

Political Participation & Disability

Alice Wong is the founder and director of the Disability Visibility Project, a Ford grantee working to create, share, and amplify disability media and culture. As a co-partner of #CripTheVote, a nonpartisan online movement encouraging the political participation of disabled people, she talks about the barriers people with disabilities face in the voting process.

Transcript begins.

[Alice Wong, an Asian American woman in a wheelchair, sits for an interview in an industrial studio. She is wearing a patterned blouse and dark trousers as well as a mask attached to a tube that helps her breathe.]

ALICE WONG: All people need to be able to exercise their right to speak out, their right to vote, their right to make their voices heard. Oftentimes, physical barriers, attitudinal barriers, and policy barriers really prevent people with disabilities to be full participants in our society.

[on-screen graphic: Political Participation & Disability]

WONG: My name is Alice Wong.

There are still a lot of barriers people with disabilities face in political participation. For example, in 2012, over 30 percent of people with disabilities reported difficulty voting compared to 8 percent of nondisabled people.

People with disabilities are still facing numerous barriers, whether it's at the polling station, whether it's filling out absentee ballots, or whether they're even allowed to vote—because there are people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, many of whom are under guardianship for various reasons. Many judges bar people under guardianship from voting, and I think that's another huge human rights issue. They may need assistance with decision making, but that doesn't mean they don't have an idea of who they want to vote for or a desire to vote for somebody.

People with disabilities have a voice, whether it's an actual literal voice or not. People have thoughts. People have desires. People want to be involved. That's the work that needs to be done.

[on-screen graphic: There Is No Justice without Disability]

End of transcript.