

DISABILITY JUSTICE AND EDUCATION GUIDEBOOK

FOR HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS AND SCHOOL
COMMUNITY MEMBERS



National Disability Mentoring Coalition's
Dinah F.B. Cohen
DREAM Fellowship Program
Disability Rights, Education, Activism, and Mentoring



Partners for
Youth with Disabilities



TABLE OF CONTENTS

FORWARD.....	PAGE 3
THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM.....	PAGE 3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	PAGE 4
INTRODUCTION.....	PAGE 5
DISABILITIES STUDIES CURRICULUM.....	PAGE 6
BODIES AND BOUNDARIES.....	PAGE 11
WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?.....	PAGE 16
INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT.....	PAGE 25
LANDMARK LEGISLATION.....	PAGE 27
REFERENCES.....	PAGE 32

FORWARD

DINAH COHEN

As the daughter of Holocaust survivors, Dinah Cohen was no stranger to discrimination and adversity. As a young girl, she was diagnosed with congenital heart disease. Cohen dedicated her life to networking, mentoring, and guiding the careers of others. Her life experiences prepared her well to lead the Department of Defense's program to help its disabled employees thrive in the workplace. Under Cohen's leadership, the Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP) became the world's largest assistive technology program, filling more than 60,000 accommodation requests for people with disabilities, including 2,400 accommodations for wounded service members.



Image description: Dinah Cohen, a Jewish woman with short curly brown hair, smiles.

Based on Cohen's personal commitment to others and her belief in the power of relationships to bolster individuals in their careers and lives, this fellowship is named the Dinah F. B. Cohen Fellowship Program.

THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The National Disability Mentoring Coalition (NDMC), in partnership with the student-led organization, Disability Rights, Education, Activism, and Mentoring (DREAM) at the National Center for College Students with Disabilities (NCCSD), is pleased to announce the establishment of the Dinah F. B. Cohen Fellowship Program to provide college students and recent graduates with disabilities with professional skills and leadership opportunities. The Fellowship Program is part of the National Disability Mentoring Coalition, an initiative of Partners for Youth with Disabilities.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

This guidebook was a collaborative effort of the five authors: Raven Roberts, Olivia Ely, Casey Doherty, Natalia Macias, and Lauren Jimenez. However, this project would not have been possible without the support of many others.

We would like to thank Macy's for their commitment to disability education and generous support of the Dinah F. B. Cohen DREAM Fellowship. We are grateful to the Partners for Youth with Disabilities staff members who made this project possible - especially Nicole Homerin and Jules Lilienfeld. Our gratitude also goes to individual donors for making this fellowship experience possible, including friends and family of Dinah Cohen. Finally, we would like to thank our readers for their commitment to disability justice and education.



INTRODUCTION

This is a guidebook for high school students who want to learn more about their own disabilities, disability studies and justice, accommodations, and steps to further education. The guidebook seeks to provide high school students with resources, community, and education. We believe that education and community are vital to instilling disability pride in individuals. The lessons readers will learn will serve them throughout all steps of their education, as well as throughout their personal lives.

Chapter 1 discusses high school disability studies curriculum, the importance of learning about disability in school, and provides a list of excellent disability justice literature and media for students to access. Chapter 2 investigates the ways that the larger culture and its ideals influence the framework used to teach about bodies in K-12 (including sex education). Chapter 3 offers a ground-level introduction to intersectionality, its founder, and its applications. Chapter 4 describes a personal experience using an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and how it benefits a student throughout their career. Chapter 5 will close our guidebook with a discussion of disability in higher education and the options students have after high school.

The authors weaved their personal experiences into the guidebook to enhance understanding and to remind readers that disability justice and disability understanding is more than praxis, it is lived experience. We hope to share lessons we have learned from our experiences with disability and education to spark conversations and end the stigma against people with disabilities.

DISABILITIES STUDIES CURRICULUM

By: Casey Doherty

Disability studies is not something that is required to be taught in almost every state. Most students finish their secondary schooling without ever learning about disability. According to the United States Department of Education, 15% of all public school students are disabled and receive accommodations under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023).

Disability will touch every person's life - whether it be through a personal disability or the disability of a family member, friend, teacher, coworker, or someone else. Learning about disability, and other identities, is part of being a well-informed student and person. Disabled people face increased violence, discrimination, bias, and stigma - it is critical that students enter their adult lives with a thorough understanding of disability and ableism, so they can participate in making the world a more tolerant, kind, and safe place.

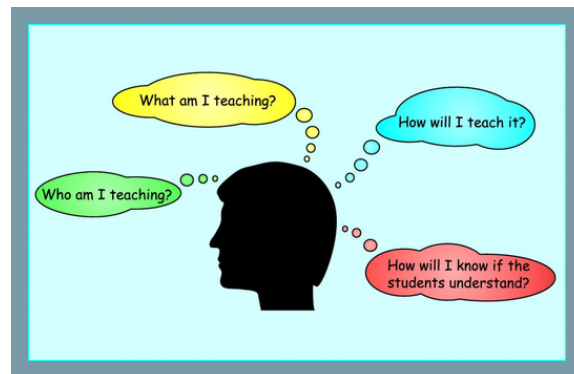


Image description: The silhouette of a head has 4 different colored thought bubbles reading (Green) "Who am I teaching?", (Yellow) "What am I teaching?", (Blue) "How will I teach it?", and (Red) "How will I know if the students understand?"

Personally, I never learned about disability in an educational environment until I attended college. I became disabled early on in college, and suddenly I was left with no knowledge, resources, or support about disability. I did not know what rights were afforded to me by the Americans with Disabilities Act, for example. I did not know how to seek accommodations or any kind of support. I do not want anyone to feel so alone. Learning about disability early on in one's educational journey will prepare them to support themselves and their community members.

