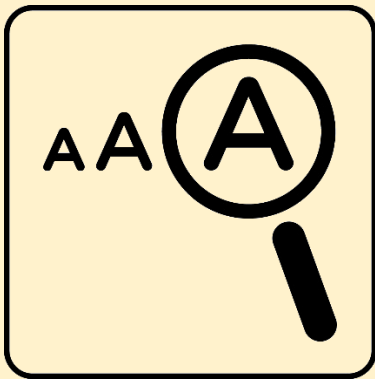


Easy Read guide

Nothing about us without us

Text size: 18pt



This guide contains:

- Easier read information of the exhibition text.

Easy Read exhibition guides in 24pt text, magnifiers and colour overlays are also available.

Nothing about us without us

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Disabled people fight back

Nothing about us without us

Disabled people fight back

For a long time disabled people have fought for justice. They have fought to stop discrimination. Discrimination is when people are not treated the same because of who they are.

In 1620 some disabled people were made to live in a hospital. It was called Bethlem Hospital but people called it Bedlam. It was not a nice place to live. This was about four hundred years ago.

The people who lived there wanted to tell other people how bad it was. So they spoke to people who made the laws, the House of Lords. They told them they were worried about how they were treated.

Disabled people fight back

Over one hundred years ago in 1890, some disabled people made a group. The group was called the British Deaf and Dumb Association. This was the first 'official' group of disabled people. 'Official' means that it was a proper group.

In the next ten years some disabled people started the National League of the Blind. In 1920 the people in this group marched to London. So they marched about one hundred years ago!

It gave other people the idea to march in protest too. A protest is when people stand up for what they believe in. Some other people went on a march in 1936, called the Jarrow March. Jarrow is a place in the North East of England near Newcastle.

Disabled people fight back

In the 1950s some disabled people fought to live independently. This means living how and where they wanted to. Then they started to think of a new idea. This new idea was called the Social Model of Disability.

The Social Model of Disability said there was nothing wrong with disabled people. It says the problems are in the world around us.

There were groups of disabled people who came together. Together they started to ask for big changes. This was called the 'Disabled People's Movement'. It got bigger and bigger.

In the 1980s disabled people asked for new laws. These were called 'anti-discrimination'. This means it would be illegal to treat people in a less fair way just because they are disabled.

Disabled people fight back

Since then disabled people have been fighting for their rights. But there is still a lot to do. We still need to fight. We need to make the world include disabled people everywhere.

Objects

Disabled people fight back banner by Ed Hall, 2015

People's History Museum and Full Circle Arts did a project together called 'Disbanners'.

Disabled people from the North West worked with a banner maker called Ed Hall. They made big banners. These banners were about disability and **austerity**.

Disabled people fight back

Key word

What does 'austerity' mean?

'Austerity' means the years after 2010. In these years the people in charge of the country spent less money. They took away some benefits for disabled people. They stopped lots of disabled people from getting money they needed. This made a lot of disabled people poorer.

Disabled people fighting for their rights use the phrase 'Nothing About Us Without Us'.

It tells the world that disabled people should make choices about their own lives. It means that other people cannot tell us how to live.

They have to ask us first. They have to make sure that our voices are heard.

Deaf liberation now

Since 1880 Deaf people have been fighting for the right to use sign language. This means they have been fighting for over one hundred and forty years.

In 1880 there was a big meeting in Milan, Italy to discuss how Deaf people should learn. It was called the Second International Congress for Education of the Deaf.

The people at the meeting voted to stop teaching Deaf people sign language. They thought it was better to teach speaking, listening and lip-reading.

There were 164 people in the meeting. Only one person in the meeting was Deaf. This meeting had a huge effect on how Deaf people learn, even now.

Deaf liberation now

Right after this meeting Deaf people started to fight back. They started a group called the National Association of the Deaf and Dumb in 1886. Then came the British Deaf and Dumb association in 1890.

A long time later in 2003 the government said British Sign Language (BSL) is a proper language. In 2022 the BSL Act was passed. The law now says that British Sign Language is important and that people who use it must be included.

But there is still a lot to do. Schools do not teach BSL. Also, Deaf people still fight for access to use interpreters. Interpreters are people who use BSL so that Deaf people can do the same things as everyone else like watching films or television.

Free our people

Key word

What does 'independence' mean?

