

From: [Nico Serra](#)
To: [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)
Subject: American's with Disabilities Act Request for Reasonable Accommodations and testimony agenda item 620 July 29, 2020
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American's with Disabilities Act Request for Reasonable Accommodations

Regarding agenda item 620 of the Portland City Council form July 29, 2020, I, Nico Serra, am requesting a reasonable accommodations request through the American's with Disabilities Act. Due to my disabilities, I was unable to finish my written testimony during the allotted time period. I am very frustrated to find out one can no longer just sign up before the meeting, as I have in the past. That we are now somehow supposed to sign up the day beforehand. This will make it that much more difficult for people of marginalized identities to testify in front of council. I implore you to open up sign ups for public testimony for the same amount of time allowed pre-pandemic. You have created a more difficult process and I do hope you change that immediately.

My written testimony on agenda item 620 July 29, 2020 is as follows

My name is Nico Serra and I'm submitting this written testimony as a private citizen today. As a person with a Disability, I am a Principal Stakeholder in any statements regarding the American's with Disabilities Act and especially on the 30th Anniversary of said historic legislation. I would be remiss if a moment was NOT prioritized from the start of this testimony to express my gratitude for the many Elders, people with Disabilities and/or the Sick, (EDS) of this world that paved the way for some relatively privileged compromised individuals to succeed. It's true, many of us have benefited even while existing in a world seeming bent on reserving the most brutal punitive tactics for the most oppressed of the oppressed here and beyond. Those of us that have found a middle class or higher life experience are almost exclusive white passing, white and/or come from money.

I'd also like to note my specific gratitude for the two distinguished presenters with Disabilities that were invited to speak before Council, especially Allen Hines. I'm grateful for Allen and the work he has done and any beef expressed here in this testimony is not with him nor is it with the Council members tirelessly using their relative privilege pursuing the advancement of those with less relative privilege than themselves. Indeed for those of us that did not land on Plymouth Rock because Plymouth Rock landed on us; as stated by Spike Lee.

Please understand, my time is quickly slipping by in these epic times and I sadly never accumulated enough privilege to have any children, besides my ragtag crew of unofficially adoptees of whom I mentor. Besides these individuals, my testimonies will likely be my only legacy and if this is to be my legacy, I have to acknowledge We The People are at a crossroads right now. My legacy is this work and those I love in this moment. Sadly, this is the case for nearly all EDS and is especially true for those with Intellectual and/or Development Disabilities and even more specifically, folks BIPOC with I/DD. As the recently passed John Lewis said, 'If NOT us, then who? If NOT now,

then when?'

It has not been 30 years of struggle for the EDS communities but thousands of years in which we have apparently been able to, by NO fault of our own, lead ourselves nowhere. True freedom remains an illusion for far too many of us when our lives can be snatched from existence with one pull of a trigger by a single state funded employee. More often than not, several armed, powerful state agents act in collaboration to hold us down as one does the dirty work.

This and many other talking points from 30 years ago have not changed. We still advocate for basic human dignity, independence and the right to participate to the fullest extent of our abilities in civic engagement with our local leadership and beyond. The brunt of this realization is even more sharpened by the fact that even when an agenda item is about celebrating how far we've come, can't even accommodate requests for community members. I am very disappointed I was not able to testify publicly in Chambers on the day of the Proclamation as these requested accommodations are mandated by the ADA and are a drastically low bar for a pat on the backs of those granting them.

Furthermore, what kind of society has endless pay for those pressing their armed and powerful state funded bodies and/or weapons into others? These collective knees on our necks continue pressing as our breath gets further and further from our bodies and somehow still y'all want us to trust the process and the system it is delivered through? Give me a break and wake up! We are collectively pinned to the ground here and especially in the global south, where so many suffer even worse outcomes due to resources being reallocated into bombs of supposed allies, like Saudi Arabia.

