



Photo by: Wikimedia Commons

Reuven Feuerstein: A man way ahead of his time

By JAY RUDERMAN
30/04/2014

I have been proud to work with the Feuerstein Institute, which was founded by Professor Feuerstein, on a program which advocates for and counsels young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities toward marriage.

Israel lost one of her great leaders this week, and his loss will be felt around the world. Professor Reuven Feuerstein was a man way ahead of his time, who saw the world not as it is but as how it should be. Decades ago Professor Feuerstein told the world in a clear and strong voice that children with disabilities should not be seen for their disability, but should be seen as children who have every right to be included into society like every other child. In fact he believed that only through inclusion would a child with a disability be able to lead a full, healthy and meaningful life.

Professor Feuerstein's philosophy of inclusion, which has positively impacted children with disabilities and their families around the globe, is just as radical today as when he began to advocate for inclusion long ago. We continue to live in a world which routinely segregates people with disabilities into separate schools, housing, sheltered workshops and separate social gatherings. Not only does our society bear the extra costs of segregation, but we actively deny people with disabilities their civil rights to become full and equal members of our society. What's even more disconcerting is that we promote segregation through the Jewish value of hesed (kindness).

Essentially, the argument in favor of segregation goes something like this: aren't we doing wonderful things for these poor unfortunate children by giving them a lovely (but segregated) place to go to school, live and work? Professor Feuerstein believed that this type of segregation was not only the wrong way for society to act, but that segregation actually harms the health and growth of children with disabilities.

However, Professor Feuerstein's excellence was not based on his beliefs alone, but on the fact that he devised and provided the therapy necessary for children with disabilities to be truly integrated into our society. Professor Feuerstein not only improved the quality of life for thousands of children with disabilities, and for their families, around the world, he probably increased the lifespan of these children.

I have been proud to work with the Feuerstein Institute, which was founded by Professor Feuerstein, on a program which advocates for and counsels young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities toward marriage.

As many of us know, dedicating your life to your partner through marriage is one of life's great joys. Why shouldn't people with disabilities experience this same joy? In the Feuerstein Institute I have found a partner who is not afraid to push society's boundaries in advocating for the full inclusion of people with disabilities in our society.

I know what it is to lose a great leader. I believe that my father was a leader and a man of vision and I miss him every day. I understand the loss that Rabbi Rafi Feuerstein, Reuven Feuerstein's son, is experiencing, but I know that he will carry on Professor Feuerstein's vision and advocacy for a fairer, more inclusive world.

Rafi, I know how proud your father was of your leadership and I admire your dedication to the cause. Please know that there are so many of us who are with you in advocating for a better, more inclusive world.

The author is the president of the Ruderman Family Fund.



Print



[Back to original article](#)

JPost.com: [Diplomacy and Politics](#) | [Defense](#) | [Jewish World](#) | [Mideast](#) | [Israel News](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Syria](#) | [Business](#) | [Food](#) | [Arts & Culture](#)

[About Us](#) | [Advertise with Us](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [RSS](#)

All rights reserved © 1995 - 2012 The Jerusalem Post.