



- CELEBRATING OUR LIVES
- CHALLENGING DISABALISM
- ACHIEVING EQUALITY

22ND NOVEMBER - 22ND DECEMBER

CELEBRATING OUR STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY

CHANGING LIVES, CHANGING TIMES:

LEARNING THE LESSONS

FROM OUR HISTORY



1992 Bloc Telathon Nothing About us Without us Campaign which was successful

There are **12 million** disabled people in the UK.

That makes **20%** of our population.

Disabled people have been continually targeted with **69 murders** in the UK between August 2007 and July 2010 according to research by the United Kingdom Council of Disabled People (UKDPC)

519 attacks were reported in the press over the same period, and the number still increases. Last year reported hate crime against disabled people rose by 20% according to Home Office.

"There are many reasons why disabled people are targeted. These often arise from the social conditioning through myths, fears and stereotypes.

Government Policy is to get disabled people off benefits and into work. However, even at a time of full employment before 2007, only 48% of working age disabled adults were in work or looking for work. Discrimination by employers is the one of the main factors behind the high rates of unemployment. Recent attacks by Ministers on disabled people as "scroungers" have fuelled media distortions and perpetuated the negative attitudes, prejudice and discrimination of disabled in all areas of life.



Gains in accessing independent living, family life, inclusive education or benefits; and seeing these as Rights backed by the **social model thinking**, have only come from the struggles of a minority of disabled people and their allies. These are now all under attack by the Coalition Government's policies.

CHALLENGING THE THINKING THAT LEADS TO DISABILITY HATE CRIME!

Understanding our history, our resistance and struggle for rights is an essential part of the change we need to see in our society.

The lack of portrayal of disability in our society is not accidental. Western culture from Greek and Roman times, reinforced in Renaissance Europe, saw the "body beautiful" as an ideal. Those with physical or mental imperfections were seen to be receiving divine retribution, or people to be got rid of. The Bible accepts this but also offers pity towards disabled people as sinners. Until very recently, popular culture has seen disabled people as objects of fear or fun, think of any horror movie you have seen. Such ideas are deeply embedded in myths, legends and classical literature. Today's media continues to reinforce the tendency to judge people by their appearance. The myths about disabled people may come from the past, but they show remarkable present persistence and are deeply rooted in the fears we all have about disability.

Greek period

Following the thinking of Plato and Aristotle **the ancient Greeks** desired a population without blemish, they were the first Eugenicists. In Sparta disabled babies were left out on the mountain side to die. The Greek myth of Hephaestus, involved the other Gods making fun of him because he had a club foot



ROME

In **Rome** Julius Caesar disguised his epilepsy. It was common to match disabled gladiators against animals for amusement. Disabled babies were thrown under chariots.



Witch hunts

From **1480 to 1680** witch hunts took place in Europe. Witches were often identified by either having a disabled child or being disabled themselves. Classic children's stories such as Hansel and Gretel were based on such ideas. The Church supported the scapegoating and wrote the Malleus Mallifcarum, 'the witches hammer' which linked disability with witchcraft. More than 8 million women were subsequently killed

Medieval

In **Medieval** churches, gargoyles were built on the outside to keep evil at bay, whilst round the altar were pictures of perfect people. The first asylums were set up in order to protect the disabled and mad from abuse and ridicule



Martin Luther, the founder of Protestantism, was quoted in saying 'take the changeling child to the river and drown him, when speaking of disabled children. Even today, witchcraft is being used to exorcise children. A recent inquiry into Victoria Climbié's death established that 30 out of 90 abuse cases involved the exorcism of disabled children.

