



THE GNLU CENTRE  
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# An Interview with Lenin ~ An Insight on One of Our Centre's Own



By Maithreyi M

In a conversation with Lenin Siddhartha Reddy, a fifth-year BA. LLB student at GNLU and senior member of the GCDS, we get crucial lessons on the value of determination and purpose. Living with retinitis pigmentosa, a condition that affects night vision and low-light visibility, Lenin has not only excelled academically but is also pursuing his dream of becoming an IAS officer.

## Early years and adaptation

"I was always an active student and considered a merit student in school," Lenin recalls. Born and raised in Warangal District, Telangana, Lenin's academic journey took an unexpected turn when his vision began deteriorating around third grade.

Rather than viewing this as a setback, his father, a government school teacher, and mother, a homemaker, made a pivotal decision to keep him in regular schooling. "My parents decided not to send me to a special school, believing I would learn better and stay competitive by studying in a regular school." This decision proved transformative – Lenin went on to score 95% in his 10th standard exams.

## Finding a path

The choice to pursue law came from careful consideration of his strengths and abilities.

"I realized it was a field where my skills would shine, and despite my visual impairment, I knew I could excel in this career," Lenin explains. His dedication led him to clear the Common Law Admission Test (CLAT) and secure admission to GNLU.

## Law school life and beyond

At GNLU, Lenin has found a supportive community that treats him as an equal. "I have great friends who understand my visual impairment and treat me as an equal, never making me feel different," he shares. The professors have been equally supportive, offering alternative assessments and accessible course materials when needed.

He states that internships have been a positive experience, too. "My mentors and seniors were always understanding of my needs and provided accessible PDFs.

**"I have great friends who understand my visual impairment and treat me as an equal, never making me feel different."**





The staff at those places were also very supportive, making the experience an enriching and learning and challenging one too." His love for travelling and his skill for adapting to any place have factored into making them an enjoyable experience too. Beyond academics, Lenin maintains an active social life and pursues various interests. "In my free time, I enjoy playing chess and reading books. I've also watched many movies with my friends, which has been a fantastic experience."

### **Campus and accessibility**

Lenin's academic success is supported by his use of assistive technologies. He relies on NVDA (Non Visible Desktop Access) as his primary screen reader, along with speech synthesizers and scanning tools to convert text into accessible formats. "For writing research papers and assignments, I use dictation tools, but I also have the ability to type quickly," he notes.

With regard to ease of navigation on campus, he finds that most areas are accessible to him. He does, however, note that there are improvements to be made, "The Shishya Bhavan washrooms are not well-lit, especially at night. I requested better lighting, which improved the situation. The stairs near the preamble area could also be made more accessible with higher contrast markings, which would be very helpful."

### **Looking to the future**

With his sights set on becoming an IAS Officer, a lifelong dream of his, Lenin aims to make a broader impact on society. He finds that GNLU has been a motivator too, "My time at university has taught me many valuable lessons, both academically and socially. I've gained confidence, learned the importance of discipline, and developed the consistency needed to achieve my goals."

### **Advice for juniors**

To incoming students facing similar challenges, Lenin offers clear guidance: "Have a clear objective. Learn to use accessible software and screen readers. Whenever you feel low, remind yourself of your past achievements and stay motivated. Set clear goals and work hard to achieve them. Let your dreams drive you, not distractions."





# Turning the Lens Inward: Courts and Accessibility Under the RPWD Act



By Tapesh Chauhan

Section 21 of the Rights of Persons With Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016 mandates every establishment to formulate an Equal Opportunity Policy for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). The RPWD Rules, 2017 further provide for the guidelines for the content as well as the publishing of the Equal Opportunity Policy.

While these guidelines have existed for a while now, only recently have institutions, especially courts, started to implement their policies. Recently, on 16 December 2024, the Delhi High Court notified its framed Equal Opportunity Policy. Similarly, earlier this year the Guwahati High Court published its own equal opportunity policy. These policies come after almost 7 years of the formulation of the RPWD rules.

