you made your dance video. Your web video. You put it up. Do people know the things they should be looking at that need to be quote/unquote "made accessible." It's conceivable to me that the knowledge base, the foundation of what might need to be addressed to even engage the question of access is not a common foundation.

Can someone, or am I in the right place here? Finishing.

Georgina: Could you elaborate Alice? I couldn't understand what you were saying. This is Georgina.

Alice: Yes Georgina, this is Alice. I am detecting a question about what sorts of things do people need to be looking at. If you consider a video. Like you made it and you are about to upload it, you ask yourself, did I make it accessible? What should I look at? What do I attempt to address when making work accessible?

It's not clear to me that the knowledge base is consistent enough across the group to understand what that might be, or what that actually might be.

Rafi: There was a YES from Rosalia in the chat.

Dominic: This is Dominic. Yes, that's a part I had trouble with when I did my content summary. I assumed, and maybe my assumption was wrong, that what I needed to do was to state what was actually happening without attempting to provide an analysis or interpret what was happening, instead leaving that to the person who needed the audio description.

But that's something that, while I have heard of it being used to make things more accessible, I didn't have personal experience of creating something like that.

Amelia: Amelia here -- sorry!

Vic: Go for it!

Amelia: Dominic, your description was really clear! Yours was one of the ones I think I understood the most. My understanding is that traditional audio description is "neutral." So you kind of get a baseline. This is what's happening in front of you. But when you are in the space, and the person in front of you is being described, that's fine as a translation.

But the conversation developing here is that in relation to what we are doing, our website and our space, maybe there's more we could do, if that makes sense.

Because it's like, if you go into analysis that's an interesting thing in itself. But it's not description it's a different thing. But having your tone of voice in what you describe is also very useful information. It's a weird balance that changes every time someone makes a new piece of performance. [Laughing.]

But that's my understanding about it. I hope that adds clarity for those new to the audio description world.

Vic: This is Vic. I hope we can put a bookmark here in this discussion. But in doing that, I want to say that I totally agree. There's no neutral and there's no singular way to describe something. In fact, no amount of words can approximate what happens when a person is moving, you know, the complexity of a body.

I also feel in addition to being about access that this is about dancing itself. How do we know what we are doing, and how do we share that? Where does our attention go? There are so many layers.

So, in conclusion for the moment, I would like for the watch parties to apply to this question. There's no singular way. There are conventions, but again, this is a time for us to challenge those conventions and I believe to even more deeply engage what dancing does by the projects of description.

So, this is an opportunity for the watch parties, and Jen and Amelia, I am happy to shape this with you so you can help us move into this over the next month and the starting place of the next month. Does that sound okay, question mark?

Alice: Sorry I know you want to move on but I want to be swift about this. We can develop this more in whatever email we send. But just so there's a common foundation across the group, if text need captions with a transcript with a time stamp afterwards? Ideal practices as I know them. If there's text in your work, you need captions and an ideal practice would have you provide a transcript with time stamps after it. If you do an audio description, you might describe the backgrounds, the visuals, the sets, the costumes, your embodiment, race, ethnicity, gender etc., and the movement and things happening, and then everything that Amelia just said, and how you might do it.

In best practice, you would provide a transcript of that afterwards. If you had text and the description, you could provide a super-transcript that mixes the audio and the captions. If you have music, you could record the description separately so it goes with the music and that tells the distinction between the summary and the description. Like if the video is 4 minutes long and the transcript is 3 minutes long, that's a summary.

And you could record the description with the video so it goes along. So, I can summarize these current practices and we can interrogate them, but for right now these are the considerations at play for starting points. End.

Vic: Thank you, Alice. Looking at the agenda for today, it's good! We are -- sorry, this is Vic -- completely off the agenda. This is a really really important discussion.

But the next thing on the agenda was Agreements. But I think we are already discussing some aspect of agreements. So, I want to table further discussion around agreements as a group for the next time we meet.

Let's shift over to the presentation that Rosemarie has prepared. Is that okay with everyone? That we move forward to having Rosemarie's Presentation? Maybe a little acknowledgment in some form? Thank you.

Okay, Rosemarie, over to you.

Rosemarie: The conversation we have been having so far, particularly Georgina's explication around access is an important preamble to what I am offering you today.

I have prepared a PowerPoint presentation. PowerPoint is a mode of communication. It's a knowledge tool and in my world, and I am in the knowledge industry because I am an educator and researcher, which is my practice, there's been much development, much conversation in my industry, the knowledge industry about how to make knowledge and learning accessible.

