



Critical Viewpoints for Disabled Survivors:

Addressing Barriers
and Accessibility
On and Off Campus

July 27, 2023
10-11:30 am PDT

VALORUS 
Advancing Equity. Ending Sexual Violence.®

Meet Your Presenter



Toria Jones

Sexual Misconduct Support
Services Manager,

University of Houston (she/her)



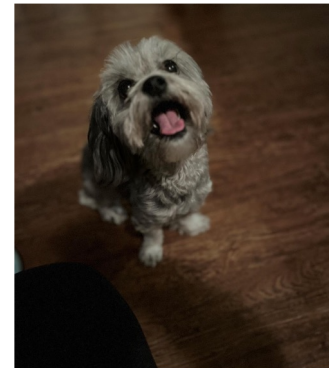
Who Am I?

Daughter, Sister, Friend,
Aunt, Advocate, One with all
the jokes.

Black Woman with a Disability

Dog mom

Fun Fact: I do improv on the
side



OBJECTIVES

PROVIDE HISTORICAL CONTEXT THAT AFFECTS OUR PERCEPTIONS OF THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY.

EXAMINE BARRIERS TO REPORTING/ACCESSING SERVICES FOR BOTH ON-CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY. DEVELOP STRATEGIES FOR ADVOCATES TO EXPAND SERVICES AND PROGRAMS FOR DISABLED POPULATIONS.

DEFINE DISABILITY AND DISTINGUISH THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PEOPLE FIRST-LANGUAGE VERSUS IDENTITY FIRST LANGUAGE.



Content Warning:

I encourage everyone to please
take care of yourself. 



WHAT IS DISABILITY?

A disability is any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions).

(Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023)



Categories of Disabilities

- Physical
- Cognitive or Intellectual
- Sensory
- Mental

It is important to note, not all disabilities are visible (physical) and those experiences are equally valid.



Please use the text chat feature to answer the following question.

Can you list some disabilities you've heard of?



Photo Credit: Disabled and Here

Obsessive Compulsive
Disorder

Traumatic Brain Injury

Paralysis

Arthritis

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Dwarfism

Down Syndrome

Dyslexia

Blindness or Low Vision

Anxiety

Cerebral Palsy

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Spinal Cord Injury

Depression

Spina Bifida

Epilepsy

Autism Spectrum Disorders

Dementia

Hearing Loss or Deafness

Tourette Syndrome

Muscular Dystrophy

Multiple Sclerosis



Disability is all around us...

**27% of adults
in the US
have some
type of
disability.**

(CDC, 2023)

Disability is not always something a person is born with. A disability can occur at any point in someone's life.

- An accident
- Due to an illness
- Aging
- As a result of violence

Please use the polling feature to answer the following question.

Do you use people first language or identity first language?

