

# Scientific Advancements Overshadowing Human Values in Regards to People with Disabilities

By Karen Lynn

March 2006

Dear Ms. Lasek, fellow friends, and facility. I am honored to be asked here, today, to be one of your guest speakers. Even though I am miles away, physically, I want each and every one of you to feel my presence. I want each and every one of you to feel my sincerity. And, most importantly, I want each and every one of you to feel the importance of these words, and to embody what it is that I am saying - so that my words empower you throughout the course of your life's work and so things like this never happen again.

Your topic was...are scientific advancements overshadowing human values in regards to people with disabilities. I would have to say yes, most definitely. From the time I was a small child, until now, I have seen much through these green eyes of mine. That was over a half a century ago, now. I was born perfectly normal, and given my first DPT shot. I reacted with a slight fever, and recovered.

Then, at 5 months old, I was taken back to receive my second shot. My mother was very in tune with me, and asked that I be given this cerium in smaller increments, but my doctor would not listen. That was my very first experience to how a man, a doctor, a human being of service, overshadowed my rights. He hurried my mother out of his office, by saying- "If she is not better by morning, give her 2 aspirins." Off he fled- never to be seen again. By morning, I was in a coma and was going to be deaf, dumb and blind.

I was very lucky, and made almost complete recovery. I was left with brain damage, later to be diagnosed with left side hemiplegic, Cerebral Palsy. Meaning, that my whole left side is and was affected. I can use my left leg, but it is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a inch shorter then my right, and I cannot rotate my ankle very well or point and flex my toes completely. My left arm is more involved and impaired. My whole body was actually twisted like a pretzel. I have never been able to hold items for longer that a half a minute and I cannot use my fingers or tell my hand what to do. It is like having the circuits of the switch board cut off. Thus, it is only a helping hand.

However, that never, ever held me back- even though I wore a full length leg brace for the first 11 years of my life; I was like any other child. But it was around 8 years of age that my mother realized that I also was not learning like the other children. A little while later, I was diagnosed with having a learning disability.

Did this really have to happen at all? No. If only this so called doctor, would not have obscured what my mother was trying to tell him. Things would or could have been so different. If only he really listened- If only he didn't brush the matter off because he was too proud to ask for help- could he have talked with a colleague and collaborated? Sure he could have. Instead he sacrificed my life and played God- I ask you, then! If this doctor really cared- would he have listened to what my mother was telling him? Would he have been concerned enough, to treat me with some kind of respect, or human dignity! If indeed he did value these precious life commodities, called human rights, I probably would not be disabled today.

I am very lucky to have been given a mother as I was. She was a very proactive and progressive thinker. She moved mountains to get me to where I am today. She decided my IEP (individual education plan), and when she saw I was not learning- she went to the principal of the handicap school, and talked in my behalf to get a special education teacher to teach me, and the other students who needed the same help. It was also my mother who decided my IHP (individual habilitation plan). If these so called evaluators got their hands on me... my human rights would have been overshadowed in a split second. I observe, and am told time and again, of stories where disabled peoples rights are overshadowed repeatedly.

Even though our society says they have done a lot to raise the bar for the standards of the disabled. I know differently! I know first hand how our values and views are disregarded. Later, in my paper I will give you a first hand account of how I know. We the disabled are turned away at every corner to get ahead in society, or to pursue our dreams or goals. We are conveniently pushed out of the way or out of site, not to be heard or seen. Most people do not like being around individuals who have a physical limitation. We make them feel uncomfortable and uneasy for whatever reason. We challenge them, threaten them, and present a depth and awareness of which they are afraid of. So, time and again, truth after truth; we the disabled are pleasantly and attractively shoved out of the way. Only to be devalued and de-humanized without little care or matter-

Whenever there are any issues of importance, these matters of discussions are covertly covered up. Even if there is a mediator on our behalf- these agencies cunningly denied these allegations with shrewdness. They slyly and charmingly disrepresent the disabled community.

Thankfully, there were those who could see what I needed and what I could become. Strongest among these, was my dear teacher, Al Gilbert. My mother developed the idea of using dance as therapy. Al Gilbert took on this challenge, and allowed my body to soar. Dance gave me strength, joy, and encouragement. It was

through the dance routines, and bare exercises that my twisted body became straight and proud. Dance, opened up the world to new plains for me! It helped me to become the creative person I was meant to be.

My success as a dancer gave me the courage I needed to challenge the system in other areas. At the age of twenty-five, I made a conscious choice to go to college. To learn all the things I never learned in my basic education. These dreams and goals were conscious selections to make me the best person I could become- it was a set target within my being to overcome my learning disability of dyslexia. Yet, this plan and aim was met with all oppositions from the experts- who thought they knew ExACTly what I needed as a disabled person. There again, I was devalued and de-humanized. I was overshadowed by the system. My human rights were put to the test with abrupt, aggression, and antagonistic vengeance.

They thought they knew what they were talking about. But they did not know what they were headed for. Until they were presented and served with papers from lawyers, stating they were in direct violations of my civil rights. Did they not know! This was the first civil rights case under section 504 of the rehabilitation act of 1975. The very people who were suppose to help me, put up every obstacle in my path. To the experts, I was a threat- to the experts I was not a person, let alone a disabled person- to the experts, I was only a symbol. They attempted to mix me up and confuse me, only to be overcome by what I had determined to do. I was gently and cleverly isolated from the real world to become a productive person in society. All because they could not cope with a person such as myself, who was a self motivator and driven individual.

After winning the first civil rights case, in California, I began my college education. Thereafter, entering and winning 2 prize in the Kaleidoscope Literary prose, fiction art award of 1983. I graduated from Santa Monica College with honors, however once again, because of a new counselor, who, by the way was a deaf, mute, "expert", was labeled mentally retarded, for a third time in my life. All because of an iq test which does not measure anything- and a "specialist", who could not see my potential. Over the past 23 years of development, my story has now become a published work of art. It is called "The Broken Hoof" and relays how a young C.P. girl finds strength in a carrousel horse.

I hope my friends, that my struggles and achievements show that the human heart of a child of God is stronger than any piece of equipment.