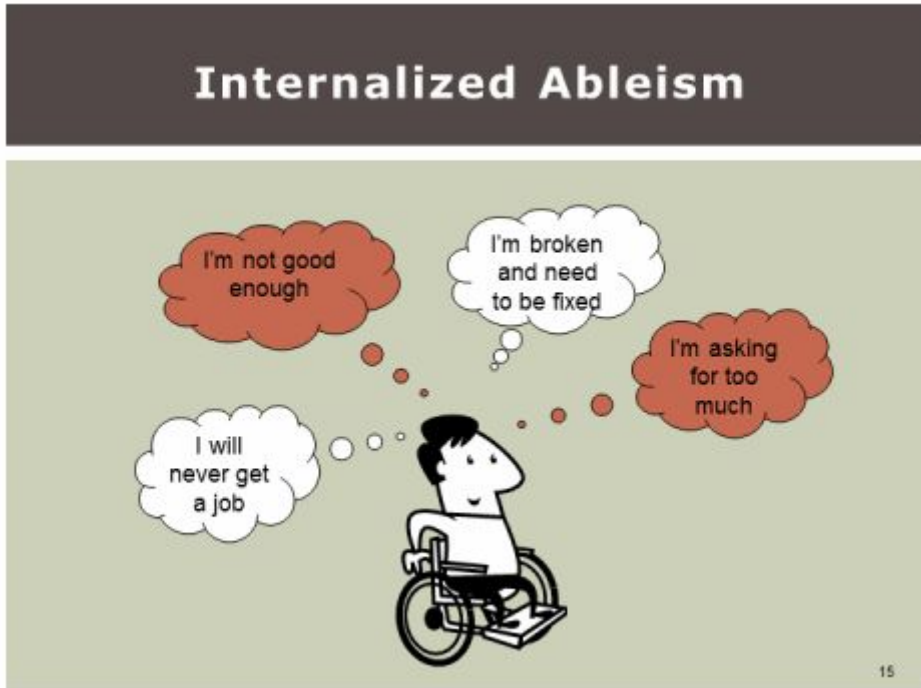


# CripStory

Maria R. Palacios

## The Other Side of Ableism



### **Internalized Ableism**

by Maria R. Palacios

Internalized ableism is

believing the lies we have been told about our bodies,

believing that nobody will love us or want us,

believing we are damaged

and broken

because others have said we are.

Internalized ableism is

negating ourselves the right to say no,

denying ourselves the right to say yes  
or saying yes when we should say no,  
or saying no when we should say yes  
because we've been made afraid to trust  
ourselves.

Internalized ableism is  
the thick extra layer of skin we grow  
in order to not get wounded  
by the voices that say we're imperfect, and worthless  
and undesirable.

It is staying silent  
to comments made without thinking  
or made while thinking it's ok  
because we believe them too.

Internalized ableism is  
allowing others to define our truths  
and explaining our bodies  
as an apology....as a mistake.

It is that little voice inside our heads  
negating things we want to yell out, but can't  
because our inner cripple is not yet liberated.

Internalized ableism is  
focusing on walking again,  
or seeing again,

or being able-bodied again while throwing away  
a perfectly livable life because we've been led to believe  
our lives as disabled people have no worth unless they're attached  
to an able-bodied goal, or an able-bodied dream.

Internalized ableism is  
refusing to see our lives as lovable and powerful  
and beautiful, and painting our disabled lives  
with an able-bodied brush.

Internalized ableism is  
being in a rush to prove ourselves as nondisabled  
and judging those whose disabilities can't be  
as well disguised, or whose bodies can't wear  
the outfits of "normality" disabled people must wear  
in order to fit in,

It is  
judging other disabled people for not working or for not living  
the able-bodied lies that push us to try to be  
"normal". Believing that if we can work, every disabled person can work,  
If we drive,  
every disabled person can drive.

Internalized ableism is  
wearing our invented able-bodied privilege  
as a badge of inspiration while justifying the oppression  
of others like us,

and enjoying the freedom given to us by the advocacy of crips who carry the burden of our shame.

Internalized ableism is  
not recognizing that independence  
is something many disabled people are still fighting for,  
or not recognizing when our rights are being wronged  
because, deep down, we are convinced  
others know better  
about what's good for us.

Internalized ableism is  
not being outraged about the invasion  
of our disabled lives,  
allowing able-bodied people  
to make choices for us....choices  
we are capable of making ourselves,  
choices  
we have the right to make.

Internalized ableism is  
believing that our bodies  
are incapable of pleasure,  
allowing others to define how we should define  
pleasure  
because many people believe  
broken bodies don't feel  
broken bodies don't give,

broken minds don't understand

Love,

intimacy

sensuality.

Internalized ableism is

denying our own sexuality,

or turning able-bodied lovers into heroes for sleeping with us

because sex with a disabled person is some sort of sacrifice,

something that deserves respect

or an Amen

because sex with a cripple is got to earn you some heaven brownie points

even at the risk of sin.

Internalized ableism is

body shaming,

crip shaming,

using disability as a bad word,

using disability as a double edge sword

that cuts deep into our own fears.

Internalized ableism is

holding back the tears

that would allow us to heal,

accepting other people's definition of beauty

and referring to our bodies

in a language not reflective of love.

