

# **accessibilizing journalism**

*an introductory media toolkit*



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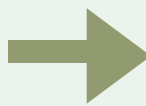
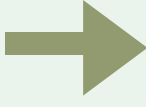


# 1. introduction

This document houses best practices for incoming and practicing journalists. From care considerations when interviewing disabled communities, to understanding Crip Time and Plain Language, to making the virtual realm of (social) media accessible, this guide is a space to begin addressing and dismantling inaccess in your journalism. Allow this to be a first step in a deeper dive into accessibilizing media, stories, art and content creation.

This work would not exist without disabled, mad, d/Deaf and spoonie creatives, scholars, cultural workers and activists who've supported, informed, guided and offered repositories of wisdom on what it means to create work of access that cares, with care. For an unabridged version of the document that this work evolved from, including stories and anecdotes, interviews, resources, voice notes and a glossary, check out **Crippled Journalism**, a disability-justice-informed guide created by Sama Nemat Allah.

## **2. interviewing** **with an ethic of care**

Here are some tips to forge safer conversations with people in the disabled community:

-  Always provide the option to meet virtually. Especially if you don't mask/test regularly for COVID-19, you may be putting chronically ill and immunocompromised sources at a risk of infection
-  If you have an interview scheduled virtually with someone, ask about their access needs. Eg. captioning, ASL interpretation, regular breaks, agenda or a question list received in advance
-  Inquire about how best they process and interact with information. Eg., a virtual meeting, an in-person meeting, written correspondence, visuals, a combination thereof
-  Provide a general guide of topics that will be discussed or questions that will be asked

# 2. interviewing

## continued

➔ Begin conversations with an access check. Access checks allow you and the person you're in conversation with to be made aware of any sensory or access needs you or they may have

— Eg., **"I'm experiencing some brain fog today so it might take me some time to think through a response to a question."**

➔ Begin conversations with a visual description of yourself for folks who are Blind or visually impaired

— Eg., **"I'm an olive-skinned femme-presenting person wearing a green button-up blouse. My hair is curly and frames my face"**

➔ When you're done talking, say "end of thought." This tells Blind or low vision and neurodivergent folks that you're done speaking and that they can talk now if they would like

➔ Ask sources how they would like to be identified in articles (pronouns, social locations like race, queerness, disability, etc)

➔ Ask sources if there is any cultural traditions, histories, stories or contexts that are important for them to be shared, recognized or centered in the article

# 3. intellectual accessibility

Offering your journalism in plain language, while unlikely to create total access, will mobilize content and knowledge in a more accessible way. It's a way of writing and speaking that let's people understand you the first time.

And a plain language communication approach done effectively stays true to an original text while also relaying the important information it houses. While there is no definitive standard for writing in plain language, here some tips from Mencap, a learning accessibility organization based in the United Kingdom:

Use a personal and active voice instead of passive voice (subject does a action, not object has an action done to it)

Use shorter sentences

Try using the 5,000 most commonly used words in the English language

Write the way you speak

Use simple punctuation and avoid colons, semi-colons or hyphens

Keep it to one idea per paragraph

Avoid conjunctions to join clauses together—these will most often create sentences that are hard to follow

Plain language doesn't ask us to completely get rid of complex or academic writing: sometimes jargon can be useful but that's only true when the person receiving the writing can understand said jargon. Start with plain language in mind from the foundation of writing an article. The following is a plain language sample, courtesy of the International Journal of Indigenous Health. The chart gives you a simpler alternative for a complex word:

<b>instead of:</b>	<b>use:</b>
attempt	try
approximately	about
consequently	so, because of
disseminate	send out, distribute
endeavour (verb)	try
facilitate	make easier, help
in lieu of	instead
in order to	to
it would appear that	apparently
in the absence of	without
substantiate	prove, support

## 4. **crip time**

Crip time is a disability justice framework that questions the western linearity and chronology of time. It recognizes the complexity of the crip/disabled/mad experience and our unique relationship with deadlines, stages, and progressive, mechanical time. Consider the way that **Ellen Samuels describes it:**

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*“When disabled folks talk about crip time, sometimes we just mean that we’re late all the time—maybe because we need more sleep than nondisabled people, maybe because the accessible gate in the train station was locked. But other times, when we talk about crip time, we mean something more beautiful and forgiving....Crip time is time travel.”*

Journalism institutions and practices are apt to prioritize expediency. We’re taught to always measure how quickly we can produce work, even under the most inconvenient working conditions. But interlocking crip time into our journalism helps in re-inventing a pursuit that is more beautiful and forgiving.



