

There are No Disabled People

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Throughout the entire history of the U.S. there have been unrecognized people. Unrecognized people are people who are looked upon as being valueless. Such people were even vilified, or criminalized. American Indians, the only original Americans, were seen by the early settlers as having no value, thus major attempts were made to rid society of "these people" (who are still referred to as savages in the U.S. Constitution), and their land was stolen from them. Eventually millions of people were stolen from Africa to work this stolen land, and these people also were eventually declared valueless became acceptable. Yes, other societies have done this as well, such as Hitler's Germany to name one. Hitler's first target were people he saw as the "disabled".

There is an ongoing debate in society now about how to address the issue of disability rights. The issue of rights is also not a new conversation in the U.S. As a result of African people in the U.S. (so called "blacks") being seen as valueless, unable, etc., a civil rights/human rights movement was forced to emerge. As we know, this movement was led by people who felt locked out, unwelcomed and thus excluded from the "American Dream". In fact many of these excluded people experienced the "American Dream" as an "American Nightmare", and said so! this movement was the most powerful movement for inclusion that our society has ever witnessed. A people only seen as unable clearly demonstrated their abilities, and society was forever changed.

Today yet another group of people are looking for the dream of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And again the obstacles of exclusion has been put in place. Again labels have been used so as to justify the exclusion and overbearing isolation of "these people"! Who are they? They are the people known as the "disabled"!

There are many of us today who believe that one of the major obstacles to all of us recognizing our "oneness" (even though we are not the same), is that we label others as well as allowing ourselves to be labeled. Think for a moment of labels we've placed on others. In almost every case the label has been used to put someone down, to separate ourselves from "them"! And we label people so as to appear different from, or better than the "others".

A term used today that we believe needs to be re-examined and eventually discarded, is the term "disabled"! Why? Because there are no such human beings. Disabled, like the other term "handicapped" gives us a major misconception of the people who are forced to wear this label. Fortunately millions have moved away from that 16th century term "the handicapped". Let's remember that this term was used to portray people who were missing limbs on their bodies as people who only sat around with their caps in their hands begging. It was perceived that such people could do nothing else but beg. They were seen as valueless.

The term "disabled" also implies unableness, can't do-ness. Think of what it means to **dis**-regard, to **dis**-respect, to **dis**-card. Ask the younger generation today what the term "dis" means. They'll tell you it means to ignore, or to abuse in some way or another. To disavow means to not recognize, or to not take responsibility for. **Discard**, **disease** (not at ease), **disown**, **distrust**, **disorder** all imply negativity. So do we want to emphasize what people can't do, their disability; or what they can do, their ability, their ableness!

Many new voices are encouraging us to realize that we aren't really talking about people with disabilities or the so-called "disabled". We must move to acknowledging that we are more often than not talking about people with "**Unrecognized Abilities**"! Only mechanical devices can get disabled, or something without life. But there is no human being who is unable to do something. Yes, we all have various limitations but no human is disabled. It's just that their abilities are not sought out, are not recognized.

Others are saying "So what's the big deal. What's all the fuss about what we call them?" We need to remember, that how we refer to a people has a lot to do with how we also treat them. The early Africans were labeled "slave" thereby justifying their inhumane treatment. The original Americans were called "savages" not people. Again a label is used to disregard a peoples' beauty and value. We say there are no disabled people, only people with **unrecognized abilities!**

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