

National Federation of the Blind

Resolution 93-01

Dallas, July 1993

Source: <http://www.nfb.org/images/nfb/Publications/bm/bm09/bm0903/bm090308.htm>

WHEREAS, the word “blind” accurately and clearly describes the condition of being unable to see, as well as the condition of having such limited eyesight that alternative techniques are required to do efficiently the ordinary tasks of daily living that are performed visually by those having good eyesight; and

WHEREAS, there is increasing pressure in certain circles to use a variety of euphemisms in referring to blindness or blind persons—euphemisms such as “hard of seeing,” “visually challenged,” “sightless,” “visually impaired,” “people with blindness,” “people who are blind,” and the like; and

WHEREAS, a differentiation must be made among these euphemisms: some (such as “hard of seeing,” “visually challenged,” and “people with blindness”) being totally unacceptable and deserving only ridicule because of their strained and ludicrous attempt to avoid such straightforward, respectable words as “blindness,” “blind,” “the blind,” “blind person,” or “blind persons;” others (such as “visually impaired,” and “visually limited”) being undesirable when used to avoid the word “blind” and acceptable only to the extent that they are reasonably employed to distinguish between those having a certain amount of eyesight and those having none; still others (such as “sightless”) being awkward and serving no useful purpose; and still others (such as “people who are blind” or “persons who are blind”) being harmless and not objectionable when used in occasional and ordinary speech but being totally unacceptable and pernicious when used as a form of political correctness to imply that the word “person” must invariably precede the word “blind” to emphasize the fact that a blind person is first and foremost a person; and

WHEREAS, this euphemism concerning people or persons who are blind--when used in its recent trendy, politically correct form--does the exact opposite of what it purports to do since it is overly defensive, implies shame instead of true equality, and portrays the blind as touchy and belligerent; and

WHEREAS, just as an intelligent person is willing to be so designated and does not insist upon being called “a person who is intelligent” and a group of bankers are happy to be called bankers and have no concern that they be referred to as persons who are in the banking business, so it is with the blind—the only difference being that some people (blind and sighted alike) continue to cling to the outmoded notion that blindness (along with everything associated with it) connotes inferiority and lack of status; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind in Convention assembled in the city of Dallas, Texas, this 9th day of July, 1993, that the following statement of policy be adopted:

We believe that it is respectable to be blind, and although we have no particular pride in the fact of our blindness, neither do we have any shame in it. To the extent that euphemisms are used to convey any other concept or image, we deplore such use. We can make our own way in the world on equal terms with others, and we intend to do it.