**Dr. Rosemarie Garland-Thompson 2021 AVETH Social Justice Seminar Series Transcript**

17:06:09 Alright Hello everybody, I am Mark Anthony. I work here at ETH and I am the coordinator of diversity at AVETH.

17:06:20 I am going to start off by just asking everybody

17:06:25 if they can potentially give me a thumbs up if they can hear me or not.

17:06:32 Perfect. Great. And I would just ask that you keep your microphone muted. You can feel free to turn your video on if you like, but you could keep it off potentially for making it easier for the internet for folks who do have their cameras on.

17:06:51 I am just going to start off by introducing the seminar series, talking a little bit about guidelines, and introducing our first speaker.

17:07:00 So the 2021 AVETH social justice seminar series is focused on disability rights and studies.

17:07:08 Each year the seminar series concentrates on a theme to create scholarly opportunities to learn more about social justice. We hope participation in the seminar series stimulates your curiosity and interest to be deliberately inclusive in your administrating,

17:07:23 leadership, advising, mentoring, and teaching. Deepening your understanding of disability is important for everyone and it's essential to promote the growth and evolution of ETH in addition to the newly green lite Barrier free project at ETH.

17:07:37 If you have any questions or comments or would like to become more involved in social justice at ETH, please reach out to diversity at AVETH dot ETHZ dot CH or visit our website.

17:07:47 This year we have four leading experts in disability studies virtually joining us to ETH. Our first speaker is Dr. Rosemarie Garland-Thompson, whom I will introduce momentarily.

17:07:59 Our second seminar entitled, Disability studies methodologies: using quantitative and qualitative methods to uncover nuances of disabled experiences in higher education by Dr.

17:08:08 Margaret Price will be on November 11 from five to six Central European Time.

17:08:17 Our third seminar entitled Academic ableism, eugenics, accommodation, and design will be delivered by Dr. Jay Dolmage and is on November 16 from five to six.

17:08:24 Our final seminar, entitled Against ableism in teaching and scholarship will be delivered by Dr. Stephanie S. Rosen, and that's on November 30 from five to six.

17:08:33 Please join us for each seminar, which will touch upon very different angles of disability.

17:08:39 Next I want to share a few of the guidelines for today's sessions. There will be multiple communication material formats for the seminar.

17:08:47 We will record the event and makes slides available shortly after the live seminar.

17:08:51 As you may notice there will also be automatically generated transcription in English during the session, which works okay, but it's not entirely accurate.

17:09:00 So this will also be saved as a transcription that we will edit and make available shortly after the live seminar.

17:09:06 You may also type your questions into the chat box in English or in German.

17:09:11 We will then read the questions aloud to the speaker in English during the Q&A session.

17:09:17 Well the chat is accessible for some, and even a preference, it is also a barrier for some people but questions after the seminar can be shared with AVETH or directly with Dr.

17:09:28 Garland-Thompson via email.

17:09:29 And while we do not anticipate it, any hateful or harmful comments will not be accepted, and you will be removed from the Zoom Room guidelines aside I want to personally thank you all for joining and the entire AVETH team for helping to make this event possible.

17:09:41 And without further ado, it is my absolute pleasure to introduce our first speaker of the seminar series, Dr. Rosemarie Garland-Thompson.

17:09:56 Dr Garland-Thompson's pronouns are she/her, and she joins us today from San Francisco, California, in the USA. Dr Rosemarie Garland-Thompson is Professor Emerita in the Department of English at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Her work addresses critical disability studies,

17:10:05 disability studies, bioethics, and feminist theory and advances access and inclusion to a broad range of audiences. Dr Garland-Thompson has written many seminal and highly influential texts.

17:10:16 And while I promised her that I wouldn't go on and on about all of these. I will honor that, but suffice to say, you should really check out her scholarship.

17:10:24 it's incredibly diverse and impactful.

17:10:28 Her career also provides an important blueprint for how to communicate both within and outside of academia, in order to make changes, and to promote social justice, and we are incredibly fortunate to have her with us today for her seminar, entitled, 'How

17:10:41 to build an inclusive world'.

17:10:44 Just as a last reminder, please address your questions and comments to Dr. Garland-Thompson, using the chat box function, and we will get to them during the q&a section. Rosemarie, please begin when you are ready.

17:11:12 Thank you very much. I'm really delighted to be here.

