

SELF ADVOCATES NEWSLETTER

DON'T TALK ABOUT IT, BE ABOUT IT

BOBRA FYNE

BY ROBERT CARDONA

My article will be in remembrance of one of YAI's favorite long-time staff, Bobra Fyne! She was the founder of YAI's self-advocacy group in 1998, she had successfully run the group for many years, alongside Tom Ott and Sonja Richardson, and had many of the YAI self-advocates trying to better themselves by speaking up for their rights on housing, employment, marriage-penalty laws, tech, and any other major-league problems facing the disability community! When I first came to the group in 2003, the late Melvin Palmer was my inspiration to come and join the group and meet Bobra and all of the advocacy facilitators.

She was the founder of YAI's self-advocacy group in 1998

After a few meetings, I quickly started to feel I was fitting in with the advocacy crew, so to speak! in the years to come, I asked Bobra if I could bring some of my YAI friends to attend the group, and all of a sudden, they, along with myself, got onto the advocacy board, doing different board positions! Bobra had also asked the group to perform at the YAI conferences at the Hilton hotel and for the Central Park Challenge as well. I even remember when I got Sean Ringgold from one life to live to visit one of the meetings as a surprise guest in 2009, Bobra had mentioned that was a great way of self-advocacy. Bobra, my dear, you will be missed sooo muchh, sobbbbbbb!

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Bobra Fyne

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**COMMUNICATION
STRATEGIES**

BY ASHLEY MURRAY & LORENZO MYERS

Hello, in today's story we are going to break down two different ways of communication for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

1. Constructive Criticism
 - Brings people up. It can be negative or positive.
 - 99.9 percent of folks feel good about the feedback.
2. Destructive Criticism
 - It's thoughtless and hurtful comments that affect someone more in negative ways.
 - 99.9 percent of folks have felt more negative after.

There are better ways of communication with folks who have a disability.

There are better ways of communication with folks who have a disability. Rather if you're a manager, coworker, or someone who is a self advocate. People who have a disability have trouble trying to decide what's the difference between actual good feedback and just straight up negative. This is Ashley and my co-assistant Lorenzo and we approve this message.



SHOPPING WITH A DISABILITY

BY JANICE MCPHILLIPS

Shopping can be stressful for people who have disabilities. Here are some things stores can do to make shopping easier for people who are wheelchair bound:

- Making fitting rooms more accessible so they can try on clothes
- Lower checkout counters
- Keeping the sales floor clear



LETTER TO THE NYC COUNCIL

BY MIKE HOWARD

Hello, my name is Mike Howard and I am a member of VOCAL-NY. Law enforcement doesn't belong in most public spaces, such as libraries, shelters, hospitals, and traffic stops. I'm just sick and tired of this crumbling, shattered system working against me and my Black and brown people on a daily basis, whenever we are minding our own business.

I have a mild intellectual developmental disability. I have seen people with disabilities like myself who are autistic being targeted and killed by police. Often just because of the color of their skin. Because even when we're in crisis, we're seen as a threat. This is unnecessary and inhumane. In addition to removing police from these interactions there needs to be true accountability. Qualified immunity has to be abolished because it has perpetuated white supremacy for decades. It is time to reverse and reboot the system now, and I mean right now!



Michael Howard

FAMILY REUNION

BY KENNETH YOUNGBLOOD



Kenneth Youngblood (far left) at his family reunion

We went to a small family gathering in Warrenton, North Carolina on Saturday, August 21st, 2021. We went to the JFK Airport from New York City to Raleigh on Wednesday August 18th, 2021. We returned on Tuesday August 24th, 2021 from Raleigh to New York City. I have a disability, but I took everything out of my pocket before they scanned it when we got on the airplane. We met all the family, visiting my uncle, aunt, grandmother, cousin, grand cousin, old cousin and nieces. I took a picture with all my family. Some of them had passed away, though. My uncle Frank died 18 years ago. My grand cousin was dead last year; her

name is Charisma Robinson. My big cousin has been dead for 2 years; his name is Donnell Robinson. My old cousin and big cousin are dead for 2 years; his name is Don Green and her name is Vanessa Robinson. But there were many family members still who were there. They all enjoyed the family reunion. We all had a wonderful time.

HOW DOCTORS AND DSPS SHOULD TREAT INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

BY ROBERT CARDONA

There is a certain way for both primary doctors, DSPs, etc. to speak to people they're supporting without yelling at them as if they were doggone 5-year olds or infants who don't know any better. However, I know certain parents who actually bring their kids into the doctor's offices with them, just to make sure they will not be taken advantage of by so-called professionals who think that just because they have their diplomas, they know everything! But, regardless, we as individuals with disabilities have a voice to be heard in our own communities, and not let anybodyyyyyyyyyy put us down, thinking we won't amount to a damn thing!



