



Forum Resolution!

The draft resolution of the Forum will be distributed to the participants this morning. It also will be read during the morning plenary session to the Forum.

We ask that you discuss the draft among yourselves during the day and be ready to discuss and adopt a final version during the closing ceremony.

Susan Daniels Challenges Assumptions

Susan Daniels, Associate Commissioner, U.S. Social Security Administration, Office of Disability

First I would like to put some of my cards on the table and make clear that all women around the world work. They do the dishes, clean the house, take care of the family, manage the bills, and keep the family unit together.

A sign on my sister's refrigerator says, "Every mother is a working woman."

70% of significantly disabled individuals do not have jobs, and more than 50% say they want to work and can work. More than five years ago there were five million individuals receiving cash benefits. Today there are 10 million individuals receiving cash benefits. We spend 70 billion dollars on people who do not work in this country.

Over the last 10 years the medical community has made significant advancements in medicine that have allowed more and more people with disabilities to return to work. The people in the US expect and demand more to be done.

In 1987 significant advancements were made in the area of civil rights for the disabled. The signing of the Americans with Disabilities act was a key to the door. Now, we need to push the door open and continue to move forward.

Education is still the most important aspect of empowering people and better positioning them for work opportunities. One of the most important thing we can do is to make sure that every disabled person has equal access to a complete education.

We have set low "low expectations." Over the years we have set up "special buses," that take us to special places where we learn special things, from special people and then those same special buses take those same special people back to their special houses where they do special things. We need to break the cycle and continue to push for complete integration and not to be segregated in what we as disabled people do, and can do.

"Folks with disabilities should get together but it should be by their own choice," and not be forced.

Why is it that activities for people with disabilities are special? Why do we have therapeutic horseback riding and the able-bodied just go horseback riding? Why are there therapeutic horticultural programs, and able-bodied folks just grow plants? We should strive to have everyone do just ordinary things and not continue to create "special" activities.

I would like everyone in the room who did not bring their own chair to stand, now I would like to back away from the microphone and speak without the assistance of the microphone. Now I would like the lights in the room to be turned off. Each of these devices that have been taken away are conveniences to many. The costs associated with installing these "normal" ordinary accommodations are staggering, yet when we look at accommodating a disabled person, many quickly highlight the costs associated with the accommodation. We need to provide equal access to those things that are "ordinary" accommodations for everyone. We need to challenge what is obvious.

Pauline Winter, New Zealand, Chief Executive Officer, Workbridge, Reports Successes

I must admit that due to the time zones, and my country being 8,000 miles away, it was a little unsettling arriving in Washington, D.C. before the time that I left my country.

I enjoy working for Workbridge because it allows me to stay in touch with so many "achievers." Many women are very self motivated and want to make a difference in the world. In my country we are heading for some exciting times. We soon may realize our first Woman Prime Minister.

We work hard to ensure that people with disabilities are getting "real" jobs and earn them real money, and not just having them employed by sheltered workshops being paid low wages.

We are "hot footing" away from discrimination and are rapidly moving toward a society that provides a quality way of life, and allows people with disabilities to have the right to choose and do what they want to do and not have things decided for them.

Workbridge has successfully placed more than 3.5 thousand individuals with disabilities in jobs that are rewarding and allow each of the individuals the opportunity to grow.

Over the last several years Workbridge has made a significant effort to address the unemployment rate of disabled women. Special programs have been established that work specifically on women's issues.

The disabled women of today must be champions of change and use our power to work for change.

Shirley Whistler, U.S. Office of Federal Contracts Compliance Programs Describes "Equal Treatment" Measures

Executive Order 11246 dealing with nondiscrimination and affirmative action is a law that we are very passionate about. We ensure that those contractors who are awarded federal contracts comply with the complete letter of the law, thus making sure that individuals with disabilities who secure government contracts are treated equally.

Some 26 million workers are covered by our organization through the government contracts that are awarded.

So far, 115 million dollars have been recovered by our office from companies that were awarded federal contracts, but did not live up to the standards and laws that govern them.

We will be working hard with other Federal agencies to ensure that those government contracts that are awarded comply with all affirmative action laws and regulations, thus ensuring that people with disabilities have a fair and equal chance when bidding.

