

**Fuck
You
I'm
dyslexic**

An unedited zine by Maggie

Thanks to:

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Mama + Papa for loving and helping me even when I didn't understand.

My cats for cuddling with me as I wrote all this.

You for reading the whole thing!

Why am I writing a zine about dyslexia?

I'm asked about dyslexia a lot. "What is it like?"

I never know what to tell you. I was born dyslexic, this is the way I process information in the world around me, this is how I've always processed information in the world around me.

Have you ever had to explain how you learn (read, write, memorize)? How would you do it?

I have to do it in the context of you (you being learning normal (learning normal is the insufficient term I made up for this zine, as people without learning disabilities are so normalized there isn't a term for you)), and what I lack in comparison to you. I read slower (than you), I don't spell (as) well (as you).

Have you ever heard of any positive things that come with having a learning disability? Have you ever thought about what disadvantages you have (as a learning normal person)?

Why don't we ever discuss what we can do to better share our knowledge w/ learning disabled folks (Hint: Zines are not the answer as one must read them).

which begs the question: why am I writing a zine about dyslexia? Firstly I'm fucking sick of being too unsure of my knowledge to share it, and writing a zine seemed like a good exercise to get over that. Secondly I wanted to write something without having it be checked for spelling or grammar make all you'll learning normal kids read as is. Thirdly there is no discourse in the radical community about disabled oppressed and normally developed/learning normal privilege. (this zine is not only about dyslexia I realized while writing it, just mostly) and I wanted to create some dialogue about that and do not know of a way to do that without producing some sort of a body of text.

How do we make this
shit better?

I don't know, I'd love to hear your ideas! Here are three of mine:

* We need to make space for multiple disabled (learning, physical, developmental) persons' cacus' at convergences/summits/gatherings

* I wanna start a website where we have zines read out loud

* We need to respect each other's stories as much as we respect theory. I shared some of mine in this zine, I would love to hear yours.

If you would wanna help with the website, share some stories or ideas about fighting ableism and you don't have my number please email fightableism@gmail.com

And why would anyone think twice about it? Disabled folks are only thought of as disadvantaged people or burdens.

What we add to the world could just disappear in a generation. And it's bullshit that Einstein & Mozart are held up as the only examples of disabled folks who contributed to the world.

Everyone of us, even the non-genious' experience the world in a very different way than normal, what we put back out there is vital and unique.

I don't have a million examples of disabled contributions so I'll just stick with the one I know the best: Pato taught me what the word love means when I was 12 years old. That's a big fucking deal.

(after re-reading this I realize that saying all disabled kids would cease to exist is clearly wrong as not all parents would be able to afford family planning/programming)

My situation of privilege within this.

My experiences with dyslexia are completely unique to me, in a very large way because of my class and race privilege, as well as the fact that I'm not an recent immigrant to the US and English is my first language.

I come from an affluent community, the public school I went to as a child had the resources to notice my dyslexia early (they would not have noticed it nearly as early if I had been struggling to learn English), I had special classes where I was taught to compensate for it. That is an extremely rare situation and because of it I was able to handle college classes and graduate on time (college which I was able to attend because my parents could afford tuition).

I would like to point out that what privilege means in this instance is that I spent a huge amount of my young life training myself to make my brain work in a way it does not naturally.

What my affluent education meant is that I was conditioned well to compensate for a world that expresses and computes knowledge in a way that I still really do not/can not.

I am not disabled the world disables me.

Working definitions

There's a couple things I wanted to make sure you and I have the same understanding of.

Disabled- Mother fucking over arching umbrella term for folks who operate and interact differently with the world around them. I find it hard to define it any more than that as learning disabilities, developmental disabilities and physical disabilities are all extremely different from each other.

Dyslexia- A learning disability (LD) that makes memorizing details really fucking hard. ie the directions letters face, the order letters go in words, historical dates, phone numbers, people's names, etc. Dyslexia is another over arching term for folks, I have one friend who's dyslexic and the only sign of it is that she writes her T's like that sometimes, I have another friend who still can't really read and write (he's in his 20's).

Smart- Someone who pays attention to the world around them and reflects upon that experience. (what I really think sometimes: someone who can cite every argument

I was at a friend from high school's mother's funeral, and in the awkwardness talked to an acquaintance from high school for a while. We discussed queer politics, how the labor movement sucks these days, and then I brought up my biggest fear for our science future genetically pre-programmed babies. This father of a two year old explained to me that he would be relieved if he knew he wouldn't be burdened with a developmentally disabled kid.

