

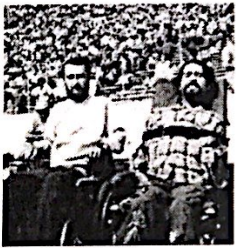
Disabled Americans

Step 1 Read about disabled Americans' struggle for civil rights in Section 6 under the heading "Disabled Americans Demand Equal Access to Opportunities." Then complete the Reading Notes for this group.

Step 2 Read the captions below for the photographs on Placard E.

Step 3 Complete your Station Notes for this group by doing the following:

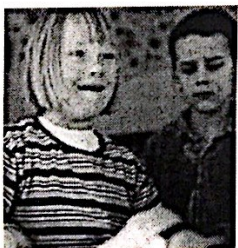
- Sketch at least one detail from the photographs that more fully explains what changes disabled Americans were fighting for. Label the sketch using information from its caption. Draw a line connecting this sketch to your "Changes Wanted" notes.
- Sketch at least one detail from another of the photographs that more fully explains what actions disabled Americans used to achieve change. Label the sketch using information from its caption. Draw a line connecting this sketch to your "How Achieved" and/or your "Successes" notes.



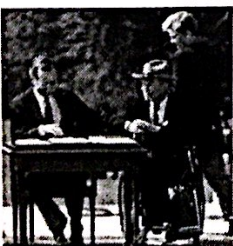
When Ed Roberts began attending the University of California at Berkeley in 1963, the headline in the *Berkeley Gazette* read, "Helpless Cripple Attends Classes at UC." Roberts, proving the headline dramatically untrue, paved the way for severely disabled students to attend college. Later he cofounded the Center for Independent Living to help people with disabilities live independently as fully participating members of society. By 1975, Berkeley was seen as a worldwide model for the disability movement. Pictured are Ed Roberts and Don Galloway, manager of blind services at UC Berkeley.



At an American Disabled for Accessible Public Transit protest in Detroit in 1986, at least a dozen people, including this man, Jerry Eubanks, were arrested. Similar ADAPT protests around the country resulted in the arrests of many others. One of ADAPT's founders, Wade Blank, described his feelings about such protests: "This is very therapeutic, blocking buses. I mean, it's like giving your finger to the white man . . . Anger is the root of advocacy movements. Oppression breeds anger."

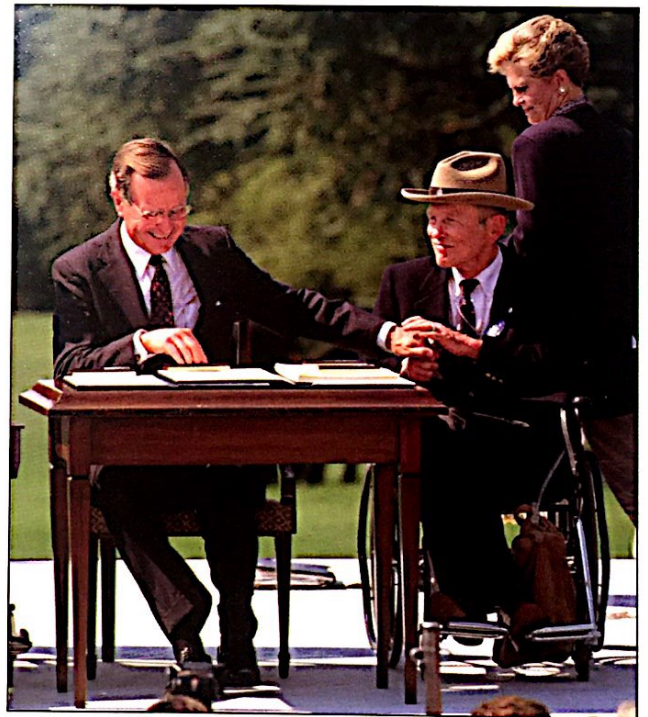
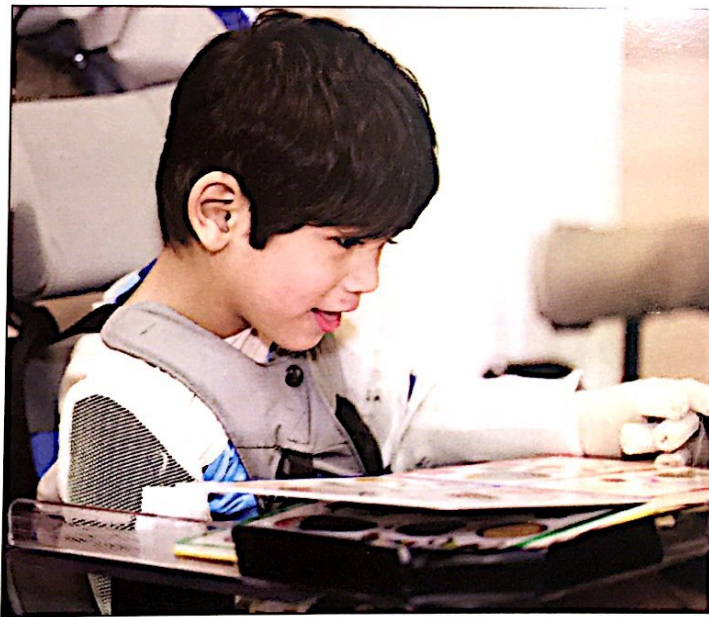