A PowerPoint is one of the tools we have been using and discussing a lot. I have been working with many other colleagues to try to create what might be called "best practices for PowerPoint" as a learning or communication tool. So, I am putting that forward to you, the form of PowerPoint as an accessible learning tool. I will call attention to this as I do it, to access and how we theorize and practice access in my industry towards PowerPoint.

One interesting quip about PowerPoint and this was made by a blind colleague of ours, is that PowerPoint is a learning aid for sighted people. That's partly true. But those who work with PowerPoint as a learning tool, we have tried to create PowerPoint presentations that use multiple formats of communication in order to be multiply accessible in a variety of formats.

I'll call attention to that as we move forward.

One thing I want to talk about, since we are discussing description, I intentionally in any PowerPoint presentation that I use, that tool, I use images to use visual text that is to say words on a screen, and to use audio communication, that is to say my voice, as the three basic modes of communication that are a part of PowerPoint. So, I will describe the images I use in here intentionally.

I hope to model what we are doing in our theories of accessibility with PowerPoint. Now these are static images. These are less challenging to describe than dynamic images like a dance video. But the key to the way we imagine making an accessible ... [audio out.] But rather to describe what the audience needs to know in your point.

I'll begin. Some limitations. My assignment was to make a half hour or 30-minute PowerPoint. That's always hard to do for any presentation. So, Ryan, could you help me a little bit. I have a whole bunch of devices here.

Please remind me of time halfway through? Remind me where my PowerPoint is. Ryan will do that.

Ryan: Ryan here. Rosemarie, how would you like me to notify you of the time in the chat?

Rosemarie: Just interrupt me with your voice!

The chat is not that accessible for me. I don't type. But I am using an iPad. When you open Chat, it takes up 3/4 of the screen in the middle of the iPad. So, I will have Chat closed. I'm happy for you to just talk over me, thank you.

Ryan: Ryan here. That's totally fine. I will share my screen now with the PowerPoint. Maybe let's wait just a minute so folks can rearrange their windows to include the captioning. The captioning is in the chat. And it's available in phones and any device that has a web browser.

Rosemarie: Part of what I always do in my knowledge practice here, is to begin with an access statement of some kind. I have done that with you a little already --

Ryan: Rosemarie? I wonder if you want to take a break. Someone has messaged about that. Some are dealing with some things. Would a 5-minute break work for folks?

Am I the person to make the decision? It sounds like yes!

So, Rosemarie, you and I will put the video up. If you want to turn things off, we can set that up.

Vic: This is Vic. It looks like there are a few people who want a break. So, take 5 minutes. Then we will carry forward refreshed with Rosemarie. Finished.

Ryan: I will share my screen now. Our fridge is broken for the move so I'm sorry about that. Navigating that now. I think you are still on mute.

Rosemarie: Can you all hear me?

Ryan: Everyone theoretically can hear you.

Alice: I can hear you if you take your microphone off silent.

Rosemarie: I was about to announce I was going to the bathroom for the break.

Ryan: Go ahead! [Laughing.] I'll set this up.

[5-minute Break: Starting 10:59 AM PT/ 1:59 PM ET.]

Vic: I can confirm the shared screen.

I see the slides on the side, and the big one in the center.

Ryan: Is it full screen now?

Vic: Yes.

Ryan: Amazing.

Rosemarie: Ryan, will I be viewable myself?

Ryan: It depends on how the screen is set up. On a computer, I have five images of folks’ videos shown and then the PowerPoint displayed. But it depends on the folks’ screen size and if they are even viewing this.

Vic: Rosemarie, in everyone's controls there's an option to show the Active Speaker video in addition to seeing the screen sharing. So, I can see you in a little video on the screen and then the rest of the screen is devoted to your PowerPoint.

Rosemarie: I see you in a little rectangle at the bottom so I think that will happen. Except I see you and not me. That's fine, I just want to figure out how it works.

Vic: It's the active speaker you see. So, it brings up whoever is making sound.

[Switching transcribers.]

Amelia: You can pin screens. The host of the Zoom can pin screens for everyone. I don't know if that's too complex for what's being done right now.

Ryan: I'm lead host now; would it help to pin Rosemarie's screen?

Amelia: Try it to see what happens.

Ryan: I believe I can also spotlight videos. Does that work?

