**Down to the Struts**

Season 5, Episode 2: All Our Families

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Guest: Jennifer Natalya Fink

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**Introduction**

“When we claim our disability lineage in our family, It also allows us to rethink and rewrite the story that we already have about people in our family. So it's both finding and claiming lost relatives in a way and welcoming them in and honoring them rather than stigmatizing and delineating them.”

[jazzy piano chords, bass strumming with smooth R&B]

Qudsiya Naqui:

Hi, this is Qudsiya Naqui, and welcome to another episode of Down to the Struts, the podcast about disability design and intersectionality. Today, we'll be listening in on my conversation with Jennifer Natalya Fink. Jennifer is a professor in the Department of English and the director of the program in Disability Studies at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, I had the privilege of speaking with Jennifer about her new book, All Our Family's: Disability Lineage and the Future of Kinship. This is a powerful reflection that documents the erasure of disability from our family narratives, the damage that this can cause as we navigate our kinship ties, and how applying the principles of disability justice to bring our disabled ancestors back into our family lineage can help us hold our communities closer in webs of care. Reading this book allowed me to reflect on my family's own disability lineage. And I hope it will offer you the same opportunity to reflect and illuminate those disability stories, you might not have realized were right there in the branches of your family tree. Okay, let's get down to it.

[jazzy piano chords, bass strumming with smooth R&B]

Qudsiya Naqui:

Thank you so much, Jennifer, for joining me on down to the struts. It's it's really a pleasure to have you.

Jennifer Natalya Fink:

Oh, I'm so excited to be here.

Qudsiya Naqui:

I'd love for you to start off by sharing a little bit about yourself and, you know, what led you to your career as a writer and how that interest intersected with your work on disability studies?

Jennifer Natalya Fink:

Sure. So I think I've always been in love with the magic of stories from early childhood, the way stories transform us connect us and the possibility for transformation through story. You're not stuck with an existing story. And I did a lot of things in my 20s and 30s. But I ended up being an experimental fiction writer, strongly influenced by ideas about queerness and social change and kind of anti normativity. Right. So I had a child, kind of late in life, got pregnant when I was 39. And gave birth when I was 40. And my daughter was diagnosed with autism when she was two and a half. And I experienced it as kind of trauma and crisis. And I got past that. But looking back, she's 15, almost 15. Now I was thinking about why was this traumatic when disability as we know is a normal part of human experience. One and four, one and five, depending how you slice it, people in the world are disabled. And I got interested in my family history with disability and the stigma and shame that had been passed down and used some of my storytelling ability and complicated ways of thinking about story and unpacking story to rethink the narratives about disability that I inherited and how they made it unnecessarily traumatic, essentially. So that's one piece of it. I was already a professor at Georgetown University. And my focus was primarily creative writing but also queer theory postcolonial all the conversations in the culture about difference and the political social forces that marginalized people so as I was having my life transformed by my daughter, I started thinking more about disability which I knew a little bit about disability studies because if you're in queer theory, you know, anti normativity camp. And I've actually worked with disabled kids at one point, but I hadn't put the pieces together in terms of my daughter's experience my experience as a parent, my own identity as a queer person and biracial family. In thinking this stuff threw together, and I got really interested in the conversations going on, especially in the disability justice world, really challenging just sort of the inclusion model, right, which was a lot as a parent, at best I got, like, you need to accept your kid like you thought they were gonna be this kind of kid, and they're gonna be that kind of kid. And you'll always be melancholic about it, blah, blah, blah, blah. And that just seemed really problematic to me. This sort of damaged goods model, the way I learn new things is to teach. So I started teaching a class and disability in the arts. And that allowed me to do a lot of reading and thinking together with my students. At the same time, a professor named Libby Rifkin was inaugurating a Disability Studies program at Georgetown. She's also the parent of a disabled child. So she was really kind of a mentor in all of this both in my pedagogy, scholarship thinking and my own life experience.

