

**A Method to 'Madness':  
The Need for Psychiatric Abolition Within the Climate Justice Movement**

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## **Introduction**

*“When learning about concepts of mutual aid, I’m brought to my experiences in a psychiatric hospital. Amidst the abuse and harassment I endured and witnessed as a suicidal patient, I’m reminded of having a disabled and healing community for the first time in my life. I remember sitting down with a man who was at least a foot taller than me watching reruns of 90s shows on a TV that kept glitching. We greeted each other often at mealtimes where I’d spin my food around before eventually throwing it out. He looked into my eyes and told me, “you’re young, you can get out of here.” I remember not fully knowing what he meant. Over the next few days he recounted all the harm we had endured together and described to me how once we were outside this facility our autonomy would look much different. As psychiatric patients, we were locked in the facility unless we “earned” the privilege of hospital passes, in which we could leave the hospital but only for a specified amount of time with medical permission. His life there was heavily restricted by nurses and hospital staff, but one day he was permitted a pass to leave the hospital premise and brought me back a single piece of paper with detailed directions on how to contact lawyers and information on the rights we had in the facility. Even when nurses “confiscated” his print-outs, he saved a copy for me. I’m reminded of those moments of kindness when I reflect on my many traumas from institutionalization.”*

- Anna Mylvaganam

This paper analyzes the connection between abolition and disability justice. We examine how the carceral psychiatric system utilizes discipline and power to enact violence against people deemed as “mentally ill” and exacerbates so-called “mental illnesses”. We draw on literature from so-called Canada and the United States, with a specific interest in understanding the history and current climate of the psychiatric system in Canada. In connection to the carceral system and disability, we discuss the violence that contributes to the disproportionate amount of people of colour who are incarcerated in psychiatric institutions and who experience disabilities. We point to the urgency and importance of climate organizers to adopt a transformative justice framework in their work and have developed a tool kit to aid in educating organizers about psychiatric justice. We begin with a description of our interest in the area. This is followed by a discussion of abolitionism, disability and climate justice.

## **Locating ourselves in the project**

Our drive to create this report is informed by our personal experiences of alienation from the climate justice movement, both in the ideas that the movement espouses and the tools it uses to accomplish its visions. Ableism is evident in the internalized capitalism among organizers; what is commonly referred to as ‘burnout culture.’ One of the main tenets of capitalism is maximization of productivity. This mindset permeates organizing spaces and takes the shape of

self-imposing stress and exhaustion, feeling guilty for resting, and equating productivity with impact. The system of capitalism forces people with disabilities to push the limits of their health in order to survive. This parallels the limits to which organizers and activists push themselves as a means to an end of making change, justified by the urgency of the crisis. There is no denying that there are crises occurring, however, it is possible for there to be a world where crises are not disproportionately faced and combatted by a few communities made marginalized by colonial histories, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and capitalism. Rather, crises could be addressed by whole, equitable communities where resources are shared. When this burnout culture is present, climate organizing communities become harmful to organizers with disabilities, and therefore exclusionary. However, rest is a privilege, as shown by sleep disparities between racialized and non-racialized people (Cheng et al., 2020). Our vision for transformative justice includes creating a world where organizing is decoupled from capitalism, systems of care allow for equity of rest, and organizers are not sacrificed for the cause.

In addition, spaces that have not been built with people with disabilities in mind represent the ableism present in broader society. One manifestation of ableism is the act of masking, where neurodivergent people suppress neurodivergent behaviour in order to fit into the norms of what is “acceptable.” Without a clear indication that de-masking is a safe thing to do, neurodivergent people will continue to mask. While many climate organizing communities make efforts to be inclusive of disabled people, there is still much progress to be made when considering the diversity of disability, and creating spaces that are safe for all. Integral to safety in organizing spaces is creating new, alternative systems of care that do not involve psychiatry and psychiatric carcel institutions. Psychiatric abolition centers on dismantling the current psychiatric system, which is violent and harmful, and building anew. In order for the climate justice movement to be truly inclusive, organizers must take part in these missions. This interconnection between abolition and climate justice points to the need to consider abolition in its many forms. Though many climate activists are active in movements to defund the police, they have not yet taken up the same solidarity with psychiatric abolition.

Seeing that climate justice and racial justice are intertwined, we have oriented ourselves towards abolitionist aims as a vision of justice. Abolition is inherently a Black framework for justice due to its origins in slavery abolition, which we will elaborate on in this paper. As non-Black and non-Indigenous people, we acknowledge the limited understanding we hold of the histories and contemporary processes of abolition and also acknowledge that a majority of our understanding of the topic is due to extensive literature from Black and Indigenous abolition and disability authors. Before we begin, we feel it is necessary to locate ourselves in the project and explain our positionalities.

Anna (they/them) is a disabled, Mad, light-skinned gender nonconforming Tamil-Chinese settler, currently on the stolen land of the hənqəmīnəm-speaking x<sup>w</sup>məθkwəyəm (Musqueam) people. Anna endured brief psychiatric imprisonment in 2019, but acknowledges they have experienced less physical and medical violence than their Black and Indigenous peers in those institutions. As someone who has a history of mental illnesses, they are interested in

integrating disability justice and transformative justice principles into climate organizing spaces as an effort to build community accountability and support models that disrupt the ableist and punitive reasoning that can easily infiltrate.

Lucy (she/her) is a neurodivergent, middle-class, white, bisexual, cisgender woman who has never been incarcerated due to her mental health. She is a settler living and studying on the lands of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam) peoples. As someone with a long history of depression and antidepressant use and who is passionate about social and environmental justice, she is interested in better understanding the role that able-bodied activists have in speaking out against psychiatric incarceration. She is excited to help share the historical and current climate of psychiatric abolition with climate organizers and anyone else who is interested. She hopes that this research paper will help to create a broader conversation about psychiatric abolition in Canada and empower those who have experienced violence from the psychiatric system to share their stories.

Sarah (she/her) is a neurodivergent third culture woman of Vietnamese and white descent. She has not experienced a psychiatric facility. Her perspectives on mental health and disability are rooted in the intergenerational trauma of war and neocolonialism. She has been drawn to the climate justice movement in part by her upbringing on the lands of the šx<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəmaʔl, Kwantlen, and scəwaθenaʔl peoples - lands that are projected to be underwater by 2100 as a result of the systems that have brought about by climate change.

