

**BLACK
DISABILITY
POLITICS**

SAMI SCHALK

BLACK DISABILITY POLITICS

BUY

DUKE
DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Durham and London

2022

UNIVERSITY
PRESS



BLACK DISABILITY POLITICS



SAMI SCHALK

**UNIVERSITY
PRESS**

© 2022 DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞

Designed by A. Mattson Gallagher

Typeset in Garamond Premier Pro and Folio

by Westchester Publishing Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Schalk, Samantha Dawn, author.

Title: Black disability politics / Sami Schalk.

Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2022. |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021054697 (print)

LCCN 2021054698 (ebook)

ISBN 9781478023258 (hardcover)

ISBN 9781478025009 (paperback)

ISBN 9781478027003 (ebook)

ISBN 9781478092681 (ebook other)

Subjects: LCSH: African Americans with disabilities—

Political activity. | African Americans—Political activity. |

Disabilities—Political aspects—United States. | People with

disabilities—Political activity—United States. | Disability

studies—United States. | Sociology of disability—Political

aspects. | BISAC: SOCIAL SCIENCE / Ethnic Studies /

American / African American & Black Studies | SOCIAL

SCIENCE / People with Disabilities

Classification: LCC HV1568.2.S35 2022 (print) |

LCC HV1568.2 (ebook) | DDC 362.4089/96073—dc23/

eng/20220404

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021054697>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/202105469>

DUKE
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments vii

Introduction 1

Black Health Matters

1 “We Have a Right to Rebel” 23

Black Disability Politics in the Black Panther Party

2 Fighting Psychiatric Abuse 48

The BPP and the Black Disability Politics of Mental
and Carceral Institutions

PRAXIS INTERLUDE ONE 69

Anti-ableist Approaches to Fighting Disabling Violence

3 Empowerment through Wellness 81

Black Disability Politics in the National Black Women’s
Health Project

4 More Than Just Prevention 110

The NBWHP and the Black Disability Politics
of HIV/AIDS

PRAXIS INTERLUDE TWO 129

Approaches to Disability Identity in Black Disability Politics

5 Black Disability Politics Now 140

(Not a) Conclusion 154

The Present and Futures of Black Disability Politics

Notes 161 *Bibliography* 187 *Index* 199

DUKE

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

So much has changed in my life over the course of writing this book, but some things, some people, have remained consistent. I would first and foremost like to thank my extended network of long-distance friends and chosen family who held and supported me through love, loss, grief, and transformation. Thank you to Britney Johnson, Julia Cadieux, Jina B. Kim, Sarah Grumet, Maeve Kane, Jim Mallek, Michael Patrick Burton, Sue Ellen Riegsecker, Darran Mosley, Aimee Bahng, Megan Albertz, Katie Hu, Kavita Patel, Sarah Hayward-McCalla, Eris Eady, and adrienne maree brown. Thank you also to my local Madison support network: Whryne Reed, Annie Menzel, Stephanie Selvick, Ruben Tabares, Shawna Lutzow, Ali Mulrow, Dana Pellebon, Lara Gerassi, Joshua Hargrove, Molly Clark-Barol, Jing Taylor, and Warren Scherer. I could not have completed this book without the many hugs, phone calls, texts, pep talks, dates, and meals these people have provided me. I want to especially acknowledge my cousins Sydney and Jonathan Schalk, who inspire me with their honest, brave selves. I love you so much, my little weirdos! Finally, thanks to everyone who has welcomed me into the Edwards family, especially Kevin and Shakira—I am so blessed to be your sister.

I am grateful for the support of my agent, Rolisa Tutwyler, who has dramatically improved my professional life, and my editor, Elizabeth Ault, who has been immensely supportive as this project shifted, encouraging me to write “the better book later” rather than rush something that wasn’t ready yet. I know this book is better than what I could have done alone because of Elizabeth’s support and insight along the way.

Research for this book began during a postdoctoral fellowship at Rutgers University under the mentorship of the late Cheryl Wall and continued under a Nellie McKay Fellowship through the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty and Staff Programs at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Support for this research was also provided by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, with funding from the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation. I would like to thank Madelyn Sundquist, my research assistant for this book, as well as the librarians and archivists at the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College and the Stanford University Special Collections and University Archives. I am also deeply indebted to the Black disabled activists and cultural workers who allowed me to interview them for this project—their names and words appear throughout chapter 5.

Further, I am forever grateful to my academic mentors who have continually taught me how to survive as a Black queer disabled woman in academia. Thank you to LaMonda Horton-Stallings, for continuing to guide and support me long past the dissertation; Alison Kafer, for always cheering me on and believing in my work; Margaret Price, for helping me learn to be more vulnerable and human in academic spaces; and Ellen Samuels, for being the most supportive faculty mentor and making my transition to working at the University of Wisconsin–Madison incredibly easy. I would also like to thank my other colleagues in the Department of Gender and Women’s Studies, especially Annie Menzel, James McMaster, Anna Campbell, Jill Casid, Pernille Ipsen, LiLi Johnson, and Jenny Higgins. Thank you as well to my other colleagues across the country who have supported and inspired this work, particularly Jina B. Kim, Kathy McMahon-Klosterman, Marlon M. Bailey, Juliann Anesi, Ally Day, Lezlie Frye, Nirmala Erevelles, Julie Avril Minich, Susan Burch, Eli Clare, Moya Bailey, Alice Wong, Akemi Nishida, Anna Mollow, Robert McRuer, Mimi Khúc, Cassandra Jones, Aimee Bahng, Ayana Jamieson, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, and Rebecca Cokley.

Finally, thank you to Jess Waggoner for, well, everything you are and do in my life. I can’t believe we hit the academic job jackpot. I look forward to many more colorful, glitter-filled adventures together—a heart don’t forget something like this.

DUKE

viii ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

INTRODUCTION

Black Health Matters

The mandate for Black people in this time . . . is to avenge the suffering of our ancestors . . . to earn the respect of future generations . . . and be willing to be transformed in the service of the work.

—MARY HOOKS, “The Mandate (Chant)”

Read the epigraph again.

If you’re a Black person, read it out loud.

I am a Black person who seeks to avenge the suffering of my ancestors and to earn the respect of future generations. I have been and will continue to be transformed by this work. I am not the person I was when I began this book in 2017. Since that time I moved across the country, began a new job, started and ended major relationships, lost my longtime animal companion, published my first book, went on a yearlong book tour, gained tenure, twerked with Lizzo, discovered family I never knew I had, visited my homeland of Jamaica for the first time, stepped into my work as a public intellectual, became a local organizer for Black liberation work, and so much more.