# 4. **crip time** **continued**

Here are some crip time methods to consider applying to your practice:

➔ **Give your source the option to recommend times and modes for communication. Don't assume everyone wants to be interviewed between the hours of 9-5**

Crip time subscribers don't always portion out their day into normative "set hours" for work, rest, sleep, recovery time, socializing, etc. so they may want to call at night or send you a voice recording of their answers in the morning when they have the energy. Accommodate this and read value in it

➔ **Be forgiving and understanding if community members have to reschedule or cancel. Let them know you can send reminders if that helps them navigate their time and schedule better**

Sometimes energies can drain quickly and abruptly, or time gets eaten up. Always thank your sources for their time

➔ **Do a "temperature check" an hour before the scheduled conversation**

"How's your body-mind feeling? Do you still have capacity for our chat? Would you prefer we email about this instead? We can call over Zoom if that would be more gentle on you."

## ➔ Provide breaks during conversations

Chats and interviews don't have to be uncut. Inserting five or ten-minute breaks throughout can give respite to both you and the person on the other line

## ➔ Think about disabled people. Research the ways crip ways of being affect temporality

From Introduction: Crip Temporalities by Ellen Samuels and Elizabeth Freeman: "...using a different form of technology for access reasons means that everything takes longer. And this is true not just for users of complex technologies like screen readers: differences such as having only limited fingers available for typing, or using one's mouth to hold a pen, or being able to look at screens for only an hour per day, or processing written information better than aural or the other way around."

# 5. access in the online realm

Accessible Design Approaches & Practical Techniques (ADAPT), is a learning opportunity designed to deepen understanding and application of digital accessibility standards. Its intended audience is emerging storytellers and designers who play a pivotal role in shaping the digital landscape. It will equip learners with essential skills to ensure digital projects comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and encourage the adoption of broader accessibility principles. Through ADAPT, learners will not only meet legal requirements but also engage with the ethical dimensions of creating universally accessible content.

# alt text

Alternative text (also known as alt-text) and image descriptions are written translations of non-text or visual content online. Alt-text are shorter descriptions that include the basic essentials of an image. It's recommended that you keep alt-text to 100-250 characters. Alt-text serves the following purposes:

- ➔ Alt-text encoded into images or videos is announced by screen readers, a crip technology used by visually disabled folks or folks with cognitive disabilities that translates images into speech or braille output
- ➔ If a picture just isn't loaded or is blocked for some reason, alt-text is provided by a browser instead
- ➔ Search engines also index words used in alt-text and factor it into search results

Alt-text is supported by Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram and LinkedIn. Alt text is short and precise. While it might feel easier to over-describe images, aim to be brief—one to two sentences will do. It's meant to be a straightforward description of your image so the person using a screen reader can get a general idea about the image and then move on to the caption of the post.



## **image descriptions**

You might want to think about image descriptions as an elaboration of your alt-text. Image descriptions exist outside of the image itself, likely placed in the caption or even sometimes as a pinned comment.

An image description is useful for someone who uses a screen reader who wants more information about your image, but it's also useful for people who might be overwhelmed by a visually complex image or aren't sure where to look when considering an image of an artwork.

### **a guide to describing**

Describing allows you to navigate and translate this visual experience to your audience. When we imbue care into this access point, describing becomes an act of love. As a translator of an image, there is space for some creative interpretation. It makes space for the kind of information you want to provide to the person consuming this post.

