



ALBUM [HOW ACTIVISTS CREATE CHANGE](#)

Album Description

Wendy Harris teaches at Metro Deaf School in St. Paul, Minnesota. She has been a classroom teacher for Deaf students of all ages since 2003 and currently splits her teaching duties between high school social studies and teaching braille and other skills to the school's DeafBlind students ages 2-21.

This school year, many teachers are analyzing our classrooms, curriculum, and teaching methods in light of the uprisings of last summer. In my Minnesota classroom, I am doing the same thing. I am also passionate about using primary sources in my classroom and about helping my students, who have a wide range of identities and academic skills, see themselves as changemakers in their communities.

As part of an Emerging America course, I created a civics lesson with a focus on intersectionality. This lesson is designed to help students analyze tactics used by activists to make change. In doing so, I chose the case study of actions taken in 1977 by activists with disabilities who occupied a federal building in San Francisco, pressuring the government to enact section 504 of the 1973 rehabilitation law prohibiting any federally-funded activity or program from discriminating against people with disabilities. Disability history is rarely included in US civics and history courses. I recently reviewed the social studies standards in all 50 states, Washington, DC, 5 US territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), as well as the C3 standards. I found that the word disability/disabled/disabilities appeared in history or civics standards just 27 times (in 11 states and Washington, DC), and the Americans with Disabilities Act is included solely as an example within a standard in 3 other states and the DoDEA. Disability history does not appear in California standards themselves, but the accompanying framework includes multiple ways to include disability history. However, when researching the 1977 protests, I found a common focus on White leaders. I decided to include the ways the Black Panthers worked with the San Francisco activists to analyze the intersectionality of the activists and interrelated systems of oppression.

Black History Month, like all days/weeks/months focused on a single identity can have a mixed impact. The typical curriculum in US schools still is focused on White history, so having a spotlight on Black history can be important in the effort to better reflect the reality of the country's history. However, this spotlight too often focuses on superficial biographies of a few people who have been put on a pedestal. For instance, Black history month is too often about Martin Luther King, Jr. (who had a dream—but we don't analyze that [entire speech](#) or the entirety of his life's work) and Rosa Parks (as a tired seamstress who didn't feel like getting up, rather than as a woman who [led a life of decades of activism](#)). By focusing on one particular event and person, without context, we deny students the opportunity to see how many people were involved in movements to make change and oversimplify what they were working for.

We also deny intersectionality. We all have multiple identities that impact how we experience the world. Our students are Black and also of various genders, sexual orientations, cultural backgrounds, religions, abilities, etc. Our students with disabilities are also of various races, genders, sexual orientations, cultural backgrounds, religions, etc. Teaching at the intersection of these identities helps students be recognized as full and complex humans and also helps them understand themselves as full members of society.

For example, when we teach about disability history with a White focus or about Black history with an able-bodied focus, we erase many people who were and are actively involved in making change. Telling the story of the 1977 actions to get the government to enforce section 504 of the 1973 rehabilitation law can be enhanced by including the Black Panthers and their work in support of these actions. Teaching about Black activism can also be enhanced by teaching about the important role Black organizers have played in efforts to overcome exclusion and gain rights for all, with concerns that go far beyond race.

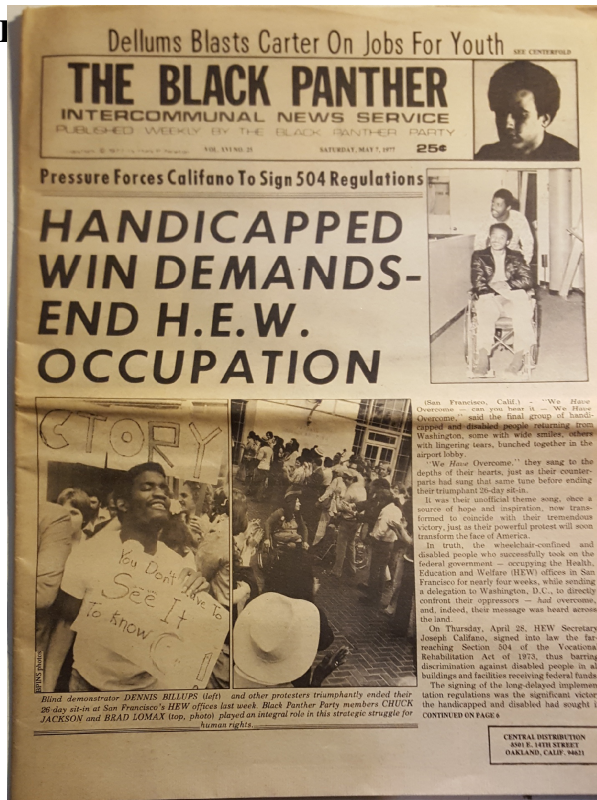


HOW DISABILITY ACTIVISTS CREATED CHANGE

Teaching Notes:

Using primary and secondary sources about protests by members of the Disability Rights Movement, students identify strategic actions taken by activists and evaluate them as to the level of personal risk or investment needed to participate. They consider them in relation to actions by African- American civil rights activists of that time and earlier, and of social justice activists in their own generation.

