

# SELF ADVOCATES NEWSLETTER

DON'T TALK ABOUT IT, BE ABOUT IT

## INTERVIEW WITH KEVIN CAREY, INTERIM CEO OF YAI

BY ISMAEL NUNEZ

### Introduction

When a reporter is asked to do an interview it can be challenging, yet a learning experience. As this reporter sat down with the latest CEO of YAI the good news was the answers were clear, and confident. There was no bad news. It was as if the famous saying, "My house is your house." The office, the handshake, reminded this reporter of his abuela (grandmother in Spanish) "Siempre Caballero" Always a gentleman.

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself? Education, background, and what got you working with people with disabilities?

I have a bachelor's from Boston University. My degree was in international relations, so nothing to do with what I'm doing now. I also have an MBA from New York University, which is more in line with what I'm doing now. When I graduated from college, my goal was to work for a mission-based organization, and one of the first jobs I had was for Children's Aid Society, which served children in all aspects. One component of that was through OPWDD, so my first work experience working with people with I/DD. I also have family members with an I/DD diagnosis. Once I started working with organizations and understanding how the government supports people with I/DD, it really spoke to me. I wanted to get learn how we could better provide supports, how we could really change the way that services are delivered, to make them more person-centered and person-focused, and ensure that people with I/DD can live the lives that they want to live in the community.

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Ismael (left) and Kevin (right)

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**RIGHTS FOR PEOPLE WHO  
HAVE DISABILITIES****BY JANICE MCPHILLIPS**

Rights for people who have disabilities are: housing, working and programs that will help them. All people have a right to appropriate housing. From group homes to independent living in an apartment. Everyone should be able to get a job. They might need special help to do it. All people should be able to have friends and to be around different people, and have fun.

**THE DEATH OF MY HIGH  
SCHOOL FRIEND****BY ROBERT CARDONA**

My article is on the death of one of my very dear high- school friends I've known since 1984: Tyrone Hampton!

I had met Tyrone at the mainstream high school in Brooklyn. He was, unfortunately, one of the bullying students that I had to encounter, but at our high school reunion 4 years ago Tyrone actually hugged me- as did all of the students who referred to me as the "r" word and even worse- the beatings I got every day. But- Tyrone had asked me to forgive him for his unforgivable treatment of me!

To all of my independent pals with disabilities who may have been in general education and have had to have face the tragedies I went through- talk to a friend, family member- or a counselor who can lead you on the right path!



A candle in remembrance of Tyrone

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

**You are interim CEO, correct? You are facing several challenges. Name one?**

We definitely have a lot of challenges. But we have an incredible amount of opportunities. We have a commissioner at OPWDD who really understands our field and understands the challenges that providers like YAI are going through and has made commitments to help us. We have a governor that also really supports our field. So those things make me optimistic. One specific challenge that we currently have is staffing in our programs, because of our rates and the inadequate funding that we get from the state. We're not able to pay staff what we'd like to pay them. However, with some recent rate changes, we will be making an impact on staff salaries soon. And we must continue to attract qualified, exceptional staff based on the mission of the organization, the benefits that we provide, and the new levels of compensation that will be rolling out in the new year.

**What do you think would make CPC more fun? Having celebrities, bands, cheerleaders, etc**

All of those ideas would be great. But the one thing that I think would make the biggest impact is to have more people we support at the event, have more staff at the event, and have more of our community stakeholders attending. And if we get a bigger turnout, and everybody's excited to be part of the community. All those other things that you mentioned would only add to the wonderful experience that everybody will have that day. I'm really looking forward to CPC on June 3.

**You're the interim CEO so you will be busy! What do you do to relax? Books, Music, Movies, Baseball Games?**

Yes, I am busy, and I also have two little children, so they keep me very busy as well. But playing with them also helps me to relax. I enjoy watching Jets games on the weekend, which also helps me to relax, at least when they win. And I enjoy reading and exercising.

**There's a movement to erase the R word. What's your opinion of that word? Should it be banned in entertainment?**

I think it should be banned completely. The YAI self advocates have done a tremendous job of explaining why that word is hurtful, and the impact that that word has on people with intellectual and development disabilities. And I think we must continue to enlighten people so that they understand the impact of that word so we can completely erase it.

