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# Personal Reflections from ePortfolio: AHRC New York City

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## **(News Story) of 1/29/13**

In the article "Autism Inc", Lars is described as a boy who pays special attention to detail and has a great memory. His father noticed how much he remembered and because of this he created a company that takes people like Lars to do jobs that require special detail. People who aren't autistic do not have the same memory capability like Lars and the people that work at Specialisterne. I think its a great idea to have people work with disabilities because they don't get any recognition for being capable of getting a job and actually being good at it. I thought it was interesting the way they select their future employees.

For the second article, "Waiter Hailed as Hero After Standing Up for Boy with Down Syndrome", I was shocked to read about this incident, especially at a family oriented restaurant. For one, if I was there and heard such a rude remark about the little boy, I would probably have said something to that man. I am very outspoken, especially for things that I know are wrong. The comment he made was uncalled for and rude. I honestly didn't think people still say rude things like this about individuals with disabilities. The fact that it was a child is even more hurtful. Sometimes people need to put themselves in other people's shoes and try to see the world in their eyes, but of course it's easier said than done. I am glad someone stood up for the child and glad that there are people in the world that stand up for what they believe in. I would have probably acted the same way as the waiter.

One of the websites that really stuck out to me was helpguide.com, although it is not a website that starts with autism in the web address, it has step by step directions and information for a family that has a child with autism. In it they talk about having a set schedule, having patience, paying attention to the child's sensory sensitivities, and so on. I think this website has a lot to offer parents who have questions and trying to be more informed.

Another website that stuck out was autism-society.org, I really liked this website because there is a blog for the whole community, so as long as the person joins the website, they can post on there and share their story. Some of the stories are very emotional and inspirational as well. On it there are also treatment options, a get involved tab and also a tab for people to know what autism is. I also like the fact that there is a donate button, this goes towards increasing awareness about autism. There was also a pdf article that tells parents how to handle the news when they learn that their child has autism. It tells them what treatments they should get, and how to look for the best ones. It also gives them a page with different links that can possibly help them even more. Like rights, blogs, treatment, listservs, and more.

Autismspeaks.org, is another great website, upon opening the website there was a video that explained autism with an animated character with the voice of a real kid that has autism. I think it's a good video to show someone who doesn't exactly know autism is and they can understand children that have it better perhaps. I like the fact that there is also a tab about children's education rights, because not a lot of people know that children with disabilities. It also gives advice to parents and how they should deal with it. That is something that I did not notice on the other websites. It tells them how to deal with anger, depression, loneliness, and so on. There are also tips for other siblings, like telling them not to be angry about the situation, but to speak about it and aware others about it. This is a great website to get a lot of information.

Websites: <http://www.autismspeaks.org/>

<http://autism-society.org/>

## **Blog (and News Story) of 2/12/13**

When we were first told 2 weeks ago that we will be paired up with an individual with autism I had a few emotions running through me. I have never fully interacted with someone who had autism or any other type of disability. Except my old college professor who had Tourette's but that didn't make me feel a certain type of way. For instance, when I told some of my peers what I had to do in this class a lot of them said they couldn't do something like that and told me "good luck". I don't understand why they would say this because I didn't think it was a big deal. These are individuals who want to be treated like everyone else. Upon meeting my partner Chris, 19, he shook my hand and smiled. I introduced myself and I didn't know what to ask him first because I didn't want to overwhelm him. I asked him where he lived. Some of the questions I asked he couldn't really answer me. So I moved on and asked more fun questions like his favorite artist which is Marc Anthony. We continued to talk and I figured I'd give him a break and asked him if he wanted to go on the web. He had a little bit of trouble with the computer but I helped him. The first thing he wanted to do was go on Facebook but he had a hard time logging on. He couldn't remember his password and he had trouble distinguishing his username and the password. I kept telling him not to worry about it and maybe next time he will remember it. As time passed he began to get more comfortable with me. He loves scooby-doo and playing PAC-Man. He also told me what he would have for lunch which was a peanut butter sandwich. He also told me it was his first time at Pace. I'm not sure if this is correct but I told him we were going to have fun this semester. I look forward to getting to know Chris and making a new friend!

