

# RESEARCH STATEMENT

As an emerging scholar, I am mindful to remain pragmatic about all my research interests and endeavors to make sure that they support my intentional practice of theatre making. I allow disability arts, activism, and education to inform my scholarship. The Disability Arts movement arose out of the Modern Disability Rights Movement of the late 20th century. While writing for the UK-based, Disability Arts Online journal, disabled artist and scholar Allan Sutherland defines disability arts as “art made by disabled people which reflects the experience of disability”. He further draws a line in the sand between is and is not, insisting, “Disability Arts is Art. It is seriously intentioned creative work - poems or painting or music or comedy or theatre or whatever - made with some sort of aesthetic purpose. It is not a hobby to keep the cripples' hands busy. And it is not therapy” (Sutherland, 2005).

The stigmatization of physical, mental, and psychological disabilities is an affective, cognitive and behavioral process. Still, every person has the right to be treated with respect and dignity. Dignity and respect for all are at the core of my teaching philosophy, which parallel as they are also two of my core values. It is my job *and* belief that my students ought to have the best education that I can provide for them and the best education that they are capable of receiving. This approach supports centering equity and access in my practice-based scholarship.

I believe that critically oriented drama education (Gonzalez, 2013) should be woven together with disability arts- I find that both fields bring out the best in the other. Theatremaking is “better, richer, and more rewarding when it is by, for, and about all of us” (Weinert-Kendt, 2021). In my research, I further explore how the narratives of individuals in the disability community can be best celebrated and engaged with through applied theatre, adaptive theatre, and arts integration within an accessible education setting. Drawing from Universal Design for Learning, as all people, disabled and non-disabled alike, can benefit from deeper and more genuine artistic inclusion. During scholarly explorations, I strive to keep in mind my privilege as a person who has access to support for my disability as well as the community support for my access needs.

In my career in disability education thus far, I have seen that many projects involving disabled individuals tend to further infantilize them. It is my goal to create art by and for disabled people that is always age-appropriate and developmentally-informed; the last thing I want to do is further contribute to the systematic theft of the autonomy of disabled individuals. I grew up around and with many disability educators and advocates; a phrase that I hold deep in my heart surrounding disability self advocacy is “Nothing about us without us.” This is a phrase that is repeated endlessly by disabled people in theatre and entertainment. In my practice-based scholarship and art-making is the desire to elevate the human voice, as “nothing about us” can be “without us”.

## Works Cited

- Gonzalez, J. B. (2013). *Temporary Stages II: Critically Oriented Drama Education*. Intellect.
- Sutherland, A. (2005). What is Disability Arts? . *Disability Arts Online*. Retrieved February 27, 2022, from <https://www.disabilityartsonline.org.uk/what-is-disability-arts>.
- Weinert-Kendt , R. (2021, March). Disability and Theatre [web log]. Retrieved March 9, 2022.