An organization called Disability Equality Education in Pennsylvania is working on bringing disability into classroom conversations. They use disability inclusive curriculum, which refers to "curriculum for all students - those with disabilities

and those without" (Disability Equality Education, 2021, Education Overview). Using disability inclusive curriculum, Disability Equality Education envisions a world where:

- Disability is no longer stigmatized.
- Students with disabilities are no longer bullied at a higher rate than their non-disabled peers.
- Students are empowered with the information they need to be the leaders we need to build a more accessible and accepting future.
- Disability is regularized and not seen as something that must be fixed or is wrong.
- Disabled students feel more supported in the ways they need.
- Non-disabled students recognize how they can make the world more accepting and accessible for their disabled peers.
- Non-disabled students will have a better understanding of the community and leadership that has come before them if/when they themselves become disabled and/or a family member, friend or loved one becomes disabled in the future.



Image description: The Disability Equality Education logo, with a rainbow flowing from the organization's name to the mind of a child.

Disability Equality Education provides lesson plans for free on their website (Disability Equality Education, 2021, Education Overview). All of the lesson plans were created and approved by disabled people. After all, nothing about us without us! The lesson plans range from Kindergarten to 2nd grade, 3rd to 5th grade, 6th to 8th grade, and 9th to 12th grade. A unique aspect of their lesson plans is that they are designed to fit into other topics, like English Language Arts, Social Studies, and Art.



Some high school lesson plans that stand out to me are the following:

Ability Privilege Lesson: This activity is designed for students to reflect on their own lives and their privileged status. Unfortunately in our society, certain groups can navigate with ease, while others must fight for their basic rights. Students will reflect on how their ability (able-bodied or disabled) affects their lives and how they can use their privilege to help others.

Link:

<https://www.disabilityequalityeducation.org/lesson-plans/ability-privilege-lesson>

Disability History Timeline: In this lesson, students will select a moment from disability history and analyze its importance.

Link:

<https://www.disabilityequalityeducation.org/lesson-plans/disability-history-timeline-lesson>

Racialization of Disability Lesson: In this lesson, students will read and discuss Douglas Baynton's *Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History* (Disability Equality Education, 2021, Lesson Plans for 9-12 Grade). Students will participate in a discussion about the racialization of disability and the intersections of ableism and racism (Disability Equality Education, 2021, Lesson Plans for 9-12 Grade). This is an excellent lesson in which to discuss intersectionality.

Link:

<https://www.disabilityequalityeducation.org/lesson-plans/racialization-of-disability-lesson>

Black Disabled Art History Lesson: Students will select a Black Disabled artist from Leroy Moore's Black Disabled Art History 101 (Disability Equality Education, 2021, Lesson Plans for 9-12 Grade). Students will research their selected artist and their works. Students will choose a piece of artwork created by this artist and



analyze it using a critical artistic framework. This lesson can be adapted for a wide range of ages.

Link:

<https://www.disabilityequalityeducation.org/lesson-plans/black-disabled-art-history>

Thinking Critically about Disability Social Media Lesson: When Stephen Hawking passed away, many artists processed the loss through art (Disability Equality Education, 2021, Lesson Plans for 9-12 Grade). Their art depicts disability from multiple perspectives (Disability Equality Education, 2021, Lesson Plans for 9-12 Grade). In this activity students will explore two contrasting images Take note of the details and how the images depict Stephen Hawking and his physical disability (Disability Equality Education, 2021, Lesson Plans for 9-12 Grade). Students will explore elements of art, social studies and psychology in this lesson (Disability Equality Education, 2021, Lesson Plans for 9-12 Grade). The focus of the discussion is up to individual educators.

Link:

<https://www.disabilityequalityeducation.org/lesson-plans/social-media-thinking-critically-about-disability-lesson>

Another organization working to promote disability inclusion in education is the Nora Project. The Nora Project creates lesson plans for educators as well.

Introduction to Disability Studies -

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ffb4bbbdd7a4b4cd8057909/t/63d9825b41e11511c99c14/1675199067839/TNP_+Exploring+the+History+of+the+Disability+Rights+Movement+in+the+USA.pdf

This is not an exhaustive list - Disability Equality Education and the Nora Project have many more lesson plans for all grade levels.



Some additional topic areas instructors could explore with their students are:

- The Social Model versus the Medical Model
- Invisible Disabilities
- Introduction to Disability Legislation
- Current Events through a Disability Lens

Some sources we recommend sharing with high school students are:

- Eli Clare - *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure*
- Judy Heumann - *Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist*
- Sins Invalid - *Skin, Tooth, and Bone - A Disability Justice Primer*
- Sami Schalk - *Black Disability Politics*
- Crip Camp: *A Disability Revolution*
- Alice Wong - *Disability Visibility: First Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century*
- Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha - *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*
- Alison Kafer - *Feminist, Queer, Crip*
- Forget Me Not: *Inclusion in the Classroom*

We recommend making these sources available to students as part of a class topic but also encouraging your school library to house these sources. A library could have a “Disability Justice” section and advertise these works to students. It is critical that schools and educators invest in disability studies lessons and literature and create school communities that are equitable, accepting, and empowering.

BODIES AND BOUNDARIES

By: Natalia Macias

Crip Theory, also known as disability studies theory or critical disability studies, is an academic and activist perspective that critically examines disability and challenges traditional notions of disability and able-bodiedness. The term "crip" is a reclaiming of the derogatory term "cripple" by the disability community, similar to how other marginalized groups have reclaimed derogatory terms to empower themselves. An academic that utilizes this theory is Alison Kafer, known for her work in disability studies, queer theory, and feminist theory. She has written extensively on topics related to disability, embodiment, and the intersectionality of various identities.

Through a Crip Theory lens, Kafer suggests that the diagnosis of a body is not linear or clear-cut. It may involve relapses or chronic illnesses, where the body may not be perceived as "disabled" or ill in certain instances, but it will in other moments (Kafer, pg.10). Our experiences are heavily influenced by socially constructed roles and norms, including attitudes toward disabilities. People with disabilities undergo changes not only due to their own struggles but also because of how society perceives and interacts with them. This dynamic relationship challenges the illusion of normalcy held by "able-bodied" individuals.