17:11:18 And I want to commend AVETH for organizing this event. And for calling it a social justice seminar, so thank you very much for including me, Mark Anthony for organizing this; I'm really honored to be on the program with my esteemed colleagues, and I'm really

17:11:43 looking forward to their talks and presentations later on in the fall.

17:11:50 So, let me begin with my presentation today.

17:11:58 And we've entitled this, 'How to build an inclusive world'.

17:12:07 Okay.

17:12:10 Already, I'm having difficulty advancing this

17:12:15 Would you like to switch to my computer? (Mark asks)

17:12:20 Oh my gosh.

17:12:26 Do you know what I might do besides just push the arrows? (Rosemarie asks). Possibly by clicking on a mouse it will be something that advances it (Mark responds)

17:12:37 What would I click on. (Rosemarie asks)

17:12:39 Oh, there we go.

17:12:41 All right. Wonderful. Thank you. Multiple approaches, sometimes are advantagous and accessible and sometimes they aren't but.

17:12:52 So, let me begin with a provocation, a slogan of what we sometimes called critical disability theory or even the disability rights movement. And that is the claim that disability is everywhere, once you know how to find it and this comes to us from the

17:13:12 historian Douglas Paignton and I recommend his work

17:13:23 wholeheartedly.

17:13:19 So I'm going to begin with a couple of definitions about what is disability, and these definitions will certainly be in the context of disability as social justice and as a social justice concern.

17:13:35 So number one, the human variations that we think of as disabilities, and this is how I like to talk about disability, as a form of human variation.

17:13:47 So the human variations we think of as disabilities are part of the human condition that occur in every life and family, and are a theme in all art and culture.

17:14:01 So that's my first assertion about disability.

17:14:06 My second assertion about disability or definition is the lived experiences of disability, give people and communities opportunities for expression, creativity, resourcefulness, relationships, and flourishing.

17:14:27 And I'm hoping that my presentation today will be a series of examples about these opportunities. Disability, I want to suggest, is a set of stories, a set of narratives that we receive and we remake. In other words, we get these stories by being acculturated

17:14:51 into our particular culture. And then we have the opportunity to rewrite or remake these stories in one way or another over our lifetimes together.

17:15:03 So disability is a set of stories that we receive and remake about human variations that the scientific medical, medicine, considers to be disability, disease, illness, and what Margaret Price and others have called body/mind differences.

17:15:26 So, Douglas Paignton has suggested that disability is everywhere. Where do we then find disability?

17:15:36 Disability is something that we can find everywhere in culture which is what I'm going to emphasize here. We find it in literature and performance and art, in music, and in design, and let me give you some illustrations here.

17:15:54 The founding narrative of the found, or the founding story, of Western culture is the story of Oedipus, Oedipus the king. The story of Oedipus is bookended by disability. Oedipus's story begins with his damaged foot that marks him as a particular

17:16:17 character for the particular fate that he plays out in his life. It marks him as the person that will live his life and be related to the people he is related to.

17:16:35 So disability begins the Oedipus story and disability and the editor's story, I'm showing here an actor, as Oedipus from 1896. You may recall at the end of the story when Oedipus discovers the truth of his face, the truth of his identity.

17:16:51 He is traumatized enough to gouge his own eyes out and to tear in the Greek dramatic fashion at his own clothes. So, disability begins and ends our founding Western narrative

17:17:12 Disability is a prompt and opportunity for aesthetic production. Beethoven is a wonderful example. Beethoven who became deaf over a lifetime, as anyone does, composed his most important work

17:17:32 after his deafness was complete.

17:17:35 And he writes a testimony of this, which is the testimony of despair, and after he writes this testimony of despair, he goes forward and creates some of his most important and significant work, as a deaf composer.

17:17:51 The impressionist artist Monet, also over a lifetime, his disability, that is to say, his increasing blindness, inflects his work and shapes what we think of as his late work by making his portraits of water lilies in the case that I'm showing you here, become

17:18:15 more distinctively impressionistic or more distinctively fuzzy as his vision itself changes over the course of his lifetime and aesthetic production.

17:18:28 Another example to follow about the shaping and the informing of aesthetic production by the experience of disability is the genre of blind musicians, and I'm showing you this from the American tradition here: first we have Blind Tom who is Thomas Wiggins,

17:18:48 who was an enslaved, actually savant performer, composer, and performer in the late 19th century and early 19th century and of course this starts a tradition, or continue the tradition of black and African American blind musicians that include Ray Charles

17:19:10 in the US context and Stevie Wonder, as well as many other blind black musicians and composers. Here's an example of a deaf sound artist, Christine son Kim, whose work is informed by the principal or the notion that deaf people are often imagined as not

17:19:34 experiencing sound, but what Christine said Kim does is explore the way that deaf people can and do experience and use sound as an implement and aesthetic implement in their own work.