This, of course is not a problem reserved for those in developing countries as we can obviously see by the way we collectively treat people living on the street. If true equity were accomplished 30 years after the passing of the ADA perhaps our people wouldn't be living on the streets but would be safely in their homes? Instead they are sitting duck, beaten and executed by the hired goons that are the Portland Police as they prey on them and so many others with their white supremacist buddies, of whom they openly collaborate with at times. As more is taken from the People, more hired guns and vigilantes are brought on to suppress our rage. But I have news for you, we are done waiting patiently while we are off-ed one by one. We will tear down the gates and self appointed gatekeepers if they get in our way.

I am embarrassed EDS people are still relegated to the same talking points and strategies implemented pre-ADA. I again emphasize the reality of what the EDS have done to make the world a better place for themselves and those who follow their leads. To be clear, my disappointment is not with those who came before me in this good fight but is instead being respectfully laid at the feet of people with power in our society, the politicians still sitting on their hands in the middle of a great canyon while those of us on the margins continue to fall from the countless cliffs we are collectively trapped on.

As a queer, intersex, and transgender, white passing BIPOC of Libyan, Tunisian,

Sicilian, Spanish and white ancestry, with Disabilities, I am not convinced of my survival over this most recent apparition of what I call the Great White Plague. Simply stated, the Great White Plague is the genocidal results of white supremacy amplified by the vast number of failed systems disproportionately extinguishing the lives of BIPOC during the SarsCov2 pandemic. The Great White Plague is especially vicious for BIPOC EDS and others at the intersections of severe oppression. The Great White Plague has virtually ensured that I will not have the privilege of raising children of my own because my partner and I can NOT afford them.

At this point, all know of the physically act snuffing the breath from the body of George Floyd. By all accounts, Mr. George Floyd was a healthy strong person showing no signs of resisting arrest. He was following all the rules but was murdered anyway. If a person with all the physical strength of Mr. Floyd could not survive such an attack, how would Elders, people with Disabilities and/or the Sick fair?

Outliving this well designed but somehow still grossly dilapidated system wide catch all trap disproportionately hangs on the backs of BIPOC, EDS, and other oppressed, minorities and impoverished folks. As eugenics and imperialism; the destructive twins birthed of capitalism, eclipsed a once safer culture in regards to looking out for others with less and leads us all down the narrow road to fewer and fewer wealthy people, we arrived at laissez faire capitalism, where the notoriously opportunist thrive and we slowly whittle ourselves to nothing.

This system using the truly evil genius strategies of scorched earth policies relies on our deeply unequal lives. Although these former societies were not technologically advanced, what is the point of making better technology if only relatively few can benefit from it? The essential nature of ensuring the dignity and livelihoods of BIPOC ESD, and/or other minorities like gender minorities, (including transgender and/or queer and/or women) immigrants, religious minorities, people of size and the many oppressed, in this town is now.

Literally everyday many are tragically thrown into cogs of institutional oppression in systems controlled by distorted oligarchical systems slanted on economics and the unspoken laws of eugenics, aka - the official/unofficial policies that at times blatantly declaring the exist of the oppressed as an imminent threat to everyone when actually, we are a threat to no one but those upholding said system. The ultra rich people are more concerned about saving their own skin and kin than they are about the existential crisis that faces humanity at this time. The rich and powerful and their pockets of politicians may be the faces of this the biggest transfer of wealth and power into the concentrated hands of less and less people but what's happening behind the curtain is coming to an end now and you best get on the right side of all of this before it's too late.

What seems to be outside of the collective strategic ideals of this Council right now is a cultural competency moment of realization of what it means for all of your constituents to actually live lives of dignity. I overflow with disappointment at what is essentially the complete disregard of arguably the most vulnerable among the EDS populations. BIPOC have been literally disregarded on this subject even though

we are disproportionately affected by undesirable health outcomes. How is it in the richest society in the history of humans, our humanity is still being divided up in front of our eyes? With not a single BIPOC asked to speak about the 30th anniversary of the ADA, I can only conclude that this historic legislation is still not protecting the most compromised in our struggle.

