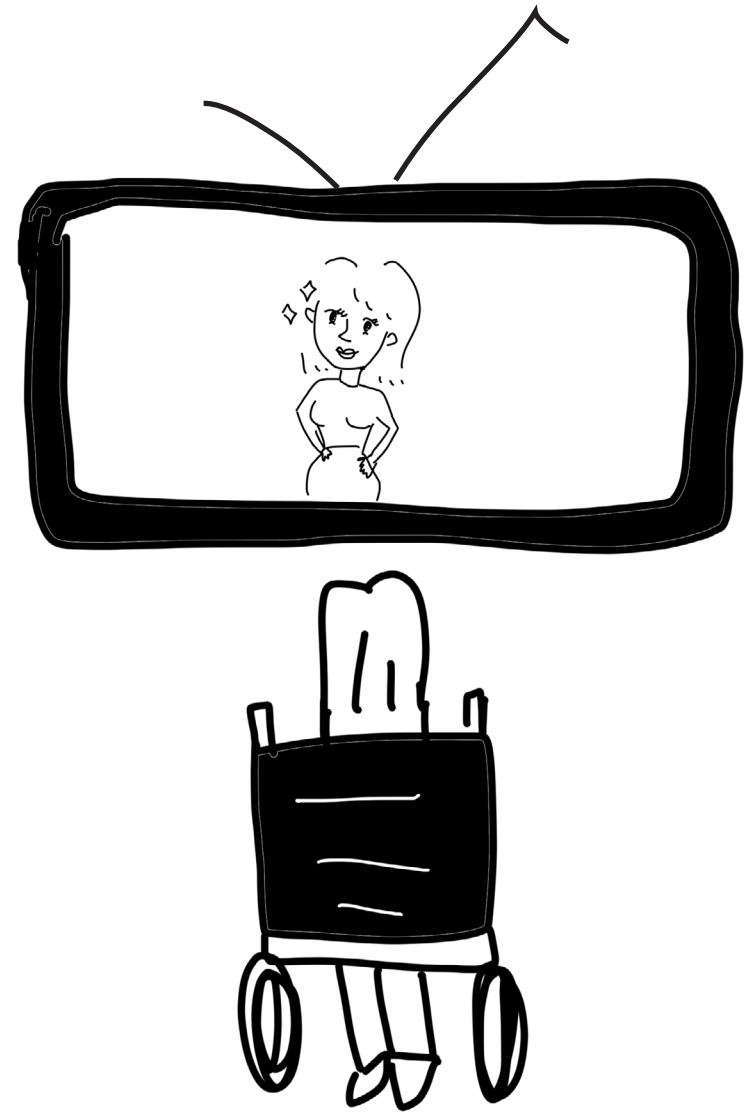


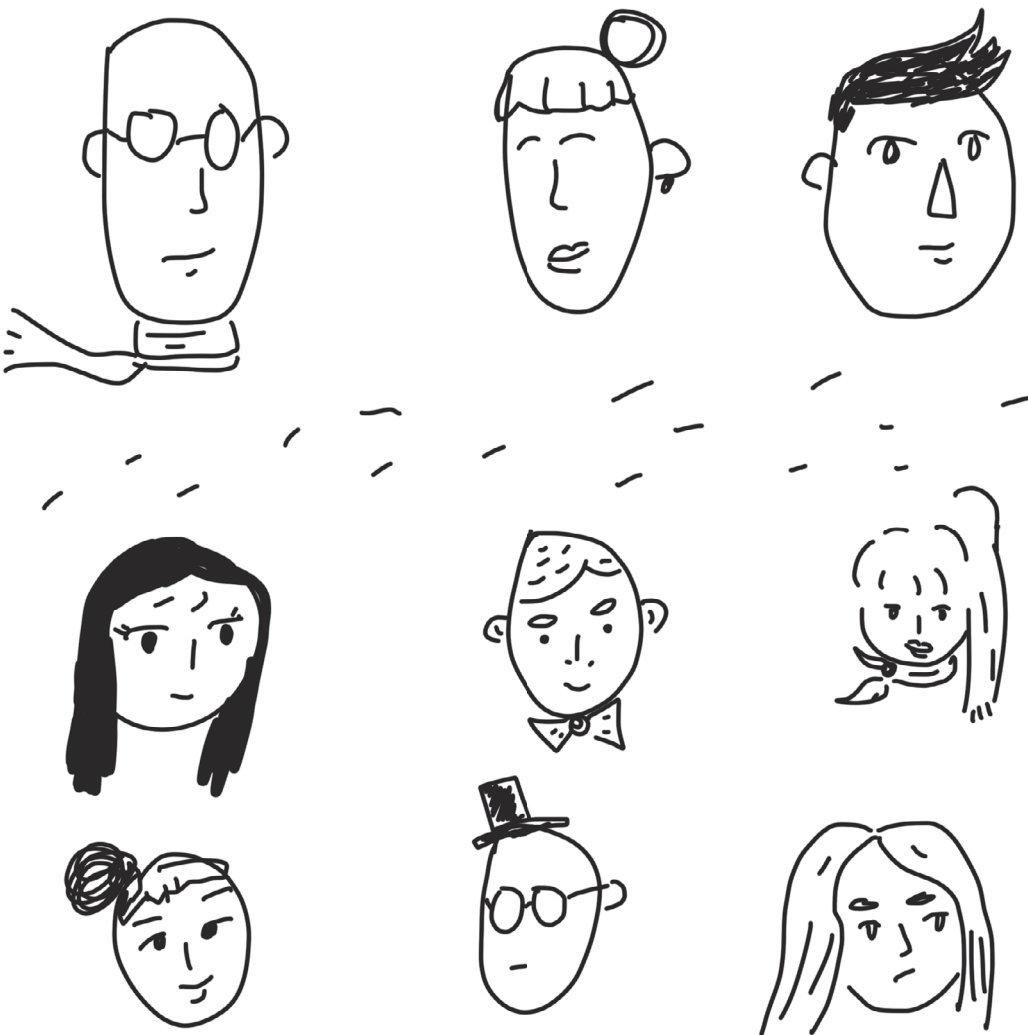
# The EQUITY PRINCIPLES

Why we need equity, not equality



In the context of disability there has always been a classification of "us" and "them": people with disabilities vs those without a disability. It prompts us to believe that having a disability is bad and people with disabilities should be "fixed" if there is a way. The happy ending is always with the person with the disability being healed. The isolation and enfreakment of those with disabilities is evident throughout society in terms of media and the everyday world. Turn on the TV or open up a social media app, and 99% of the time what you see are white, thin, conventionally attractive, straight, and more importantly in the context of this text, able bodied people.





# WHY?

**Why is this?**

**Why is it that we only see one type of person in a world of infinite diversity?**

**Why does society force us to desire to be this specific type of person?**

**Don't you just wish the world was more accepting?**

**What if we were all just viewed the same?**

**Wouldn't it make the world better and more accepting?**

That might sound like an easy fix if one day I snapped my fingers and we were all just seen as equal. No more diversity - we treat everyone the same because there is no difference at all.

But isn't that the beauty of being human? The fact that we are all different. If we were all the same and treated under the sentiment of equality, then we are forgetting important parts of our identity. We are forgetting who we are and therefore cannot respect people's rich histories, whether that be in the context of race, ability, gender, or sexuality. We must not forget the struggles of these identifiers. We are literally breeding ignorance by ignoring key parts of how people identify. A person can find much comfort in their identity and we should not take that away under the guise of treating everyone equally. It also forces people to think that we should strive to be one desirable identity.

So, if we must not forget our diversities, won't there still be injustices if there is no equality? The answer to this that we must not solve our problems with equality but with equity. To contextualize equality and equity, think of this example. What if one day every citizen of the town was given a house. This house is two storeys in which the second floor is only accessible by a flight of stairs. It may sound great that everyone gets a home and no one is left homeless, but we must think again about the diversity of humans. A person with a disability in which they cannot walk up stairs cannot even use the home the way an able bodied person can. A wealthy person who already owns a mansion would now have 2 homes and probably not even live in the one given to them.

Now, under the sentiment of equity, if everyone was given a house it would be appropriate to the person's situation. The person with the disability's house would be one level or accessible by an elevator or something of the sort. The wealthy person wouldn't even need a new home. I noticed this sounds a little bit like communism, but that's a story for another time. This is just an exaggerated example to illustrate equity.



