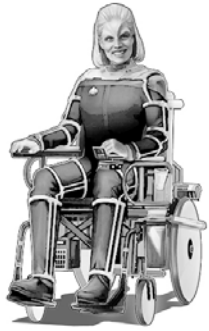
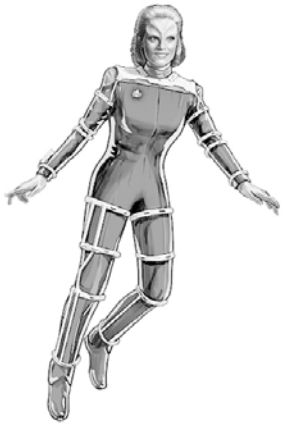
STAR TREK & DISABILITY

Part 2 - The Next Degeneration





Disability Action Research Kollective

Featuring work by **Richard Amm, Alexandra Morris, Melissa Parker, Red Hamilton Russell, Rhi Belle, Leslie Moon, Dai O Brien, Evan M. Greenberger & Grace Alice.**

This is a continuation of the previous zine Star Trek and Disability - Part 1 'The Trouble With Cripples', which has a formal introduction, a reading list and many more examples.

TOS S1E13 "Conscience of the King" - When watching a travelling Shakespeare theatre production, Dr Leighton begins to suspect that one of the actors, Anton Karidian, is Kodos, the executioner, previously thought dead. Kodos was a eugenicist who massacred thousands of people: those he thought less worthy of keeping alive during food shortages on the Tarsus IV earth colony. Kirk takes a romantic interest in Lenore, Anton's daughter, and when returning from a cocktail party, Leighton is killed. There are nine witnesses to the massacre, most of whom were killed or who have had attempts on their life in the time since the massacre. To try and test if Karidian is Kodos, he is asked to read one of Kodos's political speeches; he does this without reading the lines much but brushes this off by saying he is a good actor.

Riley, whose family was part of those massacred by Kodos when he was thirteen, overhears this and, during the group's performance of Hamlet, sneaks backstage with a phaser to kill him. Kirk catches Riley and prevents him from getting revenge. When Kodos admits who he is, he is defensive of his eugenicist mass killings, still believing it to be the right choice. It is discovered that Lenore is behind the more recent murders and murder attempts, has known about her father's past all along, and is proud of his decisions. Lenore attempts to shoot Kirk but Kodos is killed when he steps between them. Following her father's death, Lenore is shown as mad, going from crying to laughing and does not believe that her father is dead. This is a stereotypical portrayal of someone with a mental illness being violent and murderous. This could have been done better. Kodos has been living a pleasant life as an actor until his death and is still defensive of his previous actions, saying that history would view his actions as brave. Kodos does not seem to feel any remorse except for the fact that his daughter killed people for his protection. Not many of the survivors of the massacre were involved in the episode, and doing so would have given the possibility of seeking some form of restorative justice.

TOS S3E5 "Is There in Truth No Beauty?" - In this TOS episode, Dr. Miranda Jones is a blind character whose arc is not about overcoming her disability. She is, however, played by non-disabled actress, Diana Muldaur. In the course of the episode, the Enterprise acts as an escort for the Medusan ambassador Kollos to a rendezvous with a Medusan vessel, accompanied by Dr. Jones, a psychologist, and her assistant Larry Marvick. Her mission is to mind link with Kollos in the hope of allowing Starfleet to utilize the Medusan's unique senses and navigational abilities. The Medusans are a race so ugly that even the slightest glimpse drives most humanoid lifeforms insane, so protective visors are worn by the crew. Larry glimpses Kollos and is driven mad as a result, taking the Enterprise into uncharted space. In order to get home, Kollos's expertise is needed, so Spock mind melds with him, only to accidentally leave off his protective visor, necessitating Jones's telepathic treatment of him.

Viewers do not find out that Jones is blind until the halfway point of the episode, with Dr. McCoy stating to everyone that there was no reason to have informed everyone of her disability, especially without her consent, until she volunteered herself to pilot the ship. Jones wears a very attractive looking sensor web over her clothes which serves as assistive technology in navigating her environment. Dr. Jones's portrayal has a lot of positives for the 1960s: she is disabled, a woman, and a scientist who is portrayed as being competent at her job. Other characters do not treat her as lesser or incompetent even after they discover she is disabled, with her serving as a romantic interest for both Marvick and Kirk. Marvick's obsession with her ends up being his undoing, but none of the other characters expect her to have indulged him, and Kirk admires her from afar after she makes her lack of interest known. McCoy additionally respects her privacy as a disabled person. She is neither dead nor has her disability cured by the end of the episode, and her disability is one facet of her character arc, and not the entirety of her character.

It is interesting to note that in 1974, an amateur Star Trek fan club in San Francisco launched Project Communicator, a non-profit initiative

to bring the wonderment of Star Trek to blind audiences, through descriptive radio plays, and chose this episode as their first production. In 2024, Chunky Move Studios and Melbourne Fringe created a live performance based on Project Communicator for a live performance called “derelict in uncharted space” which is available on the Access Lab & Library Youtube channel @AccessLabAndLibrary.
https://chunkymove.com/events/derelict-in-uncharted-space/
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQ3Xd0_S7gI

TNG S4E10 “The Loss” - Deanna Troi, as one of the only empaths on the ship, loses access to her empathic senses, making her temporarily have an acquired disability. Despite the regrettable fix at the end of the episode, and some rather lazy comparisons to sight loss when discussing loss of an entirely fictional sense, this is a surprisingly subtle episode on the social response to acquired disability. The crew’s widespread discomfort with disability is plausibly excruciating; one of the best moments is Picard frantically pulling out the old “when people lose a sense the other senses compensate” myth and Troi sharply schooling him about the ubiquity of such myths for the comfort of abled people.

There are clear parallels with the experience of chronic illnesses that are difficult to diagnose and treat in Troi’s terror and frustration at not knowing what has happened to her and how it is likely to progress, and in the rest of the crew’s demands that she immediately adapts without being willing to acknowledge the impact of this ambiguity and her feelings of helplessness and loss of control. The discomfort amongst the rest of the crew that Troi clearly views herself as disabled for having lost a sense none of them have ever possessed is beautifully done.
It is common for Federation citizens to view themselves as perfected in a way that, while it is not precisely eugenicist, certainly shares characteristics with it. The realisation that one of their own crew has quite possibly been viewing them all as disabled people for all of her time aboard the Enterprise very clearly shocks many characters in a way they would also clearly prefer not to have to interrogate.

