

# Where Have We Been, Where Are We Going

Rebecca Cokley



# About Me



Rebecca Cokley

U.S. Disability Rights Program Officer,  
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Presidential Appointee

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Grew up on a college campus

Mom ran a DSS Office, Dad ran a CIL

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# Welcome, Wherever you are On Your Path



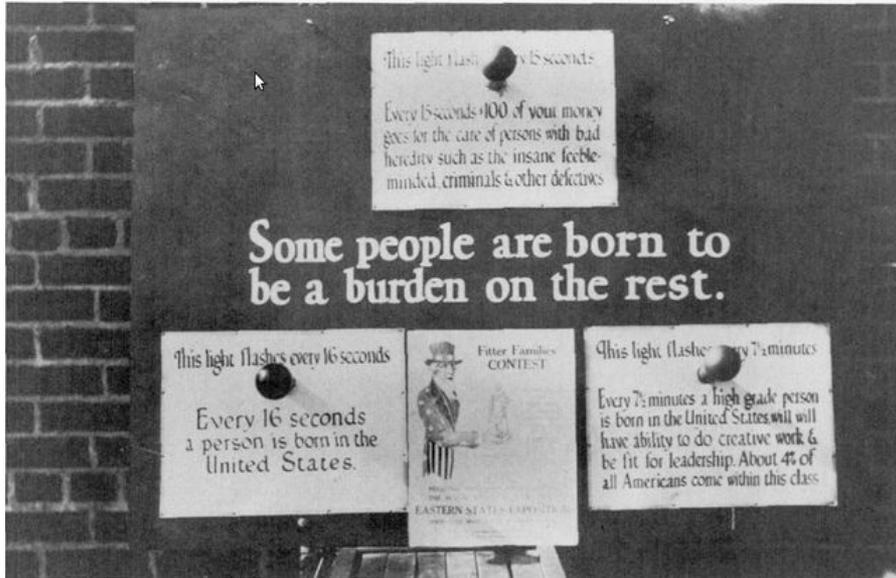
# Our Movement Was Built By Young People



The image features a solid purple background with three overlapping circles of different shades of purple. The circles are arranged from left to right, with each subsequent circle being larger and more transparent. The text 'The Past' is centered within the smallest, darkest circle on the left.

**The  
Past**

# Eugenics, Institutionalization and Families, oh my



Medical Model

Role of Eugenics Movement

Institutions Are the Way

# Emergence of Family Orgs



Demand for De-institutionalization

Largely “mother” driven

Lack of accessible infrastructure

Creation of UCEDDs by Dr. Giannini

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# The Rise of the Rights Movement



- Cross Disability
- Timing: Nexus of de-institutionalization, AIDS, Deaf Pride, Vietnam
- Major focus on physical access
- Independent Living, Economic Self-Sufficiency, Equality of Opportunity, Full Participation
- ADA, 504

The image features a solid purple background with three overlapping circles of varying shades of purple. The circles are arranged from left to right, with the darkest purple circle on the left, a medium purple circle in the middle, and a lighter purple circle on the right. The text 'The Present' is centered within the darkest circle.

# The Present

# Emergence of 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.**

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

# Where Is Progress

- Better Labor Market Data
- Elimination of subminimum wage
- Asset Limits
  - Bipartisan Support
  - Major Endorsements
- U.S. Dept. of Commerce Disability Summit
- Marriage Penalty Discussion