Writing this book, learning about the incredible labor and sacrifices of activists who came before me in the Black Panther Party and the National Black Women’s Health Project, as well as about the continued labor, care, and genius of Black disabled activists and cultural workers today, has changed me, fueled a fire in me that had gone quite dormant. This book that you hold (or scroll through on your screen or listen to) has become my own way of taking up Mary Hooks’s mandate for Black people in this time. I began the project in order to understand how Black people have addressed disability as a political concern. The research process of finding how those freedom

fighters addressed the way disability is experienced and, at times, inflicted on Black populations has helped me know that the only way I can understand my own experiences with disability, illness, and pain is through the lens of Blackness, of Black disability.

Through researching and writing this book, I have come to identify as disabled and to do so publicly more and more. At first, I said I had chronic pain stemming from a 2016 car accident. Then I stopped correcting people online who referred to me as disabled. I wasn't *not* disabled; I just—despite over a decade of investment in disability studies—wasn't sure if I was allowed to really claim disability yet. I already have so many marginalized identities; it felt excessive. As I developed arguments for how Black activists have long addressed disability and health as a political concern in ways that differ from the mainstream white disability rights movement, I began to see more clearly my own relationship to disability and the ways it is shaped by race, gender, and sexuality for me as a fat Black queer woman—a fat Black queer disabled woman. I will write more about this someday, in another space, but the short version is that as a person with depression, disordered eating, chronic pain, and anxiety, I am unquestionably disabled. What has prevented me from feeling that I can claim disability is the way my disabilities do not fit into the typical legal and medical models of disability and accommodations, the ways white disabled people especially have been dismissive of my understanding of how racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, and fatphobia have materially created, sustained, and exacerbated my disabilities. I cannot get on board with approaches to disability that do not understand it as inherently, inextricably tied to racism and other oppressions. I cannot and will not promote a disability-first or disability-pride-only analysis—and the research that undergirds this book has only solidified and clarified for me these beliefs that I once held more quietly and tentatively. In claiming this Black disability identity, I often use *we*, *ours*, and *us* when referring to disabled people, Black people, and Black disabled people. I refuse to use *they* as if I am separate from the communities I write about, live within, and learn from every day.

I write this personal narrative first to invite you, my readers and listeners, into this space. Are you willing to not only do the work but be transformed by it? Are you willing to read not only for historical information and social theory but for strategies and methods that you can take into your own work as a scholar, an activist, an artist, a person living in a world that desperately needs transformation? Take a moment to think about why you're reading this, what you want to take away from it, and how it might be useful to you

and your people. I offer it as one part of a much larger conversation about collective liberation. I hope it helps. In particular, I hope it helps Black people.

This is a book written for Black people, especially Black disabled people. By this I mean that my primary audience is Black scholars, activists, writers, and artists who might take up this theory of Black disability politics in their work for Black liberation. Of course, I understand that this book will be read by non-Black people. I certainly hope that's the case, but this book is not for them. If you are a non-Black person, imagine that you have just walked into my living room, where I'm having a conversation with my Black family and friends. You are welcome to come in, listen, and learn from the conversation, maybe even contribute to it when appropriate, but the conversation, the space of this book, is not for or about you. For my Black readers: Welcome. Settle into this space. Mark the pages. Make it yours. Pass it along. If this book is helpful to you, meaningful to you, that is what matters here. If these ideas I've developed get us even slightly closer to collective liberation, then I've done what I set out to do.

On January 18, 2016, a Black queer liberation collective called Black.Seed shut down the Bay Bridge in San Francisco, displaying three large white banners with pink lettering across the roadway that read: Black Health Matters. Figure 1.1 is one helicopter view of the protest that captured my attention that day.

The protest sought to move the city away from “police murders, rising housing costs, rapid gentrification, and apathetic city officials” and toward “an increase in the health and wellbeing of all Black people in Oakland & San Francisco” by making a series of demands for divestment from policing, investment in affordable housing, and the resignation of several city officials and police officers.¹ The optics of the action were impressive: news-helicopter shots revealed hundreds of cars backed up on the bridge as the protesters remained chained to cars and each other. Police arrived approximately thirty minutes after the shutdown began, and twenty-five protesters were arrested.

I followed the protest via Twitter as it happened. Although at the time I was in the middle of revising my first book manuscript, I took a break from that work to read and watch the social media and mainstream news coverage, saving images and screenshots. At that time, the book you now hold in your hands (or read on your screen or listen to) was still just the germ of an idea, just an observation that disability often appears obscurely or at the



FIGURE 1.1 The pink Black Health Matters banners across the Bay Bridge during the Black.Seed protest on January 18, 2016.

margins of Black activism and cultural work, a hunch that there was more to Black approaches to disability politics than what existed in the academic literature. Later, when I returned to the Black.Seed bridge action to write this introduction, I found a video about the protest that featured an interview with Alicia Bell, a member of Black.Seed, who provided details about what the action entailed.² In line with Dr. Martin Luther King's radical legacy of disruptive nonviolent protest, Black.Seed coordinated dozens of members to shut down the bridge by stopping a single car in each lane of traffic and then chaining themselves to the cars and each other. In addition to the prominent Black Health Matters sign, which was most visible in helicopter shots of the protest, other signs on the bridge called for an end to the criminalization of Blackness and justice for Black people killed by police. Further, the organizers set up an altar with the names of people harmed by state violence, on which people placed offerings. The use of the altar within a nonviolent protest against anti-Black state violence underscores that Black.Seed and similar Black activist groups recognize the importance of not merely ending state and interpersonal violence against Black people but also promoting our health, healing, and well-being, physically, mentally, and spiritually.

The title of this introduction comes from the powerful image of Black.Seed's sign across the San Francisco Bay Bridge, blocking hundreds of cars from crossing. More broadly, the motivations behind this book, *Black Disability Politics*, connect directly with the approaches and demands of this

particular act of civil disobedience. The protest explicitly included mention of not just Black lives but Black health and well-being—a suggestion that the deeper concern is not just the murder of Black people by police but all the ways Black people are harmed via housing, finances, and more. Black.Seed’s statement, therefore, draws attention to not only Black death but also Black life and the conditions necessary for Black lives to not merely subsist or survive but thrive. *Black Disability Politics* takes inspiration from Black.Seed and other social justice movements and organizations led by Black people, especially Black disabled people, Black women, and Black queer and trans people. More specifically, *Black Disability Politics* analyzes how issues of disability, broadly construed, have been and continue to be incorporated into Black activism from the 1970s to the present. I define Black disability politics as anti-ableist arguments and actions performed by Black cultural workers. Black disability politics are often performed in solidarity with disabled people writ large, but the articulation and enactment of Black disability politics do not necessarily center traditional disability rights language and approaches, such as disability pride or civil rights inclusion; instead, they prioritize an understanding of disability within the context of white supremacy. The book therefore identifies and analyzes examples of Black disability politics in order to claim, celebrate, understand, and learn from this legacy in all its brilliance and imperfection. My hope is to provide a framework for understanding Black disability politics that benefits scholars, activists, and cultural workers who wish to engage in coalitional and intersectional liberation practices. We must learn from each other if we are to build a new world together.

