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Disability is the Result of Society

Stacey Park Milberne was best known for her work promoting disability justice throughout her lifetime. She was born with congenital muscular dystrophy and became an activist to fight for equity and a fair environment for people with disabilities. Inaccessibility causes issues that create physical and social barriers and her goal was to speak out against it. Currently though, this topic is being abandoned under new policies put in place by the government (ReNika). In an article titled “Trump’s Executive Orders Rolling Back DEI and Accessibility Efforts, Explained,” ReNika Moore talks about the legal efforts promoting equity and anti-discrimination that are actively being left behind. In the interview with Stacy Milberne, she talks about first-hand experiences on how oppressive society is towards impaired individuals and offers a different point of view called the social model of disability. The social model of disability describes disability as the result of barriers created by the environment, opposing the medical model of disability (People With Disability Australia).

At the beginning of the interview, Milberne began speaking to another disability activist about the problem behind building infrastructure. They are very serious and straightforward during the interview, which I think helps get their point across. Both women have physical impairments with experience behind inaccessibility which gives them credibility behind their argument. As Milberne continues on about infrastructure changes that should be made, she states there is “.. work that we need to do to include

people with disabilities.” The term “we” was targeted at her audience to try and persuade them to work against the barriers created by society. I don’t believe that she had a specific audience though, it was for everyone to listen and she was compelling in her reasoning to do so.

While speaking on building infrastructure, she briefly introduced the idea of the social model of disability, which contrasts the popular belief of disability being oppressive. She spoke from different perspectives while doing this, showing all sides of her story and displaying traits of a trustworthy speaker. She then branched off and talked about how her last job was very accommodating. The serious tone of the video stopped for a little while and Milberne was smiling while talking about the accessibility features of the building. She spoke very passionately on the subject and I believe this was an appeal to pathos for the audience to show empathy and see what differences can make. She also mentioned her impairment was not in the way at buildings that were accessible, maybe to get the audience to think again about the differences inclusion can bring. She immediately contrasted the accessible building to one that was inaccessible in a more serious tone, which I feel reinforced the rhetoric used.

As she continued, she spoke about the result of systems of oppression like ableism and violence. Milberne claimed, “victims of police violence are 50% people with disabilities.” Her example was a statistical approach to logos, and it helped build her argument on how society needs more efficient ways to function. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) backed her claim stating, “people with disabilities make up 30-50% of individuals subject to police force.” She continued about the results of oppression in the special education system, explaining that it is continued segregation for students of color. Hani Morgan, from the University of Southern

Mississippi, supported her statement writing, “..Black students are over-referred and over-identified in subjective special education placement areas more than any other group.” (Morgan, 73). This shows another factual logos appeal supporting her arguments.

The use of Stacey Milberne’s rhetorical strategies helped support her argument in many ways. In order for equality to occur, she stated that society must accept the social model of disability. The personal stories she told played on pathos and invoked a feeling of understanding as she persuaded for change. She used logos to give strong reasoning and evidence on why we should have a universally accessible environment. Milberne was also the right person to speak on this topic because she has firsthand experience relay, making her a reliable source. In the end, she gave compelling reasoning during her interview which created a solid foundation for her to speak.

Reflection: Before I started watching Stacey Milberne’s interview, I never thought very deep into the problems that accessibility, or inaccessibility could cause. In general, I never placed myself in the shoes of someone who has major differences from me, so I never saw the viewpoint of inaccessibility. I also didn’t know the importance of perspective while learning about the social and medical models of disability. When I first watched the video, I understood all of the struggles they talked about, but I had never taken the time before to think about it in terms of everyday life, which is what people with disabilities experience. As someone who isn’t disabled, it’s easy to brush off these problems as if they aren’t ours, but after hearing Milberne’s side of the story, it’s the opposite. Society is the one creating the problems of inequality and inaccessibility. This is known as the social model of disability. This was my first time hearing about this,

but it made total sense when comparing it to the medical model, which is essentially blaming someone for having an impairment. The medical model is what most people are conditioned by society to think, myself included, but Milberne did a great job arguing against that stereotype. While I didn't realize there were different sides, she was able to convince me to take her position and put myself in her shoes. She was a very credible person to argue for this topic, bringing personal stories to tell and helping persuade her side. She was able to list facts from her head and give reasoning behind them which shows more on her character and made me want to believe and listen. Overall, I think she did a great job with her argument, it was convincing and easy to understand.

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