

Hello world, my name is Ottis Smith
and I am a Black disabled artist out of California.
Today I want to talk about one of my greatest friends
and admired scholar Leroy F Moore,
who is a co-creator of Krip-Hop Nation
as well as co-panelist along side myself
and Keith as well as Lateef
on our podcast "Black-Disabled Men Talk."
Where we use Krip-Hop theory as a theoretical lens
to examine current political, labor, gender,
and all other manner of social issues,
be it national, international,
stemming from European colonialism,
epistemology, and racial oppression.
But today I want to talk about Leroy's amazing book titled
Black Disabled Art History 101.
In it I learned about great and interesting figures
such as Horace Pippin,
who was a World War 1 vet,
who received injury to his drawing hand
and had to adapt in order to continue to produce art.
Along side other figures such as Kiilu Nyasha,
who was wheelchair bound
while she engaged in revolutionary activity
by being a member of the Black Panther Party,
organizing free breakfast
to assist with the survival programs.
Or even Albert George Al Hibbler
who was not only a Jazz and Blues musician
as well as a radio host,
but also participated in the civil rights movement
alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

I learned all of this, and so much more
in Leroy Moore's book
Black Disabled Art History 101.
Reading countless stories of Black individuals,
as they say, not overcoming their disability,
but allowing their disability to inform
their political, social, and cultural resistance
against Western normalcy,
which is defined and sustained
by the disablement of the Black body.
Leroy's "Black Disabled Art History"
is a beautiful illustration to the Krip-Hop theory
he, as well as Dr. Tamari Kitossa expound upon
in the amazing anthology titled,
Appealing because he is Appalling -
Black Masculinities, Colonialism, and Erotic Racism
The work uses a queer, feminist and intersectional lens
to study the evolution of Black masculinity
within the Western paradigm
or model of gender and sexual performance.
Beginning it's analysis by examining the relationship
the ancient Greco-Romans had with the Black body.
Fast forwarding to the trans- atlantic enslavement trade
to our immediate contemporary period.
Specifically using Frantz Fanon and James Baldwin's
plethora of writings and speeches
as the main guiding frameworks.
The chapter that Leroy co-authored is chapter 5,
"A Krip-Hop theory of Disabled Black men."
One of my favorites quotes from this chapter
that I believe fits well
in how I interpret Leroy's overall body of work goes:

"For Baldwin, as it was for Fanon, with the colonized,
when Black men resisted disablement,
- even at the price of being disabled -
disability becomes not only a recovering of manhood
and an act of communal love,
but also evidence
of the bankruptcy of the liberal project
to recuperate and value the disabled body
by placing disability at the center of Black life
as a nurturing and vibrant site
for culture, politics, and philosophy."

To me this excerpt is also beautifully illustrated
in Leroy's poem

"Break the frame, tell it like it is."

Which is a piece that was inspired by Horace Pippin.

In the poem Leroy writes:

"A broken frame
opens up the mind to endless possibilities
Like Pippin adapt to your situation
but always display
people's beauty,
the inequalities and injustice in society."

To me, ever since I have intimately come to understand

Krip-Hop Theory, through the rewarding discourse

I have with Leroy personally,

or from studying his material,

be it the amazing chapter in

"Appealing because he is Appalling"

or the amazing book Black Disabled Art History 101,

I find Krip-Hop theory to be a necessary thread

to the Black fabric, which when stitched together

forms the cosmic quilt of Blackness,

not being defined by others and resisting oppression
by struggling for the right to self and collective definition.

This work mirrors

what the Afro-surrealist movement of 1943

which began in France by great African theorists,
poets and painters

such as Aimé Césaire and Edouard Glissant;

who used paintings and poetry to critique colonialism
and challenge Western definitions of normalcy,

which they did not create but was forced upon them.

Whom cultivated great revolutionary minds

such as Frantz Fanon and James Baldwin.

As Aimé Césaire wrote:

"Poetic knowledge is born in the great silence
of scientific knowledge."