TNG S4E22 "Half a Life" - The Enterprise aids a scientist attempting to save his home planet from becoming slowly uninhabitable due to changes in their star. When his attempt is unsuccessful, it is revealed this was his last chance to do so because his society socially enforces suicide at the age of 60 with the precise rationale of "not being a burden to families" due to age-related disability and infirmity. This episode beautifully illustrates the overt and more insidious pressures eugenicist ideas put on both individuals and wider societies to discount and deny the contributions of people who do not fit a specific idea of "perfect" or "contributing" citizen. The blatant absurdity of the central premise - a person whose work is likely to save the planet in question from destruction being socially and legally coerced into suicide to prevent him burdening others with his uselessness - could have seemed a little too over the top. However, the underplayed, heartfelt performance of David Ogden Stiers as the quiet scientist driven by desperation to save his world, but eventually crumbling under the weight of social and emotional pressure into murdering himself, lifts it far above that. This episode brings the horror and the tragedy of his situation, and that of a society that may have condemned itself to destruction due to its ideological inflexibility even when its own survival was at stake, very viscerally to the viewer.

TNG S5E13 "Masterpiece Society" - The Masterpiece Society is two details shy of being a perfectly written Star Trek episode about disability. With the Enterprise tasked with evacuating a colony on Moab IV, it forces the crew to interact with its unambiguously eugenic society. Its citizens are selectively bred, genetically engineered and, to be frank, presented as far too utopian for my liking. Eugenicists don't tend to make very stable or efficient societies. Troi has an ongoing flirtation with one of these eugenicists, because of course she does; she's always been written to be as morally vacuous and intellectually incurious as Rick Berman ironically assumes all women to be. But the true fly in these eugenicists' ointment is Geordi LaForge, the Enterprise's resident disabled crewman. When it's discovered that the technology for Geordi's adaptive visor is the only thing that will avert a meteoric impact that would otherwise destroy this eugenic utopia, well, it's fair

to say they find this pretty embarrassing. Geordi himself comments that this solution would never have developed in such a genetically manicured society. It's a poetically just piece of irony, that the perspective of a disabled person and culture is what saves the day for a bunch of eugenicists. One of the elements that sour its brilliance is of course the lack of disabled voices in the production; neither the actor Levar Burton nor the filmmakers of the episode are disabled. Moral objections raised on our behalf by abled people are not what delivers true societal justice, and is also the likely origin of the second element I don't like here. What Geordi offers is the benefit of the technology, not the disabled person himself. It's a pretty typical abled perspective, to see disability as purely mechanical. I'd have much preferred if it was Geordi's insight, imagination and lived experience as a disabled man that literally and figuratively saved the day, not the technology that was developed for his disability. Because the consequences of his actions are thematically sublime. Once the colony realises their fate was averted by a disabled man, they can no longer agree how or where to relocate. Their carefully engineered social structure crumbles, and the sterile balance of their society is disrupted forever. There's no going back. Their ideology proved itself incorrect and can't be salvaged. Geordi tolerates their bullshit far longer than I ever would have, but after all, he is supposed to be a product of a far better society than the one I find myself in right now.

Geordi La Forge and Disability Pride - Geordi La Forge in Star Trek served as a personal introduction to me as a disabled teen. He was part of the limited world of disability representation in sci-fi, something like a good example. I have cerebral palsy, so our disabilities are very dissimilar. Still, as a disabled audience member, we often have to mesh ourselves in a little, sanding down the edges that don't quite "fit" or work. He was the first time I remember a character being proud to be disabled, just shrugging and saying, "This is me"—unapologetic and unbothered. As a disabled teen with no real-life adult disabled presence in my life, it felt revolutionary—it was. Yet, as I look back, a little uglier and a little wiser, I feel betrayed. It begs the question: not where it all went wrong, but was it ever right? The question, "Was it

ever right?" occurs because an original biography from 2007—which has since been taken down—notes that his "birth-blindness" was "overcome" by technology. In truth, there was always an ableism problem with his character; perhaps I just had to dig deeper, getting a little older and a little wiser about it. The notion that a lifelong disability can only be "overcome" through technological advancements while suggesting that experiencing painful treatments is better for the person than living with a pain-free disability is problematic. Further, it highlights the disturbing idea that "overcoming" a disability, despite experiencing pain, symbolises greater strength, intelligence or resilience. Also, the idea that being "happy" or finding "satisfaction with life" despite one's disability somehow makes a person special and further backs and reinforces these stereotypes. Moreover, it points out that a person's disability often becomes the primary lens through which their psychological development is considered. Ultimately, framing disability as a sign of more profound spiritual or psychological meaning doesn't serve disabled people; showing them as superhuman rather than as mere mortals only serves others, saving them from having to recognise the disabled as real, complex people with their own experiences and human struggles.

At the beginning of the series, Geordi tells Dr Crusher he doesn't want exploratory surgery because it would "affect how this works" [he indicates the VISOR], but he concedes to her point that, as she asks, "And you've felt pain all the years that you've worn this?" Yet the matter is quickly dropped. I interpret this in two ways: I see it as an acceptance of his disability and the pain that comes with some assistive technology, albeit in a shallow manner. But I also feel this is where it starts to feel as if his disability was grafted on. As someone who was born with a condition that means I live with a constant thrumming pain throughout my body, some days more wearing than others, I can tell you that it wears you out and wears you down—mentally, spiritually, and bodily. Yet Geordi doesn't show real signs of it; it doesn't mark or shape his movements or mood. I have two questions with hindsight: Why did Geordi choose to keep his VISOR when it caused him such significant pain? Why did Geordi decide to keep his VISOR even once

other types of technology existed until his hand was forced later? I've seen it said that disability is more of a non-issue for characters like Geordie because, with his VISOR, he can "see," but that is disturbingly false. Of course, it is. It is just that disability isn't engaged with or taken deeper, at least not often. However, one of the most critical scenes comes when Geordi becomes infected with a virus that acts like alcohol intoxication in "The Naked Now." When he speaks about his blindness, it can be interpreted in three ways—perhaps a combination of factors, given that people are complicated. Geordi isn't as accepting of his vision impairment as he seems; it was the virus talking, or he is expressing a natural truth for many disabled people—that we don't have to like our disabilities all the time; does the constant thrumming of pain sometimes wear me thin, of course. It is okay, human, to have moments of frustration. As he said during an exchange with Tasha Yar in the episode, "I want to see in shallow, dim, beautiful human ways." This sentiment is also emphasised in "Heart of Glory," where a Visual Acuity Transmitter links Geordi's VISOR to the main viewer, allowing Captain Picard to see as he sees. He feels no shame in it; it is his reality.

