

# CRIPSTORY

The Unheard History of Disability

## **The 504 Sit In**

Did you know that the longest sit-in in American history happened in 1977? It was called the 504 Sit-In. Unfortunately, this pivotal moment in American history was overlooked due to its association with disability history. The 504 Sit-In emerged from Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the foundation for the American Disabilities Act (ADA). The act emphasizes that no institution receiving federal funds can discriminate against disabled individuals, but it was never enacted.

When Jimmy Carter took office in 1977, the disability community had felt that they had waited long enough for their rights, and they demanded Jimmy Carter sign and implement the regulations immediately.

Joseph Califano, who was Carter's new HEW, Health, Education, and Welfare Secretary, was appointed by Carter to create a task force to review the regulations. However, the task force lacked representation of disabled people. Rightly so, the disabled community feared the regulations would be watered down.



The American Coalition of Citizens with Disability demanded that the regulations be signed unchanged, and they would take action if they were not signed by April 5, 1977. As the date approached closer and closer, Califano did not respond.



Due to the lack of response, hundreds of disabled people and their allies sat in city HEW offices nationwide. Most of them only lasted one or two days, but the one in San Francisco lasted 28 days!





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**THE BLACK PANTHER**  
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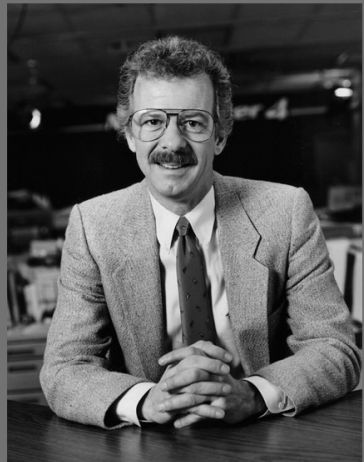
Pressure Forces Califano To Sign 504 Regulations

**HANDICAPPED  
 WIN DEMANDS-  
 END H.E.W.  
 OCCUPATION**

STORY

See Don't See It To Know

Black Panther Party, 400 E. 12th St., Oakland, Calif. 94612. Phone: (415) 774-2200. Fax: (415) 774-2201. Telex: 981000. Cable: 981000. Website: www.blackpantherparty.org



**Evan White**  
 KGO 7, KRON 4, Bay TV

While a day-to-day experience of a month-long sit-in would be grueling for any person, it posed particular challenges to disabled demonstrators. Some of the San Francisco protesters indeed risked their lives to do this. Disabled people needed medicines, personal care attendants, and more to be able to live. Finally, on April 28, 1977, California signed the 504 regulations unchanged.

While the disabled community had to wait until 1990 for the American Disabilities Act to pass for more protection against discrimination, the 504 was the first victory for disabled people in obtaining civil rights.



As a disabled person, I am so grateful for the work these people have done. If you are an educator, parent, or ally. Please share this significant event in American history. Until this big event makes it into our history books, the history of Disability Justice, just like disabled people, will remain forever invisible.









**DISABLED**

**PEOPLE**

**ARE**

**PEOPLE!!**

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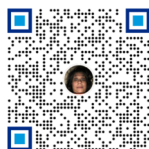
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