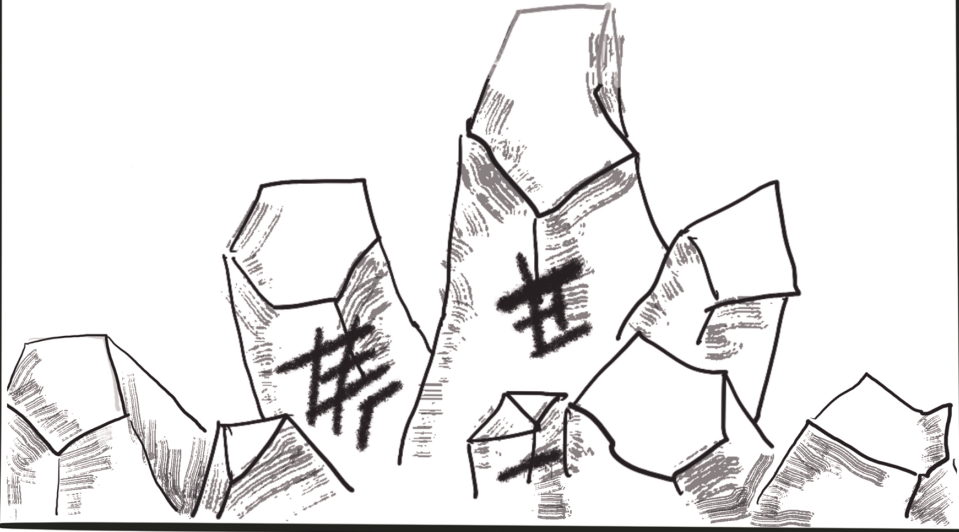




DRAWING INCLUSIONS

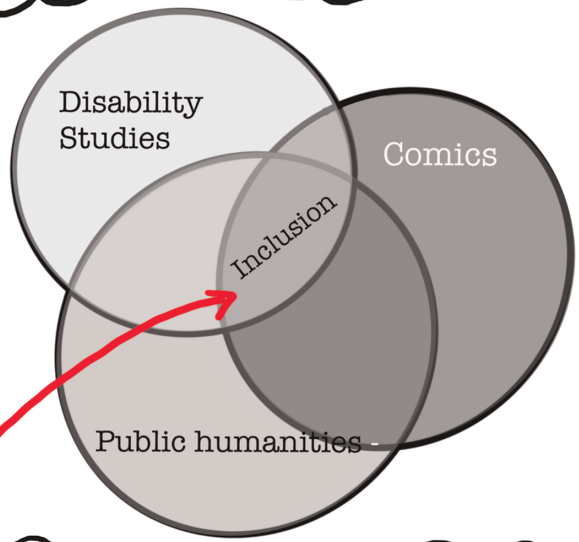
A COMIC ABOUT COMICS, DISABILITY STUDIES, AND PUBLIC HUMANITIES

BY RACHEL ADAMS





HMMM...NOW THAT I'VE LANDED MYSELF THIS ASSIGNMENT...
**WHAT DO COMICS AND DISABILITY
HAVE IN COMMON WITH PUBLIC
HUMANITIES?**
WELL, FOR ONE THING, THEY'RE ALL
INTERDISCIPLINARY FIELDS COMMITTED TO
BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE
AND BROADER AUDIENCES...



AND ALL THREE SHARE A CONCERN WITH VARIOUS
KINDS OF "INCLUSION"!

inclusion

/ɪnˈkloʊʒH(ə)n,ɪŋˈkloʊʒH(ə)n/

noun

noun: **inclusion**

- the action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure.
"federal legislation now mandates the inclusion of students who are English language learners"
 - a person or thing that is included within a larger group or structure.
plural noun: **inclusions**
"the exhibition features such inclusions as the study of the little girl"
- the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or intellectual disabilities and members of other minority groups.
"we value and promote diversity and inclusion in every aspect of our business"
- GEOLOGY**
a body or particle recognizably distinct from the substance in which it is embedded.