The idea that kids are a commodity that parents can custom to their desires is disgusting. What will making it scientifically possible for parents to choose what their children are like mean for teenage rebellion? For queers? For (you guessed it) disabled folk?

Genetically creating babies is eugenics, pre-designed babies will mean disabled folks will not exist anymore. How many parents would choose to have a baby with downs syndrome when they could just shake up their DNA again and get a normally developed kid? Who would have a dyslexic kid when with a few key strokes they could get a learning normal one instead?

him just tell me he loved me, that I hadn't just said it back.

rant time!

And how do we, members of the radical community help families in these situations? There is not support for mothers at their sanities end in society or with us. There's child care at gatherings but what beyond that? We conversations do we have to discuss creating space to support mother's in our scene/movement/lives.

And where the fuck is the space for developmentally disabled people in our revolution? There isn't room for developmentally disabled folks in the heightened text and conversations that seem to always consume most of our political lives. There aren't radical alternatives or even add ons to programs that train developmentally disable folks for the work force. Where are the conversations about creating space for developmentally disabled people?

Let's start them!

They make, someone who does well in school without trying, someone who uses words I do not know in their everyday conversation).

stupid - Someone who does not try to understand the world around them. (what I really think sometimes: Someone who cannot score well on tests, or spell every word right, or remember their times tables).



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year on the last day of the school year we would go to a big park by the lake and picnic and sign each other's year books. I remember Pato was in one of his bad moods that day, I could barely get him to sign my book. when I left that day he was playing in the sand-box, I said bye and he said it back angrily without looking up.

The next day our resource room (special ed) teacher called me to let me know Pato had died.

Since he had suffocated, and his mom was in the hospital because she almost suffocated the news paper reported that there must have been a gas leak. The next day they had their facts straight, Mrs. Gonzales had wanted to kill herself but couldn't imagine leaving Pato behind without her to take care of him. So she drugged him unconscious and put a bag over his head before putting one over her's. Pato's father got home and successfully revived his wife but he couldn't save his son.

At the service they had for the public we were supposed to stand up and share memories or thoughts with everyone (if we wanted). His neighbor stood up and talked about how warm he was and how he would tell her with a smile that he loved her, and she would say it back. And I felt like the worst person in the world that I hadn't let

Story time 6th & 7th grade

I had a friend my first two years of middle school, his name was Pato Gonzales, he had Down syndrome. I knew him before we started 6th grade together, his mom and my mom worked at my elementary school, we got introduced on the playground after class in 5th grade.

I don't remember specifics of our relationship very well, I'm not sure if it's because it was too long ago, or that it was washed over by the awkward over tones it ate my pre-teen years, or if I didn't want to remember afterwards.

I remember feeling a need to look out for him at school, but I can't for the life of me remember what that actually meant. Grown ups in my life tell me I was sweet to him - but I don't remember that I remember him being sweet to me. He would tell me he loved me a lot, and I would tell him he didn't because I was 12 and I didn't know what that word meant.

I just now pulled out my seventh grade year book to see if it would jog my memory, and there his signature was right in the middle of my back cover. Every

I remember in kindergarden (Ms. Foxin's class) sitting in morning circle and reciting the times tables

And I knew the first few.

But then

I didn't know anymore

But everyone else just kept going

And I always felt so tiny

And going

or so huge

And going

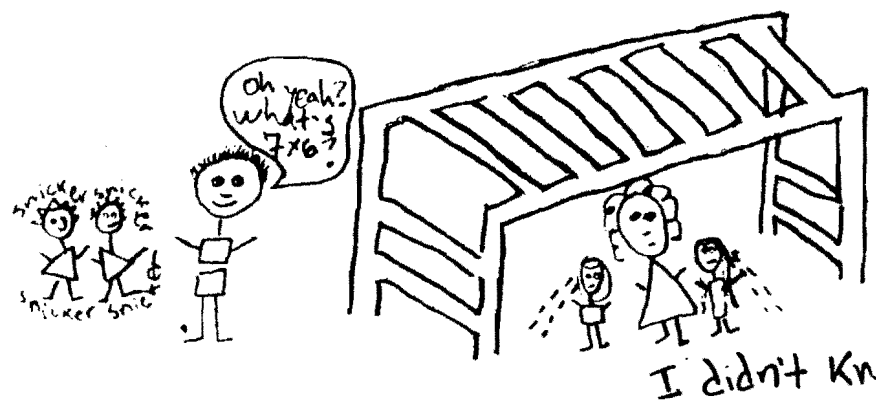
because everyone must have noticed

And going

And going

And going...

