
DEEJ: Discussion Guide

Inclusion shouldn't be a lottery

GENERAL AUDIENCES

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ISSUE 1: INCLUSION SHOULDN'T BE A LOTTERY

“My schooling is the doubt in your eyes.”

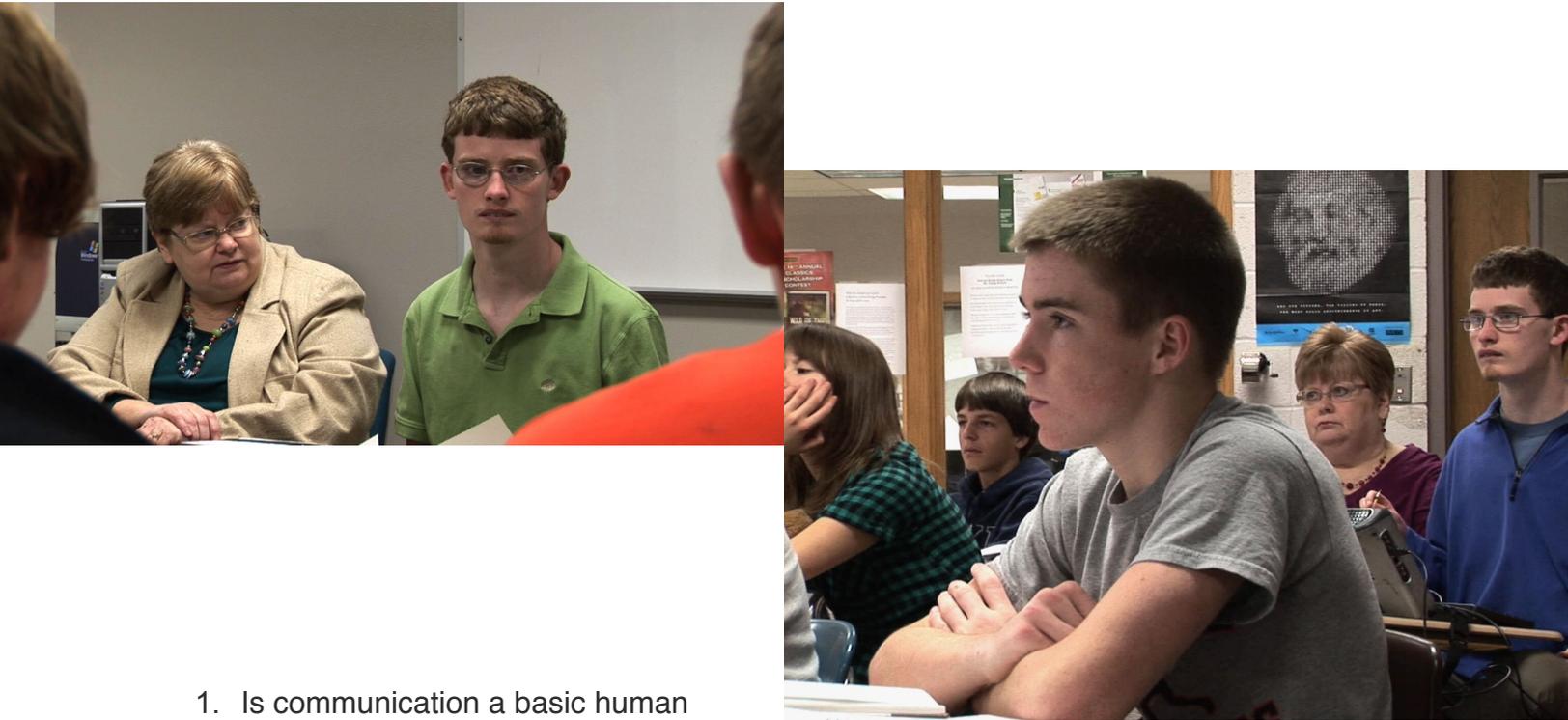
— Tito Mukhopadhyay, author of *Plankton Dreams*, *The Mind Tree* and *How Can I Talk if My Lips Don't Move*



1. What is inclusion? What does an inclusive education, workplace, community, and/or life look like?
2. What are some visible and invisible elements of inclusion in *Deej*?
3. Near the end of the film, Deej says: “I still care so much about the kids who poverty and false assumptions leave outside the door... I feel immense pride and guilt for saving myself while others get stored away and forgotten. Being included is every kid’s right. It shouldn’t be a lottery.” Who is regularly excluded? Why?
4. Why might people have chosen to exclude Deej in his early life but not in his later life? In what ways is this unfair?
5. What are the barriers to inclusion in your own community? What are 3 things you can do to break them down? (AP)

ISSUE 2: COMMUNICATION IS A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT

Article 19 of the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights* (UDHR) describes the right to communication as “**the right of every individual or community to have its stories and views heard.**”