(I LOVE THIS MEANING BECAUSE IT EMPHASIZES HOW INCLUSION IS DIFFERENT FROM A CONCEPT LIKE "ASSIMILATION," A PROCESS WHERE AN UNFAMILIAR ENTITY BECOMES INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM ITS ENVIRONMENT)

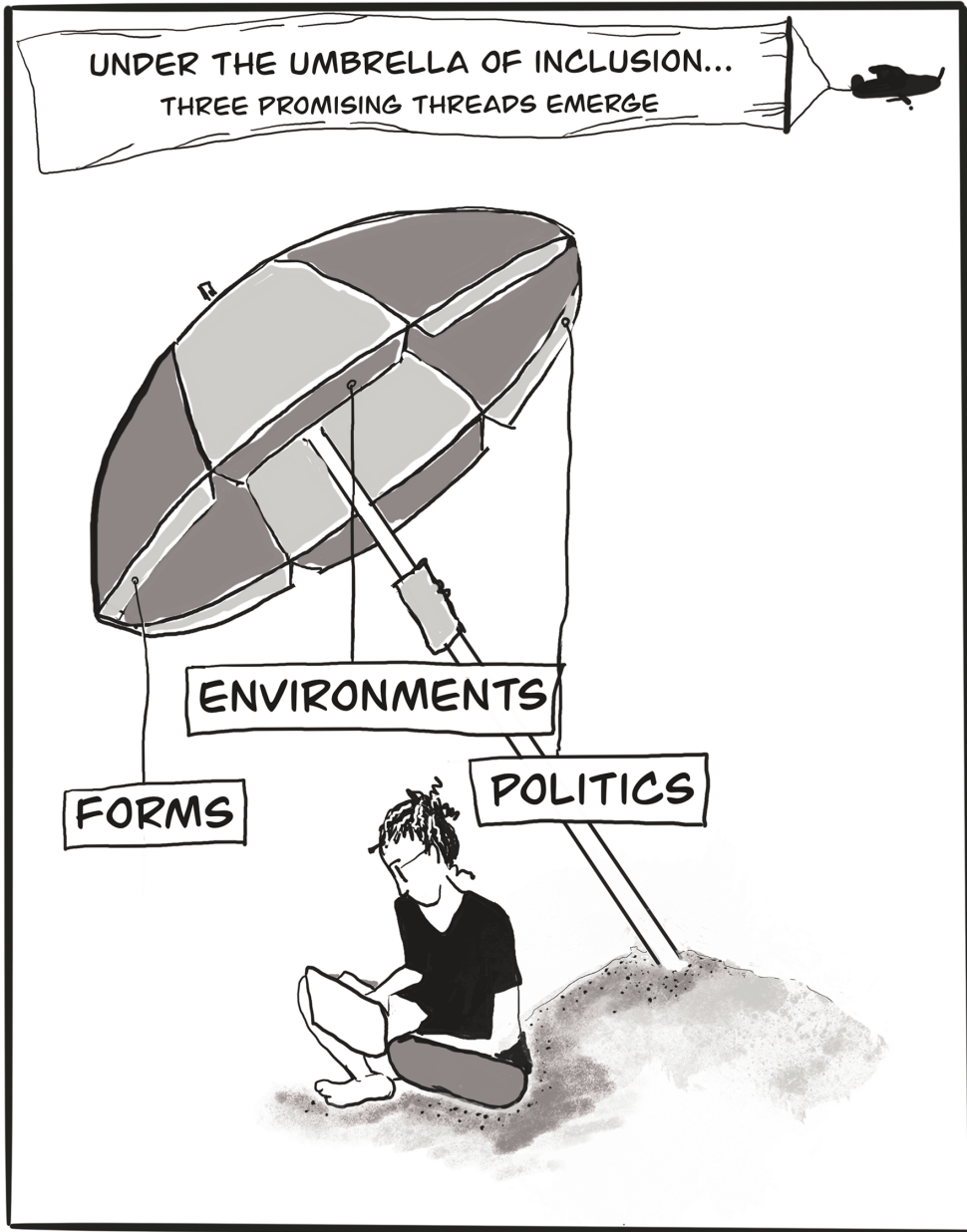
BORROWING FROM GEOLOGY, I'M LEANING IN TO THE IDEA OF EMBEDDED DIFFERENCES, CHANGED BY AND CHANGING THE ENVIRONMENTS THAT SURROUND THEM, WHILE MAINTAINING THEIR OWN PARTICULARITIES

