

From Siloed to Celebrated:
The Tragedy and Triumph Behind Special Olympics
Process Paper

Madeleine Goertz & Kathryn Kotler
Senior Division
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Several interests and connections drove our choice of National History Day project. The battle for those with intellectual disabilities, from being isolated and institutionalized, to being recognized as valued individuals, was a meaningful representation of the theme, *Triumph and Tragedy in History*. The ongoing issues related to the necessary balance between scientific discovery and human rights increased the topic's current relevance. Additionally, personal connections to the topic furthered our interests. In previous projects, we have touched on women's rights as well as LGBTQ rights and wanted to focus on the rights of those with disabilities in this project. Finally, we're particularly interested in how social issues and policy issues intersect.

Our research began with a review of background information and a general history of Special Olympics, utilizing secondary sources. Using this new knowledge, we investigated further, gathering media and quotes to support our preliminary research. We then contacted multiple libraries to obtain primary source documents, including the Library of Congress, the JFK Presidential Library, the National Library of Medicine, the Chicago Public Library, the Museum of History and Industry in Seattle, and the George Washington University Library. We also interviewed Dave Lenox, president of Special Olympics Washington; Jane Rogers, curator of the "Special Olympics at 50" exhibit at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History; Jennifer Kotler, a mother of a Special Olympian; and Timothy Shriver, Ph.D., the Chairman of Special Olympics Global.

We chose a website as it suited our topic and the available sources; we had an abundance of audio and video recordings as well as images and quotes, so a website was an effective and aesthetically pleasing method of displaying our research. We then moved to writing our analysis for each section, inserting quotes, images, and audio-video recordings to enhance our analysis.

The color scheme is a nod to this year's theme logo and Special Olympics' website. The background color fades from grey to white, signaling the shift from tragedy to triumph. As our website focuses on the history of disability rights, we did our best to adhere to the WebAIM accessibility guidelines with the tools that Weebly provides, insisting on using high-contrast fonts, adding alt-text to all images, and providing transcripts for all videos.

Our topic relates to this year's theme as the triumph of Special Olympics masks the tragic history of those with intellectual disabilities. Prior to this organization's founding, those with disabilities were isolated, discriminated against, and harmed by invasive procedures. People believed that those who didn't develop normally burdened society, and they were isolated. Through the dedicated founders of Special Olympics, tragedy turned into triumph as these beliefs began to fade, replaced with the view that people with intellectual disabilities are contributing members of society. Camp Shriver and Special Olympics celebrated and empowered those with intellectual disabilities by highlighting their courage and ability, not their disability. The triumph later expanded, including the creation of the Americans with Disabilities Act, as Special Olympics brought attention to the need to protect those with intellectual disabilities.