

Chapter 7

Making the “Unfit, Fit”: The Rhetoric of Mainstreaming in the World Bank’s Commitment to Gender Equality and Disability Rights

Rebecca Dingo
University of Missouri

Our goal is to support the fit and to help make the unfit fit. This is all about inclusion. (Wolfensohn, 1997, p. 5).

The disabled body exposes the illusion of autonomy, self-government, and self-determination that underpins the fantasy of absolute able-bodiedness. (Garland-Thomson, 1997, p. 46)

The terms “exclusion” and “inclusion” are not, in one sense, pure opposites. Since feminist analyses that did not explicitly concern themselves with the applicability and relevance of their analyses to “women on the margins” often perceived themselves as applicable to *all* women, that form of “exclusion” was simultaneous a problematic form of “inclusion.” (Narayan, 1997, p. 45)

Introduction

On 23 September 1997 at the World Bank annual meeting, President James Wolfensohn delivered the important speech “The Challenge of Inclusion” to an audience of Bank members, non-governmental organization leaders, development experts, and Bank employees.¹ In this speech, which I closely analyze below, Wolfensohn argued that it was time for the Bank and development experts to take gender and women’s place in the development process seriously; it was time, he claimed, to “include” women and bring “into society [those people] who have never been part of it before” (1997, p. 1-2). Significantly, Wolfensohn went on to define the “challenge of inclusion” as “bringing more and people into the economic mainstream” (p. 3) in order to “make the unfit, fit” (p. 5).

Seven years later, in November 2004, I attended the World Bank conference “Disability and Inclusive Development: Sharing, Learning and Building Alliances” at the World Bank Headquarters in Washington, DC. The conference opened up with a series of public service announcement-style films that featured people with disabilities from across the world. For example, the film *From Exclusion to Inclusion* (World Bank, 2004) demonstrated the way that the Bank is working to factor people with disabilities into the Bank itself and into development projects at large.

The film begins by reminding the audience that there are 600 million people around the world that have one or more kinds of disabilities and then transitions to individual frames of several people in succession talking about their own disabilities. This portion of the film is not in color but in muted tones of brown. Each person is dressed in professional clothing and most speak English or American Sign Language (ASL). Because the camera frames their upper torsos,

¹ An earlier draft of this essay received and benefited from generous comments by Brenda Jo Brueggemann, Jim Fredal, and Nan Johnson. Special thanks to Miranda Atkinson for her patient reading and source sleuthing.

we do not “see” or get a sense of the subjects’ disability—and it appears that, in fact, the disability has been overcome, erased.² Looking directly into the camera and speaking about their own experiences, this set of articulate people illustrates the Bank’s definition of inclusion and development. The brown tones coupled with the camera’s focus and the uniformly dressed speakers represent the standard working body. At this point in the film, the camera’s gaze works against the common representation of “the disabled victim” and rhetorically does not evoke feelings of “antipathy and aversion” in the film’s audience (Hahn, 1997, p. 176). Instead, the audience identifies with the articulate and controlled individuals in front of us.

As the film continues, however, the audience is introduced to the Bank’s global disability and development programs; we learn what the Bank is doing to “include” people with disabilities who live in the third world. Yet, we do not hear directly from the people participating in the Bank’s programs—we see them in action. In contrast to the professionally dressed subjects of the first scene who speak directly to the camera, look able-bodied, and appear in monotone color, the third-world subjects are filmed in full color and do not look at or speak to the camera; rather we observe them unobtrusively.³ The camera renders their actions awkward and in doing so begs for the audience’s empathy; the camera focuses closely on them shuffling on crutches while planting a garden, wheeling around a mushroom-growing warehouse, and using differently-functioning arms and hands to create various commodities.

The camera’s upward angle leads the audience to stare at and focus on the third-world subject’s disfigurement rendering the body into a working object “to-be-looked-at and not-to-be-looked at” (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 57). In each instance the subjects in the camera’s inconspicuous gaze engage in work-related activities—indeed, in each instance there is also slippage between the enabled global subject-citizen and the freakish and backward third-world underdeveloped object. As David Hevey (1997) might suggest, the subjects appear “tragic but [...] brave” (p. 334). The camera angles and panned out frames lead the audience to categorize each individual as a non-normative or substandard body in contrast to those people at the beginning of the film that appear controlled, standard, and “normal.” The visual rhetoric suggests that the person with the disability disrupts the work environment, not that the work environment needs to be enabling.

At the conference just after the film, Wolfensohn (2004) provided a few remarks that celebrated the film’s compelling presentation and suggested that the film demonstrated the need to bring people with disabilities into the realm of economic development. Focusing again on inclusion, he reminded his audience that recently, “gender was an issue that was [...] given a backward place until [the Bank] discovered that the key to development was, in fact, women”

² I want to point out that, indeed, we sometimes are unable to observe a disability; disabilities can be physical-sometimes visible sometimes not—and mental. Thus, I say “see” here because the representation of this group of people with disabilities is significant. I will explain more further below.

³ I use the general term “third world subject” to describe the people who the Bank is working to “develop” because as I will show further below, the public face of the World Bank tends not to distinguish between one third-world subject and another. In using this term I do heed Uma Narayan’s warning that feminist scholars must “distinguish the terms of their analyses and representations from the terms of colonialist discourses, taking care not to exacerbate the problems set in place by this colonial, political, and discursive background” (55). In addition, because the Bank has historically employed a rhetoric of development (undeveloped, underdeveloped, developed) to categorize the countries and regions that are in the most need of funding and assistance, I chose to use the words third-world instead of “develop.” To categorize a country as undeveloped, underdeveloped, or developed merely draws from the very discourse of eugenics I am attempting to expose in this essay.

