



Harper College

Access and Disability Services



Disability Symposium

Friday, April 24, 2026

2026
DISABILITY SYMPOSIUM

BEYOND AWARENESS

DISABILITY JUSTICE IN PRACTICE

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

2026 DISABILITY SYMPOSIUM COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

SAMY ALMEIDA-ORTEGA
BRIAN CREMINS
LORI ESHOO
AMAZIAH FINLEY
ELISA FLORES
DR. SONNET GABBARD
APRIL MAMAN
NICOLE MANCHA
BECKY RAMIREZ-MALAGON
LUCY RENTERIA
ROBERT UHREN
JAMES VITULLO
STEPHANIE WHALEN

PRESENTERS:

AMAZIAH FINLEY
DR. SANDY LÓPEZ
ELISA FLORES
ISAIAH CARRINGTON
JENNIFER WHITE-JOHNSON
NICOLE MANCHA
ADS SUCCESS CLUB
NEURODIVERSITY ALLIANCE
ZINE CLUB

STUDENT VOLUNTEERS
EVENTS MANAGEMENT
SODEXO



Schedule

At-a-Glance

2026 Disability Symposium

- 08:15 AM - 09:00 AM

Registration and Breakfast

- 09:00 AM - 9:15 AM

Opening Remarks

Becky Ramirez-Malagon
*Interim Director Access &
Disability Services*
Dr. Avis Proctor
President

- 09:15 AM - 10:30 AM

Keynote from Jennifer White-Johnson

- Q & A and a raffle

- 10:30 AM - 10:45 AM

Break

- 10:45 AM - 11:30 AM

Breakout sessions

- Jen White-Johnson: Workshop
Envisioning Resistance & Radiating
Joy (W 101)
- Dr. Sandy López and Elisa Flores:
Immigration and Disability (W 214)
- Student-led: Neurodiversity Alliance
and ADS Success Club (W 201)

- 11:30 AM - 11:45 AM

Break

- 11:45 AM - 12:30 PM

Breakout sessions

- Student-led: Zine club (W 101)
- Amaziah Finley: Rest is resistance (W 216)
- Nicole Mancha and Isaiah Carrington:
Accessibility is for ALL: Pedagogies for
Instructing Neurodivergent Students (W 201)

- 12:45 PM - 2:00 PM

Lunch and Closing Remarks



Jen White-Johnson

Jen is a disabled and neurodivergent artist and design educator whose work centers Black disabled joy and futures, grounded in disability justice and Black feminist disability frameworks. Scan the QR code at the bottom to learn more about Jen's work and creative practice.

Empowering Neurodivergent Voices: Embracing Disability Joy as a Radical Act of Resistance

Jen will present on her keynote talk focused on equity-driven and accessible teaching artist practices. Using zine-making as a tool for learning and self-advocacy, she will highlight work that amplifies anti-ableist visual design, disability justice, and community organizing.

Jen invites us to imagine a world where the stories we tell and the images we create fully reflect the breadth of disabled joy. She explores neurodiversity not simply as difference, but as a powerful source of creativity, insight, and artistic innovation. Through her talk, she will show how disabled creatives are reclaiming their narratives, challenging limiting frameworks of oppression, and reshaping the visual language of anti-ableist culture.

Session

Workshop: Envisioning Resistance & Radiating Joy

This interactive workshop builds on Jen White-Johnson's keynote, inviting participants to explore disability and neurodivergent joy as acts of resistance and community. Through guided reflection and hands-on artmaking, attendees will create a "Disability Joy" tribute poster using curated symbols, graphics, and typography.

Designed to be inclusive and low-pressure, the session supports participants of all experience levels and concludes with a collective gallery walk and an opportunity to contribute to a digital "wall of joy."



Student-led Sessions

Share Your Voice: Building an Accessible Campus Together

Join Neurodiversity Alliance and ADS Success Club for a roundtable discussion on accessibility, disability advocacy and awareness, allyship, and campus resources. Students, faculty, and staff are all welcome.

Neurodiversity Alliance supports students in building campus chapters that foster community and awareness within the neurodivergent community, aligned with the Infinity Initiative for Neurodiverse Students (IINS).

ADS Success Club is a disability-focused student organization centered on advocacy, academic success, leadership, and career readiness. The club promotes disability awareness and culture while fostering a supportive and inclusive environment. Open to all Harper College students.

Tell Your Story with Harper's Zine Club!

Join Harper's Zine Club for a creative, hands-on workshop exploring storytelling through zines.

