



Intelligent Lives Project

Interim Report -
Past, Present, & Future

Fall 2016

MICAH FIALKA-FELDMAN, *INTELLIGENT LIVES* FILM SUBJECT

The documentary film project *Intelligent Lives* (working title) explores how the segregation of people with intellectual disabilities became the norm, why this segregation is slowly being dismantled, and how individuals with intellectual disabilities are blazing a bold new path.

Since the initial screening of the *Intelligent Lives* preview film at the TASH annual conference in December 2015, 5,000+ people have viewed the preview online. Filmmaker Dan Habib has also screened and discussed the preview at 18 different events for more than 1,400 people, with more scheduled in the coming months (see the event list [HERE](#)). These screenings have resonated with a wide cross section of audiences, including youth with disabilities, college students (with and without disabilities), educators, families, professional groups, the business community, and the general public. The quantitative and qualitative data collected at these events is being factored into our project development decisions as we move forward.

This Year's Highlights

Intelligent Lives highlights from 2016 include:

- ❖ The film preview was shared and discussed at two national events: 1) the SWIFT Professional Learning Institute on July 21, 2016 in Arlington, VA, and 2) the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation (MEAF) 25th Anniversary and Summit on February 25, 2016 in Washington, D.C. At both events,

Habib moderated a panel discussion with youth self-advocates following the screenings.

- ❖ The project received a lead \$200,000 grant from MEAF and additional grants from The HSC Foundation, the New Hampshire Department of Education, and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation.

- ❖ The project secured new national outreach partners including the National Down Syndrome Congress, the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, Special Olympics, The Arc of the United States, the United States Business Leadership Network, and the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative. See the full funder and outreach partner list [HERE](#).

- ❖ *Psychology Today* and other media have written stories about the *Intelligent Lives* Project. See the coverage [HERE](#).



Micah Fialka-Feldman, along with other featured self-advocates, presents the *Intelligent Lives* preview for the Janet Krumm Disability & Media Lecture Series at the University of New Hampshire on March 31, 2016.



Habib stands with youth self-advocate panel members following a screening and discussion of the *Intelligent Lives* preview at the SWIFT Professional Learning Institute. From left: Vander Cherry, Naomi Peel, Habib, and Chris Carter

"The more examples you can show of intellectually disabled people living full lives (and showing how they got there), the better. It is very powerful to see the evidence of what they've accomplished." - Preview screening audience member

HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED



Academy Award winning actor Chris Cooper (above) records narration for the *Intelligent Lives* preview film, directed by Dan Habib (left). Cameraman Steven Ascher is at center. Cooper will also narrate the full film.

❖ A temporary website (www.intelligentlives.org) was developed and provides access to the film preview and information about the film team, supporters and partners, screenings, outcomes, media, contact information, and support options.

❖ The third major subject for the *Intelligent Lives* full-length film, Naomie Monplaisir, was identified and extensive filming of Naomie has occurred. Monplaisir attended a segregated high school called the Harold A. Birch Vocational Program, and “worked” in a sheltered workshop housed inside this Providence, RI, school. Now in her mid-20s, Monplaisir, whose family is from Haiti, is trying to transition to paid, integrated employment with some progressive supports from a local agency and the enthusiasm of her family. Monplaisir’s story represents the national push to enable people with disabilities to join the integrated workforce. In 2014, Rhode Island and the U.S. Department of Justice reached the nation’s first statewide settlement to address the rights of people with disabilities to receive state-funded employment and daytime services in the broader community, rather than in segregated sheltered workshops and facility-based day programs.

❖ Filming for the companion transition film, which will focus on successful practices in transition for youth with disabilities from secondary school to college and/or employment, is complete at four sites: 1) ConVal High School in Peterborough, NH, where student Garrett Shows leads his own IEP meetings with strong family/school collaboration, works at a local supermarket,

and participates in leadership roles in the school; 2) Project SEARCH site at Medtronic in Tempe, AZ; 3) Project SEARCH site at the city government in Rochester, NY (both Project SEARCH sites exemplify inclusive approaches of private/public employers for mentoring and hiring young adults with disabilities); and 4) the Arkansas PROMISE model demonstration project, part of a program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and the Social Security Administration, that helps youth who are receiving disability benefits and their families improve their educational and employment outcomes.

Present and Future Activities

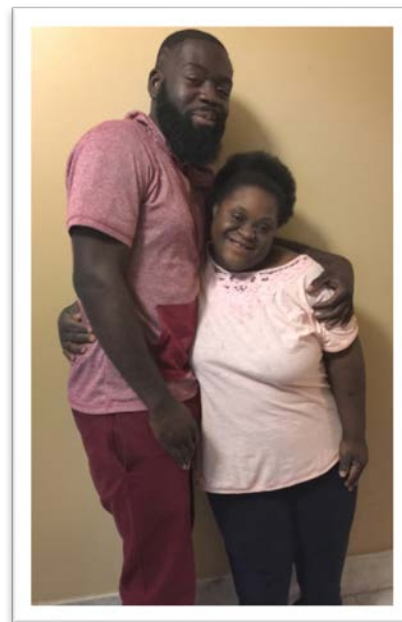
Currently, our team is working full force on filming, researching, producing, and editing the full-length film and companion transition film, as well as creating the educational/outreach materials. The project is scheduled to launch late Fall 2017, with events, broadcast, outreach, and dissemination continuing for years. Activities for 2016/2017 include:

❖ Filming will continue on the three principal subjects for the feature length *Intelligent Lives* film, as well as research and narration development for the historical sections of the film. Editing on the rough cut commenced in mid-October and will last until the end of February 2017. Final editing on the film will resume in late April and run through early Fall 2017.

