



Equality; You can't pick and choose!

With this issue of PosAbility

focusing on holidays, I was planning to use my column to explore one of the essential elements of going away. We all spend those two weeks of summer seeking sun, sea, Sangria and, yes you've guessed it, sex. So when I started thinking about putting finger to keyboard I was planning to explore the subject of disability and sex. Another reason behind my thinking was that recently I have been embroiled in the argument around disability and prostitution. I've been interviewed by newspapers and magazines, interviewed on radio shows and even appeared on the TV show *This Morning*, where I discussed the subject opposite Madam Becky Adams who is planning to open an accessible brothel especially for disabled clients. On top of this attempt to open a cripples only brothel, another campaigner called Chris Fulton is trying to find a solicitor who will help him fight for the right to have trips to visit sex workers funded by the NHS.

I kept finding myself mystified by the way these people want to portray disabled people when it comes to sex and relationships, with their drive to stick to the stereotype that we are too hideous to be able to find and maintain normal, fulfilling sex lives and that our only hope is to pay for sex. I know that it is a touchy subject and that there is a taboo around disability and sex, but to try and make disabled people a special case when it

comes to sex just struck me as damaging. Not only to us disabled people, but to the wider society. To say that some people are just so unappealing that their only way of experiencing sex is to pay for it creates an idea of what is attractive that impacts on everyone in our community. I won't bang on about my reason why I am so against this idea here. If you want to know more check out my blog

mikscarlet.blogspot.co.uk.

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"So what is this column about then Mik?" I hear you ask. Well it's the bigger picture. After the hoo-ha around sex, the press then seemed to be filled with stories that also said something about the way disabled people wanted to be seen. Firstly there was the story about disabled convicted drug dealer Daniel Roque Hall being released because being in prison might affect his health and then Oscar Pistorious's defence lawyers asking that he not be held in custody while he awaits trial for shooting his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp for pretty much the same reason. Now while I don't want to comment on individual cases, if for no other reason than I don't want to get

sued, I am really concerned at how many disabled people are prepared to play the poor little cripple to get what they want, whether it's free hookers or a get out of jail free card. I have spent most of my adult life fighting for equality for disabled people, but I was fighting for true equality and not one that can be ignored when it becomes awkward for us.

Now I'm not saying that disabled people do not face inequality. Far from it. Especially at the minute with the cuts in benefits and social care, the closure of the Independent Living Fund and the current plans for a bedroom tax combining with a society that is not changing the way it is designed or run to become more inclusive. But I do feel that these are the things we should be fighting against. Equality should make us all equal and have equal opportunity to live as we wish. So if we want to visit hookers or smuggle drugs then that's great. But aren't we working towards a world where we are all truly equal, even if it sometimes proves to make our lives difficult. Because if those difficulties are the same as experienced by the non-disabled community then we can finally say we have achieved the long dream of equality!

(Wow, this must be the most controversial column I've written so far for PosAbility. Can't wait to hear what you think dear Reader!) ■