Speaker: I see my own face, not the PowerPoint.

Victoria: The PowerPoint is up. "What is a Body." And you in a little square Rosemarie.

Rosemarie: I've lost the PowerPoint.

Georgina: You had it before?

Rosemarie: Yes.

Georgina: Maybe if Ryan goes back to the original.

Rosemarie: And you will advance the slides? I'll say "next"?

Ryan: Yes. Is this good now Rosemarie? You can see the PowerPoint?

Rosemarie: No. I can only see you.

There we go!

This will be workable. I can see the PowerPoint. This is enough. We'll just move on.

Ryan: This is Ryan. I'm ready when you are.

Victoria: This is Vic. I don't know if everyone's back, but I think we should begin.

[End Break.]

Rosemarie: I wanted to make 2 comments about access. In determining the themes or the words that we were going to examine in our time together, we knew we wanted access. We spent time deciding whether we wanted to begin, or end with what is access. We decided to end with "what is access" because that's a place of emphasis. We could use our time at the end to talk about what we've learned about access. What access might be. And evaluate in some ways the accessible practices we had developed as we went through these months together.

To put access at the end doesn't mean we don't consider it 'til the end. It means it will be extremely important to talk about it throughout our entire time together. I suggest we leave access at the end with the explanation, caveat I put forth. We can discuss that later if we want. The other thing I begin with in my practice is that access is always an aspirational ideal. This is an important Way to frame access, to know it's a process, it's something we reach for, and learn about. And that changes perpetually in terms of the context and the situation in which access is achieved or aspired toward.

So, I will begin. What is a body? That's our question or theme for the day. This is my first slide. I'm Rosemarie Garland Thompson, I'm a professor of English, disability studies, and bioethics as well. We'll be talking about that throughout this presentation a bit. I work at Emory University in Atlanta though I'm in San Francisco California with most of you. This is July 15, 2020.

Next slide.

I'm beginning here with words. I'll focus on words.

Words are a mode of expression or communication that's particularly congenial to me, because of my body. And the way I use my body in the world.

I am not a dancer. I am a talker. This is what has led me to the job that I have. I have a job of as I say, talking for a living. And working with words. Which is different from the kind of practice many of you have as dancers.

I'll begin with a phrase Alice offered to us, "intersectional disability aesthetics." I think Alice said this may be what we do as a practice together over the next year. I want to think about some of those words.

I want to talk about "intersectional" as a piece of language, as a word, as part of vocabulary of critical theory. I want to talk with and to you about disability as a concept, as an identity category. And I'll talk less today about aesthetics but I'll gesture in that direction as well. I think I'll be able to talk more about aesthetics and the politics and culture of representation a little later. But I want to focus on intersectional, and disability today.

Next slide.

I'll offer, as I do, and I'll call attention to my access practices. Some words written on the screen. Generally, to make a PowerPoint presentation most accessible, one considers the visual, the aural and the design aspect of the presentation. A general rule, have as little words on the screen as possible. And white sans serif font against black background. This is understood as visually most accessible form of using PowerPoint and using text and background. That's the mode I've used in the slides I present. This is an exemplary slide without many words. I'll read the words. They'll appear in two forms. One is auditory. Also, they appear in visual form.

This is a definition. My definition of disability. It's one of several definitions on offer of disability.

I'll begin here with 4 offerings. 4 statements about disability I have developed in my practice.

The first one is this definition of disability.

"Disability is a record written on the body of our encounter between flesh and world."

I should say this PowerPoint will be archived on some big archive in the sky that's part of our website. I have a longer, larger version of this that will be archived as well.

Usually in my knowledge practice I put together a very long PowerPoint presentation. And I cull from that a briefer presentation. I thought it'd be useful for you to reference this presentation as well as a much longer form of it.

Next slide.

This is another offering of my own knowledge practice that has to do with disability.

“For humans to thrive, we need to be ensconced in an environment that sustains the particular form, function, and needs of our bodies.”

This is a claim, a knowledge claim. It's also an ethical claim. We can talk about all of these claims I'm offering, these 4 claims, during our discussion or any other time in our time together.

Next slide.

This is the third claim or assertion coming from me and my practice.

“Disability justice shapes environments to fit humans rather than shaping humans to fit environments.”

Next slide.

This is the final assertion or claim that comes from me, my practice, about disability, bodies, identity, intersectional disability aesthetics.

