

A Brief Historical Perspective on Disability

Ancient History

- Disabilities of all kinds have been a part of humankind since the dawn of time.
- While some societies welcomed and accepted for their citizen with disabilities, many did not.
- There is ample historical evidence that the Neanderthals “took care” of their members with disabilities well into advanced age.

Anthropological Truth



The invention of the flag.

More Modern History

- Until the early 1800's most people with disabilities lived with their families in the community
- BUT – some were left to a life of begging on the streets (cap-in-hand = handicapped)
- OR were actually euthanized.

UGLY LAWS

- From the Chicago Municipal Code:
- *“No person who is diseased, maimed, mutilated or in any way deformed so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object or improper person shall be allowed on the public ways or other public places in this city, nor shall expose himself to public view, under a penalty of not less than one dollar nor more than fifty dollars for each offense”*

The Move Toward Institutional “Care”

- Because of such widely-held attitudes, but also out of a sincere desire for more humane treatment, institutions were established as early as 1817.
- *"I proceed, Gentlemen, briefly to call your attention to the present state of Insane Persons confined within this Commonwealth, in cages, stalls, pens! Chained, naked, beaten with rods, and lashed into obedience."* Dorothea Dix

Institutions

- Work Farms
- Almshouses
- Poor Homes
- County Homes
- Insane Asylums
- Madhouses
- State Schools and Hospitals

Harrisburg State Hospital



But Over Time...

- By the 1960's Institutions had proliferated, and many degenerated into human warehouses at best.
- Calling Willowbrook a "*snake pit*" Sen Roger Kennedy found residents "*living in filth and dirt, their clothing in rags, in rooms less comfortable and cheerful than the cages in which we put animals in a zoo*"
- Led to the passage of CRIPA in 1980

The Situation Improves

- By the 1970's the movement towards deinstitutionalization began, and institutions began to close.
- Services and supports became available outside of institutional settings
- With the advent of Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS), people with even the most significant disabilities are able to live active, independent lives in the community

Like This!



Not just services... But Civil Rights!

- The Architectural Barriers Act – 1968
- The Rehabilitation Act – 1973
- IDEA – 1975
- Voting Access for the Elderly and Handicapped Act - 1984
- Air Carrier Access Act – 1986
- Fair Housing Act amendments – 1988
- The ADA – 1990 and 2008

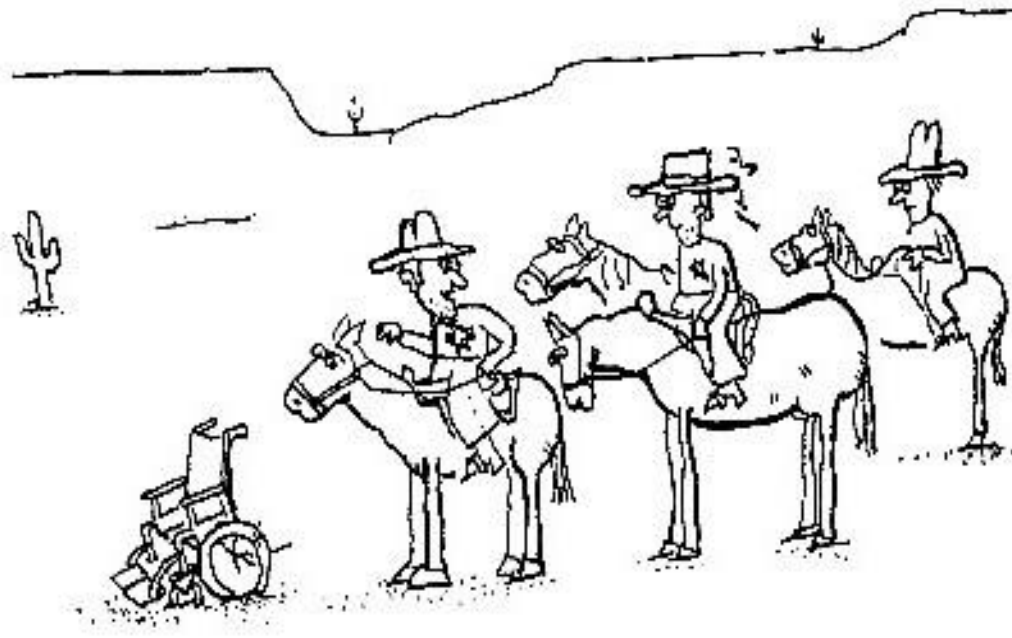
What is a Disability?

- *“Disability is the most equal opportunity minority: anyone can join at any time, and with time, most people will”* Ed Roberts
- Ed was a person with a significant disability, and was told by a vocational rehabilitation counselor that he would never be able to work. After college and a successful career in human services, Ed became the Director of the CA VRD where that counselor worked.

