Disability and Climate Justice:
A Forgotten and Misunderstood Intersection

Legal Issues and Obstacles to Including the
Disabled People in Climate Justice Policies

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This text is based on a dissertation defended in June 2025 as part of the University Diploma – Disabled peoples: Fundamental Rights and Social Inclusion at the Catholic University of Lyon (UCLY).

Abstract: This dissertation explores the intersection between disability, structural violence, and climate justice through a critical and decolonial perspective. It highlights how dominant climate policies reproduce exclusionary logics inherited from colonial history, the medical model, and past and current eugenic practices. Through an analysis of international mandates, historical injustices, and contemporary dynamics of invisibility, this dissertation questions the ability of current inclusion approaches to meet the real needs of disabled peoples in a context of global crisis. It advocates for a systemic transformation based on the recognition of situated knowledge, epistemic justice, and the abandonment of normative paradigms, in favor of a radically inclusive approach to social and climate justice.

Preamble

To all those fighting to make deinstitutionalization and prison abolition a reality. There are particularly complex, challenging, and demanding tasks, both intellectually and humanly, that require the ability to hold, doubt, listen, and search tirelessly. Certain people, through their experiences, sensitivity, or lucidity, are best suited to carry them out. These essential people are rendered invisible and vulnerable by the very structures they resist. A tremendous tribute to all those who are annihilated in the name of normality, domination, and greed. To those who no longer have a voice, but who persevere with compassion. Their voice is necessary and liberating.

Deep gratitude to the Indigenous peoples who, despite colonial violence and cultural genocides, have resisted and continue to transmit alternative worldviews and respect for human diversity. Their perspectives, which recognize the plurality of knowledge as essential to their well-being, show us that there are ways to understand difference other than through this white gaze.

To those who tried to slow my progress. To those who criticized my work, who doubted my abilities. Your resistance forced me to refine my ideas, to fight for what I believe in, to become more lucid and determined. Without you, I would not have succeeded. This thesis is the fruit of this journey and of a personal commitment.

This text is linked to a reflective work. To assist in its reading—and to better understand certain terms, expressions, and references used in this work—a glossary is available at this address: https://www.globaldisabilityjustice.org/lexique/.

If you read these words and share them, please feel free to contact me.

Key words: abolition; abolition ecology; abolitionnist care; abolitionnism; black feminism; blakability; carceral state; climate adaptation; climate change; climate coloniality; climate justice; cognitive justice; coloniality of being; coloniality of knowing; coloniality of power; community accountability; complete decoloniality; complex trauma; critical disability studies; critical intersectionality; critical race theory; cultural competence; decolonisation; deinstitutionalisation; disability; disability justice; DisCrit; ecological justice; environmental justice; environmental racism; epistemic justice; eugenics; healing justice; holocaust; inclusive education; institutionnal co-optation; institutional violence; interdependence; intersectionnality of violence; krankenmorde; liberal inclusion; matrix of domination; matrix of violence; no body is disposable; organized abandonment; participative justice; penal coloniality; precarity; racial ableism; social structure; soft police; structural ableism ; structural competence; structural gaslighting; structural violence, structural vulnerability; tokenism; transformative justice; white supremacy culture;

I - Introduction

The contemporary climate crisis, far from being a simple environmental phenomenon, highlights the systemic hierarchies and structural violence that pervade our societies. Among historically marginalized groups, disabled peoples occupy a unique position, not because of their functional limitations, but because of the organization of the social, economic, political, and epistemic structures that surround them. Although international institutions increasingly recognize the importance of including their voices in climate policies, these mandates still struggle to fundamentally transform and counter the logics of power and exclusion inherited from centuries of oppression.

This thesis takes a critical approach that questions not only the omissions of climate policies, but also the ideological foundations of Western societies. It proposes to go beyond liberal approaches to inclusion, in order to explore the "hidden" systemic violence, rooted in white supremacy, capitalism, the medical model and the persistence of eugenic practices to the present day. From massive institutionalization to social control policies, including the constant erasure of knowledge derived from the experience of disability, the aim here is to highlight the historical continuities of exclusion and domination. In this context, rethinking responses to the climate crisis requires a radical deconstruction of current models of development, normality and citizenship. This work offers a resolutely political reading of disability, and argues for a social transformation allowing the emergence of true social, cognitive and climatic justice. While more and more work is asserting that "climate justice needs intersectionality",[1] this implies refocusing, first and foremost, on the knowledge of the most marginalized groups, in order to become aware of the considerable erasure of disability, as well as the complexity and immense diversity of this group which is still largely misunderstood and insufficiently listened to.

From a holistic perspective on climate and cognitive justice, it becomes crucial to distinguish a framework based on disability rights from one based on disability justice[2] (DJ). The latter refers to the need to decolonize disability studies,[3] where "it becomes a priority to examine

1 Michael Mikulewicz, Marina Angela Caretta, Farhana Sultana and Neil J. W. Crawford, *Intersectionality & Climate Justice: A call for synergy in climate change scholarship,* https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09644016.2023.2172869#abstract, consulted le 2 march 2025.

2 Sins Invalid, *10 Principles of Disability Justice*, https://sinsinvalid.org/10-principles-of-disability-justice/, consulted on april &4, 2021.

3 Nicole Ineese-Nash, *Disability as a Colonial Construct: The Missing Discourse of Culture in Conceptualizations of Disabled Indigenous Children*, 2021, https://cjds.uwaterloo.ca/index.php/cjds/article/view/645, consulted on june 20, 2021.

Decolonizing disability requires an understanding of specific cultural and historical contexts, and calls for an approach that values the knowledge and experiences of disabled peoples in these societies. "Decolonizing disability requires both a keen awareness of the colonial processes that contribute to and cause disability (Hollinsworth, 2013), as well as a deliberate attempt to remove these structures from our social organizations (Tuck and Yang, 2012)."

Indigenous ways of perceiving and understanding disability."[4] Established in 2005, DJ focuses on the most discriminated against and marginalized disabled people. It "intentionally centers the voices and leadership of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color in the disability rights strategy."[5] DJ's principles are rooted in interdependence, intersectional analysis, and a comprehensive understanding of processes of structural oppression, capitalist development, and the intrinsic links between ableism, colonialism, racism, classicism, sexism, homomisia, transmisia, Islamomisia, antisemitism, fatomisia, anti-immigrant sentiments, and all forms of material and cultural discrimination and alienation. These principles invite us to move beyond an individualized reading of discrimination to refocus on structural violence through a truly intersectional lens. With disability overrepresented in the Global South, more and more people are seeing this movement as the beginning of a much-needed reckoning for mobilizing those affected on a global, rather than national, scale. Like intersectionality, DJ emphasizes historically marginalized voices so that no one is "left behind." Rather than including more disabled people in statist, ableist systems rooted in colonialism, white supremacist heteropatriarchy, and racial capitalism, DJ aspires to transform the social relations that generate intersecting oppressions. DJ does not conceive of access in terms of diversity, equity, or inclusion (DEI), but envisions an accessibility practice that understands that structural changes cannot occur solely when these people are involved. DJ resists the legacy of intentional collective amnesia. She believes that, when the problem is systemic, work focused on individual rights is neither appropriate nor compelling. DJ has called for a decentering of disabled people who can achieve rights through legal recourse alone. Rather than insisting on the inalienability of individual rights, DJ asks us to reflect on systems of structural oppression. This movement does not reject human rights or claim that they are bad, but, as Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni explains, they want it to become radicalized.[6]

Understanding the reasons for the creation of this critical framework is essential, as it arose "grew out of the gaps of the mainstream Disability Rights Movement,"[7] which prioritized a single axis of oppression, to the detriment of the complexity of disabled people who live at the intersections of multiple systems of oppression. It also concerns white people who are marginalized and exposed to societal neglect, including within the disability community itself. Theorists of this movement have joined efforts for decolonization, deinstitutionalization, and transformative justice. Adopting this framework means becoming aware of the roots of oppression. It also means rejecting the liberal attitude that presents poverty—a structural problem—as the result of moral and individual failure, "which encourages individuals to deny their interdependence with each other, as well as with the environment",[8] and which does not question the norms "that contribute to society's acquiescence to the disenfranchisement, invisibilisation, and the erasure of multiply marginalized communities".[9] Thinking in terms of justice means going beyond the mere application of rights, to question the social structures, educational norms, and power relations that organize exclusion.

The choice of a climate context is intentional. It serves to reveal the global legacy of colonialism by highlighting the environmental injustices that result from it. This choice highlights how inclusion policies emerging from the Global South, which appropriate the notion of decolonization, contrast with dominant liberal conceptions of inclusion and diversity from the Global North. These liberal approaches to inclusion prove ill-suited to the historical contexts and territorial realities they purport to regulate. The climate justice framework perfectly illustrates the

4 Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work, Dreaming Disability Justice*, Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018, page 24.

5 Natalie M. Chin, *Centering Disability Justice*, 2021, page 1, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3959992, consulted on february 11, 2022.

6 Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *"A Resurgence of Decolonisation: We Need to do African Studies with Africans"—An Interview with Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Part 1*, Antipode Online, 2022, https://antipodeonline.org/2022/06/15/interview-with-sabelo-ndlovu-gatsheni-part-1/, consulted le 6 june 2023.

7 Shayda Kafai, *Crip Kinship : The Disability Justice & Art Activism of Sins Invalid,* Arsenal Pulp Press, 2021, page 20.

8 Gurminder Kaur Bhambra, *Global Social Theory*, https://globalsocialtheory.org/topics/neoliberalism/, consulted on may 1, 2025.

9 Natalie M. Chin, *Centering Disability Justice*, 2021, page 54, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3959992, consulted on february 11, 2022.

stakes of this distinction, which this thesis seeks to highlight. It argues for the decolonization of the disability professional sector as a necessary step towards improving outcomes for society as a whole. Implementing decolonization requires an intersectional framework, which is the most appropriate framework for understanding and mapping multiple forms of discrimination.[10] An intersectional analysis is necessarily a "radically interdisciplinary position."[11] It allows us to think about more complex social realities—centered on the needs of the most marginalized people, to counter one-dimensional analyses of oppression—and to identify the systems that maintain power imbalances. It is robust enough to propose innovative responses and allows us to focus on how structural oppressions do not only affect marginalized, criminalized, and minority groups, but impact all of society. It helps us understand how these structural violences weaken the very foundations of social and climate justice.

In this text, the word radical is used in its original sense: it comes from the Latin radix, meaning "root." If we are to be "radical" in our desires for change, we must address the root of oppressions, as Angela Davis has stated: "radical simply means grasping things at the root."[12] The term "ableism" is understood here in the same way as the word "disability," as defined by the CRPD. The two are used interchangeably. A more complex definition of ableism—proposed by Talila Lewis,[13] Dustin Gibson, and other disabled and racialized people—has the advantage of understanding disability as closely linked to issues of race and access to resources. It examines its enduring state and roots, emphasizes its systemic nature, and recognizes the interconnectedness of oppressions, even extending to its impact on nondisabled people. This definition, widely cited in academia, will be most appropriate for this analysis.

II - The Evolution of International Mandates Related to Climate Change and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Although persons with disabilities constitute the world's largest and most disadvantaged minority, global bodies were compelled at the beginning of the 21st century to establish conventions, laws, and frameworks to finally recognize them as "valuable" subjects. There is currently no international framework specifically addressing the links between climate action and the rights of persons with disabilities. Due to the increasing occurrence of disasters, increasing attention has been paid to their resilience. In the face of climate impacts and hazards, and from a disability rights perspective, States have an obligation to implement adaptation policies aimed at protecting and strengthening this resilience.

International law imposes legal standards and obligations regarding how persons with disabilities should be empowered, consulted, and protected. The most notable development in recent decades is the CRPD. Article 11 of this convention requires States parties to ensure "the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters. "[14] The UNFCCC, the first international treaty adopted in 1992 to address climate change and its impacts, does not

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10 Samantha Cooms, Olav Muurlink and Sharlene Leroy-Dyer, *Intersectional theory and disadvantage : a tool for decolonisation*, 2022, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09687599.2022.2071678, consulted on may 19, 2025

11 Anna Kaijser and Annica Kronsell, *Climate change through the lens of intersectionality*, 2013, page 7, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09644016.2013.835203, consulted on june 13, 2021.

12 Angela Davis, *Women Culture Politics*, Vintage USA edition, 1990, page 22.

13 Talila A. Lewis, *Ableism 2020 : An Updated Definition*, https://www.talilalewis.com/blog/ableism-2020-an-updated-definition, consulted le 9 june 2021.

« A system that places value on people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, intelligence, excellence and productivity. These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in anti-Blackness, eugenics, colonialism and capitalism. This form of systemic oppression leads to people and society determining who is valuable and worthy based on a person's appearance and/or their ability to satisfactorily [re]produce, excel and "behave." You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism. »

14 CDPH, Article 11, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities, consulted on March 12, 2025.

explicitly mention socially disadvantaged or disabled persons. The 2015 Paris Agreement, which stems from the UNFCCC, is now the main multilateral framework for addressing climate change at the global level. Its preamble contains binding obligations for States to "respect, promote, and take into account their respective obligations concerning human rights,"[15] including those of "persons with disabilities."[16] These rights are also mentioned in its Articles 7 and 12.

The CRPD increasingly emphasizes the important role of persons with disabilities in participating in building their own resilience and in disaster risk reduction (DRR). The Sendai Framework for Action is an important step forward: it is one of the first to consider not only persons with disabilities, but also to consider their inclusion in DRR as essential at each of its stages. In its preamble, it specifies that DRR must be oriented towards "more people-centred preventive approach" disaster prevention,[17] where persons with disabilities must promote response policies and risk assessments. The Sendai Framework recommends ensuring that all of society "has the means and opportunity to participate,"[18] which implies "empowerment and inclusive, accessible, and non-discriminatory participation"[19] of those disproportionately impacted by disasters. Issues relating to the rights of persons with disabilities are also included in several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[20] To raise awareness of these SDGs, the European Disability Forum published a brochure stating that "disabled peoples are essential to the success of the Sustainable Development Goals."[21] The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) considers climate change as a matter of justice and places equal rights at the heart of its climate policies and programmes. It calls for addressing structural, socio-economic and intergenerational inequalities and recognises the importance of consulting vulnerable and marginalised populations.[22] The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights highlights that the effects of climate change on human rights can be compounded by intersecting discrimination, particularly in relation to gender, race, disability or migration status.[23]

In a context of climate change, where it is becoming essential to strengthen the resilience of groups exposed to multiple forms of marginalization, it is crucial to make intelligible and expose the complexities as well as the intersecting discriminations. This is essential to understand the contexts and processes at the origin of this marginalization and these inequalities. In "every new disaster providing further examples of disabled peoples being overlooked or marginalised",[24] Twigg, Kett and Lovell draw attention to the lack of integration of disability in disaster prevention. Chaplin, Twigg and Lowell specify that it is only through "inclusive development that includes the most vulnerable and marginalized in society"[25], that it will be possible to achieve these SDGs. It becomes essential to identify, using an intersectional approach, "the excluded or marginalized groups or individuals in each context so that no one is left behind".[26] Such an approach helps to

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15 Paris Agreement: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf, consulted on March 12, 2025.
16 Ibid.
17 United Nations , *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 - 2030*, preamble §7, page 9, https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_frenchsendaiframeworkfordisasterris.pdf, consulted on march 13, 2025.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Nations Unies, *The 17 Goals*, https://sdgs.un.org/goals, consulted on May 22, 2025.
21 European Disability Forum, *Persons with disabilities are fondamental to success of the sustainable development goals !, 2021,* https://www.edf-feph.org/content/uploads/2021/06/lealfet_edfsdgs_en.pdf, consulted on March 1, 2025.
22 United Nations Development Programme, *Climate change is a matter of justice – here's why, 2023*, https://climatepromise.undp.org/fr/news-and-stories/le-changement-climatique-est-une-question-de-justice-voici-pourquoi, consulted on april 5, 2025.
23 United Nations, *Analytical study on the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons in the context of climate change*, 2021, https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/reports/ahrc4746-analytical-study-promotion-and-protection-rights-older-persons-context, consulted on january 3, 2025.
24 John Twigg, Maria Kett and Emma Lovel, *Disability inclusion and disaster risk reduction,* page 3, https://wrd.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/DI%20DRR.pdf, consulted on march 12, 2025.
25 Daniel Chaplin, John Twigg and Emma Lovell, *Intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building*, page 20 https://wrd.unwomen.org/practice/resources/intersectional-approaches-vulnerability-reduction-and-resilience-building, consulted on january 8, 2025.
26 Ibid., page 21.

