

# Educators Guide for:

## Fighting for Yes! The Story of Disability Rights Activist Judith Heumann

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With a note from Judith Heumann

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### About the Book

*“Fighting for Yes! The Story of Disability Rights Activist Judith Heumann”* chronicles Heumann’s life as she fought to help pass Section 504, one of the most important pieces of disability rights legislation in United States History, which laid the foundation for the Americans with Disabilities Act.

This book could be taught within larger units about civil rights, activism, leadership, civics, government, identity or disability. This story is accessible to all ages and we encourage educators to adapt the activities based on the level you teach.

### Pre-Reading Activity

Write the words “disability” and “activist” on the board. Ask students which words come to mind when they think about these terms and create word webs with their responses. Then, introduce the term “disability activist.” Based on their word webs, have students predict what a disability activist might do. Have they heard of disability rights activists before?

### Vocabulary:

Civil rights    Barriers    Discrimination    Disability    Law    Equity  
Equality    Section 504    Protest    Demonstration    Sit-in    Institution

Read “Fighting for Yes!” to the class

### Text-Based Questions

At the beginning of the story when Judy’s mother tries to enroll her in school, “all they were hearing was No! No! No!” What might Judy and her mother have been feeling in this moment? Why were schools excluding Judy? Does that seem fair?

What obstacles in society existed for Judy? What obstacles in society do you face?

What was Judy’s first school like? How was it different than other schools? How is it different or similar to your school?

How was Camp Oakhurst different than the rest of the world? How did Judy feel there?

What happened to Judy at her graduation? How would you have felt if that happened to you?

What was happening in the mid-1960s and how did it relate to what Judy was experiencing?

In your own words, what did the original text of Section 504 say? Why was Judy excited about it? What barriers did it face to becoming a law?

What happened during the Section 504 sit-in? How did the government try to stop it? How did protestors overcome those obstacles?

### Text Based Questions Continued:

What was the outcome of their sit-in? What does that tell us about protesting?

Make a list of the times Judy heard NO throughout her life and the reasons people gave for excluding her. What would you have done if you were her? When have you or someone you know been excluded from things?

## Reflection Questions

What adjectives would you use to describe Judy's character? How did those qualities impact her life path?

What role did protesting play in changing life for people with disabilities? What changes would you want to fight for? How would you try to make those changes?

Judith did not fight this fight alone. Who helped her? How?

How is the fight for disability rights connected to the fight for other civil rights?

What role did the government play in this story? What role do you think governments should play?

Read the note from Judy Heumann together or individually. What examples of discrimination does Judy give in this letter? How does she recommend we fix problems in society? How would you answer her call to fight for yes?

## Post-Reading Activities

### Camp Oakhurst Project (adaptable for all ages)

Camp Oakhurst was a place where Judy felt a sense of belonging and independence. With this in mind, have students research different disabilities and identify what obstacles exist in school, community or society for people with those disabilities. Working together, imagine and create a school, community or world that is free of those obstacles. What would it be like? What would have to change in the real world to make this imagined world a reality? What is an action step you can take?

#### *Elementary School*

Think of a problem in your school or community that you'd like to see fixed. Why is it a problem? Who is this problem affecting the most? What should be done about it? Create a slogan and poster to fight for change. Then, share your posters in a gallery walk.

#### *Middle School*

Think of a way in which people in your school or community are being discriminated against. What do you think should be done about this discrimination? Research what activism has already been done around this topic. Create an action plan to fight against this discrimination.

#### *High School*

Research the history and impact of Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. To what degree have these pieces of legislation improved the lives of people with disabilities? What obstacles still exist? Seek out voices of disability rights activists in your research, then propose a bill that would strengthen disability rights in the United States today. What steps would you have to take to get this bill passed?

### Suggested Sources:

Book: *Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist* by Judith Heumann  
Documentary: *Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution* Higher Ground Productions [cripcamp.com](http://cripcamp.com)

School Visits Available. Contact:

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