Story Time Recess 2nd grade



Daily Affirmations I am not stupid. I am not stupid. I am not stupid. I am not stupid. I am not stupid. I am not stupid. I am not stupid. I am not stupid. I am not stupid. I am not stupid. You are an asshole

You spacing out every now and then doesn't make you "Sooo A.D.D."

Switching two letters in one email one time doesn't make you "sooo dyslexic."

That is not your experience. That is not your identity.

Story time 2nd or 3rd grade Estes-Smith home

I remember you, Sarah Estes-Smith. I remember going over to your house, like I always did, but needing to do home work that time.

I remember hitting that word, and not being able to get around it, needing to know it. I remember being so horrified, not having my mom to ask, you being the only one there. I remember going onto the next sentence, and hitting another impossible word, and another at the next. I remember feeling scared rumbles in my tummy because I had to ask you, and then you'd know. Would you still be my best friend if you knew how stupid I was?

I remember you sitting right next to me on your bed and reading out every word I got caught on, sitting with me the whole story, even though you had finished your home work, even though I read so slow.

I love you Sarah Estes-Smith.

Story time/rant My collective when I'm 22

also learning disabled
A former housemate of mine wrote in blue tape across our cabinets "Food is a right not a privilege" (and seriously the "correct" way to spell that is stupid and nonsensical). A good friend of mine (who is not an asshole (mostly)) came over, and not only informed us (the second he saw it) how to "correctly" spell privilege, but wanted us to find said blue tape and change it right a way. When I expressed my belief that "correct spelling" is ableist, he retorted by saying he hated when activists (anarchists?) put out misspelled writing "because it makes us look stupid."

An inability to spell and punctuate is not synonymous with stupidity, and fuck all y'all for inferring that it is.

Fuck you more for thinking that it is.

Spelling is a social
construct in an obvious
and literal way!

So why do radicals
always feel it's OK to
point out when I mis-
spell something? →

Why is there only
one way to spell
everything?

because it's mostly kids bullshitting,
using the vocabulary to make state-
ments that may or may not be true,
just to participate in the dialogue.
As a female socialized person I
don't feel like I can say something
that's wrong in front of a lot of
people, as a dyslexic woman I straight
up won't, ever.

I don't want folks to stop
creating and participating in
something that so clearly gets so
many kids really excited. But when
I can't participate in most radical
discourse is this scene/revolutionary
movement mine? If I cannot
participate in such a huge part
of the shaping of it I don't
know if it can be.

to understand what the text is trying to say, then when I read the article/book I can decipher what it says. If no such cheat sheet exists I need to look up every word I don't know. My regular reading speed is half of yours, with all the compensating I have to do reading theory takes me at least 5 times longer than it takes you. would you do that to understand what all the smart kids are talking about?

Then when ya'll pit these great ideas against each other, you use the same inaccessible language. which I guess is the point, big words make the smallest ideas seem intelligent. I don't say that to insult you, I say that because once I crack the code and get to the ideas behind those words, I get it I understand it, but after putting that much work into understanding something, I don't care how cool the ideas are I'm gonna hate them.

I've had a few conversations with other female socialized folk about how a lot of the discourse that happens seems inapproachable to us,

Because it's "Just their thing"

I'm dyslexic

That's just my life

I've always loved history, I like stories, political drama, repeat instances of human nature, vintage clothing, every now and then understanding better some foundations of why things are the way they are, and such.

My sophomore year of college I took my history class (I went to a theatre conservatory where I took many classes on movement and writing exercises, but only had to take one class of each major academic subject). I took a class entitled Africa 1960's-present: age of revolution, in no small part because I wanted to be able to say age of revolution in my day to day life.

When I walked into class day one I was pleasantly surprised when I found one of my favorite theatre school kids was also taking that class, I sat next to Emily pulled out my notebook and got all excited.

The class turned out to be all lecture and very quick note taking. The professor didn't take attendance and only wanted to hear our voices when we asked clarifying questions (I understand that this is a lot of folks primary experience with the educational system, I however went to a hippie middle +

Language is powerful, the language that we choose creates the discourse that is available to ourselves and our peers. So when you choose language that is only accessible to a few select folks you are choosing to create an elitist discourse. And why do you, my anarchist peers, put so much effort into creating elitist discourse?