Qudsiya Naqui:

That's a fascinating story. And, and I loved how you talked about the process of discovering concepts of queer theory, and then Disability Justice and sort of weaving them all together, I feel something very similar in my own sort of intellectual journey where I was working on all different sorts of threads in my own career, and in came and brought them all together, I was an immigration lawyer, and then, but I am a disabled person, I'm blind and just kind of like, never thought about those two things together until relatively recently. So it's really fun when those it's very illuminating, and fun and exciting. When those things start to come together. And you realize, wow, there's, there's a thread to my intellectual journey that I didn't even realize was there. So I really appreciate that. And your your book, which we're here to talk about, and I'm very excited to dig deeper into it all our families, the genesis of it, you know, as I was reading through, it seemed that you had some family members, some ancestors now, and others who may be still around who were disabled, who were sort of erased from your family history. Could you tell us a little bit about them, and how they spurred you into this this book project?

Jennifer Natalya Fink:

Yeah. So I'm, I'm 55, which is important for understanding the social context. And when I was six, my aunt and uncle gave birth to a son with Down syndrome. And this is before genetic testing. So they didn't know that he had Down syndrome until he was born. And at birth, they gave him away. That is the story, and it was a big family drama. And it was a secret. And we were not to talk about it. And I would play in my grandparents house and look for him wonder where he was who he was, I look in photo albums, I felt this loss very palpably. And I also felt the violent ableism of the sorting system. I'm queer, I think I had a sense of my queerness, long before I had the words or, you know, sexual desire. And, gee, if you have the wrong genes, the wrong whatever, you know, am I going to be given away? How do I fit into this notion of family? So, it was a very powerful absence in our family. And I was so young when it happened, that that it really shaped things. I'm also the daughter of a geneticist. So, genes and the sort of the Genetics the idea of, you know, you have a genetic curse, and the cure is a genetic technology that was really deep in our family, rhetoric, and sort of the religion of science and not understanding science, as a culture, in a sense, are produced in part through culture. So that was, those two factors, I think were huge and shaping how I thought about all this. Then, when my daughter was born, and we had this diagnosis, and it was this kind of rupture trauma, kind of reached back into this family's story in some way about disability and trauma and my sense of feeling as a parent. I remember the day of her diagnosis and looking at these numbers and just fit in her playing In the sun very happily and feeling this kind of disconnection, and rupture and feeling that this was so unprecedented that we didn't fit into my idea of family that this was outside any concept of family to, for your child to have a disability. So I think over the years, I've kind of worked through how the concept of family, in a sense is constructed against disability delineates, um, and, you know, specifically in the time period that my cousin was born, it was the age of institutionalization, after the war, this, this was the norm to give up your kid. All the doctors said, so my grandfather really pushed for this he's passed now and he was a doctor. A this idea, you know, you're entitled to a child without a disability start over, you know, have more kids, you know, get rid of this one. My kid was born in a different social context where that's no longer than norm, but in a sense that rhetoric persists, that you're not really part of the fabric of humanity in the fabric of family specifically, and as a queer person, who's who, you know, a pre-Ogalvy[?], queer person, you could say, who'd gone through, even in a very liberal Jewish family of progressive minded people had gone through a lot of this around my queerness in my adolescence and early adulthood, where this didn't fit into their notion of family and personhood. In a lot of ways. This really resonated with me. So I began to think about this and talk a lot about it research different ideas about lineage, kinship, family and disability out there in academia, in disability studies, scholarship, but also in the disability justice world. I noticed there was this real longing for by people like Stacey Milburn and Leeah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, perhaps there's this longing for kinship, that's our ancestry and lineage, but it's often kind of mythologized on an ancestral plane, and often predicated that the disabled person, social justice person will say, there were no disabled people in my family. So I seek it in the larger ancestral plane and ancestry. I thought, isn't that interesting that everyone seems to assume they're no disabled people in their family, and there never were. So I began thinking about sort of two pieces of this one is literally finding these buried stories that have been excised from the narrative because of the stigma and shame around disability literally, how do you find those people who had disabilities if they've been sort of banished from the family story, and sometimes literally, from the family itself? What if you're adopted? What if your family are immigrants, and your parents are immigrants, and you know, the people left behind? There's silence around. My partner's parents are first generation Korean immigrants. And there's sort of a gap in the stories in a way. So what does it mean to literally seek more knowledge about disabled people in your literal family, and then what changes if we just assumed they were there? There's a literal part in a mythic part, everything can't be found. You might seek and then fine, nothing. It may be lost, or parts of it might be lost if you're adopted, or if you’re a child of immigrants or you know, there are all kinds of circumstances where the literal can be hard to find, though not always impossible. There's a lot of data out there in our culture. Right, so and then there's this sort of mythic piece of it a family is a story. It's a myth, as much as it's the fact of lineage is a story of family is telling about itself. What if we just assumed there were disabled people in there, it changes how we think about our own lives and our children's lives. So those are the two pieces and I did find by approaching it this way, that there was another basically second cousin once removed, I think is the correct, somewhat distant relative in my father's family in Scotland, who had also had Down syndrome whose family had, who was born before my cousin in the US who I called cousin X. Why? Because all I knew about him was that he was a boy. And genes were very important and my family very, very deterministic view of genetics and my family. So I call him cousin x, y. And then I found there was this other sister of my grandfather's cousin, who was born before cousin X, Y, whose family had approached this very differently, they had not given her away and raised her in a loving, integrated environment in their family in the 1950s, and 60s, and then when she became an adult, they actually started a very cutting edge progressive institution that was Jewish would because there's no separation of church and state in the UK. So these institutions were rife with what I call spiritual abuse, they were run by Christians who would, you know, exploit disabled people to like make them pray to, in a Christian way and participate in Christianity. So my relatives started a Jewish and very progressive home. But I also noticed that there were a bunch of gendered pieces of it of the men in the family were not involved kind of wash their hands of the this cousin who was named Rona. And that when she got very ill, towards the end of her life, she ended up dying or kind of alone in a hospital institution wasn't really prepared for her care. And the caregivers told me that not the family, which was really interesting to me. So that got me thinking about gender and care, which is a huge conversation. And the way it relates to a lot of ableism is, a lot of women don't want to be stuck doing all the care work, basically, which is how its arranged and privatized in the US, you know, and that we need to have more honest conversations about Karen gender, to undo some of the ableism under lying phrases like, as long as it's healthy, for example, is

