

# Digital Disability Film Podcat Episode 10 - 4

## Documentaries

Speaker 1  
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Welcome to the latest digital disability feeling Podcast with Dr Alison, Wilde Doctor Miro Griffiths and my self Dr. Paul Darke. So tonight, today we're looking at the troublemaker, the great fortune coronation. And meanwhile, on Earth for documentaries. A couple of them are disability specific per say a couple of them aren't or whatever. So we thought that would be a nice mix. So let's go. So let's start with Alison. What did you think of the troublemakers? The tool maker? Um, I, um I thought I've got I've got to declare an interest here before I kind of got into disability politics signal What is able? I was very much peace campaign and environmental activists, uh, did my undergraduate dissertation on the green movement and green sociology or that type of thing. Uh, so there was, uh and of course, most of us know about the, you know, the environmental crisis and global politics these days. So there wasn't a lot in there that was new for me. Having said that, it did press some buttons from the reasons why I stopped being an environmental activists. Um, and occasionally I really bought into this documentary because it was saying things that I do think it's true. I do think we should be worried. Um, very worried if it's not too late. And, of course, when I was an environmental activist, this was three decades ago. So, you know, and I thought we were in a mess then, Uh, but at the same time, there were lots of things about it that I found problematic, which also I could with my previous experience, which was things like saying that it was about politics. And it is about politics. I did like the kind of tie in between the individual and spiritual well being and wholeness, whatever that is and the future of the planet. Because I don't see those as as a separate things, I do think they're intertwined.

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Um, uh huh. I found the main guy forgot to send now. Yeah, I found him quite convincing. Although I was also quite wary of him to, uh the woman, the woman who was in it, the woman who had quite a good life and then suddenly discover that should be doing it all wrong. I kind of felt drawn to at the same time, was quite cynical about Well, when you've got nothing better to do. So, yeah, I was

struggling with that a little bit, and it did feel a bit still a big game, like, uh, in terms of this is a fun, exciting thing to do, uh, you know, to go to prison before you die and all that kind of thing, Although, you know, partly I've got ambivalent around that, so I felt quite mixed emotions about it. But having said that, I believe we've been in trouble for a long time. Uh, I believe their oceans around disability, which, of course, one of addressing this, uh, massive issues around that, um, for all. Such as? Such as issues around disability that you think your inborn Well, clearly the story being really obviously, clearly the more crisis you get into, the more disabled people they're going, they're going to be, uh, so And given that we can't look after the comparatively a small number of us that there are there and this whole of that, But you know what I mean in terms of the future, Um uh, and we and we seem to be, uh, kind of marginal to other people's concerns. It begs lots of questions about about how to several people can be treated in the future. Which, of course, nobody is concerned about right now, but they will be in the future. I mean, even just looking at things like Sir Neville. And what happened? What happened there? It's like, you know, the the writing is on the wall for a lot of people who don't think disabilities of any importance to whatsoever. So I'm intrigued.

Speaker 1      You said it had some of the issues that you had with the environmental movement  
0:04:31 - 0:06:35      Or was it with the issues, Um, with well, with with some of the people in it. I also  
lots of great people in the environmental movement. I think there are just ideas  
that are in the so certain home. Uh, but I I also was quite disillusioned with some  
of the right wing sentiments that without and the reason the whiteness of the  
movement, all those type of things I I sometimes queried. And this in some ways,  
this this is about my own. This is about my own situation, position and prejudices.  
But I sometimes kind of, um, had doubts about the middle classes of the whole  
thing. it was never positioned to either be welcoming of people who weren't white  
or indeed who weren't middle class. And I don't think that's I think there's still an  
image problem there. As much as I'm on board problems, we've got massive  
problems. Marrow. What do you think? Um, I have I have a problem with the  
documentary on a number of levels. One is I wasn't that engaged with it. A visual,  
uh, practice. Um so I thought it was very formula contained. The documentary  
didn't didn't really capture me. I was held because of my interest in the topic more

than anything else, which I think is problematic because I think the documentary set stuff up is trying to awaken consciousness in people who are not interested in these issues. And I think that's whether there's a there's a problem with the documentary. Um, in terms of the actual content, it was obviously of interest. I I study social movements, activism resistant practices. So from that idea, um, looking at issues of civil disobedience is, of course, an interest, and but I liked it.

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I would have liked it to engage with some of the broader complexities around performing disobedience and how we can encourage people to engage with programs of either education or the organization of activists and social movements. And I didn't see a lot of that. Well, I I was I was struggling with with Roger Hell, Um um because I felt like he was articulating a message of, uh if you don't agree with me, you're wrong, and that's the end of it. And of course, the success and the sustainability of ideas around activism relies on dialogue and discussion. Um, and the kind of formulation of ideas, formulation of ideas coming together. And as Allison said, there's been some real problems around the around how the environmental movement is intersected with other aspects of identity and characteristics. Uh, when? When I was looking at the footage of the London protest, um, it reminded me of some of those messages and content that was being put out by stable activists who were saying that, you know, there are real anxiety and worries about when you lock down the city with no regard for those who need to have mobility around the city for impairment related issues, for issues regarding to mental health and so on, there's a there's a there's an isolation and exclusion, then of people who may be very committed and interested in things that you're doing. So I would like I would have liked to have seen an exploration of how we support the intersecting of different uh, you know, global and personal and and community level crisis is that are emerging and there's no you know it. It provided a clear narrative, a strong justification as to why there is an urgency to respond to these issues. Which, of course, you know, we don't need to explain now because they're so evident and obvious.

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But I But I would have liked to have seen an exploration as to how we can engage in different practices resistant, engage in different resistance practices to achieve that. Um, emphasizing the the process of direct action is is one form. But of course, there are issues of inaccessibility there. There's a there's obviously issue

with cost. As you know, that wasn't acknowledged with, you know, the They think even both of them stated at some point the documentary Roger and Sylvia. But they were both from middle class backgrounds, so there's an issue around the kind of cultural and economic capital that one has to engage in in movements. Um, and you know it. Maybe towards the end of may be thinking when when Roger Helen talked about, you know, the way through. This is a kind of citizen assemblies of ordinary people. But of course, even in those models of democracy and participation in civil society, there's real questions of concern around representation, accessibility, the valued contributions of different groups. And I think that needs to be acknowledged, not just necessarily in the documentary, but it needs to be acknowledged as part of this broader discourse surrounding the environmental crisis that we're experiencing, the impact that's going to have on vast communities, but also how many groups are disengaged or silent from that. And many groups disengaged in silence not because they're not aware of these issues, although that is a key factor in this many groups that feel disengaged on this because they feel excluded. They don't feel that they have a voice in that movement.