Independence is having the choice to live how you want to. This means you can choose where you live and where you go. It means you can choose how you spend your time, and who you spend it with.

If you are a disabled person you may need certain things to be 'independent'. For example you may need to use a wheelchair so you can go where you want to.

Free our people

In the past a lot of disabled people did not choose where they lived. Before the 1980s most disabled people could only live in a few places.

Many disabled people had to live with their family. Other disabled people had to live in a hospital or a 'residential institution'.

A 'residential institution' is a place where people are sent to live. They may not have a lot of their own space. They may not get to do things they like to.

We can say that this kind of place is 'oppressive'. This means that it is not a nice place. It means that it is a place that stops people from having their rights. A lot of disabled people did not like living there. They felt alone and did not have much freedom.

Free our people

In the 1950s and 1960s, some people who lived in these places started to say 'no' to how they had to live. They started to think about how to leave.

Then, a new movement started. It was called the Independent Living Movement. This was a group of disabled people who wanted more control. They wanted to choose where they lived.

By the year 1984 there were two Centres for Independent Living. These were run by disabled people. They tried to help other disabled people be more independent. One centre was in Hampshire (in the South of England). One centre was in Derbyshire (the middle of England).

This was a big change. Disabled people across the country started to make more choices about where they lived.

Free our people

But today a lot of disabled people still cannot live how they want. They do not have all of the same choices that non-disabled people do.

There is a reason for this. There is not enough support for disabled people to live how they want. People still do not listen to all the things that disabled people ask for. This is unfair.

It can be even harder for disabled people to control their lives if they are not able to say what they want. Independence is one of the most important things for us. We need independence so that we can choose how we learn, work, have fun and live.

Us

In the 1980s more and more disabled people fought to make their lives better.

So we can say that the 'Disabled People's Movement' grew. The 'Disabled People's Movement' means disabled people coming together to fight for big changes.

But other people still focused on the wrong things. They did not look at the problems in the world that stop us from taking part in things. They saw our bodies and minds as the problem.

Pictures of us on the TV and in newspapers made us look sad. The pictures made people look at our impairments - the way our bodies and minds were different.

Us

So the pictures did not make people think about us in a different way. The pictures made people feel sorry for us. They made people see us as 'stereotypes'.

Key word

What does 'stereotype' mean?

A 'stereotype' is when people have a certain idea of who someone is. This idea may not be true. It may be based on things they have heard about. For example, someone may meet a disabled person for the first time and think they will be the same as other disabled people. They might see all disabled people as the same.





What are some 'stereotypes' of disabled people?

Some bad stereotypes about disabled people are that we are **lazy** or that we are **not helpful**. Another stereotype is that we are a **burden** - that we make life harder for other people.

Another common stereotype is that disabled people are **brave**.

This might sound like a nice word but it can also cause problems. It can make people think that disabled people can put up with anything. It can make people think that disabled people can just work harder than everyone else to get the same things.

Charities would use pictures of disabled people where we looked sad. Not many of these pictures were taken by disabled people.

Us

In the 1990s disabled people started to take more photos that showed people what our lives were really like. The photos were exciting.

The photos showed people how different all of our lives were. They showed how disabled people had played a part in art, culture and protest. They also showed people that we could make our own choices about our lives.

People started to see much more of our lives in pictures. It was clear that photos were powerful. They could change people's minds for the better.

But some disabled people were in more photos than others. We needed to show all types of disabled people. For example we needed more pictures of disabled women, disabled parents and disabled people who were gay or bisexual.

Us / To boldly go where all others have gone
before
There are many other groups of disabled
people who need to be in more photos. This is
something we still need to make happen.

To boldly go where all others have gone before

All people have the right to make their own
choices - to be independent.

This means we should all be free to travel,
work, learn, shop and spend time with other
people (socialise). Many people do not think
about this. They already do all these things.

But lots of disabled people have not had these
choices. They have had to fight for the right to
do all these things.

One thing that disabled people have fought very
long and hard for is transport.



To boldly go where all others have gone before

- ▷ They have fought for access to many kinds of transport, such as mobility cars and parking spaces. They have also fought for access to public transport like buses, trams and trains.

It is not just transport that we had to fight for. We also fought for our right to use public services like toilets, libraries and swimming pools.

