History of the Disability Movement

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The Arc
Tennessee

Achieve with us.

For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Promoting choice, inclusion, and self-advocacy

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Introduction

- Subject today is History of the Disability Movement
- I hope that everyone finds this interesting and learns something
- I have been involved in disability rights since the 1980s and have worked for The Arc Tennessee for 26 years
- The Arc is the nation’s largest and leading organization for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families with a 60 year history of promoting and protecting the rights of people with I/DD and providing them the opportunity to live full, satisfying and self-determined lives as valued and contributing members of their communities.
History

- The Disability Rights Movement sought equal access, opportunity, consideration and basic human respect and dignity for those born with any type of disability. As a result of the movement which spans nearly 200 years, the ostracism and the fringe living which characterized life for people with disabilities in the early 1800s has given way to a society of better understanding, better accommodation and community inclusion. Still, battles are continually fought for full access.
In the Beginning......

- While the exact origin of the Disability Rights Movement can be debated, some historians concur that the movement began in 1817 when The American School of the Deaf launched in Hartford, Connecticut as the very first educational institution to use sign language and cater people with disabilities.

- The Museum of disABILITY History shares some interesting noteworthy facts that occurred way before the movement......OH MY! How language has changed! Please keep this in mind as we go through the history slides.
From The Museum of disABILITY

History (remember: language is from the time)

- 400 B.C. - Hippocrates wrote the first work on epilepsy disputing that the disorder was a curse or caused by the gods; stating it was a brain disorder.

- 15th Century - The court fool or jester was a part of the medieval and renaissance court society. Some jesters had disabilities.

- 1494 - "The Hammer of the Witches," a witch hunting manual was written by two Dominican Friars (with the authority of the Pope) that discusses seizures as a characteristic of witches.
From The Museum of disABILITY History (language is from the time)

- 1583-1601 - Elizabethan Poor Laws were passed to aid poor people with disabilities by charging a "poor rate" on owners of property.
- 1692 - The Salem Witch Trials resulted in the hanging of 19 people; some of them were people with intellectual disabilities.
- 1751 - The Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia, with the help of Benjamin Franklin, is the first hospital to create a special section for the treatment of “mental illness and mental retardation.” In 1756, these patients would be chained to the walls of the basement and put on display for a fee.
1773 - Virginia establishes the first hospital solely for the treatment of "idiots, lunatics and other people of unsound mind."

1793 - Pinel, a doctor at a France “asylum,” unchains mental patients at the institution. This unchaining became known as the "moral treatment" and was replaced with the use of straitjackets. Seven years later he created a classification system of major mental illnesses, a first of its kind.

1801 - Itard attempts to teach and train Victor the "Wild Boy of Aveyron" using methods of instruction that are still influential.
Little more history

- 1829 - New England Asylum for the Blind opened
- 1832 - Introduction of Braille
- 1838 - Esquirol distinguishes differences between mental illness and intellectual disability
- 1839 - Seguin opened the first school for children with intellectual disabilities in France using sensory training; he immigrated to the US and established other teaching centers that utilized his methods
- 1841 - Dorothea Dix advocated for separation of people with disabilities incarcerated in penitentiaries and poorhouses; lead to the establishment of 32 state run mental institutions across the United States
1848 - Massachusetts School for Idiotic Children and Youth established
1855 - The Syracuse State School opened
1866 - John Langdon Down publishes the first clinical description of what is later known as Down syndrome
1869 - First patent for a wheelchair issued
1868 - The Prisoners' Hidden Life of Insane Asylums Unveiled published; the author advocates for sweeping changes in the institutional system
Timelines, continued

- 1878 - Newark State School opened; originally instructed females only but added boys in 1932
- 1880 - National Association for the Deaf founded to advocate for reforms on behalf of the deaf; held its first national convention
- 1901 - National Fraternal Society of the Deaf advocates for the ability to buy life insurance and obtain drivers' licenses
- 1907 - Montessori opens school with successful program of education for children with learning disabilities
Timelines, continued

- 1909 – The National Committee for Mental Hygiene is formed to advocate for changes to the mental health system
- 1911 – US Government authorized compensation for workers who had become disabled
- 1916 – Terman perfected the use of IQ testing to separate students with low IQs into special classes for learning
- 1935 – The League of the Physically Handicapped is founded; they protest discrimination regarding placement in federal works programs; used picket lines and demonstrations
Timelines, continued