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And I would like I would have hoped that if you want to, if you want to engage in a broader conversation with audiences that are not passionate or not committed or not thinking on a daily basis about climate change you need to engage with with some of those issues, and that's why I make I'm rambling here. But there's, you know, the militancy. Direct action is is an essential part, but I don't think you can have rapid acceleration to that. You need to have different processes where you're bringing people with you. And I didn't see enough of that in the documentary, which I think is is key for getting a lot of people on board to reflect on these on these important issues and change structural macro level changes that are required if we're going to make a difference to protecting the planet and protecting people's lives. Uh, yeah, you weren't rambling. I thought it was very good, you know, both absolutely excellent as a documentary. I didn't like it because it seemed terribly conventional as such quite boring. And and I think I have a problem with the class issue, like you've both said. You know, I'm not gonna say anything that you haven't said, but I think it's much more. It's a difficult one because I think you do need a lot more kind of activism that's radical and interventionist because it is too

late. Virtually. And I've been I've been told recently about how there's a plan, kind of the inevitable plan instead of moving towards environmental management but towards environmental existentialism, which is what which in relation is not. How do we save that bit? Or how do we say that that's management?

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Environmental existentialism is what we're going to move into, I think, and I see that as a serious issue is, it's about the world states, often the powerful ones in the West deciding you can live, you're going to die. We're going to let that place disappear. You're gone and you're gonna so that kind of the absolute existential element is now an accepted part of that process, which is absolutely terrifying, particularly the disabled people, because they will be the ones left behind. I think you know, when we start looking at the coronation about in relation to Covid and we start talking about Covid, you can see how we are not even in the debate, but not even in the issue. We are as disabled people and utter irrelevance, and we were in this documentary about environmentalism, etcetera. So I feel highly conflicted about it because I think they do need to do that. They need to do more of that, and they need to be constant and total and committed to it in a way like never before. But it is too late, and we are going to move towards that place is just going to disappear. So then you start moving into the politics of migration. You're going to be moving. It's not going to be thousands coming because of the war. It's going to be millions. It's going to be entire populations moving. And you know that when those millions of populations start moving around, who is going to be left behind, and it's going to be disabled people. So actually, this this this troubled me this documentary quite a lot because of all those missing bits that you two have just mentioned. But actually, it's funny because I slightly disagree with the Miro. I think I think that kind of social disobedience does need to be.

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It needs to be more and a bigger part of of what we do in activism, because I think it's the thing that enables those who want change, too, in the mainstream to deliver it. And without that, nothing changes, you know? And I think it's it's pretty bleak. I think, just to come back on that I'm gonna issue with with broadening out direct action and radical activism, that's absolutely fine. And they're kind of radical. Practices that are mentioned in the in the documentary, uh, creative resistance is that they talk about. And I think at one point, you know, Roger talks about the joy of activism and the joy of resistance, which is so essential, I think needs to be

explored in other aspects of our social movement activism that the joy that can be taken, the creativity that can be taken from it. But I see it as part of a much broader program because you you know the motive. It was about trying to disrupt people's daily experiences. Now that's fine. But unless you start to engage critically and deep on a deeper level as to, you know, why are people eating rubbish food and fast food? You know there's questions about cost, this question about time that people have about viability and what you would want it or what I would want to see is, you know, if you want to create sustainable change, even if it's too late, even if it's just to slow down the acceleration of destruction of the planet, you don't necessarily. I don't think you necessarily do that just by telling somebody to change their behavior and practices. You need a broader change to concepts around education, concepts around employment, the Labour Party, labour market, the amount of time that we spend in these different sectors and different aspects of our life. And I think you do that through radical activism.

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But you also do that through programs of of international cooperation. You do that through programs of education, giving people opportunities to think that they've got the voice, the voice of value and its head. And its acknowledged that, you know, at whatever level is whether it's local or regional, national or even international. Yeah, sorry, sorry. No, because I think that's my problem was it was funneling a perspective of This is the only way to it. For me, it was funding perspective of this is the only way to achieve the radical action is needed and I don't think that's true. I think that I think that's nonsense. And the frustrating thing is, and I talked about yesterday, actually, is that a lot? A lot of the kind of framework for the radical changes that are needed, particularly the employment, I think, and social hierarchies generally were already there in text by people like Marie Book Chain and Andre, God's Path, West Paradise and all this type of thing. And I think that's one kind of lie a little bit about about this particular documentary is. It's almost as if that and a lot of radical community practice from the seventies and eighties it like that didn't exist. And a lot, a lot of I mean that What? What was it, Uh, just disrupt sacrifice and and respect. It's like, well, a lot, that kind of borrowers from from old old models, but isn't quite as you say, it doesn't kind of dig into the roots of what? What? The problem is just just come up to you a poll as well, Um, I think that we can extend just environmental extension

existentialism.

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Um, it seemed to be about eugenics and and for me, part of the reason that I drifted away from, uh, environmental groups was because those eugenics were really quite evident in even groups that you that seemed quite full of food, like Friends of the Earth. I've spent a lot of time arguing with people about issues like that in the in the early and often that is dressed up as population control. You know that the overpopulation issue, which isn't an issue, it's about wealth distribution, is about so many other things. It's about the politics, it's about all of those things. It's not about numbers, you know, and the myths that we surround ourselves with over with overpopulation. And you know where that's going that popular, which is that eugenic kind of entire tire movement that it is trapped in. And it's quite quite despairing, really. I think that that whole movement is trapped in that, which means that plus, you've got those on the other side who So, for example, you're talking about all the frameworks for the pathway to paradise it there, but no one is going to do it. No one is expecting that no one is is even politically putting any emphasis towards that. You know there's there's there's facades, you know, the climate change stuff and, you know, the green new Deal, which is watered down and pretty pointless. Uh, it's not good. And this didn't And I think the class thing is very coming back to the documentary. It just made you think you're not You're not. You're not going to achieve what you want to achieve. And this didn't give you a way out of potentially achieving that. I thought that that was its primary weakness, and it was about an individual. It was kind of like the Messianic kind of alum, which again is never going to work. You know that that never ends. Well, Uh huh. Yeah. No.