In "Masterpiece Society," Star Trek explores the issue of eugenics. No one, we're told, in this society would be born blind at the same time as trying to save the colony. Geordi works with their scientist, Hannah Bates, and one asks about his blindness: "I've never been embarrassed by this, Hannah. Never. I was born blind. I've always been this way." He points out that if he had been conceived in their world, he would have terminated. In one of his most important moments, he angrily asks, "Who gave them the right to decide whether or not I should be here? Whether or not I might have something to contribute?" Much like when he meets the Deaf mediator, Riva, in "Loud as a Whisper" and is asked if he resents being blind or using the VISOR, he responds in what is probably his most significant moment of disability pride, "No, since they're both part of me, and I really like who I am, there's no reason for me to resent either one." Later, while having his implants examined by Dr. Pulaski, he is presented with new options. Pulaski tells him it's possible to install optical devices that look like normal eyes and provide about the same visual range as the VISOR. After some back and

forth, Geordi seems to conclude that with “normal” vision, he would be “giving up a lot.” Geordi says all of the right things, and the writers have claimed that they always intended for him to show acceptance of his disability and be proud of it as a part of his identity, but you so often come up against the truth of it. He was, and is, the non-disabled person’s idea of what a disabled person ought to be — poised, clean, utterly fixable. When Commander La Forge meets “The Father of Warp Speed” in “Star Trek: First Contact,” his VISOR has been replaced by fully functioning cybernetic eyes. I have seen it argued that the fact that there was no discussion of his sight or new cybernetic eyes means that he is just the chief of engineering and not the “blind” chief of engineering, but that scrubs out and oversimplifies the disabled experience and implies something is wrong with that distinction.

The actor who portrayed Geordi noted his experience with the prop VISOR, stating that he campaigned to eliminate it: “It was time. Eighty percent of my vision was cut off when I wore that thing, and it physically hurt, which was one of the more important reasons I wanted to get out from underneath it.” This was the non-disabled actor’s experience, and I question the ableism at play in the phrasing “get out from underneath it.” In the same interview, Burton noted that not having the barrier of the prop VISOR improved his performance and the story: “It [The VISOR] So it became a barrier to storytelling, physically painful for me, and on a spiritual level, it’s really just a sin to cover an actor’s eyes.” He also noted that without the VISOR, actors related to him differently. They engaged him in a way they never had in previous scenes. I wonder about all of this—does he not sit with it and ponder that he had a real chance to understand the disabled experience in some small way, to confront it head-on and represent it on screen authentically, which is what disabled people need? Non-disabled actors shouldn’t be in disabled roles, but when they are, they are responsible for being respectful and fully understanding what they are representing. This leads to the next way Trek failed: the non-disabled refusal to acknowledge that some disabled people wouldn’t want to be cured or risk their assistive technology if given that option.

Perhaps the most damning thing is this event, which is canon: The eBook "The Insolence of Office" states that La Forge was ordered to replace his VISOR with ocular implants or risk being reassigned to a less sensitive post because his VISOR was viewed as a security threat. As someone who has been disabled since birth and who has an attachment to assistive technology I have used since childhood, I find the notion that someone could tell me to get rid of it, drastically altering my body in the process—all for the sake of a job or a higher purpose—appalling. It undercuts so much of Geordi's story—let's be clear, this is a morally reprehensible demand. Geordie stated, "They [the blindness and the VISOR] are both a part of me." It is akin to being asked to cut out a part of yourself. And, again, I think it was done for the convenience of the non-disabled people involved — a throwaway thing, and that should make every viewer sick to their stomach. I love Star Trek and Geordi La Forge, but I can't help but think that's chiefly because of what I projected onto him to fill in his blank spaces—it certainly had little to do with any insight or awareness on the part of those who created the show and other media.

Cripcoding Data - Star Trek's Data is widely recognised as being coded as neurodivergent as he is good at retaining information and solving complex calculations but struggles to interpret and express emotions. He deliberately studies and teaches himself "human" emotions, while his speech patterns, facial expressions, and body language remain distinct from other characters. He is also shown to hyperfixate on specific interests. Despite his logical and "mechanical" nature, Data is far from emotionless. He demonstrates care and empathy in his own ways, challenging misconceptions about neurodivergence and reinforcing that neurodivergent individuals experience emotions just as deeply, even if they express them differently. The Enterprise crew largely embraces Data, showing patience and compassion when explaining concepts he does not immediately grasp. However, those outside the crew often perceive him as an "outsider." The episode "Measure of a Man" provides an impactful commentary on self-determination and bodily autonomy—issues that, heartbreakingly, many neurodivergent individuals find relatable. In the episode,

Data's right to refuse a procedure is questioned based on whether he is "property" rather than a fully autonomous individual. Notably, it is Data himself who articulates the ethical and inhumane nature of the procedure. In the episode "Hide and Q", Data ultimately rejects the opportunity to become human, reinforcing the idea that neurodivergence does not require a "cure." He states that he has "never wanted to compound one illusion with another,"" essentially affirming that "becoming human" would mean losing himself and his true identity—despite having previously expressed a strong desire for it throughout earlier seasons. In Star Trek: Picard's third season, Data eventually undergoes a process which allows him to experience organic emotions and inhabit a more human-like body. However, this is framed as a personal choice for growth rather than a necessity, where Data learns to integrate his emotions while remaining true to himself. While some aspects of his portrayal lean into stereotypes, Data remains a character that generations of Star Trek fans deeply relate to, and his journey profoundly challenges misconceptions about neurodivergence, emotion, humanity, and self-worth.

DS9 S2E6 "Melora" - Melora's premise started as being a good one: writer Evan Carlos Somers who is a wheelchair user was tasked with doing an episode about a disabled character, who might become a recurring character. Particularly he wanted to respond to TNG's "Ethics" as being a horrific depiction of disability. However, when he presented his draft to the writer's room the episode was significantly rewritten. This resulted in the problematic version viewers saw, where the episode became about the DS9's main cast reacting to having to deal with a disabled character, rather than centring Melora's experiences in interacting with well meaning, but ignorantly ableist crewmembers. In the episode Melora, an Ensign who's a stellar cartographer comes to DS9 on assignment. She is portrayed by a nondisabled actress. Her race is from a lower gravity planet, necessitating her use of a wheelchair, and arm and leg braces. The inaccessibility of DS9 as a former Cardassian station is highlighted with Miles O'Brien installing ramps so Melora can navigate the station independently. Dr. Bashir is overly excited about having a disabled crewman and modifies her wheelchair

to improve it without asking, and takes on Melora as his new project: trying to find a cure for her condition, while simultaneously falling in love with her. Melora at first accepts his treatments, but upon learning she will never be able to go home/experience the lower gravity environment she's used to again, rejects them and decides she's fine as she is. The romantic subplot has been criticised by many, but Somers felt it important that a disabled character be seen in a romantic and sexual light. Melora also comes across as fiercely independent to the point where other characters find her difficult, and learns to begrudgingly accept help, admitting that she can't do everything by herself. However, this experience reflects somewhat accurately the experience of disabled people in society: we get used to doing everything ourselves because we become burnt out having to exist in an inaccessible society while having to repeatedly explain/correct things, and deal with unwanted help/ideas for cures offered usually without our consent, by well-meaning but ignorant nondisabled people who think they know better than us. In this way this episode, and how it was written is a reflection of the larger disabled experience.