Fields and Frameworks: Black Disability Studies and Disability Justice

Academically, this book contributes to the emergent field of Black disability studies. Merging scholarship, theories, and methods from disability studies and Black studies, as well as from postcolonial studies and feminist studies, especially Black feminist theory, Black disability studies explores both the lives of Black disabled people and the relationship between race and (dis)ability as systems of privilege and oppression.³ Black disability studies scholarship traces how disability has appeared among Black people, how disability has been treated and understood within Black communities, and how Blackness and disability have been—and continue to be—discursively linked in various cultures. As this field continues to develop and expand beyond the

boundaries of the United States, scholars such as Christopher Bell, Nirmala Erevelles, Therí A. Pickens, Moya Bailey, myself, and others have increasingly demonstrated the ways that disability, as an identity, an experience, and a political category, has been conceptualized and approached differently by Black activists and intellectuals than by white activists and intellectuals, thereby requiring changes in scholarly and activist methods and frameworks.⁴

For instance, there is a common narrative in disability studies that Black people have distanced themselves from concepts of disability and disability identity because of the way discourses of disability have been used to justify racist oppression. This narrative is often connected in the field with Douglas Baynton's frequently cited article "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History." The article's central thesis is that disability appears all over American history if we simply look closely enough. However, Baynton is often cited more specifically for his argument that marginalized groups, such as Black people, women, and immigrants, had discourses of disability foisted on them as justification for their exclusion from full rights and citizenship. In response, Baynton argues, these groups distanced themselves from disability as a means of accessing certain rights and freedoms. By distancing themselves from disability, he further contends, these other marginalized groups left unquestioned the notion that people with disabilities do not deserve full rights and citizenship, thereby passively accepting that disability is a justifiable rationale for discrimination and exclusion.

Baynton's article, which I myself frequently cite and teach, is incredibly important and useful; however, its narrative has become in some ways canon in the field of disability studies, used to explain why Black art, culture, and politics use disability merely as a metaphor for the impact of racism and often fail to incorporate disability politics, culture, or pride as typically understood in white disability studies and the disability rights movement. This narrative of Black distancing from disability is not wholly untrue, as much scholarship has demonstrated. However, disability studies scholars often use this narrative about Black people's relationship to disability without considering two key factors: first, the whiteness and racism of the disability rights movement and disability studies as a field, which often excludes or alienates Black disabled people; and, second, the possibility that disability politics may actually exist in Black activism and cultural work but manifest and operate in ways that do not look the same as disability politics in the mainstream movement. Recent work in Black disability studies demonstrates the multiple complex and nuanced ways that Black people, historically and contemporarily, have engaged with disability beyond simple distancing or denial.⁵ Collectively,

my colleagues in Black disability studies have made clear that the narrative of Black disavowal of disability is merely a convenient, partial narrative that has remained underquestioned and underexplored within disability studies as a whole. This book aims to contribute to this growing body of knowledge by developing a theory of what Black disability politics entail.

In addition to my intellectual foundations in Black disability studies, my work is also strongly influenced by the disability justice movement. Disability justice is a relatively new activist practice and framework developed in the mid-2000s by disabled people of color, disabled queer people, and disabled queer people of color, such as Patty Berne, Leroy Moore, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, and Mia Mingus as well as groups like Sins Invalid, the Disability Justice Collective, and Azola Story. Disability justice builds on and extends the work of the early disability rights movement, which was often very white and focused on the single issue of disability rights. Those involved with disability justice readily acknowledge that they appreciate and benefit from the advancements achieved by the early disability rights movement. However, not dissimilar from how the Black Panthers, discussed in chapters 1 and 2, were responding to the fact that Black Americans had achieved legal civil rights, yet were still socially and materially oppressed, disability justice practitioners seek a broader understanding of anti-ableism, one not limited to state-sanctioned individual rights, which often primarily benefit disabled people who are already relatively privileged by race, class, gender, sexuality, and/or citizenship status.

Further, disability justice is an inherently intersectional approach. Patty Berne writes that disability justice understands white supremacy and ableism as “inextricably entwined, both forged in the crucible of colonial conquest and capitalist domination.”⁶ Disability justice values the leadership of those most impacted (i.e., multiply marginalized disabled people), anticapitalism, cross-movement organizing, sustainability, cross-disability solidarity, interdependence, collective access, and collective liberation.⁷ Practitioners of disability justice recognize that their work “already connects and overlaps with many movements and communities’ work,” especially work by feminist and queer people of color within reproductive justice, transformative justice, and healing justice movements.⁸ Disability justice work brings important knowledge, theory, and practices to contemporary antiracist activism. A disability justice framework also reveals how the disability rights movement has overlooked or dismissed Black activism around disability. Throughout this book I analyze how Black cultural workers have engaged issues of disability in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries from the perspective of

disability justice, aiming to articulate a theory of what constitutes Black disability politics specifically. By taking up this research and analysis, I hope to help reclaim a legacy of disability justice work in Black liberation movements and develop a collection of methods, approaches, and lessons we can take away from this history in the name of continued quests for freedom.

In naming my primary fields and frameworks as Black disability studies and disability justice, I am inherently claiming an interdisciplinary, perhaps even undisciplined, approach in this book, breaking some norms of academic research and writing. My sites of analysis vary from the archives of Black activist organizations to interviews, social media, and blogs, while my scholarly influences span disciplines like history, literary studies, public health, and media studies. This is not a history of Black disability politics. Rather, this book is a historically informed analysis of a continually developing political theory that seeks to understand and dismantle ableist and racist oppressions. I turn to history because it benefits us as Black people to know and learn from what our ancestors did, to understand and honor them, and to continue their legacy of finding liberation. It is comforting to know we are not the first or the last, or alone, in our fight for Black lives, especially Black disabled lives. I am indebted to the historians whose work I build on, but in the process of researching and writing this book, I have let my subject and my political investments guide me more than my loyalty to the boundaries of any particular academic discipline or field. I write for a Black scholarly and activist audience first and foremost with the goal of helping us move toward collective liberation via scholarship and theory, and I use whatever disciplinary tools and approaches I find most useful in this work. *Black Disability Politics* refuses to be disciplined.