"enrich understanding of vulnerability and resilience building"[27], and to design more inclusive policies and programs. In 2016, the World Humanitarian Summit adopted a charter aimed at strengthening and systematizing "existing policies, procedures and practices on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian programs".[28]

The disproportionate impact of climate change on disabled peoples is increasingly recognized.[29] Many are exposed to increased risks due to intersecting discrimination.[30] The lack of reliable global data on these effects limits the ability of climate policies to effectively address inequalities and ensure that no one is left behind.

Academic researchers rarely address the links between disability and climate change. Analytical frameworks in this field of research continue to exclude them. Although progress has been made, challenges remain regarding the effective integration of disability rights into global climate policies. Eight global disability organizations sent a letter to the States Parties to the Paris Agreement in 2024,[31] denouncing their exclusion from climate negotiations and calling for the creation of a "constituency" dedicated to persons with disabilities. This request aimed to ensure equal participation in climate-related discussions and decisions. In 2023, DICARP[32] revealed that only 39 States mentioned persons with disabilities in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.

Viewing disabled peoples as vulnerable, marginalized, and passive victims ignores the political and institutional causes of this vulnerability and excludes them from policies or programs in which they should have the right and ability to develop their knowledge to ensure their own resilience. Due to structural, physical, or financial barriers, disabled peoples may face difficulties in asserting their rights. Climate justice requires us to pay greater attention to how populations are unequally and disproportionately impacted.[33] The goal is to mitigate these injustices in order to achieve equitable solutions, reducing their marginalization and exclusion. An inclusive and intersectional approach is also crucial to ensure that the rights of disabled peoples are respected and protected in the context of climate change. "To adopt a more intersectional approach to climate action, researchers emphasize the need to address historical and systemic discrimination and identify specific actors and tactics to correct long-standing injustices."[34] Jonas Ruškus states that "by adopting the CRPD Convention, States commit to redressing the historical injustices suffered by persons with disabilities worldwide and to ending the structural and systemic discrimination they experience because of their disability, which results in their exclusion from communities."[35] Issues of social justice and inequality are closely linked to this structural violence. Johan Galtung defined violence "as the institutionalization of unequal life chances and opportunities."[36]

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27 Ibid., page 21.

28 *Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action*, page 2 §1.9, https://humanitariandisabilitycharter.org/wp-content/themes/humanitarian-disability-charter.org/pdf/charter-on-inclusion-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-humanitarian-action.pdf, consulted on march 13, 2025.

29 United Nations, A/HRC/44/30: Analytical study on the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of climate change - Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc4430-analytical-study-promotion-and-protection-rights-persons, consulted on may 16, 2025.

30 Ibid.

31 Human Rights Center, Antonio Papisca, *Global disability movement asks to be included in climate negotiations*, 2024, https://unipd-centrodirittiumani.it/en/news/global-disability-movement-asks-to-be-included-in-climate-negotiations, consulted on may 10, 2025.

32 DICARP, *Disability Rights in Climate Policies: 2023 Status Report*, https://www.disabilityinclusiveclimate.org/researcheng/project-one-ephnc-76974-dsc4y-89fzh , consulted on february 13, 2025.

33 Farhana Sultana, *Critical climate justice*, 2022, https://rgs-ibg.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/geoj.12417, consulted on august 13, 2025.

34 Kaitlin F. Strange, Mar Satorras and Hug March, *Intersectional climate action: the role of community-based organisations in urban climate justice*, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13549839.2024.2315992#abstract, consulted on march 4, 2025.

35 Jonas Ruškus, *Transformative Justice for Elimination of Barriers to Access to Justice for Persons with Psychosocial or Intellectual Disabilities*, https://www.mdpi.com/2075-471X/12/3/51, consulted on january 2, 2025.

36 Julia Paulson and Leon Tikly, *Reconceptualising Violence in International and Comparative Education: Revisiting*

Beyond these normative advances, it is crucial to question the structural mechanisms that continue to marginalize disabled peoples and that are part of a deeply unequal social order. It is a collective responsibility to identify the communities most affected by structural violence, through quantitative, qualitative, and intersectional analysis. In the context of the climate crisis, “programs that do not address the root causes risk further reinforcing inequalities.”[37]

III - Obstacles to Including the Voices of Disabled peoples in Climate Justice Policies

1 - Educating on Structural or Systemic Violence

Johan Galtung's work on the interplay between cultural, direct, and structural violence invites us to focus on the roots of structural violence, avoiding a sole focus on identifying perpetrators. Direct violence is visible, more easily identifiable, and can provoke reactions. Our attention is generally drawn to it, due to its more or less brutal forms. Structural, or "indirect," violence can be particularly difficult to understand. Because of its deep roots, awareness of its presence is much more subtle; it is generally invisible and imperceptible. Because of its long-standing presence, this everyday violence can seem ordinary, acceptable, desirable, or even natural to privileged people who are not impacted by it. It "is silent and can be considered as natural as the air around us.[38] Disrupting its invisible nature is all the more necessary because its roots are deep. If no effort is made to reveal it and make it visible, it becomes difficult to understand how deeply rooted it is in society.

While many privileged people may be content with the status quo, they are also limited in their ability to imagine alternative ways of organizing society. They tend to believe that the established order has always existed. The change needed to remove this structural violence generally meets with their resistance. It is easier to focus on its symptoms and stigmatize the populations who resist it than to understand its complex and historical causes. It is harder to challenge this pervasive “culture of white supremacy,” deeply rooted in the functioning of institutions—and the structural violence they engender—than it is to blame individuals who cannot adapt to it. Neoliberal attitudes, which contribute to the systemic normalization of this “culture of white supremacy,” deprive us of the possibility of imagining policies that move beyond this framework of individual blame and divert our attention from structural inequalities.

The production of critical knowledge is essential to dismantling this pervasive violence that generates profound inequalities. This violence is rooted in the social structure and institutionalized. Johan Galtung formulated the concept of structural violence to refer to the constraints imposed on human potential by economic and political structures, such as access to healthcare, resources, education, and political power. This institutionalized violence is problematic and dangerous because it often leads to direct violence and primarily affects people with little power. It is these people who experience these structural inequalities and, at the risk of being criminalized or incarcerated, most often resort to this direct violence. Paul Farmer describes these structural violences as “social and economic inequalities that determine who will be exposed to the risk of attacks and who will be protected from them.”[39] He notes that “there is a huge difference between seeing people as victims of innate defects and seeing them as victims of structural violence.”[40] This structural violence, perceived as "natural," is entirely preventable because it is culturally and socially constructed.

Galtung's Framework, 2022, page 5, https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/education/documents/bristol-working-papers-in-education/working-paper-paulson-tikly-2022.pdf, consulted on april 5, 2025.

37 Daniel Chaplin, John Twigg and Emma Lovell, *Intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building,* page 16, https://wrd.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/1INTER~1.PDF, consulted on february 6, 2025.

38 Johan Galtung, *Violence, Peace, and Peace Research*, 1969, page 173, https://www.jstor.org/stable/422690?seq=1, consulted on may 12, 2025.

39 Kathleen Ho, *Structural violence as a human rights violation*, 2007, page 9, https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=4b11aafb94196a56f73722d0b25383e262c3b00b, consulted on march 18, 2025.

40 Fernando De Maio, *Paul Farmer : structural violence and the embodiment of inequality*, 2015, page 9 https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137355621_43, consulted on february 24, 2025.

Jennifer Sarrett points out that this violence "has a long history and is deeply rooted in many modern Western social institutions."[41] It is because society is completely unaware of it that combating this violence is difficult. By first understanding how it works, we can think about practices to mitigate its effects and no longer continue to think that it is inevitable.[42]

While the emotional intelligence, subjective experiences, and qualitative data of disabled peoples are constantly individualized and pathologized by clinical discourses, as well as by the symbolic violence they perpetuate, disability remains a central prism for analyzing the concrete effects of structural violence. The goal is to focus on the complexities of this structural violence, and its mechanisms, rather than on resistance to it. Moving beyond the disregard often reserved for these subjective experiences, and supporting historically marginalized groups in developing their capacity to express their perspectives from their own positionality, represents a crucial step. It is widely established that institutions have contributed to the significant underrepresentation of disabled peoples in many spaces of power, decision-making, and knowledge production. Reducing and preventing these harms requires a different form of accountability, which must become a daily practice, and which refers to an awareness of the systemic dimension of this violence against disabled peoples. It also becomes necessary to challenge the institutional practices that have contributed to their social, political and historical oppression.

This structural violence ultimately determines who is heard and who is ignored. To leave this violence unnamed, to keep it visible, is to encourage structural violence against disabled peoples and allow eugenic policies to flourish, maintaining this status quo of discriminatory practices. To combat this structural violence, it is “not enough to have conscious and engaged politicians; you need a conscious and engaged society.”[43] A compelling argument from the climate ethics literature holds that in the presence of structural violence, such as racism or ableism, a sole focus on individual morality is decidedly harmful and unhelpful. Labeling certain groups as “vulnerable” in climate discourses becomes problematic when these discourses fail to take into account the sociopolitical dynamics and historical legacies that produce this marginalization. Manisha Anantharaman argues that “performative environmentalism transforms climate change from a structural problem into a moral problem”[44], by proposing symbolic, band-aid solutions to structural problems[45]. An excessive focus on resilience can be problematic, if it involves blaming the individual for their failures instead of denouncing the shortcomings of the system. Resilience should not be understood as an adaptation to this structural violence. Paul Farmer has shown the need to first dismantle this structural violence that generates this need for resilience. It is also very difficult to talk about this structural violence, because apart from its symptoms, it remains invisible and silent. This invisibility allows governments to appear benevolent, to promote inclusion, diversity, equity, rights... only to further reinforce the idea that colonialism is a distant and bygone story.

It is the people most impacted by it, and who are most aware of it, who must do this work of theorizing about systemic violence—institutional, structural, and interpersonal—when this violence has finally isolated them from society. They come to understand that discrimination against them “is so commonplace as to be invisible, meaning that their lived experiences are not even considered an inconvenience. They are simply not acknowledged.”[46] This systemic discrimination is so

41 Jennifer Sarrett, *Incarcerating disability: how society-wide structural violence diminishes justice for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities,* 2019, page 1, https://iperstoria.it/article/view/335/370, consulted on november 22, 2025.

42 Susan Opotow, *Social Injustice*, 2007 https://bpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/u.osu.edu/dist/b/7538/files/2014/10/Chapter-8-Social-Injustice-Opotow-1jaya7m.pdf, consulted on august 10, 2025.

43 Karol Chrobak, *Structural Violence*, 2022, p 184, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/359565514_Structural_Violence, consulted on september 3, 2025.

44 Farhana Sultana, *Confronting Climate Coloniality*, Routledge Edition, 2025, page 16. consulted on november 10, 2024.

45 Ibid. page 16.

46 Tonette S. Rocco, *From Disability Studies to Critical Race Theory: Working Towards Critical Disability Theory*, 2005, https://newprairiepress.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=2685&context=aerc, consulted on october 23, 2025.

commonplace that it is "invisible to the perpetrator, but painfully felt by the victim."[47] The difficulty in recognizing the violence enacted on bodies and minds that fall outside dominant norms of functionality, productivity, or conformity reveals the depth of structural ableism. The inability of communities to communicate about these injustices is directly linked to what Miranda Fricker describes as testimonial injustice, which refers to situations where people are not understood or listened to because of their identity and social position. This testimonial injustice is strongly linked to structural inequalities and dehumanization. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has highlighted the difficulties that subaltern populations face in gaining a voice within dominant groups and discourses.

Discourses focused solely on "vulnerability" or "special needs" fail to challenge this collective colonial imaginary that privileges bodies and minds at the expense of "others." Challenging it requires us to question those ideas of bodily norms that privilege the epistemologies of non-disabled people, which prove more useful or viable because they are not economically burdensome. This means imagining healthy relationships where each person is valued not by their ability to generate surplus value, but by their unique capacities to contribute to the flourishing of all. Alexia Arani shows us the embodied knowledge and care that disabled people can generate, given their unique positionality. Her work resonates with the idea that we need to ask ourselves "what liberation might look like when physical ability is no longer central."[48] In this light, it becomes imperative to understand that "at the heart of capitalism is the assumption that labor and bodies can be optimized for profit."[49]

Disabled people are not yet sufficiently recognized as experts in their situation. Their marginalization operates according to systemic dynamics that the majority of individuals, not confronted with such oppression, will never be able to fully grasp. Measures that do not take into account this unique knowledge, to understand how these processes—which are incomprehensible to many—marginalize and generate vulnerabilities, will be ill-equipped to reach these affected groups, and how they resist complex processes of erasure and marginalization. Talila Lewis, for example, discusses this link between systemic erasure and struggles for liberation.[50] [51] Unacknowledged, disproportionate, and invisible workloads are still too often imposed on disabled people who have become marginalized and erased.[52]

The biomedical model has historically served the purpose of objectification.[53] In *Understanding Disability From Theory to Practice*, Michael Oliver critiques how dominant models of disability have benefited groups that hold the power to produce knowledge and contributed to the maintenance of existing power structures. This epistemic dynamic of exclusion is linked to what Nora Berenstain calls structural gaslighting, "which seeks to obscure the non-accidental links between structures of oppression and the patterns of harm they produce and enable."[54] She develops

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47 Ibid.

48 Alexia Arani, *Abolitionist Care: Crip of Color Worldmaking in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*, 2022, page 8, https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2r2255zt, consulted on november 10, 2022.

49 Dr Cathy Pratt, *There is No Place Called Inclusion*, https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/articles/there-is-no-place-called-inclusion.html, consulted on april 5, 2020.

50 Talila Lewis, *Fighting for Free[dom] & the Expense of Erasure*, 2016, https://www.talilalewis.com/blog/fighting-for-freedom-the-expense-of-erasure, consulted on june 3, 2020.

51 Sami Schalk, *Black Disability Politics*, Duke University Press, 2022, page 148. « Systems of oppression are "designed to exhaust those who fight them… mentally, physically, emotionally, economically, spiritually, politically, and in every other way imaginable; they are therefore very effective in this regard. »

52 Jan Grue, *The CRPD and the economic model of disability: undue burdens and invisible work,* 2022, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09687599.2023.2255734#abstract, consulted on february 14, 2025. « One of the main obstacles to the successful implementation of the human rights framework is that States parties continue to rely on a strong medical model where disability is understood as an individual problem rather than a structural and societal problem. »

53 Stefan Timmermans, Rene Almeling, *Objectification, standardization, and commodification in health care: A conceptual readjustment,* 2009, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0277953609002482, consulted on march 3, 2025.

54 Nora Berenstein, *Structural gaslighting*, 2020, page 5, https://philpapers.org/archive/BERSGL.pdf, consulted on september 4, 2022.

an argument for valuing the subjectivity of disabled people and for moving away from devaluing discourses of disability, which refuse to consider disabled people as capable of expressing any opinion on how impairment or disability affects their own lives.[55] Her work is useful for understanding how scientific racism and the naturalization of disability are rooted in a historical enterprise of structural gaslighting. On the links between structural gaslighting, practices of normalization and naturalization of social inequalities, she argues that "naturalization is a structural tactic of manipulation particularly central to ableism, a structure whose roots are deeply intertwined with those of scientific racism."[56] Structural gaslighting is an insidious tool of structural oppression which, "in societies fundamentally structured by oppression,"[57] consists of masking the origins of oppression. This epistemic form of abuse "aims to facilitate further abuse by interrupting the ability of its targets to name and resist abuse."[58] [59] It "aims to conceal and conceptually separate the effects of structural oppressions from the systems that produce them."[60] Disability is one of the unique sites for assessing the consequences and deep roots of colonialism,[61] which are characterized in the form of structural violence. We must value and listen to the voices of those directly impacted by it. Systemic oppression and structural violence are a daily reality for these bodies and minds, who often cannot find meaning other than in survival. For disabled peoples, environmental injustice is permanent and excludes them from many physical spaces.[62] When these people do not find solutions, active listening, or support, they end up choosing isolation and segregation to escape this violence and avoid retraumatization. This structural violence can only occur with the complicity of privileged groups who do not want to see it and do not want to know.

