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# **A Disability Primer:**

**Reclaiming, Imagining, Creating Change**

# **UW-Madison Land Acknowledgement**

The University of Wisconsin–Madison occupies ancestral Ho-Chunk land, a place their nation has called Teejop (day-JOPE) since time immemorial.

In an 1832 treaty, the Ho-Chunk were forced to cede this territory.

Decades of ethnic cleansing followed when both the federal and state government repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, sought to forcibly remove the Ho-Chunk from Wisconsin.

# Land Acknowledgement (continued)

This history of colonization informs our shared future of collaboration and innovation.

Today, UW–Madison respects the inherent sovereignty of the Ho-Chunk Nation, along with the eleven other First Nations of Wisconsin.

Please take a moment to consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring us together here today. And please join us in uncovering such truths every day.

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# Introductions



# Who We Are

- Patty Cisneros Prevo, Diversity & Inclusion Manager, Wisconsin School of Business
- Mari Magler, Director, McBurney Disability Resource Center
- Ruben Mota, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator, Office of Compliance

# Objectives

- Review US disability history
- Discover key moments in disability justice activism
- Reframe disability as a shared societal norm
- Disrupt ableism to affect change



# A Note About Language

- Person-first
- Identity-first
- Ableist and derogatory language

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# Disability History

“The story of the US nation is a contested, sometimes vicious, sometimes gloriously marvelous story of creating a national home. People with disabilities have been and will continue to be an integral part of that story.” – Kim Nielsen





# Pre and Early Colonial Period

- Indigenous North America – before 1492
  - Most communities did not have a word for disability
  - Disability not defined by body; relationship to the community
- Colonial Communities – 1492 – 1700
  - Bodily variations not significant if can work; community care
  - Nonapparent disabilities not well accepted

# Approaching Independence

- Late Colonial Era – 1700 – 1776
  - Disability was used to legitimize slavery
  - Asylums only used as a last resort
- Creating Citizens – 1776 – 1865
  - Disability tied to economic labor; shift from religious to medical explanation
  - Disability-specific institutions emerge

# Civil War and Industrialization

- Institutionalization of Disability – 1865 – 1890
  - Adaptive devices; first wheelchair patent
  - Civil war pension system; Ugly Laws
- The Progressive Era – 1890 – 1927
  - Disability as moral defect; rise of eugenics
  - 1916 polio epidemic

# Approaching Civil Rights

- Pre-civil Rights Era – 1927 – 1968
  - “We don’t want tin cups, we want jobs”
  - Embracing of language, civil rights, intersectionality of identities
- Rights and Rights Denied – 1968 – present
  - Disability rights energized by civil rights movement
  - Architectural Barriers Act

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# Early Activism



# Focus of Early Activism

- Independent living movement
  - Focus on self-determination
  - Community living
  - Removal of societal barriers
- Removal of architectural, employment, and transportation barriers

# Ed Roberts

- UC – Berkeley
- Rolling Quads



Image source: [The Arc, California](#)

# “President but not Teacher”

Bradley Lomax and Judy Heumann



Image source: [Portland Community College](#)



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# Disability Justice & Activism



# What is Disability Justice?

In 2005, disabled queer people of color- Patty Berne, Mia Mingus, and Stacey Milbern launched the framework for the disability justice movement.



Patty Berne



Mia Mingus



Stacey Milbern

# What is Ableism?

A system of assigning value to people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, productivity, desirability, intelligence, excellence, and fitness. These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in eugenics, anti-Blackness, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism.

This systemic oppression that leads to people and society determining people's value based on their culture, age, language, appearance, religion, birth or living place, "health/wellness", and/or their ability to satisfactorily re/produce, "excel" and "behave."

You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism.



