



Disability in Myths

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www.worldofinclusion.com

Who is a Disabled Person?

- You are disabled if you have a physical or mental impairment that lasts for 12 months or more and affects your ability to do normal activities a lot.
- Ignore medicines equipment and help the person may get.
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Severe Asthma
- Cancer
- Autism/ADHD
- Blindness, Deafness, Speech Difficulty
- Learning Difficulty
- Dyslexia
- Depression
- Less Use of Legs/Arms
- Disfigurement etc..

What Disabled People Want

- We want to be included
- We want to be part of society
- We want the barriers that prevent this to be got rid of.
- We want attitudes that accept us as equal but different
- We want buildings we can get into and use
- We want knowledge and skills we can understand
- We want you to focus on what we can do , not what we can't
- <http://www.worldofinclusion.com/res/qca/Wall>

Disabled People have been treated unfairly for hundreds of years.

They have been seen as laughable, pitiful or evil and not human.

Some people even wrongly think disabled people are disabled because they are being punished by God.

Myths and Legends often reflect these views.

Let's look at these and where some of these strange ideas have come from.

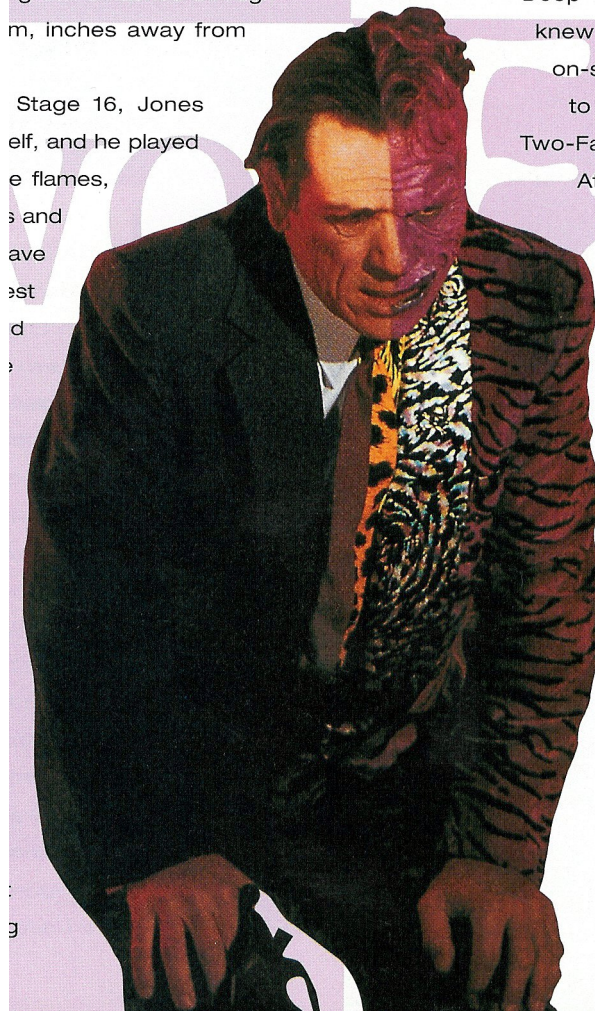
Two-Face

Batman Forever

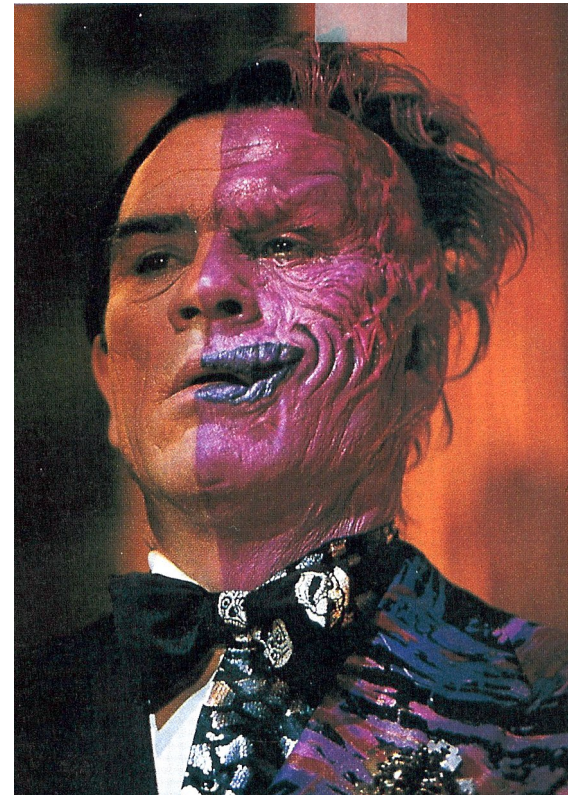


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- Hephaestus was a Greek god who lived on Mount Olympus. Son of Zeus and Hera he was the blacksmith. He was disabled. When he was born disabled his mother tried to drown him, but he was immortal and saved by his sister. When he grew up the Gods arranged he married Aphrodite goddess of love and they were very happy together, but the other Gods continued to make fun of him.



Hephaestus's Parents

