

Thank you for joining me today! This presentation will be a violation of what we expect from keynotes. What I mean by that is I will be asking more questions than offering answers or solutions. I believe sometimes the questions are more important than the answers and this may be one of those times. I am also going to be vulnerable and share that I am craving a conversation / interaction / engagement! As an immuno- compromised person with multiple disabilities who has literally and figuratively been home in quarantine for 3 plus years I am so lonely! So many of the conferences in our field are still considering meeting in person in states that had no precautions for COVID, is a reminder that I am still not welcome into those spaces. Thus I will offer some things I've been thinking about, reading, and considering and then I'd love to have a conversation!

Presenter statement

I'd like to share a presenter statement before I begin: I am Bianca Ivette Laureano Nieves De Jesus, my mother gave me her first name as my second and I am from the isla of Boriken also known as Puerto Rico from where I am displaced due to colonization and its violence. I come to you as a public school educated multiply disabled LatiNegra queer fat femme who has worked in the US sexuality field since 1996. I am coming to you as someone who is deeply still actively impacted by colonization, displacement, assimilation, and raised by those who struggled with their own anti-Blackness and pride for the independence of Puerto Rico. I speak from the experience I have had and not as an expert of experiences I have not had. I come to you as a community scholar to disrupt, question, and consider daily acts of subversion to colonial expectations that impact me

daily, constantly, and that each of us are impacted by in various ways. I speak for myself and for what I know.

KEYNOTE

In 2020, I wrote an article titled “What is Sex Positivity” published in an online media platform by an organization called Prism, a collective of journalists of color who “through in-depth and thought-provoking journalism, reflect the lived experiences of people most impacted by injustice.” My approach was to explain what I believe sex positivity is NOT.

I took this approach because I am often unimpressed and exhausted by the act of defining something without really being critical and thoughtful about what it may not be. This is an approach I use in the intersectionality course for sex professionals that I teach. People often have a response for what their understanding of intersectionality is, yet when I ask what is NOT intersectionality it's a harder question for many to respond to.

In that article I wrote, and yes I am quoting myself!, “Often believed to be rooted in values of consent, body autonomy, and pleasure, prevailing understandings of sex positivity exclude many people by failing to take into account the human right to self-determination.” The main points I offer for what sex positivity is NOT include:

- Sex positivity is not elitist, heterosexist, racist, abelist, or ageist. I want to say something about each of these briefly:
 - Elitism is rooted in oppression and capitalism. A system which requires someone to be at the economic bottom, oppressed by

poverty so that the top can thrive, is not sex positive. How do we challenge elitism in sex positivity community?

- Heterosexism is not homophobia. These two inform each other, yet heterosexism is about assuming, privileging, and giving power to relationships that are perceived as heterosexual. How is heterosexism deeply rooted in sex positivity?
- When it comes to racial justice, often white and lighter skin people claim “reverse racism”. I remind them that the reverse of racism is liberation. Why do we think in binaries when we know they are a scam? What if the reverse of sex positivity was sex expansive?
- Regarding ableism: All bodies can experience pleasure. When we challenge ableism, we also expand the understanding that sex is not only about genitals or penetration. Sex is so much more than a few acts or experiences. Sex and sexuality are life long experiences that may shift and change based on our needs. When we take a more intentional examination at our state consent laws, we may begin to notice how ableism is deeply rooted in those that hold a belief that some disabled people are unable to consent to sexual experiences. Who benefits from ableism? As crip ancestor Stacey Park Milbern asks about medicine, and health, “Is medicine about quality of life or social control?”
- To believe that only those of a certain age are able to consent to touch, love, care, and sex, is to limit the body autonomy and self-determination that is our human right. Intimacy is built; it expands and shifts as we age. What do we fear when children

and youth are supported in valuing body autonomy and self-determination? Is our fear guided by rape culture?

- If we value interdependence and know there is no way forward alone, what will it take for us to expand this knowledge and apply it to relationships and coupling for our aging community members and family? How do we want to be treated and have our body autonomy and self-determination honored if we have the privilege to age?
- Another point I share is that Sex positivity has no space for shame.
 - We all have capacity for and must do the hard work to unlearn harm we have been socialized to believe is the best way forward. We are all worthy when sex positivity is in alignment with collective liberation. This is body autonomy in action and in service to your pleasure, exploration, and consent. How is shame used in sex positive communities? Is it effective? What are new ways forward?
- A third point I share, that I think is incredibly important to note, is that Sex positivity is not a fad and is not about jargon.
 - sex positivity is not a trend or fad; instead it is a movement, a practice, and a life long commitment to honoring change. If people do not understand what you are trying to communicate about sex positivity, then it's not very positive or effective. When we choose jargon that is academic or excludes communities due to elitism, many are left out.
 - The importance of clear language to sex positivity also means it's not about misusing terms like "decolonize" or "intersectionality."

