



Beyond Accommodation: Disability Justice and Access in Your Workplace and Community



Artist: Dissent Clothing

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OPENING ACCESS STATEMENT



In the spirit of disability culture, I invite you to join me in making this space we have together as accessible for you as possible. All PowerPoint images will be described. Please do not hesitate to stand, stretch, pace, sit on the floor, eat, knit, stim, leave the room or put your feet up. Feel free to turn your cameras on or off. Signal if you would like me to speak louder or slow down and let me know if there's anything else we can do today to create avenues of access.

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



I am speaking with you today from ancestral land stolen from the Ho-Chunk nation in 1832, a land their nation has called Teejop (day-JOPE) since time immemorial. Decades of ethnic cleansing followed when both the federal and state government repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, sought to forcibly remove the Ho-Chunk from Wisconsin.

The disability justice movement calls not for simply acknowledging this violence but for an end to colonization, imperialism, white supremacy, and all forms of oppression.

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POINTS OF DISCUSSION



- Useful terminology
- Horizons of Disability Culture and Community
- Disability and Objectification
- Disabled Experience in the Workplace
- Disability Justice Approaches to the Workplace and Community
- Creating Accessible Materials
- Gender Justice
- Exercise: Planning Accessible Futures

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ACCESS IS LOVE



Image Description: Photo of 3 disabled Asian Americans, Mia Mingus, Alice Wong and Sandy Ho (from left to right). Mia is wearing glasses and large hoop earrings. Alice is wearing a brightly colored scarf and an army-camouflage-print jacket. She is wearing a mask over her nose with a tube for her Bi-Pap machine. Sandy has wavy short hair and is wearing a black sweater. On the top against a white background in black text: "ACCESS IS LOVE" in white. The "O" in "LOVE" is a red heart.

- "We believe access should be a collective responsibility instead of a sole responsibility placed on a few individuals."
- "We encourage you to understand access as not only about logistics, but about deepening our shared humanity and dignity, growing access intimacy with each other and **an opportunity to create more justice and love in our world.**"
- "Accessibility" is not only limited to ramps or captions or braille or scent-free spaces. **Accessibility also goes beyond just disability.** . . .There are many disabled people who are also queer, trans and nonbinary, indigenous, black, people of color, poor and working class, parents, immigrants and more."
- <https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/2019/02/01/access-is-love/>

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Medical Model	Social Model
Disability is a deficiency or abnormality.	Disability is a difference.
Having a disability is negative.	Having a disability, in itself, is neutral.
Disability resides in the individual.	Disability derives from interaction between the individual and society.
The remedy for disability-related problems is cure or normalization of the individual.	The remedy for disability-related problems are a change in the interaction between the individual and society.
The agent of remedy is the professional.	The agent of remedy can be the individual, an advocate, or anyone who affects the arrangements between the individual and society.

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Broadening the horizons of disability community and identity

Discuss: Compare and contrast these two images



Discuss: What else could we include in the category of “disability”?

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Broadening the horizons of disability community and identity

Illness
 HIV/AIDS
 Cancer (or cancer in remission)
 Heart conditions
 Intellectual Disability
 Chronic Pain
 Learning disabilities
 Aging
 Post-COVID conditions
 Invisible disabilities
 What else?



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SOME USEFUL TERMINOLOGY



10 Easy Alternatives To Common Ableist Language

Say This!

unreal
unbelievable
jerk
awful
bad
moody
ridiculous
eccentric
dismantled
unruly

Not That!

insane
crazy
psycho
stupid
dumb
bipolar
retarded
mental case
crippled
mad house

- Ableism
- TAB=temporarily able-bodied
- PWDs=people with disabilities
- Disabled people
- wheelchair bound vs. wheelchair user
- intellectual disability
- Neurodiversity/neurodivergence/neurotypical
- invisible disability
- psychiatric disability

UPWORTHY

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ABLEISM AND THE OBJECTIFICATION OF DISABLED PEOPLE



- Stella Young, "I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much" (5 mins)
- Objectification
- "inspiration porn"
- Charity models of disability
- "helping" rather than centering
- "supercrip"
- Ableism
- Stigma
- Euphemisms



Image Description: Stella Young, a white woman with short red hair, wearing a black t-shirt and pants with bright red shoes with white polka dots, in profile. She sits in a black power wheelchair and gazes into the camera with a slight smile.

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DISABLED EXPERIENCE IN THE WORKPLACE



- Shame and stigma around disability accommodations
- Bureaucratic and economic barriers around disability accommodation (multiply marginalized are further stigmatized)
- Inexperienced or unsupported employers
- Lack of community or awareness of other coworkers with disabilities
- Physically inaccessible workplace (including lighting, seating, and scents)
- Invasive questions about visible disabilities; doubt about invisible ones
- Ableist expectations of energy, time, and presence

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Discussion on Ableism

- If ableism is defined as discrimination or prejudice against disabled people, but can also be defined as unwelcome pity or objectification:
- Was there a moment in your life where you or someone you have encountered experienced some form of ableism? How could that situation have been different with an anti-ableist approach?