Speaker 1  
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So, anything else on that film? Uh, Socialist Seiko feminism? That's the way forward. There you go. I think we'll end on that one because it's absolutely true. What more can you say that could be hopes? Next film, anyway, Right? Let's move on to the next one, Which is the great fortune, which is a fairly short documentary. I think it's only about 50 55 minutes, and it's about a kind of fairly youngish man with Down syndrome who is incredibly rich, uh, and and he lives in a castle in near Berlin. He is very, very rich, and he is very, very rich. He is the son of the German equivalent of the founder of Christie's and Sotheby's, and and

it's a It's a kind of a very architecturally significant castle that he lives in, and he wants to be an actor or he is an actor. So he hangs out with the theater. He puts on shows he goes to shows, and it's about his daily life. I I really quite enjoy this documentary primarily because it was not your average narrative of learning disability. I thought that that was quite nice. It didn't have any particular depth, but it was quite nice that it didn't go into exploring the conventions of that kind of document. Who's looking after his money? Who's baking him safe? Who's who's protecting him from all the vicious people around him? It was just this very rich man who had Down syndrome living his life. It was a quite lonely life and acknowledges that. But actually that's true. It was a bit of a flashback to those kind of old documentaries about rich people just following around in their wealth. And it was quite nice to see one that was about someone with down syndrome. So I must admit, I quite enjoyed it. It was fairly sure Fairly brief. It seemed almost observation. Elit didn't go too deep. There wasn't a particular interview. I quite like not having an interviewer.

Speaker 1  
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And I must admit, I quite enjoyed watching it. Miro. Uh, well, I was glad it was short because I I didn't enjoy it. I thought I, uh I thought on the interesting level I thought it showed. Although I don't think it was intentionally trying to do this. It showed how the the economic capital that the individual has or even, you know, the social class, how that then start to diminish the barriers that they're experiencing on a daily basis. And you saw some of that. You know, as you said, poor kind of. Yeah, there was. There was examples of self determination of aspirations to engage in all these things that he was doing. Although you no one would argue that he's achieved that because of his of the power of wealth and historical legacy of of his family. But I thought so. It just didn't It didn't have. I think the word you used the death was problematic for me. You know, there was There was a flash of talking about sexuality, and the loneliness that he experienced is, uh and then it just kind of moved on. So it was like it was It was hard to kind of pinpoint what I was trying to take from the documentary. Um, there were little glimpses of it, and then I was when I was sitting there thinking, Well, I wonder what I wonder what the average viewer who is not engaged in discipline studies would make of this. And when I googled the reviews and it's things like, you know, uh, this is about I've got written here. This is about a mile down syndrome

man who can enjoy what he affords and understand that life is unique or about you. No one man's triumph over his, You know, his impairment or disability. It's like, Yeah, I just don't know what This what? This what this gives us as an audience, and I'm still I'm still searching for the answer. Okay. Uh huh. Alison, I don't know where to start. really? Come on now for the jugular.

Speaker 1  
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Well, from sir And I did I did keep working in the middle of the night. I first watched it, thinking, I'm not sure if my initial assessment was right, that it was just a really terrible film. It should never been mad. Well, it was a stroke of genius in it, And, uh, and I'll try to address both of those without me too long winded. But one of the things I wondered was, um whether who had the control Did he employ the filmmakers, or did they come to him? Because the way it was presented, I think you were exceptionally kind, Paul. The way it was presented there was there was no narrative. And even though that's not a problem, and I can think of lots of great films that have no real narrative, it was just completely self indulgent. And he actually portrayed in a word that I'd rather not say on this on this format. Really? Uh, it just came across this really unpleasant unpleasant. Didn't like him at all, wasn't interested in his life. Just an indulged person. And and And by the way, you said it was an actor, but I'm not sure he was because the one bit researcher family said it was a volunteer, uh, for actors, but you you might go to correct me on that. So I'm wondering whose idea this was because it sounds like it was possibly a toy for him, but that's the way it came across. I didn't feel like I lost nearly an hour of my life, which cost we'll do all the time. But, uh, it just, um, that's what I said to Paul after I wanted to. It's like it was modeling himself on some kind of flu type person that you picked up from some film or something kind of his philosophical musings. Which, uh, I don't know. It felt like that was completely set up by him, uh, just to kind of put a particular view themselves cause which, as you said, Paul, quite fairly, it's no different, really.

Speaker 1  
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And at times it reminded me of this, you know, made in Chelsea and things like this. In some ways, it's like, Yeah, well, why not? And in some ways, yeah, well, rather, I'd rather see disabled people being self indulgent and obnoxious on screen, then a lot of people already, you know, uh, have even less barriers than than he did. So I feel very mixed up about it. I don't remember saying at one point, uh, when it was a shot of the moon, that's quite a good shot. Which tells you the kind

of quality of the film making. It was very poor. Having said that, he had a beautiful home. Uh, and I was quite envious, but it was just a thoroughly unpleasant person. And I think even though it did Mm, it did kind of get to a bit of existential and dancing the way it was done. It also on reflection, did actually implicitly position some of the things that people implicit about people with down syndrome in the first place. In that, uh, that kind of they're really cute. Indulge some type of thing. And I think that's what this film was doing for him. Uh, not that they should be like, Oh, I contribute this. I contribute that. But the fact that we saw him kind of going around just almost looking for extravagant things to do in its day, it just it's it kind of reinforced that discomfort I have with don't make people down syndrome do anything apart from what they enjoy. And it's. And I think, you know, we have trouble as the disabled people's movement actually around those issues of people with learning difficulty in terms of, um what what? What should we What should we expect? What? You know what, What is it, what their roles and responsibilities. And for me, it kind of turned up some of those Is this, actually, Is this okay? If it's if it's a non disabled filmmakers idea to present him like this, then it's a problem.

