

Article Reaction: 20 Years after the ADA, Is Life Better for Those with Disabilities

“20 Years after the ADA, Is Life Better for Those with Disabilities” is an article written about the improvements and downfalls since the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In areas such as transportation, public access, some living situations and street side accommodations, the Act has provided tremendous improvements. For other aspects the Act tried enhancing such as job opportunities, the Act has hardly made an impact. In most cases it has been seen to worsen job opportunities due to businesses’ fear of lawsuits and unwillingness to pay extra expenses a disabled worker requires.

Reading this article created a more concrete understanding of the struggles disabled people go through. Though I knew that any kind of disability limits people and makes it harder for them to go about everyday life, I didn’t realize that the prejudices of others was such a big part of the struggle. As premature as this may sound, I assumed that with the passing of the Act, it dramatically improved living situations, transportation and job opportunities for disabled people. However it has seemed to be to the contrary, especially with job opportunities. In some studies it has shown that the rates of hiring disabled employees has decreased and less disabled workers are employed than before the Act was passed. This truly amazed me and opened my eyes to how much our society has changed and only cares about money and who can do the work the fastest.

At the end of the article, Woodruff mentions that her son has a disability which makes it very difficult for him to live a “normal” life, with having little access to important buildings, much less getting hired for a job. Woodruff writes, “As the mother of a 28-year-old son who uses a wheelchair, and has visual, speech and memory impairments, I have seen firsthand the roadblocks that remain for individuals with disabilities... my son, who wants to be a fully participating member of society... it is particularly tough to know some public places are still not welcoming, and that many places of employment are not open to someone like him.” Though there is no doubt in my mind that she and her son face challenging trials every day and that there are still prejudices remaining, I feel like she is writing this article from a biased standpoint. She may be correct that disabled people are not getting hired and that the rate of unemployed disabled people is increasing, but she is writing this from a personal experience standpoint and not necessarily looking at both sides.

When reading this article, one thing was very prevalent apparent to me: the disabled’s ability to persevere and never give up. It amazes me how hard disabled people are fighting for their rights and how long they have been fighting. Disabled people have been working since the 80’s to get a fair chance in society and although the Act has been passed, it seems that they are still being pushed down and held in low esteem. However it seems that nothing is going to stop them from trying. Though this is potentially a stretch, one connection I made to the perseverance of disabled people is with the character Kurt Hummel in Glee. In season one and two of Glee, Kurt Hummel was faced with the challenge of accepting the fact that he was homosexual. With this trial, he faced being made fun of, having his father look down on him and being atrociously abused by school mates. When Kurt reached the breaking point, he realized that giving up his desire for equality and ceasing to fight for it wasn’t going to make anything better for him. With this in mind and with the help of the glee club he pushed

back and demanded to be treated fairly. In time, Kurt gained more respect and ended up helping others that were in his situation. Though Kurt is still periodically bullied, he never gives up and pushes himself to show others what he is capable of. Both disabled people and Kurt show this drive for justice and an unending supply of perseverance and allowing them to get closer and closer to their dreams of equality even when there seems to be little hope left.

Questions that still remain:

- 1) Does the government look at employment rates of the disabled? Do they have a say if not enough are being hired? Can the government require that more disabled workers be hired?
- 2) It seems that matters are actually getting worse from the passing of the Act. Has anyone started protesting or fighting back? Do they look at this low percentage of disabled employment as prejudice?