

(Re)imagining Ableism

Liam Pellow

Haben Girma

Haben Girma is a deafblind woman who was able to navigate through an ableist world by herself. Her journey is a great example of the kind of treatment that disabled people receive from nondisabled people.



Source: <https://www.nbcnews.com/know-your-value/feature/meet-haben-girma-deafblind-woman-who-conquered-harvard-ncna1040916>

Her Guide Dog

Before graduating high school, Girma thought that it would be a good idea to have a guide dog to help her navigate through college and to give her more confidence. One of her friends explained to her that if Girma didn't have the confidence she needed by herself, then the guide dog won't be much help. Both the disabled person and the guide dog need to work hand in hand in order for success.



Source: <https://nationaltoday.com/international-guide-dog-day/>

Louisiana Center for the Blind

Instead of training with a guide dog before she left for college, she decided to gain some new skills at the Louisiana Center for the Blind. Here she was able to learn skills like using electric saws and baking in order to help her feel comfortable at college.



Source: https://www.nola.com/gambit/news/the_latest/article_a8df57d8-567c-11eb-bb74-9fc4f0fb2b46.html

Harvard Law

Before Girma graduated from Lewis & Clark College, she received her first seeing eye dog Maxine. Maxine helped her navigate comfortably through Harvard Law School.



Source: <https://hls.harvard.edu/2018-2019-by-the-numbers-2/>

Maxine's Influence

She described having a seeing eye dog as being able to navigate through the world in a Tesla instead of on a bike. Maxine was even able to stop the sexual harassment that Girma dealt with when she was alone.



Source: <https://shop.bird.co/products/e-bikes-a-frame-gravity-gray>



Source: <https://www.tesla.com/modelx>

Mylo

After Maxine sadly died of cancer in 2018, Girma was introduced to Mylo. The two worked together until their teamwork improved.



Source: <https://habengirma.com/2018/07/24/its-a-boy-meet-mylo-my-new-seeing-eye-dog/>

Confronting Ableism

Girma includes a specific example of her confronting ableism at the end of her story. At a friend's wedding, she and Mylo were looking for a specific room that everyone was in. A wedding guest asked Girma who was able to bring her to the correct room. Without wanting to argue she gave the credit to Mylo. Girma explains how she is tired of people giving her ableist comments like this because they do not think before they speak. She wants everyone to understand how her guide dog takes the lead from her and how she is more than capable of wandering this difficult world by herself.



Source: <https://techcrunch.com/2020/08/11/the-robots-occupying-our-sidewalks/>