

# DISABILITY JUSTICE: A PRIMER

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# Introduction and Framing

- High Level Overview
- Historical and Continuous Context
- Do not assume homogeneity of this information
- Small part of your journey and work
- Prioritize lifelong learning and use it!



# Intentions for Takeaway



# Disability Rights | Disability Justice



## Disability Rights

- Established civil rights for people with disabilities.
- Equality model – Symptoms but not root causes
- Lacks intersectional analysis
- Legal/ Rights based framework

# SKIN, TOOTH, AND BONE

The Basis of Movement is Our People



A Disability Justice Primer  
by Sins Invalid | Second Edition

# DISABILITY RIGHTS | DISABILITY JUSTICE

## Disability Justice

- Liberatory Framework based on dismantling systems
- Intentionally fluid and dynamic
- Based on 10 Principles for transformative change
- Wisdom vs. Knowledge

# DISABILITY JUSTICE PRINCIPLES

1. Intersectionality
2. Leadership of those most impacted
3. Anti-capitalist Politic
4. Commitment to Cross Movement Organizing
5. Recognizing Wholeness
6. Sustainability
7. Commitment to cross-disability solidarity
8. Interdependence
9. Collective Access
10. Collective Liberation

DISABILITY <sup>is</sup> an INTERSECTION



Image from DissentClothing

# Disability Rights vs Justice

## Disability Rights

Disability Rights are the individual legal rights to equal access and “reasonable” accommodation based on the ADA and other supporting laws

- Policy change, but who has access?
- Litigation, but who has resources?
- ADA applications, but does it cover equity issues like these?

## Disability Justice

Disability justice is a framework that seeks liberation beyond paternalistic, equality-based systems. The right to control and autonomy of our bodyminds, lives, sexualities, gender, work and intersectionalities

- Leadership of Most Impacted
- Sustainable, Intersectional, and Interdependent
- Collective Access and Liberation

# What is Intersectional Erasure/ Racialized Ableism

- ▶ **Ableism:** Bias, oppression, marginalization, etc. regarding lived or perceived impairment or disability
- ▶ **Racialized Ableism:** Compounded harm, violence, bias at intersection of racism and ableism
  - ▶ Gender, size, color/tone, and class often play a part as well
- ▶ **Intersectional Erasure:** Apathy or lack of regard for the whole person, and hyperfocus on select identities within an intersection
  - ▶ Often a result of confirmation and/or anchor bias





# BOTH/ AND, NOT EITHER/OR

Disability is not either visible or invisible. Some people can have both visible and invisible disabilities!



# MASKING INVISIBLE DISABILITIES

Most people with invisible disabilities do not disclose at work out of fear of bias!

## Data:

- 30% of the professional workforce fits federal definition of having a disability
- 39% of employees have disclosed to their manager
- 24% have disclosed to their teams
- 21% have disclosed to HR
- 62% reported an invisible disability

**Why do you think people tend to hide their disability at work?**

*Source: Center for Talent Innovation, "Disabilities and Inclusion Study," via Harvard Business Review*



# MASKING INVISIBLE DISABILITIES

## Why Do People Often Report Hiding Invisible Disabilities

- Social Conformity/ Construction
- Teasing or Harassment
- Change or loss of rapport with peers and supervisors
- Past trauma/ negative experience
- Low energy/ patience/ hope in process
- Bias towards work performance
- Stalled or disrupted career

**Thinking of intersectionality, how could other identities increase or intensify the likelihood of these?**

*Source: Center for Talent Innovation, "Disabilities and Inclusion Study," via Harvard Business Review*



# WHAT IS WEATHERING?



- Term borrowed from geology
- Effect of long-term anger or anxiety response
- Leads to distraction and disruption of development
- Can lead to micro-traumas (Long-term effects)

# Transformative Practice

## Transformative Practice Guiding Principles

- What happened as understood through themes across the narratives?
- Who is hurt and what have they said are their needs?
- Who is accountable for resolution and repair?
- Who is missing from this conversation, and how do we incorporate their voice and needs?
- What social, political, cultural, institutional, historical, etc. pieces have contributed or led to this?
- What are some situations that are structurally similar, and what helped in those situations that can be applied to this?
- What are strategies for determining root causes, and taking next steps for resolution and repair?



# DJ vs WSC: The Struggle is Real!

## Disability Justice

1. **Intersectionality**
2. **Leadership of those most impacted**
3. **Anti-capitalist Politic**
4. **Commitment to Cross Movement Organizing**
5. **Recognizing Wholeness**
6. **Sustainability**
  1. **Commitment to cross-disability solidarity**
8. **Interdependence**
9. **Collective Access**
10. **Collective Liberation**

## White Supremacy Culture

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. <b>Perfectionism</b>                   | 10. <b>Individualism</b>                |
| 2. <b>Sense of Urgency</b>                | 11. <b>Progress is bigger/<br/>more</b> |
| 3. <b>Defensiveness</b>                   |   |
| 4. <b>Quantity over Quality</b>           | 12. <b>Objectivity</b>                  |
| 5. <b>Worship of the<br/>Written Word</b> | 13. <b>Right to Comfort</b>             |
| 6. <b>Paternalism</b>                     |   |
| 7. <b>Either/Or Thinking</b>              |   |
| 8. <b>Power Hoarding</b>                  |   |
| 9. <b>Fear of Open Conflict</b>           |   |

# WHAT TO DO: ORGANIZATIONS/ HR

- **Make a commitment across organization and among all members of community:** Infuse disability equity across all departments and at all levels
- **Continuing Education:** Both ensure staff have access to opportunities to learn more about disability and ensure all educational opportunities are accessible for disabled employees
- **Train and Advance Disabled People:** Do not only focus on hiring disabled people, implement equity in advancement and leadership
- **Strive toward Universal Design:** Beyond accessibility, seek to design a workplace that is accessible in its nature





# WHAT TO DO: MANAGERS

- **Be proactive:** Ask about accommodations on intake forms and/or provide a list of possible accommodations with accessible ways to receive without bias or threat
- **Trust people:** If someone comes forward, believe them, thank them, and listen. It is difficult to disclose. Not everyone is trying to “get over” on the system
- **Make time and space:** Some people will want, or need, to make their invisible struggles visible. Create time and a safe space for that
- **Check Ins:** Put regular and “shadow” meetings on the calendar. The “shadow” are times where meetings can alternatively happen to accommodate chronic disabilities

*Source: Liz Allen, Tech Invisibility Project, “Asking for Accommodations with an Invisible Disability”*



# WHAT TO DO: DISABLED EMPLOYEE/ ALLIES

- **Look for signals of support:** Organizations will show that they take inclusion and equity seriously upfront
- **Get to know your manager:** Look for inclusive behaviors and develop a rapport for ongoing discussion
- **Find comrades in solidarity:** Find a peer you can trust or see if the organization can start a solidarity program to help with witnessing and strategizing
- **Join or start an ERG:** If an allyship program is not possible, an ERG for disabled folks, (and caregivers,) can help create a empathetic community, and can work together for change

Source: HBR, "Why People Hide Their Disabilities at Work"



Source: Disabled and Here

# Questions and Debrief

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