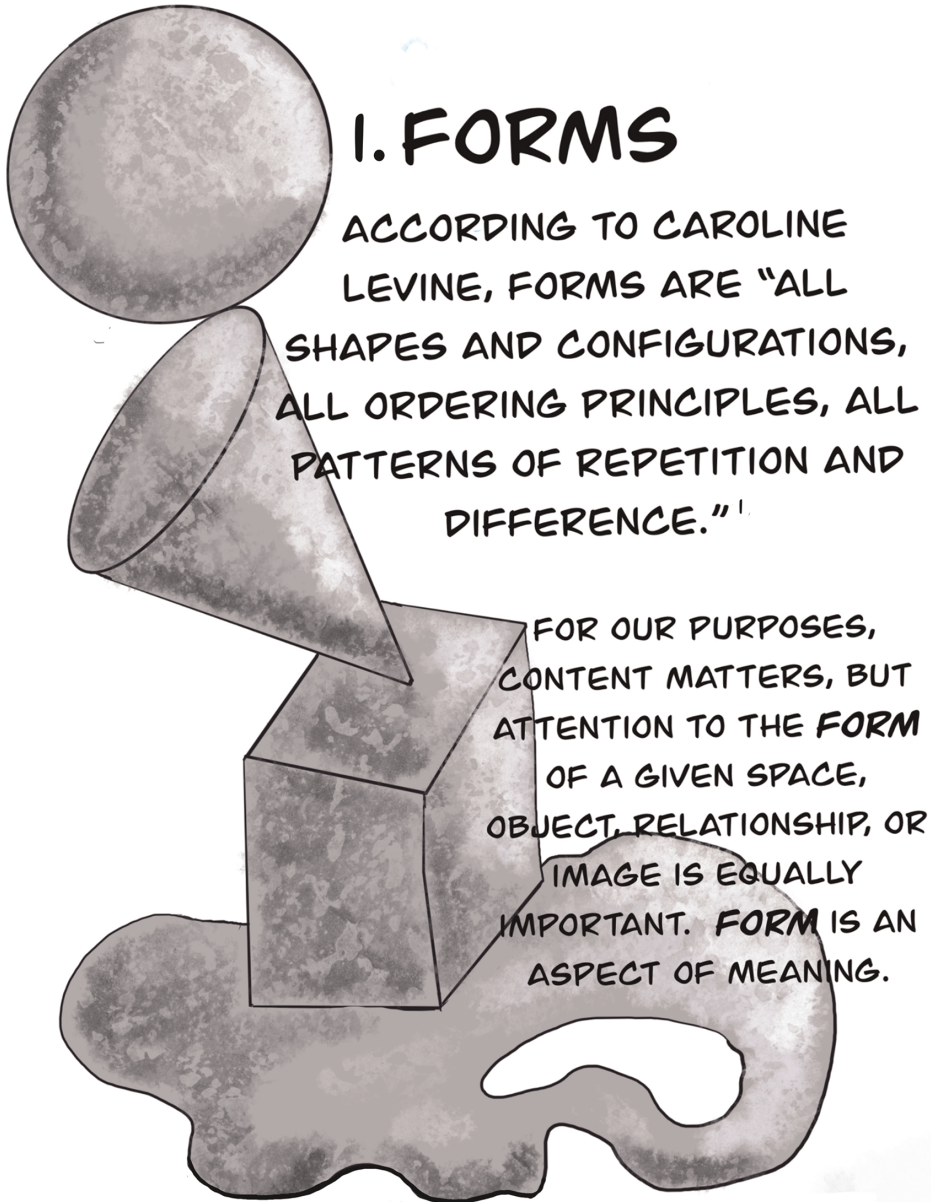
As with human differences, when it comes to gemstones sometimes an inclusion adds value, and sometimes it is considered a flaw!

