

The graphic features a central dark blue circle containing the text 'UIC' in light blue. This circle is surrounded by a yellow ring, which is further enclosed by a red ring. Four thick lines radiate from the center: a yellow line extending to the top right, a red line extending to the bottom right, a yellow line extending to the bottom left, and a red line extending to the top left. The background is a solid light blue.

UIC

Alumni Exchange

**COLLEGE OF
APPLIED HEALTH
SCIENCES**

Code of the Freaks: Disability and the Post ADA World

Timotheus “TJ” Gordon

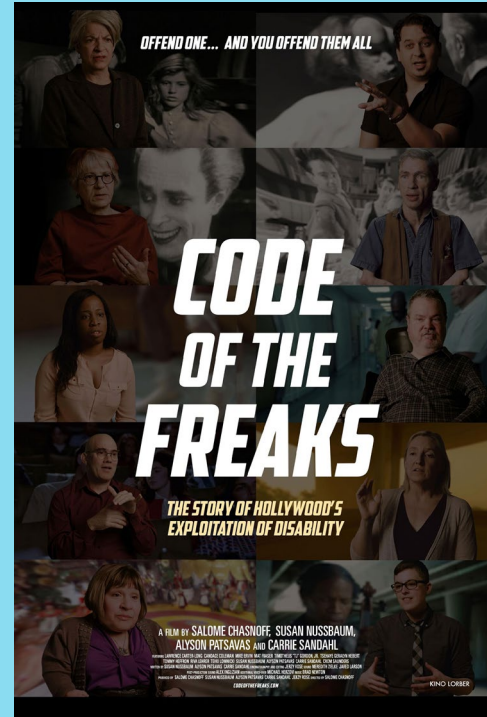
Writer, Researcher, and Activist
Co-founder of Chicagoland Disabled
People of Color Coalition and UIC
Alum

Alyson Patsavas

Assistant Professor Disability and
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Associate Professor Disability and
Human Development
Director of Bodies of Work



**DISABILITY AND
HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT
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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

Tsehayeb 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?