Qudsiya Naqui:

which I hate. What does that even mean, right?

Jennifer Natalya Fink:

Which is a proxy for the gender Do you want a boy or girl, you're supposed to say I don't care, as long as it's healthy. That's, that's the formula. But so what if it's not who decides what health is most disabilities are required, etcetera, etcetera. So I really used all these different pieces of my family story as a way into really trying to challenge a lot of our assumptions about parenting disability care, the whole nine yards, and use a disability justice framework to think about this, and come to some different open up some new possibilities for how if we find at assume we have a disability lineage, we begin to transform some of the ableism defining family and disability.

Qudsiya Naqui:

Yeah, I think I think that's really helpful to think about how you use you're not used is the wrong word, but how you thought through your own family story and how it fits into this bigger narrative about all those things you described, gender care, ableism, and how they all fit together. And I also think another added component that's sort of interesting is immigration and how that can destroy, disrupt, to someone's sort of familial disability lineage, and you can lose some of that. So I am the child of immigrants. I'm a first generation American and Asian American. And when I was diagnosed with my condition, you know, again, many, geneticists descended, and there was all this discussion of where did this come from, and all this kind of thing. And my parents were kind of thinking about that. Maybe there was one cousin, maybe they were like, two people that we think might have had some kind of vision, something, but there's so much erasure and there's no naming of the thing. I mean, even to this day, I mean, in my family, like God love them, but they have difficulty even uttering the, the word blind and with respect, you know, and it's, so I think it's so easy. We don't have a language to talk about this. That isn't stigmatizing. And so it's really easy to erase someone's identity in that way. And I loved how you also talked about rethinking your I think it was your mother who was hard of hearing, and how, you know, you were like, wait a minute, you know, she's disabled herself whether or not she used that way of talking about herself, but the same, you know, she tried her butt As to kind of overcome. And in so doing and not naming it also, like, advanced this idea of like erasure of the identity or of the of the experience.

