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Imagine yourself walking through the great streets of New York City, you pass by various types of people that make up the human race, African Americans, Asian, Hispanics, Caucasians. There are many different ethnicities in this world, but what if one of those people you passed was being harassed? What if that person had a mental disability? What would you say? What would you do? Would you even do anything? What if the harasser used the “R” word to address the bystander with the disability? Let me tell you what would happen if you didn’t do anything. The derogatory term of the “R” word would be used more frequently in the everyday life. If a person doesn’t object to the use of this word it will continue to be prejudice and hurtful to those individuals who can’t defend themselves.

When people speak to one another, the voice that is heard, matters. It’s the voice that tells the person they are special and that no one should tease you for your incapability to lead a normal life. It’s the voice that wishes to speak out to a person and touch their life, but can’t. I realize this as I watch my 12 year old brother, Sal, who has Down-Syndrome. I watch and learn from him everyday as he comes and sits next to me at night holding a book, or a deck of cards maybe even a calculator. He has a thirst for knowledge, he watches me as I do my homework in excitement that maybe he will live up to the same expectations. I watch him as he tries to play basketball, write...speak. He looks up at me with his endearing brown eyes and freckled face every time he accomplishes a goal only showing me his unconditional love. He demonstrates that he is eager to learn something new everyday. I see as he struggles to do something as tedious as to write his full name or tie his shoes, but he persisted, and now he can. He has as much potential as anyone in this world, just like any other person who is mentally or physically challenged, that is just it, everyone has potential even the developed mentally disabled they can grow up to be anything they wish. You can see how much one of the billions of words on the English language can change a person’s perspective on life. My family and I seem to understand Sal when he speaks, it is not exactly words that come out of his mouth, but whatever it is he explains it in a more than willing way to make it clear. He tells me if he’s hungry, thirsty, happy or sad. He has feelings; all people have feelings, even those who have a disability. The “R” word does not benefit anyone by using it against a person who has a mental or physical disability. Just think of it as every time you use the word it affects an innocent person who can be half way across the world, or right next door.

The developed mentally disabled people do not choose to be this way; they are born or develop these afflictions. Just like my brother, at two months old he had open heart surgery, and without the assiduous care of the doctors, nurses and family he would not be here today, he would not be here to teach me that everyone in this world matters. You may not realize how much one word can affect a person especially those who can’t defend themselves. People with disabilities may not understand what is going on, so why do people continue the use of this abominable word? All they show is unconditional love to you and what do people do in return? They are called multiple names, the “R” word; one of the most hurtful words in the English language, which in all cases should not be used to discriminate a person by gender, race or their mental and physical incapacities. Those whom can’t defend themselves can lead their lives as any

other person would, especially with the help of family and friends. If you can relate to this you can understand the cruel demeaning use of the “R” word must be stopped before it is used to discriminate those who have never done anything wrong. If anything, these kinds of people are the life and hope in our society.

I guarantee everyone has heard the “R” word be used at least once in their life time and I guarantee they have laughed or have ignored the word to its full capacity. One problem, the people in this world who have been called this word don’t deserve it, they try to ignore it but that word will always be bound inside of there minds and leave an invisible scar that will stay with them for eternity. You may see people walking around and joking with one another, using this atrocious word to confront or judge a person. You have the adequacy to stop the use of this word and sometimes people just sit there and take it. In some ways this word is a stereotype. People use this word so frequently; I can honestly say that even I have used this word, before I even knew what it meant. Have you ever heard the quote: think before you speak? This is another reason why people use words like the “R” word, they don’t think before they make their action. For some people they are like water, hurtful words flow out of them before they consider the person they are offending feelings.

So much can be learned from the developed mentally disabled, they teach us trust, respect, loyalty and so much more that will enhance the way the future generations will think and act. The “R” word the most disrespectful word that can change the way we look at a person with a blink of an eye. Whatever you want to call this detrimental word, it should be clear that people with disabilities should not be addressed as a “R.” Everyone deserves a chance to be there own person, have their own dreams and expectations. Every time you look into a person’s eyes you see their emotions their inner self, you can evaluate the person they really are, and that words affect everyone. As you can see a single word can make the difference in someone’s perspective.

When we use this word we don’t stop to think of the people who are important. Just think of my brother, all of the suffering he had gone through to reach where he is now and at a young age his enthusiasm is still strong. Think of how my brother would never blame you for anything; think of how I would do anything for him because I love him. Just think of the innocent person you are offending by using the derogatory term. You have the ability to change billions of lives. To change a life around is like getting a new present. On the outside is wrapping that beholds the mystery inside, but when it is open the true gift releases itself. Think of all the mentally disabled people and how much better off they are if we just eliminated ONE single word. Just one word is all we need to stop THE WORD.