DS9 S5E16 "Doctor Bashir, I Presume" - Dr Julian Bashir's estranged parents visit him at work and it is revealed they had him illegally genetically altered as a child to remove learning difficulties. This procedure has been banned for any reason other than repairing serious birth defects since the Eugenics wars to prevent another Khaaaan Noonien Singh. Serious birth defects are not defined in any way. Julian's father turns himself in to Starfleet for his crime to save Julian's career and is sent to a penal colony in New Zealand, which implies the Trek universe not only still has prisons, but that they exploit the prisoners for free labour. Julian says "All I knew was that I was a great disappointment to my parents". Julian's parents didn't just adjust him to be average, they adjusted him to be significantly better than standard humans, altering not just his cognitive functioning but improving his hand-eye coordination, stamina, vision, reflexes, weight and height. His dad also says there is no shame in genetic engineering, and that he doesn't see him as less human, but more human. There is a line about Julian being their legacy, and while they deny it, they

seem to have been motivated by shame, vanity, and status, especially as the father was an underachiever. Julian accuses his father of wanting to replace his own child instead of raising the "defective" one he was given. His dad says "What we did was save you from a mediocre life of underachievement" and his mom says they felt bad seeing him fall behind his peers and worried if it was their fault, perhaps from not being careful enough during the pregnancy or passing on a "genetic defect" without realising. Bashir's dad was embarrassed by having a son with learning difficulties, which implies this is a society where having a disabled child is a source of shame. Life is so bad, and the shame so unbearable, they would risk their child's life and their own imprisonment to "fix" their child. We see in other episodes like DS9 Chrysalis that insults like "stupid" are still used to demean non-disabled people by linking them with learning difficulties. This insult only makes sense in a world where productivity is linked to self-esteem. These attitudes reflect a dark social reality, as Trek is often presented as a utopia where all individual needs are met and people live to improve themselves. Apparently, life for people with learning difficulties is still significantly worse than their peers. Excluding and having prejudice towards variation within humans when the federation includes a significantly wider range of alien bodies and minds makes no sense. As the eugenicists supposedly lost the eugenics wars and genetic tinkering was banned, it is surprising that there are not more disabled people around in Trek and that disability is not less stigmatised.

DS9 S5E21 "Soldiers of the Empire" - In this episode, General Martok, has lost an eye in the Dominion War and also appears to have PTSD from his time spent in the Dominion camps. He refuses a replacement artificial eye implant offered to him by Dr. Bashir, who tells him to get one, or accept his disability, but it's heavily written as him being stubborn. This implies that Martok is not seen as capable unless he's restored to his full physical health, revealing a very ableist attitude from Bashir. However, Martok's refusal is interesting here, as it contrasts sharply with TNG's Worf's attitude towards being paralysed: he does not see the disability necessarily as a weakness, but as a badge of honour, whereas Worf felt his life was over even though both

injuries would theoretically make them “less efficient” in battle. This and Martok’s crew not treating him differently, reveals that Klingon attitudes towards physical disability are not as rigid/ableist as Worf made them out to be in TNG, and that Worf perhaps had a super conservative view of Klingon culture based on his limited experiences with it growing up on Earth. It makes sense for Klingon culture to be inclusive towards disability as they had back up organs and warrior culture, meaning injuries would be common and seen as badges of honour. Martok goes on to being “blind” about his own decision making and the morale of his crew who plan to mutiny. He is eventually helped by Worf to take command and overcome his fear. Being blind in one eye was used to symbolise his poor leadership decisions and lack of foresight. This directly links blindness with negative internal attributes. Script writer textbooks often say to add physical disability to evil characters to visually represent moral corruption. This is an ableist trope which reinforces prejudicial stereotypes in the minds of viewers. To the credit of this episode the facial difference element is not linked with evil, even while blindness is linked to other negative traits.

DS9 S7E10 “It’s Only a Paper Moon” - Nog’s arc and Aron Eisenberg’s realistic performance of psychological trauma in this episode have been praised by numerous war veterans and veteran’s groups as helping them get through their own trauma. This episode is also remembered by many fans as being one of the better episodes of Deep Space Nine. However, it is not without its flaws when it comes to disability portrayal. In this episode, Nog recovers from having his leg amputated as a result of injuries sustained in the Dominion War. He is released back to Deep Space Nine after spending time in rehab, but is still adjusting to not having his leg, and no one quite knows how to react, even Ezri Dax who is supposed to be DS9’s counsellor. Nog appears to be depressed, is still dependent on a cane, despite having a prosthetic, and has a psychosomatic limp, which Ezri, his friends, and family try to unsuccessfully wean him from. As a result of this well-meaning but unwanted interference by nondisabled people, Nog retreats to living full time in the holosuite with Vic Fontaine, the resident Frank Sinatra character. There he becomes less reliant on his cane, engaged in the

fantasy world, and his limp disappears: the holosuite provides the space he needed to work through his trauma. However, Nog doesn't want to leave until forced, and admits that he stays because the emotional trauma of his injury caused a fear of death. While this is a very good episode, it would have had more emotional impact if this arc had not been completely resolved in the frame of a single episode. Additionally, Ezri's and other nondisabled character's reactions of hurtful/harmful unwanted interference designed to get the disabled person back to "normal" are reflexive of the attitude many disabled people face in today's society. The original episode script called for Nog to lose both legs be legless for an extended period. This was watered down to him only losing one leg and already having a synthetic replacement before the episode began. Rick Berman was responsible for watering down this disability representation, similar to how he did with non-straight, non-white, and non-sexist representations.

