



Kevin McShan reflects on International Day for Persons with Disabilities



By Kevin McShan

Inclusion is the gateway to independence. It develops the infrastructure required for people of all abilities to pull out a chair at the table of consequence. To have an active and influential voice as we debate, solve and reimagine the issues which inform our thinking and impact our lives.

As we mark a day that aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights, and well-being of persons with disabilities, I reflect upon the journey to achieve objectivity, fairness, equity and equality for our special needs community.

I've lived my entire life with spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy. Rather than dwelling on my physical restrictions, I've chosen to celebrate my life and the life lessons I've been put on earth to teach. Our time together in the world is infinitely short and we must all maximize our moment of impact. I've always worked to develop bridges of understanding and camaraderie because it is my strong belief we're all given a set of skills and expertise to impart on the world.

However, the access to opportunity isn't always equally distributable. We all have the obligation to extend a listening ear and avenue for progress, for diversity of perspective leads to creative collaboration which fuels the opportunity for mutual respect and understanding of diverse perspective and creates universal unity.

Yes, this day is meant for reflection on the progress we've made in closing the gaps of disparity experienced by individuals with disabilities, which indeed needs to be celebrated. However, it's also a reminder of the work of promoting cohesion, the action or fact of forming a united whole is still an ongoing discussion and an incomplete puzzle that still needs to be stitched together. Acceptance, in my view, is the initiation into a harmonious state. The realization of real unity is only achieved from the adoption of other prospective and points of view. The greatest element of debate is your ability to consider issues with the understanding others may disagree. It doesn't mean because you have opposing viewpoints their opinion is any less valuable.

The true definition of growth is exhibiting the wherewithal to embrace the diversity of possibilities. There is no better time than now to foster an environment of inclusive voices and debate the issues on their merits rather than encouraging an atmosphere of exclusion. Diverse perspective is truly what will permit our societal discourse to

strengthen, grow and ultimately cultivate to fortify the promise of prosperity and empowerment for all. Stumbles along the way will occur naturally, however, if we keep climbing the mountains of excellence because stumbling upon greatness doesn't happen by accident. It occurs thanks to your sheer will and determination to prosper in the sights of prosperity.

This day holds increased significance because of the educational and life lessons we can all learn from it. This means in my view we can be one percent better in our comprehension of what it means to be unified as one.

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