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Personal Reflections from ePortfolio: AHRC New York City

Adriana Arias
Pace University

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by [Adriana Arias](#)



My Biography - What I Am Bringing to AHRC New York City

Buon giorno! My name is Adriana Josandy Arias. I am 18 years of age. I am currently a second-semester sophomore studying nursing RN here at Pace University's College of Health Professions. I am also currently considering a double-major in Psychology. I transferred here in the fall 2012 from the City College of New York (CCNY) in Harlem. I entered CCNY through an affiliation with my high school, City College Academy of the Arts (CCAA), which was an early college program. I spent last semester at Pace Pleasantville campus where I lived in a dorm in the Briarcliff campus, and am now temporarily at the NYC campus and commuting from home. I live in the upper west side of Manhattan in an apartment where I have lived most of my life. I have a younger brother, Armando, whom I have been taking care of since he was born 10 years ago. My family is of Hispanic background. My mother and father were both raised in the Dominican Republic, but my mother also has family in Puerto Rico, and Spain. My first language was Spanish, and I'm currently learning Italian. My parents came to the United States when each was about 18 years of age. I was born in New York in Mt Sinai hospital but I visit my parents' country often. Throughout high school I helped initiate my school's volleyball team, and Gay-Straight alliance and I was very involved in the schools drama club. I played the piano when I was younger, and although I have strayed away from the instrument I still love music and have starred in two musicals.

I started doing community service when I was in the 8th grade through the Mott Hall School's service learning program. Every Friday I was let out of school at midday and volunteered as a teacher's assistant at a nearby elementary school. Throughout all of high school I have continued to volunteer at the Washington Heights YM&YWHWA through their career training, and leadership programs. While in the leadership program my peers and I sat down and planned community service activities that we could perform in the community. We took a trip to a nearby soup kitchen and helped serve food to the homeless. We spent an afternoon making sandwiches and then spent another afternoon handing them out to homeless individuals in the community and we put together a children's carnival at the YM&YWHWA gym where we spent most of our day playing games, talking with, and reading to young children. And much more! I also did community service at my high school. I volunteered to help with set designs for plays, and other productions put on at the school, and I tutored an ESL student (English as a Second Language). I helped him do his homework for about an hour afterschool each day to help him improve his English. I am currently still working with this student, to help him study for his upcoming English State Regents Exam.

I feel that I would be a great contributor of enthusiasm to the AHRC NYC program. I'm well known for always having a positive attitude – even in the mornings – and I try to keep others just as motivated. I took a class in photography, so I have experience using digital cameras. That is the extent of any professional training I have in technology. However, I am constantly on the computer, and I have proven to be a quick learner. For example, at a previous job of mine at Olive and Bette's Co. Inc. I was able to fix a laptop that wouldn't connect to the company's network without any previous experience in fixing computers. I've always taken pride in being able to pick up on technology quickly.

My Biography in Graphic Representation



(News Story) of 1/31/13

If the law says that we are all created equal, then we should all have the same rights to participate and have the same opportunities no matter who we are – this includes individuals with disabilities. This is basically what is said in the article ‘Feds: Schools Must Open Sports to Kids with Disabilities’ on disabilitycoop.com. It claims that according to the Rehabilitation Act students with disabilities have civil rights to participate in sports alongside students who do not have disabilities so long as their needed accommodations do not change the game or create an unfair advantage. This is exactly how it should be. As long as the game is still fair to those who do not have disabilities then it is fair that students who have disabilities play too.

However, in ‘Young Disabled Athletes Forge an Accessible Path to Starting Lines’ we can see that this isn’t so easy. For example, if an athlete uses arm strength to push his wheel chair in a track race, doesn’t this defeat the purpose of the race – leg strength. But at the same time it isn’t fair that wheel chair bound individuals not be allowed to participate in certain sports. Interpreters like in the case of Kiara Chapple, however, should be allowed because they aren’t fundamentally changing the game in any way. It is still fair for everyone.

In the Chicago Tribune’s article ‘Sports expand for people with disabilities’ they explain how a kid got a specially designed bike to help him with balance. I think that in most cases like this one children with disabilities should be allowed to play just like everyone else. But in the case like wheel chair basketball where it changes the game – then they should make more opportunities available or more accessible for people to know about. That way disabled individuals feel less excluded. We see in the CNN article ‘Schools must provide sports for students with disabilities, U.S. ed department says’ that the students are supposed to be included as stated in the law and by the department of education but they are not receiving this adequately.

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- Lendon, Brad. "Schools must provide sports for students with disabilities, U.S. ed department says." *Schools of Thought. CNN*, 25 Jan 2013. Web. <<http://schoolsofthought.blogs.cnn.com/2013/01/25/schools-must-provide-sports-for-students-with-disabilities-u-s-department-of-education-says/>>.

