

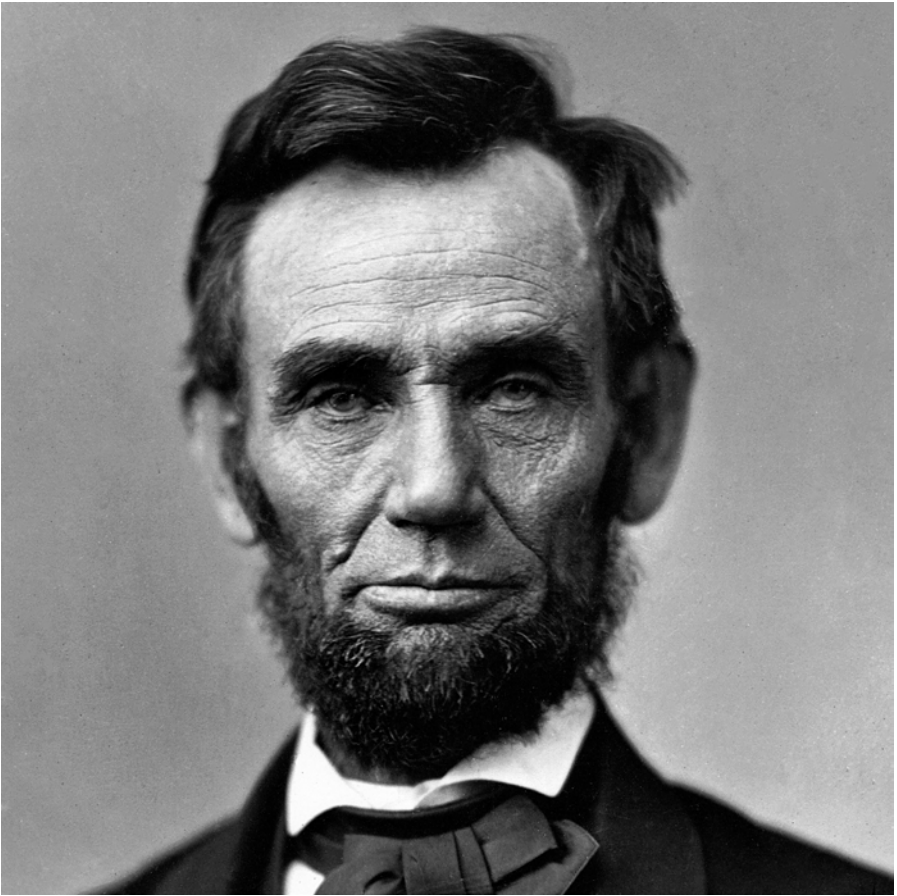
DISABLED LEADERS

Part Three: *1809 AD - 1968 AD*



Disability Action Research Kollektive

Featuring work by **Richard Amm, Maria Lightwood,
Louise Bell, Blair Maddock-Ferrie, Jacob Prince,
Lez Moon & Alexandra Morris.**



Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865) was the 16th President of the United States and led the nation through the Civil War, defeating the Confederacy, and abolishing slavery. Born into poverty, he was self-educated and eventually qualified as a lawyer. Lincoln was assassinated a week after the war ended, which left him a martyr and symbol of human freedom. He likely had depression and Marfan syndrome, and may have also had smallpox, malaria, and mercury poisoning.

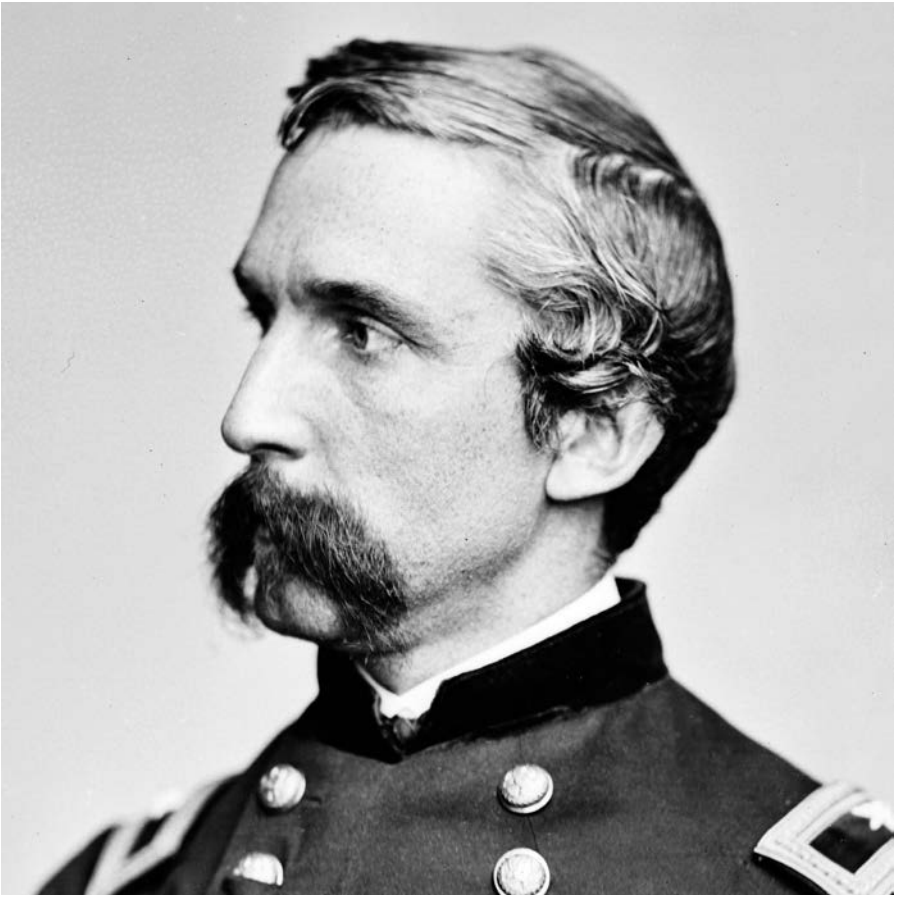
His melancholic nature was widely noted, and he experienced profound grief and suicidal thoughts. He once said “I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on the earth.”