Jennifer Natalya Fink:

Yeah, you know, I think that's the other thing. When we claim our disability lineage in our family, we It also allows us to rethink and rewrite the story that we already have about people in our family. So it's both finding and claiming lost relatives in a way, and welcoming them in and honoring them rather than stigmatizing and delineating them, right. There's that piece of like weaving them back into the tapestry and claiming them and naming them. There's another piece that's sort of a renaming piece. And with my mother and grandmother, it was really at the, as I was, at the end of writing the book that I came to this, my grandmother was very hard of hearing, and towards the end of her life deaf, and was horribly ashamed of it, didn't like to use hearing aids, and her life was really limited by it. And it was a little bit unspeakable in our family to talk about it. And she had utter disgust for children with disabilities. She disidentify, she was terrified of it. She had a real terror, I think of her own disability that she projected outwards. But she was the best listener and just this vibrant presence, who loved me more than anybody in the world. My mother has been hard of hearing my whole life, and increasingly so as she ages and she is kind of the opposite of her mother, she saw what happened to her mother. So she uses every possible technology, you know, and her doctors have said, you were just you're actually extremely hard of hearing. It's amazing how well you do your lip read, you're working so hard all the time lip reading, and I had a kind of scorn for her. You know, I said, Mom, you're talking too loud. And didn't appreciate how hard she was working, and how embarrassed she was about it. And, you know, it wasn't her fault. It's an innate thing, because I was terrified of going death. So I in by at the end of this book, I really reclaimed, you know, first of all, owned my own ableism. It's not just about these other family members, it's about me, you know, and I want to end that, I don't want to continue that legacy. So I talk about claiming my grandmother and my mother in my lineage of disability ancestry, which I hadn't thought about at all, it hadn't occurred to me to think about them. And thinking about disability gain to that my grandmother's charisma and warmth was part of her disability was it's an outgrowth of it, and that my mother is someone who my friends are always like, your mother is the best listener in the world. And part of it is she was sort of a translator for her mother, and that she's working so hard to pay attention. So I want to point out how the concept of disability lineage here allows us both to find these lost relatives and claim them, but also to rethink the narrative we already have about our family.

Qudsiya Naqui:

And I think framing it in this way leads us to so much more kindness, I think, you know, especially with parents, now I'm witnessing my parents getting older and losing things they had before. Like, hearing. Again, this is just another example. Disability is the largest minority that anyone can become a part of at any time. And so, being now immersed in this framework, when I think about my dad, who might be losing a bit of his hearing, or my mom was having trouble walking. Instead of being fearful and resentful of it, I can say, How can I help you or maybe instead of yelling, and expecting you to respond or getting mad when you don't, I can tap you on the shoulder I can accommodate you give you access and be kind about it. And so, and we don't often think about that in the context of our own families, because we have this. It's just really interesting. We expect this sort of non disability in our family. And that might be wrapped up in things around like our parents and the role they take in caring for us. And when that switch flips, like that can be very traumatic and jarring. But I think if you are able to reframe that in this in this disability justice narrative, it just helps you to be have more empathy for for your family and just others around you in general.

Jennifer Natalya Fink:

Yeah, absolutely. And I think that was pretty transformative for me. I also got interested in For parents who themselves are disabled, so much of the rhetoric directed towards parents about having a child with a disability assumes that you the parent don't have a disability. Exactly. So writers like Jessica slice were really important to me talking about parenting as it's disabled, you know, like, what is it the parent as a disabled person, so to see things in a more fluid and complex way, right, and if we live so long, we'll all be disabled to some degree. And also who, you know, the social model of disability suggests that at least that impairment might be objective, but what its meaning and force is really socially constructed, and a lot as you say, around excessive what's accessible, right? So I'm very impaired in my right eye, actually, and wear glasses to read. But nobody views that as a disability. I have friends who are wheelchair users who can get around just fine if there's a $50, ramp rate cost less than my eyeglasses, but everybody sees them as disabled. Right? So I think, you know, the stigma, shame, and concepts that come in part because we don't see disability in our families. It's part of our lineage, and a normal part of family life a normal part of being human, we keep replicating, so I'm trying to stop it and reframe it.