“The lived experiences of disability provide individuals and human communities with multiple opportunities for expression, creativity, resourcefulness, relationships, and flourishing.”

This is a statement about what I consider to be the generative potential of disability. Disability dance is an example of the generative potential of disability. In some sense this claim is crucial to our project of creating dance together in the time we'll be with one another.

I have to get my PowerPoint back.

Next slide.

What I'm going to discuss today are 2 critical terms. The first of these critical terms coming from critical theory or critical race theory or feminist theory or critical disability theory or critical disability studies. A lot of use of the word "critical," we can talk about that later.

The idea of social construction. I'll talk about the social construction of race, gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity. The social construction of identity categories if you will. Of reality of you will. These terms mobilize social constructionism. I'll talk about that.

We can have strong constructivism in understanding identity categories or interpretations. Or weak. I'll talk about that when we move forward. The last term that has to do with social constructivism is the concept of intersectionality. This is crucial. Because the social construction of identity categories or social construction of human identity rests on the premise that all people are identified by and identify within multiple categories of being, or multiple categories of identity at the same time. In other words, everyone involved in social life occupies a position in the identity category or social system we think of as "race."

No matter what position one has, one has a position in the social system of race. Whether that position is, as a person of color, white person, black person, brown person. There are various positions in this social system. Race is not something owned or occupied solely by people of color, people in the "marked" category. But by everyone, even those who occupy the unmarked category, the universal category. Which in race is understood as whiteness. Everyone occupies a position.

Same is true in the binary social category of gender. Everyone occupies some kind of position in this continuum or binary of gender. Whether that position is masculine or feminine, male or female, intersex, trans. There are a variety of positions articulated in relation to where we fall. Where we're assigned. Where we claim in that system. As well as the system of sexuality and certainly of course disability. Everyone occupies a place in the social system of disability. This is very important when we think of intersectionality. It's important to recognize that all these categories constitute our identity, we move in our lives within and amongst all these categories at the same time. Next slide.

I'll offer a little about the history of critical theory and critical vocabulary. I wanted to point out that probably the earliest articulation of social constructivism comes from the French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir who wrote The Second Sex in 1949. This is a famous quote used in early social constructivist theory, if you will, on the shared screen. And social constructivist theory comes from the field of sociology, which is very important to recognize. Which academic discipline gives us these terms.

[Switching transcribers]

But de Beauvoir was a philosopher.

"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."

So, they are talking about the social category, or the social system, that we call gender, and these are assigned to people upon birth in the binary categories of woman or man.

What's revelatory about this work in 1949 is that she recognizes that achieving the identity, the gender identity of woman here, is a process. That one becomes through a series of experiences, through a series of repetitive performances, and to use Judith Butler's concept of performativity, that one comes into identity through acts of embodiment.

Okay, next slide.

The second concept from critical theory that I wanted to introduce to you today, has a variety of different terms that describe it. I listed some of these terms here on the slide.

I will read these and then talk more about them.

One way of talking about this, is to use the term perspectivism, or perspectivalism, a very awkward term. A more felicitous term from femininity is the idea of standpoint theory.

From another knowledge vector, if you will, comes relativism. I'll leave that there for a few moments and talk about the last two ways of talking about this concept I want to bring forward, that I actually like! I term is the phrase, situated knowledge. The other phrase is the idea of "the view from nowhere." Let's see if I can explain how these all work together.

These suggest that knowledge or perception of the world comes to us not from some objective knowing view, not from some god's eye view, nor some view from nowhere, nor some scientifically subjective viewpoint, but from specifically situated bodied knowers positioned differentially in bodies.

So, what this creates is a kind of crisis in philosophy and in specifically epistemology and the philosophy of knowledge and knowing. That says there's many ways of understanding, of viewing, of knowing the world. Phenomenology is another contribution to this idea.

This idea is very important in understanding what we sometimes call difference, or what we sometimes call diversity. What we sometimes call the recognition of varying kinds of identity systems. So, one of the things that feminist standpoint theory has put forward is that because of the process of becoming a woman, which is a social process according to de Beauvoir, women through that process know the world differently because of their position in the world as women, their embodied position. They know the world differently from men, who again are positioned differently. Men as beings who have been, if you will, socialized to become men.

Now one of the most important aspects I think is the concept of situated knowledge that is to say our situation creates the kind of knowledge we have of the world.

