

PROVOCATIVE PRACTICE

MOVEMENT



An Interview with Dr. Kelly Fritsch.

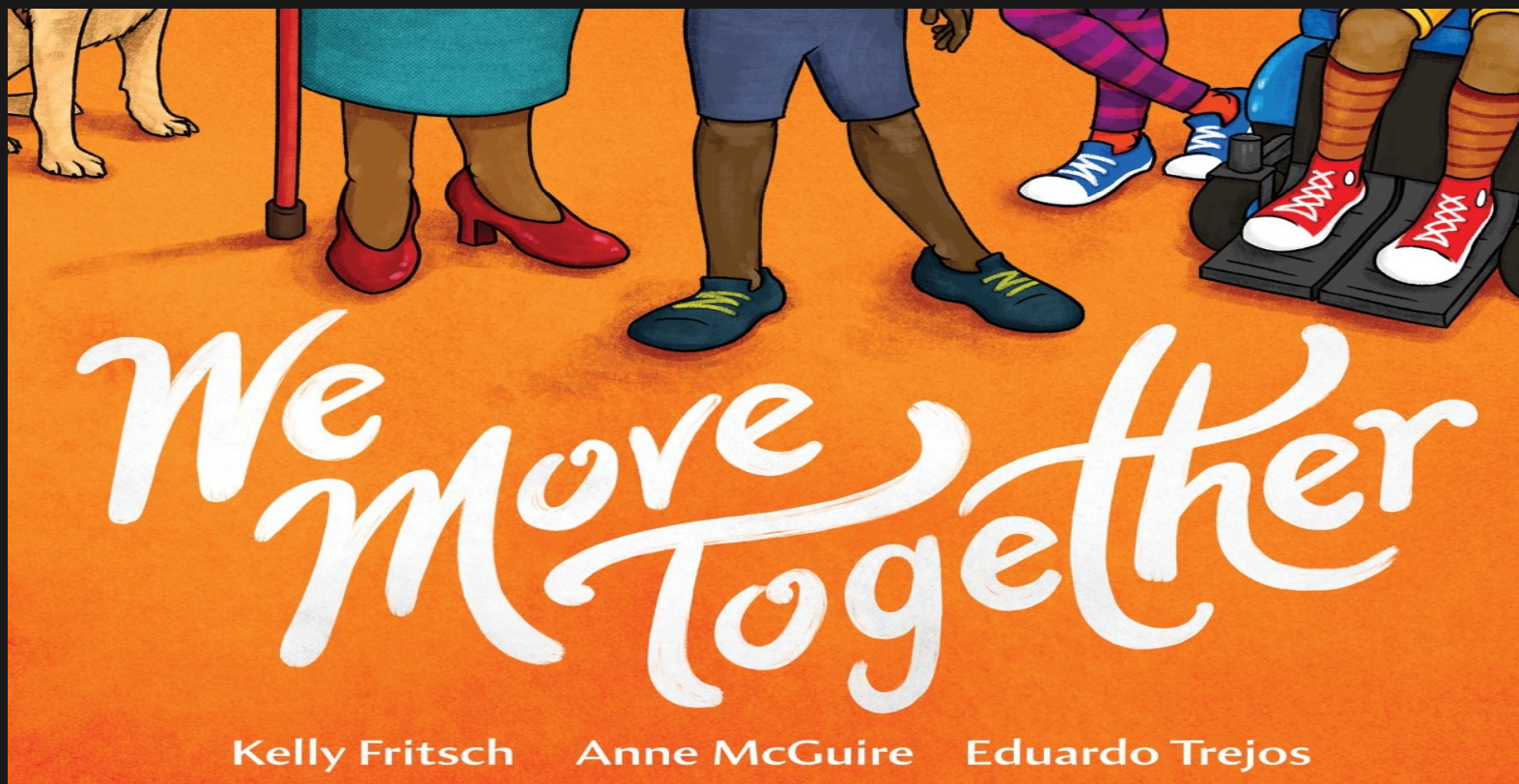
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Kelly Fritsch is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and Director of the Disability Justice and Crip Culture Collaboratory. Her disability justice themed children's book, *We Move Together*, shows us how a simple concept like "movement" can illuminate and inform how we work together to make our communities more just.

CUASA: How do you see *We Move Together* as an extension of your research and teaching in the field of critical disability studies?