In embarking on this project, we do not claim to be experts. We have also deeply reflected on what it means to examine abolitionism in relation to disability and climate justice from our perspectives as non-Black and non-Indigenous people. Our goal is not to center ourselves but to foster a conversation that allows us to examine ourselves first and also examine the structures reinforcing ableist oppression.

## **A Brief Overview of Abolitionism**

Abolitionism, or the abolition movement, refers to the ending of the transatlantic slave trade (Ben Moshe, 2018). The abolitionist movement, which started in the mid-eighteenth century, sought to end chattel enslavement, evolved from religious roots to become a political endeavor (Pollard et al., 2015). Religious denominations including Quakers, Mennonites, Presbyterians, Baptists, Amish and other Protestant groups opposed chattel enslavement arguing that everyone was equal before God, and therefore enslavement was morally evil. Alongside the argument of immorality was the argument that free labour, a form of labour where the labourer is free, is more productive than slavery. In Haiti in the 1790s, Black slaves revolted and overthrew French Rule, taking control (Pollard et al., 2015).

Slavery allowed capitalism to flourish in Europe and empires to grow. The global spread of abolition and the decline of the Atlantic slave trade occurred through to the late 1860s. In some cases, the abolition of the slave trade occurred much earlier than the abolition of slavery itself (Pollard et al., 2015). In the U.S.A., the slave trade was abolished in 1808. However, as

slavery as a labour system was inextricably tied to the economy of the South, it was not abolished until 1863. Early abolitionists that were key to the movement include William Lloyd Garrison, Lydia Child, Theodore Parker, James Lowell, and Frederick Douglass. These movement builders worked to turn public and political support against slavery. Ideas were disseminated through lectures, conventions, letters, books, and pamphlets, and other forms of oral and written poetry (often in the form of songs) (Blackett, 2008; Ernest, 2011). Slavery was abolished across the British Empire in 1834, including in Canada.

Though the abolitionist movement is no longer centered on slavery, abolitionists have sought and continue to seek the end to oppressive systems and institutions, including segregation, policing, and prisons. Cullors (2019) describes abolition as “a praxis that roots itself in the following principles: people’s power; love, healing, and transformative justice; Black liberation; internationalism; anti-imperialism; dismantling structure; and practice, practice, practice” (p. 1864). Modern-day abolitionists include Angela Davis of the Black Panther Party, and queer, Black feminist Audre Lorde.

## **Abolition in Canada**

Although many popular historical abolitionist texts by Black authors have been written in the United States, such as Frederick Douglass’ *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Ernest, 2011), few centered in the Canadian landscape are well known. Black abolitionist history in Canada has been largely neglected in political, social, and educational spheres, although Canada has a long and rich history of Black abolitionist thinking and action. Authors such as Harvey Amani Whitfield, Ruth Holmes Whitehead, and Graham Reynold have written in depth about Black history in the Maritimes, or rather the history of Black Loyalists who escaped slavery in the United States and immigrated northward (Walker, 2017). As well, they have written about the civil rights era in Canada, the mass influx of immigration from the Caribbean, and everything in between (Walker, 2017). Barrington Walker writes that “The Maritimes was one of the most important theatres of the narrative of black slavery to freedom...” (Walker, 2017, p. 196).

Black Canadian history is often widely considered to be a recent history, yet Black folks have lived in Canada for hundreds of years (Walker, 2017). Modern-day Black writers like Richard M. Reid, Karen Flynn, Peter Hudson, Afua Cooper, David Austin, and Charmaine Nelson have all written about Black history in Canada in recent years, as well (Walker, 2017). Agency and resistance are two themes that repeatedly show up in the archival history and modern history of Black Canadians (Walker, 2017), themes that can also be attributed to folks who face the intersection of environmental racism and psychiatric punishment.

Once slavery was abolished in the United States, slave-like conditions continued for many Black people who were, and continue to be, disproportionately incarcerated in comparison to other groups (Ben Moshe, 2018).

Quakers, otherwise known as the Religious Society of Friends, opposed abolitionism (Jordan, 2004). The Christian sect did not adhere to abolitionist beliefs, meaning they were against the concept of slavery but did not seek to overthrow the system that created it (Jordan, 2004). As abolitionists recruited many people from within Christian communities, white religious leaders viewed abolitionism as “a threat to religious liberty” (Jordan, 2004, p. 588). Though Quakers, alongside smaller Christian churches such as the Freewill Baptists, the Moravians, the United Brethren in Christ, and the Presbyterians, disallowed slave owners from joining their congregations, many white religious leaders viewed abolitionism as destructive to society and politics (Jordan, 2004). Alternatively but similarly, many Black religious leaders argued that abolitionist discussions had no place within the religious sphere (Jordan, 2004). Quakers viewed abolitionism as “fanatical” (Jordan, 2004, p. 592) and leaders in the church argued that Quakers should focus on “works of charity and benevolence” instead of the “various currents” of political activism”, insisting that politics and religion should not mix (Jordan, 2004, p. 593-594). Due to the refusal of Christian churches in the United States to adopt abolitionism as a framework and belief system, many abolitionists chose to leave these churches and establish “comeouter” churches that were centered around abolitionism. Overall, Jordan argues, Quakers were committed to a “racial status quo” (Jordan, 2004, p. 606).

Historically, Indigenous peoples have also experienced incarceration and racialized and gendered violence in both Canada and the U.S.A (Palacios, 2016). Indigenous and Black scholars have shown that girls and women of colour are “targets of state violence and agents of resistance and theoreticians in [their] own right.” (Palacios, 2016, p. 139). We draw on the abolitionist ideas to argue for a re-imagining of the connection between gendered racism, disability, and the environment. As 15% of people globally have a disability, it is imperative that climate justice policies better include those made marginalized through ableist systems (Bell et al., 2020). Research has shown that equity, climate change and global health are intertwined. Climate change has and will continue to exacerbate health inequities around the world (Bell et al., 2020). To make these connections meaningful, we offer a brief explanation of disability, psychiatric abolition, disability justice framework and climate justice.

## **Understanding Disability**

Disability is widely understood as “a physical, mental, cognitive, or developmental condition that impairs, interferes with, or limits a person's ability to engage in certain tasks or actions or participate in typical daily activities and interactions” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Disability scholars and many people with disabilities have argued that disability is a social construction, a bodily experience in a world that is generally not made accessible for people of diverse mental and physical abilities (Lott, 2017). The social constructionist lens of disability thus positions responsibility on society as a whole to adapt to the needs of people with disabilities instead of perpetuating the hegemonic view of disability through an individual lens, as the medical model of disability does (Lott, 2017). Besides the medical model, moral or

religious models of disability see disability as a sin or a moral failing of either the disabled person or their ancestors (Retief & Letšosa, 2018). By contrast, in social models as well as political-relational models of disability, disability is often referenced as cultural, social, and political identity (Kafer, 2013). Notably, in addition, disability studies within post-secondary institutions have and continue to center the experiences of white people, largely ignoring the intersecting identities of people of colour.

