Annual Gala

Wednesday, November 17, 2021 — Friday, November 19, 2020

Master of Ceremonies: Hari Srinivasan

Service to the Self Advocacy Movement Award: Ask Me, I’m an AAC User! and Mi Cerebro Atípico

Ally of the Year Award: Sandy Ho on behalf of the Disability & Intersectionality Summit

Harriet McBryde Johnson Award for Nonfiction: Zack Budryk

Proceeds will support our advocacy work and programs for the coming year, and will allow us to continue working to empower disabled people across the country.
Our Mission

The Autistic Self Advocacy Network seeks to advance the principles of the disability rights movement with regard to autism. ASAN believes that the goal of autism advocacy should be a world in which autistic people enjoy equal access, rights, and opportunities. We work to empower autistic people across the world to take control of our own lives and the future of our common community, and seek to organize the autistic community to ensure our voices are heard in the national conversation about us. Nothing About Us, Without Us!
Program
Wednesday, Nov. 17
6:00 pm – Welcome Remarks

All aboard! After an introduction from our MC and a look at the week’s upcoming events, we’ll be honoring our four awardees. We’re really excited to share with you the important work our awardees are doing. Hear about their work and hear from them at the awards ceremony, streamed on YouTube Premiere at 6pm EST. The event will remain on our YouTube channel for anyone that can’t make it on the day. Follow along this week on our Twitter account, @autselfadvocacy. Make sure to use the #ASANGala hashtag!

Link: https://autisticadvocacy.org/awards

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Harriet McBryde Johnson Award for Nonfiction:
Zack Budryk

Note: All times listed on the schedule each day are in Eastern Standard Time (EST).
Program
Wednesday, Nov. 17
(continued)

7:00pm – Film Screening

Join us to watch LISTEN and People Like Me! You’ll be able to play and pause the video on your own, but we’ll start watching at 7pm. Feel free to join the discussion on Twitter and Facebook using the #ASANGala hashtag!

LISTEN is a short film, created by CommunicationFIRST, made with and about non-speaking autistic people in response to the film MUSIC. The run-time is 10 minutes. This film contains graphic descriptions of restrain and seclusion and includes conversations about and references to topics such as disability-based discrimination and harassment.

Link: https://autisticadvocacy.org/listen

People Like Me is a documentary by Autism Campus Inclusion alum Marrok Sedgwick in which non-speaking autistic adults assert the richness and beauty of autistic culture, and describe ABA as abuse and torture. The run-time is 20 minutes. This documentary includes conversations about and references to violence against children and racialized violence. This film may be overstimulating to those with visual and auditory sensitivity.

Link: https://autisticadvocacy.org/peoplelikeme

LISTEN has captions and People Like Me has both captions and audio description. ASAN is excited to share these films with you!
Program
Thursday, Nov. 18
3:00pm to 4:30pm – Panel 1: Racial Disparities in Public Health

Current systems have failed to serve people and communities of color in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Those same systems have barred people of color, especially disabled people of color, from getting accessible health care. In this panel, three public health experts will discuss how racial disparities affect public health. The event will be held live on Zoom, but will also be streamed to YouTube. The event will remain on our YouTube channel after the event.
Link: https://autisticadvocacy.org/panel1

Panelists: Shivangi Agrawal, Héctor Manuel Ramírez, Ryan Easterly
Moderator: Greg Robinson, Policy Analyst

5:00pm – Film Screening

Join us to watch This is Not About Me! You’ll be able to play and pause the video on your own, but we’ll start watching at 5pm. Feel free to join the discussion on Twitter and Facebook using the #ASANGala hashtag! The film is available for viewing until 9pm.
This is Not About Me, a documentary film tells the story of Autism Campus Inclusion alum Jordyn Zimmerman. The run-time is 56 minutes. This documentary includes conversations about and references to restraint and topics such as ableist discrimination and harassment. This is Not About Me has subtitles. ASAN is excited to share this film with you!
Link: https://autisticadvocacy.org/thisisnotaboutme
Thursday, Nov. 18
(continued)

7:00PM–8:30PM Panel 2: Centering AAC Users in Film

It’s essential that we center non-speaking autistic people in autistic narratives. In this panel, five autistic AAC users involved in filmmaking discuss the impact of AAC users telling their own stories and the consequences of excluding AAC users in work about their lives. They also talk about representing multiply-marginalized AAC users in film. This panel is pre-recorded and will stream on Youtube only. The event will remain on our YouTube channel after the event.

