

AGAPASM - Gaúcha Association of Parents and Friends of the Deafblind and People With Multiple Disabilities!

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"You were born from our land and here you will grow up. You have our people's face. Who were born from the wish for justice and freedom. You will take hope, freedom, autonomy, success. Your freedom is our freedom. Stand firm on your ideals. Your thoughtness and sense are the essence of your tenderness and passion. Proud of being Gaúcha" Alex Garcia.

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AGAPASM: Mission, Goals and History

Mission

To develop, support and guide Public Policies which substantiate full development of the deafblind and people with multiple disability, as well their families in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, based on their acquired rights of freedom, autonomy, development and social-humanitarian participation as all and any citizen, always considering their conditions and their unique and indivisible particularities, adding to

this respect and consideration to their value judgement, their culture, beliefs and traditions.

Goals:

a) to promote the integration of its associates, parents of the deafblind and of people with multiple disabilities, friends, deafblind and people with multiple disabilities, collaborators and all people who are interested in the social, educational, cultural, recreational and professional development of deafblind and people with multiple disabilities;

b) to send deafblind and person with multiple disabilities to institutions specialized in Education, Health and vocational training, using these to get proper adaptation to the society;

c) to create a pleasant and favourable environment for coexistence providing to each person an opportunity to use all the benefits of the society, leading the person to the full exercise of citizenship, a right which is guaranteed by the Brazilian Constitution and by The Human Rights Declaration as a free citizen;

d) to defend the rights of the deafblind and people with multiple disabilities and the rights of their families and representatives;

e) to organize, support and develop researches, the release, teaching, education, the scientific advances which can benefit the deafblind and people with multiple disabilities as well their families;

f) to organize, develop and support a plan of action and social, cultural, and educational programmes and to propose Public Policies which can attend the specific needs of deafblind and people with multiple disabilities and their families;

g) to apply, by education and other socially accepted means, for the organization of a society capable of collaborating effectively in the promotion of the deafblind and people with multiple disabilities, as well as their families, so that they can participate of the social progress of Rio Grande do Sul and Brazil with dignity;

h) to organize and develop training courses and the improvement of professionals involved in the teaching-learning process of deafblind and people with multiple disabilities as well to promote the training of guide- interpreters in all the state of Rio Grande do Sul, to increase the process of inclusion of the deafblind and people with multiple disabilities in the society;

History

"All and any organization is originated in continuity. In the necessity of movement. In the wish for truth and happiness, founded on justice of free man.

It denies the static. The interest which makes stamps. Intolerance that draws barriers. It denies to subtract freedom and autonomy of man." Alex Garcia.

AGAPASM, in a not too distant past, was called and known in the state of Rio Grande do Sul as Deafblind and Multiple Disabled Context of Rio Grande do Sul. A pioneering work in the state, which was developed by Alex Garcia, a deafblind and a specialist in Special Education. While he was developing this work, he faced the tough reality which affected the deafblind and the people with multiple disabilities in Rio Grande do Sul. There were many questions on his mind. Wishes of equality and full development of all deafblind and people with multiple disabilities began to move his sense and emotion. Alex Garcia, as a leader in the area of World Deafblindness starts to quickly advance the Deafblind and Multiple Disabled Context, always sharing experiences and values with other world leaders. These advances are reflected in the changing of life quality of the deafblind and people with multiple disabilities.

Alex Garcia is the father of one of the most meaningful Public Policies for deafblind people of Rio Grande do Sul and why not saying, of the Brazilian.

History. He demonstrates that it's possible to change the reality and the destiny of the deafblind and people with multiple disabilities. With many advances, Alex Garcia and the Deafblind and Multiple Disabled Context started to suffer some influences of political parties and the context starts to be used as a tool by these parties. The Deafblind and Multiple Disabled context loses its identity. Alex Garcia tries to defend

the context, using all possible ways. He fights until his physical health exhaustion. Defeated, Alex painfully observes all the work he did being wasted, getting lost. He observes the deafblind and people with multiple disabilities keep static. However, Alex sees that his wish for justice becomes stronger. Side by side with the families of the deafblind and people with multiple disabilities and with many friends and collaborators, all of them people who know all about his fights, then there is the foundation of AGAPASM - Gaúcha Association of the Parents and Friends of Deafblind and People with Multiple Disabilities. The association starts from the people's wish for justice.

The Deafblind and Multiple Disabled Context in Rio Grande do Sul: AGAPASM beginning.