The Elizabethans introduced a series of Poor Laws as a reaction to the dissolution of the Monasteries, when many disabled people became dispossessed. Widespread poverty resulted from the breakdown of the feudal system. In 1552 Parliament suggested that every Parish should appoint two collectors of alms to assist the churchwardens after Sunday service to *“gently ask and demand of every man or woman what they, of their charity, will be contented to give weekly towards the relief of the poor”*. Beggars were divided into the deserving and undeserving poor. Disabled people were in the first category and were seen as objects of charity

16th
Century



18th - 19th
Century



1781 Ship Zong sailing to Jamaica. Sick and Disabled Slaves were thrown overboard allowing the captain to claim insurance for the drowned slaves.

As the **Enlightenment** dawned and science was substituted for superstition, things began to change but not always for the better. Hogarth's Rake (1733) ends up in the mad house at Bedlam, his reward for a dissolute life. Writers and artists began to use disability as a metaphor for uselessness, evil or pity. Despite the Enlightenment, the Slave Trade bank-rolls the start of capitalism with many sick and disabled slaves thrown overboard

1750-1850



With the **Industrial Revolution**, the new production methods led to the rejection of more people as not capable of being adjuncts to machines. The ranks of the destitute grew, leading to the 1834 Poor Act and the Workhouse with indoor punitive relief. It was widely believed all beggars were faking it. Working people fought back and prominent Chartists included a disabled son of a slave, William Cuffay

Eugenics



Disabled people began to be seen as more of a threat that had to be contained and locked away (1850 Asylum Act). Darwin's cousin Galton applied his thesis to human beings, leading to the New Eugenics. Disabled people were a threat to the 'gene pool'. This ignores history, where despite prejudice disabled people have often come to the fore in all areas. New sciences, such as psychology, stepped in with false measures of IQ and the scene was set for locking away the 'mentally deficient' for the whole of their lives [1913 Mental Deficiency Act]. The new universal education system also drew attention to disabled children and the same impetus led to segregated schools

1900's

The National League of the Blind became the first formal disabled people's organisation, campaigning for employment and inclusive education. The dominance of a 'medical model' understanding meant that Doctors increasingly claimed the lives of disabled people. We were categorised by our impairments. Veterans returning from war and blind workers rejected this form of labelling that ultimately led to poverty. They fought for the right to work in the 1920s and 1930s with marches and demonstrations



1920 "Justice not Charity" NLB meet in London calling the government to introduce the Blind Persons Act

Fascists throughout Europe, especially the Nazis in Germany, questioned the continuing existence of the burden of 'disabled people.' Why should honest working people put up with paying for the so called 'useless-eaters' ? The result was the T4 programme and the murder of more than 1 million disabled people across the German Empire. Disabled people were forced to wear the black triangle, a symbol originating from the concentration camps marking people as 'anti-social'



In the 1950s and 60s small groups of disabled people, families and charities sought to improve the lives of disabled people.

In the 1970s a new worldwide movement campaigning for the human rights of disabled people was taking shape, following the example of the Civil Rights Movement. This was based on a 'social model' perspective, where people were disabled by barriers in the attitudes, environments and organisation, **not** their impairments. The Disabled People's Movement was born. The rights we now defend are largely due to this movement. This later included people with learning difficulties and those with mental health issues.



Equality means for all of us.

Disabled people includes people with a variety of impairments and may also be part of other oppressed groups; as women and girls, black and Ethnic minority, LGBT, refugees and asylum seekers, religious and secular.

Together, we are fighting to defend these gains and need your understanding & support

For more information on:

UKDHM: www.ukdisabilityhistorymonth.com

School work: www.worldofinclusion.com/qcda.htm

Work place: www.tuc.org.uk/equality/index

UN Convention: www.un.org/disabilities

Inclusive Education: www.allfie.org.uk

Disability Movement: www.ukdpc.net

Disabled People Against the Cuts www.dpac.uk.net

Disability Rights: www.equalityhumanrights.com/...guidance/...equality-act-guidance

Let us know what you are doing for UK Disability History Month and we will put it on our website.

Get your organisation to affiliate to UK Disability History Month 2012. Over 80 affiliated in 2011

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