ADA Definition

- The term *disability* means: a) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; b) a record of such impairment; or c) being regarded as having such an impairment.
- Major life activities include seeing, hearing, breathing eating, sleeping walking, speaking, learning, working... and the operation of major bodily functions

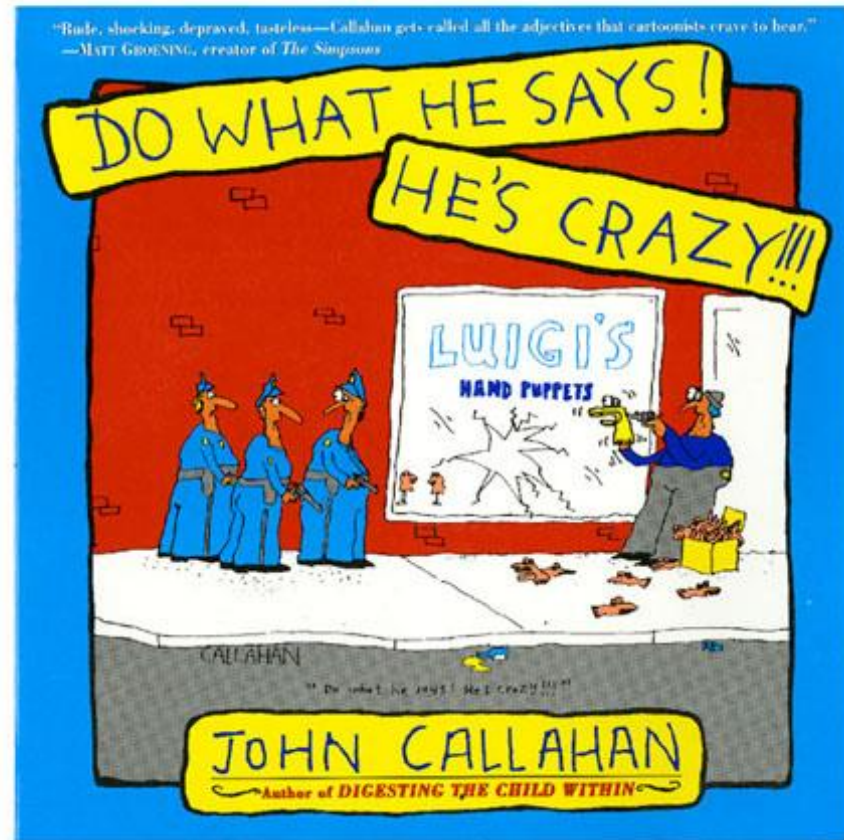
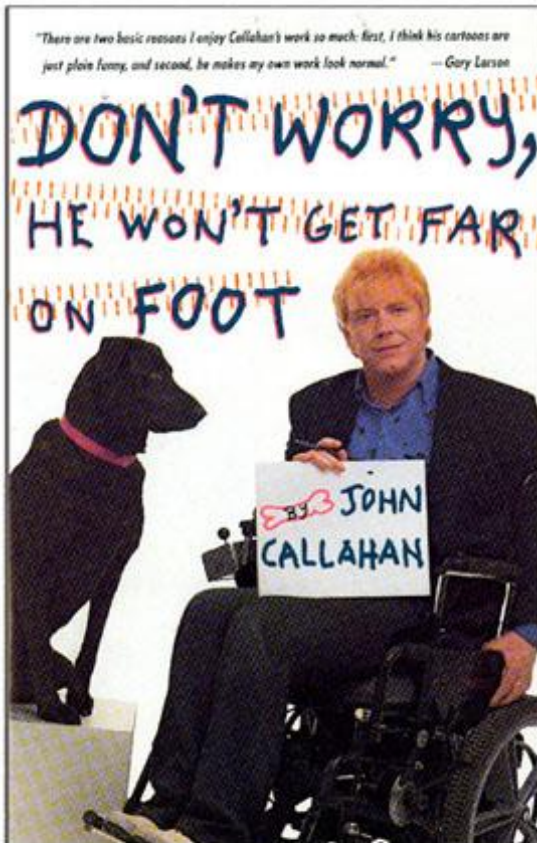
An Example of a physical impairment substantially limiting a major life activity



edshaw
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"Don't worry, he won't get far on foot!"

An example of a mental impairment



Humor in Disability Culture

Words of Our Own

- *The ADA: Boldly Going Where Everybody Else Has Already Been* (Bumper Sticker, Author Unknown)
- *Of All the Things I've Lost, I Miss My Mind the Most* (T – Shirt Worn by a Person with Traumatic Brain Injury)
- *If It Has Tires or Testicles, It Will Give You Trouble* (Sticker on the Back of Power Wheelchair)

The Things People Say

- Irving Goffman Wrote *Stigma: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity* in 1963.

Examples: “My poor dear girl...

“She sure is happy...

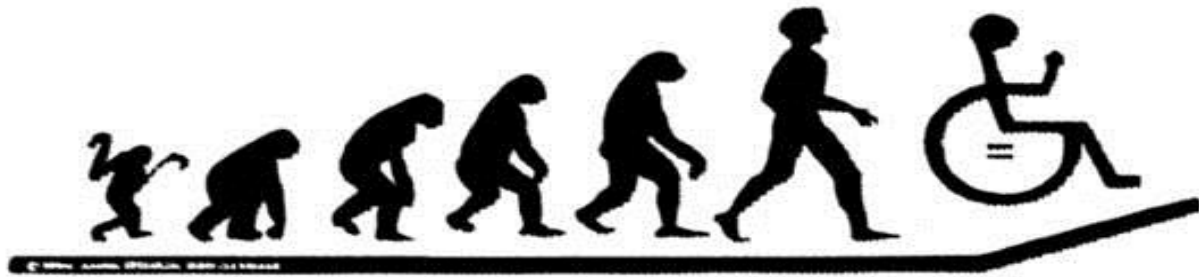
“Hey, no drag racing...

Good Intentions Run Amok?

- Huh???



T Shirt by Chicago ADAPT



"ADAPT OR PERISH"

- C. DARWIN

Comedy

[Mike Beers](#)