* thanks to Victoria Rosver for this insight



4.





I. FORMS

ACCORDING TO CAROLINE LEVINE, FORMS ARE "ALL SHAPES AND CONFIGURATIONS, ALL ORDERING PRINCIPLES, ALL PATTERNS OF REPETITION AND DIFFERENCE."¹

FOR OUR PURPOSES, CONTENT MATTERS, BUT ATTENTION TO THE **FORM** OF A GIVEN SPACE, OBJECT, RELATIONSHIP, OR IMAGE IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT. **FORM** IS AN ASPECT OF MEANING.

1. *FORMS: WHOLE, RHYTHM, HIERARCHY, NETWORK* (PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2015) P. 3

ON INCLUSIVE FORMS

BY DESIGNING THIS PIECE AS A COMIC, I AM EXPERIMENTING WITH ACCESSIBLE FORMS!

FORM IS MUCH OF WHAT MAKES A COMIC A COMIC

- COMICS ARRANGE IMAGES IN A SEQUENCE TO TELL A STORY
- THEY OFTEN COMBINE WORDS AND IMAGES

•FRAMES AND BLANK SPACE ARE PART OF A COMIC'S MEANING

THE SIMPLICITY OF THESE FORMAL FEATURES, WHICH COMBINE DIFFERENT MODES OF REPRESENTATION, MAKE COMICS A HIGHLY ACCESSIBLE MEDIUM!

FORM IS CRUCIAL TO DISABILITY ACCESS...³

•CLOSED CAPTIONING MAKES FILM ACCESSIBLE TO DEAF VIEWERS!

•ELEVATOR BUTTONS THAT INCLUDE TACTILE SIGNS ARE ACCESSIBLE TO BLIND USERS!

•SIGNS THAT COMBINE WORDS AND IMAGES ALLOW FOR DIFFERENT KINDS OF LITERACY!

3. SEE AIMI HAMRAIE'S EXCELLENT BOOK, *BUILDING ACCESS: UNIVERSAL DESIGN AND THE POLITICS OF DISABILITY* (UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS, 2017).

FORM CAN MAKE THE HUMANITIES MORE (OR LESS) PUBLIC...

•MAKING ACCOMMODATIONS OVERLY DIFFICULT TO ARRANGE!

Request accommodations at least three weeks in advance by emailing noreply@exclusive.edu

Paperback	\$69.99
Hardback	\$180.00
eBook	\$62.99

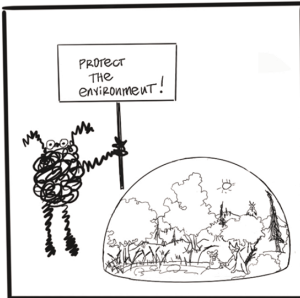
•BOOKS PRINTED IN TINY FONT AT UNAFFORDABLE PRICES!

•LECTURES WITH NO MIC OR VISUAL AIDS!

2. SOME GOOD SOURCES ON COMICS AND FORM: HILLARY CHUTE AND MARIANNE DEKOVEN, "INTRODUCTION: GRAPHIC NARRATIVE," *MFS MODERN FICTION STUDIES* 52.4 (WINTER 2006): 767-782; AND SCOTT MCCLLOUD, *UNDERSTANDING COMICS: THE INVISIBLE ART* (HARPER PERENNIAL, 1993).

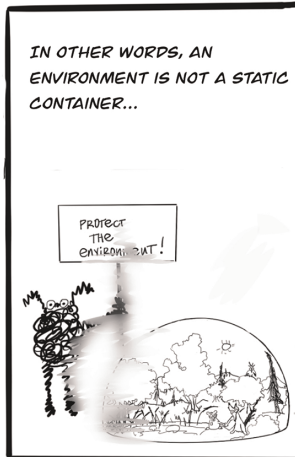
II. ENVIRONMENTS

"ENVIRONMENT" CAN MEAN MANY DIFFERENT THINGS!

