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The Hidden Prejudice: Mental Disability on Trial

By [Michael L. Perlin](#)

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In *The Hidden Prejudice*, Michael L. Perlin reveals a pattern of prejudice against mentally disabled individuals that keeps them from receiving equal treatment under the law. Sanism, like racism, is a prejudice against a minority population. This mostly hidden prejudice against mentally ill people has pervaded Western culture throughout history and continues to affect our culture and legal system.

Under the pretext of "improving" society, a judge, lawyer, or fact-finder may rationalize turning a blind eye to faulty evidence and render a sanist decision. The pretext for this testimonial dishonesty is that the end result justifies the means. In cases involving the mentally disabled, these end results are founded on the prejudicial belief that the mentally disabled are not responsible or intelligent enough to deserve the full rights of citizenship. Perlin argues that these are sanist decisions, and explores the roots and results of these decisions.

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