Queen Victoria (1819-1901), a constitutional monarch, ruled the United Kingdom for longer than any predecessor. Her reign, the Victorian era, saw an enormous expansion of the British empire, and rapid industrial, political, scientific, and military change. Her husband Albert had chronic stomach trouble and died of Typhoid, after which she became reclusive and only wore black for the rest of her life. In her later years she began using a wheelchair for official duties. She had chronic pain, osteoarthritis, cataracts, depression and was malnourished. Describing her depression she said it was a "lowness and a tendency to cry," that "came and went," which was "what every lady suffers with more or less." She also once said "We poor creatures are born for man's pleasure and amusement, and destined to go through endless sufferings and trials."

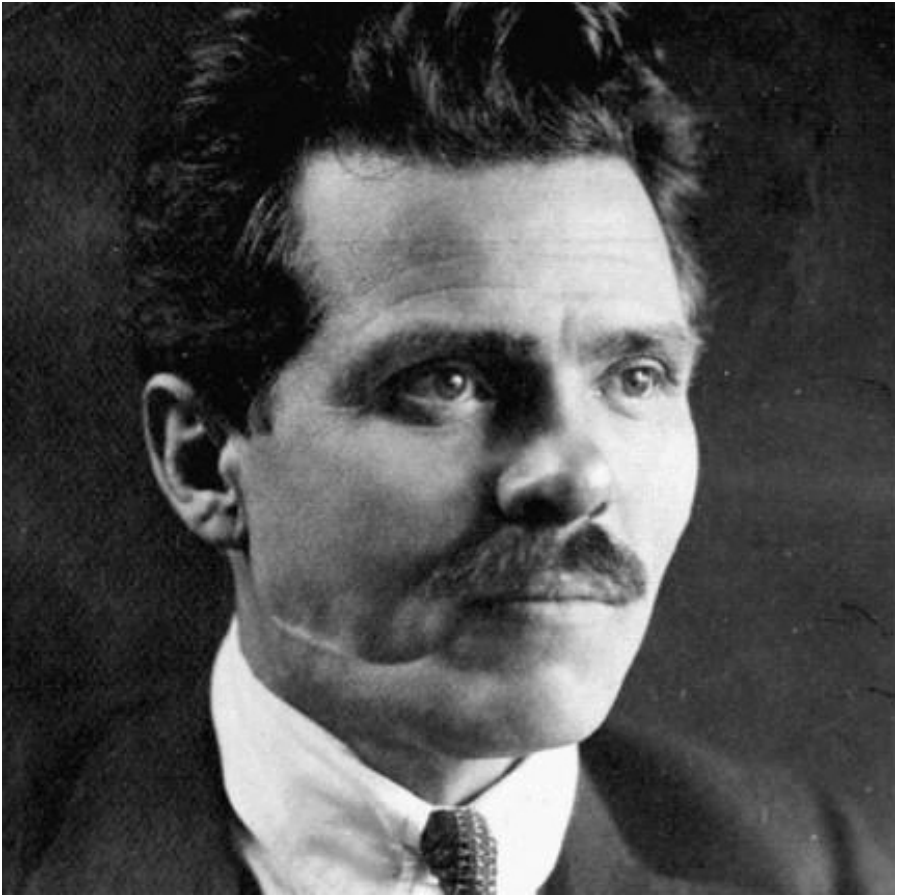


Harriet Tubman (1822-1913) was a chief architect in the underground railroad, an organisation that directly involved itself in the emancipation of slaves; aiding them in escaping southern oppression. Tubman was born into slavery, but escaped at 27. She acted as an armed spy for the Union in the American civil war, and, in her later years became a champion for woman's suffrage. Tubman suffered a head trauma as a child, when an overseer hit her head with a metal weight. She suffered periodic dizziness and chronic head pains. In the 1890's she had a doctor saw open her skull with no anaesthetic to relieve pressure. She once said "Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars, to change the world."



Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain (1828–1914), Civil War general and Governor of Maine, sustained a near-fatal injury at the Battle of Petersburg, leaving him with lifelong paralysis and chronic pain. He was active in politics and academia, serving as president of Bowdoin College. As a politician, he supported the death penalty and refused to form a police force to enforce the prohibition of alcohol. At 85 he eventually died of wounds he received in the war.

He once reflected: “I fear, this war, so costly of blood and treasure, will not cease until men of the North are willing to leave good positions, and sacrifice the dearest personal interests, to rescue our country from desolation, and defend the national existence against treachery.”



Nestor Makhno (1842-1934) was a charismatic Ukrainian anarchist revolutionary general who led the Black Army during the Russian Civil War. He had a prominent facial scar, lived with tuberculosis and had continual problems with badly-healed wounds which affected his health and mobility. His army innovated new tactics such as adding mounted machine guns to carts pulled by horses. "The more a man becomes aware, through reflection, of his servile condition, the more indignant he becomes, the more the anarchist spirit of freedom, determination and action waxes inside him. That is true of every individual, man or woman, even though they may never have heard the word 'anarchism' before." And "Burn their laws and destroy their prisons, kill the hangmen, the bane of mankind. Smash authority!"

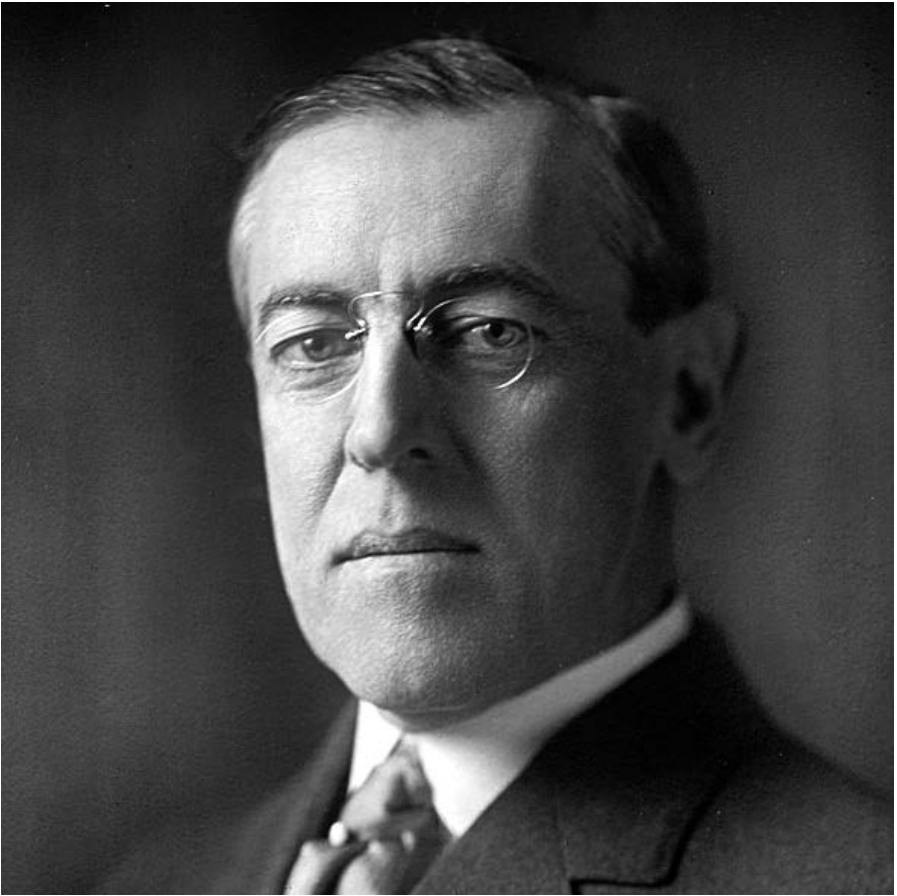


Eugene Kingsley (1856-1929) described himself as “An uncompromising enemy of class rule and class robbery”. He also founded and led the Socialist Party of Canada. Kingsley was an organiser, a writer and a double amputee who wore prosthetic legs. Politically he was a Marxist-De-Leonist, which is an approach that believes in class struggle using militant industrial unions as well as a political party. He was also a prominent proponent of “Impossibilism”, which points to the limited value of reforms under capitalism, as they stabilise the existing system.

