

Faculti Summary

<https://faculti.net/colonising-disability/>

The speaker discusses their work which is motivated by personal, academic, and political factors, particularly stemming from their experiences as a British woman with disabilities. They explore the intersections of critical colonial history, race, gender, class, discrimination, and how these relate to disability—a topic they feel is often overlooked. The project began amidst political austerity in Britain, which heightened discrimination against disabled individuals.

The historical context of the British Empire is significant in shaping attitudes towards disability, influencing both how disabled individuals were perceived and how they engaged with empire. The speaker critiques paternalistic and "civilizing" discourses that often stripped disabled individuals of their agency, drawing parallels with similar narratives around indigenous and marginalized groups.

Examples include the education systems for the deaf and blind that emerged in the 19th century, which sometimes benefited individuals by creating communities, yet often imposed oppressive structures that limited their identities and languages, especially with the shift towards oralism over sign language in education due to eugenics and racial ideologies.

The relationship between race and disability is emphasized as complex and interlinked, with discussions around immigration laws in the late 19th to early 20th centuries showcasing how these identities were assessed in overlapping ways. The speaker argues that disability is not a marginal issue but central to understanding British and imperial history, encouraging a broader discourse that includes the experiences of disabled individuals in the shaping of societal structures and cultural narratives.