Understanding structural violence necessarily involves recognizing the historical continuity of colonialism.[63] Far from being a phenomenon of the past, colonization remains an active process whose contemporary forms are expressed through both invisible structural violence and interpersonal violence, disproportionately affecting racialized and disabled people. This violence is deeply linked to the colonial history towards these groups, structural inequalities, and historical institutional violence. The "symbiotic relationship between structural racism and structural violence has a long history and origins in European colonialism."[64] A growing global reckoning with epistemic injustices towards disabled people requires us to shift discourses of impairment and develop effective strategies to address their needs comprehensively, while dismantling the harmful perspectives of this colonial-era legacy. Chris Cunneen and Juan Tauri show that settler colonialism has never been passive: it is actively perpetuated through mechanisms of dispossession, social and economic exclusion, and disenfranchisement.[65] They emphasize the criminogenic nature of colonialism, which actively generates marginalization, cultural dislocation, and systemic

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55 Ibid., page 50. « Individuals, institutions, political systems, and social groups engage in structural gaslighting, whether they intend to or not, when they invoke oppressive ideologies, obscure or obscure the real causes and mechanisms of oppression and the conceptually serious oppressive acts of the structures that produce them. »

56 Ibid., page 31.

57 Ibid., page 3.

58 Ibid., page 1.

59 Ibid., page 8. "la fonction de dissimulation ou de mystification des relations sociales objectives est le but ultime du gaslighting structurel"

60 Ibid., page 8.

61 Robel Afeworki Abay and Karen Soldatic, *Intersectional Colonialities, Embodied colonial violence and practices of resistance at the axis of disability, race, indigeneity, class and gender*, Routledge Edition, 2024, page 2.

62 David Abbott and Sue Porter, *Environmental hazard and disabled people: from vulnerable to expert to interconnected,* 2013, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09687599.2013.802222, consulted on march 11, 2025.

63 United Nations, *Acting High Commissioner: Addressing the Legacies of Colonialism Can Contribute to Overcoming Inequalities Within and Among States and Sustainable Development Challenges of the Twenty-First Century*, 2022, https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/acting-high-commissioner-addressing-legacies-colonialism-can-contribute, consulted on may 12, 2025.

64 Frontiers in Public Health, *Racism and Structural Violence: Interconnected Threats to Health Equity*, 2022, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8850294/, consulted on may 3, 2024.

65 Chris Cunneen and Juan Tauri, *Indigenous Criminology*, The Policy Press, 2016, page 5.

inequalities.[66] A return to the past allows us to become aware of colonial violence and reflect on its continuity in the present. It is necessary to illuminate its persistent legacy, the structural violence it reproduces, and which maintains coloniality. Lorenzo Veracini defined colonialism as a resilient virus, due to its capacity to adapt or transmit itself, and which persists in the form of coloniality. This persistence translates into structural violence that, even today, keeps racialized and disabled people in positions of inferiority and precarity. These structural violences require us to understand how this imbalance of power limits access to a quality life. Azad and his colleagues propose building communities that resist these structural violences through knowledge production rooted in lived and embodied experiences[67]—not through external, disconnected discourses. A social model approach to disability allows us to act not on an individual reading of disability, but at a structural and political level, in line with the DJ movement's discourses on interdependence and sustainability.

In recent years, there has been a wealth of literature establishing the inextricable links between climate change and colonialism. These explicit links are no longer the sole domain of activist discourse; they are now mentioned in the latest IPCC report.[68] While it has "recently identified colonialism as a major cause of climate change,"[69] this topic is still little discussed, obscured, and difficult to address in the West. Carl Death notes that "in Western socio-climatic imaginaries, decolonial ideas are invisible and liberal narratives of technological optimism dominate."[70] The IPCC recognizes how the effort for "climate justice reinforces the importance of taking into account the legacy of colonialism in the development of regional and local adaptation strategies."[71] To explain the unequal distribution of climate change harms, and address the links with structural injustices, Farhana Sultana carefully demonstrates how "marginalization, erasure, and silencing are mechanisms of climate coloniality"[72] [73], which continually reproduce "hierarchical power relations established during active colonialism," and hinder the realization of climate justice. This climate coloniality is closely intertwined with the global extractivist system—a hegemonic economic model based on the unlimited exploitation of natural resources at the expense of ecosystems and vulnerable communities.[74]

It is the historically excluded, who hold the keys to a true understanding of structural violence, who must educate and enlighten us in all projects of inclusion and interdependence. Petrovitch Njegosh rightly points out that these systemic exclusions are perpetuated by the lack of decolonization of educational and social structures.[75] Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni insists that coloniality operates today as a form of cognitive domination. It perpetuates the colonial order by systematically neutralizing, extracting, or destroying epistemologies that challenge the ideological

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66 Ibid., page 57.

67 Urmitapa Dutta, Abdul Kalam Azad, Manjuwara Mullah, Kazi Sharowar Hussain and Wadi Parveez, *From rhetorical « inclusion » toward decolonial futures : Building communities of resistance against structural violence,* 2021, Page 357, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/ajcpage12561, consulted on february 3, 2025.

68 IPCC, *Summary for Policymakers*, 2022, https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf, consulted on june 2, 2022.

69 Farhana Sultana, *Confronting Climate Coloniality*, Routledge Edition, 2025, page 1.

70 Tara Nair van Ryneveld and Mine Islar, *Coloniality as a Barrier to Climate Action: Hierarchies of Power in a Coal-Based Economy*, 2022, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/anti.12907#anti12907-bib-0023, consulted on july 3, 2023.

71 IPCC, *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, 2022, page 2713. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_FullReport.pdf, consulted on june 2, 2022.

72 Farhana Sultana, *Confronting Climate Coloniality*, Routledge Edition, 2025, page 210.

73 « Understanding climate coloniality means showing how the legacies of imperial violence persist insidiously, not only exacerbating environmental degradation, but also multiplying climate catastrophes suffered by marginalized populations around the world, who are rendered disproportionately vulnerable and disposable in the process. » (Confronting Climate Coloniality ; Farhana Sultana)

74 Susanne Normann, *"Time is our worst enemy:" Lived experiences and intercultural relations in the making of green aluminum*, 2021, page 166, https://spssi.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/josi.12472, consulted on january 20, 2023.

75 Valentina Migliarini and Brent C. Elder, *The Future of inclusive education, Intersectional Perspectives*, 2022, Palgrave Macmillan, page 29.

foundations of Western hegemony.[76]

Radical disability politics offer a crucial alternative to traditional approaches to rights. The latter tend to be more assimilationist than transformative, integrating marginalized people without challenging the very structures of their exclusion.[77] When such oppressions are deeply entrenched, and the ideologies that maintain them are normalized, decolonization becomes necessary.[78] Understood as a process of recentering ourselves on the peripheries that have been historically marginalized, decolonization is not a problem of inclusion, but a work of dismantling white supremacy. It underscores the importance of understanding the major difference and ongoing confusion between the politics of inclusion coming from the Global South, which appropriate this notion of decolonization, and the liberal understanding of inclusion and diversity from the Global North. Decolonization remains a relevant tool for illuminating this long-standing structural violence, for revealing the underlying structures of this violence that persist and continue to harshly impact marginalized communities.

2 - Planning Systemic Decolonization

Decolonization has historically been defined as a process of dismantling the colonial ideologies that underpin the privilege and superiority of Eurocentric knowledge. Rather than denouncing the mechanisms of domination that persist, history books teach us that the colonial era ended in the 1970s. Although the term "decolonization" meant the acquisition of a form of independence and the right to self-determination for formerly colonized peoples, it took on other meanings during the 20th century. It also concerns the historical recognition of the colonial experience and its legacy. "Decolonization movements also seek to go beyond simply calling for greater 'inclusion'"[79] and "diversity initiatives that leave colonial structures intact"[80], which do not reject "the power relations inherent in knowledge production."[81] The decolonial turn[82] proposes a change of attitude, and recognizes coloniality as a fundamental problem, as Nelson Maldonado-Torres explains.[83] Achile Mbembe claims that France has "decolonized" without decolonizing itself.[84] For his part, the Acting High Commissioner of the United Nations emphasizes that it is impossible to respond to global crises without seriously addressing the legacy of colonialism, and insists on the need to deconstruct this ideology of white supremacy.[85]

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76 Tara Nair van Ryneveld and Mine Islar, *Coloniality as a Barrier to Climate Action: Hierarchies of Power in a Coal-Based Economy*, 2022, page 962, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/anti.12907#anti12907-bib-0023, consulted on july 3, 2023.

77 A.J. Withers et al., *Radical Disability Politics*, 2019, page 179, https://stillmyrevolution.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/radical-disability-politics.pdf, consulted on july 8, 2020.

78 Samer Abdelnour, *What Decolonizing Is Not, 2022,* https://shs.cairn.info/revue-management-2022-4-page-81?lang=en, consulted on march 7, 2020. « Decolonization involves actions that (1) center the epistemic privilege and political aspirations of colonized and subjugated peoples; (2) identify, dismantle, and transform marginalizing colonial systems and structures; and (3) advance and achieve the goals of liberation, reparation, and radical equality. »

79 Muminah Arshad, Rachel Dada, Cathy Elliott , Iweta Kalinowska, Mehreen Khan, Robert Lipiński, Varun Vassanth, Jotepreet Bhandal, Monica de Quinto Schneider, Ines Georgis and Fiona Shilston, *Diversity or decolonization? Searching for the tools to dismantle the 'master's house'*, 2021, page 3, https://journals.uclpress.co.uk/lre/article/811/galley/17142/view/, consulted on march 22, 2025.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *On the Coloniality of Being, 2007, page 262,* https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09502380601162548, consulted le 20 april 2025. « The decolonial turn consists of making the invisible visible and analyzing the mechanisms that produce such invisibility or distorted visibility in light of a broad stock of ideas that must necessarily include the critical reflections of the "invisible" people themselves. Indeed, their intellectual production must be recognized as thought—and not just as culture or ideology. »

83 Ibid., page 243. « Coloniality survives colonialism. It is kept alive in books, in academic performance standards, in cultural models, in common sense, in the image of oneself and of peoples, in aspirations for oneself, and in so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects, we breathe coloniality all the time and every day. »

84 Achille Mbembe, *Out of the Dark Night : Essays on Decolonization*, Columbia University Press, 2021, page 4.

85 United Nations, *Acting High Commissioner: Addressing the Legacies of Colonialism Can Contribute to Overcoming*

Decoloniality aims to detach ourselves from dominant knowledge and power structures, to reconstruct a way of thinking based on epistemic plurality. Olivier Mutanga deconstructs Eurocentric approaches to disability studies, which ignore colonialism and its persistent impact on the lives of disabled people in the Global South.[86] He emphasizes the importance of a decolonial analysis to imagine alternative ways of existing. Understanding the origins of negative attitudes toward disabled people, and the continuity of colonialism, is essential for producing liberatory knowledge capable of challenging the mechanisms of captivity imposed by coloniality. This work involves imagining relationships that address the roots of these prejudices. It requires a detailed analysis of the historical origins of structural violence and its mechanisms of reproduction. Since eugenics shaped hostile attitudes toward difference, it is crucial to produce knowledge that values the diversity of abilities. This allows us to go beyond the body norm, to promote educational inclusion, and to ensure that disability is no longer a vector of exclusion.

Andoh and Nketsiaba detail why the lack of knowledge about the needs of students with disabilities makes access and acceptance of disability much more difficult, even determining its inclusion. The difficulties that disabled peoples face are linked to both the social and physical environments of institutions. They note that the accommodations that disabled peoples can receive still too often depend on the benevolence or compassion of certain individuals, rather than on formal obliging institutions.[87] Arguing that decolonial analyses and Critical Disability Studies take these structural oppressions into account, T. Dirth and G. Adams call for the normalization of disability, to consider it not as an individual problem to be medicalized, but as one with high disruptive, disruptive, and epistemic potential.[88] [89] The “medical model fits particularly well into the contemporary era of neoliberal individualism.”[90] These individualistic ways of being “constitute the default norms of hegemonic psychological science.”[91] N. Erevelles and A. Minear describe "disability as the very embodiment of the disruption of normativity which is, in turn, the symbol of an efficient and profitable individualism and of the economic appropriation of profits produced within capitalist societies"[92].

The word decolonization frightens those who benefit from the colonial status quo. Yet, if there is one group that understands the legacies of colonialism, that would benefit from a process of decolonization, that is regularly silenced and forced to question dominant epistemologies, it is disabled people. Tuck and Yang remind us that decolonization is not a simple strategy of inclusion, but a fundamentally unsettling process: it is not simply “an ‘and,’ but rather an ‘elsewhere’ for knowledge production and imagination.”[93] Like Nirmala Erevelles, we must view disability studies as a constant challenge to established norms—as a permanent epistemic journey. To decolonize is to break with a coloniality that has produced power imbalances and structures of oppression, relegating certain communities and their knowledge to the status of inferior. The pandemic has revealed “how the legacy of slavery and the foundations of eugenic theories continue to influence

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Inequalities Within and Among States and Sustainable Development Challenges of the Twenty-First Century, 2022, https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/acting-high-commissioner-addressing-legacies-colonialism-can-contribute, consulted on may 12, 2023.

86 Olivier Mutanga, *Ubuntu Philosophy and Disability in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Routledge Editions, 2024, page i.

87 Ibid. page 56.

88 Thomas P. Dirth and Glenn A. Adams, *Decolonial Theory and Disability Studies: On the Modernity/Coloniality of Ability,* 2019, https://jspp.psychopen.eu/index.php/jspp/article/view/5117, consulted on july 6, 2020.

89 Ibid. Their analysis of the medical model reveals that “the broader injustice of disability lies in the ableism of everyday life: that is, the technologies and ideologies that institutionalize neoliberal individualist ways of being, (re)presenting them as natural values” to which everyone should aspire.

90 Ibid.

91 Readsura Decolonial Editorial Collective, *Decoloniality as a social issue for psychological study*, 2022, page 5, https://spssi.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/josi.12502, consulted on may 20, 2023.

92 Nirmala Erevelles and Andrea Minear, *Unspeakable Offensive : Untangling Race and Disability in Discourses of Intersectionality*, 2010, https://www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/doi/10.3828/jlcds.2010.11, consulted on june 4, 2024.

93 Vivetha Thambinathan and Elizabeth Anne Kinsella, *Decolonizing Methodologies in Qualitative Research: Creating Spaces for Transformative Praxis*, 2021, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/16094069211014766, consulted on january 4, 2022.

law and society."[94] It has highlighted persistent gaps in disability rights,[95] underscoring the urgency of transformative change. Genuine decolonization must end structural violence, which leads to the systemic abandonment of the most vulnerable.

In 2011, Nelson Maldonado-Torres invited us to examine the "afterlives" of colonization and its logic of "constant adaptation," emphasizing that decolonization remains, in the 21st century, largely unfinished. Ann E. Lopez adds that "European colonization has left its mark on every aspect of our lives: behaviors, attitudes, abuses…"[96]. She defines decolonization as the process of removing the imprint of white supremacy. Arto de Ploeg reminds us of the importance of connecting the word "decolonization" to its geographical origin, and the aspirations it carried.[97] To understand the present, to eliminate colonial structures and their contemporary extensions, we must first recognize the historical roots of these ideologies. Decolonization involves acknowledging past and present injustices, and accepting that "the past is not the past, as the privileged choose to believe, but the very foundation of current privileges or devaluations."[98] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Catherine Walsh, and Walter Mignolo see Indigenous epistemologies as a way to escape this coloniality. Their visions of difference are based on "an inclusive spiritual consciousness, regardless of ability."[99] Linda Tuhiwai Smith points out that many programs incorporating Indigenous elements are seen as innovative on the international scene.[100] Decolonizing Methodologies thus shows how these knowledges open up other forms of imagination and worldviews, where the West often remains limited and deprived.

