

Disability Justice: A Framework to Move Us Forward



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Plan for Today

- ✦ What do we mean by the term *disability justice*?
 - How is it different from other frameworks that guide our thinking & our supports for folks with disabilities?
 - Why is it important?
- ✦ What could it look like in practice?
 - Questions to help us to shift our thinking & actions toward justice

What Do We Mean by Disability Justice?

Bodies, Boxes, & Fences

Rooted in the Harms of Ableism

- ✦ *A system that places value on bodies & minds based on societally constructed ideas of normality, intelligence, excellence, desirability, & productivity.*
- ✦ *These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in anti-Blackness, eugenics, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism, & capitalism.*
- ✦ *This form of systemic oppression [determines] who is valuable & worthy based on language, appearance, & ability to satisfactorily (re)produce, excel, & behave.*



Disability Narratives: What we Center

Medical
Model
(Bodies)



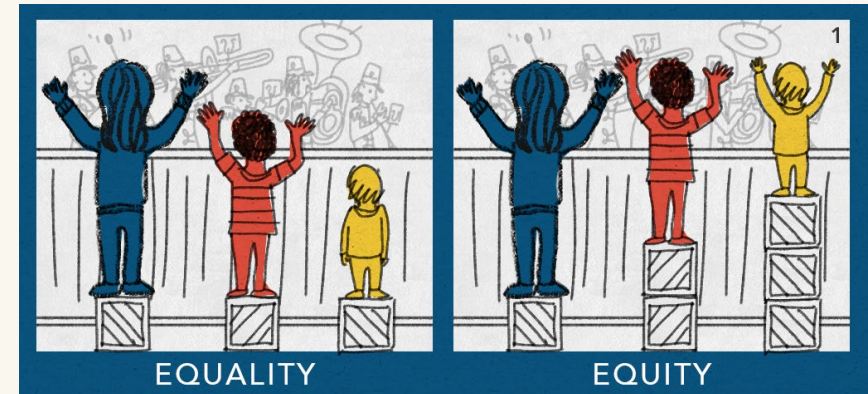
Social
Model
(Boxes)

A Third Narrative: Justice & Liberation

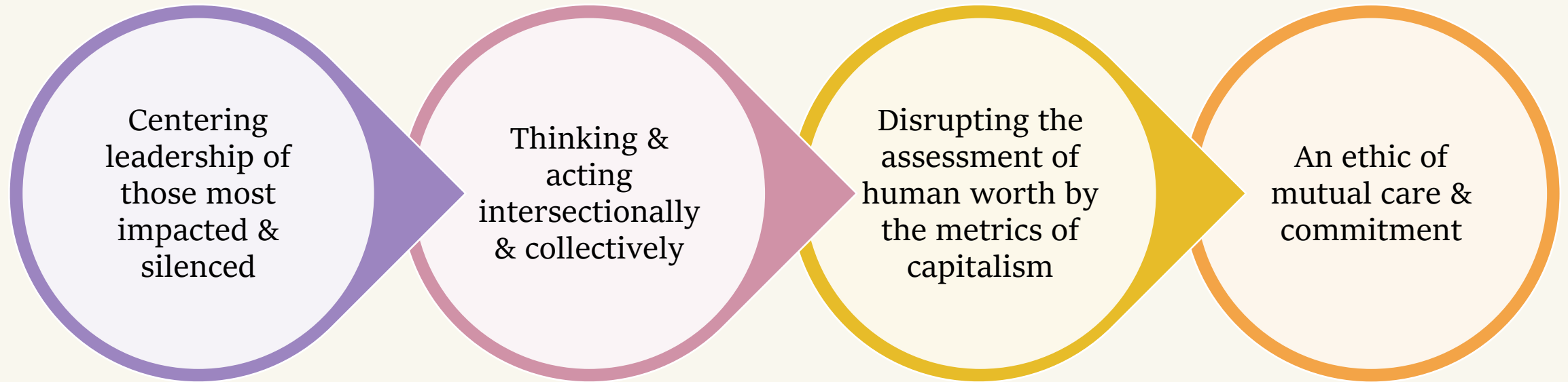
◆ Interrogating our assumptions & definitions

- The necessity of the “fences” that define who deserves access & who gets to decide that

◆ Centering human dignity & rights



In Addition to Interrogating the Fence...