- 1940 – National Foundation for the Blind formed; advocate for “white cane” laws
- 1943 – Kanner introduces classification of autism and characteristics of it in *The Nervous Child*
- 1945 – Establishment of the National Employ the Handicapped Week
- 1946 – Hill-Burton Act passed which provided federal aid for rehabilitation; Cerebral Palsy Society of New York city is formed by parents.
- 1948 – National Paraplegic Foundation established to advocate for disability rights
The 1950s Movement

- 1950 - Creation of Social Security Disability Insurance
- 1950 - The National Association for Retarded Citizens (now known as The Arc) established to influence legislation and public perception of individuals with intellectual disabilities
- 1954 - Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka: Separate but equal schools is considered unconstitutional; lead to the Civil Rights movement giving momentum to the disability rights movement
- 1954 - The National Association for Retarded Children (now known as The Arc) along with President Eisenhower declared the first "National Retarded Children's Week" to create awareness about the need for funding and legislation for the education of children with ID
The 1960s Movement

- 1961 – The Arc funds research and gets legislation passed on PKU (phenylketonuria) newborn screening testing of all babies born in the US
- 1962 – The University of California at Berkeley admitted its first student with significant disabilities
- 1963 - The Mental Retardation Facilities and Community Health Center Construction Act was passed. President Kennedy addresses Congress for the reduction of the number of persons confined to residential institutions. He asks that ways be found to reintegrate those released back into the community; considered the start to deinstitutionalization that was popular in the 1970's.
The 1960s Movement

- 1964 - Civil Rights Act passed outlawing discrimination based on race; provided framework for disability rights legislation
- 1965 – Through advocacy efforts of The Arc, Medicare and Medicaid are established under the Social Security Amendments. Medicaid established health insurance for Americans with disabilities
- 1965 – Autism society of America formed by parents of children with autism
The 1970s Movement

- **1970s** - The concept of deinstitutionalization grows; it endorsed the closing of state institutions and promoted the establishment of community living.

- **1971** - The Pennsylvania ARC brought lawsuit against the state of Pennsylvania that resulted in the establishment of rights for disabled children to access free and equal public education.

- **1972** - Rivera does an expose on the Willowbrook State School that leads to an immediate federal inquiry; the deplorable conditions of the facility for people with intellectual disabilities became national news; consent decree for community placement signed in 1975.
The 1970s Movement

- 1973 – The Rehabilitation Act is passed; large victory for the disability rights movement; discrimination is addressed for the first time; qualified persons seeking employment could not be discriminated against based on their disability; provided the outline for the future Americans with Disabilities Act
- 1974 - People First, the nation's largest and first self-advocacy organization, was founded
- 1975 - "The Education for All Handicapped Children Act," public law 94-142 (now known as IDEA) was passed; to provide free and appropriate education, individualized education programs with parental involvement, establishment of due process proceedings, and to provide an education in the least restrictive environment.
The 1970s Movement

- 1976 - Amendment to the Higher Education Act of 1972 passed requiring services for college students with physical disabilities
- 1977 - Disability rights advocates protest in 10 cities for regulations implementing section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- 1978 - Federal government begins funding independent living centers; sit-ins were held in Denver over the inaccessibility of the public transit system; Bowe publishes *Handicapping America*, it is considered the text for the disability rights movement
- 1979 - Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund established in Berkeley, CA and becomes the leader in disability right legal advocacy
The 1980s Movement

- 1980 - Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act passed; allows US Department of Justice to file suits on behalf of residents of institutions
- 1981 - International Year of Disabled Persons with ceremonies before the United Nations General Assembly; governments world-wide asked to promote the acceptance of people with disabilities into mainstream society through full participation and equality; later established as the National Decade of Disabled Persons for the years 1983 to 1992 by President Ronald Reagan
- 1982 - National Black Deaf Advocates founded; National Council on Independent Living is formed
The 1980s Movement

- 1983 - ADAPT is established and uses civil disobedience to obtain accessible public transportation and access to public and private buildings.
- 1984 - Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act passed making polling places accessible; considered difficult to enforce.
- 1985 - New York State holds the first conference for self-advocates with developmental disabilities.
- 1986 - Air Carrier Access Act passed which guaranteed people with disabilities could no longer be banned from airplane flights; Protection and Advocacy for Mentally Ill Individuals Act passed.
The 1980s Movement

- 1988 - Civil Rights Restoration Act passed specifies that an institution which receives federal financial assistance is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability or age in a program or activity which does not directly benefit from such assistance.