Odo as cripcoding for autism - as he loves routine and finds social interaction difficult. He notices small details and is analytical. The reverting to his natural liquid state could be seen as masking during the day and being himself once he is alone.] When we first meet Odo, it Is obvious he's different. We find out over the course of the first two seasons of DS9 that he is a shape-shifter (the only known one of his kind), and that after experimented on to get him to express himself in a way the people around him could understand, he learned to imitate them to survive, albeit wholly artificially. This is a painfully familiar experience for autistic people, who often "mask" their real selves to survive in a society that is not designed for them, and where many people otherwise find them strange or off-putting. It is illuminating that when Odo discovers his people in the two-parter "The Search," and he finally starts to see his potential as his true self rather than his masked identity, it is treated as ominous.

Some of this is excusable as necessary for the plot, since his people are being set up as villains, but then disabled characteristics are often used as shorthand for villainy in fiction. Regardless, Odo finally finds people like himself, and those people show him ways of interacting with them

that are much more direct and come naturally to him – something that many autistic people have experienced when interacting with other neurodivergent people after a lifetime of social alienation. They show him that the same characteristics that isolated him could actually be superpowers when he learns how to use them properly. (It is also interesting that the term for them – "Changelings" – is shared with a medieval mythological creature that many believe pathologized autistic children.) The telling aspect, however, is that Odo's embrace of aspects of himself that are different is treated within the show as weird, or even dangerous. There is some reassurance that certain characters – namely Kira – eventually encourage Odo's exploration of self, but even then, his natural affinity for order (another common autistic trait) and connection with his own people are viewed as suspect. If Odo is autistic, and the Changelings are viewed through that lens, then the show's approach to them is troublingly ableist. Many other characters have similarly been cripcoded with neurodivergent traits including Spock, Data, Worf, Bashir, Tilly, Reno, Barclay and Seven of Nine.

VOY S1E9 "Emanations" - Harry Kim is accidentally transported to another dimension on an expedition to an asteroid full of alien corpses. His appearance causes disruption to a society that believes death transports people bodily to another dimension where they exist in perfect physical health. He meets a man whose family is heavily pressuring him into suicide due to acquired disability causing him chronic pain and limiting his ability to work "because they don't want to worry about him anymore". Harry draws out the man's actual wish to continue to live as a disabled person, and is able to switch places with him, disguised in his funeral shroud, so he can return home to Voyager and the man can escape to friends willing to care for him. This is an excellent portrayal of the kind of domestic and familial abuse that disabled people are all too often subject to for trying to safeguard their own lives, health and safety. The man's wife threatens Harry for even letting her husband express his discomfort to him, she tries to disrupt her husband from speaking to anyone other than the facility staff who shut down his discomfort with the situation with platitudes, and withdraws affection from her husband when he expresses doubts to

her. The fact that he has other people to whom he can go for care, but his family try to emotionally blackmail him into suicide nonetheless, makes it quite clear that the issue is about disablism and control rather than lack of capacity for care. It is notable that this episode does not cure or negate the man's disability; Harry simply provides cover for him to find his own life as a disabled person away from his abusive family.

VOY S2E23 "The Thaw" - Voyager discovers a planet recently recovering from a major ecological disaster, where five inhabitants are found in stasis pods. After discovering two are dead, Captain Janeway decides to revive the three remaining individuals, but they are trapped in a virtual reality controlled by a sadistic clown. B'Elanna Torres and Harry Kim volunteer to occupy the stasis pods and connect to the Clown's twisted simulation. The virtual environment was meant to create a utopia, but instead, it manifested their fears and became deadly. Torres strikes a deal with the Clown to negotiate freedom for the hostages. The Doctor intervenes when Kim is nearly hurt, offering the Clown a simulated brain in exchange for hostages, but the Clown refuses. As Torres shuts down the simulation, the Clown retaliates, killing one of the aliens. Janeway's holographic presence ultimately reveals the deception and helps dismantle the system, leading to the Clown's defeat and the hostages' liberation. In addition to the Clown, they meet a woman called "The Little Woman" in the credits. There has been a long harmful history of people with dwarfism being seen as lesser or there for the entertainment of others, and this episode plays cruelly into that stereotype. Verne Troyer, who played Mini Me in Austin Powers, has spoken out against treating people with dwarfism like they're oddities or circus freaks like the character in this episode: "We can do anything you can do. Don't look at us like we're circus people or people you make fun of…." The Little Woman was one of the Clown's creations in the virtual reality program. She was the first of the characters except the Clown to react to Ensign Harry Kim and Lieutenant J.G. B'Elanna Torres' existence in the program. She later participated in the Clown's torture of his "guests." Further, it plays into the trope that all disabled people face: the notion that disability signals or implies evil.

VOY S5E3 "Extreme Risk" - In this episode, B'Elanna Torres exhibits the common signs of depression when the Malons attempt to seize Voyager's probe. Voyager works out how to safely retrieve it, deciding on building a new shuttle. B'Elanna arrives unusually late to a meeting and sits passively in contrast to her usual self, only providing short answers when asked for her opinion. As Paris enthusiastically describes his dream of building the Delta Flyer, and asks if she will help him construct the shuttle, she appears lost in thought and nods in agreement, lacking her usual enthusiasm. Janeway notices this change in response and appears confused and concerned about her chief engineer's disinterest. Later, Seven criticises B'Elanna's designs, and unexpectedly, Torres does not defend her work—an action that raises further concern among her colleagues. Following their discussion, B'Elanna retreats to the holodeck to engage in extreme patty-cake with Cardassian thugs. Afterwards B'Elanna seeks comfort food in the form of banana pancakes, which she now finds unappetising. Unable to determine whether the projected microfractures in the Delta Flyer pose a fatal flaw in the design, Torres tests the shuttle on the holodeck with the safety protocols turned off, resulting in severe injury.

After the incident, Janeway confronts her, revealing that the doctor found evidence of old injuries. The captain questions whether B'Elanna had purposely turned off the safety protocols and permits Chakotay to investigate B'Elanna's holodeck activities. He takes her into one of her programs demanding, "Why are you intentionally trying to hurt yourself?" B'Elanna replies, "I'm not trying to kill myself- I'm trying to see if I'm still alive," stating she feels nothing, even in situations that should evoke strong emotions.The hidden nature of depression often prevents others from understanding the debilitating impact of the condition on the person experiencing it. While Torres is capable of continuing her duties as chief engineer, a major depressive episode could severely hinder someone's ability to work, and depression often requires extensive treatment. However, by the end of the episode, B'Elanna returns to her banana pancakes.

