Twitter Thread by LA Carmichael



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(ableism, addiction)

Alright, y'all, who wants an essay about disability? This thread is vitally important to understanding canes, crutches, wheelchairs, walkers, & any other mobility aids. Ask yourself, would you feel shame about using an aid like glasses to do this task?

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> Gentle reminder: a mobility aid is not a last resort. You are not obligated to endure increased pain and fatigue or to miss out on valued activities and experiences. If a mobility aid would improve your quality of life, that's a good enough reason to use one!
>
> — The Tweedy Mutant \u267f\U0001f308 (@the_tweedy) January 6, 2021

Would you shame me for using a wheelchair one day so I can use a single crutch the next day? Would you shame me for using a single crutch in 90% of circumstances & then using a wheelchair to navigate a convention or big event? Would you shame me for standing up from my chair? 2/

I have been shamed, verbally & to my face, for all of these things.

Mobility aids are TOOLS. There is no one right or wrong way to use a tool (just ways that might be less likely to cause injury—if you're new to crutches DM me & I can give you a tutorial).

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Here's another vital thing to understand. Mobility aids, wheelchairs especially, are LIBERATING. I know to many they look like a symbol of all that you'd give up as an able-bodied person, & I have also struggled with big emotions abt my chairs in childhood & coming back

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to my wheelchair when I was an adult. It's okay to grieve the things you lose when your body isn't able to do a thing.

But the wheelchair isn't what you think it is. The wheelchair is FREEDOM and MOVEMENT and ACCESS.

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I think about those memes of Steven Hawking floating out of his wheelchair after his death. I shared it that day, saw a critique, slapped my forehead, & removed it. Bc that concept gets it all wrong. What would his life have been without his wheelchair or his voice adapters?

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Hawking's wheelchair was a tool that let him connect with people across the world. My wheelchair is EMPOWERING.

I know a person in their 50s whose parent didn't have anyone to explain this, & thought a wheelchair was the last possible resort, to be avoided at all costs.

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A wheelchair probably felt like a symbol of failure. If they'd been allowed to use a wheelchair part time starting with their first injury in the 80s, they might not have spent a huge amount of their life & energy & time struggling with debilitating chronic pain & addiction

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as they tried to cope by self-medicating. Why was the wheelchair the evil, & not the pain that person had to endure by being forced to walk?

A mobility aid can be a lot of things to a lot of people. I don't get to tell you what it means to you, your body, & your life.

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I do ask you to consider that maybe the thing failing a disabled person isn't their body needing an aid to be mobile (what's more human than using a tool & adapting??) & more about the world that's full of inaccessible buildings & transports built by & for able-bodied people. 10/

(See: Senator Duckworth trying to evacuate & find a wheelchair-accessible place to lockdown during the insurrection.)

1/5 people will be disabled in their lifetimes. We're the largest & most diverse minority, bc any human can become disabled at any moment. Including you.

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Luckily, humans are wired as tool users. We're wired to adapt. We're wired to overcome struggle through trial and error and engineering. Mobility aids are seeing advances in technology that we couldn't have dreamed about when I got my first wheelchair as a kid.

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Here's the other thing to consider—the archaeological record shows that for a long, long, LONG time, humans have been wired to care for each other even w injuries that would slow down a group of hunter-gatherers for months or longer. We're wired to take care of each other.

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Ableism is a social construct. It's woven into western cultural narratives on independence, productivity, perfection, & who has value as a person. But it doesn't have to be that way. So many cultures treat disability differently.

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Wrapping up this #DisabilityActivism essay thread with my favorite @BreneBrown quote:

"You are imperfect, you are wired for struggle, but you are worthy of love and belonging."

#HealingVisibly

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