

Class 4

Disability Justice: A framework for activism

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2 activist frameworks

Disability rights

What: Laws to prevent discrimination.
Relies on institutions and government to enact/follow laws

Qualities:

- Self-representation
- Self-determination
- Integration
- Independent living
- Single-issue identity

Disability Justice

What: Intersectional movement for collective liberation. Relies on activists to speak to lived experience

Qualities:

- Unity
- Less hierarchical
- Egalitarian
- Collective determination
- Intersectional

Disability rights

Focus: Work within current systems to provide employment, educational, housing and other services for people with disabilities

Who: Historically, a mostly white-led movement for people with a defined disability

Idea advanced: An individual with a disability is a human first and disability is a natural part of humanity.

Disability justice

Focus: Redesign systems to root out ableism, racism, homophobia, transmisogyny, etc, to ensure people with intersectional identities are welcomed and to dismantle systems of exploitation

Who: Centers on disabled people of color, women, people who identify as LGBTQ+, immigrants and other historically excluded groups

Idea advanced: Able-bodied supremacy formed in relation to other systems of domination and exploitation.

Principles of disability justice

1. Intersectionality
2. Leadership of most impacted
3. Anti-capitalist politics: worth is not dependent on ability to produce
4. Cross-movement solidarity
5. Recognizing wholeness: disabled people are not “less than” because of their disability
6. Sustainability: movement depends on the community
7. Commitment to cross-disability solidarity
8. Interdependence: support and community are important
9. Collective access: needs are welcomed, acknowledged, respected
10. Collective liberation: no one left behind

(Sins Invalid, 2015)

Disability justice

A disability justice framework understands that:

- All bodies are unique and essential.
- All bodies have strengths and needs that must be met.
- We are powerful, not despite the complexities of our bodies, but because of them.
- All bodies are confined by ability, race, gender, sexuality, class, nation state, religion, and more, and we cannot separate them.

<https://www.sinsinvalid.org/news-1/2020/6/16/what-is-disability-justice>

Resources

Legal understanding of disability rights vs disability justice

- <https://www.law.uw.edu/news-events/news/2024/access-uw-podcast>

Learn more about the Disability Rights Movement:

- [Our Fight for Disability Rights – And Why We’re Not Done Yet](#)
- [Disability Rights History Resources](#)

Learn more about the Disability Justice Movement:

- [Sins Invalid](#)
- [What is Disability Justice?](#)
- [10 Principles of Disability Justice](#)
- [My Body Doesn’t Oppress Me, Society Does](#)
- [Until Justice Just Is](#)

Practice!

We are going to practice looking at systems through both a disability rights framework and a disability justice framework

- What do we see/what is happening to people.
- How do we respond/identify solutions using the disability rights framework?
- How do we respond/identify solutions using the disability justice framework?



Systems:

- Education
- Housing
- Healthcare

Education

What do we see/what is happening to people?

How might we respond/identify solutions using the disability rights framework?

- **Focus:** Work within current systems to prevent discrimination of students with disabilities



How might we respond/identify solutions using the disability rights framework?

- **Focus:** Redesign systems to root out ableism, racism, homophobia, transmisogyny, etc, to ensure people with intersectional identities are welcomed and to dismantle systems of exploitation

Housing

What do we see/what is happening to people?

How might we respond/identify solutions using the disability rights framework?

- **Focus:** Work within current systems to prevent discrimination of students with disabilities



How might we respond/identify solutions using the disability rights framework?

- **Focus:** Redesign systems to root out ableism, racism, homophobia, transmisogyny, etc, to ensure people with intersectional identities are welcomed and to dismantle systems of exploitation

Health care

What do we see/what is happening to people?

How might we respond/identify solutions using the disability rights framework?

- **Focus:** Work within current systems to prevent discrimination of students with disabilities



How might we respond/identify solutions using the disability rights framework?

Focus: Redesign systems to root out ableism, racism, homophobia, transmisogyny, etc, to ensure people with intersectional identities are welcomed and to dismantle systems of exploitation