- “People have inherent worth outside ... capitalist notions of productivity. Each person is full of history & life experience”

Adapted from Lackshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, DJ Audit Tool

Why Does this Matter?



Disability services (medical)

- Deficits foregrounded
- Actions focus on treatment, remediation, control in the name of safety
- Rights & access can be provided after demonstrating competence & merit (often involving compliance)



Disability rights (social)

- Societal disablement foregrounded
- Actions focus on barrier removal, resources, accommodations
- But because these are considered “special” or “extra,” accessing them most often requires burdensome demonstrations of eligibility



Disability justice (liberation)

- Dignity/human rights foregrounded
- Actions focus on full inclusion, self-determination, & **universal design**
- Rights, access, inclusion honored without conditions or eligibility burdens & by default

So...

What Would it Mean to Shift our Frame from **Accommodations** to **Justice**?



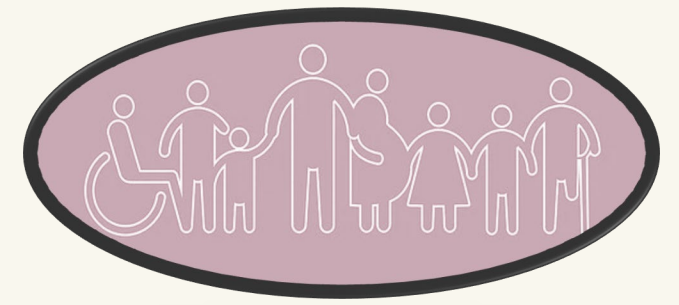
What is Universal Design?

Laurie's Definition

- ◆ Universal design is about knocking down the fence rather than assuming its necessity & “helping” people to see over it; realizing that the fence was created to privilege certain bodies & minds over others; & interrogating our notions of what constitutes “care”



What is Universal Design? The Formal Definition



The design of environments & products to be usable by all

To the greatest
extent possible

In the most
independent &
natural manner
possible

In the widest
possible range of
situations

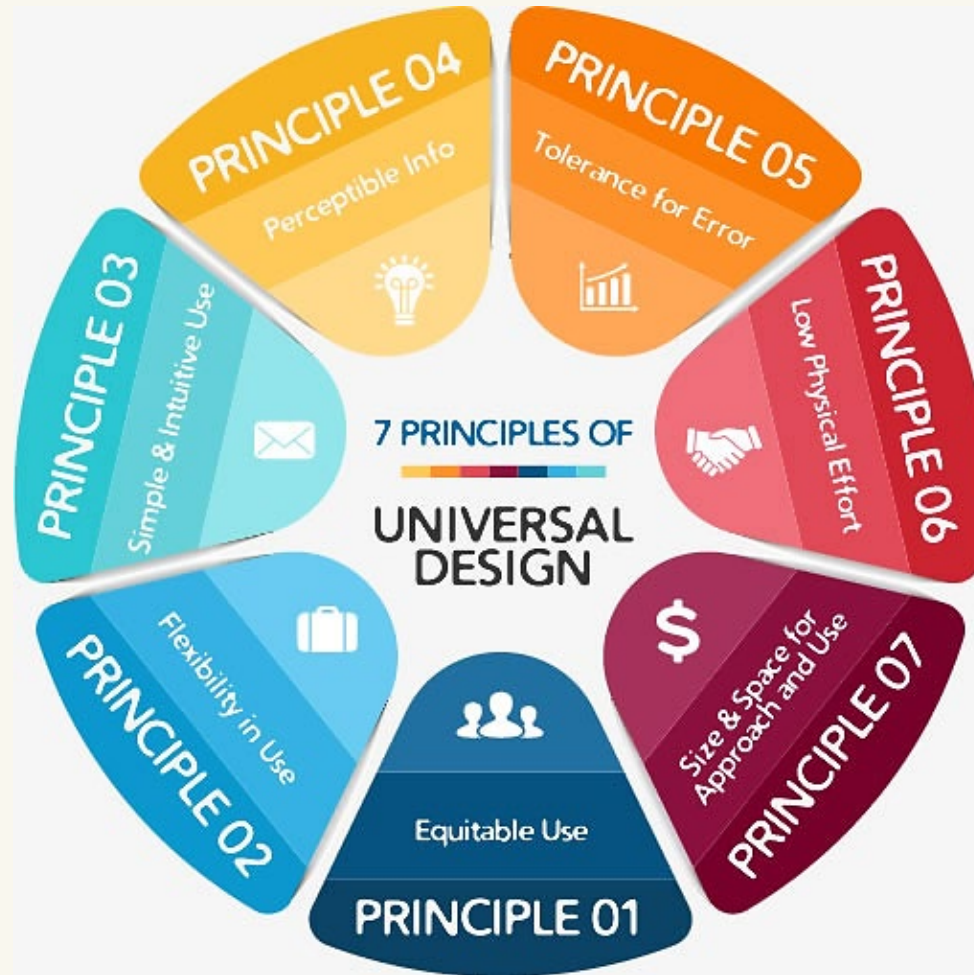
Without need for
adaptation,
modification,
assistive devices,
or special
solutions