Link: https://autisticadvocacy.org/panel2

Panelists:  Marrok Sedgwick, DJ Savarese, Huan Vuong, Isaiah Tien Grewal, Jordyn Zimmerman

Moderator:  Donnie Denome, Publications Associate

Program
Friday, Nov. 19

2:00pm – Panel 3: Racial Disparities in Community Living

Emergencies like hurricanes or pandemics shed light on pre-existing inequalities and systemic discrimination in our society, but those inequalities have been there long before. Many essential aspects of community living, like utilities, internet access, transportation, health care, incarceration, and foster care, are forgotten, even in conversations about community living. In this panel, three community living experts will discuss how racial disparities affect who can access community living and to what degree. The event will be held live on Zoom, but will also be
streamed to YouTube. The event will remain on our YouTube channel after the event.

Link: https://autisticadvocacy.org/panel3

Panelists: Valerie Novack, Gelila Selassie, Lucina Kayee
Moderator: Noor Pervez, Community Engagement Manager

4:00PM–5:30PM Civic Engagement Twitter Chat

Excited about making changes? You can join us in talking about civic engagement on Twitter. We'll be posting the questions and our own answers on our Twitter account, @autselfadvocacy. Make sure to use the #ASANGala hashtag!
Link: https://twitter.com/autselfadvocacy

6:00PM Closing Ceremony & Remarks from Executive Director Julia Bascom

All good things must come to an end. Executive Director Julia Bascom will give the closing remarks, reflecting on the past year and the importance of self-advocacy and civic engagement. The closing remarks will wrap up another year’s celebration of advocacy and community, and refocus us to go full steam ahead next year. This event will be streamed on YouTube Premiere at 6pm EST. It will remain on our YouTube channel for anyone that can’t make it on the day.
Link: https://autisticadvocacy.org/closing
Giveaways

Speak for Yourself has donated a copy of their AAC app that we’ll be raffling off at the gala! Speak for Yourself is an app for iPad that allows you or an AAC user in your life to use your iPad as a communication device. We are all about building self advocacy skills and bringing autistic voices to conversations, and this app could help you or a loved one speak up in your daily life and beyond! To enter to win the app, comment on our Giveaway Facebook post to enter! We will use a random comment picker to pick the winner on Friday, November 19th.

We’ll also be raffling off two year-long ASAN memberships at the Trivia Teammates tier, which includes a membership welcome pack, a member-exclusive newsletter, digital phone and computer wallpapers, an ASAN logo sticker, an ASAN mug, a $5 gift card to ASAN shop, a physical copy of one of ASAN’s books (Knowing Why, Navigating College, Empowering Leadership, Welcome to the Autistic Community, or Loud Hands), an ASAN pen, an ASAN lapel pin, an ASAN tangle, and a T-shirt!
Awardees and Speakers

Master of Ceremonies: Hari Srinivasan

Hari Srinivasan is a minimally-speaking autistic student at UC Berkeley. He is on ASAN’s Board of Directors and a 2019 alumnus of our Autism Campus Inclusion program! At UC Berkeley, Hari is a student journalist for the Daily Californian, student instructor for a class on autism, research assistant at the UC Berkeley Psychology and Disability Labs, and was the first nonspeaking president of the student group, Autism:Spectrum At Cal. As a Haas Scholar, he is doing research on how autistic people experience awe. Hari was recently selected to serve on the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee, which advises federal policy and priorities around autism. We are so grateful for Hari’s dedicated advocacy!
Award for Service to the Self-Advocacy Movement: Mi Cerebro Atípico

Mi Cerebro Atípico es un colectivo dirigido por y para personas autistas. Nuestro objetivo es promover los principios del movimiento por los derechos de los discapacitados con respecto al autismo en el mundo de habla hispana. Nace como una iniciativa de acción afirmativa con la intención de corregir la situación de desigualdad y opresión en la que se encuentran las voces autistas en nuestra comunidad, poniéndolas en el centro de la reflexión sobre nuestras diferencias, necesidades y derechos. Trabajamos para empoderar a las personas autistas hispanohablantes y promovemos entre sus familias la constitución de las redes humanas de apoyo a las que todo ser humano tiene derecho. Proveemos comunidad, soporte y recursos para las personas autistas hispanohablantes y sus familias.