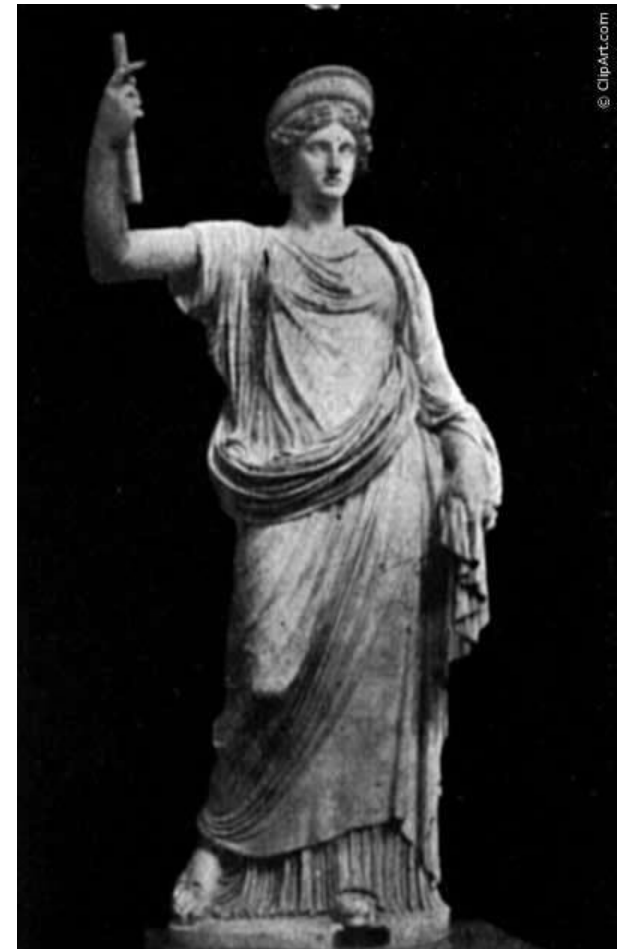
- Zeus-Father/King of the God's. Powerful and Strong. Symbol Thunderbolt



(2) THE OLYMPIAN ZEUS.
(Coins of Elis of the time of Hadrian, from the collections in Paris and Florence respectively.)



Mother Hera queen of the . God of Marriage and the Sky



Hera (undated photo)

One Greek Myth about Hephaestus

- **Basic Story:** Feeling rejected by his mother Hera, Hephaestus made a lovely throne for her and sent it to Olympus. She sat in it and discovered she could not get up again. Then the chair levitated. The other Olympian gods tried to reason with Hephaestus, but even his brother Ares was driven off with his flames.
- He finally was given wine by Dionysus and, drunk, was brought to Olympus.
- Drunk or not, he still refused to free Hera unless he could have either Aphrodite or Athene as wife. He ended up with Aphrodite, who in this instance was not a quick learner.
- When she lay with his brother Ares in the bed Hephaestus had made, chains emerged and they could not leave the bed, exposing them to the laughter of the rest of the Olympians when Hephaestus called them all together to witness his adulterous wife and brother.

Aphrodite(Venus) Goddess of Love



(S) APHRODITE OF MELOS.
(Paris, Louvre).



- i Venus de Milo also Aphrodite Rhodes 500 BC
- ii Birth of Aphrodite Pompeii Fresco 1st C AD

Hephaestus or Vulcan, God of Fire

After his second fall he returned to Olympus, and subsequently acted the part of mediator between his parents. On that occasion he offered a cup of nectar to his mother and the other gods, who burst out into immoderate laughter on seeing him busily hobbling through Olympus from one god to another, for he was ugly and slow, and, owing to the weakness of his legs, he was held up, when he walked, by artificial supports, skilfully made of gold. His neck and chest, however, were strong and muscular.