**What advice would you like to give a disabled person like myself?**

Live your life to your fullest. And just because somebody has a disability does not mean that they can't do everything they want. And work with organizations like YAI to live, learn, work, and play in the community, and live your fullest life possible.

**...we definitely have a lot of challenges ahead of us. But I also think that we have an incredible amount of opportunities in the next couple of years.**

**Anything else you'd like to add?**

I look forward to continuing to work with the self advocates to make sure that their voices are heard and to make sure that their goals are realized over the next couple of years at YAI. I welcome the opportunity to attend future meetings and to be part of the group, helping them achieve their objectives in any way that they would like.



## FAMILY REUNION 2022

BY KENNETH YOUNGBLOOD

We went to my Family Reunion at my grandma's house in Warrenton, North Carolina on Saturday August 27th at 2:30 in the afternoon. We were riding the automobile to Creedmoor, North Carolina, at the "Airbnb" house on Friday August 26th to Tuesday August 30th, then went back to New York. We were visiting our cousins, nieces, grandmother, aunts, uncles, grand cousins and old cousins in North Carolina for my family reunion. My mother told me I had to separate my money for snack, drink, family reunion,

automobile, house and gas for down south this year. I have a disability, but I learned to save money for down south every month. I took pictures for my family reunion in North Carolina. We went to Fish Fry Feast on Friday August 26th at my Uncle's house in Henderson, North Carolina at 4:30pm. I learned to post my family pages on my "Facebook" on the internet. I've been going to the family reunion for 39 years. We are going back to the family reunion next year. My sister and niece were driving the automobile to North Carolina. We were having a great time at the family reunion. I like being with my family because it makes me feel safe.

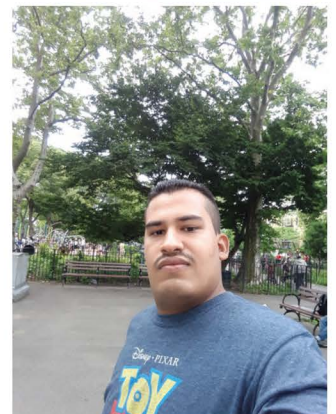


Kenneth and his family at their reunion

## SUNSET PARK

BY ORLANDO JUAREZ

There is one area in Brooklyn that I know really well. This area has two types of people with a booming Chinatown and Latino community. The area I'm talking about is one of the places that is part of my childhood. It's called Sunset Park. The Hispanic and the Chinese people live there, and they have different activities and cultures, however they still have some things in common, they have so many stores that keeps them busy. They each have different foods, toys, and clothes, and they sell things that represent their cultures. There is one place they always go during the weekends: the public park between 41st and 44th Street and between 5th and 7th Avenue, there are lots of fun things like dancing and tai chi exercise and sports like soccer. And at that park people can see Manhattan and of course the sunset. So, whenever people want to go to see two cultures in the same area it's Sunset Park.



## THANKSGIVING DINNER

BY KENNETH YOUNGBLOOD

This last November I had a Thanksgiving Dinner at my house with my family. My mother told me to write the Thanksgiving Menu. We were having a Rotisserie Chicken, Fried Chicken, Meatloaf, Ham, Green Beans, Collard Greens, Mashed Potatoes, Macaroni and Cheese, Canned Yams, Rolls and Soda.

My family helped me in cooking dinner for Thanksgiving in the kitchen. I have disability, but I made my apple pie, cherry pie or sweet potato pie for Thanksgiving Dessert. My mother bought whipped topping, fresh strawberries, a big can of Green Beans, frozen strawberry, fresh pepper, mini Pepsi and Ginger Ale on Monday.

I bought Collard Greens, Yams and Pound Cake at the supermarket. We will make chocolate pudding, strawberry shortcake and sweet potato pie for Thanksgiving Dessert. I enjoyed Thanksgiving Dinner with my family. Happy Thanksgiving!



