



Term Project
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DST 365 - Fictions of Disability
Professor Julia M. Rodas
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Keyword: Spectacle ~ Thing or person seen, especially an unusual or ridiculous one: he makes a spectacle of himself. A strange or interesting object or phenomenon.

At the beginning of this course I did not have a clue what I was going to get out of “The Fictions of Disability.” Meaning I didn’t understand what would the fictions of disability be, someone lying about being disabled to reap the benefits? Well now that I’m at the end of this course and the lessons I have learned by reading the assignments, writing about what I have read and listening to Professor Rodas, I have experienced a new way of how the disabled have been portrayed negatively. I don’t agree with everything, but the majority of it now I can see how that person, that logo or that fundraiser is a considered inappropriate or disability porn.

The labels and treatment of the disabled is so overwhelming, but what interests me is how insensitive people can be when they use the disabled as an “spectacle” for one’s satisfaction, whether to humiliate the disabled person or to satisfy one’s self like the caregiver bringing family and friends around his or her child to say look he or she is getting better” like in the film ***The Miracle Worker by Disney -- The Contemporary Version***. Or the young public defender who was the life of the party when he was in a manic state in ***“The Madman Is Back In The Building” by Laura Dimon, Richard Shapiro, Ellen Moynihan, John Annese and Janon Fisher***.

“Ysrael” by Junot Diaz was a very sad assignment for me to do. There were so many characters in the story that were both victimized and made Rafa’s “spectacles” but one who was his main focus was Ysrael. Ysrael was in a serious accident as a baby. He was viciously attacked by a pig; which damaged his face. Now as a teen, Ysrael has an optimistic attitude that

one day he will have surgery, but for now he wears a blue mask over his head and face like the wrestlers wears to keep his scars hidden, because he don't like the attention he gets, the bad attention. The same attention like Rafa was on a mission to hibe Ysrael once he get close to him. Rafa focused on Ysrael so much he didn't realize his brother was molested. I wonder if he would have cared if he found out, because it seemed everything was about Rafa! When they reached Ysrael, a conversation pursued. Once Ysrael begin to talk Rafa's brother begin to like Ysrael. But that was short lived when Rafa took a glass bottle and hit Ysrael over the head. As soon as Rafa had the chance he took Ysrael blue mask off and describe Ysrael face having a hole in the cheek where you can see his oversize or bit off tongue. After Rafa was satisfied he turned Ysrael over so his face won't be in the ground causing him exfixiation.

In *The Miracle Worker*, during the first scene when Helen snatches a pair of scissors and is running around wild on the porch and grab a servant and tries to cut his tongue out his mouth. I'm assuming this part of the film symbolizes she wants someone to feel what she is going through unable to speak or communicate. No one is trying to take the scissors out of Helen's hand but they are watching this little girl jump on a boy two times her size with a weapon in her hand. No one helped not even James, Helen's brother, because Helen's tantrums became a spectacle. The show ended once Kate, Helen's mother arrived. "Let me have those scissors!" Kate was able to gain access of the scissors once she gave Helen a piece of candy. This is how they kept Helen in a calm state, because Helen wasn't born disabled, she became disabled when she was stricken with scarlet fever at the age of seven, which left her blind and deaf. Now Helen is trying to navigate through the world without the ability to see or hear and for a child or an

adult this sudden change can be so challenging and overwhelming. However, you help the person going through these changes not give in to what they want to make them feel better, because in reality it doesn't make them better it makes the bitter. A piece of candy doesn't last for so long, but understanding your disorder or disability and learning what you can do or be in the future is a milestone Helen has overcome thanks to Anne Sullivan.

It was a blessing when Anne Sullivan came into Helen's life. Unlike Helen's parents, Sullivan believed if you work hard or display good behavior, you will get a treat. Throughout the film you see how Helen and Sullivan go through their ups and downs trying to learn each other and soon Helen began to learn things have words. At the end of the two weeks, Sullivan knew Helen needed more time with Helen in order for her discipline to work, but her parents denied. But instead of having a quiet dinner alone, they invited Aunt Ev. This is another example of how the parents used Helen as a spectacle for they're gain as "good parents" -- Look what we did we made a good choice in hiring Anne Sullivan, because Helen is fixed. I don't think they realized it but they did. Kate announced how Helen was a different girl thanks to Ms. Sullivan. But while she was praising Helen, Helen kept throwing her napkin on the floor. Ms. Sullivan picked her napkin at least three times before Sullivan said she need to be in the room with Helen alone. If Sullivan allowed Helen to get away from bad behavior the likelihood of her being successful was slim. The same goes for a child without a disability.

The Madman Is Back In The Building is about a 26 year-old public defender named Zack who worked for the City Legal Aid that went out with the company after winning a case along with the young student, the future lawyers as well. This night, like others he had in the past was

an episode of his bipolar diagnosis and alcohol may have been a factor as well; however a person without mental problem can drink and act ridiculous or drunk. He doesn't recall much, but he know being waked by the police in his underwear on the subway platform. Zack became the office spectacle. How did he leave the without anyone from his group helping him? It's okay to watch him make a fool out of himself, potentially himself or someone else, but no one called a cab and took him home or called an ambulance. Call for help! He never revealed he had bipolar and lost many friends because of it. And his first day back at work was so stressful and in a couple years he resigned be the disorder became to overwhelming.

In a real-live story that has caused me to think about our communities and how we think about mental health. This incident happened almost 2 months ago. A 34 year-old bipolar man named Saheed Vassell was shot to death for pointing a metal object (like a gun) towards pedestrians and then at the police who then fatally shot Vassell to death in Brooklyn. When I seen clips of Vassell going up to people with this object which to me seemed like a gun was horrific; especially when he went up to somebody who had a child. Another clip that bothered me was hearing his parents say, *he's a good kid when he's on his medication.*” Then one day I hear the people in the community talk about how he do his own thing, he's known on the block, then you see a clip where “Mr. Vassell is dancing and talking on top of a piece of a cardboard box and looked disheveled.” He was a spectacle and when I was growing up I remember every project, community or corner had one (a spectacle). Who failed Vassell? He was mentally ill and needed help. It's nice to see people rallying for the good, but don't rally when the person is dead why not when he or she is alive.

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