



CBCF Conference Reflections By Alise Smith, 2018

My name is Alise Smith, and I work as a Counselor Assistant I at the Chabot College Disabled Student Resource Center. I was also a part of the Youth Disabled and Proud Advisory Council in California. I am currently a graduate student studying to be a rehabilitation counselor to better serve African-American students and family in transition from K-12 special education to college accommodations services.

I was first interested in becoming a Disability Ambassador for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (CBCF) annual conference because I wanted to help the African-American community start to re-invent their perception of what a person with physical or invisible disabilities is capable of achieving in today's educational system. I also wanted to learn about the current legislation that surrounds education and civil rights laws to encourage students and families to support for this upcoming November 2018 election. Along my journey of attending the conference workshops based on education, I had the privilege of meeting an assistant professor that conducts research on disproportionate representation of African-American students in special education. The assistant professor's presentation expanded my knowledge on the educational barriers that still exist for students of color and exposed me to new theories of why African-American students seek out disability support services last at the college level, including one theory about the fear of re-experiencing segregation in classes and being singled out from their peers.

Furthermore, this experience has encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone of serving students of color at the college level to now learning how to become an advocate for K-12 students' civil rights in special education. In conclusion, I would like to thank the World Institute on Disability and JPMorgan Chase for their scholarship and for making this conference accessible for participants like myself who have a disability. The accommodation that allowed me to have inclusive access to the conference was not having to strain my joints by walking far to the conference every day. This opportunity also gave me the honor to network with other Disability Ambassadors that attended the conference.



Alise as a Disability Ambassador

Alise Smith works as a Counselor Assistant I at the Chabot College Disabled Student Resource Center in California where she provides direct support to over 1,200 students in the program. She works daily to empower African-American students to utilize their accommodations in the classroom and to connect with local disability services to receive further assistance. She was also previously a member of the Youth Disabled and Proud Advisory Council where she advocated for major laws that greatly impacted the disability community.



Alise as an artist, enjoying the colorful backdrops at CBCF