Image description: An art piece from **Crip*, a University of Illinois-Chicago art exhibition. It is a blue bench with white lettering that reads "THIS EXHIBITION HAS ASKED ME TO STAND FOR TOO LONG. SIT IF YOU AGREE."

These socially constructed ideas also dictate what a disabled person is believed to be capable of or what is deemed possible for them to accomplish. Kafer argues that imagined futures and experiences play a role in this, as they often envision a future filled with pain, isolation, and bitterness for disabled individuals. Such representations lead people to either pity, bless, or refuse to acknowledge disabled individuals altogether (Kafer, pg.2). These imagined futures shape the understanding of disability in the present and influence one's conception of a better future.

The impact of these imagined experiences on interactions between "able-bodied" and "disabled" communities is crucial to critical Crip Theory. The disabled community is often seen as dependent or lacking a future. This perception contributes to discrimination, with disabled-based prejudice being condemned as cruelty or insensitivity, rather than recognized as markers of structural inequality (Kafer, pg.10). Consequently, Kafer argues for the positioning of ableism as the obstacle to a good life, instead of focusing solely on disability (Kafer, pg.2). To achieve this, she emphasizes the need to politicize disability, as the social and biological worlds are inseparable. Placing disability solely within the medical framework and treating both disability and the medical world as apolitical undermines its place in radical politics or social movements. Disability should be viewed not only as a natural phenomenon but also as a cultural one (Kafer, pg. 9).



Image description: a group of students of various races and perceived genders moves down a school hallway holding their backpacks and books.

The lack of representation, discussion, and recognition of disabled bodies in all its diverse forms heavily impacted the way I interacted with disability. I didn't have the language to advocate for myself because at the time I wasn't aware of invisible disabilities. This is why the way we are socialized to view bodies and illness can have a large impact on the perception but also the internalization of disability.

There are a few tenets (if you will) that are indoctrinated through the educational system; such as individualism, purity, heteronormativity/normalcy.

How do schools talk about bodies?

Individualism is one of the strongest ideals in Western/American culture. It is no surprise that through education, we find it used as a framework. And yet individualism heavily clashes with Crip Theory or even Disability as a concept. Disability is a heavily interpersonal and social experience. While it may be recognized as that at certain times, often in schools, the label of a disability or

impairment becomes very much an individual issue. “Who are you, and so who are we? Here we are, and so what are we to become”? (Haraway, p.221). Donna Haraway, a feminist professor at UC Santa Cruz, challenges us to question the ways that we can evolve from our environment as an individual but also as a community. To question how the community shapes itself and adapts. We may find some balance by understanding that individual choices shape our community, history, and what we become.

Another ideal pushed within schools is the paradoxical phenomenon of purity and violence (militarization). This can be seen in the way virginity is discussed and something pure and clean but once “broken” is irreversible. It also is centered in the act of penetration which is based on the assumption of heteronormativity. The fertilization process is something violent and the eggs are conquerable. The overall way that sex is taught also communicates what a nuclear family should look like therefore monogamy is the norm, and what sexuality looks like therefore heterosexuality is the norm.



Image description: a feminine person with long dark hair and a red/white striped shirt and jeans sits in a wheelchair at a desk with a laptop and papers.

The norm establishments also extend to health and how schools talk about disability. There is a normal way bodies interact with the environment and with other people. I remember being taught that an illness was an invasion and my antibodies were little soldiers fighting against it. So then when I would continue to get sick, it felt like my body was betraying me, not fighting hard enough against this

invasion. It removes the responsibility from the larger institution to be accessible and accommodating.

Currently, SexEd and Social Studies curriculums are revamping their materials to be more inclusive to Queer and Black people, respectively. SexEd is expanding with comprehensive sex education which is the process of teaching and learning

about the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality. Social Studies and History are utilizing Critical Race Theory. Critical race theory is an interdisciplinary academic field devoted to analyzing how laws, social and political movements, and media shape, and are shaped by, social conceptions of race and ethnicity. Both are receiving backlash and restrictions from conservative individuals and legislative representatives. And still, disabled representation is being omitted from these new curriculum changes. How representative is it if 7.3 million students in the U.S. are disabled, making up 15% of the overall population?

Sins Invalid is a good example to schools that there are multiple ways to show their disabled students that they belong, have a community, and have and will be a part of history. Sins Invalid is a nonprofit organization based in the United States that centers its work around disability justice, intersectional feminism, and performance art. Founded in 2006, the organization was created by disabled artists and activists to address the marginalization and erasure of disabled people's experiences, particularly those of disabled people of color and queer and gender-nonconforming individuals. Sins Invalid uses performance art, storytelling, and cultural work to challenge ableism, racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression while celebrating the beauty and power of disabled bodies and identities. Through their performances, workshops, and other creative endeavors, the organization seeks to



Image description: A Sins Invalid Performer is shirtless, holding onto a rope to hold themselves up while sitting in their wheelchair. The performer has facial makeup/tattooing.



Image description: A Sins Invalid performer sits in a cushioned chair. Their leg is crossed over the other and they are aiming a cane off to the side.

change cultural perceptions of disability, promote disability pride and empowerment, and advocate for disability justice and rights. The name "Sins Invalid" challenges the notion of "invalid" being used to dismiss or invalidate disabled experiences and existence. Instead, it reclaims the term and asserts the validity and strength of disabled individuals and their stories.

I believe that now is an excellent time to introduce a new definition of what bodies and boundaries are to students in K-12 rather than just higher education because of the evolution of comprehensive sex education. It is important to include a disabled lens in the new curriculum because disabled bodies are often left out of policies, laws, and histories. Bodies are ever-changing and fluid, responsive and interactive with our environment and other people, and this diversity deserves to be represented, discussed, and at the very least, recognized.



Image description: High school students have a conversation while walking in a hallway.



Image description: A Black high schooler in a beige hoodie looks towards the ground while smiling.

WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?

By: Raven Roberts

Intersectionality was coined by activist Kimberle Crenshaw over thirty years ago. The term was first used in "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," her 1989 article in the University of Chicago Legal Forum.

