

## INTERSECTIONS OF ABLEISM, RACISM, AND GENDER-BASED OPPRESSION

### Topic

In this video, Lydia X. Z. Brown, explains the relationship between ableism, racism, and gender-based oppression. Lydia describes ableism, a system of beliefs that defines who is considered valuable, “normal”, and healthy, and who is not. Lydia notes how the people who are most valued have more power. Lydia discusses how ableism, and all other oppressions are interconnected, influencing the daily lives of youth and subjecting them to greater surveillance and systems involvement.

### Relevance of Topic to System-Involved Youth with Disabilities

Understanding intersectionality is critical to understanding and responding to youth as *whole* people. Intersectionality is not simply being aware of a youth’s various identities such as gender, race, age, or disability, but also considering how all of their identities, together, influence how they are perceived by others. For instance, youth are often presumed to be less competent because of age, thus they face ableism along with ageism. The importance of this topic is evident by the fact that disability is a significant intersectional identity in juvenile system trends.

Many youths enter the justice system with service gaps and unmet needs. Intersecting identities can increase the likelihood of justice involvement, particularly when disability intersects with other identities predictive of higher discipline or justice involvement, such as race and socioeconomic status. LGBTQIA+ identity also influences system involvement and experience.

- Somewhere between 30% and 60% of incarcerated youth in juvenile detention have a disability - most often learning or emotional disabilities, but only about 37% of justice-involved youth with disabilities received special education services while in school.
- Approximately 20% of youth in the juvenile justice system identify as part of the lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, questioning, intersex, asexual, plus (LBGTQIA+) community, a much higher rate than among youth in the general population.

Multiply marginalized youth with disabilities may also be involved with multiple systems simultaneously. For example, up to 65% of justice-involved youth have past or current involvement in the child welfare system.

### Recommendations for Creating Systems Change

- Acknowledge and address individual and systemic biases.
- Ensure the practices and services are centered on the voices and experiences of youth.
- Respectfully honor the *whole* person.
- Be aware that youth with disabilities and other marginalized identities are more likely to experience sexual assault and other victimization within and outside of detention settings and consider steps which can be taken individually and as a system to promote safety for all individuals.
- Modify practices that contribute to discrimination, marginalization, and/or stigmatization, and promote trauma-informed practices that focus on creating safe spaces for all individuals.

### Learn More



[We Can't Address Disability without Addressing Race](#)

[Beyond Suspensions: Examining School Discipline Policies and Connections to the School-to-Prison Pipeline for Students of Color with Disabilities](#)

[LGBT Youth in the Juvenile Justice System](#)

[Keeping LGBTQ Youth Safe in Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Placements](#)

## Presenter Information

**Lydia X. Z. Brown** is an advocate, attorney, and strategist whose work focuses on interpersonal and state violence against disabled people living at the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, and language. They founded and direct the Fund for Community Reparations for Autistic People of Color's Interdependence, Survival, and Empowerment, and co-edited *All the Weight of Our Dreams: On Living Racialized Autism*. Lydia holds adjunct lecturer positions at Georgetown University and at American University. They serve on the American Bar Association's Commission on Disability Rights and chair the ABA's Civil Rights and Social Justice Section's Disability Rights Committee. To learn more about Lydia's work, go to [Laboring for Disability Justice & Liberation website](#)