Disability oppression does not happen in isolation but intersects with other identity markers including race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. that exacerbates the ableist oppression people with disabilities experience. Intersectionality, a term and framework coined by professor and lawyer Kimberle Crenshaw (1991), describes these various factors that influence one's positionality in the world. Over the years, some disability activists have argued that the disability rights movement and disability studies as a field have failed to address intersectional oppression faced by individuals with disabilities particularly those who identify as Indigenous, Black, racialized, LGBTQ2+, poor, incarcerated etc. Many policies are informed by Eurocentric and white feminist ideologies, which fail to apply an intersectional framework to understand how people of various identities, such as class, gender, race, and physical and mental abilities, experience the world differently. This has led to the evolution of the disability justice framework (Berne, 2015). Berne (2015) identified the principles of disability justice as intersectionality, leadership of those most impacted, anti-capitalist politic, cross-movement solidarity, recognizing wholeness, sustainability, commitment to cross disability solidarity, interdependence, collective access, and collective liberation. The disability justice framework seeks to “end ableism in conjunction with ending other systems of oppression” (Jampel, 2018, p. 3). Disability justice focuses on how ableism, white supremacy and capitalism function jointly with other oppressive systems to “render the majority of the world ‘invalid’” (Sins Invalid, 2015). As such, some view the existence and prominence of disability communities and their interdependent relations as a means of providing access and care to one and other as fundamentally opposing exploitative and capitalist notions of value and work, often propped up by eugenics reasonings (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018). In a capitalist society, people with disabilities are undervalued due to the hegemonic belief that their “inability to produce” in the way the society expects nondisabled people to renders them “disposable” (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 35). Thus, the anti-capitalist politic is innately a part of disability just through the nonconforming body/minds of disabled folks (Sins Invalid, 2015). We draw on disability justice framework ideas to show how the history of mental health centers have rebranded by changing their names, from asylum to psychiatric hospitals and then to mental health centers, and the language used within them. We also analyze the role that privacy plays in the lives of those who are institutionalized and how this connects to bodily and mental agency.

## **Disability Rights in the United States and Canada**

In the so-called “United States,” the Americans with Disabilities Act came into force in 1990. The Act prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life. Gaeta and Moss (2019) write that the Act, though it has weaknesses, has and continues to be crucial to ensuring the right to access, and achieving this through the legal system. In Canada, no such law exists. The film *Hope is Not a Plan* notes that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is the primary piece of legislation that enshrines disabled people’s rights in law through the right to equal protection and equal benefit. However, the Charter lacks a mechanism through which these rights can be guaranteed, requiring people to go through the arduous process of the Human Rights Commission (Urban Sherpa Films). Hoffman et al. (2016) note that Canada has signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which exists to promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity, as stated in Article 1.1. However, they argue that the CRPD has not been adequately incorporated into legislation, policy, and jurisprudence, and an unbiased system for oversight of the CRPD’s implementation is non-existent (Hoffman et al., 2016). The authors conclude that implementation has been largely unsuccessful domestically.

### **Psychiatric Abolition, Mad Studies, and Healing Justice**

“Mad” is a reclaimed identity of mentally ill, psychiatric survivors, disabled, neurodivergent folks, etc. whose perceived “non-normative” expressions can lead to marginalization and even institutionalization (Fireweed Collective). Mad Studies is an anti-psychiatry academic field of study that approaches psychological literature around mental health and healing by centering autonomy and healing, led by primarily psychiatric survivors and other self-identifying “Mad” folks (Reaume, 2006). Geoffrey Reaume’s work emphasizes this field of study as a “history of Mad people” rather than a “history of madness” as an effort to centre “unknown and uncelebrated mad who make up the vast majority of people who lived this history” and how their influences should be a central part of critical disability studies (Reaume, 2006, p. 171).

The psychiatric abolition movement first began to receive traction in the radical Black and brown organizing community in Toronto in the early 1990s, where some began to use the term “psychiatric survivor” to describe the depth of trauma and abuse they survived under psychiatric institutionalization (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 83). Mensah (2020) describes psychiatric abolition as a movement whose goal is “that all the cages come down, including those that function under the guise of psychiatric ‘care’” (n.p.).

The anti-psychiatry movement questions the authority of medical professionals, drawing parallels to surveillance and power differentials in the medical industrial complex and the prison industrial complex (Bracken & Thomas, 2001). Many psychiatric survivors share experiences of over-medication, solitary confinement, and physical restraints of psychiatric prisons. The organizing of the first Psychiatric Survivor’s Pride Day included hospital demonstrations with



hundreds of attendees, as well as workshops and educational sessions that focused on tenants' rights, policing issues for psychiatric survivors, the closing of homeless drop-in centres, and changes to family benefits legislation (Finkler, 1997). These demonstrations gained international coverage, prompting many lawyers and medical professionals to contend with their own harms, as well as the existence of a community often institutionalized and separated from the public.

The birth of the psychiatric abolition movement pushed back against ideas like transcarceration which continually shifted the nature of prison-like systems in favour of a “better” or “nicer” carceral system without ever really changing the fabrics of the institution (Finkler, 1997; Mensah, 2020; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018). Transcarceration is defined as “the ongoing routing of mentally ill offenders (MIOs) to and from the mental health and the criminal justice systems” resulting in continued confinement in various institutions (Arrigo, 2001, p. 162).

The result of transcarceration and proposed prison reform is similar - neoliberalism allows the carceral system to grow and is perpetuated into new systems (Finkler, 1997; Mensah, 2020; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018). Abolition is the antithesis of reformation: “Abolition critiques the carceral system and carceral logics, but also critiques efforts to *reform* carceral sites, because some of the factors leading to the growth of the carceral State were the direct result of attempts to reform the system.” (Ben-Moshe, 2018, p. 348). The concept of reforming neglects how the State itself is a violent neoliberal entity (Ben-Moshe, 2018). As well, many policies are informed by white feminist ideologies, those that ignore intersectionality and use the framework of “White ideals of womanhood” (Ben-Moshe, p. 350, 2018). Instead of a continual growth and shift of the system, Angela Davis (2020) proposes that abolition is “not primarily a negative strategy. It’s not primarily about dismantling, getting rid of, but it’s about reenvisioning. It’s about building anew.” The anti-psychiatry movement prizes the relationships we build with one and other, specifically how to extend peer-supportive mental health care and mutual aid to others, as to not rely on carceral interference. Peer-led respites have been common interventions, as well as healing justice collectives such as the Fireweed Collective, which centres anti-oppressive politics and self-determination in police-free recoveries.