(2004, p. 3).⁴ In other words, due to the context of the speech and the overarching goals of the World Bank's development projects, Wolfensohn implied that people with disabilities, like women, may be the missing link to creating successful development policies that bring third-world citizens into the "mainstream of the economy"—into a system of transnational capitalism (1997, p.5).

Wolfensohn's speeches both in 1997 and in 2004, and the World Bank-sponsored short films like the one described above are at once informative and troubling. To some extent I believe it is important that the World Bank devotes projects, programs, and development monies to address the needs of women and people with disabilities. However, although Wolfensohn's speech and the film described above both demonstrate the need for intervention, the representation of "the disabled" global citizen relies upon audience members' preconceived notions and visual expectations about third-world "backwardness" and "the disabled" victimhood. *From Exclusion to Inclusion* tells a teleological story of development; it suggests that those who have been included in the mainstream of economic development have become standardized working bodies and enabled subjects whose voices count, who can tell their history, and who have, ultimately, overcome their disability. In other words, the group of people the film begins with stand in stark contrast to the third-world people with visible disabilities the Bank is working to "include."

The rhetoric of mainstreaming, inclusion, backwardness, and fitness appears in images that render some people with disabilities as productive and "normal" and others as pathetic, "disfigured" victims. This rhetoric disturbingly intersects a larger colonial discourse of eugenics and ability. On one level the Bank's varying representations of people with disabilities addresses disability scholars such as Harlan Hahn (1997), James C. Wilson, and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson's (2001) concerns, because some of the film images do not objectify or victimize people with disabilities, showing how people with disabilities are productive members of society. At the same time, it is significant that the images where people with disabilities appear as victims are also the same people the Bank is working to bring into the "mainstream" of global capitalism. This representation reflects a dually historic tendency to portray the physical (and mental) traits of colonized or third-world people *and* people with disabilities as monstrous, uncontrollable, incomprehensible, *or* exceedingly docile and genial (see, for example, Hahn, Narayan, Burton, and Lutz and Collins).

This essay considers the World Bank's rhetoric of inclusion. In addition to the brief description of the above film, I will examine the World Bank's discourse of normalcy as employed in their promotional pamphlet, "The World Bank Group: Working for a World Free of Poverty," and their call to include women (in 1997) and people with disabilities (in 2004) in their development plans. I demonstrate how intersecting eugenicist and colonial narratives about gender, dis/ability, and development are contradictory, given the development problem that disabled and/or female bodies pose for World Bank development programs. Because contemporary World Bank development policies tend to focus on enabling third-world citizens to enter the labor force, people with disabilities whose non-standard bodies cannot often engage in common laboring activities and women who still are predominately caretakers of children, pose a conundrum for Bank policymakers. Why, then, does the Bank characterize women and people

⁴ In the texts I examine here, Wolfensohn uses the term "gender" when he means women. However, the World Bank has explicitly addressed how men and women's gendered identities factor into their development program. As Kate Bedford argues in her essay "Loving to Straighten-Out Development" World Bank development programs in Ecuador explicitly school participants on how to engage in normative sex acts and balance the emotional labor of work and family, for example, to fit with a new economy that demands women to work outside the home and men participate as in-home caretakers.

with disabilities as the missing links to development? How does the Bank propose to resolve this aforementioned conundrum?

In this essay, I attempt to begin answering these two questions. I argue that despite the Bank's attempt to normalize women and people with disabilities into work activities, it in no way solves this conundrum; instead, the Bank perpetuates the problem by returning to deeply historic, colonial, and eugenic discourses. For the most part, such discourses work because their legitimacy is unquestioned and familiar. The manner in which the Bank represents women and people with disabilities as the missing links to development is significant because these modes of representation demonstrate how the Bank's own rhetoric is entangled in a larger ideology of able-bodied global citizenship, western liberal individualism, and neo-liberal economics.⁵

As Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (1997) explains in her description of the contradictions of liberalism, "the disabled figure renounc[es] [...] [the] very existence [of the] fiction of self-improvement and [...] present[s] the ultimate challenge to perfection and progress" (p.46). Likewise, neo-liberalism's contradiction lies in the fact that in the neoliberal economy, the welfare state, or any state dependence is seen as a sign of weakness or a disability because it exposes the inherent contradiction of the notion of self-reliance for citizens. Consequently, people with disabilities (like all citizens) are never autonomous in the way the Bank's teleology of development promotes. In other words, despite the Bank's attempt to make the "unfit fit," the very economic structures the Bank promotes depends upon an illusive standardized, homogenized, and normalized body-politic that reinforces the exact problems that the Bank purports to address (Davis 2002, Hahn 1997, and Garland-Thomson 1997).

