



Supporting Authentic Disability Advocacy

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Advocacy

What words come to mind when we think of supporting disability advocacy?



Advocacy Is:

Not just about “speaking up.”

- Places responsibility on the disabled person
- Assumes equitable treatment (i.e., that the person will be listened to)
- Usually based on non-disabled assumptions/privilege (do this because it works for me as a white, cis, non-disabled person)

Real Advocacy Training:

- Starts at being ignored/being told “no.”
- Teaches the person how to access/apply levers of power
- Educates the person on the inequity they face and why
- Equips somebody to take you to task



This light flashes every 15 seconds

Every 15 seconds \$100 of your money goes for the care of persons with bad heredity such as the insane feeble-minded criminals & other defectives

Some people are born to be a burden on the rest.

This light flashes every 16 seconds

Every 16 seconds a person is born in the United States.



This light flashes every 7 1/2 minutes

Every 7 1/2 minutes a person is born in the United States. Only those who have ability to be fit for life are all American.

Refresher:

- How we got here
- What Advocates are working against

Eugenics


- Built off of "Social Darwinism," a set of beliefs intended to "improve the genetic quality" of a society.
- First proposed in 1880, became dominant beginning in the 1920's.
- Viewed marginalized races, low socioeconomic status, criminality, promiscuity (especially in women) and disability as interchangeable and related.
- Viewed all of these things as mortal threats to society and things to be eradicated.
- Methods to address this "threat" were state sanctioned murder, sterilization, jailing/removing "inferior" people from society, laws preventing inferior people from having contact/relationships/sex with people deemed genetically superior (read: WASPs)



Eugenics Applied in America

UNFIT HUMAN TRAITS
SUCH AS FEEBLEMINDEDNESS
EPILEPSY, CRIMINALITY,
INSANITY, ALCOHOLISM,
PAUPERISM AND MANY OTHERS,
RUN IN FAMILIES AND ARE
INHERITED IN EXACTLY THE
SAME WAY AS COLOR IN
GUINEA-PIGS. IF **ALL**
MARRIAGES WERE EUGENIC
WE COULD **BREED OUT**
MOST OF THIS UNFITNESS
IN **THREE GENERATIONS.**

THE TRIANGLE OF LIFE



YOU CAN IMPROVE YOUR *EDUCATION,*
AND EVEN CHANGE YOUR *ENVIRONMENT;*
BUT WHAT YOU REALLY **ARE** WAS ALL
SETTLED WHEN YOUR PARENTS WERE
BORN.
SELECTED PARENTS WILL HAVE
BETTER CHILDREN **THIS**
IS THE GREAT AIM OF **EUGENICS**

- Removal of rights of disabled (and other marginalized groups) through guardianship.
- Removal from society through Institutionalization and Ugly Laws.
- Families told to "institutionalize and break ties" with disabled family members.
- Forced Sterilization (overwhelmingly to women).
- Murder by "plausible deniability neglect," zero accountability.
- Exclusion from education and public space.
- Laws enforcing segregation, miscegenation laws, laws criminalizing sex with disabled people.



- "Disability services" from the 1920's to 1970's dominated by eugenicists.
- We all work in this same system the eugenicist's built.
- **This history- the history we grew up with, made ableism normalized and universally accepted.**
- **Most of our attitudes, fears, laws and discomfort regarding disabled people is from the eugenics era.**

How Does This History Affect Disability Advocacy?

- Not starting from a level playing field, not taken as seriously.
- Not real autonomy- Advocacy limited to “choice” rather than **CHANGE**.
- “The Master’s tools will never dismantle the Master’s house”
- The right to advocacy seen as a luxury rather than an imperative.
- Erasure of disability advocacy from history

Real advocacy is a civil rights struggle!

“For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.”



Audre Lorde



Writing Advocates Back Into History



ED Roberts

- Founder of the Independent Living Movement.
- Contracted polio at age 14.
- HS refused to give him diploma because he could not pass driving test (appealed and won).
- In 1962, accepted into UC-Berkeley, acceptance revoked when they found out he was disabled.
- “We’ve tried cripples before, and it didn’t work.”
- Founded Berkeley Center for Independent Living

The 504 Sit In

- “Section 504” is part of a federal law prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities.
- The law passed in 1973 but 4 years later in 1977, the law had not yet gone into effect over fears it would be too expensive.
- Judy Heumann and 120 other disabled activists occupied the San Francisco Federal Building, refusing to leave for 25 days.
- They successfully forced the Federal Government to put Section 504 into effect.



The Gang of 19

- In 1978, the city of Denver had only 10 wheelchair accessible buses out of over 600.
- “We can put people on the moon, so we can probably put lifts in buses.”
- 19 disabled activists blocked a city bus for 24 hours to protest the lack of accessible transportation.
- After the protest the city of Denver agreed to add lifts to 213 buses.



The “Capital Crawl”



SKOLSTREJK
FÖR
KLIMATET



AUTISTIC SE



Modern
Advocacy



Supporting Advocacy Requires-

- Validation of Inequity. “This isn’t fair, this isn’t your fault, but we can work to change it.”
- Let the Masters tools dismantle the Master’s house. **REAL** support of advocacy will profoundly change how we do our jobs.
- Recognize and sit in the discomfort at our own role in **oppression**.
- Education of ourselves and those we support on **rights, risks, and responses**.
 - Rights- “Your voice needs to be heard here.”
 - Risk- “You may face retaliation. Here is what that could look like.”
 - Responses- “Here is how you can respond if that happens.”

If we encourage people to speak
up...

We must also back their play.

Support Guidelines:

- NEVER Co-opt. If it is your idea, it isn't advocacy. If it's their idea, don't become the leader. Support the person.
- Resistance is expected. This is why it is advocacy rather than "talking."
- Understand the difference between "Advocate" and "Agency Booster/Mascot."
- ALWAYS educate on next steps. How do they take it up the chain? What comes next? How does the person go up the ladder?





Addressing Resistance

- Societal resistance- based most often on perceptions
 - Incapability
 - Burdens
 - Consumer of resources
- Systemic resistance (governments, Medicaid, etc.)- based on resources
 - Disabled people not worth the money
- Personal resistance (from friends, family, **Us**)- Usually based on fear
 - Concerns of risk
 - Concerns of failure
 - We know best

Personal Resistance

- **Convert adversaries into allies by addressing fears.**
 - Build plans with the person to accomplish goals and manage risks.
 - Most objections will fade if we can demonstrate how the person will be supported.
 - No empty talk- we must follow through.
- **We are allies in this process, not leaders.**
 - When we “drive,” even if based on the person’s wishes, we send the message of incapability.
 - We also raise questions of whose idea it really is.





Key Points

- Advocacy is needed because disabled people (and other marginalized groups) don't get equity when they "Speak Up."
- We must recognize our role as oppressors.
- We must avoid co-opting and inserting our own interests.
- We need to be willing to accept advocacy that targets us.
- We must educate on Rights, Risks, Responses- how the system works, how to keep raising the issue.
- We must support people to plan and use these plans to address personal resistance.