<http://www.theoi.com/Olympios/>



Blacksmith and craftsman

The Myth of the Changeling

- German and Northern European
- Large head, staring eyes, eating alot and not able to move.
- The offspring of fairies, elves, the devil, trolls.
- Believed they swapped for a healthy human baby
- This was an explanation for disabled children for example Hydro-Cephlus, Downs Syndrome or Cerebral Palsy



At Hessloch near Odernheim in the Gau the servant and the cook of a clergyman were living together as man and wife, although they had not been able to have their relationship publicly consecrated. They had a child together, but it failed to grow and gain weight. It cried day and night, always demanding to be fed. Finally the woman sought advice, and was told that the baby would improve if she would take it to Neuhausen on the Cyriak Meadow, have it weighed there, and give it water from the Cyriak Spring. At that time it was believed that in such cases a child thus would be restored to health or would die within nine days.

[Note 1]

As the woman approached the millrace near Westhofen, the child, whom she was carrying on her back, became so heavy that she began to pant, and the sweat began running from her face. At that moment a traveling student approached her, saying: "Woman, what sort of wild creature are you carrying? It will be a miracle if it doesn't break your neck!"

She answered that it was her own dear child that would neither grow nor gain weight, and that she was therefore taking it to Neuhausen to have it weighed.

He replied: "That is not your child! It is the devil! [Note 2] Throw him into the brook!"

She did not want to do this, insisting that it was her child while kissing it.

He continued: "Your child is at home in a new cradle behind the chest in the side room.

Throw this monster into the brook!"

Crying and sobbing she did as she had been told. Immediately there issued a great cry and commotion from beneath the bridge she was standing on, like the howling of wolves and bears. And when the mother arrived home, she found her baby, hearty and healthy, laughing in its new cradle Brothers Grimm

Changelings

The Founder of Protestantism in Germany: Martin Luther believed in changelings.. He sincerely believed that Satan was responsible for the malformed children known as changelings, and that such satanic child exchanges occurred frequently. In Luther's theological view, a changeling was a child of the devil without a human soul, "only a piece of flesh." "Take the changeling child to the river and drown them" he preached.



Modern Myths Albinos in East and Central Africa

Albinism is a condition where the colouring of the skin, hair and eyes does not occur due to lack of Melanin. Albinos usually have to stay out of sun and have visual impairment.

Over 60 Albinos have been murdered in the last few years in East Africa for the magical powers parts of their body are meant to give people 10,000 Albinos are in hiding and under threat.

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/211>



Tanzania Winifrida

Rutahiro (2nd left) says she is now scared even to leave her house

Myth about Albino People

- Traditionally killed or abandoned at birth in many African Societies
- Cursed
- A sign of punishment
- Illegitimate children with white men
- Not human-false people
- Magic charm or power



Kenya. Mary Owido sits with her children at their home in western Kenyan town of Ahero. Owido, who lacks pigment that gives color to skin, eyes and hair, says she is "afraid of going out alone."

- **'We want your legs'**
- The last adult albino to be murdered - just a few weeks ago - was Nyerere Rutahiro.
- Nyerere Rutahiro's body was laid to rest in a cement-sealed grave
- He was eating dinner outside in his modest rural compound, when a gang of four strangers burst in, and threatened to arrest him. As his wife Susannah looked on helplessly, the men began to hack at Nyerere's arms and legs with machetes.
- "We want your legs," they shouted, "We want your legs," his wife recalls, still deeply traumatised by what she saw.
- Nyerere was clearly being targeted for being albino - but in every other respect he was an accepted part of his community. A father of two in his 50s, farming cassava - just like everybody else.
- His body was laid to rest in a cement-sealed grave to protect against grave robbers who often steal body parts of the dead to give to witchdoctors. A builder had been hired to do the job.



What is the answer to these Myths?

- Discuss in your groups what you think about what is happening to Albino children and adults in Africa.
- Write what do you think needs to be done to challenge what is happening
- Make up a modern myth that would have a good ending for an albino.
- Take changeling story and rewrite it so the disabled person is shown positively