

UNVEILING CHALLENGES:

**Navigating Recruitment  
AI in the Complex  
Landscape of BIPOC and  
Disabled Communities**

“Mindful and intentional, Ethical AI involves the deliberate design and implementation of artificial intelligence to promote the common good while minimizing its negative impacts”  
(Tantaco)

People with disabilities encounter widespread economic and societal exclusion, facing unemployment rates over twice as high as those without disabilities (“Persons with a Disability”). This research delves into the implications of Recruitment Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the hiring experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and disabled individuals.



The primary inquiry guiding this study is:

***What Are the Nuanced Effects of Recruitment AI on the Accessibility and Fairness of Employment Opportunities for BIPOC and Disabled Candidates?***

Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the investigation combines quantitative analysis of recruitment data with qualitative insights drawn from interviews with BIPOC and disabled applicants, alongside perspectives from human resources professionals.



Focusing on the intricate interplay between race, ethnicity, and disability, the study aims to uncover potential biases embedded in AI algorithms and assess their impact on the equitable representation of diverse job seekers. The outcomes seek to contribute valuable insights to ongoing discussions surrounding the ethical use of AI in recruitment, offering guidance for refining strategies that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within organizational hiring processes.

Under the ADA, also known as the *Americans with Disability Act*, an individual with a disability is one who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, has a record of having such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment. Disabilities may manifest as lifelong conditions, emerge at different life stages, or result from significant life events or changes. The impacts of disability can be wide-ranging and context-dependent, with visibility varying from visible impairments such as hearing, sight, and mobility issues to invisible challenges like cognitive, intellectual, or mental health conditions.



Disability, often intersecting with various facets of identity such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and socioeconomic background, is intricately linked to an individual's overall identity and life experiences (Collins and Bilge). Moreover, the interconnected social stigmas associated with disability are magnified when coupled with other marginalized identities (Frederick and Shifrer). Therefore, when discussing AI, the intersectionality between disability and race needs to be considered.

AI advocates for the broader adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) frequently highlight its capacity to drive economic growth. They argue that increased productivity at reduced costs, a higher GDP per capita, and the potential for job creation are all compelling benefits of the usage of artificial intelligence.

**“As tools using advances in natural language processing work their way into businesses and society, they could drive a 7% (or almost \$7 trillion) increase in global GDP and lift productivity growth by 1.5 percentage points over 10 years”**

**(Generative AI)**



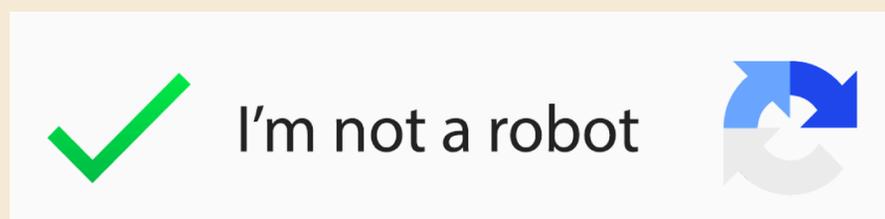
However, there is extensive evidence of the discriminatory harm that AI tools can cause to already marginalized groups. In the article, *“How Artificial Intelligence Can Deepen Racial and Economic Inequities: ACLU,”* it is stated that:

**“AI is built by humans and deployed in systems and institutions that have been marked by entrenched discrimination”**

(Akselrod)

Bias is often molded into the outcomes the AI is asked to predict. Similarly, there is also bias in the data used to train the AI, data that is often discriminatory or unrepresentative for people of color, women, or other marginalized groups, and can rear its head throughout the AI’s design, development, implementation, and use.

As organizations grow in size and contend with a higher influx of job applicants, they face the challenge of balancing various priorities, including recruiting and retaining top talent, enhancing workflow efficiency, and managing costs. Consequently, employers are increasingly adopting automated tools to facilitate the entire employee lifecycle, from recruitment to retirement. Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a significant role in these advancements as AI, a subfield of computer science, concentrates on teaching computers to execute tasks traditionally carried out by humans. Recruitment AI contains a wide arrangement of technologies that function differently as one participates in the recruitment process.



