Macalester College
DigitalCommons@Macalester College

Award Winning History Papers | History Department

1-15-2020

Narratives of Disability Activism at Macalester College, 1907 to the 1990s

Bea Chihak
Macalester College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/hist_awards

Part of the Disability and Equity in Education Commons, and the History Commons

Recommended Citation

Chihak, Bea, "Narratives of Disability Activism at Macalester College, 1907 to the 1990s" (2020). *Award Winning History Papers*. 1.
https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/hist_awards/1

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the History Department at DigitalCommons@Macalester College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Award Winning History Papers by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Macalester College. For more information, please contact scholarpub@macalester.edu.

Narratives of Disability Activism at Macalester College, 1907 to the 1990's

Bea Chihak
HIST 490
Senior Capstone
1/15/2020

Table of Contents

Introduction 2

I. The Early Years (1907-1948) 13

II. Intersectional Activisms: Black Power and Disability Innovation at Macalester (1968-1977) 23

III. What is Access? Students with Disabilities Demand Their Rights (1979-1989) 36

IV. Letters to the Editor: Disability Activists Spread Awareness and Build Macalester Disability Services (1990-1999) 49

Into the 21st Century: Calls to Action 67

Bibliography 73

"Disability Justice is a vision and practice of a *yet-to-be*, a map that we create with our ancestors and our great-grandchildren onward, in the width and depth of our multiplicities and histories, a movement towards a world in which every body and mind is known as beautiful"
— Patty Berne, "10 Principles of Disability Justice"[1]

"For we have an urgent need to rescue all the wisdom that we push aside"
— Khairani Barokka, *Indigenous Species*[2]

Introduction

Living with a disability often means having to tell a history. From repeatedly recounting your life story to medical professionals, to explaining why you missed work or school last week, there is little recognition of the day to day histories people with disabilities tell in order to self-advocate and survive. Folks with disabilities must often explain the legitimacy of their disabilities, their needs, their communities and cultures, even their entitlement to basic human rights. Making these explanations and recounting these histories is often lonely and difficult, a process underappreciated and unarchived by institutions that claim to serve and include.

One such institution is Macalester College. Students, faculty, and staff with disabilities have been surviving Macalester and surviving at Macalester since the earliest years of the institution, or at least the beginning of the 20th century.[3] Yet as of 2019, there are no compiled histories of their existence. Why does this matter? After all, Macalester is a space of higher education and not a museum for the lives who pass through.

I argue that the absence of this collective history reflects a larger force of discrimination against people with disabilities at Mac and that by beginning to tell these histories together, we

---

[1] Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha. *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*. (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018): 29.
[2] Khairani Barokka. "Introduction." *Indigenous Species*. United Kingdom: Tilted Axis Press, 2016.
[3] "Executive Notes." *Macalester College Bulletin*, March, 1907.

can combat the discrimination. The U.S. disability rights movement began in the 1960's in (and outside of) spaces of higher education, pushing against the idea supported by vocational rehabilitation that people must cure, hide, or compensate for their disabilities in order to fit into society or school.[4] Vocational rehabilitation, or voc rehab, was established during World War I to support the effort of turning disabled soldiers "into economically useful citizens."[5] It developed into a practice that sought to bring veterans (and into the mid 20th century a wider population of people with disabilities) into mainstream society through offering job training and psychological support doled out by a team of able-bodied professionals. Voc rehab asserted that having a disability did not mean a person was unable to do work, but also asserted that it was the job of individuals to overcome barriers they faced because of their disabilities.

The disability rights movement asserted that those barriers were an example of discrimination; disability was not an isolated and shameful deficit, but a diverse identity shared by many. Disabilities were not 'disabling' in themselves, rather exclusionary environments made disability burdensome. Disability rights crossed over and was modeled on other social justice movements that came before and during it, such as the civil rights, women's, student's, and poor people's movements.[6] One way that the disability rights movement differed from the other social movements was that it not only confronted discrimination against the group; it also worked to defend and culturally validate the existence of the group itself.

---

[4] Ruth O'Brien. *Crippled Justice: The History of Modern Disability Policy in the Workplace*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001): 21-23.
[5] Jacqueline Vaughn Switzer. *Disabled Rights: American Disability Policy and the Fight for Equality*. (Washington, D.C. Georgetown University Press, 2003): 55.
[6] O'Brien, *Crippled Justice*.

The idea that disability is a shared identity remains a revolutionary one, as media and institutions continue to conceptualize disability as a barrier to overcome. In *Crippled Justice: The History of Modern Disability Policy in the Workplace*, historian Ruth O'Brien scrutinizes the legislative successes of the disability rights movement, such as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. Both documents support and define the civil rights of people with disabilities. O'Brien argues that cultural values of postwar voc rehab remain embedded into these acts.[7]

In higher education we can witness continued stigmatizing conceptualizations of disability in the traditional structure of disability services. Students retain the right to reasonable accommodations, rather than needing to alter themselves or overcompensate to fit into classroom.[8] However, accommodations are given confidentially at an individual basis, perpetuating silence around disability. Professors are legally required to accommodate individual students when or if they appear, rather than change their classes to become more inclusive and welcoming from the onset (as with the idea of universal design for learning).[9] The frequent invisibility of accommodations purports an idea of equality, of not 'calling out' the student(s) with disability. It also suggests the scarcity of students with disabilities on campus, even absence.

This means, firstly, that stigma around having a disability continues, dissuading students from asking for support. When I started my first semester at Macalester in 2016 I had no notion

[7] O'Brien, *Crippled Justice*, 5.
[8] Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990. Public Law 101-336. § 12181. 108th Congress, 2nd session (July 26, 1990).
[9] For a definition of Universal Design see: Sheryl Burgstahle. "Universal Design: Process, Principles, and Applications." University of Washington DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology), 2014.

of the numerous supports that existed for students experiencing mental illness. In addition to accommodations, there were free counseling services, mental health support groups, and a student organization called Voices on Mental Health. If I had come in as a fiery self advocate I would have sought out these resources, or at least paid attention when they were touched on during freshman orientation. I was definitely not a fiery advocate, however. I did not seek out these spaces because I did not identify as having a mental illness. And I did not want to. Admitting that I was struggling meant conceding that I had not 'grown out of' anxiety and depression, that I could not deal with them 'on my own' in college. I did not want to fail the test of transitioning into Independent Adulthood.

Now I am a senior, finally starting counseling just last spring, happily joining Voices this fall. In hindsight, the ideas I had about mental illness and mental health more broadly were fraught. But three years ago, I did not have the language to articulate the shame I waded through, where it came from, or what it kept me from. I began to learn this language, funnily enough, when I stumbled upon the history of the disability rights movement.

Before I get into this I want to note that many students do not have the privilege I did to hide their disability and still make it in school, do not have the privilege to enter counseling when they get around to it, instead finding themselves hospitalized. My experience is by no means everyone's; it represents only a tiny sliver within the varied forms of identity and intersectionality across 'disability.' My story is also not meant to stand in for anyone else's. Instead I hope to offer an entry point into articulating why sharing more and all of our stories is worthy of being called history and essential to enacting social change.

My sophomore year, in the fall of 2017, I took a course with Dr. Crystal Moten called Narrating Black Women's Resistance. Professor Moten asked us, for the final assignment, to write a biographical essay on the history of a female-identifying, African American activist. Looking through oral histories, I stumbled on one by Johnnie Lacy. Conducted in 1998 as part of U.C. Berkeley's *Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement Oral History Series*, the interview centered on Lacy's prolific activism and directorship of the Berkeley Center for Independent Living in the 1970's and 80's. Johnnie Lacy described how she became part of the disability rights movement; how, though she had worked for years in racial and economic justice and lived with a physical disability, she did not relate to the disability rights movement.[10]

That is, not until Lacy witnessed the 504 sit-in, where folks with disabilities demanded regulations on Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, which granted civil rights to people with disabilities. They protested in the HEW building for 28 days.[11] They pushed against ideas of disabled people infused in the media and demonstrated community around disability. Lacy then began to make the connection between the way her identities as a woman, African American, and poor were discriminated against and the day to day struggles she faced because of her disability. Lacy worked, too, to make the disability rights movement more inclusive to different cultural understandings and experiences of intersectional identities with disability.[12] In a 504 training among other people with disabilities, Lacy said, "I could identify myself with a whole

---

[10] Johnnie Lacy, "Director, Community Resources for Independent Living: An African-American Woman's Perspective on the Independent Living Movement in the Bay Area, 1960s-1980s," an oral history conducted in 1998 by David Landes, (Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2000): 80.
[11] Kitty Cone. "Short History of the 504 Sit in." Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF), 1997.
[12] Johnnie Lacy, "Director, Community Resources," 104-113.

group of people that… I didn't really know existed… it gave me a sense of pride as a disabled person. [It] made me feel like a whole person."[13]

I wish I could say that reading Lacy's words and researching for this project led me to have a neatly summarizable epiphany. Instead it was the beginning of an awareness that came gradually, one that I hope to spend the rest of my life growing and sharing. Before this class, I did not know that the disability rights movement existed. I had never reflected on the portrayal of disabled people in the media and how that affected my own assumptions. Later, seeking out this space I began to think about the narratives my family had around my mom's deafness. I learned that deafness was a widespread identity, that I could name the experiences I had growing up with my mom, not oddities or obstacles, but a form of disability culture.

I began to draw hesitant connections between mental illness and disability, began to open up about struggles I was having. Working for Cow Tipping Press I learned about literary misrepresentation of people with developmental disabilities. Studying away in Cochabamba, Bolivia, I witnessed university students with disabilities demand a global restructuring of the education system, contrary to a U.S. narrative that the ADA solved discrimination against people with disabilities. Reading Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarsinha I learned this was an ancient movement with a new name, Disability Justice.[14] When Lydia X.Z. Brown spoke on campus last semester I learned about the continued institutionalization of disabled lives.[15] When Deej Savarese came to campus in November 2019 and screened his documentary on freeing people with disabilities and creating inclusive schools, I wondered why so few people showed up.

---

[13] Johnnie Lacy, "Director, Community Resources," 98.
[14] Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work*, 2018.
[15] Lydia X. Z. Brown. "Cripping Intersectionality: Neurodiversity and Disability Justice." Lecture, Macalester College, Saint Paul, MN, February 1, 2019.

Hadn't we flooded in to see Winona LaDuke and Angela Davis? Then I remembered that two years ago, I likely would not have gone to see Deej.

With no understanding that there was a disability justice movement, I had no reason to take interest in it; with no experience considering mental illness a shared identity, I had no reason to pursue community around it. Despite the resources and wealth of knowledge that existed on campus, I found them, I felt, by accident. As of 2019, Macalester offers no courses in disability history and has no Disability Studies department. The lack of academic visibility of disability and the movement leads to continued stigma. Just as crucially, so does a lack of visibility of disabled lives, the histories and existence of students, faculty, and staff with disabilities on campus. How would my experience have been different if I heard of struggles similar to mine being publicly and structurally addressed, rather than 'taken care of' behind the walls of disability services?

This is a cyclical issue that has been going on throughout Macalester's history. In 2000, *The Mac Weekly* interviewed Danette Crawford '01, a student with cerebral palsy completing her honors thesis on sexuality and disability. The interviewer, Rino Koshimizu, asked "do you know if you're the first student at Macalester who's used the wheelchair for their main mobility?" Crawford replied, "I'm not sure, but I know there hasn't been one for a long time."[16] Crawford goes on to describe her experience struggling her first semester of college to find a support network and accommodations. In fact, less than a decade before Crawford's interview, Jessica Sundin, a mobility aid user herself, wrote an article "for the disability wise about choosing a school," detailing Macalester's accessibility (and lack thereof) and her own struggles to receive

[16] Rino Koshimizu. "Danette Crawford explores mind, body, and soul." *The Mac Weekly*, December, 2000.

accommodations.[17] How would Crawford have benefitted from hearing Sundin's experience and insight?

Because there was little visibility of this article outside of a few issues of *The Mac Weekly*, because Sundin herself had left Macalester a few years earlier and so few wheelchair users attended Macalester, Crawford was obliged, like nearly every single student, faculty, and staff member with disabilities, to reinvent the wheel of self-advocacy when she arrived on campus. To reinvent methods of survival. To reinvent disability activism.

What if we did not need to reinvent this knowledge to graduate from Macalester, to work here? What if disability history-telling was not solely lonely and difficult and underappreciated? What if we met our crip Mac ancestors,[18] drawing their voices out from the ivory tower of elevator-less silence, what if we joined them? What if we became the freed ancestors of future generations?

The Project

The history of disability at Macalester is not a clean arc where the college gradually became more accessible, students with disabilities organizing more and more until there was a clear blueprint for the networks that exist today. Instead, over the last century students, faculty

---

[17] Jessica Sundin. "Accessibility at Macalester questioned." *The Mac Weekly*, April, 1993.
[18] "Crip ancestors" is a term used by disability justice activist Stacey Milbern to describe an approach to conceptualizing disability history. Milburn writes, "people sometimes assume ancestorship is reserved for those of biological relation, but a queered or cripped understanding of ancestorship holds that, such as in flesh, our deepest relationships are with people we choose to be connected to and honor day after day." (Stacey Milbern. "On the Ancestral Plane: Crip Hand Me Downs and the Legacy of Our Movements." Disability Visibility Project, 2019.)

and staff with disabilities at Macalester have led waves of activism, sparking and resparking disability awareness on campus.

In this essay I bring out some of these activisms. I also examine the narratives they are archived inside of, which hint at why this awareness so repeatedly seems to disappear from campus. In researching for this project, I turned mostly to *The Mac Weekly*[19] digital Archives where I used keywords including but not limited to "disability(ies/ed)," "handicap(ped)," "mental illness," and "accessible(ity)." Searching in the Digital Commons, I also found articles from the *Macalester Today* and several oral history interviews with professors. In the physical Macalester Archives, archivist Ellen Holt-Werle guided me to the collection of Macalester *Focal Point* magazines as well as old Student Handbooks.

I focus on the Macalester newspaper because it is one of the few sources that tells the disability history of Mac, but media narratives of disability also clue into larger institutional and societal perspectives of disability by people at the time they are written. In *Representing Disability in an Ableist World* Dr. Beth A. Haller argues that media is often a central place where people with disabilities are represented, as they are often excluded from other parts of society.[20] It is the only space where many able-bodied and disabled people witness disability and impart values about it, giving "a blueprint of the cultural codes in societies."[21]

---

[19] *The Mac Weekly*, established in 1914, is "a student-run publication that covers on-campus news, highlights student interests, and provides a forum for opinion and discussion of issues pertinent to the Macalester community." ("Who We Are & What We Do." *The Mac Weekly*, 2019.) It is circulated across the campus.

[20] Beth A. Haller. *Representing Disability in an Ableist World: Essays on Mass Media*. Louisville, KY: Advocado Press, 2010.

[21] Haller, *Representing Disability*, 43.