-Newstory:

When I asked Chris where he would like to travel he said nowhere. I gave him a few examples like a beach in Florida, California, Italy and so on and he still insisted that he did not want to travel. So I am challenging myself and will see if any airport around NY accommodates individuals with autism traveling internationally like Europe. I couldn't find anything online for AirEuropa.com. There is

a 1800 number so I decided to call. First, the lady did not understand what I meant. I explained to her my "imaginary situation", I told her that my friend and I wanted to go to Paris but he has Autism. She said "I do not understand what you're trying to tell me" and then I asked her if she knew what autism was, and she said no. I tried to explain it to her and she did not say anything back, again I said if the airline accomadates people with disabilities. She said no. I was getting very frustrated and told her thanks anyway and hung up. The fact that she did not know what autism was made me realize that a lot of people are still not aware, I am even more shocked because I feel like she should know things like this. Perhaps she is new and she is not fully trained. I do hope that more airlines, especially international ones, take in considiration people with disabilities.

<http://www.aireuropa.com/>

## Blog (and News Story) 2/26/13

Partner Blog-

Today Chris and bonded a lot over The Walking Dead. We both were super excited talkig about the zombie t.v. show. I noticed that Chris opened up to a lot more, which is what I was hoping. Last time we saw each other he really didn't speak. We were both more at ease today. He showed me where he lives on google maps and he was really excited about it, I also showed him where I lived. I told him how we could walk around Pace since this is his first time in the program, but he wanted to watch videos on youtube. We saw a lot of music videos, and he told me where he wanted to travel. He said Puerto Rico and out of curiotisty we googled air fare ticket prices. Then he told me after he finishes school he would like to be a school bus driver, he wanted me to help him google search for job listings. Then he changed it to working as a secretary in an office. He seemed really excited. We talked about food and how he wants to learn how to cook, he loves egg omelettes. I also caught him singing and dancing, he says he is a great dancer so hopefully he will show me some moves this semester! We both speak spanish which I thought was pretty cool. Chris also shared with me that he likes to listen to music with his friends when he comes home from school and how his dog annoys him because he barks too much. Overall I think Chris and I are going to be getting along real well this semester and I am excited as to what he will be sharing with me next week! I want it to get warmer out soon so we can walk around the neighborhood!

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This news story is truly heartbreaking. My prayers go out to the family who is suffering at this moment. Robert did not deserve this, what was meant to be a fun movie night for him turned out to be gruesome and hopefully someone with a disability in the future won't have to go through this. I really hope that the police officers who were responsible for this are held accountable . This incident should open everyone's eyes that people with special needs, NEED special NEEDS. Again, people who have more authority like police officers, and such should know more about individuals with disabilities. They should set the example that they are learning how to deal with situations like these, and perhaps this will get more people socially aware that not everyone is the same that there are people out there who need special care. I googled law enforcement and disabilities and found a .pdf document about the American's disability act and law enforcement. Which basically protects people with disabilities, and how law enforcement should handle certain situations. Some of the situations that I read were interesting and according to the document, some of the situations really did happen in real life. I can't imagine what it is like to have fear of someone who is supposed to protect you.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/18/robert-saylors-death-homicide-mentally-ill\\_n\\_2711629.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/18/robert-saylors-death-homicide-mentally-ill_n_2711629.html)

[http://www.ada.gov/q%26a\\_law.pdf](http://www.ada.gov/q%26a_law.pdf)

## Blog of 3/19/13

Today Chris finally came to the program! I was very excited to see him today, since it has been two weeks since the last time I saw him. We went to the gym with some ot the group members today, Chris was really excited to play basketball and workout with everyone. He played basketball for 30 minutes or so, and then we went to the weight room. He loves working out! He kept making me laugh with some jokes, something along the lines of girls loving guys with abs. After that we went to the other equiptment room where he went on the treadmill and did other workouts. After that we went upstairs to use the computer. We talked about how we were both excited for spring break, he told me that he was planning on hanging out with his best friend Michelle and watching cartoons. Outside of the classroom and I noticed that Chris is very friendly! He kept greeting people and holding doors for them, which I thought was really nice of him. People also were being friendly right back at him. Chris was being very talkative today! We talked about weather, t.v. shows, school, and of course food. Another thing that I noticed that Chris likes to sing! He was singing a lot of songs today in class. I really hope when we come back from springbreak that the weather is nice enough for us to go outside of campus! I think he will really enjoy being outside of campus and interacting with people outside!