Here, Alex explains more about the Context

"My friends, I'll point the Deafblind and Multiple Disabled Context in Rio Grande do Sul. This work was idealized and developed by me in a professional and voluntary way in the last 10 years and because of obscure reasons it couldn't be continuously developed. Then in the last years, it's possible to see some changings about pedagogical practices and socialcultural concepts in relation to people with disabilities in Rio Grande do Sul. These changings go from the complete segregation to potencial inclusion examples.

However, why develop this work? First, because of personal matters and my life experience. Then because of the segregation suffered by the deafblind and people with multiple disabilities through the years, which can also be found on special models of attention. This work involved education through the proper attention to this group of individuals, always respecting their unique and indivisible characteristics. Those characteristics are recognized in many parts of the world, and are reflected on the Rights of Deafblind people, Deafblind children, their parents and on the Declaration of Salamanca and on other guidelines.

Nevertheless, our schools hardly ever can deal with the specific characteristics of deafblindness and multiple disability with some kind of quality because the few schools which deal with those characteristics work specifically with techniques to deal with blindness and deafness, however, the practices to deal with deafblindness are completely distinct of those.

As we can see, our sociocultural atmosphere doesn't have much to offer to the deafblind and people with multiple disabilities, so the Deafblind and Multiple Disabled Context of Rio Grande do Sul establishes as a goal contribute to structure future works that enable those people to grow in their own existence as well exercise their citizenship, trying to get a better life quality and a relevant social humanitarian participation and consideration"

Initial Works

"A research called 'Deafblind: where are you?' was developed by me and it was chosen as the pilot project by the programme of creation of Latin America Deafblind Association (POSCAL). We catalogued 85 deafblind people. From these, 30 were pre-symbolic and 55 were post-symbolic. The first ones have very severe disabilities and many of them are between 14 and 17 years old and they had never had any kind of educational assistance. After some years of work and study, I faced the first possibility of structuring the studies for deafblindness in Rio Grande do Sul and I started working at FADERS - Foundation responsible for the Public Policy Structure for People with Disabilities and People with High Abilities in Rio Grande do Sul. We have here in Rio Grande do Sul a Public Policy which stands out: People with Disabilities must have special attention in their own cities. Because of this, I tried to structure a specific work to each case in the cities where deafblind and people with multiple disabilities live.

I was responsible for methodological structures and orientation of about 40 teachers who worked direct and indirectly with deafblind and people with multiple disabilities, since the acquisition of basic abilities for daily life until the more symbolic development acquisitions. Because of this study, many deafblind and people with multiple disabilities as well their families could be taken off the deepest and

unimaginable educational, social and political isolation and exclusion of Rio Grande do Sul".

Specific Structures

"All deafblind and person with multiple disabilities had special attention in public and free schools. So, every month I went to each city which was part of the work to orientate teachers and families".

Difficulties

None of the Educational institutions wanted to have deafblind and people with multiple disabilities as students neither the teachers wanted to work with them. These students had completely devastated family structures: on the one hand there was poverty and on the other hand there were many doors which were always closed to the student's needs. Our job implicated in taking the deafblind and people with multiple disabilities off their own houses, implicated in convincing each authority related to education, each teacher, each parent of how important is giving opportunities to the deafblind and people with multiple disabilities".

Currently

Unfortunately, The Deafblind and Multiple Disabled Context of Rio Grande do Sul doesn't exist anymore. In its essence, as it was pointed here. Maybe doesn't it exist anymore because it didn't satisfy some manipulation needs of some political party? Didn't it fulfill its function of being a tool for some Human entities of Special Education in Rio Grande do Sul a tool for the acquisition of status and power? Or maybe because this context didn't admit the exploration of many lives by people who live in the center of our country through obscure partnerships? Or because this study was made by a deafblind person?

In the end, I point out that the future of deafblind and people with multiple disabilities in Rio Grande do Sul is not sure. The genocide continues but the fight for freedom, autonomy and social justice will increase and someday our minds will be free and our behaviours can be directed to the full development of our lives.

AGAPASM will strongly try to keep the essence of the Deafblind and Multiple Disabled Context, with the support of each friend, each teacher who was part of the fight, each collaborator, each parent of deafblind and people with multiple disabilities.

Please, in God's name I ask all of you to support our work so this flame won't extinguish

**Thank you very much. Alex Garcia - Gaúcha Association of the Parents and Friends of Deafblind and People with Multiple Disabilities - AGAPASM
Specialist in Special Education. Deafblind people Educator. Deafblind and.**