First and foremost, as recruitment AI becomes more prominent, AI can be present as early as you submit your application to the interview process. Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) are platforms where recruits can conduct each step in the hiring process from posting the position offering to evaluating and selecting the candidates.

Candidate Relationship Management (CRM) systems are used to maintain a connection between those seeking employment and recruiters to help refer those seeking employment for future job openings. We bring these two, applicant tracking systems and candidate relationship management, together as they share similar impacts on people with disabilities. Automated outlier detection tools such as CAPTCHAs are used, which when insufficiently trained can flag people with disabilities as not human or as spam (Nian).

With this being present, the determination of whether or not someone may be human comes down to just a few seconds' delay in a response, a minor slip in choosing the correct answer, or misinterpreting a set of letters. In addition to that, individuals with difficulties relating to visual impairment or dexterity are disproportionately affected. Further, the skills and qualifications gap for disabled people, due to systemic inequalities, also are likely to disadvantage these candidates as they are being evaluated against not only historic hiring decisions but standard person specifications. These systems have not been designed to be flexible and consider that some may appear less qualified on paper due to the systemic denial of education and employment opportunities.



Resume, also known as CV, screening has been a major driver of recruitment innovation powered by AI systems, aiding in processing high application volumes. AI screeners detect characteristics in the CV content, such as key phrases and proper nouns, to evaluate employability against the criteria for the position. These criteria have been determined by the job descriptions.

Some advice would be to use the language of the job description to edit your CV/Resume. The AI screeners may even go further to interpret the characteristics of the applicant, such as personality, sentiment, and demographics. Some even go as far as supplementing data in CVs with public data sources, social media, and information from previous employers. As stated before, the skills and qualifications gap for disabled people due to systemic inequalities is likely to disadvantage these candidates when evaluated against a standard job description.

AI screener systems need to be trained with diverse cognitive and intellectual abilities so that they are better equipped to handle linguistic flexibility. Various candidate aptitude assessments, covering cognitive ability, technical skills, personality, and decision-making, are commonly employed to quantitatively evaluate and compare job applicants for specific roles. Generally, these tests aim to assess a candidate's capacity for quick thinking, problem-solving, and data interpretation.

## THE NAMED ADVOCATES

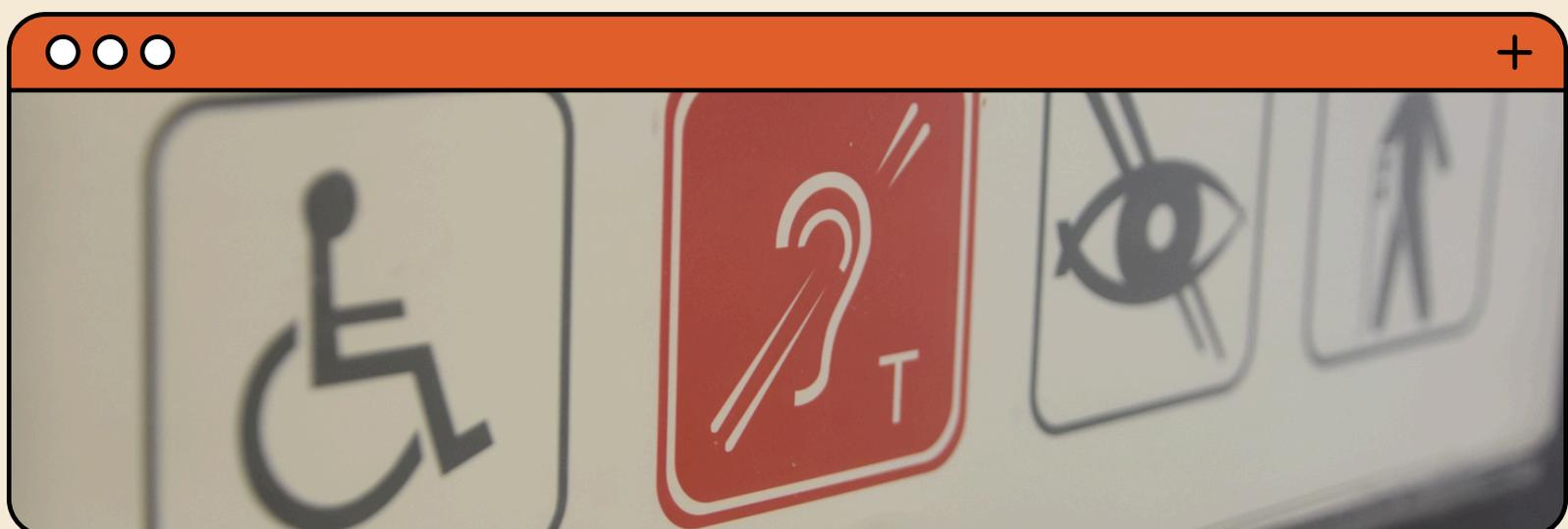
*Nilesh Thakker*, managing partner and global head of the Talent Practice at *Zinnov*, a New York City firm that helps companies build, buy, and sell technology, stated,