She describes intersectionality as a praxis or framework for understanding the effects of oppressive systems in place rather than an elaborate theory.

"When I introduced the term intersectionality almost thirty years ago it was to address multiple failures, not only in law but also rhetorical failures, political failures, within feminism and anti-racism."

~ Kimberle Crenshaw,
Keynote at Women of the World 2016



Image description: Kimberle Crenshaw, a Black woman in her 60s, poses on a bench with a slight smile, her hand below her chin.

WHO IS KIMBERLE CRENSHAW?

Kimberle Crenshaw is a civil rights advocate, feminist, and often considered a founder of critical race theory. She is an academic who co-founded the African American Policy Forum in 1996, a think tank dedicated to the advancement of racial justice and justice for all by embracing the intersections of identity.

Crenshaw has authored "On Intersectionality: Essential Writings" (2014), an introduction to intersectionality and a compilation of much of her work. Crenshaw is the founder and director of the Center for Intersectionality & Social Policy Studies at Columbia Law School.

For a five-minute introduction, hear about Ms.Crenshaw and intersectionality's origins [here](#).

AN EXERCISE

In a [TEDTalk](#) titled “The urgency of intersectionality”, Crenshaw conducts an exercise where she asks those who are able to stand as she lists names, and once they hear a name they can’t describe or name anything about, to sit.

While reading, consider standing and practicing the exercise yourself. Here is the first set of names:

- Eric Garner
- Mike Brown
- Tamir Rice
- Freddie Gray

Still standing? Here’s the second set:

- Michelle Cusseaux
- Tanisha Anderson
- Aura Rosser
- Megan Hockaday

Can you spot the pattern? Both groups of names are Black people murdered by police in recent years in the United States. The key difference between the two? The first group is men and the second is women.

The group of Black men, as Crenshaw points out, received a significant amount more media coverage than the women. Thus, people are much more likely to have heard the stories of Eric Garner and Tamir Rice than they are of Tanisha Anderson or Aura Rosser.

We’ll try another exercise later, but for now, I invite you to search each of the names above and learn more about their stories.



Image description: (Left) Michelle Cusseaux, a Black woman with short curly hair smiles at a holiday party. (Right) Tanisha Anderson, a Black woman with red lipstick smiles while wearing a graduation cap and gown.

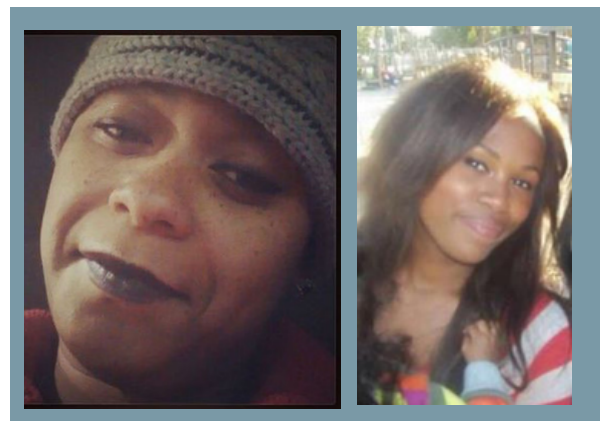


Image description: (Left) Aura Rosser, a Black woman with dark lipstick and a gray knit headband. (Right) Megan Hockaday, a Black Woman with long hair smiles outside in the sunshine.

FAST FACTS

The approximate number of adults with a disability by ethnicity and race

- American Indian / Alaska Native: 3 in 10 have a disability
- Black: 1 in 4 have a disability
- White: 1 in 5 have a disability
- Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander: 1 in 6 have a disability
- Hispanic: 1 in 6 have a disability
- Asian: 1 in 10 have a disability

Approximate number of adults with a disability by gender (binary)

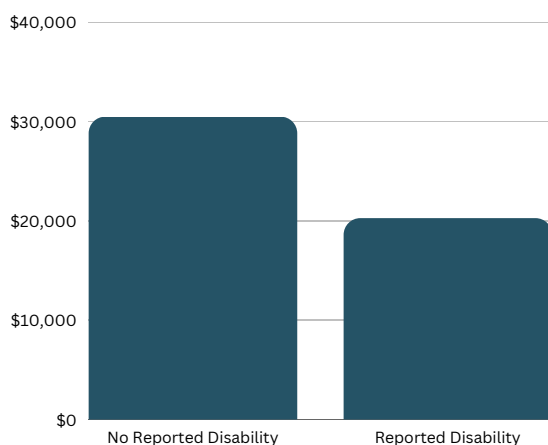


17.4
percent of men

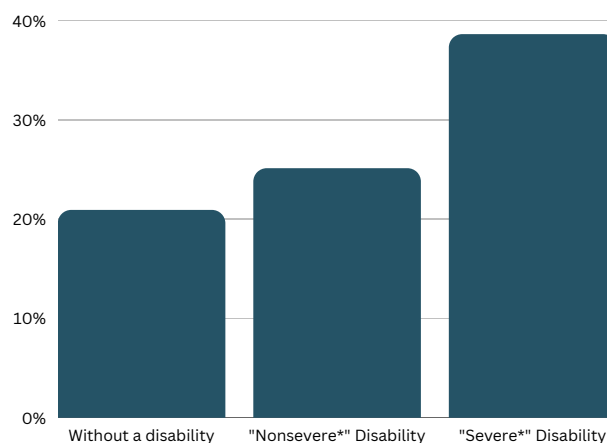


19.8
percent of women

Approximate number of adults with a disability by class



U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 data
on median income



Percent of non-graduating high schoolers
by disability status, American
Psychological Association, 2006

*Note that some modern disability advocates no longer associate with terminology like "nonsevere" or "severe".

