

TEACHER NOTES: Lesson 3: Students with Disabilities in Segregated Public Education (1960s and 1970s)

**This is a part of the Indiana Disability History Project series:
From Segregation to Integration, Oral History about the Education of
Children with Disabilities.***

- **Lesson 1: Children with Disabilities in the Age of Institutions**
- **Lesson 2: Educating Children with Disabilities without Public Schools**
- **Lesson 3: Students with Disabilities in Segregated Public Education (1960s and 1970s)**
- **Lesson 4: The Integration of Students with Disabilities into Classrooms (1970s– 2000s)**

*The Indiana Disability History Project is funded by the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent positions or policies of the Council.



Students with Disabilities in Segregated Public Education (1960s and 1970s)



INDIANA INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY AND COMMUNITY
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**GOVERNOR'S
COUNCIL FOR
PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES**



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Opening: excerpt from The Wheelchair Warrior (by Andrea Pepler-Murray)

- Runtime: 38 seconds

The Wheelchair Warrior (Andrea Pepler-Murray)


Guiding Question


Andrea has a condition that affects her muscles and she wore braces on her legs as a child. Growing up in the 1960s, she was put in a special education class.

- **What was Andrea's experience in her special education classroom?**

Things to Know

- Children with disabilities who went to public school in the 1960s were usually placed in a separate class with other children who had disabilities of all kinds. They experienced **segregated** education.
- The word "retarded" is no longer used to describe people who have learning challenges. Instead we say someone "has an **intellectual disability**."
- **Cerebral palsy** is a permanent condition that appears early in life and may make it hard for a person to control their movement and keep their balance.

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Notes for Teacher

Video Description: "He slammed the paper on the principal's table and he says, 'Don't tell me that this child is retarded - Look at what she's done.'" As a child with cerebral palsy in Hammond, Indiana, Andrea Pepler-Murray had been placed in segregated special education classes. It took an art teacher to advocate for her educational potential. In this video, Andrea describes the struggle for recognition of her abilities and for the opportunity to learn. She later graduated from Purdue Calumet University.

About the Clip: This is an excerpt from the video, "[The Wheelchair Warrior](#)." Andrea became known by that name at her university because of her advocacy for students with disabilities.

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Video 1: The Wheelchair Warrior (Andrea Pepler-Murray)

- Runtime: 2 minutes 31 seconds

I've Come a Long Way (Beverly Rackley)


Guiding Question


Beverly attended a school that was only for children with disabilities. She and her parents wanted her to go to a school where there were also students without disabilities. It was very difficult to find a school that would accept her.

- **What was Beverly's experience in her special education classrooms?**

Things to Know

- Until the middle of the 1970s, there was no United States law that said children with disabilities must be allowed to go to public school.
- Before Beverly was old enough to go to school, doctors told Beverly's mother that she should put her daughter in an **institution**, away from her home and family.
- If they did go to school, it was not uncommon for children with disabilities to ride a bus to a school far from their own community.