This undisciplined nature may be particularly evident in the way I talk about and define disability. A major intervention of Black and critical race disability studies is to expand our conceptualization of disability. This expansion draws on work in disability justice and crip theory, a strain of disability studies theorizing (inspired by queer theory) that encourages a move away from a primarily identity-based approach to disability and toward a theoretical approach that seeks to trace how disability functions as an ideology, epistemology, and system of oppression in addition to an identity and lived experience.⁹ Relatedly, disability justice activists “are building an analysis that includes political and historical understandings of disability, bodies, ableism, pace, illness, care, cure, aging, the medical industrial complex and

access.”¹⁰ Disability justice activists often include terms like *sick* and *chronically ill* to acknowledge and include people who may not identify as disabled, especially those who have been made sick or ill by white supremacist and heteropatriarchal violence and neglect. Similarly, crip theorist Alison Kafer describes disability as an expansive “political, and therefore contested and contestable category” and argues for recognizing the collective affinities among disabled, impaired, sick, ill, and Mad people, who are connected not by essential or inherent qualities but by the related oppressions we experience for our nonnormative bodyminds.¹¹ These two similar approaches to disability as a political and social concern matter because disability studies and the disability rights movement have each often focused on apparent physical and sensory disabilities rather than on cognitive and mental disabilities or chronic illnesses. As Kafer notes, this “oversight is all the more troubling given the fact that diabetes occurs disproportionately” among racial minorities and that “asthma is a common side-effect of living in heavily polluted neighborhoods, which, unsurprisingly, are more likely to be populated by poor people.”¹² In other words, existing disability studies and disability rights frameworks for understanding and defining disability have been developed with little attention to the types of disability most common in poor and racialized communities. These white disability studies frameworks therefore are unable to fully account for the ways disability politics manifest in Black communities and activism.

The expansive understanding of disability I use in this book requires engagement with not only disability studies but also health science studies, medical humanities, and the history of science and medicine. I have argued elsewhere that scholars of race and disability should include issues of illness and health in their work because so many Black folks and other people of color experience disability as the impact of capitalism, interpersonal violence, state violence, and/or state neglect.¹³ It is also important that scholars and practitioners of health science studies, medical humanities, and the history of science and medicine understand and engage with disability studies and disability justice in order to better theorize and respond to disability from an explicitly political and social position that centers the voices and experiences of disabled and ill people of color. As the individual chapters of this book show, we cannot understand Black disability politics without engaging histories of anti-Black violence, scientific and medical racism, health disparities, health activism, and environmental racism. We also cannot understand Black disability politics without exploring how Black people have conceptualized

not only disability, illness, and disease but also health, wellness, and healing within our own communities.

This book, *Black Disability Politics*, aims to bring about a better understanding of its titular term by exploring how specific Black organizations and individuals have engaged the intersections of and relationship between Blackness and disability, or racism and ableism, in their work. My time period for this book spans from the 1970s to the 2010s, focusing on Black disability politics articulated and enacted alongside or in the wake of the contemporary disability rights movement.¹⁴ I selected this period in order to assess how Black people have engaged issues of disability in moments when disability rights activism and legislation were already in existence, that is, moments when Black cultural workers could reasonably be expected to have some awareness of disability rights. This is not to say that Black disability politics or the disability rights movement began in the 1970s. There is clear historical evidence that this is not the case, but by the 1970s the disability rights movement was unquestionably in full effect.¹⁵ Therefore, selecting this time period as my focus allows me to trace how Black people have engaged disability politics in comparison to the mainstream disability rights movement. Again, while this work is historically informed by archival research, it is not a comprehensive history of Black disability politics or even the Black disability politics of the organizations I focus on. This book is one part of a larger academic, activist, and cultural conversation that I want to bring more people into through my work so that we can collectively learn and know more in order to do and be better.

As this section has already indicated, I take a broad, interdisciplinary approach that uses disability studies as a method rather than an object-oriented area of study that would focus exclusively on the lives of disabled people and representations of disability.¹⁶ This conceptualization of disability studies as a politicized approach to research entails critical exploration of how (dis)ability operates as a social system, historically, discursively, ideologically, and materially in our world. This matters for my theorization of Black disability politics because, at times, the articulations and enactments of Black disability politics I analyze are not performed exclusively by Black disabled people. This is important for activist readers to understand: you can do the work of disability justice without being disabled, though multiply marginalized disabled people's expertise and leadership should be centered. The role of nondisabled Black people specifically in the work of Black disability politics also matters because, as I demonstrate throughout the book, ableism and racism are so deeply linked that we cannot dismantle white

supremacy and end its violence against us as a collective if we do not also understand and address the role of ableism in shaping Black lives.

While the articulations and enactments of Black disability politics explored in this book do not erase or trump those moments when Black cultural workers have distanced themselves from disability, better understanding other ways Black people have engaged with disability can help build the theoretical tools necessary for Black disability studies scholarship. Further, assessing both the accomplishments and missteps of Black disability political work can help activists, intellectuals, and artists today. We can neither uncritically romanticize nor trash our radical movements of the past, and I do my best to balance appreciation, honor, and respect for the work of those who came before me with a desire for more inclusive radical politics that leave no one behind. I aim to help us learn lessons from Black disability politics historically so that we may continue to cocreate better coalitional politics that remain attuned to how racism and ableism, often in conjunction with sexism, classism, queerphobia, and transphobia, collude in the lives of all Black people, disabled or not. Let me say that one more time: ableism negatively impacts all Black people, whether or not you consider yourself to be disabled. All Black folks need to know this and take it to heart. Understanding these cultural locations of Black disability politics allows us to sharpen our political and theoretical approaches as Black cultural workers in our quest for Black liberation.

Defining Black Disability Politics

What, then, are Black disability politics exactly? First, I define *disability politics* generally as engagement with disability as a social and political rather than individual and medical concern. Following Kafer, who encourages an “expansive approach to disability politics,” my understanding of this term is not limited to policy or law.¹⁷ I define *Black disability politics* as disability politics that are articulated (in text, speech, political platforms, and ideologies) or enacted (in activism, organizing, lobbying, art, and interpersonal dynamics) by Black cultural workers—an umbrella term for activists, artists, writers, scholars, intellectuals, and others whose work directly responds to and influences culture. In other words, *Black disability politics* is my term for how Black folks engage with disability from a liberation and justice perspective. Black disability politics can be understood as part of both disability justice and Black liberation movements writ large, providing lessons for people within both movements, whether or

not individuals are Black or disabled. Black disability politics are developed, articulated, and enacted by Black people, but this work may influence or be influenced by the disability politics of other racial groups.¹⁸

In addition to articulating this primary definition of *Black disability politics*, this book also identifies and analyzes four common qualities of Black disability politics. Based on my research, I argue that when Black cultural workers engage with disability, their approaches tend to be intersectional but race centered, not (necessarily) based in disability identity, contextualized and historicized, and holistic. By identifying and analyzing qualities of Black disability politics, I provide a theoretical framework for interpreting articulations and enactments of Black disability politics—one that acknowledges, seeks to understand, and accounts for the distinct ways that Black people have experienced, engaged, and encountered the (dis)ability system. My hope is that my identification and analysis of the major qualities of Black disability politics here will prove useful to Black and disability studies scholars researching Black engagement with disability and to other Black cultural workers seeking to better integrate disability politics into their work. Further, I hope that my theorization of Black disability politics may be adaptable in form, if not substance, for other critical race and disability studies scholars exploring how racialized populations have articulated and enacted their own forms of disability politics.¹⁹ In what follows, I briefly explain each of the central qualities of Black disability politics, which are further explored and analyzed through concrete examples in the chapters to come.