Now, this entire philosophical enterprise that is sometimes called relativism has shattered the idea that there is a universal viewpoint, that there is a universal way of knowing, that there is a universal hierarchical system of knowledge that is right, that is sometimes understood as divinely determined, and has created an understanding of multiple knowers positioned multiply. This has created a new valuing of what we think of as the concept of diversity, of diverse ways of knowing, and diverse knowledge positions.

This has been crucial to identity studies, race theory, feminist theory, of queer theory.

Next slide.

Ryan: Hi, Rosemarie, it's Ryan. It's been about 20ish minutes and you have 17 left.

Rosemarie: Thank you; this is my curse. I talk too much.

Here is the first image I will describe. This is a photograph of me. This photograph illustrates the position of me, and it illustrates my body as a knowing body. So, I will describe what I am.

I am a woman. I am a woman that could be described as a white woman. I am a relatively small woman. In this picture I have glasses, short silver hair, I have on a black shirt that's part of the uniform of my work. What is perhaps most apparent in the foreground of the picture are my hands that I put forward. They are a distinctive part of my embodiment that determines my identity as a person with a disability. I have unusual hands and arms. I have four fingers on my right hand which is in the foreground of this photo of myself. My left Hand is less accessible. It's smaller than my right and has 2 fingers on it. It's always hidden in the sleeve of my shirt.

I hold in these hands, the iPad I am using here today. Because it's a very accessible form of technology. It operates by touch. So, this photo of me introducing myself is important in positioning myself as a knower, a subject and an agent in the world.

Now I will transition into something that will be more quick than what I have done before. I want to explain these difficult concepts and give a general idea of where they come from in the archive of disciplinary knowledge.

I'll talk about the development of the concept of "normal." This illustration is the Vitruvian Man. It's a drawing by Leonardo da Vinci from 1490. It's quite famous. It's line drawing of a man who appears to be of European genetic heritage, as we might say, standing facing forward. He has long hair that would have been a part of the style of a renaissance or early modern Italian man.

The man is shown in two front-on perspective drawings so that he appears to have four arms. Two are raised even with his head, and two others reach straight out from his chest. Then he has four legs. These images are superimposed on each other. You see his genitals. Two legs are together and the other two are spread. He creates a circle.

This man has come to emblematize the universal subject of Western culture. The white, able-bodied male.

This concept of the universal subject, of the universal man, has given rise to a concept of normalcy that is very particularly raced and gendered and abled and sexualized.

Next slide.

There is a history of the idea of normal that begins, and there are many places where you can read about the development of normal. Normal comes as a description of human bodies beginning around the end of the 19th century when statistics and counting and measuring and science become the dominant mode of understanding and interpreting the world. So normal comes to stand as a description of a statistical phantom and aspirational ideal.

In the Taming of Chance, it's said that it becomes one of the most ideological tools of the 20th century. Here I am showing two images from 1893. These are anthropometric composite figures from Dudley Sargeant of a normative man and neoromantic woman in European culture. These two statues are very familiar to anyone who has a familiarity with say, museum culture. We see these statues all the time.

This is a statue of a nude, again, European normative woman and a European normative man, very much like Leonardo's Vitruvian Man. They of a particular race, and of a particular bodily configuration. It's hard to know what sexual identity they might operate within, but a good way to describe the norm, or the normal, and these ended up having the names Norm and Norma. Well, that's another set of figures. But these are very much the model for Norm and Norma.

But one description that comes from Erving Goffman in *Stigma*, a good disability studies founding text, describes the norm or the normal person, or the unstigmatized person in western culture from the 1960s. He writes, perhaps with irony, there's “only one complete unblushing male in America:

a young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual, Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight and height, and a recent record in sports.” [quote on shared screen slide.]

Goffman here is capturing that this figure in 1960s America of the most complete normalcy, or the figure that has accrued the most privilege. And of course, this has been challenged by critical race theory, queer studies and disability studies for the entire time that these knowledge bases have been operating.

How am I for time?

Ryan: 10 minutes left?

Rosemarie: Oh. Okay.

I'll move forward more quickly here.

I want to introduce here a brief history of eugenics. I will move from sociology through philosophy, which are the two places I have taken you, now onto history by talking about a way of thinking. I'll talk about what science was, and perhaps still is.

At the time in western culture that normal is being developed as a concept, and as a statistical phantom and aspirational ideal, by giving you some images that I will talk about and some definitions around eugenics.

