

UW-MADISON

DIVERSITY FORUM 2022

THE EVOLUTION OF DISABILITY JUSTICE

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Q&A and Interactive Elements.



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Introductions

Emmett: He/Him/His

Political Science

Sophomore

Elise: She/Her/Hers

Political Science & Sociology

Senior

Priyanka: She/Her/Hers

Physics & Theatre

Junior

Brelynn: She/Her/Hers

Community and Nonprofit Leadership
& Political Science

Junior

Acknowledgements

- We are here today as a result of the removal of the Ho-Chunk through government policies of settler colonialism and militarism including a continual relegation of indigenous peoples to the past.
- Disabled bodies and people of multidimensional and marginalized identities have and continue to contribute to settler colonial systems.

Accessibility Features and Disclosures

- This presentation features large, high contrast text.
- Speakers will use person-first and identity-first language interchangeably while referencing disabled people/people with disabilities.

slido



What are some words/phrases you associate with social movements?

i Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

*Social Movements

- Women's Suffrage
- Black Lives Matter
- #MeToo
- Abolitionists Movement
- Civil Rights Movement
- Chicano Movement
- Environmental Movement
- Labor Movement
- March for Our Lives
- Reproductive Justice Movement
- LGBT Movement
- Anti-War Movement
- Queer Liberation
- Disability Rights Movement

*NON-EXHAUSTIVE

Ten Principals of Disability Justice (Sins Invalid)

1. Intersectionality
2. Leadership of those most impacted
3. Anti-capitalistic politic
4. Commitment to cross-movement organizing
5. Recognizing wholeness
6. Sustainability
7. Commitment to cross-disability solidarity
8. Interdependence
9. Collective Access
10. Collective Liberation

“I am not free while any [person] is unfree, even when [their] shackles are different than my own.”

~Audre Lorde

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973

- Signed by President Nixon in 1973
 - Modeled on language from the 1964 Civil Rights Act
 - Explicitly outlawed discrimination from federally funded amenities or institutions based on disability status
 - But the language was broad -- given to the Department of Health, Education, Welfare (H.E.W.) for revisions and enactment
 - HEW secretary Joseph Califano worried about "unreasonable burden"



Image description: Joseph Califano is helped onto a raised platform by two assistants while he is barraged with questions about his inaction by 504 protesters.

April 1977: The 504 Sit-In



26-day occupation of the San Francisco regional office of the HEW

- On April 5, protesters all around the country occupy regional offices of the federal Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW)
- Most protests ended that day, except in San Francisco!
- Over a hundred protesters refused to leave until Califano signed regulations for Section 504 on April 28
- Longest non-violent occupation of a federal building in United States history

Image description: Judy Heumann, a white woman with glasses and chin-length hair, is sitting in a wheelchair and speaking into a microphone. A button reading "Sign 504" is on her left collar.

504 Sit-In: Not Just Disabled People



Photograph: Center for Independent Living

- Gay Liberation Movement
- Kitty Cone, key 504 protester and openly lesbian
- The Butterfly Brigade smuggled walkie-talkies past the FBI occupied HEW building
- Lesbian bar owner washed people's hair after the building's water was turned off
- Buttercup Restaurant, Brick Hut lesbian cooperative, and Glide Memorial Church donate dinner

Image description:

Kitty Cone, a white woman with shoulder-length hair and glasses, speaks to reporters with several microphones pointed at her.

504 Sit-in: Black Panther Involvement

- BPP provided food, medication, mobile showers
- Extensive coverage in *The Black Panther* newspaper
- Key Activists: Dennis Billups and Brad Lomax

Image description: two side-by-side photographs of *The Black Panther* newspaper. The article title reads: "Handicapped Win Demands – End H.E.W. Occupation" with sub-heading "Pressure Forces Califano To Sign 504 Regulations".



Photograph: Billy X Jennings



Photograph: Billy X Jennings

"Lomax's Matrix: Disability, Solidarity, and the Black Power of 504" (Schweik, 2011)

Brad Lomax:

- A disabled member of the Black Panther Party
- Leader for the independent living movement
- Vital part of cross movement organizing between the Black Panther Party and Disability Rights Movement in the Bay Area.



