

Quote/Unquote

"Now the time has come when society should start accepting disabled women. There are many disabled women who are capable and intelligent but are rejected by society. Why? And just because a woman is disabled, she cannot get married because the man's parents refuse to accept her as their daughter-in-law. The preposterous reason is that they adhere to the old tradition and give priority to what society would say rather than to their son's feelings about the woman." (Nafisa, <http://www.independentliving.org/docs2/daa6.pdf>)

"... a woman with a disability is unmarriageable because she is in a deformed body that society has taught her to hate. Furthermore, she draws no male attention, the way an "ordinary girl" would. These preconceptions reflect the current situation in Lebanon where people with disabilities have yet to be fully integrated into society; women, in particular, have been mostly kept in their homes by over-protective parents or relatives. Hence, having minimal chances of gaining contact with the world outside their home and minimal chances of getting married, women with disabilities are seen as sheltered and isolated women, surrendering their virginity at the first sign of male attention. Being already constructed as unmarriageable in a context that holds high disregard and minimal opportunities of integration for people with disabilities, women with disabilities are seen as having nothing to lose by consenting to sex outside marriage. Consent to sex is the only way to get male attention and affection ... In the case of women with disability, conceptions of consensual sex and rape are tied not only to the woman's individual desires for affection, but more broadly to society's disregard for people with disabilities. When she consents, she is believed to have done so because she has internalized society's disregard for her as a disabled woman. While these conceptions reflect a critical view of social relations at the intersection of dis/ability and gender, they nonetheless reinforce oppressive social relations that define women's worth through their status as un/marriageable. In addition to rendering invisible a woman's personal desires in consenting to sex, conceptions of disabled women's sexuality have the potential of undermining women's disclosures of rape. While it may be true that some women with disabilities have learned to exchange sex for affection, what I find more interesting is that this belief in disabled women's need for affection is used to cast doubts on the credibility of dis-

abled women who disclose incidents of rape. In short, a disabled woman's credibility is undermined by virtue of her social location that has constructed her a priori as unmarriageable, and hence as unrapeable." (Samantha Wehbi, *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 295-296)

"My main objective is to be an effectively contributing member of the community at large and thus contribute to the development of my country. The problem is the negative attitude in society towards the active participation of disabled people in community development. I have to counter the belief that a disabled person is an object of pity who always needs assistance from somebody else. This problem is compounded by the fact that I am a woman. Being a disabled woman is a double disadvantage in my community." (Gloria, <http://www.independentliving.org/docs2/daa6.pdf>)

"I had polio when I was very young. My parents were told that I would never be able to walk normally again. My mother struggled so that I could have as many surgical operations as possible, but she never let me go to school. In the institutions where I was staying, all the other girls were going to school except me. My mother said it was not important for me to learn. I am now 26 years old, and totally illiterate. I learned to sew, and I have been working in sewing factories for ten years. My mother and father do not work, and my brother is unemployed. My father gave him his shop, to start his own business, but somehow he managed to lose everything. He only comes home to ask for money, which he spends on alcohol, and other things. Despite all this, my parents love and respect him and dare not confront him. I, on the other hand, am not allowed to go out except to go to work. They have forbidden me to participate in a summer camp for disabled people. They even stopped me from marrying a man that I was in love with. They said that even if I eloped, they'd find me and kill me. They could do that! I got scared and left the man I was involved with. My parents say that I am disabled and cannot marry. But that is not true. They do not want me to leave home because my salary is their only income. Sometimes I wonder why they can't love me the same way they love my brother. After all, he only brings them trouble. I am the one who looks after them. (Zeinab, *Gender and Disability: Women's experiences in the Middle East*, p.22)