

Moving with Intention

EMBODYING LANGUAGE & DISABILITY JUSTICE



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MOVING WITH INTENTION:

Embodying **Language** and **Disability Justice**

“**Language Justice**” (LJ) and “**Disability Justice**” (DJ) have become common buzzwords in spaces where interpreters are providing language access services. However, these words are often used in ways that do not engage or embody the heart of these frameworks or stances. Additionally, very few have placed LJ and DJ in praxis dialogue with one another, often invoking them as two different frames that happen to be applied within a given space where Disabled people and/or users of languages other than English are present.

In this series we want to explicitly bring LJ and DJ into dialogue and use the contexts in which we work as real-world applications for how these frameworks coexist and mutually reinforce one another. Specifically, we address the marriage of LJ and DJ when applied to spaces wherein Spoken Language interpreters and/or Sign Language interpreters are providing language access services as our work often necessitates operating under both frameworks. In the content that follows, we lay a foundation for hiring entities and organizers.



LANGUAGE JUSTICE

is a stance and framework that is concerned with language, race, and how both are situated socially and politically in our everyday lives.

LANGUAGE JUSTICE:



is about building and sustaining multilingual spaces so that everyone's voice can be heard – both as an individual and as part of a diversity of communities and cultures

recognizes the social and political dimensions of language and language access, while working to dismantle language barriers, equalize power dynamics, and build strong communities for social and racial justice



affirms the fundamental rights of individuals and communities to language, culture, self-expression, and equal participation



alters institutions to provide space for full democratic participation (rather than provide more people with access to the status quo)



DISABILITY JUSTICE

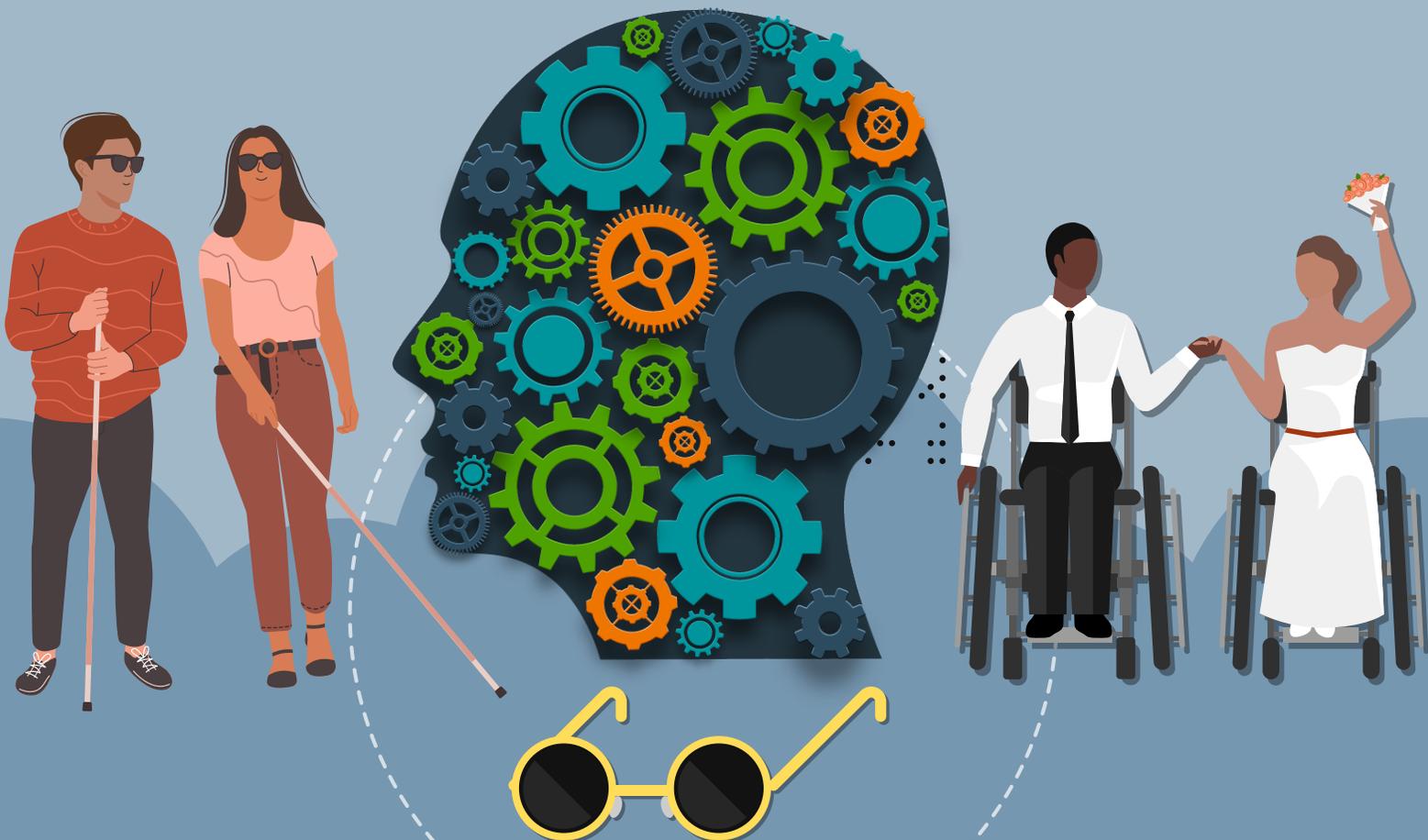
is an advocacy framework that challenges the Disability Rights Movement and the legal framing of disability for the purpose of solely accessing civil rights.