Mi Cerebro Atípico is a group run by and for autistic people. Our goal is to promote the principles of the disability rights movement regarding autism in the Spanish-speaking world. It was born as an affirmative action initiative with the intention of correcting the situation of inequality and oppression in which autistic voices find themselves in our community, putting them at the center of all reflections made about our differences, needs and rights. We work to empower Spanish-speaking autistic people and promote among their families the constitution of the support networks that every human being has the right to. We provide community, support and resources for Spanish-speaking autistic people and their families.
Award for Service to the Self-Advocacy Movement: Ask Me, I'm an AAC User!

Ask Me, I'm an AAC User! is a group where AAC users are the authority on AAC and where AAC users, SLPs, support staff, doctors, parents, family, and others who are interested in AAC can ask questions and get advice and some insight from actual AAC users. We are *not* an autism specific AAC group. While we do have a lot of autistic members we do also have a lot of allistic (non autistic) AAC users as well. Our goal: prioritize the voices of the general AAC user community. In this group all AAC use and need is valid. AAC users range from part time to full time and type of AAC varies between each user. Many use multiple forms of AAC. AAC access and use is a basic communication right, everyone should be able to use and access AAC regardless of perceived speech capabilities.
Ally of the Year Award: Sandy Ho, on behalf of the Disability & Intersectionality Summit

Sandy Ho is a research project manager at the Community Living Policy Center, a student at the Heller School, the founder of the Disability & Intersectionality Summit, and a community organizer in the Boston area. Her areas of interest include civic engagement of people with disabilities, access to Medicaid HCBS for people of color with disabilities, and building research capacity among disability advocates. She identifies as a queer disabled Asian American woman.

The Disability & Intersectionality Summit (DIS) is a biennial national conference that centers the multiple oppressions that shape the lived experiences of disabled individuals, as told by disabled people, in a setting organized by disabled activists. DIS aims to create dialogue on how our society must address systemic oppressions using an intersectional approach. The conference centers the experiences and knowledge of multiply marginalized disabled people such as, queer disabled people of color, undocumented transgender disabled people, or formerly incarcerated disabled people among others.
Zack Budryk is a DC-area journalist and crime novelist who covers environmental issues for The Hill. His reporting on climate change recognizes the importance of bringing disability—and experts with disabilities!—into the conversation. He explores how ableism in climate concerns harms both disabled people and resilience efforts. His writing has appeared in The Guardian, USA Today and The Washington Post. He also co-hosts Stim4Stim, a relationship podcast by and for autistic people with Charlie Stern. In both his podcast and writing, he discusses the challenges and benefits he finds in his approach to relationships. He lives in northern Virginia with his wife Raychel, their cats Lucky and Tessie, and their chihuahua Ziggy.
Racial Disparities in Public Health Panel

Current systems have failed to serve people and communities of color in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Those same systems have barred people of color, especially disabled people of color, from getting accessible health care. In the Racial Disparities in Public Health panel, three public health experts will discuss how racial disparities affect public health. The event will be held live on Zoom, but will also be streamed to YouTube. The event will remain on our YouTube channel after the event.

Shivangi Agrawal is a disabled and queer activist and artist from New Delhi, India. Along with a collective called Determined Art Movement (DAM), their art practice involves journaling, creating zines, poetry, painting on big canvases, walls or unique surfaces like their prosthetic shoes and wheelchairs! They like to use the various forms of art for justice, collective organising, live documentation of political narratives and radical thoughts. Find them on Instagram and Twitter @DisabledSpice.

They also work as an interdependent consultant, researcher, writer, advisor and facilitator with an emphasis on advocacy for disability, sexuality, gender, policy, content creation and accessibility.

Héctor Manuel Ramírez (they/them) is an Apache & Mexican Two Spirits person occupying space in Yaanga, Tongva (Los Angeles, California) the unceded ancestral lands of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. Héctor is an Autistic person who is hard of hearing & has a psychiatric disability. Hector has done local, state, & federal level policy work in the areas of equity & disparities in Disability, Native American, Latinx, Indigenous, LGBTQIA2S+, Immigrant, Undocumented Americans, & most impacted & highly marginalized communities during COVID-19 pandemic.