## AIRPORT DISABILITY ADVICE

BY JANICE MCPHILLIPS



Recently I traveled on a plane to visit family. I was happy to find there were some disability accommodations at the airport that made my trip easier. When making the reservations, we asked for wheelchair transportation so when we got a wheelchair shortly after arrival at the airport. By being in a wheelchair, I went to the front of the line at security. I did have to remove my shoes and coat before going through the airport detector, but I went through in a wheelchair. On the way to the gate, I needed to use the restroom and my transporter was very nice and waited while I used the facilities. I noticed in the bathroom there were handrails and hand dryers at a level easily accessible to someone in a wheelchair. I also used an elevator and noticed brail buttons. Since I am able to walk short distances, I got out of the wheelchair at the gate. Even though I wasn't in a wheelchair, the people at the desk remembered I came in a wheelchair and let me board the plane first so I would have extra time. So, if you are traveling by plane, I suggest you visit the airport website to learn of the disability services offered for departure and arrival to the airport.





## MY DAY AT COMIC CON 2022

BY ORLANDO JUAREZ

Finally, my first time inside Comic Con. On Friday, October 7, 2022, I got the chance to enter the Comic Con and when I got there, it was like a full family house because there were a lot of spectacular things. Things such as anime stuff as well as cartoons arts. Also merchandising items from the past and old comic books and action figures, even special collectors' items.

My best moment at Comic Con was the Yu-Gi-Oh! booth where I got to test my dueling skills and earn some tokens. Lots of Yu-Gi-oh fans really enjoy it. But most importantly I got to see a lot of people in their costumes. Some of them wore costumes inspired by their favorite character. Some of those characters represented the people who wore them, and some of those people are autistic.

Luckily, most people enjoy Comic Con. They come to see a lot of things, and they get to meet some of their famous actors as I did. I can't wait to go again next year. I also want to go to the anime con that is coming this November.



(Top) Orlando poses with Spiderman and (bottom) Cousin Itt at Comic Con



## VIRTUAL DISABILITY PRIDE PARADE

BY KENNETH YOUNGBLOOD

I went to Virtual Disability Pride Parade on Sunday October 2nd at noon to 3pm. Last year, the disability pride parade was cancelled. Because of the pandemic.

I have a disability, but I did visit my friends from AHRC, UCP, YAI and JCC of Manhattan at Disability Pride Parade. I knew how to march in the Disability Pride Parade from before. The colors of pride are red, orange, yellow, green, and blue.

People with disabilities were in wheelchairs and walkers at Disability Pride Parade.

My friend Car'Melo says, "At YAI we don't talk about, we be about it. Yes. He's right. I enjoyed the Disability Pride Parade this year. I will go to the parade again next year!"



# **LATIN AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS SERVING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN USA**

**BY ISMAEL NUNEZ**

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September 15th -October 15th was Latin American Heritage month! Latinos in the United States of America are a growing population. We face challenges everyday and many are not aware of organizations to serve people with disabilities. Here are few organizations this reporter (who is proud to be Latin American) found that can be good help.

**The Unification of Disabled Latin Americans, U.D.L.A - [udlaus.org](http://udlaus.org)** - is a non-profit organization founded in 1974 by and for physically disabled individuals in LA county. "The main goal of U.D.L.A is to dedicate and commit to improving the quality of life for those individuals with disabilities. Creating a safe place and being a platform for those to gain their self-esteem to be productive members of society. In keeping with our mission, all of our U.D.L.A staff are disabled people of all types...We provide community services that benefit children, youth, senior citizens, disabled individuals and their families. We thrive on uniting all ethnic groups as good neighbors, so they can work together at community events."

**The Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Persons With Disabilities and their Families (RIADIS) - [www.riadis.org](http://www.riadis.org)** is a network created by organizations of persons with disabilities from 19 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Formed in 2002, RIADIS represents national DPOs as well as several NGOs acting as technical collaborators.

**Deaf Latinos y Familias [deaflatinosyfamilias.org](http://deaflatinosyfamilias.org)** - "We are a non-profit organization that was founded in 2010 by Irma Sanchez. We work with Latinx families with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Deaf Adults, and non-verbal, as we integrate family history, traditions, and values into their lives to bridge the gap between two different cultures/languages/worlds. We are a family-oriented organization ran for parents by parents." They "promote awareness of the Latinx cultures to children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Deaf Adults, non-verbal, and community members by providing families resources and American Sign Language classes in Spanish to bridge the communication gap."