Blog (and News Story) of 2/14/13

Songs of Love & Pride

The concert put together by AHRC and Carnegie Hall was such an amazing experience! When I first arrived at the concert my job was simply to escort an individual named Luis from the main entrance of the Michel Shimmel Center for the Arts, to another entrance on Spruce Street that was wheel chair accessible, help him sign in at the registration table, and then find his seat in the multi-purpose room. Afterwards I took a seat in the front of the room with my CIS 102W classmate, Erika, whom I had just met upon my arrival at the multi-purpose room earlier.

The concert was such an amazing experience! I'm glad that it was a class requirement because otherwise I would not have gone to see it. I was amazed by the songs that the individuals and staff of AHRC had created. I wish I had such creativity. A song called 'Teddy Bear' written and performed by an individual named Anthony was my personal favorite. I got home around 11:30 PM on Thursdays from a late-night Anatomy class, and at that time when I arrived home, I was STILL singing the few words that I knew to the song. In my opinion, it was a very empowering performance. The happiness on stage was contagious – and I found myself talking about the performance to my family and wishing that I had brought more people along with me to experience it as well.



Blog (and News Story) of 3/7/13

Classroom experience

Today, during the class time my partner, Kelly and I had planned to film a scene of her “working in an office” as part of our project. This is because this is what Kelly wants to do in the future. She would like to work in an office setting. We went into an empty class room and sat her down at a large desk. Then we set it up with a pencil cup, pens, notebooks and folders that I brought in for her. I gave her iPad to type in and she acted as if she was doing some paperwork in the office while I filmed her. We then planned what we are going to do next week and selected a template from iMovie in which we are going to create her movie trailer for the project.

News Story

In the article that I read a man named Brad Parks was afraid to lose all his athlete friends after a ski accident that left him paralyzed from the waist down. He was now wheel chair bound and didn't want them to forget about him because he couldn't participate in sports anymore. This is where he came up with wheelchair tennis. I think that this story would be inspirational to my partner because one of the things I've noticed is that she gets down when she begins to talk about places she couldn't go or things she couldn't do because they weren't accessible for her. This shows that there doesn't have to be a limit. That you don't have to wait for things to happen – you can make them happen!

URL References

Anderson, L.J. "Health Matters: Wheelchair tennis founder expands sports world for disabled." *Media Dis&dat*. Mercury News, 26 Jul 2011. Web. Web. <=<http://media-dis-n-dat.blogspot.com/2011/07/meet-founder-of-wheelchair-tennis-brad.html>>.

Blog (and News Story) of 3/21/13

Classroom Experience

Today in class Kelly and I made plans to go to a nearby Barnes & Nobles, and pizzeria after the Spring Break so we could film some clips since these are things that she likes to do. Afterwards, she asked me to help her find the original spanish version of "The Macarena" on the computer. She always seems to brighten up when listening to this song, and since I speak spanish assumed that I could help her find it. And I did! We didn't have time to do anything else because on her way to class Kelly got stuck in traffic and I had to leave early to go to a doctor's appointment for my Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. However, in anticipation of this Kelly and I met up yesterday in Times Square.

Yesterday, we met up in front of the AMC empire 25 in hopes of filming Kelly in a movie theater for our project because this is one of her favorite activities to do with her father. Of course, the movie-lover that she is, Kelly convinced me to watch a movie with her called warm bodies. We were joined by Daniella (her usual supporter), Michelle (her supporter for the the day), and Jumel (one of her friends from the AHRC program). In the theater, before the movie started we recorded a bit of Kelly pretending to watch the movie to add to our project. Then Kelly headed to her music program where she likes to sing.

News Story

(Please see page section titled "My Mid-Term Reflection Journal on [Book] Miracle Boy and on My Project" on right).

Reference

Mattlin, Ben. *Miracle Boy Grows Up*. Skyhorse Publishing, 2012. Print.

Blog (and News Story) of 4/4/13

Classroom Experience

In class today, we decided that although our trailer was a very entertaining way to go about our project it wasn't enough to stand alone. We started off by writing a list of all the things she likes to do, and who she does them with – and what she would like to do in the future. We then started to create a PowerPoint on the iPad's Prezi app. Kelly chose pictures to enhance the presentation, and chose a color scheme and I helped her put it all together. This took us about the entire time that we had. We will put the rest of it together during our next class period together.

News Story

"Books of Hope, Found in Newtown Gunman's Home" is an article debating the ties between autism and the shooting in Sandy Hook Elementary school. They say that during a search of gunman, Adam Lanza's home they found a series of books about life with autism. Lanza had Asperger's and many are associating his aggression with the disability. However, I don't think that it is fair to say this. It is not fair to say anything pertaining to the cause of these murders because nothing is known as of yet. You can't say that it is caused by his Asperger's, but you also can't say that it was not. Statisticians are right when they say, "correlation is not causation." But there is also a saying that goes, "the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence." In this case, meaning that just because you don't have evidence to prove that, that is the cause doesn't mean that it isn't the cause. We can't say that everyone living with Asperger's syndrome is going to be aggressive as Lanza was, because everyone is different but we can't know the cause for this mass killing without further investigation. We can't immediately pin the blame his disability.