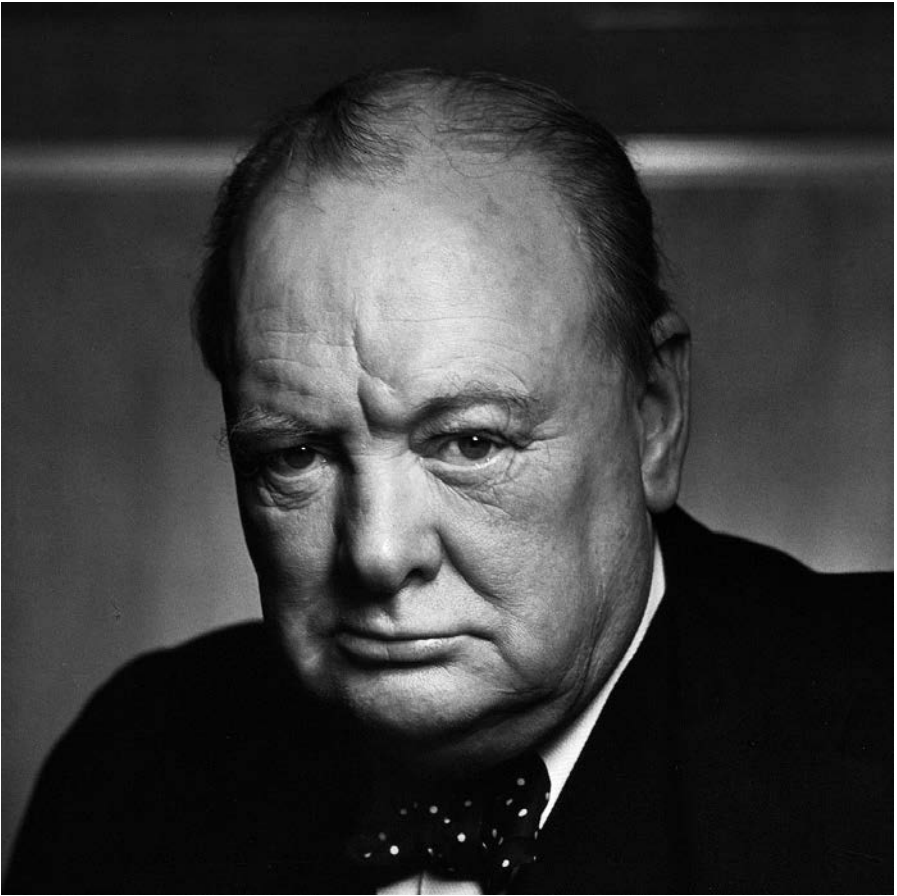
He was described by Canada’s chief wartime press censor as “an out-and-out red Bolshevik Socialist of pronounced literary capacity and unquestionably one of the most dangerous men in Canada,”



Wilhelm II (1859-1941) was the king of Prussia and the last emperor of Germany. He promoted scientific development, modernised the education system and built a strong navy. Due to being deprived of oxygen during birth he had neurological damage which included a paralyzed left arm and Erb's palsy. His mother was embarrassed about his disability and was obsessed with trying to cure him. Various 'treatments' were administered to him as a child including cutting tendons, stretching, electric shocks, and putting his arm into a freshly killed rabbit. Historians have speculated that his childhood experiences may have led to disturbed emotional development and a quick temper. Wilhelm dismissed the famous diplomat Otto von Bismarck which likely made Europe less stable. After Germany was defeated in World War I, Wilhelm was forced to abdicate.



Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924) was the 28th President of the United States, leading America through World War I while experiencing chronic strokes and neurological impairment. A severe stroke in 1919 left him partially paralysed, and his wife, Edith, quietly assumed many presidential responsibilities. He supported labour rights, helping to limit the work day to 8 hours for rail workers, as well as extending the right to vote to women. His legacy remains contested due to his support for racist segregation policies, which included making racial inter-marriage a crime. He once said “Liberty has never come from the Government. Liberty has always come from the subjects of it. The history of liberty is a history of limitations of governmental power, not the increase of it.”



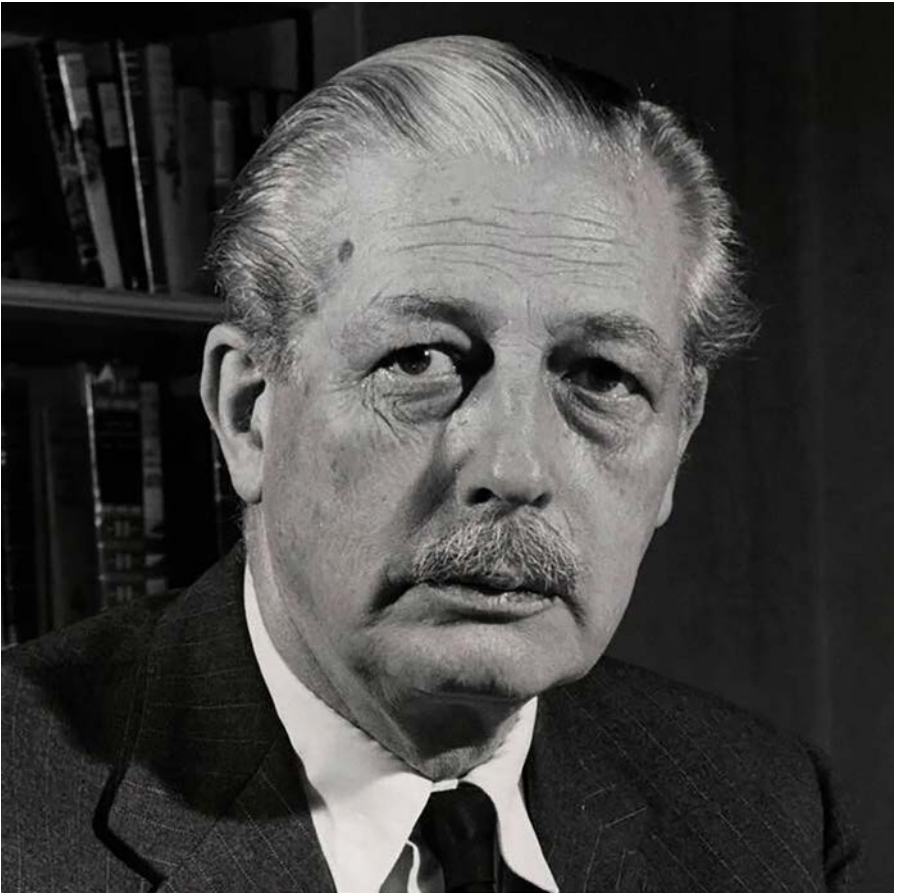
Winston Churchill (1874-1965) was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during WW2. As a military officer he fought in the Boer War and WW1. As a statesman he opposed the policy of appeasing Hitler and was instrumental in winning WW2. He was however also an advocate of eugenics and is implicated in contributing to the Bengal Famine. Churchill preferred succinct communication and asked for all reports and instructions to be half a single side of paper long. Winston had signs of depression which he referred to as his “black dog” in his private correspondence. Some scholars argue he may have had bipolar disorder due to his hyperactivity and limited sleep while others say that was just his baseline personality. Churchill is said to have had a stutter and a lisp, although his thoroughly rehearsed speeches show no evidence of this.