Here are some questions to ask yourself when writing image descriptions:

Is this image in colour or black and white?

Are there people in the image? How many? Where are they? Are they gathered or scattered?

Can I carry the reader through the image's background, middle ground and foreground?

Or is it better to carry them clockwise through the image?

If there are people featured in the image, it's best practice to ask them how they'd like to be described. Is there a racialization, ethnicity, disability or gender presentation that they would like mentioned?

It's important to be transparent with your audience and explain to them that this is your creative or accurate interpretation of an image. At the end of the day, it is your conversation with your audience and their needs. It will never be standardized. The key is to edit, edit, edit. Visual writing, interpreting, and alternative text is very much rooted in translation. This means two things:

1. There is no right way to do it
2. It will never be perfect but neither are we—That's kind of the point

# examples of descriptions

**image**

**alt- text**

**image description**



Poster with the words: "We Carry A New World in Our Hearts" sits on a pot of an orchid against a window.

Colour photograph of Sama's windowsill in the background. In the foreground, a white orchid plant sits on a shelf in front of the window with a print of a yellow poster of a silhouette waving a flag with text that reads: "We carry a new world in our hearts."



Sama stands in front of a tree, semi-enveloped by its green leaves. She is holding onto one of its branches as she looks off to her left of the photo.

A waist-up photograph of Sama, standing in front of a large tree with green leaves. She is looking off to her left of the photo to something not visible in the photograph. Sama has pale skin and a head of black curls. She is wearing beaded earrings, rounded gold-framed glasses, a white sheer top with puffed sleeves and a black skirt.



A screenshot of Pride and Prejudice (2005), featuring the back of Darcy's head as he turns around, with the caption, "Clown shoes squeaking"

A coloured meme of the Pride and Prejudice (2005) scene of Darcy and Elizabeth in the rain. The image shows the back of Darcy's head, having just turned around after his proposal was rejected. The caption reads: "[Clown shoes squeaking]"

Here are some more useful links for alt-text and descriptions in the journalism arena:

**Alt-text is journalism:**

Enhancing your reporting with accessibility

**Veronica with Four Eyes**

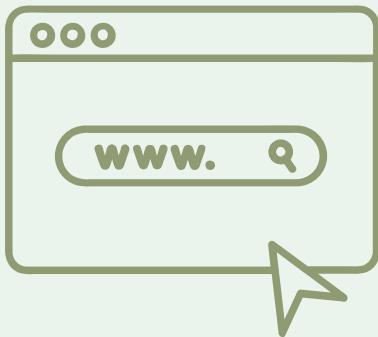
How to write descriptions for photojournalism images

**Charts, Maps, and Data Visualizations:**

How to write effective alt text, for journalists

## 5. online access continued

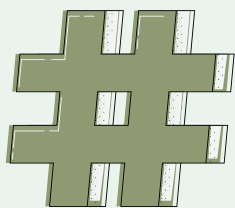
### websites:



If you're looking to accessibilize your website with little to no coding knowledge, you might want to consider implementing an already developed accessibility plug-in in the back-end of your website. A plug-in is a software component that adds a specific feature to an existing computer program. This feature will often let a user increase web page contrast, change font sizes, underline and highlight links or get rid of animations and page styling that may be distracting.

Wordpress and other website builders offer a number of **accessibility widget** options, but others may require additional money, maintenance or coding. Make sure to incorporate a keyboard navigation system onto your website for users not using a mouse. Run your website through an accessibility checker like the **WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool** to check for its compliance with accessibility standards. Better yet, send it to a bunch of friends with different access needs or internet bandwidths and see how your website fares.