Intersectional but Race Centered

In researching Black engagement with disability politics across multiple cultural locations, I found that the work is always intersectional, but the emphasis tends to be on race/racism as the major analytic lens. By *intersectional*, I mean that the work is grappling with the relationship of multiple oppressions, not that the focus is on the intersection of specific identities, as I explain further in the next quality.²⁰ By *intersectional but race centered*, I mean that articulations and engagements of Black disability politics tend to be most concerned with the material impact of racism as it intersects with disability and overlaps with ableism, though the words *disability* and *ableism* may never be used. Disability is included and addressed, but this is often done within larger racial justice topics rather than as the main investment or concern. Black disability politics are often also feminist, anticapitalist, and

anti-imperialist, but generally they are first and foremost antiracist politics operating in solidarity with disabled people. There are both benefits and pitfalls to this first quality. I apply the label of Black disability politics to Black cultural work even when it is imperfect or conflicting, even when solidarity and coalition are intended but falter. My interest is less in attempting to locate or dictate the perfect marriage of anti-ableist and antiracist movements and more in highlighting how investment in Black lives by Black people has often necessitated grappling with disability and ableism, whether or not the Black cultural workers involved or white leaders in disability rights and disability studies claim or recognize such work as disability politics. I argue that anti-ableism may be incorporated into antiracist work in a variety of ways that differ from what is typically expressed or prioritized within traditional disability studies and mainstream disability rights activism. One key method in locating Black disability politics, therefore, is understanding how the political and cultural work can be intersectional but race centered and still operate in solidarity with disabled people.

Not Necessarily Based in Disability Identity

The second major quality of Black disability politics is that the work is not necessarily based in disability identity. As already mentioned, although the work is conceptually intersectional in that it addresses the relationships of ableism/disability and racism/Blackness as well as of other oppressions and social categories, it is not necessarily intersectional in regard to the identities of the cultural workers involved. This manifests in two ways. First, Black disability politics are not exclusively enacted by Black disabled people. Although Black disabled cultural workers appear frequently throughout my research, I argue that Black disability politics can be expressed and performed by any Black person who interrogates the intersection of racism and ableism and attempts to combat both of these oppressions. Second, I include “not necessarily based in disability identity” as a central quality of Black disability politics because some Black people with impairments, disabilities, or illnesses do not claim disability as an identity for a variety of reasons. These reasons may include lack of access to official disability diagnoses, services, and resources (in other words, not being legally or medically recognized as disabled); the traumatic or oppressive circumstances of their disablement; internalized ableism; identification with disability-specific rather than disability-general communities (i.e., Deaf, autistic, Mad, etc.); the potential for a disability label to further their marginalization; or identity

development within communities of color and families of origin in which politicized or celebratory concepts of disability did not exist.²¹ In short, Black disability politics are not necessarily based in disability identity because the work tends to be more race centered, as already discussed, and because disability identity is contentious for many Black people.

Contextualized and Historicized

Given the complex nature of disability within Black communities, the third quality of Black disability politics is that the work is typically contextualized and historicized. That is, Black cultural workers engage with disability with critical attention to the sociopolitical contexts of race, class, gender, religion, and geography in a given time period as well as to the historical circumstances, events, and legacies that have shaped experiences and understandings of disability within Black communities. As disability studies scholars have argued, the line between disabled and nondisabled is unstable, permeable, and socially, historically, and contextually defined. Black disability politics are intently attuned to how race shapes understandings and experiences of disability and vice versa. Various scholars have also demonstrated how race has shaped perceptions of what is and is not a disability, who is and is not disabled, and, at times, who does and does not warrant accommodation and inclusion.²² Others have explored how racial, gender, and class oppression and violence produce the material circumstances of increased disability, illness, and disease among Black and other marginalized populations.²³ This existing scholarship makes clear that we cannot understand Black disability politics without understanding the specific racial context and history of Black experiences of disability. Black cultural workers frequently perform such contextualization and historicization within their articulations of Black disability politics.

Owing to this importance of context and history, Black disability politics are often articulated in conversation with what Julie Livingston calls *debilitation*.²⁴ Jasbir Puar, building on the work of Livingston, argues that debilitation should be understood as distinct from disablement because it emphasizes “the slow wearing down of populations instead of the event of becoming disabled.”²⁵ Puar therefore uses debility as “a triangulation of the ability/disability binary,” further noting, as I already mentioned, “that while some bodies may not be recognized as or identify as disabled, they may well be debilitated, in part by being foreclosed access to legibility and resources as disabled.”²⁶ This context of debilitation, the slow wearing down by racial violence—psychological, emotional, financial, and

physical—is essential to understanding Black disability politics, as Black disability political work often occurs at sites of or in response to the debilitation of Black people.

While I am conceptually influenced by Livingston's and Puar's work, I still primarily use the word *disability* in this book because of the key role disabled people and oppression against disabled people play in this project. I also choose to use the word *disability* because, while disability identity is not essential for Black disability politics, disability studies and disability justice are central frameworks for my thinking. My use of *disability* as a central term, therefore, honors and prioritizes the preferred terms of the communities within which I have developed this research as well as my own chosen term of identification. Further, this book aims to highlight the ways Black and other antiracist cultural workers can identify the relationship of their work to disability rights, disability justice, and anti-ableism. I use the word *disability* because of its recognition and value in the wider world beyond the academy, a world in which I hope this work will prove useful. I value accessibility in my writing and language choices here. I want a wide audience because I believe that many different populations can learn a lot from the way Black cultural workers have engaged issues of disability. I hope that by mining the past and present for these examples, providing a framework of analysis, and offering critiques of (and alternatives to) missteps and failures of solidarity, this book can participate in increasing and improving intellectual, political, and artistic engagement with disability justice by Black people and all those who operate in solidarity with us.

