

Peering Eyes Watching

By Karen Lynn

When I sit quietly, and think over my life, as a rebel, advocate, and activist with a cause, I remember certain residue of the most frustrating aspect of dealing with my own disability. These remains have been the left over hurt and pain that were caused by the "attention of self styled experts" and people who wanted and had to have control at all cost.

Having been brought up to believe in the truth and goodness in man kind, I was won over, persuaded, and convinced by these so called experts, in the disabled community. These experts exercised restrained management to try and run other peoples lives, and have complete control and say so over our destination, despite what I truly believed was right for me, in my heart.

These experts tried on numerous occasions to impose their authority, their supremacy, and their power in many areas of my life. I personally had to struggle and fight back with everything I had, to ward off their arrogance in obtaining my education as well as in employment. Sometimes, I simply was not taken seriously or sincerely by both experts and those I worked with. My word was not regarded or deemed worthy.

For example, I was falsely labeled mentally retarded on three separate occasions. This was designed to force me to except what one particular expert wanted me to limit my life to. He believed himself to know "all" about what he felt I shouldn't be allowed to do with "my" life. His opinions were designed around a very old fashioned, out-moded, and passé, concept of what we, with hidden learning disabilities, were supposed to theoretically do. We were sentenced to live life in a workshop setting. We were beaten and battered down to believe that, that was all we were able to handle and receive out of life.

What was even more frustrating was that this gentleman could not work himself without having an interpreter by his side. Who was he to tell me what my dreams and goals ought to be, or how I should direct my live. And, how dear he tell me where my interest lie!

So, the very person who should have been the most supportive, helpful, and kind to me, turned out to be the greatest obstacle of all. One situation at a time he impeded, held me back, and obstructed my future academic progress. It was not

only very irritating, infuriating, and exasperating to have to waste time being evaluated and judged severely, but it limited my future work.

This arrogant, haughty, disturbing attitude was shared by others too! Some of them were people I worked with. You would think it would be different. But this was not the case- as I found out this attitude was everywhere! They assumed that simply because they did not have a visible disability they had every right to make fun of me, belittle me, and minimize my contribution to myself, my life, others, and the world.

Some people refused to allow me to work as I chose and saw fit. They did not wish me to be an equal and productive person in society. These professionals found every way possible to discredit my abilities, my talents, and my aptitude of skills. I had to personally find clever and survival oriented techniques to persuade not only the experts, but those clients I worked with to make an effort to follow instructions.

These struggles resulted from the same attitude which doesn't grasp our full potential and abilities. I think the greatest thing we can do as a community is to be committed to one another, help in any way we can, and have an active directed lifestyle. We must retain the right to express our own vision to the world in our own creative, original, genuine way. It is also very vital that we as disabled people are supportive of our own community, and all their dreams, wants, and desires.

Because of my situation, I have been thoroughly committed to giving back all of what I never received from these "helpful" counselors. In every jagged, angle of my journey, I have sought to be a voice when there was no voice for the unheard among us. All of us, in our own special way, ought to find it within the depths of our beings, to give unconditionally, unreservedly, and completely to our total cause. It will harm and hamper many if given with half-measures or haphazardly.

It is truly annoying to think of how much time we all must spend getting around a system that does not work. It wouldn't bother me so much if I didn't see stubbornness so many show. The issue is no longer what is best for our own goals, but rather, how to impose the expert's viewpoint and will upon us. We have the right as children of God, and citizens of a free country, to run our own lives. That must include the right to make mistakes, and learn from them. Our "friendly" experts think they are giving us a better life, but it is too often a comfortable slavery. They do not see with our eyes, and feel with our hearts, nor do they talk the same language as we. Like Sara in "children of a lesser God," we must retain our will. That may be disconcerting to the normal community, but it is preferable to a

life-time spent waiting to be told what to do, or fighting a system that just does not work.