Reference

Dunlap, David. "Books of Hope, Found in Newtown Gunman's Home." *New York Times* [New York] 01 Apr 2013, Print.

Blog (and News Story) of 4/18/13

Classroom Experience

Today in class Kelly and I put the finishing touches on our project. We chose pictures to add to the presentation on prezzi. All the pictures we chose from are screenshots of the videos that we have been making throughout the semester. But also we added some of Kelly's favorite Broadway musicals. After that we spent the rest of the class trying to find a way to save the prezzi document offline. We were able to find a download button that says we can save the prezzi presentation on a usb or CD to present offline. Now we just have to find a way to combine our prezzi and our trailer video.

News Story

The article, "Working Through Dyslexia" a student named Brian Meersma inspires others with disabilities to overcome their disability and learn to read, even if it is harder for them. Meersma himself, has dyslexia which makes it difficult to read but he uses assistive technology to make it easier and faster to read. These computer programs have highlighted text, and audio capabilities to facilitate reading. This is an inspiration in itself because he isn't letting his disability hold him back from doing things he should be able to do normally. But not only that, Meersma is honorable because he takes the time to help others with disabilities. He has become a role model for other people with the same and other disabilities, so that they know they aren't alone and that they don't have to stop themselves from being educated or doing what they want to do in life.

My Friends in the Course at Pace University



My classmate, Erika and I after class on Thursday - at a Pace event we attended with my partner.

View My Technology Tools



During our time in class my partner, Kelly, and I have been using my iPad 2 to record things that she likes to do or things that she would like to do in the future - that we will use to create a "movie trailer" of her life.

My Mid-Term Reflection Journal on [Book] Miracle Boy and on My Project

Whether it be a small or large feat, everyone has obstacles that they have to bear in everyday life. For Ben Mattlin - author of the memoir 'Miracle Boy Grows Up'- this obstacle is a diagnosis of spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), a genetic disease that limits his motion and ultimately leaves him wheelchair bound since early childhood. Throughout the current semester, I have had the pleasure of working with Kelly, a participant of the AHRC adult day services. Although Kelly does not have SMA she may be able to relate with some of Mattlin's struggles because she too is wheelchair bound.

Throughout the course of the semester, Kelly and I have been working on a project about her life. Our first day working together we established that she really enjoyed watching movies. One of her favorite activities was going to the movies with her father several days a week. She often comes into class ecstatic and explaining about a movie that he was taking her to see the following day. She also starts everyday by asking if I've seen any recently. I tried to tie this into our project somehow. Making an entire movie would probably be too long so we resolved to make a "movie trailer" of Kelly's life.

Typically, we start our class period by filming something that Kelly likes. For example, a few days ago Kelly mentioned that she loves painting her nails. She claims to feel prettier when she has her hands painted a bright red color! So we planned to bring nail polish in to class the next week and record while I was painting her nails as part of our trailer. Filming doesn't take long and we usually end up having some sort of small talk about all the other things that Kelly likes to do afterwards. This is usually where we get an idea and begin to plan what we will be filming the next week of class.

One of the things that I really admire about Kelly is that she never seems to limit herself. From what I hear, she pushes to do the things that she likes and wants to do. On rare occasions she mentions a time where she couldn't go on a camp trip to the lake or isn't allowed to go up the statue of liberty because they aren't accessible. She initially says these things with a tone of disappointment but then moves on to mention things that she can do - like go swimming for example. She maintains this positive attitude when she wants to do something, or go somewhere different but also with just everyday things.

Throughout his memoir Mattlin struggles with speaking up and being his own advocate. It comes up over and over again that individuals with disabilities shouldn't allow others to speak for them. Instead individuals should know what constitutes as a reasonable request and speak out to get the help that they need. The lack of courage to speak up and tell his attendant, Jorge, that he was being too rough could have caused Mattlin his life when he develops neuropathy (Mattlin, 130).

My partner's case is not as extreme. However, Kelly is the perfect example of someone who advocates for herself - even better than most people could. During the class period in which we decided what our project would be the first thing Kelly said to me was, "I don't want this project to be about my disability, anyone can just look at me and know it. I want this to be about me." She was straight-forward and let me know what she wanted. She exactly follows the advice of Mattlin's mother before her death. She always told Ben that he can't expect people to read his mind. If he wants something he should speak up (Mattlin, 152).