The healing justice movement – born out of queer, disabled, Black and brown organizers – centers healing and transform harm by addressing intergenerational trauma. Healing justice is built on the trust of its most vulnerable. Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) speaks to a sense of hopefulness in the disability community that is central to ideas of disability justice: “I hold onto the wild truth that as long as we need to heal, we will continue to dream into exactly the kinds of healing we need.” The practice of cripp and disabled communities healing together has long been a tradition of imagination (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 110).

As articulated by the Kindred Healing Justice Collective:

“We need to be able to respond to the increased state of burnout and depression from our movements; systematic loss of our communities' healing traditions; the isolation and stigmatization of healers; and the increased privatizations of our land, medicine, and natural resources that has caused us to rely on state or private models we do not trust and do not serve us” (as cited in Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018).

The hopefulness that is central to disability justice also finds ground in abolitionism. Police and prison abolitionist Mariame Kaba (2021) describes how organizers can practice hope daily, as hope is not the feeling of optimism, but a discipline that is essential to organizers' ability to persevere despite not witnessing change.

## **Methodology**

The research for this paper was conducted through secondary data collection. We reviewed literature pertaining to psychiatric abolition and deinstitutionalization in B.C., Canada, and the U.S.A. Our searches began with the UBC Library databases using key terms such as: abolition, psychiatry, deinstitutionalization, Riverview Hospital, transcarceration, transformative justice. Sources were rejected that did not discuss ableism, disability justice, incarceration or climate justice in a North American context, used language of ecofascism or did not employ disability justice principles, or sources that only contextualized outdated disability rights initiatives rather than a focus on liberation. The themes and sub-themes that we explored included: the history of the movement, the paralleling frameworks of community care, and ableism within the climate movement and its effects. Scholarly, peer-reviewed literature was examined alongside information from podcasts, social media content, and news articles. Through an iterative process, data was coded using NVivo to synthesize the data into the following themes:

- Abolition; sub-themes: deinstitutionalization, liberation, maroon abolition
- Eugenics; sub-themes: ableism in environmentalism, white supremacy
- Intersectionality; sub-themes: environmental injustice, race
- Justice frameworks; sub-themes: disability justice, healing justice, transformative justice
- Reformism/neoliberalism; sub-theme: transcarceration

We had originally planned to conduct 'mapping' of the communities and groups that are apart both the abolition and climate justice movements in our local "Vancouver, B.C." context, in order to identify these collectives and their missions/visions, map the relationships among them and linkages among their respective visions, and identify opportunities for coalition and solidarity. However, our searches did not find any collectives or organizations towards psychiatric abolition and were therefore not able to do said mapping. While there are many abolitionist collectives locally, their primary focus is on policing and incarceration.

## **Emerging Themes**

### *The pathologization of disability*

Mariame Kaba (2021) writes that the carceral system is based on the belief that "predators" and "dangerous people" being confined in cages creates safety. Those who are considered "safe" are

meant to be “free” outside of prisons, and the “dangerous few” are locked inside. This notion of safety has shown to be a myth, as “the logic of using... prison has not proven to address the systemic causes of violence” (pp. 23-24). Looking at the history of disability in white settler society provides insight into how people with disabilities came to be othered and pathologized. In examining the history of institutions, Ben-Moshe (2020) notes that deviance has been attributed to sin and judged on moral grounds, which has morphed into a scientific concept where “deviant[s] were now viewed as pathological, in need of therapy, rehabilitation, correction” (p. 48). This conviction that mental illness should be corrected stems from eugenics, as eugenicists theorized the genetic inferiority of people with mental illnesses (Kaufman, 2018). The pathologization of disability coupled with carceral logic results in the incarceration and measures to limit the agency of people with disabilities as “the mental ‘patient’ is perceived as potentially dangerous and therefore in need of segregation and control” (Ben-Moshe, 2020, p. 104). his mentality manifests itself in the popular, unsubstantiated belief that deinstitutionalization has resulted in growing prison populations. People with disabilities are seen as dangerous and violent, and therefore must be segregated in some form. Rather than examining and taking apart the systems and pathways that create disability, and intertwined oppressions including criminalization and poverty, disabled people are secluded from society and pushed to seek treatment and correction at an individual level. Palacios (2016) writes that the transcarceral continuum also works to make therapy and education individual responsibilities and issues instead of societal ones. While seeking “treatment” in psychiatric facilities is often seen as an individual’s choice, people are often incarcerated in these facilities through state-sanctioned systems of forced commitment (e.g. the B.C. Mental Health Act) and lack of alternative options for receiving help, healing, and care. Involuntary psychiatric incarceration is discussed further in this paper. These systems of incarceration, be it prisons or psych wards and mental health centres, are sites that provide an illusion of safety to the privileged, under the guise of the betterment of society. However, they are sites that are designed to conceal anyone who exposes the violence of the system, and “we know in truth that [dangerous] people have never ceased to walk among us, and that the purpose of the carceral system has never been to sort the ‘good’ from the ‘bad.’” (Kaba, 2021, p. 61).

### *Climate change policies and disability*

Globally, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) endeavour to set an agenda for change, and Bell et al. (2020) argue that the SDGs lack a disability perspective, particularly with respect to global migration. Due to climate change, many people will need to engage in global migration to survive, especially those in “communities within low-lying islands and coastal deltas” (Bell et al., paragraph 2, 2020). The authors note that around 15% of people globally have a disability and argue that climate change and global health are intertwined, as climate change has and will continue to exacerbate health inequities around the world, including disability injustice (Bell et al., 2020). Farbotko et al. (2018) argue that there is a need for