The rhetoric of inclusion and mainstreaming that the Bank puts forth relies upon and furthers representations of colonial "backwardness" while also maintaining and reifying historic discourses of eugenics, normalcy, and able-bodied-ness. This rhetoric of inclusion represented in the film I described above and the pamphlet and speech I will analyze below distracts from the Bank's larger neocolonial and neoliberal project by rhetorically constructing nations, citizens, and the global community as having universal goals and fundamental similarities that aid entry into normative economic processes. Contrastingly, the very economic arguments the Bank puts forth, re-marginalize third-world women and people with disabilities by reinforcing "such concepts as will, ability, progress, responsibility, and free agency, notions around which liberal society organizes" (Garland-Thomson, 1997, p. 47).⁶ Because Bank materials represent third-world subjectivity, gender, and disability as "backward," "unfit," and ultimately outside the mainstream of (Capitalist) economic development, development practioners are persuaded to act because this representation renders third-world people and nations as disorganized, not controlled, and incomprehensible. Bringing the "backward" into the mainstream of economic development makes them controllable, organized, comprehensible, and ultimately safe.

⁵ Economist Susan George characterizes the neoliberal economy in the following way: "the State [...] reduce[s] its role in the economy, [...] and citizens [are] given much less rather than much more social protection" (27). Anthony Giddens, likewise, notes that neoliberalism is "link[ed to] unfettered market forces [and] to a defense of traditional institutions, particularly the family and nation" (12). Like the US and German eugenics projects from the early part of the twentieth century, which attempted to identify the sorts of people who were genetically fit to reproduce a strong country, Giddens explains that in the neoliberal economy the welfare state or any state dependence is seen as a weakness or a disability because it exposes the inherent contradiction of the notion of self-reliance for citizens (13).

⁶ I only identify people with disabilities as a separate category from "women" or "gender" because the instances I examine throughout this paper maintain this false distinction.

The World Bank's Disabling Neo-colonial Power.

World Bank and its programs and policies are important to examine from a colonial and disability perspective because as Harlan Hahn (1997) describes, "all aspects of the environment are molded by public policy and [...] policies are a reflection of pervasive attitudes and values" (p. 175). Stefan Kuhl (1994) likewise suggests that contemporary public policies contain traces of eugenicist discourses that problematically frame our understanding of political and social intervention. The World Bank is a U.S. based international development organization and as such puts forth public policies that reflect the interests of the United States and other leading (post)industrial powers such as France, Britain, Japan, and Germany. Supporting neoliberal economics, whereby individuals become more responsible than governments for securing their personal and community well-being, the World Bank's overarching programs and policies attempt to bring capitalism to third-world economies, and in doing so lock governments and citizens into a classed system sustained by an unequal global labor market.

Within capitalism, as Hahn points out, "the unemployment rate of disabled adults may be traced to broad economic forces rather than individual impairments" (p. 173). Although according to the film I examined above, the Bank appears to be trying to secure work for third-world citizens with disabilities, for most of these people, the labor they will be able to perform will not lift them out of poverty.⁷ In other words, the very global capitalist structure the Bank promotes poses a specific problem for people with disabilities since capitalism "conceptualizes equality as equality among workers rather than financial equality" (Davis, 2002, p. 110). How then, do women and people with disabilities factor into this system that relies upon a standardized and able-bodied work force? How does the Bank, in general, account for this contradiction?

The World Bank's Teleological Narrative.

In this section I introduce the World Bank and demonstrate its teleological narrative of development as represented on the cover of the promotional pamphlet "The World Bank: Working for a World Free of Poverty." While I do not examine how the Bank represents women and people with disabilities specifically, I suggest the Bank's overall mission (as communicated in the pamphlet's visual rhetoric) demonstrates a common representational slippage between the "normal" global citizen and the "backward" disabled third-world object. I argue that the Bank's visual rhetoric works to neutralize the differences between "backward" and disabled countries by imposing a development process that attempts to standardize a country's economic and cultural practices. This argument calls attention to how the Bank's neo-colonial and normalizing discourses intersect to frame its arguments for "helping the poorest of the poor" (see the World Bank's mission statement).

The World Bank can be characterized as what Garland-Thomson calls the "normate," "the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them" (qtd. by Davis 2002, p. 38). Although the Bank is not a person as Garland-Thomson's use of the term suggests, her characterization adequately represents the relationship that the Bank has with third-world nations and people. Headquartered in Washington DC where 7,000 of their 10,000 employees work, the World Bank is the largest development organization in the world. The

⁷ The Bank does realize that stigma is a major factor for integrating people with disabilities into their development plans too.

World Bank has 184 member countries, yet outside of the United States there are only 100 other Bank offices throughout the world.⁸ All Bank presidents have been U.S. citizens.⁹

While the World Bank is a lending and credit institution, it does not function as a traditional bank. Instead, first-world countries supply money to the World Bank (the United States is the largest contributor) and the Bank in turn provides loans to countries who agree to follow the Bank's development plans to become a viable actor in the transnational economy.¹⁰ In this way, "normate" correctly characterizes the Bank because at the very least, the Bank, with its leadership and location in the United States, demonstrates its cultural and economic capital and how its body politic is well endowed with resources enabling its programs. The Bank's institutional structure and (inter)national presence, its stated goals and arguments, and its implicit values demonstrate its complacency with the inherent class structure produced by capitalism and Western imperialism. Likewise, the World Bank Group's institutional practices as envisioned on the pamphlet cover below reflect Georges Balandier's definition of a colonial situation: "the domination imposed by a foreign minority, 'racially' and culturally different, over a materially weaker indigenous majority in the name of a racial (or ethnic) and cultural superiority" (qtd. by Spurr, 1993, p. 5 - 6).

