

THE RIGHT TO BE RESCUED





ADVOCACY AWARD

**Superfest
International
Disability Film
Festival**

2016



OFFICIAL SELECTION

Ability Fest

2017



OFFICIAL SELECTION

**Social Justice
Film Festival**

2016

“The Right to be Rescued”

A Rooted in Rights Original Documentary

One billion people on the planet have a disability. Yet, in a global United Nations survey, 86% of people with disabilities reported that they did not participate in disaster management and risk reduction processes currently in place in their communities.

More inclusive disaster planning can save lives.

Everyone has the right to be rescued, but for many people with disabilities, that right was ignored during the devastation that Hurricane Katrina brought to Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama in 2005.

Ten years later, Rooted in Rights released “The Right to Be Rescued,” a short documentary that explores the effects of natural disasters on people with disabilities and calls for fully inclusive disaster planning.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a light purple short-sleeved button-down shirt, is seated at a dark wooden desk in an office. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. The desk in front of her holds a black office phone, a pen holder with various pens and scissors, a blue sticky note, and some papers. In the background, there is a white quilted blanket with a red and black geometric pattern, a framed map, and a bulletin board with various papers pinned to it.

“No disasters are natural. When you know in advance who is likely to be the most harmed by a disaster and you don’t do anything about it, then that is a choice. It’s about whose lives are more valuable and which ones aren’t as valuable.”

Adrien Weibgen | Author

An aerial photograph showing a large, dark-colored house that has been severely damaged and is floating in floodwaters. The house is tilted and surrounded by debris, including wooden planks and other structural elements. The water is dark and turbulent, with several large, circular ripples or whirlpools visible. The overall scene depicts the aftermath of a major disaster, likely a hurricane or storm surge.

“People with disabilities have a right, equal to that of people without disabilities, to receive emergency services.”

Adrien Weibgen | Author

Hurricane Katrina



"Nearly half a million people with disabilities lived in the counties and parishes affected by Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama."

Centers for Disease Control



"People have a right to be rescued so they don't perish just because they have a disability."

Jeanne Abadie | Policy Specialist, Advocacy Center of Louisiana



In 2005, New Orleans and many Gulf Coast communities called for citizens to evacuate before the storm made landfall. But evacuation can be incredibly challenging, or even impossible, for some people with disabilities. As a result, many people with disabilities perished in Hurricane Katrina.

“For emergencies, everybody should be included in the plan properly.”

Rickii Ainey | Local activist





There are many reasons it's more difficult for people with disabilities to leave places as quickly as those who are non-disabled.

For example, New Orleans used public buses for evacuation during Hurricane Katrina, but a staggering **94% of New Orleans bus stops are inaccessible**. Because of this, people with disabilities had to find another way to evacuate or remain in place.

Unless there is a specialized emergency plan in place, people with disabilities will almost certainly be left to die when disaster strikes.

A photograph of an elderly man with white hair, wearing a white button-down shirt, sitting at a round table covered with a green plastic tablecloth. He is looking down at a small red bowl on the table, which appears to contain pills. The table is cluttered with various items, including several medicine bottles, a glass of water, and papers. In the background, there is a window with yellow curtains, a wooden cabinet with a framed picture, and a wire basket hanging from the ceiling. The room has a checkered floor and wood-paneled walls.

Earl Robicheaux, recovering from cancer treatments, waited for five days in a 115 degree hospital room to be rescued after the power went out due to flooding.



"It was horrible for many, for people with disabilities, the impact is greater."

Jeanne Abadie | Policy Specialist, Advocacy Center of Louisiana

Benilda “Benny” Caixeta hired a company to come pick her up, but they failed to show during the storm. Police offered to take her to the Superdome emergency shelter, but would not take her power wheelchair, which she needed to live.



A woman with short dark hair, wearing red sunglasses, a white V-neck t-shirt, and grey leggings, is sitting in a wheelchair. She is wearing black gloves and has a watch on her left wrist. She is smiling slightly. The background shows a paved area, a concrete curb, and some greenery.

Aline Bonds was stuck on an overpass for days before being rescued.

She died six months later from complications.

“Every city is going to have some kind of evacuation plan and is going to need to think about how to make a plan that works for everyone.”