## hashtags:



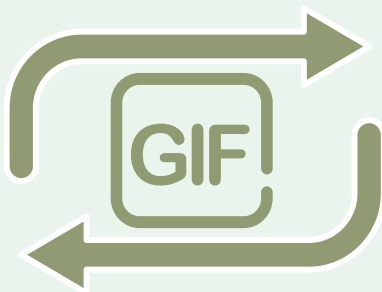
Use “CamelCase” for hashtags, capitalizing the first letter of each word. This will facilitate screen readers reading the words individually rather than as incoherent words. It also makes the hashtags easier to read for people scanning posts visually. For example, the hashtags #CripTime and #Accessibilizing-Journalism are easier to read than #criptime and #accessibilizingjournalism.

## emojis and emoticons:



Emojis are described by a screen reader and generally have good descriptions. Avoid overusing them and be sure to place spaces between words and emojis. Emoticons, which are different than emojis, are constructed using text like this example of “shrugging” `~\\_(\`ツ\)/-`. These can be difficult for everyone to understand, but when read by a screen reader the individual characters are read giving the user no idea of the intended meaning. We discourage the use of emoticons for this reason.

## gifs:



Gifs are fun but they can be either useless or harmful for disabled communities if they're not accessible. Use gifs that maintain a three flashes or below threshold per second. Those that blink/flicker faster can trigger seizures or headaches. Download the **PEAT (Photosensitive Epilepsy Analysis Tool)** to help you identify seizure risks in any animated content. Make sure your gifs can be paused or hidden completely—continuously looped animations can cause sensory or cognitive overload. Be sure to offer alternative text or descriptions for your gifs.



## transcriptions



If you're posting content with audio, like a podcast, for example, providing transcripts is an access act of care that offers an additional entry point into your content, especially for d/Deaf and hard of hearing communities, and those who may have varied experiences with processing auditory information. Basic transcripts are a text version of the speech and non-speech audio information (pauses, sniffing, movement, etc) that makes up your content. Descriptive transcripts come into play when you're transcribing video content, and include visual as well as auditory information.

Using transcription tools like Otter.ai or Zoom can be great starting points for your transcripts. But with the AI's tendency to mishear ("synonym" can be transcribed as "sin a name") and its inability to make notations of silences, laughter or statements said sarcastically, it's important to allocate human resources to reviewing the text and making sure it syncs up with the audio. It's also important to consider **privacy issues** and **data storage** practices for these types of technologies.

## audio descriptions:



Audio descriptions (AD) are spoken descriptions of key visual elements in media. AD provides information on visual content that is critical for Blind, visually impaired or partially-sighted audiences to understand a program or production. AD is usually interspersed within a program or broadcast's original narrations, voice-overs or other audio components. When creating visual media, one way to create a more fulfilling experience for non-visual audiences is to create a second version of video content with AD or extended AD. One obstacle of AD is fitting long-form descriptions in short time frames. Extended AD allows you to pause a video, explain the imagery on the screen, and then resume. This would be particularly helpful when presenting data visualizations.

## graphics:



If you find yourself in need of a graphic for social media, here are some tips to consider:

- ➔ Limit your use of typeface variations: One font for titles and one font for body text (or use the same for both)
- ➔ Try to keep all text left aligned. Left alignment is best for readability
- ➔ Test out background and text colour contrast on [whocanuse.com](https://www.whocanuse.com) and aim for an AAA grading
- ➔ If you're creating a poster or figure, choose a sans serif font like Arial or Helvetica. Serif fonts like Times New Roman are recommended for longer texts
- ➔ The British Dyslexia Association style guide notes that it's best to emphasize text by bolding words, rather than through italics, capital letters or underlined text.
- ➔ Keep font sizes at a minimum of 12 (although some people might need larger fonts; there should be an option for that).
- ➔ For headings, use a font size that is at least 20 per cent bigger than the normal or body text
- ➔ Use a lot of white space around text and images to declutter and decrease chances for sensory overload

# 6. understanding disability justice

## **Sins Invalid's 10 principles of Disability Justice**

Sins Invalid is a disability justice performance collective founded by and celebrating disabled artists, centralizing racialized and queer crip art-makers who have been historically marginalized. In alignment with their organization's vision that “we will be liberated as whole beings—as disabled, as queer, as brown, as black, as gender non-conforming, as trans, as women, as men, as non-binary gendered,” they founded the 10 principles of disability justice.