Identity
First
Language

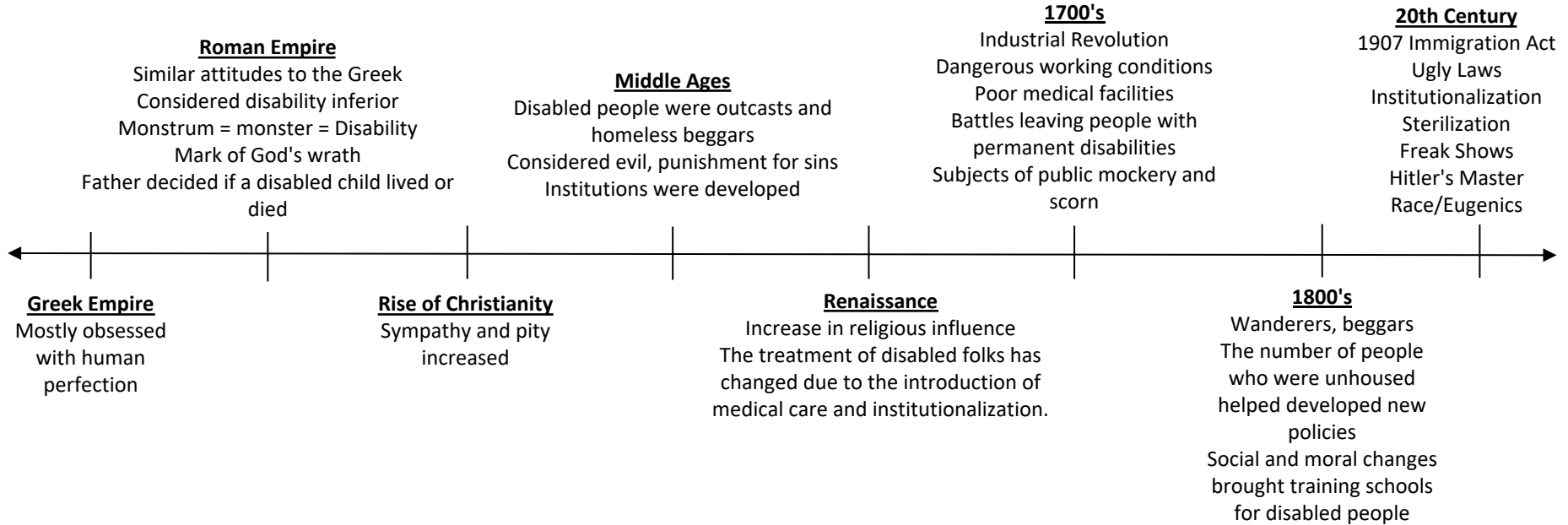
versus

People
First
Language

DISABILITY IS NOT A BAD WORD!



DISABILITY HISTORY



Source - <https://sailhelps.org/a-brief-timeline-of-the-history-of-disabilities-the-shameful-treatment-of-people-with-disabilities/>



Forced Sterilization in America

A process or act that renders an individual incapable of sexual reproduction. (Human Rights Watch, 2011)

Eugenics is at play.

Women with disabilities are vulnerable to forced sterilization under the guise of medical care or the consent of caregivers/parents/guardians.

Not only is this an example of erasing disability but also removing autonomy from the individual.

National Women's Law Center



*“We have seen more than once that the public welfare may call upon the best citizens for their lives. It would be strange if it could not call upon those who already sap the strength of the State for these lesser sacrifices, often not felt to be such by those concerned, in order to **prevent our being swamped with incompetence.** It is better for all the world if, instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime or to let them starve for **their imbecility,** society can **prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind.**”*



WHAT IS ABLEISM?

A system that places value on people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normality, intelligence, excellence, desirability, and productivity. These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in anti-Blackness, eugenics, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism.

This form of systemic oppression leads to people and society determining who is valuable and worthy based on a person's language, appearance, religion, and/or their ability to satisfactorily [re]produce, excel and "behave".

You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism.

-Talila A. Lewis



Ableist Language

It's important to be aware that ableism can often be hidden in our society, and one of the ways it can sneak into our systems is through the language we use. It's crucial that we pay attention to the words we choose to ensure that we're not perpetuating harmful attitudes or stereotypes towards individuals with disabilities.

Instead of this...	Use this...
Handicap or handicapped, special needs, differently abled	Disabled or disability, person with a disability
Suffers from	Living with
Confined to a wheelchair	Uses a wheelchair, wheelchair user
Crazy, psycho, dumb, "they are so bipolar"	Wild, frustrating, annoying, difficult.
Fall on deaf ears, turn a blind eye, blind leading the blind.	"You didn't hear me", Overlooked, ignored, missed, lost
Lame	Bad, unpleasant, awful, boring.
Normal, Healthy	Able-Bodied, Nondisabled
Dwarf	Person with Dwarfism, Little Person
Tone Deaf	Out of touch
"OMG, I am so OCD"	Meticulous



Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

A federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday activities. The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability just as other civil rights laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act states, “No otherwise qualified person with a disability in the United States...shall, solely by reason of...disability, be denied the benefits of, be excluded from participating in, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act



Myths Surrounding Disabilities

Disabled people do not have sexual relationships

Folks with hearing disabilities can read lips

People in wheelchairs are confined to that chair

Disabled people are brave and inspirational

Disabled people are suffering and unhappy

"But you don't look sick"

"You just gotta push past your disability"

Disabled people are helpless and cannot take of themselves

People with mental illnesses are violent and unpredictable

"You are not disabled, you are differently abled"



Please use the text chat feature to answer the following question.

CHAT QUESTION

What are some additional myths you've heard surrounding people with disabilities?

How do these myths and stereotypes affect disabled folks when it comes to violence?



What is Sexual Violence?

Someone who forces or manipulates another person into unwanted sexual activity without their consent. (NSVRC)

Sources – VAWNET, NLM

Trans and nonbinary disabled people are at greater risk.

People with disabilities are 3x more likely than non-disabled people to experience serious violent crimes such as rape and sexual assault.

An estimated 2 in 5 female victims of rape had a disability at the time of their rape.

Disabled women of color are at increased risk due to intersectional systems of oppression and violence.



Disabled Students on Campus

19% of undergrads and 12% of graduate students report having disabilities which is an increase of more than 350% since 1999.

31.6% of female undergrads with a disability were victims of sexual assault compared to non-disabled female undergrads.