A Premier HealthCare doctor with patient

CENTRAL PARK CHALLENGE

BY KENNETH YOUNGBLOOD



People walking at CPC 2018

On Saturday June 5th, 2021, we had the Central Park Challenge (CPC) from YAI. It was on Zoom at ten in the morning. Jessica Stinchcomb told me how to go to Central Park Challenge on Facebook and to watch on my smartphone this year. I have a disability, but I registered for the Central Park Challenge from YAI. Jessica also sent by mail my 5XL T-Shirt on Friday September 24th from YAI. We did not come to the Central Park Challenge in person this year, because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Last year, we had a Central Park Challenge on Zoom. They got a DJ, Cheer New York, 3K Run, 3K Walk and Face Painting at the Central Park Challenge. I met all the people at the Central Park Challenge. I wore my sandals and shorts for Central Park Challenge. It was a good time.

COMIC CON

BY ORLANDO JUAREZ

When I got to Comic Con, I saw a lot of people in costumes and they were expressing themselves and who they want to be. Like the Spiderman costumes. The upcoming movie is coming up and there were lots of them in Hudson Yards.

I'm very sure Comic Con is trying to help people express how they truly feel not just on the outside but on the inside. I believe that people with disabilities like to go to express themselves and share who's their favorite hero. I believe people like to go enjoy their time, express themselves, and have fun.

My favorite part is the costumes, and everyone can be their favorite superhero. I like Dragon Ball Z, Spiderman, and Power Rangers. I didn't dress up, but I took selfies with them. Two years ago I went but last year I couldn't go because of the pandemic. This year was my special return.



Orlando Juarez at Comic Con

PARENTS WHO HAVE AUTISTIC CHILDREN

BY ROBERT CARDONA

I know many parents throughout the YAI organization who have children with Autistic disabilities! In the 1970s and early 1980s, long before all of these new laws, we fought for people with disabilities to fight for their rights to vote in both the presidential and mayoral elections, marriage-penalty laws, supported and transitional employment jobs, residential and group home housing, but, also, Autism spectrum children who often are looked down on as being so called different, unstable or even thought of as a common waste of life to the outside world (as both of my older sisters did, sobbbb)!



The rainbow-colored infinity symbol represents the diversity of the autism spectrum, and is used by the Autism Rights Movement.

The current parent associate friends I have who have children with Autism, including Claudia, whose older son John is autistic, and is planning to move on his own into an IRA apartment run by YAI. Also, I know other parents with the agency who are also advocates for their kid's rights. such as Linda and Stephanie, as well as Margaret Puddington, who is veryyy well known in most of the US, going to all of the state-wide conferences and hosting parent conference meetings in her own home. So, as you can see, you don't have to be ashamed of your disability, just be proud of your accomplishments and your achievements you have encountered throughout your journey in both your personal and professional life!

PANDEMIC RESPONSE

BY ISMAEL NUNEZ

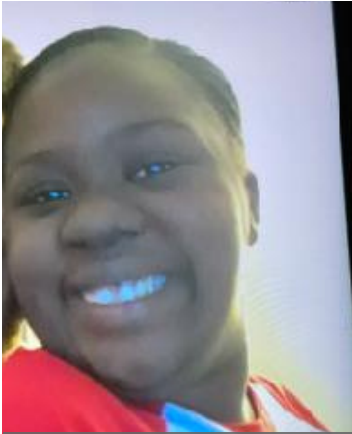
For this pandemic, a better word is depression! Here's what I've missed: One of my hobbies is taking pictures and reporting on the parades--especially the Latin American parades. I also miss the dance and mermaid parades. I'm saddened I had to miss my birthday back in April. To add I miss my job at the New York Public Library, due to COVID-19 I was forced to be laid off! I'm still frustrated and hurt.



Photo by Ismael Nunez from a parade he attended

INTERVIEW WITH ASHLEY MURRAY

BY JANICE MCPHILLIPS



Ashley Murray

Janice: Where do you go to school?

Ashley: Spring Creek High School special education and Hostos College.

J: What kind of disability do you have?

A: At age 7 I had dyslexia.

J: What inspired you to be in YAI Self Advocates Newsletter Group?

A: I like to write about real life issues.

J: What job did you get?

A: I worked at the Bronx Zoo.

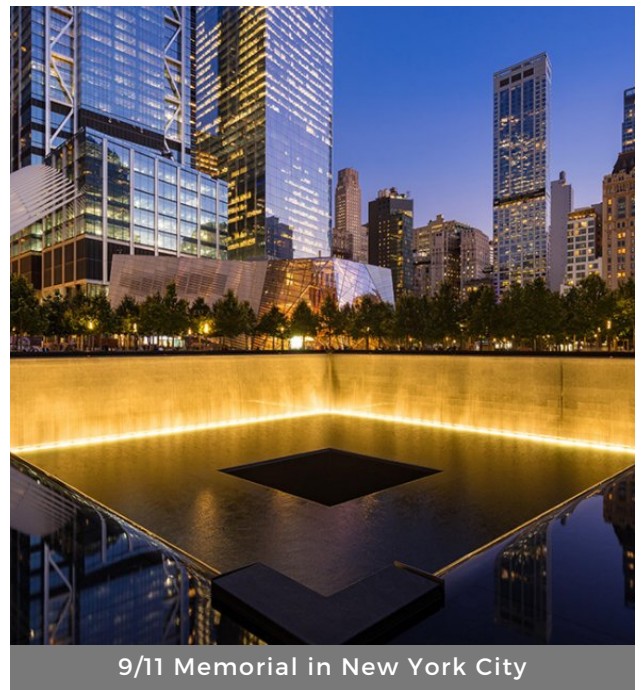
J: How do you respond to the R word?