"Because colonialism has been wrongly relegated to historical categories,"[101] it is often difficult to convey that we still live within a colonial paradigm. Yet the connection between historical harms and the persistent dynamics they reproduce follows logically from this legacy. In the same way, a society that lacks the tools to name, acknowledge, and understand the deep roots of ableism can never become truly inclusive. "We must understand and practice accessibility that brings us closer to justice, not just inclusion or diversity."[102] [103] This requires addressing coloniality in its close links to systemic inequalities, and the relations of power and exclusion that it perpetuates. A true process of decolonization is only possible with the participation of those who experience this persistent legacy of colonization. Decolonization is nothing other than the dismantling of the world created by colonialism. To correct structural inequalities, we must refocus the knowledge and narratives of colonized peoples, understanding how their experiences, critiques, and visions are shaped by colonial history. Without taking their narratives into account, without decolonization, it will not be possible to imagine other types of relationships. An "inclusive" colonial system, rooted in these norms and ideologies of white supremacy, remains a colonial system. It itself works against diversity and inclusion.

The system of "civilization" in which we live is based on coloniality, which outlives colonialism. It is characterized by an imbalance of power, a process of othering—woman/man, disabled/non-disabled, South/North, etc. This legacy of colonialism, which deprives some people of

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94 Natalie M. Chin, *Centering Disability Justice*, 2021, page 51, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3959992, consulted on february 11, 2022.

95 Ibid., page 1.

96 Ann E. Lopez, *Decolonizing Educational Leadership, Exploring Alternative Approaches to Leading Schools*, Palgrave Edition, 2020, page 85, https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-62380-7.

97 Decolonial Europe Day, *Decolonising Europe Booklet 2023*, page 10, https://euroalter.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/decolonising_europe_booklet.pdf, consulted on may 9, 2023.

98 Vivianne Saleh-Hanna, *Colonial Systems of control*, University of Ottawa Press, 2008, page 15.

99 John Ward, *Indigenous Disability Studies*, Routledge Edition, 2025, page 71. « The term disability is arguably an umbrella term based on a colonial construct that does not align with the traditional views of many Indigenous peoples, as it comes from a deficit-oriented perspective. » (Kevin P. Morgan)

100 Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies, Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 1999, page 160.

101 Vivianne Saleh-Hanna, *Colonial Systems of control*, University of Ottawa Press, 2008, page 34.

102 Natalie M. Chin, *Centering Disability Justice*, 2021, page 54, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3959992, consulted on february 11, 2022.

103 Simon Dawes and Marc Lenormand, *Neoliberalism in Context*, palgrave macmillan Editions, 2020, page 181. « Meaningful inclusion only merits the designation of 'inclusion' if disability is more fully recognized as offering alternative life values that do not simply reify dominant concepts of normality. »

their rights while granting more value to others, is still present. If we fail to name and acknowledge this colonial paradigm in which we live, we will be very ill-equipped to dismantle it. This new form of colonization is no less dangerous than the first, it is “almost always unconscious and almost always ignored.”[104] The simple fact of living “in a capitalist, eco-murderous, colonialist, ableist, and white supremacist hetero-patriarchy”[105] exposes us to violence that stems from this imbalance of power. Marina Bell explains that "for some of us, it is about accepting the fact that we have benefited from unearned privileges at the expense of others"[106], in order to understand why "we live in a society that does violence to everyone"[107].

France and England are among the empires that played a major role in the establishment and perpetuation of coloniality.[108] Colonial studies seek to recognize the colonial structures that remain in place, even after independence. This legacy is accompanied by a persistent dehumanization and erasure of the epistemologies of those who were called “others.” As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak points out,[109] these populations were dehumanized because they did not fit into the valued and desired norms of modernity. Decoloniality counters this dynamic of coloniality that maintains this social and racial stratification by refocusing on the voices of those who are experiencing the ongoing impact of colonialism, to “restore their humanity to subjects and groups who had been stripped of it, and thus make the world truly human.”[110]

One decolonial strategy is to detach from the hegemonic and dominant understanding of disability and consider CDS analyses that take into account the intersections of disability with other identities. Without this understanding of critical intersectionality, which requires foregrounding disability, decoloniality is incomplete. Xuan Thuy Nguyen et al. encourage viewing in/ability as both a decolonial and epistemic praxis. For them, decoloniality is a way to create a radical space to challenge dominant understandings of disability in the Global South.[111] They argue for a refocusing on the most marginalized while demanding global epistemic justice, based on genuine equality of knowledge production between the Global South and the Global North. The coloniality of power, as defined by Anibal Quijano, is a colonial and historical continuity. This is not an event from the past that has ended, but a structural and ongoing process that requires the examination of these mechanisms of dehumanization, a constant denunciation of coloniality, and a deep understanding of decoloniality. For the many people who claim to fight against all forms of injustice, the use of the term “decolonization” is also an excuse, as we see later, for not addressing the root cause of colonization: “the elimination of the mentality of white supremacy.”[112]

3 - Debunking the “Culture of White Supremacy”

The misunderstanding of white supremacy—consistently portrayed as consisting of marginal, violent groups, and not as the political system on which the West has been founded for the past 500 years—remains ever-present. The term “white supremacy” fails to fully grasp the extent of the

104 Sunil Bhatia and Kumar Ravil Priya, *Coloniality and Psychology: From Silencing to Re-Centering Marginalized Voices in Postcolonial Times,* page 4, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/10892680211046507, consulted on april 22, 2022.

105 Marina Bell, *Abolition as a project of personal transformation*, 2022, §20, https://journals.openedition.org/champpenal/13491, consulted on december 3, 2022.

106 Ibid.

107 Ibid.

108 Rikke Andreassen, Catrin Lundström, Suvi Keskinen, Shirley Anne Tate, *The Routledge International Handbook of new critical race and whitness studies*. Routledge Edition, page 400.

109 Zahra Ali et Sonia Dayan-Herzbrun, *Pluriversalisme décolonial*, Tumultes, 2017, https://shs.cairn.info/revue-tumultes-2017-1-page-5?lang=fr, consulted le 10 january 2025. « Modern European thought, coupled with the economic monopoly of its imperialist powers, has exercised itself by constructing radical otherness, refusing to recognize as human those who were simply different ». (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak)

110 Ibid.

111 Xuan Thuy Nguyen, Shilpaa Anand, Alexis Padilla, *Thinking with Decolonial Disability Studies:Invitation to the Special Themed Issue*, 2024,https://rdsjournal.org/index.php/journal/article/view/1368/2749, Page 3.

112 Agnes Binagwaho, Brianna Ngarambe, Kedest Mathewos, *Eliminating the White Supremacy Mindset from Global Health Education*, 2022, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9122008/, consulted on january 30, 2024.

global, daily violence endured by disabled, Black, and Indigenous peoples. Using the term "culture of white supremacy" is preferable, if we want to understand the extent of the haunting and ongoing institutionalization of this violence of whiteness, rather than thinking of it only when we talk about violent, marginal white supremacist groups.

Each of the DJ theorists "have demonstrated why discussions of white supremacy and disability oppression must be simultaneous, as these systems reinforce and interlock with one another."[113] Samuel Z. Shelton reminds us why "it is impossible to destroy white supremacy without significantly advancing DJ, and vice versa." Leroy F. Moore clarifies that "able-bodied supremacy is co-constitutive of white supremacy. Together, they create inaccessible and racialized spaces."[114]

Studying the fifteen characteristics of white supremacist culture, outlined by Dr. Tema Okun[115], is fundamental to recognizing that this culture is normalized and pervasive in our daily lives—in institutions, in social movements, in our personal relationships. Once normalized, it becomes invisible, difficult to identify. This culture is so highly valued that it impacts our behaviors, our ways of acting and thinking. Dismantling it requires, above all, an awareness of its pervasiveness—in all our relationships—and the impossibility of naming it. People who wish to act for the rights of disabled peoples must understand how this oppression of disabled peoples is deeply connected to this "culture of white supremacy." Nor can we dismantle this culture by participating in it. Joel Michael Reynolds points out that "white supremacy is always a form of able-bodied supremacy."[116] Those who want to uproot this culture must understand that this work is most often entrusted to people of color and/or disabled people. Dismantling this culture—understood as a process of decolonization—requires courageous conversations to change mindsets. Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Frantz Fanon have made it clear that this work of decolonization—which consists of ridding ourselves of these dominant and harmful cultural models—is always a violent, and inevitably unpopular, process.

Recognizing the characteristics of this culture—long invisible and normalized—is essential to disrupting it and creating truly inclusive spaces. The work begins with learning to identify them: until we can name them, we cannot deconstruct them. Dismantling this culture begins with acknowledging its existence, the ongoing presence of this violence, its normalization, and how white supremacist privilege and associated inequalities persist. Linda Steele discusses the limitations of the CRPD and international law, which "do not, on their own, provide us with the tools to effect the kind of structural change"[117] she calls for in her work on disability diversion. She finds the DJ framework more compelling because it emphasizes "the importance of challenging interlocking oppression and privilege, including white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, colonialism, capitalism, and other violent institutions."[118] We must urgently understand why the history of disability oppression and able-bodied supremacy "are inextricably linked, both forged in the crucible of colonial conquest and capitalist domination."[119] The systemic lack of any will to dismantle this white supremacy, combined with an intergenerational misunderstanding of colonialism as a major cause of the climate crisis, reveals a still widespread ignorance. Colonialism, however, "redefined and repositioned disability as a condition laden with signifiers and messages around notions of ideal colonized bodies constructed around a consciousness of the body, paving

113 Samuel Z. Shelton, *Disability Justice, White Supremacy, and Harm Reduction Pedagogy: Enacting Anti-Racist Crip Teaching*, 2020, page 7, https://www.jstor.org/stable/48644516, consulted on may 4, 2022.
114 Christopher Reimer, « *I would make a home for them »: On Crip Interdependence and Abolition Ecology*, 2021, page 3, https://antipodeonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Critical-Restoration-Geographies-1_Reimer.pdf, consulted on september 3, 2023.
115 Tema Okun, *White supremacy culture*, 1999, https://www.dismantlingracism.org/uploads/4/3/5/7/43579015/okun_-_white_sup_culture.pdf, consulted on june 23, 2017.
116 Joel Michael Reynolds, *Disability and White Supremacy,* 2022, p 60-61, https://philarchive.org/archive/REYDAW-2, consulted on january 3, 2023.
117 Linda Steele, *Disability, Criminal Justice and Law Reconsidering Court Diversion*, 2020, Routledge edition, page 21.
118 Ibid., page 21.
119 Sins Invalid, *Skin, Tooth, and Bone – The Basis of Movement is Our People: A Disability Justice Primer*, 2017, page 57, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09688080.2017.1335999, consulted on april 9, 2021.

the way for contemporary narratives of normativity".[120]

To understand the roots of climate change, "it is necessary to consider it as a symptom of an unjust social order based on colonialism, capitalism, extractivism, political neglect, and the oppression of many marginalized communities."[121] It is also necessary to question the role of the medical model in the perpetuation of white supremacy, as well as in the hierarchization and normalization of bodies within institutions inherited from colonialism. Neglecting this legacy prevents us from understanding disability as a political issue, linked to power relations and mechanisms of oppression.[122]

4 - Understanding the Medical Model as an Obstacle to Social Transformation

Disabled peoples have long been ignored, neglected, and continue to suffer from a lack of representation and consideration. Even today, their perspectives and voices remain absent. The medical model suggests that "society is not considered responsible for accepting disabled peoples"[123], and that they "do not contribute to society."[124] The term "disability" can thus be understood as society's inability to integrate physical and mental diversity into its social fabric. The lack of understanding and awareness surrounding this term fuels a system of disempowerment, while masking and naturalizing inequalities. This misinterpretation can lead us to believe that social inequalities stem from individual deficiencies, rather than the maintenance of structural inequalities. Eugenic sciences, influenced by this model, even claimed that criminality and social inequality take root in the womb. Although recognized as discriminatory, this model continues to legitimize abuses and maintain segregation.

The CRPD notes that the persistent confusion between the terms "disability" and "impairment" limits the understanding of a human rights-based model of disability.[125] "It is society that disables, limits, or oppresses persons with disabilities by excluding them from dominant institutions and social arrangements."[126] Those who adhere to the medical model fail to grasp the implications of a rights-based approach because this understanding "makes ability/capacity the social norm."[127] This understanding "feeds into an ableist norm"[128] that is incompatible with the CRPD. The medical model is premised on the idea that disabled bodies are imperfect, thus justifying institutionalization.[129] It denies the social construction of disability, ignores institutional and structural oppressions, and adopts an individualistic reading. Devoid of critical analysis, it disempowers by reinforcing medical power through an ahistorical approach. This view reduces disability to a monolithic experience[130], unrelated to structural violence or any other form of oppression such as white supremacy, capitalism, or neoliberalism. A deeply problematic aspect of

120 Karen Soldatic and Shaun Grech, *Disability and Colonialism, (Dis)encounters and anxious intersectionalities*, Routledge Edition 2016, page 10.

121 Claire Spivakovsky, Linda Steele and Penelope Weller, *The legacies of institutionalisation, Disability, Law and Policy in the'Deinstitutionalised' Community*, Hart Publishing, 2020, page 244.

122 Linda Steele, *Disability, Criminal Justice and Law Reconsidering Court Diversion*, 2020, Routledge edition, page 80.

123 Claire Spivakovsky, Linda Steele and Penelope Weller, *The legacies of institutionalisation, Disability, Law and Policy in the'Deinstitutionalised' Community*, Hart Publishing, 2020, page 244.

124 Sheelagh Daniels-Mayes, *Researching Indigenous people living with a disability: The urgent need for an intersectional and decolonising approach (BlakAbility)*, 2023, https://www.lowitjajournal.org.au/action/showPdf?pii=S2949-8406%2823%2900004-9, consulted on april 28, 2025.

125 Rosemary Kayess, *The CRPD and Segregation. A framework to transformation*, 2024, §4, 7 et 16, https://journals.openedition.org/alterjdr/3728, consulted on january 29, 2025.

126 Ibid., §4.

127 Ibid., Résumé.

128 Ibid. §7.

129 Stephanie Jenkins, *Constructing Ableism*, 2021, page 5, https://www.mdpi.com/2313-5778/5/3/66, consulted on february 3, 2025.

130 Angela Frederick & Dara Shifrer, *Race and Disability: From Analogy to Intersectionality*, 2019, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326330829_Race_and_Disability_From_Analogy_to_Intersectionality, consulted on december 2, 2020.

this model is that it individualizes societal problems, placing collective responsibility for these structural, systemic, and intergenerational violences on disabled people. In the context of residential schools in Canada—marked by the intergenerational and cyclical removal of children and broader colonial dispossession[131]—this individualization masks "these historical and ongoing injustices in the deviance and pathology of the body."[132] Linda Steele calls for "resisting exclusively individualized approaches to reparations" that are unable to grasp structural, historical, and intergenerational harms[133] or provide the systemic responses necessary for their transformation.

Difficulties integrating into society should not be attributed to people weakened by disabilities. They should not bear the responsibility of a social system that, by erecting barriers, has long ignored, isolated, and excluded them. The Critical Disability Studies (CDS) movement eschews these binary and simplistic visions of the Western medical model. Its objective is to shift the focus from disability—conceived by this model as a marginalized "other"—to the structural and systemic oppressions it produces. CDS thus allows us to "highlight the residues of colonialism."[134] Campbell Fiona Kumari emphasizes that this field of study invites us to shift our attention from disability to the dynamics of oppression perpetuated by so-called "normal" and "able-bodied" people.[135]

Social inclusion policies must go beyond mere accessibility to become truly transformative. They must raise awareness and educate about constructed historical narratives and the violence they continue to reproduce against disabled peoples. It is the responsibility of all disciplines to raise awareness about this oppression constructed by the medical model, an oppression that is not only historical, but continues in the contemporary world. The medical model demands that we align ourselves with bodily norms that, in turn, create inaccessible spaces. When these exclusionary policies are no longer acceptable, liberal inclusion policies—which reject challenging the initial problem—are implemented and then blame disabled people for their inability to adapt, ultimately adding a new layer of violence and exclusion. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson reminds us that one of the fundamental roles of CDS is to demonstrate why disability, and the diversity it embodies, must be fully integrated into society, notably through anti-eugenics arguments.[136] The question of "who and what is included and excluded is at the heart of CDS."[137] For Patty Berne, the cruelest aspect of eugenics is that it continually forces disabled people to prove their right to exist.[138] The medical model has constructed disability as a pathology, valuing cure over culturally competent care and attention, while imposing constant epistemic work on those affected to counter the prejudices—disgust, contempt, and liberal pity—and the epistemic violence it generates. The latter, rooted in colonialism and Eurocentrism, is not only ideological but is embodied in material harms linked to this construction of the "other."[139] The constant erasure of disabled people reveals the distinction between "valued" and "devalued" lives. This normalization and naturalization of this violence against these rendered vulnerable people only reproduces unimportant and potentially disposable lives.