I'm showing an image which is the eugenics tree logo from 1985. I can recommend many books on eugenics, but eugenics was a science through the late half of the 20th century. This illustration is a tree with many roots. All of these roots are the different disciplines in academic knowledge, such as genealogy, biology, history, sociology, religion, etc. Eugenics is understood as the self-direction of human evolution. Eugenics means good genes and it's the science of improving the race.

Now the race was understood in western culture, European and American culture in particular, not narrowly as being race as we understand it now in the United States, but a larger set of categories that would encompass a variety of different forms of human embodiment. So, race was the human species, and understood as a race that was divided into a variety of different kinds of races. There were many names for these different kinds of races. But eugenics was an effort to understand human differences and to select for and against human variations in order to improve and create the best kind of humans.

The definition of eugenics I will offer in the next slide that is my own definition

"Eugenics is the ideology and practice of shaping -- I use "shaping" a lot -- a particular human community according to its values and by controlling who reproduces, how they reproduce and what they reproduce." Eugenics was about controlling sexuality and that means it was about controlling who marries and who makes families with other people.

Next slide.

[Switching transcribers.]

Ryan: You're coming up on the final few minutes.

Rosemarie: Thank you. I have images to show how eugenics was carried out. The Nazis carried it out most fully to its conclusion because it was a totalitarian state. This image written in German is of an Aryan family. What's eerie about this family is that it conforms, the physiology of the family, to Dudley Sargent's [sp?] figures of 1893.

We have a white Aryan looking father, mother, the mother dressed like a happy peasant woman. There are 4 children able-bodied, a heteronormative family. 2 boys 2 girls. Gender, racial hierarchies are enforced in this family called "The Healthy Germans." A healthy German family. We see the convergence of what we think of as normalcy in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, connected up with the concept of health.

What we have is that normal and the ascendance of normal is an enforcement of medical normalcy. An enforcement of health. As the highest virtue in the modern regime of normalcy.

Let me show 3 other images quickly. Then I'll stop and we can think about when to complete this. Next slide.

This is the kind of practice of eugenics that took place in the United States. This is just one example, the most perfect baby contest, this is from 1949 Brooklyn. 2 white European mothers holding up 3 white-looking European-looking able-bodied babies. One has won the contest. There's normalcy and perfection, highly raced, gendered, sexually normative, that begins to be associated with health and medical normalcy.

Next slide.

Here we have something else. This comes from the discourse of design and making.

This is Le Corbusier, an architect who lived 1887-1965. This is his concept of the "modular man." I'll describe this briefly. It's a very modern or modernist looking design using red, white, blue, and black almost. A kind of very modernist looking design. A man, measured here. A silhouette, outline, similar to the Vitruvian Man but modernized. It's measured in order to be prescribed as the ideal figure for which buildings were created.

This figure that is a gendered, able, sexualized figure in many ways, is an ideal figure for whom buildings were created.

And part of the movement of universal design and accessible is to call into question the gendered, the abled, the sexual nature of this phantom figure. This "normate" if you will for whom the world was built and designed. One more image, then we'll break this up.

This is an image of what I call the normate template. It's an image of a baby. I think it's from 2010s. I don't have the date in here. It's an image of a baby. Much like the 1949 baby that won the better or most perfect baby contest. This is an image of a normal baby in terms of its genetic baby. A very cute, white, seemingly able-bodied blonde baby. A Gerber baby lying on its stomach with a diaper on.

It has many labels on it. High IQ. No baldness. Perfect pitch. Its feet are the feet of a sprinter. Its eyes have 20-20 vision. Its brain or mind or head has low risk of Alzheimer's, low risk of breast cancer and strokes. This is an image of the normal baby that has been created through the new medical field of genetics and new field of genetic testing and selective genetic practices that have created the idea now in medicine and reproductive medicine of the normal and healthy subject.

So, we move from Leonardo's 1490 Vitruvian man to this normal, healthy newborn in a very smooth, eugenic pattern that leads us to where we are today in the critique that is critical disability studies. I'll stop there. You can access the rest of this PowerPoint, you can think about it and ask questions, later on.

Thank you.

Victoria: That was fantastic, Rosemarie, I wish we had more time for you to go on. So many exciting ideas. I hope we have plenty of time to come back to it. For everyone, the agenda we originally shared was perhaps one plan. Let me get gallery view.

This was the best way this meeting could have gone from my perspective. I think we had a good discussion on access. Thank you, Jerron. Jerron gave me a yes signal. That's the other thing about Zoom, it's weird socially.