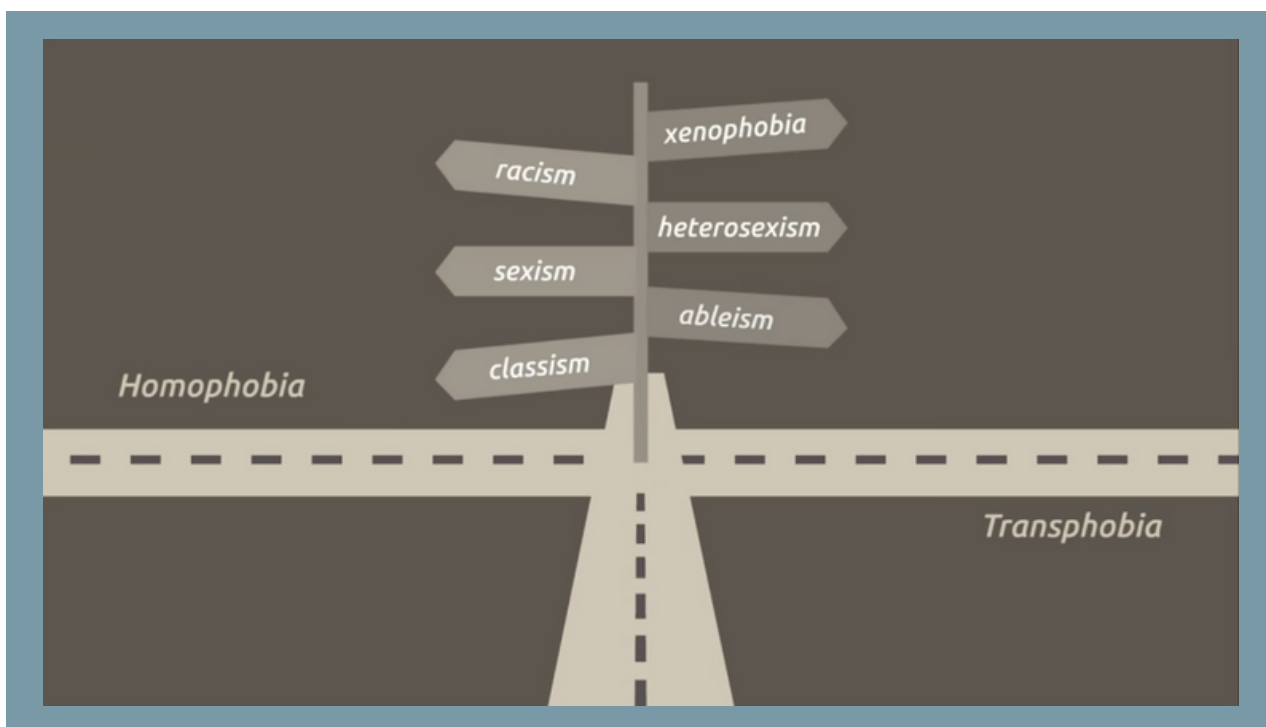


Image description: A graphic with a brown background and two tan roads intersecting. At the intersection of those roads are six signs that read racism, xenophobia, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and ableism. On one side of the road that runs horizontally says transphobia, the other side says homophobia.

“Intersectionality is not primarily about identity it’s about how structures make certain indentures the consequence of and the vehicle for vulnerability. So if you want to know how many intersections matter you gotta look at the context. What’s happening? What kind of discrimination is going on? What are the policies, what are the institutional structures that play a role in contributing to the exclusion of some people and not others,” Crenshaw said in a keynote address given at Southbank Centre. (Keynote at Women of the World 2016)

Brad Lomax was the founder of the Washington D.C. Chapter of The Black Panther Party, an African American revolutionary organization that also played a major role in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The Black Panther Party also fed the occupants of the 504 Sit-In under Lomax’s leadership. Lomax, who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, was an early proponent of both movements, recognizing the way the two intersect and the importance of justice for all.

INTERSECTIONALITY TODAY



Image description: Audre Lorde, a self-described "Black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet," smiles to the camera.

"There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives,"

~ Audre Lorde, womanist and equal rights activist, Learning From the 60s Presentation, 1982

The lens of intersectionality has been shaped by far too many activists to name and has been an essential part of nearly every human rights and acceptance movement since and before the word was coined.

Angela Davis, Shani Dhanda, and Judy Heumann are activists whose experience and fight for rights centers around varying aspects of their experience through the lens of intersectionality.

Angela Davis is and has been a feminist political activist, American Marxist, philosopher, and more for over 50 years. She is the author of many books including "Women, Race & Class" (1981) which focuses on intersectionality in Black women.

Shani Dhanda is an award-winning disability specialist, listed as one of the UK's most influential people and the founder of the Asian Disability Network.

Judy Heumann is a disability rights activist

When asked by TIME in 2020 how to explain what intersectionality means today, Crenshaw responded "These days, I start with what it's not because there has been a distribution. It's basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other." (Time Magazine, 2020)



THE IMPORTANCE OF AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH

Like the social approach to disability, which identifies society as the debilitating condition for persons with disabilities rather than their diagnosis, viewing things through a lens of intersectionality can help maintain personhood or view others as human.

As the [Intersectionality Training Institute](#) explains, “Intersectionality is foremost about attention to power. In essence, if interlocking oppression and discrimination such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, cisgenderism, classism, and ableism and audism are not the primary focus of your intersectionality work, you’re not doing intersectionality.” (Intersectionality Training Institute)

Intersectionality not only helps you view others as whole, it also helps you understand their circumstances and their own. It has the power to show you that the world is greater than yourself and that there are systems in place that affect each of our experiences, often for the worse.

For me personally, intersectionality helps me, a Black biracial, straight, cis-gendered, disabled woman understand and prepare for my experience. It shows me how my experiences may differ from a dark-skinned Black woman or a queer disabled nonbinary person because of the structures in place in our society under capitalism and patriarchy.

But it also shows me the way our experiences are similar. It helps each of us better understand ourselves and the oppressive systems around us, as well as our unique roles in transforming them.