Photograph: Hollynn D'Lil

Image description: Brad Lomax sitting next to Judy Heumann and speaking at a rally in 1977 at Lafayette Square in Washington.

Privilege & Stratification within the Disability Rights Movement

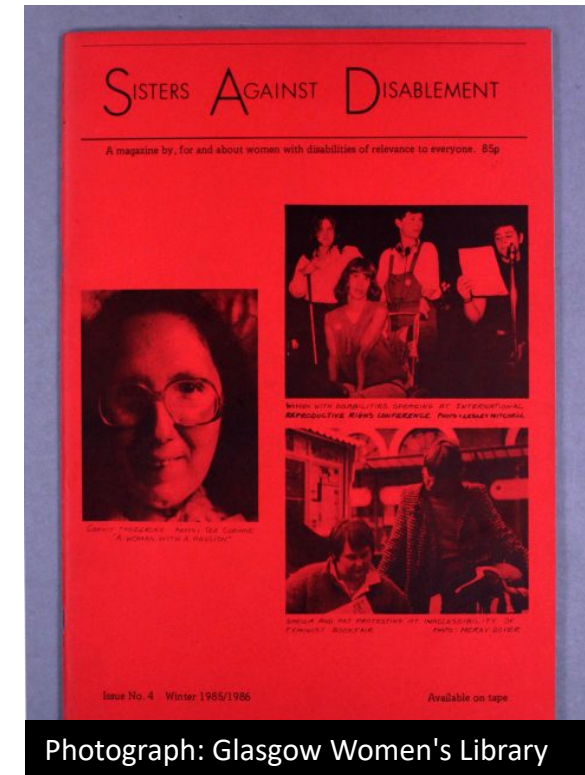
- **Cross-movement solidarity:** building alliances between social movements in order to better achieve political or social capital
- **Disability Rights movement:** mainly white-led
 - Enacted lateral ableism, racism, sexism, homophobia, etc.



Image description: Individuals using wheelchairs and one individual with dwarfism are in a street with a banner reading "Injustice Anywhere Is A Threat To Justice Everywhere – Martin Luther King Jr."

Disability in the Feminist Movement

- Early eugenics
 - Birth control and forced sterilization
- Rhetoric of female sex as a disability
 - Weak, feeble-minded
- Rosa May Billinghurst
 - Known as "the cripple suffragette"
- Sisters Against Disablement (SAD)
 - Boycotted the Lesbian Sex & Sexuality Conference in 1983 due to accessibility concerns
- Feminist Audio Books (FAB)
 - Recorded works of feminist literature onto tape for blind and visually impaired women



Photograph: Glasgow Women's Library

Image description: Cover of Issue No. 4 of Sisters Against Disablement, published in 1985. Three images are on the cover, likely featuring members of the group.

