

Disability Justice: An Audit Tool

Plain Language Edition

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“We Are Our Best Strategy To Win”

Quote by Stacey Park Milbern

We remember Stacey Park Milbern, May 19, 1987- May 19, 2020

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How It All Started

In 2018, Stacey and Leah talked on the phone:

Stacey: Hey, we need to work on a project. What should we do?

Leah: We can teach people about disability justice and how to work against ableism.

Stacey: And we can help new leaders. When you're a disabled leader, some things are tough, and no one tells you about them.

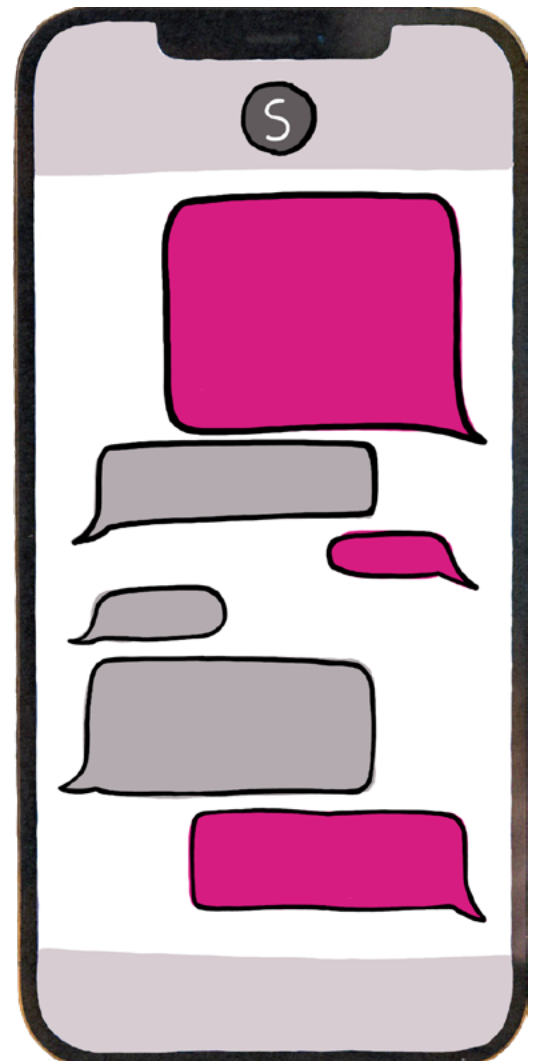
Leah: That's true.

Both: What if we made a disability justice guide?

Stacey: This guide would help groups know if they're following disability justice, especially groups that care but may not know all the details.

Leah: Yes, and people need to think about this often. It's personal, and they should be honest.

Stacey: This will really help everyone. I love the idea! Let's make it happen!



The Story Behind This Guide

by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha

My good friend Stacey Park Milbern wanted us to work on a special project about disability justice. In 2016, she told me about a group in Portland interested in the same cause. They invited me to talk at an event. At first, I wasn't sure. But Stacey said they really wanted to support disabled BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color).

Our Journey

For four years, we did many great things. We started a project called the Disability Justice Leaders Collaborative (DJLC). This was a place for disabled BIPOC leaders from Oregon and Southwest Washington. Here, they could learn more, grow as leaders, and work against ableism (discrimination against disabled people). This group also made a report about how to help others understand disability justice.

By 2020, many from this group started to take on big roles. Some ran for positions in the government, started groups, and organized events. They made sure that disability justice was a part of their work.

Stacey and I also helped other groups learn about disability justice. We taught and supported them so they could do better. We even thought of making a tool for others to see how well they understood disability justice.

Losing Stacey

But then, on May 19, 2020, we lost Stacey. She had to wait a long time for a surgery because of COVID-19. On her 33rd birthday, right after her surgery, she passed away. Everyone who believed in disability justice lost a dear friend and teacher. I lost my close friend of 11 years.

We never got to make the DJ Audit tool together. I wish Stacey was here to help me with it. But the way this tool was made—with everyone’s ideas, slowly and carefully, and learning from mistakes—is just how Stacey would’ve wanted.

Using This Tool

I hope this tool helps you. Let’s work together to end ableism. Remember, disabled people have a lot of wisdom to share.



Understanding the Disability Justice Audit Tool

What is this Tool?

This tool helps groups led by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to understand and use disability justice, even if the groups aren't mainly about disability. Here's why this tool is important:

- Many BIPOC groups are interested in disability justice. But there aren't many trainings to help them use it day-to-day.
- Groups want tools to help them see how well they're using disability justice.
- Some groups are confused. They don't know the difference between disability rights and disability justice. This tool helps them learn more.
- Some trainings about disability are from a white point of view. This tool looks at disability from a BIPOC perspective.
- Groups sometimes only have a basic checklist to see if they're following the law (ADA). This tool is more than just a checklist. It helps groups think about many parts of disability justice.

How Does this Tool Work?

This isn't just a checklist. It's a set of questions to help groups see how well they're using disability justice ideas and leaders. Groups can use this tool many times to keep improving.

Why Did We Create This Tool?

Sometimes BIPOC groups are already using disability justice without knowing. For example, they might:

- Offer food and places for meetings that everyone can use.
- Pick up older people or sick friends.
- Meet in public places that are free and open to everyone.

Still, talking about disability can be hard. For a long time, many disability groups were mainly white. BIPOC people might have felt left out or faced racism. Some bad things that have happened to BIPOC people because of race and disability are:

- Being hurt or treated badly at work.
 - Bad experiences with doctors.
 - Being treated unfairly at school or work.