17:19:51 Another example here of course from artistic production is disability dance. I'm showing here and image of the dancer Alice Sheppard and Laurel Lawson in their kinetic light performance from 2017, in which they use and develop a whole range of virtuosic,

17:20:12 virtuosic dance movements, using their wheelchairs.

17:20:21 There is of course a trove of disability narrative stories about the experience of disability, and I'm simply showing you here a couple of examples, contemporary examples.

17:20:32 One is a book that I have edited along with Peter Catapano from the New York Times that collects the really groundbreaking personal essays that were part of a New York Times series for several years, called About Us.

17:20:49 These are personal essays written by people with disabilities, about the experience of living with disability. In 2020, we have Disability Visibility edited by Alice Wong.

17:21:00 Which again presents a diversity of exerpiences in the form of personal narratives of people with disabilities by people with disabilities.

17:21:18 So I want to emphasize for our purposes here today at ETH, where we can find disability in our inclusive designed and built environments, and I want to want to talk specifically about that, because ETH is a technical university and by that what we mean,

17:21:43 or what I mean, is that the mission of ETH or any technical university is what I call, inclusive world building. That is to say that ETH and other higher institution, education, educational institutions have the mission of training the world builders

17:22:11 of the future. That is to say, the engineers of both the built material environment, the technological environment, and the human environment. That is to say, actual human beings, engineering, actual human beings in medicine,

17:22:30 Engineering, Science, Technology, what we think of as STEM education.

17:22:35 So I'll give you some examples here.

17:22:37 These are wonderful examples. Here is a tactical watch that has been designed for blind people to use. Blind people often need to, and do, access information through the sense of touch, through tactility as opposed to accessing information through, for example,

17:23:01 print.

17:23:02 And so this technical watch designed to be touched, rather than visually accessed is an elegant and accessible design. I'm showing here and image of me.

17:23:17 I wanted you to see me, to introduce me a little bit, all of me not just my head.

17:23:23 Here I am using my accessible technology, the technology that I need to use in order to enter the workplace and to have a job, and of course to enter education as well.

17:23:34 I work in the educational workplace and that is inclusive communication technology. So, I do not input text tactically, I do not use a keyboard, but rather I speak.

17:23:48 I use dictation technology

17:23:50 in order to do my work and dictation technology has technology has changed the way that I relate to the increasingly changing and demanding expectations of a digital world or what I call a digitally burdened workplace.

17:24:08 Here are some elegant prosthetic designs that I wanted to share with you. I'm showing you an image here of an Eames chair inspired prosthetic leg. And I want to call attention to a fashion practice that I think is particularly interesting, and that is

17:24:25 the fashion practice of displaying rather than hiding high tech and aesthetically designed prosthetic devices. In the past, prosthetic devices were often designed in order to be hidden.

17:24:41 They were often designed in order to mimic flesh-like limbs. But now, these beautiful and aesthetic designs are put forward very often to be seen, and we have this man, very fashionable man, wearing a suit that has short length, legs, so that people can view

17:25:02 and so that he can display as a fashion statement.

17:25:07 In the same way that many of us display our glasses, these prosthetic devices.

17:25:12 Another very interesting change and aesthetic design comes from the alternative limb project, and I'm showing you here an aesthetically designed limb, again, to be seen.

17:25:25 It is emblazoned here with beautiful flowers and often the designs that come from the alternative limb project are incrusted with jewels; they are but bedazzled, and they're really quite wonderful if you want to go and take a look at this.

17:25:44 I'm showing you here an image of the MIT engineer, Hugh Herr, who has designed a variety of very impressive and important prosthetics. Hugh Herr is one of the few designers who himself has a disability. He's a double amputee, so he designs

17:26:06 his prosthetics that he himself he uses, and that other people use based on his own experience

17:26:14 of disability and of using prosthetic devices. This is a wonderful image of an ear chair. I don't know how much this is used because I haven't researched it very much, but it is a hack, if you will, on a classic chair designed to increase the auditory

17:26:37 environment to enhance the auditory environment in conversation between two people that might be sitting opposite one another in these chairs to amplify the auditory communication environment between the two ears of these chairs.