VOY S6E14 "Memorial" - In this episode, Chakotay, Paris, Kim and Neelix begin experiencing strange visions after returning to Voyager following a two-week planet-scanning mission. On board, they all start to remember being involved in a military operation where eighty-two civilians were killed, and the bodies were vaporised to cover up the massacre. They all show symptoms which meet the criteria for PTSD. Paris and Chakotay relive the battle in their dreams. Kim has an anxiety attack during routine maintenance. Neelix experiences auditory hallucinations, which prompts him to hold Naomi Wildman behind the mess hall counter because he believes they are still under attack. Chakotay confesses that he has been dreaming of fighting in an alien war, the same one as Neelix. As the PTSD symptoms spread to the crew of the entire ship, The Doctor administers a neural suppressant to Captain Janeway, which prevents her from experiencing the memories while she is trying to find a solution. Even though the episode provides a compelling depiction of the symptoms of PTSD, it turns out that the crew had no experience in the battle which they never took part in.

On the surface of Tarakis, the crew finds the source of their wartime memories in a large monument. Ultimately, it is a memorial to those who died and a warning about the cruelty of war. Even though the alien device is the source of the memories, rather than physical trauma, the symptoms of the voyager crew experience meet the criteria for a PTSD diagnosis. Once again, like other episodes of Star Trek, the episode does not end with an explanation of how the crew will deal with the memories, flashbacks or anxieties or if they will live with PTSD. Indeed, it seems as though the idea is dropped, and none of the crew suffer any long-term effects, which could itself be seen as a failure given that PTSD requires a great deal of time and potential medications and therapy to be treated. It is not something that can be so effortlessly overcome.

ENT 2E14 "Stigma" - The storyline begins earlier in "Fusion." In this episode, T'Pol, the Vulcan science officer and subcommander, mind-melds with Tolaris, one of the V'tosh ka'tur ("Vulcans without logic"). Through this traumatic mind-meld, she becomes infected with a fatal disease called Pa'nar Syndrome. In the later episode, "Stigma", Dr. Phlox

informs her that her Pa'nar Syndrome is no longer responding to his treatment. He faces difficulty obtaining research findings from Vulcan scientists due to the stigma surrounding the illness. There are parallels that can be made between this fictional syndrome and the AIDS crisis, which was also hidden and deeply stigmatised. However, one of the younger physicians, Dr. Yuris, provides T'Pol with the research Dr. Phlox sought. Dr. Yuris confides in T'Pol that he is a member of the minority capable of mind-melding, prompting her to recount her experience and request that he keep it confidential. Yet, Dr. Yuris later breaks his promise to defend her at a medical hearing, revealing that she did not consent to the mind-meld. He states that the mind-meld was performed against her will.

Throughout history, sexually transmitted diseases have often been met with harsh societal reactions. The Pa'nar Syndrome storyline starkly illustrates how society frequently lacks compassion and tends to moralise, echoing moments from the AIDS crisis when the disease was reduced to an issue solely affecting homosexuals, prompting concealment by both society and the scientific community. In the last season of Enterprise, T'Pol is eventually cured of Pa'nar Syndrome by mind-melding with T'Pau in the episode "Kir'Shara." During a conversation in which T'Pol is told that there is no cure for the syndrome, T'Pau counters, saying that this is a lie perpetuated by the High Command. In addition to the stigma surrounding sexuality and intimate acts, the Vulcans' initial reluctance in "Stigma" reflects how disabled patients often report feeling they receive lesser healthcare due to prevailing stigmas surrounding disability.

SNW S1E8 The Elysian Kingdom" Rukyia - Rukyia is an unfortunately stereotyped and underdeveloped chronically ill character. We first learn about her in the episode "Ghosts of Ilyria" which deals with the Ilyrians, a race that actively embraced eugenics. We learn that she has an incurable fatal disease that her father is desperately researching in an attempt to save her. Rukyia's story serves as the B plot in that it is her father Dr. M'Benga keeping her in stasis in a transporter pattern buffer that allows a nearly deadly plague to infect the ship. Other than brief

check ins with her character, we do not see Rukyia again in a substantial way until the episode the Elysian Kingdom, where the Enterprise comes across a sentient nebula who senses she is lonely and brings her favourite fantasy story to life by transforming the ship and its crew into the universe of the book in an attempt to cheer her up. Rather than viewing this alien presence as a threat or being at all suspicious of its motives, Dr. M'Benga, when it says it can cure Rukyia allows Rukyia to meld with the alien presence, even after he learns that this means that she cannot ever again live as a regular human, nor ever leave the nebula. This is odd given that she can remain in the buffer indefinitely until a cure is found. Rukyia's entire character arc here serves as a missed opportunity, as it ties directly into the stereotype of needing to cure disability. It also reflects the downwards trend of more nuanced and positive depictions of disability to more negative and stereotyped ones throughout the history of the Star Trek franchise. Rukyia exists for the sole purpose of motivating her father, a nondisabled character. We also do not get much of a sense of Rukyia's personality until her final appearance on the show. More creative ways the writers could have taken her character include having her learn to live with her illness/ being in the pattern buffer for extended periods of time, or having her and her father accept her eventual death and learning to live with the time she had left.

Hemmer, Blind Engineer from Strange New Worlds - Lt. Hemmer, while portrayed by actor Bruce Horak, who is blind himself (a positive step compared to past blind characters in Star Trek), unfortunately checks nearly all the tropes for disability portrayal, and is representative of just how much disability portrayal has fallen since TOS. He is a blind character who is given additional telepathic abilities to make up for the blindness thereby fulfilling the "supercrip," disability trope. A "supercrip," is someone with a disability who is portrayed as an exception for overcoming their disability or is portrayed as being granted extrasensory perceptions or abilities to overcome or make up for their disability. Hemmer's entire arc as a character serves a narrative purpose for the education and character growth for the nondisabled Cadet Uhura. When that purpose is completed, he is

immediately killed off. Additionally, in the episode “Elysian Fields,” where he portrays the fictionalised character of Caster, that character too checks off tropes about portrayal of blind characters in film. The character of Caster is depicted as a blind wizard, thereby fulfilling the trope of a blind mystic with extra powers that make up for their blindness, in addition to also fulfilling the “supercrip,” trope again. Background wheelchair guy - There is a manual wheelchair user who has no speaking lines in the background of Star Trek Discovery. The actor received online harassment simply for existing in Trek. Many science fiction universes are eliminationist ones where disabled people no longer exist. Their non-existence is often how one knows it is the future. But this is a future written by non-disabled people, who are openly fantasizing about an oppressed minority being cleansed from society. This is especially strange because in a future filled with aliens, there will be species from vastly different gravities and environments, assistive technologies should be everywhere and their existence should be unremarkable. Trek has generally failed to represent authentic disabled experiences and futures, and having an actually disabled regular actor, even as an extra, is an achievement worth celebrating.

