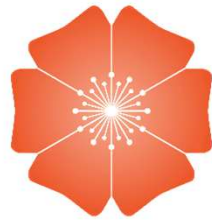


Disability Awareness, Sensitivity, and Being Anti-Ableist – Part 1



THE DIOCESE OF
CALIFORNIA

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Task Force on Disability & Deaf Access

Introductory Exercise

- Caveat: Doing exercises can be a bit ableist, depending on the type of exercise and how it is done.

Imagine:

You enter a new church that you haven't visited before during a Sunday morning service. The congregation is in the middle of the sermon when you enter. Who is giving that sermon? Describe the person giving the sermon and where that person is located in the church.

In what you imagined, was the speaker in the pulpit?

- Did the pulpit have steps leading up to it?
- How did the speaker communicate?
- Did the altar have steps?

The characteristics of our buildings inform us as to the people that are expected to serve.

- What does that say about our churches at the time they were built?
- What characteristics do we expect our clergy and other church leaders to have?

“Disability is a natural part of the human experience.” –
IDEA, 20 U.S.C. §1400(c)(1)

Everyone will experience disability at some point of their life, whether permanent or temporary.

According to the CDC, 26% of American adults had a disability as of 2018. And the COVID-19 pandemic created an additional 1.2 million people with disabilities as of December 2021 due to long COVID. (Center for American Progress)

Race and disability are inextricably linked

- 1 in 4 Black Americans are disabled.
- 3 in 10 Indigenous Americans are disabled.
- 36% of disabled Black Americans live below the federal poverty line.
- 34% of disabled Indigenous Americans live below the federal poverty line. ([CDC Disability and Health Infographics](#))

Recent History (1)

- 1815-1817: Thomas Gallaudet founds the first formal school for the Deaf in Connecticut.
- 1839: Louis Braille develops the first tactile/raised alphabet in France. It does not become well-known in the USA until just after the Civil War.
- 1907: Forced sterilization of disabled people enacted into law by Indiana; 24 states follow suit. Lumps “imbeciles” with “rapists.” SCOTUS rules that forced sterilization is constitutional in 1927.

Recent History (2)

- 1935: Social Security Act signed into law to support disabled adults.
- 1939: Nazi Germany begins “mercy killings” of disabled people across Europe, euthanizing approximately 250,000 people with physical and intellectual disabilities.
- 1940s: Disabled veterans and the President’s Committee on Employment of the Handicapped begin a decades-long push for “barrier-free buildings” and employment of disabled people in the United States.
- 1962: Ed Roberts

Recent History (3)

- 1973: Rehabilitation Act of 1973 passed, which includes Section 504.
- 1974: Last of the “Ugly Laws” repealed in Chicago.
- 1975: Educating All Handicapped Children Act
- 1977: Disabled protesters occupy HEW building in San Francisco for 28 days demanding the Rehab Act regulations be drafted and implemented.
- 1978: ADAPT forms and protests erupt over inaccessible public transit.

Recent History (4)

- 1986: The EAHC becomes the IDEA.
- 1988: Deaf President Now at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC
- 1990: Capitol Crawl
- 1990: Americans with Disabilities Act becomes law.
- 1996: Federal Telecommunications Act becomes law\
- 1999: SCOTUS rules that disabled people have the right to community services in the community of their choice (*Olmstead v. LC*)

Recent History (5)

- 2008: ADA is reauthorized with stronger regulations and accessibility guidelines
- 2009: Rosa's Law: "MR" becomes "Intellectual Disability"
- 2017: ADAPT protests inside Capitol Hill to save Medicaid and ACA

And Yet:

THIRTY-ONE states, plus the District of Columbia, still allow forced sterilization of disabled people.

California is one of those thirty-one states.



crutches_and_spice

teawithqj

**"I've never once
overcome my
disability,**

**but I have
overcome the
desire to slap
someone
every single
day of
my life.**

*Imani
Barbarin*



**And that's what
should be celebrated.**

crutches_and_spice It's really hard! Clap!...

BUT FIRST: Let's Talk About Language

- “Special Needs?” NOPE.
- “Handicapped?”
- “Handicapable?” or “Differently-abled?”
- “Problem” or “difficulty”
- “Person-First” vs. “Identity-First”
- Taking ownership of labels (Crip, Aspie, Deaf...)
- If you don't know, ask.
- If you can't ask, be factual and descriptive.