Talila "TL" Lewis

# Patty Berne

*“Disability Justice was built because the Disability Rights Movement and Disability Studies do not inherently centralize the needs and experiences of folks experiencing intersectional oppression, such as disabled people of color, immigrants with disabilities, queers with disabilities, trans and gender non-conforming people with disabilities, people with disabilities who are houseless, people with disabilities who are incarcerated, people with disabilities who have had their ancestral lands stolen, amongst others.”*



Patty Berne

# Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality describes the ways in which systems of oppression based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class, and other identities “intersect” to create compounded systems of discrimination and/or disadvantage.



**Dr. Kimberle Crenshaw**



# Disability Justice?

Leroy Moore, Eli Clare, and Sebastian Margaret later joined Patty, Mia, and Stacey. The disability justice framework focused on the ways that ableism is linked to multiple other systems of oppression.



Leroy Moore



Eli Clare



Sebastian Margaret

# Sins Invalid

## MISSION:

“Sins Invalid is a disability justice-based performance project that incubates and celebrates artists with disabilities, centralizing artists of color and LGBTQ / gender-variant artists as communities who have been historically marginalized.”

# 10 Principles of Disability Justice

1. Intersectionality
2. Leadership of those most impacted
3. Anti-capitalist politic
4. Cross-movement solidarity
5. Recognizing wholeness
6. Sustainability
7. Commitment to cross-disability solidarity
8. Interdependence
9. Collective access
10. Collective liberation



# Disability Justice Activism Today

- Haben Girma — Disability Justice Lawyer, Author, Speaker
- Imani Barbarin — Black girl magic + Disabled pride
- Keith Jones — 2021 Emmy Award Winning Lyricist and 2021 Mentorship Hall of Fame
- Annie Segarra aka Annie Elaine — YouTube content creator and intersectional activist
- Alice Wong — Disabled oracle, Founder @disvisibility, author of *Year of the Tiger*
- Talila Lewis — Community Lawyer, Organizer, Educator; Social Justice Consultant
- Anjali Forber-Pratt — Administration for Community Living Director of the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR)

# Disability Justice Activism - UW-Madison

- Associate Professor of Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Wisconsin- Madison
- Author of:
  - Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women's Speculative Fiction
  - Black Disability Politics



Dr. Sami Schalk

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# Reframing Disability



# Disability Models

	Medical Model	Social Model
What is Disability?	The condition of being unable to perform a task due to impairment, which is an individual burden.	The restriction of activity caused by the design of environments which exclude people with disabilities from participating in society.
Implication	The individual must adjust or become more normal to fit into society and the established environments.	Society must adapt the design of environments. Individual differences are normal and accepted.

# Identity / Social Identity / Cultural Affiliation Model(s)

Disability as a community

- Goal is for individuals to embrace disability as part of their personal identity.
- Belief – Disability is socially constructed (similar to social model) AND claimed as a positive identity.

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# Disrupting Ableism & Affecting Change



# Ableist Language

disAbled	Differently abled	Physically challenged	Deaf and dumb	Insane
Psycho	Retarded	Lame	Turn a blind eye to...	Wheelchair bound
Crazy	Handicapped	Special needs	Use your voice!	"I'm so..."

# Microaggressions

- Denial of privacy
- Secondary gain
- Perceived helplessness
- Spiritual intervention
- Denial of disability related experience
- Patronization
- Second-class citizen
- Denial of personal identity
- Spread effect
- Infantilization
- Desexualization
- Exoticism



# Strategies for Interrupting Ableism

- Note and recognize ableist attitudes and systemic ableist practices.
- Advocate and promote disabled people for leadership positions.
- Encourage representation of disability in campus media, shared governance, committees, social justice events.
- Incorporate and practice accessibility in the various aspects of your work.
- Endorse and provide opportunities for identity development and exploration.
- Budget for accessibility.
- “Nothing about us without us.”

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# Questions?

For additional information or to learn more about how you can create a more inclusive, accessible community, visit [Accessibility@UW-Madison](mailto:Accessibility@UW-Madison)