These tenets have grounded cross-movements, fuelled acts of disabled and crip love and referenced a hundred times over. Created by Patty Berne, edited by Aurora Levins Morales and David Langstaff, let this introduction to disability justice guide and hold you as you move through understanding the cosmology of crip meaning-making.

The following descriptions are borrowed from Sins Invalid:

**1 Intersectionality:** “We do not live single issue lives” –Audre Lorde. Ableism, coupled with white supremacy, supported by capitalism, underscored by heteropatriarchy, has rendered the vast majority of the world “invalid.”

**2 Leadership** of those most impacted: “We are led by those who most know these systems.” –Aurora Levins Morales

**3 Anti-capitalist politic:** In an economy that sees land and humans as components of profit, we are anti-capitalist by the nature of having non-conforming body/minds.

**4 Commitment to cross-movement:** Shifting how social justice movements understand disability and contextualize ableism, disability justice lends itself to politics of alliance.

**5 Recognizing wholeness:** People have inherent worth outside of commodity relations and capitalist notions of productivity. Each person is full of history and life experience.

**6 Sustainability:** We pace ourselves, individually and collectively, to be sustained long term. Our embodied experiences guide us toward ongoing justice and liberation.

**7 Commitment to cross-disability solidarity:** We honor the insights and participation of all of our community members, knowing that isolation undermines collective liberation.

**8 Interdependence:** We meet each others' needs as we build toward liberation, knowing that state solutions inevitably extend into further control over lives.

**9 Collective access:** As brown, black and queer-bodied disabled people we bring flexibility and creative nuance that go beyond able-bodied/minded normativity, to be in community with each other.

**10 Collective liberation:** No body or mind can be left behind – only moving together can we accomplish the revolution we require.

# 6. disability justice

## defining key concepts:

<p><b>ableism</b></p>	<p>A pervasive form of social oppression that naturalizes able-bodiedness. Operating on an individual, institutional and cultural level, ableism oppresses communities with mental, physical, emotional or behavioural differences by privileging an able-bodied status quo.</p>
<p><b>disableism</b></p>	<p>Directly refers to the discrimination against disabled, mad, d/Deaf, neurodivergent, fat, and spoonie communities. This colludes with ableism, sanism and audism.</p>
<p><b>sanism</b></p>	<p>"The belief that life without hearing is futile and miserable, that hearing loss is a tragedy and the "scourage of mankind" and that deaf people should struggle to be as much like hearing people as possible." — Harlan Lane.</p>
<p><b>compulsory able-bodiedness</b></p>	<p>A system that assumes that able-bodiedness is something we're all working towards. Like Robert McRuer reminds us, compulsory able bodiedness "repeatedly demands that people with disabilities embody for others an affirmative answer to the unspoken question, "Yes, but in the end, wouldn't you rather be more like me?"</p>
<p><b>normalcy</b></p>	<p>Disability (and other forms of difference) is constructed as abnormal to legitimize its opposite (non-disability) as 'normal.' Normalcy becomes a means by which to mark some bodies as functional, Beautiful, and Desirable in alignment with supremacist, capitalistic ways of being.</p>