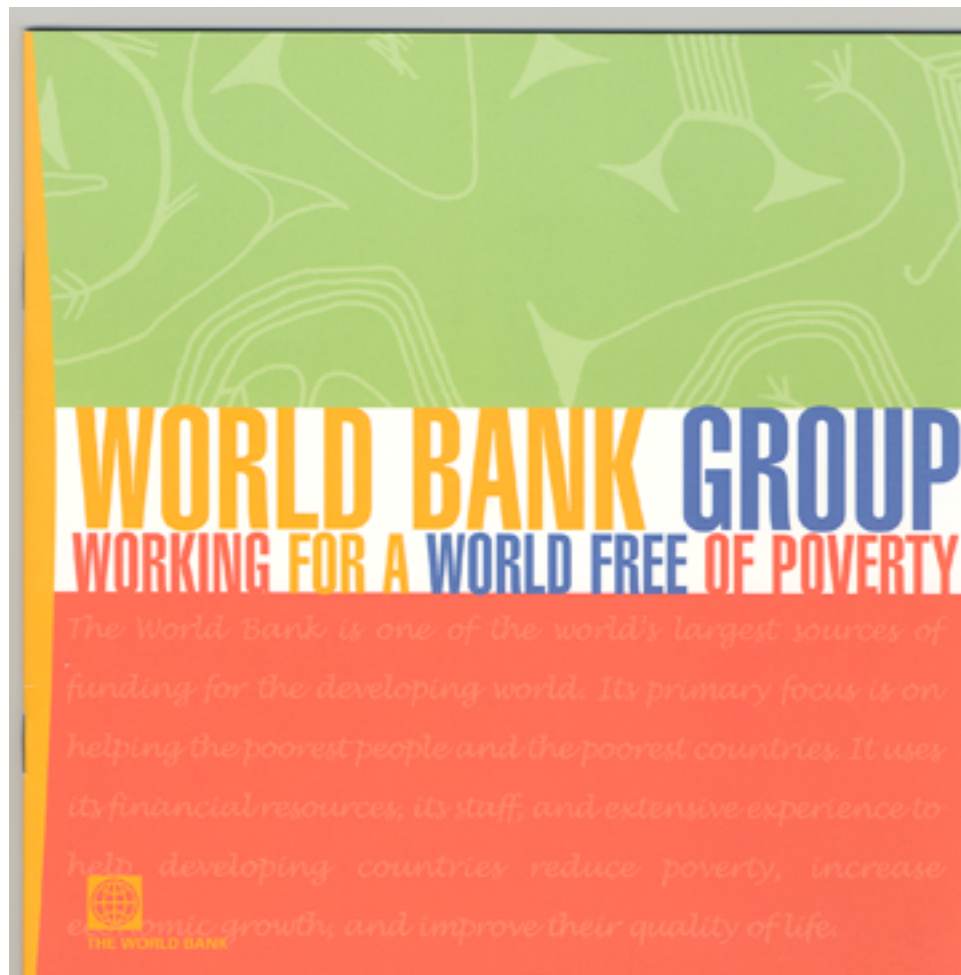
The Bank certainly does not see itself as a colonizer; yet, as visually depicted below, there is a fixed narrative of development led by particular endowed and foreign countries in the name of fitness, orderliness, and economic productivity. The Bank's promotional materials make clear that the countries they serve are "members" of their organization, yet, there is an embedded set of power relationships present between the "normate" "colonizer" (here, the Bank) and the "backward" and "disabled" colonized (here, third-world nations) whereby the first tends to be technologically advanced and economically strong and the second tends to have little technological advancement and a simple and vulnerable economy (Spurr, 1993, p. 6). In this way, the Bank's relationship to third-world countries can be seen as a form of neocolonialism

⁸ The Bank's neocolonial discourse and reliance on Western imperialism is, at the very least, demonstrated by its geographic location. Although the Bank has offices and institutions throughout the world, its "headquarters" and majority of employees are centralized within the US, specifically, Washington DC. The Bank has a "membership" of 184 countries all of whom "own" "shares" in the Bank ("World Bank Group" 11). In addition to the geographic location of the Bank, it is also funded and aided by wealthy western countries. As the pamphlet "World Bank Group" further explains, "The number of shares a country has is based roughly on the size of its economy. The United States is the largest single shareholder[.]" (11). The pamphlet continues, "The Bank's president is, by tradition, a national of the largest shareholder, the United States" (11). Shareholders are part of the voting contingency of the Bank and as such, the higher number of shares a country has the larger percentage of votes they acquire.

⁹ The Bank's stated mission is to "help developing countries reduce poverty, increase economic growth, and improve [...] [the] quality of life." From 1995 until 2005, James D. Wolfensohn resided as president of the World Bank. He began his position in the midst of a period when the Bank embraced strict rational choice and neoliberal policies. Wolfensohn's demeanor and willingness to meet with the people the Bank serves demonstrated a remarkable shift in the public face of the Bank. As president, Wolfensohn embraced the liberal humanist language of inclusion, gender equality, and disability rights thereby securing the Bank's ethos during a time when anti-globalization activists were increasingly publicly attacking its institutional lending practices.