Emma Goldman (1869-1940) was a Lithuanian-born feminist, anarchist, public speaker and writer who advocated free speech, free love, birth control, women's equality, and labour rights. Goldman may have also supported eugenics. She had depression most of her life, as well as endometriosis, which caused her significant pain and made it difficult for her to travel and work. Goldman founded anarchy-feminism and was at one time considered the most dangerous woman in America by the US government. She was arrested and imprisoned multiple times for her revolutionary speeches and was eventually illegally stripped of her citizenship and deported. "The history of progress is written in the blood of men and women who have dared to espouse an unpopular cause, as, for instance, the black man's right to his body, or woman's right to her soul."



Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945), also known as FDR, was the 32nd President of the United States of America. Polio caused him to become paraplegic in 1921 and he became president in 1933. FDR introduced the New Deal, which was a series of economic reforms to improve social security and labour rights to reverse the Great Depression. After the attack on Pearl Harbour, he took the USA into WW2 and was a significant factor in winning the war. FDR went to great lengths to conceal his disability from the public. The Secret Service would destroy compromising photographs, so of the 35,000 images of him, the wheelchair is only visible in two of them. It was generally believed the public would not accept a leader with an impairment, and that disability was disqualifying for high office.



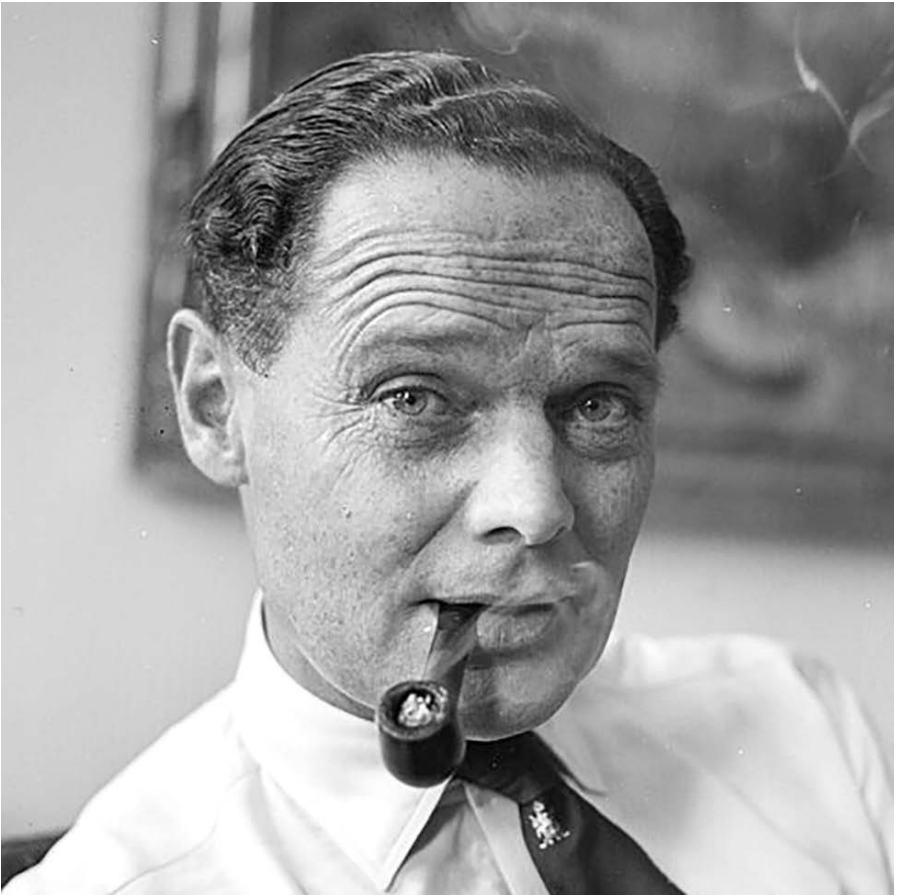
Harold Macmillan (1894–1986), UK Prime Minister (1957–1963), presided over decolonisation and social reform while managing the effects of severe injuries from World War I. Shot multiple times during the Battle of the Somme, he spent hours wounded in a trench, later suffering from lifelong mobility issues and chronic pain. After the Suez Crisis he worked to repair the special relationship the UK had with the USA. After he resigned, he went to work in his family's publishing firm. It was once said that he "had a talent for pursuing progressive policies but presenting them tactfully in a Conservative tone of voice". Known for his wit and pragmatism, he once remarked: "We believe that unless we give opportunity to the strong and able, we shall never have the means to provide real protection for the weak and the old."