**"A persistent issue with AI-generated outputs is that they are often inaccurate and require fact-checking by human moderators"**

(Grensing-Pophal)

Recognizing that these assessments often lack reliability as one-size-fits-all solutions, many recruiters acknowledge the limited generalizability of psychometric tests for individuals with disabilities and those from non-WEIRD (western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic) backgrounds (Cook and Beckman, 2006).

There exists a level of uncertainty regarding whether assessed candidates, including those with disabilities, can effectively learn and fulfill the responsibilities of the role. Moreover, many psychometric tests pose accessibility challenges for a broad range of disabled candidates, necessitating a balance with alternative measures in the recruitment process. Gamified assessments introduce additional concerns related to dexterity, vision impairment, and response time.



## THE NAMED ADVOCATES

Games often incorporate tasks evaluated based on the speed of reaction to prompts and precision of responses, potentially disadvantaging individuals with motor limitations who require additional time or assistance for dexterity-related tasks. Those with visual impairments may need magnification, color adjustment, and extra time. Additionally, individuals with cognitive diversity may require language adjustments and additional time to comprehend prompts.

An example of this is *Jessica Clements*, who, facing an automated one-way video job interview with a visual impairment, found the experience challenging (Lee). She struggled to read questions and experienced distractions when the front-facing camera activated. Confronted with an interview question, a ticking-down clock, and her face looking back at her, she found the experience a struggle.

**"I couldn't read the questions; I had to zoom in. And when it flipped to the front-facing camera, it was distracting," explained Clements, who has a visual impairment. "I'd much prefer a face-to-face interview, but I guess it's what they're all doing now"**

As organizations increasingly adopt AI technologies for recruitment, especially in the interview process, there is a need to address accessibility and ensure an inclusive experience for individuals with disabilities.

Collaboration is pivotal for forward-thinking organizations committed to ensuring equitable treatment for applicants with disabilities in AI-driven recruitment. These organizations actively engage with technology suppliers, purchasers, and users, recognizing their collective responsibility in shaping fair technologies.

