

# DISABILITY MATTERS

7TH DISABILITY AWARENESS DAY

THEME : INCLUSIVITY: THE PLACE FOR ALUMNI WITH DISABILITY



**KENYATTA  
UNIVERSITY**

Kenyatta University...



# Fundamental Statements

## Our Vision

- To be a dynamic, inclusive and competitive centre of excellence in teaching, learning, research and service to humanity.

## Our Mission

- To provide quality education and training, promote scholarship, service, innovation and creativity and inculcate moral values for sustainable individual and societal development.

## Our Identity

- A community of scholars committed to the generation and dissemination of knowledge and cultivation of wisdom for the welfare of society.

## Our Philosophy

- Sensitivity and responsiveness to societal needs and the right of every person to knowledge.

## Core Values

- Respect
- Integrity
- Commitment
- Hard work
- Excellence
- Tolerance

# in [this] Issue

Messages.....5

Place of alumni with disability..... 6

Celebrating our heroes.....8

An article for Kenyatta University  
disability awareness day.....9

From Hassan Harun.....10

Sighted love.....11

Disability mistrey.....12

Disable or nondisable, can both  
co-exist in mainstream.....14

Life.....15

Do disable have sex.....16

Relationships and Disability.....17

Article of people with disability.....18

Did you know.....19

## VICE CHANCELLOR FORWARD



Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) need a free accessible, comfortable as well as secure environment. Kenyatta University strives to put structures in place to enable PWDs achieve their dreams. This has enabled many to graduate from this University and we thank them for the good example they are setting to others after their graduation. These alumni are also a great encouragement to our students with Disabilities as they can see light at the end of the tunnel.

Disability if positively perceived can be a motivator to higher goals and only becomes a hindrance when it prevents one from doing what they intend to do. We should therefore strive to change our attitudes and view PWDs as persons first before we see the disability. In doing so, we are going to have many Doctors, Professors, Teachers, Engineers and many other professionals not as PWDs, but as people who deserve their status because they have rightfully earned it.

Let us not just think of accessibility for PWDs as a privilege to them but as a right. Just because you can use stairs to get into a building should not make you avoid constructing ramps because you do not need them. You never know when you can find yourself in that club. After all no one chooses to be born with disability or applies for one. Avoid taking things for granted. What you take for granted now may be of benefit to you in the next minute, hour, day or even years to come.

Let us all embrace one another as human beings. We are all from one source and let us dream of a unified society, where no one is more privileged than the other, where we fight for opportunities from the same platform and where we are all equal.

Thank you.

Prof. P.K. Wainaina  
Ag. Vice Chancellor  
Kenyatta University

## FROM THE DIRECTORS' DESK



Welcome to our Disability Matters Magazine, Fourth Issue which commemorates the Seventh Disability Awareness Day marked on Friday, 19th February 2016. On my behalf, the Directorate of Disability Services (DODS) staff and the Committee organizing the Seventh Disability Awareness Day led by Dr Nelly Otube, and reporting to DODS Board led by Prof. Charles Onindo-we all warmly

welcome you to this Seventh Edition – “seventh” being the figure of completeness. The theme for the Seventh Disability Awareness Days was “INCLUSIVITY: THE PLACE OF ALUMNI WITH DISABILITY. We celebrated our alumni such as our Chief Guest of the day – Mr. Harun Hassan, Dr Samuel Tororei, the key Note Speaker and many others. These occupy key positions in Government and Private sector. Our gathering in the amphitheater was a testimony that we can go farther, encourage one another to aim higher as we mentor the youth as we were also mentored by others ahead of us. Our Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), Professor John Okumu presided over the entire ceremony accompanied by the Registrars, Deans, Directors, Chairmen of Departments and Heads of Units and Sections.

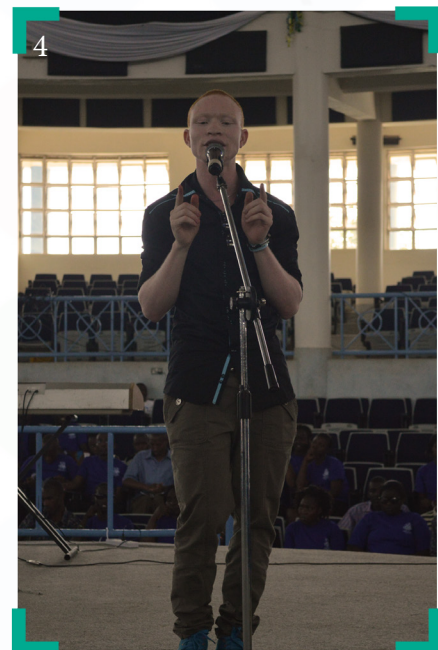
The Seventh Disability Awareness Day commemorative events were organized by DODS, Kenyatta University Disabled Students Association (KUDSA), Department of Special Needs Education and the Department of Music and Dance to show case how persons with disabilities are mentoring one another and also adapting technology to help them achieve their own and institutional set goals. We had invited institutions working on issues of disabilities, training institutions showcasing the technology uptake and how it helps them to achieve higher levels of livelihoods as the ultimate goals. They highlighted technology utilization in academics such as adaptation to special cases in examination accommodations, daily activities and entertainment.

Some of our major DODS achievement of the year, 2015 include: vetting students for accommodation-an exercise that took two days; Transport – the Maruti mini-busses are functioning well and at some stage two (2) are now running, hours have been extended to early mornings, evenings and weekends; the fee support programme through the National Council for Persons With Disabilities (NCPWD), checks worth over 300,000/= were delivered before the fee payment deadline in February 2016 and the Sensitization mandate on Disabilities early February - we sensitized all the newly employed KU staff – within the last two (2) years. The feedback was good, and some staff members said there is need for more information for a longer period-probably a whole day. Our services as DODS were recognized by 3 institutions which gave us awards on Disability Mainstreaming: National Gender and Equity Commission (NGEC), Centre for Gender and Disability and Ability Center.

In this Fourth Issue of Disability Matters Magazine, you will read articles from various writers – students and staff- putting across views on life as PWDs, how they cope with challenges and how life continues despite! Of special attention is the speech from our Chief Guest, Mr. Hassan and the Key Note address by Dr. Tororei, among the many interesting read ahead of you. Have a great read!

**Prof. Paul Kamau Mbugua, Director, DODS**

# PICTORIALS FOR THE 7TH DISABILITY AWARENESS DAY



1. Some of the Disability Day Committee members, the chief Guest and Management representatives after the courtesy call
2. Kenyatta University Disabled Students Association (KUDSA) members presenting a song in the Amphitheater during the celebration
3. Students playing volley ball during the 7th Disability Day Celebration.
4. Jairus Ongeta- A student performing during the 7th Disability Day celebration
5. Mr. Hassan Harun signing the Visitors' book in the VC's office



# The place of Alumni with Disabilities.

I want to start by pleading that all protocol has been observed even if it wasn't, because my apologies are hopelessly an incorrigibly informal person so you will permit me to continue with my sins of being informal and in any case I suppose you want to celebrate, isn't it and celebrations cannot be too formal if they are too formal we shall all sleep. Mr. Chief Guest, bwana Hassan I did not forget you but since you are an alumnus and almost 30 years after me utavumulia tu. Now ladies and gentlemen I was told to come to tell a story so this is the first assignment that is not academic. I hope to try and tell this story. And the story is a gentle boast of KU through its alumni with disability, nani kama KU.