The hierarchization of physical, cognitive, intellectual, and behavioral abilities and the

131 Linda Steele, *Disability, Criminal Justice and Law Reconsidering Court Diversion*, 2020, Routledge edition, page 134.
132 Ibid., page 134.
133 Ibid., page 207.
134 Valentina Migliarini and Brent C. Elder, *The Future of Inclusive Education, Intersectional Perspectives*, palgrave macmilan, 2023, page 10.
135 Dan Goodley, *Dis/entangling Critical Disability Studies*, 2013, page 88, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09687599.2012.717884, consulted on january 6, 2025.
136 Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Eugenic World Building and Disability : The Strange World of Kazuo shiguro's Never Let Me Go, 2015,* page 141, https://www.academia.edu/36643200/_Eugenic_World_Building_and_Disability_The_Strange_World_of_Kazuo_Ishiguros_Never_Let_Me_Go, consulted le 23 february 2025.
137 Katie Ellis, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Mike Kent and Rachel Robertson, *Manifesto for the future of critical disability studies*, Routledge Edition, 2019, page 13.
138 Shayda Kafai, *Crip Kinship : The Disability Justice & Art Activism of Sins Invalid,* Arsenal Pulp Press, 2021, page 84.
139 Farhana Sultana, *Confronting Climate Coloniality*, Routledge Edition, 2025, page 8.

associated inequalities of treatment are normalized, tolerated, and perceived as natural in the West. The concept of disability—introduced by colonialism[140] and still used to draw the boundaries of inclusion, segregation, incarceration, and accessibility—was part of these technologies that obsessively equated difference with inferiority. It has been a constant since the earliest colonial encounters[141]. Dr. John Gilroy argues that, according to Indigenous peoples, the notion of disability has historically been mobilized to control, institutionalize, oppress, and criminalize these communities[142]. This concept, moreover, does not reflect their own understanding of difference. Dr. Scott Avery argues that contemporary practices of exclusion and segregation are typically Western and colonial[143], and points out that First Nations communities have strong traditions of inclusion and acceptance of diversity.[144] [145] Western society has historically resisted any policies that might support diversity.[146] Colin Barnes notes that there is evidence of persistent prejudice against disabled peoples in the West, long before the emergence of capitalism.[147]

Nation-state discourses—which classified people, rationalized, and institutionalized violence and dehumanization—are still necessary to enforce, normalize, and justify hierarchies of ability and worth between groups and communities. This dehumanization still serves to justify and enforce domination and disadvantage toward certain individuals as natural. Paty Berne, Laura I. Appleman, and Liat Ben-Moshe remind us that the incarceration, institutionalization, and eugenic policies toward disabled and racialized people were central to the "massive colonial project of Western European expansion."[148] [149] Daniels-Mayes invites us to understand why the colonial concept of disability is the embodiment of an "ongoing process of colonization."[150] Colonial contexts marginalized and stigmatized disabled and Indigenous people; their subjugation was essential to any colonial project. The category of disability was not only constructed by the medical model to classify productive capacities, it also served to differentiate and subjugate "others" to imperial power. Stephanie Dawn Kennedy has noted the intersections between modernity, disability, work, slavery, and the central role of disability in the valorization and devalorization of bodies within colonial exchanges.[151] She states that "the concepts of monstrosity, race, disability, and slavery were inextricably linked during the colonial period." [152] Thicknesse and Long have thus linked the supposed deviance of Africans to intellectual disability, describing them as a different human

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140 Nicole Ineese-Nash, *Disability as a Colonial Construct: The Missing Discourse of Culture in Conceptualizations of Disabled Indigenous Children*, 2021, https://cjds.uwaterloo.ca/index.php/cjds/article/view/645, consulted on june 20, 2021.

141 Chris Cunneen, Antje Deckert, Amanda Porter, Juan Tauri, Robert Webb, *The Routledge Handbook on Decolonizing Justice*, Routledge Edition, 2023, page 271.

142 John Gilroy, Margaretha Uttjek, Lavonna Lovern and John Ward, *Indigenous people with disability: intersectionality of identity from the experience of Indigenous people in Australia, Sweden, Canada, and USA*, 2021, https://dgsjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/dgs_08_02_04-4.pdf, consulted on september 11, 2024.

143 Claire Spivakovsky, Linda Steele and Penelope Weller, *The legacies of institutionalisation, Disability, Law and Policy in the'Deinstitutionalised' Community*, Hart Publishing, *2020,* page 6.

144 *Ibid.* page 6.

145 Scott Avery, *Culture is Inclusion: A narrative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability*, FPDN Australia, Sydney 2018, https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/system/files/exhibit/EXP.0020.0001.0001.pdf, consulted on june 14, 2021.

146 Len Barton, *Disability and society, Emerging Issues and Insights*, Routledge Edition, 1996, page 52.

147 Ibid., page 51.

148 Sins Invalid, *Skin, Tooth, and Bone – The Basis of Movement is Our People: A Disability Justice Primer*, 2016, page 18, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09688080.2017.1335999, consulted on april 9, 2021.

149 Chris Cunneen, Antje Deckert, Amanda Porter, Juan Tauri, Robert Webb, *The Routledge Handbook on Decolonizing Justice*, Routledge Edition, 2023, page 271.

150 Sheelagh Daniels-Mayes, *Researching Indigenous people living with a disability: The urgent need for an intersectional and decolonising approach (BlakAbility)*, 2023, https://www.lowitjajournal.org.au/action/showPdf?pii=S2949-8406%2823%2900004-9, consulted on april 28, 2025.

151 Karen Soldatic and Shaun Grech, *Disability and Colonialism, (Dis)encounters and anxious intersectionalities*, Routledge Edition 2016, page 17.

152 Stephanie Dawn Kennedy, *'Remember in the Body' : Disability and Slavery in England and the Caribbean, 1500-1834*, 2015 Page iii.

species.[153] David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder have noted the close links between colonization and ableism:[154] "disabled people are intimately linked to this colonial complex."[155]

To understand the historical injustices suffered by disabled people, and their continuation in the modern world, it is essential, as the following paragraph explains, to recognize that "carcerality is deeply linked to the experience of disability".[156]

5 - Do not overlook the history of the creation of the carceral state and institutionalization

Incarceration, life in institutions, psychiatric hospitals, and the most violent treatment have long been a reality for disabled people.[157] Starting in the 18th century, collective responsibility for them was gradually transferred to institutions, leading to the confinement of a growing number of "insane" people, a phenomenon that intensified in the mid-19th century. This confinement and "spatial exclusion necessary to assuage the apprehension of the unknown [...] laid the foundations for our own modern carceral state."[158] Laura I. Appleman adds that modern societies have gradually become accustomed to the erasure and incarceration of this population, to the point of making it a global model. She asserts that "the long tail of eugenics still explains our 21st-century incarceration policies."[159] Vivianne Saleh-Hanna develops a reading of penal coloniality[160] to explain "the emergence of prisons in Africa as an integral facet of colonialism".[161] This penal coloniality maintains divisions and stigmatizations, keeping poor populations in mutual fear.[162]

To understand the connection between the creation of the modern carceral state and disability, the example of the United States—a white European settler colony—is emblematic. It is observed that "the first modern mass incarceration was not of criminal offenders, but of the disabled."[163] Laura I. Appleman points out that "In the early 20th century, the number of people incarcerated for mental, physical, or social disabilities far exceeded the number of people incarcerated for crime."[164] These ideas persist: "colonial legacies reverberate strongly in the practices of punitive agencies and in the processes of criminalization of subaltern populations."[165] Laura I. Appleman shows that the confinement of disabled people—or those deemed unsuitable for the political system—was seen as necessary for the emergence of nation-states in Europe.[166]

153 Ibid., page 266.
154 Emily J. Hutcheon and Bonnie La sheicz, *Tracing and troubling continuities between ableism and colonialism in Canada*, 2018, page 10, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335334581_Tracing_and_troubling_continuities_between_ableism_and_colonialism_in_Canada, consulted on march 3, 2025.
155 Chris Cunneen, Antje Deckert, Amanda Porter, Juan Tauri, Robert Webb, *The Routledge Handbook on Decolonizing Justice*, Routledge Edition, 2023, page 271.
156 Ibid. page 271.
157 Shayda Kafai, *Crip Kinship : The Disability Justice & Art Activism of Sins Invalid,* Arsenal Pulp Press, 2021, page 19. « our disabled body-minds are aware of the long history of eugenics, scientific racism, colonialism, and capitalist productivity that labels us disposable. »
158 Laura I Appleman, *Deviancy, dependency, and disability: the forgotten history of eugenics and mass incarceration*, page 442.
159 Ibid., page 420.
160 The notion of penal coloniality developed by Viviane Saleh-Hanna is part of a critical analysis of criminal justice systems inherited from colonization. In her book Colonial Systems of Control, she explores how European penal models imposed in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, were not only ill-suited to local social and legal structures, but also contributed to the marginalization and injustice of African populations. Penal coloniality, according to Saleh-Hanna, refers to the imposition of criminal justice systems alien to the cultural and social realities of colonized peoples, resulting in forms of domination, injustice, and suffering that persist beyond the colonial period.
161 Vivianne Saleh-Hanna, *Colonial system of control*, University of Ottawa Press, 2008, page XXIII.
162 Ibid., page 31.
163 Laura I Appleman, *Deviancy, dependency, and disability: the forgotten history of eugenics and mass incarceration*, page 443.
164 Ibid., page 442.
165 Ana Aliverti, Henrique carvalho, Anastasia Chamberlen and Máximo Sozzo, *Decolonizing the criminal question : Colonial legacies, Contemporary Problems*, Oxford Edition, 2023, page 201.
166 Laura I Appleman, *Deviancy, dependency, and disability: the forgotten history of eugenics and mass incarceration*, page 422.

The consequences of early 20th-century eugenic, punitive, and discriminatory practices toward difference are still evident today in everyday relationships and across all spaces. The work of Linda Steele and Liat Ben-Moshe is among the few scholarly contributions exploring the connections between disability, deinstitutionalization, and prison abolition. Laura I. Appleman and Liat Ben-Moshe reject the tendency to "underestimate the interconnections between the colonial construction of race and disability" and "the central role that the history of institutionalization of people labeled as disabled […] played in the creation of the carceral state."[167] Their research shows that dismantling prisons requires a DJ attentive to the dynamics of colonialism, racial capitalism, and ableism—the very foundations of the carceral state.[168]

While this thesis aims to highlight the most marginalized and criminalized populations, as well as their persistent difficulties in accessing their fundamental rights, the following paragraph seeks to identify the policies that have reinforced or maintained this status quo of structural violence. It also questions the factors that allowed so many disabled people to be exterminated less than a century ago. Is this past over? Is it still present? Have these methods of execution really disappeared?

6 - Recognizing the Continuity of Eugenics in the Present

Disabled people were the targets of eugenics because they represented a "serious threat to the future of society," race, and civilization itself.[169] The term "eugenics" is a word we rarely hear, even though we are immersed in its legacy. Fiona Kuari Campbell describes "modern eugenics as 'more insidious and secretive,' and aims to force individuals to control or manage themselves within ableist systems and assumptions.[170] Sterilization[171], institutionalization, incarceration, and so on show us that eugenics is still present. Some speak of this eugenic past as an event that never ended. Livneh suggests that this understanding of the origin of these negative attitudes, and of the many prejudices, is fundamental to helping many professionals in managing the feelings of disabled people, while working to change the attitudes of society[172]. This understanding must constitute a basis for the production of knowledge, to make these dynamics intelligible and work towards their transformation.

Eugenics reinforced exclusionary policies, continues to inflict harm, and perpetuates these ideologies of otherness and inferiority in contemporary societies. Levi specifies that its current forms include preventing "disabled people from reproducing or being born,"[173] their isolation, exclusion, internment, and institutionalization—which, in extreme cases, leads to their murder.[174] Special education is criticized for its eugenic underpinnings: it institutionalizes the separation of students with disabilities, normalizes structural violence, and perpetuates unequal access to opportunities for growth. Kliewer and Drake show that "occupations of control,"[175] such as "segregated special education programs,"[176] have their origins in eugenic science, which posits that

167 Chris Cunneen, Antje Deckert, Amanda Porter, Juan Tauri, Robert Webb, *The Routledge Handbook on Decolonizing Justice*, Routledge Edition, 2023, page 271.
168 Sheila Wildeman, *Critical Pathways to Disability Decarceration: Reading Liat Ben-Moshe and Linda Steele*, 2023, page 4, https://digitalcommons.schulichlaw.dal.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2969&context=scholarly_works, consulted on february 5, 2025.
169 Jess Whatcott, *Menace to the future, A Disability and Queer History of Carceral Eugenics*, Duke University Press, 2024, Chapitre 0, page 20.
170 Jennifer Sarrett, *Incarcerating disability: how society-wide structural violence diminishes justice for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities,* 2019, page 3, https://iperstoria.it/article/view/335/370, consulted on november 22, 2022.
171 United Nation, *Sexual and reproductive health and rights of girls and young women with disabilities*, https://docs.un.org/en/A/72/133, page 11, consulted on november 8, 2024.
172 Olivier Mutanga, *Ubuntu Philosophy and Disability in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Routledge Editions, 2024, page 78.
173 Michael Robertson, Astrid Ley, Edwina Light, *The First into the dark*, UTS ePRESS, 2019, chapitre 8, page 189.
174 Ibid., page 189.
175 Christopher Kliewer and Stephen Drake, *Disability, Eugenics and the Current Ideology of Segregation: A modern moral tale*, 2010, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09687599826939, consulted on december 3, 2024.
176 Ibid.

“difference must be stigmatized, contained, and eliminated from the community.”[177] These concerns have historically justified segregation. According to the CRPD, these institutions should not exist, nor should they be considered a choice. Michael Robertson et al. specify that the structural or institutionalized ableism of disabled people manifests itself in the inability of society to meet their most basic needs.

Esme Cleall invites us to refocus on anxieties of belonging and the politics of race throughout the 20th century to understand this rise of eugenics and its impact on both disabled and racialized people.[178] This eugenics served to justify expansionist ambitions “by attributing physical and intellectual inferiority to those deemed ‘other’.”[179] Georgia van Toorn and Karen Soldatic point out that, “to secure the future of the colonies, the nation, and the empire,”[180] disabled, poor, racialized, Black, and Indigenous people required “eugenic population controls”[181] to reinforce “inequalities related to class, disability, race, ethnicity, and Indigeneity.”[182]

Marius Turda, a historian of eugenics and race, recalls that disabled people, "considered to represent a different and less capable humanity, were institutionalized in 'special schools' and 'colonies', and then subjected to specific educational programs." He emphasizes the immense responsibility of psychologists in the implementation of eugenic policies. The medical model, and the exclusion, indoctrination, and eugenic attitudes it engendered, have established a cycle of dependency from which it is very difficult to break free. The medical model has also contributed to "the lack of community support."[183] Marius Turda insists that this indoctrination is deeply rooted in society. He advocates for a public acknowledgment of past wrongs and appropriate societal awareness, "so that we can prevent mistreatment in the present."[184] He also calls for a commitment to "developing new ways of thinking and treating each person with dignity and respect, as equals to others."[185] Here again, an artificial separation between past and present, which absolves our systems from any form of responsibility, which erases and ignores history, is not a path towards decolonization.

