1) The film indicated that the disability rights movement emerged after soldiers returned home after WWII. Why do you think that is? Consider the intersection of race, class, and gender.

Could the return of primarily White male soldiers influenced early on the need for legislation to protect the rights of persons with disabilities? Do you think the attention the movement gained in the 1950’s would have been less visible if it were women returning home from the battlefield?

2) Robert F. Kennedy described Willowbrook mental institution as a “snake pit,” meaning that the conditions of the hospital were poor and its patients experienced various forms of abuse and neglect by the hands of untrained staff.

Why were persons with physical and/or developmental disabilities institutionalized? Can you think of any contemporary “snake pits”? In other words, in what institutions continue to lack accommodations made for persons with disabilities? Can you think of an institution that continues to treat persons with disabilities as second-class citizens?

3) Reflecting upon the protests she participated in while in San Francisco, disability rights advocate Mary Jane Owen said, “We were treated like old children.” What did Owen mean by that statement?

4) Senator Tom Harkin and Senator Ted Kennedy worked diligently to make the Americans with Disabilities Act law under President G. H.W. Bush’s administration. However, Senator Harkin revealed that John Sununu, one of President Bush’s closest advisors, refused to support ADA legislation for a variety of reasons, and that his failure to support the movement made him “irrelevant” in the Bush administration.

Why do you think people like Sununu and portions of the business community rejected creating legislation to protect the rights of persons with disabilities? Was the resistance from Sununu and the business community related to more than the undue financial hardship they believed enacting ADA would cause?

5) “I’ll take all night if I had to,” said one determined young girl with cerebral palsy as she climbed the steps to the Capitol building in protest of the lack of action in signing ADA into law. Her commitment to climb 100 stairs with only the strength of her arms demonstrated her belief in her own self and her own capabilities, as well as her personal determination to be integrated equally into society.
6) What provisions and/or allowances do you make for your students? Are there administrative obstacles in your way that you must navigate, or sometimes even circumvent, in order to ensure your students have access to the tools they need in order to succeed? If there are administrative obstacles that you do face, how could the school better support your efforts to guarantee equal access to academic success?

7) Disability Rights Pioneer Judy Heumann closed the film by admitting, “I don’t believe that discrimination easily ends just because we’ve been able to get pieces of legislation passed…This fight of ending discrimination in the area of disability will go on for decades.”

What are the areas in which discrimination against persons with disabilities exists? What needs to be done in order eradicate discrimination for persons with disabilities?