Dr. S.K. Tororei giving a speech during the disability awareness day

I think that KU has every reason to be proud as the pioneer university in Kenya in serious support for students with disability. Even when it was a college, I think we did better than those in the main campus (University of Nairobi). I joined KU in 1978 and I found a group of students who had joined KU in 1977. I think a story of KU and alumni with disability started approximately properly in 1977 which is 40 ago, so KU you are not only 30 years, you are almost 40 and you know life begins at 40! Now the story I will share with you is then our experience during that period. Inclusivity the place of alumni with disability, in other words the life and times of former students with disability who have passed through the gates and classrooms of KU. Now in those days once upon a time, KU was a very huge fairly empty campus. We did not have vehicles (maruti), to transport us around and we had to walk with our brailers from one corner to another. And you had to do that in between lessons. That made us extremely healthy in fact, if KU becomes too efficient with transport, my friends may become unhealthy because they just jump from a vehicle to a classroom. In our time, we walked from one end to to another and I don't know how I made it.

From the outset KU exhibited unique attitude to students with disability. First of all the range of subjects offered, KU allowed students with whatever disability even if it was to participate in all manner of courses so that in 1977-1978 we had students

with visual impairment doing music. My friend Peter Pokosh, who is the senior teacher in Maralal Boys sharpened his musical skills by starting as a Diploma student and ending up as a holder of a Bachelor's degree. And after him came a number of others including my late good friend Samson Lemy and many more sometimes I don't remember.

What is it that was unique about KU then and now? One of the things that were unique was that the Professors, the teachers, were willing to take risks. They were willing to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. For those who had visual impairment we would go to our classes with a very noisy brailier. Have you listened to a brailier? So imagine there are two or three students in your class..pakaka (noise from brailiers) and you are trying to lecture, we did not have the use of the technologies that you brothers and sisters now have. We had to walk with our brailiers, we tried recording but it was boring because it was like listening to a teacher twice in the same day. So we insisted on brailiers and our lectures, professors put up with us, infact they insisted that we sit near the front because as we used to say we lived by every word that came from the mouth of the professors.

The opportunities to read were limited and this was another greatness of KU because with the help of the Dean of students then, good Mrs. Mwangi, we started the Resource Centre in 1979. The Resource Center was started by Mrs. Mwangi and myself with the help of a group of 'diplomats' aka mabalozi (students without disabilities). We made them feel good and they came and helped us with reading and we started a resource that was going to deal with those things that could not be done by a library. In 1980 the library decided that it knew how to do these things better than the Resource Centre and with the help of my good friend Peter Mwathi, started offering these services.

So ladies and gentlemen I can see the reason why KU excels is because it has a tradition of excelling. It gave itself that tradition. In those days, a brailier was costing something in the range of Kshs.20,000/- and you know the meaning of Kshs.20,000/- in 1978. One of my classmates one day, because I was a noisy boy asking for this service and pleading for them and occasionally making noise, one of my friends was irritated one time and he asked me, "Who do you think you are? Why do you think the university should spend Kshs.20,000/- on each of the blind students, when we also need other things?" You see that was the first time I was provoked to take economics seriously because then I had to justify the opportunity cost of having a disabled student in a university.

It also provoked me to decide that the best way to deal with these issues was to get into the student leadership and not on the basis of favoritism because of disability but on the basis of standing for election. In 1980, I deliberately competed with the rest of the students and I got elected by the student body as the Vice Chair of KUCSA. These days you call them Presidents. In those days if you called yourself a President you would be in trouble- there was only one president. So this was one way of achieving inclusivity. Inclusivity cannot come to you; you must work hard, and herein lies another unique feature of KU, that students were very accommodating to us. Don't worry about the guy who asked me, and even that asking, I think he was great. Because if he hadn't asked, maybe I wouldn't be where I am because I have sharpened my defense skills. You see up to that time, we looked at services for persons with disability being given as a privilege, you just had to sit and they were given. Now you provoked me to have to justify, and you know even those of you who are Christians, justification is an going issue and so it deals with being a person living with a disability, so the majority of students in KU were very accommodating and that's why they not only elected me as their Vice Chair but they did that in style with a huge majority. I

don't know whether some of my classmates are here, you can ask them to confirm that am not boasting.

Although it is not too bad occasionally, to boast with gentility. Now in those days, students with disabilities were around ten so you can see if I had depended on the votes of students with disabilities I would have got nowhere. I think as a student, we can take a little credit that when we were given the chance, we grabbed it. I don't know whether those of you with disabilities here now, are you willing to grab or you want to wait for manna? The problem was manna had two negative distinct qualities, one it came from heaven so if it didn't come we didn't know what else to do, and secondly it could only last for 24 hours so we refused the manna syndrome. Now even in those days as I have noted the range of this subject allowed us to take every subject that was available. If you had unusual impairment of course you were confined to the Arts because of technologies those days, so most of us took Arts and also Music. Those with other disabilities like physical also went to the Sciences and so forth. The support services were of course rudimentary but extremely useful.

When we started the Resource Centre for instance the University employed a brailist, in those days, we did not have imposers. Everything had to be done by hand. And so the University employed a brailist, and we were able to braille a few of our things but other students-diplomats would come to read for us and what we had to do was to make quick notes. We only got to the Resource Centre for a limited number of materials because those had to be produced by hand.

I want to confirm today that life in those days college life for us was un restricted, I remember the days in the dining hall when we could eat better food than Hilton. I think the whole of KU was about 2000 or less, so the dining hall was the place to look forward to, and in the dining hall there was no discrimination. Our student friends would help us with the serving. It is those little things that matter to a person living with disability. Getting your dignity then was exciting I don't know about now.

KU gave us the ability to pursue higher education though you can say KU was part of the University of Nairobi, so you say it was University of Nairobi. But am not interested with what was then called the main campus. You know they thought you were lesser being but I want to prove to them that we were equal because we succeeded. At KU you were allowed to express your abilities so KU was willing to accommodate special needs -the Resource Centre, about the developing of the library, about the seeking of assistance like from UNESCO to modernize the access to library services etc. I think by about the mid-1990s KU was a University with the most advanced library services for students with visual impairment. I have been happy to see the Resource Centre is still around. All these assisted us not only with academics but also in building self-confidence. Let me tell you my younger brothers and sisters with disabilities, there is no substitute for self confidence when you are seeking to be embraced and to embrace the world. KU also assisted by getting assistance for us both in-house and externally and in this way we were able to do our things. They had flexibility, I think this was the only university where the students with disability would go and see the Principal without any hindrance. This way the University administration and the accepting student's population gave us the opportunity to appreciate the good things in the society. It also gave us the opportunity to achieve both in academics and in the professions. This in turn enabled us to blaze the trail and explore new horizons in employment e.g attaining CEO positions which I attained in 1982. Other friends became senior education officers especially at Kenya Institute of Education.

In addition, friends like Samuel Kabue excelled in international assignments in 1990s. You will then see that always students in the past years strove to expand their space by taking up leadership in efforts like the review of laws as they affected persons with disabilities in mind 1990s - efforts led by Bwana Kabue and others who were members of the task force and myself who made presentations and gave views that were incorporated in the task force report which in turn led to the development of the Disability Policy and the Persons

With Disabilities Act. These things covered the period 1993 to 2004 although the disability policy has never really been completed to date. By 2003 KU alumni were ready and indeed participated in the Constitutional review process otherwise known as Bomas with the late Teresa Omollo and myself being members and Kabue and others offering close support.