A recent example of the elimination of disabled people, and one of the most significant in the history of disability, is the Krankenmorde extermination project, less than a century ago.[186] This euthanasia program, under the Nazi regime, led to the elimination of 300,000 people and the sterilization of another 400,000. In France, during the Occupation, 40,000 people died in psychiatric hospitals.[187] Michael Robertson et al. point out that to achieve the objectives of Krankemorde,[188] the prior implementation of structural violence—medical, social, economic, and educational—was decisive.[189] While the recognition of this extermination of disabled people is very recent, historians continue to debate the complex links between the Holocaust and the central role of Krankenmorde.[190] David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder emphasize the central role of disability “in any effort to

177 Ibid.
178 Michael Robertson, Astrid Ley, Edwina Light, *The First into the dark*, UTS ePRESS, 2019, chapitre 7, page 159.
179 Ibid., page 12.
180 Georgia van Toorn and Karen Soldatic, *Disablism, racism and the spectre of eugenics in digital welfare*, 2024, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/14407833241244828?int.sj-abstract.similar-articles.4, consulted on september 15, 2024.
181 Ibid.
182 Ibid.
183 Jeanne Hayes, Elizabeth Lisa M Hannold, *The road to empowerment: a historical perspective on the medicalization of disability*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25790713, consulted on january 3, 2022.
184 Marius Turda, *Confronting the Legacy of Eugenics in Psychology*, https://humanrightspsychology.org/commemorating-the-holocaust-confronting-the-legacy-of-eugenics-in-psychology/, consulted on december 3, 2024.
185 Ibid.
186 Michael Robertson, Astrid Ley, Edwina Light, *The First into the dark*, UTS ePRESS, 2019, chapitre 7, page 159.
187 Isabelle von Bueltzingsloewen, *Starvation in French Asylums during the German Occupation*, 2021, https://hal.science/hal-03323189/document, consulted le 25 february 2025. « The scenario that led to the extermination of the mentally ill and disabled by the National Socialists during World War II could be repeated, even in France. »
188 Michael Robertson, Astrid Ley, Edwina Light, *The First into the dark*, UTS ePRESS, 2019, chapitre 7, page 163.
189 Ibid, Chapter 7, page 163.
190 Ibid., page 162.

understand the nature and mechanisms of the Nazi Holocaust."[191] The extermination processes, practiced in the death camps, were first tested and experimented on disabled people. This "extreme act of ableism," rarely referred to as genocide, has only recently been fully integrated into historical consciousness. David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder explain this late, until recently, awareness as a result of the absence of a social model of disability, which "left this population mired in models of pathos and tragedy developed during the era of eugenics."[192] This persistent failure to recognize the value of these lives also explains why the violence suffered by disabled people has long remained at the margins of the historical narrative. In contrast to widespread outrage at the persecutions of the Nazi regime and its allies in Europe, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities asserts[193] that the responsibility of Nazi eugenics practices for the murder of approximately 300,000 disabled people and "the significance of the eugenics movement and its impact on the way societies continue to dismiss the value of the lives of disabled people have long remained confined within disability circles."[194] The report concludes that "the hegemony of ableism in society has perpetuated the idea that living with a disability is not a life worth living,"[195] which limits the inclusion and opportunities of these people to participate in society. This contributes to maintaining the understanding of disability through a medical lens, which views these people as requiring healing in order to participate in a society that continues to privilege a type of body and mind that is said to have "social utility."

To understand the connection between different institutional sites, Chris Chapman, Alison Carey, and Liat Ben-Moshe analyze the transformations that occurred with the advent of industrial capitalism and its increasing demands on labor. Programs were assigned to populations deemed unfit for work. These schemes relied on forms of detention and institutional isolation, often in inhumane conditions, intended to illustrate the abjection and shame associated with dependency.[196] Interdependence was seen not as a form of solidarity, but as a mark of weakness. These abject conditions served as a warning and deterred any deviation from the dominant productivist model. Poverty and the inability to work were understood as painful. These conditions were abhorrent enough to make waged work as attractive as possible. The task fell to education, psychology, and care professionals to "sort" able-bodied and disabled populations. Michel Foucault wrote in 1988: "Before having the medical meaning that we give it, or at least that we like to suppose, confinement was required by something quite different from any concern to cure the sick. What made it necessary was an imperative to work."[197]

When these historical inequalities are deeply rooted and maintained by an institutional culture, we must ask how the "apparatus of disability," and the ways it has been used for centuries, continues to sustain ableist attitudes and persistent prejudices. To recognize the pervasiveness of these oppressive structures and systems within society, we must understand its historical roots, identify the antecedents of these violences, and their continuity in the present. Many recognize that ending the disproportionate incarceration of disabled and racialized people requires eliminating ableism and all forms of subordination and stigma around disability. Liat Ben-Moshe asks us to approach the issue of disability, and its incarceration, from an intersectional perspective.[198] Jess

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191 David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, *The Eugenic Atlantic : race, disability, and the making of an international Eugenic science, 1800-1945,* 2010, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0968759032000127281, consulted on februar 3, 2025.

192 Ibid.

193 United Nations, *Rights of persons with disabilities, A/HRC/43/41*, https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g19/346/54/pdf/g1934654.pdf

194 Ibid., page 4.

195 Ibid. page 17.

196 Liat Ben-Moshe, Chris Chapman, & Alison Carey, *Disability Incarcerated, Imprisonment and Disability in the United States and Canada*, palgrave milgrane, 2014, page 6.

197 Ibid., page 7.

198 Liat Ben-Moshe, *Alternatives to (Disability) Incarceration*. Abstract, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137388476_14, consulted le 15 june 2022. "think about incarceration in a variety of places where disabled and/or non-normative bodies and minds are confined, such as psychiatric hospitals, residential institutions for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and prisons. "

Whatcott details why many abolitionists consider "detention to be eugenics."[199] Angela Davis reminds us that "carceral practices are so deeply embedded in the history of disability that it is effectively impossible to understand incarceration without also addressing the confinement of disabled people."[200] Along these lines, Ruth Wilson Gilmore has analyzed the role of ableism in maintaining the carceral state, developing the idea that the marginalization and political incapacitation of disabled people is one of its fundamental goals.[201] Because racialized, Black, and Indigenous disabled people are disproportionately incarcerated, it is imperative to integrate race into any analysis of disability. This means recognizing that white supremacy and ableism are systems of oppression so intertwined that they cannot be analyzed separately.[202] "Around the world, marginalized groups suffer from racialized overincarceration as a result of colonialism."[203]

A collective uprooting of eugenicist ideologies and a profound transformation of our social structures are essential conditions for achieving social justice. From a climate justice perspective, it is equally essential to question how these eugenicist legacies shape our political orientations and strategic choices in the face of climate change. Due to the continuity of these historical violences, "calls for accountability and reparations in response to injustices committed against disabled people are beginning to be heard more loudly."[204] The case of France, a leader in segregation in Europe,[205] underlines the urgency of revisiting its eugenicist past and the institutions that emerged from it, in order to envision systemic change and forge new analytical frameworks. It will not be possible to achieve true social justice without integrating a critical understanding of this past, and without recognizing how many spaces continue to exclude and marginalize the "valuable" voices of disabled peoples, keeping them in separate spheres. It is also necessary to abolish institutions supposedly dedicated to social justice that, in reality, contribute to the disappearance of marginalized populations. Resisting eugenics means challenging these eugenic practices, which aim to erase disabled peoples, by opposing the logic "according to which the disabled and the insane are destined to disappear".[206] The first specialized classes for children classified as "disabled," established at the end of the 19th century, in direct connection with the rise of the eugenics movement, testify to this logic of exclusion: "the separate special education program was thus born from the science of eugenics and was ultimately a program of control".[207]

It is therefore imperative to challenge persistent beliefs that view disability as an isolated individual problem. Disabled peoples, long objectified by institutions, must be fully recognized as actors in their own right. They must be empowered and encouraged to intervene in the processes of preventing, repairing, and transforming the systemic violence they experience. Rethinking and redefining justice based on their voices and experiences represents not only an ethical imperative, but a transformative opportunity for society as a whole.

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199 Jess Whatcott, *Menace to the future, A Disability and Queer History of Carceral Eugenics*, Duke University Press, 2024, Chapter 0, page 2.

200 Tess Sheldon, *Entangling Liberty and Equality: Critical Disability Studies, Law and Resisting Psychiatric Detention*, note 3, page 268.

201 Autumn Miller, *Against Productivity & Liberal Pity: A Case Study in Prison Abolition & Disability Justice*, 2023, https://dsq-sds.org/index.php/dsq/article/view/9192/7853, consulted on september 10, 2023.

202 Liat Ben-Moshe, *Decarcerating Disability, Deinstitutionalization and Prison Abolition*, University of Minnesota Press, 2020, "Race is coded in disability, and vice versa." – page 40.

203 Megan Korchak, *Decolonizing Prison: A Framework and Practices for Revisioning Incarceration,* https://www.saskoer.ca/decolonizingjustice/chapter/decolonization-and-prison/, consulted on may 3, 2025.

204 Liat Ben-Moshe and Linda Steele, *Introduction to the Symposium – Decarcerating Disability, Criminal Justice and Law: New Writing on Disability, Abolition and the Limits of Rights*, page 3, https://journals.kent.ac.uk/index.php/feministsatlaw/article/view/1179/2150, consulted on november 20, 2024.

205 Eurofund, *Paths towards independent living and social inclusion in Europe*, 2024, page 60, https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/publications/2024/paths-towards-independent-living-and-social-inclusion-europe, consulted on octobber 26, 2024.

206 Jess Whatcott, *Menace to the future, A Disability and Queer History of Carceral Eugenics*, Duke University Press, 2024, Chapter 4, page 145.

207 Christopher Kliewer and Stephen Drake, *Disability, Eugenics and the Current Ideology of Segregation: A modern moral tale*, 2010, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09687599826939, consulted on december 3, 2024.

7 - Achieving Epistemic Equality to Achieve Social and Climate Justice

Disability has long remained an ignored aspect of social justice, still equated with a medical condition and sidelined by critical theorists and social activists. As "research subjects" and research participants, disabled peoples have been excluded for so long that their perspectives and needs are still largely ignored in many spaces. Their "lower productivity" can no longer justify questioning their knowledge production. Drawing on the principles of Nancy Fraser's social justice theory, while noting the failure to integrate the dimension of disability, Teodor Mladenov demonstrates that a society can only be considered just when it can guarantee "parity of participation" for all its members.[208] He emphasizes the need to refocus disability at the heart of social justice debates, calling for it to be considered not as a peripheral issue, but as a central axis of analysis and action.[209] He states that “the category of disability is a major instrument used by the capitalist state to regulate labor supply in the interest of capital accumulation.”[210] This idea of “parity of participation” is essential for a historically invisible group. It constitutes a foundation from which it becomes possible to build truly inclusive and culturally relevant social justice. The preamble to the CRPD also recalls the need to recognize the contributions of disabled peoples to their communities, while affirming that they are also capable of advancing society as a whole. A model based on the rights of disabled peoples must affirm the counter-hegemonic principle that carries the idea that disabled peoples have the possibility of contributing to the production of unique knowledge in the epistemic system. This involves questioning the dominant epistemic frameworks on which society rests, and which “can only be maintained by groups whose individual members have this power”.[211]

Nirmala Erevelles highlights the fundamental role that disabled people play in epistemic work “on the ground,” “in real life,” “in embodied activism,” and “in scholarship.” She emphasizes the crucial importance of intersectional work, ensuring that the epistemic labor necessary to ensure that disability is neither erased nor subsumed under other categories, but understood in all its intersectional complexity, is made visible.[212] Similarly, Robel Afeworki Abay argues for the imperative to approach structural ableism from an intersectional perspective,[213] and to consider the interdependence of this oppression with other structural discriminations such as racism and sexism. In the current context, marked by a rise in concerns about the erasure of knowledge from populations most exposed to marginalization, it becomes essential to question the mechanisms of knowledge production. Combating intersectional discrimination in the hegemonic production of knowledge proves fundamental to denouncing and deconstructing epistemic violence.[214]

As early as 2006, Christopher Bell highlighted the lack of intersectional analysis in “White Disability Studies,” and the epistemic erasure of multi-marginalized communities it engendered in its tendency “to whitewash the history, ontology, and phenomenology of disability.”[215] He showed us the importance of not following dominant perspectives and revisiting the past. The focus on a single oppression, such as disability, marginalizes certain communities that must struggle to overcome violations of rights, even within the disability rights movement. Addressing disability without taking into account these intersecting dimensions fails to account for the complexity, diversity, and extent of the violence experienced by these people and their daily resistance against the systems of domination that seek to erase them. This “single-issue, rights-based strategy “tackles

208 Mladenov Teodor, *Disability and social justice*, 2016, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09687599.2016.1256273#d1e354, consulted on january 12, 2019.
209 Ibid.
210 Ibid.
211 Rajeev Bhargava, *Pour en finir avec l'injustice épistémique du colonialisme*, 2013, §8 https://journals.openedition.org/socio/203, consulted on march 16, 2025.
212 Nirmala Erevelles and Marina Morrow, *Intersectionality : Introduction*, 2023, page 494, https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-981-16-1278-7_91-2, consulted on october 24, 2024.
213 Robel Afeworki Abay and Karen Soldatic, *Intersectional Colonialities, Embodied colonial violence and practices of resistance at the axis of disability, race, indigeneity, class and gender*, Routledge Edition, 2024, page 26.
214 Ibid., page 26.
215 Nirmala Erevelles and Marina Morrow, *Intersectionality : Introduction*, 2023, page 485.

the symptoms of inequality, but not its root cause."[216] Gaslighting, normalized by the medical model, obscures the interconnectedness of multiple oppressions and prevents us from understanding why "white supremacy, rape culture, and the reproduction of capitalist hierarchies in organizing all thrive on ableism."[217] These dynamics demonstrate that "white supremacy, colonialism, ableism, and capitalism" are intertwined.[218] Black feminist disability work[219] has been central in highlighting that "ableism underpins, depends on, and reifies all other oppressions."[220] It also helps us understand that "decolonization recognizes the interconnectedness of groups oppressed by colonialism."[221] Finally, it is crucial to distinguish the relational perspectives—community or spiritual—on disability held by many communities in the Global South[222] from the dominant liberal frameworks of the Global North, which are often inadequate for thinking about interdependence because they are "shaped by the colonial legacy"[223] and rooted in "the medical model of disability, which emphasizes individual deficiencies".[224]

DJ emphasizes the importance of leadership by the most affected disabled people in social justice debates, so that their expertise can guide action. She pushes us to understand, through an intersectional lens, that people located at the intersection of multiple identities disproportionately experience the effects of structural inequalities—and not uniformly. She highlights the limitations of single-track approaches in complex social situations. The Council of Europe recognizes that "intersectional discrimination is one of the major unresolved problems in the world."[225] Key principles from the theories of Subaltern Studies and intersectionality have emerged to ensure that questions about erasure are continually asked, systematically identifying groups absent from discursive spaces. We must resist and not become accustomed to the absence of these voices that are often not heard. They fuel practices and systems that exclude them without even realizing it. The genuine acceptance of human diversity—and the concrete means to achieve it—is a fundamental aspect of social justice. Debates on climate and social justice cannot succeed without taking into account the complexity of this diversity, in all its dimensions.[226]

"At the heart of decolonization lies, among other things, the question of epistemological justice."[227] Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Frantz Fanon have shown how colonialism shaped the persistence of systemic injustices, particularly towards disabled peoples.[228] The decolonial project aims to recognize and value long-ignored subjectivities and knowledge. Miranda Fricker has defined epistemic injustice as "the systematic devaluation or exclusion of certain voices and knowledge systems."[229] Solutions that do not address the root causes of this ongoing legacy of inequality are guaranteed to maintain and normalize these injustices. The central theme of contemporary discussions on epistemic justice, and equality in knowledge production, requires

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216 Natalie M. Chin, *Centering Disability Justice*, page 22.
217 A.J. Withers et al., *Radical Disability Politics*, 2019, page 184, https://stillmyrevolution.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/radical-disability-politics.pdf, consulted on july 8, 2020.
218 Ibid. page 185.
219 Rosamund Greiner, *Toward Critical Studies of Disabilities : engaging Latin American theoretical perspectives on Congenital Zika Syndrome*, 2022, §11, https://journals.openedition.org/horizontes/6648, consulted on march 3, 2025.
220 Radical Disability Politics, page 185.
221 Université York, *Stratégie de décolonisation, d'équité, de diversité et d'inclusion*, https://www.yorku.ca/dedi-strategy/wp-content/uploads/sites/789/2023/05/22-201_DEDI-Strategy-2023-28_FR_r2.pdf, consulted on march 2, 2025.
222 Arpita Roy, *Decolonizing Disability Studies : Identities, Epistemologies and Global South Perspectives*, 2024, https://www.thecreativelauncher.com/index.php/tcl/article/view/1230, consulted on december 20, 2024.
223 Ibid.
224 Ibid.
225 Concil of Europe, *Intersectionality*, https://www.coe.int/en/web/north-south-centre/intersectionality/-/asset_publisher/wMPHJcZn0JE6/content/structural-imbalances, consulted on march 22, 2025.
226 Lexi Giizhigokwe Nahwagiizhic, *Neurodiversity from an Indigenous perspective, Indigenous Disability Studies*, Routledge Edition, 2025, page 94.
227 Robel Afeworki Abay and Karen Soldatic, *Intersectional Colonialities*, Routledge Edition, 2024, page 11.
228 Arpita Roy, *Decolonizing Disability Studies : Identities, Epistemologies and Global South Perspectives*, 2024, https://www.thecreativelauncher.com/index.php/tcl/article/view/1230, consulted on december 20, 2024.
229 Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing,* Oxford University Press, 2007.

dismantling cultural and structural violence to overcome this epistemic oppression. Disabled people have the capacity to reveal these invisible violences, if their ontologies and epistemologies were to cease being objectified and devalued. Without understanding how these violences target certain populations, their eradication is impossible. If we do not understand how knowledge production is impacted by the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power, nor how colonial institutions constantly work to conceal these violences, then we will be ill-equipped to examine how these systemic harms are reproduced. Epistemic justice, as a critical tool, aims to liberate reason itself from coloniality.[230] It pushes us to recognize our dependence on dominant epistemic frameworks. From this perspective, climate justice must recognize climate coloniality as a major political issue, requiring a decolonization of knowledge. This is not a mere technical challenge, but a problem deeply rooted in structural inequalities.

