

The Making of Project II

When my sparkly green spiral notebook journal that I got for my birthday in sixth grade resurfaced from the bottomless pit I call my dresser, the inspiration for Project II was born. The journal chronicled my experience through middle school from a wheelchair after some unfortunate circumstances left me unable to walk. I had spent a lot of time thinking about and writing about how being in a wheelchair affected me. The feelings of being an outsider and feeling alone were evident in my journal and in the memoir I had subsequently written on the topic. Through writing, last year I finally felt at peace with what had happened to me and how it isolated me during my middle school years, and still continues to have lasting effects on my life.

It became time this year to look at the bigger picture. To look past my experiences. To look past my feelings. I needed to look at how disabled individuals across the board experience some of the disadvantages, poor attitudes, and even discrimination that I have faced. I began to wonder why that is? Does being physically disabled really make us that different from the rest of the world? As [I began doing research and reading about housing discrimination, employment discrimination](#), etc that happens to disabled people, I felt a sense of community. I had never known anyone else under the age of eighty that was in a wheelchair, but through my research, I finally felt not alone. As I felt a sense of community, I felt some anger, not just for myself, but for all of us.

I know I cannot solve the problem of disability oppression on my own. But, I was not doing anything about it. I was sitting by and watching as myself and others experienced a world that is not particularly accepting of people with physical disabilities. I began to wonder if able-bodied people even realize what type of hardship and demoralization that occurs. When I thought back to my time before I became disabled, I realized that I had never spent a drop of time thinking about what my life would have been like if I could not walk. It just never occurred to me that I could lose something that I took for granted. With this retrospective realization swarming my mind, I had a sudden understanding that others might have the same naivety that I had. This is when I knew that I had an opportunity through Project II to bring to life this issue of able-bodied privilege for those who might be unaware of its existence. I turned to the [Minor in Writing blog](#) and pitched my idea. With the feedback I received, I knew the project was a good direction for me to go.

Many scholars have addressed privilege before. They have explained what it is, what it is rooted in and why it is detrimental. I did not want my contribution to the academia to be repetitive. I came across these “privilege lists” written by two renowned scholars, [Allan Johnson](#) and [Peggy McIntosh](#). Their lists were both eye opening and

relevant. However, neither of them formulated lists about able-bodied privilege. I knew this was my opportunity to add to the discussion. I wanted my list to be as powerful and relatable as Johnson's and McIntosh's, but I did not want it to be too similar.

I decided my essay and list about able-bodied privilege would be different because I have the personal experience that would set me apart from other contributors in the field. Throughout the project, I have returned to that sparkly green journal many times as a way to remember all of the oppression and obstacles that I experienced. I combined that with the research I did about workplace and housing discrimination experienced by others with physical disabilities. I think the combination of research and personal experience is what will differentiate project II from what is already out there in the field of sociology. I also think it really helped me look at a personal issue on a global level, and recognize that I am not the only one. I will forever be more aware of the deep roots and lasting impact that disability oppression has caused for not only me, but for others.