

Nourane Selim and Hanin Qandil

Title: Understanding disability: seeking empathy not sympathy

JRMC 4460

Audio Documentary Script

LEAD IN: This audio documentary is about people with special needs. It focuses on the journey of a young woman who had an accident and is now living in a wheelchair. While discrimination against disabled people and the inaccessibility of Egyptian streets represent a hardship that people with physical disability have to cope with, she was able to overcome all the obstacles and challenges she faced trying to integrate into the Egyptian society.

*MUSIC: FADE IN: Tamer Karawan - Taraf Talet (plays for 2 mins 33 secs, up and then under)*

*Omneya El Yamany (OY): "In Germany the doctor said to me that you won't be able to walk again. Actually I didn't cry and didn't feel sad at all." (00:10)*

Nourane Selim (NS): That was Omneya El Yamany, she traveled to Germany for rehabilitation after having a car accident on the Suez Road.

*OY: "I was 18 years old. I had the accident in the second semester of the first year in my university. I stopped my education for one and a half year, and then I returned to the university and started this journey." (00:16)*

N.S: When you Google the definition of disabled, you only get synonyms like incapable, impaired, weaken, damage, paralyzed and others. Omneya, among many, is proving all dictionaries wrong.

*OY: "I felt that I was newborn, I'm observing everything in a new way." (00:05)*

NS: With her spinal cord partially damaged, Omneya gets to experience new sensations that she didn't experience before.

*OY: "Being paralysed, you lose the sense and the movement, for example if you want to go to the toilet, usually the normal people feel that type of feelings, the alarm that you want to go to the toilet. If you are paralysed, you have another sensation, for example you have headache, this is a sign you have to go to the toilet." (00:23)*

NS: In most cases, when we give sympathy, we do not reach across to understand the world as others see it. This is what happened when Hanin and I visited Omneya. She gave us a tour in her house and made us coffee.

*Nat sound Omneya in the kitchen, plays for 10 secs - FADE IN*

NS: We told her, we can help, we can do it. We didn't get it at the moment.

*Nat sound Omneya in the kitchen - FADE OUT*

NS: We understood later on, that such acts of sympathy convey the idea that you could not possibly understand someone's experience, while also implying that you are glad you cannot.

*Ola Morsy (OM): "So we have to stress here on a very important difference between empathy and sympathy." (00:05)*

NS: This is Ola Morsy, a consultant psychiatrist at The American University in Cairo

*OM: "So to be, to have empathy to a person with the disability is that to put yourself in his shoes and imagine life how is it going with this certain disability and try to as much as possible pave the way to help this person do whatever they can." (00:20)*

*OY: "My parents and my cousins when I came back from Germany, they usually help me, so I just tell them no stop it, I can do this. This is an exercise and every time you practice this, it would be more easier." (00:14)*

*MUSIC: FADE OUT : Tamer Karawan - Taraf Talet*

*MUSIC: FADE IN: Khaled Hammad - Kelmet Ser (plays for 60 secs, up and then under)*

NS: The struggles of disabled people do not stop there. Born with a disability called Cerebral Palsy that affects the ability to move, Magdy Abdel-Sayed had to adapt to the undeniably inhospitable environment surrounding him in Egypt. He's now the students' ambassador of Helm Foundation, an organization that promotes the full inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of life in Egypt

*Magdy Abdel-Sayed (MA): "In Egypt we have the accessibility problem and there's also another problem that people with disabilities don't feel like they're integrated into the society in the first place, they feel alienated." (00:13)*

NS: Abdel-Sayed explains that the problem of alienation starts early on with public and private schools setting admission conditions designed to exclude children with mental or physical impairments.

*MA: "Schools most of the times, they don't accept people with disabilities because they say that this will ruin the school's image." (00:09)*

NS: The problem continues with people with disabilities being overlooked by employers and invisible to almost the whole community.

*OY: "After I graduated, my friend suggested me to her director or manager and then he said no she's a wheelchair user, she use a wheelchair, I can't depend on her." (00:13)*

*MUSIC: FADE OUT: Khaled Hammad - Kelmet Ser*

*MUSIC: FADE IN: Khaled Hammad - Ahla El Awaat (plays for 45 secs, up and then under)*

Hanin Qandil (HQ): Despite all challenges, Omneya decided to flip the page and start writing a new chapter.

*OY: "From day one, I'm searching why god chose me. This is my motivation because simply we're here to make a difference." (00:10)*

*OM: "They know how to remain motivated and even when things don't go right. Even if they take it as a challenge and as a way to start all over again and like when there is a will there's a way. They usually have regular motivation type." (00:22)*

*MUSIC: FADE OUT: Khaled Hammad - Ahla El Awaat*

*MUSIC: FADE IN: Hesham Gamal - Ersem Alb (plays for 90 secs up and then under)*

HQ: For Omneya, one of the best ways to keep herself motivated is to motivate other people around her.

*OY: "I decided six months or one year ago to start giving. I usually do this, but I started being more focused on this. I give my experience to other people who had suffered from the same case as me." (00:18)*

HQ: In Fitiology, a gym in New Cairo,

*Nat Sound Omneya at the gym, plays for 15 secs - FADE IN*

She gives coaches there all the skills and exercises she learned in Germany in her rehabilitation phase. She works out three to four times a week and became an inspiration for almost twenty disabled cases, who exercise with her at the gym.

*Nat Sound Omneya at the gym - FADE OUT*

HQ: Her paralysis did not prevent her from achieving this one goal on her bucket list, to skydive, regardless of the consequences, becoming the first Egyptian wheelchair user to skydive.

*OY: "Usually I go to Czech republic for one month to make physiotherapy, once I wanted to go to a camp in Norway, my mother was refusing at all. She told me you can't travel alone, this is a camp and so. I gave her two choices, I go to the camp or I do skydiving, she chose skydiving." (00:23)*

HQ: Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi has recently declared 2018 as the year of those challenged with a disability. According to Egypt Today, a new law approved by the parliament states that people with disabilities shall exercise the right to education, learning, work and recreation, and in the use of public facilities and services. It also aims to provide a safe environment for them, free of exploitation, violence, and neglect.

*MA: "I hope that it's not just words that are put on paper and that's it. The idea is the implementation of the laws."(00:08)*

*MA: "People with disabilities can do much more than we think, and you have to give the person with disability a chance because if we actually give them the chance which are from 15 to 17 million of the Egyptian society, Egypt as a whole will definitely improve." (00:21)*

*MUSIC: FADE OUT: Hesham Gamal - Ersem Alb*

*MUSIC: FADE IN: Tamer Ashour - Wesh El Kheir (plays for 60 secs up and then under)*

HQ: While doing this, Nourane and I realized that feeling sorry for people with disabilities is not what they ask for, they ask for a much simpler thing... A chance.

*OY: "Just give them a try because they are differently abled." (00:04)*

HQ: There is no greater disability in society than the inability to see a person as more, and as far as we are concerned, disability means possibility.

HQ: This audio documentary was produced by Nourane Selim and Hanin Qandil for the Audio Production course taught by Professor Kim Fox in Spring 2018.

HQ: We would like to thank our interviewees, Omneya El Yamany, Magdy Abdel Sayed and Professor Ola Morsy. Music credits to Taraf Talet by Tamer Karawan, Kelmet Ser and Ahla El

Awaat by Khaled Hammad, Ersem Alb by Hesham Gamal, and Wesh El Kheir by Tamer Ashour. All Nat sounds are collected by Nourane Selim and Hanin Qandil.

*MUSIC: FADE OUT: Tamer Ashour - Wesh El Kheir*