According to the RPWD Act, every establishment shall "notify equal opportunity policy detailing measures proposed to be taken by it" for employment and skill development of PwDs. The same is covered more briefly by the RPWD rules, 2017, which prescribe different requirements based upon establishments with twenty or more employees and those with less than that. For the former, the establishment should, inter alia, provide a list of posts available and their manner of selection, facilities and provisions for ensuring accessibility for PwDs, and the appointment of an officer to look after recruitments.

For the establishments that fall into the latter category, they are only to ensure that proper facilities are provided to all their PwD employees.

In respect of identifying posts available for PwDs, the Delhi High Court's policy gives the timeline of two months for doing the same. While the policy of the Guwahati High Court merely states that the list for the same shall be prepared without giving any timeline. It further provides that a specific no-discrimination policy shall be made for all the employees to follow. Similarly, while the Delhi High Court has also ensured the court's physical infrastructure is accessible and a grievance redressal officer has already been appointed, the same was yet to be done by the Guwahati High Court when its policy was published.



**What must come as the most surprising fact is that no other high court's equal opportunity policy for PwDs could be found on their website. The Supreme Court hasn't published it on its website either.**



The Court's Committee on Accessibility, in October last year (2023), published its report titled "A Court for All: Paving the Way for Greater Accessibility in the Supreme Court for Persons with Disabilities, Women & Senior Citizens."



The report presented an accessibility audit of the supreme court premises and provided suggestions for ensuring greater accessibility. It not only covered challenges faced by PwDs but also barriers that women, senior citizens, and HIV patients have to face accessing the Court's premises. It was within this report that the Committee provided a small draft equal opportunity policy for the highest court of the nation.

Rule 8 of the RPWD Rules, 2017 states that for publishing the policy, it has to be provided on the website or, alternatively, at clearly visible places within the premises. Neither of these requirements could be found complied to by the Supreme Court.

It is clear that the courts themselves have failed to fulfill the mandate of the RPWD Act, 2016. Any attempts they make further on by the courts to ensure that other institutions provide opportunities to PwDs would be made from the court's own glass house. Institutions like those of higher education and government departments have already started to formulate their own policies. It is high time now that courts clean up their act and start to lead by example. The Equal Opportunity Policy might seem like a small step in ensuring complete accessibility for PwDs but is a necessary step on the path where accessibility is fully respected as a fundamental right, not only through judgments but also through acts.





# Discrimination, Eugenics, and the Myth of Overpopulation



By Geet Sahu

Ableism is at the heart of your oppression. Whether you're oppressed because of your gender, your sexuality, your caste, your ethnicity, your class, your place of birth, or anything at all—it's because most people are, albeit unconsciously, ableist.

Let us start with Marx. He introduced us to the concept of commodity fetishism—where a product is of value because of what it costs, not because of the labour put in making it. The workforce, or the human element, is alienated from that product.

In today's world, humans themselves are alienated from the human element. My value depends on how productive and efficient I can be. This may sound cruel, but we all believe it to some extent. You know that feeling when you have slept the whole day away and your to-do list is left untouched?

So now people are products, and in the case of any deformity, the product would be discarded—or at least given less value. This would be a layman's understanding of ableism—the reason why people with disabilities are discriminated against is because of the belief that their contribution to society would be lower than their resource consumption. Thus, they would be a burden to society and therefore do not deserve the same respect and dignity afforded to others. At the core of this belief is the assumption that human life is only valuable if it contributes to society.



But how do other kinds of oppression link into this? Well, if people are products, then who wouldn't want a perfect product? The perfect product would be a white, straight, neurotypical cis-man without any disabilities, born into the upper class and from a wealthy country in the Western hemisphere. Such a person would have access to any kind of resource he wanted, thereby receiving the best education leading to a high-paying job. If his job is high-paying, then the assumption is that he must be contributing more to society than others.

