I AIN’T NO AFTERTHOUGHT: CHALLENGING THE NON-PRIORITISATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

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The poem draws attention to the non-prioritisation of children with disabilities in educational reform agendas. Basirat Razaq-Shuaib is a doctoral candidate in Disability and Inclusive Education at the University of Cambridge.

I AIN’T NO AFTERTHOUGHT

Born of a woman but not like every other,
I am one of those often described as the lesser.
Sometimes I’m also called disadvantaged,
Though I have potentials they are encaged.
I face so many walls so hard to scale,
My education is all but a haze.
Left on the side lines, considered an afterthought,
My spirit sinks seeing how my battles are being fought.
If only they can embrace my unique light
And provide me with opportunities to take flight.
They say they hear my voice and understand my plight.
They say they made laws that entrench my rights.

But all I hear is words, words and more words
About how every child has the same rights.
But of what rights we speak I really don’t know
Because rights as a word is just a homophone.
One that my brain finds rather confusing,
With too many meanings I find it amusing.
But if you mean the one that says all children are equal,
Then I’ll say from where I stand I beg to differ.
Because though you say that all children are equal,
It appears what you mean is some are more equal.
And even when you claim to take some action,
For your convenience you help some children first before the...

Yes, just as I thought, before the others-
The very group that represents the lesser.
Lesser not by choice but by societal standards,
Yet we have no choice our patience you demand.
Even if I understand that resources are scarce,
Isn’t it disheartening to be left for the last?
I ain’t no afterthought, I’m a child just like every other,
With dreams in my heart, with hope to discover.
So before you ask me to wait
Ask yourself, what’s at stake?
Am I giving every child a fair chance?
Or perpetuating this circumstance?

I ask you all to widen your view
To see the value in embracing us too.
For when you prioritize those deemed “the lesser,”
You uplift not one child but all children together.
Let’s challenge the notion of limited resources,
And seek creative solutions that unlock better courses.
Because until you choose what must be done
Over what you find convenient,
And place collective well-being
Over self-interest achievements,
You cannot say you have my interest at heart
Or that every child is equal without playing your part.
I AIN’T NO AFTERTHOUGHT AND I DEMAND FOR BETTER.