In fact I was dully appointed to the Steering Committee of the Constitution review or Bomas process and therefore I suppose we can say that your alumni were part of the Constitutional review leadership.

So now let us turn consideration of some of the benefits coming from this participation. First the Constitution contains fairly progressive provisions for persons with disabilities which have led to enjoyment of increased participation in elective and appointive positions. Now for example we have members at both the Senate and National Assembly and in most County Assemblies among other benefits. Some of our efforts could be considered ambassadorial quest for instance. Some alumni successfully pursued postgraduate studies abroad- Kabue and Tororei in 80s and 90s and others later. This way the product of KU alumni with disability were felt far and wide. It is also important to note that KU alumni with disability have taken teaching positions in institutions of higher learning such as Moi and Kenyatta Universities. These achievements were embodied when KU recognized me at its 25 anniversary celebrations for construction work with persons with disabilities ..... a recognition which has done wonders to me every time I sought public office.

Yes we too have participated in research and consultations. Many have done research as an academic necessity for attainment for postgraduate degrees while others have done research for gainful considerations as individuals or in scanning various professional fields.

And what about the area of recognized publications? Here too we can be found. Just a few days ago I received a request from an American college for permission to reprint an old article of mine on visibility of the blind in the workplace in their college year book. Earlier I and others had presented papers and talks to distinguished international audiences such as London School of Economics, World conferences and many other fora.

In the area of civic duty and service to the nation, KU alumni are proud tax payers and participants in other national efforts. They also raise families and add to the population of Kenya like other citizens and in this they are part of the country's productive efforts. They serve in various community outfits such as schools board of management, chamas, and children groups and so on. Now we come to the business of looking ahead. We have done what we have done in the past and now we must take stock and see what else we need to do from now. First I believe we as alumni must be mentors and role models for our younger brothers and sisters and for those in society who have children and relations with disabilities. In turn we must make effort to encourage universities and other institutions of learning to offer better services and to embrace assistive technologies. Indeed we must commit to actualizing the inclusion principal in all that we do and embrace new technologies and strategies to achieve our intentions.

In the end, in conclusions we owe it to those who have sacrificed for us and ourselves the obligation to make life better for all and to continue making ourselves useful members of society. Inclusion will then have a meaning and a life.

Thank you all and God bless you.

(Dr. S.K. Tororei)

# CELEBRATING THE **HEROES**

Disability as they call it is a term that relates to anybody with a condition of being unable to perform as a consequence of physical or mental unfitness. What baffles my integrity is that it does not happen by choice. It's just a condition that one finds himself or herself in either by accident or by nature. However, I wish to deviate from the dogmatic assertion that "disabled" people are less individuals and wish to celebrate them for reasons that are not obvious.

These paladins have more of a golden attitude, they know that they are physically challenged but they keep working, they keep trying, they prove that their disability does not equal to their inability. They often challenge the equilibrium. Surprisingly they accomplish more than you could ever imagine of them.

However, the journey for them is not as simple as it sounds. Many are the times they meet with quibblers who put them down but they always have the guts to get rid of them. Infact, many people are thunderstruck when they see a blind comrade walking normally along the beau-

tiful university pavements, many stand glued to the ground when they see people on wheelchairs leading the school choir, someone with wretched arms typing on a computer etc. Many thanks to the few who affable with these heroes and heroines.

This is the stark truth: these people have proved in all possible ways that they are heroes that ought to be celebrated at all costs. In fact I can bet to my last coin that they can do much better than most of us. They are a real inspiration to many with worn-out hearts. We therefore have to celebrate you all. On behalf of my fellow comrades we salute all our disability students and in one accord we shout "bravo !!!"

*by Dennis Mwago Kinyanjui*



# AN ARTICLE FOR KENYATTA UNIVERSITY DISABILITY AWARENESS DAY.

Dr. Stephen M. Nzoka was a student of K.U in 1976-79 for bachelor; then 1985-87 for masters and finally 2006-2011 PhD Today Dr. Nzoka is a lecturer in the Department of Special Needs Education, a mentor, researcher, an active writer in the university and active participant in departmental affairs. His motto goes blind but able. He is a diligent intellectual and a symbol of the fact that disability is not inability.

## Meaning:

It is not always easy to get an operational definition of a term or concept. In fact such definitions often vary from writer to writer. The case in point here refers to disability and awareness.

The term "disability" does not refer to a disease and is not contagious. It is rather a handicapping condition which renders someone unable to use a part(s) of his/her body effectively. The causes may vary from disability to disability, though some have high correlation between them, for instance, learning disability and intellectual disability. These causes include genetics, diseases, injury, accident, emotional and behavioral problems, deformity of organs and visual impairment among others (Ndurumo, 1993)

## Purpose

Evidently, the purpose of instituting disability awareness day by this world class university (2010) was quite reminiscent of its incessant, physical, academic, infrastructure and social development under which this festival falls. Its annual observation indicates, among others, that Kenyatta University has a place for all people, non-disabled as well as those with disabilities. That they are made aware through regular sensitization, to learn together, live in harmony and dignity and to share life burdens of one another. That Kenyatta University deliberately and intentionally chose to lead other universities in this social endeavor. That the institution is quite sensitive to our special category of needs be they intellectual, physical, moral, ethical, social, emotional or behavioral in a free and inclusive community. That it is a true indicator of an inclusive community in which the members socially co-exist and learn from one another. That it is a day of sharing our convictions and values, both staff and student body and determining our individual status before God. That it is a day of stock taking. Hence it enables us to assess our successes and failures from year to year. That it is a day we educate one another; support one another and promote the slogan that Disability is not inability. We need one another.

## Objectives

From the above discussion, it is obvious that as a leading university, K.U aims at

- Being a place of choice for all youth aspiring for educational development.
- Offering a conducive learning atmosphere for all young Kenyans for general growth and development
- Equipping all categories of students with means for excellent educational performance
- Building a community in which all members value one another- Showing and walking the way other institutions of her caliber should follow for actions speak louder than words.

## Significance.

Indeed disability awareness today has a lot of significance to Kenyatta university fraternity, and to outsiders. As the title suggests, all persons

with disabilities in the institution, both staff and students utilize this annual opportunity to create social awareness that they co-exist, demand mutual respect, affirmative action, empathy and not sympathy, encouragement, support and association rather than isolation. All departments concerned about disabilities in conjunction with that of the Directorate, enthusiastically organize and actively participate in it to ensure its success.

Through this they invite their counterparts to join them ...as their day too. The holiday associated with the day persuades all stake holders to remember and to regard it with the impact it deserves.

In conclusion, all people; guests, visitors, parents, friends who participate in this annual event do not only take this message far and wide but also spare a thought for persons with disabilities. They begin to realize that given "wings to fly" we can. Once again disability is not inability when proper services are timely provided. **Long live the Disability Awareness Day, long live Kenyatta university.**

*by Kevin Egesa.*



# From Mr. Hassan Harun

## **From Mr. Hassan Harun**

19th February, 2016 I was privileged to be a Chief Guest, representing the government/National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD), during KU's 7th Disability Day. I left this college 13 years ago without disability. I am very delighted my former college is trying to redefine the concept of disability by not focusing on the person's impairment but much more on the barriers whether physical or attitudinal, PWDS face every day in order to participate freely in the society.