Talking about these things is hard. It can bring up bad memories or feelings. But this tool hopes to make it a bit easier and safer to talk about.

Speaking About Disability in BIPOC Communities

Is it safe to talk about our disabilities?

Many Black and brown people face racism and other unfair treatments. So, talking about having a disability might feel unsafe. They feel they already have many challenges.



Mia Mingus, who works on disability justice, once said that many disabled women of color don't call themselves "disabled." They might live with disabilities, but they don't use that word. There are many reasons for this. It can be risky to say you're disabled when it feels safer to not talk about it.

Why Has It Been Hard To Talk About?

There have been times when it wasn't safe for us to talk about disability. But when we talk about how unfair treatment has hurt our families and communities, it helps us heal.

The Good Side of Talking About It

When we use ideas from disability justice:

- Our work gets stronger.
- Our plans and actions in the community can last longer and do better.
- Our groups can focus on and support disabled leaders. These leaders know the answers.
- We can understand and fix the past unfair treatments in our groups and communities.
- We can heal from past hurts and build a better world.



Using the Disability Justice Audit Tool

This tool helps you understand and use disability justice. It has six parts:

Section 1: Understanding Disability Justice

Here, you will learn the main ideas of the disability justice movement.

Section 2: How We Think About Disability Justice

This part asks: How do you use disability justice in your political work?

Section 3: Checking How We Do Things: Steps and Plans

Look at how disability has been part of your group, your community, and your actions.

Section 4: Ten Key Ideas of Disability Justice (DJ): Conversation Starters

For each of the 10 main ideas of disability justice, ask yourself: How do I use this idea in what I do?

Section 5: Making Things Accessible for Everyone

Here are some helpful ways to make sure everyone can take part in your work.

Section 6: Four Stories of Including Disability Justice in Our Work

Read stories of how groups used disability justice. They will share what they did, what they changed, and how they made it work. There are also stories from a political campaign and an election that used disability justice.

Using This Guide: Easy Steps

1. Writing Your Thoughts:

- Use this guide to help you think.
- Write down your feelings and answers to the questions.
- Check your notes later. Maybe in a few months or a year. See what's new or different for you.

2. Group Study:

- Use this guide with friends or co-workers.
- Choose one part to talk about each time you meet.
- Share ideas. Think of things you can do or change together.

3. Checking Accessibility:

- Use the checklists given in this guide.
- Look at your place and activities. Check your website and work rules.
- Think: What's good? What can be better?

4. Learning From the Past:

- Talk with people in your group or work. Learn about its history.
- Ask many people. Some may know different things.
- Think about mistakes made in the past. Learn from them. Maybe ask people who left because they felt bad.
- Think of 3 things you can do to be better with disability rights.

Words to Know

Disability Justice: This is about making sure disabled people have equal rights and are not treated badly because of their disability.

BIPOC: This stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Ableism: This is when people treat disabled people unfairly just because they are disabled.

Disability Justice Leaders Collaborative (DJLC): This was a group of disabled BIPOC leaders from Oregon and Southwest Washington.

Disability Justice Audit Tool: This tool helps groups understand and use disability justice.

ADA: This stands for the Americans with Disabilities Act. It is a law that protects disabled people from being treated unfairly.

Checklist: A list of things to check or do to make sure everything is correct or in order.

Racism: This is when people are treated badly or unfairly because of their race.

Political Vision: This is what you believe should happen in society and politics.

Accessibility Audits: These are checks to see if places and activities are accessible or easy to use for everyone, including disabled people.

Assessing Organizational History: This is about looking at what a group or organization has done in the past to learn from it.

Individual Journaling: This is when you write down your thoughts, feelings, and answers to questions by yourself.

Group Study: This is when you learn or talk about something with a group of people.

Disabled Leaders: These are leaders who are disabled. They often have a lot of knowledge and experience to share.

Section 1: Understanding Disability Justice

What is Disability Justice?

Disability justice means making sure everyone, especially disabled Black, Indigenous, and people of color, get fair treatment. It also includes people who are queer, transgender, Two Spirit, or who feel different about their gender.

Patty Berne, a leader in disability justice, says it fills in the gaps left by the disability rights movement.

The Past and Disability Rights

In the late 1960s, people started a movement called “disability rights.” They wanted laws to protect disabled people’s rights. But, this movement had some problems:

- It mostly listened to white men.
- Some people felt left out because they were not white.
- They only focused on disability and not other problems like racism.

Key Points to Remember

- Disability justice: Making sure everyone, especially certain groups, get fair treatment.
- Disability rights: A past movement to protect rights of disabled people through laws.
- Disability justice is a way of thinking and working that focuses on the experiences and leadership of disabled Black, Indigenous, and people of color, and people who are queer, transgender, Two Spirit, or don’t conform to traditional gender roles.

Disability Justice Activism: Key Focus Areas

Disability justice activists work on many important issues. Here are some of their main concerns:

Safety and Rights:

- Fighting against police harm towards disabled and Deaf Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).
- Seeking justice in prisons for disabled and Deaf BIPOC.

Healthcare:

- Opposing unfair medical treatment and tests on disabled BIPOC communities.
- During COVID-19, fighting against care refusal and lack of access to vaccines for disabled and sick people.

Climate Change:

- Working on surviving climate disasters.
- Ensuring that disabled, elder, and medically at-risk people have the support they need during climate events.

Immigration:

- Standing against laws like Trump's public charge law that stops disabled people from moving to new places.

