

Discussion of Films, Videos, and/or Books on Disability

Your congregation might want to sponsor a video or film night or film series featuring movies that portray disability, with refreshments and discussion after the viewing.

Contact the AIM Committee for a list of movies. Also see Disability History and Awareness Month Resources and Materials at:

http://www.mdod.maryland.gov/uploadedFiles/New_and_Features/Films%20-%20Disability%20History%20and%20Awareness%20Month.pdf

Below are some questions that might be used to stimulate discussion on movies:

- In what ways did the portrayal of the characters in the film seem representative or unrepresentative of the experience of people with disabilities or their families as you understand them? Were any stereotypes enforced or debunked?
- Did you gain any insights from this film that will help you understand people with disabilities and their families? What was helpful? Unhelpful?
- Was anything in this film disturbing to you?
- Does this film help the cause of promoting a better understanding of disability issues? If so, why? If not, why not?

Recommended Videos

- **When Billy Broke His Head ...and Other Tales of Wonder** is an entertaining, irreverent road movie about disability, civil rights, and the search for intelligent life after brain damage. Laced with humor and biting wit, the video is a widely acclaimed, groundbreaking film about disability culture; a no-holds-barred, first-person account that refuses to tell the “inspirational” stories we have come to expect from films about people with disabilities.
- **Disability Culture Rap:** This documentary-style 20-minute video is a wild and exhilarating trip into the poignant issues and raw energy of contemporary “disability culture.” It comes with a facilitator’s guide. You can order it online at: www.diversityshop.com/store/product2.html, or try getting it through your local library.

Diversity World’s comment on Disability Culture Rap: “This video is the most powerful testament to ‘disability culture’ and ‘disability pride’ that we have ever seen. Yes, it is controversial as well – it isn’t a just a ‘feel good’ video and it is bound to stimulate discussion. . . . We think this is a great tool for empowering job seekers

with disabilities – to give them a sense of pride and belonging to a movement that is fervent and strong. We particularly recommend it for young people with disabilities – every high school student with a disability should have the opportunity to see this one!”

- **A Little History Worth Knowing**, by Irene M. Wood and Associates. This video examines the history of individuals with disabilities “from ancient times to the telethons of today’s growing disability movement.”

Recommended Books

- **Waist High in the World – A Life Among the Nondisabled**, by Nancy Mairs, Beacon, 1997. In a blend of intimate memoir and passionate advocacy, Nancy Mairs takes on the subject woven through all her writing: disability and its effect on life, work, and spirit. There is a discussion guide available online: <http://www.beacon.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=1634>
- **Mean Little deaf Queer – A Memoir**, by Terry Galloway, Beacon, 2010. No one yet knew that an experimental antibiotic given to her mother had wreaked havoc on her fetal nervous system, eventually causing her to go deaf. As a self-proclaimed “child freak,” she acted out her fury with her boxy hearing aids and Coke-bottle glasses by faking her own drowning at a camp for crippled children. Ever since that first real-life performance, Galloway has used theater, whether onstage or off, to defy and transcend her reality. There's a reader’s guide available online: <http://www.beacon.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=2050>
- **Mad in America – Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill**, by Robert Whitaker, Basic Books, 2010. In this controversial book, medical journalist Robert Whitaker argues that modern treatments for the severely mentally ill are just old medicine in new bottles, and that we as a society are deeply deluded about their efficacy. The book raises important questions about our obligations to people who are mentally ill, the meaning of “insanity,” and what we value most about the human mind.
- **Anatomy of an Epidemic Magic Bullets, Psychiatric Drugs, and the Astonishing Rise of Mental Illness in America**, by Robert Whitaker, Broadway, 2011. In this controversial book, Robert Whitaker investigates a medical mystery: Why has the number of disabled mentally ill in the United States **tripled** over the past two decades? Readers are challenged to think through that question themselves. Whitaker investigates what is known today about the biological causes of mental disorders and the effects of commonly used treatments.

- **Many Forms of Madness: A Family's Struggle with Mental Illness and the Mental Health System**, by Rosemary Radford Reuther with David Reuther, Fortress Press, 2010. Written by a renowned feminist theologian who is the mother of a son diagnosed with schizophrenia, this is a very clear-eyed look at her son's life, the mental health system, and what it would take for the system to really work. Poems and essays by her son are also included. This excellent book would be especially useful to anyone trying to understand or improve the system, what works, what doesn't, and how to fix it and why.
- **I Wish You'd Tell Me - A Toolbox of Answers to the Question, "What Can I Say That Will Help?" When the One You Love Is Bipolar**, by Alysse Adularia, lulu.com, 2010. This book has some very helpful suggestions for dialogue with a person who is bipolar and is experiencing difficulties of various sorts.
- See also: List of Books and Movies in Appendix C of **Disability Awareness – Do It Right**, Mary Johnson, Editor, Advocado Press, 2006, pp. 84-87.