Evy Messell, International Labor Organization Cites Global Difficulties in Opening Employment Opportunities

Many of the problems for women around the world who want to work are the same. Educational opportunities are often denied or are not accessible to disabled women. Often the family and community prevent a woman from seeking an education. Social pressures in many countries make it very difficult for a disabled woman to pursue an education.

It is often very difficult for the labor market to adapt and make employment opportunities available for disabled people because it is seen as a low priority.

Employment opportunities working for the disabled often depends on the person's skills and how they fit into the labor market. One third of the world's families are supported by women.

Presently, the general trend in many countries is growing unemployment and this has had a tremendous impact on disabled women of the world attempting to secure employment opportunities.

One of the critical needs for improving employment opportunities for the world's disabled women is to develop better methods of making educational opportunities available.

Remember Hidden Disabilities!

Although I am a person in a wheelchair with a ventilator, both very visible disabilities, I am also a person with the hidden disability of asthma and am often ill because I have circulatory deficiencies and am usually fighting a respiratory infection (I have had 18 respiratory infections in the last 12 months)

While this Forum has been validating, exciting, and intellectually challenging for me, I have been disheartened several times by speakers' and participants' comments that "While we are disabled, we are not sick!" There is nothing wrong with being sick.

Other comments that have hurt me, and several other friends with disabilities, have included, "Why is she sitting down when there are hardly any chairs? Why can't she stand up and give someone else a chair who really needs it?"

There are many hidden disabilities like Asthma, Arthritis, Heart Disease, Environmental Illness, AIDS, Chronic Fatigue, Psychiatric Disabilities or Mental Illnesses, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder,

Developmental Disabilities or Mental Retardation, etc. My asthma has been continuously triggered by women wearing perfume, yet women are insulted if I explain why I cannot sit near them when they are wearing perfume.

Unless we relinquish our judgmental attitudes towards one another's differences, this Forum will have been a farce. To expect a woman with a psychiatric disability to go through a fourteen hour day of talks, workshops, meetings, etc. without validation or support, or to not have safe space for environmentally disabled women, or to get angry when you ask a seemingly able-bodied woman to carry something, and she says "No" because she has a back injury is to put steps in front of a woman in a wheel chair. We must get rid of our "take up thy bed and walk, cripple" attitudes because these attitudes are crippling all of us.

Celebrate your own diversity and celebrate the diversity of others. Disability is not a contest between whose needs are greater or lesser, and none of us will ever be independent because not even the strongest, healthiest able-bodied woman is independent; we are all interdependent interloving, inter-caring women--so let's stop being super crips or super able-bodied and show that love to each other.

Concetta (Connie) Panzarino

Announcements

- ◆ **Important transportation update:** If you need lift-equipped transport to the airport and you turned in a form with your information, you must be in the lobby of your hotel (Hyatt/Doubletree/Ramada Inn ONLY) 3½ hours before your flight leaves. Shuttles will be leaving for the airports on a regular basis. Transportation to the airport will only be given to people with special needs. Make sure the Secretariat has your transportation information.
- ◆ Please confirm your **overseas airline reservations** 72 hours in advance--otherwise they could be canceled.
- ◆ The **Participant's List** will be ready by this morning.
- ◆ The ThinkQuest Team, "Just Because I Have a Disability Doesn't Mean I Byte", invites you to visit their temporary site at <http://thinkquest.phillynews.com/tq97/index.html>
- ◆ Please remember to turn in your **Evaluation Forms** before you leave. The results will provide all of us with important information for follow-up activities. The forms were provided in your gray bags. Please put them in the boxes marked "Evaluation" or give them to Forum Staff. Thanks.
- ◆ Meeting for African women with representatives of the U.S. Department of Education: 1) discuss the needs of disabled women and girls; and 2) discuss ideas for U.S.-Africa collaborative work. 10:30 a.m. today, Diplomat Room
- ◆ **Don't Forget Us!** The Forum staff will be working on the Forum's Final Report for several months. Please send any newspaper articles, reports on activities, plans for follow-up meetings, formation of new groups, to the Forum at Third Millennium, RBBieler@aol.com or fax: 301-838-3029.