Héctor is on the board of directors with Disability Rights California & the National Disability Rights Rights Network where Héctor provides oversight & accountability of the nation’s only legally based advocacy organization established by Congress to protect
the rights of all individuals with disabilities in every state and U.S. territories. Héctor has worked with all of the Protection & Advocacy programs in all of the 50 states & territories to improve the lives of people with disabilities by guarding against abuse, advocating for basic rights, & ensuring access & accountability in health care, education, employment, housing, transportation, voting, and within the juvenile, criminal justice system, natural disaster response, climate change, immigration detention facilities, and COVID-19 responses.

Ryan Easterly is an experienced grantmaker, strategist, and advocate who's driven by a desire to effect meaningful change. His vernacular and love for sweet tea reveal his proud Alabama roots. His experiences as an individual with multiple marginalized identities inform his commitment to bridging gaps and supporting people’s access to resources and power.

Ryan has worked in philanthropy for more than a decade. He’s held positions within the HSC Foundation and currently serves as Executive Director of the WITH Foundation, a private foundation that promotes comprehensive healthcare for adults with developmental disabilities in the United States.

Widely regarded as a visionary leader on the intersections of race, class, and disability, Ryan was appointed by President Obama to the President’s Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities. He now serves as a member of the Presidents’ Council on Disability Inclusion in Philanthropy which is co-chaired by Ford Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Ryan also serves as co-chair of Exponent Philanthropy's Disability Funders Peer Circle.

The panel will be moderated by Greg Robinson.
Centering AAC Users in Films Panel

It’s essential that we center non-speaking autistic people in autistic narratives. In the Centering AAC Users in Films panel, five autistic AAC users involved in filmmaking discuss the impact of AAC users telling their own stories and the consequences of excluding AAC users in work about their lives. They also talk about representing multiply-marginalized AAC users in film. This panel is pre-recorded and will stream on Youtube only. The event will remain on our YouTube channel after the event.

Marrok Sedgwick is a documentary filmmaker and learning scientist. He is a non-speaking autistic person with other disabilities. He is a transgender person. He makes films that create new film languages based on his identities. Film languages means the way images and sounds are put together to make a story. He wants his films to show non-speaking people and transgender people deserve inclusion. Recently he made a film called People Like Me. It won multiple awards. One award was Best Student Film at the International Documentary Association 2020 Awards. Marrok is currently a PhD student at University of Illinois at Chicago. He studies how non-speaking youth with developmental disabilities learn with new media. New media means anything digital. Digital could be computers, photos, videos, the Internet, and social media. He wants to create new ways for people to teach students with developmental disabilities.

Huan Vuong is a nonspeaking autistic student at Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) who communicates with a letterboard. Huan attended the Autism Campus Inclusion program in 2018. He has been advocating for himself and others like him since high school. He was one of the Arlington Five who, together with ASAN, filed a complaint with the Department of Justice in 2016 under the Americans with Disabilities Act to demand for their right to use their most effective mode of communication. At NOVA, Huan started the student group called Aware for marginalized students to meet and share experiences. Today, he lives independently with a roommate, and continues to advocate for individuals with disabilities.
Jordyn Zimmerman is a graduate student of education at Boston College studying Curriculum and Instruction: Special Education. Before graduate school, she completed her bachelor’s degree in Education Policy at Ohio University. As a nonspeaking autistic student who was denied access to effective augmentative communication until she was 18 years old, Jordyn has personal experience challenging the educational status quo. She is most recently featured in a documentary titled, “This Is Not About Me” (October, 2021). Jordyn’s website is www.JordynZimmerman.com and she can be followed on Twitter at @Jordynbzim.