While we talk about the things that Kelly likes we often decide what we are going to film during the next class period so that I can bring in any props that we would need to make the scene look realistic. During one of our conversations we spoke about what Kelly wants to do in the future. She says that she aspires to work in some type of office setting. She also mentioned that she had to do some type of job or volunteer work, which I'm assuming is for her program with AHRC but was having trouble deciding what exactly she was going to do, because many things posed a problem for her to be able to do independent of her attendant.

In "Miracle Boy Grows Up" Mattlin describes how difficult it can be for individuals with disabilities to find a job because people already have predetermined limitations in their minds when they become aware of someone's disability. Mattlin loses a job opportunity that his dad set up for him simply because he is disabled and would need accommodations (Mattlin, 154-155). He's even told once by a possible employer that they were hiring him to help them, not for them to help him (Mattlin, 115). Such discrimination is fortunately illegal now, but finding a job could still be a problem. When Kelly was discussing with her supporter, Daniella, what she would do as volunteer they couldn't agree on anything. For example, Daniella suggested dog walking. But if the dog were to do its business she would not be able to bend down to pick it up herself, and then it wouldn't be something she could do on her own anymore.

Many of these conversations come up during class time. But always in subtle small talk. These things don't define my partner's life - even though they contribute to it. She really enjoys watching movies, and we have taken a trip to the movies to film her doing this (and watched a movie while we were there). We have filmed her painting her nails, and working at an office scene we set up for her. We took pictures together, and even recorded as my classmate Erika and her partner took us on a tour of the Pace campus. We even spent some time planning to film her shopping and eating out.

Pretty soon we will begin putting everything together into the iPad software, and editing pieces of the videos into clips. It has been such a great experience working with Kelly so far in the semester. She really is such a sweet girl. She knows what she wants and she lets people know so that it can be made possible. She is persistent - even if she just wants me to watch a movie with her - and doesn't let things bring her down for too long similarly, Mattlin writes of how he has pushed forward even through all the hardships of life with SMA.

My Final Reflection Journal on My Project

Throughout the semester, I had the immense pleasure of partnering with Kelly to create our final project. I honestly did not think that I would enjoy the class as much as I did. I am so glad to have created several new friendships that I hope to preserve past this semester. On our first day of class, I wasn't optimistic about the upcoming semester. I was new to campus and did not want to be here and I expected something completely different from the course. However, when I started getting to know Kelly and her supporter, Daniela I began to enjoy myself.

Immediately after getting acquainted I could see that Kelly had a distinct passion for movies. She specifically mentioned loving seeing them in the theaters with her parents. She also mentioned watching a play on Broadway called 'Once on This Island'. This was a play that I had starred in off-broadway just last year. That was the moment that I felt Kelly finally started to open up and feel comfortable around me.

Since Kelly really enjoyed movies and musicals, I thought what better way to represent her life than the same way movies and shows are presented to us every day - through a trailer! This was what inspired our project and actually fueled our conversations every class. Every Thursday, without a doubt, Kelly would roll into class and ask what movies I had seen since I last saw her, followed by a full report on what she had seen, and a list of recommendations. I only wish I had the time or money to see all those movies in theaters. Kelly and I actually had very similar taste in movies.

One of the things I appreciated about the project was also that it served as a sort of ice breaker, or conversation starter as well. The movie theme always popped up eventually but the project really let us get to know each other better. Not only Kelly and I but I also got to know Daniela who works to help Kelly get around. But every time we were deciding what we would be filming for the project next, it helped bring up new things about each other that we didn't know before. It was a totally different way of getting to know someone than from the norm. It was an interesting experience.

The three of us had lunch together several times after class and even went to the movies once (per Kelly's request of course). We laughed, filmed, had girl talk and all for a class! That was basically my experience getting to know Kelly in the semester. The hardest part of the class however was dealing with technology that I thought I knew how to use but really had limited knowledge of. I use my iPad everyday and home and never noticed the vast amount of things I could do with it!

For our project we used iMovie and Prezi. The iMovie app was fairly simple, it had a preset template and all we had to do were record videos and add them into the appropriate slot in the template. Prezi, however, was not a walk in the park for us. Daniela, Kelly, and I spent countless hours thinking of alternatives to what we originally wanted to do simply because we couldn't find a way to get it to work on Prezi. We ended up having to leave out three video clips from the prezi. But we worked it into the presentation. We took a screenshot of one and included it in the prezi as a photo. We included the other at the end of our trailer video and the third was a video of Kelly reciting a poem she wrote. She recited this in person during the presentation instead.

It took a lot of effort but I believe that in the end our project really came together well. I can definitely leave the semester with awareness of disability rights, and movements. I also now know that technology has so many more capabilities than what we see superficially. It is no wonder we are increasingly becoming immersed in computers, tablets, and other such technology.

My Certificate of Recognition by AHRC New York City