Parker is a middle-school-aged Black boy diagnosed with ADHD. He’s been disabled by many of the systems in place that don’t accommodate his ADHD and unique learning style. He’s more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD than his non-Black peers. He may share a lot with other students with disabilities in his class, but each of their varying identities leads to differences in their experience. For example, research shows his female classmates with ADHD are often misdiagnosed and underdiagnosed.

This is just one common example of the way that systems of oppression affect our experiences differently.

ORGANIZATIONS

Sins Invalid

Many disability organizations center intersectionality in their beliefs including Sins Invalid, a self-defined “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.” Below is an image of the 10 Principles of Disability Justice, but you may also find it listed out on the next page.

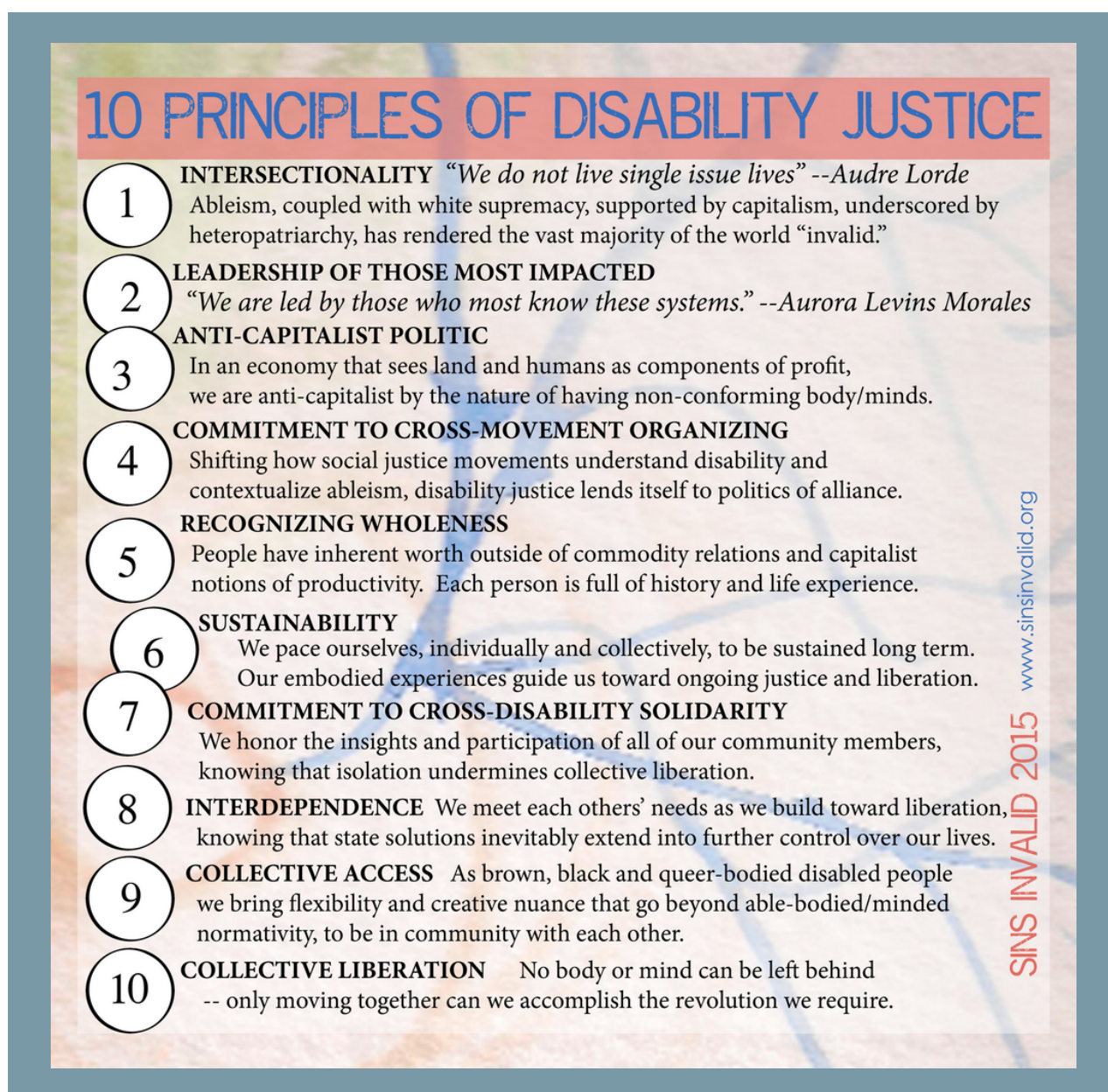


Image description: A faintly colorful graphic listing the 10 principles of disability justice according to Sins Invalid.



10 PRINCIPLES OF DISABILITY JUSTICE, AS LISTED BY SINS INVALID

- **INTERSECTIONALITY** “We do not live single issue lives” –Audre Lorde. Ableism, coupled with white supremacy, supported by capitalism, underscored by heteropatriarchy, has rendered the vast majority of the world “invalid.”
- **LEADERSHIP OF THOSE MOST IMPACTED** “We are led by those who most know these systems.” –Aurora Levins Morales
- **ANTI-CAPITALIST POLITIC** In an economy that sees land and humans as components of profit, we are anti-capitalist by the nature of having non-conforming body/minds.
- **COMMITMENT TO CROSS-MOVEMENT ORGANIZING** Shifting how social justice movements understand disability and contextualize ableism, disability justice lends itself to politics of alliance.
- **RECOGNIZING WHOLENESS** People have inherent worth outside of commodity relations and capitalist notions of productivity. Each person is full of history and life experience.
- **SUSTAINABILITY** We pace ourselves, individually and collectively, to be sustained long term. Our embodied experiences guide us toward ongoing justice and liberation.
- **COMMITMENT TO CROSS-DISABILITY SOLIDARITY** We honor the insights and participation of all of our community members, knowing that isolation undermines collective liberation.
- **INTERDEPENDENCE** We meet each others’ needs as we build toward liberation, knowing that state solutions inevitably extend into further control over lives.
- **COLLECTIVE ACCESS** As brown, black and queer-bodied disabled people we bring flexibility and creative nuance that go beyond able-bodied/minded normativity, to be in community with each other.
- **COLLECTIVE LIBERATION** No body or mind can be left behind – only moving together can we accomplish the revolution we require.