17:26:55 Of course all of us are familiar with the signage in the accessible world, the classic, and I'll talk a little bit more about that blue and white stick figures that indicate paths and accessible spaces within the built environment, and we'll talk a bit

17:27:16 more about that. This is an emblem that guides people in multiple ways to single use restrooms, or single use bathrooms, and it indicates how these different, this new form of, accessible restroom can be available to a variety of different people and of

17:27:39 course the signage is visually accessible as well as tactically accessible because it's braille.

17:27:47 Some of the accessible sanitary systems are particularly impressive.

17:27:53 I'm showing you here two toilets, which have been designed both to be accessible for use and accessible for cleaning. They have grab bars.

17:28:05 They have different kinds of

17:28:13 designs that make them usable by a variety of different users who have a variety of different needs as well as embodiments. Of course accessible transportation systems have changed our world, and I'll talk a little bit more about. that I'm giving you examples

17:28:31 here of the Washington DC metro, and the history of accessible transportation in the United States, starting with the Washington DC Metro is a very interesting one; if anyone wants to research, that I've done a little bit of work around that myself.

17:28:51 So I'm showing here some examples of accessibility features built into public transportation. Over the last 30 years or so starting around in 19, late 1960s, for example, braille information is available, there is access for people using service animals.

17:29:12 There is good access, of course, from platforms into the trains. I'm showing you an image here of cane navigation over tactically accessible surfaces.

17:29:25 Just to give you a few examples of the accessible built, transportation, the built and designed transportation environment.

17:29:34 This is a particularly interesting example for European audiences, and I should have put this in the slides but this is an example of a project I have been working on, or at least with myself over the last year.

17:29:49 This is an example of a castle called Schloss Hartheim and Memorial, shown in 1940 in the older picture on the right and in 2015 in the rehabilitated form of the building.

17:30:05 This is a politically contaminated building that has been rehabilitated from the care center that was used in the late 1930s and early 1940s as a gassing and extermination facility for people with disabilities, under the Nazi regime.

17:30:28 And that has now been rehabilitated into a memorial and interpretive site to give, and provide the history of eugenics and the history of these programs of extermination which you may hear more of about later.

17:30:44 So thinking about rebuilding or rehabilitating politically contaminated buildings is a really important part of European architecture and preservation in general.

17:30:58 Of course, devising accessible solutions for historic buildings is an important initiative in inclusive world building a particularly challenging problem, design solution if you will for historic buildings in Europe and elsewhere.

17:31:17 We don't have as many old historic buildings in the US, as you do in Europe, and I'm showing you a gothic cathedral with an accessible entrance that has been designed in order to preserve the integrity of the building but also to make it accessible,

17:31:36 and up to code for the regulations about accessing historic buildings.

17:31:42 Of course, the iconic emblem of access in the built and designed inclusive world is the ramp, and I'm showing you here an image of the helical ramp at the Ed Roberts campus in Berkeley, California.

17:31:59 This is an emblem, in my view of the evolution of ramp design from in the early 1960s when ramps made out of ugly aluminum were fastened on to the front of buildings and thought to devalue the aesthetic integrity of a building and the economic value

17:32:22 of a building. Now, to design solutions which put ramps like this beautiful red helical ramp, at the very center of a building, to emblematize the inclusive design that architects and designers and engineers have been charged with coming up

17:32:45 with and evolving over the last 30 or 40 years.

17:32:50 I'm showing you here, a cover of a very interesting book by my colleague Kat Holmes, who is a engineer of accessible products and design, called 'Mismatch: how inclusion shapes design' and this is written for, and from a computer engineer, about why and

17:33:13 how we might include disability in our corporations and in our built and designed world.

17:33:22 So I want to talk in the rest of my presentation about inclusive world building at work and give some suggestions for steps that you might take at your university and in your various systems at the university to promote Disability Justice.

17:33:48 So, I mentioned that visibility is everywhere once you know how to look for it and I want to suggest that access is everywhere once you know how to look for it, and now I've showed you some ways that access is available, I'm going to charge you to find

17:34:04 access and define inclusion and to carry out inclusive world building. So I've suggested to you that there's an iconography of access and iconography of Disability Justice to use and to note, and to promote in your lives and in your workplace.

17:34:27 And I'm showing you the international symbol of access designed originally and more static stick figure that we're very familiar with from 1968, and the controversial but interesting 2010 more dynamic, agentic, if you will, figure of the wheelchair user

17:34:50 leaning forward as if the user is actually powering that own, that chair herself.