Voting:

- Battling against actions that make it hard for disabled people, especially BIPOC, to vote.

Education:

- Making sure BIPOC disabled kids and adults can learn just like everyone else.
- Stopping unfair treatment that can send kids from special education to prison.

Disability justice activists also share their message and connect with people in many creative ways, like art, music, writing, and online groups. Building community, making friends, and supporting each other is just as important as their public campaigns.



Understanding the 10 Principles of Disability Justice

From Sins Invalid

1. Everyone's Life is Connected

- *We are all linked together* - Audre Lorde
- Different kinds of unfairness, like ableism (unfairness towards disabled people) and racism, can make many people feel left out.

2. Let the Most Affected Lead

- *Those who know the problems best should guide us* - Aurora Levins Morales

3. Being Against Unfair Profit Systems

- Some systems treat people and land just to make money. We don't agree with this because it doesn't respect everyone's value.

4. Working Together Across Movements

- We try to help other groups understand disability better. This way, we can all fight against unfairness together.

5. Everyone is Valuable

- Every person has worth. It's not about how much work they can do or money they can make.

6. Think Long-term

- We want to make sure our fight for fairness lasts a long time. We listen to what our own experiences tell us so we can keep pushing for what's right.

7. Unity Among Different Disabilities

- We value everyone in our community. We know that leaving someone out hurts our fight for freedom.

8. Depending on Each Other

- We help each other out. Sometimes, solutions from big organizations or governments can control us more, so we rely on each other instead.

9. Working Together for Everyone's Benefit

- As people with different backgrounds and disabilities, we come up with new ways to include everyone. This helps us stay connected.

10. Freedom for All

- Everyone should be free and treated fairly. We believe that working together is the only way to make big changes.



Section 2: How We Think About Disability Justice

Understanding Disability Justice

When some groups try to include disability justice, they might make sure there are ramps for wheelchairs or have someone who knows sign language for Deaf people. This is good, but disability justice is more than just making things accessible. It's also about giving power to disabled people. Some things to think about:

- How is our group letting disability justice guide what we do?
- Do we remember disabled people when we make plans? Or do we forget until the last minute?
- Do we see disabled people as leaders in our group? Or just people we help?
- Have we ever treated disabled people unfairly in the past? How can we fix that?
- Have we ever talked about disability justice with other groups we work with? How can we bring it up?

Looking Back: Our Past with Disability

- Have we ever talked about disability or disability justice in our group?
- What has happened in the past in our community related to disability?
- Have we ever done something wrong related to disability? How can we fix it?

- Do other groups we work with talk about disability justice? How can we talk about it with them?

Building Relationships with Disabled People

- Do we know any disabled activists or groups? How can we work with them?
- How are our relationships with disabled people? Can we make them better?
- How can we support disabled activists in what they're doing? Can we share resources or money with them?

Learning More About Disability Justice

- What do we know about the disability justice movement? Who taught us?
- Do we know how disability justice is different from just fighting for disabled people's rights?
- Are there disabled leaders we look up to? Who are they?
- Are there things about disability justice we need to learn more about? How will we learn?

Our Plans for Disability Justice

- How long has our group worked on disability issues?
- How do we talk about disability in our group?
- Who are the disabled leaders and important topics we're working with right now?

- Do we ask disabled people for advice? Do we pay them for it?
- What are our goals for the future to support disability justice?
- If we make a change, will it help or hurt disabled people? How do we know?

In Conclusion

We want to make sure our group is thinking about and helping disabled people in the right way. These questions can guide us.



Section 3: Checking How We Do Things: Steps and Plans

Setting Up: Making Sure Everyone Can Join

Budgets:

- Do we set aside money to help everyone take part? (Like for sign language, looking after kids, or helpers?)

Who Can Help:

- Do we know people who can help make things better for everyone? (Like sign language experts or safe cleaners?)
- If not, should we find some?

Events:

- Do we have a list to check everything is okay for everyone at events?
- Before events, do we ask people what they need to take part?
- Do we know good places to hold events where everyone can come?

Our Team: Everyone Should Feel Welcome

Counting:

- Do we know how many people with disabilities are in our group?
- Are any of them leaders? Do they feel okay with how we help them?
- Do we check in with them to see how they're feeling?

History:

- In the past, did anyone with a disability leave because it was hard for them? Why?
- What did we learn? How did we try to fix it?

Our Rules: Being Fair and Kind

Asking for Help:

- What do we do if someone needs extra help to do their job?
- What proof do they need to give us?

Taking Time Off:

- If someone needs time off because they're sick or hurt, what do we do?
- Do we have plans to help if they can't come in?

Being Fair:

- How do we decide if someone's doing a good job? Are we being fair to everyone?

Words to Know

Sign Language: A way of talking using hands, often used by Deaf people.

Disability: Some people have a harder time doing certain things because of their bodies or minds. This is called a disability.

Venue: A place where events happen.

Section 4: Ten Key Ideas of Disability Justice (DJ) Conversation Starters

Inspired by the actions of disability justice advocate Max Airborne from Oakland, CA, this section invites you to reflect deeply on ten principles that shape disability justice. Max practiced understanding each principle in a public way, sharing his thoughts, growth areas, and questions about them. He invited others to join him. Similarly, we encourage you to use the following questions as a tool for reflection or discussion.

Everyone is Important

- How do you include everyone in your work on disability justice?
- How do you ensure people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, non-men, and those who are poor or working class are part of your work?
- How do you support and follow the lead of people facing many challenges at once?

