

The short bus is a symbol of the inequality that has plagued the disabled community since the beginning of time. Once, we were segregated, doomed to languish in institutions and special schools, destined to be forgotten. Today, inclusion and integration are in vogue, and yet, equality is still a fleeting dream. On the short bus, we are outcasts, refugees fleeing the place called normal. But I wonder, which is better: to be separate, and equal within your own kind; or to be integrated, and always feel like you don't quite belong?

Many drivers of the short bus move on to bigger buses and better pay, so our drivers are constantly coming and going. But once in a very great while, a driver will stick around long enough to witness a culture at its finest. We are proud of our short-bus status, refusing to bow to society's labels. But some riders of my short bus even try to distance themselves from the other short bus, the short bus that brings the mentally challenged kids to school. They believe we are somehow inherently superior to those kids. Maybe it's a defense mechanism, a way to wield our own sort of power over them, since the rest of society believes we are inherently inferior to the so-called "normal" crowd. We are not equal, those other short-bus kids are even less so. It's attitudes like this that create such a divided society that no one can ever hope to be equal to anyone else. We constantly strive for this concept of normal-it doesn't exist! As long as you live you will never be normal, because there IS no normal! So why don't we all stop pretending, release our inner freak, and declare equality for one and equality for all?