1. Is communication a basic human right? Why or why not?
2. Are there many different reasons to communicate? Can you name some of them?
3. Can someone who doesn't speak, learn to read and write?
4. In what ways do we obstruct nonspeakers' paths to literacy?
5. Can literacy be a more sophisticated way of communicating and not just a course in school? What would be the advantages or disadvantages of this conceptualization?
6. What are the different languages used in *Deej*? What changes can you make in your community to promote the use of more shared languages? (AP)

ISSUE 3: DISRUPTING NORMAL/ EMBRACING DIVERSITY

Sanjay Gupta: So what do you think, DJ, **should autism be treated?**

DJ Savarese: **Yes, treated with respect.**

— Interview on *Anderson Cooper 360*, November 2007



neurodiversity

1. Is assessing people as autistic useful? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. Are “normal” people normal or just members of the dominant culture?
3. What is neurodiversity? How might curing autism be offensive to autistics?
4. In what ways does your community implicitly or explicitly promote normalcy? In what ways does it implicitly or explicitly encourage diversity? (AP)

ISSUE 4: NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

The **greatest lesson** of the civil rights movement is that **the moment you let others speak for you, you lose.**

—*Ed Roberts*, Disability Rights Movement pioneer



1. Look up the Autistic Self Advocacy Network's website: <http://autisticadvocacy.org>
How do their ideas/concerns compare with your own?
2. What does the narrator tell us that neither the camera nor neurotypicals can?
Identify 3-5 scenes in which the narrator told you something you didn't know or understand before.
3. Read *All the Weight of Our Dreams* or *Loud Hands: Autistic People, Speaking*.
What is intersectionality? Why is it important to any discussion of autism?
4. Self-advocacy is essential. Rather than speaking for someone else, how can you assist that person to advocate for themselves? (AP)

ISSUE 5: INTERDEPENDENCE NOT INDEPENDENCE

For too long I have dreamed of independence. Again and again, I have spoken of getting free. I have envied the ease with which the non-disabled can walk on the moon or tie their shoes underwater. They are circus performers, talented chimpanzees. Tonight I will dream of being dependent, dependable.

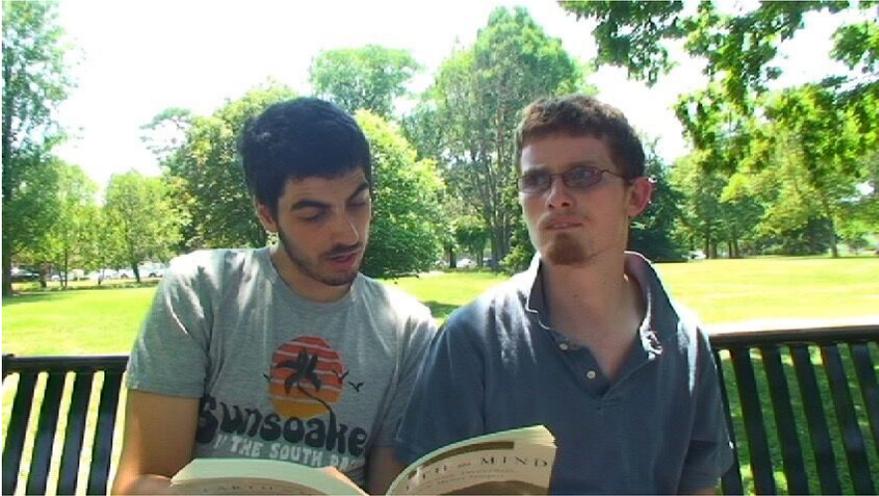
--DJ Savarese "Passive Plants" *The Iowa Review*, spring 2017



1. Spend 5 minutes listing all the people who support you.
2. List all the things you do totally independently, without any support.
3. In the film, who does Deej need? And who needs Deej? Who are Deej's mentors? How did he meet/find them? Whom does Deej mentor and how did they connect with him?
4. Heartfelt encouragement is essential. Give some examples of times and ways in which people offer Deej heartfelt encouragement. Now list some ways in which you can offer the same to nonspeaking people within your community. (AP)
5. Brainstorm some other potential people who can support the nonspeaking person in your community. Brainstorm some people the nonspeaking person can support. (AP)

NEXT STEPS: PLANTING SEEDS FOR ACTIVE CHANGE

At the end of the film, DeeJ says, “I have work to do. Neurotypicals have work to do, too. Hope lives on messy and imperfect.”



1. At the end of the film, DeeJ says, “I have work to do. Neurotypicals have work to do, too. Hope lives on messy and imperfect.” What work does DeeJ have to do?
2. What work do neurotypicals have to do?
3. Why is shared responsibility important?

ACTION PLAN: TURNING HOPE INTO REALITY

Using your answers to the questions labelled AP (for Action Plan), identify your next steps.

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