It is  
not knowing how to love our differences,  
not recognizing our uniqueness  
as the one thing that makes us whole  
while believing that wholeness must always equal able-bodiedness,  
must always mean going back to pre-disabled form  
because that's the norm and nothing else will do. Otherwise  
we have  
no value, no purpose,  
no reason to live.

Internalized ableism is  
seeing disability as something  
we always have to overcome.

It is  
becoming passive witnesses to the struggles of others like us  
or saying that we've never been oppressed  
while saying "those people" even though we're one of them.

Internalized ableism is  
labeling each other,  
putting each other down,  
segregating ourselves into little groups that farther label us  
as we fail to recognize that, in the end,  
we, really, are  
fighting the same war.

Internalized ableism is  
pretending that the hierarchy of self-actualization  
is applicable to crips,  
forgetting that in the crip hierarchy of actualization  
access and inclusion  
are at the base of everything  
otherwise we cannot actually actualize our-selves  
no matter how hard we may try.

Internalized ableism is ignoring all that  
and judging other disabled people  
for nor forcing themselves into outfits of social acceptance  
not tailored for disabled bodies.

Internalized ableism is  
believing that we have to wear them any way  
because that way others can see us  
as one of them  
but only in our eyes  
because disability  
doesn't lie.

Our crip truths are always louder  
than what whatever words we use  
to disguise ourselves  
in the non-disabled world.

Internalized ableism is  
erroneously believing that the nondisabled world

is the only world that matters.

It is

sharing our stories from a position of pity

instead of power

and believing

that we have no power

and no voice.

Internalized ableism is

accepting the myth that if we need help,

we're helpless,

that if we can't move our bodies

we need somebody to live our lives for us,

accepting the lie that others know more than we do

about how to feel

even though we're the only ones who have exist

in our disabled bodies.

Internalized ableism is

feeding the lies

that portray our lives as pathetic

and empty of joy,

purposeless and void

of any value and any hope,

believing the shit we have been fed,

and turning away from the struggles of others

because we don't want



to see ourselves

there.

Internalized ableism is

believing that our mobility aids imprison us,

calling ourselves “wheelchair bound”, handicapped

and falling for the inspiration crap

that tells the world we are pitiful, needy, vulnerable and helpless

instead of the human potential that lives within all of us.

Internalized ableism is

accepting the medical model

as the model that defines our lives,

surrendering to the illusion

that inclusion

is something

that does not apply

to us, or something we do not

deserve.

Internalized ableism is

not making our access needs known

because they have been known

to inconvenience others.

So instead we accept half-ass access

or none at all, and do so while expressing gratitude

as if our rights were half-ass rights,

as if our needs were inferior

to the needs of others.

Internalized ableism is

letting other people raise our kids

because we've been convinced

that we don't have what it takes to be parents.

It is

believing

disabled people should not be parents,

or that disabled children should not be born.....thinking

that disability

always is the worst possible outcome,

the worst possible consequence,

the most painful

punishment—something we can't wish

on anyone.

Internalized ableism is

letting religious fanatics pray and prey over us,

and use our differences as scare tactic to explain

their version of God

as a punishing God

as a vengeful God.

Internalized ableism is

hiding our differences as much as we can,

concealing our scars,  
covering our “imperfections”,  
not being able to say “Disability Pride” with pride....  
not feeling offended by the use of the word *crip* by noncrips,  
allowing others to choose how to refer to us  
and what language to use when doing so.

Internalized ableism is  
only sharing  
able-bodied pictures of ourselves  
although we’ve been disabled for a while....  
Not wanting to be friends  
with other disabled people, reminding ourselves again  
that we’re not one of them, and believing that “those people”  
do have problems, but they’re not our problems  
to worry about because.....well....  
you know,  
as long as we internalize our fears,  
we can convince ourselves  
they won’t come true  
and live in our very own  
Dis-abledbodied world where we can hide  
our disabled side  
until the day when, hopefully,  
we realize that we have ALWAYS been  
whole  
that we have ALWAYS been worthy,

and we are finally able to see ourselves  
in the mirror of others whose bodies look like ours,  
whose lives reflect our lives  
and find beauty and hope and human potential  
instead of brokenness and fear and wasted humanity  
for only when we recognize each other's value, will our own humanity  
make itself evident to ourselves  
and to the world.

## Maria R. Palacios

Maria R. Palacios is a poet, author, disability advocate, spoken word performer, disability educator, workshop facilitator and professional presenter who uses the power of her words to empower and educate. Her work touches upon diversity, disability and sexuality, women's issues, empowerment and more. Maria is the author of several books including "Criptionary, Disability Humor & Satire" which offers education and awareness about disability issues through the power of humor. Through this blog, Maria hopes to offer an additional source of information and empowerment as she shares her personal experiences, stories, dreams, fears, confessions as well as powerful poetry, sexy crip thoughts and personal observations. Welcome to "CripStory" and have a nice read.

✎ July 6, 2017

Uncategorized

## 4 thoughts on “The Other Side of Ableism”

### 1. **msmarguerite**

July 7, 2017 at 4:18 am

Reblogged this on Ruby Pratka – Year of No Fear and commented:  
I will just leave this here.

### 2. **Tonia**

July 7, 2017 at 3:33 pm

I adore this poem so much. So much of it resonated with me. Thank you for writing it.

### 3. **Laurence**

August 20, 2017 at 1:30 pm

Very very powerful. Thank you!

## 1 Pingback

1. “The Other Side Of Ableism”: A Few Thoughts – #LowOnSpoons Week

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