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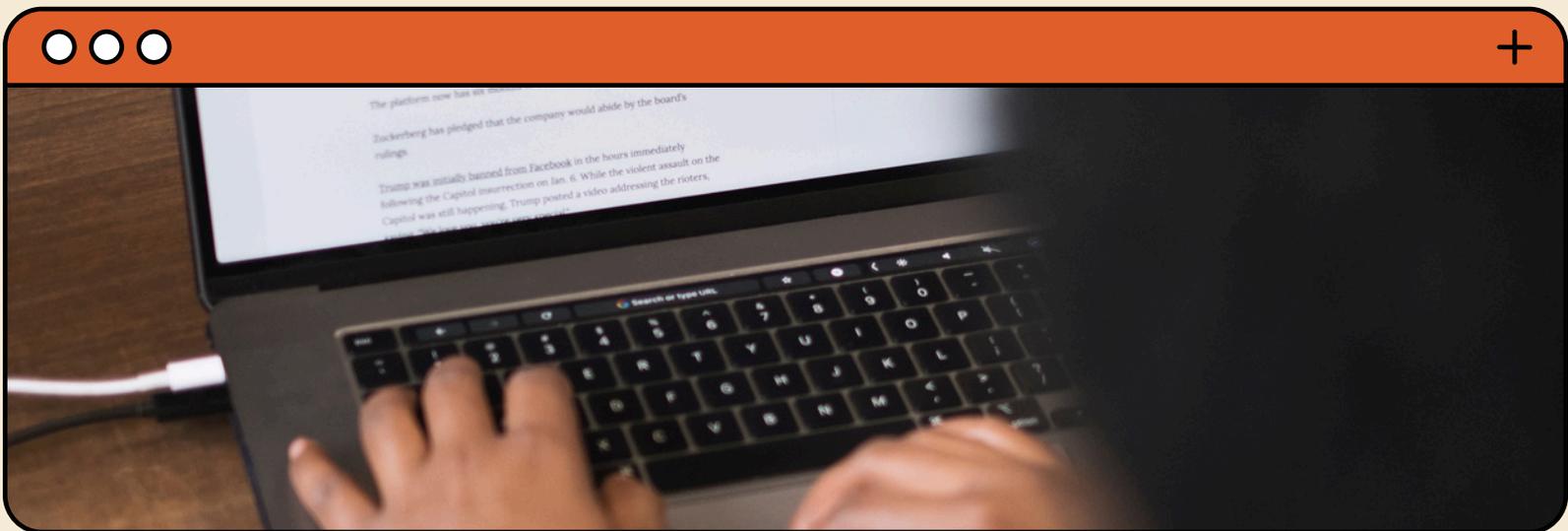


By fostering open dialogues and partnerships, human resource professionals can develop essential tools and language to address the fairness and inclusivity of Recruitment AI systems, as they are expected to be well-trained in diversity, equity, and inclusion, specifically in the scope of job recruitment.

This collaborative approach emphasizes joint initiatives to evaluate and tackle specific challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, ensuring that AI technologies prioritize safety and meet the diverse needs of all job seekers. Through such efforts, organizations aim to create an inclusive technological landscape for a more accessible and equitable future in employment.

# Questions That Human Resources Professionals Should Be Asking Tech Companies

TO INCORPORATE INCLUSIVITY AND FAIRNESS



Questions to consider include the benefits and risks of the technology for disabled and disadvantaged job seekers, the incorporation of inclusivity and fairness into the technology, and the supplier's ability to demonstrate adaptability for equal opportunities.

Here are some examples of what human resources professionals should be asking these tech companies:

- What are the benefits and risks of this technology for disabled and other disadvantaged employment seekers?
- Was a shared understanding of inclusivity and fairness—with specific reference to eliminating the root causes of disability-related discrimination—designed into this technology?
- Can the supplier demonstrate how the processes will adapt to ensure equal opportunities for not only disabled employment seekers but also those of the Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities?

## THE NAMED ADVOCATES

Creating and deploying Recruitment AI systems that treat individuals with disabilities and all job seekers equitably requires active involvement from all stakeholders—technology suppliers, purchasers, and users. The objective is to encourage purchasers to participate in a dialogue and collaborate in developing essential tools and language to assess whether a given Recruitment AI system is 'safe' for job seekers who identify within the BIPOC community and those with disabilities. Forward-thinking organizations can support technology suppliers aligned with their values and expectations regarding applicants with these identity characteristics. This process begins by posing the right questions to technology developers and suppliers.

