

Hi, I'm Krystina Wray Jackson,

also known as Bombshell BlaQ,

and thank you Leroy F Moore

and Krip Hop Nation

for inviting me

to this beautiful project.

I'm coming to you

from Dublin, California,

just East of San Francisco.

I'm originally from Philadelphia.

I was born outside of Philly

in West Chester, Pennsylvania,

and I moved to Stockton, California,

in the 90's.

I went to Junior High

and High School and College there.

And when I was 19

during a snowboarding adventure,

I injured my neck

and became paralyzed.

And I'm now  
living with quadriplegia.

That was in January 2002,

and now it's September,  
and 2021

and this coming January,  
I am celebrating

20 years  
as a spinal cord injury survivor.

And it's wonderful  
to be on this side of the journey

and to be celebrating  
Disability Culture

and normalizing and sharing  
amazing information

about Black disabled artists.

So, thank you, Leroy.

If you don't have the book  
Black Disabled Art History 101

definitely pick that up,  
it's phenomenal.

I'll be reading about some  
of my favorite artists in the book.

It's impossible to pick just one

so I'll start with Dance,

and I'll read about

India Harville.

She's a phenomenal dancer.

I am also a queer

African American person

who identifies as non-binary

and I use a wheelchair

and I definitely connect with her

and her artistry.

So let's jump in

with India's beautiful story.

"If you can breathe,

you can dance."

Dance and movement

have helped India Harville,

a queer Black disabled woman,

cope with  
her hemiplegic migraines.

Today, she shares the healing gift  
of Dance as a teacher.

In her wheelchair, Harville  
teaches people

to dance on their feet,  
on wheels,

on crutches  
or with the cane.

I love this. I adore this.

It is so important, regardless  
of your physical abilities,

that you enjoy the body  
that you are in,

that you move your body  
any way you can

and that you celebrate your life

and share that gift with others.

That is what India is doing

so beautifully.

That is the artist I wanted  
to highlight from this book,

and there are many more.

So let's continue.

The next one is someone  
who is doing it all.

I'm an actor and a singer,  
a comic book writer.

Albert Clemens really blew  
me away when I read his story,

That's the beautiful thing  
about this book.

There are so many Black disabled  
artists I had no idea about,

and so this was a  
wonderful discovery.

So Albert Clemens' story,  
a.k.a Cripple Clarence Lofton:

Can you dance,  
sing, whistle

and play an instrument  
all at the same time?

Albert Clemens could,  
and did.

Clemens got his stage name  
Cripple Clarence Lofton

because he  
was born with a limp.

He was a tap dancer,  
a boogie woogie piano player

and singer, and owned a  
nightclub in Chicago in the 1940's.

When I was injured at 19,  
I was a creative writing major,

and after becoming disabled,  
I learned that it's very expensive.

Caregivers and wheelchairs  
and equipment

and modifying your home  
and vehicles.

And I changed my major

to Business

and I concentrated on Finance

and I went to

the Eberhardt School of Business

in Stockton

at the University of the Pacific.

And I also

studied Entrepreneurship,

and that's what I did

once I graduated.

I started a company making

accessories for wheelchairs

and in 2018, when I became

"Ms. Wheelchair California,"

that was my platform -

encouraging people with disabilities

to pursue entrepreneurship

and to carve out a space

for themselves,

rather than mold yourself

to fit into corporate culture

and a world that's not set up for us  
to thrive and succeed.

To just do that on your own.

So I love reading about other  
African Americans with disabilities.

And owning a nightclub in 40's!  
That's wild and amazing.

Thank you Albert Clemens.

I have another artist  
that I wanted to highlight.

And he's from the Chocolate City  
of Oakland.

Oakland is a city  
dear to my heart.

Oakland is actually the focal feature  
of my upcoming comic book

and the artist I want to highlight  
is Gerone Spruill.

What colors  
make up your community?



What music fills your streets?

For Gerone Spruill,

Black and Brown people

fill the streets of Oakland,

and the soundtrack of his city

is a mixture of Soul and Hip Hop.

He is an autistic painter,

rapper and DJ.

He creates colorful drawings

and comic book stories

about his beloved Chocolate City,

Oakland.

Fellow comic book writer

and artist.

I love it. Thank you.

I have to continue with someone

who's synonymous with Oakland.

Joe Capers,

a.k.a. Blind Joe!

If you were in Oakland  
in the 80's and 90's,

you'd have heard of the likes  
of Tony, Toni, Tone,

a young M.C. Hammer,  
Digital Underground,

Too Short and  
Dawn Robinson of En Vogue.

Joe Capers, aka Blind Joe,

a blind musician and producer,

built the first completely accessible  
and affordable studio

in the San Francisco Bay Area.

I can tell you now,  
as a recording artist,

that is very challenging  
to find.

There's been many times  
where we put folding chairs

into recording booths,

and someone would have to pick  
me up out of my wheelchair -

It's not ideal.

So this is huge!

He created these completely  
accessible and affordable studios

in San Francisco's Bay Area.

To recognize his contributions  
to the Arts,

in 2013, the city of Oakland  
officially declared

the month of August to be  
Joe Capers Month.

If you're in the Bay Area in August,

come celebrate Joe Capers Month  
with us.

I promise it will be  
a beautiful celebration of artistry.

I have another dancer  
back in the Dance chapter,

I hope I'm saying

his name correctly:

Barak Adé Soleil.

For 25 years, Barak has used  
movement

to explore the beauty  
and wholeness

of the Black disabled body.

For Soleil,  
disability is an opportunity

for creativity and exploration.

He uses crutches,  
a wheelchair,

the floor and walls

to support his dancing movement.

He incorporates techniques  
from Queer Culture,

Disability Arts  
and the African diaspora

in his Arts.

Barak founded the Underbelly,

a network for artists of color.

I love that too.

It's so important

as Black disabled artists

that we're able

to connect with one another

and share and elevate our stories

and collaborate and have fun

with our artistry.

So this was beautiful.

These are the artists

that really touched me.

Right now,

I'm in acting school in Berkeley.

I'm going to the

Empowerhouse Acting Studio

and studying

the Meisner Technique.

There is a fellow actor

I want to highlight.

He's the last one

I'll highlight from

Black Disabled Art History 101.

His name is Lee Williams.

Athlete, painter, singer, actor,  
poet and father,

Lee Williams did it all.

He played Porgy in the Black opera  
"Porgy and Bess"

at the Black Repertory Theater  
in Berkeley,

made it on the big screen with  
Whoopi Goldberg and Ted Danson

in "Made in America"

and made his first solo CD  
in 2006 called "Phase Five".

Lee Williams did all this and more  
from his wheelchair

with love and grace.

I love that so much.

It seems like I'm in good company  
in the Bay Area

as a Black disabled artist,

creating Art and music

and writing and everything else.

Lee Williams is an actor  
from Oakland, California,

he's the last artist

I'm highlighting.

This has been a pleasure.

I am Krystina Wray Jackson  
a.k.a Bombshell BlaQ.

I'm a singer, actor,  
comic book writer,

and this has been great!

Till next time.