‘transformative mobilities’, or new ways of mobility that center and accommodate those with disabilities (as cited in Bell et al., 2020). Movement and migration also occurs as a result of natural disasters, which are worsened by climate change. Many politicians view the death of people with disabilities in natural disasters as natural and the authors note that “vulnerability is often perceived as an inevitable or ‘natural’ consequence of life with impairment, as a problem lodged in individual bodies rather than an outcome of exclusionary social structures and physical environments” (Görgens and Ziervogel, 2019 in Bell et al., paragraph 3, 2020). Bell et al. (2020) write that the erasure of people with disabilities from climate change and disaster recovery planning undermines disabled people’s knowledge and valuable lived experiences. This parallels the argument of Jenks and Obringer (2020), which illuminates the ableism that underlies how environmentalists exclude disabled people from policy development. They provide the example of plastic bans, which have been labelled by abled environmentalists as ‘convenience items,’ such as plastic straws and pre-cut vegetables, ignoring their importance in the daily lives of disabled people (Jenks and Obringer, 2020). They note that disability justice campaigns have fought these campaigns, which policy-makers have responded to with lip-service and policies that require people with disabilities to disclose their disability to acquire so-called convenience items (Jenks and Obringer, 2020). The root of this erasure and exclusion is in othering, which has manifested itself in overtly discriminatory laws such as criminalization of disabled people being on public sidewalks (Jenks and Obringer, 2020). Bell et al. (2020) write that we must understand disability as normal in order to dismantle the belief systems that cause people with disabilities to experience even worse health inequities due to erasure and neglect. This would require us to collectively uproot doctrines such as eugenics that provide basis for the perpetuation of oppression into the present.

The authors mention the similarity of planning for climate disasters and planning in daily life for disabled folks: many disabled folks already have “the skills of anticipating, assessing and improvising in the face of risk” and that these skills are invaluable for climate change policy planning (Bell et al., paragraph 8, 2020). Bell et al. (2020) conclude that we must look at international migration and the inevitability for trans-border migration in policy planning and understand the socio-cultural and economic factors that create and perpetuate disability. We must reject discourses that posit people with disabilities as victims and the very biomedical model of disability that creates this rhetoric (Bell et al., 2020).

### *Connecting climate justice and disability*

The movement for environmental and climate justice has evolved over time to further consider multiple systems of oppression – the “historical and institutionalized patterns that disadvantage a particular group of people based on their social identity” – in order to apply an intersectional framework to the work (Jampel, 2018, p. 2). Jampel (2018) argues that disability, racial, and environmental/climate justice are inseparable, and by viewing these issues through an intersectional lens we can better understand the root causes. Through this lens, it becomes

apparent that the creation of an exploitable “other,” through processes of disablement and racialization, is necessary in order to create value in a capitalist system. In relation to climate justice, this othering creates a system of societal relations where the exploitable populations are in closest proximity to environmental harms. Through othering, people become sacrifice zones. (Jampel, 2018). This analysis illustrates that the interconnections among racial, environmental, and disability injustices arise from a construction of a social hierarchy for the purpose of profit. It can then be argued that dismantling of both capitalist exploitation and social hierarchy are key to the liberation of both racialized and disabled peoples. Sudbury (2009) raises a barrier to growing solidarity among oppressed peoples: the creation of a “hierarchy of oppression” and division of identities based on race and gender “limit the possibilities for coalitional work, particularly a common resistance to capitalist exploitation” (p. 4). This argument can be extended to the creation of disability, as evidenced by Jampel (2018). Lorde (2007) argues that “terror and loathing of any difference” among movements for justice ensure that “only the most narrow parameters of change are possible and allowable” (p. 110). Indeed, for those with disabilities, this societal and systemic terror and loathing of difference underlies the ongoing oppression of our minds and bodies. This common understanding of disability justice, climate justice, and racial justice as interrelated struggles with shared roots provides a strong rationale for deepened solidarity and allyship across these movements.

However, ableism as a system of oppression is a lens that has been neglected in climate justice discourse and praxis. Though many organizers strive to include people with disabilities through various accommodations, the consideration of disability justice as a fundamental part of the framework has been overlooked. In this paper we will detail the links between disability justice and climate justice, and provide recommendations for a way forward for the climate justice movement. The most instinctual call to action would be the ‘inclusion’ of disabled people and their/our struggles within the climate justice movement. Rather, we call upon the climate movement to act in solidarity with abolitionist causes. We reject the ‘inclusion’ paradigm as it calls for the sub summation of already-oppressed peoples into oppressive systems. This paper is a call to allyship and solidarity with a shared conviction that the climate justice movement must be abolitionist. Justice must include abolition and liberation.

The most commonly-positing connection between disability and climate justice is the ongoing creation of disability as a result of a changing climate. This framing takes on a lens of global health, arguing that “health risks from climate change are amplified by social inequalities, and climate-impacts exacerbate vulnerability” (Parry et al., 2019, p. 1). This framing can be ableist, as Johnson (2011) argues that the movement for climate justice “has ‘tend[ed] to conflate disability, disease, and environmental justice’, often with the ‘implicit assumption that we want healthy environments so that we do not end up damaged (i.e. disabled)’” (as cited in Jampel, 2018, p. 5). Disability justice activist Mia Mingus (2020) argues that “disabled people are used as the poster children of environmental injustice” through this belief that disability is undesirable and to be feared, and prevented through protecting the environment and halting climate change. The ‘climate change causes disability’ cause-and-effect narrative is ableist. We do not deny that

the effects of climate change are consequential to human health. Leaning on this narrative takes the focus away from those who are currently disabled and how climate change will affect them, and centers abled people and their fear of disablement.

Jenks and Obringer (2020) make the important distinction that the intersection between disability and climate justice is much more complex. In order to comprehend this connection, “we need to take a broader understanding of what environmentalism and environmental justice entail and affect, while also taking stock of the disability’s complexity and disabled people’s experiences” (p. 156).

Belser (2020) highlights the tension between the social model of disability and disability pride. She argues that it is important to understand that disability can be valued, while also recognizing that disability is a consequence of oppression and structural violence (Belser, 2020). To balance these tensions, it is essential to understand that disability can be a natural part of being, while disablement (i.e. the creation of disability as a construct) is a product of oppression. This paper is grounded in the knowledge that disabled experiences are complex and diverse, and thus disability and climate justice must center all of these experiences.

### *Abolition and disability*

Ben-Moshe (2018) discusses how abolition is a movement with multifaceted factors, from white supremacy to disability issues. The author discusses how incarceration perpetuates the white supremacist settler ideology behind slavery. She writes that people’s intersecting identities, such as their race, class, gender, and ability, determine their likeliness of being incarcerated in the United States (Ben-Moshe, 2018). She points out that white supremacy is often fostered within abolitionist groups, stating that “even though abolition alludes to slavery, not all forms of abolition center (anti-black) racism or racial capitalism.” (Ben-Moshe, 2018, p. 345). Vivienne Saleh-Hanna writes that “abolition that is rooted in color neutrality or white supremacy (as these are interchangeable for her) is a failure for liberation,” meaning that many white abolitionists continue to believe in the justice system that unfairly treats and harms Black folks (Ben-Moshe, 2018, p. 345). She acknowledges the important work of “Maroon abolitionists,” which Sudbury (2009) refers to gender-oppressed anti-prison activists from “communities of runaway slaves, indigenous peoples, and their descendants” (Sudbury, 2009, p. 8).