Lead by Example

- How do you let those most affected by ableism lead in your work?
- Do you view disabled people as leaders, especially those who face many challenges and those who are poor or don't have fancy education or jobs?
- How do you challenge the power of money in your work? Are you avoiding practices that use disability to make money?

- What are your thoughts and feelings about this?

Work With Others

- How do you include DJ in your work with other movements?

Value Everyone

- How do you value everyone in your work, even when they can't work quickly or as much as others?
- How do you work with people who don't have many degrees, work full time, or have fancy resumes?
- Do you connect with disabled people who are sick, homebound, institutionalized, "weird," uneducated, and poor?

Think Long Term

- How do you plan for the long term? What are you doing well? What could you do better?
- How do you help everyone you work with think long term?

Support All Disabilities

- How do you support all types of disabilities?
- What are you doing well? What is difficult for you? How can you learn and grow?

We Need Each Other

- What does "we need each other" mean to you? What is easy or hard about this?

- How do you practice this idea?

Work Together

- How are you helping everyone work together?
- Share some examples of when you were flexible and creative in helping everyone work together. Share some examples of when this was hard for you.

Work for Freedom Together

- How are you working for freedom for everyone with disability justice at the heart?
- Share some examples of how you're working for freedom for everyone. Where do you want to grow?

Words to Know

Intersectionality: The idea that everyone is connected. People can face different challenges based on their race, gender, class, or other identities. We should think about these challenges together, not separately.

Ableism: Discrimination or unfair treatment based on disability. Ableism can be against people with physical or mental disabilities.

Cross-movement Organizing: Working with other groups or movements. For example, disability justice can work with movements for racial justice, LGBTQ+ rights, and more.

Interdependence: The idea that we all need each other. People can work together and support each other instead of trying to do everything alone.

Collective Access: Creating spaces and opportunities where everyone can participate, no matter their abilities.

Collective Liberation: Working for freedom for everyone. This means thinking about how different types of discrimination connect and challenging them all together.



Section 5: Making Things Accessible for Everyone

Why do we need things to be accessible?

Stacey Park Milbern said: Access is our first step. Some think just making a place easy to get into is enough. But we need more. We want to be safe and feel welcome. When a friend makes their home easy for my wheelchair, I feel trusted. When someone checks that an event is good for me and my friends, that shows they care. I am thankful for the help we give each other. I can't wait for what comes next.

What does "accessible" mean?

Accessible means making things easy for everyone to use. It's important because we all deserve to be part of things. Some places might not be easy for everyone to get into. We want to change that.

Why is it more than just a door?

Being accessible is the start. It's like opening the door for everyone. But, there's more to do after that. It's about feeling safe and welcomed.

How can we help?

Many people have shared ideas on how to make things accessible. Instead of making new ideas, let's use what's already there. For example, one week, we can check if our place is good for wheelchairs. Another week, we can see if our events welcome everyone.

Making Online Meetings Easy for Everyone

written by HEARD (Helping Educate to Advance the Rights of Deaf communities)

What's this about?

Many people with disabilities have used online tools like Zoom for meetings because going out can be hard for them.

After the COVID-19 virus in 2020, even more groups started using online tools. This means there are more people asking for services like sign language and real-time captions (words on the screen).

HEARD made a guide to help groups make their online events easy for everyone to join and understand. You can find more about it here:

ASL:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aVBV0vUvT18&feature=youtu.be>

English Resource: bit.ly/accessrevolution

Spanish Resource: bit.ly/revolucionacceso

Text Only English & Spanish with image descriptions:

bit.ly/accessrevolutionTXT

Tips for Good Online Meetings

Here are some tips from Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha that she learned from Alice Wong of the Disability Visibility Project:

Sign Language in Meetings:

- Have American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters in online meetings.
- They need to be skilled and used to online events.

- If the event is over 1 hour, have at least 2 interpreters.

Words on Screen:

- Have live captions. These are made by a person, not a computer. They show what is being said in words on the screen.
- Just having words on the screen isn't enough for some Deaf people. ASL might be their main way of communicating.

After the Meeting:

- If you share a video of the event, it should have captions.
- Also, provide a written version of what was said.
- Example: Alice Wong gave a talk in 2019. There's a video of it on YouTube. The video has captions made by a person, not a computer. There's also a link to a written version of her talk: [2019 Autistic Self Advocacy Network Annual Gala: Keynote by Alice Wong \(captioned\)](#)

Preparation

- Collect scripts and plans for the event 48 hours before it starts. Share these with the interpreters.
- Have a practice session before the event.

Safety in Meetings

- Have rules for online safety. For example, only allow certain people to share their screen.
- Have someone in charge of helping with access. They can help if there's a problem.



Sharing About the Event:

- Tell people that there will be sign language and captions.
- Describe pictures in words on social media.
- Give an email address for people to ask questions.

For Radio or Podcast:

- Always share a written version of what was said.

Words to Know

ASL (American Sign Language): A way of communicating using hands, facial expressions, and body.

CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation): Words that show up on the screen in real-time to say what someone is speaking.

Making Art Spaces for Everyone: A Guide by Carolyn Lazard

What is this guide about?

- Title: *Accessibility in the Arts: A Promise and a Practice*
- Author: Carolyn Lazard
- Main idea: Help small art places be better for everyone, especially disabled people.

Why do we need this guide?

- Some problems: Disabled people often find it hard to join in at art places.
- Solutions: This guide gives ideas on how to make art places better and more welcoming.