Then on this day I was asked what really motivates me to live a happy life. Many times I am asked this question. But frankly as a human I too have my very low moments. We all have instances or times in life when we feel alone on our journey. And in this journey, we all have more to share with others than we realize. Ken Poirot in his book 'Mentor Me' wrote "Life has a plan for each of us; we may not understand the whys on our journey but every event is meaningful nonetheless". Just excavate the rich experiences of your life and try to share your knowledge from your unique point of view. That's exactly what I am doing these days.

On the 23rd of March, 2007 I was involved in a horrific road accident that almost took my life. For almost a year, I spent my time staring at hospitals' ceilings and another long year completely confined in a bed in our rural home, listening to the cracking sound of iron sheets under the sweltering heat of Manderu sun. Doctors told me I will never walk again. Recovery and adjusting to a wheelchair lifestyle was tough and indeed a frustrating one. Sometimes family members and friends thought I would not make it. I've gone through many life challenging situations, but on this one, I deeply felt the mountain was not only too high but again very steep to climb.

I was born and brought up in the plains of Manderu County. Manderu is, in many ways, our Timbuktu - that far off and remote place. Largely sandy and hot enough to 'scald' soft feet of the school going children. Nomadic communities there traverse the vast plains in search of water and pasture. It is among the poorest counties in Kenya that devolution under the current dispensation seeks to fast track to development. In a polygamous family of over thirty siblings, I was the last born on my mother's side.

Somehow I grew up as a gifted child; striving to be amongst the very best in my class. I topped my primary class and was the second best in my secondary class. I was earlier admitted to Maseno University College then to pursue BA (Drama & Theater Studies). Later-in 2003 through inter-university transfer-I graduated with Bachelor of Environmental Studies (planning & Management) from Kenyatta University. At the university, a sense of curiosity and drive to achieve were wired in me. This saw me head the then vibrant regional student union North Eastern Province University Student Association (NEPUSA) where I brushed shoulders with great leaders such as the current President Uhuru Kenyatta, the current Deputy President Ruto and the Leader of Opposition Raila Odinga. I attended conferences and workshops and spoke strongly of the challenges bedeviling my region especially in education. I have worked both in public and private sector.

In every dark situation, there is always that spark that lights a flint of hope. My spark was lit by my family, friends and the community of persons with disabilities. These three pillars of my life encouraged me that I could be resilient. They encouraged me to redefine my path. And redefining I did! They encouraged me that we can make lemonade out of

the lemon that the vagaries of life splash on our faces.

Three years later, after this accident, I started wheeling into the future. I also married a beautiful wife who became a dependable partner in my struggle and I graduated with MA (Public Administration). As time went by, I developed a passionate interest to understand matters disability among nomadic communities in particular and in Kenya in general. I asked what is it like to be a person with disability or to have a family member with disability in Kenya. The journey began. I rallied my friends especially those with disability to form NONDO, the first organization that advocates for the rights, inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities from northern Kenya in all spheres of life. I am also a member of the Board of Director, National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD), a Commissioner with World Disability Union (WDU) and have also served as a National Executive Committee Member with Association for Physical Disabled of Kenya (APDK), one of the leading disability services provider in Kenya. I am also a Peer Group Trainer, especially for those who suffered spinal cord injury.

This excruciating yet inspiring experience has given me three life lessons that I can share with any person who is going through a similar one;

### **(I) WE ARE BEATEN TO SHINE**

For gold to shine, it is passed through fire. It has to be beaten and subjected to abnormal temperatures and conditions. The outcome of this process is the precious metal that defines beauty and prestige. I might have been 'beaten' but I wasn't defeated. Whatever anguish that people go through here on earth, if they keep their heads high and reinforce their resilience, they will have the capacity to achieve greatness. Don't be defeated by situations; instead, be beaten to shine!

### **(II) WE NEED A SUPPORT SYSTEM; FAITH IN A HIGHER POWER**

There is probably someone who has gone through what you are going through; perhaps they have fought tougher battles. They cope with a strong support system of family, friends and colleagues. In times of bliss, cultivate a support system. It will come in handy. Faith in a caring and divine power that is in control of our lives also replenishes our hope. Let us be there for each other also when we need each other the most.

### **(III) LIVE FOR SOMETHING, EVEN IN DISTRESS**

It was Zig Ziglar, the late motivational speaker who said that you can have everything that you want in life; if you will just help others get what they want. Indeed, in life, we rise by raising others. Finding a cause to live for, even in the toughest of circumstances, builds our self esteem. When the great boxing legend Mohammed Ali was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease-a mental disorder-and was asked what his greatest lesson in life was, he had this to say: "I have learned to live my life one step, one breath, and one moment at a time, but it was a long road. I set out on a journey of love, seeking truth, peace and understanding. I am still learning." Such are the journeys of our lives. We continue learning.

**Email; [harunassan@yahoo.com](mailto:harunassan@yahoo.com), @Harunassan**



### ***Sighted Love***

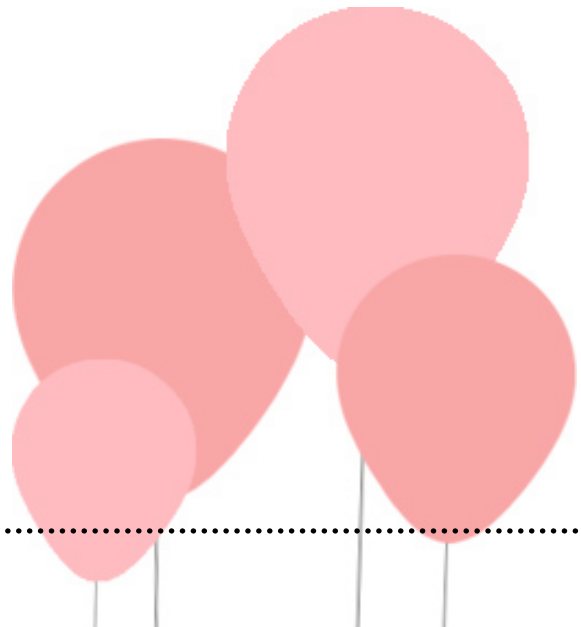
She only mentioned it once. Yes, just once, and maybe never again but that was enough. Loud enough to maintain an echo forever resounding in my ears. Strong enough to hit and dent my pride. That's right, brutal enough to shutter my ego. She must have been carried away or maybe my charming caresses, seductive smiles and all the flattering brought her under an unbreakable spell. I never dreamt of her to be that filthily vocal. Especially when it came to someone she always preached to the world to be in love with. Her mouth must have sworn to betray its owner or was it just another instance of the mouth speaking at the abundance of the heart? Did she know just how badly it hit me? I pretended to be fine and not to have heard what she had just thrown up but seemingly determined, she kept on gently rubbing it in. "Darling, is there anything we can do to remedy the situation?" "Don't you think that you should fight for this love?" "Didn't you say that I was all you had?"

At this point, with this abrupt ruthless uncalled for transition of feelings; everything that had started rising in my body had to involuntarily collapse withholding all the desire for her. She had three questions and I was to be the respondent. I had several but I never expected her to answer even one. "Was I the only one to fight for that damn love thing? Or was I the only one in need here?" Was I to go beyond what was humanly possible for me just to keep her around?" "Who was she really?" "For how long was I to put up with her deliberate sadistic moves? Hurting someone purely on purpose! Oh! No, the price was simply unattainable.