This reminder of the history of disability, and a structural approach to this oppression, can provide an essential basis for engaging in transformative justice, which understands violence as a "collective responsibility."[231] Because the structural analysis of this oppression is very difficult and very poorly understood, for people who are not impacted by it, it is urgent to recognize how the resistance of disabled people functions as a tool to counter these structural oppressions. This embodied theory—or decolonial love[232]—can help us make decoloniality and liberation concrete.[233] Transformative justice is therefore not possible without placing disabled people back at the center of reflections and actions. The invisibility of ableism, including in so-called "progressive" circles, fuels a cycle of continued violence.[234] Angela Davis et al. denounce the dependence of dominant anti-violence circles on punitive sanctions,[235] which reinforce the carceral system instead of challenging it. This addiction to punitive justice makes it difficult to detect the roots of violence. Adrienne Maree Brown invites us to imagine forms of mutual accountability that go beyond this punitive logic: "Instant judgment and punishment are practices of power over others. They are what those who hold power do."[236] "Abolition is about giving people what they need instead of punishing them for what they don't have."[237]

Although not explicitly mentioned, intersections of power run through all relationships—from institutional practices to individual gestures.[238] [239] These "social categorizations, often in combination, […] serve as the basis for inclusion and exclusion."[240] Hong, Duggan, and Ferguson

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230 Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom In Africa*, Routledge Edition, 2018, page 3.

231 Linda Steele, *Disability, Criminal Justice and Law Reconsidering Court Diversion*, 2020, Routledge edition, page 205.

232 Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Investigating decoloniality, https://www.lse.ac.uk/africa/Hub-for-African-Thought/Thinkers/QA/Sabelo-J.-Ndlovu-Gatsheni, « Being decolonial requires a decolonial love for those who have been oppressed. A radical love that is open to their will to live and to fight for their liberation... »

233 Jesica Siham Fernández, *Abolition Psychology: Principles for a decolonial liberation psychology hacia El Mundo Zurdo*, Annual Review of Critical Psychology, 2024, https://discourseunit.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/1147_fernandez.pdf, page1.

234 Katie Tastrom, National Lawyers Guild, https://www.nlg.org/disability-justice-and-abolition/ (text from an older version of their website). "Intersectionality and radical inclusion ask us to examine our own responsibility for our ableist behaviors by strategically resisting pervasive ableist discourses and ideologies that present these people as deserving of attention only when the debilitating consequences of trauma become apparent."

235 Angela Y. Davis, Gina Dent, Erica R. Meiners and Beth E. Richie, *Abolition. Feminism. Now*, Haymarket Books, 2022, page 10.

236 Adrienne Maree Brown, *We Will Not Cancel Us, and other dreams of transformative justice*, AK Press, page 23.

237 Katie Tastrom, *A People's Guide to Abolition and Disability Justice*, PM Press, 2024, page 153.

238 Anna Kaijser and Annica Kronsell, *Climate change through the lens of intersectionality*, 2013, page 4, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09644016.2013.835203, consulted on june 13, 2021.

239 Chris Chapman and A.J. Withers, *A violent history of benevolence interlocking oppression in the moral economies of social working*, University of Toronto Press, 2019, page 372. Chris Chapman and A.J. Withers teach us that in a professional social work context: "rejecting the narrative of one's own innocence invites each of us to consider our involvement in interpersonal harms and interrelated systemic oppressions [...] even with "good" intentions, even if we consider ourselves "good" people, we can still cause harm and participate in structural violence, and we must strive to take responsibility for this."

240 Valentina Migliarini and Brent C. Elder, *The Future of inclusive education, Intersectional Perspectives*, 2022, Palgrave Macmillan, page 13.

have shown that “the rise of liberalism, as a politics and epistemology, is linked to the incorporation of minority difference.”[241] These dynamics of power and exclusion invite us to rethink our analytical frameworks, particularly through intersectional, abolitionist, and decolonial approaches, which offer alternative ways of understanding difference—as Ubuntu and Botho philosophies do in disability studies in the Global South.

8 - An Example of Decolonizing Disability Studies: Ubuntu and Botho Philosophy

The lives of over 75% of the majority world's population are still marked by Western colonialism and eugenics.[242] Disability scholars such as Helen Meekosha, Shaun Grech, and Karen Soldatic have cited the violence of the Global North and argued for the importance of a transnational approach to recognize that the preponderance of disability in the Global South "is firmly tied to Northern imperialism, centuries of colonization, and globalization."[243] While disability is a Western construct,[244] the historical irony is that the perspectives and voices of the marginalized global majority, who are most impacted by it, are still largely overlooked. Although defined as backward by dominant Eurocentric prejudices, their often unacknowledged perspectives can fill the "gaps" in Western theories. Decolonizing disability studies invites us to move beyond Western epistemologies. Shakespeare and Cornell argued[245] the need to consider the perspective and resources of postcolonial societies, highlighting the enduring impact of global power relations. Incorporating these perspectives helps counter persistent colonial dynamics and build strategies better suited to the realities of the Global North and South. Incorporating the experiences of the marginalized majority world into our everyday reflections is essential for understanding the ongoing effects of colonialism and the implications of Eurocentric foundations of disability. Such an approach helps challenge the norms imposed by coloniality, the Western medical model, and neoliberalism. It is important for us to understand the resilience and survival strategies that indigenous populations developed to cope with colonialism, how they came to terms with these disability labels, and to oppose this colonial understanding of difference.

Ubuntu and Botho philosophies, rooted in values of compassion, respect, and care for the most marginalized, contrast sharply with Western educational approaches based on individualism, competition, and individual autonomy. The dominant medical model of disability, despite some advances, remains inadequate for the realities of populations in the Global South. The ICF, which combines social and medical perspectives on disability, fails to integrate specific sociocultural contexts. Olivier Mutanga explains why the absence of intersectional and decolonial approaches to disability limits understanding of the persistent effects of colonialism on disabled peoples in sub-Saharan Africa. He explains the value of the Ubuntu philosophy, originating in this region, in offering a powerful framework for addressing intersectional disadvantage, particularly in higher education. This philosophy values collective responsibility, interdependence, and social inclusion. It provides a strategic foundation for supporting disabled peoples in contexts of the Global North and the Global South.

Regarding universities, Olivier T. Gore emphasizes the importance of an environment where students can freely discuss their disabilities, a necessary condition for adequate support. The Ubuntu philosophy calls for transforming educational structures to make them accessible, creating safe spaces, and recognizing the essential contribution of students with disabilities to the quality of

241 Liat Ben-Moshe, *Decarcerating Disability, Deinstitutionalization and Prison Abolition*, University of Minnesota Press, 2020, page 118.

242 Valentina Migliarini and Brent C. Elder, *The Future of inclusive education, Intersectional Perspectives*, 2022, Palgrave Macmillan, page 13.

243 Helen Meekosha, *Contextualizing disability: developing southern/global theory, 2008, https://www.academia.edu/1079773/Contextualizing_disability_Developing_southern_global_theory*, consulted on may 5, 2021.

244 Áine Kelly-Costello, Pratima Gurung and Raven Cretney, 2024, *Disability and climate justice : From marginalization to leadership*, https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/B9780443140822000387, consulted on march 30, 2025.

245 Olivier Mutanga, *Ubuntu philosophy and disabilities in sub-saharan Africa*, Routledge Edition, 2024, page 4.

education. It encourages ethical and supportive behavior in the academic world, behavior that requires prioritizing support for disabled peoples. This principle encourages university leaders and teachers to practice one of the principles of the Ubuntu philosophy: existence through others.

"Colonialism profoundly influenced the perception of disability in Africa, with significant consequences for disabled peoples."[246] Olivier T. Gore observes that medical and social models of disability have not improved the lives of students with disabilities. He shows how the Ubuntu philosophy helps reveal the intersectional disadvantages that affect students and calls for sufficient support and attention to ensure their needs are addressed. This approach allows university teachers and administrators to understand their responsibility in addressing the multiple forms of exclusion that affect students with disabilities.[247] De Oliveira makes the same observation in his research on the experiences of students with disabilities at a medical school in Brazil.[248] Andoh and Nketsiaba remind us that education is essential to enable disabled peoples to overcome inequalities and contribute to transforming society.[249] For Rankopo and Diraditsile, the Botho philosophy is a fundamental philosophy of African culture. It has helped ensure the capacity of members to be accountable to one another. They also stress the importance of raising awareness in society of the structural disadvantages that further marginalize disabled peoples.[250]

While Ubuntu philosophy allows us to view disability through the prism of relationships, shared dignity, and community, it also opens the way to a broader understanding and questioning of the mechanisms of co-construction of oppression. The following paragraph focuses on this analysis of the intersecting dynamics of power and domination, in order to avoid all forms of essentialization and rigid understandings of the "other."

9 - Understanding the Collusion and Interdependence Between Disability and Other Oppressions

As many scholars assert, ableism is not an isolated system of oppression, nor just another oppression, but a founding structure of modern social hierarchies. Closely linked to racism, sexism, colonialism, etc., it has been a tool of colonial and racial hierarchization. Racialized bodies have historically been dehumanized through their animalization and pathologization. At the very heart of capitalism, eugenics, and the modern nation-state, it illuminates the dynamics of exclusion and the valorization of certain bodies. The delay in recognizing it as a power structure to be deconstructed has created blind spots and limited the effectiveness of many movements. The interdependence of oppressions challenges marginalized groups to overcome silos and hierarchies between struggles. It is these insidious barriers of colonialism that paralyze collective action and awareness of the interconnectedness of oppressions. It is suggested that "these different aspects of social inequality do not operate independently of one another; they interact to create interdependent systems of oppression and domination."[251]

Intersectionality refers to the way these systems intersect to create and shape complex social structures. The failure to acknowledge this interdependence is increasingly seen as a form of social violence. Intersectional feminism recognizes the links between gender inequality and other forms of oppression, such as ableism or racism, asserting "the need to address these intersecting systems of discrimination."[252] Nirmala Erevelles has emphasized that "the omission of disability as a key category in discussions of intersectionality has disastrous, even deadly, consequences for disabled

246 Olivier Mutanga, *Ubuntu philosophy and disabilities in sub-saharan Africa*, Routledge Edition, 2024, page 5.
247 Ibid., Chapitre 3.
248 Ibib., page 57.
249 Ibid., Chapitre 4.
250 Ibid., Chapitre 5.
251 Rider University, *Privilege and Intersectionality*, https://guides.rider.edu/privilege/intersectionality, consulted on may 2, 2025.
252 Brenda Russell, Debra Oswald MaryKate Cotter, *What makes a liberal feminist? Identifying predictors of heterosexual women and men's liberal feminist ideology*, page 2, https://spssi.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/asap.12383, 2024, consulted on may 5, 2025.

people of color, caught in the violence of multiple differences."[253] This omission is also a concern in debates on climate change, where intersectional disadvantages are often ignored. Within the European Union, victims of these disadvantages are still denied protection, in clear violation of Article 6 of the CRPD. Although the concept of intersectionality is gaining recognition, the lack of data on intersecting discrimination remains a major obstacle at the European level.[254]

In 2013, Kaijser and Kronsell recognized the underrepresentation of certain groups at all levels in decision-making on climate issues. They advocated for a social and political approach to climate change, integrating intersectional perspectives capable of taking into account social structures, symbolic representations and identity constructions, in order to avoid the "pitfalls of essentialization"[255] and foster "solidarity and action beyond social categories".[256] They consider that an intersectional approach to climate change must have as its central mission the recognition of the interdependence between "the improvement of the living conditions of marginalized groups and environmental sustainability".[257] They draw in particular on a recognized definition of intersectionality: "the interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements and cultural ideologies, as well as the consequences of these interactions in terms of power".[258]

Power patterns are shaped by climate policies and strategies. An intersectional perspective must not only analyze the differentiated effects of climate change on populations that are deemed "vulnerable" or "affected," but also question the implicit norms and assumptions taken for granted that contribute to the (re)production of social hierarchies and power relations—particularly through institutional mechanisms. The absence of an intersectional approach in climate policymaking risks generating new power dynamics, or even exacerbating existing inequalities and structural violence. This could further marginalize individuals and groups already deprived of decision-making power. Yet, this dimension remains largely understudied.[259]

Intersectionality has a rich and long history, rooted in the liberation struggles of Black and Indigenous women—from Sojourner Truth's famous speech in 1851 to the Combahee River Collective's declaration in 1977.[260] Black feminists have had to do this demanding work, which involved theorizing oppression from multiple anchors: gender, class, race, sexuality, disability, etc. Kimberley Crenshaw, who is credited with coining the term "intersectionality," has highlighted the growing tensions within social movements based on single identity politics. These approaches still ignore differences within marginalized groups themselves. Some marginalized groups still do not understand disability as a social construct and still interpret it through hegemonic notions of normalcy, reducing it to a solely biological reality, devoid of political, social, or historical dimensions.

Crenshaw showed, as early as 1991, that approaches focused on a single identity primarily benefit those who are most privileged within oppressed groups.[261] An intersectional framework aims to show that oppressions are not simply additive, they interact in unique ways depending on the

253 Nirmala Erevelles, *Disability and difference in global contexts, Enabling a Transformative Body Politics*, palgrave milgram, 2011, page 22.

254 European Disability Forum, *Joint Briefing for United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities regarding the review of the implementation of the CRPD by the EU, Equality and intersectional discrimination faced by persons with disabilities in the European Union*, https://www.edf-feph.org/publications/joint-briefing-for-united-nations-committee-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-regarding-the-review-of-the-implementation-of-the-crpd-by-the-eu/, consulted on june 2, 2024.

255 Anna Kaijser and Annica Kronsell, *Climate change through the lens of intersectionality*, 2013, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09644016.2013.835203, consulted on june 13, 2021.

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259 Nahuel Arenas-García, *Unpacking the Linkages Between structural violence and climate crisis*, 2024, https://www.pdcnet.org/enviroethics/content/enviroethics_2024_0999_9_12_82, consulted on may 7, 2025.

260 Catherine Jampel, *Intersections of disability justice, racial justice and environmental justice*, 2018, page 2, https://par.nsf.gov/servlets/purl/10058562, consulted on may 20, 2020.

