

Honoring International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Insights

12.03.24

This year's International Day of Persons with Disabilities spotlight is on [Haben Girma, J.D.](#) Girma is the first [Deafblind student to graduate from Harvard Law School](#). She worked at [Disability Rights Advocates \("DRA"\)](#) from 2013 to 2016 as a Skadden Fellow and staff attorney. During her time at DRA, she contributed to the precedent-setting case [National Federation of the Blind, et al. v. Scribd, Inc.](#) Following the [court's denial of Scribd's motion to dismiss the case, Scribd agreed to a settlement](#) where Scribd redesigned its website to solve compatibility issues with specialized software for the blind.

After her time at DRA, she chose to devote her efforts full-time to education advocacy. Girma has given speeches for developer conferences, written op-eds for major newspapers, and [authored a memoir](#) entitled "[Haben: The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law](#)." In her memoir, Girma details her family's story as refugees of the 30-year war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, as well as how she built a school in Mali and learned to salsa dance using tactile, rhythmic cues. She also describes how she developed a text-to-braille communication system, made her way to Harvard Law and became a disability rights advocate.

Girma has travelled around the world in order to give talks on accessibility and inclusion, as well as [spoken with President Obama](#) at the White House. She has argued that accessibility is important for society because it applies to all of us. "Anyone can become disabled at any time," Girma [says](#). "You want to still be able to access your products and services even when your body changes, and all of our bodies change as we age."

Girma has a widely followed social media and web presence. Her [website](#) and [Instagram page](#) are a collection of important experiences and knowledge about improving accessibility, as well as pictures of her precious Seeing Eye dog, Mylo.