

Ariane Bretl

Writing Seminar: Disabilities and Differences

Professor Lindgren

December 18, 2020

### Eyes Wide Open

Before taking this class, I had little to no knowledge or experience with the disabled community. I would occasionally see ads for the paralympics, and watch movies or read books with disabled characters, but I had never done the research or educated myself on why one should care about disabled lives. I grew up with a family and in an environment that had a more similar mindset to Peter Singer than Harriet McBryde Johnson. My mom having gotten pregnant with my brother rather late had many tests done to ensure she would have a “perfect child”. After reading Singer’s piece and articles about gene editing, I felt the need to ask my mom if all the tests she had done did not come back the way she hoped, would she have kept the baby? I did end up asking my mom this question, and when she said she wouldn’t have kept the baby, she gave the same reasons as the ones Peter Singer mentioned as to why she would not keep it. This exchange with my mom really opened my eyes to who and what I was influenced by growing up, and looking back now I am not shocked, but rather disappointed I was never exposed to such an incredible movement. Coming into this course with such a tainted image of the disability community, I was eager to start a conversation with the class as to why we should care and how to encourage others to care, too. This is why I loved writing my second essay about Peter Singer and Harriet McBryde Johnson because it was as if I was proving my old self wrong with my new knowledge of disability pride. This battle between an old-fashioned narrative and a progressive one encouraged

me to create cogent arguments with bits of evidence that would continue the conversation.

Taking this course was like learning a new word; once you learn it, you hear and see it everywhere. Disability and differences are all around us and affect the way we do things in major ways. Disability affects architecture, technology, and the people around us to create a world that is more accepting and accessible. After watching the videos and reading the articles assigned to us in class, I notice how inaccessible the world really is. Subtitles create an inaccurate and incomplete experience, and social media in many ways cannot be enjoyed by anyone who is deaf. I thoroughly enjoyed *Good Kings Bad Kings* and the story it tells of activism and determination, but I am also so thankful that I read *Train Go Sorry* because it introduced me to a culture that I didn't even know existed. Before reading *Train Go Sorry*, I knew practically nothing about the deaf community or deaf culture. I learned about what it meant to live in a hearing world or think like a hearing person. I learned about the ongoing argument over oralism and the promotion of sign language, about the difference between a hearing table and a deaf table, and so many other aspects of deaf culture that I was previously unaware of. Disability pride and rights are now always in the back of my mind. When I watch something with subtitles, I look to see how the subtitles represent the sound in the movie and if they do it any justice. When I walk through public buildings, I look to see how accessible it is to people of all different disabilities. A portion of my Instagram feed is filled with posts about disability education and disability pride. I am a big believer in how education can open the mind to new perspectives and beliefs, so I am very thankful this course proved this idea to be true. Through this class, I believe I have grown as a writer and a thinker. I now have a more open-mind that has allowed me to be sensitive

to other people's opinions, while also expressing my own in a healthy in-class debate. I believe a lot of what I have learned from this class, will stay with me and help me in many ways as I continue my education in college and beyond. Thank you Professor Lindgren for an amazing semester!