## Blog of 4/2/13

Today was a fun day, being with the adults from AHRC! We talked about dreams and what they mean. It was nice talking about them because sometimes we forget what our dreams are and put them in the back burner. We did some arts and crafts, which I haven't done in years. I can't even remember the last time I did something like that. I attempted to make a dream catcher. Which I secretly always wanted to do but never got around to doing it. I got partnered up with Denise. She was really nice and sweet. We talked about our dreams and she told me that her biggest dream was to get married and have two kids, twins, a boy and a girl. We decided to put a really big bead on the dream catcher to represent that specific dream since it's what she wants the most. Her other dreams are to travel to Hawaii, travel on her own (buses/trains), and also live on her own. A lot of independent dreams. Which is something that a lot of people, including me, take granted for. For example, I commute to Pace and just the fact that I can travel alone without the help of anyone is truly a blessing. I told Denise about my traveling dream, which is to go to France this summer. She also told me that she had a boyfriend, that she met through AHRC. We also talked about sleeping dreams and she told me she had a dream about Dracula, which is pretty random and funny. Denise seems like a really nice person and I would have liked to spend more time with her. Working with everyone today was something new and I very much enjoyed it. I hope Denise keeps the dream catcher and hangs it in her room, I really did try to make it as pretty as possible. Hopefully when she sees it she will remember today and most of all remembers her dreams and achieves them. Next time I meet with my partner Chris I want to know some of his dreams, I know a few but I want to see if he has more.

## Blog (and News Story) of 4/9/13

Today was a real fun day! The weather was beautiful and a lot of people decided that it be a great idea to go to the seaport and enjoy the weather instead of being indoors. I teamed up with Jenny and her partner amongst others to go down there. It was Chris' first time going there, he said he recently saw pictures of it online and he was really excited that we were going. While we were walking there, someone in the class (I believe Hector) had a pet snake, and showed it to everyone. Chris actually got to hold it and walked all the way to the seaport with it. He wasn't scared at all and enjoyed it. We all enjoyed the beautiful view and we all had great conversation. I got to talk to the other high school students and learn a little bit more about them. Chris told me about his spring break and his recent activities, we talked about our favorite show, The Walking Dead, and I asked him about his dream job. Since last week we talked a lot about dreams. He told me that he really wanted to be a teacher, which is something he never really mentioned. I don't know if this is a recent dream of his, but he told me he would really enjoy being one and he would like to spend time with students. He keeps bringing up the fact that he will be graduating high school soon and he is very excited! I am excited for him as well because I remember when I was excited about it when I was in high school. I can't believe the semester is almost over!!! It seems like just yesterday that I met Chris. I feel like those two weeks he wasn't there kind of put us a little back, but I am glad he is showing up and I hope he does for the remainder of the semester.

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In the article "Why Are Autism Spectrum Conditions More Prevalent in Males?" by Samon Baron-Cohen amongst others was definitely an eye opener. I never really realized that most males have autism, and when I think about it I do notice that indeed I see/hear more about males having it. This is a great article, it explains many theories which are a little hard to understand since I never really liked science. It is also interesting when the article explained how females are under diagnosed because they may be "pretending to be normal". And how males show slight psychological changes that exhibit ASC, which is why we see more males with it. I would really like to know more about this subject! It was very interesting.

## Blog (and News Story) of 4/30/13

Where is time going?? I can't believe we have one more class with the high school students! Today's weather was not the greatest. So we stayed inside and worked on the final presentation. I showed Chris the small video I made from some of the videos I took this semester, He was super excited and he looked like he really really really liked the video. So much that he would like a copy to show his mom. In the video clip I played a Spanish song because I know how much he loves to listen to the singer Marc Anthony. I also showed him the power point slide I put together for next week and he liked it. I hope everything runs smoothly next week. This is probably the shortest blog I write this semester since I was putting everything together with Chris today (mostly the power point slides). We did not take any pictures today.