David James “DJ” Savarese (www.djsavarese.com) is an artful activist, public scholar, and practicing optimist. He is the co-producer, narrative commentator, subject, and poet of the Peabody award-winning documentary Deej: Inclusion Shouldn’t Be a Lottery and founded Listen2Us: Writing Our Own Futures as an Open Society Foundation Human Rights Initiative Youth Fellow. As Co-Chair of the Alliance for Citizen Directed Support, he is designing and fundraising for the Lives in Progress project, an online map and database that documents dis/Abled self-advocates’ experiences, and offers the tools, resources, community and mentorship necessary to pursue meaningful, self-directed lives. His publications include a chapbook, A Doorknob for the Eye; a “Notable” Best American Essay, “Passive Plants;” an insight piece entitled “Coming to My Senses;” and numerous poems in various literary journals. Forthcoming publications in 2021-22 include an article on ableism and assistive technology in LOGIC Magazine; an auto-ethnographic study, “Unearthing the Tools (and Concepts) That Bury Us;” a co-authored essay on life-writing across genres, “Enmeshing Selves, Words and Media, or Two Life Writers in One Family Talk about Art and Disability,” and a multiply-authored chapbook, Studies in Brotherly Love (PromptPress). He also teaches poetry writing and presents nationally on a range of topics. Before moving to Iowa City, he graduated from Oberlin College ’17 with a double major in Anthropology and Creative Writing.

Isaiah Tien Grewal is a 19-year-old minimally-speaking autistic advocate and student from Toronto, Ontario, Canada, who
types and spells to communicate. He is a cast member of the Zukor Award-winning short film “LISTEN: Made by and with Nonspeaking Autistics” and a contributing writer to “Leaders Around Me: Autobiographies of Autistics Who Type, Point, and Spell to Communicate,” edited by Professor Edlyn Pena. He writes lessons for Spellers Learn and his poem “Talk Therapy” was featured on the blog of the International Association for Spelling as Communication (I-ASC). He has advocated as a Spotlight Main Stage Presenter at the 2019 Motormorphosis Conference, in presentations to the City of Toronto earlyON Child & Family Centres, and to a Member of Parliament of the Canadian House of Commons. Recently, he was nominated a 2021 I-ASC All-Star Ambassador Spellebrity. After the pandemic, he hopes to resume his coursework at Harvard Extension School and cross-border visits to Disney World. In the meantime, he is enjoying regular practice to master independent typing, visits with extended family, and worshipping every Sunday at his church.

The panel was moderated by Donnie Denome.
Racial Disparities in Community Living Panel

Emergencies like hurricanes or pandemics shed light on pre-existing inequalities and systemic discrimination in our society, but those inequalities have been there long before. Many essential aspects of community living, like utilities, internet access, transportation, health care, incarceration, and foster care, are overlooked, even in conversations about community living. In the Racial Disparities in Community Living panel, three community living experts will discuss how racial disparities affect who can access community living and to what degree. The event will be held live on Zoom, but will also be streamed to YouTube. The event will remain on our YouTube channel after the event.

Valerie Novack (she/her) is a disability policy researcher focusing on inclusive infrastructure and emergency management practices. She focuses on lifting up the expertise of lived experience and grassroots efforts of marginalized peoples into policymaking at the local, state, and federal levels. Valerie started in a Center for Independent Living before becoming a 2019 Portlight Fellow focusing on legislative solutions to inaccessible emergency response practices in the United States. She was the founding Board Chair of the Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies and has had the pleasure of partnering with ASAN, FEMA, Neighborhood Access, and the National Disability Rights Network. Novack has a bachelor’s degree in disability studies and urban planning from the University of Toledo and a master’s degree in disaster preparedness and emergency management from Arkansas State University. She is currently pursuing her PhD at Utah State University.

Gelila Selassie is a staff attorney based out of Justice in Aging’s Washington, D.C. office. Gelila works to help state advocates improve access to Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) and Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS) with a focus on advancing equity. Gelila previously worked in Charlotte, North Carolina representing clients in Medicaid and Marketplace appeals and improving health care access to low-income individuals. She also served as an Equal Justice Works Fellow there, where she helped preserve seniors’ dignity and autonomy.
through increased access to public benefits and preventing elder abuse. Gelila is a graduate of the University of South Carolina and Wake Forest University School of Law.

Lucina Kayee is a Queer, Black Muslim abolitionist, an advocate for survivors of the foster care system, the founder and Executive Director of Atlas of Blackness. Atlas of Blackness (AOB) is a grassroots multimedia artistic research-based organization that mentors Black foster youth by providing resources to document their untold stories to produce authentic narratives rooted in their truth. Lucina is an active team member on the Every Child Deserves a Family Act Campaign, a Campus Ambassador for the Robert F. Kennedy Young Leaders program, and an active Board Member of the Peris Foundation. She loves reading, hiking, and binge-watch Survivor in her spare time.

The panel will be moderated by Noor Pervez.
Thank you for celebrating with us!