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ACCESS CHECK

- Do you need to change positions?
- Grab food or water?
- How is the pace?
- Questions so far?

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CREATING ACCESSIBLE MATERIALS

- Sans serif text, white background with black letters or vice versa; forego animations
- Accessible, searchable PDFs
- Print formats (provide large font)
- Captioning videos and video calls (googlemeet, webcaptioner, paid software)
- Image descriptions (let's practice!)

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Practice image descriptions for this photo of fashion model Aaron Philip (pronouns: she/her)

Bonus: How does this portrait defy the cultural assumptions we have about people with disabilities?



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DISABILITY JUSTICE-INFORMED APPROACHES



- Intersectional: connected to disability, economic, gender, and racial justice— “We do not live single-issue lives”
- Moves away from medical approach to disability (identity, culture and community)
- Recognizes disability as not just biomedical, but also socially constructed and relational
- Recognizes the oppressions embedded in the workplace and how our individual approaches can reinforce and/or upend these power dynamics

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ASSUMPTIONS/CHANGING THE SPACE



- DO assume that we all have access needs
- DO consider an access statement to set the tone
- DO respect a disabled person's privacy
- DON'T ignore or avoid them
- DON'T assume the intent of a someone's communication (or lack thereof)
- DON'T talk to a disabled person like a child or touch or give assistance without consent (mobility devices as well)
- DO provide alternatives to spontaneous oral exchange
- DO emphasize flexibility and interdependency

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HOW TO APPLY THIS KNOWLEDGE



- Be prepared to indicate nearest accessible all-gender restrooms in your meeting space, workplace, etc
- Signage to indicate accessible spaces and routes
- Offer multiple seating options
- Image descriptions
- Scent-free spaces
- Alternate ways to socialize/connect/be involved where physical presence isn't required (livestream)
- Provide access checks at beginning and midpoint
- Embrace slowness to ensure all are included

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Discussion:

Examples of tasks you've seen or been asked to perform that do not consider physical, mental, or emotional access needs? Confusing or inaccessible on other levels? Impossible deadlines, pressure to come in when sick, etc?

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Alice Wong, "Disabled Oracles and the Coronavirus"

- Wong reflects on the power of disabled wisdom in light of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Insists that: "Disabled people know what it means to be vulnerable and interdependent. We are modern-day oracles. It's time people listened to us."
- We have seen swift movements towards accommodations for online meetings, events, and working from home for able-bodied people that seemed "impossible" to accommodate disabled people before the COVID-19 pandemic
- Shows how disabled practices and creativity have now come into widespread use, often without attribution to the disabled people who have called for and implemented them.



Photo of an Asian American woman in a power chair. She is wearing an orange-red jacket and black pants. She is wearing a mask over her nose attached to a gray tube and bright red lip color. Her hands are resting over her joystick. Photo credit: Eddie Hernandez Photography

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LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC

As workplaces push to go “back to normal,” what are some of the lessons we have learned from the pandemic and from disabled people that we can use to effect change in our workplace and make it more accessible for all?

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ACCESSIBILITY AND GENDER JUSTICE

- Employees and clients may not feel safe disclosing their pronouns
- Offer your pronouns if you feel safe doing so
- Don't assume someone's pronouns based on their gender presentation
- Refer to them by name, confirm pronunciation
- **Names and pronouns can change over time**
- Questions?



Queercrip symbol created by Sky Heyne Cubacub—a pink and black symbol representing both gender diversity and disability in the same symbol

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“You wanna know how you’ll know if you’re doing disability justice? You’ll know you’re doing it because people will show up late, someone will vomit, someone will have a panic attack, and nothing will happen on time...We won’t be grateful to be included; we will want to set the agenda...**It looks like what many mainstream abled people have been taught to think of as failure**”

--Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha

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EXERCISE: BUILDING ACCESSIBLE FUTURES



- Take a few minutes to quietly consider where you can improve access or advocacy for disabled folks in your workplace. How about in your own living space, activist space, social spaces, familial spaces, online spaces, general interactions, etc?
- Set goals for how you will implement this, and a deadline
- Using the chat feature, share the commitment to what you are changing, discuss how you will change it, share your deadline

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Questions? Ideas?
Contact: waggoner2@wisc.edu

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“I believe we can do access in liberatory ways that aren’t just about inclusion, diversity and equality; but are rather, in service of justice, liberation, and **interdependence**”

--Mia Mingus

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