Holistic

Last, as a result of the other three central qualities, Black disability politics are ultimately quite holistic. By using the term *holistic*, I mean, first, that the work tends to address whole bodyminds and is not predominantly focused on physical disability as disability studies and disability activism have been historically. I use the term *bodymind* after Margaret Price and expand on it more in depth in my previous work.²⁷ Briefly, *bodymind* refers to the inextricable nature of body and mind, insisting that one impacts the other and that they cannot be understood or theorized as separate. In fact, the separation of the body and the mind, also referred to as the *Cartesian dualism*, has been used against people of color and women to claim that we are primarily or exclusively controlled (and therefore limited) by our bodies. The term is particularly appropriate for my work on the Black Panther Party and the National Black Women's Health Project, as

both organizations attended to Black people's well-being with attention to physical, psychological, and emotional needs, or "body and soul," as the Panthers put it. *Bodymind* as a term best represents the holistic nature of Black disability politics, and I refer to mind and body separately only when analyzing discourse that uses such separation. Second, I also use *holistic* to refer to the work itself because it attends to social and political change at both micro (individual and community) and macro (societal, national, and international) levels. In short, I use *holistic* to refer to the wide range of bodymind topics addressed within Black disability politics as well as the diversity of tactics and approaches employed within Black disability political work.

Topically speaking, Black disability politics operate holistically because they are not limited to physical disability nor even to official legal or medical definitions of disability. Throughout this book Black cultural workers employ Black disability politics to attend to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health and well-being of Black people as political and social concerns. This means, as my discussion of contextualizing and historicizing Black disability already suggests, that Black disability politics include engagement with health, illness, disease, and medicine even as these topics may not be considered disability issues as defined by the state, the medical industrial complex, or the disability rights movement. Since Black disability politics so often intersect with health activism and health-care reform, analyzing this work at times requires challenging ableist assumptions about health and wellness within Black activism, especially health activism, where disability is often used as a specter, a symbol of racial violence. For instance, when disabled children are used as examples of the failures of the medical industrial complex to care for Black mothers, disability is used simplistically as the negative result of racist neglect, drawing on ableist reactions to disability to produce empathy for Black mothers, who are implicitly positioned as nondisabled caretakers burdened by disabled children. In this book I attempt to identify when Black cultural workers have resisted this sort of ableist move, and when they have not, I propose alternative rhetorical, theoretical, and activist approaches that might move us away from using disability in this reductive and oppressive way. I offer such critiques in the praxis interludes of *Black Disability Politics* with acknowledgment of the difficult tensions and conflicts involved in intersectional work, the deep roots of ableist assumptions in American culture, and the fact that none of us operate outside oppressive systems of power.

By approaching the (dis)ability system holistically, Black disability politics can be applied to a wide range of issues, even those that do not necessarily seem to be directly or obviously *about* disability. This quality of Black disability politics topically parallels conflicts between the early Black feminist movement and the civil rights, Black Power, and women's liberation movements in which Black men and white feminist activists often dismissed Black feminist concerns as not properly or sufficiently about race or gender, respectively.²⁸ Similar to how Black feminists covered a wide range of topics in their organizing and publications, work in Black disability politics frequently entails countering the combined impacts of racism and ableism in a variety of political and social arenas.²⁹ These parallels are important because the intersectional thinking and organizing developed by Black feminists and other feminists of color in the 1960s and 1970s led the way for the intersectional thinking and organizing of Black disability politics, and several of the examples of Black disability political work examined in this book were and are performed by Black feminists.

This quality of being holistic also applies to the tactics of Black disability politics. Black disability politics focus simultaneously on micro (individual and community) and macro (societal, national, and international) change. This aspect of Black disability politics is common to many activist movements historically. Many cultural workers understand individual intellectual change to be the foundation for collective movement toward systemic change, recognizing that without addressing our individual and interpersonal habits of internalized oppression and lateral aggression, true freedom is impossible. In the specific case of Black disability politics, the concurrent focus on micro- and macrolevel change differs from predominantly rights-based organizing, which heavily depends on and trusts the state to be the arbiter of liberation and protection. This move away from rights-based discourses is reflected in much disability justice work today and is also apparent in the Black Power movement, which sought to move beyond civil rights alone when it became clear that changes in laws would not be enough to counter systems of oppression.

In practice, the holistic nature of Black disability politics means that this political work can take a variety of forms, from patients' rights advocacy and health-care reform protests to the creation of community-support systems and individual consciousness-raising and empowerment. Black disability politics provide a framework for understanding the wide variety of ways that systems of race and (dis)ability intersect in our world and the many avenues one might take to fight these oppressive systems.

Book Overview

This book contains this current introduction, five chapters, two praxis interludes, and a conclusion. The first four chapters are historical in orientation. The praxis interludes serve as contemporary bridges to draw lessons for social justice work today from the work of Black activists in the past, building on their successes and learning from their missteps. The praxis interludes aim to demonstrate some practical applications of the Black disability political theory developed in the historical chapters.

Chapters 1 and 2 explore the Black Panther Party's engagement with disability within their larger antiracist, anticapitalist, anti-imperialist revolutionary liberation ideology, relying primarily on the BPP's own representation and explanation of their involvement in their weekly newspaper. Chapter 1, "We Have a Right to Rebel': Black Disability Politics in the Black Panther Party," discusses the 504 sit-in, the party's most direct engagement with disability rights, followed by a shorter discussion of the Panthers' Oakland Community School to demonstrate how Black disability politics can be articulated and enacted in ways that are often overlooked or misunderstood in disability studies and Black studies alike. Chapter 2, "Fighting Psychiatric Abuse: The BPP and the Black Disability Politics of Mental and Carceral Institutions," then focuses on the BPP's activism against various forms of psychiatric abuse in prisons, mental institutions, and psychiatric hospitals, especially the return of psychosurgery. Following these chapters, praxis interlude 1, "Anti-ableist Approaches to Fighting Disabling Violence," explores and critiques how the Panthers' work on psychiatric abuse at times missed the mark and perpetuated ableist language and tropes in their fight against disabling violence. Within my critique I offer alternative rhetorical approaches for cultural workers to use in discussing and combating such violence.

The next two chapters focus on the National Black Women's Health Project (NBWHP), positioning its Black feminist health activism in the 1980s and 1990s as a prime example of Black disability politics. Chapter 3, "Empowerment through Wellness: Black Disability Politics in the National Black Women's Health Project," introduces the history of the NBWHP and then analyzes the NBWHP's holistic, cultural, and political approaches to health and wellness, highlighting the ways disability is included and addressed in both explicit and implicit ways. Chapter 4, "More Than Just Prevention: The NBWHP and the Black Disability Politics of HIV/AIDS," assesses how the NBWHP's approaches to health were enacted in programming and publications regarding HIV/AIDS among Black women

and Black communities. I use the NBWHP's work on this specific disability concern to demonstrate how health activist work that promotes prevention or reduction of potentially disabling diseases and conditions can still be anti-ableist. After these two chapters on the NBWHP, praxis interlude 2, "Approaches to Disability Identity in Black Disability Politics," critiques the NBWHP's general avoidance of explicitly politicized disability identity and draws heavily on the knowledge of contemporary Black disabled cultural workers to consider how we can critically engage disability identity within Black communities today.

