

Staring down at my feet, I am lingering besides the door of the All-state audition room waiting for results. Glancing at my watch, I notice that it has already been ten minutes since the last flute player had entered the room. *Is something wrong?* I think to myself. *Usually, no one takes more than five minut—*

I am interrupted in the middle of my thoughts by the sound of a door opening and an All-state judge handing me a score sheet. Naturally, I scan down the sheet to see if the flute player had made it through the audition. *Name...audition number 109...total of ...74 points...*

“Did I pass?” says an unfamiliar voice.

I whirl around, caught off guard completely. I turn to face a girl who is staring at the ground, her flute already tucked perfectly inside its case, and a hand scrunched into a grip so hard that her knuckles look as pale as the moon.

Hesitantly, I answer, “I’m sorry, but you were eleven points short.”

The girl looks up to me and instantly, I notice something is wrong with her eyes. Not just the fact that tears are starting to form, but the fact that there’s something distant about them, as if they were looking past me or at something further into the distance.

“I knew I wasn’t going to make it.” She mutters.

I try to encourage her. “Hundreds of flutists try out every year and only about twenty make it. Don’t be disappointed in yourself.”

She snaps at me. “That’s not the point. I know I’m good, I know I can play, I just can’t sight read!”

The truth dawns on me and I can feel my mouth drop to the floor, and I leave it there, gaping wide open. At the moment, I feel like the most mindless human being on the entire planet. In disbelief, I look at her one more time, only to confirm my intuition.

*She’s blind*

After a long, awkward moment, the girl speaks again. “When I sight-read, the judges give me the same sight-reading piece that everyone else gets, only mine’s in Braille. I know all the rhythms and the notes, but the problem is I can’t memorize a piece that I’ve never played before. I have to play a few notes and then stop, so I can read the next ones.” The girl is silent for a moment before she continues to speak. “Still, you’re not supposed to stop in the middle of any audition, and I always get points off. That’s why I never make it pass the first round.”

The girl turns to me, waiting for me to say something, but I just can’t find the right words to express how I’m feeling, partly due to the fact that there’s a lump in my throat so even when I try to speak, nothing comes out.

Instead, I silently watch as the girl walks off, tapping a metal rod to find her way.

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The *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990* is a law that was enacted in order to protect discrimination based on disability (Harris). Disability is defined by ADA as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity” (Williamsburg). In a sense, ADA was created with the intent so that people with

disabilities will be able to seek fair employment, public transportation, telecommunications, and accommodations (Roberts). By law, disabled persons are able to fulfill any job opportunity that they want as long as they are capable of doing the job. For example, just because a person doesn't have a leg doesn't mean he cannot get a job as a secretary filing papers, since he is still capable to do the job. Still, even though ADA has been put into place, the number of people with disabilities and are jobless is rising especially during these bad economic times (Hart 93). Although most people may argue that it is human nature, especially in the workforce to look for the best possible candidate to fulfill the needs of the job, we must consider that disabled peoples need a job as well.

Title two of ADA prohibits disability discrimination by all public accommodations at the local and state levels (Kemp 104). Public entities must comply with the needs of the disabled. In this sense, there should be ramps and elevators for the crippled, and Braille writing on the name plates of men and women restrooms for those who can't see. If these regulations are overlooked by anyone, then those who have neglected to follow these guidelines have violated a federal law and will face consequences from the state.

Public transportation must also be arranged so that a disabled person will be able to use a public bus or taxi cab. The disabled should also be able to drive and those who are disabled should find a parking space near the front of the parking lot, specifically reserved for them by federal law. Besides parking spaces, however, there should also be lodging places such as hotels with services and facilities that are usable

by people with disabilities. However, although these specifications are required there are many exceptions to this law including private clubs and religious organizations who don't allow disabled peoples to join or enter (Williamsburg).