I know that it turns you on, I've seen it, it's cool. My dear friend Daniel described how amazing it is to have an idea or a collection of ideas and then find that one specialized word that describes your thought exactly. Sounds pretty rad.

But honestly, after a life time of getting excluded from discourses I don't really care how neat it is for you, I want to be part of a movement/scene/revolution that has space for me, and there is no space for me in theory drenched heightened language.

I can't get through theory, I had to do it in college and it hurt. To get through theory I have to read a cliff's notes or leyman's translation first

Lame
Does Not
Mean
uncool

Fuck you!
Stop using it as such!

high school, not to mention a small selective conservatory program where we had to talk to prove we could think intelligently about theatre. So I found this old school style of teaching jarring. We would be graded on three in-class essays only.

I got extended time on such things, but double time sometimes means you just get twice the time to agonize on the things you just don't know. An important thing to be able to do when studying any region/country/continent's revolutionary movements is the ability to remember names and dates and acronyms (most importantly acronyms), the entire continent of Africa (from 1960's-present) is no exception (in fact, I would argue, trying to cover that many country's revolutionary history uses that skill set more so).

I am very good at remembering how things are connected - what caused what to happen - but names dates and mother fucking acronyms never stick.

When Emily and I would study together she never understood which laws/brutality/state repression lead to which groups/movement/riots, so I spent the whole time explaining the big picture stuff to her with her plugging in the names and dates.

And since an understanding of events and relationships between movements and

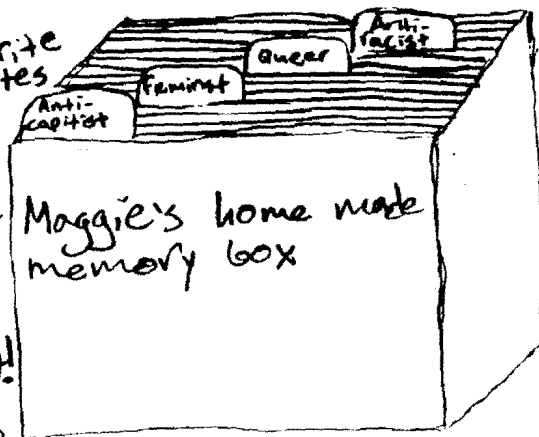
repression isn't easy to quantify I barely made a passing grade. Emily who easily memorizes passed with an A or a B (I don't remember).

My inability to memorize the details gets in the way of me participating in (radical) political discourse.

When discussing/debating/fighting with someone about politics I'm supposed to be able to cite instances/stats/theory/something to back me up, I can't just talk about what I think. The annoying part is when I try to source something I read I can't remember important variables author/date/name of what it's about/what the exact stat was, I don't forget all of these things but usefully forgetting just one is enough to get an eye roll and all attention turned to the other folks in the conversation.

On a number of occasions I have fantasized about creating a manual memory.

I could just write down all the good quotes and then catalogue them. And then when I wanna make my point I just flip to the right one, and ~~voila!~~ I can win an argument! ~~Kept it useful~~ probably take too long...



And you forced me to fight
Pushing my passion
Telling me I can change everything
You made a warrior of me
with my blazing ideals
and unrelenting tongue
I have guts of steel
They tell me now
And I do
But they come from my roots

And I want you to know
In case you didn't already
That I wouldn't have made it
Not at all
without you

You are my home
You are my family

It wasn't just impossible for me
to fall through the cracks, with
the support I received at ACS
I excelled at school, and learned I was
smart.
(I wrote this romantic prose a year ago
it's cheesy and emotionally honest)
An ode to ACS:

How do I start
to tell you
to explain to you
to thank you?

I can't

The things that should be so little
could only be
so big
I think of my friends
The folks I know now
Being numbers and grades
Spending all of high school never being seen
And all this time
I knew I was me

You wanted my energy
And required my noise
You pulled out my voice
Before I knew I had one
Taught me to write it down



It doesn't really matter who I'm talk-
ing to, or what I'm saying, my arguments
are only as good as my citation. I can't fight
the way you do, therefore I'm stupid.

Retarded
is not
an insult or
Synonyms with
Stupid.

Fuck you!
Fuck your abelist shit!

