

2022-2023 Community Engagement Summary

Advocacy Without Borders

1. **Intersections on the Spectrum:** The Intersections on the Spectrum podcast is the brainchild of Doug Blecher and Kelly Bron Johnson, created to discuss intersectional issues within the autistic community, and give visibility to commonly marginalized, repressed, underrepresented, or erased identities and issues.
<https://intersectionsonthespectrum.com/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with the hosts about multiply-marginalized autistic issues, and subsequently appeared as a guest on their podcast to further the dialogue.

- Transcript: <https://intersectionsonthespectrum.com/transcript-mor%C3%A9nike/>
- Recording: <https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/intersections-on-the-spectrum/episodes/Intersections-on-the-Spectrum-Diem-Mooney-e1doudm>

2. **Adulting on the Spectrum:** The goal of Autism Speaks' podcasts are to inspire the autism community, spark dialogue and make society a more understanding and accepting place for people with autism and their families. Adulting on the Spectrum podcast, hosted by Andrew Komarow and Eileen Lamb, features autistic adults from various backgrounds to learn about their life, talents, challenges and the ups and downs of being on the spectrum. <https://www.autismspeaks.org/podcast-episodes>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with the hosts about advocating for BIPOC autistics and about addressing community infighting, provided them with several resources, and subsequently appeared as a guest on their podcast to further the dialogue.

- Transcript: https://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/More%CC%81nikeTranscriptMarch.docx_0.pdf
- Audio: [Ep. 19 –How to work past the in-fighting within the autism community, advocating for BIPOC community](#)

3. **NINE- Neurodivergent Infinity Network of Educators:** The Neurodivergent Infinity Network of Educators, founded by Karen Timm, is dedicated to: creating safe, accessible and inclusive spaces (both in person and virtual) where Neurodivergent Educators can embrace their authentic selves. <https://sites.google.com/ddsbc.ca/nine/home>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with founder Karen Timm about effective public school and community collaboration, innovative strategies for highlighting BIPOC autistic needs, and subsequently appeared as a presenter for the Intersectional Infinity Summit.

- Intersectional Infinity Summit 2022 utilized “neuro-affirmative human rights and educational practices” to “build greater connections within the Autistic and Neurodivergent community to find common ground, amplify voices, and co-learn alongside those seeking to be allies.”

- ◆ Its primary goals were to “amplify the voices and perspectives of non-speakers and those within the Autistic community who have been historically most marginalized and to promote presumption of competence and reframing of communication.”
- ◆ Link to Summit: <https://sites.google.com/ddsb.ca/intersectional-infinity-summit/home>
- ◆ Link to presentation: [Intersectional Infinity- Morénike Giwa Onaiwu](#)

4. **Sarasota County:** The Sarasota County ADA and Title IV program aims to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and to offer accommodations to increase accessibility in the county’s communication, employment, programs, activities, policies, and services. <https://www.scgov.net/government/county-administration/ethics-and-compliance/ada-title-vi-compliance>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with the Sarasota County ADA Coordinator to provide guidance on inclusive and neurodiversity affirming techniques to embed in various trainings being offered to the public and to departments within the county, including libraries, emergency services, sustainability, and others. Subsequently, we helped with development of topics for their “Culmination of Autism Awareness” event.

5. **Arizona Center for the Disability Law/Disability Rights Arizona:** This not for profit public interest law firm is dedicated to protecting the rights of individuals with physical, mental, psychiatric, sensory and cognitive disabilities. <https://www.azdisabilitylaw.org/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with their staff on cultural sensitivity and autism acceptance.

6. **The Stemma Project: Creating Community and Culturing Change:** This Georgia nonprofit is “dedicated to providing programs, events and community service projects that advance the cultural framework of African-American families and influence the worldview perspectives of education, wealth and enhanced activities for everyday life.” Its areas of focus include “Financial Literacy, Self, Family and Community Defense, Mental Health Awareness, Autism Awareness, Skill Training and Job Readiness, Cultural Awareness, Scholarships, Community Organization, and Community Development.” <https://www.stemma.one/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with the Stemma Project founder and lead coordinator on community participatory strategies related to promoting neurodiversity and autism acceptance in the African American community, particularly in the US South.