KF: *We Move Together* explores some of the ways people navigate through space and community, following a group of disabled and non-disabled characters as they negotiate barriers and conflicts that impede and enhance their ability to move together. The book highlights some of the joys of disability culture and community and portrays disability as a desirable part of our communities and world.



KF: The book promotes discussion on accessibility, disability justice, ableism, and social justice, all themes emerging directly from my research, teaching, and personal experiences of disability. The book was collaboratively written and illustrated with disability studies professor Anne McGuire from the University of Toronto, and graphic designer, Eduardo Trejos. Our work was informed by our experiences as disabled people, disability studies scholars, and parents, as well as many years of conversation with disabled community members and families with disabled children.

In addition to the hardcover book, our research and teaching practices about disability and accessibility have also informed the development of our open access learning guide, as well as access tools that accompany the book, such as an e-version with captions, an ASL interpretation, and an audio described version of the book. It is important to us that the book be accessible to many different readers.



CUASA: What are some ways that we, as CUASA members, can think about building spaces on campus that allow for more types of movement?

KF: I would love for CUASA as a whole to take a more active role in responding to and building on Carleton's Coordinated Accessibility Strategy released in 2020. The design of our classrooms, meeting spaces, and offices need to anticipate not only the presences of diversely disabled students but also better anticipate diversely disabled faculty and staff. This means addressing issues in the design of teaching stations and how technology in classrooms can be accessed, what kind of lighting exists and how it can be manipulated, how doors, windows, and blinds open and close, the layout and moveability of furniture, air quality, the need for all gender accessible washrooms, the lack of accessibility features in our mail and photocopy rooms, kitchens, lounges, and more, so as to anticipate d/Deaf faculty, blind faculty, wheelchair-using faculty, chronically ill, and Mad faculty. Even things like trying to use public transit on campus comes with significant accessibility barriers that needs to be addressed.

KF: Carleton has committed to being the most accessible campus in Canada which is an exciting and ambitious horizon to work towards and our union should be playing an active role not only in holding Carleton accountable but also helping get us there in innovative and collaborative ways. And it is worth noting that the built environment is only one part of the work that needs to be done. Creating a culture of accessibility and a culture that welcomes and anticipates diversely disabled people also means addressing the banal and everyday ways ableism and sanism are expressed in institutional policies and collegial relations, and how ableism, sanism, and disability oppression are interwoven with racism, white supremacy, settler colonialism, cisheteropatriarchy and so on, and entangled in unjust conceptions of normalcy, intelligence, and excellence which have roots in anti-Blackness, eugenics, colonialism, and capitalism. Addressing disability oppression as CUASA members demands our attention to these intersections and also provides the grounds for cross-movement solidarity and support.

Sometimes we need to take a break.



CUASA: What are some ways that the pandemic has made movement even more difficult for folks in the Carleton community?

KF: I think the pandemic has precisely highlighted the ways we do not move together and exacerbated already existing inequities that are very much grounded in ableism. The pandemic has increased feelings of stress, isolation, loneliness, and alienation, intensified financial, food, and housing precarity, as well as directly increased the ranks of the chronically ill and disabled, among many other issues. This has impacted Carleton community members in substantial ways, from the oft-cited (but largely unaddressed) issues of escalating workloads, productivity demands, and unsustainable care responsibilities, to technological and spatial difficulties of connecting with one another in meaningful ways that can help us build the kind of movements we need to really improve our working conditions, not just at Carleton but as part of the high education sector more generally.

In part, *We Move Together* emerged out of a context of knowing how deeply disabled people are treated as disposable, expendable, and unworthy of care in our current world, evidenced everywhere from deplorable living conditions in congregate care settings like group homes and long term care, to pandemic triage protocols that leave disabled people without access to lifesaving medical care, to education policies that have completely left disabled children without access to needed supports in classrooms.

KF: Focusing on joyfully moving together in disability community in *We Move Together* isn't about turning away from the brutal realities of racist, ableist, and frankly, often eugenic living conditions, but quite the opposite: that we must find ways to move together to challenge injustices even when it is very difficult, even when the barriers are immense. The book reminds us in simple and complex ways that disability justice, in its emphasis on interdependence, accessibility, solidarity, and collective power, can help us further bring into being a different world that is already being built.

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