I do want to have at least a couple moments to share with Rosemarie some of the musings, questions, illuminations her presentation brought up. But knowing we're 8 minutes before we finish, I want to suggest our follow-up. Then we can go back and have our own closures together.

Since we didn't have time to talk about the work posted on our website, I'd like to suggest that in the immediate, we go to the website and under the heading "Responses" we share some of our responses and specifically the thought of what does this excerpt of work tell us about the body.

I've already uploaded a few responses and I'll continue to do that. It'd be nice that it's not one single person's experience but multiple.

Also, I'd like to follow up on the watch parties of this work and hopefully before August in groups of 3 or so.

We can get together and share work and talk about it.

And I'm also hoping, maybe this is too long of a wish list. But whatever musings you have following today and Rosemarie's presentation, that we can put a place on the website and share with one another. And follow through with Ryan and Lauren. Under the heading "What is the Body" we can have musings on Rosemarie's presentation.

Rosemarie: This is Rosemarie, I want to add something. The material I presented today that comes from theory might or might not be useful. I wanted to connect what we're doing to critical disability studies in some way. If this is useful. And if you would like to know more about it. There's a lot. I'm available for a phone call. You can just kind of contact me. We can have a FaceTime or phone call. You can say, “tell me more about this. What did you mean by...?” That would be so welcome as a way for us to get to know one another. This is the kind of thing we may have had if we were together. A coffee or drink in the afternoon at the beautiful UCLA campus.

That's what makes this format feel so constricting. We don't have that luxury of being together. So, I would be amenable to that. If any of you want to do that. If it's of interest to you in your practice to know more about this theory business. That's all.

Victoria: Thank you Rosemarie. I'd like to suggest that before we sign off, we do a go around. To put some closure on this.

Maybe we can share something in our mind that's vibrating from what Rosemarie shared or from anything in today's meeting that will percolate with you as we go forward. Very brief. It's like creating a pot of shared experience. Not necessarily shared by everyone but we can share it with one another before we leave. I wonder if someone would like to start. Are my instructions pretty clear?

Maybe so. Just closure. It's something you're going to keep thinking about from today.

Stephanie: I'll start, this is Stephanie. Right away I'm having strong feelings about the presentation just offered.

I need therapy right now after that. Not that anything was new about it for me. I didn't necessarily see anything new. But all the images. I know we didn't finish the presentation. I can imagine a through line and arc. But what was offered was painful. All the images. All the Euro normative hetero normative realities. In 2020 most of us understand that.

For me, there's always a frontloading of all that. As a person of color with disability and daughter of immigrants, I feel completely invisible the whole time. I know that was the goal of everything that was presented. So, I get it, I understand the intention of all that. But I'm hoping for something new. I'm hoping for all of us to come from this perspective of where people are more included in the images so we feel included in what's being talked about. Again, I understand the intention, I'm noting the impact of all the images. And where I'm at. End of my thought.

[Switching transcribers]

Dominic: This is Dominic. I just wanted to piggyback on what Stephanie said. You know, I cannot speak for anyone else, but I feel that I have had the exposure to that historical context.

I found myself really disappointed. That's what I am living through and attempting to survive in a very real and visceral way. I am living this out.

So, I didn't feel that the PowerPoint was 100% necessary for me. And I also had a moment of, well, wait. I did all this work, all this labor selecting my video, uploading it, deciding the key/queue points, writing the content summary, and it was never even discussed. That is what was most exciting to me about having this time was to really get exposure to other people's work, to dig in and discuss.

That was tough. I think somehow we need to find a better balance, because I can say honestly -- and there's no heat in this -- that the way things are just so heavy with the theoretical isn't working for me right now. That's the end of my thought.

Vic: Does anyone else want to share anything? We are just moving outside our agreed upon time. If you can, stay for a few more minutes. That would be great. But if you need to leave, we understand.

Amelia: Amelia here, and my cat is being fed behind me. My partner is putting our cat through an obstacle course. Enjoy if you can see that.

I agree with what's been said as much as I can from my position in a different country and time zone. I agree I think that I wish we had gotten to talk about the work posted on the website. I really enjoyed the PowerPoint and I'm glad that that happened. Maybe I missed something in the correspondence. I didn't realize that was what was going to happen. Maybe that's on my part and I need to pay better attention.