Qudsiya Naqui:

Yeah. And that brings me to another question. So I recall years ago, when it came out the book, Andrew Solomon's book, Far from the Tree, which, at the time when I was reading it, I was just so hungry, for stories about that center, disabled people that even talked about any of the things he talked about in his book. And I really, to some degree, subscribe to what he was saying to, it's proven somewhat true in my life where, you know, I don't know anyone else who is currently living in my family who is also blind. And so I have found great solace and strength in the family of my own creation, which is my blindness community. And that's been really helpful. And the book Far from the Tree. For those who haven't read it, it's an interesting book. But the idea is that there are vertical and horizontal identities and vertical identities are those that are transmitted down the family lineage. And when a child that is born that is fundamentally different from their parent, whether that's a deaf child born of a hearing parent, or a blind child born of a sighted parent, autistic child born of a non autistic parent, that the notion is that the parent has to find a way to accept, accept the child, and then the child has to find other forms of support outside of that family lineage. And and you really challenge that argument in this really interesting way. And I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about that. And what your critique and what reframing you propose?

Jennifer Natalya Fink:

Yeah, I mean, I think I accept the second part of the proposition, the part where if you are any kind of minoritized person, you need to find community, and that as a child, you need to separate from your parents anyways, to some degree and find that community for yourself. The part that I really don't accept is the idea that there's something unacceptable about a disabled child to a non disabled, currently non disabled parent, that that's the starting place. That paradigm is deeply troubling to me that assumption that you have to work to accept your child, that it's a trauma, that they're disabled, that you were expecting a non disabled child, entitled, in a sense to a non disabled child. And because you're such a good person, and you love your child, you're going to have to work to accept them. I think there's a fundamentally ableist proposition in that the presumption that you're Why do you assume your child will not be disabled? Right, and that that's something to be overcome as a parent. So I want to undo that assumption. And I think the answer to why is in part because this disabled people have been so delineated, literally torn off from their family trees, literally institutionalized, segregated, marginalized, and then rhetorically cut out from the story of the family. Every family story is a disability story if we choose to tell it. And if we did, then the diagnosis birth or later acquisition of a disability most disabilities are acquired not innate, would not be such a trauma that a family has to get over to accept their child. I think that's a horrific, honestly, I find that as a parent, horrific, horrific and unacceptable. So I really need to challenge the ableism. Of that. I also think this idea that the child has to go out there and find a community and the family doesn't, is really problematic. I think the family needs to find a community with other families. And this is sort of the kinship, part of finding community and kinship and this where is where the disability justice framework is useful. So I found it really important to find a community of families whose children have similar disabilities to mine, and then to be part of a larger community of disability justice folks, rather than my kid has this burden of finding separate from us a community, that's really a weird thing to put on a kid honestly, I think that should be something that the family is doing together. And then later, the child as a teenager will find well find their peeps, right? As y'all do. And for me, it was sort of an analogy to my queer experience of being kind of delineated. So I don't accept disability as this individual project. I think it's collective and familial, and communal so so that that's some of my critique of Solomon. I think it's a very white male position, in a way this individualism, and it perpetuates what Rosemary garland Thompson calls the fiction of the norm eight, that there's this ideal human, that disabled people feel failed to be when in fact, all people have variations in their genetic code, every single human does. And a lot of our ideas about the normal and the normate, come from fascism. They come literally from the Nazis, disabled people were much better integrated into American society before World War Two. And with great irony, I say, as you know, child of Jewish immigrants, we beat the Nazis, but we integrated their ideology into ours. So I know that's sort of a dramatic thing, you know, to say, but but I truly believe it. And I see that in Solomon's and many other people's rhetorics, I take him down, because that book has had such a big cultural reach. But I think this idea that you have to work to accept your own child, I think is unacceptable. And we need to look at what were your what were the suppositions about who your child would be, I think every parent should be excited to be on the journey with their child, whoever they are.