A: I do not respond to the word at all.

9/11 MEMORIES

BY KENNETH YOUNGBLOOD

The World Trade Center started back in 1975. It stood to 2001. I have a disability, but I read the "9/11 Never Forget" in the newspaper and listened to 9/11 memories on Television. They crashed, burned and destroyed the World Trade Center with two airplanes in New York City on September 11th, 2001. I watched the world trade center collapse in "9/11 never forget" on YouTube on my laptop and phone. They sang the "Star Spangled Banner," "God Bless America," "We Are the World," "Lean on Me," and "America, the Beautiful." I read all the names of people of the twin tower in "9/11 Memories from America."



9/11 Memorial in New York City

I posted pictures of the World Trade Center and twin towers in my Facebook and Instagram on my phone. I watched the movie called "World Trade Center" in 2006. I have disability, but we are going to 9/11 memories museum next time. Today, we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the twin tower in 9/11 memories.

THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE: THE MTA AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

BY ISMAEL NUNEZ

If one person with a disability wants to see a film where Self Advocacy, Fighting, why there's changes in the New York City Metropolitan System Authority. One must see this film "The Biggest Obstacle!"

The film is close 90 minutes long yet gives fine information on the MTA. You hear from people with disabilities and their struggles travelling every day in the subways and buses.

You'll see a woman having leg problems, walking up the stairs slowly. What's sad is no one bothered to help her, to add there was likely no elevator at the subway.



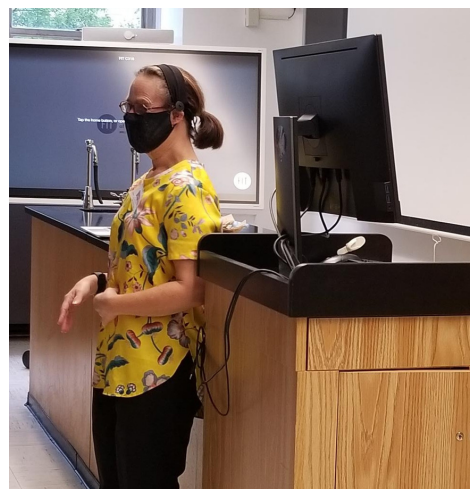
As for the elevators at the NYC subways, people with disabilities also have a hard time using them! One woman in a wheelchair describes "Often times the elevator is not working, other people who use it are not disabled, and often many including the homeless use it as a bathroom! It's not only disgusting, it's scary."

The documentary pulls no punches! The filmmakers did an awesome job on their research, and admitted, "It was all worth it, what we have in 90 minutes is awesome!" They're so right! It's a film not just about the MTA and people with disabilities; it's also about self advocacy! One person who was present at the screening who uses a wheelchair said it best "I'm a self advocate and I will always advocate!" The screening took place at an East Harlem arts space on 99th street between 2nd and 3rd avenue. Not a large crowd yet, but a documentary like this should've been shown at Radio City Music Hall! Powerful film!

FASHION INSTITUTE

BY JANICE MCPHILLIPS

I went to speak at the Fashion Institute of Technology about my self advocacy about how I spoke at the United Nations. Also I spoke about people who have different disabilities and how they interact with each other. I also talked about MAC (Mainstreaming at Camp) in Frost Valley, and other services that YAI provides for people who have disabilities.



Janice McPhillips at the Fashion Institute of Technology

HANKERING FOR MORE IS BACK WITH SAFETY AND FUN

BY ISMAEL NUNEZ

For almost a year, Hankering For More was having meetings on Zoom, then finally this past winter they got together for three live activities:

1. An annual picnic at Central Park where each person was given a free sandwich from Subway. Here the group members who attended stand proudly for a proud photo.

2. A week later several members attended a free baseball game at Citi Field. Here they are standing in front the of the big apple! We just hit a grand slam! We're all safe and all winners.

3. Hankering For More went on the Circle Line this past November. The joy of it; despite the medium cold weather, everyone was so happy to see each other, and like always there was a joy of hanging out and having a fine brunch. That day myself and several other members walked to the Brooklyn Diner at Times Square, and got good exercise taking a nice walk.



1. Ismael Nunez with YAI Hankering For More at Central Park



2. Ismael Nunez with YAI Hankering For More at Citi Field



3. Ismael Nunez with YAI Hankering For More at the Brooklyn Diner