In this essay I ask: What narratives exist about disability activism at Macalester, and what do those narratives illuminate about how people with disabilities on campus conceived of access and what they sought to change? I divide the essay into four body sections: “I. The Early Years (1907-1948)” “II. Intersectional Activisms: Black Power and Disability Innovation at Macalester (1968-1977),” “III. What is Access? Students with Disabilities Demand Their Rights (1979-1989)” and “IV. Letters to the Editor: Disability Activists Spread Awareness and Build Macalester Disability Services (1990-1999).” I identify two competing narratives that appear in each of the sections, throughout the chronology. One narrative celebrates disability activism that is individualistic, championing only individual people with disabilities and their feats. It focuses on progress Macalester has made, and is often framed in terms of charity work that the college and/or its able-bodied students do on behalf of disabled people. The second narrative identifies disability activism in collective struggles of people with disabilities at Macalester, asserting that the activism is an ongoing project combatting persistent exclusion and inaccessibility at Mac. I finish the essay with a concluding section, “Into the 21st Century: Calls to Action.” In this section I give a brief overview of significant changes in the 21st century and pose the question: How do we bring narratives of disability activism together in an accessible and accretive history?

I do not want this essay, one capstone by one Macalester student, to be stand alone. Rather, I hope that this essay will become part of, part-threshold to, a larger campus-wide effort to start openly acknowledging, displaying, addressing, and sharing the history of students, faculty, and staff with disabilities at Mac. In the final section of this essay I offer a call to action, voicing further initiatives readers can take. In the spring I will continue this project in the form of bringing it to the Radical MacACCESS event, to the library, and conducting oral histories with

alumni with disabilities and others. When I graduate I hope that incoming first years find all the joy of discovering disability justice and its communities that I did, with less loneliness along the way. I hope that they will find pride in taking part in the identities and activisms Macalester folks have lived out since the earliest years of the institution.

I. The Early Years (1907-1940's)

In this section I analyze the earliest narratives that mention disability in the Mac Weekly. *I examine two cases of student veterans and argue that they called out a contradiction where vets were honored in the memorialization of their feats, while living vets with disabilities faced exclusion and discrimination. The sources also hint to disability coalition building. I then analyze a short narrative written about a blind Macalester student to demonstrate the ways in which students with disabilities' voices on campus were silenced. I contextualize veteran and nonveteran student activism within that of national disability rights organizations and conclude that students with disabilities were surviving and thriving not only as a result of their powerful self-advocacy, but because of the visions and labor of these organizations and their precursors.*

The first mention of disability I found in the Macalester Archives dated back to 1907. An excerpt from the *Macalester College Bulletin*,[22] it declares that the Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching was revoking pension benefits from Macalester faculty because the college required a certain number of trustees to be Presbyterian. The author protests that this ruling "excludes a vast majority of [religiously affiliated] colleges that most need this beneficent provision for the aged and disabled teachers. It is true that Macalester has not yet men needing such assistance, but the need will surely arise."[23]

The author portrays disability here as a naturally occurring phenomenon, rather than a deviation from normal. However, they also view disability as arising in higher education only within the bounds of old age, alluding that all Macalester employees are young, able-bodied, male (and white). The author calls to a kind of activism and legal change on behalf of people with disabilities, who, they claim, only exist outside of Macalester at the moment of publishing. Another article in 1911 followed the College Board's involvement in the issue, emphasizing the

---

[22] The *Macalester College Bulletin* was a precursor to *The Mac Weekly*.
[23] "Executive Notes," 1907.

need for retirement funds for faculty who “become disabled.”[24] This associates disability with an inability to work.

It is not surprising that the first mentions of disability at Macalester relate to the college as a workplace, rather than the attendance of students with disabilities. Many people with disabilities at this time would not have been permitted to attend higher education, instead institutionalized in hospitals, lunatic asylums, and workhouses.[25] Decades into the 20th century, education reform was still not applied to students with disabilities. Even the 1965 Higher Education Act, which offered support services for low-income and first generation students, did not extend the services to students with disabilities until 1976.[26] Instead, much of the legislation and activism around disability in the early 20th century pertained to veterans, and the possibility of returning to work or school with disabilities.

As years and wars passed and the number of veterans with disabilities increased, public understandings of the meaning of disability shifted. No longer were people with disabilities only the older aged, nor ‘uneducable’ individuals hidden in institutions, or gawked at in freak shows. Now people with disabilities were also war heroes. They were often young men who could still work, with support. Representations of disabled victims, heroes, and martyrs became popular.[27] However, these representations, combined with the efforts of voc rehab served to otherize people with disabilities in new ways.

---

[24] “Stray Items.” *Macalester College Bulletin*, December, 1911.

[25] “The Rise of the Institutions, 1800-1950.” *Parallels in Time: A History of Developmental Disabilities*. The Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, 2019.

[26] L. Scott Lissner. "Education, College and University." In *Encyclopedia of Disability*, by Gary L. Albrecht. Sage Publications, 2006.

[27] O'Brien, *Crippled Justice*, 2.

Voc rehab, though it centered on the movement out of institutions, was grounded in three problematic notions. First was the need to hide or mask disability. As Ruth O'Brien asserts in *Crippled Justice*, disability was seen as a variation from the norm that people needed to compensate for to succeed in school or the workplace.[28] Second, the key to rehabilitation centers was the team of able-bodied experts who diagnosed and educated their clients.[29] This suggests that the best way to learn how to live as a disabled person is from able-bodied professionals not in communities of people with disabilities. Third, voc rehab often focused on physical disability thought to be accompanied by an "emotional maladjustment" that needed to be fixed.[30] This renders nonphysical disabilities invisible, denying the validity of mental illnesses such as PTSD, and suggests that disabled people cannot articulate what is best for themselves.

In the *Mac Weekly* Archives, both a 1921 essay and a recurring 1940's column undermine the efforts of voc rehab, expressing a different narrative on disability in the way they discuss and represent disabled veterans. In 1921 the *Mac Weekly* published an issue dedicated to a Memorial Week commemorating Mac's record of service in WW1. One piece, published anonymously under "Essays", reads like a personal account told from the perspective of a veteran, touching on themes of disability and exclusion. Written in third person, the essay describes "a capable young fellow" who needed food and financial support.[31] He had just come back from war and was "a bit nervous of course and sudden noises frightened him and his limp was quite noticeable too."[32] He approaches another man to ask for help, "an average man who

[28] O'Brien, *Crippled Justice*, 23.
[29] O'Brien, *Crippled Justice*, 7-8.
[30] O'Brien, *Crippled Justice*, 7-8.
[31] "Essays," *The Mac Weekly*, April, 1921.
[32] "Essays," 1921.

served his time evading income and war taxes."[33] The man turns him away in disgust. The protagonist expresses helplessness; "'Disability' from the government didn't go far enough [and] there was no work that he could do."[34] He describes how, as he stands in the street, no one notices or cares that he is there.

The author juxtaposes Macalester's celebration of veterans on the page with the experience of a returning vet who receives no celebration and little support. He alludes that this lack of support is due to public perceptions of the veteran's disability, represented by both a limp as well as manifestations of mental illness, nervousness and trauma. The author compares the protagonist and the man he asks for help--one is a veteran and one is not, and one is disabled and the other is not. He states that before the war, he would have had the same chances as the able-bodied man, whom he describes as being part of his same 'flock.'[35] While the topic of attending Macalester as a student does not come up explicitly in this essay, the placement of the essay next to a column honoring Mac student veterans hints at parallels. Perhaps the 'flock' suggests that both men went to Macalester. Where they were once bound together in this identity, now the protagonist does not have the same chances to use his degree, instead facing widespread discrimination for disability.

The author combats a narrative of disability then gaining popularity--that if disabled people worked hard enough their disabilities would not affect them. He also flags a telling of disability history that publicly showcases vets with disabilities as martyrs, while dehumanizing them structurally and in day to day interaction. Interestingly, he does this *within* a showcasing of

---

[33] "Essays," 1921.
[34] "Essays," 1921.
[35] "Essays," 1921.

vets, calling the Mac community to be wary of who they are forgetting with a nameless narrator who represents many lives, not just the burnished dead.

A second example of Macalester students pushing against voc rehab disability narratives takes place two decades later in a late 1940's column, "For Vets Only." Written in 1947 and 1948 by Macalester columnist and student veteran Paul Weeldreyer, "For Vets Only" reported on resources offered to returning veterans, the number of male and female vets enrolled at Mac, relevant legislation and recent national news, and even the histories and lives of older vets.[36] In the two articles that I found, Weeldreyer brings out issues pertaining particularly to veterans with disabilities. Where the 1921 essay explored an anonymous disabled veteran's experience of stark isolation, struggling on the streets rather than attending school, "For Vets Only" works to support and collectivize the many veterans on campus, as well as build awareness of vets outside campus and the issues they face. Weeldreyer promotes a widespread allyship that contrasts with voc rehab's assertion that the best thing for disabled people is the expertise of the non-disabled. Instead, the column's readers find a community of those with shared experiences and disabilities.

"For Vets Only," while beginning to offer a different narrative of disability activism, retained some problematic elements. In one issue, for example, Weeldreyer reported on a U.S. Office of Vocational Rehabilitation study that found disabled workers were more efficient and had fewer absences in the workplace than able-bodied workers.[37] This pushes against a perception of people with disabilities as incapable and speaks to worries Mac students with disabilities may have had. At the same time, Weeldreyer does not reference any additional

---

[36] Paul Weeldreyer. "For Vets Only." *The Mac Weekly*, April, 1947; Paul Weeldreyer. "For Vets Only." *The Mac Weekly*, March, 1948.
[37] Weeldreyer, "For Vets Only," 1948.

support people with disabilities receive in the workplace. The column's focus on taking advantage of voc rehab benefits and knowledge as much as possible is constructive, but it also revokes space disabled students may have taken to question high expectations for disabled people in the workplace, and why the VA was accommodating these expectations rather than the people whom it served.

In fact, during this time, one organization was questioning these standards and explicitly calling them out as discrimination. Chartered in 1942, the American Federation of the Physically Handicapped (AFPH) later served as a force in the 1960's disability rights movement. AFPH brought together representatives from various government agencies, veterans among them, to promote the employment of people with disabilities and create accessible legislation.[38] This approach differs from "For Vets Only" because it conceptualized disability as a central and distinct identity. Similar to how the earliest Mac account of disability associates disability exclusively with old age (but distinct at the level of representation), the 1920's and 40's works associate disability with being a veteran. What, then, were the narratives around young, non-veteran Macalester students with disabilities before the 1960's? What activisms and collectives did they build and participate in?

These are exceedingly hard questions to answer because of how unarchived the lives of Macalester students with disabilities are during this time. However, I wanted to touch on a short example narrative that I found to remind us that this is not because people with disabilities did not exist at Mac. Rather, they were made invisible in many ways on Mac's physical campus and

---

[38] Lindsey Patterson. "The Disability Rights Movement in the United States." *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History*. (Oxford University Press, 2018): 443-3.

within narratives written about them, narratives of the 'inspirational disabled person' that would be repeated for decades.

A 1929 issue of the *Mac Weekly* includes a section called "Out of the Current" that lists tidbits about what was going on at Macalester--mostly jokes, quippy quotes and puns. In the middle of the list, the anonymous author states:

> Students who are always complaining about their troubles should take a lesson from Miss Evangeline Larson, Mac's blind student. What a noble spirit to carry on like this, and courage that defies all handicaps. She is making Macalester finer by her splendid example.[39]

This utterly patronizing description of Larson renders her invisible and voiceless on the basis of her disability. It claims to uplift and honor her 'carrying on'--what readers can only guess to mean living--as the author assumes that everyone (including Larson) would agree disability makes life so difficult it is not worth living. It needs to be overcome, 'defied,' to live.

Funnily enough, Evangeline Larson is mentioned in no less than twenty more articles published in the *Mac Weekly* between 1929 and 1931. None of the others mention her blindness. They also do not quote her. Instead they supply Larson's name on lists and information on musical performances that she was involved in, the Sigma Alpha Iota musical sorority and the Chi Phi Delta literary society that she joined.[40] While the courageous "noble spirit" narrative depicts Larson as isolated and existing to benefit and inspire other Macalester students, the other articles show Larson becoming part of and building her own communities on campus based on her interests. We have no information on Larson's perspective of Macalester as an inclusive or

[39] "Out of the Current." *The Mac Weekly*, October, 1929.
[40] "Sigma Alpha Iota Pledges Eight." *The Mac Weekly*, December, 1929; "Chi Phi Delta." *The Mac Weekly*, June, 1930.

exclusionary space, what resources she found to navigate a campus where she was blind among a sighted majority. Larson may not have even been the only blind person at Macalester. While the author calls Larson "Mac's blind student" in 1929 (note the possessive gives agency to the college, revoking it from Larson), that does not mean that in 1930 onward there were not other blind students--no statistics exist. Perhaps other women with disabilities made up the groups Larson was in. The ways they may have sought out and supported each other have disappeared with a paragraph that turns disability into one person's burden.

It is easy and impossible to dismiss this narrative as 'a product of the times.' We may hold misconceptions that a) society had no positive narrative examples of blindness and disability at this time, because b) disability (in this case, blindness) as an identity was not widely circulated until the disability rights movement, decades later.

Contrary to both of these, in Chapter 7 of *The New Disability History*, historian Catherine J. Kudlick describes the work of an 1890's movement to consolidate and define a blind identity. Kudlick discusses the competing narratives on blind identity within two journals, *The Problem* and the *Outlook*. Based in Kansas, *The Problem* "was the official voice of the American Blind People's Higher Education and General Improvement Association (ABPHEGI)."[41] Its publisher-editor, D. Wallace McGill, hoped the journal would spark a movement to combat the oppression and isolation blind people in the U.S. often experienced. *The Problem* included reports on news related to the Blind, conventions and proceedings, as well as debates about education and battles for access to higher education, and practical tips on how to succeed in a

---

[41] Catherine J. Kudlick. "The Outlook of *The Problem* and the Problem with the *Outlook*: Two Advocacy Journals Reinvent Blind People in Turn-of-the-Century America." *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*. The History of Disability Series. (New York: New York University Press, 2001): 187.

majority-sighted college.[42] It also included a "Personal letter addressed to the people of the U.S." calling for any and all to give the addresses of blind people in their communities, raising awareness of their existence and calling for allyship in building communities of blind people.[43]

By 1907, however, *The Problem* had ceased to gain widespread popularity. In its place came a journal called the *Outlook* that also worked to create a blind identity. The *Outlook* was run by sighted 'experts' such as social workers, educators and medical professionals.[44] Instead of focusing on community-building among blind people, they focused on changing the public's image of blindness, infrequently evoking individual blind people's voices such as well-known Helen Keller. Kudlick stresses, though, that the journals do not represent a clean divide between "good modern blind people and reactionary sighted professionals."[45] Each made headway in the representation of blind people and each maintained problematic elements.

