

PARENTS ORGANIZE

The term "developmental disability" was adopted in the early 1970s to address disability and funding issues in more comprehensive terms. It originally referred to "persons with a range of disabilities, including mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and other neurologically handicapping conditions." The term, intended to qualify persons for funding, was expanded in 1978 to cover a wider area of disabilities and life activities.

At the insistence of persons with disabilities, the organization later changed its name to the National Association for Retarded Citizens. It is now known as The Arc.

SOCIETAL VALUES:
Greater acceptance of differences; willingness and ability to address social problems.



Parents of children with disabilities began organizing in the 1930s. By 1950, following the interruptions of economic depression and war, 88 local groups with a total membership of 19,300 persons had been established in 19 states. In September of 1950, the National Association for Retarded Children was formed during a conference in Minneapolis, MN.



Elizabeth Boggs was an early leader in the Parents Movement and one of the people responsible for creating the term "developmental disabilities."



At first, parents came together a few at a time, usually in someone's home.

Are there any other parents out there who have a retarded child? Would you be interested in meeting and talking about this with another parent? Call 224-4343

In one state, a parent looked for support by placing an advertisement in the local newspaper. The newspaper initially declined to print the ad, feeling it was too controversial. After it was finally printed, the parent received over one thousand replies.



Beyond parents offering support to one another, these groups fought for institutional reform, community services, and better education for their children.

PARENTS ASSERT THEIR LEADERSHIP AND BEGIN TO ORGANIZE ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES.



Dale Evans Rogers' book *Angel Unaware* and Pearl S. Buck's *The Child Who Never Grew*, both widely read, perpetuated the view of all persons with developmental disabilities – young and old – as eternal children. The message of these books was two-fold: all families, rich or poor, can have children with disabilities; and persons with mental retardation are really just "children." Buck placed her child in an institution. Dale Evans Rogers' child died very young; she suggested that children with mental retardation are special angels, serving a divine purpose that is lost in institutions.

At her brother's request, Eunice Kennedy Shriver authored an article that appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, talking about their sister Rose (who has mental retardation) and how their family adjusted. The article was read by millions, and further convinced parents that having a child or sibling with mental retardation was nothing to feel shame or guilt over.

Disability activists have written and spoken out against the use of pity images in fundraising campaigns. Some activists have held their own anti-telethons, promoting disability pride and culture over low expectations and paternalism. In the early 1990s, a Chicago-based group called Jerry's Orphans was started by former MDA poster children.

The themes of "eternal child" and "objects of pity" have been taken to their extremes by the annual Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Telethon, with its relentless appeals to pity and heart wrenching images of helpless poster children needing to be "cured" rather than accepted by society.



STEREOTYPE:
Persons with developmental disabilities as eternal children: viewed as children who never grow up, capable of doing no wrong and wanting only to be loved. This message was reinforced in the early Parents Movement's focus on "helping the retarded child." The concept of Mental Age – equating one's IQ with years of age – further reinforced this stereotype.

The word "cripple" has been used to hurt people with disabilities and define them as unable and useless. Many activists are now reclaiming the word as an act of empowerment.



1924
Congress passes the Immigration Restriction Act.

1927
Buck v. Bell - Supreme Court Case that permits sterilizations.

1931
27 states have enacted sterilization laws.

1933
The Cuyahoga County Council for the Retarded Child, a parent advocacy and support group, forms in Ohio.

1934
Third Reich begins sterilization of Germans.

1926
Arthur H. Estabrook and Ivan E. McDougale publish *Mongrel Virginians: The Win Tribe*.

1930
Harvey M. Watkin's questionnaire of 317 members of the American Association on Mental Deficiency finds that 80% favor sterilizations.

Germany enacts the Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring, permitting forced sterilizations for people with perceived genetic disabilities such as epilepsy, schizophrenia, manic depression, deafness, congenital feeble-mindedness, Huntingtons' chorea, and blindness.