In addition, Ben-Moshe (2018) writes that systems of incarceration and policing are disability issues. The author discusses how “people with disabilities (and those labeled as disabled or insane) are and have been confined in a variety of carceral settings, including psychiatric hospitals, rehab facilities and nursing homes” (Ben-Moshe, p. 344, 2018). She argues that knowledges born out of existing as people with disabilities in these carceral settings, otherwise known as “epistemologies of abolition,” are vital within the abolitionist movement (Ben-Moshe, 2018, p. 344). As well, the reformist “it will get better” ideology that neoliberal queer folks often impose on young queer folks can be found within the abolitionist movement

and Ben-Moshe argues that this message is ableist as it ignores the many ways that things won't get better for people with disabilities (Ben-Moshe, 2018). Ben-Moshe (2018) writes that "disability, as a lived reality, in a world that often cannot contain it, allows for re-formulations of in/dependence and community..." (p. 352). Therefore, a disability justice framework does not look towards being included in the current systems but being liberated from them (Ben-Moshe, 2018).

Ben-Moshe writes that abolition is equated to urgency and revolution as those made marginalized do not have the luxury of time on their side (Ben-Moshe, 2018). She writes that "Emancipation is ongoing work and cannot wait until the time is ripe for it. Slaves, captives or prisoners, and those fighting for their freedom, cannot wait for a new world order in order to be free of incarceration or bondage. They cannot wait until the right conditions emerge and the desired future begins." (Ben-Moshe, 2018, p. 15). She adds that abolition is a form of "dis-epistemology," meaning it forces us to reject the idea of absolutism, or certainty (Ben-Moshe, 2018). The abolition movement is about getting messy, acknowledging that we don't always have the answers, and staying true to the process of abolishing systems of oppression (Ben-Moshe, 2018).

Ben-Moshe writes that abolitionist ideals do not inherently have to be overly optimistic or positive, writing that "Not knowing how things end up is not a disadvantage but in fact opens up possibilities of other life worlds that cannot be imagined right now." (Ben-Moshe, p. 351, 2018). In conclusion, de-institutionalization, or the closing of carceral institutions like prisons and psychiatric hospitals, is important in the construction of prison abolition (Ben-Moshe, 2018). Abolition is about destroying ideologies of imprisonment and white supremacy and thinking up new ways of being (Ben-Moshe, 2018). Abolition is activism, strategy, and knowledge (Ben-Moshe, 2018).

Heynen and Ybarra argue that political ecology must analyze and deconstruct white supremacy by looking at abolition ecologies (Heynen and Ybarra, 2020). They write that Ruth Wilson Gilmore, a political scholar and abolitionist, founded abolition geography, or a subfield that looks at "radical place-making" (Heynen and Ybarra, 2020, p. 22). Abolition ecology looks at "the ways that carceral geographies of detention, incarceration, policing and deportation are *not* exceptional, but everyday spaces where people of colour struggle to live, work, and play" (Heynen and Ybarra, 2020, p. 22). The desire to use "land as resource and identity" are shared by a plethora of people: Indigenous folks and white and BIPOC settlers, those who live in urban areas and those who don't (Heynen and Ybarra, 2020, p. 22). Abolition ecology focuses on the needs of racialized communities to have access to clean air, water, land, and communities free of environmental toxins (Heynen and Ybarra, 2020).

Looking at Ruth Wilson Gilmore's work on abolition geography, the authors argue that people must be centered in analyses of racism and geographies, not just the ways they have been used and abused (Heynen and Ybarra, 2020). She argues that abolition is about creation and change, that "abolition geography starts from the homely premise that freedom is a place" (Heynen and Ybarra, 2020, p. 25). Abolition geography understands access to liberatory and full

lives to be possible for all people, especially Black and Brown people who are often pushed into categories of undocumented, guilty (and therefore imprisoned) (Heynen and Ybarra, 2020). The authors draw on Black radical tradition, Indigenous methodologies, and Latinx geographies to better understand the field of abolition ecology (Heynen and Ybarra, 2020). This being said, political ecology “must acknowledge that Indigenous territorial rights fundamentally shape the limits and possibilities of abolition for uninvited guests across race, class, and immigration status” (Heynen and Ybarra, 2020, pp. 26-27)

Furthermore, Heynen and Ybarra consult W.E.B. Du Bois and his theory of abolition democracy (Heynen and Ybarra, 2020). According to Du Bois, there is no freedom for Black folks in America until social systems that rely on white supremacy and the oppression of Black people are abolished (Heynen and Ybarra, 2020). The authors agree, arguing that these social structures must be transformed.

In addition, Nik Heynen, using his own definition, argues that abolition ecology looks at how white supremacy has created and sustains unequal access to nature and society (Heynen and Ybarra, 2020). The authors write that “nature has always been unevenly socially produced through relations of empire, settler colonialism and racial capitalism” (Heynen and Ybarra, p. 27, 2020). Just like Du Bois and Gilmore’s focuses on abolition democracy and abolition geography respectively, abolition ecology focuses on how white supremacy affects peoples’ access and relationships to clean and fresh air, water, robust land, and environmental racism (Heynen and Ybarra, 2020). Abolition ecology allows geographers to be more critical of how white supremacy is part of every institution in the US, its history and ongoing nature (Heynen and Ybarra, 2020).

### *Disability, incarceration, and isolation*

Canada has a long and disturbing history with psychiatric incarceration. Abbas and Voronka (2014) discuss Ontario’s historical psychiatric institutions – the first institutions for people with intellectual disabilities were constructed in Ontario in the 1850s (Abbas and Voronka, 2014). The authors write that prior to this construction, people with so-called mental illnesses had been housed in prisons. Thus, the asylum or psychiatric institution was believed by many to be an improvement and a form of aid (Abbas and Voronka, 2014). Those who were instructed to build the asylum were often patients themselves who had lacked the agency to decline and were not paid for their labour (Reaume, 2000a, in Abbas and Voronka, 2014).

