BACKGROUND
Ed Roberts was born a perfectly healthy young boy in 1939, San Mateo, CA. The oldest of four brothers, Ed was like most young boys, he liked to be outside, to play baseball, and to go to school. When Ed was 14 he contracted Polio. The disease left him paralyzed below the neck, living most of his life in an iron lung, a machine to help him breathe. Unwilling to be defeated, Ed continued to pursue his education, enrolling at University of California Berkeley in 1962. Upon hearing his story, other disabled and paralyzed students started enrolling at UC Berkeley as well.

While at UC Berkeley, Ed and his fellow students started a disability rights group, the Rolling Quads. Among the challenges that they faced, one of the hardest was simply getting to class. “There are very few people, even with the most severe disabilities who can’t take control of their own lives. The problem is, the people around us don’t expect us to” -Ed Roberts, 60 Minutes. Simply, the streets and sidewalks had not been designed with those with disabilities in mind. So, members of the Rolling Quads would sneak out at night, and destroy the corners of curbs on streets, thereby allowing access for those using wheelchairs. These access points, or curb-cuts, are now mandatory at the end of every block in the United States, but that was not always the case. It was almost 30 years after the Rolling Quads’ late night curb cuts that basic access necessities were written into law in the United States.

After years of struggle and advocacy, George H.W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act into law in 1990. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities. While this act did a lot to progress the rights of people with disabilities, it still faces scrutiny, and disability still is not considered in many areas of society.

For example, there has been new scrutiny of the ADA from the Trump administration. In 2018, an a House Resolution (H.R. 620) was presented to Congress that would make it easier for private businesses not to comply with ADA requirements. H.R. 620 passed through the House of Representatives in the Spring of 2018 before being rejected by the Senate. The ADA has been the law for 27 years, yet the implementation is not complete, and a resolution like H.R. 620 could threaten this progress. Even with the Americans with Disabilities Act in place, legal action is just one way in which we can make our world more accessible and inclusive for all. Many designers and engineers working on designing solutions to global issues happen to be able-bodied. Seemingly simple solutions such as banning plastic straws to reduce plastic in the ocean may be seen as a win for environmental groups, but can have a negative impact on those with disabilities that require them to use straws to drink. From the clothing that
we wear, to our subway and bussing systems, and beyond, it is important to think about and design a world that is accessible for all and to protect the laws that ensure those rights.

RESOURCES

Personal Stories
- Why I Wrote the Americans with Disabilities Act (the Washington Post)
- Ed Roberts, Activist, 60 Minutes Segment with Harry Reasoner
- Disability Rights Advocates Point Out Problem with Banning Plastic Straws (NowThisNews)
- Starbucks Elimination of Plastic Straws Is Bad for Disabled People (Teen Vogue)
- Disabled Campbell County Man Struggles to Find ADA-Friendly Gas Stations (ABC News)
- #RaceAnd: Kay Ulanday Barrett (Race Forward)
- Michael Wolff: Stop Designing for Only the Young and Able-Bodied (the Guardian)

Art and Images
- Disability Math, Jamal S. Kordes
- Photo Exhibit Celebrates 25 Years of the Americans with Disabilities Act (DDCE)
- * Disability Artists Fostering Narratives of Acceptance & Adaption (Scene360)
- * ADA/ Universal Design top posts (Pinterest)
- * Designing for Disabilities: How Parson’s Open Style Lab is Helping to Make Fashion Accessible (Fashionista)

Articles
- The 1977 disability rights protest that broke records and changed laws (Newsela)
- Declaring Independence in Berkeley (Psychology Today)
- ADA Anniversary Marked with Protest of Inaccessible Disabilities Service Office (NPR)

Data & Maps
- Facts About the Americans with Disabilities Act (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission)
- Just the Facts: Americans with Disabilities Act (United States Courts)
- Fueling the Creation of New Electronic Curb Cut (the Center for an Accessible Society)
- Disability Statistics (Cornell University)
- 2017 Disability Statistics Annual Report (University of New Hampshire)
- Disability and Health Data System (Center for Disease Control and Prevention)
- *Wheelmap.org
- *Disability Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals (UN)
- *Google Maps now lets users add wheelchair accessibility details for locations (Tech Crunch)
Videos

- Electronic Curb Cuts (Commission of Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans)
- The Little Known Patterns on British Streets (Things You Might Not Know in Association with the Royal National Institute for the Blind)
- Design for Disability: Playlist 372 (TED Talks)
- We Won't Go Away (Minnesota Department of Administration: Council on Developmental Disabilities)

Websites

- What is the Americans with Disabilities Act (Americans with Disabilities Act National Network)
- 99% Invisible Episode 308: Curb Cuts (99% Invisible)
- Assistive Technology (World Health Organization)
- * Universal Design (the Center for an Accessible Society)
- The Royal National Institute for the Blind
- Digital Accessibility (Minnesota Council on Disability)
- * Design for Disability 2018 (Cerebral Palsy Foundation)
- * What is Universal Design (Center for Excellence in Universal Design in Association with the National Disability Association)

* = resource includes one or more solutions