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Teaching Notes:

This article summarizes points of the San Francisco protest and also shows the connection between different groups struggling for civil rights. The support by the Black Panther Party is discussed more in Britta Shoot, 2017. “The 1977 Disability Rights Protest That Broke Records and Changed Laws” <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/504-sit-in-san-francisco-1977-disability-rights-advocacy>.

Reference Link: http://www.disabilityhistory.org/BlackPantherParty_504.html

Title: Handicapped Win Demands -- End H.E.W. Occupation
 Publisher: The Black Panther Intercommunal News Service
 Date: May 7, 1977

BLACK PANTHER PARTY MEMBER BRADLEY LOMAX AND ORGANIZER JUDY HEUMANN



Reference Link: <https://longmoreinstitute.sfsu.edu/patient-no-more/slideshow-mural>

Title: Black Panther Party member Bradley Lomax and organizer Judy Heumann at the rally in Lafayette park in Washington.

Photographer: HolLynn D'Lil

Date: 1977

Published: Patient No More exhibit, Slideshow: Mural (image 23 of 27). Paul K. Longmore Institute on Disability, San Francisco State University.

Link: <https://longmoreinstitute.sfsu.edu/patient-no-more/slideshow-mural>,



Teaching Notes:

Annotation: This collection of 25 artifacts from activism spans several decades and includes some examples from the 1977 protests. The collection shows a variety of items used in activism and leads to a discussion of methods.

Reference Link: <https://everybody.si.edu/citizens/activism>

Title: Activism [exhibit]

Publisher: Curated by the Smithsonian National Museum of American History

Date range: 1960s-2002

Link: <https://everybody.si.edu/citizens/activism>



Teaching Notes:

Annotation: This is one of the iconic images of the Capitol Crawl (in 1990 for the ADA—Americans with Disabilities Act). It shows a type of protest— which can lead to a discussion of the strategic decisions of *what, where, and how* to protest. It also shows that the protests continued past 1977

Reference Link: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/0a/4c/e5/0a4ce52d3b10ed64b83b0e0752fe4706.jpg>

Title: ADAPT protesters at the Capitol Crawl

Photographer: Tom Olin

Date: 1990

Link: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/0a/4c/e5/0a4ce52d3b10ed64b83b0e0752fe4706.jpg>

JUDITH HEUMANN - DEFYING OBSTACLES IN BEING HEUMANN AND CRIP CAMP | THE



Teaching Notes:

Annotation: This is a recent interview with Judy Heumann who was a leader in the 1977 protests. She mentions some of the long-term impacts of the protests.

Reference Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybcQbpSVo3c>

Title: Judith Heumann - Defying Obstacles in "Being Heumann" and "Crip Camp" | The Daily Show

Creators: Trevor Noah and Judith Heumann

Date: March 10, 2020



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The 25 Day Siege That Brought Us 504

Ervin, Michael. 1986.

On April 5, 1977, thousands of disabled people in cities all over America converged on their implementation of regulations that would add significant impact to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The regulations had been written three and one half years earlier. The author was involved in the actions the author deems to be the most significant event in the history of the disability rights movement. www.independentliving.org/docs4/ervin1986.html

(Appeared in MAINSTREAM 18 April, 1986)

It happened nine years ago this month. On April 5, 1977, thousands of disabled folks in cities all over America converged on their implementation of regulations that would add significant impact to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. They held mass rallies outside. They sat in. The issue was the implementation of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The regulations had been written three and one half years earlier. The author was involved in the actions the author deems to be the most significant event in the history of the disability rights movement. HEW Secretary, which was then the lead agency in 504 enforcement. Candidate Jimmy Carter. But nearly two months into his term. still nothing had been done.

Teaching Notes:

Annotation: This is an interview 9 years later with some of the 1977 protest leaders (Kitty Cone, Judy Heumann, Frank Bowe) and talks about motivation, action, and results.

