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Cheetah Legs and Pictures

When I was six years old, my family and I moved to the United States. My biggest wall was language. I couldn't speak English at all, so I always had a hard time expressing myself. Years later, a woman named Aimee Mullins inspired me to see my hardship in a different way.

I first learned about her when I saw a super presentation from a series called "TED Talks." The title was, "It's not fair having twelve pairs of legs." Aimee Mullins was born without fibula bones in her legs. As a result, she had both of her legs amputated below the knee when she was one year old. By the age of two, she had learned to walk on prosthetic legs and could spend her childhood alongside "able bodied" kids. She later became a gold medalist Paralympics athlete in the Atlanta Games. In 1999, she was invited to fashion designer Alexander McQueen's London show. That event changed her life. She became an actress and fashion model.

During the TED presentation, she talked about how her prosthetic legs had given her speed, beauty, and an additional fifteen centimeters in height. I was really surprised to see how unique her legs were. She had cheetah legs, glass legs, and carved wooden legs made from solid ash. They did not look like human legs at all. This changed my way of seeing prosthetic limbs. I was shocked when I heard her say that prosthetic legs don't have to look like real legs. I'd always had a stereotype that prosthetic limbs had to mimic real legs and arms.

Using prosthetic limbs looks like a disadvantage at first, but Aimee turned it into an advantage. She says that prosthetic limbs are no longer tools to replace lost parts of the body, but symbols for people to express their creativity. Therefore, disabled people can become the architects of their own identities by designing their bodies. For Aimee, being disabled is no longer a disadvantage. It's an advantage because she can represent her personality. I think she is a strong, cool, and beautiful woman. She lets everyone see her legs rather than hiding them. I respect her strong confidence and personality.

After seeing her presentation, I thought about myself just after moving to the United States. At first, I couldn't speak English. So I wondered if there were any ways to communicate. I thought, "the only thing I am good at is drawing." So I drew some pictures and showed them to my classmates. They tried understanding what I drew and they taught me the English word. I remember many of my classmates praised my work. This made me really happy. Just like Aimee, whose prosthetic legs seemed like a disadvantage at first, my difficulties with English also seemed like a disadvantage. But Aimee turned her prosthetic legs into a symbol to represent her uniqueness and I used my pictures for communication. Both of us succeeded in overcoming our hardships.

If you have your own hardship, try to change the way you look at it. That hardship may not really be a disadvantage. If you are too tall, maybe you can succeed in sports or help people reach things that are in high places. If your thoughts are too childish, maybe you can succeed in making up some ideas for children's attractions. Figure out a way to express your uniqueness and you can change yourself. By expressing our personalities, we can turn our hardships into our strengths.