

CRIPSTORY

The Unheard History of Disability

Ugly Laws

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From 1867 to 1974, many cities in the US enacted laws known as Unsightly Beggar Ordinances, which later became known as ugly laws. These laws unfairly targeted impoverished and disabled individuals. The earliest known instance of these laws dates back to 1867 in San Francisco, where it was illegal for individuals who were deemed “unsightly” or “disgusting” to expose themselves in public. Those who violated the laws were either fined or sent to a poorhouse or work farm. The first recorded arrest for violating an ugly law was of Martin Oates, a former union soldier during the American Civil War, in San Francisco in July 1867. Racism also played a role in the enforcement of these laws, as Chinese immigrants and their descendants were unlawfully quarantined to prevent the spread of disease. Ugly laws were eventually repealed following the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the passage of the American Disabilities Act in 1990 ensured that such discriminatory laws would never exist again.

Illegal Lives



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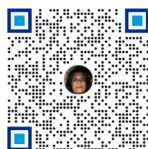
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