Reference Link: <https://www.independentliving.org/docs4/ervin1986.html>

Title: The 25 Day Siege That Brought Us 504

Author: Michael Ervin

Date: 1986

Link: <https://www.independentliving.org/docs4/ervin1986.html>

PATIENT NO MORE (MULTIMEDIA EXHIBIT) SLIDESHOW DNO

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

AUDIO DESCRIPTION TRACK

PLAN YOUR VISIT

THE TRAVELING EXHIBIT

VIRTUAL TOUR

ACCESS!

RESOURCES

Slideshow: Mural



Photograph by Anthony Tusler

Rally/ Demonstration on April 5th outside Federal Building.

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Reference Link: <https://longmoreinstitute.sfsu.edu/patient-no-more/slideshow-mural>

DISABLED IN SAN FRANCISCO VOW TO CONTINUE SIT-IN.PNG



Teaching Notes:

Annotation: This mainstream media source also summarizes the points of the San Francisco protest, and can be compared with the Black Panther article from 2 weeks later.

Reference Link: <https://www.nytimes.com/1977/04/17/archives/disabled-in-san-francisco-vow-to-continue-sitin.html>

Title: *Disabled in San Francisco Vow to Continue Sit-In*

Publisher: New York Times

Date: April 17, 1977

Short History of the 504 Sit in

by Kitty Cone



In 1973 the first federal civil rights protection for people with disabilities, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, was put into law. What section 504 says is “no otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States shall, on the basis of his handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” Essentially it said no program receiving federal funds could discriminate against a person with a disability.

Section 504 was based on the language of previous laws that protected women and minorities. It

recognized that our society has historically treated people with disabilities as second-class citizens based on

Teaching Notes:

Secondary sources

Kitty Cone, 1993 “Short History of the 504 Sit In”. This overview by one of the leaders gives context and background information about the protest. <https://dredf.org/504-sit-in-20th-anniversary/short-history-of-the-504-sit-in/>

March 12, 1990: Disability Rights Activists Make “Capitol Crawl” for the ADA. This Zinn Education “day in history” piece gives an overview and background for the Capitol Crawl event. <https://www.zinnedproject.org/news/tdih/capitol-crawl-for-ADA/>

Jess Zimmerman, 2013. “‘Capitol Crawl’ – Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990”. This overview of the Capitol Crawl also includes an interview with Jennifer Keelan, who participated as a child. <http://www.historybyzim.com/2013/09/capitol-crawl-americans-with-disabilities-act-of-1990/>

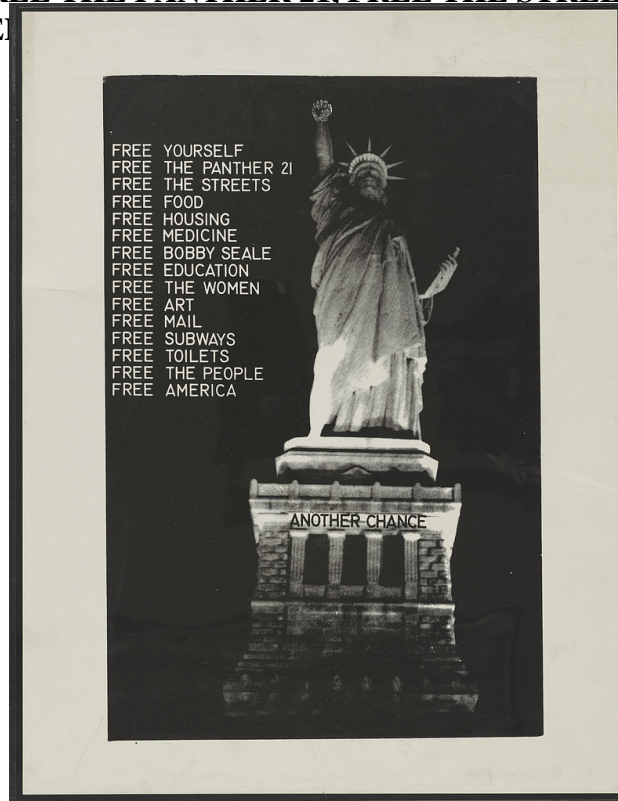
Britta Shoot, 2017. “The 1977 Disability Rights Protest That Broke Records and Changed Laws” This overview of the 1977 protests includes a number of images and also highlights the support by the Black Panther Party. <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/504-sit-in-san-francisco-1977-disability-rights-advocacy>



Andrew Grim, 2015. "Sitting-in for disability rights: The Section 504 protests of the 1970s". This overview accompanies the exhibit by the Smithsonian which I included in primary sources. <https://americanhistory.si.edu/blog/sitting-disability-rights-section-504-protests-1970s>

Reference Link: <http://www.emergingamerica.org/teaching-resources/how-disability-activists-created-change>

FREE YOURSELF, FREE THE PANTHER 21, FREE THE STREETS, FREE FOOD, FREE HOUSING, FREE MEDICINE, FREE BOBBY SEALE, FREE EDUCATION ...