Speaker 1  
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If it's his less so I guess I get what you're saying and I agree with you both. But I would say I think it had. I think it was trying to make a parallel between that, that indulgence of wealth and the indulgence of someone with a learning difficulty, and it's trying to make a parallel. You could say it didn't do it very well, but I think it was doing that intentionally. Equally. I think it was talking. It was trying to explore how, to some extent how disability is is about class and it is about wealth. You know, you're more disabled, the poorer you are, and you're less disabled. The richer you are. And I thought it was doing that. And I think it did that quite well. You know, again, I think it was a non disabled filmmaker making it, I don't know, but I think it was trying to bring in all of those things. I quite like that. That you didn't particularly like him. I think the problem is the interpretation of it. As in a way, it was trying to take away the the element of envy of someone just because they were rich and disabled by saying, Oh, but they're still lonely. Uh, and so I had a problem with that. But often that is a depiction of wealth in itself. You know, you money can't buy love and all of those kind of cliches that I think we're in there. I quite like that. It had no narrative. It didn't explain anything because, like,

why was he going to the theater? Who was he meeting? He seemed to be buying a flat and then decorating it. It just seemed, were the indulgences of wealth. And it just happened to be someone with down syndrome and up. And I did. I did quite like that. You know, I thought it was It was It was not what I expected. Uh, and it was just a different perspective, but with within a fairly cliché kind of drama of the narrative of that following an individual's life.

Speaker 1  
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Mhm, I think he was Also, I forgot what he said exactly when he was flicking through that book. But he said something which which took me as quite misogynistic as well, Which also annoyed me. Yeah, yeah, but I I thought that was to me. He was He was stuck, just like in that ideology of of wealth and power. You know that he treated it like he treated his driver with contempt to some extent. You know, I think he treated him like awfully, but, you know, we're watching the thing about the Royals at the moment. That's how they are. If you're that rich, you know, other people are an irrelevance. They're there to serve you and I quite like that. Uh, but yeah, the driver objectification. I don't care what you know. You'll be who I want. You to do. You know he dressed like his Pratt as well, so that that's neither here nor there. So any other comments on that one? Can I ask you to What was the what was the point of the abortion trial on TV? What was I don't I don't know that I don't know what that was about. I probably missed it. I don't engage in in now. I think if you're German Austrian TV series with judges, but I didn't understand what that was trying to convey or what was I presumed. It was just an element of his life that I think, because he probably is quite well known, particularly in Berlin, that that was probably just an incident that he is well known for, I don't think, but again, it wasn't too bad. It was about him trying to defend the lives of people with down syndrome, which again was it's not bad. And you know, a lot of these countries, you know, European countries particularly often seem quite medieval in their treatment of disabled people. You know, I remember if you go to Spain or Italy a lot where the church is the primary carer, you know it is awful.

Speaker 1  
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And then actually to see him engaging in that kind of debate on television. And I presumed it was a kind of judge duty thing, and it was about moral and ethical issues. You know, we'd have had Joan Bakewell presenting it that kind of thing. So but I thought I didn't think there was any particular point except to make it

clear of He did have a standpoint about having down syndrome, but nothing more than that. Best of all, I did, I think, Yeah, I'd recommend it. But you know, that's that's that's that. Anyway, onto Coronation, which is the A wee wee documentary about coronavirus in China. Uh, mirror, you're going to start on this one. Um, I know. I thought I thought that this well, I watched this after watching the great fortune. So maybe that's why I think it was a lot better. I don't know, but it was. I was quite gripped with it, particularly the second half. Whether it it became more of a dialogue about issues of reciprocal arrangements between communities and groups, I think it raised some interesting questions about I was reminded, particularly the older person who was a manager of a one the union. Or maybe it was a remember that time they were a union person. Yeah, It reminded me of kind of Chomsky's writing about the role of the state and manufacturing consent, Uh, not questioning the role of the state or a roll of influential bodies and assuming that their role is to is always for good intentions. And of course, we can see through the to the pandemic that that's not that's not the case. And many groups have been exposed to to violence or acceleration of the violence they were already experiencing prior to the pandemic. Um, so there was so many interesting points I thought I was you know, I was interested and, um, the kind of the different lives that some of the some of the individuals had.

Speaker 1  
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So the person who had been brought in to build the infrastructure in Wuhan but then couldn't get out of Wuhan and was living in a car in the in the garage in a complex um, I also was really struck by There was a scene at the beginning where individuals trying to get home and eventually get home with his fish have died in the in the fish tank. And it reminded me right at the beginning of the pandemic. When there was that story broke were because of the measures measures that were taken when Wuhan, a parent of a disabled child, was not allowed to go home. And he kept asking the state to go to his house because his disabled child was on his own. Uh, and nobody went, and then the child would eventually died. So what I can take from that is is the way in which the measures and the responses that we have to crisis or emergencies, how they play out for different communities and different groups, particularly for those who who are seen as being expendable, whether that's in sustaining the infrastructure. You know, the medical practitioners who are trying to save lives, that people are building hospitals, the people who are

dependent on public services such as older people, disabled people. I thought I raised some really interesting kind of themes and issues there. Um, and I was really struck as well by that aunt analogy, the ant colony analogy as well, when, when they were talking about how they killed off. Uh, you know, colony of ants in an apartment block by infecting one and then watching it kind of affect the rest of the ant colony in order to remove them.

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And, of course, there's so many parallels there with the way in which we respond to crisis is in the way that there has been accusations, quite legitimate accusations about how the slowness of the response to the pandemic has exacerbated not just the inequalities that people experience, but also the prevalence of death, particularly those in in, uh, learning civil community. Or or, you know, send groups of being marginalized even further during the pandemic, or have had their value and their role questioned in society. So on the whole, I thought it was I was quite gripped by the documentary Have to say, Alison, um, again, I'm going to declare an interest. I love this month's work. Um I mean, I give traveled the world to look not not just at his work, but yeah, so I'm not going to be critical of this way. I will be if I saw something I completely disagreed with Button. I thought, considering the topic, it was a beautiful film. The first minute, uh, the first minute of film just took my breath away. Uh, the ending of the film was just perfect. Always saying I would go into that because people might watch it. Um, I thought, even without kind of analyzing about point, I read only one review afterwards. But even before analyzing, I thought, just kind of from a a phenomenal, logical perspective is clutches an experiential perspective, But it communicated something global about the pandemic. Just the whole haunted nous. Um uh, just it was just very haunting. But then, of course, uh, it did seem all the things that you said, which I think you've done very alkaline the mirror, you know, all kind of dressing, a few people's, um, experiences and situations through it. Um, it didn't seem to have much direction.