Queen Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon (1900-2002), ruled the United Kingdom and was known as the Queen Mother after the death of her husband. She became a symbol of resilience as she refused to leave London as it was being bombed during WW2. Elizabeth spent much of her time supporting charities and had a strong interest in the arts. In old age, her vision faded to the point where she could only recognise people by their voices. At the age of 86, a fall broke her pelvis and she intermittently used a wheelchair for the remaining 14 years of her life. She did not like to be seen or photographed using the wheelchair, and would rise from it or use a walking stick at moments when photographs were likely.



Bertram Hoffmeister (1907-1999) was considered Canada's greatest general by combat victories. He rapidly rose through the ranks, going from Major to Major General in three years, Canada's highest rank. He masterminded the destruction of the army group north west, as he encircled the German army and captured over 24,000 soldiers and destroyed a thousand tanks. Before seeing combat, he was sent to a rest camp for having a mental breakdown, experiencing partial paralysis, and having severe anxiety. After the war he became an advocate for people with PTSD and for environmental conservation. It was said of him that "Hoffmeister's genuine desire to save lives, not surprisingly, went over well with his subordinates"



Douglas Bader (1910-1982) was a flying ace and wing commander during World War Two. He lost both his legs in a crash and was discharged against his will on medical grounds but once the war started was able to rejoin the Royal Air Force. He fought in Dunkirk and the Battle of Britain but was eventually shot down over Germany and became a prisoner of war. He made so many escape attempts that the Germans threatened to take his legs away. Once the war was over he became a member of parliament but was known for his controversial views, being in favor of apartheid and capital punishment.

As a guest of Adolf Galland, at a meeting full of ex-Luftwaffe pilots he remarked "My God, I had no idea we left so many of you bastards alive"



Manuel Escorza del Val (1912-1968) was the chief of the intelligence services for the anarchists during the Spanish Civil War against the fascists. He was considered the most powerful person in the CNT, where he oversaw executions, assassinations, interrogations, intelligence gathering and espionage. Manuel used a wheelchair and crutches; he had paralysis and restricted growth from polio. He was described as honest, reserved, austere, headstrong, highly educated and efficient. After the war, he moved to Chile and became a cultural journalist. He was greatly feared by his ideological enemies, who only dared to defame him after his death. A friend described him as “An incorruptible and implacable revolutionary”. He said ‘We shall show no mercy in dealing with fascists and neutrals’



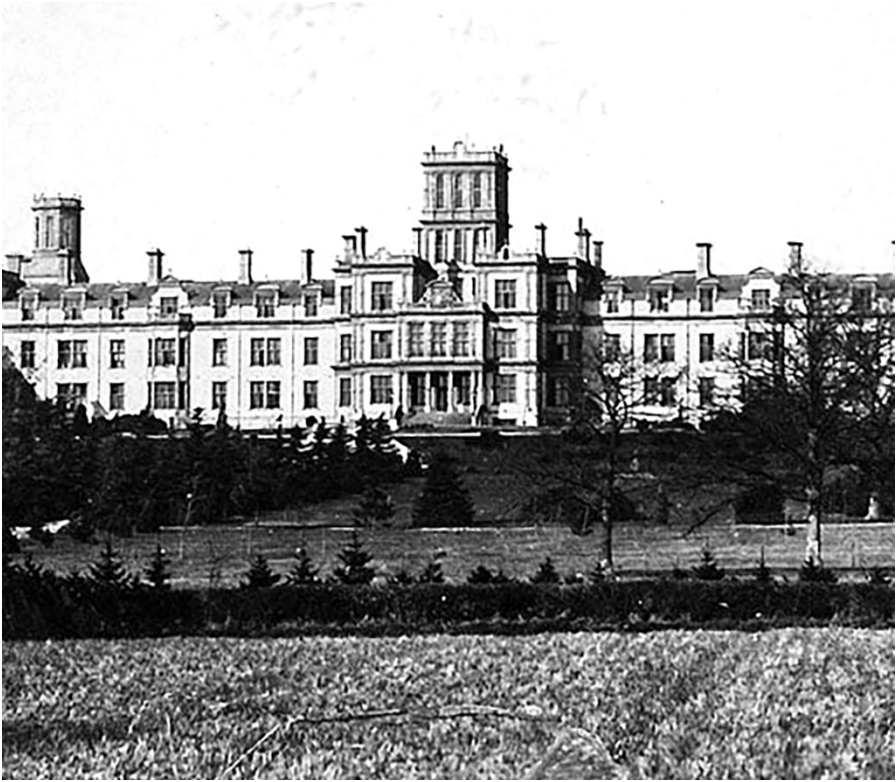
Fannie Lou Hamer (1917-1977) was the youngest of 20 children of a sharecropper family, and was an African-American activist. She was a key figure in the voting, women's, and civil rights movements. Fannie served as vice-chair of the Freedom Democratic Party, was an organiser of Mississippi's Freedom Summer, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and was a co-founder of the National Women's Political Caucus. She was disabled by polio, the effects of police brutality, and a non-consensual hysterectomy. Fannie was a wife and mother of 4 children, whom she adopted. Hamer was illiterate, leaving school at age 12. Her tombstone reads "I am sick and tired of being sick and tired."



