

# Girls with Disabilities

## *A Rights Perspectives*

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Although many of our articles over the years have established connections between girls, girlhoods, and human rights, this issue of *Girlhood Studies* is one of our first to locate explicitly the study of girls' lives, in particular the lives of girls with disabilities, within a framework of human rights. As the various contributors articulate, disabled girls remain among the most disadvantaged when it comes to policies and practices that ensure micro-level safety and security, along with macro-level education and participation. The guest editors, Nirmala Erevelles and Thuy Nguyen, bring to this Special Issue their own experience of addressing the concerns of girls with disabilities in both the Global South and North. These guest editors and contributors, writing from a variety of vantage points, remind us that the intersection of girlhood studies and disability studies offers a rich and generative space for deepening our understanding of the relationship between politics and well-being under circumstances in which these girls find themselves that may include their experiencing natural disasters, war, accident, and, as we see at the time of publishing this issue, being vulnerable before and after birth to the spread of the Zika virus as it manifests itself in Brazil and beyond.

In some ways one might look at the decision to publish a themed issue on transnational perspectives on girls with disabilities as an admission that there is still a great deal to do to ensure that these girls are not marginalized. Yet, does having a Special Issue on girls with disabilities not have the potential to marginalize them again? As the articles point out in different ways, there is still a great deal that has to happen before girls with disabilities can be represented simply as girls within the heterogeneity of different girlhoods. In some ways the normalizing effect of depiction and representation in popular culture itself might be read as the barometer, and we might look at a representation in the 1980s of a girl in a wheelchair in an Archie comic as signalling a type of heterogeneity. But we are far from



arriving at something that is simply about heterogeneity without a focus on difference, however it might be constituted, and perhaps heterogeneity is only one point in a range of crucial positions for girls in terms of human rights. As long as disabled girls are the most likely to be victims of sexual violence and the least likely to be educated, there is clearly a need for advocacy and research, and radical changes in policies and practices across the Global North and the Global South. The transnational dialogue offered by the authors who contributed to this issue of GHS is helping to ensure such radical transformation.