Aurellio in Discovery - In season three and four there is a wheelchair-using character who is a scientist. He is played by a disabled actor, Kenneth Mitchell, which is great, but he is an ally with a villain in S3 and helps build a bomb against federation orders in S4. He is said to have kids and a wife which is surprisingly progressive as most disabled people are desexualised in their portrayals but we never actually see them. He was also infantilised when he was talked to, especially by Osyraa, who even played music for him. They gave him some storylines unrelated to his disability which was great, but he didn’t change or grow as a character even after seeing that the person he was following was bad. His childlike innocence in believing Osyraa is good doesn’t transform into anything else even after he realises she is evil. He doesn’t meaningfully react to her being evil even after she strangles him. But he doesn’t die, isn’t cured, and isn’t sent to an asylum and everything about him isn’t about his disability, which is good and unusual. But most of his character was in the set up and there wasn’t

much of an ending or story for him.

“Curing” disabled characters - Several disabled characters in Trek experience miraculous cures. Captain Pike in TOS enters a psychic realm where he can walk again. Geordi in TNG gets artificial eyes. Data gets his emotion chip and becomes more human in various other ways. In DS9 Bashir tries to cure Sarina seemingly without her consent. In SNW the doctor’s daughter, Rukyia, has a chronic condition and is stored in the pattern buffer till her dad gives her away to an extra dimensional alien that he just met. DS9 establishes that the Federation routinely uses genetic manipulation to fix “birth defects”, which are never defined, and which is odd considering which side won the Eugenics Wars. Rutherford in LD is cured of needing his implant in the final episode. Most of these narratives are written without any input from disabled people. When disabled writers are involved the stories are markedly different. For example, Melora in DS9, rejected a gene therapy cure to keep access to her community and culture. In ENT, Emory Erickson dedicates his life to saving his son instead of curing his paralysis. In TNG, negotiator Riva lost his communication aids and instead of seeking a cure, teaches the two sides sign language as part of the peace process.

Cure focused narratives imply disabled lives are less desirable, suggesting that fulfilment is only possible if the disability is removed or fixed. Disability is positioned as a loose end, a problem to be solved, instead of a natural part of human (or sometimes alien) diversity. Many disabled people see their disabilities as central to their identities and experience. The framing of disability as a broken individual often ignores social and environmental barriers like lack of accessibility, discrimination and social exclusion. It shifts responsibility away from a society to accommodate and include disabled people and makes it an individual, rather than environmental problem. A good example of environmental accomodation is when in VOY when Tuvok goes blind and only has to say “Computer, activate tactile interface” to keep working at his job. That one line means that Tuvok is still the best person for the job, that sight is not a requirement to be in Starfleet,

and that tactile interfaces are standard on starships and everyone trains in them. This is great progress from TOS when Dr. Jones was told she could never fly a ship because of her being blind (or a woman?).

There are also passing references to entire societies where people are disabled but they are never visited in the series. This includes Gamma Vertus 4 where everyone is mute, Thandos 5 where people do not have limbs, Riva's civilization where the ruling family is deaf, Solaris 5 would likely have peace based on sign language and that would likely have become a part of their culture. Endochronius 5, the one place with more than one disabled person that we have seen visited, has "The Farm" where disabled people are sent, seemingly without consent, to be cured or live out their lives in an institution. Curing disabled characters takes away from the already infinitesimally small amount of representation disabled people get on TV, as well as making stories and worldbuilding less interesting.

In space, nobody is ADA compliant - Most of the federation ships do not even meet today's accessibility standards, with many having unnecessary steps everywhere from the bridge to the teleporters. This could range from the merely impractical to serious workplace safety violations, as ships shake, can fill with smoke, have inconsistent lighting and sometimes people have to move heavy things. But with the wide variety of planets of origin, gravities, atmospheres, limb configurations and sensory variation, step-free environments and assistive technology like wheelchairs should be commonplace in the standardized gravity of federation environments. The cetacean deck is flooded with water, a modified environment to accommodate dolphins to be crewmembers of federation ships, yet humans who need access accommodations are often encouraged to change their physical bodies to fit the pre-existing environment. Bodymind variation within humanity is not accommodated, even though this is a universe where the much wider variation in alien bodyminds is meant to be.

The environments in Trek have been stubbornly resistant to accessibility even though there have been numerous wheelchair-

using characters within Trek, such as Melora, Pike, Aurellio, Emory Erickson, and Mark Jameson. Many of them were extremely capable at their jobs, yet none of them could access the bridge on most ships, even for work which is mostly seated like being captain or operating a console. The ship in TOS has two steps down and one step up to get to the captain's chair. TNG has two steps up. DS9/Terok Nor Ops has three from the entrance, three from the teleporter pads and four to the central controls. The Defiant (DS9) has a single step to every single console on the bridge. Voyager has two turbolifts which separate two areas of consoles at different levels joined with a staircase, so a wheelchair user would presumably have to take a lift to another level and take another lift up to access the other side of the room in the bridge, while the captain's area is only accessible by a stairs between them. ENT has three steps down and then two steps back up again to get to the captain's chair. Discovery has a step up to the captain's chair and two down to the forward consoles. The La Sirena in Star Trek Picard, (while having a senior citizen as a captain) has a captain's chair with level access, consoles one step up or two down and a ladder is needed to access the rest of the ship. Beating every other ship for access, the USS Cerritos in Lower Decks, has all stations, the captain's chair and the turbolifts all accessible via ramps and there are no stairs. The only series brave enough to accommodate dolphins also accommodates wheelchair users on the bridge!

Impairment and actors - Roddenbury was asked by a journalist why Picard was bald, as surely by the 24th century there will have been a cure for male pattern baldness. Gene responded that no, because by the 24th century nobody will care. This was however after Roddenbury didn't want to give him the part because he was bald and had to be convinced, and made him wear a wig for his second audition, which thankfully did not continue into the series. While being bald has arguably become less stigmatising than it was in the 90s, it is still something that many feel pressure to address with medication, surgeries and wigs to avoid social judgement. James Doohan, who played Scotty on TOS, lost his right middle finger in World War II. While he masked it early on in the show through the use of hand doubles and

clever camera angles, by the time of some later episodes and the films, he felt comfortable enough with the impairment where it becomes visible on screen. Interestingly, he also chose not to use nonfunctional prosthetics to mask the limb difference, even though that was an option at the time. Jeri Ryan who played Seven Of Nine was unable to go to the bathroom in her costume because it took so long to get into and out of and so would avoid drinking water on set for long periods which led to health problems. Jonathon Frakes who played Riker had a back injury which led to his distinctive method for sitting down which included swinging a leg over the back of the chair. William Shatner who played Kirk in the original series eventually needed to use glasses in the later movies, this was explained away by his character having a rare syndrome which meant he couldn't have the cure for that which exists in the Trek universe. Similarly, LeVar Burton, who played Geordi specifically requested that he no longer use the VISOR when he came back for the films, as it was uncomfortable and he couldn't see well with it on. His character had previously repeatedly chosen to turn down alternative treatments and keep the VISOR.