Finally, in chapter 5, "Black Disability Politics Now," I shift fully to the twenty-first century and discuss my interviews with eleven contemporary Black disabled cultural workers. In this chapter, I argue that Black disabled cultural workers are using their articulations of Black disability politics to change how we organize for social justice. I analyze their contemporary Black disability political work and make connections to the qualities of Black disability politics I identify in the historical work of the previous chapters, arguing that these qualities remain similar or have only slightly shifted. This final chapter also identifies some of the ways that Black disability politics are being incorporated into other Black-led activist movements.

For this part of the research project, I received an institutional review board waiver to perform interviews with Black disabled cultural workers, particularly activists.³⁰ I began with reaching out to members of the Harriet Tubman Collective and expanded my search based on recommendations from participants. In total, I interviewed eleven people, seven of whom are members of the Harriet Tubman Collective. All of the participants identify as both Black and D/disabled. Some capitalize the *D* in Disabled when referring to their identity, and some do not; therefore, both spellings appear in chapter 5. Not all of the interview participants called themselves *activists*. Some preferred other words, like Talila "TL" Lewis's term *social justice engineer*.³¹ As a result, I refer to the interview participants collectively as Black disabled activists and cultural workers, though the questions I asked focus more on activist and political work than artistic work. I name each interview participant here because each of them matter immensely. This is how they asked to be identified:

- * T. S. Banks (he/him): poet, facilitator, organizer, mental wellness advocate, and board member for Disability Pride Madison
- * Patrick Cokley (he/him): administrator of the Lead On Update and founding member of the Harriet Tubman Collective

- * Candace Coleman (she/her): community organizer for Access Living (Chicago) and founding member of the Harriet Tubman Collective
- * Dustin Gibson (he/him): founding member of the Harriet Tubman Collective
- * Lorrell Kilpatrick (she/her): advocacy services coordinator and founding member of the Harriet Tubman Collective
- * Talila “TL” Lewis (no pronouns): social justice engineer, movement lawyer, community organizer, educator, codeveloper of Disability solidarity praxis, volunteer director for Helping Educate to Advance the Rights of Deaf communities (HEARD), and founding member of the Harriet Tubman Collective
- * Tiara Simmons Mercius, JD (she/her): family law clerk and creator of the hashtag #DisabilityAblesplained
- * Tinu Abayomi-Paul (she/her): author, disability advocate, and creator of the hashtag #EverywhereAccessible
- * Kayla Smith (she/her): Black autistic disability rights advocate and creator of the hashtag #AutisticBlackPride
- * Vilissa Thompson (she/her): social worker, founder of Ramp Your Voice, and founding member of the Harriet Tubman Collective
- * Heather Watkins (she/her): disability advocate, writer, mother, consultant, speaker, creator of the blog *Slow Walkers See More*, and founding member of the Harriet Tubman Collective

There were other people I was unable to interview owing to scheduling conflicts, the pandemic, and time constraints for the project. I want to make clear that the goal of this work is to uplift their voices and make connections with my archival research, but more comprehensive interviews with these and other Black disabled cultural workers would be of immense value. I hope someone reading this takes on that particular task to contribute to the conversation and the movement.

My goal in taking on the methodological and temporal shifts in this book is to break from the typical disciplinary academic monograph mode and create something that is more clearly emerging through shared political community and useful for cultural workers outside of academia, especially activists. In my interview with TL Lewis, Lewis states, “Most disability studies or whatever it is called—I don’t know who it’s for, but I certainly can’t access it and I’m literacy privileged—if that shit’s for the academy, y’all can have it. Disability justice, disability solidarity, Black disability politics is about: this

is for us.” The inclusion of interview quotes at various moments throughout the book brings us back to the overarching goals of not just this book but the larger work of collective liberation. I am immensely grateful not only for the time, knowledge, and expertise of each of the participants but also for the way doing these interviews has forever changed me, bringing me into my own new relationship to disability identity and Black disability politics even after years of researching and writing on this subject. For any of us who are involved in the work of liberation, whether our role is artist, organizer, writer, educator, healer, thinker, or policy maker, we need to be in conversation with one another. I have learned so much from talking to the eleven Black disabled cultural workers here. I have learned so much from reading the work of other contemporary Black disabled cultural workers. Black feminists have a long lineage of creating work that bridges academic and activist communities, and I do my best to honor and participate in that legacy here.

Finally, the book ends with “(Not a) Conclusion: The Present and Futures of Black Disability Politics,” where I return to my own narrative voice to reflect on the process of writing this book in the midst of national and global upheaval. This final section addresses both scholarly and activist audiences, summarizing the arguments and ideas of the book while also attempting to imagine what comes next. I wrote the first draft of this nonconclusion in the midst of a global pandemic as COVID-19 forced a worldwide slowdown like nothing we have ever experienced before. I began writing the last part of this book while participating in social distancing in my home in Madison, Wisconsin, while on leave from teaching. I finished it several months later after participating in the Black liberation uprisings of the summer of 2020 as an on-the-ground organizer and activist. In the nonconclusion I reflect on how my research influenced my approach to these direct actions and how these experiences transformed my understanding of the purpose of this book (and forced me to finally finish it).

For over a year before finishing the first draft of *Black Disability Politics*, I knew that the book I had originally set out to write had changed into something else, something more interdisciplinary, more activist oriented, but I struggled to envision the full structure. In the spring and summer of 2020, with a pandemic and uprisings altering life as we know it, I realized that so much was going to change, so much would never be the same. There was no point in trying to write the book I had originally envisioned because the world I had started to write this book in was gone. What you hold in your hand (or are reading on a screen or listening to) is the book

that I needed to write in and for this moment. It has been a labor of love but labor nonetheless. This is the knowledge I have been able to acquire with the privilege of my position as an academic and with the risks of my positions as an activist. I hope it is useful now and in the future for us, for Black people, especially Black disabled people, as well as for anyone who claims to love and support us. In accord with Mary Hooks in the epigraph that began this introduction: in this new world, may we avenge the suffering of our ancestors, earn the respect of future generations, and be willing to be transformed by the work again and again and again.

Let's begin.

