

What's the Word- October 2018



*Miss Understood*

A little bit about me. I am a visually impaired individual born with this disability. I also carry two more powerful disconnections with society: I am female and then finally born black. Feeling that slavery should have vanished, however, seeing that it still exists is the reason that I feel so strongly that society looks at the disability community as a liability and not as an asset.

I graduated from the University of Milwaukee this year in May from the School of Social Welfare. In addition, I have had experience working with women who have been domestically abused. As life has it, once government begins to make changes, the newest individuals that are hired are the first fired. I have filled out so many applications that I have lost count. I am constantly worried that if I disclose my disability before an interview, I will not get the chance to show all of my abilities. I often hear that I am underqualified for a job and I feel that is just an excuse because it is illegal to discriminate against disability. Many employers see a disability as too much work to put into an employee when, in fact, most accommodations are quite easy to set up.

I was an employee at Industries for the Blind for a long time. I started there needing employment and thinking it would only be for a summer. Although I appreciate the experience and the job, I always saw it as a sheltered workshop. I didn't feel right being stuck in a job that I was only around other people who were visually impaired. I decided to go to UW-Milwaukee to get a degree so that I would have education backing my resume and giving it weight.

I am currently finishing an internship at Disability Rights Wisconsin, which has been a great experience and solidified my passion for advocacy and change. I see that the disability community is often split by disabilities which makes me very sad. In a community that should

be able to find similarities in their struggles, I see a lot of work for inclusion. I also have noticed that people of color are generally uninformed about so many resources that could benefit people with disabilities. I call this "Hidden Knowledge" because it is available, but hard to access until you have somebody walk you through the systems.

Yes, there is so much I have to say about being disabled and black because no matter how one wants to be equal, it will never truly happen in society. Yes, am I able to share the restroom with other cultures, dine in the same restaurants and possibly one day be employed in a powerful seat with society? But does this make me feel inclusion? NO! Because in real society they are still attempting to find reasons why my ethnicity still carries flaws or why my life is still too dark to be seen within the light.