Adrien Weibgen | Author



Lawsuits

Over the last decade, lawsuits have been brought against municipalities who have not properly prepared for the needs of disabled citizens. These lawsuits lead to changes in some of the country's largest cities, and the solutions implemented can serve as a guide for other cities as they create inclusive disaster plans.

Los Angeles

In 2011, a court ruling held that the City of Los Angeles violated the Americans with Disabilities Act by failing to meet the needs of disabled residents in their disaster planning. A court order required the City to revise its plans. The following year, the County of LA reached a settlement and they also revised their plans. Together, these changes could help 1.3 million people with disabilities in the LA area in the event of a disaster.

New York

On October 29, 2012, Hurricane Sandy struck New York. At that time, the city had no specific plans for people with disabilities in natural disaster situations.

Because of this, many people with disabilities remained trapped in high rise buildings with no power, even days after the storm subsided. A trial was held during which citizens with a wide range of disabilities testified about the negative impacts of inaccessible disaster planning. Finally, in 2013, a federal judge ruled that New York disaster plans discriminated against people with disabilities and the plans were revised.

Emergency Kit

An inclusive emergency plan needs to include accommodations for all people with disabilities in the community, including accessible shelters and transportation, medication administration procedures, transport for medical and mobility equipment, provision of sanitary products, and availability of communication devices and interpreter services.



Public Registry and Toolkits

New Orleans has a coalition that includes people with disabilities to discuss disaster plans.

The Special Needs Registry began after Hurricane Katrina as a single page of information about demographics and needs of residents with disabilities.

The **Oregon Office on Disability and Health** and the **Alaska Health and Disability** programs both provide a toolkit in the form of a PDF that guides people with disabilities through the process of developing their own natural disaster plan.

Can you get to your front door/porch? *

- Yes
- No

Can you get to the street curb? *

- Yes
- No

Can you walk 5 blocks? *

- Yes
- No

Inclusive Disaster Response

During natural disasters, things like food and water can be hard for everyone to find. For people with disabilities, things like oxygen tanks and medication are also vital.

Portlight Inclusive Disaster Strategies is an organization that helps people with disabilities get access to necessary equipment during disasters.

Portlight Disaster Strategies was on the ground in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria in 2017. They not only focused on aiding citizens with disabilities, but also included disabled people on the emergency response teams in the field.