But I understand that things that come up from the PowerPoint for me, and I have this question when people talk about race, and intersectionality and things that don't get mentioned is the implication of class and education. That links to Stephanie's and Dominic's comments. In the theoretical body that's described is that something that's assumed is that this person will be educated in a specific way and have a neurology that gets along with that education.

Being someone at times that is very much that person and at other times very NOT that person, I think there are others in this situation that might feel that too. I think these are points that should be a part of the discussion but don't always get mentioned. And I'm done.

Jerron: This is Jerron. I'm grateful for all the offerings we had today. I'm thinking mostly about our decisions to possibly expand our responses or our response time to things. Even extending beyond the day that we communicate together to be the time that we dissect or uncover our artworks. That's expensive. Thank you, Amelia.

I'm excited to know ....

Vic: Can everyone hear Jerron? You suddenly dropped out. We can't hear you so well.

Try speaking again, Jerron?

Jerron: I'm trying to switch something. How's that?

Vic: A bit better.

Jerron: Okay. Gosh.

Vic: Maybe get closer to your computer mic? I don't know.

Jerron: Is that better?

Vic: Way better.

Jerron: Excited for the expansion of the container we have. Thank you all for your offerings. [Laughing.]

Vic: Does anyone want to share before we close this up?

Alice: This is Alice. I want to think structurally. Period. Finish that part of the thought.

I would love to offer some more flexible format for conversation. I figure that if someone wanted to talk about x, there's probably more than one person who wants to talk about it. I would love to offer more flexible formats that say could be an equivalent of like chat, coffee, office hours, or to think about expanding a phone call to do work together.

I would love to do that and figure out how it works across time and access. So, I'm trying to figure out how to talk to you more and spend time in a way that involves concepts and ideas that join together. Whether that's work ideas or reactions.

I am really interested in that as a format. So, like to say I'm available from a to b and I'm available over the weekends to chat more. I would love that to be a part of my lab practice.

Responding to Stephanie and Dominic about how we think through race and gender and Amelia about education and class, and the neurobiology of access, yeah! Yeah! Yeah.

I feel it. I feel it deeply. End of thought! [Laughing.] There are no words for me, other than I feel it and I feel it deeply.

Ryan: This is Ryan. I know we are encroaching on the end. Speaking of access, those who don't have access to what we are talking about, so it's not in a long email, a few things:

Office hours and we can provide emails for the instructors. This space will be on the About Page. It WILL be put onto the About page.

Under Resources you will find the transcripts for the prior two calls. The PowerPoint specifically will be under the What is a Body heading Response and comments are available for that PowerPoint if we want to continue those discussions. This is so you don't have to sift through the emails. This is to just say it here because we are all together.

Vic: As we leave one another, I want to say that absolutely creating new work, talking about dance work, is the centerpiece of this. But alongside understanding the discourses that we participate in all around us, I know some of you are already very very familiar with these.

I think we are trying to do a lot of things in two hours. I think that conversation around access was so important. Not finished but it's essential and that eclipsed some of our other time together. I will commit to figuring out in advance the time we need.

But we are jumping into a relationship like we have lived together for a long time. But that's the beauty of meeting monthly before we meet in person. We have this opportunity to do the pleasure and the work of learning who we are as communities and as artists, and so on, in advance of being together. So, I ask for your patience and tolerance as find our way.

The other piece, we have facilitators and I am the convener of this we want this to feel like a horizontal opportunity where we shape the direction together. So that means it's a little more meta thinking and creative process. So that's the creative process together and being a group that can do that together. I feel like as much as I'm familiar with the material Rosemarie gave us, I think in this context you opened ways of thinking for us to build vocabularies together that will be extremely useful.

I will ask you again to use the website. I already made responses and I will upload those to every piece sometime today. I hope it's not the only response to the question: How am I learning about the body from this work? From each work?

I hope you have the time to do that with each other.

Through a studio visit? Or a watch party? Like Jen and I get together, Jen and Shay and I get together and we have a smaller group sharing of working and talking. However it is. So we all can join together. I know Rosemarie and Dominic offered their time. So let's all do that and find out what we can do for each other.

Anything else to say? Or you can all go to bed, or to wherever you need to go. Holding space.

I'm finished.

Alright then. Goodbye everyone. Until soon.

[Goodbyes.]

[End meeting.]

*\*\*\*This transcript provides a meaning-for-meaning summary to facilitate communication access. TypeWell speech-to-text service may not be a fully verbatim record of the proceedings.*