



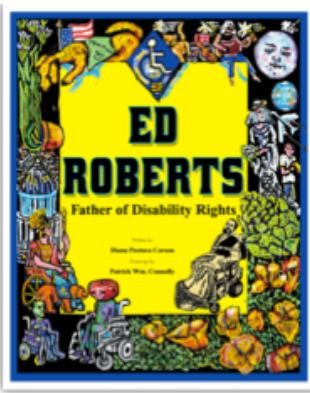
Beyond Awareness Disability Rights History

We've come a long way with diversity education. Ask any child about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. or Cesar Chavez and you will probably get the complete story behind each man's amazing sacrifice and impact on our society. Our students know about the many nationalities, religions, and cultures that make up our national patchwork quilt. They learn the history of how each one has contributed to this country's experience, this country's development as a uniquely unified entity. They understand the immorality of slavery and racism as well as many forms of oppression. Yes, our students certainly know a lot about diversity.

Yet we have neglected to educate our children about the largest minority group in the United States: people who experience disability. Who was Ed Roberts? He was a man who, due to his physical disability, had to fight to receive a public education. Roberts went on to become California's director of the Department of Rehabilitation, and he is now hailed as the "Father of Disability Rights." Who is I. King Jordan? He was the first Deaf president of Gallaudet University, a university for Deaf people which was led by hearing presidents for over one hundred years until a widely publicized student protest pressured the university to hire Jordan instead of a hearing candidate. These individuals, among many others, compare to the countless heroes who created an appreciation for diversity among Americans.

Yet when asked about Ed Roberts or I. King Jordan, most students do not know of their contributions to society. Today's students need to understand the impact that legislation has had on the life quality of disabled people. They need to know that there were no curb cuts, ramps, accessible restrooms, etc. before disability rights pioneers demanded equal access. They need to know that children with disabilities did not have the right to an education until citizens demanded equal access to learning and opportunity. The acquisition of legal rights has allowed disabled people to thrive in their communities and have access to life quality. Diversity education and civil rights history are not complete without including the struggle for appreciation and rights for the largest minority group in existence in the United States (Joseph Shapiro, *No Pity*). For this reason, it is essential to teach children about the grassroots disability rights movement that has granted legal rights to people with disabilities.

Diana is so passionate about this that she wrote a children's book about disability rights pioneer, Ed Roberts, which is beautifully illustrated by Patrick William Connally, and is rich with symbolism of the civil rights era. This book came about when Diana had wanted her students to research American Heroes, and when she assigned Ed Roberts as one of them, she discovered that there were no books about this trailblazer whose work, along with the blood, sweat, and tears of many other dedicated pioneers, paved the way for disability rights and equal access for all. So Diana *Ed Roberts: Father of Disability Rights*. Others were involved in the fight for equality including I. King Jordan, Judy Heumann, Justin Dart, and many more. Many more books need to be written in the future to further our understanding of Disability Rights History, to take us Beyond Awareness. Until then, we must find creative ways to empower our community with knowledge about disability rights history.



www.EdRobertsChildrensBook.com



Diana Pastora Carson, M.Ed. has been an educator for over 20 years. She is a consultant and trainer on diversity as it relates to disability and is the author of several articles and books on the topic, including *Ed Roberts: Father of Disability Rights; Beyond Awareness: Teaching Diversity Appreciation to Children and Youth; and Foundations for Ability Awareness*.

Diana's Ability Awareness work has earned her statewide PTA recognitions in the areas of advocacy and outreach, as well as her schools designation of Teacher of the Year. She has also been featured on several radio programs, and served two terms on the Board of Directors of Disability Rights California.

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