

## EXCERPT FROM LAW REVIEW ARTICLE ON POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

Consider the term "mongoloid idiot." Up until the late 1970s, that terminology wasn't an insult, it was a medical diagnosis. It wasn't uttered by crude, ignorant people, it was pronounced by the best trained medical doctors in the world who told families of kids with the condition that their children would never be able to dress themselves, recognize their parents, or lead "meaningful lives." Abortion was commonly recommended. According to a recent book by Martha Beck, entitled *Expecting Adam*, not one single doctor at the Harvard Medical School where she was employed approved her delivering a child who was potentially a "mongoloid idiot." At the very least, parents were advised to institutionalize the child. Only the most stubborn or inspired parents resisted the advice of their doctors.

Then something momentous happened: The terminology changed. "Mongoloid idiot" became Down syndrome. Parents began to take their Down syndrome children home and love them. They learned that the doctors were wrong.

They learned that children with Down syndrome are here for a very specific purpose: to teach us patience, humility, compassion, and sheer joy. They learned the profound interdependence of human hearts and minds. And they learned something else. They learned that they were very specially blessed.

Of course, the terminology did not cause Down syndrome. Did it have an effect on how Down syndrome children were treated? Certainly, it did. The term "mongoloid idiot" may look like only words, but the fragile little babies, whose lives were prematurely terminated or wasted in mental institutions, can surely testify in some celestial court to the power of mere language, to the intimate links between words and social policies.