261 Kimberley Crenshaw, *Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color*, 1991, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1229039?origin=crossref, consulted on february 20, 2025.

context. This framework is valuable for making visible relevant factors, in a specific, sometimes very complex, context in which a person evolves. It seeks to understand which identities are highlighted and which are invisibilized and absent, in the context studied. This requires a detailed reading of the power structures at play. One of the great challenges of intersectionality is to make these power dynamics visible,[262] in order to reveal the mechanisms of erasure and oppression towards minority groups. By exposing these systemic logics, intersectionality provides tools to identify, challenge, and transform power relations. She rejects binary approaches to oppression, preferring complex analytical methods capable of uncovering invisible forms of privilege and intersections of oppression—whether historical or contemporary. This framework can, for example, be used to analyze and identify systemic inequalities that specifically affect certain communities, making them more vulnerable to climate hazards. To design inclusive policies, prevent disasters, and ensure that all voices are heard, policymakers must recognize the structural factors that accentuate the vulnerability of certain groups, due to their position in social hierarchies. The invisibility of disabled peoples in climate justice discourses is not simply an oversight, but a long-term political process rooted in dominant social norms. Understanding the extent of these impacts on marginalized groups requires careful attention to these systems of power that have been constructed, maintained, and perpetuated over very long periods of time.

Intersectionality is an essential analytical tool for understanding social inequalities and combating the epistemic erasure of disability. Like other social categories, disability is subject to prejudices that seek to exclude difference and marginalize the individuals concerned. The names used to refer to people with certain forms of impairment have a negative influence on the targeted individuals and alienate them from society. Othering is a negative attitude that denies the humanity of others who are often deprived of dignity, devalued, and discredited by bodily norms that respect "typical" development. An intersectional approach asks us to refocus on those people who are the most erased, who are forced to live at the most extreme margins of society. Intersectionality asks us to avoid generalizations or any form of simplification that would present a situated position, and the knowledge generated, "as a universal aspect."[263] The specificity of these embodied knowledges stems from a unique position within society, a specific context or place, and "can prove valuable in addressing issues related to climate change".[264] They require "questioning universal claims to knowledge production".[265]

It is in this perspective of promoting the knowledge of "largely marginalized communities, traditionally absent from research"[266], and of questioning dominant normative frameworks, that DisCrit theory[267] proves particularly relevant. By articulating critiques of racism and ableism, it allows for an in-depth examination of the systemic mechanisms of exclusion present in educational institutions, and to highlight the often invisible experiences of students who are both disabled and racialized. These are the same students "who have been pushed outside the educational effort by the discourse and practices of separate special classes".[268]

10 - DisCrit: A Framework for Rethinking Education and Injustice from the Margins

The climate justice framework provides an essential framework for understanding how social, economic, and environmental inequalities intersect and reinforce each other, particularly for those

262 Sue Nichols and Garth Stahl, *Intersectionality in higher education research: a systematic literature review*, 2019, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07294360.2019.1638348, consulted on may 6, 2025.
263 Anna Kaijser and Annica Kronsell, *Climate change through the lens of intersectionality*, 2013, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09644016.2013.835203, consulted on june 13, 2021.
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268 Valentina Migliarini and Brent C. Elder, *The Future of Inclusive Education, Intersectional Perspectives*, palgrave macmilan, 2023, page 12.

affected by intersectional disadvantages related to race, gender, disability, etc. Annamma, Connor, and Ferri thoroughly interrogate the systemic logics of exclusion within supposedly inclusive education policies. They demonstrate how disability and race are co-constructed in contexts of power, revealing the constant erasure of subaltern voices in dominant discourses on inclusion. Transposed to the Italian context, this theoretical framework is taken up and adapted by Valentina Migliarini et al., who highlight similar mechanisms of marginalization in education policies, integrating the specificities of the school system and local migration dynamics, in relation to climate change.

By mobilizing this work from a climate justice perspective, this thesis proposes to shift the perspective on inclusive education, no longer as a consensual goal, but as a terrain of struggle where deeply rooted power relations are replayed, too often invisible in dominant institutional narratives. The seven principles of DisCrit have the advantage of revealing "how marginalized communities resist white supremacy in various ways. [...] Work rooted in DisCrit is committed to recognizing the values and gifts of these communities".[269] DisCrit recognizes that "decolonizing actions are a form of activism".[270] Researchers mobilizing DisCrit theory recognize marginalized students as epistemic subjects in their own right, bearers of knowledge derived from their lived experiences. Their position on the margins of dominant structures gives them a critical capacity to identify intersectional forms of oppression—whether systemic or interpersonal—and to design transformative responses to put an end to them.

By articulating the contributions of Disability Studies (DS), insights from the social model of disability, and the intersectional analysis of Critical Race Theory (CRT), DisCrit—born from the contraction of DS and CRT—allows us to analyze how social norms are constructed through the interweaving of racism and ableism.[271] According to this framework, these two systems of oppression operate in conjunction: racism legitimizes and reinforces ableist logics, while ableism supports and consolidates racist structures. This framework has been mobilized to analyze and deconstruct structural inequalities within the education system, highlighting how forms of oppression intersect in unique ways to marginalize students located outside the norms of whiteness and ability. The articulation of DisCrit with Critical Disability Studies (CDS) offers a relevant framework for interrogating the global legacy of colonialism[272] and its persistent effects on contemporary political, cultural, and educational dynamics. Valentina Migliarini et al. emphasize that it is essential to openly engage with the history of colonialism and its continuity, refocusing on the discourses, experiences, and voices of historically marginalized populations.[273] Engaging in a "transnational and intersectional approach to inclusive education"[274] is essential to "learn from resilient, resourceful, and creative teachers […] in countries where they have long faced such realities."[275] These are places "filled with teachers who can tap into students' existing funds of knowledge"[276] to address the legacy and current practices of colonialism, othering, and racial capitalism. In many contexts, the knowledges mobilized remain largely rooted in a supposed neutrality, shaped by Eurocentric and ableist perspectives. This apparent neutrality—as exemplified by the French doctrine of insensitivity *to color* racism [277], rooted in a relentless denial of doing critical social justice work—serves to invisibilize power relations, including systemic racism, anti-Blackness, and the history of dehumanization of Black and Brown bodies[278]. Discrit scholars instead

269 Ibid., page 12.
270 Ibid., page 60.
271 Ibid., page 109. « Les chercheurs de DisCrit se concentrent sur l'incarnation et le positionnement des étudiants de couleur étiquetés comme handicapés pour souligner à quel point le racisme et le validisme sont interdépendants. »
272 Ibid., page xi.
273 Ibid., page 57.
274 Ibid., page 16.
275 Ibid., page 53.
276 Ibid.
277 Iseult Mc Neulty, *Denial of Denial: Color-Blind Racism and Academic Silencing in France*, 2021, https://www.aaup.org/JAF13/denial-color-blind-racism-academic-silencing-france, consulted on july 22, 2022.
278 Valentina Migliarini and Brent C. Elder, *The Future of Inclusive Education, Intersectional Perspectives*, palgrave macmilan, 2023, page 94.

refocus on socio-historical contexts in their analysis of disability[279].

Disabled peoples are still wrongly perceived as part of a homogenous group in mainstream studies, often characterized by their lack of intersectional critiques. A so-called “universal” approach to disability ignores the multitude of identities that can intersect with disability. The consequences are often dramatic, exacerbating the risks of discrimination, marginalization, and erasure. Intersectionality is the essential ally of CDS, as it allows for the exploration of how the interweaving of identities produces singular experiences of discrimination. Discrit offers the opportunity to reflect on these intersectional perspectives of inclusive education.[280] By integrating these approaches, teachers stop seeing marginalized students of color as problems to be “managed,” and instead “consider them as invaluable resources”[281] and essential actors in the construction of a just and emancipatory educational community. In debates about social justice and climate-related disaster risk, this theoretical framework is fundamental because it highlights the intersections between ableism and structural racism. Hurricane Katrina in 2005 is a particularly telling example: the hardest-hit communities were predominantly African American, poor, and included many disabled peoples. These populations were excluded from evacuation and reconstruction efforts, revealing deep institutional racism and ableism. DisCrit helps us understand this exclusion not as accidental, but as the product of an unequal and normative system that values certain lives. These events highlight the need for an intersectional approach to understanding and addressing these intersecting oppressions.

The intersection of disability and race is not just a descriptive framework for intersecting oppressions; it represents a major political and analytical strategy. As Talila Lewis explains, it is the “most dangerous intersection in history.”[282] It is a matter of recognizing it as a strategic site for analysis and action. It crystallizes extreme and systemic forms of marginalization. In this sense, thinking about this intersection is not a simple theoretical operation, but a strategic lever for social justice. Recognizing the interdependence of oppressions, in light of climate events, leads us to mobilize perspectives that allow us to articulate intersectionality and radical inclusion with the dynamics of healing and collective liberation.

11 - Articulating Critical Intersectionality, Radical Inclusion, and Collective Liberation

These intersectional approaches allow us to explore Healing Justice (HJ),[283] born out of the struggles for survival and resistance of Black, Indigenous, queer, and disabled communities. It emerged in 2005 in response to systemic violence that leaves deep marks on both bodies and minds. Drawing on the knowledge of intersectional feminists and the idea of radical inclusion, this approach values marginalized experiences as sources of transformation, liberation, and community sustainability.[284] It makes visible the often-ignored traumas experienced by disabled peoples and invites us to no longer view them as individual problems to be solved, but as realities that require collective responses. HJ thus refocuses practices of care, rest, spirituality, and community anchoring at the heart of social struggles, with the fundamental principle of leaving no one "behind."

This perspective represents a critical response to traditional environments characterized by urgency, exhaustion, and an obsession with performance. Justice movements can only be sustainable if they care for those who carry them forward. Inspired by ancestral knowledge,

279 Ibid., page 10.

280 Ibid., page 106. « Teachers appear to lack reference to an intersectional framework, such as DisCrit, that could help them formulate a different approach to inclusive education that would create functional and ecological classrooms. »

281 Ibid., page 111.

282 Lydia X. Z. Brown, *There is No Abolition or Liberation without Disability Justice*, 2024, page 3, https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/4/oa_edited_volume/chapter/3693856, consulted on may 15, 2025.

283 Cara Page & Erica Woodland, *Healing Justice Lineages, Dreaming at the croossroads of liberation, collective care, and safety*, North Atlantic Books, 2023.

284 Sharon Doetsch-Kidder and Kalia Harris, *Healing Justice as Intersectional Feminist Praxis : Well-being Practicefor Inclusion and Liberation*, https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3037&context=jiws, consulted on july 10, 2024. « Intersectionality is a practice of radical inclusion that centers marginalized people within oppressed communities [...] and requires the integration of healing into liberation movements », page 3.

community health practices, and alternative healing traditions, healing justice aims to repair bodies and connections, decolonize care practices, and ensure genuine inclusion for those most impacted. It affirms that healing is eminently political: liberation requires care, listening, memory, and repairing the wounds left by systemic oppression. This movement recognizes that cultures of overwork and a lack of community support disproportionately affect disabled peoples.[285] It opposes centuries of austerity in care, inherited from oppressive systems—including eugenic, medical, and psychiatric institutions. Healing justice proposes collective and restorative responses to what it identifies as a prison-industrial complex, encompassing policing, surveillance, confinement, forced psychiatrization, and the pathologization of marginalized bodies and minds—particularly those of Black, Indigenous, trans, poor, and/or disabled people. It is both a political and spiritual movement, recognizing that the body, mind, and community are both sites of resistance and targets of violence.

ACCHO, an Aboriginal community-led model of care, is another powerful example of resilience against inequalities in access to care. It contrasts with the Western approach that is "individualistic, segmented, and person-centered."[286] ACCHO "views the health and well-being of the individual as part of a broader context of the social, emotional, and cultural well-being of the whole community."[287] This example offers "insight into how tribal groups have survived colonization and continue to struggle for their sovereignty."[288] Relationality is central to Indigenous research. It directly opposes the idea of objectivity.[289] [290]

The work of Acker-Verney and her colleagues is part of this broader critique of the medical model, which tends to pathologize individuals rather than recognize the social constructions of disability. By adopting an intersectional approach, they also advocate for a transformation of policies and practices to better include and represent disabled peoples in development initiatives.[291] Indigenous knowledges view differences as essential to community and individual well-being.

« Our movements themselves have to be healing, or there's no point to them »"—Cara Page[292]

IV - Conclusion

This thesis has analyzed the contribution of colonial history to structural violence and how decolonization efforts can make these issues visible in various contexts. Solidarity with multiply marginalized groups involves not only recognizing the systemic oppressions they face, but also how to address their responses to this violence. The achievement of social and environmental justice is hampered by these persistent patterns of social exclusion, which require epistemic change to counter prejudices against these populations. We must focus on structures rather than individual actions. Dismantling these power structures requires an intersectional approach to understand their root causes. Decolonization entails dismantling these structures and the colonial ideologies that

285 Ibid., page 6. « Piepzna-Samarasinha (2016) situates healing justice as developed by queer and trans people of color, and particularly "the brilliance of Black and Brown women with disabilities, in response to all that is missing in mainstream and "alternative" white/cis/disabled Western biomedical spaces in terms of understanding how colonialism, ableism, cultural theft, and whorephobia affect healing systems. »

286 Samantha Cooms, Olav Muurlink and Sharlene Leroy-Dyer, *Intersectional theory and disadvantage : a tool for decolonisation*, 2022, page 7, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09687599.2022.2071678, consulted on may 19, 2025.

287 Ibid., page 7.

288 Ibid., page 9.

289 Ibid., page 9.

290 Ibid., page 9. Decolonial research is "valid and reliable" only when it is "designed by or with First Nations peoples, in ways that enable the exploration of the intersectional lived experiences of First Nations peoples in Australia and that privilege the multiplicity of ways of knowing, being and doing between and within national groups."

291 Susan M Manning, Pamela Jonhson, and Julianna Acker-Verney, *Uneasy intersections: critical understandings of gender and disability in global development*, 2016, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23802014.2016.1242091, consulted on may 13, 2025.

292 Sharon Doetsch-Kidder and Kalia Harris, *Healing Justice as Intersectional Feminist Praxis : Well-being Practices for Inclusion and Liberation*, https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3037&context=jiws, consulted on july 10, 2024.

maintain these systemic inequalities. In the field of disability, it engages in critical reflection on how the experiences of disabled peoples—particularly those from the most marginalized communities—have been shaped by colonial history and the resulting logics of domination. Education, awareness-raising, accountability[293] for these structural forms of violence, and empowering the most affected communities to participate in decision-making processes are powerful tools for transforming the structures that perpetuate them. Without being aware of the harm caused by this violence and how we indirectly contribute to it, we will be unable to generate transformations.

The challenge is not simply to adapt to the climate, but to repair and transform deeply unequal social structures. Climate justice must create space for and consider the voices most likely to highlight the power relations that generate these crises. We must fundamentally rethink how inequalities are reproduced in the production of knowledge about climate change, emphasizing the expertise of the most impacted populations who are still the least empowered to modify and shape its trajectory. The goal of the decolonial project is to identify the contemporary and historical structures that perpetuate and maintain oppressions, taking into account the embodied knowledges that can bring about real, lasting and profound change. Refocusing on coalitions that are representative of the full diversity of disabled people in solutions is the most promising strategy if we are to achieve climate justice. Although the CRPD principles represent a significant step forward in holding parties accountable for the impacts of climate hazards, their full integration into French law is still largely lacking. They cannot constitute "on their own a sufficient mechanism to change the causes of structural violence and marginalization."[294]

This analysis is consistent with a number of studies that examine the relationship between CDS and decolonization, and that adhere to the need to include perspectives from the Global South to understand the global and lasting impact of Eurocentric foundations of disability. They see this as a necessary condition for addressing systemic injustices, deconstructing these Eurocentric normative frameworks, and bringing out inclusive practices rooted in social justice.[295]

While this thesis argues for a decolonial approach to disability, it is impossible not to extend this critical requirement to the discipline itself. Criminology, in its most institutional forms, tends to lock out the possibility of thinking about "justice as possible beyond the limits and oppressions of white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and colonialism."[296] By denying students the opportunity to conceive of alternatives to punitive and dominant logics, it contributes to maintaining a profoundly unequal order of knowledge. It is urgent to open breaches in these frameworks, to make possible a truly emancipatory thought of justice.

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