

The seeds of an audacious disability rights movement sprouted in northern California during the already turbulent 1960s when Ed Roberts (1939-1995), a polio survivor who used a wheelchair and an iron lung, fought to attend mainstream schools in a world without required curb cuts and wide entrances. At a time when few believed people with disabilities could or should be educated and employed, Roberts defied prejudice and architectural barriers to attend UC Berkeley, California's premier public university. In 1962 - the same year that James Meredith first attended the University of Mississippi - he became the first highly-publicized student with significant disabilities to enter the university. Officials housed him in the campus infirmary because no residences could accommodate his massive 800-pound iron lung. His example inspired others with disabilities to apply, and soon Cowell Hospital became the de facto disabled student dorm.

Buried in the so-called Rehabilitation Act redesigned in 1973 to accommodate returning Vietnam veterans was a provision based on the 1964 Civil Rights Act stipulating that individuals with disabilities "should not be denied the benefit of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." Cast in broad terms and bureaucratic language, Section 504 - which would serve as a model for the ADA thirteen years later - basically said that everything touched by the U.S. government needed to be fully accessible to people with disabilities: schools, universities, public offices, transit systems, hospitals. Enforcement of these provisions languished for over four years due to pressure from organizations fearing it would prove too costly. After four years of government stalling, people with disabilities took action. Protests organized by the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities (ACCD) began on April 5, 1977. Women and men of diverse racial and socio-economic backgrounds riding wheelchairs, wielding white canes and crutches, using various forms of communication arrived with personal care attendants, friends, and family at the ten regional Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) government offices across the United States in a series of unprecedented shows of civil disobedience. They soon fizzled out everywhere except San Francisco. "Patient No More" traces this exciting history by following three basic interweaving questions that could help structure assignments and course objectives. Section 504 states:

No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States, as defined in section 705(20) of this title, shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance...

The office of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) was assigned the task of creating the 504 regulations, which would detail how the law would be implemented. Without the regulations, the government did not know how to interpret Section 504, and so from 1973 to 1977, no changes came as a result of Section 504. By 1977, the office of HEW had developed 504 regulations (in consultation with disability activists), which modeled 504 implementation on the civil rights act. But to see these changes begin to get made, it required a signature from the head of HEW, Joseph Califano. The 504 protest had a very straightforward goal, to get his signature, and 24

days after the protest began, the protest succeeded and Califano signed the regulations unchanged.

-Beitiks, Emily Smith and Catherine J. Kudlick, "Curriculum Guide for 'Patient No More: People with Disabilities Securing Civil Rights'(p.5)" (undated) excerpt.