If you'll be patient with me I'd love to read a full poem
that Leroy cited in the book

"Appealing because he is Appaling"

titled "Man to Man Talk":

Hey you stop stop I'm right behind you

I'm Black like you my brother

Yeah the Black Kripple

Loot at me look at me

Hear this hear this

But let's go back born DOA, Dead On Arrival

Cause lack of oxygen to the brain

CP Cerebral Palsy POC Person Of Color

Big Black Football player, my dad

In the waiting room didn't like the doctor's news

Men in white suits pumping my chest,

eyes opened

Welcome to the living Leroy

My life Black and disabled
Home was stable Adults thought I was unable
Like a penny I have been
Flipped dual identities -
My two communities don't want me
Felt like I was homeless
My childhood haunts me
Children were ruthless
Racism & Ableism created a mask
I continue to see single Black mothers
with their disabled sons
Husbands gone could not deal
Mothers strong had to be real
Black disabled boys from broken homes
Lingering questions, did Dad leave because of me
Girlfriends not a reality
Women want my advice but can't see me as a mate
Black disabled men are in a stalemate
Will I die a single man?
But it's another cold night
The Isley Brothers singing Between the Sheets
While Black disabled men sleeping on the streets
Sex education came from the Lusty Lady
It's a lonely world
Self-employment, self love
putting society's attitudes on the shelf
Black sisters don't know what they are missing
She, a Black woman
Me, a Black disabled man
We were trained to fear,
compete and not talk to one another
Is this why all my intimate relationships

are with White women?

Race + Disability divided by sexuality =

uh uh

I was 3/5 of a person

With a disability I'm not even on the scale

Disability & Masculinity? Can we talk?

Black Masculinity has to make room for my body

Ask Teddy Pendergrass

The Black Stallion of the '70s & '80s

Regained his sexuality as a wheelchair user

Now that is the true strength of a man

Black Disabled and Masculine

Morris Day, What Time Is It?

Somebody Bring me a mirror Cause I know I'm fine

Masculine mixing with feminine

Like all of us I came from a woman and a man

My sexuality goes deeper than what you see

But you treat me

like Ralph Ellison's invisible man

Bumping up against our shadows

It took forty years to walk with my head up

Saying Black is beautiful and

Disability is gorgeous

Too sexy for society's straight jacket

Wearing my sexuality on my sleeves

My body, mind and soul stepping into the spotlight

You see society tries to put me down

But you can't keep a good man down

This is a message to all my Black disabled brothers

Feel your masculinity and step into your sexuality

Brothers, it's time we ALL had a man-to-man talk

Again, this is Leroy's Poem: "Man-to-Man talk"

and it's from the anthology he participated in, in Ch.5
called "Appealing because he is Appalling"

Returning to the book
Black Disabled Art History 101 by Leroy
is a breath of fresh air
in a world that dichotomizes everything
especially those with disability,
while if you read "Appealing because he is Appalling"
- a book I can not recommend enough -
argues disability is not a demarcating line
but the demarcating line
which Western society uses to define its entire existence.
Separating normal from ab-normal,
the blessed from the accursed.
The intelligent from the incompetent,
the beautiful from the ugly,
the real human from the pseudo human.

It feels good to see people, such as
the recent grammy winner Toni Hickman
able to succeed without needing to narrate
the story of them as overcoming their disability.
As if the solution to solving systemic oppression
is for individuals to overcome
their racial, gender, sexual - or any form of identity -
opposed to destroying that very real system
which imposed the unjust
and unnatural hierarchy to begin with.

Nor does it make paraplegic and play-write
Lynn Manning a victim to their disability
instead it places disability where it belongs
as a diversified existence.

Speaking of diverse,

Leroy's book has more than a diverse catalog
divided into sections for Visual Art,
Musicians, Dancers, Actors and Actresses.

Black Disabled Art History 101

is both revolutionary and has something for everybody.

Thank you again and my name is Ottis Smith.