In the 1990s many more disabled people asked to be part of society. They wanted to get rid of barriers. Barriers are parts of the world that stop disabled people from being included.

‘To boldly go where all others have gone before’ is a saying that disabled people used. It was an important saying in the Disabled People’s Movement.

To boldly go where all others have gone before
It came from a famous saying in the TV show
Star Trek. The saying was: 'to boldly go where
no man has gone before'. Disabled people
changed it to be funny and to make people
think about our rights.

There was a group of disabled people who
used this saying a lot. They were called the
Disabled People's Direct Action Network or
DAN. They put the saying on campaign
banners and t-shirts.

Key word

What does 'direct action' mean?

Direct action is a type of protest. People
do it when they need to reach a goal. It
may mean that people take up space
somewhere.



To boldly go where all others have gone before



For example people might come together outside a building to stop people from going inside.

Why do people do this? People often do direct action when other things do not work. They might do direct action when the people who make laws do not want to discuss a problem we have.

People in the Disabled People's Direct Action Network did a lot of direct action. They chained themselves to buses, trains and public places that disabled people could not access.

Today we have access to a lot of transport and services. We must thank the disabled people who fought for this over the years. Disabled people who did campaigns and groups of disabled people fought for a long time.

Piss on pity

A lot of charities and groups trying to 'do good' were set up in the 1800s. Many were there to make the lives of disabled people and poor people better.

But they often gave people the wrong idea about disabled people. They made other people think we could not help ourselves. They made other people pity us - to feel sorry for us.

When we go back in time, many people have seen disabled people as sad or in need of help. You could see disabled people looking like this in books or stories. For example, in 'A Christmas Carol' by Charles Dickens, there is a person in the story called Tiny Tim. When we read the story we are meant to feel sorry for him.

Piss on pity

Today disabled people are still made to look like this. We see this in books, TV and films. For a long time disabled people fighting for change have said 'no' to lots of charities.

They do not like how some charities are not run by disabled people. They do not like how these charities show us in a bad way.

Disabled people do not like how lots of charities make choices for us. In 1893, over one hundred years ago, blind workers set up a union. They came up with a saying, 'Justice not Charity'.

Key word

What is a 'union'?

A union is a group of people, often workers. People who work in the same type of job often come together.





They care about each others' jobs. They fight for better pay. They also fight back when they are treated badly at work. Over the years unions have made a lot of people's lives better. For example, unions fought to create the weekend. They also fought to make the work day shorter.

In the 1990s thousands of disabled people came together. They did this to show anger about a TV show called 'Telethon'. The TV show was meant to raise money for disabled people. But it showed disabled people in a bad way, where we looked sad and in need of help.

When this happened disabled people came up with a new saying. The saying was 'Piss on Pity'. It means that disabled people say 'no' when others pity us.

Piss on pity / Tragic but brave

The saying inspired many activists - people fighting for change. It also inspired lots of artists. It was an important saying in the Disabled People's Movement.

Tragic but brave

The media plays a big part in our lives - like TV, film and newspapers. Many people learn things through the media. Sadly it can make people learn the wrong things.

Many disabled people have said that the media can harm us. It does this by showing us in a bad way, or a way that is not true.

Disabled activists and people who study disability say that the media has done a bad job of showing what our lives are really like. It has not helped people to see us as equal to them.

Tragic but brave

How has the media made disabled people look? Here are some ways: tragic, brave, scary and not quite human. One man who wrote books about disability talked about this. His name is Mike Oliver. He wrote a book called 'The Politics of Disablement'.

He said the media makes people think about disabled people in two ways. One way is that we are victims - that we just need help and cannot do things by ourselves.

The other way is that we are superheroes. This means that we are extra brave. It means we can 'overcome' or get away from the way our bodies and minds are.

Because a lot of disabled people do not like how the media shows us, they campaign to change this. They would like us to choose how the media makes us look.

Tragic but brave

The Disability Arts Movement has been very important for disabled people. This is where disabled people created art together to change things. They tried to show the world what our lives are really like.

At the same time that disabled people made art with each other, they found community. Community is where people have something in common that brings them together.

Disabled people still use art to make our lives better. We also use comedy, theatre, poetry and music to do this. When we do these things we can celebrate who we are.

We can also use art to take away barriers. Doing art helps us to be a bigger part of society - the world around us.