The approaches that the *Outlook* and *The Problem* took in representing people with disabilities echoed Weeldreyer's approaches in "For Vets Only." Like *The Problem*, the column offered a space for and by veteran students about veteran issues including those related to disability. Perhaps in a version of "For Vets Only" that leaned further into this work, creative essays like that published in 1921 would have become part of this collection. Like the *Outlook*, the column put weight into studies done by the 'experts' rather than open a space to debate their power. The *Outlook*'s work is also echoed in the 1929 note about Evangeline Larson where disabled people are presented to be inspiring or palatable for others rather than resources for each other. Larson and other students with disabilities in the early decades of Macalester history were

---

[42] Kudlick, "The Outlook," 188-192.
[43] Kudlick, "The Outlook," 192-193.
[44] Kudlick, "The Outlook," 190.
[45] Kudlick, "The Outlook," 207.

surviving and thriving not only as a result of their powerful self-advocacy, but because of the visions and labor of disability rights organizations and their precursors. Organizations in which these competing narratives of disability existed and were perpetuated into the larger movement of the 1960's and 70's.

II. Intersectional Activisms: Black Power and Disability Innovation at Macalester (1968-1977)

In this section I confront the Mac Archives' silence on the disability rights movement. Using a case study of narratives surrounding Macalester's Educational Opportunity Program (EEO), I argue that the silences reflect a broader national silencing of the work of minorities within the disability rights movement. I juxtapose a narrative of EEO as minorities needing charity with one asserting the need for a campus-wide inclusion of students of color that addresses discrimination. I conclude that EEO significantly influenced the disability history of Macalester.

The disability rights movement began in the late 1960's and gained headway in the 70's with demonstrations, grassroots organizing, and the passage of new legislation. The movement continued throughout the decade and became a global social movement.

Looking through the Macalester Archives, though, there is little evidence of the disability rights movement and the changes it instigated until 1979. In 1979 a *Mac Weekly* article, "College evaluates needs of handicapped students," includes the first mention of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and its relevance to the school's accessibility.[46] Section 504 of the 1973 act stated:

> No otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States shall, solely by reason of his handicap, 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.[47]

This section called out the exclusion of people with disabilities as *discrimination*, rather than an inevitable circumstance due to the severity of a person's disability or effort to assimilate into society. The rights language began to suggest that barriers people with disabilities faced were societal and due to structural and social discrimination, not their disabilities. Section 504 came

[46] Becky Cameron. "College evaluates needs of handicapped students." *The Mac Weekly*. November, 1979.
[47] The Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Public Law, Section 504. Text cited from Joseph Madaus. "The History of Disability Services in Higher Education." *New Directions for Higher Education* 2011, no. 154 (2011): 9.

during a time when at least one million children in the U.S. were denied access to public school on the basis of their disabilities.[48] The act introduced a major change in requirements for all education, far past the threshold of early schooling and into higher education.

Why was this monumental piece of legislation not mentioned in the *Mac Weekly* until six years after it was passed? How did student activists involved in various social justice movements during the 60's and 70's, such as the civil rights movement and the women's movement, not report as extensively (and hardly at all) on disability rights?

I argue that the silences in the archives at this time reflect larger, national struggles the disability rights movement experienced. One is the silencing of disability activism by invoking the words 'disabled' and 'handicapped' in disparaging ways. For example, one 1968 *Mac Weekly* article, "Campus Chest Goal $3000," describes the allocation of funds to several local service projects. The article states that one of the recipients, the Guadalupe Project, "is a multi-service center… designed to combat the handicaps of illiteracy, poverty, and a non-American culture."[49] The author uses "handicap" to signify a barrier or impediment. They assert that the barriers including "a non-American culture" must be 'combatted' in order to make social progress.[50]

In his article "Disability and Blackness," scholar Josh Lukin discusses how throughout U.S. history African Americans were excluded under the premise that "blackness is like a disability" where 'disability' suggested weakness, deficiency, and inferiority.[51] Disability was invoked both to justify exclusion and to combat it by gaining white Americans' paternalistic

---

[48] Vaughn Switzer, *Disabled Rights*, 61.
[49] "Campus Chest Goal $3000." *The Mac Weekly*. November, 1968.
[50] "Campus Chest Goal," 1968.
[51] Josh Lukin. "Disability and Blackness." *The Disability Studies Reader*. (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2013): 308-315.

sympathy, similar to how the 1968 *Mac Weekly*, writing to a predominantly white student body, applies 'handicap' to describe Latinx culture.[52] The article illustrates 'disability' and' handicap' used in a casual all-in-one rhetoric to describe the non-normative that could be 'fixed' through actions like charity.

Both the disability rights and civil rights movements pushed against this conceptualization of disability in different ways that tended to deny intersectionality rather than embrace it. In 1972 initial attempts to pass antidiscrimination legislation for people with disabilities met intense pushback. When several disability rights advocates in the Senate tried to amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include 'handicap', they met opposition from all sides, including African American advocates, who argued that the inclusion of people with disabilities would limit the protection afforded to other classes.[53] This argument persisted for years following the act's passage, explaining in part why Section 504, though modeled on the Civil Rights Act, passed through separate legislation.

Johnnie Lacy and Donald Galloway, activists involved in both the civil rights and disability rights movements, attested to the ways in which many in the civil rights movement pushed against the use of disability rhetoric as a form of oppression by disassociating entirely from activism centered on disability. Lacy describes how many of her fellow African American activists viewed disability as just "one other inequity…to deal with."[54] They conceptualized 'handicap' as an additional symptom of injustice, rather than an identity subjected to injustice.

---

[52] Lukin, "Disability and Blackness," 312; "Campus Chest Goal," 1968.
[53] Vaughn Switzer, *Disabled Rights*, 58; cites Richard K. Scotch. *From Good Will to Civil Rights: Transforming Federal Disability Policy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984): 44.
[54] Lukin, "Disability and Blackness," 309; cites Johnnie Lacy, "Director, Community Resources."

Donald Galloway describes how it was not just the civil rights movement that disconnected from the disability rights movement, but also vice versa. In an oral history Galloway described how he was dismissed from a leadership position at the Berkeley Center for Independent Living in 1973 because he wanted to start a black caucus within the center; "the attitude was that we [African Americans with disabilities] were all one, and there's no need for it."[55] Here board members actively silenced people of color with disabilities in the Center for Independent Living (CIL), a space explicitly intended to be open to the voices of people with disabilities.

The Berkeley CIL was founded in 1972 by Ed Roberts and fellow student activists at U.C. Berkeley who made up the Physically Disabled Student's Program, formerly a smaller student group called the Rolling Quads.[56] The CIL came as a resistance to widespread institutionalization and to a particular university program that dictated that students with severe physical disabilities live in a hospital while enrolled because the school did not have facilities for them.[57] The CIL, echoing the language of the poor people's movement, asserted that people with disabilities should be treated as clients of services and treatments they have a right to access, not voiceless patients. The movement rejected custodial help in favor of innovative self-help groups, and prioritized people's self determination.[58] In the next several decades, CILs spread from one university center to be built across the nation.[59]

---

[55] Lukin, "Disability and Blackness," 312; cites Donald Galloway. "Blind Services and Advocacy and the Independent Living Movement in Berkeley," 2000–2002. *Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement Oral History Series*. UC Berkeley, 2004.
[56] Joseph P. Shapiro. *No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement*. (New York: Times Books, 1993): 53.
[57] Shapiro, *No Pity*, 50.
[58] O'Brien, *Crippled Justice*, 109-111.
[59] O'Brien, *Crippled Justice*, 109-111.

While Ed Roberts gained national attention for his efforts, less attention was given to the labor of activists like Galloway and Lacy who worked to combat restrictive definitions of independence that the independent living (IL) movement maintained. These activists asserted that CILs could be exclusionary to many folks belonging to different minorities who held different understandings of disability and care, and had different barriers to supercede with compounded oppressions they faced.[60] The disability activism that gained the most attention were the most public forms of protest, such as those of a grassroots organization called Disabled in Action (DIA).[61] After Nixon vetoed the 1973 Act twice, DIA's fervent demonstrations helped pass the bill through Congress.[62] In her article "Points of Access" Lindsey Patterson describes how many DIA members had backgrounds organizing in mostly white, middle class summer camps and rehabilitation centers for individuals with physical disabilities. Groups such as these offered spaces for consciousness raising and community building that would help them form networks in higher education, such as the one created by the Rolling Quads.[63] What about students who experienced having disabilities but who did not belong to these privileged backgrounds? What groups were they part of and what kinds of activism did they engage in?

One such instance of student activism comes through in the Macalester Archives that is not labeled disability rights, but that I argue plays a significant role in disability history on campus. In the 1969-70 academic year, Macalester initiated a program called the Expanded Educational Opportunity Program (EEO). EEO was designed to admit low income students,

---

[60] Lukin, "Disability and Blackness," 310-314.
[61] Vaughn Switzer, *Disabled Rights*, 59.
[62] Vaughn Switzer, *Disabled Rights*, 59.
[63] Lindsey Patterson. "Points of Access: Rehabilitation Centers, Summer Camps, and Student Life in the Making of Disability Activism, 1960-1973." *Journal of Social History* 46, no. 2 (2012): 473, 479.

mostly students of color, to Macalester with financial aid and other supports such as career counseling.[64] In an oral history interview conducted in 2007, then Professor of Education and Sociology Michael Obsatz describes that the program led to unexpected friction and strife. Obsatz states vaguely that "some disrespectful things went on," later mentioning damage to the school facilities.[65] He describes the EEO students as segregating themselves when the program intended to integrate them and identifies the students as "vastly different" from the "very upper middle class" Macalester culture.[66] Obsatz believed that one issue was the assumption among the student and faculty that "people who came from… poor economic conditions would be *grateful* to go to Macalester."[67]

In the Mac Archives, I could find no documents authored by members of the EEO. However, throughout the program's approximately five year existence (1969-1974) heated debates about EEO took place in the *Mac Weekly*. One particularly salient article was written by Ira Cummings, an African American student and the *Mac Weekly*'s Minorities editor. In a 1971 article entitled "Racism: a history, an example, a prediction" Cummings identifies a white student's criticism of the EEO program--that students of color "are 'getting everything'"--within the context of racism in U.S. history, as well as offers his own criticisms of the program from a different angle.[68] Cummings states that the year EEO started:

> The stereo in Black House was stolen and two days later it was replaced by the school but when it came time that we wanted to keep the Black Studies courses we had and expand to include others again the cry 'we have no funds available.' The aspirations of Black

---

[64] Michael Obsatz. "Interview with Michael Obsatz, Professor of Education and Sociology." Conducted by Laura Zeccardi, (Macalester Sociology Department Oral Histories, 2007): 5.
[65] Obsatz, "Interview," 5.
[66] Obsatz, "Interview," 5, 12.
[67] Obsatz, "Interview," 13.
[68] Ira Cummings. "Racism: a history, an example, a prediction." *The Mac Weekly*. October, 1971.

> students towards a good education have been continually met with this same form of resistance.[69]

The stereo stolen from the black student center provides an example to the damage that Obsatz refers to, demonstrating violence against students of color. While Obsatz calls the EEO group self segregated, distinguishing between the EEO students and non-EEO students, Cummings draws connections between the experiences, injustices and goals of EEO students and those of other students of color on campus.

Cummings' statement also includes his own perspective on EEO's shortcomings. Cummings expected that EEO, Macalester's proud marker of inclusivity and a program allied with the Black Liberation Affairs Committee, would offer funds for Black Studies. Instead, he finds the effort to be one of tokenization and perceived charity. Charles Cambridge, an international student from Guyana who had held various positions in EEO administration, offered an even more scathing review of the EEO program. Speaking about the preparatory summer program set up for EEO, Cambridge stated that "by attending courses that are either black-taught or taught by teachers sympathetic to blacks, the students get an unrealistic view of Macalester."[70] Cambridge suggests that Macalester is pretending to be truly representative, when in reality African American faculty and their allies are a small minority. Cummings pushed against Cambridge's sentiment that EEO needed to be disbanded, but ultimately condemned Macalester for the soon-to-be disappearance of the program, asserting: "I must say that I hope

---

[69] Cummings, "Racism: a history," 1971.

[70] Ann Kulenkamp. "Mac student blasts EEO." *The Mac Weekly*. September, 1970.

that none of the Black people (all non-whites) have dreams of building a future upon the whims of this white institution."[71]

Cummings also ties together the efforts of the civil rights movement and poor people's movement while calling out Macalester student's perceptions of activism. He states:

> When EEO started for some reason the white students… wanted it disbanded because they expected that a group of Black folks would instead of attending the Poor People's March in Washington continue by mule cart and foot to the gates of Dupre Hall.[72]

To Cummings, EEO is a necessary initiative for Macalester, an institution which should be admitting more students of color from lower economic backgrounds, students who have a right to higher education. Cummings alludes that white students at Macalester are ignorant to the purpose of these movements, the fact that the Poor People's March is a struggle against institutions like Mac's exclusion of poor people. Instead these students believe, as Obsatz suggested, EEO students should be grateful for what they have and navigate campus with only the 'mule cart' they can scrape together.

While Ira Cummings does not mention disability rights and the ways in which activists with disabilities were making these same declarations, I argue that the EEO and the narratives surrounding it significantly influenced disability history at Macalester. Obstatz reported on, and in some ways perpetuated, the narrative that EEO students were distinct from campus and objects of charity rather than part of a program moving toward campus inclusion. Cummings called out and criticized the latter narrative, asserting that EEO activism was shared by others on campus, and was only the beginning of what Macalester needed to do to include low income students and--as Cambridge highlighted--faculty of color. It is possible that EEO and the debates

[71] Cummings, "Racism: a history," 1971.
[72] Cummings, "Racism: a history," 1971.

it sparked among student activists in the *Mac Weekly* helped pave the way for language disability activists would use later, when they demanded rights to accommodations and pushed against the idea that they should be grateful to be allowed to attend Mac. More broadly, these narratives, while for the most part not directly pertaining to students with disabilities, still act as narratives of disability activism in the sense that the activism was always part of other movements, its struggles happening within and adjacent to fellow social justices.

Moreover, the archives also do provide us with a direct connection between EEO and disability activism. In his interview, Obsatz describes the EEO students as having "educational difficulties" and credits the program with the creation of Macalester's Learning Center, "to help students who had learning disabilities, or limitations in their learning, to learn better."[73] The Learning Center was the precursor to Macalester's current MAX Center offering tutoring services and extra academic support outside of classes. From its initial conception the center normalized the needs of students with disabilities and offered support to meet those needs at a center that would benefit students with and without disabilities. Macalester students who enrolled through EEO, some of whom may have had learning disabilities themselves, and EEO allies ultimately showed the college (and perhaps specifically advocated for) the need to open a space for supporting diverse learners.

