



INTELLIGENT LIVES

By Dan Habib, Filmmaker and Project Director, UNH Institute on Disability

If Micah Fialka-Feldman, Naieer Shaheed, or Naomie Monplaisier were born in the first half of the 20th century, their IQ scores would have led to a clinical label of “moron,” or perhaps “feeble minded.” Their parents would have been told to send them to live in an institution alongside hundreds or thousands of other people with disabilities. They might have been among the approximately 60,000 Americans forcibly sterilized in order to “improve the stock” of the human species during the U.S. eugenics movement. As recently as 1975, Micah, Naieer, and Naomie would not have had any legal access to a public education.

But Micah was born in 1984. Today he is a 31-year-old student at Syracuse University. He has a vibrant social life, a job co-teaching university classes, and a love of social media. Naieer was born in 1999. He is a talented artist who is immersed in general education classes, basketball games, and a wide social circle at a public high school in Dorchester, Massachusetts. Naomie has not had the same opportunities as Micah and Naieer. In high school she was in a segregated program for special education students and working in a sheltered workshop in Providence, Rhode Island. Now in her late 20's, she is trying to make the transition to a regular paid job in her community.

Micah, Naieer, and Naomie are the central characters in my new film *Intelligent Lives* (working title) scheduled for release in the fall of 2017. The film will explore how our society's narrow views of intelligence have largely maintained the segregation of people with intellectual disabilities. Most of the 6.5 million Americans identified as intellectually disabled continue to live segregated lives based on low expectations. Only 17% of students with intellectual disabilities are fully included in general education classrooms alongside their non-disabled peers and just 40% receive a regular high school diploma. As adults, more than 75% are unemployed.

The film also will capture an emerging new reality in which people like Micah and Naieer have benefitted from the high expectations of family and educators,



Naieer Shabeed attends the completely inclusive Henderson High School in Dorchester, MA. Naieer is featured in the documentary Intelligent Lives (working title).

Photo credit - Dan Habib/Intelligent Lives Project

grown up among supportive peers, and accessed technology and other supports to successfully participate in all aspects of community life. They have been fully included in general education classes, gone on to college, found paid employment, and have meaningful personal relationships.

Academy Award winning actor Chris Cooper is narrating the film's historical perspective drawing on the research of established experts in the field of intelligence testing and intellectual disability. Cooper also shares his personal perspectives based on attempts to quantify his late son Jesse's intelligence. “The IQ test told us nothing about Jesse's potential. About who he was as a person,” Cooper says in the film preview. “Can any attempt to measure intelligence predict a person's value or potential to contribute meaningfully to the world?”

In addition to the full-length film, I'm also creating a 30-40 minute companion documentary showing successful post-secondary transition approaches across the country, from Peterborough, New Hampshire to Tempe, Arizona, to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. The transition strategies explored in this film include entrepreneurship development; self-determination strategies; leadership opportunities; workplace-based learning; and interagency collaboration between schools, vocational rehabilitation, area agencies, post-secondary schools, and others.

The Intelligent Lives Project will include extensive educational and outreach resources, including a website, educational materials, a “take action” campaign, and social media components. The films are currently in the production stage and the project will launch in the fall of 2017.

Watch a 14-minute film preview and learn more about this project at www.intelligentlives.org. If you would like more information about my previous films, visit the Inclusive Communities Project at the University of New Hampshire's Institute on Disability: www.iod.unh.edu/inclusivecommunities.

Photo credit – Intelligent Lives Project



Academy Award winning actor Chris Cooper (right) narrates the new documentary Intelligent Lives (working title), directed by Dan Habib of the UNH Institute on Disability (left). Cameraman Steven Ascher is at center.

This project has received financial support from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, the New Hampshire Department of Education, the New Hampshire Association of Special Education Administrators, and many national funders.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS: WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS?

By Jameyenne Fuller, Intern, Disability Rights Center - NH

Going to college? It's important to know there are differences between your rights when you were in high school and your rights in higher education. Your primary and secondary schools were required to identify you as a student with a disability, evaluate you, recommend accommodations, and provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Higher education institutions are not required to provide FAPE. They are required to provide appropriate accommodations, but you still need to meet the basic requirements for participation in the program.

All public and most private higher education institutions are subject to the Americans with Disabilities Act or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, or both. This means that a higher education institution cannot discriminate against you based on your disability. They cannot deny you admission based on your disability and cannot charge you higher fees than students who do not have a disability. They also are obligated to provide reasonable accommodations, at no additional cost, which allow you to participate in their programs. Examples of accommodations include: early registration for classes and advance access to course information, assistance in note taking, written and verbal instructions for assignments, permission to audio record lectures, arrangements to meet frequently with professors, and extended time for exams.

The institution is **not** required to provide accommodations that would fundamentally lower or change requirements for a course or degree, or would present an undue financial burden. For example, extended time for exams is a reasonable accommodation, but altering the substance of the exam would not be. If the school provides housing to its students, it must provide you with accessible housing. Institutions for higher

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