TELLING THE STORY OF DISABILITY

Talea Anderson, Washington State University

In January 2017, the Disability March website (https://disabilitymarch.com) was launched in protest against the incoming Trump administration. The website invited participants to tell counter-narratives about disability in an inclusive digital space.

PARTICIPANTS

3,037 people posted to the Disability March. These included men, women, caregivers, families, and disabled individuals.

IDENTITY

In their posts, more than half of participants used “I am” statements to describe themselves. In these statements, the most common descriptors were:

- woman 413
- mother 138
- disabled 380
- queer 98
- person 97

DISABILITY

Less than half of the march participants chose to identify a disability using constructions such as “I have,” “I suffer from/am disabled by/deal with/struggle with/am challenged by,” etc. In profile pictures, only 241 participants chose to reference disability via medical equipment or medical setting.

WHAT’S NEXT?

This project employed text mining to collect identity statements. The information collected suggests that Disability March participants wished to privilege their commonalities with mainstream society rather than differences. Identity statements were also notably complex, with the longest 100 of them ranging from 10-37 descriptors. Future work will consider how the Disability March project—as an example of grassroots protest—did or did not invite broad participation with its outreach and archival practices.