In her article "In Defense of Themselves: The Black Student Struggle for Success and Recognition at Predominantly White Colleges and Universities" Joy Ann Williamson identifies the late 60's and early 70's as a time when African American students on predominantly white campuses across the U.S. were radically rethinking what education should look like. Influenced

---

[73] Obsatz, "Interview," 6.

by the Black Power movement, they criticized postsecondary institutions as working to "generate middle-class Americans with middle-class (that is, white) values who accepted the existing social order."[74] Black Power-era students worked to bring in Black Studies, cultural centers, and academic support systems. Cummings' activism, the type of EEO program he demands, and the activist community of students of color he refers to, reflects this larger, national movement.

Black Power was also an essential part of disability rights movement. In "Lomax's Matrix: Disability, Solidarity, and the Black Power of 504" Susan Schweik describes how the history of the movement is often 'whitewashed', with a spotlight on the middle class, white activists who gained attention.[75] When the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was passed, congress left its enforcement to the federal courts. Section 504 itself had no regulations issued by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) to define what constituted as discrimination. There followed immediate problems with implementation and interpretation, and few agencies abided without the constant lobbying and labor of people with disabilities. In 1977, the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities (ACCD) began organizing a weeks-long sit-in in the San Francisco HEW offices. ACCD was not alone, rather many different networks and organizations joined the effort including Butterfly Brigade, a group against gay violence, Delancey Street, a rehab program for substance abusers, the Chicano group Mission Rebels, and the Black Panthers.[76]

---

[74] Joy Ann Williamson. "In Defense of Themselves: The Black Student Struggle for Success and Recognition at Predominantly White Colleges and Universities." *The Journal of Negro Education* 68, no. 1 (1999): 102.
[75] Susan Schweik. "Lomax's Matrix: Disability, Solidarity, and the Black Power of 504." *Disability Studies Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2011).
[76] Schweik, "Lomax's Matrix."

Schweik also analyzes media coverage of the 504 sit-in. Most major news sources focused on the voices and images of specific activists like Judy Heumann. However, looking through the Black Panthers archives Schweik found coverage of a “Minorities Panel, consisting of Margaret Irvine, Bruce Oka, Jane Johnson and a third woman,” who testified to the congressmen on the compounded discrimination they faced.[77] Schweik also examines continued problematic terminology around disability in the Black Panther coverage; for example, a description of Bradley Lomax, a disabled Black Panther leader and IL activist, as “victimized by polio.”[78] The Black Panther’s journal was not free of patronizing language applied toward individuals with disabilities. However, in including group representation of the numerous voices in the movement, the journal began to avoid what scholar Anna Mollow has termed “disability essentialism”, wherein “the experiences, needs, desires, and aims of all disabled people are assumed to be the same.”[79]

Combining different activisms and narratives on those activisms in the Macalester archives, we can begin to piece together a movement that intertwines testimonies to intersectionality in individual experiences and evidence of coalition and group organizing. A 1973 issue of the *Mac Weekly* did include one feature story about a student disability activist, Mary Hartle. Written by another student, Fred Cohen, the article begins by identifying Hartle as “a member of one of Minnesota’s smallest minority groups;” that is, blind.[80] Cohen describes

---

[77] Schweik, “Lomax's Matrix.”
[78] Schweik, “Lomax's Matrix.”
[79] Anna Mollow. “‘When Black Women Start Going on Prozac. . . .’: The Politics of Race, Gender, and Emotional Distress in Meri Nana-Ama Danquah’s *Willow Weep for Me*.” *The Disability Studies Reader*. (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2013): 413.
[80] Fred Cohen. “Hartle lobbies for blind at capitol.” *The Mac Weekly.* March, 1973, p. 8.

Hartle's fervent activism outside of campus lobbying at the state capitol. Hartle's efforts reflect the years-long labor of people with disabilities to gain rights and work with the Rehabilitation Act; she credits all programs for the blind as being achieved by blind activists themselves.[81]

At the end of the article, Cohen emphasizes that Hartle feels Macalester is inclusive of blind students. He states, "despite her treatment here, Mary is not likely to stop working for improved conditions for the blind, many of whom are old, undereducated and poor."[82] Cohen distinguishes between 'the blind'--a tiny minority of mostly lower income people, and 'Macalester'--a school that does happen to have a few blind students but is otherwise a space for higher income, sighted individuals, who are "very accepting" of these exceptions to the rule.[83] This language compares to the ways in which Obsatz and Cummings introduce different narratives on EEO. Both Cummings and Hartle offer proof that minority students are actively part of the Macalester campus. Juxtaposing what we know about Macalester in the early 70's through EEO narratives and through Hartle's activism, we can counter Cohen's suggestions that low income people with disabilities were not on campus and that Macalester was inclusive of all people with disabilities.

The Learning Center's origin offers an example of the intersectional activism, a work of lasting disability innovation put into place by low income students, students of color, students with disabilities, and staff and faculty proponents of the program who shared those identities. The history of EEO exists in the face of silence in the archives on other disability rights labor and student survival of violence and oppression. This silencing is reflected in the larger struggles

[81] Cohen, "Hartle lobbies," 1973.
[82] Cohen, "Hartle lobbies," 1973.
[83] Cohen, "Hartle lobbies," 1973.

of the disability rights movement within language, media coverage, and the nature of the legislation. Individual activists and groups facing intersectional oppressions called for a multicultural definitions of independent living and disability. The work to counteract the silencing of these voices in the historiography of 504 is ongoing. Following the efforts of numerous groups in 1977, as well as “forgotten activism in profound engagement at the meeting ground of poverty, urban marginalization, disability and race,” regulations were finally passed on Section 504.[84] This included Section E, which requires public and private institutions of higher education to “consider the applications of qualified students with disabilities and to implement necessary accommodations and auxiliary aids for students with disabilities.”[85]

Into the 1980’s, the *Mac Weekly* coverage on disability activism increased significantly. What did conditions look like for students with disabilities at that time? What testimonies and narratives arose as students with disabilities demanded the equal opportunities that, by 1977, were their rights?

[84] Schweik, “Lomax's Matrix.”

[85] Madaus, “The History of Disability Services,” 9.

III. What is Access? Students with Disabilities Demand Their Rights (1979-1989)

In this section I analyze the ways in which students with disabilities appear in the first narratives regarding compliance with Section 504. As students testified to experiences with inaccessibility on campus and not knowing what resources were available to them, they demonstrated a holistic view of access that contradicted college officials' language surrounding compliance. However, their activisms were often portrayed within paternalistic narratives in the Mac Weekly*.*

In 1979 the *Mac Weekly* published its first article addressing Macalester's compliance with Section 504. Writing "College evaluates needs of handicapped students," student Becky Cameron defines 504 and describes what the college needs to do to become accessible, ending with student testimony.[86] The article demonstrates a sharp contrast between the ways in which college officials and students with disabilities refer to Macalester's accessibility, and define future accessibility.

Jim Rognlie, a representative for the Macalester Health Service and Cameron's interviewee on the evaluation, states that "all that Section 504 entails is mind-boggling. To provide for one may create other problems."[87] Rognlie's use of the pronoun "one" to refer to people with disabilities protected under 504 alludes to the idea that accommodations signified large changes for the benefit of few individuals. Rognlie then offers an example from a case at another college where strobe lights were added to the fire alarms for d/Deaf individuals and ended up triggering epileptic seizures.[88] Rognlie's impression that 504 is "mind boggling" suggests that full compliance is impossible and more harmful than beneficial. While he phrases

---

[86] Cameron, "College evaluates," 1979.
[87] Cameron, "College evaluates," 1979.
[88] Cameron, "College evaluates," 1979. The Epilepsy Foundation now recommends that fire alarm flashes be kept under 2 Hertz with breaks between flashes, "a provision that is usually implemented but not enforced." Giuseppe Erba. "Shedding Light on Photosensitivity, One of Epilepsy's Most Complex Conditions." The Epilepsy Foundation, 2006.

the harm in terms of accommodations hurting other students, it is also likely Rognlie believed that following regulations would harm the college in other ways.

In "The History of Disability Services in Higher Education" Joseph W. Madaus describes the few years following 1977 as a "panic period" for colleges fearing closure due to the cost of compliance.[89] Many lawsuits ensued. One particularly influential lawsuit in 1979 determined that providing a 'reasonable' accommodation meant providing an accommodation that caused "no undue financial and administrative burdens."[90] College officials' conversations on compliance often focused on taking the absolute minimum and least financially burdensome actions possible. A text published in 1986 by Laura F. Rothstein "Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act: Emerging Issues for Colleges and Universities" offers an example of the kinds of literature that college officials would have been reading in the late 70's to 80's to determine what actions to take. Rothstein echoes Rognlie's sentiment, stating that it is difficult to draw precedent for what is required for an accommodation from so many different lawsuits relating to different disabilities. [91]

Importantly, Rothstein asserts that "the most significant development is universities recognition that Section 504 does *not* require that all classrooms and buildings be accessible to handicapped persons but that 'when viewed in its entirety, [the program be] readily accessible to handicapped persons.'"[92] In the same vein, she goes on to cite a 1979 lawsuit that determined "while the refusal to make some modifications or adjustments *might* constitute illegal

[89] Madaus, "The History of Disability Services," 9.
[90] Vaughn Switzer, *Disabled Rights*, 61.
[91] Laura F. Rothstein. "Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act: Emerging Issues for Colleges and Universities." *Journal of College and University Law* 13, no. 3 (1986): 233.
[92] Rothstein, "Section 504," 231. Emphasis mine.

discrimination, substantial modifications or fundamental alterations to a program were *not* required under Section 504."[93] Rothstein illuminates that the commonplace response to 504 was an attempt to follow it as little as possible and avoid structural change that college officials assumed would be more costly. Here the definition of an 'accessible campus' is one that occasionally adjusts to meet the needs of people with disabilities, individuals who are given just enough access to navigate the college rather than the same access held by others on campus.

The student testimonies following Rognlie's assertions offer a completely different perspective on what 504 compliance and accessibility should look like. Cameron quotes Macalester student Atlabachew Tedla, an ambulatory wheelchair user,[94] stating:

> If someone who was totally dependent on a wheelchair came [to Macalester], they really would have a hard time…[Macalester] should make ramps for every academic building and the library. The back ramp at the library is too inconvenient.[95]

While Rognlie depicts individual accommodations cancelling each other out, Tedla demonstrates the ways in which physical accommodations can aid students with differing physical disabilities. Tedla empathizes with and advocates for any person who would need to navigate campus using a wheelchair, based on his own experience periodically using one. Tedla indicates that people with disabilities belong to a larger group and have their own wisdoms to offer to make the campus more accessible to numerous people in the future, not just those on campus at the time of the compliance evaluation.

---

[93] Rothstein, "Section 504," 233. The lawsuit was *Southeastern Community College v. Davis.*
[94] An ambulatory wheelchair user is a person who uses a wheelchair to get around at times and other times does not. (Cressida Hale. "We Need More Awareness of Ambulatory Wheelchair Users." *The Mighty*, 2018.) Cameron uses "partially dependent on a wheelchair" which is reminiscent of terms such as "wheelchair bound" or "confined to a wheelchair" that are offensive and take agency away from the person whose mobility aid is the opposite of confining.
[95] Cameron, "College evaluates," 1979.

In Tedla's conception of accessibility, all people can access all areas of campus, contrary to Rothstein's definition based on a lawsuit of the same year. Tedla states that every building on campus needed a ramp at the time of writing, not just in later renovations or the construction of new buildings. Commenting that "the back ramp at the library is too inconvenient," Tedla also asserts that simply adding a ramp to a building does not make it accessible.[96] True access is not only the existence of features intended to support people with disabilities, those features must also be easy to use, even welcoming. And the people who use them, people with disabilities, get the final say in whether or not they are sufficient.

Another interview in Cameron's article offers an example of Macalester's receptivity in 1979 to student asks for accommodations and the structures used to put them into place. Tracy Masterson, a blind student, shares how when she first came to Macalester, she asked the Health Service for readers to help navigate the campus. She did not get the readers until too late, "by the time they [the Health Service] got around to [it]... I already knew my way."[97] The fact that the Health Service was the central place that students with disabilities had to ask for access indicates a medicalization of disability similar to that the IL movement fought against on the U.C. Berkeley campus.[98] At Macalester, there existed no department specifically to address the needs of students with disabilities until decades later. Into the 80's the Dean of Students, rather than the Health Service, offered the primary place of resources. However, throughout the 70's, 80's, and into the 90's students needed to individually go to numerous different places to get accommodations, from the Dean of Students to Residential Life to the Physical Plant (facilities).

---

[96] Cameron, "College evaluates," 1979.
[97] Cameron, "College evaluates," 1979.
[98] Shapiro, *No Pity*, 50.

Years after attending Mac, Kristen Castor '76, stated that in order to get into her dorm in Dupre "the food service let me use the freight elevator and I often rode up with garbage or old food."[99] Masterson attests to an experience many Macalester students had finding their own way based on extensive self-advocacy, finding creative ways to survive on a campus inaccessible in numerous areas.

In Chapter 14 of *The New Disability History*, Richard K. Scotch argues that though Section 504 and its regulations were monumental in asserting that people with disabilities had rights, they also perpetuated the idea that people with disabilities "are drastically different from others and in need of different treatment and protection."[100] This perspective can be seen in Rognlie's statements where he alludes that people with disabilities needs are so different and contradicting that it is impossible to meet them all. Students Tedla and Masterson contradict this by offering changes that can and will benefit students to come, and citing instances where the school did not meet simple (innocuous) requests. The students demand equal treatment and access. While college officials in the 70's and 80's justified minimal changes, students called for innovation through dialogue. However, students' voices were still silenced and subverted in narratives of disability and disability activism that perpetuated paternalism.

Just one week after the *Mac Weekly* published the article "College evaluates needs of handicapped students," Becky Cameron published a feature story on Tracy Masterson called "Blind woman finds Mac 'interesting.'" The article reports on Masterson's early schooling,

---

[99] Kristen Castor. "Making Mac accessible." *Macalester Today*. November, 1995.
[100] Richard K. Scotch. "American Disability Policy in the Twentieth Century." *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*. The History of Disability Series. (New York: New York University Press, 2001): 389; cites Robert L. Burgdorf, Jr., "'Substantially Limited' Protection from Disaibility Discrimination," Villanova Law Review no. 42 (1997): 534.

hobbies, and favorite class at Mac.[101] The article does not mention any of Masterson's activism in the face of inaccessibility at Macalester that Cameron referred to in the 504 article a week earlier. Where the compliance article appeared on page seven of the *Mac Weekly*, the feature appears on page two and, with its large photograph of Masterson, takes up more space on the page. *Mac Weekly* readers are more likely to read this article than the previous one, and could do so with no notion of the other's existence. "Blind woman finds Mac 'interesting'" otherizes Masterson in many ways, including in its title that refers to a "blind woman" rather than a student. The article's conclusions are reminiscent to those of "Hartle lobbies for blind at capitol"--that students with disabilities find Macalester a fine place for students with disabilities, "very accepting," or "interesting."[102] That Masterson's voice was more quoted and made visible in this context over the 504, advocacy-centered article helps explain the difficulty Mac coalitions of students with disabilities would have sharing their voice and message a couple years later.