Disability in the Civil Rights Movement

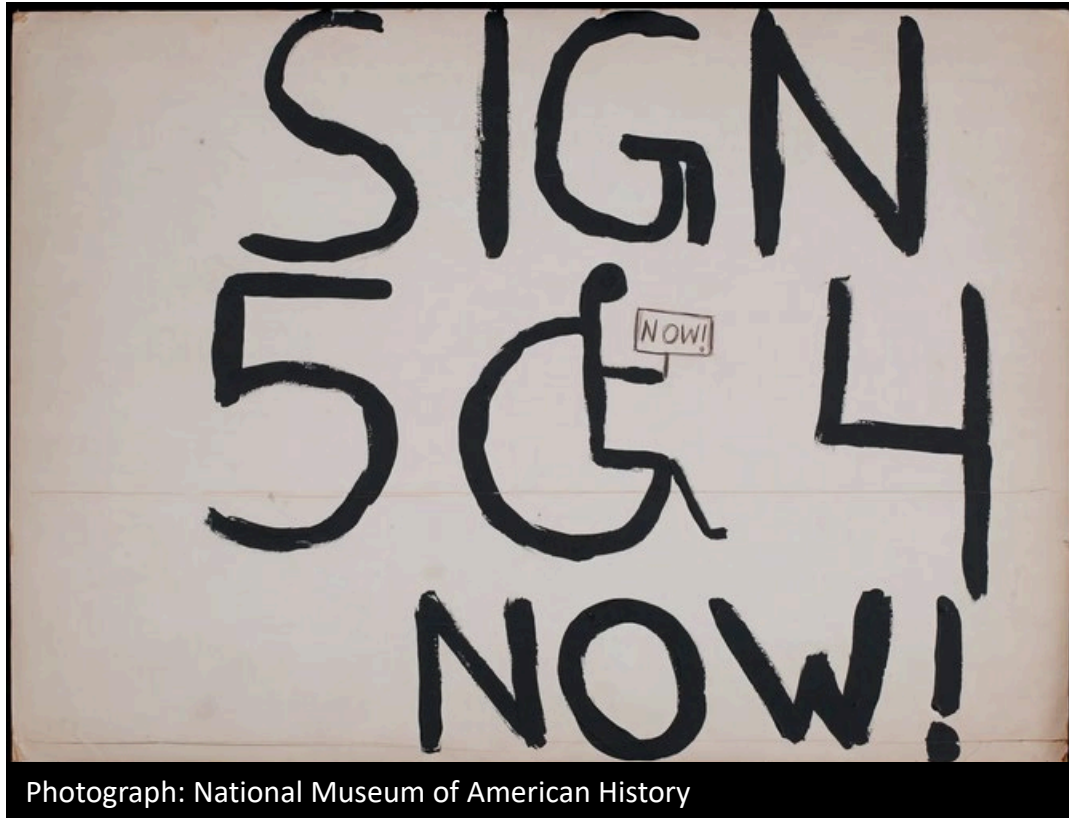


Image description: handwritten sign that reads, "Sign 504 Now" with wheelchair symbol in place of the 0.

- Civil Rights Act of 1964
 - prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, religion, national origin, or gender, but not disability
- Discrimination against disabled individuals is not addressed until 1973, with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
- Passage of the ADA in 1990

Disability in Queer Movements

- Queerness framed through a medical lens ("plague" or mental illness)
 - Conversion therapy
 - Queer individuals respond by pushing for a de-medicalization of queer identity
- HIV/AIDS and Act Up
 - Gay male masculinity was defined by health and activeness
- *Dykes, Disability, and Stuff* newsletter (1988-2001)
 - Founded in Boston, MA and published in Madison, WI
 - Featured artwork, reader submissions, articles, poetry, and queer book reviews
 - Alternative formats available



Image description: The cover of *Dykes, Disability, & Stuff* Volume 1, Issue 3, published in 1988. The issue is titled "Where's our art?" and features several pieces of artwork, including the statue of liberty in a wheelchair and a wheelchair user holding a sword.

Disability in S.T.A.R.

- Marsha P. Johnson – known for her role in the Stonewall Riots and one of the co-founders of S.T.A.R. - identified has having physical and psychiatric disabilities.
- S.T.A.R.'s politics centered Disability Justice
- S.T.A.R. was often in conflict with other parts of the Queer Liberation movement because of the focus other parts of the movement put on integration into capitalist society.



Image description: Marsha P Johnson and Sylvia Rivera

Disability in Social Welfare Movements

- Deinstitutionalization efforts since the 1970s have often had strained relationships with public employee unions.
- Mixed interactions between unions and disability activists relating to mask guidelines in the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In 2021 10.1% of all adult Americans with disabilities were unemployed.
- SSI – Supplemental Security Income – puts an asset cap of \$2,000 in assets for individuals and \$3,000 in assets for couples. This forces many disabled people into an artificial poverty.