EDS are to this day still fighting to be let out of prisons for the disabled. This bears repeating, many of us are still fighting for independent housing, instead we are relegated to institutions which residents call prisons. Therefore, you must reallocate money from the police budget and pour it into a registry of accessible and affordable housing so EDS can finally cease being the highest population of unhoused people in our city.

You must use the reallocated fund from the cuts you will make to the police budget to build at least 20% accessible units in all dwellings going forward. We no longer accept the fact that the City of Portland simply allows organizations to pay fines and fees when they skip adding these required units under the Fair Housing Act. Yes, accessible housing is not covered under the American's with Disabilities Act and is famously one more piece of evidence summing up the true failure of this legislation.

Furthermore, all funds and penalties obtained through said backroom deals must go immediately into a rental unit only funding option for those seeking reasonable accommodation requests as renters. At this time, modifying our living quarters is almost exclusively reserved for home owners due in large part to regulations, grant opportunities only available to owners, financing options that only exist for owners as well as policies from countless companies that simply 'don't do that for renters'.

In closing, all members of this Council have arguably done things in their lives to improve the lives of people that have less than them. Some have made a practice of this while others clearly are still learning how to appropriately apply their power in a system that seemingly only listens to their perspectives and those of the preferred people they socialize with. These are especially white passing and white, masculine presenting individuals. You know who you are.

As I pivot to bestow special recognition to Council members JoAnn Hardesty and Chloe Eudayly in this moment as they have continuously been accomplices using real actionable strategies to truly improve the lives of the most compromised of the most compromised. Thank you both for bold leadership in this regard and in so many others. As you continue amplifying voices of oppressed individuals, Commissioner Hardesty and Commissioner Eudayly, you create a living legacy of true freedom. You welcome people like me, and so many others with big dreams, even if we know deep down nothing may come of said dreams besides broken hearts, minds and bodies.

I must also warn, your collective legacies could be altered if the dominant power structures do not shift from the ongoing patterns of 'winners' take all. Somehow, said 'winners' always seem to get the story wrong in one way or another. I pray that between now and said potentially bleak rewrites of history, you will continue to do everything within your relative power to collaborate, support and bolster the survival

of those fighting the Great White Plague in a good way. Which does not include, in my humble opinion, individuals actively enacting physical and economic violence upon others and the planet. Furthermore, I hope voters will strongly weigh your potential endorsements and/or endorsements of Chloe Eudayly, Dan Ryan and Sarah Iannorone. I endorse these candidates as I believe y'all actually believe in All Power to All the People.

My patience had worn thin for the usual methods requiring the politics of politeness regarding other members of Council sitting on their collective hands right now. I hope you are beginning to comprehend your tone deafness will shift now and in the future. It frankly disgusts me people and/or institutions with real privilege and power in such a so-called 'revolutionary' place run by so called 'radicals' in the middle of this epic moment in time have arrived at such a low bar as a proclamation of victory for groups of which they do not even belong to.

Do you understand we must begin with racial justice while dovetailing into equity for Elders, people with Disabilities and/or the Sick and beyond or have we collectively learned nothing of true equity for all? You must use your privileges and power to systematically dismantle all of what the eugenics movement has destroyed or you too will never be able to remove the stains on your hands. You will always be bound to your direct ancestors who swung the actual whips, fired the actual guns and burned the very real homes and lives of so many BIPOC people here and beyond to the ground.

Again, I remind you We The People are at a crossroads regarding our collective continued existence. I ask you yet again today if you plan on continuing to sit on the sidelines as you contemplate which side of the great canyon you are closer to or if you can possibly continue to sit in the middle? If not you, then who? If not know, then when? Get it together and call me if you need some coaching, I'm available. Thank you for focusing your attention on my remarks. Please contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
-Nico Serra