In her 1981 *Mac Weekly* article "Mac unaware of disabled" student Cindy James '83 calls out the lack of support for people with disabilities on campus and lack of awareness of disability rights; "this is the International Year of Disabled Persons yet… nothing is being done here at Macalester."[103] James states that many buildings are inaccessible to wheelchair users, and that many are unaware about what 'disabled' means, how it encompasses a group that includes many types of visible and invisible disability.[104] Central to the article is James' call to start a Macalester Disabled Awareness Group (MDAG). James and another student, Amy Summer, intended the group to "enlighten the Macalester Community through various means" such as

---

[101] Becky Cameron. "Blind woman finds Mac 'interesting.'" *The Mac Weekly.* November, 1979.
[102] Cameron, "College evaluates," 1979; Cameron, "Blind woman," 1979.
[103] Cindy James. "Mac unaware of disabled." *The Mac Weekly.* May, 1981.
[104] James, "Mac unaware of disabled," 1981.

teach-ins, workshops, a Handicap Day, and starting numerous support groups, including connecting students to groups off campus.[105] James emphasizes the importance to create a sense of unity among students with disabilities as a first step toward bringing about inclusion.

James asserts that MDAG's fomenting of collective unity and power would help as a force to make Mac more accessible. James writes, "after enlightening, [we wish to] help our campus reach federal structural standards… we hope to be that ever-present voice reminding the appropriate people that Macalester hasn't fully complied."[106] To those already organizing MDAG, compliance is an ongoing project, not a dismissable one. Federal compliance is also only one part of Mac becoming an accessible place. To James and MDAG, true accessibility includes creating spaces for consciousness raising and community building around disability. MDAG intentionally combats the discriminatory concept that disability is a problem individuals must overcome. In the first article in the *Mac Weekly* Archives that directly pertains to students with disabilities organizing collectives and calling for change, James establishes a narrative on disability activism where it is collective, ongoing, and by and for the people it benefits.

So what happened with MDAG and James' calls to action? In the archives, I found no further mention of MDAG in the *Mac Weekly* or in the student handbook's list of student organizations. I also did not find evidence of the Fall of 1981 Handicap Day that MDAG was planning. However, it is definitely possible that the group continued organizing and that Handicap Day did take place to some extent, unarchived. After all, members of MDAG were students placing much of their energy surviving on an inaccessible campus with little left to leave a paper trail. Perhaps Handicap Day had a small turnout and no one wrote an article on it

[105] James, "Mac unaware of disabled," 1981.
[106] James, "Mac unaware of disabled," 1981.

for the *Mac Weekly*. James herself was not a regular reporter in the *Mac Weekly*, publishing just this one article. Considering the case of Cameron's two articles and previous paternalistic narratives published on people with disabilities dating back to 1921, we can see that "Mac Unaware of Disabled" took a distinctly different view of disability, which perhaps helps explain why MDAG did not gain more publishing attention.

James' article featuring MDAG focuses mainly on changes that still need to happen in accessibility and student organizing and support. A *Mac Weekly* article published three years later, in 1984, discusses changes that have finally begun to be put into place since the evaluations in 1979.[107] How does this 1984 narrative, applied to progress made, compare to earlier student demands? What does it illuminate about the experiences of students with disabilities on campus? In what ways do students and college services continue to conceive of accessibility differently?

"Handicapped students seek changes," by Julie Wolters, appears on the second page of the November 1984 *Mac Weekly*, filling the entire lower half. It includes two images of individuals whom Wolters consults on the state of accessibility at Mac, one of student Bruce Watson and another of the Assistant Dean of Students Tom Levitan. Wolters begins the article with: "A student at Macalester wishes to go to the library," then describes how this anonymous student must go through the loading dock in the back because the front entrance has stairs.[108] Wolters offers a second case of an unnamed student trying to memorize every telephone number on campus because she has a work study job as a switchboard operator, but the list of the numbers that she is provided is a campus text with no Braille.[109] By referring to students in

---

[107] Julie Wolters. "Handicapped students seek changes." *The Mac Weekly.* November, 1984.
[108] Wolters, "Handicapped students seek changes," 1984.
[109] Wolters, "Handicapped students seek changes," 1984.

general terms rather than beginning with features, Wolters indicates that the issue goes beyond individual people with disabilities on campus.

Wolters goes on to focus on physical barriers for the remainder of the article. She asserts: "A flight of stairs, a narrow door, a street curb—all pose serious problems of accessibility for a person with a temporary or permanent physical handicap."[110] She notes that since the 1960's laws have passed that require federally funded buildings meet physical accessibility needs.[111] For example, the 1968 Architectural Barriers Act. Yet, Wolters states that the majority of student dorms--all but Doty and Dupre--as well as numerous campus buildings such as Old Main and Carnegie, do not have elevators.[112]

Wolters explains that to get around campus, students with disabilities must "negotiate with the campus administration."[113] She quotes the Assistant Dean, Levitan, stating that "we had a choice here at Mac… We could try to make the buildings accessible, or we could make the programs accessible."[114] In this either/or perception, Levitan admits that the reason the administration chose to focus on programs was because buildings "would be really expensive to renovate."[115] Levitan's assertion echoes the precedents set in Rothstein's examples that colleges could meet 504 requirements by meeting student's needs at the minimum. The earlier example of inaccessibility that Wolters provides, though, stands in direct contrast to Levitan's statement. A student who is not provided resources to complete her work study job offers the perfect example of an inaccessible 'program'. Where Levitan asserts that the necessary programmatic changes

---

[110] Wolters, "Handicapped students seek changes," 1984.
[111] Wolters, "Handicapped students seek changes," 1984.
[112] Wolters, "Handicapped students seek changes," 1984.
[113] Vaughn Switzer, *Disabled Rights*, 59.
[114] Wolters, "Handicapped students seek changes," 1984.
[115] Wolters, "Handicapped students seek changes," 1984.

have already been made, Wolters' example Student brings together Macalester as both a workplace and college, suggesting that if one is inaccessible, so is the other.

One year earlier, the *Mac Weekly* published an article pertaining to the inaccessibility of Macalester as a workplace. "Working at Mac: Staffers voice concerns" by Alison Albrecht reported on numerous cases where staff from across campus expressed concern about "working conditions, salaries, wages, morale, and the administration."[116] The article focuses particularly on custodial and maintenance staff members who cite their experiences being directed to do tasks outside of their job descriptions as well as navigating a generally hostile atmosphere, living in fear of losing their positions.[117] These staff members, many of whom would be working in facilities, the Macalester Physical Plant, were one of the central providers of accommodations for students with disabilities. Not only does "Working at Mac" demonstrate an environment where staff members with disabilities may have been particularly disadvantaged, it also hints to how a structural lack of support for students with disabilities was negatively impacting other campus services and members of the college community.

It is possible that some of the extra tasks Physical Plant staff members referred to were related to accessibility. In "Handicapped students seek changes" Wolters quotes Levitan and Physical Plant Director Mark Dickinson on what changes were being made to enhance student access. When needed, students could get "a key to the Rice Hall elevator."[118] The Physical Plant would help students get around campus on snowy days, and to "circumvent the stairs" at the

---

[116] Alison Albrecht. "Working at Mac: Staffers voice concerns." *The Mac Weekly.* November, 1983.
[117] Albrecht, "Working at Mac," 1983.
[118] Wolters, "Handicapped students seek changes," 1984.

student center, students could "go through the kitchen to SAGA's food elevator."[119] The Physical Plant was also in charge of patching up and making fast alterations to buildings such as adding handrails, when students specifically asked for them.[120] This focus on access as individual special arrangements and patch-ups may have led to a larger and unsustainable workload for Macalester facilities. Students also cited instances where staff members in facilities went out of their way to assist students with disabilities.[121] Disability activism was taking place in day to day allyship grappling with continued structural barriers.

Students testified to the nature of these continued barriers, resisting a physical-modifications model of access. While riding up the SAGA food elevator was considered an accommodation, Kristen Castor '76 referenced her experience having to ride up with old food as an example of inaccessibility.[122] Locked elevators, events with no chairs except in a far corner, and needing to enter the library through a loading dock in the back.[123] All are examples where students with disabilities need to go out of their ways to exist in a space and move away from students without the same needs. This is exactly the opposite of Cindy James' call for MDAG and to make students with disabilities and their needs visible to ensure they are respected and met, as well as for allyship across campus. In Wolters' 1984 article, she quotes Mac senior Bruce Watson, who had brought about policy changes through his self-advocacy. Watson stated: "I wish I had known about a lot of the accommodations people were willing to make when I started here… I wish people would think more about the needs of the handicapped,

---

[119] Wolters, "Handicapped students seek changes," 1984.
[120] Castor, "Making Mac accessible," 1995.
[121] Castor, "Making Mac accessible," 1995.
[122] Castor, "Making Mac accessible," 1995.
[123] Bruce Watson. "Other Voices." *The Mac Weekly.* November, 1984, p. 4; Wolters, "Handicapped students seek changes," 1984.

instead of making changes only when someone brings up the subject."[124] Without visibility of accommodations or a structure of support, Watson was unaware of what was available. Though James' call for MDAG had likely happened when Watson was a freshman on campus, he remained unaware of it. This indicates students' activisms missed each other as they struggled to work around inaccessibility and build their own definitions of access and pathways to succeed at Mac from scratch. Though Watson eventually began demanding his rights and changing policy as a senior, he and other students with disabilities had been given no space to learn what those rights were in the first place.

Following the anonymous student testimonies, statements from Levitan, Dickinson, and Watson, Wolters concludes "the issue of handicapped accessibility at Macalester is not settled." [125] But the article does not end there. Instead, Wolters then reports that the upcoming summer of 1985, Macalester will host two events for people with disabilities--Elderhostel, a session for senior citizens and the Special Olympics which Wolters describes as "a nationwide sports competition for mentally and physically handicapped youths."[126] The last word comes from Dickinson on event preparation: "We're going to have to make some accommodations with bathrooms and doors in the dorms… But I think in the end we're going to be surprised at how much the handicapped can do for themselves."[127] In an article that only addresses physical disability and accessibility, its one mention of nonphysical (mental) disability arises in describing the Special Olympics. That is, individuals who are not Mac students that the college provides a service for. Dickinson's statement does not refer to compliance but assumes that these

[124] Wolters, "Handicapped students seek changes," 1984.
[125] Wolters, "Handicapped students seek changes," 1984.
[126] Wolters, "Handicapped students seek changes," 1984.
[127] Wolters, "Handicapped students seek changes," 1984.

temporary and permanent changes are made as a bonus for those participating in the events. A bonus not necessarily needed by the people it benefits. The language "how much the handicapped can do" echoes old vocational rehabilitation perceptions that people with disabilities must do the work needed to integrate. The condescending concept of watching people with disabilities prove that they are capable echoes the feature article on Tracy Masterson, and the far earlier narrative on Evangeline Larson.[128] Wolters' article provides a competing narratives between college officials satisfaction with the accommodations system and Watson's suggestion that 'access' needs to be talked about in more terms than accommodations.

Wolter's article in context with Castor, James, Summers, MDAG, Tedla, and Masterson's activism demonstrates student activists demanding an access that is structural and consciousness-raising while college officials who assert compliance is already in place with unsustainable, tenuous, physical accommodations. Into the 1990's the *Mac Weekly* would become a field of direct narrative confrontation with students beginning to question how their stories appear in the news, and continuing to expand disability activism to address a diversity of people with disabilities and barriers they faced on campus.

---

[128] Cameron, "Blind woman," 1979; "Out of the Current," 1929.

IV. Letters to the Editor: Disability Activists Spread Awareness and Build Macalester Disability Services (1990-1999)

In this section I analyze Macalester Today *articles and student handbooks in addition to* Mac Weekly *pieces. The 1990's marked a time when disability rights gained national visibility in new ways, reflected in the increasing number of events around disability awareness at Macalester. I look at the coverage of these events and examine the ways in which students were challenging the narratives on disability in the* Mac Weekly, *opening up a dialogue. I argue that students with disabilities brought about Disability Services office and called for even more expansive conceptions of an 'inclusive campus.'*

"If you need any disability accommodations, and are not satisfied with services you are receiving, Lora Hendrickson is the staff person responsible for ADA compliance. Her office is located in the Personnel department, on the second floor of *77* Macalester."[129] A building with no elevator. "If it's difficult or impossible for you to get to her office, call her at x6268. I would also suggest calling her if you are in any way unsure about your rights [or] the College's responsibilities."[130] So states Macalester student Jessica Sundin in a 1993 letter to the editor titled "School falls short of ADA rules." Sundin's letter addresses the lack of information in the 1993-94 Student Handbook on student rights and available accommodations. Sundin also turns the *Mac Weekly* into a resource for people with disabilities on a campus where no other comprehensive, widespread document exists. In addition to directing people with disabilities to the ADA coordinator, Sundin lists numerous potential accommodations and points readers to the grievance procedure in case they feel that they are being discriminated against. "Finally, for

[129] Jessica Sundin. "Mac falls short of ADA rules." *The Mac Weekly.* September, 1993.
[130] Sundin, "Mac falls short," 1993.

those of you who are interested in joining the struggle to make our campus open and welcome to people of all abilities, feel free to contact me or the Macalester Peace and Justice Committee."[131]

Sundin's letter demonstrates that much remained the same since "Handicapped students seek changes" in 1984. The college still lacked compliance with disability antidiscrimination legislation. Numerous buildings on campus were inaccessible. Students with disabilities felt unaware of available accommodations. Students also continued to combat narrow definitions of access; for example, Sundin states "'providing the same opportunities' does not mean segregated dining and housing facilities."[132] The word "segregated" indicates language that equates oppression that people with disabilities face with other forms of oppression. Prior to the 1990's, this language had not been used in a mainstream way in the *Mac Weekly*, instead students like Cindy James called to a mostly unresponsive student body or were sandwiched into other narratives and considered a tiny minority, as with Tracy Masterson.[133] Disability rights as a movement, not just the efforts of a minority on campus, was now finally getting acknowledgement and widespread attention in the *Mac Weekly* and campus at large, Sundin's letter being one of a burst of reports on disability rights throughout the decade.