What's special about this guide?

- Beyond old ideas: Instead of sticking to old ideas about making places accessible, this guide thinks of new ways. It focuses on the real needs of disabled people.
- It also talks about how to tell everyone what you're doing. How you can use ads and promotions to let everyone know about the better changes. And it tells how to save money for making things better. It shows where to find tools, apps and programs that don't cost much or are free.
- Disability justice: This guide uses disability justice ideas. This means it thinks deeply about fairness for disabled people.

What can you find in this guide?

- Detailed help: The guide is very complete. It helps art places know what to do and how to do it.
- "Accommodations" section: This part talks about different ways to make art places better for everyone.
- Promotion ideas: It teaches how to tell people about the good things you're doing.
- Budget Tips: Money can be tight. The guide gives ideas on how to make things better without spending a lot. It lists free or cheap tools and apps to help.

Words to Know

Accommodations: Changes that help everyone join in and understand.

Accessible: Easy for everyone to use or understand.

Budget: A plan for how to spend money.

Disability Justice: Ideas and actions that make the world fairer for disabled people.

Guide: A book or piece of information that shows you how to do something.

Promotions: Ways to let people know about something.

W3's Website Accessibility Checker

This is a tool that checks if websites are good for everyone.

Making Things Easier: A Checklist for Accessibility

Stacey Park Milbern has made a checklist in her book *Don't Leave Your Friends Behind* from 2011. This checklist is still good today. It gives information about:

- Food
- Bathrooms for everyone, no matter their gender
- Access for wheelchairs
- And much more!

Checking How Accessible Your Office Is: RAMP Vancouver Access Audit

The Radical Access Mapping Project, or RAMP for short, is a group based in Vancouver. They focus on disability justice, which means making sure everyone can participate, no matter their abilities. One of the things they do is check different community spaces in Vancouver to see how accessible they are. This process is called an "audit." They then share these audits online so others can learn from them.

RAMP provides "templates," which are like examples or guides, online. You can use these templates to check your own space and see what is missing and what is already in place. This can help make your space better for everyone!

More here: <https://radicalaccessiblecommunities.wordpress.com/the-radical-access-mapping-project/radical-access-mapping-project-vancouver/>
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1HKw_g2NDxoZAc7otQUOIE-q17CZskLK7EB5afDYHmt1E/edit

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AUXwgl5chH-3fE7Kv67wuuLn-9ooGRHU3KxBUnr-_p9A/edit

Words to Know

Template: A guide or pattern that can be used to make something.

Audit: A detailed check or review of something to see how it's doing or what it needs.

Making a Good Public Protest or Rally

When you want to make a public protest or rally, here are things to think about:

- What's your plan? What are your goals? How can you include people with disabilities in your plan?
- Include everyone. Can people with disabilities or health problems join in? Can people who think differently join in too?
- Try different things. All actions don't need to be big outdoor events. What are other ways you can protest?
- Details of the action. How long will your action last? If you're marching, how far will it be? How much time will it take?
- Keep people comfortable. Can you give people chairs to sit on? Chairs can help a lot of people, like parents, old people, and sick people.

- Speak everyone’s language. Do you have people who can translate sign language or other languages? You need to ask these people to come early. Not all translators are the same.
- Take care of basic needs. Will you give out water and snacks? What about a chair with wheels if someone gets tired?
- Keep everyone safe. Sometimes, people with disabilities get pushed in marches. Can you have helpers who can guide these people?

Sins Invalid has more ideas for planning good public events here: <https://www.sinsinvalid.org/news-1/2020/6/8/access-suggestions-for-mobilizations>

More Help

- “Crippling the Resistance: No Revolution Without Us” is an essay with more help for making protests better.
- “26 Ways To Be In the Struggle, Beyond the Streets” is a guide with ways to protest without going to the streets. You can teach, make art, post on social media, raise money, and teach others.

Simple Language

Simple language makes it easy for everyone to understand things. This is especially good for people with learning disabilities. You can find a good guide for simple language here.

Words to Know

Public protest: An event where people show they don’t agree with something.

Rally: A big meeting where people show they support something.

Translator: A person who changes spoken or sign language into another language.

Accessible: Easy for everyone to use or understand.



Section 6: Four Stories of Including Disability Justice in Our Work

Here we'll talk about how some organizations have added disability justice into what they do. People wanted us to share these stories. They wanted to know the steps, the struggles, and how it all looked in real life. They asked, "We have two people with disabilities in our group. What do we do now?"

Not many stories tell how groups have started to see and do more disability justice (DJ) work. We asked people to tell us their stories. Here's what they shared.

Story 1: Block Build Be

Block Build Be (BBB) is a project by the Buddhist Peace Fellowship in Oakland, California. They are one of the few Buddhist groups led by people of color and/or queer/trans people. They use Buddhism as a way to fight for social justice.



They have a few people with disabilities in their group, but their main focus isn't on disability issues.

BBB is a space where people from many social justice movements come together.

They learn from each other and develop their skills. They focus on many issues like racial justice, Black liberation, immigrant rights, and more.

BBB follows three important actions to create justice and freedom:

Block: Stop harm and injustice

Build: Grow relationships and communities

Be: Use peaceful practices for strength and freedom

BBB once organized a retreat that wasn't very accessible for everyone. A member, Max Airborne, trained the team on disability justice. Max is disabled, white, and identifies as genderqueer.



Max shared his experience on adding DJ into the retreat. He said, "We started by talking about the importance of access for everyone. We need to realize that everyone has access needs, but only some people's needs are met in our world."