Abbas and Voronka (2014) discuss how these institutions were built to control and exclude those who were deemed mentally unstable from general society. The concept of mental illness was created within these environments, “where mad people were monitored, typified, and categorized (Abbas and Voronka, p. 122, 2014). Aside from being believed to be inherited through genetics, “madness” was believed to be “triggered by urbanity” and something that must be isolated from the general public in order “to protect its purity and progress” (Abbas and Voronka, p. 127, 2014, p. 127). The Rideau Regional Centre in Smith Falls, Ontario, for example,



was confined behind walls and trees and worked to hide those deemed mentally unfit (Abbas and Voronka, 2014). This shows how spatial geography holds a significant role in how we view and treat people with disabilities in our society (Abbas and Voronka, 2014). Within the centre, patients experienced a tightly controlled environment including barred windows, locked doors, lack of privacy, the termination of individual property, gender segregated patients and staff, and more (Abbas and Voronka, 2014). The modern-day redevelopment of the Rideau Regional Centre erases “the history of confinement at this site and its role in exclusionary policies” (Abbas and Voronka, p. 126, 2014).

The Provincial Lunatic Asylum was built in 1850 in modern day Toronto, Ontario (Abbas and Voronka, 2014). The institution “was built at a time when white settlers were preoccupied with spatially containing various degeneracies, which included the criminal, the racialized, Aboriginals, and others” (Dowbiggin 1997, Gilman 1985, in Abbas and Voronka, p. 127, 2014). By the end of the 19th century, seven asylums existed in the province of Ontario.

### *Renaming and Rebranding*

We previously laid out how reform has been central to the persistence of psychiatric facilities. The use of renaming and rebranding has been one tool to create a veil of care around these facilities, hiding the violence within. Historical asylums, such as the Provincial Lunatic Asylum in Toronto, have gone through multiple renamings since their genesis (Abbas and Voronka, 2014). The Provincial Lunatic Asylum, currently known as the Queen Street Mental Health Centre, represents a form of rebranding (Abbas and Voronka, 2014). Many psychiatric spaces today use “the language of ‘community integration’” (Abbas and Voronka, 2014, p. 130), although many people today who do not live in institutions are still forced by psychiatrists to take medications, are detained and restrained if the psychiatrist believes that are a harm to themselves or others (Abbas and Voronka, 2014). ‘Community Treatment Orders’ include surveillance of and lack of agency for those contained in these hospitals and centers and many mental health centers today involve involuntary incarceration (Abbas and Voronka, 2014). The authors write that “Renaming, retelling, and redevelopment” (Abbas and Voronka, 2014, p. 133) erase the histories of previous psychiatric institutions which are now mental health centers. Psychiatric hospitals which have been redeveloped and rebranded as mental health centers “have their roots in policies that sought to identify, remove, and manage those who were deemed degenerate” (Abbas and Voronka, p. 2014, p. 134), and, as the authors note, these very practices continue to be practiced today. Palacios (2016) discusses the transcarceral continuum and how it relies on the reforming of language in “mental health agencies, welfare and child protective services, and professionalized social services” (Palacios, 2016, p. 144).

### *Transformative justice and climate justice: the racial, queer, and gendered dimensions*

In order to create safe, non-carceral communities, it is essential to examine and understand how people experience safety. Previously, we described how people with disabilities have been pathologized and deemed unsafe. Therefore, people are socialized to relate feeling a lack of safety when disabled people, particularly those with mental differences, are present. This internalized ableism is present in organizing communities, unless unlearning and learning occur. One manifestation of ableism is masking, where neurodivergent people hide neurodivergent behaviours and traits in order to be perceived as “normal.” Masking is performed in order to make the neurotypical people around the neurodivergent person feel safe and comfortable. Safe, inclusive spaces require that people deconstruct these learned thoughts and feelings of safety and comfort (and lack thereof), requiring acknowledgment and embrace of discomfort. Janice Haaken argues that in social movements, discomfort is often conflated with trauma, which is not always the case, resulting in a reactionary response that calls for action on someone else’s part. She emphasizes the need for organizers to dwell in and deconstruct their discomfort and tension (as cited in Friedman, 2021). The presence of people with disabilities makes abled people feel uncomfortable, which can be interpreted as trauma. As such, abled organizers must learn from their disabled peers in order to become aware of how disability manifests, and to allow space for discomfort in order for disabled and abled people to be in community together. To build this community, the recognition and differentiation between violence/harm and internalized ableism is necessary. In this process of learning and unlearning, and creating an environment where neurodivergent people can be themselves, there will inevitably be conflict. Systems of transformative justice must provide means through which people can address these conflicts.

Furthermore, there is a significant connection between climate justice and transformative justice. Palacios (2016) writes that girls and women of colour, in particular Black and Indigenous women, are often targeted by the state and thus the abolition movement must include their experiences. She writes that Indigenous and Black radical feminists push for justice that does not rely on the neoliberal state and reject heteronormativity, patriarchy, capitalism, and by extension the concept of the nation-state (Palacios, 2016). Palacios writes that “Indigenous feminists embrace this politics of resurgence and are interested in nurturing self-determined and community-led responses to racialized gendered violence targeting Indigenous girls and women rather than relying on colonial nation-states by further engaging with and appealing to state institutions and government bodies.”, arguing that there exists a desire for inter-community work instead of reliance on the government to provide essential services (Palacios, 2016, p. 142). The author argues that in North America, the increase in police surveillance and incarceration in recent decades “has coincided with neoliberal cuts in welfare, public health provision, and social services, alongside increased state policing and surveillance of Indigenous communities and communities of color” (Palacios, 2016, p. 143). She writes that Indigenous women are disproportionately incarcerated in Canada, making up around 41% of women in provincial prisons and 36% in federal prisons (Sapers, 2015 in Palacios, 2016). The mass incarceration of Indigenous women works to legally and socially eliminate them from society and reproduces gendered white supremacy (Palacios, 2016).

Each of these institutions and organizations work to control Black and Indigenous women from outside of prison (Palacios, 2016). Many radical Indigenous groups are aimed at focusing on their communities' needs instead of fighting the nation state (and not winning). Radical Black and Indigenous feminists groups understand that “citizenship, incapacitation, and punishment, for example—work together to produce and police social difference” and other Black, Brown, and Indigenous peoples (Palacios, 2016, p. 150). They reject “heteropatriarchal racial nationalism” inside and outside of their communities (Palacios, 2016, p. 150). They understand that mainstream white feminism upholds the nation state, and thus the carceral state, and has hurt Black and Brown people, especially women (Palacios, 2016). She discusses the prison abolitionist praxis, or the vision of the abolition of state-sanctioned surveillance and incarceration and argues that the framework works to end “structures of white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy that shape institutional violence—and creating lasting alternatives” (Palacios, 2016, p. 151).

