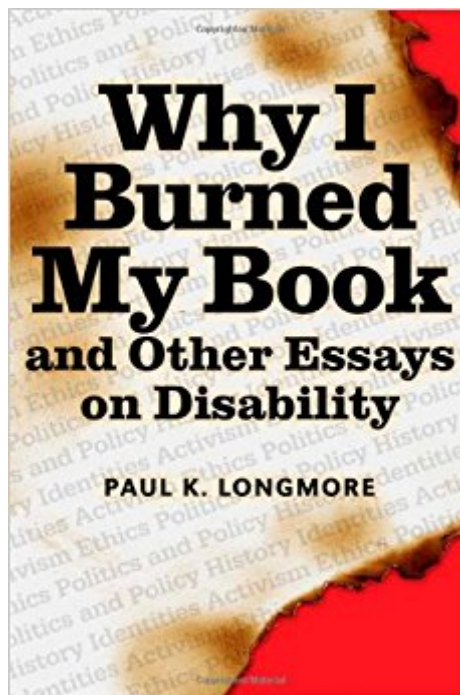




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# Why I Burned My Book And Other Essays On Disability (American Subjects)



## Synopsis

This wide-ranging book shows why Paul Longmore is one of the most respected figures in disability studies today. Understanding disability as a major variety of human experience, he urges us to establish it as a category of social, political, and historical analysis in much the same way that race, gender, and class already have been. The essays here search for the often hidden pattern of systemic prejudice and probe into the institutionalized discrimination that affects the one in five Americans with disabilities. Whether writing about the social critic Randolph Bourne, contemporary political activists, or media representations of people with disabilities, Longmore demonstrates that the search for heroes is a key part of the continuing struggle of disabled people to gain a voice and to shape their destinies. His essays on bioethics and public policy examine the conflict of agendas between disability rights activists and non-disabled policy makers, healthcare professionals, euthanasia advocates, and corporate medical bureaucracies. The title essay, which concludes the book, demonstrates the necessity of activism for any disabled person who wants access to the American dream.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The strength of Longmore's work [is] in remembering the ongoing marginalization of millions[.] Longmore challenges and disrupts dominant ideologies of 'normality' and disability. Furthermore, he offers an alternative in writing the study of disability as social history.... Longmore's text is a worthy read for its intellectual sensibility."-Metapsychology Online "Why I Burned My Book and Other

Essays on Disability is a collection of some of his best writing on both history and policy. The combination of scholarship and activism displayed in this book is exciting."-H-Net "Why I Burned My Book is a must-read for anyone seeking to understand the history and the current issues of disability."-The Progressive "Longmore's newest work provides an engaging discussion of some of the major issues and concerns within the disability community as well as a scholarly review of the major events in disability history.... The book provides an in-depth accounting of disability rights history, scholarship, activism, and advocacy. It is lively and very accessible and is an important contribution to the files of disability studies, as well as broadening and deepening our national understanding of the complexity of our history, one the author's stated goals."-The Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare "[A] fine introduction to the contemporary study of disability."-Reviews in American History "Longmore offers poignant observations about images of disability in American culture....A major strength of Longmore's essays is calling our attention to historical antecedents, so that current disability issues can be put in the context of developments in society and technology."-New Political Science "Paul Longmore is simply the best historian now writing about disabilities. This volume collects a series of major essays that have shaped the academic and public discourse about disabilities inside of and beyond the university. From the unwritten history of disabled people to questions of assisted suicide, and the public face of disability culture, Longmore writes intelligently, compassionately, and readably. Read these essays and learn!"-Sander L. Gilman, Distinguished Professor of the Liberal Arts and Sciences and of Medicine, The University of Illinois-Chicago "Paul Longmore's sharp and cogent criticism has always sought and found the soul of the disability rights movement. But these essays go far beyond activism and constitute a cultural document for a people adrift. Longmore's refreshing views represent an intellectual Ellis Island for people with disabilities, hampered by bureaucracy, myth and sentiment, trying to find a place in America. His stories are as important to this nation's sense of self as the Mayflower's landing at Plymouth Rock."-John Hockenberry, author of A River Out Of Eden and Moving Violations

"Personal inclination made me a historian. Personal encounter with public policy made me an activist."