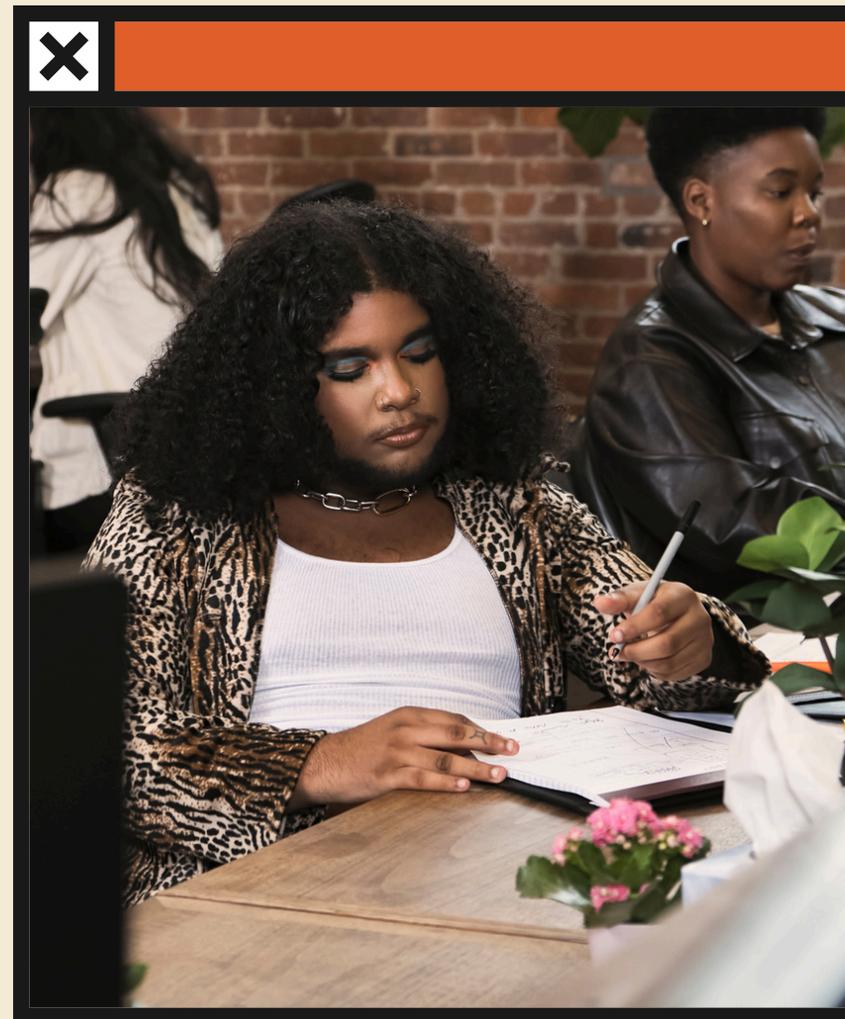
In conclusion, the intersection of Recruitment Artificial Intelligence (AI) with the employment landscape has profound implications for marginalized communities, especially BIPOC and individuals with disabilities. The research reveals biases embedded in AI algorithms, risking the perpetuation of systemic inequalities in recruitment systems. Disparities faced by people with disabilities, exacerbated by biases in automated tools, highlight the need for a paradigm shift in technology adoption.

Addressing unemployment disparities requires proactive measures to dismantle barriers rather than fortifying them through biased algorithms. Navigating AI-driven recruitment requires recognizing the interconnectedness of discrimination forms, emphasizing the multifaceted fight against oppression. The focus on disability within the context of ongoing racial justice movements serves as a poignant reminder that the fight against oppression is multifaceted, requiring holistic strategies that address the unique challenges faced by various marginalized groups.

The disparities in unemployment rates underscore the persistent systemic challenges that demand proactive measures to dismantle barriers, rather than inadvertently fortifying them through biased algorithms.

Therefore, the call to action is clear:

**Organizations must commit to fostering collaboration, transparency, and inclusivity in the development and deployment of Recruitment AI systems.**



By actively engaging with stakeholders, posing critical questions, and aligning values with technology partners, we can work towards a future where AI technologies not only enhance efficiency but also contribute to a more just and equitable employment landscape for everyone, regardless of their background or abilities.

In this way, the potential of AI-driven recruitment to perpetuate inequalities can be transformed into a force for positive change, reflecting a shared commitment to diversity, fairness, and the dignity of all job seekers.

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# ADDITIONAL SOURCES

**Artificial Intelligence: The Robots Are Now Hiring | Moving Upstream**

[https://youtu.be/8QEK7B9GUhM?si=GF63u-4WpsHR8I\\_L](https://youtu.be/8QEK7B9GUhM?si=GF63u-4WpsHR8I_L)

**How AI could be rejecting your job application**

[https://youtu.be/468IKvaTf\\_k?si=AlzQEU5s0nk-9LZj](https://youtu.be/468IKvaTf_k?si=AlzQEU5s0nk-9LZj)

**The AI hiring industry is under scrutiny – but it'll be hard to fix**

<https://www.technologyreview.com/2019/11/07/75194/hirevue-ai-automated-hiring-discrimination-ftc-epic-bias/>

**In Conversation with Dr. Timnit Gebru and Minerva Tantoco on Ethical AI**

<https://mcsilver.nyu.edu/in-conversation-ethical-ai/>

**Disabled and Here**

<https://affecttheverb.com/disabledandhere/>

# GLOSSARY

**ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act):**

Legislation in the United States prohibiting discrimination based on disability, defining disability and outlining rights and responsibilities.