My happiness was at stake here, and if we were to go that way, then someone would have to cry the tears I never got a chance to shed. Was it really the right time for such? Could there have been a right time meant for anyone to be immune towards self imposed stupidity? When painful reality decides to check in, time is truly never a factor. You probably think that since I had the liberty to walk away, then I shouldn't be this mad with my past but can you really shake off your past if it keeps on intruding into your present? I wish I had the ability to only hear exactly what she meant to

say and not actually what she said. Imagine I keep on hearing her utterance in the mouths of ladies who would never pull that even if some intense anger and hatred replaced their apathy for me. She told me that I was handsome and had the best personality ever and only if I was sighted, then I could have been her love. Yes, I keep on hearing it even when it's not said. She couldn't imagine herself dating a "BLIND" guy. It could have been a nightmare for her to picture herself in the arms of a "blind lover." Who would she be telling her friends that she was dating? Would she have the courage to introduce me to all those she considered as her own? And who would she be saying I was to her? I bet she hasn't forgotten yet about how she claimed to have felt utterly embarrassed that it had to be me helping her out of some situations at times. To her, I would never be a man enough. For what reasons would she be opting to stay with me? She'd rather disown and defy any feelings that she had for me just to make sure that her reputation was safeguarded. She believed in love but not with the blind and such. For once in my entire lifetime, I had been sidelined for what I was and actually who I was.

***by J.M. Kitili***





# THE DISABILITY MYSTERY

## THE DISABILITY MYSTERY

It is on a Friday, 3.56 pm, and the common unit lecturer's echo hits you at the back of the common unit lecture hall, "see you next week!" It is all noisy, chairs screeching, someone shouting here and another calling her friend over there as students leave the hall, some hurriedly some slowly, as they catch up on each other. But there are these three students who are grounded where they are, not making any move. One is blind, carefully holding his braille machine. The other is on the wheelchair, and without someone to assist her, she cannot descend the stairs. Another one at the far end is a double leg amputee waiting for all students to leave so that he can struggle his way out as he spins his chain propelled wheelchair. They are isolated. No one seems to interact with them. They are just there, on their own. Some students sympathize but cannot do anything. Some imagine how they handle it pressed. Or, how they shower and dress up. How can you talk to a deaf person when you don't know sign language? Well then - what if it was your brother? What if it were you? Sadly, many do not get hit by these thoughts. In your village, you must have seen young kids playing kalongolongo stop all of a sudden and run away as that old woman with albinism passes by and resurface minutes later when she is 100 metres away. And in school, there is this girl with Schizophrenia and she got no friend. Worse, some parents do not take children with disabilities to school, they lock them up in the house and at worst, tie them at a secluded part of the cowshed. Your cousin, who gave birth to a child with a disability, abandoned her in hospital because her pastor said that is a sign of a curse. And in the office, when a new employee with a disability reports to work, you stare at her. Elsewhere, you heard of how an acquaintance got fired after sustaining a spinal injury in an accident, much as he was willing to work. And in town, on each street, beggars with disabilities seem to be on the increase each day. Lest we forget, albinos' body parts are in high demand in Tanzania where witchdoctors assert they make strong charms, or so it is alleged.

This is just part of the litany of problems people with disabilities go through across the world, a situation replicated in Kenya. However, in light of their problems, there have been numerous advancements and legislations towards incorporating people with special needs in what abled people engage in. Much as several developments have been made, these people, especially those in rural settings, and from poor backgrounds, continue to face a myriad of challenges. More often than not, they suffer in silence as no one really voices their plight.

It is estimated that across the world, 600 million people live with disabilities (translating to 1 in 7 people) where 80 percent live in developing countries. A great percentage of them have to endure discrimination and stigma in their everyday lives, lack an education and proper nutrition, are locked out of opportunities and forever locked in the poverty bracket.

While poverty and disability both create a sadistic circle, it is worse when they are prevented from full participation in the economic and social life of their communities, especially if the proper supports and accommodations are not available. The recent focus on poverty reduction strategies among this group of people is a unique chance to rethink.

Grace Kawala, a Kenyatta University Student sustained a spinal injury after a grisly road accident in 2011, an event that required her to use a wheelchair as she could not be able to walk again. "Life was a bitter pill for me. I had not

accepted my new self. I cried all day. I did not want to talk to anyone", Grace told this writer. After a year, I wanted to go back to campus, but many of our Kenyan Universities did not have special facilities for our convenience. "That is why I shifted from Mount Kenya University to Kenyatta University in 2013". Grace has since recovered and is a student leader in the students' governing council.

But for Gerald Maina, a parent to a child with deformed limbs from Makongeni in Thika town, life seems to get harder by the day. "During his birth, the mother passed on. To make this more painful, the doctor informed us of his condition saying medically, they can't do anything. We tried all options, medical, spiritual and alternative medicine, in vain. We spent a lot of money. I even closed down a butchery and restaurant business I was running then", laments the 41 year old father of three. His in-laws, Gerald labours to explain, accused him of offering his wife to freemasonry, because then he was doing well financially. These accusations from his bitter relations made the relationship cold. He had to take care of his three children. He wanted to get married again but all women who sympathized with him were either warned that they will be sacrificed or could not bear the thought of taking care of a disabled child. Today, Gerald walks across town begging for handouts at least to sustain himself and take care of his other two children. "I have begged until people do not give anything anymore", he says.

Psychologist Dorothy Keraro argues that mostly, children with disabilities are born to abled parents. The parents cannot agree to this fate, and fight every way to make the child be abled like them. "Many people do not want something with is out of the status quo. It can really be troubling if that's the case", Dorothy observes. Further, The Master of Arts in Psychology student, asserts that the community generally associates disability with bad omen, curses and to some point, a punishment from God for an immoral act by the parents. "Some even get to use the Bible to solidify their assertions", she says adding that this has made life harder for these people.

According to the 2010 constitution, any discrimination, of whatever kind against persons with disability is outlawed. The state ought to ensure equal opportunities for all. The Persons with Disabilities Act, 2003 as well as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons 2006 buttress the need for a dignified treatment of these groups of people. Indeed, since 2008, when it was ratified by Kenya, a number of changes have taken place to the benefit of the people living with disabilities (PLWDs).

A number of universities have incorporated disability services, special education programmes, facilities and learning aids and sponsorships for students with disabilities. It has also become a requirement in building designs, broadcasts, employment opportunities, business openings, leadership and other public and some private appointments, to have a representation of PLWDs. Kenyatta University boasts of pioneering the largest and most detailed Disability Directorate which other universities followed suit like Egerton, Masinde Muliro and University of Nairobi. Lecture halls, pavements, computers, library facilities, washrooms, transport systems, teaching and non-teaching staff have so far been aligned to serve these students. In fact, the university has even established sports for PLWDs and a number of students have excelled in them. A number of lecturers with disabilities have also been hired.

According to Dr. Edwin Gimode, the dean of students at KU, they are deter-

mined to be the best university in the region in terms of inclusion of PLWDs in learning and in professional advancement. "We have been making various efforts and we are thankful that our previous Vice Chancellor, Prof Mugenda, has shown exemplary passion in handling the needs of these students", Dr. Gimode says.

