



## Creative Intervention

### Black Bodies Crippled Criped

ALLISON ROLLE

Brock University, Canada

To introduce myself I must introduce my body, a neglected site of inquiry. I enter this poem as the flesh, blood, and bones of my ancestors. I enter this poem an undone and remade Black, Queer, Disabled body. I am the labored joints of my grandmother, and the flesh of my grandfather now enveloped in the Earth. I am deconstructed, dismayed, and distressed. I am stolen, stiffened, and criped.

I use poetry as a means for somatic exploration. I use this poem to unwind unreleased screams. I use poetry to pry at my grief, a grief that binds and undoes us simultaneously. I use poetry to examine the ravage of our bodies, and how anti-Black violence rearranges stolen muscle. I use poetry to articulate damage. Damage that is physical, spiritual, mental.

I write this poem as a eulogy to my siblings. I write for those whose tendons no longer bend, stretch, constrict, or flex. I write to point toward the vestiges of Black death. I write to consider the markings it leaves on our living bodies. Black bodies on Turtle Island have been immersed in a violence that lingers, tremors, and cuts down to our bones. Thus, this poem serves as a call, as a plea, for scholars of social justice to broaden our conceptualization of disability.

*Correspondence Address:* Allison Rolle, Social Justice & Equity Studies, Brock University, St. Catharines, ON L2S 3A1; email: [arolle@brocku.ca](mailto:arolle@brocku.ca)

ISSN: 1911-4788



Ahmaud Arbery's body lays molding in the ground

Shot

Beaten

Criped

Emmett Till's body lies exposed at his wake

Brutalized

Beaten

Criped

My body lies stiff in my mother's arms

Black Bodies

Stolen

Criped

Death has set into my brother's bones

Black Bodies

Mourning

Criped

My brothers lay in grounds our grandmothers toiled

In soil that ate at the palm of their hands

My brothers lie in fields of splintered skin

Swaddled in blood their ancestors shed

Hearts twisted by their son's contortion

Dig their graves with ragged breaths

And I, my brother's keeper, stands wailing

At the sight of their bodies unraveled in rest

To be Black is to be undone

Deconstructed from outside-in

To have flesh torn by hails of bullets

To have lungs shredded by toxins we're forced to inhale

To be Black is to have a grief that binds

That lingers and marries your bones

Undone and remade is our marrow

Black Bodies

Lost

Mourned

Our disability is an inability

To emerge from a violence that steals

That ravages our fathers' shortened breaths

That renders our mothers with anxiety

This violence forces us to bury our brothers

With hearts enveloped in the tendrils of disease

Digging in air that constrains our living

Black Bodies

Forced

Into Crippling

--

## **Recommended Readings**

Schalk, S. D. (2022). *Black disability politics*. Duke University Press.

Bailey, M., & Mobley, I. A. (2019). Work in the intersections: A Black feminist disability framework. *Gender & Society*, 33(1), 19-40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243218801523>

Clare, E. (2001). Stolen bodies, reclaimed bodies: Disability and queerness. *Public Culture*, 13(3), 359-366. <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-13-3-359>