What changed? The passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 likely impacted cross-campus student activism and attention to disability rights. In "Coalition Building and Cross-Disability Activism" Jacqueline Vaugn Switzer analyzes how the ADA passed due to the strong advocacy of numerous national organizations representing a wide diversity of

---

[131] Sundin, "Mac falls short," 1993.
[132] Sundin, "Mac falls short," 1993.
[133] James, "Mac unaware of disabled," 1981; Cameron, "Blind woman," 1979; Cameron, "College evaluates," 1979.

disabilities. This coalition took place despite the fact that at times some groups competed for resources and even opposed each other's approaches. For example, the National Rehabilitation Association joined with groups that had criticized rehabilitation professionals for not doing enough for their clients.[134] Advocates for the ADA also intentionally bridged social justice groups; for example, by connecting disability and LGBTQ rights with the involvement of HIV/AIDS organizations.[135] The coalition achieved not only the passage of the ADA, an act built off of Section 504 but more comprehensive and far-reaching, it also achieved widespread public attention to the disability rights movement. Though people with disabilities had already been organizing together for decades, including on the Macalester campus in MDAG, the ADA and its publicity led to more acknowledgment of their existence and labor.

Similar to Section 504, though, compliance with the ADA was brought about mainly through fervent, continued disability activism. This was particularly true in the case of higher education at private colleges like Macalester. In "Disability Issues on Campus and the Road to ADA," written in 1991, Dr. Jane Jarrow overviews how the ADA will affect college campuses. Jarrow states that because most colleges are already covered by 504 regulations, "the ADA will have limited impact on [their] policies and procedures."[136] Jarrow elaborates: "The impact is more likely to be felt in increased numbers of students with disabilities [attending] higher education and in a *renewed* focus on disability access [due to] the spotlight focused on disability rights."[137]

---

[134] Vaughn Switzer, *Disabled Rights*, 77-78.
[135] Vaughn Switzer, *Disabled Rights*, 77-78.
[136] Jane Jarrow. "Disability Issues on Campus and the Road to ADA." *The Educational Record* 72, no. 1 (1991): 30-31.
[137] Jarrow, "Disability Issues," 1991. Emphasis mine.

For Macalester this meant a renewed focus on Macalester's continued lack of compliance with 504, and thus, the ADA. Under Title III of the ADA, private schools like Macalester do not have to take as many actions as public schools, under the assumption that they did not have the resources to do so.[138] In a 1990 *Mac Weekly* article "Accessibility improves, more renovations needed" Jennifer Abel quotes students and staff on Mac's physical inaccessibility. One student, Greg Miller, asserts that Mac "should be ahead of ADA codes, not just meeting the minimum." [139] The assistant to the Macalester president, Sandy Hill, responded that accessibility was just one priority and questioned why people with physical disabilities would choose Mac when they could go to a barrier-free University of Minnesota campus.[140] Students in articles published in the next several years pushed against this, reporting on the steps that local colleges Carleton, Augsburg, "and even St. Thomas" were taking to evaluate and meet the accessibility needs of a growing population of people with disabilities on campus.[141] All of which were private--and competing--colleges under the same ADA requirements as Mac. Students asserted that Macalester needed to understand the issue of disability access in a proactive way that welcomed in a growing population of prospective students who enriched campus diversity.

Students asserted that Macalester's attitude of dealing with students with disabilities when they happen to come along led to types of inaccessibility that extended beyond physical

---

[138] Mark C. Weber. "Disability Discrimination by State and Local Government: The Relationship between Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act," William and Mary Law Review 36, no. 3 (1995).

[139] Jennifer Abel. "Accessibility improves, more renovations needed." *The Mac Weekly.* November, 1990.
[140] Abel, "Accessibility improves," 1990.
[141] Abel, "Accessibility improves," 1990; Jeni Eltink. "Accessibility Questioned at Mac."*The Mac Weekly*. April, (1993): 4.

ones. In 1993 the *Mac Weekly* published "Accessibility at Macalester questioned," an article that Jessica Sundin addresses to prospective students with disabilities about what she wished she had known before enrolling. Sundin states that many professors are inflexible to her needs.

> I believe this stems from a total lack of information about the realities and rights of our lives as students with disabilities. Because there is no one on staff at Mac with experience working with disabilities or disability legislation, there are no advocates for me as a disabled student. There is no one taking the responsibility of educating our community.[142]

Sundin asserts that accessibility does not happen without awareness. She problematizes an environment where students individually ask for their needs. Sundin also suggests that this issue influences and involves everyone on campus. Particularly a campus that claims to be socially aware. In 1991, the Macalester *Focal Point*, a student run magazine dedicated to advocacy, published a list of words and their definitions titled "A Primer of Macalester Lingo." They defined 'diversity' (n.) as "the favorite Mac administration term to describe the college" and 'diverse' as "at Mac, non-speciesist, non-racist, non-sexist, non-ageist, but unfortunately not handicapped-accessible."[143] In 1993 the Macalester handbook statement on Students Rights, Freedoms, and Responsibilities included "the Physically Handicapped" under their list of minority groups that could be represented by a Minority Student Advocate.[144] The *Focal Point* jokes about the nonchalant and increasingly visible way students with disabilities are excluded from the college's conceptualization of diversity that it supposedly strives for.

---

[142] Sundin, "Accessibility at Macalester questioned," 1993.
[143] Elee Wood. "A Primer of Macalester Lingo." *Focal Point*. 1991.

[144] "Students' Rights, Freedoms, and Responsibilities." *Macalester Student Handbook*. 1993-1994. Macalester College Archives, Dewitt Wallace Library Room 218.

In April of 1993 disability rights at Macalester made the whole front page of the *Mac Weekly*. A large (untitled) photograph of a young person in a wheelchair being lifted down a flight of stairs separated two articles by Jeni Eltink,[145] "Accessibility Questioned at Mac" and "Disability Awareness Raised." Both articles report on Disability Awareness Week, a series of events organized on campus and sponsored by MPJC, Community Council, MACTION (the community involvement organization), the Minnesota Public Interest Research Group (MPIRG), the Women's Collective, the Biology and Women's Studies Departments, Campus Programs, Winton Health Services, and the Learning Center.[146] Unlike Cindy James' proposed Handicap Day, Disability Awareness Week finally garnered cross-campus allyship, echoing the increasing cross-social justice recognition of disability rights happening nationally.

Eltink reports that Disability Awareness Week was composed of nine major events. They included a panel on the reproductive rights of people with disabilities, a panel on the ADA and how it was being implemented, a lecture from Professor with a disability, Karen Warren entitled "Women, Disability, and Ecofeminism" as well as several performances by local artists and creators with disabilities, such as the Northern Sign Theater.[147] The first event of the week was a presentation on learning disabilities, to raise awareness of the existence of students with learning disabilities on campus and discuss different learning styles.[148] Eltink reported that the target

---

[145] The photograph is of students Jessica Ford and Christian Boulton participating in 'simulation day,' a day during Disability Awareness Week where students were invited to "have a disability for a day," using wheelchairs and other items as props to 'simulate' having a disability. ("MPJC sponsors Disability Awareness Week." *The Mac Weekly*. November, 1994.) Jessica Sundin discussed the problematic elements of this in her article "Simulation brings mixed blessings." *The Mac Weekly*, November, 1993.
[146] Jeni Eltink. "Disability Awareness Raised." *The Mac Weekly*. April, (1993): 1.
[147] Eltink, "Disability Awareness," 1993 (5).
[148] Eltink, "Accessibility Questioned," 1993 (1).

audience--faculty members--did not show. Eltink cited Sundin, a planner for the event, stating that faculty held an attitude that "if you [a student] have a learning disability, how did you get into Macalester? It must not be a serious problem."[149] Eltink cites the Dean of Students Ed DeCarbo stating that Mac will work on increasing programmatic accessibility, which takes students with learning disabilities into account.[150]

These 1993 *Mac Weekly* cover stories demonstrated Macalester administration and student body finally addressing non-physical forms of accessibility in addressing compliance and disability rights. Yet despite the articles addressing the need for Mac to be more aware of people with disabilities on campus, Eltink only quotes one student on the event, Jessica Sundin. While Sundin was undoubtedly an outspoken activist and leader on disability issues at Mac, disability activism was going on on campus in numerous ways that defied the possibility of being represented by an individual voice. For example, the following September, the same month Sundin published her letter to the editor and call for students with disabilities to join MPJC, another student Sara Merz wrote a letter to the editor "Macalester Needs Network for Disabled." Merz expressed concern that the needs of students with disabilities were not being met and called to address that in a network of students to offer tools for advocacy and information on college policies.[151] While Eltink's article emphasized a call for Macalester to "appoint a resource person" a staff member specifically to address disability-related concerns, Merz's article called for a

[149] Eltink, "Disability Awareness," 1993 (1, 5).
[150] Eltink, "Accessibility Questioned," 1993 (1).
[151] Sara Merz. "Macalester Needs Network for Disabled." *The Mac Weekly*. September, 1993.

student network.[152] Both are important, but Merz's concerns were not featured in the larger headlines.

Another intersecting disability rights issue going on in 1993 that the April headline did not report on--and that Disability Awareness Week events did not address--was activism regarding HIV/AIDS on the Macalester campus. Beginning in the late 1980's, student handbooks included an "AIDS Protocol" section. In 1993 the protocol appeared directly before the college statement on the ADA--a vague declaration that Mac is required to provide "reasonable accommodations" through the Dean of Students office.[153] The handbook states that if an AIDS case is identified at Mac the college will provide support in the form of "medical attention, counseling attention, [and] academic advising."[154] The protocol urges that students "volunteer information on the subject" so services can be called upon in the "least disruptive" way.[155] They note that students are not required to disclose if they have HIV/AIDS, nor will they be discriminated against in the admissions process, housing, or the classroom.

One month before the April Disability Awareness Week, another article by Jeni Eltink "Researcher Examines Mac AIDS Responses" reported on the work of Mac Health Services staff member, Jeanne Henjum, to create programming to raise Mac awareness on HIV/AIDS transmission. Henjum calls for "proactive students" on campus willing to discuss what approach Health Services should take.[156] The article alludes to its desire to have representation of HIV

---

[152] Eltink, "Accessibility Questioned," 1993 (4).
[153] "Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)." *Macalester Student Handbook*. 1993-1994, 59. Macalester College Archives, Dewitt Wallace Library Room 218.
[154] "AIDS Protocol." *Macalester Student Handbook*. 1993-1994, 58-59. Macalester College Archives, Dewitt Wallace Library Room 218.
[155] "AIDS Protocol," *Macalester Student Handbook*, 1993-1994.
[156] Jeni Eltink. "Researcher Examines Mac AIDS Responses." *The Mac Weekly*. March, 1993.

positive in the creation of the program. A central reason why many national organizations became involved in ADA advocacy was the parallels between stigma and discrimination that individuals with HIV/AIDS were facing at school and in the workplace, and those people with other types of disability faced. In his essay "'We Do Not Talk About Such Things Here': My Life (So Far) as an HIV+ Academic" Disability Studies scholar Chris Bell discusses the experience of disclosing his HIV status while working in academia, and losing a teaching position because of it. Bell was told not to speak about AIDS, and reflects on how this represented a global silencing.[157] Bell states that his dismissal "directly violated the principles of the ADA. But I did not know that then… I did not see myself as 'disabled,' rather as a person living with HIV."[158] The separation the Macalester student handbook makes between the AIDS protocol and the ADA statement indicate that HIV positive Macalester students may also not have known of their rights under the ADA. On the flip side, students with disabilities would have benefitted from a more detailed ADA statement such as the AIDS protocol. Eventually, Disability Services at Macalester would emphasize confidentiality in their statement. But individuals and organizations involved in Disability Awareness Week were all for a disruption that would change Macalester silence on disability. It is interesting to speculate what a formalized alliance between these two awareness initiatives would have resulted in; it is likely that one did not happen because of the specific stigma around HIV.

---

[157] Chris Bell. "'We Do Not Talk About Such Things Here': My Life (So Far) as an HIV+ Academic." *Disabled Faculty and Staff in a Disabling Society: Multiple Identities in Higher Education*. (Huntersville, N.C.: AHEAD, 2007): 218-19.

[158] Bell, "We Do Not Talk," 219.

However, Disability Awareness Week did have a direct impact on the Macalester community. Evidence for this can be seen in another letter to the editor published in the *Mac Weekly* in November 1994. The letter, "Article biased towards able-bodied reader" is written by Meredith Stanton Aby '95, who identifies as a "temporarily able-bodied activist."[159] Aby's letter is a response to "Handicapped workers enjoy opportunities offered by Kagin," a report by Janet Piehl on a program wherein the Macalester Kagin Commons hired "mentally, physically, or emotionally handicapped" high school students.[160] The program, STEPS (Specialized Transition Employment Planning Services) provided the job training and experience through the St. Paul public school system.[161] Aby calls out the article as "offensive and prejudiced."[162] Aby writes that the word handicap is offensive, which the reporter should have known had they attended Disability Awareness Week. Furthermore, Aby argues that Piehl and Andy Grage, the Kagin service manager, patronize the student workers.[163] Aby points out a quote by Grage "we try to treat them as much as regular employees as possible" indicates that "'they' are not 'normal' [which] perpetuates the oppressive hierarchy of abilities that MPJC is trying to stop" through Disability Awareness Week.[164] Lastly, Aby emphasizes that "Piehl did not quote a single person with a disability working at Kagin for her story. She took their voice away from them."[165]

---

[159] Meredith Stanton Aby. "Article biased toward able-bodied reader." *The Mac Weekly.* November, 1994.
[160] Janet Piehl. "Handicapped workers enjoy opportunities offered by Kagin." *The Mac Weekly.* October, 1994.
[161] Piehl, "Handicapped workers," 1994.
[162] Aby, "Article biased," 1994.
[163] Aby, "Article biased," 1994.
[164] Aby, "Article biased," 1994; cites Piehl, "Handicapped workers," 1994.
[165] Aby, "Article biased," 1994.

Unlike the majority of patronizing *Mac Weekly* articles of decades previously, "Handicapped workers enjoy opportunities offered by Kagin" gets rebutted by a student activist, an ally to disability rights. With increased awareness on campus due to the efforts of disability activists, the *Mac Weekly* became more a space of dialogue. Problematic, charity-based narratives did still arise, yet students responded to them and were published in the same text. Disability Awareness Week was altering how nondisabled students viewed the portrayal of people with disabilities, providing those students a source from which to cite their knowledge, and a resource to guide reporters and readers to. Aby's reflection on how the 1994 article portrayed people with disabilities echoes the findings of a study by Dr. Beth A. Haller. The study analyzes articles from eleven prominent U.S. news sources and how they refer to disability throughout several months in 1998. Haller found that stories regarding people with disabilities were often 'inspirational' feature stories, and that frequently journalists wrote disability themed stories that had "no person with a disability as a source."[166] Like Aby, Haller asserts that this implies "people with disabilities can't speak for themselves."[167]

Narratives of disability activism that applied these patronizing practices also appeared in the *Macalester Today* the magazine for alumni, parents and donors. In 1994 Kevin Brooks' article "Barrier-free Living: A friend's tragedy leads three alumni to remove housing obstacles for the disabled" he describes how the origins of Accessible Space Inc. (ASI). Brooks states that ASI was first conceptualized by Stephen Wiggins, Charles Berg and Stephen Vander Schaaf (all '78) after Wiggins' childhood friend, Mike "Hondo" Pesch became paralyzed in a diving

---

[166] Haller, *Representing Disability*, 33.
[167] Haller, *Representing Disability*, 33.

accident.[168] Brooks describes how Pesch's only housing options were living with parents or institutionalization in a nursing home. "Starting from an original idea by Pesch and other Courage Center residents" the three Mac students designed a network of affordable homes for people with spinal cord and mobility impairments that would be run by the residents themselves. [169] They continued to work on ASI post-graduation, establishing a successful network of residences.

