

EOC File (March 2008)

Things We Do, People We Meet: Reflections in Brief

Discrimination Hurts: In Memory of Li Ching (I)

March 1st, 2008 was a sad day for us – it’s the day we lost Li Ching. An admirable fighter who braved hearing impairment to achieve academic success and recognition at international chess competitions, Li finally decided to put an end to it all by taking her own life.

Words cannot describe the stress which people with disabilities are often under as a person, a student or a job-seeker. As Li had said it herself, she felt helpless and angry from all the scorn and jeer she had received throughout her short life. It was so painful that her first thought of suicide emerged when she was in Form 1. The pressure and hostility did not subside as she channeled through the other milestones in life : going through college, seeking employment. Tormented, frustrated and deprived of any means of escape, Li chose to walk away from it all, forever.

The tragedy has put the predicament of people with hearing impairment in the limelight. Indeed, with their “invisible disability”, their needs are easily overlooked. Facing numerous obstacles in their studies and daily life, it is only with community support that they can realize their potential and fully participate in society.

Some may wonder, how effective is our anti-discrimination legislation as a remedy? Our response is simple : discrimination indeed exists and that is why we have laws and redress mechanism, in the same way as hospitals and medical staff are needed to help us fight against the

presence of diseases. It is imperative that we nip discrimination in the bud. Equally important, those who are in need should make their voices heard.

Had Li been willing to seek counselling and assistance, had the community been better equipped to respond promptly, the tragedy might not have happened.

Li's death has shown us how destructive discrimination can be. A callous remark, mindless even if not spiteful, is enough to dampen a person's spirit or cause the individuals to abandon his or her determination to persevere. Hong Kong needs to be more accommodating, and a little less scornful. Respecting and supporting one another – that is the key to a better society.

Useful Links

Disabilities and Education Series by the Equal Opportunities Commission:

<http://www.eoc.org.hk/EOC/GraphicsFolder/DisEdu.aspx>

EOC YouTube Video: “Between Hearing & Not Hearing”:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/HKEOC>

Education Opportunities Begin at School:

<http://equaled.hkedcity.net/graphmode/en/main.html>

The Hong Kong Society for the Deaf:

http://www.deaf.org.hk/eng/e_news.php

Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong – Y's Men's Centre for the Deaf:

<http://www.ymca.org.hk/ynd/>

Cheung Ching Lutheran Centre for the Disabled:

<http://hk.geocities.com/r2ctr/>

Otic Foundation:

<http://oticfoundation.org.hk/>

Lutheran School for the Deaf:

<http://www.lsd.edu.hk/>

Hong Kong Sports Association of the Deaf:

<http://www.hksad.org.hk/>

Hong Kong Sign Language Association

<http://www.hksla.org.hk/index.html>