¹⁰ The World Bank reports the following percentages of voting shareholders: US with 16.41 percent of votes, Japan with 7.87 percent of votes, Germany with 4.49 percent of votes, the UK with 4.31 percent of votes, and France with 4.31 percent of votes ("World Bank Group" 11). The remaining votes are divided among shareholders of other countries that are not mentioned. Knowing who the voters/shareholders are is important when considering the audiences of international policy.

which is reified not only in the power structure present between Bank members from first world countries, but also through the below image (see Figure 1).



(Figure 1, “The World Bank Group: Working for a World Free of Poverty” 2003 p.1)

Unlike the Bank’s policies, which focus on bringing developing countries into the mainstream of global capitalism through partnerships with private corporate firms over supporting community-based social services, the cover to the promotional pamphlet, “The World Bank Group,” appears artistic and centers on the compassionate and human-side of development. This pamphlet, with its colorful cover displaying “primitive” art, exhibits the Bank’s goal of third-world global development.

The top portion of the cover contains the jumble of fragmented figures but the bottom portion appears orderly and intelligible. The words “World Bank Group: Working for a World Free of Poverty” mediates between the line drawings and texts below it. There are hues of salmon pink, yellow, and blue below, which provide a stark contrast to the shades of green in the background image of a series of line drawings that evoke “primitive” art above. From the simple images at the top, the viewer can detect what might represent an arm and hand, a fractured body

with two solid feet, bent arrow ends, and layered concentric half-circles. Below the drawing, in color and in childish handwriting, is the following phrase:

The World Bank is one of the world's largest sources of funding for the developing world. Its primary focus is on helping the poorest people and the poorest countries. It uses its financial resources, its staff, and extensive experience to help developing countries reduce poverty, increase economic growth, and improve their quality of life. (World Bank Group, 2003, p. 1)¹¹

The pamphlet invites its readers into the process of development by guiding our eyes down the page to the colorful, logical, and concise development of *something* that makes sense, out of what is first represented as incomprehensible, archaic, disjointed, and chaotic. The juxtaposition of the fragmented and “primitive” figures with the methodical words suggests a movement toward a goal—a specific teleology, an attempt to make normal that which seems incomprehensible and incomplete. The compositional structure of this front-page image represents a teleological movement away from “primitive” forms of communication (for instance, the drawings) to a more nuanced and “developed” mode (for instance, writing with words). The cover illustrates the act of attaining a written and comprehensible language and connotes that this form of communication is non-existent and must be taught by a more knowledgeable group of people. When the pamphlet states that the Bank “uses its financial resources [...] to help developing countries” (World Bank Group, 2003, p. 1), it depicts the Bank as a global “normate” hero by “developing” (“primitive” as the visual rhetoric suggests) countries through the Bank’s rich experience of promoting development, economic, and skill viability.

The combination of the line drawings and words also demonstrates how the Bank facilitates the teleological movement toward becoming a normal productive country that is organized, controlled, and comprehensible. Like in the film I briefly described above, only by making what appears as “unfit, fit” through teaching a standardized language, ontology, and economic practice can third-world nations and citizens enter what Wolfensohn describes as the “mainstream” global economy (p. 5). In other words, this normalizing visual rhetoric as David Pfeifer notes, “encourages people with power and resources to label people without power and resources as abnormal” (qtd. by Davis, 2002, p. 38). What is striking about the above image as a whole, is that the sort of intervention that the Bank imagines itself to make appears enabling; yet, the power relationship represented here indicates that fitting into the mainstream means becoming standardized and comprehensible so that the third-world country factors into the Bank’s capitalist equation.

The visual rhetoric above suggests that third-world nations are disabled; at once they reflect the teleological image categories that Garland-Thomson (2002) describes because they are “exotic,” “sentimental,” and eventually progress to “realistic” and comprehensible. The entire image reflects the common visual representation that disability is something that can be overcome and erased by proper training or mainstreaming. This very rhetoric of mainstreaming is further employed in a speech delivered by Wolfensohn in 1997. However, in this instance, Wolfensohn’s argument for including women into the mainstream of development depends upon ableist and eugenicist frames that ignore and/or attempt to obliterate physical difference, while, somewhat contradictorily, arguing how the Bank intends make normal and comprehensible third-world nations and citizens.

¹¹ Although there is an obvious text present in this first page, I have chosen to analyze it as it reads as a whole image since the literal words work so clearly against the primitive drawing that they must be read together.

Disabling Rhetorics.

At the annual World Bank meeting in 1997, after a series of thank yous and greetings, James Wolfensohn continued his annual address with the following story:

I have learned that people are the same wherever they are—here in this room and across the world. We all want the best for our children and our families. We all want peace and economic and physical security. We all want to live in a supportive community. We all want personal dignity.

This was vividly brought home to me six months ago when I visited a large water and sanitation project[.] [...] [I] went from one makeshift home to the next, talking with the women who live there and who used to carry water on their shoulders from the bottom of the hillside to their dwelling at the top. [...] And as I walked around, more and more of the women came up to me displaying pieces of paper showing charges and receipts for a few *reals* a month. I watched and listened to this until the vice governor said, “What they are showing you Jim, is that this is the first time in their lives that their name and address have appeared on an official notice. This is the first time their existence has been officially recognized. This is the first time they have been included in society. With that receipt they can get a credit to purchase goods, with that receipt they have recognition and hope.” (1997, p. 1—2)

This human-interest story told by Wolfensohn (1997, p. 1-2) demonstrates the Bank’s concentration on extending partnerships with women as “agents of development.” Although in the past the Bank had given attention to women via programs such as Women in Development (WID), traditionally WID has been marginalized and issues of gender have tended to be tied to development issues such as population control (Bergeron, 2003b, p. 405).¹² As feminist scholar Suzanne Bergeron notes, before and during the Washington Consensus policies, gender and other issues of inclusion were not part of the Bank’s general protocol (Bergeron, 2003a). As she points out, Wolfensohn’s speech, which contains an emotional story whereby women are given entry into the market and therefore access to economic normativity through their purchasing power, is quite remarkable.