"Everyone at the retreat shared their access needs, not only at the start but also at the start of each session. We made sure everyone could move around the room, hear what was being said, and see the lips of the people speaking. We also supported people when they

needed lower light to prevent headaches, patience with social rules, emotional help, or help carrying things.

"We had a group of 'access pixies' who helped with access issues."

They did more than I imagined. They met regularly to discuss needs, made announcements, and asked if anyone had new needs.

“They really loved being access pixies and learning how to support access. Next year, I want to make wings for the access pixies!”

Words to Know

Disability Justice (DJ): Making sure that people with disabilities are treated fairly and have what they need.

Social Justice: Fair treatment for all people in society.

Retreat: A place or activity that helps you relax and get away from the usual things in your life.

Access Needs: What a person needs to be able to do things like moving around, hearing, and seeing.

Access Pixies: People who help others with their access needs.

Buddhism: A religion that teaches people about how to live a peaceful and mindful life. It started in Asia about 2,500 years ago.

Injustice: When people are not treated fairly.

Liberation: Being free from things that limit you.

Racial Justice: Making sure all people, no matter their race, are treated fairly.

Genderqueer: A term used by some people who don't identify as just male or female. They might identify as both, neither, or as another gender.

Peaceful Practices: Activities that help you stay calm and relaxed. These can include things like meditation or yoga.

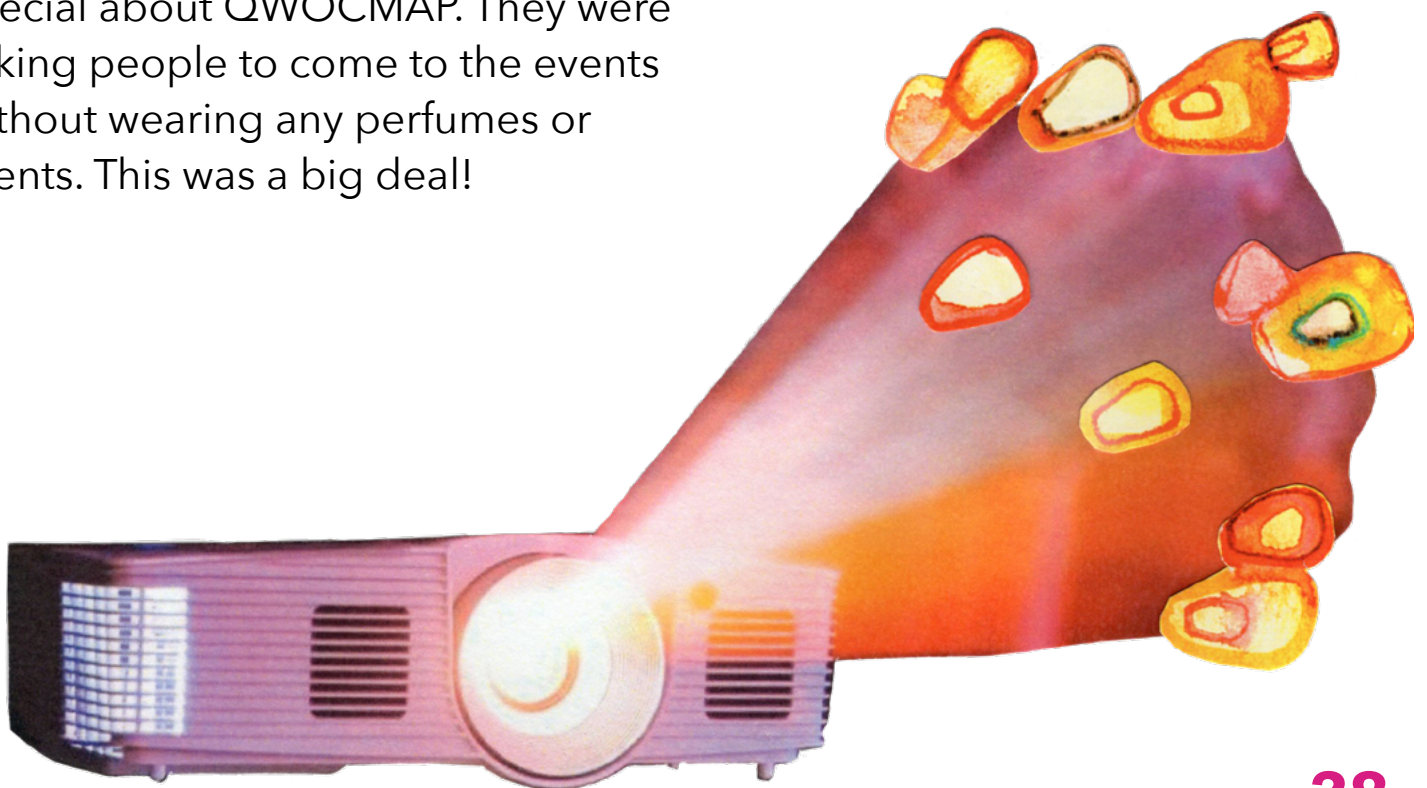
Story 2: Kebo Drew, Queer Women of Color Media Access Project (QWOCMAP)

I'm Kebo Drew, and I want to tell you about a fantastic group called the Queer Women of Color Media Access Project (QWOCMAP). This group has been around for 25 years! It is for queer and trans people who have a BIPOC background. The group helps these people learn how to make films and videos. We also host a yearly, multi-day film festival that's free and lots of fun!

