

# Importance of Disabled Representation in Disabled Work & Education



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# My background



Abilities Dance is a Boston-based nonprofit dance company using art as a tool to promote intersectional disability rights in the greater Boston area and beyond.



# Performance Video



Access is artistry.

Different intersecting identities are represented.

The nondisabled dancer isn't "helping" the disabled dancer.

There was a blind audio descriptions editor to work with the dance writer describer.

# Performance Videos



# Tension in Disability Activism and Special Education Work starts with language

- The term itself “special needs” is found offensive among disability advocates
  - Gernsbacher, Morton Ann et al. ““Special needs” is an ineffective euphemism.” *Cognitive research: principles and implications* vol. 1,1 (2016): 29. doi:10.1186/s41235-016-0025-4
- Whether you use people first language “person with a disability” or identity first language “disabled person”, the term itself disability is not offensive

# We are not in the room

When attending this conference last year in person, a building was inaccessible and there was a speaker who while considered great in her field used such problematic language. There weren't enough people speaking from their own experiences in the community.

To make an analogy to another marginalized community (and in no way saying the two are the same) in 2020 we would find it unconscionable to have a field in which we studied black history/served black students without listening to the community's leaders of what is acceptable or even lack black representation in the curriculum and as leaders in the space. We should feel the same way towards disability in the disabled education space.

# Students need to see what they can become

Without representation, we will always fall behind to our nondisabled peers.

Advocate for disabled guest speakers. Expose your students to disabled artists and disabled led productions.

Collectively advocate for a new name than special education as it is othering.

Educate yourself on your own ableism and constantly strive to do better for your students and for the field.



# Performance Videos

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