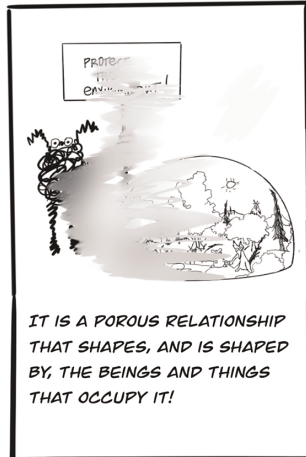


ETIENNE S. BENSON WRITES, AT ITS MOST BASIC, AN "ENVIRONMENT" REFERS TO "A MUTUALLY CONSTITUTIVE RELATION BETWEEN AN ENTITY AND THAT WHICH SURROUNDS IT."

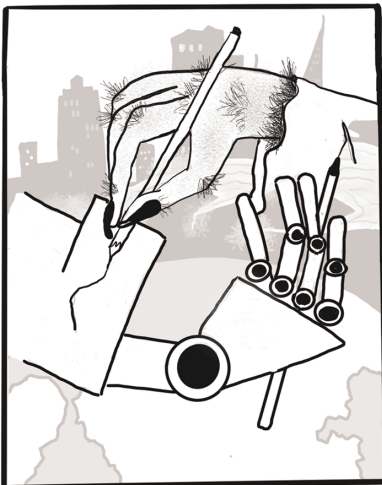
4



IN OTHER WORDS, AN ENVIRONMENT IS NOT A STATIC CONTAINER...



IT IS A POROUS RELATIONSHIP THAT SHAPES, AND IS SHAPED BY, THE BEINGS AND THINGS THAT OCCUPY IT!



AN ENVIRONMENT IS AN ASPECT OF MEANING. IT AFFECTS OUR ACCESS TO, AND PERCEPTION OF, A GIVEN EXPERIENCE, AS WELL AS THE RELATIONS AMONG ITS VARIOUS SUBSTITUENTS.



4. SURROUNDINGS: A HISTORY OF ENVIRONMENTS AND ENVIRONMENTALISMS (CHICAGO: UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS, 2020) P. 12.

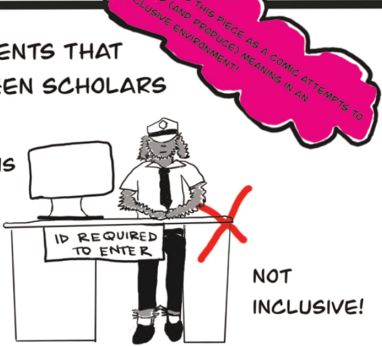
8.

ON INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

PUBLIC HUMANITIES SEEKS ENVIRONMENTS THAT ENABLE EQUITABLE EXCHANGE BETWEEN SCHOLARS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS...

- AN INCLUSIVE UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT IS FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC...
- AND MAKES USE OF PUBLIC SPACE IN SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES!


IT SHOULD ALSO FOLLOW BEST PRACTICES FOR DISABILITY INCLUSION...⁵



NOT INCLUSIVE!

DISABILITY STUDIES RECOGNIZES THAT ENVIRONMENTS, BUILT AND SOCIAL, CAN ENABLE (OR OBSTRUCT) INCLUSION OF DIVERSE BODYMINDS...⁶

•ACCORDING TO THE WHO, "A PERSON'S ENVIRONMENT HAS A HUGE EFFECT ON THE EXPERIENCE AND EXTENT OF DISABILITY. INACCESSIBLE ENVIRONMENTS CREATE BARRIERS THAT OFTEN HINDER FULL AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ON A FULL AND EQUAL BASIS WITH OTHERS."⁷



NOT INCLUSIVE!

COMICS CREATE AND THRIVE IN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS...⁸



•COMICS ARE INCLUSIVE BECAUSE THEY DON'T REQUIRE A SPECIALIZED ENVIRONMENT LIKE A LIBRARY OR MUSEUM!



•THE PRESENCE OF COMICS CAN MAKE AN ENVIRONMENT FEEL MORE INCLUSIVE!

