

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