

Foundations of Disability Justice: A Toolkit for Equity



A resource for students, organizers, educators, and workplaces

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Disability Justice** – A framework that goes beyond rights and access to center intersectionality, collective liberation, and anti-capitalist values.
- **Ableism** – Discrimination and social prejudice against disabled people based on the belief that “normal” bodies and minds are superior.
- **Access** – The ability to fully participate in all aspects of life. Includes physical, sensory, emotional, cognitive, and digital access.
- **Interdependence** – A rejection of individualism; the belief that care and support are shared, collective responsibilities.
- **Medical Model of Disability** – Views disability as a problem within the individual that needs to be fixed or cured.
- **Social Model of Disability** – Says people are disabled by society’s barriers (e.g. inaccessible buildings, policies), not their bodies or minds.
- **Crip** – A reclaimed term used by some disabled people as an act of empowerment and cultural identity.
- **Access Intimacy** – The deep understanding and care around access needs between people, often unspoken or built through trust.

Myth-Busting Section

- (“Don’t believe everything you think.”)
- ✗ “Disabled people want to be cured.”
✓ Some do, some don’t. Many reject the idea that they need to be fixed at all.
 - ✗ “Access is just about ramps and elevators.”
✓ Access includes emotional safety, sensory needs, flexible communication, and more.
 - ✗ “If someone doesn’t ‘look’ disabled, they’re faking.”
✓ Disability can be invisible, fluctuating, or masked. You can’t tell by looking.
 - ✗ “Only professionals know what disabled people need.”
✓ Disabled people are the experts on their own experiences and should lead access planning.
 - ✗ “Asking about access is awkward or too hard.”
✓ It’s a basic part of inclusion. It shows care and helps everyone feel safer.

Access Tools

(Some low-barrier, high-impact ideas)

- Quiet/chill spaces at events
- Captions on videos and transcripts for podcasts
- Flexible deadlines and communication styles
- Mic passes and speaking order options
- Sensory-friendly lighting
- Remote participation options
- Clear signage and accessible fonts
- Community agreements
- Access check-ins (see attached)

Sins Invalid's 10 Principles of Disability Justice

Why They Matter?

These principles offer a radical rethinking of disability - not as a problem to fix, but as part of a broader struggle for justice. They move beyond legal access to center intersectionality, collective care, and liberation.

They remind us:

- Oppression is interconnected - race, gender, class, and disability must be addressed together.
- Interdependence is powerful. We all need each other.
- Rest, access, and joy are not privileges - they are rights.
- Disabled people, especially those most impacted, must lead.

Disability justice is not just about including people - it's about transforming the world.

1. **Intersectionality** - All forms of oppression are connected; race, gender, class, and disability must be addressed together.
2. **Leadership of Those Most Impacted** - Center Black, brown, queer, trans, and poor disabled folks.
3. **Anti-Capitalist Politics** - We value people over productivity. Rest and slowness are not shameful.
4. **Commitment to Cross-Movement Solidarity** - Disability justice is part of broader liberation struggles (e.g. racial, climate, reproductive justice).
5. **Recognizing Wholeness** - Disabled people are whole human beings, not defined by deficits.
6. **Sustainability** - We reject burnout culture. Our work must be rooted in care and balance.
7. **Commitment to Cross-Disability Solidarity** - We respect the diverse experiences across disability types.
8. **Interdependence** - We survive and thrive through mutual care, not forced independence.
9. **Collective Access** - Access is a shared responsibility. Ask, listen, and adapt.
10. **Collective Liberation** - None of us are free until all of us are.

Name:

Pronouns:

ACCESS CHECK-IN GUIDE

Please answer this prior to meetings, classes, or events:

What do you need to fully participate today?

Do you need a break or rest option?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Would you like a check-in buddy or quiet support?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Are we using language, tech, or space in a way that feels inclusive to you?

☐ YES ☐ NO

If not what can we do better?

Is there anything you'd like others to know about your communication, sensory, or emotional needs?

☐ YES ☐ NO

If so, what?

(Optional) Additional Comments / Concerns / Feedback