John F. Kennedy (1917–1963) was the 35th President of the United States. He successfully negotiated the Cuban Missile Crisis which narrowly avoided nuclear war and he also initiated the Apollo program which led to landing the first humans on the moon. He founded the Peace Corps and supported the civil rights movement. Kennedy lived with Addison's disease, which caused chronic pain, nausea, and fatigue, and suffered from severe back injuries, necessitating daily medication and the use of a back brace. He fought in World War II and was left with serious injuries. His 1963 assassination cut short his presidency. He once said "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." and "Our problems are man-made; therefore, they may be solved by man. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings."



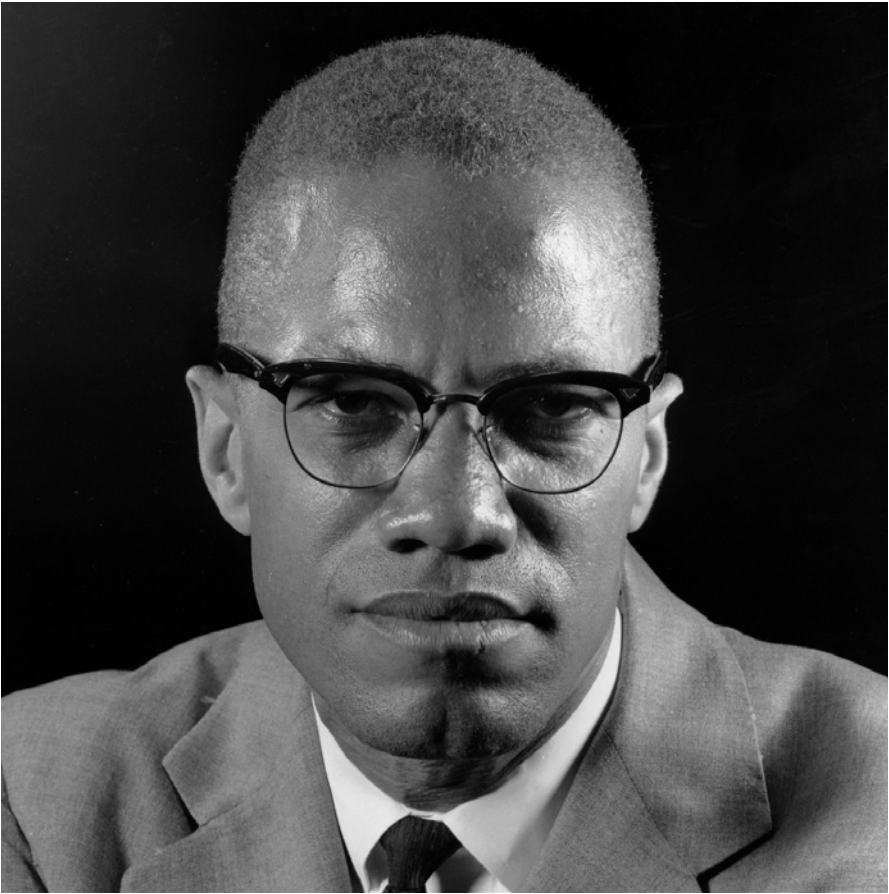
Rosemary Kennedy (1918-2005) was the sister of US president John F. Kennedy. She was deprived of oxygen when her family had nurses prevent her birth for two hours while waiting for a prominent doctor to arrive. This caused developmental and intellectual disabilities, which her family attempted to hide to avoid the stigma of being associated with 'defective genes'. In her early twenties, Rosemary was a slow reader but was celebrated in high society in England for her beauty and charm. However she supposedly became "increasingly irritable and difficult" when brought back to the USA. She was sent to live in a convent but was caught sneaking out at night to party. There was a concern her behavior, or a pregnancy, would reflect badly on the family's political ambitions so her father, against medical advice, had her undergo an experimental lobotomy, without even telling her mother. The lobotomy caused Rosemary to lose the ability to walk, speak, or control her bowels and her family prevented her from ever having visitors.



