

Frank G. Bowe 1947-2007

Frank G. Bowe lost his hearing at age 3. As a youngster he struggled through school in Lewisburg, the only deaf child in his class. His mother, Catherine "Kitty" Bowe, often intervened on his behalf. His father, the late Frank Bowe, took over a Little League team so Frank could play softball. A consultation with a psychologist marked a turning point in young Frank's life - Frank was told he had a high IQ and could do anything he wanted.

Bowe became an acclaimed disability rights activist, CEO, consultant, author, and esteemed teacher, having earned a BA from McDaniel College, MA from Gallaudet Graduate School and PhD from New York University.

Activism

Frank Bowe's activism focused on changing people's attitudes, bringing those with impairments into the general population so people would understand that physical disability, such as deafness, blindness or paralysis, does not imply mental disability or an inability to function fully in society.

In 1977, as the first executive director of the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities, Bowe helped organize people with disabilities to occupy offices of the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare to focus attention on the rights of the disabled. This 10-city protest resulted in landmark regulations to enforce *Section 504* of the 1973 *Rehabilitation Act* - requiring that federally funded institutions provide access to the disabled. Many consider these events a precursor to the 1990 *Americans With Disabilities Act*.

Bowe was the first person with a disability to represent any nation in planning the UN International Year of Disabled Persons (1980). He chaired the US Congress Commission on Education of the Deaf (1984-86), testified frequently before the House and Senate, and was a regional commissioner of the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration. Bowe was involved with legislation (1990), sponsored by Senator Harkin (D-Iowa) and Representative Markey (D-Massachusetts) that required TVs to receive and display closed captioning. The subsequent 1996 *Telecommunications Act* required broadcast and cable programs to be closed-captioned.

Honors

The honors bestowed on Frank Bowe are many: alumni awards from McDaniel, Gallaudet and NYU, listings in Who's Who, Distinguished Service Award of the President of the US, the National Hall of Fame for People with Disabilities, and more.

Bowe joined Hofstra University in 1989, teaching research, counseling, special education and rehabilitation. He led a project to make the university's information and instruction more accessible and usable for students, faculty and staff. A caring and inspiring teacher, he received the Distinguished Teaching Award in 1996.

Author

An avid reader, Bowe was also a prolific researcher and writer. Bowe contributed hundreds of articles to professional journals. His books include: *Handicapping America* - the first full-length text on social policy and disability, *Making Inclusion Work*, *Early Childhood Special Education*, *Changing the Rules*.

Bowe's *Universal Design in Education*, a handbook on meeting the diverse needs of all students, places the responsibility on schools to provide material and environments that are accessible and usable to all students, by offering options such as lessons in

written and auditory forms, handouts on paper and cd, electronic and hard copy texts, distance learning and physically accessible classrooms.

Universal Design

Area resident Donna Anderson relates this anecdote from a conference she attended on Universal Design. A young boy in a wheelchair was waiting outside his school building until the custodian could clear snow from the ramp. The boy asked how long it would be until he could go in. The custodian said, "Most of the children use the steps; I have to clear them first." The boy replied, "If you shovel the ramp EVERYBODY can go in together."