Dr. David Sankok is the chairman of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD). Last year he threatened to close down Parliament and City hall after what he called negligence of the leaders to effect provisions for persons with disabilities. Up to date, not all buildings have adhered to that act.

"Kidero and Muturi (Nairobi governor and parliament speaker respectively) will have a first-hand experience of what disabled people go through. I tell you, they will have to carry us to short and long calls, tea breaks, various offices and other places where average people have to access if they do not act on this provision. No business will go on there!" Sankok said in an interview with a local newspaper.

Sankok was wrongly diagnosed in a local private hospital in Maela, in 1988 while in class six. Then suffering from pneumonia, the young Sankok got injected in the lower inner quarter of his gluteus maximus muscle tampering with his sciatic nerve hence paralyzing his right leg, which he later lost. However, he never lost hope, he decided to study medicine to protect other children from such eventualities, and graduated as a doctor in 2005 from the University of Nairobi.

In their quest for better treatment, PLWDs have led to the establishment of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons whose aim is promotion of measures for prevention of disability, rehabilitation and participation of PLWDs in social life and development. The agency has been working with numerous organizations across the world, and NGOs, in their effort to see their objectives realized.

But Dr. David Lela, a special education lecturer has some interesting views on PLWDs. "Most Kenyans think disabled people are those with physical disabilities only. There are mental, psychological and sensory impairment disabilities too", says Dr. Lela. Because many people and even leaders do not recognize this fact, the roll out of effective strategies to manage issues of PLWDs has been bumpy. "An analysis of the situation of disabled persons has to be carved out within the context of different levels of economic and social development and different cultures", Dr. Lela advises.

In Kenya, there are 97 special schools for PLWDs and only six universities have special facilities for students with special needs. The staff that have skills for this special work are few, and not many students are willing to take such courses in tertiary institutions.

Dr. William Obiero who once worked with Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) says that Kenya has so many children homes but less than 20 for children with disabilities. The sentiments are echoed by Marion Karimi who runs Hope and Faith Centre for the Disabled in Juja. Maji Mazuri Children's Home in Mwiki is another home that caters for children with disabilities.

Stella Mwangeli, a physiotherapist who helps people with disabilities perform various exercises in various facilities is surprised that no special institution in Kenya has been established to train people on how to handle these cases. "There is so much focus on Special Needs Education. Much as it is relevant, other jurisdictions disability studies are not well pronounced in line with global disability rights development", complains Stella. Stella adds that most graduates have no idea what to do when they encounter the disabled patients. The same case applies to teachers, managers, and even those in other leadership positions. No wonder they are avoided. "Stories are told of doctors and nurses who ignored patients with disability because they do not know how to effectively communicate with them. Some just have an outright negative attitude towards the disabled!" Jane Chepkurgut, a blind mother of one hopes that hospitals will be friendlier to them. She recalls a nurse asking her, 'who made you pregnant?' She wondered who took away the right to bear children from them (PLWDs). "In some health facilities, maternity and delivery beds are not suitable to the needs of women with disability, yet planning is done by university graduates", wonders the special education graduate.

Nominated MP Isaac Mwaura has often been vocal in parliament in pushing for bills to handle the needs of the people with special needs. In last year's budget, 770 million was to be transferred to people with extreme disabilities, 380 million as grants, 100 million for the Albinism Fund and 30 million for bursaries. Mwaura argues that this is so little money compared to the demanding need from this group of people to make progress in life like their abled counterparts. His sentiments are shared by Dr. Sankok. Mwaura himself lives with and educates children with albinism who were rescued from being sold to witchdoctors in Tanzania from TaitaTaveta. Mwaura says he is committed to ensure PLWDs lead a better life despite their challenges. As we celebrate the World Disability Day, it ought to be understood that much as various steps have been made, a lot is yet to be done to ensure full

inclusions of PLWDs in our day to day activities. However, all hope is not lost.

## FACTS AND FIGURES

Approximately 600 million people live with disabilities in the world.

According to the Kenya Bureau of Statistics, 1 830 312 million (3.9 per cent of the Kenyan population) have a disability.

The majority of disabilities found in Kenya are

- Physical
- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Speech impairment
- Mental impairment

There is only one Spinal Injury Hospital in Kenya.

There are 97 special institutions for PLWDs

Six of the Kenyan universities have elaborate facilities for PLWDs

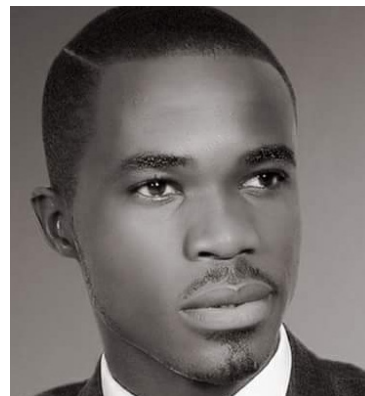
98 percent of Kenyans cannot be able to talk to deaf people using sign language

Disability is more often than not regarded as a curse

PLWDs face some of the worst stigmatizations and discriminations in various sectors of life

There are four parliamentarians to represent special needs in parliamentary and senate legislations.

Major causes of disability vary from accidents, albinism, war, polio, cerebral palsy, stroke, epilepsy, mental disabilities, and hearing impairments



Kenyatta University is stronger when every single student is able to live up to his or her full potential and that's why KUSA values equal protection, access to opportunities for all and awareness campaigns meant to change our thinking. .

We see it every day, that our fellow students with disability benefit from special provisions put in place by the university to enhance their lives. Thanks to the flexible marutis, thanks to the standard hostels, thanks to the ramps in our beautiful facilities like PML and BSSC.

In KU we are so proud, because our brothers and sisters have disapproved the presumption that disability means a life of dependence. Thus we fully recognize that people with disability can lead us, they can live independent lives, they can contribute to the growth of this university and can inspire many lives.

As KUSA, We have committed sh.350,000 to carry out objective activity and events that will go a long way in ensuring full integration and fostering values in our students through KUSA special needs committee.

We have a big role to play as an institution and as studentsS.

It is important we continue inspiring hope and confidence while protecting, promoting and upholding the rights of persons with disability.

KUSA PRESIDENT  
WERE WERE SAM



# DISABLED OR NON-DISABLED, CAN BOTH CO-EXIST IN THE MAINSTREAM

"The only thing worse than being blind is having sight and no vision." These words were said by Hellen Keller; one of the greatest women to have trod this earth. The school of people who see disabled people as passive recipients of aid could have definitely ignored and shunt Hellen aside on account that she was both BLIND and DEAF. Hellen Keller, though born with a disability, lived to rise to the title of doyenne in the intellectual world of women. She toiled and moiled to achieve a bachelor of arts degree, and lived to erect an outstanding legacy that millions of non-disabled people have not achieved in their life lifetimes.

The adage 'disability is not inability', further exudes how people with disability can equally get things done if given space in the mainstream. Therefore, actors in the scholarly and technological sectors should rise to the occasion and integrate people with; physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional or even developmental disability in their routine endeavours. Universities, being at the helm of education provision, should lead by embracing disability mainstreaming in their approach, since in the long run all students are equal, only differently gifted.

Modern technological inventions, need to be utilized by our universities, to bring disabled students on board. Such technology that can be capitalized on include: use of specialized computers, brail machines for the blind, convenient shuttle, appropriate wheelchairs, spiral stairs on storied buildings and all such machines that will bring disabled learners at par with their able counterparts in the same environment.