I started going to these film festivals in 2007, when I was new to the Bay Area. It was a lively event! Hundreds of queer women of color of all ages and backgrounds were there.

They were mingling, having fun, and enjoying free desserts together. It was free, so lots of people who don't have a lot of money could come too. Everyone was friendly and welcoming.

In 2011, I noticed something special about QWOCMAP. They were asking people to come to the events without wearing any perfumes or scents. This was a big deal!



Often, it's difficult for spaces where BIPOC people hang out to think about accessibility in this way. Lots of Black and brown people find it hard to go without scented products. This is because of our cultural traditions and because unscented products for our hair and skin can be expensive and hard to find.

On top of that, many BIPOC people are taught by their families to always smell "clean". This makes it tough to get BIPOC spaces to be fragrance free.

Then, in 2014, QWOCMAP made a big announcement for their 10th anniversary "Season of Love" festival. Here is what they said:

Hi Friends,

We have a favor to ask. Can you learn about not using scented products?

Our festival this year has a theme. It's called "Re-Generation: Food, Environment & Land." This theme talks about:

- Caring for our planet.
- Standing up for what's right.
- Making sure things are fair.

As people of color, we face some problems. We don't always have:

- Good food.
- Clean water.
- Reliable power.

Sometimes our homes have bugs and mold. Sometimes there are bad chemicals.

When we go to work, we might find harmful things. These can be in cleaning stuff, salon fumes, or hair products. Our neighborhoods might even be built on polluted land.

These problems can make us sick. Even things that smell nice can harm us.

This makes it important for us to think about fairness and helping people with disabilities.

At QWOCCMAP, we believe in fairness. We believe that everyone should be able to join us. So, at our festival:

- We look out for those who get sick from the environment or chemicals.
- We make sure there are seats where there are no fragrances.
- We use cleaning products that don't have scents.
- We ask everyone to avoid using things that have fragrances. This includes things they put on their bodies or clothes.

We have had these rules for a while. But we know that being fair and not leaving anyone out is a constant work.

We're sorry if some people had to leave the festival because of scents. We are grateful for their help in finding solutions.

This year, we need everyone to avoid fragrances.

This request isn't just for the community. It's also for us, the team and the volunteers. Some of us get sick from chemicals. When there are no fragrances, we can do our jobs and stay healthy.

Everyone can also enjoy the festival more.

As we get ready for our 10th festival, we want you to understand why we're doing this.

We have some links for you to learn about going fragrance-free. The information comes from people like us.

Whether you wear your hair in locs or in a designer style, there's something for you. We're sharing this because we know you care about the community.

If you want to ask something or chat, please email us. We love working with you!

Leah's Interview with Kebo Drew from QWOCCMAP

I talked to Kebo Drew in June 2021. Kebo is one of the people who formed QWOCCMAP. They are Black, from the South, and they are queer. They also have long-term health problems.

We talked about how QWOCCMAP is making sure they think about disabled people in their work.

Funding Problems

There are often problems with how money is given to the arts.

Once, the California Arts Council took away a lot of money from the National Arts and Disability Center.

When I found out, I said that people of color (POC), queer people, and transgender POC often say they are sick or disabled. They are suffering from both racism and ableism (discrimination against disabled people).

This surprised the council. They didn't realize that ableism was a part of white supremacy.

Our group, QWOCMAP, is heavily involved in these issues, and we can talk about how they are connected.

Our Approach to Disability Justice (DJ)

We see ourselves as one of the groups that do DJ. All of us identify as disabled or neurodivergent (having a brain that works differently), but we're not officially a disability group.

But we are a group that is learning to put DJ first before anything else. This lets us talk about DJ issues in places where other groups might not be allowed to go.

Seeing Everyone as Disabled

If you think everyone is disabled rather than seeing it as a burden, your view of everything changes. In my family, I can't think of anyone who is fully abled. There are a lot of health problems like diabetes, strokes, high blood pressure.

My dad died from cancer, which he got from being around a chemical called Agent Orange during the Vietnam War.

My aunt couldn't have a baby because of the type of work she had to do. This shows how disability affects both sides of my family.

As people of color doing DJ work, we need to think about how our histories have disabled us, rather than just saying we'll get better at it all.

Accessibility is Not a Burden

It's not a burden to make things accessible. I want to create a place where my family can come.

Some people who work at QWOCCMAP are disabled, but they don't say they are.



We want to show these people a space where we practice DJ, and maybe that will help them talk about their own disability.

Starting with the following rules:

We started with making sure we were following the rules in the ADA/Section 504. We checked all the lists of things we needed to do, but we still felt like something was missing.

We wanted to do more than just the basic things. At QWOCCMAP, everything we do is free, people just have to show up.

We wondered, why not use the same idea for disability? You don't have to ask for things like a sign language interpreter or captions on film. They are just there.

Making Movies More Inclusive: Our Story

Start of Our Journey

We started from a personal need. Mad, our co-founder, is hard of hearing. So is her mom. They had trouble at the movies. There's a device for hard-of-hearing people, but it often doesn't work well. An intern also shared his experience. He could hear some sounds, but not all. So we decided to use transcripts!

Funding and Accessibility

But we faced a problem. How would we pay for captions on everything? We got some money for two years. After that, we paid from our pockets. Some say they can't afford to make things accessible. We say you have to put your money where it matters.

Ensuring Captions

We made a rule. If you send us a film, it must have captions. But we also helped people with this. We made a simple guide about captions, like font size. When someone doesn't know what to do, we give them the guide.

