Code of the Freaks: Disability and the Post ADA World

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codeofthefreaks.com
Overview of Evening

I. Introduction to overall project (short trailer)

II. Concept and Framework

III. The film in context

IV. Discussion
Did you get a chance to watch the full film?

1. Yep.
2. Yep, watched it and loved it.
3. Nope.
4. Nope, but I’ll do it right after the talk.
I. Introduction to Project

- Disability and American Film Class (large gen ed lecture course at UIC)
- Susan Nussbaum and Salome Chasnoff’s “salons”
- Research and Community Engagement Phase
- Disability Culture *community* response to Hollywood representation
- Kickstarter campaign to complete film
- 13 interviews with activists, artist, and scholars
I. Introduction to the Project

Code of the Freaks Creative Team

Salome Chasnoff (director and producer)
Susan Nussbaum (writer and producer)
Alyson Patsavas (writer and producer)
Jerzy Rose (editor and producer)
Carrie Sandahl (writer and producer)

Cast
Lawrence Carter Long
Candace Coleman
Mike Ervin
Mat Fraser
TJ Gordon
Tsehaye Hebert
Tommy Heffron
Riva Lehrer
Tekki Lomnicki
Crom Saunders
Susan Nussbaum
Alyson Patsavas
Carrie Sandahl
Code of the Freaks (2020)
How does thinking about a movie impact your ability to enjoy it?

1. I agree with Susan Nussbaum, it enhances the enjoyment.
2. It totally destroys it. You have ruined movies with disability for me now.
3. It depends on the movie.
II. Concept and Framework

- Addresses stereotyping
- Highlights disability as a narrative device
- “It’s all the same movie”
- Captures varied responses to how films have functioned in the lives of actual disabled people
- Showcases disability community’s voice
How familiar are you with the ADA?

1. Expert
2. Some familiarity
3. I’ve heard of it, at least
4. What’s the ADA?
III. The Film in Context

- Code of the Freaks captures persistent stereotypes (that have not changed in the decade of the project’s life)
- ADA celebrations of progress set against realities of many disabled people’s lives
- Increased visibility of disabled people and ongoing conversation about disabled actors
- Intersections of racism and ableism, in particular, highlight disparities of progress
- “Lives Worth Living” and medical rationing
What role do you think films play in shaping understandings of disability?

1. It’s a bit of a stretch to connect film to real life
2. Some small role
3. Films play a crucial role in shaping how people view and treat disabled people
#BlackAutisticJoy in ADA 30

TJ Gordon recently wrote an article for the Disability Visibility Project
https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/2020/07/19/blackautisticjoy-in-ada-30/

“Thirty years after it was signed into law, the ADA is not the only answer to ending oppression among black autistics, Deaf, disabled, and neurodivergent people. The ADA must be more than a law that requires compliance and it should do more than provide access to employment, education, and basic needs.”

“We need to create cultural access to all important things in black communities, as well as physical and mental access.”

What role do projects like #BlackAutisticJoy and/or Code of the Freaks play in helping to create cultural access?
IV. Discussion

1) In what ways might a film about disability representations is necessary today?

2) What do you think *Code of the Freaks* can accomplish?

3) If *Code of the Freaks* is meant to start conversations, what types of conversations do you hope that it starts?

4) Other Questions?