If disability mainstreaming will be achieved in our universities then the notion that 'disabled people should be isolated' will get erased, plus disabled students will improve their self esteem and social skills. Non disabled learners who go through this mainstream lectures, will form understanding, tolerance, and be prepared to deal with disability in their own lives-since disability is a state one finds himself or herself in without a prerequisite application. Finally it will be fitting that universities achieve a main stream approach so as to awaken the realization that all students are equal.

**By Kevin Egesa**



## life

Days do come and go. Night dawns, people lay to rest, then again wake up and continue with their unending activities... For sure human needs are insatiable. With all these activities, things seem to change every moment you take in that breath, every moment your heart beats. It only takes a mere fraction of a second and everything turns over, and you are born again as a different person from who you were the last moment you were alive. It can take this short span and you are no more. Life offers us both honey and lemons, thorns. What we only need to do is utilize whatever we get. Challenges do befall us, but what do we do to beat all odds and remain at the top? We cannot allow ourselves to be pinned down by these thorns and remain there for the rest of our lives. Someone once told me that when life offers us lemons, we need to make lemonade out of that. I have come to understand the truth of this with the experience that life has given me.

When that time of change comes and it is time to turn over a new page of life, we need not to continue staring at the blank page but try to find out what you can do with that new page, it may be a page opening a gate of opportunities in life. We can write our dreams on the blank page, or write our plans on the new page... This is cleaner than our past pages filled with agony of life. It is another high time I encourage you to take up your blanket and follow the path of life, accept whatever it offers you, you might never know what that new status of your life might be leading you to, and you neither know what will be of you tomorrow. All in all we keep hoping for the best. Take your special ability into action now.

Grace Mumbi Kawala

## Our Differences Equals Our Beauty

God created us uniquely, that's why people have diverse lifestyles and cultures. Every person has a special ability granted by our creator for the benefit of humanity. No one was created inferior; we all have the potential to grow and become successful in any field. Some individuals use the term disabled to refer to person who are physically challenged which is wrong, every human being has a unique gift and capability. It is time for Kenyans to change their mentality and perception towards physically challenged persons. We are all equal before the eyes of God, whether you are tall, short, black or white, always respect other people's opinion, culture and Lifestyle.

The future of our nation depends on how we treat one another today, holy Bible advocates for Love as the greatest commandment. Change is as good as resting, true Kenyan citizens should always campaign for justice and fairness for all.

**By PATRICK NDUNG'U NDIRANGU**

(FOURTH YEAR KENYATTA UNIVERSITY STUDENT  
PURSUING BACHELOR OF COMMERCE).

# Do Disabled People



If I got a shilling for every time someone asked me that question I'd be a millionaire by now. I remember when I was in high school, some of these big higher learning institutions would come over to spend time with us, encouraging us and one time, a particular individual called my able-bodied friend (aka "regulars" in the disability community) on the side and asked him;

"Hawa watu wao umangana? (Do these people have sex?) Wanakuanga na nyege? (Do they have feelings?) Wanakatiana aje sasa? (How do they pursue each other?)"

At first, I was offended but later on I learnt not to hold it against him after all, it wasn't his fault even though ignorance is no excuse. In a world where the need for intimacy and belonging is a crucial, people around the globe spend lots of money and time both in the field and online with the hope of finding that special someone with whom they can share all their lives with. With this demand comes the thousands of sites all over the internet about love, sex and dating. Ironically, everyone has been considered except one; People with Disabilities or as we are commonly called these days PWD(s). When it comes to matters of Love, Sex and dating PWD(s) have been sidelined and it's mind boggling why that is! Apparently, people assume that PWD(s) could not, would not, and should not partake or participate in such because they are undesirable, weak, defenseless, fragile little angels who should be sympathized with, hidden and protected. PWD(s) are denied sexual rights partly to keep them outside mainstream society and also probably because PWD(s) are treated as if they are children and most times, we are told that sex should not be considered as a priority for us. Instead, we should focus on our condition, our disability, our imperfections, our health, finances and the list keeps on growing by the day. Pretty soon it will be an endless one.

You see they forget that we are human beings too with emotions and needs just like everyone else in the world. They forget that we too experience sexual desires. They forget that we too subscribe to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs as well.

Do people with disabilities have sex? Hell YES! In fact, statistics show that PWD(s) have a higher libido than the average man. HOW? Well, that's for us to know and you to find out.

An organization for people with disabilities in the US recently came up with comfortable, secure sex positions for PWD(s) – call it our very own Kama sutra manual if you will. On their website: Sexuality and Disability, they have put illustrations showing what to do and how to do it for one to be able to

achieve optimum results. Some organizations like the TLC Trust have gone the extra mile and collaborate with sex workers, surrogates and healthcare professionals who volunteer to help PWDs on their sexual journey.

Are PWDs in romantic relationships?

YES! Despite all the lies, myths and stereotypes plastered on us by the society we are amazing lovers. As we speak, a PWD friend of mine (paralyzed from the waist down) is getting married to a lovely young lady who is a regular very soon. I won't lie and say that they haven't gone through hell to get to this point, but who doesn't? Every time I think of this topic I always think of those two and they stand as my role model couple because no matter what they go through, as long as they have God and each other, they believe and they know that they can overcome anything.

Most people think that when you have a disability like paralysis that it is not possible for you to have sex, but in reality that's actually false. You can be paralyzed and still have a healthy sex life. For me, what matters at the end of the day is having a partner whether a PWD or a regular that knows me, understands me and is not afraid of me. One that is open minded and ready for adventure, ready to take each day as it comes. The truth is we are all different and it is this difference that makes each of us unique and this uniqueness triggers us to become curious to know about one another.

My disability; my condition does not deter how I do my activities; in bed or otherwise. Sex for PWD(s) is very possible. It has been done and will continue to be done because with each day comes a new technique, a new style and a new position.

© Julius Mwaura Rodriguez

About the Writer...

Julius M. Rodriguez is the C.E.O. for the National Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (NAPD), published author of the book A Flower in Thorns and the pioneer of the Mr. And Miss Disability Kenyatta University Beauty Pageant. He also sings with the KU Students' Choir. Find him on twitter @JRM280

# RELATIONSHIPS & DISABILITY

By Cate Syokau.

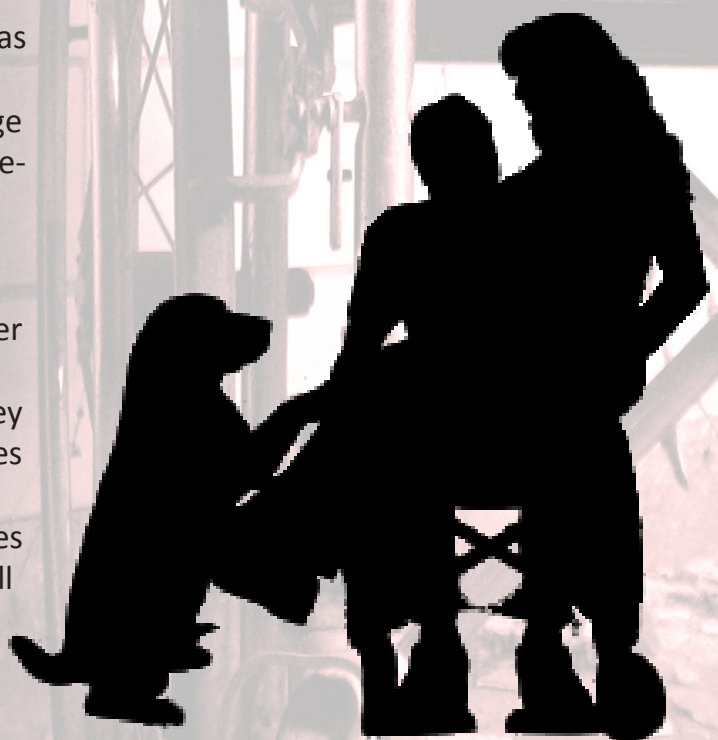
The experience of people with special needs has shown that the basic human need to form close relationships is as relevant for people with special needs as for those without.