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In this article "Too old to be a dad?" By Jeffrey Kluger, I learned a few new things. I already knew that for women, as they older that they tend to have a harder time to get pregnant and that they tend to be in greater risks when they birth past the age of 35. I did not know that men create hundreds of millions new sperm every 16 days! Personally, if I was a male, and older, I wouldn't like to have a



child when I am past my 40s. I do not think I would have the energy and I would be worried that if something were to happen to me, what would happen to my child? This article states that men, who have children at an older age, tend to be more patient with their younger kids. That they think that they are better suited to be parents at an older age. They will also be more of a caregiver, have more money and better sustain a child with more nurturing. This article also talks about a study that was made where men produce sperm that have genetic typos called "de novo mutations". Which on average a 20 year old male passes 15 to 25 such genetic typos to any child he fathers". While women pass 15 no matter what age they are. The study also said that dads who were at an older age tend to pass on schizophrenia and autism. I thought this was an interesting article, and probably will be sharing this with some people from work!



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

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Miracle Boy Grows Up by Benn Mattlin was a great eye opener and not only that but also inspirational. Benn's story is a great one that gives hope to everyone, not only for the people with a disability. Having spinal muscular atrophy, Ben pushes through all the curve balls life has thrown at him, having divorced parents, losing his mother to cancer, moving across the country, finding a job that accepts him for him, and many more. Ben shares his life story and the history of the disability rights movements that have come a long way. The reader never feels sorry for him, instead they will laugh, cry, and hopefully have hope. That anyone can really be anything if they put their mind to.

During the first few chapters Ben tells a story about an accident that he had when he was a very young boy. He falls down the stairs on his wheelchair due to his father forgetting to put his seatbelt on. Instead of his mother babying him she tells him that he must always speak up, not to be shy, and that people are not mind readers (Mattlin 6). Most parents would have babied their child after such accident, but Ben's mother probably knows that Ben will have to start speaking up due to his disability. She wants him to be able to take care of himself, even if it's just with words, and not to rely on other people. Back in the 1960's there were really no support groups for parents who had children with disabilities, Ben's mother tried her best in the upbringing of her child. She most likely had no one to go for advice about the situation.

Since there were not a lot of supportive groups, Ben never fully interacted with other disabled kids. He says "I figure if I'm being separated from them, there's got to be a reason. There's got to be something wrong with them" (Mattlin 14). One would think that since he is disabled he would want to be with kids that are just like him, instead he talks about them like him himself was not disabled. It is not necessarily a bad thing, but it is a bit of an irony. If he does not accept these kids, then how can the rest of society? It is not until Ben is older that he realizes that talking to others with disabilities not only helps him better understand, but he has a support system that knows what he is going through. Not until 1988, when he is twenty-four, he finally learns to say "people with disabilities" instead of "handicapped" (Mattlin 121). I think this is a huge stepping stone for Ben, because he even writes to congress to pass the law that bans discrimination against the disabled.

I wonder what Ben would have been like if his school had a program like AHRC, would that have made an impact in his life for the better or for the worse? Observing the teens in our classroom, and watching the videos from the previous semesters, I think it is not a bad idea to be with people who know exactly what you are going through. As people, we want a sense of belonging to a group. Not just school but life in general. Although Ben never went to school with disabled kids, he made the best of the situation even when he was younger. He writes, "Within a day I'm appointing a trusted subset to be my first choices for wheelchair-pushing" (Mattlin 16). Ben makes a situation that could have gone south with his classmates, but instead he made it into a positive. By making his wheelchair into some sort of a game for his classmates.

After reading this book and learning about the budget cuts that will be happening, it makes me angry because these people very much depend on this government funding. Although Ben was very fortunate to have the support of his family and wife to get through life financially, not a lot can say the same. By reading this book one can see how people with disabilities can suffer from not receiving aid. A lot of people depend on others and medicine to survive a whole day. How can people look the other way if this truly happens and stays? Will there be no more support groups or aid?