The Centering of White, Cisgender, Heterosexual Voices



Photograph: National Archives Catalog

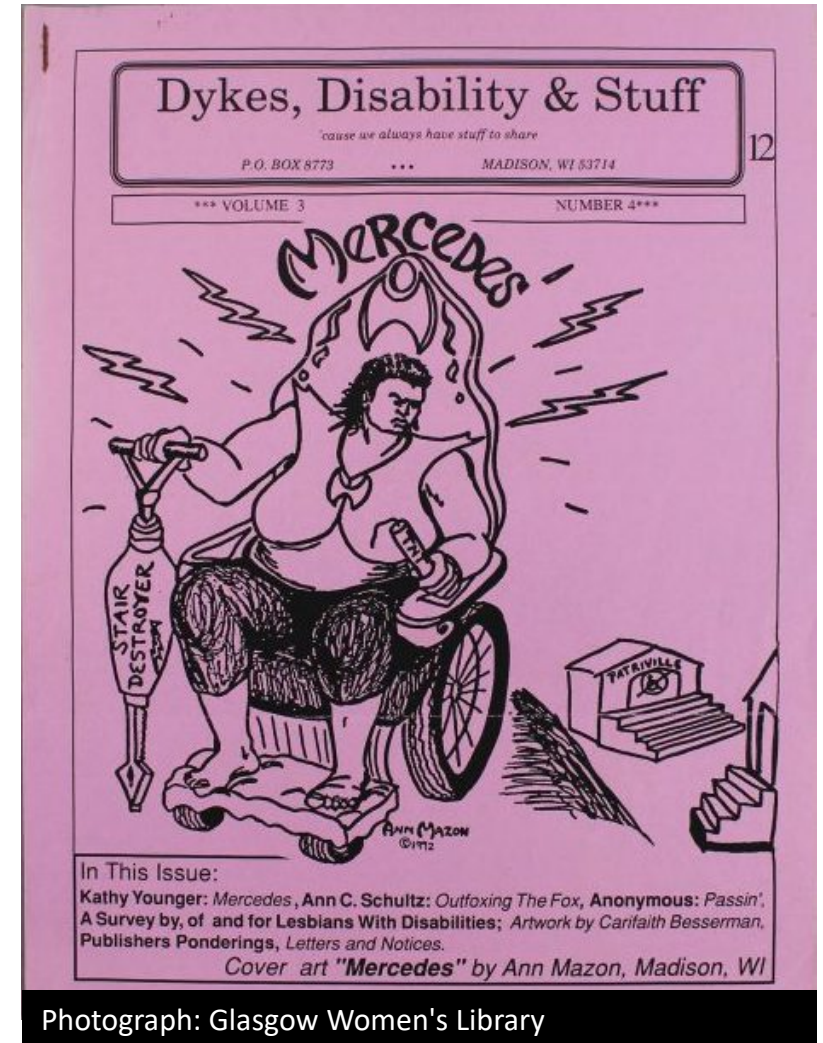
The disability rights movement, past and present has often used white cisgender, heterosexual voices to play into respectability politics.

Image description: George Bush sitting on the white house lawn with two white masculine-presenting individuals in wheelchairs, one standing white masculine-presenting individual and one white feminine-presenting individual.

Cross-Movement Organization in the UW-Madison Community

- Gay Purges at UW-Madison between 1948 and 1962
 - Relied heavily on ableist rhetoric of homosexuality as something that needed to be "cured."
- *Dykes, Disability, & Stuff* newsletter
 - Disability Pride Madison
- Spring 2022: TAA, BIPOC Student Coalition, MadNews, and disabled student activists worked together to voice opposition to the dropping of the mask mandate

Image description: The cover of *Dykes, Disability, & Stuff* Volume 3, Issue 4, published in 1992 in Madison, WI. It is titled "Mercedes" and features an illustration of a disabled person in a wheelchair holding a tool that says, "Stair Destroyer."



Photograph: Glasgow Women's Library

Looking Forward: Cross-Movement Organization at UW-Madison

- Students find spaces of identity and belonging through Registered Student Organizations and Cultural Centers housed under the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs.
- While these spaces provide affinity spaces for students, they can also be limiting when students hold multiple identities.



Photograph: Mike DeVries

Image description: The Red Gym – a castle-like red brick building.

Thank you!

Recommended Resources

- *Black Disability Politics* by Sami Schalk
- "Autistic Hoya" blog by Lydia X.Z. Brown
- *Care Work* by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha
- *Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist* by Judith Heumann
- The Heumann Perspective Podcast
- *Skin, Tooth, and Bone: The Basis of Movement is Our People* by Sins Invalid
- *Sitting Pretty: The View From My Ordinary Resilient Disabled Body* by Rebekah Taussig
- Disability Visibility Project: <https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/>
 - *Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century* anthology
 - *Resistance and Hope* essays by disabled people

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