17:35:02 I want to suggest, and this is my main point here, that accessible, or inclusive design, creates disability inclusion by changing who we share our world with.

17:35:18 And I'm showing a picture of people on accessible transportation, simply going about their world: a wheelchair user,

17:35:28 using a street car here designed for wheelchair access sitting next to a person who was an African American woman or a woman of color using a mobile phone on her way to work.

17:35:43 Both are professionally dressed, both are simply going about the world. I'm going to suggest that 50 years ago, anywhere in the world, and certainly in the wealthy world,

17:35:56 this scene could not take place.

17:35:58 This man would not be going to work.

17:36:01 This woman would not be going to work because they had not had access to the inclusive built environment that has been developed over the last 50 years, and I'm going to talk a little bit about the history of that development.

17:36:19 In my narrative of disability is everywhere and accessibility is everywhere,

17:36:26 this begins with the united nations, beginning in 1948, with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights. So it is the concept of human rights and civil rights

17:36:42 that leads us to the whole apparatus of legislation that creates disability and people with disabilities as a minority group, as a protected category, as a category meriting inclusion.

17:37:01 And as a category that it is against the law now, in most of the world, to discriminate against. This is Eleanor Roosevelt, holding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

17:37:20 In the United States, we have a series of laws, beginning in, more or less 1968 that creates this apparatus of legal provisions that desegregate the world, that integrates the world, and that mandate disability inclusion.

17:37:43 This is the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and 2009, but I want to emphasize here today, the continuation of the United Nations because of course the United Nations, as you will know is in your country, in Geneva, and I have actually gone there

17:38:02 to work on this.

17:38:05 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, there are many conventions, many treaties that have come out of the original 1948 UN Declaration on human rights.

17:38:18 In 2006, we have what is infelicitously sometimes called the UNCRPD, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, which is a much more capacious treaty.

17:38:32 It's a much more capacious treatment of Disability Justice than the Americans with Disabilities Act, and that is another conversation that people might want to have.

17:38:43 I want to show you an image of Theresia Degener, who was a German law professor, a colleague, and friend of mine who was, she may still be, at least I hope so,

17:38:52 the vice chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities the UNCRPD. Theresia is a very interesting figure in disability law, Disability Justice, in that she was born as what some people call aT halidomide, she was born armless.

17:39:11 And she's a very interesting history of her relationship with prosthetics. She was offered prosthetics as a child, and prosthetics were enforced on her, and her narrative is that prosthetics got in the way of her using the body that she was born with to engage

17:39:28 with the world. And I love this picture of her because she is in a beautifully tailored suit, that I very much admire, that has been tailored for her as an armless person. This is part of disability fashion that's evolving, a very interesting topic that you might

17:39:45 be interested in.

17:39:49 What can we do to increase disability inclusion. I'm going to try to wrap up here in just a few minutes so we have some time for Q&A.

17:39:58 These are calls.

17:40:01 First of all we can know disability history, culture, and justice. We have an obligation to bring forward these elements, these knowledge systems, if you will, in order to create disability inclusion and justice.

17:40:23 We have the obligation, I'm calling us to know disability technologies and to use disability accommodations and technologies in our lives and our work, all of us.

17:40:39 I want to call us to practicing disability inclusion in the workforce, the workplace, and the marketplace. That's the concept of Kat Holmes in Mismatch,

17:40:59 that disability needs to be incorporated into the workforce, the workplace, and the marketplace.

17:40:59 We have the obligation, the call, to find and support inclusive communities, and I'm showing in a church community here, a deaf church community, using American Sign Language, as an example.

17:41:13 And finally to connect with disability organizations. I'm showing you a very impressive disability organization, UK based, that I'm familiar with called Changing Faces, which is operated by the person with a disability and founded by the person with a disability,

17:41:30 James Partridge. It's a support organization for people with disabilities in the workforce and life.

17:41:39 And I want to end by showing you an image of my colleague, Haben Girma, the first deaf, blind person, a first generation African American woman,

17:41:54 the first deaf, blind person to graduate from Harvard Law School, along with Barack Obama in 2015 at a ceremony at the White Housemin celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which is the first time that Barack Obama

17:42:15 had ever met Haben Girma, and it was an historic meeting and and historic, if you will, consciousness raising moment for the President of the United States.

17:42:27 And I want to suggest that building an inclusive world,

17:42:34 and bringing disability into the world, in these ways that I've had suggested can change attitudes, it can increase access, it can build community, and it can cultivate leadership.

17:42:52 Thank you.