

**Additional Comments on the Reported Impact
of Service Dogs on the Lives of People with Severe Ambulatory Disabilities: A Reply to
Karen Allen
Ed Eames, Ph.D. and Toni Eames, M.S.**

Dr. Karen Allen's response to our critique of her research on the impact of service dogs on the lives of individuals with severe ambulatory disabilities in the Fall 1996 DSQ still does not answer many of the essential questions raised by us. For her to claim absolutely no knowledge or interest in the raising, training, and placement of the 48 service dogs used in the study is inconceivable. After all, the service dog is the independent or antecedent variable and is central to the study.

Allen reports that more than 500 individuals applied to become part of the research population. In spite of inquiries in leading disability publications, no one has claimed participation in or knowledge of this study. In addition, none of the 48 participants, their friends, or relatives have come forth.

The issue of ethics in the scientific enterprise has continued to be a central concern. In a recent article in the American Scientist on ethical conduct, Woodward and Goldstein write: "The idea (of publication) is to try to give all the information to help others judge the value of the contribution." (Woodward and Goldstein, 1996: 483) Dr. Allen has not followed this scientific imperative. By providing no information about the selection, training, and placement of the service dogs, Dr. Allen undercuts the fundamental scientific dictum of replicability.

Turning once again to Woodward and Goldstein's discussion of ethical scientific conduct, they write: "Peer review, as currently done, is extremely unlikely to uncover instances of intentional misconduct." (Ibid, 489) Dr. Allen claims her work has been thoroughly reviewed by her peers, but provides no information on who these peers were or how they reviewed her work.

Setting aside the methodological, ethical, and antecedent variable issues, some of the substantive findings in the study are startling even to those of us who believe in the efficacy of service dogs. At the beginning of the study, none of the participants were gainfully employed. Miraculously, at the end of the study, 23 of the 24 individuals initially partnered with service dogs and 17 of the 24 partnered with service dogs after one year were employed. (Allen and Blascovich, 1996, 1003). Thus, at the end of the study, 40 of the 48 participants in the study had achieved gainful employment. In many ways, these figures are even more startling than the alleged \$60,000 saving in the cost of personal assistants. Moving from 0% employment to 82% employment during the two year course of the study runs counter to the reality of the reported statistic of 70% unemployment for people with severe physical disabilities. If these figures have any validity, then the entire vocational rehabilitation system in this country should be converted to a dog training program designed to provide service dogs for individuals with disabilities such as MS, MD, TBI and SCI!

References

Karen Allen and Jim Blascovich, "The Value of Service Dogs for People with Severe Ambulatory Disabilities: A Randomized Control Trial," Journal of the American Medical Association, 275:13, April 3, 1996, 1001-1006.

James Woodward and David Goldstein, "Conduct, Misconduct and the Structure of Science," America Scientist, Sept-Oct 1996, vol. 84, no. 5, 429-90.

On the Outskirts: The Black Community

Leroy Franklin Moore, Jr.

What does this mean to me? It means isolation, being mute, being out-of-sight-out-of-mind, rejections; it means role models, awareness and education. My brothers and sisters are stuck on a picket fence watching our communities charge down two streets that have not connected yet into a freeway!

The two communities I am talking about have so much in common. They both have a civil rights movement that produced laws, a march on Washington, and a rich culture. They unfortunately also share high percentages of unemployment, low educational achievements, and people living below the poverty line. During election years, they are used as targets for the ills of our society. Although the two communities have so much in common, they continue to travel on their own streets. I am talking about the Black community and the Disabled community. Black disabled people are on a picket fence and on the outskirts of the Black and disabled communities.

The Black community has finally recognized and listened to the voices of Black women as a powerful and firm element in the community. The Black civil rights movement and the feminist movement had to step aside to make room at the tables of their communities, movements, and in history books for this strong tell-it-like-it-is, important, and solid chair.

Black gays and lesbians are making the same moves and knocking at the doors of the Black and gay and lesbian communities like Black women did. However, their voices are only now slowly opening the doors. But there is no door in the Black community for Black disabled people! Why? Black disabled people are pushed out of the Black community and into the white world to receive services and benefits from therapy to education. Black parents with disabled children have to enter a new world, the Disabled Rights Movement, which is predominately white above the grassroots. So the Black community is untouched by the needs, concerns, and rights of Black disabled children. As Black disabled children grow up, they learn if they need services, their legal rights enforced, and a job they have to leave their community and enter a community of which they are rightful members, but because of a lack of diversity it is even harder to obtain services, rights, and jobs. The voices of Black disabled people are not being heard in their communities.

Every civil rights movement has a ladder which splits the movement into two camps: the haves at the top and the have nots at the bottom. The Black Gay and Lesbian, Women's, and, yes, the Disabled movements all have or had people that belong to their respective movements, but