DUKE

22 INTRODUCTION

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

Introduction

- 1 Black.Seed, "Black Queer Liberation Collective Black.Seed Shuts Down Bay Bridge," *Anti-Police Terror Project* (blog), accessed September 29, 2016, <http://www.antipoliceterrorproject.org/new-blog-1/2016/1/18/black-queer-liberation-collective-blackseed-shuts-down-bay-bridge>.
- 2 Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, "How Black.Seed Shut Down the Bay Bridge on MLK," YouTube.com, accessed May 10, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4G76v_iLDzM.
- 3 I use *(dis)ability* to designate the overarching social system of bodymind norms that creates categories of disability, impairment, able-bodiedness, and able-mindedness, producing privilege for some and oppression for others in dynamic, intersectional, and context-based ways. I use the terms *disability* and *ability* to designate the specific marginalized and privileged positions within the (dis)ability system as a whole. For more on the rationale behind this language choice, see Schalk, "Critical Disability Studies as Methodology"; and Schalk, *Bodyminds Reimagined*, 6.
- 4 In addition to the individuals named thus far, additional examples of important Black disability studies scholarship include Samuels, "Examining Millie and Christine McKoy"; Samuels, *Fantasies of Identification*; Bailey, "Race and Disability in the Academy"; Boster, *African American Slavery and Disability*; Barclay, "'The Greatest Degree of Perfection'"; Barclay, "Mothering the 'Useless'"; Knadler, "Dis-Abled Citizenship"; Jarman, "Dismembering the Lynch Mob"; Jarman, "Coming Up from Underground"; and Jarman, "Cultural Consumption and Rejection of Precious Jones."
- 5 See Waggoner, "My Most Humiliating Jim Crow Experience"; Schalk, "Experience, Research, and Writing"; and Tyler, "Jim Crow's Disabilities."
- 6 Berne, "Disability Justice."
- 7 Berne, "Disability Justice."
- 8 Mingus, "Reflection toward Practice," 108.
- 9 See McRuer, *Crip Theory*; and M. Johnson and McRuer, "Cripistemologies."

- 10 Mingus, "Reflection toward Practice," 108.
- 11 Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 10.
- 12 Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 12.
- 13 See Schalk, "Interpreting Disability Metaphor and Race."
- 14 For more on the history of the disability rights movement, see Charlton, *Nothing about Us without Us*; Fleischer and Zames, *Disability Rights Movement*; and Shapiro, *No Pity*.
- 15 For the historical evidence of Black disability politics prior to the 1970s, see, for example, Tyler, "Jim Crow's Disabilities"; Waggoner, "My Most Humiliating Jim Crow Experience"; Knadler, "Dis-Abled Citizenship"; Knadler, *Vitality Politics*; and Barclay, *Mark of Slavery*.
- 16 Minich, "Enabling Whom?"; Schalk, "Critical Disability Studies as Methodology"; and J. Kim, "Toward a Crip-of-Color Critique."
- 17 Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 153.
- 18 Given the limited scholarly work on the specific approaches to disability politics within particular racialized communities thus far, I cannot say how much Black disability politics overlaps with Indigenous and Native disability politics, Asian/American disability politics, or Latinx disability politics, but I am certain future research will trace the connections among these approaches as each group further develops and articulates their specific disability politics.
- 19 An important example of this work occurring among other racialized groups is the 2013 special issue of *Amerasia Journal* 39, no. 1, titled "The State of Illness and Disability in Asian America," and the *Asian American Literary Review's* 2016 special issue "Open in Emergency: A Special Issue on Asian American Mental Health."
- 20 I acknowledge the scholarly debates around the term *intersectionality*, but following the lead of Jennifer Nash, I aim to disrupt Black feminist defensiveness and protectiveness of the term by simply defining and using an intersectional framework rather than spending extensive time defending it. The term works for me and may not work for others, and that is okay. See Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined*.
- 21 For scholarship on the complicated relationships of people of color to disability identity, see Day, "Resisting Disability, Claiming HIV"; Nishida, "Understanding Political Development through an Intersectionality Framework"; Erevelles, *Disability and Difference in Global Contexts*; Erevelles, "Crippin' Jim Crow"; and Puar, *Right to Maim*.
- 22 See Erevelles, "Crippin' Jim Crow"; Dolmage, "Disabled upon Arrival"; and A. Taylor, "Discourse of Pathology."
- 23 See J. Kim, "Crippling East Los Angeles"; Schalk, *Bodyminds Reimagined*, 33–58; and Puar, *Right to Maim*, 95–155.
- 24 See J. Livingston, *Debility and the Moral Imagination in Botswana*.
- 25 Puar, *Right to Maim*, xiii.
- 26 Puar, *Right to Maim*, xv.

- 27 Price, “Bodymind Problem and the Possibilities of Pain”; and Schalk, *Body-minds Reimagined*.
- 28 See Springer, *Living for the Revolution*.
- 29 For examples of the range of issues addressed by Black feminists, see Hull, Bell-Scott, and Smith, *All the Women Are White*; Combahee River Collective, “The Combahee River Collective Statement”; B. Smith, *Home Girls*; or Guy-Sheftall, *Words of Fire*. For a scholarly analysis of this broad range of Black feminist issues, see Springer, *Living for the Revolution*, 91–93.
- 30 All participants were paid for their time, and interviews ranged from thirty minutes to just under two hours. I asked participants the same series of eight questions but informed them that they were allowed to skip any questions or come back to them later. I asked:
 - 1 How do you identify or describe yourself?
 - 2 How did you become politicized in your identities or become an activist?
 - 3 What activist work have you done? What are you most proud of in that work?
 - 4 How do you think Black activists and Black communities have addressed or avoided disability as a political concern?
 - 5 How do you think the mainstream disability rights movement has addressed or avoided race as a political concern?
 - 6 How do you see race and disability (or racism and ableism) interacting in the lives of Black people historically and/or in the present?
 - 7 How would you describe Black disability politics or Black disability activism? What are important qualities or aspects of Black disability political work?
 - 8 Is there anything else I should know about you, your work, or Black disability politics?

After the interviews, I sent transcripts to participants to allow them to review them and edit or change anything they wanted. Later I sent the first draft of chapter 5 to the participants to again get their approval and feedback on how I am representing them and their ideas.

- 31 Talila “TL” Lewis, interview by Sami Schalk, December 6, 2019.

Chapter One: “We Have a Right to Rebel”

- 1 The original image caption misidentified Dennis Phillips as Dennis Billips, but he is mentioned and quoted in other articles under his proper name.
- 2 Huggins and LeBlanc-Ernest, “Revolutionary Women, Revolutionary Education,” 165. Ericka Huggins and Angela D. LeBlanc-Ernest argue that Panther women are represented less in the literature in part because they wrote less and worked more than leading men in the BPP. They write, “BPP women did