

CONNECTING OUR STORIES TOGETHER



Introduction:

We know we cannot talk about self-determination until we talk about what shapes people having (or not having) self-determination. This activity will move the group from individual stories told in the first tool (Story Circles) to community issues.

Materials Needed:

- Flipchart, whiteboard, or chalkboard
- Markers or chalk

Time Allotted: 30-45 minutes

- Introduction - 5 minutes
- Large group discussion – 30 minutes

Description of Activity:

This activity works the best as a large group. It works best as a large group.

Below are three questions. Ask the group each question one at a time. Write down what people say on the board/flipchart. Each question should take about 10-15 minutes.

It is important for the facilitator to tie in relevant disability movement stories and other community self-determination stories. You will need to connect the dots.

Prompts for Large Group Processing:

1.) WHEN IS A TIME A GROUP OF PEOPLE WAS HELD BACK OR TOLD THEY COULDN'T DO SOMETHING?

As group members name examples, push the group to think about why that community was held back.

Some examples might be:

Women being told they could not vote. Some reasons women were told they couldn't vote were because they weren't smart enough to do it, that their role was to take care of their families, or that their husbands would take care of them so they didn't need to vote.

Many people of color, like black southerners or Chinese sugar cane farmers, were told similar things (e.g. white people would "take care" of them, that they were too stupid to vote, etc.)

These will be common themes that may also come up in the discussion for the next prompt.

2.) TELL A TIME A DISABLED PEOPLE WERE HELD BACK OR TOLD THEY COULDN'T DO SOMETHING.

This prompt might require more guided facilitation from you since many people are not familiar with disability history. Try to encourage the group to think larger than their personal stories to an issue that affects many disabled people or a major story in history.

At the end of the curriculum you will find disability history stories you can tell. Other examples you might want to weave in for the first 2 prompts:

- The history of Eugenics and Sterilization of Poor Women of Color with (and without) Disabilities
- Oralism and the banning of Sign Language in Deaf schools
- Greensboro Woolworth's Sit-Ins
- Women's Struggle to Vote
- Stonewall Riots Against Police Brutality of GLBT communities
- Wade Blank, the Gang of 19, and Institutionalization
- ADAPT and the Right to Ride
- 504 Sit-Ins

3.) WHY ARE PEOPLE HELD BACK? HOW DOES POWER WORK?

Use this prompt to pull out common themes of the examples given above and mentioned by the group. Some common themes might be:

- Society thinking that a certain group of people need to be “taken care of”
- Society thinking that a certain group is incapable
- Society thinking that a certain group is worth less than every one else
- Society thinking that it is not a certain group’s “place” to do something
- More!

Facilitation Notes:

As the facilitator, this is a good time for you to brush up on your disability history and social justice history. Its important that the facilitator be comfortable taking about Ableism, racism, and other oppressions.

This activity is much easier to facilitate if you ask the group to think of historical community examples. Historical examples are things like segregated schools, violence against women being seen as the woman’s fault, etc. However, people in the group may want to give personal experiences and family history as examples, too. This is okay. The themes of the stories are what are important.

If the examples given are of individual experiences, connect that to community issues. An example of this might be someone mentioning a Latina with a visual impairment having her child taken away from her. The way you would make that a community issue is by explaining that this is something that happens to women of color and disabled parents everyday. Ableism and racism make people think we can’t be parents. You would then talk about why society thinks we can’t be parents. If the examples don’t reflect community issues, help them think of other examples.

You may need to take a lot of initiative in guiding the conversation. For example, when people think about issues people with disabilities have, it is easy to get stuck talking about access --- things like not being able to access paratransit services or a school district saying there is not enough resources for someone. Stories about access are important and you can pull out a lot of themes out around who deserves resources and who is considered a drain on society, but try

to guide the group to think deeper. The goal is to get the group to think about institutional power [power of people in charge].

Resources:

Disability stories are in the resource section of the curriculum.