I argue in favor of the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990* and personally, I believe that more things should be done to complete all parts of the law and to further ensure equality among all Americans, regardless of any physical or mental condition. Although the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990* has certainly helped those who are disabled, it hasn't done anything to enforce its rules. As it is clearly stated within the act that the disabled cannot be discriminated in the workplace, they still are being discriminated by many of their co-workers and managers. Many disabled persons are commonly victimized in the workplace, being called horrible names, some of which are crude and shouldn't be said in public or even at home. Others are harassed due to their disability and are made fun of—even joked upon by their companions when working. Some workplaces make working conditions difficult, specifically for the purpose so that a person will find the environment too harsh for his or her disability to handle. Other times, many companies treat disabled persons unfairly through pay and work schedules. Disabled persons, especially before ADA were paid much lower than their counterparts. Still, unfair pay for the disabled still goes around today, although much less then it had two decades ago. Though, as of today many of the disabled have complex schedules issued by companies whose sole purpose is to give them hard work hours— forcing them to quit their jobs.

However, it isn't just Americans who have disabilities; countless numbers of

disabled individuals around the world are being discriminated upon. Recent studies have shown that ten to twelve percent of the world's population has disabilities—making up a huge portion of our society (Kemp). A recent London poll consisted of 1,500 adults, who had cerebral palsy. Eight-five percent of these adults felt that they have been discriminated or witnessed discrimination associated with verbal abuse, patronizing behavior, and access problems with wheelchair users. During this survey five percent also say that they have seen a disabled person who had been physically abused because of their disability. Moreover, local charity studies have found that a quarter of disabled peoples are still regularly suffering from discrimination even despite the presence of the *Disabilities Discrimination Act*. In addition, a recent survey conducted in Britain found that forty percent of disabled individuals could identify problems with accessing goods and services within the past year. Also, recently featured by United Kingdom newspaper company, *The Guardian*, was a survey with a thirty-seven percent statistic of people with disabilities who had claimed to be abused in the public and accosted when they tried to use parking spaces for disabled drivers. Sixty-seven percent of those surveyed also felt like they expected to be discriminated when it came to job interviews.

Bottom line is, disabled people need help—we should be there to lend a hand.

More laws and organizations need to be enacted and put into action all over the world. Although there are many international organizations such as the Student Advocates for the Mentally Disabled (SAMD) along with Japan's Mentally Disabled

Organization (JMDO), these two organizations are not enough to sustain twelve percent of the world's disabled persons.

Not only are many disabled persons unable to seek help, many disabled children, especially in third world countries like Africa, don't go to school. Out of the seventy-two million children who are out of school, one third have disabilities (Huston). In Zimbabwe, women with disabilities are severely discriminated upon. A two thousand four report by Save the Children found that sexual abuse of children with disabilities in Zimbabwe is increasing, and that eighty-five percent of girls with disabilities had been sexually abused as of April 2010 (Stain). Among these girls, sixteen percent were mentally challenged, twenty-five percent had physical imparities, and fifty-two percent tested positive for HIV. What's worse is the fact that it's hard to gain or even access counseling or treatment, moreover there's no information on HIV/AIDS in Braille and staff have little to no knowledge of sign language.

At this point, all this information almost seems unfathomable.

Nevertheless, it's the truth and there's still more to come.

One in every ten children in Africa are disabled, and ninety-eight percent of those children are not in any kind of school. Even more frightening is the fact that many children are born with their disability, but eighty percent of Africa's disabled become disabled due to diseases or accidents.

Being disabled isn't the only reason why some children can't or won't go to school. There are many factors that limit going to school for African children: difficult transportation, no special facilities, and the lack of usable bathrooms. Even when

disabled children did go to school, they did not eat or drink anything, since they wouldn't be able to use the restroom at school afterwards.

Besides being unable to go to school, some African traditions see disability as a punishment and a curse caused by wrong actions and improper moral behavior, and in some rural areas, disabled children are portrayed and viewed as evil spirits.

In other countries, many children are shunned and stay in homes, oftentimes not even known to society except for a couple of the closest family members.

