

CIVIL RIGHTS

"We're chained to the world
and we all gotta pull."

- Tom Waits



As civil rights activists were asserting their status as equal citizens, self-advocates were beginning to fight for recognition as people first, with their disability considered second.



The Civil Rights movement was underway, with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. calling for "children [who] will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

SOCIETAL VALUES:

Greater acceptance of difference; freedom and equality for all people



As Rosa Parks fought for the rights of African Americans to sit at the front of the bus, disability rights activists are fighting just to get on the bus.



The Civil Rights Movement focused national attention on the rights of disadvantaged groups.

INFLUENCED BY THE CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS STRUGGLES OF THE 1950s AND 1960s, PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES BEGIN TO FIGHT FOR THEIR RIGHTS.

Just as the Civil Rights Movement mobilized thousands of activists across the country, the Disability Rights Movement has appealed to people from all communities: women and men, children and adults, young and old, straight and gay, rich and poor.

Also at this time was the beginning of the Women's Movement, which alerted our country to the fact that one-half of our citizens are discriminated against on the basis of gender alone.

Activist Judy Heumann, now a member of the Clinton administration, speaks out with passion at a hearing during the battle over Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

As it was in the Middle Ages, disability is still largely a poverty issue. The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is over 65%.

Ed Roberts, a post-polio quadriplegic, entered the University of California at Berkeley in 1964 and effectively began the Disability Rights Movement. With the support of his organizer mom, Zona, Ed fought the university and the State Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. He got the press on his side, championing his cause. When Ed won this battle, a local newspaper carried the headline, "Hopeless Cripple Goes to School."

"I am convinced that we are making the most profound social change that our society has ever known." - Ed Roberts, 1990



80% of people will experience disability at some time in their lives.



"I remember meeting with Leonard Pelletier before he was arrested. I met with Stokeley Carmichael, and others in the Black Power movement. When I told them that we were all fighting the same civil rights battle, they didn't believe me; they didn't understand our similarities. I did. Even now, many people don't realize it."

-- Ed Roberts, 1992

Whenever you see a curb cut, think of Ed Roberts and the work of activists in the Disability Rights Movement.



1947
Parents discuss forming a national advocacy organization during an AAMD conference in St. Paul, MN.

1948
The General Assembly of the United Nations adopts the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

The United Cerebral Palsy Association is founded.

1950
The National Association for Retarded Children is formed. The Muscular Dystrophy Association is founded.

1953
Ed Roberts, "father of the Independent Living movement," contracts polio.

1964
Ed Roberts enrolls at the University of California, Berkeley.

Malcolm X is assassinated on February 21.

1965
Robert F. Kennedy attacks the Rome and Willowbrook State Schools in New York for appalling conditions. Civil Rights marches in Selma, Alabama. The Voting Rights Bill becomes law, nullifying local laws and practices that prevent minorities from voting.

1955
The Montgomery Bus Boycott.

1956
Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas court ruling that "separate but equal" segregated schools violate the 14th amendment to the Constitution.

1957
Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) is founded to coordinate localized southern efforts to fight for civil rights.