In 1975, Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. It said that students must be in "the least restrictive environment possible." Students, such as this preschooler with Down syndrome, were mainstreamed into classrooms with non-disabled students whenever possible.



Before signing the ADA into law on July 26, 1990, President George Bush remarked, "With today's signing of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act, every man, woman and child with a disability can now pass through once-closed doors into a bright new era of equality, independence, and freedom."

Disabled Americans



Disabled Americans



In 1962, the University of California at Berkeley reluctantly admitted Ed Roberts as a student. Roberts had a severe **disability**, an impairment that limited his daily activities. Polio had left him paralyzed, and he needed a respirator to breathe. California's vocational rehabilitation agency had told Roberts that he would be too disabled to work. But Roberts surprised everyone. He fulfilled his degree requirements and graduated from UC Berkeley.

As a disability-rights activist, Roberts changed the way many Americans viewed people with disabilities. He helped disabled people gain the right to participate in life at the university. His achievements encouraged other disability activists around the country.

Many disabled Americans were inspired by the African American civil rights

movement. So, too, were other groups, including gay Americans and older Americans. Starting in the 1960s, these groups made their own claims for equal rights.

Disabled Americans Demand Equal Access to Opportunities

Disabilities can be both physical and mental. Physical disabilities include blindness, deafness, and impaired movement. Mental disabilities include illnesses like bipolar disorder. According to the 2000 census, nearly 20 percent of Americans over the age of five have some type of disability. But this large population has often been subject to discrimination.

The first groups of disabled Americans to fight for their rights were deaf and blind people. Decades before the civil rights movement, they set up organizations to provide education and other services to those who needed them. They also asserted that blind and deaf people had a right to use their own languages: Braille and American Sign Language. In the early 1970s, after graduating from UC Berkeley, Ed Roberts started a program to make it easier for physically disabled students to attend the university. He and fellow activists pressed the school to improve **accessibility** on campus, making it easier for the physically disabled to enter university facilities. Ramps and curb cuts, for example, made the campus more accessible to people in wheelchairs.

In 1973, Congress passed the Rehabilitation Act, which some supporters compared to the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This law stated, *No otherwise qualified individual with a disability . . . shall, solely by reason of his or her 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.—Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973*

The law granted disabled people the same access to federally funded programs as other Americans. It took four years, however, for government officials to decide how to enforce the law. They finally did so in 1977 after protesters, many in wheelchairs, took over the offices of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in Washington, D.C. Equal access applied to children, too. In 1975, Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. This law set a new standard for educating disabled children. It said that these students must be in "the least restrictive environment possible." Wherever possible, students with disabilities were to be **mainstreamed**, or included in classrooms with nondisabled students.

The most important civil rights victory for disabled Americans came years later. In 1990, Congress passed the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**. The ADA called for better public access for people with disabilities. Changes included braille signs on elevators and accessible public transportation. The ADA has also improved education for disabled children. Equal access to employment remains a problem, however. About 30 percent of people with disabilities are unemployed.