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Nothing About Us Without Us: Disability, Oppression and Empowerment. James I. Charlton. Reviewed by Stephanie Brzuzy, Arizona State University.

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The discussion on the social response to single African American women who succeed in the workplace is worthy of note. Experiences of the women in the study are reminiscent of the right wing double message to women. That is, welfare mothers are viewed negatively for staying home with their children and not working while simultaneously, middle-class white women are made to feel guilty for going to work and not staying home with their children. Similarly, African American women who are single and successful are treated punitively for not being married rather than being respected and rewarded for not being on the welfare dole. Additionally, the successful black woman may be seen as symbolic of the failure of black men (and others) and this can spill over negatively into family and community life.

African American men and women alike must continue to use the extended family as a buffer. As noted by the authors, "Closeness to extended families can help black women and men absorb and counter the many damaging impacts of racial oppression." (p. 151). This African American tradition is being diminished somewhat by the American value of individualism and the focus group respondents expressed this concern. Networking among relatives and "fictive kin" provide support for African American men and women alike and serve as a buttress in the face of continued stigmatization, dehumanization, and discrimination in the workplace and other aspects of daily life.

Double Burden is a more public statement of what has been primarily expressed in closed African American circles and as such, serves to enlighten a broader population about the ever presence of negative racial occurrences in black life.

Wilma Peebles-Wilkins
Boston University

James I. Charlton, *Nothing About Us Without Us: Disability, Oppression and Empowerment*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998. \$27.50 hardcover

By the year 2000, approximately 850 million people world-wide will experience some degree of disability, 13% of the world population. Eighty percent of people with disabilities live in Third

World countries. Approximately 40 million people with disabilities live in the United States. People with disabilities worldwide are the poorest of the poor, the most marginal of the marginal, the outcasts of the outcasts, the most politically powerless of the politically powerless. People with disabilities are killed by their families, institutionalized by their governments, exiled from their villages, and left to beg in the streets. People with disabilities are viewed as less than human, looked upon with pity, and offered paternalism.

Nothing about us without us . . . What does it mean? It means the disability community has had enough of being put aside and powerless. Nothing about us without us is about self-determination and the disability community making its own decisions. Nothing about us without us is about a social movement focused on liberation from systemic worldwide oppression for people with disabilities. These are the topics of James Charlton's book.

Nothing About Us Without Us is an important contribution in the analysis of the disability rights movement. The disability rights movement is a relatively new social movement. It began in the early 1970's in the United States, coming out of the social activism of the 1960's. The movement really gained momentum worldwide in the early 1980's with the United Nations declaring 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons. Charlton describes the movement in the following manner:

Out of the difficult and often hard realities of everyday life, organizations of people with disabilities have appeared in virtually every country in the world. Most of these organizations embrace the principles of empowerment and human rights, independence and integration, and self-help and self-determination, and these organizations form the core of the international disability rights movement (1998, p. 130).

Numerous books and articles chronicling the disability rights movement in North America have been written, but Charlton's book is unique because it offers the reader a comprehensive look at the international disability rights movement and takes the important step of placing disability rights in its broader political/economic and sociocultural context. He demonstrates how

the disability rights movement comes from a place of resistance to systematic oppression of people with disabilities worldwide.

Over the course of ten years, Charlton interviewed disability rights activists from thirteen countries in the Americas, South Africa, Asia, and Europe. He was interested in the experiences of activists and the organizations within which they worked. He was also interested in how they came to personally be involved in disability rights and how their consciousness was raised to confront the discrimination they experienced. Charlton looks at the similarities and differences in disability rights issues in numerous countries and develops a theory of disability oppression that cuts across geographical boundaries.

In the body of the text, the author outlines three dimensions of disability oppression. The first concept is the political/economic dimension that addresses how people with disabilities are marginalized economically and politically throughout the world. The second dimension is concerned with culture and belief systems that include mythological beliefs about people with disabilities, stereotyping of people with disabilities, and the pitying of people with disabilities. The third dimension explores consciousness and alienation with particular emphasis on how people with disabilities internalize their oppression and remain alienated from themselves and others. The focus of the book shifts in the last section and Charlton explores the empowerment of people with disabilities through the disability rights movement and raised consciousness. Charlton also provides a detailed history of the organizations developed in the last 25 years by people with disabilities to fight their oppression. The chapters are interesting because the author uses excerpts from his interviews with disability rights activists from around the world to support his arguments and to give examples. Their personal stories give the book more depth and they give the reader a good sense of the complex issues facing different countries. The similarities and differences worldwide are also made clearer through the excerpts.

This book is a scholarly work. The author uses a broad literature base to support his arguments. At times, this depth can be difficult for the reader because the point the author is trying to make can be lost. However, this comprehensive book is well worth reading because it provides understanding into the causes, extent,

and impact of oppression and discrimination against people with disabilities worldwide. *Nothing About Us Without Us* is a critical analysis of the disability rights movement. The book gives the reader a good grounding in the history of the international disability rights movement and where it is today. The author leaves the reader with many question about where the disability rights movement will go in the future. Wherever the movement goes, Charlton is clear, nothing about us without us. The future will depend upon people with disabilities determining the course of their destinies and claiming their power against formidable economic/political and sociocultural barriers.

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Susan D. Holloway, Bruce Fuller, Marylee F. Rambaud and Constanza Eggers-Pierola, *Through my own Eyes: Single Mothers and the Cultures of Poverty*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998. \$35.00 hardcover.

In an era of welfare reform, when poor families' lives are being transformed by large-scale public policy, it is easy to lose track of the personal stories and lived experiences of women and children in poverty. Federal and state policymakers have attempted to fashion a new approach to income support that reflects changing public sentiments about government's role in the lives of families, while also imposing obligations on adult women to look for work, find work, and exit the welfare roles promptly. How women will respond to these new requirements is as yet unknown, in part because we understand little about the struggles low income families already face coping with crushing poverty, dangerous neighborhoods, few steady work opportunities and limited child care resources. More important, we know even less about women's personal perspectives on the joys of raising young children while coping with the challenges of doing so in poverty. *Through my own eyes* attempts to give voice to women whose considerations on child rearing, child care, and other broad-ranging issues are too infrequently heard in the clamor of debate about welfare reform.

The book uses ethnography to capture the personal experiences and viewpoints of 14 low-income women. In doing so, the