

Non-Fiction Book Response: Make Them Go Away

Make Them Go Away, by Mary Johnson, is a book that tells how the American Disability Act came about, what the Act includes, the protest against the Act and furthermore how the Act potentially further harms disabled people. In chapter two, *Passing the Americans with Disabilities Act*, the author briefly discusses when and why the Act was passed. But, more importantly, she discusses the fact that the Act isn't necessarily helping disabled people, but instead harming them. With the Act passed in 1990, it only states that adjustments must be made to public buildings or businesses as long as it is a "reasonable accommodation" and no "undue hardship" is required. In other words, if it is too difficult for a business to make changes it doesn't need to be done. The only way it will be forced upon the business is when someone disabled sues against them which, consequently, as the author pointed out, puts full blame on the person who is disabled. Another key point that the author pointed out is that with the Act, less people will want to hire due to the fear of getting sued for lack of accommodations.

The most surprising aspect of this chapter for me was how unwilling and inconsiderate others are to help or accommodate for people with disabilities. There was a section of the chapter where the author told of a disabled woman who was attending a Congressional hearing and the facility had no restroom for disabled people. As the woman wrote a letter to a New York Congress man she said, "I doubt very much that a hearing would have been held in a setting that lacked restrooms for the non-disabled. In fact, it would be absurd to consider it. So then why is it considered appropriate to have a hearing somewhere that had no restrooms people with mobility problems could use?" (19) This particularly stood out to me because no one thinks or cares if it is inconvenient for others, let alone disabled people. They just care that it is more accessible to themselves. This is astonishing to me, because if those people who will not accommodate for the disabled were actually disabled, they would want everyone to adjust facilities for them as much as possible.

Reading this chapter enlightened me on the downside of passing the Act. Beforehand I was unaware that the Act had negative effects on disabled people. On page 16, Johnson quotes a section from *The Orange County Register* discussing the act: "many other companies, though now favorably disposed toward them, may look on hiring the disabled as an invitation to lawsuits." "The ADA hurt the disabled, it said, by making it less likely that a business would hire them, fearing lawsuits," Johnson added. Previously to this reading I was uninformed that the ADA had any negative effect on disabled people and that businesses were so concerned about lawsuits from people that they backed away even more from hiring disabled workers. It made me realize that there is a lot more that goes into passing acts than just having the government agree with it.

However, with this knowledge, I am not sure if the Act has actually impacted disabled people more negatively. Before this act was passed, disabled people were never given a fair opportunity to work because people did not want to deal with the "complications" and expenses a disabled employee brings to the job. Some may argue that this fear of lawsuits is just one more reason to make businesses unwilling to hire disabled workers, which very well might be the case. However disabled workers were already at a disadvantage for being hired because of our high speed and intolerant society. In retrospect, I don't believe that passing this act had a major negative effect on disabled people.

One connection I made during this reading was to my abortion project. In my Op-ed article for abortion, I talked about how that if roles were switched the people supporting abortion would not want to be aborted and would support pro-life. This is very similar in the case of people not wanting to make buildings accessible for people with disabilities. People fought against the ADA intensely because they did not want to take the time and spend the money to change their buildings. However, if roles were switched, these people who are unwilling to change their buildings and make accommodations would want everyone to do everything in their power to help support them and their disability so they could be a part of society.

Questions that still remain:

1) If business were concerned about hiring disabled workers due to the fear of being sued, did anyone protest against this and say that they were not following the provisions of the act by dismissing the idea of hiring a disabled employee?

2) As time has passed with the ADA as law, have disabled people been treated more equally and been offered more jobs? Or do they still face tremendous bias?