

## **Love and Disability Rights: Organizing Together in Hard Times**

*A plain language version of “Love and Disability Rights: Community Organizing During the War on Empathy”*

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We are living in a hard time. Many people are scared, divided, and disconnected. People with disabilities feel this especially. We are often treated as less than human. The world sometimes acts like we don’t matter. That hurts.

To survive, many of us have learned to be strong and hide our feelings. We are told that being tough is the only way to fight for our rights. But what if love and care make us stronger—not weaker?

This writing is about how love and empathy (caring about other people’s feelings) are powerful tools. They can help us fight for justice and bring us together. When we lead with love, we build stronger communities and a better future.

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### **The Problem: A World Without Empathy**

Some people, including politicians and people in power, now say empathy is bad. They say it makes us weak. They make fun of kindness. But without empathy, people suffer. Rules and systems become cold and cruel. People with disabilities often suffer the most.

When leaders take away empathy, they also take away our rights. Medicaid is being attacked. Disability rights laws like Section 504 are being weakened. Elon Musk even said that empathy is a weakness. But empathy is not weak. It is what makes us human.

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### **A History of Harm**

People with disabilities have always faced unfair treatment. In the past, we were locked in institutions, sterilized, or denied basic rights. That didn’t end long ago—it still happens in new ways.

Today, some people with disabilities are still forced into treatment or lose control over their own lives. Many are put in jail or institutions. Society still acts like we are a problem, not people with value.

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## Struggles Inside Our Own Movements

Even inside the disability rights movement, things are not always fair. There is not enough money or support, and sometimes that makes us fight each other instead of working together. People feel left out or unappreciated.

We need to treat each other better. Being a leader should mean helping others—not just being in charge. We must check in on each other, support each other’s work, and make sure everyone belongs.

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## Why Love Matters

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said real power comes from love. Not soft love—but strong love. Love that fights for justice. Love that lifts people up. That’s the kind of love our movement needs.

For us, this means:

- Respecting interdependence (helping each other) instead of seeing it as weakness.
- Creating policies that care about people, not just rules.
- Making sure no one is left behind.

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## Making Space for Everyone

Empathy is powerful. But we also need **belonging**—feeling truly welcomed, seen, and needed. We must ask:

- Who feels safe in our spaces?
- Who is missing?
- Are we treating each other with care and respect?

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## Art Helps Us Be Seen

Stories, music, poetry, and art help people understand our lives. Art shows our feelings and makes us visible. It is not just something extra—it’s part of how we fight back. When we create and share our stories, we remind the world that we are human, that we matter, and that we belong.

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## Moving Forward with Love

This world tells us to be hard and cold. But we don't have to live that way. We can choose love, care, and connection. We can treat each other with dignity.

**Justice is love in action.**

If we want to survive and build a better world, we must start by believing in each other again.

That is the power of our movement. That is our radical hope.