

**Fighting for a Voice**

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Having both anxiety and autism can make school stressful. I got diagnosed with autism recently, and finding out there was a reason behind why I was struggling with supposedly simple tasks makes it better. I can find and search for tools and accommodations to help me get through school, making me able to work with my disability rather than against it. One of the accommodations made was the 504 plan, part of a series of legislation passed for disability rights so disabled people are able to have equal opportunities in life. These works of literature came to be because of the protesting by the Disability Rights Movement. The Disability Rights Movement was a long movement that protested fervently for the government to make changes to help fix the treatment, care for, and perception of disabled people. As with most cases, the movement started slow; but it grew to grab the attention of the government to help start to make the changes needed.

Before the Disability Rights Movement was able to make a difference, the movement needed to grow. There were always disabled people in America but the awareness of them shot up in the 1900s with disabled people looking for jobs with the rise of polio and rubella. Psychiatric patients formed groups, such as “We Are Not Alone” and NARC, to spread awareness. In 1948, President Truman formed the National Institute of Mental Health; and just twelve years after President Kennedy organized “planning committees to treat and research disability.” (National Parks Service). In order to make change, you need to have people listen. Such little awareness required the group to grow in order to achieve this. It started separated, but the people used whatever voices they could to make their needs known. Then with even more national awareness of certain disabilities, the movement gained traction. By staying determined and slowly but surely trying, the group was finally able to get awareness to the government to let them know that change was needed. This national awareness of how disabled people were unable

to do things because of a lack of accommodations allowed for the group to get some of the accommodations they needed to give them a voice in their own communities. More research gave people with less known disabilities a chance to figure out accommodations in their own way.

Even though they had reached awareness from the presidential level, it did not mean that their work was done. The Disability Rights Movement still had a while to go in terms of actual laws. The group protested for certain laws to be passed as well as the amendment of old laws. In 1973, the 504 plan was implemented allowing disabled people to receive assistance in programs they are in. I have my own 504 plan set up to help me achieve more in school than without the assistance. In 1975, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act was passed, which “guaranteed children with disabilities the right to public school education.” (National Parks Service). Work did not stop there, and by 1990 “the United States Congress passed more than 50 pieces of legislation between the 1960s and the passage of the ADA in 1990.” (National Parks Service). The Disability Rights Movement worked and protested hard to get the rights they have today. Being disabled, their voices were already limited but they pushed on despite it and made people listen. It was not perfect then and still is not now, but it is much better than where it started. Now there are online resources which help me find simple hacks to get homework done or clean up my room, and helped me realize that several things I considered to be my faults were actually symptoms of my neurodivergence.

Overall, the movement is inspiring and shows how a group of people can work past their troubles to get what they need to live and prosper here in America. The Disability Rights Movement started disconnected and small, but it grew to have a huge impact on how I can live

today. With more awareness and support incorporated into everyday things, I can more easily get through life and school in a way that works for me.

Works Cited

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