<p><b>futurity</b></p>	<p>A concept forged by Indigenous thinkers. In their paper, <i>Disabling Bodies of/and Land</i>, Laura Jaffee and Kelsey John remind us that how we imagine futures always "has significant implications for the efficacy of present day struggles toward decolonial disability justice." Disability is often imperiled as a site of no-future, but crip world-building holds that we don't just exist in the future, we're the ones dreaming and creating it.</p>
<p><b>collective care</b></p>	<p>Collective care is a crip framework of loving. It holds that we are safer when we offer and receive support and access from one another instead of from institutions, organizations and the state.</p>
<p><b>disability arts</b></p>	<p>Disability arts sees disabled, Mad, D/deaf, neurodiverse, and spoozy creatives shaping, conceiving, and breaking the compact and ostensibly unyielding bounds of modern art. It sees values in those identities. If traditional art is a monotonous white box, crip art is a beautiful, shapeless nebula that knows no limits or edges and that is vast enough to encapsulate all of our idiosyncratic peculiarities—and does so emphatically and without hesitation.</p>
<p><b>embracing ugly</b></p>	<p>Disability justice work is liberatory in the way it asks us to move past aesthetics and desirability. In a speech about <i>Moving Toward the Ugly</i>, Mia Mingus asks: "What would it mean to acknowledge our ugliness for all it has given us, how it has shaped our brilliance and taught us about how we never want to make anyone else feel?" Mingus asks us to partake in an embrace of the self, of the body that "shakes, spills out, takes up space, needs help, moseys, slinks, limps, drools, rocks, curls over on itself."</p>
<p><b>deaf culture + deaf gain</b></p>	<p>In a landscape that sees Deafness as a deficit (see: hearing loss), Deaf culture is a subversive call of insurgence. Deaf culture is maintained by Deaf Peoples and their history, tradition and language. Deaf culture is intergenerational, meaning it is passed down from generation to generation and allows for the subsistence of a network and collective of Deaf community members. Deaf Gain rejects the idea that experiencing deafness means experiencing loss. Signed language becomes a revolutionary expression of community building, interdependent care, and liberation—it allows us to see beauty in the diversity of existence and in the humanity of existing diversely.</p>

# 7. covering disability

## tropes to avoid

### **supercrip and inspiration porn:**

Disability activist Stella Young coined the term inspiration porn in her 2014 [TEDx talk](#) to describe stories that mined disabled lives and experiences to “inspire” a usually non-disabled audience through practices of objectification and othering. It leans heavily into respectability politics by reproducing a binary between a “good” disabled person—who is “overcoming” their disability and doing extraordinary things—and a “bad” disabled person. The heroic representation of disabled people is often referred to as the supercrip, a narrative device which Rosmarie Garland Thomson says relies on “the oldest mode of representing disability”: the [visual rhetoric of wonder](#).

### **madness and violence:**

Where madness, psychosis or schizophrenia are involved, Western media coverage emphasizes unpredictability, violence and danger. In actuality, acts of violence are more commonly committed against mad people, and rarely by them. These schemas also decontextualize madness and psychiatrization from their enduring histories with colonialism and white supremacy,

## **nothing about us without us:**

Disability narratives in the press are too often rife with sources that are not disabled. Instead of communicating directly with disabled peoples as their primary sources, reporters will reach out to and centre non-disabled family members, doctors, therapists and friends. People who are degrees separated from the realm of disability and disability justice are given more credence and validity than disabled peoples themselves. This robs disabled people of the agency to be the drivers of our own narratives.

The Center of Disability Rights' Disability Writing and Journalism Guidelines recommend accessing authentic disability representation for stories by following disabled activists on social media. Check out hashtags like **#CripTheVote**, **#ADAPTandRESIST**, **#ActuallyAutistic**, **#DisabilityTooWhite**, **#DeafTalent**, or **#FilmDis**.

## **intersectional disability:**

Audre Lorde reminds us that "there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives."

It is irresponsible to sever crip narratives from Blackness, Brownness, Indigeneity, queerness, transness and fatness. This is in part because disabled peoples exist at the intersections of many of these social locations, and that the convergence of these axes produce compounding lived experiences. Authentic coverage of disability and crip livelihoods is always intersectional because liberation is intersectional. True crip storytelling, true crip liberation, true disability justice is collective, interdependent and leaves no one behind.



