



DISCUSSION GUIDE:

5 BLACK WOMEN WHO TAUGHT ME ABOUT BODILY AUTONOMY

5 Black Women Who Taught Me About Bodily Autonomy

Especially since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, many people with disabilities & people of color have unapologetically claimed their bodily autonomy. However, our society has also stripped bodily autonomy from our communities through forced sterilizations, guardianship abuse, and abortion bans. So which is it? Do we have bodily autonomy or not? This tutorial examines the stories of 5 Black women who teach us what bodily autonomy really means.



GLOSSARY

HELPFUL TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- **Bodily autonomy:** the freedom to make decisions about your own body. It is also being able to decide when you require assistance and when you can figure it out for yourself ([the NAMED Advocates](#))
- **Ableism:** the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. At its heart, ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require ‘fixing’ and defines people by their disability. . . . Ableism classifies entire groups of people as ‘less than,’ and includes harmful stereotypes, misconceptions, and generalizations of people with disabilities ([Access Living](#)).
- **Internalized ableism:** occurs when we are so heavily influenced by the stereotypes, misconceptions, and discrimination against people with disabilities that we start to believe that our disabilities really do make us inferior ([source](#)).
- **Forced sterilization-** sterilization is an operation that stops someone from ever having babies. In many states, laws say that doctors can sterilize disabled people against their will. This is called forced sterilization ([source](#)).
- **Guardianship:** Guardianship is a system that allows one person to make decisions about another person’s life. These decisions can include where you live, your friends, your money, and your health care ([ASAN](#)).
- **Black disability politics:** is the way that Black people engage with disability as a political and social issue, rather than a simply a medical or personal issue (Dr Sami Schalk).



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Watch [this video](#) and then discuss or reflect on the following questions:

- What are some of the lessons that you pull from this video?
- What does bodily autonomy mean to you? Why is it important?
- Who are some of your north stars or BIPOC disabled icons who have taught you about bodily autonomy?
- Are some groups of people not entitled to bodily autonomy?
- Is bodily autonomy a human right?
- What are the most pressing issues towards bodily autonomy? ie- forced sterilization, abortion etc.



HOW CAN I JOIN THE FIGHT FOR BODILY AUTONOMY?

- 01 Join the fight against forced sterilization.
- 02 Support guardianship reform.
- 03 Explore community-based services for mental health crises.
- 04 Speak up about your needs.
- 05 Respect the bodily autonomy of others.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



- [Principles: Personal Autonomy](#)
- [What My Parents Taught Me About Bodily Autonomy](#)
- [Empowering Autonomy: Challenging Disability Stigma and Supporting Independent Living](#)
- [Black Women Have Never Had Bodily Autonomy | Zerlina](#)
- [What is Bodily Autonomy and Integrity?](#)
- [Lois Curtis, Whose Lawsuit Secured Disability Rights, Dies at 55](#)
- ['Sometimes it is racism': Jada Pinkett Smith on prejudice, typecasting and the fallout from that slap](#)
- [Bodily Autonomy and the Right to Privacy: What They Are, How They Affect People with Disabilities, and Why We Need to Protect Them](#)
- [Forced Sterilization of Disabled People in the United States](#)
- [Disability Solidarity: Completing The 'Vision For Black Lives'](#)