Building a World that Includes Disability

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Summary

- Non-medical definitions of *disability*
- Cultural contributions made by people with disabilities
- *Disability’s* evolution during civil rights movement
- Taking *disability* further: the potential of DEI initiatives
Disability is everywhere, once you know how to find it.
What is disability?
The human variations we think of as disabilities are part of the human condition that occur in every life and family and are a theme in all art and culture.

Funerary statue of Dwarf Seneb and his family, from Giza, c. 2456-2323 BCE
The lived experiences of disability give people and communities opportunities for expression, creativity, resourcefulness, relationships, and flourishing.
Disability is a set stories we receive and remake about human variations that scientific medicine considers as disability, disease, illness, and body-mind differences.

“Shayla” from Doug Auld’s series State of Grace: Portraits of Burn Survivors (2005)

Vincent van Gogh, Self Portrait with Bandaged Ear (1889)
Where do we find disability?
We find disability in:

- literature
- performance
- art
- design
Disability crosses all genre, media, time periods, aesthetic themes, and cultures.
What does finding disability do?
Finding disability is an opportunity to explore, redefine, and make new stories about what it means to be human.
Finding disability helps us understand how communities make and unmake the human variations we think of as disabilities.
literature and performing arts
Albert Greiner as Oedipus in 1896
Portrait of John Milton (circa 17th century)

Cover of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667)
Beethoven’s original manuscript from Piano Sonata in E Major, Op. 109, marked up to the point it is almost unreadable (1820)

Portrait of Ludwig van Beethoven by Joseph Karl Stieler (circa 1820)
Cover of Harriet Jacobs' book
*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861)

Cover of Frederick Douglass’
*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave.* (1845)
performance
“Blind Tom” Wiggins  
1849-1908

Ray Charles  
1930-2004

Stevie Wonder  
born 1950
Sidney Poitier as Porgy, “The Goat Cart Man,” in 1959 film, Porgy and Bess

Audra McDonald and Norm Lewis in The Gershwins’ Porgy and Bess, ART, 2011
Peter Dinklage as Tyrion Lannister in HBO’s “Game of Thrones” (above) and on Esquire (left)
Leroy F. Moore Jr., poet, creator of the Krip Hop movement, and co-founder of the disability performance art collective Sins Invalid
Alice Sheppard and Laurel Lawson in Kinetic Light performance (2017)
art & sculpture
Michelangelo's *Pietà* in St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican
Sam Jinks
Still Life (Pieta) 2007
John Singer Sargent, *Gassed* (1918)
Claude Monet, *Water Lilies* (1914-26)
Frida Kahlo, self-portraits of disabled artist
Judith Scott (1943-2005)
Photograph by Leon Borensztein
Christine Sun Kim, sound art (2012)
66 Degrees (Self Portrait) by Riva Lehrer, 2019
https://www.rivalehrerart.com/self-portraits
accessible/inclusive design
The Alternative Limb Project, Kiera Roche, chairperson for LimbPower, pictured.
MIT engineer Hugh Herr
Kathy D Woods, pioneer of disability fashion, with her apparel company logo.
Ear Chair from Prooff
tactile watch for blind people
wheeled mobility
Helical ramp at the Ed Roberts Campus, Berkeley, CA
Access is everywhere, once you know how to look for it.
How did we get from segregation to inclusion?
the path from patient to citizen
human and civil rights
1948-present
Eleanor Roosevelt holding the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (1948)
Helen Keller holding a braille volume (1956)
Disability rights advocates protest for accessibility
Joseph P. Shapiro, No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement (1993)
image of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and 2009
Cover of The Atlantic’s December 2020 issue titled “The Last Children of Down Syndrome” (2020)
Disabled people are a politically created group of qualified individuals protected against discrimination by civil rights legislation and accorded the right to request reasonable accommodations.
What can disability inclusion do?
accessible design and disability cultural consciousness create inclusion by changing who we share our world with
What can we do to increase disability inclusion?
know disability history, culture, and justice
know disability technologies and use accommodations
practice disability inclusion in the workforce, workplace, and marketplace
find and support inclusive communities

Members of a Deaf church congregation using American Sign Language
Joshua Miele, board member of the San Francisco Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired and creator of YouDescribe
• change attitudes
• increase access
• build community
• cultivate leadership

Disability Rights Advocate, Haben Girma, with President Barak Obama in 2015
thank you