

# Solidarity Syllabus – May 2018

## *Disability Solidarity*

In this month's episode of *Solidarity Is This*, Deepa speaks with with [Alice Wong](#), founder of the [Disability Visibility Project](#). Their conversation explores the experiences that people with disabilities have in being part of social change movements, and how to combat ableism.

The Disability Visibility Project “is an online community dedicated to recording, amplifying, and sharing disability media and culture.” DVP encourages disabled people to record their narratives using the StoryCorps app, moderates online discussions about disability representation, and uplifts disabled media. You can find the project and [podcast](#) at [DisabilityVisibility.com](#), on Twitter at [@DisVisibility](#), and [on Facebook](#). You can also donate to support DVP at [www.patreon.com/DVP](#).

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## Disability Justice

In the United States, 1 in 5 people has a disability — in total, [around 22%](#) of the population. [According to the CDC](#), 25% of women have a disability, and around 33% of Black people are disabled. There are a wide range of physical and mental disabilities that can affect different aspects of a person's life, like movement, vision, hearing, communication, learning, and more. Some disabilities are invisible or hidden while others are not, and one type of disability can affect each person differently.

In 2005, [disabled activists of color](#) began building a framework for Disability Justice. This framework centers around ten foundational principles focused on coalition-building, community power, and intersectionality.

- intersectionality
- leadership of those most impacted
  - anti-capitalism
- commitment to cross-movement organizing
  - [recognizing wholeness](#)
    - sustainability
- commitment to cross-disability solidarity
  - interdependence
  - collective access
  - collective liberation

To learn more about the disability justice framework, a [good starting point](#) is *Skin, Tooth, and Bone – The Basis of Movement is Our People: A Disability Justice Primer* from Sins Invalid.

### Further readings:

- [Changing the Framework: Disability Justice](#): How our communities can move beyond access to wholeness – Mia Mingus, LeavingEvidence.wordpress.com
  - [Access Intimacy, Interdependence and Disability Justice](#) – Mia Mingus, LeavingEvidence.wordpress.com
  - [10 Ways We Can Make Leadership Accessible for Sick Folks in Activism](#) – Katie Tastrom, The Body is Not an Apology
  - Thompson, V. & Wong, A. (July 26, 2016). #GetWokeADA26: Disabled People of Color Speak Out, Part One. Ramp Your Voice! <http://wp.me/p3Ov4P-FA>
  - Thompson, V. & Wong, A. (July 26, 2016). #GetWokeADA26: Disabled People of Color Speak Out, Part Two. Ramp Your Voice! Disability Visibility Project. <http://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/2016/07/25/getwokeada26/>
  - [At the Intersection of White Privilege and Disability](#) — Cara Liebowitz, The Body Is Not an Apology
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## Ableism

In this month's episode, Alice encourages listeners "to explore what ableism is, and confront and reflect on their own implicit bias about disability."

Ableism refers to [the set of societal attitudes & practices](#) that devalue and dehumanize disabled people. When we view the world through the lens of ableism, we ignore and reject the experiences that people with disabilities have in different aspects of life, from using public transit to accessing buildings and being fully part of workplaces and classrooms. Ableism pervades at all levels of society, from institutional, systemic discrimination to interpersonal microaggressions.

For a good starting point, check out [What Is Ableism](#), a project founded in the aftermath of the 2016 election to address the "disconnect between the disability community and the liberal, progressive and left activist scene." This site is full of great resources, readings, outreach tips, and action opportunities for fighting and unlearning ableism.

In this short video, ["Ableism is The Bane of My Motherfuckin' Existence."](#) Patty Berne and Stacey Milbern of [Sins Invalid](#) discuss disability justice and how ableism intersects with and compounds other forms of oppression.