As a kid, I loved the waiting room at my orthodontist's office because it was filled with comic books!



•THE ENVIRONMENTS WHERE COMICS FANS AND CREATORS GATHER TEND TO ATTRACT DIVERSE AUDIENCES AND ADAPT TO MEET THEIR NEEDS!

5. FOR ONE EXAMPLE, "ACCESSIBLE EVENTS GUIDE," WWW.OPWDP.NY.GOV/ACCESSIBLE-EVENTS-GUIDE

6. MARGARET PRICE FIRST USED THIS EXCELLENT TERM IN "THE BODYMIND PROBLEM AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF PAIN," *HYPATIA* 30.1 (WINTER 2015): 268-284.

7. WWW.WHO.INT/TEAMS/NONCOMMUNICABLE-DISEASES/SENSORY-FUNCTIONS-DISABILITY-AND-REHABILITATION/WORLD-REPORT-ON-DISABILITY

8. JEREMY DAUBER, *AMERICAN COMICS* (NORTON, 2021) AND JARED GARDNER, *COMICS AND THE HISTORY OF TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY STORYTELLING* (STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2012).

9.

III. POLITICS

BY MOST DEFINITIONS, **POLITICS** IS A STRUGGLE OVER RIGHTS AND RESOURCES. THE **POLITICS OF INCLUSION** IS CONCERNED WITH WHO CAN CLAIM MEMBERSHIP IN A GIVEN GROUP, AND WHAT THE TERMS OF ACCESS ARE.



ON INCLUSIVE POLITICS

SUSAN SMULYAN WRITES, "COLLABORATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE NEED TO BE AT THE CENTER" OF ALL PUBLIC HUMANITIES ENDEAVORS.⁹

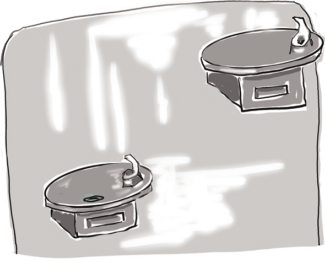
THIS COMIC IS INSPIRED BY THE POLITICS OF INCLUSION!

9. "WHY PUBLIC HUMANITIES?" DAEPALUS 151.3 (2022): 124.

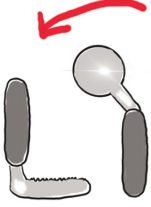
SOCIAL JUSTICE IS ALSO CENTRAL TO DISABILITY POLITICS THAT SEEK MORE THAN LEGALLY-MANDATED REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCESS AND ACCOMMODATION...

...TAKING THE CHALLENGE OF INCLUDING DISABLED BODYMINDS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO RETHINK ENVIRONMENTS, PRODUCTS, AND CULTURAL PRACTICES!¹⁰

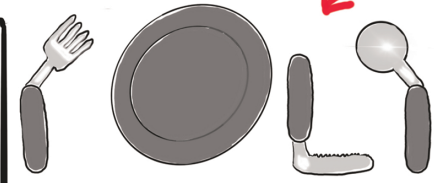
Separate water fountains are ADA-compliant, but they have a notorious history...



Font Cutlery Set by Hop Design Studio in Sydney, Australia can be custom 3D printed for individual users



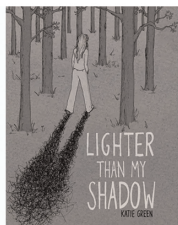
10. FOR MORE SEE SARA HENDREN, *WHAT CAN A BODY DO? HOW WE MEET THE BUILT WORLD* (NEW YORK, PENGUIN, 2020).



COMICS HAVE NO INHERENT POLITICS, BUT CAN BE READILY ADAPTED TO THE POLITICS OF INCLUSION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE!¹¹



Some of my favorites!



11. HILLARY CHUTE, *WHY COMICS?* (HARPER COLLIN'S, 2017); FREDERIK BYRN KOHLERT, "COMICS, FORM, AND ANARCHY," *SUBSTANCE* 46.2 (2017): 11-32; QIANA WHITTED, *EC COMICS: RACE, SHOCK, AND SOCIAL PROTEST* (RUTGERS UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2019).

