

Letter From Helen Keller

January 4, 1954

Dear Mr. Henley,

I am indeed happy to inform you that my deaf-blind fellows are receiving construction help for the first time in the history of America. This work, now nearly nationwide in scope, is being carried forward as one of the many services of the American Foundation for the Blind with which I have been allied for thirty years.

Now that the problems of the doubly handicapped are being studied and solved, I am writing to you because it offers a wonderful opportunity for your noble impulses—effective aid to the most appealing and loneliest group of human beings on earth.

Try to imagine, if you can, the anguish and horror you would experience bowed down by the twofold weight of blindness and deafness, with no hope of emerging from an utter isolation! Still throbbing with natural emotions and desires, you would feel through the sense of touch the existence of living world, and desperately but vainly you would seek an escape into its healing light.

All of your pleasures would vanish in a dreadful monotony of silent days. Even work, man's Divine heritage—work that can bind up broken hearts—would be lost to you. Family and friends might surround you with love, but consolation alone cannot restore usefulness, or bring release from that hardest prison—a tomb of the mind and dungeon of the body.

I doubt if even the most imaginative and tender normal people can realize the peculiar cruelty of such a situation. The blind who are taught can live happily in a world of sounds, and the deaf use their eyes instead of ears, but the deaf-blind have no substitute for sight or hearing. The keenest touch cannot break their immobility. More than any other physically fettered group, they must have right teaching and constructive procedures to reclaim them to normal society.

Will you not, dear friend, give some thought to the work of the American Foundation for the Blind, which labors so diligently to restore life's goodness and the dignity of useful work to both deaf-blind and blind people. My associates at the Foundation may be depended upon to use your gift wisely. I plead for your financial support, where so much needs to be accomplished.

Trustingly and cordially yours,

Helen Keller

P.S. If you have already sent your gift to the Foundation for this year, will you please accept our renewed thanks and pass this letter along to a friend who may wish to further our work.