

Let's talk Human Rights!

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Let's Talk Human Rights!

Decisions, Decisions

I struggle with making decisions. Small decisions like which color accent pillow to purchase for my living room send me into a state of panic. What if I make the wrong choice?!? Bigger decisions are even worse. When I graduated from high school I still hadn't decided which college I would be attending that fall. I went back and forth, made lists of pros and cons, talked with family and friends I respected and ultimately followed my best

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friend, Jill to the greatest school in the world (Coe College!).

I've gotten a lot better over the years, but in the past, the fear of making a bad decision weighed so heavily on me that it froze me from making decisions independently. I was constantly seeking approval from others to validate my choices. If I received feedback from someone that wasn't 100% in support of my decision it sent me into that ever-familiar state of panic. I would find myself trying to convince them that I had made the right decision and then brainstorming ways to reverse the decision I had made. It was entirely exhausting. Sometimes I just wished someone else would make all my decisions for me. What if that was the reality?

The basic rights that we hold as fundamental to people as citizens of the United States of America are not actually granted to everyone. People have rights, but not all people? For hundreds of years, people with disabilities have had their rights restricted through the court system through orders of full guardianship. Rather than supporting the individual to make their own decisions, a court designates someone to make those decisions for them.

I joked about wanting someone to make my decisions for me, but in all honesty that would be awful. Just like the members of Destiny's Child and Charlie's Angels, I am an independent woman. What I really need is supported decision making. It's what works for me and I suspect, that's how most of us make decisions - with the support of people who care about us.

I realize this topic is a bit controversial as everyone has their own unique situation and opinion, but bear with me as I ask some rhetorical questions that often float around my brain while I'm supposed to be doing other things. Why is making decisions different for people with disabilities? Why do we need to protect them by taking away their right to make decisions? Wouldn't it make more sense to help them make decisions for themselves by creating opportunities to explore options, learn about what they want and how to get it, and try again if they fail? When guardianship is deemed "necessary", why does it restrict so many rights that

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most other Americans exercise freely? What are the lasting effects of the restriction of these rights for people with disabilities?

I hear professionals talk about self-determination and self-advocacy with great regularity. It is so basic it may as well be wearing leggings and holding a Starbucks Pumpkin Spice Latte while taking a selfie with a filter. Why then do we find ourselves in a society that consistently restricts the basic rights of people on the supposition that they aren't capable of acting in their own best interest? I for one have made many mistakes in my three decades on this earth. I'm one of those people who has to learn things the hard way, and let me tell you- I have learned a lot! #blessed

I get to make decisions for my life and for the most part, I'm the boss of me. If the same were true for everyone, including people with disabilities, we'd have another revolution in this country. I hope I live long enough to be a part of it. Happy Independence Day!

Written by **Page Eastin**, [Office of Persons with Disabilities](#)

Juneteenth

Many African Americans recognize their Independence Day as June 19th. Juneteenth or June 19, 1865, is considered the date when the last slaves in America were freed. It symbolizes the end of slavery. Juneteenth has come to symbolize for many African-Americans what the fourth of July symbolizes for all Americans -- freedom.

It serves as a historical milestone reminding Americans of the triumph of the human spirit over the cruelty of slavery. It honors those African-Americans ancestors who survived the inhumane institution of bondage, as well as demonstrating pride in the marvelous legacy of resistance and perseverance they left us.

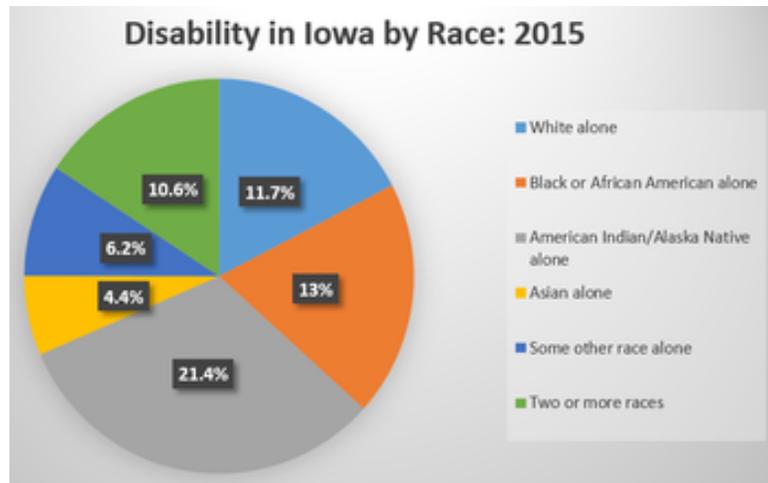
Click [here](#) for more information on Juneteenth:

Written by **Kim Cheeks**, [Office on the Status of African Americans](#)

Employment in Iowa

This blog post is the second in a series focused on the employment of Iowans with disabilities.

The Data



(State Data Center, 2015)

Minority Rehabilitation

Former United States Senator Tom Harkin helped author the Americans with Disabilities Act 27 years ago. He said of the civil rights law, “The Americans with Disabilities Act is nothing less than an emancipation proclamation for people with disabilities”. The comparison of the emancipation proclamation signed by Abraham Lincoln in 1863 and the Americans with Disabilities Act signed by President George H. W. Bush in 1990 is interesting to me. It got me thinking about race and disability. Thanks for the blog post inspiration, Senator Harkin! (I can only hope he’s reading this while sipping iced tea on a lake, enjoying his well-deserved retirement).

Minorities with disabilities face higher unemployment and poverty rates, as well as less access to services, than their non-minority counterparts. As members of a minority group, individuals experience barriers of a traditionally underserved community, and as individuals with disabilities they experience additional barriers within their own communities. Minorities are at

increased risk for health issues that can lead to long-term disabilities (National Rehabilitation Center, 2010).

In 1984, Frank Giles authored a paper on the vocational rehabilitation of minorities. In it, Giles cited issues such as:

- Difficulty gaining access to services
- Lack of trained minorities in professional roles
- Fewer successful outcomes of minorities served

Giles' paper was written my entire lifetime ago, yet it seems even more relevant today as Iowa becomes more diverse. By 2050, analysis shows that 53% of Iowans will be non-white. As we attract people to our state to help us fill our workforce needs, we need to be prepared to meet their individual needs, including the needs of minorities with disabilities.

Room for Improvement

Organizations providing services to minorities with disabilities should create action plans that include:

- Targeted outreach to minorities with disabilities
- A culturally competent staff comprised of professionals of minority races
- Inclusive policies, procedures, and practices that meet the needs of individuals with disabilities from various races.

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence requires that organizations have a defined set of ethics and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally. Cultural competence is a developmental process that evolves over an extended period. Staff training, outreach and marketing, and service delivery should all be developed with a culturally-competent approach. The perspectives and experiences that consumers bring can be especially valuable for policy makers.

How does your organization stack up?

- What can your organization do to increase targeted outreach to minorities?

- What steps will you take to become more culturally competent in providing services to individuals of minority backgrounds?
- What mechanism for obtaining consumer input from underserved populations will you utilize?
- How will you modify policies and procedures to ensure inclusion and successful outcomes?

Written by **Page Eastin**, [Office of Persons with Disabilities](#)