This, of course, is not a conscious thought process for most people. Our thought processes are not directly discriminatory. You would not think, "Oh, since he is a straight, white man, he is contributing more." Rather, the trigger for affording him more respect than others would be based on the achievements listed on his LinkedIn profile.

But we must understand that those achievements arise out of opportunity. Other people with different identities are not given such opportunities. One of the most ridiculous examples of how sexism takes away opportunities is that a cis-man with the name Hilary might be rejected from a job application because the recruiter thought from his name that he was a woman.



But we must understand that those achievements arise out of opportunity. Other people with different identities are not given such opportunities. One of the most ridiculous examples of how sexism takes away opportunities is that a cis-man with the name Hilary might be rejected from a job application because the recruiter thought from his name that he was a woman.

  
**And thus, we are products, and our value is dependent not on hard work but on the identities we are born with and the environment we live in—which result in the opportunities we are afforded.**  


So when people quote Darwin saying, “Survival of the fittest” and argue in favour of free markets and against a welfare state, they are being ableist. In fact, Darwin was inspired by Thomas Malthus, a priest who argued that the poor, the disabled, and the sickly should all be made to stop reproducing, or else they would eat away our resources.

The underlying argument here is that only the perfect “products” should be allowed to reproduce to create more perfect products. This is what eugenics purports. And eugenics is what led to the forced sterilisation of black people in America, the mass killings of the disabled and sickly in Germany, and then, of course, to the genocide by the Nazis.

The State continues to act as an eugenicist even now. India’s laws on abortion provide for one exception to any kind of time limit on obtaining an abortion.

If the foetus has a “foetal abnormality,” even one that may not put the birthgiver at risk, abortion is blindly permitted without any time limit. This is ableism in hindsight, and there are multiple other examples. Forced sterilisation is a common form of harassment faced by oppressed classes—from prisoners to transgender persons.

But still, we are missing one point. One may argue that, in order to achieve population control, conserve resources, and ensure the “evolution” of society, we must adhere to the principle of survival of the fittest—let those who are not competent enough to survive die out.

My question to you is: What is society? Society is made up of people. And if you turn those people into products that need to contribute to the welfare of society, then what remains of society? Is our goal as human beings to “evolve”? To become better and better? But then, who are we becoming better for?

The people, of course.

But if we leave behind the people in that struggle for “progress,” then that progress becomes meaningless. Sure, there would be resource generation, but as argued previously, those resources would only be accessible to the one percent.

The best example is climate change. One may argue that natural resources are being depleted because of overpopulation, but the fact is that the one percent of the population are the highest consumers along with being the highest emitters of pollution.





So the problem is not population. The “weak” do not need to die out in order to preserve “society.”

We must remember the human element, best explained by anthropologist Margaret Mead when they said that the earliest sign of civilisation is a healed human femur. Humanity is about compassion, not about survival.





# More than a dream: Disability and True Representation in *The Peanut Butter Falcon*



By Mithra K. S.

The *Peanut Butter Falcon* is an indie drama film directed by Tyler Nilson and Michael Schwartz. The movie marks their feature film directorial debut, and it immediately stood out for its heartwarming and authentic portrayal of a young man with Down syndrome, a rare and refreshing take in cinema. Released on August 9, 2019, the film blends elements of adventure, drama, and comedy, offering an uplifting story about self-discovery, friendship, and following one's dreams.

The movie opens with a scene that immediately sets the tone for the film—a mix of humour, heart, and a strong sense of character. It begins with Zak (Zack Gottsagen), a young man with Down syndrome, trying to escape from the nursing home where he lives. He's determined to pursue his dream of becoming a professional wrestler, a passion sparked by his love for the sport's larger-than-life personalities. The escape is both comical and poignant, his desire to break free a clear reflection of his desire to live life on his own terms. Zak escapes the nursing home, setting out on a quest to find "The Salt-Water Redneck" and enroll in his wrestling school. Along the way, he forms an unexpected bond with Tyler (Shia LaBeouf), a drifter with his own troubles, and together they embark on a life-changing adventure.