Excerpts from a book called *Sticks and Stones: Disabled People's Stories of Abuse, Defiance and Resilience* takes the mixed emotions and feelings of many of the disabled from all around the world who had submitted articles about how he or she felt about their disability (Kirk). This book gives insight on the personal feelings and mixed emotions that those with disabilities face when they are being discriminated. One testimony by a man named James quotes, "Once a famous football player visited our school, all the kids got his autograph except me," another bibliographic account came from a girl called Susan, claiming that she had been called the word, retard, more than her actual name. Another tear-moving account comes from an elderly woman named Ronda who tells her story about being discriminated by her own father, who forced her to stay at home from school, and a mother who wouldn't let her outdoors. Both her parents felt that she was a disgrace, and as a result, Ronda thought that it was her own fault that she was born blind and couldn't walk.

The result of these discriminations builds up a variety of feelings, including a lack of self-esteem and self worthlessness, which in the long run, causes depression and even suicide.

Men and women with disabilities, sometimes look to suicide as the answer to all their problems. The most common reason why disabled women suicide has to do with facing oppression and they are less likely to be married, employed, and when divorced, less likely to have custody over their children. In addition, huge numbers of disabled woman have impoverished lifestyles in dehumanizing institutions, where despair leads suicide attempts (Stanton).

Moreover, for women, certain aspects of being disabled are harder on them rather than on men. Women's pride and confidence tends to be linked with their body image, if one's body becomes disabled due to a physical injuring, then women will naturally become less confident in themselves. Feeling worthless, a disabled woman may attempt suicide.

Others factors that contribute to the main reason why disabled peoples suicide can be tied to social isolation, unemployment, social and health status changes, and institutionalization. Being socially isolated from the rest of society and unemployed makes maintaining a living tough, especially when you're disabled, due to the lack of attendant services and inaccessible housing, many disabled persons are dumped into institutions, where isolation and unemployment are even more enhanced.

Obviously, if the suicide rates of disabled persons are higher than the average person, and ninety-eight percent of disabled children in Africa don't go to school,



something needs to be done, so that suicide rates of the disabled persons fall in numbers and that disabled children in Africa are able to go to school like all children regardless of any sort of disability should be able to.

As I was saying earlier, something needs to be done, and I *mean* something needs to happen, not just the passing of another act that writes out another set of rules and guidelines, but we as a people need to be more respectful and more helpful to those in need. Laws shouldn't have to force or place restrictions on our actions in order for us to help disabled people. Out of the goodness of our hearts, we should've been helping them even more than we are now. Yes, as humans we have been doing a good job, we've helped disabled persons have a place in society, but do we really treat them fairly?

Voltaire once proclaimed, "All the citizens of the state cannot be equally powerful, but they may be equally free."

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Tying the laces of my ice skates, I fumble as I work on the last few knots, trying to make them as tight as possible so they won't be loose while skating on the ice.

"There!" I say as I finish tying the last knot, before giving my skates one last squeeze. Hobbling, I make my way over onto the ice rink and I take a single step before gliding over the ice.

"Oops! Coming through—" I ram myself into the sidelines, before falling into the bleachers. A little girl now stands motionless, gripping hard to the side of the rink.

I make my way back onto the ice and I start to apologize, "Sorry, I didn't see you there."

The little girl smiles a toothless grin and she motions me to bend down. I put my knees on the ice and I bend down awkwardly, while the little girl takes her gloved hand and touches the outlines of my face.

"You have a pretty nose," She says, before tweaking my nose and pinching it. "It's not flat or really wide. It's the perfect size."

Slightly flattered, yet feeling a bit awkward I decide to change the subject for my own benefit. "Is this your first time skating?"

The little girl smiles her toothless smile again. "I've been skating since I was two. Now I'm seven." She holds up her hand and two fingers. "Seven years old," she says.

I smile at her, "Do you like skating?"

Her smile flops into a frown instantly, "Before the accident I did." She pauses before continuing, "Now, I can't see."

"Well, you have the most beautiful blue eyes."

"My mommy says that too," she replies. "I don't remember what my eyes look like though."

A couple of tears suddenly trickled drop by drop down her face, flowing from her cheekbone to her chin, before falling onto the ice.

Her tear shattered into a billion more tears.

Each one holding in the pain, hidden, behind those beautiful sky-blue eyes.

Works Cited Persuasive Argument

*Diana Ye*

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