

Is there such a thing as a social disability?

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There are different definitions of what qualifies as a disability. I would like to propose a new type of disability and call it a Social Disability. This disability is defined by a dominating attitude when compared with society in general regarding attitudinal, sensory, cognitive, and economic barriers, and the strong tendency for people to generalize about all persons within their communities.

The scary part of this disability is that it affects all of us. We see the young man with the Mohawk and immediately categorize him as a social deviant, and is not to be trusted. The biker in his colors causes us to pass that aisle in the grocery store and come back after he has left. The older woman in a dress that has seen too many repairs and washes, walking down the street holding to her cart as if it is the only thing keeping her in this world, and we turn our heads so as not to become aware of her existence.

We tell ourselves that we are good people and that we give to the church on Sunday, we buy Girl Scout cookies and volunteer at the spaghetti dinner. Yet, we hold ourselves mentally in a position of dominance over those that do not fit within our social structure. We learn this early in life and carry this disability with us forever. I am a Jock, a Nerd, or part of the popular crowd. They are not my color, my religion, or my age. They choose a different lifestyle, hairstyle or food to eat. We hold to our dominance as if it is a cart filled with our perceptions and prejudices, as if it is an anchor to keep us in our world.

Dr. Seuss taught us that we are not different from one another in a story about Star-Bell Sneetches, at the end of the story; no one remembered what group they came from. When we find away to release our anchors, and reach for levels of understanding beyond the confines of our own disabilities and accept people as presented, we will no longer have a need to define the word disability. Please shed your disability, you might find Mr. Mohawk is a heart surgeon who will next week save your life. The motorcycle rider is a plumber and the colors stand for pride, honor and loyalty, which are just as important to him or her as they are to you. Each of us is unique, we are all made of stardust, and we all have a star upon ours.