

Process Paper

Our topic was the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) law, signed by President George H. W. Bush on July 26, 1990. The law declared people with disabilities have the right to equal access in our society, and that the government, businesses, schools, and transportation have legal responsibility to provide these accommodations. Because of this, we believe that the ADA relates to the theme of Rights and Responsibilities. We chose this topic because we both have had experiences that have made us curious about the perspective of those with disabilities. Henry's grandma had polio, and then post-polio syndrome, and her life experiences were our main motivation to choose the ADA.

We found many impactful sources. One key secondary source was *The ADA Companion Guide: Understanding the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines*, written by Marcela Abadi Rhoads, explaining the protections for people with disabilities. An important primary source was the ADA document itself. It outlined the specific protections for people with disabilities and identified who is responsible. We conducted an interview with key disability rights activist Jennifer Keelan-Chaffins, who led a pivotal protest while only 8 years old called the Capitol Crawl, an inspirational and pivotal event that contributed greatly to the signing of the ADA.

We chose a website because we were able to include influential images, a relatively large amount of text, and of course, a clip from our interview. We spent time figuring out how best to organize the information into different webpages and had to get written permission to use images from primary sources. Due to the fact that neither of us have ever built a website, the process to create the website was educational and rewarding.

Martin Luther King Jr., in a letter from Birmingham jail on April 16, 1963, wrote that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. This writing highlights the core message of the ADA law, which argues that Americans with disabilities aren't second class citizens, they belong in our community, and deserve equal rights and opportunities. Many disability rights leaders used this saying in their signs and banners. This paved the way for protesters to successfully convince Congress that disability rights are civil rights. To be full members of society, people with disabilities need accommodations for things such as wheelchair access, braille, hearing-impaired communication, and equal access to jobs, housing and education. This positively impacted the lives of people with disabilities because the accommodations provided equal opportunities in society. The government is responsible to protect its citizens with disabilities by making laws, and ensure that all people, businesses, and organizations follow the law. Citizens should also help to increase awareness about disability rights. Our topic is important to history not only because it provided rights to those with disabilities and paved the way for other countries to pass similar laws, but also because it shows that when citizens speak up and protest against injustice, they can create the change they want to see.