Ben gives hope, not to only succeed career wise, but also that love is possible. Being in a wheelchair does not come in the way of his love life. He notes "Some folds, out-of-the-blue, dub ML a saint—others, conversely, let on that I must be wealthy..." (Mattlin 117). Yes they do have some difficulty with the misinformed people, that their love is to be taken serious, but Mattlin reassures the reader and everyone else that he found happiness under the circumstances. Him and his wife stick together and do not let people get the best of them

Ben's story is beautifully told, it makes you smile and be well informed about the disability rights movement. He makes the reader want to keep reading the book, which is not boring at all. I highly recommend this book to anyone, especially to someone who has not fully interacted with a person who has a disability. It opens one's eyes not to be self-conscious or judgmental. It allows you to imagine what it is like to be in someone else's shoes. We are all human, and if you look past people's superficial details, you can relate to anyone's struggles. This book has made a great difference in my experience with this class; it has made me more open to anything. I have a whole different outlook on individuals with disabilities. I very much think that Ben is a great role model and think it is a great story to shared with any of the teens and adults in AHRC New York City.

#### Works Cited

Mattlin, Ben. *Miracle Boy Grows Up: How the Disability Rights Revolution Saved My Sanity*. New York, NY: Skyhorse Pub., 2012. Print.

### **My Final Reflection Journal on Impacts of Semester**

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The semester has come quickly to an end. I have learned so much about myself that I did not think I was capable of. This was definitely a learning experience. I will honestly miss this class and wish it was a two semester thing instead of one. I had a lot of fun meeting new people and learning new things.

Chris's journey and mine has sadly ended at Pace. But I do hope he does come back next semester and enjoys himself and opens up more for the next person he partners up with. I think Chris had a great time with us here at Pace. I do still wish I could have known him a little bit more because I know there's more to him. But the part that he showed me about himself was just as good, if that makes any sense.

For my learning experience I have learned that I am a caring person. I've usually have gotten from people that it seems like I'm not caring. To the point where I started believing this and I started being that way. But in fact I am caring and I do have a heart so to say. I noticed that when Chris couldn't keep up with the rest of the group I would walk the same pace as him, there was a time where he tripped outside and I rushed over to him quicker than the aid that was with us. I cared for Chris' well being.

I also noticed that I can be patient. A trait I didn't think I had. I feel like people who deal with autistic kids/adults need to have patience and be understanding. I showed this a lot when Chris had trouble googling certain things or even looking for stuff on YouTube. I didn't get easily frustrated, which is something that I often do. I tend to get mad or frustrated when someone isn't up to speed with me. But with Chris I was more understanding. I know people who don't understand even if they know that the individual has special needs. I can probably take these new found traits and put them to use in my life with people I interact with.

I remember coming to this program I was very unsure that I could handle this because I've never dealt with someone like Chris. I don't even remember what I was so worried about. Everything ran smoothly with him and I and I even interacted with the other students. Like Patrick. I had a harder time having a conversation with Patrick but I still tried. Meeting Chris that first day I was super nervous, now I look at how silly it was for me to feel that way. Sure it took a while for us to start talking like old friends catching up, but it was worth the wait. When Chris didn't show up for two weeks I thought I was going to have to partner up with someone else which would

have been fine but I felt like I had to start from scratch. To begin a new bond I had already built with Chris. Luckily he showed up the rest of the semester

I also enjoyed myself when we hung out with the adults of AHRC, especially doing the dream catchers. I would definitely recommend this program to other pace students so hopefully they too can learn about themselves and meet new people. Looking back at my old blog posts I learned a lot about disabilities, especially the airlines one where I actually called the airline and the person didn't even know what autism was. With my new knowledge and understanding on this subject I will definitely tell more people about it and hopefully they can see it like I can, but I feel like someone has to experience something like this to fully appreciate/understand it. My friends are proud of what I have accomplished because I know that this is something that people dont tend to do once in their life. I am 24 years old and this was my first time interacting with individuals who have special needs.

When I look at the mini video I made of Chris I can tell he had a lot of fun this semester which makes me feel like I really accomplished something. I made Chris happy and he had fun showing me his favorite shows and his favorite songs on YouTube. It was an amazing experience and I would do it all over again!.

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