Speaker 1  
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But of course, it all came together to to communicate some of those messages about the individual and society that he's quite well known for, but also about how the pandemic, uh, and how future things like that may may leave a lasting legacy. So I just think, Yeah, it's what I would expect of him. I think the visuals were was, uh, even though it was done very quickly, and I think it wasn't, you know it clearly

there was some costs of that. I still think that it was quite beautiful. Even things like going into the newly built facilities almost at the beginning. Um, in some of the beginning things and seeing how extensive they were in the kind of close scrutiny of the doctors washing the hands and things, it really communicated lots of those broader things about how how they were able to deal with this very decisively. We weren't, of course, about how how that culminated in lots of different experiences, particularly for certain groups. As you said. So I think it did. It kind of for him had a very measured approach, just how efficient they were. And yeah, yeah, also looking at the kind of ricochet effects of what of how they dealt with it. So, yeah, I thought it was I thought it was great. I think everybody should watch face. I I thought it was it was a bit too long. Uh, I have a problem with very long things. My attention span, obviously, but I think it suffered from balance in a way in the it was ended up being quite critical about a society that did very well for the masses, by and large, in dealing with Covid 19, because they compared to us, they compared to most other places and and I think it it became very critical of it without trying whilst trying to understand the things that the state needed to do in order to achieve a low death rate.

Speaker 1  
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It's a comparatively but but also by revealing kind of like some of the more dubious natures of kind of like those totalitarian states. And I think there was a lot of very Chinese specific stuff that I didn't get. You may have got. I didn't particularly get, but I don't know, I was left. I was left very disturbed by in that I wasn't quite sure what it was supposed to be. It was trying to be critical, but it was also being very positive because it acknowledges through that detailed examination of the hospital being built, the immense work that was put into saving lives, but then the kind of the kind of blase nature of others which I thought ended up being very critical of individualism. So, for example, the very end bit where they're picking up the ashes. Wow. Yeah, you know, which I thought was the best bit in a way, allow allowed the state to avoid responsibility for the weakening of respect for human life by making about individual behaviors. And I think it would have been stronger if it had a more of a folk. It would have been stronger if he could have been there making it. I suspect he he can't be there making it. And so he's actually compiling all of this material that he's got and I get that, and I like that, that element of it. But I think that that end bit left me quite uneasy because I

think he was. He ended up blaming everybody, which I was deeply uncomfortable with because, you know, we see another thing about death next, which I think is very interesting and given how, uh, ancestors and death is a very, very important thing in Chinese culture. And then the wiping the dust of the dead off the table that left me very confused, but moved. And but I thought all that had happened before. It sort of flipped it on its head, and I thought, I think it needed more focus. I'm rambling, but what do you think, Alison?

Speaker 1  
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Kind of, kind of. I think that is its power. I think it's exactly that the fact that you know it was doing this, but it was doing that. So I think in some ways that is what it offers us. It was only you know what the way one state dealt with it, but it's like surely that's got global message. The result is that by choosing one thing we will get, uh, we will get these other things and they're not all going to be positive. But it's like all of us, I don't know. It seems like a while ago all of us are abandoned. That idea that we couldn't have it all. And it's like, you know, to some extent, state like that will deliver those kind of things, like the man who who wanted to get his father's ashes. It's like it's like what kind of abdicating responsibility for the choices of how we want to live. And in some ways I think that kind of contradictory thing that's going on in that film actually brings that home is we need to make choices and we do need to make them now because, you know, going back to the first film because we're all going to hell fairly soon. If we don't and we have, we have to kind of We have to face up to the fact that you know, if we live this way, then we're saying goodbye to all these other people we are making. These people live in misery. You know, these are the choices we make and very few of us are doing that. And I think I think that's what this film really is powerful in doing. So what? What? I agree with you. But equally, I think I thought what was interesting about it as someone in the West watching it, particularly in a country where basically, they did nothing, exactly. But this is what we get. We live with a leader who put junk tries to push us into things, and we all know we all know what's going on. But we'll just just give us license to blame each other, and what do we get? A lot of people dead.

Speaker 1  
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So we're making that choice collectively. Not me personally. Person to us. Um, yeah. You know, we're guilty of something else, but still the same thing. But what? But I suppose that I suppose you're helping me understand what my

problem with with it was is that in the end, it dis empowers us because it ends up. It's about the state. And of course, we are making the choice for that state, uh, particularly in the West, but equally there as well and almost working for the this idea of the greater good, which which, you know, is a different version of the greater good there than it is here. But at least there's saved hundreds of thousands of lives, whereas I was So we get we get to keep our so called freedoms, but say goodbye to some of our family. Yeah, I suppose. I suppose you know he is an artist, but I would have liked, I suppose I would have liked something about, say, Britain or America as a parallel to to give it more power and impact to us. You may not be that it's for us. And it's for a Chinese audience to try and understand the nature of their state. It was a well constructed, well made product, but I just thought it needed because in the end it blamed everybody. In the end, it blamed everybody and I get that. It is everybody's fault. But actually we are saying now disempowered that you need to give some kind of hope that I didn't think it gave us that hope at the end. Should we be helping Should we be helping? I think if you want to engage people in activism, even in just in political engagement, I think I read recently that the Labour Party always do better when they offer hope rather than despair. And the Tories will always do better. When they say you're in despair, we can make it less despairing, and I quite like that analogy.

