

## Leadership From The Triple Lens Of Diversity

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**A**s we celebrate black history month in February, it is important to recognize the black, disabled leaders who fought tirelessly for civil rights for people with disabilities. Especially for people of color with disabilities.

Having multiple aspects of diversity in this American society, at times, can lead to additional discrimination and stigma. This occurs when people have minority status due to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation and other attributes of diversity.

Individuals in the disability movement who became staunch leaders who fought the trifecta effect while comprising a myriad of traits, were judged even more critically for these aspects of diversity. They had to fight harder to obtain employment, education, housing, transportation, the right to vote and physical and mental healthcare. This is how the independent living movement was created and we still address these factors today.

A great black, disabled leader named Johnnie Lacy was born in 1937 in the state of Arkansas. Her family later moved to McCloud, Calif. Despite contracting polio at the age of 19 and the lack of resources, she engaged in a laborious fight to earn her academic degrees. Armed with her education and disability advocacy, she founded the Center for Independent Living at Berkeley and was the Director of the Community Resources for Independent Living from 1981 to 1994. Her advocacy initiatives led to the implementation of independent living centers to address the systemic barriers for people with disabilities across the United States.

Another unknown fact is regarding the great advocacy work that Brad Lomax did during The "504 sit in". Lomax had multiple sclerosis. He participated in a 28-day protest in 1977 because the federal government did not pass the regulations to implement the law of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

He conducted the "504 sit in" in San Francisco and worked with other advocates to get supplies for the participants who had serious disabilities and required services to address their complex disabilities. After this famous sit in, Lomax flew to Washington D.C. with Judy Heumann to address congress regarding the mistreatment of people with disabilities

These stories, and others like them, teach us that if you have the desire to try, we all can make a difference. Yes, it is hard to have a disability and to be a member of another minority group, but we must keep trying.

As the first Executive Director at CIDNY to be a black, blind woman, I am happy to say that CIDNY is here to represent and help you. We work with any consumer with any disability. If you need help with any aspect of your life, please contact us. We can be reached at [www.cidny.org](http://www.cidny.org) or by telephone, 212 673-2300.

Again, as disabled advocates, we are in it together!