

As a woman who has lived with disability for more than 25 years and as caregiver for my husband, who is 84, ill and disabled, I'm writing to ask you to avoid the trap of euthanasia and assisted suicide. As you may know, people with disabilities face tremendous discrimination in healthcare as well as in society as a whole. The term we most often use for this is **ableism**, and the ideology that life with disability is somehow 'undignified' is, perhaps, the very definition of ableism.

Many people believe that Oregon 'death with dignity' law is working well after 17 years, here is one analysis that questions that assumption: <http://www.truedignityvt.org/whats-going-oregon/>. That most of the reasons given for 'choosing' assisted suicide in Oregon are ableist is beyond question. Year after year, the reports show that disability, fear of disability and fear of becoming a 'burden' are the 'reasons' most often cited. The very existence of the 'death with dignity' law feeds into and reinforces ableist fears and prejudices in Oregon.

These many ableist assumptions are why **every major disability rights group** that has taken a position on assisted suicide opposes it. A very good article from Marilyn Golden of the Disability Rights Defense and Education Fund (DREDF) is located at: http://dredf.org/assisted_suicide/assistedsuicide.html

Though I am a child of the Cherokee Nation, I appear white and therefore, do not have the same personal experience of racism many others do in our movement. There is, however, good research that shows that African Americans oppose assisted suicide bills by 65%: <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/11/21/chapter-1-opinion-about-laws-on-doctor-assisted-suicide/> There is wisdom in their opposition.

Finally, there are implications for society as a whole. The 'approval' of anyone's suicide diminishes

us all and may make other suicides more likely, as has happened in Oregon where the (non-assisted) suicide rate is rising 35% faster than the national average. 'Approval' of these deaths also has a chilling effect upon law enforcement as this article shows:

<http://www.truedignityvt.org/assisted-suicide-and-euthanasia-gradually-create-a-special-class-of-homicide-almost-never-investigated/>.

If we should start caring less and less for those who are poor, racial minorities or disabled, what have we come to as a society? I sincerely hope that Australians are better than this and I hope that you will take the lead by refusing any consideration of euthanasia and assisted suicide, there are many care options that can provide comfort and ease the end of life without ending life.

Thank you,
W. Carol Cleigh

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere - Rev. M.L. King, Jr.