Taking Care of Mental Health

One year, some people at our festival all got upset at the same time. Even with my training, we couldn't see this coming. But we learned from this. We now have people ready to help at the festival. This is part of disability justice too. We know that things like PTSD and other mental health issues are also disabilities!

Learning and Growing

We always try to improve. We know we can't do everything. So we ask others for help. When there were issues about abuse and safety, we asked other organizations for advice.

Power to the Community

We believe in the power of the community. We let people take the lead. If someone has an idea, we let them make it happen. This is how we started offering childcare.

Serving Multiple Needs

We also try to meet different needs. For example, people who have survived tough times often need a quiet space. We found out that people who need less sensory input also need this quiet space.

Time for Learning

Sometimes, we need time to understand things better. This is also part of disability justice. We are always working to improve.

Checking Our Work

We always check if we are doing what we say we will. We have volunteers who read our rules and guidelines. They make sure we follow them.

Thinking About Everyone

We consider everyone's needs. Like, service animals are important, but some people are allergic. So we plan the seating in the theater carefully. We also work to hire more interpreters of color first.

Listening to the Community

We listen to what people tell us. We ask for their ideas. We try to meet their needs. Like, if someone says they can't eat nuts, we take note. We want to make sure everyone feels welcome and cared for.

Always Improving

We are always trying to learn and do better. We want to make our festival a place where people can feel good. We always try to find solutions to problems.

Our Core Values

We believe in welcoming everyone. We try to treat everyone with respect. We guide people on how to treat others with respect too.

Overcoming Challenges

We face challenges. But we use our relationships to find solutions. Once, wildfires hit our area. We were planning a workshop. We were worried people wouldn't come. But we were partnering with an organization that had an air filter. So our workshop became a safe space.

Conclusion

The world can be unfair to disabled people and people of color. But this also makes us more creative. We work around our needs, not the other way around. We support each other. We remember to care for ourselves. We believe in loving and caring for each other. Even though it's slow work, we believe it's worth it.

Words to Know

Transcripts: Written versions of the words spoken in a movie, show, or video.

Captions: Words shown on a screen that tell you what is being said in a movie, show, or video.

Font Size: How big or small the letters are when you write or print them.

PTSD: Short for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. This is a condition that can happen after a person has had a very scary or sad experience.

Organizations: Groups of people who work together for a special reason or cause.

Childcare: A service that takes care of children while their parents or caregivers are busy.

Sensory Input: Things that we see, hear, touch, taste, or smell. Some people may feel uncomfortable with too much sensory input.

Interpreters: People who help those who use different languages understand each other. For instance, they can help someone who uses sign language understand someone who uses spoken language, and vice versa.

Service Animals: Animals trained to help people with disabilities. For example, a service dog might help a person who cannot see.

Allergic: When your body has a bad reaction to something. For example, some people might start sneezing or get a rash when they are around certain animals or eat certain foods.

Wildfires: Very large fires that happen in the wild, like in forests. They can be very dangerous and cause a lot of damage.

Air Filter: A device that cleans the air. It can be very helpful for people who have trouble breathing when the air is not clean.

Story 3: Hand in Hand

An organization called “Hand in Hand” is helping domestic workers. They believe that every person deserves good working conditions. They have many successes, like ending unfair pay for some workers. They also helped create the Biden administration’s Build Back Better program. This program funds care for disabled people and elders at home. Historically, there have been disagreements between disabled people and domestic workers. But “Hand in Hand” is working to bring these communities together. They believe that both can win if they work together. They have also done cultural work. They share stories about the warmth and love they find in working together. They are changing the idea of care from something people are often ashamed to need to something that everyone deserves.

Disability justice enters into their politics and policies in that they are building alliances, believing that both overlapping communities can win.

To learn more about Hand in Hand’s work:

<https://domesticemployers.org>

<https://domesticemployers.org/our-work/disability-justice/>

<https://www.carecantwait.org/communities>

Words to Know

Domestic Workers: People who do housework for others like cleaning, cooking, or caring for children.

Alliances: Partnerships or friendships between people or groups.

Sub-minimum Wage: A wage that’s lower than the minimum amount set by the law.

Story 4: Nikkita Oliver’s Election Run

Nikkita Oliver is a lawyer and an activist. They are Black, queer, and nonbinary. In 2021, they ran for a seat in Seattle’s city council.

Their campaign was called “Nikkita4Nine.” It had nine main ideas. One idea was about helping disabled people during disasters. These could be wildfires, floods, or heavy snow.

They also wanted to plan the city better. Another idea was about stopping harmful practices. The harmful practices included clearing out homeless camps. Or arresting people for consensual sex or drug use that doesn’t harm others. They also wanted to stop using the King County Jail.

They made a special place for people to share ideas. It's called a "Disability Justice Community Listening post." They said, "We want to make policies with the people who are affected. We want a city that works for everyone. Being fair to disabled people and making things easy to use is about more than just following the law."

Words to Know

Nonbinary: Not identifying strictly as male or female.

Abolitionist: Someone who wants to end a system or practice.

Participatory Policy: A way of making rules where people can share their ideas and views.

Disability Justice: The belief that disabled people should have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else.

Universal Design: The idea of making things easy for everyone, including disabled people, to use.

Consensual Sex: Sexual activity where all people involved agree to it.

City Council: A group of people elected by the citizens of a city to make decisions and laws for that city.



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**Do you have questions about the Disability Justice Audit Tool?
Or do you want to tell us how you used it?**

Email us at djaudittool@northwesthealth.org.