### *Riverview Hospital as a Case Study in Local Context*

The conversation around deinstitutionalization in so-called “British Columbia” has been largely centered on Riverview Hospital in Coquitlam, commonly referred to as Riverview. Riverview was opened as an asylum in 1913 (Laneela, 2014). It originally called the Hospital for the Mind, then renamed Essondale, and once again to Riverview in 1965 — evidently, Riverview was not immune to the rebranding tradition of psychiatric institutions (Vinca et al., 2020; Morrow et al., 2014). Amidst changing ideas around the ethics of the asylum as an institution, a growing movement toward regional care, and economic cuts to social services, patient numbers at Riverview began declining in the 1960s (Ronquillo, 2009). Ronquillo (2009) notes that the concept of normalization, mental health treatment through integration of patients into ‘normal’ society, as espoused by Wolf Wolfensberger, alongside the development and use of psychiatric medications were central to deinstitutionalization at the time. Boschma et al. (2014) note that the closure of Riverview was advocated for by groups such as the Mental Patients Association (MPA), a Kitsilano-based grassroots anti-psychiatry organization who also critiqued the establishment of community-based mental health services as an alternative to centralized psychiatric treatment. The MPA established its own systems of mental healthcare among its members, delivered by ex-patients who “transformed the meaning of help and support” (p. 11). The MPA also organized protests at Riverview to speak out against the institution and its practices, including lobotomies, physical restraint by means of straight jackets, and overmedication (Mental Patient’s Association, 1973). Plans to transfer patients from Riverview to more local mental health treatment, and living in the community, were first initiated in 1987. However, Riverview continued to operate and use violent practices such as electroshock therapy into the 2000s (Laneela, 2014). The Hospital finally closed in 2012. However, the site has continued to house mental health facilities, including həy’χwət kʷθə šxʷhəli? leləm (Healing Spirit House), “home of The Maples Adolescent Treatment Centre and Provincial Assessment Centre”

(Government of British Columbia, 2019). At the time of writing this report, the Riverview lands are currently being redeveloped through a reconciliation-based partnership between K<sup>w</sup>ik<sup>w</sup>ə<sup>ł</sup>əm (Kwkwetlem First Nation) and BC Housing, renamed səmiq<sup>w</sup>ə<sup>ł</sup>elə, meaning Place of the Great Blue Heron in hənqəminəm (Cheung, 2021). The site, within the ancestral lands of K<sup>w</sup>ik<sup>w</sup>ə<sup>ł</sup>əm, will continue to operate mental health services (Cheung, 2021).

Throughout Riverview's redevelopment, we impress upon the community, planners, and decision-makers to consider with regards to mental health care:

- Are facilities simply being renamed and rebranded while continuing to inflict trauma? What do we need to do in order to abolish psychiatric institutions and create alternative, non-carceral systems of care?
- Are spaces rooted in transformative justice principles, including healing, care, and accountability?
- How are broader systems of oppression – including capitalism, colonialism, and ableism – creating disability in our local context?
- How do these systems intersect, and how might we dismantle them?
- How can care systems address root causes rather than seek to treat and correct individuals?

Redevelopment of the site through a joint, reconciliatory decision-making process is an important event of K<sup>w</sup>ik<sup>w</sup>ə<sup>ł</sup>əm land back and leadership on land stewardship (Cheung, 2021). However, there continues to be psychiatric institutions in “B.C.” A community has recently been grown by three psychiatric survivors of Royal Jubilee Hospital's Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES) in Victoria, with the goal of sharing stories of the PES among survivors. At the time of writing this paper, the Facebook group “PES: a Pathetic Excuse for Support” has 2000 members, and the accompanying Instagram account (@dobetter.pes) has around 150 posts with survivor-submitted stories detailing trauma experienced at the PES. Many institutions with similar stories of trauma exist in “B.C.” and across “Canada,” with ableism saturating society resulting in abuse and discrimination in non-health-centric spaces including educational, political, and legal systems.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, we have chosen to focus on the history of psychiatric institutionalization and incarceration across so-called “Canada.” Our aim is not to speak for those who have a wide variety of experiences with psychiatric institutionalization, but to educate able-bodied and neurotypical climate organizers. Academic literature that documents and provides a way forward for deinstitutionalization and psychiatric abolition in the context of the U.S. is prolific, however, within so-called Canada, literature is sparse and has primarily been developed around the psychiatric and mental health institutions in “Ontario.” The paper seeks to document the psychiatric abolition movement in “B.C.” and highlight gaps for future research. Further research on B.C. institutions should be conducted employing a critical disability lens. While there is some

documentation of anti-psychiatry organizing among white communities, such as the Mental Patient's Association's actions in the late 20th century, documentation of organizing within and among racialized communities should be centered going forward.

Able-bodied and neurotypical organizers have the responsibility to become educated on disability justice, without placing the burden on disabled folks in their communities to take the role of educators. The racial and gendered dimensions of climate justice have become common knowledge among organizers but the disability dimension must also be broadly recognized and understood, with emphasis on understanding the issues faced by multiple-marginalized disabled people, in order to create a world that realizes justice and liberation for all. Our aim was to avoid using paternalistic and white supremacist language and tones throughout the paper. As many climate organizers in Canada are white, we hope that this paper addresses how white climate organizing so often perpetuates white supremacy and ableism, and thus alienates people of colour and people with disabilities from participating in environmental justice initiatives.

## **Call to Action**

Our recommendations appear in the form of a [Transformative Justice toolkit](#). We discuss areas of future exploration, including the connection between abolition and decolonization, queer incarceration, and further research on Indigenous incarceration in Canada. We explore the links among transformative justice, disability justice, and climate justice, as well as generative conflict and oppression, look at what it means to cultivate collective access, and provide a social syllabus on abolition for public use. We also provide a case study for Riverview Hospital, a decommissioned psychiatric institution in Coquitlam, British Columbia. In this toolkit, we encourage people to think in a circular and intersectional way instead of through a linear lens. This means analyzing the many ways that people experience psychiatric institutionalization differently based on their identities, such as gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation, and more. As a group, we look forward to seeing a larger discussion of the connection between psychiatric and environmental justice from environmental leaders and organizations in the near future.

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