11.



SO WHAT'S TO BE LEARNED FROM THIS INTERSECTION OF PUBLIC HUMANITIES WITH COMICS AND DISABILITY STUDIES?

I HAVE A FEW IDEAS:

THE HUMANITIES ARE UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO THINK CRITICALLY ABOUT THE FORMS AND ENVIRONMENTS WE CURRENTLY INHABIT, GENERATE IDEAS FOR CHANGE, AND COME UP WITH CREATIVE WAYS TO GET THERE.

1. WE NEED **FORMS** THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE TO DIVERSE BODYMINDS. COMICS IS MY STARTING PLACE, BUT THERE ARE OTHER ARTS AND MEDIA THAT TAKE ACCESS AS AN OCCASION TO ENGAGE MULTIPLE SENSORIA--TACTILE, AUDITORY, GUSTATORY, OLFACTORY--AND NEURODIVERSE COGNITIVE STYLES.

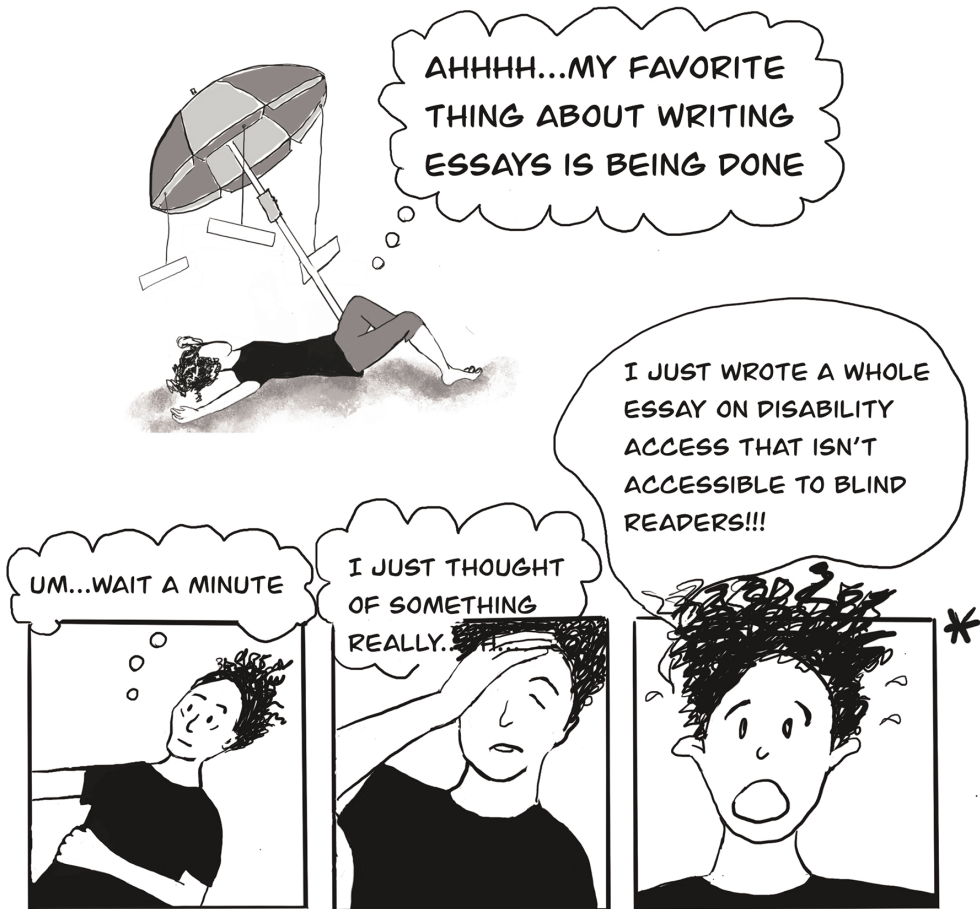
2. WE ALSO NEED **ENVIRONMENTS** THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE AND WELCOMING TO VARIED AUDIENCES. DISABILITY INCLUSION CAN BE A STARTING POINT FOR COMMITMENT TO UNIVERSAL ACCESS.

