

# Editorial Introduction to Volume 2, Issue 2

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## Article Information

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## Abstract

The current issue of JCSCD continues the broad mission to examine disability and languaging under the light of criticality and casts a particular focus on genocide and its implications for disabled people and communication. The seven articles in this volume each address aspects of interconnections between genocide, trauma, human rights, linguistic rights, decolonization, systemic inequities in healthcare and education as they relate to disability and communication. Collectively, the papers in this volume remind us of the need to recognize the interlocking nature of oppression in the pursuit of linguistic justice. In this issue, we also wrestle with the growing erosion of academic freedom and the need to adopt safeguards that shield scholarship from the reach of fear and repression.

The current issue of JCSCD continues the broad mission to examine disability and languaging under the light of criticality, and focuses on genocide and its implications for disabled people and communication. Genocide wipes out people, material culture, language, knowledge, and memory (or attempts to do so). What remains is a debilitated population characterized by mass disablement, endangered languages and traditional knowledges, and the pillaging of indigenous resources. Genocide is a tool of settler colonialism driven by capitalism. The entanglements of settler colonialism and capitalism are what contribute to the modern construct of disability as a category that posits some people as less human than others (Erevelles, 2011; Grech, 2016). Therefore, disability justice, which recognizes that ableism is intertwined with other forms of oppression, demands that we take settler colonialism and capitalism to account. For more than a year, a genocide has taken place in Palestine under the auspices of the Israeli settler state.

Within Palestine, Israeli settler-colonialism is contingent upon 'disabling' the Palestinian population and, further, the tactics employed to marginalize and oppress Palestinians serve to reify ableist conceptions that equate disability with deficiency. Because the construction of a subhuman Palestinian identity relies on and reinforces hegemonic conceptions of disability as deficiency, I proffer, dismantling one demands the renunciation of both." (Jaffee, 2016, p. 2).

Palestine is a disability justice issue, as is genocide and settler colonial violence in all forms.

Disability activist and writer Alice Wong (2023) writes, "everyone has a stake in defending humanity and dignity and Palestinian liberation is tied to disability justice." Palestinian scholar Jasbir Puar (2017) writes that since 1948, the Palestinian people have existed in a settler-

colonial state that is often violent and debilitating. The intentional disablement of Palestinian bodies exacerbated by the withholding of adequate health care and disability accommodations infrastructure creates a debilitated population (Jaffee, 2016). As Jaffee (2016) writes, "the geopolitical production of disablement among Palestinians has often been foundational to the settlement of the Israeli state" (p. 1). A debilitated population serves the settler-colonial state's interests in maintaining power and control of masses that might otherwise rise up in resistance. The mass destruction in Gaza lies bare this settler colonial project and the wanton maiming of bodyminds, from limbs torn asunder to subjecting generations of people to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD affects communication and language learning (Yehuda, 2016), the ability to access autobiographical memories (Brien et al., 2020; Westby, 2024), and interpret and engage in social situations (Hyter, 2024).

Language and (dis)ability play a critical role in survival during periods of armed conflict and state terror. For example, deaf people often miss distributions of aid or audio-verbal warnings of incoming attacks because they did not hear the announcements, disabled language users have heightened risk in interactions with occupying forces and linguistic barriers in obtaining access to medical services, and refugees confront various barriers to migrating and other forms of aid because of limited access to linguistic resources and language barriers. Genocide, civil war, and military conflict are all mass disabling events, which also interrupts vital therapeutic and health care interventions such as interrupting power to charge assistive technologies such as cochlear implants, prosthetics, and alternative and augmented communication tablets. Bombs wipe out prosthetics factories and medical care facilities.

A significant angle of the settler colonial project also enacts linguistic injustice. The settler colonial project in-

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stitutes accent discrimination to demarcate those who belong and those who do not. Settler colonial authorities enact policies and practices to prohibit or destroy marginalized languages, not only to replace local languages and cultures with the settler state's dominant language and culture but also to subjugate the local population's ability to resist or maintain collective local identities such as the British colonial authorities' prohibition of *Kar Pallavi Bhasha* (Nair, 2020). Settler colonial logics have also affected attitudes toward non-normative languaging. Certain languages and modalities marked the superiority of white British colonizers in contrast to Britain's colonial subjects (Cleall, 2015). Through our focus on language as a site of disablement, debility, and power relations, our efforts in working toward a more just world, linguistically and otherwise, are interconnected with efforts to address all forms of oppression.

Protecting author safety is a fundamental concern when addressing topics such as genocide, where power dynamics and censorship play a central role. Genocide depends on systematic silencing of dissenting voices, making it imperative to provide secure avenues for those writing about these atrocities (Altanian, 2020; Maksudyan, 2009). The JCSCD unequivocally condemns Hamas' attacks on Israeli civilians and expresses deep concern about the global rise of antisemitism. Simultaneously, we must address the imbalance of power that disproportionately censors those critiquing the Israeli oc-

cupation, especially its calculated and inhumane policies in Gaza. Our mission is to amplify the perspectives that are disproportionately oppressed. Genocide relies on silencing dissent, rendering it critical to create safe platforms for voices that challenge dominant narratives. To uphold ethical and scholarly integrity, JCSCD expects all authors to be accountable for their work but recognizes that, under extraordinary circumstances where an author's safety is at risk, anonymity or pseudonymity may be necessary. In such cases, the authors' identities are verified by the editors and each case carefully reviewed, aligning with the guidelines of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) that prioritizes human safety above publishing norms (COPE, 2024). These measures, while vital for author protection, are also a lamentable consequence of the growing erosion of academic freedom, forcing institutions to adopt safeguards that shield scholarship from the reach of fear and repression.

While not all of the articles in this special issue explicitly address the interconnections between languaging, disability, and genocide, we recognize there are underlying connections between genocide, human dignity, linguistic rights, and the resulting mass disablement, which intersect with issues of disability and communication. Our work for linguistic justice requires that we recognize the interlocking nature of oppression. To quote Fannie Lou Hamer, "nobody's free until everyone's free" (Brooks & Houck, 2010).



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