**National Hispanic Latino Association of the Deaf - [nhlad.org](http://nhlad.org)** - has a mission "to build an alliance between Deaf Latino community through the preservation of our language, culture, and customs. We recognize the importance of gaining empowerment through the promotion of leadership and education throughout the Latin American community...Our organization National Hispanic Latino Association of the Deaf Logo represents two things: 1-Latin American countries, and the Caribbean Islands. 2-It represents their Culture, Language, Families, Food, Dance, Arts, Clothes, etc."

In an article posted by the worldbank.org "One out of five Latin American households living in extreme poverty (measured by a daily income of US\$3.20) includes a person with a disability." Organizations such as these are much needed.

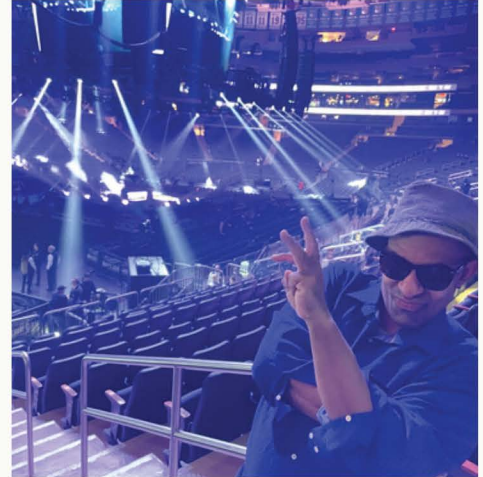


## FINALLYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY GOING TO WILD- N- OUT!

BY ROBERT CARDONA

This Thursday- after years of writing to this brutha- now- my dream is finallyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy coming true- I will be going to see my number 1 idol- and- my favorite actor-rapper- Nick Cannon- and the cast of wild- n- out- live at Madison Square Garden!

Everyone who knows me under the sun KNOWS HOW LONG I'VE BEEN TRYING TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN-I have been writing to Nick countlessly on his page- also wanting desperately to join the cast of the show - even though the staff in my agency aren't having me going on any auditions for the shows I've been trying to get on for the longest- the original people from my agency who were around years ago- alwaysssssssssssssss used to bring me to allllllllllll of the recreational events I enjoyed going to- the soap opera fan club events, the Broadway plays, etc- but- now- I've been working EXRETEMELYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY HARDDDDDDDD TO GET MY RECREATIONAL SERVICES BACK AGAIN-so- on Thursday- let's hope Nick and the cast will spot me in the audience - God willing- and- hire me for the show- I'm all booed up- now- whozzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz uppppppppp- hahhaaaaaaaa



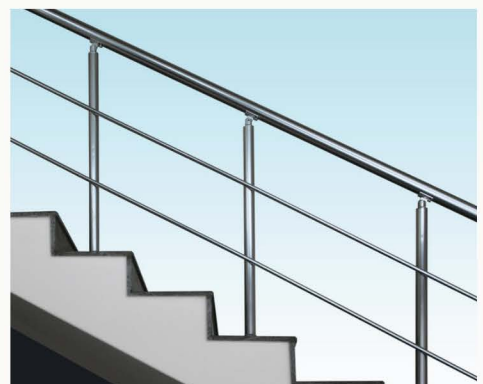
(Top) Robert at MSG for the Wild n Out Show (bottom) Nick Cannon on stage



## HANDRAILS FOR THE ELDERLY

BY JANICE MCPHILLIPS

The handrails are far away for the elderly and the disabled that go to their cars and Westchester Access-a-Ride. I went to a manager's office to speak up for myself. They are going to put up a sign that people should not double park there. They are going to move the rails down so people can hold on to them for safety.



## FAMOUS LATIN AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES

BY ISMAEL NUNEZ

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September until around early October this country salutes 'LATINO/A HERITAGE MONTH! Where Latin Americans are honored for their achievements! These Latin Americans, along with Arsenio Rodriguez who had the disability of blindness, had the same obstacle as Mister Rodriguez - Disability! Yet they continued to strive and be an inspiration not just to Latinos, but all people.