Qudsiya Naqui:

And I And to that end, I loved your replacement sort of statement for the I don't care if it's a boy or girl, it's, as long as it's healthy, you're like, I don't care what the gender identity of my child is, and nor do I care what their care needs are, I'm here ready to meet whatever those may be. And I think that's a better way of thinking about it. It's a better way of thinking about each other as adults as well. So I really appreciate that. And, and interestingly, when you talked about kind of the Nazis, I thought the other piece that was interesting in your book, and the history that you laid out, was that it also was the reverse in some ways that the Nazis learned from the American project of eugenics.

Jennifer Natalya Fink:

Yes, yes. And this was sort of something you know, I did not know before I started researching this book. I knew a little bit through my work in disability studies, that the T four program was sort of the pilot program to Auschwitz it the the Nazis piloted their ideas about eugenics on disabled people in Germany, before mass producing them against Jews and other minorities, right. But I didn't know where they got their great ideas from was Hitler was very interested in 18th and 19th century American ideas that were used, like pseudoscience used to perpetuate the enslavement of black people in America. Right and then in reconstruction, their second class citizenship, those eugenics ideas were very exciting to Hitler and where he got his ideas, which were ideas about a kind of viewing race as a kind of disability essentially, and the behavior of people of color as well. The big best example is that running away from your slave master was an official disease, right? So there's this pathologizing of people of color in the US that the Nazis use that logic to describe disabled people and Jews. So that was really shocking to me and made like the worst kind of sense, I think, and then seeing this thinking, suffuse genetic discourse to fuse up toCrisper . And I'm not against, I'm not an anti science person, I'm very happy to be vaccinated, I'm happy to support. But I think if we centered disabled people in these conversations, and de-pathologized disability, we'd use these tools differently. And we make different decisions about our research agendas, if the goals were not always to eradicate, right, we'd use these tools differently. And if the people asking the questions, the scientific questions and setting the research agenda, a included disability, disabled people and B, or people who owned disability in their own families without stigma and shame, who reclaimed their own disability lineages, right? I think we'd end up with different outcomes.

Qudsiya Naqui:

I think that's right. If you're if you're, you know, a scientist and you're you really have centered or lineated, your disabled ancestor or your disabled family member, it's a lot harder to craft a research agenda that is designed to eradicate them. Right. If you're if you're centering that in your mind, it's a lot harder to, then you're going to redirect your efforts elsewhere. It's not again, like you said, it's not that the study of genetics is inherently bad. It's it's the the fact that it is so deeply rooted in eugenics and ableism. That is the issue, I think, for sure. And so to that end, you know, you talk a lot about the framework of Disability Justice was treated referenced a few times in the concept of mutual aid, which has grown sort of, as you were describing, outside of, of the sort of biological family, our disability communities have I was mentioning for myself, are not made up of people in my, biological family. And so I'm curious about your thoughts on how we can activate these principles of mutual aid and care work and disability justice into how we think about our biological families. And so they don't exist outside of them. And we can, we can sort of really need ourselves.

Jennifer Natalya Fink:

that's a big part and was sort of a surprising part of where I ended up in the book was, I think, too often, there's this sort of harsh binary, between, you know, family of origin in social justice movements, which is viewed as you know, regressive and oppressive and Bad, bad, bad. And, and usually nuclear, which, you know, especially if they're children of immigrants is far from the truth. And then this sort of chosen family of usually people who are childless, it's elder, it's often elderly and childless, and not very well sustained, right, beyond sort of one's 20s and 30s. So I was thinking about how disability lineage could help us connect these two. What if we didn't see them as separate? What if we viewed our lineage as part of expanding into a larger kinship system? And you know, it's tricky, right. And I have friends, you know, who are queer and childless and very delineated from their families, where this is sort of like a horrible idea. But in a sense, they're accepting the terms of the nuclear family that you have to fit into this ableist model to benefit from it. So I would like to see chosen families and disability justice communities, really work to engage elders to include elders to include high needs infants, moms with babies, right? You don't see a lot of them in those communities. So you know, to imagine that there's a place for biological families in chosen families to, to think of these things together, because otherwise we preserve the homophobia, the ableism, etcetera, of the family in some way and its power. Right. So I think that that's one piece of it, and And then I think so many of the innovations of mutual aid are really exciting, but they aren't scalable. They let the state off the hook, right, we just saw with the family aid that Biden passed, and then now it's over that it was the single largest factor in ending child poverty in this country in like 100 years. So I'm getting this numbers wrong. But with, you know, this very small amount of money going to everyone, it was transformative in a way 10 people, you know, if I get together with 10 of my friends and try to help 10 people, it doesn't have the same impact. So I think we need to demand more of the state. Right, and not sort of go to what are almost libertarian waiting frameworks that are deeply ableist. In in assuming that, first of all, everyone can give like people have different needs, infants have needs, all people have needs, a community should really be able to be capacious and flexible, and inventive enough to involve all bodies and minds. And I think there's a lot of phobia fear, denial about the power of family of biological families, honestly, in these communities. So I kind of want these two paradigms to be more integrated. And instead of just looking to the mythic plane for ancestry, disability, lineage and ancestry, to actually value our own family's ancestry and kind of demand that were included in.

