



Edward V. Roberts

Speech: Empowerment

[undated]

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People with disabilities are confronted with totally inappropriate negative attitudes and pity - products of a protective and charitable approach to disability. Unfortunately, many organizations do not understand the fundamental and basic flaw in treating any person as an object of charity - it causes people to lose their humanity. My work proceeds from a basic belief that persons with disabilities have the same desires and needs as anyone else. The quality of my life is related to how free I am to make my own choices.

New attitudes about disability are needed to change the institutions that continue to promote charity and pity so that people with disabilities can participate equally in every aspect of our society.

Many people with disabilities find it difficult or impossible to carry out many basic activities of daily life on their own. For these people, independent living is impossible without another person's help. Yet hundreds of thousands of these people are unable to obtain the assistance they need in their home. As a result many of them live in institutions. Funding should go not to institutional living arrangements that control the lives of people with disabilities, but to programs that enable seniors and people with disabilities to continue living at home in their communities.