Speaker 1  
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But I think you do need to give people hope and I don't think this did it, particularly with the ending, because we're we're all guilty of betraying our ancestors. You know that that troubled me. But again, that's what he wanted to do. So, you know, troubled us. Yeah, concern about well, equally, he troubled us, but equally we're fucked you know, and I think I wanted a bit more for the kind of artist he is to give us that that little glimpse of hope that I just didn't think was there, you know, because what they did was very hopeful in the the way they prevented hundreds of thousands of deaths that would have been inevitable if they hadn't have done that, which I felt you need it. And again, this is quite a lot because I don't want to defend the state in doing that. But actually, there's hundreds hundreds of thousands of people alive who would have been dead. Whereas we've chosen the freedom, have hundreds of thousands of people. Yeah, And isn't that an act of hope to do that rather than the rhetoric of fault? You know, whereas Johnson will come back and say and we're gonna be back to the, you

know, the Britain we were kind of thing and do nothing. They're just acts. Isn't that support more important than words? Support? Yeah, they are. But then I thought it was very negative about the acts of hope that the Chinese state did. Ah, by the way, it ended with the ashes I thought that was Can I just say, by the way, I'm not defending the Chinese, trusting anybody case anybody thinks I am? Well, no, it's quite funny because I am defending the Chinese state, particularly in comparison to our state. And I don't have a problem defending the Chinese state in saving all of those lives for that. Yeah, but you could argue the reason. The only way they could do that is because they are the kind of state that they are.

Speaker 1  
0:49:55 - 0:51:46

And you could. You could argue that the reason they can let 350,000 people die in Britain is because of the state that we are combined with the fact that the Tories are riding high in the polls. They're going to sweep the board in the next elections. They've killed 200,000 people, you know, probably 100,000 disabled people. That's that's just utter despair. Yeah, Yeah, Marrow. Final word to you. And now I think you both said a quiet. I couldn't really really There was any other point I was going to make was there was an acknowledgement of how ah, the the diffusion of responsibility within the different state apparatuses. So, you know, again going back to the the construction worker. You know, when he's trying to get home, he's trying to get his travel permit and then everyone who speaks to be always passing them on to somebody else and it almost became kind of kind of kind of cat cat. Go ask in the way that he became lost in the bureaucracy of of trying to do something which is so important to just get back to his family and and, you know, get out of the state that he was in. And then so for me, it was it was looking at. The documentary was shining a light on the issue of responsibility and how we engage with the apparatus of the state in order to, you know, seek the support of the necessary, uh, basic needs that we have, or trying to get necessity that we need in order to function and how, at the same time, you've got the management of the people, which requires an acknowledgement and a recognition of the state's ideology. Alongside the behavior is an accident of the individual within the context of a pandemic and I thought that was really interesting and I took.

Speaker 1  
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I didn't take much hope for the documentary, but I saw the hopelessness as being quite refreshing because it made me think that we need to have that response, which is that if we are doomed, what do we what do we do about it in the in the

context of saying that there is no hopelessness and how you bring together the assemble, those different aspects of the idea of the dominant ideology that you are experiencing either a macro or micro level, alongside the activity activities and the contributions that your neighbors are making and the individuals are making. And I think, you know, in the UK we have there has been no recognition of that has been a reflection of that. And I think, you know, as you both said, there's there's been such devastation and slow violence that we've committed to people around us in our communities. Uh, and I'm hoping that the hopelessness that we feel, you know, being at the moment we are in the pandemic will help us to have that consciousness and raise that consciousness around what's what's going on. I agree with you, but But I suppose what? What you've just said It makes me think that again. The element of it being about China and and remember as a Western audience, which will be its primary audience. I suspect, because I suspected we ban in China will be, uh, an audience who are fed anti China propaganda and and also living in their own delusions that they live in better states. So, like you're talking about the casket risk element of trying to contact something that's the same here, you know, if you're going through the benefits system, if you're doing all of that, it's the same here. And in fact, it's the same here on even minor issues. And and it's even worse in America.

Speaker 1  
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So the two beacons of freedom you know, it's a nightmare combined with the fact that they've let hundreds, hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people die. And I used the word let by choice as they did, and I think that that, to me, is the key weakness of it that it fed into anti China propaganda, which I don't. It is what it is combined with the fact that they didn't let hundreds thousands of people who do it and we did. And we have an equally after a system on many, many levels claiming benefit for being disabled, for being unemployed, for all of those things, having places to live, homelessness, you know? And I think the same thing. I mean, you know, Yeah, and it allowed us allowed us to not compare in a way. And I think that that to me was the thing I didn't like about. Yeah, I didn't. Yeah, but I didn't see that so good when I was watching it, I was reflecting on my experience as an individual in my country. So well, I took from it was there was a There was a kernel of seeing some of these issues the future responsibility, the bureaucracy, the abandonment of certain groups of people and so on as a recognition that we need

to think about these as part of an internationalization of the issues so that no longer we do do we see it as a kind of personal troubles or internalize our own problems that we've we've created, which is, of course, what we're doing with its individualized individualization of individual responsibility. But recognizing that some of these issues transcend the geography of where they are and that they are being experienced differently. Perhaps, but they are still recognition that they need to be experienced across the globe. And we need an international response to that indeed. And we'll leave that up to David Miliband at the international rescue.

Speaker 1  
0:55:37 - 0:58:20

Anyway, I think we've done enough on that one. Uh, we'd all recommend it. I'll take it. Yes, yeah, yeah, we all recommend seeing that one. So now we're on to the last one, which is meanwhile on Earth, a Swedish documentary about undertakers. I'll start by saying I to me this was the best film of them all. I love the style of it. It's very still. Uh, it's not interviews again. I I quite like the stillness of the observation of the ordinary nous of the respect people have for the living and the dead. Uh, in following these undertakers and I thought it captured that very well again. It's not too long again. I always go on about length. Length is very important. I'm a man, so I obviously would say that mhm. 112 minutes. I think one of the things I would say is is in the next podcast. Hopefully, we're gonna look at a film called about endless Nous, which is by Roy Andersson, a very famous director. And the style of this comes from his work. I think his work is much better. Roy Andersson. It's on a whole nother level of what this captures, but I it made you hopeful in the face of death in the way the it wasn't just an acceptance of death, It was an acceptance of life that I thought it moved between those two things with such a such beauty that I think it was it was very, very good. Alison, um, I'll come back to what you said about hope, because I don't I'm not sure it didn't make me hopeful about death. And that wasn't for me. What it was found. We all read things differently. I agree that it was a really, really excellent film. I didn't like it better, uh, than coronation as I like to equally different ruling. Um, I'm going to check out the person you said, uh, to make those comparisons, but it kind of remembered reminds me a little bit of the workers. Chantal Akerman, Uh, but in a very different kind of way.