Wolfensohn’s focus on the “inclusion” of women (and other marginalized groups) is significant because it demonstrates the Bank’s attempt to grapple with people who do pose a problem for the Bank’s neoliberal development plans. As illustrated below, Wolfensohn ignores the structural factors that would make their plans unviable and instead reifies a collapsed historic colonial and eugenicist argument that renders economic fitness as a country or citizen’s ability to enter the mainstream. This section begins by exploring the arguments Wolfensohn employs to factor women into the Bank’s development plans. I then consider how, to resolve the “Challenge of Inclusion,” Wolfensohn employs eugenicist rhetoric of mainstreaming that ultimately seeks to erase those differences that appear incomprehensible and dangerous.

In the beginning of the above short anecdotal story, Wolfensohn successfully consubstantiates his audience by asking them to imagine that their deepest concerns—those about their family, their physical and economic well-being—are the same as anybody else’s. In his imaging, Wolfensohn implies that “inclusion” means the erasure of difference—not only physical, racial, or economic difference, but also the difference produced by location, mind-set, desires, circumstance, etc. If indeed, in the words of Wolfensohn, “people are the same,” then he

¹²Also, see for example, Johanna Brenner, “Transnational Feminism and the Struggle for Global Justice” in *New Politics* Winter 2003. She points out that organizations such as WID have been concerned with the relationship between gender and development for over thirty years. It is important to recognize the proliferation of such organizing when examining the changing rhetoric of gender within Bank materials.

also implies that people who fall outside the realms of “development” have the capability to fit in with the rest of the “developed” world *if* they are able to become part of the global market. Somewhat ironically, the classed system of capitalism becomes the great equalizer that erases gender, geopolitical, racial, and physical differences. Wolfensohn’s appeal to individualism—part of the liberal discourse of sovereignty—that reminds the audience of the Bank’s larger project to make citizens individual actors who can secure their own economic viability by becoming similar to, or the same as, “successful” developed countries. Although the word “difference” is not used in the above short vignette, sameness only has meaning when there is an implied difference.

Wolfensohn’s lengthy rendition demonstrates the emotional and ableist power of his story, which concludes with a group of women finally being recognized—and gaining subjectivity—through a receipt for a necessity like water. This physical receipt marks their entrance into the market economy and demonstrates their acceptance of the invitation to be a part of what Wolfensohn later describes as the “mainstream.” The simple slip of paper provides official recognition and emphasizes these women’s existence and inclusion while symbolizing a narrative of hope. In his story, we encounter women who, “for the first time [...] [with] their name and address [...] appear[ing] on an official notice,” are included in the global economy (p. 2). Therefore “inclusion,” for Wolfensohn, means bringing normative economic activities to what is represented as an empty and identity-less regions of the world. It is this entry into the market that gives these women an identity; and as metonymic representations of their country, they bring their home countries into the normative economy.

Yet, just as Wolfensohn is touched by these women’s recognition, he takes away that very subjectivity by not providing his audience with the names of these women, through his story transforming them into mere objects that need to be developed. The women that Wolfensohn describes have a dual metonymic function in this brief speech. Certainly, the women are real and are experiencing the material realities of their country’s developing market economy—the localized availability of clean drinking and cooking water and sanitary toilet and bathing facilities cuts down on time the women must spend fetching and preparing necessities like water. In this way, they are part of the larger story of globalization and are an identifiable example of “success” in the global economy.

Yet, there is also a slippage between the women’s agency and the agency of the country in which they reside. Importantly, while we do not know the names of the women or the region or town in which they reside, Wolfensohn does mention that they are from the “*favelas*” of Brazil.¹³ Wolfensohn’s description of the women’s country and geographical location is significant because women only become metonymic representations of their whole country in so far as they might reflect how the Bank is enabling and their home country is normal; they are tangible examples of how they have entered the mainstream. Implicit within the human-interest story that Wolfensohn tells is the same prescribed development narrative we saw in the above image: if a country, and its citizens, follows the mainstream development narrative, then that country will gain an identity and be part of the larger global community.

Like the pamphlet analyzed above, Wolfensohn’s story depends upon his audience’s identification of colonial texts. This story, where a group of formerly excluded women become active citizens of the globe, evokes the common representation of the colonized woman as either dangerous or a passive victim (Briggs, 2002, p. 191). Likewise, this same characterization parallels Snjeev Kumor Uprety’s (1997) depiction of colonial subjects: “aggressive, stubborn, and shrewd on the one hand, and submissive shy and passive on the other hand; both are

¹³ *Favelas* are shanty towns in the hill areas of Brazil.

described as being ‘socially cognitively, behaviorally and emotionally... [incompetent]’ (p. 365). Wolfensohn’s description of his experience in the Brazilian *favelas* is reminiscent of colonial narratives that describe non-Western countries as lacking, without history, and devoid of a place or presence. His speech implies that the audience, made up of Bank affiliates, is working to fill a void, making an impact, and creating an identity for a place that, before the Bank’s intervention, was nameless or unviable—without an identity.