Those of any age,
size or variation
in physical,
sensory, MH, or
intellectual ability

“Universal Design assumes that the range of human ability is ordinary, not special.”

Elaine Ostroff, 2001

The 7 Principles of Universal Design for Physical Spaces



Universal Design for Learning



Multiple means of engagement (connecting with the material)

- Sensory, cognitive, affective strategies; hands-on experience; collaborative learning)



Multiple means of representation (acquiring knowledge or skill)

- “Pathways” to learning (sensory, conceptual, direct experience; creative technology; assistance to contextualize & prioritize info)



Multiple means of action & expression (demonstrating knowledge or skill)

- Choices & supports for demonstrating mastery – individual or collaborative; preferred modality; practice opportunities

Questions to Assist Us

What if...

- Inclusion was not optional (*we can't afford those updates – or - these accommodations are too burdensome*), but a cultural norm & expectation?
- *Accommodations* were not special rights to be earned or deserved, but how we engage with the folks in our care – supporting dignity, self-determination, & ability to thrive?
- We included impacted folks in ALL of our change efforts?

Where are...

- Our openings, or leverage points, to move toward these aspirations even though we exist within an essentially ableist institutional framework (mindsets, laws, policies)?
- Our opportunities to make our environments (physical, social, educational) maximally inclusive *by default*?

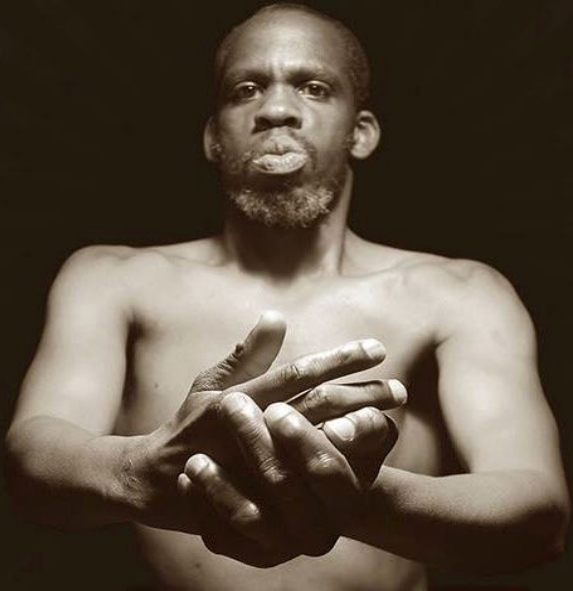
ALL BODIES ARE UNIQUE AND ESSENTIAL.

ALL BODIES ARE WHOLE. ALL BODIES HAVE STRENGTHS AND NEEDS THAT MUST BE MET.

WE ARE POWERFUL NOT DESPITE THE COMPLEXITIES OF OUR BODIES, BUT BECAUSE OF THEM.

WE MOVE TOGETHER, WITH NO BODY LEFT BEHIND.

THIS IS DISABILITY JUSTICE.



ALL BODIES ARE CAUGHT IN THE BINDINGS OF ABILITY, RACE, CLASS, GENDER, SEXUALITY AND CITIZENSHIP. WE ARE POWERFUL NOT DESPITE THE COMPLEXITIES OF OUR IDENTITIES, BUT BECAUSE OF THEM.

ONLY UNIVERSAL, COLLECTIVE ACCESS CAN LEAD TO UNIVERSAL, COLLECTIVE LIBERATION.

THIS IS DISABILITY JUSTICE.



Written by Aurora Levins Morales, Patty and Micah Bazant for Sins Invalid.

Micah Bazant, Activist & Artist