ORGANIZATIONS (CONTINUED)

The International Disability Alliance

The International Disability Alliance is an alliance of over 1,100 organizations to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities. They believe that having a diverse team and intersectional approach is key to growth and have several intersectional projects including the [Women and Girls With Disabilities Campaign](#) and [Indigenous Persons With Disabilities Global Network](#).

“IDA has developed an Intersectionalities strategy to support underrepresented groups and their organizations in building their capacities for full and effective participation. The primary groups identified for this work include youth, older and indigenous persons with disabilities, persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities, as well as persons with deafblindness as they are the most vulnerable to intersectional forms of discrimination” (International Disability Alliance)

Disability Intersectional Summit

“The Disability & Intersectionality Summit (DIS) is a biennial national conference that centers the multiple oppressions that shape the lived experiences of disabled individuals, as told by disabled people, in a setting organized by disabled activists,” according to their website.

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

By: Olivia Ely

This law which was called the “Education for All Handicapped Children Act” (EHA) was passed on November 29, 1975 by President Gerald Ford. The law’s name was changed to “Individuals With Disabilities Education Act.” The idea of this law was that it would help students with disabilities get access to education that would be tailored to their needs.

How does this help students with disabilities?

- This law only applies to students who are ages 3 to 21 years old. After a student has graduated from high school or turned 21 years old. The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act can not apply to the student when it comes to going to college.
- This law allows “formal grants” which specifically the money to go to states so that disabled children can get early intervention.
- This law also allows for discretionary grants to fund research, getting technological assistance.



Image description: an interior shot of the dome of the US Capitol.

I chose this topic because of my experience as a student and how this law has helped me to succeed as a student. In my time as a student, I had an Individual Education Program (IEP) since elementary school because of my disability, which is Cerebral Palsy. My accommodations are that I need extra time when it comes to testing, and that I need an assistant to help me to take notes in the classroom. There has been one situation regarding my accommodations in an academic environment not being used (middle school.) In college, I was able to get my accommodations in order to succeed.

In eighth grade, I was really struggling with Science. As the semester progressed, it was time for the IEP meeting, and my parents and I were able to get great feedback from the other teachers until we got to the subject where I was having t



trouble: science. My mom started by telling the science teacher that I was having trouble with the class. My mom then began to give her suggestions on how to help me with understanding the material better. For example, I am a visual learner and we had an experiment that we did in class. This specific experiment would help me to understand the concept behind the experiment, so my mom asked her if we could take the materials for the experiment home with us so that I could understand the concept better. She refused, her reasoning being that I would lose the materials for that project. This really surprised my mom and me because of her unwillingness to help me with understanding the concept that I was having trouble with. Then the principal looked over at my mom and me and said, "Don't worry we will get those materials for you, look at me." After getting the materials from the principal I was able to understand the concept that I was confused about. I was able to pass her class with a B as my final grade.

After middle school, I went into high school, and during my last few meetings with my teacher, parents, and myself. We talked about what is going to happen after I graduate from high school and how I can succeed in college and my principal told us that my Individual Education Program (IEP) was going to turn into a 504 plan, which for me gave the same accommodations as my IEP.

During my two years at Bucks County Community College. I had a difficult time with my English classes because of how many pages of an essay I had to write and how to answer the prompts, but I would always ask for help from my English teacher. He would allow me extra time to complete the essays. For example, an essay would be due by this Wednesday. I would ask him after class if I could have extra time to complete the essay. He would say yes. He also allowed me to rewrite essays that I had written for him the previous term because I had had to retake the course that I had taken the previous semester because of the poor grades that I got.

With his help, I was able to get a B in both English classes that I took. It's important for students to access their accommodations. Some students, like myself, may have trouble understanding the material because of their disability and this would help them to understand the material better.

LANDMARK LEGISLATION

By: Lauren Jimenez

Finding our way to equal education started with the landmark case Brown Vs. Board of Education (1954). This case found racial segregation in schools unconstitutional and violated the 14th Amendment for equal protection. Following this case The Civil Rights Act of 1964 pushed the right to equal education for all students regardless of identification or social class to have equal access to education without discrimination, enacting a new federal law titled the Equal Education Opportunity Act of 1974. This Act helped eliminate barriers for students especially those with disabilities with the added protection of the Rehabilitation Act.

According to the national center for education statistics in 2015-16, only 19% of students with a disability were in undergrad and 11% percent in graduate school. This amount is not surprising considering the barriers students with disabilities face such as examples: financial costs, medical costs, statistical testing, and lack of support in some cases. It's known that standardized tests are not an accurate representation of one's ability to succeed. Everyone has a unique learning style. You will find what works best for you through trial and error.

I had to go through many tribulations until I found what worked for me. While I was in undergrad I felt at odds as a first-generation student as statistics show first-generation graduates at 42% in undergrad and 58% in graduate school. I wanted to be part of the 58% statistic and push through the struggles. It took support from my family and school counselors to show me I was capable of achieving my goals because there was a time

when I didn't think I would obtain an associate's degree as a first-generation student with a disability. Education was not always a right for students with disabilities, In the 1970s students with disabilities were excluded from public schools and placed in separate schools. The act of segregation based on disability was found to be a violation of the fourteenth amendment backed up by the Brown vs Board of Education case. Cases such as Parc v. Pennsylvania and Mills V. Board sought inclusion to grant the right to an accessible education from grammar to secondary school. The unfair treatment in



Image description: a gavel rests on top of an open book.

these cases confirmed the need for protection, courts and Congress validated these struggles and enacted the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act which focuses on three categories Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), and the Child Find program all these categories cover the protection of students ages 3-21. To ensure an appropriate education for each student with a disability they are evaluated for an Individualized Education Program entailing of accommodations, goals, and progress. With all these protections education is made less restrictive and can give confidence to students to pursue their goals. However, upon completion of high school or a GED, we lose these programs, as colleges and universities do not use IEPs or seek out students with a disability. This causes students to feel overwhelmed with the process of continuing their education.