In the Principles of Universal Design<sup>1</sup>, it is eloquently put as one of the guidelines to, "Provide the same means of use for all users: identical whenever possible; equivalent when not." We can learn a lot about equity through design because design is incorporated in our lives everyday. Universal design is beneficial in so many ways because it allows anyone to have accessibility to whatever product or environment being utilized. OXO kitchen tools are exemplary of universal design. In fact OXO originated from Betsey Farber arthritis and her difficulty in peeling potatoes with a poorly designed peeler. OXO products are extremely popular and you probably have at least one OXO product in your kitchen because they are so comfortable and almost anyone can use them with ease<sup>2</sup>.

Universal design has the ability to remove stigma and doesn't "divide people," but there is a thin line that universal design can cross when it comes down to inclusive design. Universal design is usually defined with "equitable use," but it can become a problem when something becomes so universal that its origins become blurred. Although everyone uses OXO products, how many people know that they originated with people with arthritis in mind? Especially in terms of inclusion, it "exists as a movement because exclusion is the norm<sup>3</sup>." Inclusion sets up an "us" and a "them." There is the possibility that we are further alienating people with disabilities or other minority groups in a negative way.

1. [https://projects.ncsu.edu/ncsu/design/cud/about\\_ud/udprinciplestext.htm](https://projects.ncsu.edu/ncsu/design/cud/about_ud/udprinciplestext.htm)

2. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/30/opinion/disability-design-lifetools.html>

3. [https://theblog.adobe.com/inclusion-doesnt-stop-accessibility/?scid=3f284909-11b1-465a-a427-b181399bbde7&mv=social&mv2=paid\\_social](https://theblog.adobe.com/inclusion-doesnt-stop-accessibility/?scid=3f284909-11b1-465a-a427-b181399bbde7&mv=social&mv2=paid_social)