David Spurr (1993) calls this rhetorical trope, negation: a discourse that “denies history as well as place, constituting the past as absence, but also designating that absence as a negative presence” (p. 98). Although Spurr is speaking of the embedded and reified colonial and contemporary narratives about the African continent, his observations shed light on binary logic that the whole of Wolfensohn’s speech employs. The receipt with the women’s names that Wolfensohn mentions, is a physical marker of existence. At the end of his story he claims, “this is what the challenge of development is all about—inclusion. Bringing people into society who have never been part of it before. This is why the World Bank Group exists” (p. 2).

Wolfensohn’s (1997) statement reveals one of the Bank’s important belief systems: when a country or region is not developed economically, it has no identity, history, or part in a global society. This void impacts the present circumstances of the country. Implied in Wolfensohn’s speech is that the women of the *favelas* exist in a negative and incomprehensible place without history. The women are depicted as naive, passive, disabled, and incapable of creating their own history—or subjectivity. The written slip of paper that the women in the story receive is a physical marker that provides a tangible historic reference. In the Hegelian sense, writing not only offers evidence of existence and history but it also implies that there is “the possibility of history in a teleological sense” (Spurr, 1993, p. 98). Like in the image above, writing implies the entrance into a language that has meaning for people beyond local borders; this is reminiscent of the pamphlet cover above where we visually see the movement from chaos to orderly writing. An ordinary receipt brings the citizens and their country into a recognizable historic trajectory and symbolizes the creation of an infrastructure—order, law, institutions, economic practices, and customs. To this extent, the credit for water service these women receive is, for Wolfensohn, the first step in creating a chronicled global presence—it is a physical reference to their inclusion.

Wolfensohn’s description of the women of the *favelas* and their entry into the market is part of the primary discourse of inclusion and normativity that informs several of the Bank’s recent texts. Within Wolfensohn’s (1997) speech, enabling and development means “inclusion” or entry into the “normalizing”/ “normative” cultural of global capitalism. He defines “the challenge of inclusion” (for instance, the name of his speech) as bringing “more and more people into the economic mainstream, to promote equitable access to the benefits of development regardless of nationality, race, or gender” (p. 3). The terms inclusion, mainstream, equity, access, and development, along with evoking the nation-state, have significant rhetorical weight. At the very least, the cluster of these terms that recurs throughout Wolfensohn’s speech implies that “inclusion” into the “mainstream” is based upon a country’s successful entry into the market and economic progress. However, Wolfensohn’s speech depends upon an audience’s prior indoctrination into a discourse of eugenics, ableism, and normative citizenship.¹⁴

For example, Wolfensohn employs these very discourses just as he attempts to disengage from their eugenic connections: “I want to be very clear on this point: I am not espousing some Darwinian theory of development whereby we discard the unfit by the wayside. Quite the

¹⁴ These discourses of exclusion are maintained by governing bodies, language systems, and bodily practices (Davis *Enforcing* 107).

contrary. Our goal is to support the fit and to help make the unfit fit. This is all about inclusion” (p. 5). Despite Wolfensohn’s attempt at uncoupling his references of becoming “fit” from the very discourse that informs them, he reifies the power structures present in the movement to rehabilitate something “abnormal” into something that makes sense to those in power. Policies that seek to homogenize or mainstream a country’s economic existence make controlling a country’s culture and economy easier because the parameters for development are laid out, tested, and assured. The Bank, by creating a “fit” and comprehensible “mainstreamed” economy, ensures that a nation will remain passive and predictable.

Wolfensohn’s (1997) notion of fitness evokes the ideologies of early twentieth century eugenicists who sought to create the industrialized normal citizen-worker. Not only were these workers, through invariable physical fitness and productivity, to maintain their nation’s fitness, their “fit” and standardized bodies would maintain their country’s economic “fitness.” The fit body would be able to perform the tasks necessary for factory work and goods production. As Davis (2002) further points out, the “unfit abnormal body,” during industrialization, was relegated to the welfare system because it could not be mainstreamed (p. 40). The words “unfit” and “fit” evoke the discourse of eugenics (and Darwin’s theory of the survival of the fittest) and remind audiences of height and weight charts, psychological testing, and the classification of ability. In other words, Wolfensohn’s rhetoric of mainstreaming implies an erasure of difference as it discounts non-western or other forms of economic viability. Therefore, the rhetorical appeal of this inclusionary discourse rests upon the audience’s desire to comprehend or make “normal” a country’s economic, social, and governmental practices.

A country’s ability to become “fit”—or to fit into the economic “mainstream”—rests upon a bourgeois democratic ideology that situates the universal and interchangeable citizen-worker or nation-worker as the producers of a uniform product (here, other “global” citizens, low-wage labor, “safe” investment zones, and so on) (Davis 1995, p. 36 and 2002 p. 110). Like in the film *From Exclusion to Inclusion*, in this formula “all working bodies are equal to all other working bodies because they are interchangeable [...] all citizens must have standard bodies to be able to fit into the industrial-political notion of democracy, equality, and normality” (Davis, 2005, p. 111).

