

## Foreword

### *When Being Reader #1 Is Awesome*

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Sometimes being reader #1 is awesome. Reading this manuscript was one of those times. I received the call for papers (CFP) for *Crip Genealogies* in December 2016. At the time, I was working on what would become *Black Madness :: Mad Blackness*. I was also at the beginning of a prolonged crisis with myasthenia gravis that, when it was done, had resulted in the following: five hospital stays longer than three weeks, including a stint in a nursing home and rehabilitation center; six other hospital stays for recurring pancreatitis; three emergency surgeries and one preplanned surgery; several rounds of chemotherapy; and innumerable doctors' appointments. And that was just my medical life.

I disclose this information because I write in the tradition of Black feminists who believe my specific location influences my analysis. It matters that I am disabled and Black and woman and more. I also believe Anna Julia Cooper: to paraphrase, when and where I enter, others enter as well. In this case, I enter where the ramp is, usually at the back or on the side of a building, if it is there at all.

The editors of this volume (authors and luminaries each in their own right) understood the necessity of a collection that perturbs readers interested in the history of what the American academy calls "disability studies." Their call for papers read, "In this anthology, we want to push back against the expectation of a coherent narrative of disability studies, one without contradictions, and its limited and limiting approach to race. In its place, we want stories of a disability studies very much entwined with, and indebted to, the fields of feminist studies, queer studies, postcolonial studies, and race and ethnic studies. We want to think through alternative intellectual histories and genealogies. We suggest that offering critical genealogies, ones that recognize critical race

theorists' and theory's contributions to disability studies, counters hegemonic genealogies and in so doing remakes the field."

Returning to the discipline (!) of English, I offer comments on form and function. Chen, Kafer, Kim, and Minich knew that this type of inquiry required a collection. You need a cacophony of voices to have this conversation, and an edited volume does the trick. Further, this type of inquiry—a usefully cranky one—pushes against the possibility of cohesion because it asks readers and writers to deliberately consider the places where the narrative refuses cohesion. In Matthew Salesses's work in *Craft in the Real World*, the accepted stories of a culture rely on forms of erasure. Salesses opines, "Any story relies on negative space, and a tradition relies on the negative space of history. . . . Some readers are asked to stay always, only, in the negative. To wield craft responsibly is to take responsibility for absence" (19). These editors asked, who is left out of a field that champions itself as the most marginalized? They curated the essays you now hold, which fill in the gaps and retell the dominant and, heretofore accepted, narratives about disability the world over. I would be remiss if I did not add that their introduction defies the formal expectations of an introduction by asking questions, being transparent, and opening up conversations rather than foreclosing them through forced cohesion.

When I received the first iteration of *Crip Genealogies*, I was thrilled to be reader #1. For those who are unfamiliar, publishers typically choose two experts in the field to read a manuscript and approve it or decline it for eventual publication. The running joke is that reader #2 tends to be the most irritable. I have no idea whether this is true for this volume, but I will say that irritability is rather a standard state for many academics. In my case, I felt negatively implicated by the reading—*Why had I not considered the issues raised here? What the hell was I doing, such that I could not answer the CFP?*—but also buoyed and represented by it. This emotional mélange of need and chagrin made music as it shivered up my spine.

In 2009, I saw Christopher Bell for the last time at the Rocky Mountain MLA conference in Snowbird, Utah. Michelle Jarman and I spoke with him about disability over sandwiches. We each had our own misgivings about the field: it did not feel wide enough for the people we were most interested in honoring. Characteristically, Chris abruptly ended the conversation and pushed Michelle and me into a picture. Now, when I see our faces smirking from the photo, I can only envision Mel Chen, Alison Kafer, Eunjung Kim, and Julie Avril Minich in the frame with us, Chris and other crip ancestors behind the lens, a different SOS, come in, wherever you are, urgent, calling you, calling all of us, come in, y'all, come on in.