**AI (Artificial Intelligence):**

The development of computer systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as speech recognition, problem-solving, and decision-making.

**Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS):**

Platforms facilitating various stages of the hiring process, from posting job positions to candidate evaluation and selection.

**Automated Outlier Detection Tools:**

Systems designed to identify abnormal or irregular data patterns, often used in recruitment processes.

**BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color)**

An acronym encompassing individuals from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, emphasizing inclusivity and representation.

**Call to Action:**

A compelling appeal for specific actions or initiatives to address identified issues or challenges.

**CAPTCHAs:**

Automated tests designed to distinguish humans from bots, which can pose challenges for individuals with disabilities.

### **Candidate Relationship Management (CRM) Systems:**

Tools to maintain connections between job seekers and recruiters for future opportunities.

### **Collaborative Approach:**

Involving joint efforts and partnerships among stakeholders to address challenges and promote inclusivity in AI-driven recruitment.

### **Cognitive Diversity:**

Variability in cognitive functions, including learning styles, problem-solving approaches, and thinking processes.

### **Dexterity:**

The skillful use of one's hands and body, particularly in tasks requiring precision and coordination.

### **Discriminatory Harm:**

Negative consequences resulting from biased AI tools, particularly affecting marginalized groups.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):**

An organizational commitment to promoting diversity, ensuring equity, and fostering inclusivity in all aspects, including recruitment.

### **Fact-Checking:**

Verifying information for accuracy and authenticity.

### **GDP (Gross Domestic Product):**

The total value of goods and services produced within a country, often used as an economic indicator.

### **Gamified Assessments:**

Evaluation methods incorporating game-like elements to measure cognitive abilities, often used in recruitment processes.

### **Human Moderators:**

Individuals responsible for fact-checking and ensuring the accuracy of AI-generated outputs.

### **Human Resources Professionals:**

Personnel responsible for managing human resources functions within organizations, including recruitment and diversity initiatives.

### **Inclusive Technological Landscape:**

An environment in which technology considers and accommodates the needs of diverse users, promoting accessibility and fairness.

### **Intersectionality:**

The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, gender, and disability, creating unique experiences for individuals.

### **Paradigm Shift:**

A fundamental change in approach or perspective, especially in the adoption of technology or practices.

### **Positive Change:**

Transformation towards a more just, inclusive, and equitable employment landscape through conscious efforts and collaboration.

### **Psychometric Tests:**

Assessments designed to measure individuals' mental capabilities, behavioral style, and personality traits.

### **Resume Screening:**

The process of evaluating resumes or CVs to identify suitable candidates based on predetermined criteria.

### **Systemic Inequalities:**

Persistent and widespread disparities within social, economic, or political systems.

### **Unemployment Disparities:**

Differences in employment rates, highlighting challenges faced by certain groups, including those with disabilities.

### **Values Alignment:**

Consistency and agreement in principles, objectives, and expectations among stakeholders.

### **Vision Impairment:**

A condition affecting the ability to see, ranging from partial sight to total blindness.

### **WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic):**

A term highlighting the potential bias in research and assessments based on the limited demographic representation of participants.

The National Alliance of Melanin Disabled Advocates (NAMED Advocates) creates spaces for Disabled leaders of color and BIPOC allies to gather, learn, connect, and grow around racial and disability justice. Through the use of knowledge and empowerment tools, we work to destigmatize the existing outward narrative that currently surrounds the Disabled community.

We equip community members with the vocabulary to express their authentic selves with confidence and certainty. Our community events are celebrations of solidarity, providing opportunities for collaboration and relationship building. This FAQ sheet was created by Zy-Asiah Gray-Small, and designed by the NAMED Advocates team.

Learn more about the NAMED Advocates here:  
<https://withkeri.com/named-advocates/>