**Marc Anthony**, Latin Music Singer, was painfully shy to the point that he would refuse to talk. He discovered that his speech impediment would disappear when he sang. "It was my savior," he confessed. "I preferred to sing than to talk so I protected it, [singing] was mine and that's why when I do anything I do it wholeheartedly. Whenever I sang—maybe because I had to concentrate so hard—I'd lose my embarrassing stutter."

**George Lopez**, ACTOR/COMEDIAN has dyslexia, a type of learning disability where you mix up letters and numbers when reading. And yes he has this in real life, and in his TV Show "George Lopez Show" there have been episodes focusing on the issue of learning disability.

**Penelope Cruz** is a Spanish actress who has known much success in many of her movies. She was originally a dancer but slowly started to get involved in Spanish television. This beautiful and talented actress has been said to suffer from OCD.

**Magdalena Carmen Frieda Kahlo y Calderon** (better known as Frida Kahlo) was born in Coyoacán, Mexico. While she is best known for her self-portraits, all her work is celebrated in Mexico as being emblematic of national and indigenous tradition. At a young age she had polio and the age of 18, she was in a bus accident where she received fractures to her spine, collarbone, and ribs, a shattered pelvis, and shoulder and foot injuries. Although Frida lived to be only 47, her work continues to influence artists around the world.

**Michelle Rodriguez** shared with Cosmopolitan in 2006 that she struggles with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). She said that her ADD may prevent her from pursuing her dreams of working behind the camera. "I want to write and direct," she told the magazine. "But it's not easy with ADD. I have a hard time focusing when I'm alone. I'm a scatterbrain, but I'm nervous of taking medication. I don't really want to depend on anything to control my brain."

**Rosie Perez**, Actress, Dancer, Choreographer, Activist-Growing up she suffered abuse in her childhood as a result she has suffered from high anxiety, PTSD, and Depression. As she stated in an interview at NBC News Latin, "Beating Depression is a wonderful thing" Along with her entertainment achievements she's been an advocate on several notable causes: Among them immigration reform, marriage equality, AIDS awareness, promoting arts education in public schools. She has also been advocate on several issues affecting the PUERTO RICAN/LATIN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES.

**Cristina Sanz**, Actress, who has Down Syndrome-First Hispanic with a Disability As Part of Ensemble Cast to Be on an Emmy Award-Winning Show Born this Way.



## MY LIFE IN PARK SLOPE

BY ORLANDO JUAREZ

Park Slope was my childhood home in the 90s and 2000s, Park Slope had lots of trees and nice houses to enjoy. It filled me with energy and excitement, moments such as an annual street fair at 5th Avenue during May. It helped me get through some obstacles and there also held me some special moments until I graduated Middle school 88. At the time of the New York blackout on August 14, 2003, we lost our apartment building, 530 at 6th Avenue by a fire during the blackout. After that we had to struggle until we waited for an opportunity, then by spring 2004 we moved to Sheepshead Bay. However even when we moved, I still remember Park Slope. Sometimes when I go there for important things, I take a few minutes' walk between 9th Street and 20th Street to explore the old neighborhood and to relive my moments. I hope that Park Slope will find a way to bring back the old neighborhood, and I hope that it also helps people to relive their moments.



Top: View of Park Slope when Orlando visited. Bottom: Selfie of Orlando in Park Slope



## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

BY MICHAEL HOWARD

This past Saturday, December 3rd was International Day of Persons with Disabilities for those who are unaware. Speaking of people with disabilities like myself, most of us need to pay attention to fight back and focus on the 118th Congress which will be sworn in on 1/3/23 by US House Republicans who will have the majority and plan to do something that will be affecting us by robbing us of what we are receiving and handing it back to the corporations who have been screwing us for decades. While the conservative, centrist Democrats are allowing it to happen every time they have the upper hand. And that's why I really don't trust the two-party duopoly because the rotten system is really affecting us poor through working class people thoroughly. International Day of Persons with Disabilities holiday is about Love, Peace, and Solidarity in my opinion. And we won't allow these corporate cronies to snatch away something we built and organized.