The project ASI offers an example of disability activism extending from campus to the wider Twin Cities community, however it retains echoes of charity and the idea of innovation brought about by able-bodied people on behalf of people with disabilities. The author does not contextualize ASI within the larger Independent Living movement that was going on at the same time. There is no interview with Mike Pesch (who was deceased at the time), nor with any of the other residents Brooks refers to vaguely who envisioned ASI, nor with any people with disabilities living in and managing the organization. Brooks also does not connect these alumni's labor to the efforts students across campus were making at the exact same time to make Macalester an 'accessible space'.

Yet, some alumni were making the connections themselves, again in letters to the editor. In a 1995 issue of the *Macalester Today*, Kristen Castor '76 wrote "Making Mac Accessible" in response to a *Today* article reporting on the renovation of Olin and Rice Halls. Castor writes "I was dismayed that there was no mention of plans to make the buildings accessible to wheelchair users."[170] Castor goes on to describe some of the numerous obstacles she faced at Mac, such as

[168] Brooks, "Barrier-free Living." *Macalester Today.* May, (1994): 21.
[169] Brooks, "Barrier-free Living." *Macalester Today.* May, (1994): 21.
[170] Castor, "Making Mac accessible," 1995.

petitioning to get a class moved downstairs only to be asked to go to a second floor office in an inaccessible Old Main to submit the petition.[171] Castor's use of the Macalester publication to talk about her experience with discrimination is powerful. The *Today* ends Castor's letter with an editor's note about which buildings on which buildings on campus were accessible, and that Olin and Rice would have ramps on either side.[172] The note tries to ease Castor's concern. Her concern, though, is not only a lack of access, but that an important feature of inclusion would not be mentioned in a significant renovation. Castor demands that in narratives on progress, the history of people with disabilities' struggle not be erased.

This struggle must not be erased in completed renovations or in a consolidated system of Disability Services. In Christy M. Oslund's chapter "Disability Services and Higher Education" she describes how the field of Disability Services grew from "a movement begun by the first generation of university staff suddenly appointed to be service providers, when they began gathering to share best practices and ideas for how to serve the growing population of students with disabilities."[173] In 1977 the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) held their first annual conference in Arizona, offering a place for the staff gatherings. In 1978 the National Council on Disability Education (NCD) was founded as part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 revisions.[174] By 1984 the NCD became an independent agency that reviewed "all federal disability programs and policy."[175] It was around this time, the same year as the article

---

[171] Castor, "Making Mac accessible," 1995.
[172] Castor, "Making Mac accessible," 1995.
[173] Christy M. Oslund. "Disability Services and Higher Education." *Disability Services and Disability Studies in Higher Education: History Contexts, and Social Impacts*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015): 52.

[174] Oslund, "Disability Services," 56.
[175] Oslund, "Disability Services," 56.

"Handicapped students seek changes," that colleges began to appoint point persons responsible for implementing a standard of access across the institution. Some colleges, for example those public universities that would fall under Title II of the ADA, were farther ahead in creating a resource center for students with disabilities. For example, in 1992 an international conference of disability service providers in higher education was held in Austria, including presentations from staff at the University of Minnesota and Ohio State University's extensive program that had been running since 1974.[176]

Throughout the 1980's and 90's we can see that it is not only coalitions of service providers but also the fervent activism of Macalester students with disabilities that called for and envisioned a consolidated disability services program. From the late 1970's to the early 1990's the authority on disability services oscillated between the Assistant Dean of Students, the Health Service, and the Physical Plant. During this time, I found no evidence of one person being appointed a central person for students to go to. Through the *Mac Weekly*, students protested their need to painstakingly track down accommodations. This continued even after the ADA passed. Though Macalester appointed a person, the position changed several years in a row and in the resource documents for students, it was unclear who exactly that person was. Under a section on the ADA the 1993-94 student handbook directs students with disabilities to "complete an identification form in the Dean of Students office."[177] In the next paragraph the handbook states that it is the Associate Director of Personnel "who coordinates the services for Macalester community members with disabilities" working with the Advisory Committee, the Learning

---

[176] Betty P. Aune. "Report on an International Conference on Disability in Higher Education." Journal on Postsecondary Education and Disability 10, no. 2, 1993.
[177] "Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)." *Macalester Student Handbook*. 1993-1994.

Center, the Health Center, Residential Life, the Provost's Office and other services to "ensure assistance."[178] There is no information on who the Associate Director of Personnel is, where readers can find their office, what number to call, nor what types of services or "assistance" they provide. This is exactly the criticism Sundin made and worked to remedy in her 1994 letter to the editor, "School falls short of ADA rules."

Other articles in the *Mac Weekly* worked to remedy this confusion as well. In 1993, a letter from the President Bob Gavin reported on the existence of an ADA Assessment Committee that would include representatives from Admissions, Academic Affairs, Personnel, the Learning Center and the Physical Plant to study "whether ADA compliance should be centralized in one office" or not.[179] In the *Mac Weekly*, students responded by referring to students that were farther ahead than Mac in their compliance and resources. In 1994 this committee had expanded to include students who began expressing the need for campus awareness, including awareness of diverse disabilities, the same year Disability Awareness Week was gaining wider attention on campus.

In 1995, Macalester was beginning to have a centralized ADA Office. In "ADA Office works to accommodate disabled" Ben Roberts reports on exactly what ADA compliance means, referring to it as "renewing" the 504 requirements, and includes the ADA Guidebook's definition of accommodation.[180] The Mac ADA Office was headed by the Dean of Academic Programs, but Roberts also notes that the Dean of Students and the Physical Plant are leaders in

---

[178] "Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)." *Macalester Student Handbook*. 1993-1994.
[179] Bob Gavin. "Letter from the President Regarding Accessibility." *The Mac Weekly*. April, 1993.
[180] Ben Roberts. "ADA Office works to accommodate disabled." *The Mac Weekly*. October, 1995.

accommodations as well.[181] Guyer's goal, Roberts writes "will be to present a non-threatening environment and make sure no one feels stigmatized about coming forward." Roberts also interviews two students with disabilities, Noah Cole '96 and Nicole Kahn '99 on their experiences navigating the ADA Office. Kahn states: "I'd say they [the ADA office] have been pretty good, but they haven't had a blind student on campus for a long time, so they turn to me for advice. That's okay. I came here knowing that I'd be in that situation."[182] Kahn is put in a place where they need to explain their needs, even though at least one other blind student had been spreading awareness of where the campus was inaccessible only ten years earlier, calling out the need to memorize a book of telephone numbers for her work study job.[183]

The 1997-98 Student Handbook includes a section particularly on "Disability Services" that demonstrates the resource extending beyond bare-minimum ADA compliance. The section begins "students seeking accommodations for physical, psychological, or learning disabilities should contact the Disability Services Coordinator...located at Macalester Health Services."[184] This time, a telephone number is provided. The inclusion of psychological disabilities is one of the first mentions of mental illness in the context of disability access, though Macalester had been providing student counseling services for decades. The mention hints at an alliance that would grow more prominent into the 21st century. The section's second paragraph states:

> Macalester College recognizes that issues related to disability affect everyone at the college… [the] Coordinator acts as a liaison between all members of the community in

---

[181] Roberts, "ADA Office," 1995.
[182] Roberts, "ADA Office," 1995.
[183] Wolters, "Handicapped students seek changes," 1984.
[184] "Disability Services." *Macalester Student Handbook*. 1997-1998. Macalester College Archives, Dewitt Wallace Library Room 218.

> assuring that students with disabilities have equal access to excellent educational and social opportunities available at Macalester.[185]

After decades of activism, the officiated definition of access now resembled what students with disabilities had been envisioning for decades, calling for it in the late 70's, but also demanding equal opportunities and broader awareness in the early 20th century.

The final acknowledgment of disability as a central part of the community and the existence of a disability services coordinator in 1997 did not signal that everything had been 'fixed.' Macalester did not have a single-purpose, staffed Disability Services Office until 2016. Additionally, not everything that disability activists on campus fought for was addressed by the new system of Disability Services. In addition to a central place students could go to to ask for and receive accommodations, students also asked for organized coalitions for awareness and consciousness-raising.[186] They demanded more intentional integration between educational and employment access for student work study and people with disabilities working across campus. Students, faculty and staff with disabilities called for the consideration of intersectional oppressions and discrimination people faced on campus; for example, the intersection with race and class in the case of EEO, and that of gender and sexuality in Mac grads' HIV/AIDS activism, and Disability Awareness Week's panels on womanhood and ecofeminism. Students and alumni with disabilities pushed against narratives that were progress and charity based and that silenced the voices of the people whose experiences and activisms they addressed. They appeared in narratives and built their own. Much like the narrow, inaccessible places they survived in, people with disabilities voiced their truths in the narrow narratives offered to them in

[185] "Disability Services." *Macalester Student Handbook*. 1997-1998.
[186] Merz, "Macalester Needs Network," 1993; James, "Mac unaware of disabled," 1981.

addition to publishing their own. The 1990's was a year of letters to the editor as people with disabilities called out those narrow narratives. They demonstrated that access was not a solution that Macalester would eventually reach, but an ongoing dialogue that needed to continue in cross-campus conversations, offices, classrooms, dorm rooms, student organizations, in the *Mac Weekly* and the *Macalester Today*. They pushed against the idea of a disability rights that expired and became 'renewed'. At Macalester, the waves of student activism that we see each decade, and the lack of awareness students have of others who came before, demonstrates that the knowledge students accumulated were not brought into the college's structures. Into the 21st century, disability activists' demands, resistances, and dialogue remain as pertinent as ever.

Into the 21st Century: Calls to Action

In this section I overview changes that took place into the 21st century, with particular attention to disability-centered student organizations. I conclude with a list of eight "calls to action" based on what Mac activists with disabilities called for throughout the twentieth century.

In addition to the initiation of a Macalester Disability Services Office in 2016 and an amendment to the ADA in 2009, the 21st century brought an increase in student organizations centered in disability identities and activism. While MPJC and other student organizations in the 1990's--as well as For Vets Only in the 1940's--began to welcome disability activism and awareness into their ranks, providing a strong allyship, these organizations were not explicitly focused on disability issues, run by students with disabilities. Prior to the 2000s networks of students with disabilities, such as MDAG in 1984 and Merz's network in 1993, did not gain popularity or widespread support. In 2008 Macalester students started their own chapter of a national organization called Active Minds. The organization sought to conceptualize mental illness as a part of a person's identity rather than a problem to be solved.[187] They worked to bring people who identified as having mental illness together to discuss issues they faced, as well as spread campus awareness on mental health more broadly. The group organized Mental Health Awareness Weeks and joined wider Twin Cities area Mad Pride events.[188]

In 2014 Active Minds published a survey done with MPIRG that found over half of the campus community identified as experiencing mental health issues.[189] A *Mac Weekly* article on the survey reported on the effort to destigmatize mental health issues and its collaboration with

---

[187] April Dejarlais. "Students fight political correctness of 'mental illness.'" *The Mac Weekly*. October, 2008, p. 6.
[188] Dejarlais, "Students fight," 2008.
[189] Joe Klein. "Active Minds draws attention to mental health issues on campus." *The Mac Weekly*. March, 2014, p. 3.

the Health and Wellness Center to increase initiatives to support students with mental illness with attention to the campus as a broader environment of mental health.[190] The article also reports on Active Minds' Voices on Mental Health panel. The panel would become the current (as of 2020) organization Voices on Mental Health.

In her book "Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life" scholar Margaret Price argues that with its focus on the 'rational mind' as well as productivity and individualism, "academic discourse operates not just to omit but to abhor mental disability."[191] Price argues that people with mental disabilities and the divergent ways they operate in higher education are impacting academic culture, making it more innovative and inclusive. Price asserts that this resistance is also relevant for numerous categories and understandings of disability. She cites Susan Wendell's scholarship on chronic illness and how narratives that define what activism is often revolve around expending excessive energy, which excludes the types of activism--including survival itself--that people with chronic illness engage in.[192]

Public understandings of activism also influence the kinds of activism that are reported on. More recent organizations at Macalester that have received less attention in the *Mac Weekly*, and thus in the Macalester Archives themselves, than Active Minds including the Disability, Chronic Pain and Chronic Illness Collective (DCPCI) founded in 2014, the same year as the article and the Macalester Autism Collective (MAC) founded in 2019.

Competing narratives of disability activism, those that are progress, individual and/or charity centered and those that focus on collective ongoing activism both continue into the 21st

---

[190] Klein, "Active Minds," 2014.
[191] Margaret Price. *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life*. Corporealities. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011): 8.
[192] Price. *Mad at School*.

century. These narratives were and are frequently intertwined, nested within each other, in direct conversation, or alluding to the other. Neither one is entirely problematic or entirely perfect, entirely representative of 'disability activism at Macalester.' As a diverse, intersectional, multi-defined concept and set of lived experiences, no one single narrative or type of narrative can represent all of disability activism. The multiple narratives that appear in the Macalester Archives demonstrate an ongoing struggle of people with disabilities on campus to represent themselves rather than solely be reported on. At the same time, individuality and collectivity both remained important in expressing the experiences of Macalester community members with disabilities. The competing narratives do not win over one or the other, cannot be plucked into a single perfect narrative that can be used as a frame for disability activism into eternity. Rather the voices of activism that come through the archives demonstrate that narratives are part of the structures of inclusion on campus, and like those structures they must be multitudinous, ongoing, open to change and dialogue with past and future generations.

The narratives also hinted at and voiced calls to action that remain relevant to inclusion at Macalester. Here are a few that I found:

Ask questions about accessibility. Throughout the Macalester Archives students with disabilities on campus asserted that the majority of people at Macalester remained oblivious to barriers that they faced, and they called out the misconception that barriers are only physical ones. Doing activities such as proactively considering disability in event-planning, self-auditing classrooms and other spaces and activities to question what is accessible or inaccessible and

how, and starting conversations on disability and access that normalize and celebrate diversity are all examples.

Support disability-centered student organizations. Students in the 1990's called for Mac community members to attend Disability Awareness Week. In addition to following student led and sponsored events, there are numerous ways to get involved with, join or support disability organizations and collectives on campus.

