

LIBERATION POLICY OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

2nd draft 1981

1. All human beings have an equal right to live, to eat adequately, to housing, to clean water, to a basic standard of health and hygiene, to privacy, to education, to work, to marry (or not), have children (or not), to determine their own sexuality, to state an opinion, to participate in decisions which affect their lives, to share fully in the social life of their community and to contribute to the well-being of others to the full extent of their capabilities.

2. At the present time only a few, a privileged section of the world's population, enjoy all these rights, whilst the majority of people are divided into groups which are comparatively underprivileged. The basis of the division is economic. Most of these groups are sub-divided (e.g. women into black, brown, white, yellow, young, old, married, single, Jewish, gay, working-class) until each group experiences itself as a powerless minority.

3. Whilst the basis of the division is economic, the power to sustain the situation is primarily of a psychological nature. Information is given by way of stereotyping, incorrect or biased histories, demonstrations of violence against minority groups (e.g. the Holocaust) and numerous other ways that persuade the members of both the privileged and under-privileged that they deserve their position in society. It is the personal belief in that idea that allows each person and each group to accept their condition.

4. People with disabilities are one such group, but have two special features;-

(a) It is a group whose members embrace every other group.

(b) The cause of the special title, unlike most other classifications (e.g. black) is often an additional drain on the resources of the individual, i.e. it is not inherently distressing to be black, whilst it may be to suffer from painful arthritis.

5. Taking our special features into account, a draft policy for liberation should include the following:

* To reach out and make contact with our members in ever societal group.

- * To learn to recognise the affects of society's conditioning on people with disabilities, and to create ways in which people's awareness can be heightened to a point where their self-image changes from a negative to a positive one, from weak to strong.
- * To recognise that the division of people with disabilities on the grounds of different disabilities (paralysed, deaf, people with visual handicaps, epileptic etc.) has been divisive, and one of the major factors in our slowness to join together to change our common difficulties.
- * To learn about each other's disabilities in order to be informed and able to support each other over genuine difficulties.
- * To seek to abolish all forms of segregation particularly in educational settings and residential institutions.
- * To seek allies amongst able-bodied people (i.e. people who will help us to fight for ourselves - not on our behalf).
- * To seek complete self-determination and control over our representation in the media (TV, books, films, adverts, etc.) and to have control over information put out about us.
- * To seek to unite organisations and institutions representing people with disabilities to fight for a common policy of liberation. (This does not mean detracting organisations from their original aims e.g. medical research, if these aims are complementary to the movement).
- * To work out a just economic policy taking into account that with industrialised countries in particular, a disability can require extra income to allow the person to reach the same standard of living as able-bodied people, whilst at the same time the competitive nature of earning money can exclude people with a certain degree of disability from making an equal contribution to work.
- * To inform as many people with disabilities as possible of their rights, in particular those included in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights for Disabled Persons.
- * To encourage people with disabilities to organise themselves into active groups which will discuss the implications of achieving their rights at international, national, and local levels, and will seek to change or influence conditions around them accordingly.

* To make allies of, and be allies to all other oppressed groups.

Source: In From the Cold: A Liberation Magazine for People with Disabilities, First Issue, June 1981, pp. 19-20.