Qudsiya Naqui:

Yeah, and I think that takes that is going to take a complete reimagining of how, quote, non disabled or temporarily non disabled family members think. I mean, not to put down on it, but I think it's a it's a cultural shift. I think that needs to happen. And I think it is starting to happen. And I think your your book really offers a significant contribution in that direction. And I hope many people people who are listening to this right now are going to pick up the book and read it when it's available. And what do you most want people to take away from both your sort of personal narrative and story and then the larger narrative, you piece that into in the course of the book?

Jennifer Natalya Fink:

Yeah, you know, more than anything, every family story is a disability story. If you dig, if you choose to tell it as such, imagine that you already have a disability lineage that's rich, and upsetting probably in big places, right? And that if we're going to have a different relationship, to disability, We must reclaim this, we must. And it will redefine the way you think about what you already know about your family. Even if you say, you know, I can't find anything out about these people. It's gone, it’s vanished. Imagine it reimagine your family map. Assume, you know, we say presumed competence, presumed disability lineage, presumed disability lineage, assume it's there. So I think that's what I want people to take away more than anything else, and demand integration, demand that your family integrate you and your disabled family members. We're still, you know, so many years, the ADA in such a segregationist society when it comes to disability. And I think that's what this lineation this weaving together that I'm calling for, pushes against.

Qudsiya Naqui:

That's really great and feels very actionable, I think, and, Jennifer, where can our listeners find your work and your book,

Jennifer Natalya Fink:

The book is coming out in it'll be on a Kindle audible by the 22nd of March, and it will be in print at wherever you like to buy books, online, or in bookstores. April 5, all our family's disability lineage and the future of kinship. And I recently wrote a New York Times opinion piece that you can take a look at if you're interested. I'm Jennifer, Natalya, yep. On Instagram, and Jennifer, Natalia think you can find my website and I really hope people read the book and use it to find their own disability lineages. To claim it and name it and kind of transform how they think about disability and family in their own life. I have tips at the end very like BuzzFeed listicle tips how to, you know, I schlepped to Scotland you don't have to? How to ask questions, how to search, how to make sense of your disability lineage and why and why you should.

Qudsiya Naqui:

Well, thank you so much, Jennifer, this has been a wonderful conversation. I'm very much looking forward to sharing your work and your book with our listeners. We'll provide links to all of the resources that Jennifer mentioned the book, The New York Times, opinion piece, et cetera, in our show notes, so thank you all for listening.

Jennifer Natalya Fink:

Thank you so much.

[jazzy piano chords, bass strumming with smooth R&B]

Qudsiya Naqui:

Thanks for joining us for this episode of down to the struts. This podcast would not be possible without the energy and creativity of our audio producer, Ilana Nevins and our social media manager, Avery Anapol. Special thanks to Claire Shanley for designing our logo and Eiffel gangsta beats for our theme music, you can become part of our Facebook group down to the struts podcast to join our growing community. You can also find us on Twitter and Instagram at down to the struts. And finally, don't forget to subscribe rate and review the podcast at Apple podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher or wherever you love to listen. Thank you again for your support. And stay tuned for our next episode so we can get back down to it

Transcribed by https://otter.ai