More Language

- “Wheelchair user” or “uses a wheelchair”
- “Accessible restroom,” “accessible parking,” “accessible entrance...”
- “Accommodations” or “disability accommodations”
- “Deaf” versus “deaf”; “hard of hearing”

More Language

- Blind or low vision or visually disabled
- Little People / little person
- Autistic / neurodiverse
- Neurotypical
- Chronic illness
- Psychiatric disability

When Language Around Disability Is Problematic

- Using phrases such as “blind as a bat” or “blind to criticism”
- “Falling on deaf ears”
- Using disability-related terms to express criticism or as an insult (“that’s insane,” “the party was lame,” “they must be paranoid”)
- The “R-word”
- Recently, both Lizzo and Beyonce removed the word “spaz” from their songs after outreach from the Disability Community

“Inspiration Porn”

Attitudinal Barriers:

The late Stella Young nails it.

https://www.ted.com/talks/stella_young_i_m_not_your_inspiration_than_k_you_very_much?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Other Realities of Living With Disability

- Anxiety – even if not as part of a diagnosed anxiety disorder. We still live in a largely inaccessible world where not all places are accessible or required to be accessible. Encountering barriers to accessibility is incredibly stressful and anxiety-inducing.
- Anxiety – travel is extremely difficult for folx with power chairs that are commonly mishandled and damaged, or communication barriers where safety announcements are not always captioned.
- “Spoon theory” or “deaf time”

Other Realities of Living with Disability (cont'd)

- Disabled people are far more likely to live in poverty.
- 19.1% of disabled people were employed in 2021, up from 17.9% in 2020 prior to COVID. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- Higher likelihood of experiencing violence: 2.5 times more likely than nondisabled people
- Over 90% of developmentally disabled people will experience sexual assault
- Roughly 66% of jail inmates are disabled, punishing and excluding disabled people further from society

Understanding Manifestations and Appearances

- Disability is as unique as the person living it. No disability works the same on a second person.
- No two people with similar disabilities may use the same disability accommodation(s).
- The presence of one disability does not mean another disability is also present—i.e., being nonverbal does not mean the person is also developmentally or intellectually disabled.

Psychiatric Disabilities and Violence

Multiple studies have been done over the last twenty years show that people with psychiatric disabilities are far more likely to be victims of crime and not the perpetrators of crime.

[People with severe mental illness as the perpetrators and victims of violence: time for a new public health approach](#)

[Violence and mental illness: an overview](#)

[Psychiatric Illness and Criminality](#) - “[In] the criminal justice system ... persons with mental illness get treated as criminals, arrested, charged, and jailed for a longer time in jail compared to the general population. ... People with mental illness are arrested and sent to prison in disproportionate numbers, often due to a lack of awareness and resources...”

Psychiatric Disabilities and Violence (cont'd)

- [Insane-America's 3 Largest Psychiatric Facilities are Jails](#)
- [SF's Largest Mental Health Facility--the Jail](#)

These stories, while addressing the truth, perpetuate the bias that criminals are mentally ill, and lead many people to fear people with psychiatric disabilities—especially when those people are unhoused and living on the street. As of 2009, at least 80% of San Francisco's unhoused population were also disabled, either physically, psychiatrically, or both.

Common Disability Manifestations

- Developmentally disabled folx have difficulty making and maintaining eye contact, controlling gross and fine motor skills, controlling how loud their voices are. Developmental delay does not always coincide with intellectual disability.
- People with epilepsy experiencing a stroke (however major or minor) may stare, blink rapidly, or nod excessively.
- A common manifestation of both autism and Tourette Syndrome is disinhibition, or the inability to inhibit inappropriate behaviors and/or speech.

Common Disability Manifestations (cont'd)

- People with ADHD may not be able to sit still, often act without thinking, and speak excessively. They may also not have the same executive functioning skills as neurotypical people do, and appear disorganized.
- People with auditory processing disorder will take longer to understand what is said.

Theology of Disability and Questions to Hold

- Use of disability in our hymns and songs: Amazing Grace (“was blind but now I see”), O For A Thousand Tongues To Sing (“Hear Him ye deaf, His praise ye dumb...)
- How do we reconcile the portrayal of disability “cures” in the Bible with disability identity and pride today?
- How have some of these stories contributed to some believing disabilities could be “cured” through prayer and/or faith?
- How can we be more mindful of language in liturgy and worship?
- “[T]here is a case to be made that not all cure results in healing, and not all healing results in cure.” - KT Tupling, Disability Officer, Diocese of Oxford

What to Watch and Read

- Crip Camp – Netflix
- Rising Phoenix – Netflix
- See What I'm Saying (www.seewhatimsayingmovie.com)
- Crutches and Spice (www.crutchesandspice.com)
- Disability Visibility – Alice Wong
- Year of the Tiger – Alice Wong
- Being Heumann – Judy Heumann
- Haben – Haben Girma

Whom to Follow

[29 Disabled Leaders You Should Be Following on Twitter](#)

Questions?