Teaching Notes:

This poster is part of a supplemental set of primary sources to accompany the Extension activity in the lesson [How Disability Activists Created Change](#).

EXTENSION: BLACK PANTHER PARTY

Have students revisit the article from the Black Panther Intercommunal News Service and the article by Britta Shoot to find the actions the Black Panther Party took in support of the 504 movement.

Ask the students: From the comments and actions depicted in the articles, what do you think the motivation of the Black Panther Party was? What changes did they want to happen?

Next, have small groups analyze the three primary sources about the Black Panther Party, looking for both actions taken and problems these actions were meant to solve.

As a whole group, look for intersections. This could be between the issues the Disability Rights Movement and the Black Panther Party were working on in the 1970s or between the Black Panther Party and Black Lives Matter or another civil rights movement the class has studied.

Extension Resources

Title: Free yourself, free the Panther 21, free the streets, free food, free housing, free medicine, free Bobby Seale, free education ...



Creator: unknown

Date: between 1965 and 1980

Link: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2015649390/>

Annotation: This list of demands from the Black Panther Party is clear, easy to read, and can be compared to demands from other groups fighting for civil rights, particularly the Disability Rights movement.

Title: Elbert "Big Man" Howard oral history interview conducted by David P. Cline in Santa Rosa, California, 2016 June 30. [pages 24-25 of transcript, 1:09:00-1:13:00]

Creators: Elbert Howard and David Cline

Date: 2016

Link: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2016655436/>

Annotation: Briefly mentions some of the actions taken by the Black Panther Party in Oakland.

Title: Norma Mtume oral history interview conducted by David P. Cline in Los Angeles, California, 2016 June 27. [pages 16-19 of transcript, 0:30:34-0:34:20]

Creators: Norma Mtume and David Cline

Date: 2016

Link: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2016655429/>

Annotation: Describes survival programs of the Black Panther Party.

Reference Link: <http://www.loc.gov/item/2015649390/>

Created / Published: [between 1965 and 1980]

Subject Headings: - Black Panther Party

- Statue of Liberty (New York, N.Y.)

- Social justice--1960-1980

Genre: Posters--American--1960-1980

Prints--1960-1980

Notes: - Title from item.

- Gift; Gary Yanker; 1975-1983.

Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>

Digital Id: ds 00959 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ds.00959

yan 1a38168 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/yan.1a38168

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON HANDICAPPED, INDIVIDUAL [JACK F. SMITH IN



Teaching Notes:

Annotation: This photo with President Jimmy Carter was taken two weeks before the San Francisco Section 504 protest. It raises the question: "If there was a White House Conference, why did the protest have to happen?" It also shows another way of advocating for change.

Reference Link: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2017658348/>

Creator(s): Trikosko, Marion S., photographer

Date Created/Published: 1977 March 18.

Call Number: LC-U9-34146- 10/10A [P&P]

Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>

Notes: Title and date from log book. Contact sheet available for reference purposes: USN&WR COLL - Job no. 34146, frame 10/10A. Forms part of: U.S. News & World Report Magazine Photograph Collection.

The 1977 Disability Rights Protest That Broke Records and Changed Laws

The 504 Sit-In was the longest non-violent occupation of a federal building in United States history.

BY BRITTA SHOOT • NOVEMBER 9, 2017



A photograph taken by Hollynn D'Lil, one of the protesters, from inside the 504 Sit-In. HOLLYNN D'LIL

Teaching Notes:

This overview of the 1977 protests includes a number of images and also highlights the support by the Black Panther Party.

Reference Link: <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/504-sit-in-san-francisco-1977-disability-rights-advocacy>

Britta Shoot, 2017. "The 1977 Disability Rights Protest That Broke Records and Changed Laws"
<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/504-sit-in-san-francisco-1977-disability-rights-advocacy>



Teaching Notes:

You bring up some great points here. We do often gloss over a whole life story of someone like Dr. MLK Jr. or Rosa Parks in a way that gets in into the student's memory (and the public conciousness) without analyzing the full scope. It can also be argued that we stick to too few figure's themselves, to repeat over and over when so many other played integral parts in our country's history.

And I love your mention of people with disabilities being mostly written out of history, or at least the general lesson plan. Marginalized groups like those and others are finally getting their due. Great post!