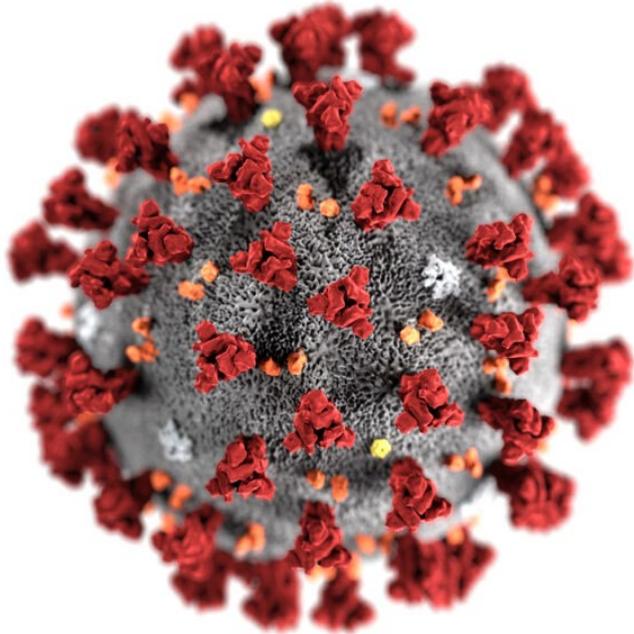


# Uniting Workers and the Disability Community



- Moving beyond false choices
  - NO ONE should be poor
  - Creating pathways for growth
  - Centering our rights to our bodies
  - We have enough
  - How we work with allies
    - Siblings & Family members
    - Veterans
  - Supporting care in all forms
    - Child care
    - HCBS
    - Respite
-

# COVID and the DisCo



- A minimum of 20M newly disabled people in the U.S.
  - Existing programs and systems are/were beyond stretched
  - Caregiver shortage
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# The Fights Ahead



- Creating and normalizing an movement that includes everyone
  - Showing up for other movements
  - Fighting to save the rights we have (ADA, ACA, etc)
  - Disconnecting poverty & disability
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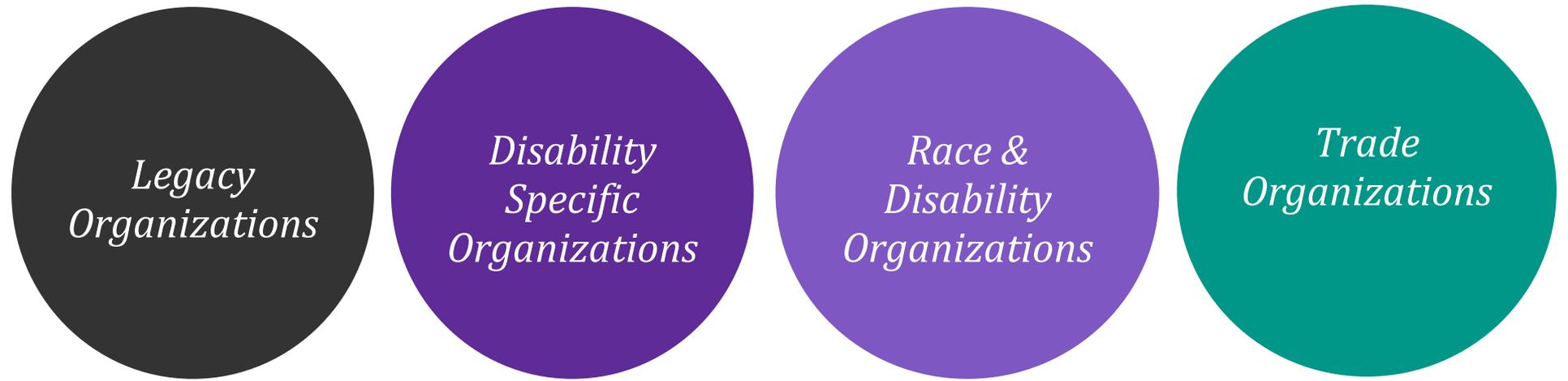
# What Is Your Call to Serve?

- Supporting Programs Like This
  - Running for Office
- Sharing Information (newsletters, TikTok, etc)
  - Personal Development or Growth



**The Future....  
All issues are  
disability issues**

# A Strong, Robust, Representative Field



*Legacy  
Organizations*

*Disability  
Specific  
Organizations*

*Race &  
Disability  
Organizations*

*Trade  
Organizations*

# Building the Field

- Investing in Our Young People
  - Youth Leadership Forums, People First, Independent Living Programs
- Anchor Orgs
  - American Assn of People with Disabilities
  - New Disabled South
- Trade Associations
  - Disabled Journalists, Educators, and Doctors (oh my!)
- Utilities
  - Data for Progress
  - Disability Culture Lab
- Integration Orgs
  - Urban Institute
  - National Partnership on Women and Families



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# What We Need to Do

- We need to be mentoring. Not just getting mentored, but mentoring those coming behind us.
- We always talk about leadership as passing a torch, instead think about how you're using your torch to light someone else's.
- There will be days when your flame runs low and you need a recharge—so reach out to the people who care about you.
  - We need to be organizing...and organizing in ways different than before

**“We’re Not Fighting  
for Scraps, We are  
Fighting for  
Liberation” -Ayanna  
Pressley**



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