Speaker 1  
0:58:20 - 1:00:39

And I just thought she was so well done. I mean, it wasn't it wasn't a comedy, but it really made me really made me smile The drivers of the hearse, which is just so

wonderful. Uh, just it was a very, very beautiful film. And I think the power of it for me was the way with it seemed almost effort effortlessly brought to life all these things that surround, uh, an area of life which she saw to be so hidden, and we don't even want to think about it. And it brought them up in such a mundane, ordinary, aware of the fact that for a lot of people dealing with death is part of their life. It just kind of blew me away of that because it tells us why you know about what we're ignoring, and that leads me to lead me to thinking. Actually, the I think this will be an excellent strategy, Um, for a film on on disability, because, you know, all all the all the literature on the disability industry and the amount of people who you know, feeding to disabled people's lives in different ways and the way that they benefit from us massively. It's like this. This would be such a good way. Another things that are a bit like that. But the way that this has done so skillfully and effortlessly and just make you begin to think about all these people's lives and how they they make things possible for us that we take for granted it particularly important. You know, it's one of the worst years for deaths. Well, yeah. Uh, if two focuses on, well, this doesn't just magically happen. And now that it's tables, people's needs get magically over there were not looking, so I just Yeah, just super looked at. I will watch it again. In fact, I may watch it again next week. Yeah, well, just Well, Roy Andersson has done a quadradrilla.

Speaker 1  
1:00:39 - 1:02:32

Gee, I suppose you'd call it a for those four films which I think I may have sent you already and it's the last one was about endless nous. If you're gonna watch them watch the first one first, which I think it's called Stories from the Second Floor, I'll send you back. But Roy Andersson. Right? And I think we'll do more on that in the next one. But, Mirror, what did you think of this documentary? Well, it was my favorite of the of the four, Um, similar to Allison. You know, the display of the the ordinary nous. Um, you know, I wrote here the kind of the mechanical aspects of the, you know, the process of facilitating somebody's, you know, um, either burial or indeed, cremation. Uh, you know, there was just this kind of ordinary ordinary this and and and and then highlighted the kind of the routine, the daily routine of existence. And, of course, the daily routine, then of of the kind of closure of of of, of somebody's body, you know, starting to disintegrate and and and and disappear. And it was interesting, because when when you see the

part when together pathology department and they're they're looking at the body and preparing the body and the body is kind of leaking, it's using different aspects of skin is tearing, and there's no repulsion. And of course, when you think about the largest, tell people how often our bodies are seen as repulsive because of the leaks because of the damage because of the you know, the tears and so on. And yet in this in this environment, it's not. It's just, you know, the body is just mechanical, it's just functional. It's just it's just at the end of it of its of its processing. And I really enjoyed I I just really enjoyed it. And I think that there was that kind of assemblage of the, you know, the material aspects in terms of the preparation of the environment.

Speaker 1  
1:02:32 - 1:04:22

You know, the intricate detail given to the aesthetics of of the of the funeral or the burial or cremation. Um or indeed, of course, you've got the practices that are being reproduced by the workers and the dedication that they put into their and when you assemble and you and you start to recognize the sheer complexity that goes into burial and cremation and funerals because I was thinking absolutely and thinking, you know, when you think about death at that stage, you're just, you know, for me, I was just as you know, thinking it's represented by the figure of the undertaker or is represented by the figure of the religious sector that's what individuals attached to. And you don't you know you well for me, I I dismissed. You know, the significance of not just the pathology department, not just the people who are carrying and transporting the body. But of course, the people who are involved in the in the mechanical nature of, you know, making other machinery works, making sure that the systems are geared up, that they're routinely check that they are functioning because of the of the significance that they hold in daily society of life. And I also was really struck by Monday, you know, the the there was for me. It was really interesting part where, um I think it's the son of of an elderly person. He's on the phone talking about how his mother thinks that, you know, younger people don't care about the lives of elderly people. And then you just suppose that with the you know, the range of workers who are involved who are doing all this intricate detail and and this, you know, this kind of reflection and respect that they have for the body, even though the body is now, you know, the deceased and there's no there's no interaction with the thoughts and the ideas of what the person is saying.

Speaker 1  
1:04:22 - 1:06:31

It's just the relationship between the individual and this. This this body. Um I thought I thought I would really breathtaking. I thought the documentary I really enjoyed the actually the use of the older lady, who obviously was deeply visually impaired, you know, close up to a telephone and her son because they seem quite random characters. Uh, but of course I like that parallel with them and like in a way that they're the next customers. But they're not customers. There were people and they had lives. And, you know, it was that whole point. And that's why I thought it was very hopeful, because even in death, you know, there was that respect for you. The that was widespread, you know, from the grave digger to the body cleaner to the nurse. But equally they had their own lives. And that that kind of mutual, just living and living is death in the end. And I love the way it played towards that. And I love because I think the camera moves, possibly only once or twice. I think it moves quite near the end along the side of the crematorium, bit to go from putting it into the people getting out. And I I just thought it was It was very, very good. And I think the director his name is Carl Olsen deserves an enormous amount of credit and interdependency chemicals very strongly. You know, given what you said, the fact that we we are in some ways the not the opposite message from from From the Last film. But the fact that all of this relies on interdependence, as does our response to the pandemic, Uh, and I think that came across so clearly It's like, yeah, in some ways, that's stronger than a political message to be too dependent. And I quite like that because to some extent, you know, you could use it as a criticism, but actually it's a business, and it's a very profitable business. But I quite like that.