# 8. language

List adapted from : Lydia X Brown

<p><b>terms to describe disability or madness:</b></p>	<p><b>alternative terms to ableist language:</b></p>
<p>Disabled            Mad            Sick            Crip            Autistic            Spoonie            Chronically Ill            Neuroatypical            Neurodivergent            Has a disability            With a disability            Has a chronic health condition</p>	<p>Asinine            Bad            Careless            Chaotic            Confusing            Dense            Devoid of _____            Disgusting            Evil            Extremist            Incomprehensible            Inconsiderate            Irrational            Obtuse            Outrageous            Shameful            Unconscionable</p>

<b>ableist term</b>	<b>meaning/origin</b>
<b>stupid/idiot</b>	<p>The word "idiot" has roots in the psychological classification system that categorized mad and/or disabled people based on a specific range of abilities: "Those so defective that the mental development never exceeds that of a normal child of about two years." Words like these are often used to degrade an individual's intellect or knowledge.</p>
<b>dumb</b>	<p>According to Jack Gannon's 1980 book Deaf Heritage, the term dumb is a linguistic microaggression that Aristotle used to label the deaf community as incapable of being taught or retaining knowledge. The philosopher subscribed to the belief that if an individual could not use their voice, they were "senseless" and thus unable to develop any cognitive abilities.</p>
<b>moron/ moronic</b>	<p>Psychologist Henry H. Goddard coined the word moron in the 20th century to signify a so-called feeble-minded population that posited a lower intelligence that made them dangerous and more likely to commit crimes. He then concluded that the "feeble-minded" needed to be extinguished or segregated from the remainder of society in order to prevent them from reproducing.</p>
<b>crazy/ deranged/ insane/ lunatic</b>	<p>These terms refer to individuals with mental or psychiatric disabilities. When used as a metaphor to describe anything confusing or outside of the norm, it stereotypes mentally disabled people as irrational or disengaged from reality. It is often used as justification to criminalize them and incarcerate them. People often use these words to name facism, badness, or evil, equating mad people with the oppressors.</p>
<b>special needs</b>	<p>Disabled community members have long been advocating against the use of euphemisms like special needs, differently-abled or handicapable. It maintains a belief that there is something inherently wrong with being disabled. Additionally, a special needs denomination is predicated on an Othering effect that constructs disability as a site of radical and "special" difference.</p>

<b>abelist term</b>	<b>meaning/origin</b>
<b>blind/ blinded to</b>	These terms refer to blind, low-vision and visually-impaired people. They are often used as a metaphor to describe someone or an action that is willfully ignorant, prejudicial or harmful. Instead of using a disability to call out an individual's ignorance, try pinpointing specifically how and why their actions were harmful or just name the systems of oppression as they are.
<b>lame</b>	When this term was first introduced to the English language, it was an adjective used to characterize a physically disabled or impaired individual. Given the meaning of the word at its inception, it is both dehumanizing and ableist to continue to use it to refer to someone as lesser than.
<b>obese</b>	A word built around the judgment of consumption. It derives from the Latin term <i>obesus</i> , meaning "that has eaten itself fat." According to fat activists, the word is employed by dominant bio-medical systems to pathologize fat people and their bodies. Fat is a neutral description which can and should be used when referring to fat communities.

Even with these terms in mind, in conversation with communities with lived experience, you must first and foremost let them take the lead in naming and identifying themselves. Drew McEwan, a Mad author, poet, educator, highlights the importance in following author/artist/subject in how they identify:

"I worry about folks, in a well-meaning way, "sanitizing" the language derived from lived experience. For instance, someone identifying their experience with madness as "crazy." This comes from experience with activist/academic norms of language being used to cover over the real-world, lived use of language and identity to those who might be outside those communities. I think it's important to report the complexity and messiness of identifications as we all draw from language that we have access to and that feels right in the moment, even as our body-minds and experiences of them are in constant change and flux."

# 9. acknowledgements

This document was authored by Sama Nemat Allah and developed with the support of Dr. Nicole Blanchett from the School of Journalism at Toronto Metropolitan University through an Equity and Inclusion Grant received from The Creative School

This document was created on stolen, occupied, and unceded territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Haudenosaunee, the Chippewa, and the Huron-Wendat Peoples, colonially known as Toronto, Ontario. We pay gratitude to the Original Caretakers for allowing us to study, create, and research on Turtle Island