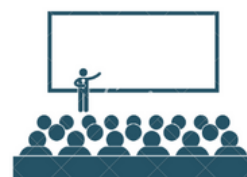
A good place to start when thinking of higher education is what type of education you want, a degree, or specialized training for a job. There are many options to choose from. Here are a few places to start.



Trade Schools



**Community
College**



University

To help students succeed many of these institutions offer accommodations for students and mentoring services. However, it is up to the individual to disclose their needs as they now need to become their own advocate. Becoming your own advocate allows you to be the voice of your future. It can be scary to build up the confidence to ask for what you deserve but think about it. We advocate for ourselves every day whether it is with doctors to simply stating what you want to eat. It is all about asking for things you want and deserve to create an equal environment.



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Here are some tips on how to shift into this power mindset:

- Find a mentor whether it is someone from your family, school, work who inspires you.
- Think of your strengths and how you can use those.
- Know your rights.

When it came time for me to ask for accommodations I started by sitting down with my counselor in the disability service center at my community college, while sitting there I was reminded that everyone has their strengths and weaknesses. My strength is listening skills and my weakness is with time. Once I was granted the accommodations of longer test times, upfront seating, and large print notes and reading materials, I saw an improvement in test scores and gained more confidence in my education goals.

Asking for accommodations grants you an equal opportunity and will help you obtain your goals even in the workplace. It is acceptable to ask for accommodations as long as they are reasonable and will improve the quality of your work. To find what accommodations may be right for you try using this website <https://askjan.org/soar.cfm> which can lead you to what may be appropriate for your needs. It is important to advocate for yourself and seek accommodations since colleges do not follow the Individuals with disabilities act that K-12 federally funded schools follow. Once in college, students are left to find their own way through the education system.

I never had an IEP plan as my disability did not take effect until my first year in community college. It wasn't until two years of struggling through school that I



transferred schools and discovered the many resources out there to help students succeed such as:

- Disability resource center: where they offer counseling sessions, find ways to adjust to the new class setting, find the right accommodations, and how to talk about your accommodations with professors, tutors, and more.
- Cultural centers, some schools offer safe spaces for students to meet, relax, do homework, etc. There are currently 17 schools that offer a center. These schools are granting a voice to their students where they can help end the stigma of disability.
- Tutoring, having a 1 on1 tutor can help you stay on track in the classroom.
- LGBTQ centers.

These programs give students confidence in obtaining a degree because they create an inclusive environment.

There are two key terms needed in inclusive spaces, inclusion and equality. These two terms may seem similar however when not used correctly together it results in unfair treatment. The act of equality is to not discriminate against an individual and grant them the same opportunities as their peers no matter their identities, social class, or health. To stay true to this definition the removal of barriers is granted through accommodations to ensure those with disabilities are granted the same access as those without disabilities. For individuals with a disability, it can feel at times we are constantly asking for accommodations to feel included, we deserve to be in safe spaces where we can feel accepted, this is why incorporating inclusion is necessary in equality. To stay true to this practice we should think in terms of universal design where we find ways to enhance involvement and opportunities by anticipating the types of accommodations individuals might need to participate and make the appropriate changes without being asked. Examples are ramps, automatic doors, lighting, door handles, braille writing, elevators, and more. These overlooked details help individuals navigate the environment with independence. The act of removing barriers to create a universal design is essential in schools and workplaces this follows the guidelines inequality, which is protected in Section 504, which states that "no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under." This ensures

This ensures individuals are granted an equal opportunity whether that is in school or the workplace. Obtaining a space in the workplace is the end goal of higher education because higher education is all about providing the tools for students to become self-sufficient and contribute to society.

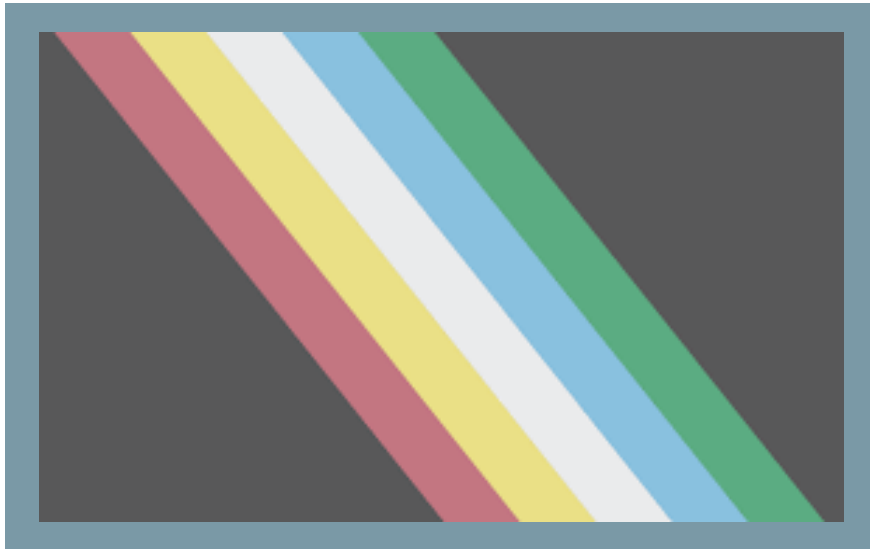


Image description: A charcoal grey flag with a diagonal band from the top left to the bottom right corner, made up of five parallel stripes in red, gold, pale grey, blue, and green Description ends

CONCLUSION

We, the authors, hope that everyone who reads this guidebook can learn something, whether it be about disability curriculum or disability law. We hope the guidebook offers an explanation of several elements of disability and resources to expand your knowledge in myriad ways. We invite you to share what you have learned and the guidebook itself with friends, family, and colleagues to further the conversation and commit to ending ableism in all forms. Thank you for your time and your dedication to learning more about disability.



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