DJ holds that:

- all bodies are unique and essential
- all bodies have strengths and needs that must be met
- all bodies are confined by ability, race, gender, sexuality, class, nation state, religion, and more, and we cannot separate them

WE ARE POWERFUL, NOT DESPITE THE COMPLEXITIES OF OUR BODIES, BUT BECAUSE OF THEM

The pitfall of LJ is that historically it has not addressed (dis)ability. In a similar vein, DJ has not addressed language and how it can be used as a barrier to access. In subsequent publications, we will address how bilingual sign language/tactile language interpreters, Deaf and DeafBlind interpreters, and multilingual/multimodal interpreters bring consonance to LJ and DJ while putting them both into practice.



LJ+DJ FOR HIRING ENTITIES IS:



- Going beyond language access. The provision of access services is an important step, but it does not absolve you from the time and investment required for the intentional supplementary actions needed to address the diverse needs of individuals who may be present.
- Such intentional actions may include, but are not limited to, the provision of other access tools, practices, and providers to assist in full inclusion (i.e. chat monitor/reader, chat translator, visual descriptions of presentation materials, etc.)

It is not:

- Simply being in a bi/multilingual spaces (without granting those communities full access to participation/engagement)
- Event opening protocols
- These protocols should be deliberate and not haphazard. Additionally, the onus should not be completely on the access team to prepare end service users for your event. Entities should invest in preparing these protocols (i.e. script, access checklist, etc.) or collaborating with the access team members and/or community members to co-construct these protocols prior to the event. Having these tools professionally translated into the entity's most frequently used languages also demonstrates a commitment to LJ beyond a single instance.

EMBODY LJ+DJ:



Your actions have to align with what you state your intentions to be. Hiring entities must invest in LJ work - both publicly and privately, including:

- Being knowledgeable about the access features of the platform you plan to use or the space/facility you plan to occupy
- Having the tools/personnel ready to troubleshoot and resolve any access issue(s) that may arise without deprioritizing the needs of any participants

You must actively engage with the communities that you would like to have participating in your events. Do not merely promote the provision of interpretation services to passively attract communities.



Understand that Justice doesn't always mean fairness; it means striving for equity and potentially shifting what languages and/or (dis)abilities dominate the space. Equity means investing more time, being proactive in your planning practices, putting more effort into prep for all parties involved, strategic budgeting, and consideration for additional steps that may need to be taken to meet participants' access needs.

Interlocutors speaking and signing with intention and consideration for the interpretation process and those engaging through interpretation.



Allow for anonymous accommodation requests as a way to reduce biases and prejudicial planning practices.

HINDRANCES TO EMBODYING LJ+DJ:

- Moving hastily. Expediency can be detrimental to access. In interactive spaces, time should be allowed for interpretation and intentional pauses should be taken for responses of all language users in the space.
- Overlooking the interpreting process causes a shift in the power dynamics of the space requiring participants of non-dominant groups to have to “fight” for equal footing.
- Placing the responsibility on the access team to uphold values you are not practicing with intentionality in the space creates a false public-facing narrative that is disingenuous and misleading (e.g. gender-neutral language—often entities will request interpreters use gender-neutral language, for example in Spanish, though they are not using gender-neutral language in English).
- Implementing practices without intentionality. Each of our communities has unique needs. Applying a “one size fits all” approach in every setting, without considering the distinctive characteristics of those present in the space, can be perceived as performative.