- 1989 - Original ADA legislation introduced into Congress and advocacy groups advocate nationwide for its passage.
Americans with Disabilities Act

- 1990 - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) passed - one of the most significant civil rights documents of the 20th century! Its purpose is to end discrimination, reduce barriers to employment, and ensure access to education for people with disabilities. Equal opportunity was established for employment, transportation, telecommunications, public accommodations and the state and federal government's services. It has increased the visibility of people with disabilities and led to the reshaping of the physical environment and improved communications access.
The 1990s Movement after ADA

- 1991 - Self Advocates Becoming Empowered was founded in 1991 during the Second North American People First Conference in Nashville, Tennessee
- 1993 – “Motor Voter Act” passed to increase voter registration of people with disabilities
- 1995 - American Association of People with Disabilities is founded in Washington, DC
- 1999 - Supreme Court rules on *Olmstead v. L.C. and E.W.* stating that the ADA requires public agencies to provide services in the most integrated setting
The 21st Century Movement

- 2008 - Congress amended the ADA to restore the civil rights of Americans with disabilities and overturn four Supreme Court decisions that had inappropriately narrowed the protections of the ADA.

- 2008 - The United Nations General Assembly’s Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) came into force. CRPD is one of the nine human rights treaties of the United Nations and signifies a change in the perception of people with disabilities as objects of charity and protection to individuals who have rights that must be respected and guaranteed by states; but unfortunately it has still not been ratified in the US.
21\textsuperscript{st} Century Movement

- 2010 - The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) reformed health care law made major changes to health care and insurance; and included many provisions that affected people with disabilities

- 2010 - Obama signed into law the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) to update the Communications Act and expand safeguards and accessibility in communications for people with disabilities

- 2011 - Obama and U.S. Labor Department issued a proposed rule that would require federal contractors to set goals that 7\% of their work forces be individuals with disabilities

- 2013 – ACA health insurance for all Americans, also known as “Obama Care” rolled out
The Movement Today

- Today, the disability movement has a more social focus as evidenced by the "R-Word" Campaign, to eliminate the colloquial use of the words "retard" and "retarded"

- The disability rights movement has made great progress but challenges lie ahead
  - People with disabilities still live in institutions and nursing homes
  - People with disabilities want accommodations, not pity
  - People with disabilities enjoy working and want to have meaningful jobs
My Personal Involvement

- Been involved with the movement since 1988
- Public speaking engagements for over 25 years on subjects such as bullying, self-determination, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and disability movement history
- In support of Olmstead, protested nursing home placements in 1990 (see picture next slide)
- Received The Arc TN Presidential Award in 1999
- Received the Jo Andrews Self-advocate Award in 2010
- Founding member of the National Council of Self Advocates
- Received the Roger Blue Lifetime Achievement Award in 2013
ADAPT protest, 1980s

ADAPT and People First members protest nursing homes.

Courtesy of Tom Olin, photographer
My Involvement, continued

- Founding member and current board member, STEP
- Serve on numerous councils and commissions
- Member of The Arc, People First and ADAPT
- Attend state, national and international disability conferences annually
- Speak with legislators on behalf of people with IDD
- Lead the 2013 NCSA Self Advocacy pre-conference planning held during The Arc's national convention
Facts

- About 1 in 5 Americans have a disability; 1 in 10 have a severe disability
- Only 26% of people with a severe disability have a job
- About 9 million people have disabilities so severe that they require personal assistance to carry out everyday activities
- More than three-quarters (77.4%) of Americans age 22 to 64 with disabilities do not receive public assistance
- Disability is relatively common among those who receive government cash, food or rent assistance; about half the beneficiaries of these programs have a disability
The Future

• Much has changed throughout the years, but people with disabilities still experience irrational fears or ignorance, traceable to the prolonged social and cultural isolation... stymieing recognition of their dignity and individuality

• Disability rights organizations such as The Arc will continue their advocacy movement for the rights and full participation of all people with disabilities
Questions and Evaluation

- Anyone have any questions?
- Was this information beneficial?
- Who would like to share one thing they have learned today?

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