This very idea operates in two ways throughout Wolfensohn’s speech. First, by making “developing” nations “fit” into what Wolfensohn describes as the “mainstream,” countries are given the task of maintaining the “normative” function of the global economy and ultimately, of stratifying nations that are “fit” and “unfit” (1997, p. 5). Second, individual citizens of these “developing” nations must support their nation’s globalized economy by entering into the mainstream market and producing commodities that will demarcate their acquiescence of “normal” economic activity. A discourse of normalcy is reified when the state—or another governing body—attempts to make “normal” those who are deemed as unfit or non-standard (Davis, 1995, p. 30). The rhetoric of mainstreaming that Wolfensohn employs resonates with modern conceptualizations of “normality” whereby individuals practice moderation, discretion, diligence, and moral self-improvement (Terry, 1999, p. 11). Without such self-regulation, the “abnormal” or non-mainstreamed is a threat to the security of those who have embraced normality.

Indeed, as Wolfensohn continues, “[w]ithout inclusion, too many of us will be condemned to live separate, armed, and frightened lives” (1997, p. 3). His statement here employs *pathos* and plays on the audience’s fear of the uncontrolled and underdeveloped regions of the world. This rhetoric of inclusion is significant because it also draws from a fear of contagion; these disabled and “backward” countries who do not fit into the mainstream also demonstrate the vulnerability of those who see themselves as enabled. His shift from speaking

about inclusion to separating “us” from “them” demonstrates the corporeal consequences for those who already inhabit the mainstream if non-standard countries and citizens remain unchanged. Wolfensohn implies that countries outside the mainstream are in need of rehabilitation, support, or care-taking in order to bring them to a state of “normalcy” / development so they no longer pose a threat.

Wolfensohn ends his speech by returning to the story he began with, the recognition of the women from Brazil, and the move to focus on individual people, not nations:

The look in people’s eyes is not a look of hopelessness. It’s a look of pride, of self-esteem, of inclusion. These people who have a sense of themselves, who have a sense of tradition, who have a sense of family. All they need is a chance. Each one in this room must take personal responsibility for making sure they get a chance. We can do it for the sake of our children, we must do it. (1997, p. 9)

Remarkably, Wolfensohn does not employ the same rhetorical devices in this ending that he employs in the rest of his speech. The keywords that Wolfensohn employs are no longer development, mainstream, and fit. Instead, he turns to the audience’s most personal relationships—“our” children and families. Wolfensohn implies, yet again, that development means not only attaining an identity and history but also establishing the normative traditions of family. By turning to personal responsibility, he reassures the audience that they have obtained entry into the developed world, acquiring the responsibility to make sure everyone enters into this economy and benefit from the mainstream. In doing so, however, Wolfensohn further makes “cultural outcasts of [Bank program] recipients by assuming that individual bodies must conform to institutional standards rather than restructuring the social environment to accommodate physical variety” (Garland-Thomson, 1991, p. 51). The turn to the family and personal responsibility is significant because Wolfensohn suggests that individual generosity or individual change can bring about normalcy.

Conclusion.

Disability scholars such as Lennard J. Davis, Michael Berube, and Rosemary Garland-Thompson make clear “that there is no neat division between the world of the body and the world of the body politic” therefore we must consider the ways that ableism functions at the discursive, rhetorical, and material levels (Davis, 2002, p. 111). As I have demonstrated above, normalizing and ableist rhetorics are present throughout Bank materials and the Bank employs them to persuade audiences that the transnational market economy can be enabling for minorities such as women and people with disabilities. Wolfensohn’s and the Bank’s discourse of inclusion, coupled with a fantastic ableist metaphor of development, operates as a normalizing prescription of success. The Bank proscribes that women (in the 1990s) and people with disabilities (in the 2000s) must become part of the economic mainstream and so normative global citizens without considering the material consequences of their development plans. For whom will this classed system be enabling? Likewise, at the recent “Disability and Inclusive Development” conference, Wolfensohn suggests that people with disabilities must be brought into an economic mainstream made for those who are currently able-bodied. However, he does not acknowledge how that system is made for those who are currently able-bodied. How does the Bank’s mainstreaming process and rhetoric function to reify the fine line between normal citizen and “deviant” disenfranchised and/or disabled citizen?

As Davis points out, the unequal distribution of wealth imposed by capitalism contradicts the seemingly ethical goals of the World Bank to “help the poorest of the poor”—a category in

which people with disabilities overwhelmingly tend to fall (2002, p. 110). Likewise, Garland-Thomson suggests that when moral generosity “seeks to compensate for physical differences,” people with disabilities become further cultural outcasts “by assuming that individual bodies must conform to institutional standards, rather than restructuring the social environment to accommodate physical variety.”

While at the “Disabilities and Development” conference in 2004, I was pleasantly surprised at the vast number of disability activists from around the world who were calling not for mainstreaming but for the Bank to recognize the way that neoliberal development plans are inherently contradictory for people with disabilities. For example, in another film by disability activist Victor Pineda and Michael Fried (2004), *A World Enabled: Disability as a Human Rights Issue*, they expose the problems of universal work programs whereby people with disabilities are paid (very little) for each individual product they produce. In short, they expose how the disabled body will never be standard and in doing so demonstrate the need for universal design. I was also pleased to see that disability activists in fact, despite how the Bank represented them, had very strong and angry voices. However, I am troubled that we do not see the critiques offered by these activists in action. These active individuals demonstrate the how the Bank’s programs are “unfit” for their non-standard bodies, and so the Bank’s only choice is to normalize them.

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