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It's My World, Too

It happened suddenly. The road was pitch-dark, and the air was heavy. We were coming home one moment, and the next all I could hear was the muffled blare of sirens around me.

I woke up on a hospital bed, my dad beside me. It felt like something was wrong, but I was only 7 years old; I didn't understand what happened. I wanted to get up but I couldn't feel my legs.

That's when I was told I would never walk again.

Confined to a wheelchair, my early life was difficult. There was the initial frustration, the feeling of being different. Then there was acceptance. Finally, the focus shifted from me to the rest of the world. I was fine with myself, and I had even learned how to move around without any help, but even so, going outside was a challenge. Nothing was made with us in mind. Ramps and such were few. When a strong snow storm came, I was practically a prisoner of my own home. At school, there was no bathroom that I could use. To top that off, I couldn't join the other children in their activities, so I was slowly excluded from most of their groups.

I was all alone in a world made for them, and not for me.

Meanwhile, the world made progress. I would read about robots you could control with your mind, cars that would drive themselves, and the people determined to make them a reality. In turn, those people determined me. I figured that if technology gave us wings to fly, if technology let us conquer the seas and their abysses, it could also help us, disabled people, into society. The world must allow us to contribute to social life.

After all, each one of us could be a Stephen Hawking; the world would simply need to harness that potential.

So, as soon as I could, I began to meet people like myself. We rallied together to bring about change; environments that would be designed for everyone by means of technology. We joined the cause thousands of scientists were tackling for a long while, as supporters and donors.

Today, the world is made for all of us. I can go wherever I want, without the need for an assistant, because years of activism have transformed the cities we live in. It's easier than ever to feel that I am integrating myself into society, and I can fully interact with it. Through technology, education and sheer progress, discrimination has mostly disappeared and fewer and fewer people treat me as abnormality. Our work is bearing fruit.

Paraphrasing Neil Armstrong's words, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind," I believe that the giant leap, technology, ultimately helps me make a small step into the world.

Sure, things aren't at their peak yet, but I am happy knowing what will be; the best is yet to come.