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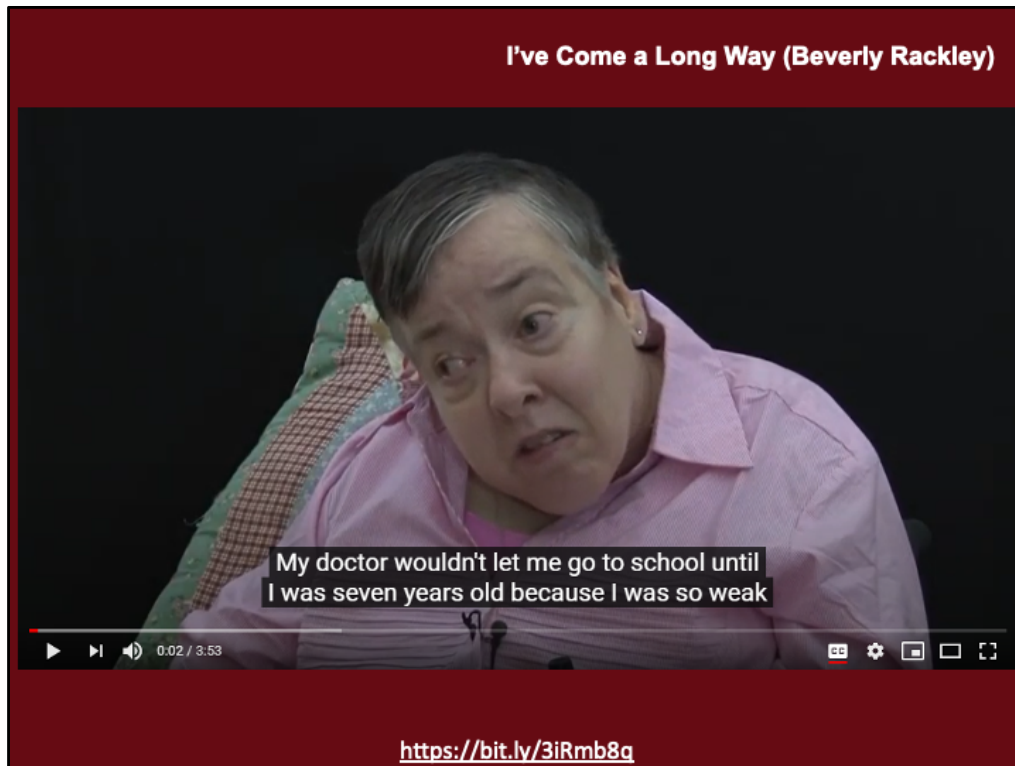


Notes for Teacher

Video Description: Beverly Rackley's mother refused the advice of medical professionals to place Beverly in a state institution for children with disabilities. She wanted to keep her at home with the family. When the seven year old needed to start school in Indianapolis in the late 1960s, Beverly's parents had to fight the school board to allow their daughter to ride the bus. In this video, Beverly describes her parents' advocacy to get her access to public education and the rejection she experienced. She remembers being denied attendance at nine different schools because the schools didn't want the responsibility of a student with medical needs.

About the clip: At the time of her interview in 2014, Beverly was a board member on three different disability organizations. She received a certificate from Camp Riley at Bradford Woods recognizing her advocacy work. Beverly says, "I have come a long ways, and I'm not stopping. This is just the start of my fight because I have fought all of my life. I'm going keep on fighting for my rights and for others, too."

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Video 2: I've Come a Long Way (Beverly Rackley)

- Runtime: 3 minutes 53 seconds

Nobody Asked Me (Darcus Nims)


Guiding Question


Darcus wanted the opportunity to learn and work.

- **What are some things that her teachers told her she could not do?**

Things to Know

- When they finished high school, students with **intellectual disabilities** were often sent to **sheltered workshops**. This made it unlikely they would find a job or continue their education.
- As an adult, Darcus Nims founded an **advocacy** organization of people with intellectual disabilities, **Self-Advocates of Indiana**.
- Self-advocates have worked to get people to stop using hurtful words about them, such as the "R" word.