Archive stories of advocacy and activism. Numerous students in the *Mac Weekly* testified to needing to navigate the Macalester campus with no support or knowledge of what people with disabilities, even with the same disabilities, had done before them. This information was not recorded (and particularly in the early years, not valued by college administration). What are the ways in which Macalester community members with disabilities can share their insights and stories on navigating campus in a way that can become an accumulative resource and force for change? One way is through the Macalester Archives themselves. In a recent *Mac Weekly* article, "The Last Call: Archives as a Space of Resistance" columnist Shireen Zaineb called minority students and organizations to submit to the Archives. Zaineb writes that "by documenting our present and past at this school, we show that we were here, building communities, taking classes, becoming crucial to the fabric of an institution that never intended to serve us."[193] How can this effort also be structurally supported at Macalester, and the Archives made more accessible?

Foment allyship between different generations of Macalester disability activists. Present, past, and future generations of people with disabilities at Macalester can connect in

---

[193] Shireen Zaineb. "The Last Call: Archives as a space of resistance." *The Mac Weekly*, November, 2019.

more ways than through the Archives. Self advocacy histories are also a living form of knowledge and force for community-building. Disability activists at Macalester also called for the importance of connecting student's lives to broader disability rights (now more far-reaching disability justice) struggles around the Twin Cities and the country. Perhaps systems can be put in place where Macalester alumni with disabilities connect with students with disabilities from admissions to career-entry.

Address past paternalism in Macalester civic engagement. In the Macalester Archives I found narratives that portrayed disability activism as something able-bodied students paternalistically involve themselves in to help people with disabilities. Currently Macalester boasts a reciprocity and reflection-centered Civic Engagement Center. In what ways can disability activism be brought more intentionally into the CEC's programming?

Practice equitable news reporting. Macalester students called out problematic reporting practices in the *Mac Weekly* that patronized subjects with disabilities, otherizing them in different ways including failure to interview them and failure to follow the basic disability rights mantra of 'nothing about us without us.' Macalester publications need to promote keen awareness of still-mainstream problematic tendencies in portraying people with disabilities. Additionally, reporters and the broader Macalester community need to be aware that 'disability news' and numerous mediums through which people with disabilities devise and share disability justice frameworks, exist outside of academic scholarship. For example, various forms of social media--blogs, podcasts, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, etc. are genuine spaces of self-representation and collective activism.

Extend the conversation on inclusion beyond the bounds of Disability Services. Students in the Archives asserted that Disability Services was only one part of access at Macalester, not its solution or endpoint. Bringing concepts such as Universal Design for Learning help address activists' vision of a campus that would bring together students, faculty and staff with disabilities at Macalester, as well as intersectional activisms.

Connect disability rights efforts to other intersectional activisms. This can take place in many ways from student organization alliances that address common issues and different definitions of disability to Disability Services outreach. It can also take place in history-telling initiatives. I argue that making the disability history of Macalester more visible is an essential practice in the struggle for inclusion--and that is just as true for the histories of all minority student groups on campus, those who identified as having disabilities and who did not. Searching for these histories and placing different historical narratives and activisms together in the intersectional patterns of our own lives, we can quilt histories stronger than the forces that silenced them.

Bibliography

Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990. Public Law 101-336. § 12181. 108th Congress, 2nd session (July 26, 1990).

Aune, Betty P. "Report on an International Conference on Disability in Higher Education." Journal on Postsecondary Education and Disability 10, no. 2, 1993.

Barokka, Khairani. *Indigenous Species*. United Kingdom: Tilted Axis Press, 2016.

Bell, Chris. "'We Do Not Talk About Such Things Here': My Life (So Far) as an HIV+ Academic." *Disabled Faculty and Staff in a Disabling Society: Multiple Identities in Higher Education*. (Huntersville, N.C.: AHEAD, 2007): 217-223.

Bouin Genest, Gabriel. "The Body as Resistance Art/ifact: Disability activism during the 2012 Quebec Student Movement." *Mobilizing Metaphor: Art, Culture, and Disability Activism in Canada*. Disability Culture and Politics. Vancouver: UBCPress, 2017.

Brown, Lydia X. Z. "Cripping Intersectionality: Neurodiversity and Disability Justice." Lecture, Macalester College, Saint Paul, MN, February 1, 2019.

Burgstahle, Sheryl. "Universal Design: Process, Principles, and Applications." University of Washington DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology), 2014.

Cone, Kitty. "Short History of the 504 Sit in." Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF), 1997.
<https://dredf.org/504-sit-in-20th-anniversary/short-history-of-the-504-sit-in/>

Erba, Giuseppe. "Shedding Light on Photosensitivity, One of Epilepsy's Most Complex Conditions." The Epilepsy Foundation, 2006.

Galloway, Donald. "Blind Services and Advocacy and the Independent Living Movement in Berkeley." Interviews conducted by Sharon Bonney and Fred Pelka. 2000–2002. *Disability Rights and Inde- pendent Living Movement Oral History Series*. UC Berkeley, 2004. Web. 3 March 2012.

Hale, Cressida. "We Need More Awareness of Ambulatory Wheelchair Users." *The Mighty*, 2018. <https://themighty.com/2018/11/ambulatory-wheelchair-users-exist/>

Haller, Beth A. *Representing Disability in an Ableist World: Essays on Mass Media*. Louisville, KY: Advocado Press, 2010.

Jarrow, Jane. “Disability Issues on Campus and the Road to ADA.” *The Educational Record* 72, no. 1 (1991): 26-31.

Kudlick, Catherine J. “The Outlook of *The Problem* and the Problem with the *Outlook*: Two Advocacy Journals Reinvent Blind People in Turn-of-the-Century America.” *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*. The History of Disability Series. New York: New York University Press, 2001, pp. 187-213.

Lacy, Johnnie. “Director, Community Resources for Independent Living: An African-American Woman’s Perspective on the Independent Living Movement in the Bay Area, 1960s-1980s,” an oral history conducted in 1998 by David Landes, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2000. Interview transcript. http://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/kt0p30012x/?brand=oac4 (accessed Dec. 18, 2017).

Lissner, L. Scott. "Education, College and University." In Encyclopedia of Disability, by Gary L. Albrecht. Sage Publications, 2006.

Lukin, Josh. “Disability and Blackness.” *The Disability Studies Reader*. (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2013): 308-315.

Madaus, Joseph. "The History of Disability Services in Higher Education." *New Directions for Higher Education* 2011, no. 154 (2011): 5-15.

Milbern, Stacey. “On the Ancestral Plane: Crip Hand Me Downs and the Legacy of Our Movements.” Disability Visibility Project, 2019.

Mollow, Anna. “‘When Black Women Start Going on Prozac. . . .’: The Politics of Race, Gender, and Emotional Distress in Meri Nana-Ama Danquah’s *Willow Weep for Me*.” *The Disability Studies Reader*. New York: Taylor & Francis, 2013, 411-431.

O'Brien, Ruth. 2001. *Crippled Justice: The History of Modern Disability Policy in the Workplace*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Oslund, Christy M. “Disability Services and Higher Education.” *Disability Services and Disability Studies in Higher Education: History Contexts, and Social Impacts*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Patterson, Lindsey. “The Disability Rights Movement in the United States.” *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

Patterson, Lindsey. "Points of Access: Rehabilitation Centers, Summer Camps, and Student Life in the Making of Disability Activism, 1960-1973." *Journal of Social History* 46, no. 2 (2012): 473-99.

Piepzna-Samarasinha, Leah Lakshmi. *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*. Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018.

Price, Margaret. *Mad at School : Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life*. Corporealities. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Public Law § 504, cited from Joseph Madaus. "The History of Disability Services in Higher Education." *New Directions for Higher Education* 2011, no. 154 (2011): 9.

"The Rise of the Institutions, 1800-1950." *Parallels in Time: A History of Developmental Disabilities*. The Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, 2019.

Robert L. Burgdorf, Jr., "'Substantially Limited' Protection from Disaibility Discrimination: The Special Treatment Model and Misconstructions of the Definition of Disability." Villanova Law Review 42, no. 2 (1997): 534.

Rothstein, Laura F. "Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act: Emerging Issues for Colleges and Universities." *Journal of College and University Law* 13, no. 3 (1986): 229-65.

Scotch, Richard K. "American Disability Policy in the Twentieth Century." *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*. The History of Disability Series. New York: New York University Press, 2001, pp. 375-392.

Scotch, Richard K. *From Good Will to Civil Rights: Transforming Federal Disability Policy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984): 44.

Shapiro, Joseph P. *No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement*. New York: Times Books, 1993.

Schweik, Susan. "Lomax's Matrix: Disability, Solidarity, and the Black Power of 504." *Disability Studies Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2011). doi:10.18061/dsq.v31i1.1371.

Vaughn Switzer, Jacqueline. *Disabled Rights: American Disability Policy and the Fight for Equality*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003.

Weber, Mark C. "Disability Discrimination by State and Local Government: The Relationship between Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act." William and Mary Law Review 36, no. 3 (1995): 1089-1134.

"Who We Are & What We Do." *The Mac Weekly*, 2019.

Williamson, Joy Ann. "In Defense of Themselves: The Black Student Struggle for Success and Recognition at Predominantly White Colleges and Universities." *The Journal of Negro Education* 68, no. 1 (1999): 92-105.

Zaineb, Shireen. "The Last Call: Archives as a space of resistance." *The Mac Weekly*, November, 2019.

Primary Sources

Introduction

Koshimizu, Rino. "Danette Crawford explores mind, body, and soul." *The Mac Weekly*, December, 2000, p. 11.

Sundin, Jessica. "Accessibility at Macalester questioned." *The Mac Weekly*, April, 1993, p. 12.

Part I

"Chi Phi Delta." *The Mac Weekly*, June, 1930, p. 3.

"Essays." *The Mac Weekly*, April, 1921, pp. 2-3.

"Executive Notes." *Macalester College Bulletin*, March, 1907, p. 2.

"Sigma Alpha Iota Pledges Eight." *The Mac Weekly*, December, 1929, p. 3.

"Stray Items." *Macalester College Bulletin*, December, 1911, p. 7.

"Out of the Current." *The Mac Weekly*, October, 1929, p. 4.

Weeldreyer, Paul. "For Vets Only." *The Mac Weekly*, April, 1947, p. 4.

Weeldreyer, Paul. "For Vets Only." *The Mac Weekly*, March, 1948, p. 8.

Part II

Cameron, Becky. “College evaluates needs of handicapped students.” *The Mac Weekly*. November, 1979, p. 7.

“Campus Chest Goal $3000.” *The Mac Weekly*. November, 1968.

Cohen, Fred. “Hartle lobbies for blind at capitol.” *The Mac Weekly.* March, 1973, p. 8.

Cummings, Ira. “Racism: a history, an example, a prediction.” *The Mac Weekly*. October, 1971, p. 6.

Kulenkamp, Ann. “Mac student blasts EEO.” *The Mac Weekly*. September, 1970, p. 3.

Obsatz, Michael. “Interview with Michael Obsatz, Professor of Education and Sociology.” Conducted by Laura Zeccardi, Macalester Sociology Department Oral Histories. (2007).

Part III

Albrecht, Alison. “Working at Mac: Staffers voice concerns.” *The Mac Weekly.* November, 1983, p. 7.

Cameron, Becky. “Blind woman finds Mac ‘interesting.’” *The Mac Weekly.* November, 1979, p. 2.

Cameron, Becky. “College evaluates needs of handicapped students.” *The Mac Weekly*. November, 1979, p. 7.

Castor, Kristen. “Making Mac accessible.” *Macalester Today*. November, 1995.

James, Cindy. “Mac unaware of disabled.” *The Mac Weekly.* May, 1981, p. 5.

Rothstein, Laura F. "Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act: Emerging Issues for Colleges and Universities." *Journal of College and University Law* 13, no. 3 (1986): 229-65.

Watson, Bruce. “Other Voices.” *The Mac Weekly.* November, 1984, p. 4.

Wolters, Julie. “Handicapped students seek changes.” *The Mac Weekly.* November, 1984, p. 2.

Part IV

Abel, Jennifer. “Accessibility improves, more renovations needed.” *The Mac Weekly.* November, 1990, p. 7.

Aby, Meredith Stanton. “Article biased toward able-bodied reader.” *The Mac Weekly.* November, 1994, p. 8.

"AIDS Protocol." *Macalester Student Handbook*. 1993-1994, pp. 58-59. Macalester College Archives, Dewitt Wallace Library Room 218.

"Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)." *Macalester Student Handbook*. 1993-1994, p. 59. Macalester College Archives, Dewitt Wallace Library Room 218.

Brooks, Kevin. "Barrier-free Living: A friend's tragedy leads three alumni to remove housing obstacles for the disabled." *Macalester Today.* May, 1994, pp. 21-22.

Castor, Kristen. "Making Mac accessible." *Macalester Today*. November, 1995.

Eltink, Jeni. "Accessibility Questioned at Mac." *The Mac Weekly*. April, 1993, pp. 1, 4.

Eltink, Jeni. "Disability Awareness Raised." *The Mac Weekly*. April, 1993, pp. 1, 5.

Eltink, Jeni. "Researcher Examines Mac AIDS Responses." *The Mac Weekly*. March, 1993, pp. 2, 5.

"Disability Services." *Macalester Student Handbook*. 1997-1998, p. 4. Macalester College Archives, Dewitt Wallace Library Room 218.

Gavin, Bob. "Letter from the President Regarding Accessibility." *The Mac Weekly*. April, 1993, pp. 14-15.

Jarrow, Jane. "Disability Issues on Campus and the Road to ADA." *The Educational Record* 72, no. 1 (1991): 26-31.

Merz, Sara. "Macalester Needs Network for Disabled." *The Mac Weekly*. September, 1993, p. 5.

"MPJC sponsors Disability Awareness Week." *The Mac Weekly*. November, 1994, p. 3.

"Students' Rights, Freedoms, and Responsibilities." *Macalester Student Handbook*. 1993-1994. Macalester College Archives, Dewitt Wallace Library Room 218.

Piehl, Janet. "Handicapped workers enjoy opportunities offered by Kagin." *The Mac Weekly.* October, 1994, p. 5.

Roberts, Ben. "ADA Office works to accommodate disabled." *The Mac Weekly*. October, 1995, p. 3.

Sundin, Jessica. "Accessibility at Macalester questioned." *The Mac Weekly*. April, 1993, p. 12.

Sundin, Jessica. "Mac falls short of ADA rules." *The Mac Weekly.* September, 1993, p. 5.

Sundin, Jessica. "Simulation brings mixed blessings." *The Mac Weekly*, November, 1993.

Wood, Elee. "A Primer of Macalester Lingo." *Focal Point*. 1991, p. 11.

Conclusion

Dejarlais, April. "Students fight political correctness of 'mental illness.'" *The Mac Weekly*. October, 2008, p. 6.

Klein, Joe. "Active Minds draws attention to mental health issues on campus." *The Mac Weekly*. March, 2014, p. 3.