In addition, these articles unpack common forms of ableism:

- [6 Forms of Ableism We Need to Retire Immediately](#) — Julie Zeilinger, *Mic.com*
- [6 Ways Your Social Justice Activism Might Be Ableist](#) — Carolyn Zaikowski

- [Disability Ain't for Ya Dozens \(or Demons\): 10 Ableist Phrases Black Folks Should Retire Immediately](#) — Talila Lewis, *talilalewis.com*
- [Please don't edit me out](#) – Rebecca Cokley, The Washington Post

To learn more about ableism from disabled people and activists in real time, explore the hashtags #ableism and #AbleismExists.

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## Issues and Concerns

### *The ADA Education & Reform Act*

*“The Americans with Disabilities Act... is basically our civil rights bill. It basically says that we belong in society, we have protections if we’re discriminated against, and that we have expectations to have access to public spaces... [HR] 620 sends a chilling message to a huge community - it says, ‘you don’t matter.’” – Alice Wong on [Solidarity Is This](#)*

#### Q: What is the ADA?

While far from perfect, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (the ADA) established substantial federal protections for disabled communities. When disabled people encounter buildings that are not accessible, they can file a complaint with the Department of Justice. To comply with the ADA, the business must fix the accessibility issue and pay legal fees — which incentivizes businesses to make their buildings accessible from the get-go.

#### Q: What is the ADA Education and Reform Act?

In February, the ADA Education and Reform Act of 2017 (HR 620) passed the House of Representatives and now awaits a Senate vote. This bill would gut [the ADA](#). HR 620 shifts the burden onto the disabled community instead of businesses who lack accessibility.

#### Q: What can I do to fight HR 620?

[Call](#) or [email](#) your senators and tell them to vote NO on the ADA Education & Reform Act. [Tweet at your reps](#) using the hashtags #HandsOffMyADA and #StopHR620.

Check out this article from Alice Wong to find out more about actions you can take to fight HR 620: [6 Things Can You Do to Protect Disability Rights Today](#)

More resources about H.R. 620:

- [Myths and Truths about the ADA Education and Reform Act](#) — ACLU

- [Calling Congress Is Easier Than You Think — Here's How To Do It](#) — Andrea González-Ramírez, Refinery29
  - [Save the ADA! Oppose H.R. 620](#) — Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
  - [Disability Visibility Podcast, Ep 18: Accessibility and the ADA](#) – Alice Wong
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Disability identities overlap with other cultural and political identities; ableism also overlaps and compounds other forms of oppression like racism, homophobia, transphobia, and more.

### *Disability & Poverty*

- Disabled people are [twice as likely to be poor](#) than non-disabled people.
- Women with disabilities who work full-time only make [73 cents on the dollar](#) compared to non-disabled men, and disabled employees in the US [can be paid less than \\$2 an hour](#).

### *Disability & Mass Incarceration*

- Prison inmates are almost [three times as likely](#) to report having a disability than non-prisoners. Currently, there are [three times](#) as many people with mental health conditions in prisons and jails as in state mental hospitals.
- Kids with disabilities enter the juvenile justice system at [5 times the rate](#) of non-disabled youth. About [85% of incarcerated children](#) have a disability.
- Helping Educate to Advance The Rights of the Deaf ([H.E.A.R.D.](#) @behearddc), founded in part by Talila Lewis (@talilalewis), is an all-volunteer nonprofit that “develops collaborative-transformative-restorative solutions” to fight the criminalization of disability. HEARD keeps a log of police brutality incidents against deaf people. HEARD “has documented a steady increase in the number of deaf incarcerated people in New York.” Deaf incarcerated people are routinely [denied sign language interpreters](#) and other accommodations.

[This syllabus](#) from Talila Lewis, *Disability Justice In the Age of Mass Incarceration: Perspectives on Race, Disability, Law & Accountability*, is full of resources and readings that examine the intersections of race, class, and disability in the mass incarceration crisis.

(Talila A. Lewis, *Disability Justice In the Age of Mass Incarceration: Perspectives on Race, Disability, Law & Accountability*, Northeastern University School of Law, Public Interest Law Syllabus, Summer 2016. [goo.gl/uwGIB0](http://goo.gl/uwGIB0). Course Archive: #DisabilityJusticeNUSL.)