Zines are DIY (do-it-yourself), self-published magazines. In this session, participants will create and share their own zines in a supportive, collaborative environment. A selection of zines featuring disability perspectives and disabled creators will also be available to explore.

Art supplies will be provided.

Sessions

Rest is Resistance

Rest is often treated as a reward for productivity, but within Disability Justice it is a necessary act of resistance and survival. This session explores how ableism, capitalism, and institutional culture contribute to chronic burnout, particularly for disabled, neurodivergent, and marginalized communities. Participants will examine how productivity culture shapes expectations in higher education and workplaces, often excluding those whose bodies and minds function outside rigid norms. The session also introduces strategies for cultivating collective care, flexibility, and interdependence, reframing rest as a shared practice that supports accessibility, sustainability, and justice.

Presenter

Amaziah “Doc Z” Finley, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Harper College. Doc Z’s work centers on equity-minded pedagogy, disability justice, and the intersections of race, language, and power. She is committed to creating accessible, trauma-informed learning environments that support diverse learners and challenge traditional academic norms. At Harper College, she contributes to initiatives promoting inclusive teaching, student success, and global engagement. Known for her interactive, student-centered teaching style, she integrates anthropology and social justice to help students critically examine systems of inequality while fostering supportive classroom communities grounded in care and belonging.

Takeaways: Disability justice • Collective care strategies • Accessible and inclusive teaching

Sessions

Intersecting Barriers: Immigration and Disability

Immigration enforcement has raised civil rights concerns, including the denial of rights and accommodations for individuals with disabilities during encounters with authorities, detention, and court proceedings. Advocacy efforts for immigration and disability often operate separately, leaving disabled immigrants and their families without coordinated support. This session explores how immigration enforcement affects disabled immigrants and mixed-status families, highlighting policy intersections, common barriers, and available resources.

Presenters

Sandy López, Ph.D.

Director, Undocumented Student Resource Center, Northern Illinois University. Experienced teacher, advisor, administrator, and student advocate supporting undocumented and Latinx students. She is also actively involved in campus and community initiatives that promote equity and access. Education: B.A. in Deaf Education; M.S. in Instructional Technology; Ph.D. in Educational Administration Foundations.

Elisa Flores, M.S.

Access Advocate, Harper College; certified rehabilitation counselor. Focuses on ADA compliance, disability policy, universal design, and inclusive practices grounded in disability justice. She is committed to creating equitable educational spaces and mentoring students and staff to remove systemic barriers.

Education: M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling, Northern Illinois University; B.S. in Health Science (Rehabilitation Services emphasis).

Takeaways: Policy intersections • Barriers and advocacy • Resources and support

Sessions

Accessibility is for ALL: Pedagogies for Instructing Neurodivergent Students

Neurodivergent students face a unique set of challenges to overcome in the classroom. As research emerges to address the challenges of this set of students, we see that when pedagogies are designed for students with the highest need, all students benefit. In this session, we will discuss specific strategies that instructors can utilize to enhance the accessibility of their classroom.

Presenters

Isaiah Carrington

Student Diversity Initiatives Coordinator & Speech 101 Instructor, Harper College. Develops inclusive pedagogy that supports students of all backgrounds and identities, fostering a fun, safe, and risk-friendly classroom.

Education: M.A. in Communication Studies, Southern Illinois University; B.A. in Communication Studies, Southern Illinois University.

Nicole Mancha-Mercado

Instructor, English Department, Harper College. Experienced in K-12 and higher education, focusing on literacy, language, and culture. Committed to equitable learning environments and student development.

Education: M.F.A. in Creative Writing, Southern New Hampshire University; M.Ed. in Urban Higher Education, University of Illinois at Chicago; Ph.D. candidate in Literacy, Language, and Culture, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Takeaways: Inclusive pedagogies • Universal design strategies • Accessible and supportive classroom practices.

By: Jen White-Johnson



THE ANTI ABLEIST ART EDUCATORS MANIFESTO

@jtknoxroxs

1. **SHOW UP**
2. **ERADICATE ABLEISM**
3. **UPLIFT ACCEPTANCE**
4. **CREATE WITH AND NOT FOR**
5. **OUR DIFFERENCES SHOULD EMBOLDEN US**
6. **DISABILITY IS NOT A BAD WORD**
7. **VALUE ALL BODIES AND MINDS**
8. **ALLYSHIP IS SACRIFICE**
9. **OUR ART IS OUR SURVIVAL**

CONNECT WITH US!

For questions, partnerships, or accommodation requests:

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SHARE FEEDBACK