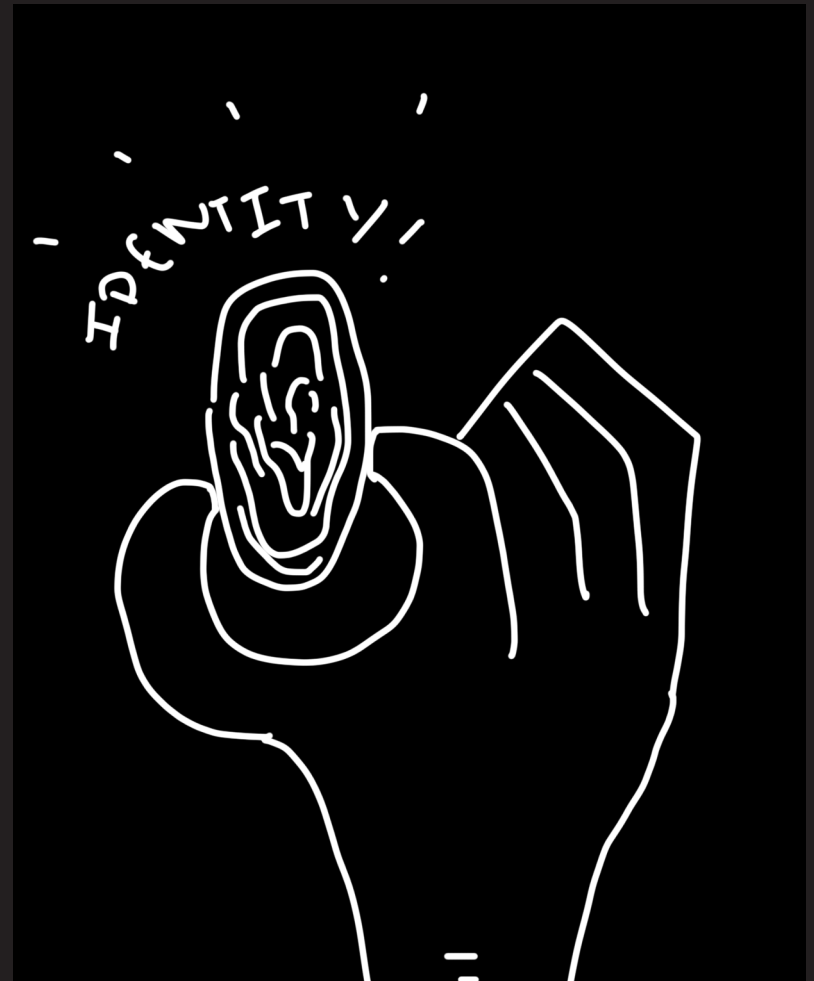


Remembering where we come from is so crucial in a world model that utilizes equity. Identity is something that people find comfort in. It is something that everyone deals with differently and can be precious for some. In the disability community, crip culture has risen as a source of self empowerment through identity. "Crip theory and practice entails sustained forms of coming out, and the recognition that another, more accessible world is possible in which disability is no longer the raw material against which imagined and sometimes liberationist worlds are formed."<sup>4</sup> The word crip originated from the derogatory word cripple for someone who is unable to walk. The disability community has reclaimed that word which was once hurtful into something empowering. Crip was created for the disability community and only to be used by this community. According to disability activist, Caitlin Wood, it is the choice of the person with the disability whether or not they want to utilize the word<sup>5</sup>. This sentiment can be applied to many situations, not just the disability community. For example, the use of the word "queer" in the LGBT community or the use of the "n word" for African Americans. If you are not a part of that community, you should not use those words because you cannot identify with what that community experiences. And if you are of that community it is your choice whether or not you want to use those words.

4. <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095648189>

5. <https://www.bitchmedia.org/post/lets-talk-about-crip-culture>

What you should take from this importance of identity is that you should recognize it, not in a way that divides people, but in a way that encourages respect and self empowerment. We must educate ourselves. We must learn where we come from and what lies in our history so that it does not happen again. Ignorance and the refusal to acknowledge people's identities is what breeds hate. Not everything is just black and white. We should stop trying to fit into one ideal that fits all. Look around you and see what diversity the world holds. We cannot achieve equity without recognizing these differences.



# RECIPE

## for an Equitable World

Number of servings: enough for everyone

Cooking Time: a whole lifetime, if not more

### Ingredients:

- An open mind
- Patience
- Will and desire to learn
- People in charge of education with the aforementioned mindset
- Parents and guardians with the above mindset
- People in government with the above mindset
- People in charge of media and entertainment with the above mindset

\* This recipe works best with a homemade mindset. This is one of the few instances when an ingredient cannot be store-bought. It must be homemade because of the integrity of the human hand.

Now it seems a bit difficult to completely change social and economic systems of society that result in an equitable world but this recipe is sworn by many and I promise you, you will love the outcome.

First comes a little kitchen prep. Start with the open mind. Use this to expose yourself to things that might not ever cross your path normally. Think about others. Think about that they are experiencing, feeling, and what they are dealing with. Think about why others feel the way they do. Know that everyone is experiencing something in their own unique ways. Try to understand where people come from. Do not be afraid to ask questions. Use your patience if you are struggling or getting frustrated when trying to understand. With your open mind and patience, educate yourself. You must yearn to learn. There is so much out there to experience and so many people to meet and learn from.

This mindset can be applied in multiple ways depending on who you are. As an educator or parent, you are teaching the future. In schools, teach kids to have the mindset we prepared earlier. Make the curriculum widespread. Don't gloss over things that might be shameful to a country because it is important to learn these things so they do not happen again. It should be taught that these certain things were bad and should not repeat. Parents, expose

your children to as many good and informing things their blossoming brains can handle. Teach them about who they are, where their ancestors came from, family history. This information can be a big part of their identity, empower them, and give them a sense of community. In addition to this personal information, make sure that they recognize that there are all kinds of people with different backgrounds than them. They should respect that and celebrate this diversity.

Now, take the mindset we just used and apply it to government. Vote. Vote for people with this mindset. If you are a politician, learn this mindset. Start at the local level and work your way up. If executed correctly, we'll be able to see things like equitably cost healthcare for everyone, fully ADA approved forms of public transportation, eradication of poverty/homelessness, birth control for anyone who needs it, restrooms that make everyone comfortable and much more. With the mindset and what we learned with it, we can think up all kinds of things that would make the world more equitable through our government.

In the context of media and entertainment, we can use this to obtain our desired mindset. Diversify the casts and stories of the content that we love. People can be exposed to so many things they might not usually cross paths with through the consumption of media and the use of social media. Make casts with people of different races, genders, social classes, sexualities, bodies, and abilities. Tell stories that teach lessons or show struggles that may never have been in the spotlight.

At this point you should have the open, patient, and eager mindset to obtain equity through teaching, government, and entertainment. With these pieces, we can achieve a world that is better for everyone through the careful respect that comes with learning from the people around us and recognizing where we come from. Enjoy!