Several myths about people with disabilities have been said by people.

1. **Men and women with special needs do not need sex.**
2. **Men and women with special needs are not sexually attractive.**
3. **Those with special needs have more important needs than sex.**
4. **Boys and girls with special needs do not need sex education.**
5. **Men and women with special needs such as retardation should not have children.**

Contrary to the truth of the matter is that people with special needs are as beautiful as any other person without special needs. My fellow comrades, let's take the challenge and date like any other people who lack special needs.

To conclude, the truth of the matter is that we are also human beings just like any other person; we can be in relationships just like all other people and fall in love the way they also do. We can have fun and enjoy our lives just like others who lack special abilities. Let's encourage others, starting by ourselves embracing our states of life, since we are all wonderfully and beautifully made in the image and likeness of God.



# ARTICLES ON PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

*He sat in a wheeled chair, waiting for dark,  
And shivered in his ghastly suit of grey,  
Legless, sewn short at elbow. Through the park  
Voices of boys rang saddening like a hymn,  
Voices of play and pleasure after day,  
Till gathering sleep had mothered them from him.*

*About this time Town used to swing so gay  
When glow-lamps budded in the light-blue trees  
And girls glanced lovelier as the air grew dim,  
"In the old times, before he threw away his knees.  
Now he will never feel again how slim  
Girls' waists are, or how warm their subtle hands,  
All of them touch him like some queer disease.*

*There was an artist silly for his face,  
For it was younger than his youth, last year.  
Now he is old; his back will never brace;  
He's lost his color very far from here,*

*Poured it down shell-holes till the veins ran dry,  
And half his lifetime lapsed in the hot race,  
And leap of purple spurted from his thigh.  
One time he liked a blood-smear down his leg,  
After the matches carried shoulder-high.  
It was after football, when he'd drunk a peg,  
He thought he'd better join. He wonders why . . .  
Someone had said he'd look a good in kilts.*

*That's why; and maybe, too, to please his Meg,  
Aye, that was it, to please the giddy jilts,  
He asked to join. He didn't have to beg;  
Smiling they wrote his lie; aged nineteen years.  
Germans he scarcely thought of; and no fears  
Of Fear came yet. He thought of jeweled hilts  
For daggers in plaid socks; of smart salutes;  
And care of arms; and leave; and pay arrears;  
Esprit de corps; and hints for young recruits.  
And soon, he was drafted out with drums and cheers.*

*Some cheered him home, but not as crowds cheer Goal.  
Only a solemn man who brought him fruits  
Thanked him; and then inquired about his soul.  
Now, he will spend a few sick years in Institutes,  
And do what things the rules consider wise,  
And take whatever pity they may dole.  
To-night he noticed how the women's eyes  
Passed from him to the strong men that were whole.  
How cold and late it is! Why don't they come  
And put him into bed? Why don't they come*

**By Lucy Muthama**

## TORRENTIAL POTENTIAL.

*You are not a waste of God's creation  
With your lacking, shine in your generation  
Dare not question the creator, question your ability  
Fear not- let your bomb explode with creativity  
Do the undone, be fine and show your credential  
Be counted: Within disability lies torrential potential.  
I dare thee the blind today  
Open your eyes and be gay  
At the sight of the strength of your vision  
And the power of your unfailing mission  
Achieve your vision and mission and be influential  
Be counted: Within disability lies torrential potential.  
I dare thee the crippled  
You are great and empowered  
Up with you and walk to your destiny  
John Walker puts it right, walk with supremacy  
Be bold, your form and appearance are nonessential  
Be counted: Within disability lies torrential potential.  
Let the deaf hear the sweet melodies  
We sing them as they chase their dreams  
Let the dumb shout loud to induce the walk  
Real be our campaign from Nairobi to Bangkok  
Yes you can for we trust your existential  
Be counted: Within disability lies torrential potential.*

**By: Benard Martin alias Benamattah.**

*Did I tell you about someone I used to know?  
Years ago,*

*The one who couldn't talk,  
But told me so much,*

*The one who couldn't move,  
But we danced all night,*

*The one who couldn't see,  
But helped me find my way,*

*The one who couldn't go outside,  
But we still played,*

*The one who was a person,  
But you made them feel like they couldn't be.*

**By Lucy Muthama**

# DID YOU KNOW? I AM YOU.

*Did you know that we are the same?  
That we are all human beings?  
Beautifully and wonderfully made by our creator  
If you see something different just understand that  
you are not the creator.*

*Did you know that we can all enjoy sports?  
Just play your volleyball and I will sit down and play  
sitting volleyball  
Run alone but I will be guided to take my race after  
all two are better than one  
Swim free style, but just with my arms, breaststroke  
is equally good*

*You thought with one leg I cannot enjoy soccer?  
I play amputee football with my friends;  
You thought my limbs were too weak for any sport?  
You can't beat me in chess and scrabble.  
You thought polio had taken away my dream of  
weight lifting?*

*I am the champion in power lifting.  
Let us all enjoy the sport and games that we can,  
life is too short to keep grumbling.*

*I am getting married next year.  
You thought I could not see,  
The tone of your voice, the position you take while  
talking to me, your handshake, the distance you  
keep and many more, speak volumes  
I don't need to see you to know you.*

*You talk your own language and expect me to smile?  
How is that possible?  
How will I know if you are talking to me or about  
me?*

*I don't understand your language*

*I only sign*

*If that is too hard for you, take a pen and paper  
It is better than nothing*

*I might as well teach you how to say hello.*

*I did not know but now I know.*

*No matter how different I may look, disability is not inability  
The way you stare at me hurts my heart,  
Don't judge me from my physical appearance  
Small, dirty, Scary I may look. Trust me  
Birds of the same feathers.....I am you  
Created in the same image, for to the same creator we belong  
Don't look down upon me, my abilities are limited to space and  
time  
Come close so you will know I am you*

*Come closer, for the light has come,  
We are blessed, moving towards the direction of success  
Education, religion, leadership opportunities, we all deserve  
Like bees, we should work together in nation building  
The skills, the talents and abilities, for sure I am you  
The same goals we strive to achieve  
I love you like a brother, then why don't you reciprocate?  
Come closer, so you will know I am you.*

*Back then, I faced rejection, discrimination and oppression  
A poor child, no parents I no longer walked on my feet,  
I was afflicted with all forms of disabilities that attracted mockery  
from my peers  
However, the fire in my heart is lit, glowing red  
We are alike  
With peace, love and harmony I will always be you....*

**Pius Mogaka**



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