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LEH 355

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May 14th, 2018

Monstrosity

In the world we live in today, being different from the people around us or an outcast to society, you will be isolated and viewed with fear because you don't have the characteristics to what society considers normal. People with disabilities and incapacities are looked down upon and are treated like they're less than human. The society we are apart of has accustomed people to perceive individuals with disabilities as monsters that prefer to be dead than alive. It is awful that we encourage this awful behavior of scapegoating people with disabilities, instead of learning their difficulties and understanding them as a person first, not treating them like animals and monsters.

Matthew Genser, who is the protagonist of the short film called "The Barber of Augusta" is a 30-year old man who lives with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) along with conduct disorder, and personality since he was a child. He explains how difficult it has been for him to have a place in our society because he's different. His admiration and what makes him feel at ease is his favorite superheroes and providing haircuts. Matthew dresses up as his favorite heroes and gives haircuts to his clients. He loves to provide free haircuts to the homeless especially because he feels like they are the most relatable to him while other people claim it's for attention, meanwhile he does agree with the statement that it is for attention because he has

battled for people to recognize him his whole life. “A lot of people did not want him around, so it was hard for him, it was really really hard for Matthew to grow and develop in a society where kids like him are not accepted” (Mrs.Genser). Being treated like a monster in isolation since a child can deprive a kid from a growing experience that they would never get to have and also can mentally affect a person as they get older. “I felt like a monster for a long time not because of how my parents treated me but because of how I felt about myself” (Genser). Having to disown yourself because of others not understanding how you feel is humiliating.

People are born in all different ways and forms. We are all born with imperfections, that is why not one person in this world is perfect. In the text ‘The Elephant Man’ by Frederick Treves, there is a man called John Merrick who is feared and looked at in disgust because of his disfigured and terrifying face including the shape of his head. “People are frightened by what they don’t understand” (John Merrick). What people see is this extremely ugly and inhuman individual just because of his physical appearance, but not a person understands or knows how big his heart is. Merrick doesn’t want to be treated or looked at like a monster, he just wants to be accepted and have a “normal” life to experience the world instead of having to be hidden in darkness like a monster. “I am not an elephant! I am not an animal! I am a human being! I am a man! (John Merrick). His sole purpose of living is to be apart of a society where he does not put fear into others.

The neglect and isolation of people with disabilities can produce permanent damage to those individuals who already struggle in their lives because of how they are considered different. From the text “Of Mice and Men” by John Steinbeck, Lennie is a ranch worker who has a mental disorder and possesses incredible strength. Lennie enjoys petting soft things, but his aggressive nature and not fully understanding from right or wrong creates this isolation for

Lennie disabling him to live among others which is why Lennie and George are always on the move. Lennie's physical appearance is not scary but him accidentally killing people and animals because of his nervousness and disorder is what had him considered as a monster and that is why Lennie always had to be hidden. "If you don't want me I can go off in the hills and find a cave. I can go away any time." (Lennie). People with disabilities must be aided and loved to help fight their battles not isolated, that can only expand more difficulties from the ones that already exist.

Society portrays people with disabilities as monsters. The images of disabled people in Television and motion pictures show a representation that expands the idea that people with disabilities should harshly despise themselves and should prefer death than being alive.

"Disability has often been used as a melodramatic device not only in popular entertainments, but in literature as well. Among the most persistent is the association of disability with malevolence. Deformity of body symbolizes deformity of soul. Physical handicaps are made the emblems of evil". Entertainment platforms seek to use the disabilities of people to their advantage to create representation of horror and evil. "What we fear, we often stigmatize, shun, and sometimes seek to destroy." (Longmore). Our society is accustomed to believe that having disability is seen as not "normal" which is completely wrong because we are all human and unique with our own capabilities.

No person alive should determine whether a child born with a deformity or disability is allowed to live their life. We are all created and born through the same procedure, what changes the fact of a child living just because of a deformity. According to "Rehabilitating Aristotle: A Virtue Ethics Approach to Disability and Human Flourishing" by Garret Merriam, Aristotle explicitly endorsed, in the Politics,¹ the common Greek practice of leaving "deformed" babies to die of exposure and is reputed to have claimed that those "born deaf become senseless and

incapable of reason. Today, children born with deformities are viewed with such horror like monsters when it's just natural occurrences that are apart of life. No person should be judged or scapegoated for the way they look or function.

“The political task is to liberate the disabled people from the paternalistic prejudice expressed in those images and to forge a new social identity. The two are inseparable.” (Longmore). Instead of dehumanizing people for their disabilities or physical appearances, we should uplift each other and show the world that it is completely okay to be different. We are not monsters, we are human.

Works Cited

Longmore, Paul. *Why I Burned My Book*. Temple University Press, 2009.

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