Required reading for any student or professional interested in disability studies or disability advocacy. More scholarly writing than the title implies. Concise review of disability history and major events. Longmore's personal experience adds insight and credibility.

Paul Longmore, my uncle, passed away in August 2010. His work will continue to challenge and expand our culture's perception, treatment, and understanding of people with disabilities.

Thank you, It's wonderful

Collection of reviews and other materials on disability studies, operating from a rejection of the medical model of disability (disability is about individual deficits) and adopting the social model (disability is about structures of exclusion, prejudices, and responses). There are historical essays and film reviews; for me the most challenging pieces were about assisted suicide. By limiting resources for people with disabilities, society can coerce them into accepting that suicide is the best option available--but that's a false dichotomy: "The rhetoric of 'choice' is deployed to hide the realities of coercion." One man who sought assistance committing suicide lived in a state willing to pay \$230 a day to keep him in a nursing home, but under \$300 a month for him to live in his own apartment with assistance. It struck me that this was a micro example of how failure to provide for everyone's medical needs disciplines all workers/potential workers. Longmore writes about the way that social assistance in the US has been divided into programs for "deserving" workers and for the "needy," both of whom are stigmatized and used to police the bounds of acceptability. Being in need is defined as being deficient, contrary to the realities of human existence. This has obvious general implications for how employees relate to their employers, but consider the nursing home example in this light: because of minimum wage laws, a much higher percentage of the money spent on in-home care would go to the caregiver, and in-home care would also create more jobs because of the economies of scale in a nursing home. So disempowering people with disabilities by only funding nursing home care helps control other workers as well. Longmore finishes by explaining why he burned his book: because of the disempowering regulations that prevented him from earning royalties, which might disqualify him for the assistance he needs to live independently. The regulations that discourage people with disabilities from working are still, counterproductively, mostly in place, and his perseverance is startling; he points out that receiving pensions can disqualify people for assistance, thus condemning them for having worked. It's a ridiculously counterproductive situation and also a dehumanizing one.

Paul K. Longmore is a historian. He wrote a well reviewed book on George Washington. In 1988, in front of the federal building in Los Angeles, he burned a copy of his book. Longmore saves the essay about the book burning until the end of *Why I Burned My Book*; Longmore needs to take the

reader on a long and instructive journey through the history, imagery, and ethics of disabilities and disability rights so that the reader will understand why someone would burn their own book. Longmore's perspective as a historian with excellent writing skills and a physical disability probably isn't unique, but it certainly makes him more than qualified to write on the history of the disability rights movement. I enjoyed the history essays [which make up slightly less than half the book] the most. I found the essays on assisted suicide to be the most challenging. I support assisted suicide in principle, but I found Longmore's arguments in opposition well stated and troubling, and they've been swirling around my brain ever since I read them. I highly recommend *Why I Burned My Book* to anyone wanting a deeper understanding of disability and the disability rights movement.

Brilliant book by a fabulous writer, historian, activist and educator. Prof Longmore for years has been teaching, writing and championing disability history -- in fact he is just this week receiving an award from the American Association of People with Disabilities for his ongoing scholarship and his role as "an intellectual force and passionate spokesperson for all disabled people's right to dignified supports for independent living and self-determination." With solid logic and accessible language (pun intended), he demonstrates how social prejudices and institutional discrimination shape the lives of disabled Americans as much--if not more--than any physical frailties or limitations. This work is simply too good to pass up! An excellent introduction to disability history and disability rights -- and a welcome antidote to the willful ignorance evident in the last review by "mipater."

Paul Longmore is one of the most important writers and thinkers about the phenomenon of being disabled. His cogent, well researched analysis of the prejudices and stereotypes behind social policy and treatment of people with disabilities in the US is enormously helpful to both understand the role of disability but also to craft policy to eliminate disproportionate and negative practices.

I just cannot accept the fact that the truly handicapped have the demands that authors such as Longmore states. It's as though only a small number of disabled (and a large number of their lawyers) yell, scream, and whine for "rights" that are never denied from them in the first place. As *Disabling America* taught me (ISBN: 0785262253), the disabled did not want to be turned into victims but that's exactly what the ADA did.

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