Katherine Bowes-Lyon (1926-2014) and her sister **Nerissa (1919-1986)** were the first cousins for Queen Elizabeth II of England. They both had developmental disabilities, did not speak, and were classified at the time as “imbeciles”. They were secretly sent to Earlswood hospital, previously known as The Earlswood Asylum for Idiots and The Royal Earlswood Institution for Mental Defectives. They lived their whole lives there. The family attempted to keep them secret and falsely listed them as having died in 1940 and 1961. A documentary said of them “Whilst their sisters Elizabeth and Anne enjoyed lives of privilege and inclusion in the upper echelons of the aristocracy, Katherine and Nerissa were all but forgotten, written out of family history.” Their treatment by the Royal Family and the secret that surrounded their existence is a testament to the power of eugenic thinking at the time of their birth and the shame associated with ‘imbecility’.



Queen Elizabeth II (1926-2022) was the longest reigning monarch in British history, and the 2nd longest reigning sovereign in world history. She was a constitutional monarch reigning over both the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. Her reign saw the Troubles in Northern Ireland, the decolonisation of Africa, and the entry and withdrawal of the UK from European Communities. When she was 96, and marking the celebration of her 70th year on the throne, she did not want to be seen using a wheelchair, in spite of her many predecessors who used them publicly, like King Charles II, Queen Victoria, Queen Mary, King Edward VII and Princess Margaret: “On her insistence, a military-style exercise was put in place so that no one could see she was having to use a wheelchair,”



Malcolm X (1925-1965) Was a polarizing but charismatic Civil Rights figure. Malcom had a profound reverence for the cultural ancestry of African-Americans. Opposed to the legalistic reform approach, Malcolm was in juxtaposition with Dr. King. Malcom was a Black Separatist seeking to bring a sense of pride and joy to Black people. He rejected white moderates, believing they would stymie the independence of the African-American people. Malcolm identified intersectionality between the struggle of Black and Disabled people, via discriminatory language, (i.e., “black” as a synonym of “bad.”) Malcom, who had dyslexia, was an autodidact; teaching himself to read by copying Bible verses. “I have no mercy or compassion in me for a society that will crush people, and then penalize them for not being able to stand up under the weight.”



Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon (1930-2002) was the daughter of the Queen Mother and younger sister of Queen Elizabeth II. Even before her first public appearance there were unfounded rumors about her being deaf and mute. As an adult, the press continued to engage in much speculation about her private life. She received treatment for depression and often had migraines. In the last 20 years of her life became a wheelchair user due to a series of strokes which reduced her mobility.

She would attend many public events in her wheelchair and this helped reduce some of the social stigma surrounding them. During the same time the Queen Mother was also a wheelchair user but generally made an effort to avoid being seen using it in public. Margaret once said “I have as much privacy as a goldfish in a bowl.”



Antony Armstrong-Jones, 1st Earl of Snowdon (1930-2017) was a British photographer, filmmaker and husband to Princess Margaret. After contracting polio at age 16, he was left with a withered left leg, a permanent limp, and frequently used a mobility aid for the rest of his life. He was considered a controversial choice of husband for Princess Margaret, due in part to his disability, and his potentially scandalous photographic work. His photographic subjects included David Bowie, Laurence Olivier, Elizabeth Taylor, Princess Diana and J.R.R. Tolkien. He made several documentary films about disabled people, campaigned for disabled peoples' rights, was a member of multiple disability charities, established a scholarship scheme for disabled students called the Snowdon Trust, founded the Snowdon Council to better support disabled people and was granted a patent for a type of electric wheelchair in 1971. This zine series was produced with members from the Disabled Leaders Network, which is run by the Snowdon Trust.



Tammy Duckworth (1968) is an American politician, retired Army National Guard lieutenant colonel, and disability rights advocate. She lost both of her legs when her helicopter was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade. Duckworth persevered and broke multiple barriers, becoming the first Thai American woman elected to Congress, the first woman with a disability elected to Congress, the first female double amputee in the Senate, and the first senator to give birth while in office. As a legislator, Duckworth has been a strong advocate for disability rights, veterans' issues, healthcare reform, and affordable housing. "We must recognize the unique challenges faced by disabled women and work tirelessly to dismantle the systemic barriers that hinder their full participation in society. Our feminism must be intersectional and inclusive, ensuring that no one is left behind in the fight for equality and justice."

The Disabled Leaders series charts the history of powerful families over the course of 30,000 years. This series was not made to inspire, but to chart the relatively recent decline in how society thinks about disabled people. It may be natural to look at the exclusion and stigma associated with disability in the modern day and imagine that the past was the same or worse. Technological and medical innovations have improved the quality of life for those disabled people who could afford it. It is a common belief that humanity is currently at the pinnacle of ethical and moral development and that disabled people have never had it so good. However the majority of historical evidence points to the opposite: Society was more accepting of disabled people in the past, and associating disability with stigma and shame is relatively modern. This has occurred within the last 200 years, which was the dawn of industrial capitalism and the rise of the eugenics movement.

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