I was fortunate enough to go to the alternative middle/high school in my home town, the Alternative Community School or ACS (the year after I graduated they renamed it Lehman's Alternative Community School after our founding principal, so the kids call it LACS now) ACS was different in a lot of ways. We didn't have a gay straight alliance we had a queer straight alliance. We had all school meetings where the entire school population made decisions about how ACS would be run. We had no dances no sports teams (except an ultimate frisbee team for a year or two). But most importantly, for this zine anyways, the whole school 6-12 grade was under 300 people and we didn't have letter grades. Being a part of a community where I knew my teacher's and they knew me made high school not only bearable but often great. Being able to create my own final projects having math teachers help me with homework during lunch, having a resource room where I could always get help with my hardest classes.

Story time 5th grade

Mom's parked the car in our driveway, we've been having one of our classic screaming matches.

"I'm just stupid." I yell.

She responds telling me I'm not.

"Don't lie to me!" I know what reading group I'm in, I know I can't do math: stupid.

"You're not stupid." This is the first time anyone tells me I'm LD, this is the first time I hear dyslexic in reference to me.

You are not stupid

You are not stupid

You are not stupid

You are not stupid

she says

I don't know if I believe it.

Story time 2nd - 8th ish grade

My parents are academics. They met in grad school, where they both got MA's in Latin American history. My mom then got a teacher's certificate and supported my dad as he went on to get his PhD.

My dad got a job as the librarian in charge of Cornell universities Latin American collection. And I spent my whole life surrounded by solely academic adults.

I remember when I was in second grade and I counted out three more years of elementary school, it just seemed so impossible. I already spent my entire afternoons struggling to get through my homework and school was just going to get harder and harder, and then there was middle school and high school, and it just wasn't possible that I would make it. And my mom was already at her wit's end having to spend so many hours forcing me through my homework, and my dad just was so assumed that I needed him to spell the simplest words. They were going to hate me so much, there was no way they could love me after I flunked out of school. All the grown ups I knew were so good at school they got jobs where

they'd never have to leave it. So if I couldn't go to school I couldn't get a job or have a house or friends or family or be happy in anyway.

Why couldn't I just do it? Why couldn't I just read fast or remember my times tables or just spell any words I knew? I actually didn't know, since dyslexia is such a broad disability they didn't want the label to limit me. So I spent my formative years thinking I was stupid. And I just hated myself.

It just got worse as I got older, feeling ugly, being awkward, developing boobs and crushes. And just feeling always feeling like I was this rotten thing making everything so horrible. So I hate being in my skin, so I acted like a brat, so my parents got angry at me pretty much daily, so I was the rotten thing making my family horrible, so I acted like a brat etc etc etc.

And my life/thoughts/actions spiraled into the traditional middle class white girl depression that I still manage to fall back into sometimes. And white depression does run in my family I will always think of mine as a symptom of living in a system that I do



← Some jerk face laughed at me when I asked them to spell neighbor, and I got so mad that I turned into a werewolf and ate them.

Why is your privilege something
I have to conform to?
It's not, so stop acting like it is. IF I
were to say I don't respect folk's chosen
gender pronouns because biological
gender "is just my thing" or that they
pronouns were "my biggest pet peeve"
I hope you'd punch me in the face.

So watch out spelling fascists!
This disabled persyn's
fighting back!

Not fit into. Feeling worthless is
trying as hard as you can and still
not being able to do it, feeling worth-
less is being LD in this system.

People always say their biggest pet
peeve is: Bad Grammar

I never say my biggest pet peeve is:

Abelism

douche bags...

Why is it ok to police my spelling? why
is it ok to force this structure that is
not how I communicate on me?

Why do radical kids do this?

If I send you a text message, write on
your facebook wall, or send an email your
way why do you think it's ok to point
out my misspelled words, my improper
grammar, and mis-used words?

If you understood what I meant,
and you did understand what I
meant, then why?

I know I have had spelling been made
very clear to me since I was old enough
to write, I don't need every learning
normal kid I interact with to point it
out to me.

Why do you feel it's ok to be an
authority of how I communicate?

I have been learning spelling techniques
and rhyming rules since kindergarden. I have
been trying to learn this shit my whole
life- do you really think you saying some-
thing about my spelling now will change
it? I'm not lazy, I'm dyslexic.

Why do we all have to write the
same way?

Why can't my words be spelled differently
from yours? why are we so in favor of
the spelling convention that we can't
let folks deviate from it at all? why is a
peice of misspelled text so fucking
distrubing to you?