Speaker 1  
1:06:31 - 1:08:37

It didn't do that. It didn't get into the kind of that kind of capitalist notion of life and death, and it actually it brought it back to humanity about the people engaged in it. And I thought that was that was a whole different and new and positive and hopeful way to explore that. And I think anything else, Mary, I want to take this jolly sorry. I want to go and get him to take his job. I loved all the lifts because obviously in a wheelchair I love lifts and all of those lifts they've got everywhere upstairs, up to the crematorium, up to the oven. Actually checking it all works. I just, you know, I suppose in the back. And I think there's money in those left. There's money in those lists. But he did. I do it and I really like the old lady. And again, I think it was a bit like again. One of my slight problems with the

coronation and the way we we won was there were moments in that one that were interviewed. There was like the old Union woman Communist Party was being interviewed by her son and I I think I didn't like that because I think the strength of it up until that point and afterwards was the observation of Element, which was the beauty of this one. And not having people being interviewed is it's such a so then they have their own voice that has absolute value. I thought it was just a really beautiful thing. And it let them speak them. You know, Don't get me wrong. There was someone in there saying, What about this? And then they would talk about it. You know that it's there in the background, but to cut all of that, our to give their voice that that center stage and value that when there's someone else interviewing takes away from it. I thought it was really, really beautiful.

Speaker 1  
1:08:37 - 1:10:28

And the whole move, the whole there was so much a movement in it from a still camera and that, you know, was was was amazing because because the movement in it is the trolley of the dead of the dead body and it coming in and out of shot through the doorway. You know, on the undertaker's car, there's all the movement behind it and the stillness of them in it. I I thought that that visual originality was fantastic. Anything else? No, no, I was just gonna say there was I just I found it. Really? You know, when we think about death and how often the methods it becomes no absorbing doesn't it? Of our conversation. When it happens, we you know, we we fixate on it. We are talking about it. And as Alison touched on, that just the ordinary nous that they were carrying on having other conversations. You know, the they're burning a body by the things I was saying. Oh, dreams, Check the machine. You need to have a look at that. We'll do that next week. We go for lunch now, uh, you know, and even like when things But you know, when things went wrong, you know, when the two grave diggers, the band, the lorry or the truck comes in and they're trying to wave it down say they haven't finished the sermon yet and the ceremony hasn't hasn't completed. It was just It was just It was a nice reflection of, you know, so often in our society, we become consumed by these things, and we think that these events are so essential and that they will destabilize, and they will disrupt everything about our our existence and our life at the micro level. But of course, here we have people who are dedicated to these to these taboo subjects are dedicated to these subjects, and yet they are just. They see it as part of the mechanical nature of of the functioning of the community, of the

environment of their society.

Speaker 1  
1:10:28 - 1:12:19

And I think it raises really interesting questions about how we place so much emphasis on certain topics that we see as being disruptive when in fact they're not disruptive. They're just they're just ordinary, and we need to see them as being ordinary. And you bought into it completely. So, for example, when he was lining up the coffin on the plinth and you're going No left, it's not straight. It's not straight go that way. We go that way. And of course, it does bring us back to the first film as well, because they refer to the people playing with drones. That Heathrow at one point did you get that when the woman is practicing the flu or the singing in the church and she could pick up a door or a nephew because idiots playing with drones and he dry? I thought, you know, because I watched one of them was a nice little backwards and forwards kind of stuff on that, just going back on the on the lifting. It's a bit of a tangent, but did you see the steepness of the ramp in the coronation documentary in the toilets? Fine. If you look through the documentary, look for the ramps and that is scary. So yeah, I remember. Yeah. In reflection. What? What, and again? Because I'm banking on you as the expert in this Alison because you've read the book had written about it. What? What do you think? Disability documentary needs that it doesn't have. Well, you know, we've seen a lot of the cliches of in all the things we've watched throughout our life about disability. And I talked about the cliches, and that's why I quite like the great fortune because I didn't think they were there. What? What do you think? And you've just said, you know, talking about this film, you know, meanwhile, on earth, this would make a great disability one on on, on on on the disabled life. Expand on that a bit for me. What do you think? What do we want?

Speaker 1  
1:12:20 - 1:14:31

I can't answer that and just try. Definitely not an extra. I think we want everything, but so I'm a bit obsessed part because I'm writing, at the moment a little piece on on that horrible, horrible worst film ever. Music I We're not We're not going to review. There were No, no, no, no, no. But I will go back to the fact that and I think this last documentary proves it is, um we keep talking about action. Of course, this isn't applying documentary particularly, um, but unless you've got people who have some experience involved on that hole team of people who create these things for us, um, it's it's always going to be lacking. So, you know,

uh, in whatever way that is. And I wouldn't be descriptive about that because we all know that good things sometimes come from things that are possibly slightly dodging. So But I do. I do think, uh, that's what the CIA film tells me about. You know, media portrayals in general is you get somebody who's just curious like something. If someone was just curious about death, for example, and just decided what they thought it was, uh and I went and and and chest that you probably get something that didn't ring true, like we did with see us film. So I'm assuming and have no idea about this. I'm assuming the director of that film had done proper research because it felt authentic. It felt that that's they covered. Most of the basis of what we know happens when somebody dies and give us a lot more information, Uh, which enables us to experience that. And I do think there's lots of debates coming up at the moment. How authentic can something be like? It's the same, for example, with without having more of us people on it. So it's not particular actors, but it's just like it's completely ill advised. And it's it's curiosity about disability.

Speaker 1  
1:14:31 - 1:16:10

It's usually going to fall short, so I've got any easy answers. If you want any answers at all, please read my next book. David. Proud short film on iTunes. No, I change. I player on the BBC. Just thank you. Check that out. That's about authenticity and the personal experience of disability that that I think that I think is quite good. Mirror what you can end for us on your wise words. What was the question? What do we need? Disability documentary. Um, well, you can say against many different avenues for me because of my interest in resistant practices. I'd like to see a documentary that engages authentically with how to say that people resist and why they resist. And while they're proposing as alternatives, um, and I think that to do that successfully, we need to start thinking about that on an intersectional level and think about how that intersects with different aspects of our backgrounds and how that shines. A, uh, how that presents a mirror, then to how societies already organized and why the current arrangements of society are undesirable for many groups of people. And I think by recognizing the personal within the political and trying to facilitate up through through people's experiences and to people's stories under the context of or within the context of resistance practices, I'd be very interested in something on that. Yeah, thank you all. See you next time