Students without disabilities experienced nonconsensual sexual contact at a rate of approximately 9.4% whereas students with disabilities were at 17%.

- Disabled students are often socially isolated due to stigma and lack of inclusion which leaves them vulnerable to abuse.
- The same stereotypes and beliefs applied to disabled people in the community is also applied to disabled students on campus.
- There are major gaps in reporting sexual violence on campus.

Source: National Council on Disability



Barriers to Reporting

- Isolation
- Not being taken seriously
- Fear of not being believed
- Lack of Accessibility
- Lack of Awareness
- Lack of education on sexuality
- Limited communication
- Fear of Institutionalization
- Depends on their abuser

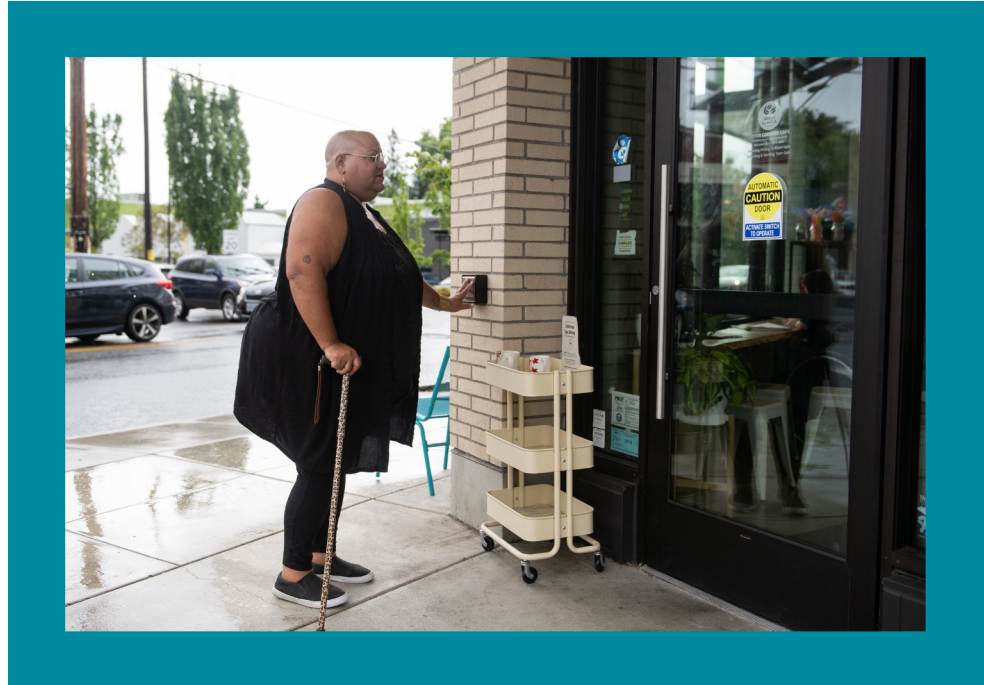


Photo Credit: Disabled and Here

Questions to Consider

- Who are you serving in our agency/department?
- Who is missing?
- Do you feel equipped to serve disabled survivors?
- Are you aware of reporting laws involving people with disabilities?
- Is there disability representation in your programming/marketing?
- Are disabled voices present?
- Is your space accessible? Access to your building?
- Is disability included in data collection?



What Can I Do to Help?

- Check your own biases.
- Don't assume, just ask.
- Connect with your local disability service providers.
- Connect with your campus's accessibility centers (universities and community colleges).
- Connect with disability student organizations.
- Hire disabled people.
- Prioritize accessibility.

Photo Credit: Disabled and Here



What Can I Do to Help?

- Train your staff and faculty on serving disabled survivors.
- When there's an interpreter present, make sure you are speaking directly to the survivor.
- If a caregiver is present, take notice if they are speaking for survivor.
- Uplift disabled voices.
- Include disability representation in your educational programming.
- Continue to learn.

Photo Credit: Disabled and Here



Additional Resources



- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - <https://www.ada.gov/>
- The Arc - <https://thearc.org/>
- National Council on Disability - <https://ncd.gov/resources>
- National Black Disability Coalition - <https://www.blackdisability.org/>
- Transgender Law Center Disability Project - <https://transgenderlawcenter.org/programs/disability-project/>
- Chronically Academic - <https://chronicallyacademic.org/>
- Association on Higher Education and Disability - <https://www.ahead.org/home>
- National Association of the Deaf - <https://www.nad.org/>
- Disability Visibility Project - <https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/>



ANY QUESTIONS?
COMMENTS?



Thank you!

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Women and Gender Resource Center
Division of Student Affairs

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