Political economy, productivism and ableism - Star Trek is set in what appears to be a post-capitalist world, where any desire or need can be met quickly and easily through replicators and holodecks. It's shown in at least one episode of TNG that there is no need for people to work for their living, the crew of the star ships and members of Starfleet are all there because they want to be, rather than because they need work, or because they see joining the armed forces (because, let's not kid ourselves, that is what Starfleet is) as a way of learning a trade, etc. as happens now. The implication is that the honour and esteem of the uniform is enough in itself. There is barely ever any mention of salary, retirement funds, or disablement pensions for the poor redshirts in TOS. This all adds up to a suggestion that citizens of earth do not need to worry about their material needs. In such a post-scarcity post-capitalist world, where turbo-lifts work reliably, transporters offer instant and safe movement from one location to another, voice-activated technology abounds (but almost always with manual controls as well), and hologram technology is sufficiently developed

that it wouldn't take much to make fully interactive automatic signed language interpreter avatars, the lack of visibly disabled people and accessibility tech in the show is puzzling. We simply don't see any disabled people or their ways of navigating the world. Maybe the Terrans simply lack appreciation of diversity, but this doesn't seem to be the case. There are several Terran women in command roles in Trek. There's racial diversity within crews and relationships. Dax is effectively a trans character. There are cross-species love affairs, androids having sex, same-sex and polyamorous relationships and Riker being implied to engage in what amounts to VR sex on the holodeck. This begs the question of why Trek doesn't engage with disability in the same way. We simply never get enough of a view of civilian life on Earth outside Starfleet to make a judgement on what life is like for the regular Federation citizens. However, the hyper-selective process of getting into Starfleet academy suggests there are still ableist barriers to overcome to get to Starfleet and thus probably also in other areas of Federation life too. The extracurricular activities in the Academy are almost exclusively sporty – Parrises Squares, Velocity, wrestling, boxing to name but a few. There is a presumption therefore that the most valued bodyminds in the Federation are normative ones despite the implication that Terran society has developed to a point of post-scarcity.

How representations of POC changed over the series - Like disability, casting of diverse ethnicities did not continuously improve and seemed to go backwards at times. Racially diverse casting was deliberate on Rodenberry's account in TOS but this did not reliably continue into later incarnations of Star Trek. TNG had the opportunity to do better but its casting was almost entirely white. The only non-alien of colour as a main character is Worf, and the only other main character of colour is Geordi. Picard, Riker, Crusher, Wesley, and Yar, all white, plus in terms of non-humans Troi and Data both made to be white passing. DS9 and VOY were slightly better (DS9 POC who were nonalien were Sisko, Jake, Bashir, and VOY was Chakotay, and Kim, whereas with aliens on DS9 you had Worf, and VOY you had B'Elanna and Tuvok) but then it got worse with ENT again. On ENT you had Hoshi, and Mayweather but

both got less attention and stories than the white characters.

The frequency of disability representation has declined.
20% of the population of earth, in 2025, currently have disabilities.
11% of The Original Series features disability episodes (9/79 Episodes).
4% of The Next Generation features disability episodes (8/178)
2% of Deep Space 9 features disability episodes (4/176 Episodes)
4% of Voyager features disability episodes (7/172 Episodes)
2% of Enterprise features disability episodes (2/98 Episodes)

Why the quality of disability representation may have declined -
There has been an overall decline in the amount and quality of disabled representation in the Star Trek franchise over time. This may have happened for a variety of somewhat interconnected societal trends. Gene Roddenberry was the driving force for inclusion in the series and after he died, Rick Berman took over and may have been an active force in minimising portrayals of women, disability, minority ethnic groups and especially LGBTQ people. But disability representation decline is seen in the industry more generally and is not specific to just Star Trek. The most common theory is that AIDS campaigning replaced disability special episodes on TV in the 90s. Disability employment also has not improved since the 60s, with the industry becoming more competitive and beauty focused. Stock market crashes potentially made the TV industry take fewer risks, leading to a decline in disabled narratives and the hiring of fewer disabled actors.

The structure of the TV industry has changed in ways that make it less accessible. Writer's rooms are getting smaller and allotted time shorter. The five weeks allowed to the writing staff of TNG to develop a season would be considered glacial compared to the five days allowed to Tony Gilroy to develop an entire season of Andor, a modern sci-fi show, in 2020. Andor ultimately had 4 credited writers for its 12-episode run, compared to well over 20 credited writers for the 26 episodes of the third season of The Next Generation. Smaller writers' rooms mean fewer open seats for disabled writers, and less space to be found in the industry for them. It mustn't be overlooked either that the very

presence of a minority writer in a writing room does not guarantee that they accrue more authority and power over time. With single year contracts a writer cannot simply work their way up from staff writer to showrunner incrementally over time, and their contribution doesn't necessarily have more sway with more industry experience they have. In fact, the only chance a disabled writer would have to ensure their desired degree of disabled representation would be to become a showrunner, armed with their notorious veto power and control over the overarching narrative of a particular season. But industry changes alone aren't the only factor affecting disabled representation here. The format of television shows, and the way their stories are structured, have had notable effects as well.

Disability representation by the numbers - Representation is important, not just the quantity but the quality. Disabled people are eight times more likely than other minority groups to say that how they are represented in the media is inaccurate; in fact, many disabled people find existing depictions problematic and disempowering. Disabled people constantly rate improving representations in the media as a top priority yet little has been done to achieve this. Non-disabled people learn about disability primarily from the media, which frequently presents disabled people in negative ways. 43% of the British public claims not to know anyone disabled, and 67% admit to feeling uncomfortable talking to disabled people. 87% of disabled people said that the negative behaviour and attitudes of non-disabled people affect their daily lives. Disabled people are under-represented on television. Disabled people are 18% of the total population, yet only 8.3% of on-screen characters. A core issue in sustaining harmful portrayals of disabled people is that the industry not recognising and understanding disability as a civil rights issue in the same way as other minority groups.

Thank you for reading Star Trek and Disability Part 2 - The Next Degeneration. If you have not already please find Part 1 - The Trouble With Cripples as it has a formal introduction and a reading list as well as more examples.

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