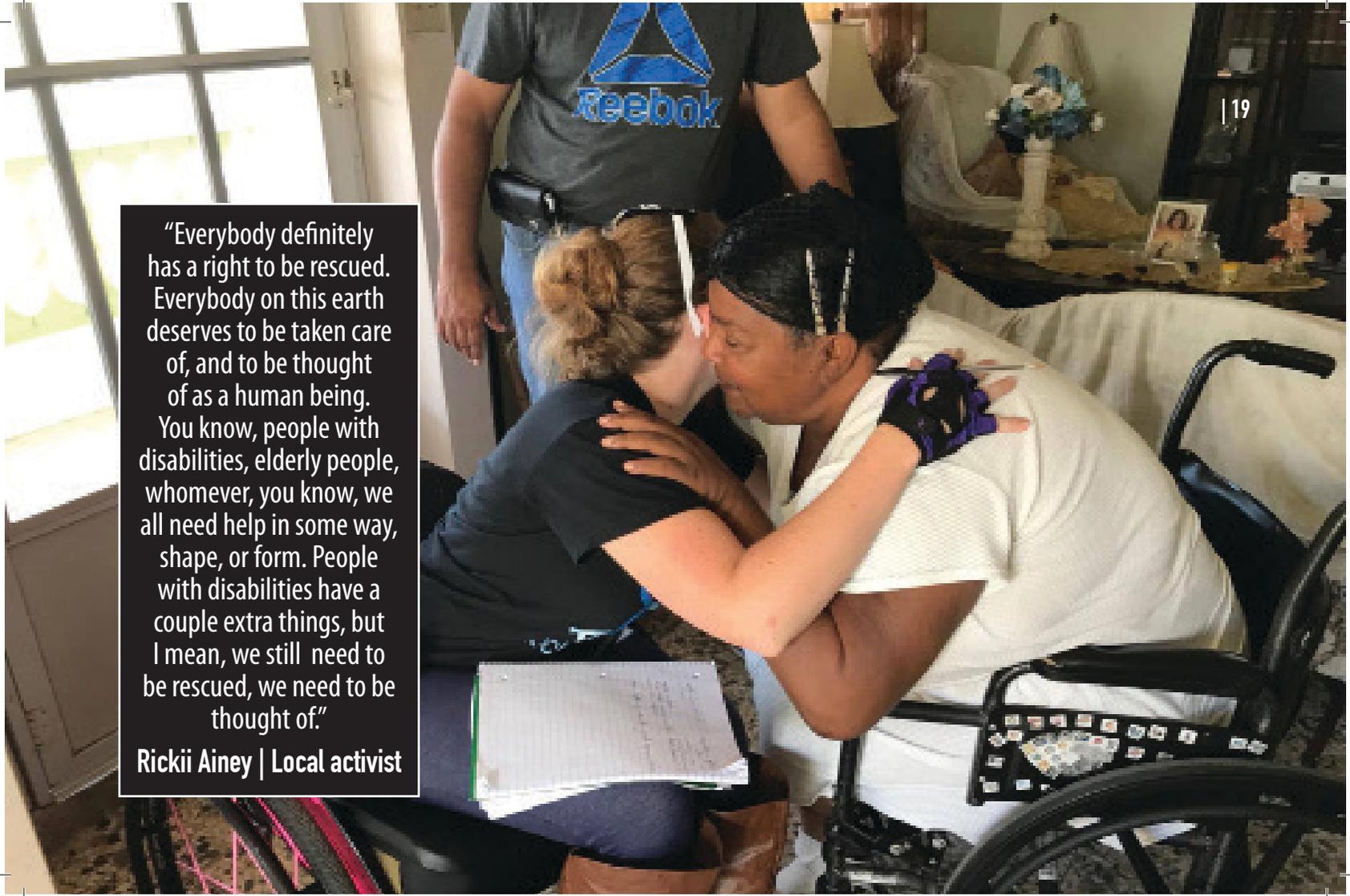


Inclusive disaster planning isn't a luxury - it's a necessity. There are resources that support the development and implementation of accessible disaster plans. Using these resources and seeking guidance from the disability community to create safe and inclusive procedures will save lives.



“Everybody definitely has a right to be rescued. Everybody on this earth deserves to be taken care of, and to be thought of as a human being. You know, people with disabilities, elderly people, whomever, you know, we all need help in some way, shape, or form. People with disabilities have a couple extra things, but I mean, we still need to be rescued, we need to be thought of.”

Rickii Ainey | Local activist



MATRINA'S LIVES LOST

The life stories behind the storm victims



BENILDA CAIXETA
1954-2005

By all accounts, Benilda Caixeta wore her disability lightly. Friends say she never lost sense of fun or her sense of style. She never failed to paint her fingernails or put on her makeup. She never lost her charm or high spirits. She never told her age. She kept up with all the latest Internet humor and forwarded good jokes to her pals. She tooled around town blithely in her fancy electric wheelchair. She even made clothes for herself, clever seamstress that she was, that flattered someone in a seated position with a curved spine.

But in fact, her physical limitations were profound. In recent years, she had lost use of everything but her forearms and hands.

The word "grace" comes up over and over again when people try to describe Caixeta. "Benny was the essence of grace," says friend Muara Johnston. Born and bred on a farm in Minas Gerais, Brazil, Caixeta emigrated to the United States in 1975.

**"The worst case scenario if we don't prepare, is people die unnecessarily."
Jeanne Abadie | Policy Specialist, Advocacy Center of Louisiana**

... short marriage and a health, enrolled at the National Institutes of Health, at the University of New

Discussion Questions

1. What kinds of barriers might people with disabilities face during a natural disaster?
2. How do natural disasters affect communities?
3. What does it mean to have an inclusive disaster plan?
4. What specifically should be included in an inclusive plan?
5. For what disasters is your community at risk?
6. In what ways does an inclusive plan help communities as a whole?
7. What are the consequences for inaccessible plans for natural disasters?
8. Where can you find resources to create an inclusion plan for your community, school, business, or home?
9. Who should be present when a disaster plan is being made?

**Sign up to host your own screening of
“The Right to Be Rescued” at:
www.RightToBeRescued.com**



© 2018 Rooted in Rights
Rooted in Rights is a program of Disability Rights Washington