❖ Filming at one additional site for the transition film will take place during the 2016/2017 school year: a high school at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota which is doing innovative work in entrepreneurship development and workplace experiences for students with disabilities (in a community with a 90% unemployment rate). Editing on the transition film will begin in early 2017.

❖ Dan Habib and consultant Dr. Cheryl Jorgensen will continue to develop the project’s educational/outreach materials, similar to the resources developed for *Who Cares About Kelsey?*. These materials will enable the project to become a worldwide resource supporting the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities.

❖ Work will begin on a new website dedicated solely to the *Intelligent Lives* Project which will include an online “Host a Screening” guide that can be tailored to the needs of particular audiences, as well as online educational resources and multimedia.



Naomie Monplaisir, who will be featured in the full *Intelligent Lives* film, with her brother, Steve. They live in Providence, RI.

Viewer Evaluations and Feedback

QUANTITATIVE FEEDBACK

Feedback from the *Intelligent Lives* preview screenings has been received through surveys after screening events. Quantitative data consisted of responses to the following statements:

- I have an increased appreciation for the idea that everyone has talents, and that people with intellectual disabilities can be full and valuable participants in society.

Strongly agree: 63.36%
 Agree: 21.51%
 Neutral: 5.70%
 Disagree: .87%
 Strongly disagree: .20%

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Above: Dan Habib moderates a panel of young advocates following a screening of the Intelligent Lives preview at the MEAF 25th Anniversary Celebration. From left: Habib, Elvin Charles, Tia Holmes, and Jonathan Duvall.

Long-Term Goals

In the long-term, we anticipate the project will help youth and adults, with and without disabilities, to:

- ❖ *Commit* to ensuring that people with disabilities, who navigate the world in a non-traditional manner, are seen as valued and intelligent human beings with a place in general education, higher education, relationships, and the workplace.
- ❖ *Look* for every person’s competence in unique and unexpected contexts and interactions.
- ❖ *Provide* the essential supports enabling people with intellectual and other disabilities to thrive.

For the remainder of 2016 and the majority of 2017, we will continue our work on the full-length *Intelligent Lives* documentary, its companion film on transition, and our educational/outreach materials. We will continue to send you periodic updates, and contact you as soon as we are ready to start scheduling events (screenings of the finished films will likely start in Winter 2018).

Your thoughts and feedback are always welcome! If you have any questions or would like to know anything else about the project, please contact me at dan.habib@unh.edu or 603-848-5301 (cell).

Sincerely,

Dan Habib
Intelligent Lives Filmmaker and Project Director

Institute on Disability/UCED



QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK

Qualitative feedback has also demonstrated an initial, positive impact on adults who support, or otherwise impact, youth with disabilities. Participant quotes from surveys include:

- ❖ “Thank you for focusing on this issue. With so much focus on having the perfect smart child, you are exposing and debunking one of the strong myths weighing down so many people with so much to offer.”
- ❖ “It seems like most educators, many politicians, researchers of brain function and learning, and community members are interested in seeing education be about more than just those scores. I hope your film will challenge and inspire people to make that happen.”
- ❖ “I think that it is important not to ‘sugar coat’ the experiences of those who have gone to college programs. It was not discussed, but there were still likely great challenges, both academically and socially. Those should be addressed in the film, too.”

- I have a better understanding that intelligence cannot always be measured, such as social/emotional intelligence, artistic intelligence, etc.

Strongly agree: 69.98%
Agree: 23.73%
Neutral: 4.72%
Disagree: 1.35%
Strongly disagree: .20%

- The screening/discussion made me more motivated to work towards including all individuals with disabilities in general education, higher education, and the workplace.

Strongly agree: 49.24%
Agree: 28.65%
Neutral: 9.11%
Disagree: 1.88%
Strongly disagree: 0%



Lead Supporter:

Major Supporters: American Federation of Teachers • Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies at the University of Maine • Center for Disabilities at the University of South Dakota • Center for Disability Resources at the University of South Carolina in partnership with the SC Developmental Disabilities Council • Center for Leadership in Disability at Georgia State University • The HSC Foundation/National Youth Transitions Center • Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston • New Hampshire Charitable Foundation • North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities at Minot State University • Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities at the University of Rochester

Additional Supporters: John P. Hussman Foundation • National Association of School Psychologists • New Hampshire Association of Special Education Administrators • New Hampshire Department of Education