3. **FORMS** AND **ENVIRONMENTS** BECOME **POLITICAL** WHEN WE RECOGNIZE THEM AS ARENAS OF STRUGGLE OVER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

WE'RE NOT THERE YET! COMMITTING TO INCLUSION--THE VERSION THAT VALUES UNASSIMILABLE DIFFERENCE--IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMAGINE MORE CREATIVE, JUST, AND SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVES.



11. SEE TRICIA HERSEY, *REST IS RESISTANCE: A MANIFESTO* (LITTLE BROWN, 2022).



THIS ISN'T WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED, BUT I'VE EDITED FOR NARRATIVE EFFECT. IN TRUTH, MY FRIEND, THE DISABILITY STUDIES SCHOLAR JULIA MIELE RODAS, READ A DRAFT OF THIS ESSAY AND POINTED OUT THE PROBLEM. LUCKILY, SHE COULD ALSO DIRECT ME TO SOME WRITING ON THIS VERY TOPIC...

MY WORK IN DISABILITY STUDIES HAS TAUGHT ME TO TAKE THE CHALLENGES OF ACCESS AS A CHANCE TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW...

I STARTED TO READ UP ON RECENT DISCUSSIONS ABOUT COMICS AND ACCESS FOR BLIND READERS.

IT TURNS OUT THERE ARE NO EASY ANSWERS. AS A VISUAL MEDIUM, COMICS PRESENTS INHERENT OBSTACLES TO READERS WITH LOW VISION. BUT THOSE CHALLENGES ARE ALSO AN OPPORTUNITY TO THINK CREATIVELY ABOUT ACCESS.



MY SOLUTION WAS TO PROVIDE ALT-TEXT TO DESCRIBE THE IMAGES I HAD CREATED FOR BLIND READERS.

BY WRITING MY OWN ALT-TEXT, I CAN IDENTIFY THE ASPECTS OF AN IMAGE THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO WHAT I WANT TO COMMUNICATE.

I ALSO ADDED THIS CODA TO DRAW ATTENTION TO THE CHALLENGES OF ACCESS TO THE FORM I'VE CHOSEN.



READERS WHO WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ADAPTING COMICS FOR BLIND READERS CAN START WITH THE LIST BELOW.

GO TO THE END TO SEE A WRITTEN SCRIPT OF THE ENTIRE COMIC.

A FEW SOURCES ON COMICS AND BLIND READERS:

* YUE-TING SIU, NICK SOUSANIS, EMILY BETIKS, AND CHANCEY FLEET, "ACCESSIBLE COMICS FOR BLIND AND LOW VISION READERS," *JOURNAL OF LITERARY & CULTURAL DISABILITY STUDIES*, 18.3 (2024):309-329.

* NICK SOUSANIS AND EMILY BETIKS, "COMICS BEYOND SIGHT: A HIGHLY VISUAL CASE FOR BLIND ACCESS," *MIT TECHNOLOGY REVIEW* JULY/AUGUST 2023.

* RACHEL SARAH OSOLEN AND LEAH BROCHU, "CREATING AN AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCE: A STUDY IN COMIC BOOKS, ACCESSIBILITY, AND THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED READER," *THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INFORMATION, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION* 4.1 (JANUARY 2020).

IN THE SPIRIT OF INCLUSION...



THIS COMIC IS DEDICATED TO MY SON,
HENRY, WHOSE UNUSUAL HABITS OF BODY
AND MIND INSPIRE MY THINKING ABOUT
DISABILITY JUSTICE

RACHEL ADAMS

art by
Henry



THANKS TO JULIA MIELE ROPAS, VICTORIA ROSNER, SUSAN SQUIER, AND JEFF WILSON FOR HELP AND ENCOURAGEMENT WHILE WRITING THIS COMIC.

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- SUSAN SMULYAN. "WHY PUBLIC HUMANITIES?" *DAEDALUS* 151.3 (2022): 124-137.
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