

BSA Auto/Biography Study Group

Centre for Biography and Education

“LIVES IN CONFLICT”

One Day Conference 12th December 2014
The British Library Conference Centre

ABSTRACT

“I open the coffin and here I am.”
Disability as oppression and liberating education in my
brother’s construction of identity

Ignacio Calderon-Almendros, University of Malaga

This paper presents a case study on my brother Rafael, a young musician. Research is based on 180 records made through interviews, focus groups, observations and documentary collection, involving 190 informants.

The data analysis shows how the social system creates subordinated and stigmatized conditions of experience for people with disabilities that lead to social exclusion and reification. This disability as oppression (which is the “coffin of the dead”) can be combated by education understood as resistance to inequality, if we question the social order and power relationships, and strive to create the possibility of being subject. So, Rafael has been able to construct his identity in a relatively autonomous way, challenging social mandates that led him to exclusion and denied him as a subject. “I open the coffin and here I am”: In 2012, Rafael received the World Down Syndrome Day Award for being the first student with Down syndrome in the Higher Degree of Music.