### *Further readings:*

- [Infographic: From Disability to Criminality](#) — Erin Zipper, Julianne Hing, ColorLines

- [Disability Solidarity: Completing the “Vision for Black Lives”](#) – The Harriet Tubman Collective
- [Disability is a hidden side of the police violence epidemic](#) – s.e. smith, Vox
- [The Mass Incarceration of People With Disabilities](#) — Rebecca Vallas, TalkPoverty
- [Callous and Cruel](#): Use of Force against Inmates with Mental Disabilities in US Jails and Prisons – Human Rights Watch
- [Disability is a Cause and Consequence of Poverty](#) – Rebecca Vallas, TalkPoverty

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### *Disability in Media & Culture*

- “[Disabled people] are [20%](#) of the population, and we are only [2%](#) of the images you see on American television, and of those 2%, [95%](#) are played by nondisabled actors.” – Maysoun Zayid

Disabled activist and blogger Vilissa Thompson [started the hashtag #DisabilityTooWhite](#) to call attention to the lack of intersectionality in disability representation.

Further readings:

- [Disabled People Still Aren't Being Cast to Tell Their Own Stories in Hollywood](#) – Alice Wong, *TeenVogue*
- [Confronting the Whitewashing Of Disability: Interview with #DisabilityTooWhite Creator Vilissa Thompson](#) – Sarah Blahovec, HuffPost

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## Being in Authentic Solidarity

**Q: How can you be in authentic solidarity with persons with disabilities?**

*“It’s really a shared experience and also a shared responsibility,”* Alice explains. “We’re all interdependent on one another.” She emphasizes humility and vulnerability in building solidarity: Be honest about what you don’t know. Be willing to listen and do the work, and be willing to be vulnerable as you reach out and learn.

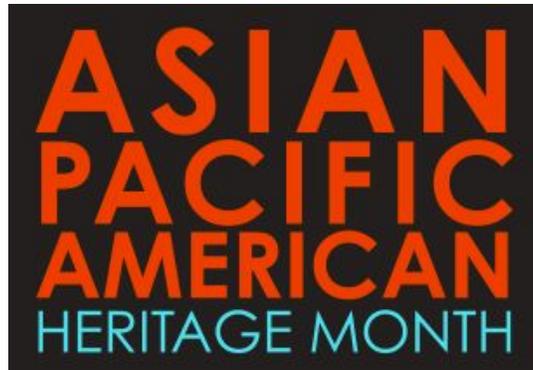
To learn more about disability justice, center and listen to disabled folks, especially people of color. While this is by no means a comprehensive list, here are a few disabled community activists and leaders to follow on Twitter:

[@talilalewis](#)  
[@nothreefifths](#)  
[@Imani\\_Barbarin](#)

[@maysoonzayid](#)  
[@miamingus](#)  
[@autistichoya](#)

[@kriphopnation](#)  
[@sinsinvalid](#)  
[@VilissaThompson](#)  
[@HTCSolidarity](#)

[@DisabledLatinx.](#)  
[@RebelwheelsNYC](#)  
[@SarahJama](#)



May is Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month.

Resources:

\*Check out Episode 20 of the Disability Visibility Podcast: [Asian American Women and Mental Health](#) to hear Alice's conversation with Emily Wu Truong and Jessica Gimeno about mental health advocacy, the model minority myth, and their personal perspectives as Asian American women.

\*At the end of this month's podcast, Deepa reflects on her experience at the [Japanese American Memorial](#) in Washington, D.C. During World War II, over 120,000 Japanese Americans were detained in internment camps at sites around the country – like [Manzanar](#), [Heart Mountain](#), and [Tule Lake](#). Visit these sites and support the preservation of history. To learn more about internment and Japanese American resistance during WWII, explore the documentary series "[Resistance at Tule Lake](#)" and the digital archives at [densho.org](#).

\*[A Different Asian American Timeline](#) is an online project from [ChangeLab](#) which situates Asian American history within the context of racial capitalism.