With Tyler's help, Zak chases his dream of becoming a professional wrestler, adopting the ring name "The Peanut Butter Falcon."

The movie stands out for its authentic portrayal of a character with Down syndrome, offering something rare and beautiful in modern cinema. The film focuses on Zak's journey of self-discovery wherein we are shown that he is not a fragile man in need of constant care and protection but rather an insanely strong individual physically, mentally and emotionally. As he trains to be a wrestler he builds confidence, embraces his independence and a new lit sense of purpose. The film came to fruition after Tyler Nilson and Michael Schwartz met Zack Gottsagen at a camp for disabled artists. They were inspired by his infectious personality and his dream of becoming an actor. They set out to create a film that not only showcased his talents but also told a story that felt real and grounded, free from stereotypes. The casting of Gottsagen as Zak was a choice that paid off, as his performance brought depth and authenticity to the character that truly set the film apart from others. What makes the movie so special is that it never uses Zak's condition as a punchline or a tool for cheap emotional manipulation. Rather, it presents him as a fully realized character with hopes, dreams, and flaws.



It is refreshing to see the way the movie treats Zak, with dignity and respect. Many films featuring characters with disabilities often rely on tropes that either make them a source of inspiration for others or, conversely, focus on their hardships to manipulate the audience into feeling pity. In contrast, this movie allows Zak to simply be himself. He's not defined by his condition, but rather by his desire to pursue a dream: to become a professional wrestler. The film doesn't sugarcoat or sensationalize his challenges, it never turns his disability into a spectacle either. This choice allows the audience to see him as a person first—complex, independent, and full of life. The supporting characters, including Shia LaBeouf's Tyler and Dakota Johnson's Eleanor embrace him for who he is. Their evolving relationship with him is real and grounded, and there's a beautiful balance of humour, warmth, and emotion. The film's tone never descends into melodrama. Instead, it finds humour in everyday moments and celebrates the joy of human connection without leaning on the typical tear-jerker formula.

Unlike many disabled characters in films, Zak isn't a symbol or a metaphor. He is a person—funny, strong, vulnerable, and more importantly independent of his disability.

The Peanut Butter Falcon is a buddy movie with the feel of a fable, brought to life through cinematographer Nigel Bluck's striking visuals. Set in a distinct, lived-in location, the film makes you feel the salt in the air and the pollen in your lungs. From the waves and marshes to the worn-out boat, every detail rings true, rooted in the real world, not a fictionalized version of it.

The music—bluegrass, country, and gospel—flows naturally throughout, adding to the film's grounded atmosphere. It's a fable deeply tied to the here-and-now. The cinematography is stunning, capturing the wild beauty of the South, with sweeping shots of the coastal waters, sunlit fields, and weathered houses. The film's visual style is intimate and raw, used to emphasize the characters' sense of freedom as they travel on their journey. This connection to the land adds a layer of authenticity to the film, helping to ground the characters' emotions and struggles in the real world.

There is something uniquely vibrant and genuine about The Peanut Butter Falcon. Nilson and Schwartz's attention to the details of Zak's world elevates Gottsagen's performance, allowing his humour, intelligence, and depth to shine through. This authenticity highlights a glaring issue in the cine world—representation. The conversation about "representation" often overlooks the disabled community. Able-bodied actors frequently take on disabled roles and even win Oscars for their performances. While these performances are empathetic and well-executed, Gottsagen brings a raw, natural quality to the character that is irreplaceable. It's impossible to imagine an able-bodied actor bringing even half of what Gottsagen does with ease, making his role in this film a crucial step in the fight for true representation.





In the end, *The Peanut Butter Falcon* is a breath of fresh air. It's a film that treats a character with Down syndrome as just a person, with a life of his own. It's not about pity or inspiration—it's about friendship, adventure, and the pursuit of dreams. Its setting amplifies these themes, making the film both emotionally resonant and visually stunning. It's a true testament to the power of human connection, and how, no matter our circumstances, we all deserve the chance to live our lives fully.







The image contains G in large font and CDS in smaller font

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