- What does language access mean for sex positivity?
- Finally, I note that Sex positivity is not the All Lives Matter of sexuality.
 - When folk say “all lives matter” in any context it is a microaggression, a form of violence, and a clear signal that the person using these terms does not understand intent versus impact, or they don’t care because they think they are “right.” To decenter whiteness is not the same as dehumanizing white people. Don’t allow your sex positivity to turn into a microaggression. How do we notice or avoid discussing the ways sex positivity is violent and a microaggression?

In the article as a wrap up I do offer my perspective on what sex positivity includes and is to me and for the communities of which I am a part and I share:

- Sex positivity rejects cissupremacy, and also embraces intersex community members.
- Sex positivity is liberation and equity.
- Sex positivity recognizes, honors, and strategically uses various forms of power.

I’ll highlight those questions I mentioned before I end today. I want to next introduce a framework that has helped me expand my understanding of sexuality, bodies, care, and interdependence. It is the framework that guides today’s keynote: a Black Feminist Disability Justice Framework. When originally offered, this was titled a Black feminist disability framework by the architects of it Drs Moya Bailey and Izzetta Mobley. I expanded the disability portion of this framework to include disability justice. Being guided

by this framework requires a recognition that history stems from exploration, conquest, colonization, genocide, and chattel slavery in the US. In this way, Disability is a construction of the US as a nation state, empire, a colonial legacy. When we are in community with and led by indigenous peoples globally we begin to understand they too have a different connection to and with disability in their own cultures which reject colonial narratives that impact them daily. These various languages, histories, and rituals challenge us to inquire about how we relate to and create ideas and social realities of disability, Blackness, difference, and who is human? Today I am speaking specifically about the US.

In a Black Feminist Disability Justice Framework, understanding the ways the US has racialized people and communities, Blackness has always been used as a way to identify those who are less human, to identify who is worthy and can produce (reproduce), race and ableism work to incarcerate Black people, Blackness is used to mark disability, and has Blackened those viewed as unfit. The Eugenics movement, which is still alive and well for many disabled people who are racialized, emerged here, long before it was documented as beginning in the 1920s. A quick example that I believe has direct connection to a collective liberation via sex positivity is when Black people who were enslaved in the US craved and fought for freedom during chattel slavery, they were considered and diagnosed as mad. The diagnosis was drapetomania which was established in the 1840s. I invite each of you to consider how diagnosis of psychiatric disabilities specifically has led to institutionalization, isolation, and harm which also suppresses and erases people with psychiatric disabilities from sexual expression,

exploration, and connection. How does the sex positivity movement miss opportunities to challenge Eugenics?

As I think about what this use of a Black Feminist Disability Justice Framework offers, I remain unsure if this useful for all of me. This framework is a US construct but does it address the colonial legacy that keeps me displaced from my homeland of Puerto Rico, the oldest colony in the world? When people discuss “decolonization” I don’t always know what they mean. So many of those people who claim this “decolonization” then vacation in my homeland paying either large corporations for a piece of beach or the 10% of those who own 90% of the airbnb’s on the island. Where is the decolonization there? How is sex positivity upholding colonization and assimilation?

What happens as we begin to question the origins of sex positivity and how it is deeply guided by what we understand to be white supremacist practices? How are we ready to change or expand or risk losing those we need the most as leaders? Does my existence always have to be a form of resistance to something? When am I able to simply exist without the oppressive, code-switching, assimilationist, ways sex positivity isolates and erases many of us?

Are we ready for a constantly evolving shape shifting expansive and sustainable form of sex positivity? or is that not possible under colonial empire where it was imagined in the ways we understand it and practice it today? Will those of us who reject sex positivity due to its colonial legacy be targeted, namecalled, and erased because we do not buy into the

structures and systems that have created it thus far? Will our aversion to the alignment with and to oppression of sex positivity have our humanity questioned, removed, and thus prove the point of its origins of dehumanization? What afterworld are we ready for that sex positivity offers us?

I'll be putting the questions I offered earlier in the chat box along with some citations if you'd like to read more. Let's open it up for questions! What are your questions? Someone ask me a question.

QUESTIONS AGAIN

- How do we challenge elitism in sex positivity community?
- How is heterosexism deeply rooted in sex positivity?
- Why do we think in binaries when we know they are a scam?
What if the reverse of sex positivity was sex expansive?
- Who benefits from ableism? As crip ancestor Stacey Park Milbern asks about medicine, and health, "Is medicine about quality of life or social control?"
- What do we fear when children and youth are supported in valuing body autonomy and self-determination? Is our fear guided by rape culture?
- How do we want to be treated and have our body autonomy and self-determination honored if we have the privilege to age?
- How is shame used in sex positive communities? Is it effective?
What are new ways forward?
- What does language access mean for sex positivity?

- How do we notice or avoid discussing the ways sex positivity is violent and a microaggression?
- How does the sex positivity movement miss opportunities to challenge Eugenics?
- How is sex positivity upholding colonization and assimilation?

CITATIONS

What is Sex Positivity? <https://prismreports.org/2020/09/24/what-is-sex-positivity/>

Moya Bailey, Izetta Autumn Mobley. (2018.) Work in the Intersections: A Black Feminist Disability Framework. *Gender and Society* 33:1 pp 19-40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243218801523>

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