

Democracy Of the People with Rebecca Cokley

Rebecca Cokley is the director of U.S. Disability Rights at the Ford Foundation, which focuses on advancing economic justice, countering stigma, and building leadership opportunities for people with disabilities in America.

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My name is Rebecca Cokley. I am the director of the U.S. Disability Rights program here at the Ford Foundation. I am a white woman with achondroplasia which is the most common form of dwarfism. I am wearing a red dress, a black blazer, and a vintage throwback Ford Foundation lapel pin. I have red hair, a glorious abundance of freckles and green eyes.

A democracy is only truly of the people if it is accessible by all. Inside the preamble of the Americans with Disabilities Act is a promise for disabled Americans. It reads we have the right to full participation, equality of opportunity, economic self-sufficiency, and independent living. And yet today, 36 years after the passage of the ADA and 250 years after the founding of our country, 60% to 80% of polling places are still inaccessible in some way, shape, or form.

The American Dream is not ADA accessible. When we think about what our democracy needs, it's amplifying those voices to actually create a democracy that centers those most impacted. And it is my hope that in the investments that we make and in the work that we do here to strengthen our democracy, that by the next major anniversary, Americans with disabilities around the country will be enfranchised fully and able to fully access their right to vote.

[The Ford Foundation logo is stacked in a bold black serif font, then transforms into a single letter "F" set inside a black circle.]

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