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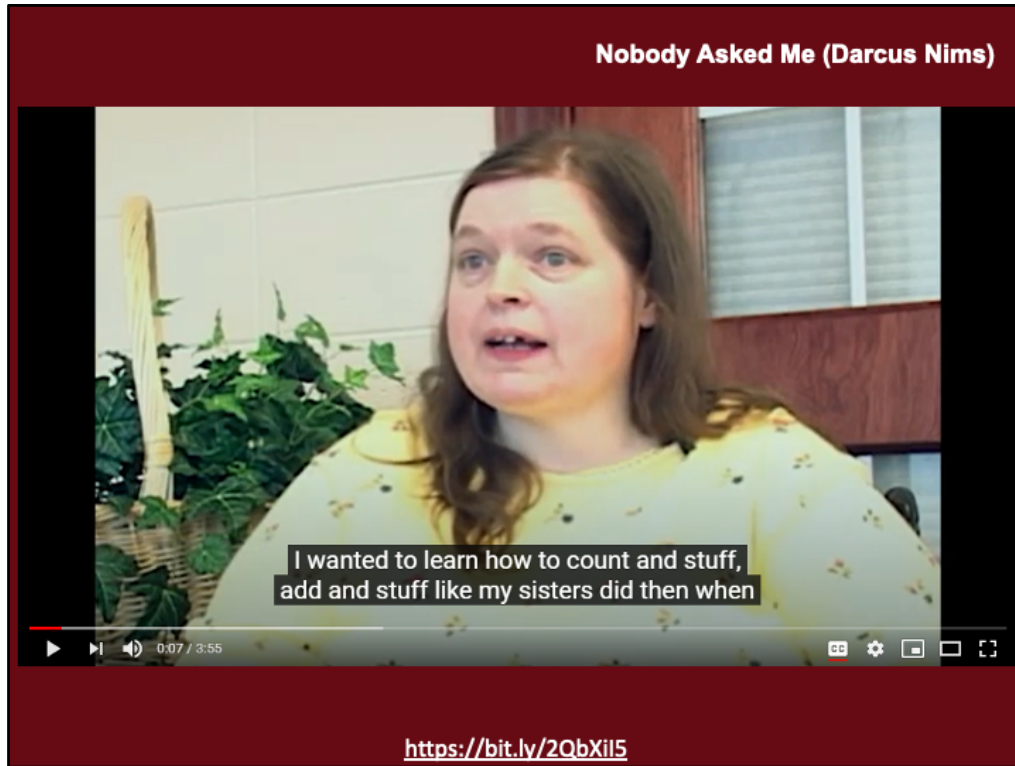


Notes for Teacher

Video Description: Darcus Nims* wanted to learn math skills at her school in Indianapolis. She wanted to learn how to type. Her teachers told her those skills were for "regular" people. She wanted to get a part-time job like her sister, but a teacher said "my kind of people had to learn our kind of place." When Darcus turned 18, no one asked her what she wanted to do. Instead she was sent to a sheltered workshop. Darcus eventually became well known for her advocacy on behalf of other people with intellectual disabilities.

***Profile of Darcus Nims available in Lesson Plan 3**

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Video 3: Nobody Asked Me (Darcus Nims)

- Runtime: 3 minutes 55 seconds

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Discussion/Debrief

The Wheelchair Warrior with **Andrea Pepler-Murray**:


- **What happened that caused Andrea to get a better education?**
- **Andrea's abilities were underestimated because of her appearance. Have you ever seen that happen to someone?**


I've Come a Long Way with **Beverly Rackley**:

- **How could Beverly's schools have been prepared for children with medical disabilities such as the kidney condition Beverly had?**

Nobody Asked Me with **Darcus Nims**:

- **What kinds of barriers did Darcus face in her educational experience?**

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The prospective answers of each question are available in [LP3-debrief-answers.pdf](#)

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Glossary

- **Advocacy:** acting to increase the rights of people with disabilities and improve their lives
- **Barrier:** a problem faced by students with disabilities that keeps them from getting a good education, such as a building with no access for wheelchairs, negative attitudes of students or teachers, or lack of supports needed to succeed in the classroom
- **Cerebral palsy:** a permanent condition that appears early in life and may make it hard for a person to control their movement and keep their balance
- **Institution:** a large facility where people with disabilities live and receive care, often in a confined setting and without their consent
- **Intellectual disability:** a lifelong condition related to thinking that can cause a person to develop and learn more slowly or differently
- **Self-Advocates of Indiana:** a statewide organization of people with intellectual disabilities speaking up for the right to be fully included in their communities
- **Segregation:** the practice of keeping people of different races, religions, abilities, etc., separate from others
- **Sheltered workshop:** a segregated facility employing adults with disabilities at very low wages



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