Subsequently, our founder then served as the speaker for their annual African American Autism Awareness on Saturday, May 7, 2022.



7. **Autism Science Foundation (ASF):** ASF is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting people with autism and their families by funding scientific research to understand the causes of autism and to develop better treatments.

<https://autismsciencefoundation.org>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with the ASF Chief Science Officer and several others for over a year on a project focused on autism and gender disparities culminating in a publication in The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health Journal and a podcast episode.

- Article link: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37973254/>
- Podcast link: <https://autismsciencefoundation.org/resources/podcast-in-support-of-afab/>

8. **The Association for Autism and Neurodiversity (AANE):** AANE helps Autistic and similarly Neurodivergent people build meaningful, connected lives by providing individuals, families, and professionals with education, community and support, in an inclusive atmosphere of validation and respect. <https://aane.org/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with Pam Palmucci of AAE and team to help develop and provide initial guidance and program evaluation for their Simpatico Mentoring program for autistic adults. This collaboration lasted ~one year.

9. **Fresh Arts:** Fresh Arts empowers artists through programs that build knowledge, amplify local resources, and connect communities. <https://fresharts.org/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with Fresh Arts personnel about the possibility of amplifying BIPoC neurodivergent artists via their Artist Opportunity Board, Artist Resource Library, toolkits, podcast, workshops, and/or panel conversations.

10. **Public Consulting Group (PCG):** A multidisciplinary provider serving public and private sector health, education, and human services organizations in all 50 states of the US, 6 Canadian provinces, and the European Union. Its goal is to make measurable improvements to performance and processes. <https://www.publicconsultinggroup.com/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with the PCG team to discuss collaborating on a training session in Indiana for employment providers focused on the intersectionality of Autism/mental health/cultural diversity and its impact on employment.

11. **Lopez Island Education Foundation:** This nonprofit supports learning-based and experiential programs and activities for students of Lopez Public Schools via supplemental funding to sponsor various educational projects. <http://lopezeducation.org/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with the team to discuss neurodiversity affirming strategies for engaging with multiply marginalized BIPoC families in the district.



- 12. Classic Learning Test (CLT):** CLT offers assessments that strengthen a traditional education, providing a meaningful metric of students' abilities and helping them pursue a fulfilling future. Their online and paper assessments evaluate reading, grammar, and mathematics and provide a comprehensive measure of achievement and aptitude. <https://www.cltxam.com/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with CLT founder Jeremy Tate about their organization's communication strategy on social media and their podcast, specifically about polarizing language and being more culturally sensitive to issues relevant to people of color. Our founder subsequently appeared on their podcast, Anchored, which seeks to "engage in conversations with leading thinkers on issues at the intersection of education and culture, including headline news in the world of education."

- 13. Hello Sleuth:** Believing that "parents are the glue who connect schools, doctors, therapists, and local kids' programs," this nonprofit focuses on peer education and resource sharing for non-emergency concerns about children's health and development. On its platforms and its specialized app, parents and caregivers offer "hard-fought lessons and specific data about symptoms, diagnostic approaches, recommended experts, and treatments." <https://www.sleuthparents.com/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with the founders on how to highlight the experiences of neurodivergent families of color.

- 14. This Can Happen Global:** Multinational organization focused on empowering workplace mental wellbeing, particularly supporting employers and employees to create and maintain a positive environment for good mental health in the workplace. <https://www.thiscanhappenglobal.com/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with the team on accessible and culturally-sensitive techniques and content and subsequently provided free training for the organization.

- 15. Bridges Graduate School:** Bridges Graduate School "embraces the philosophy of celebrating human cognitive diversity and the belief that education should be strength-based and talent-focused." <https://bgs.edu/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with the team on accessible and culturally-sensitive techniques and content and subsequently gave a free presentation entitled "Elevating your 2E culturally diverse child: Fostering the intersection of your child's identities."

- 16. The 2E Center for Research and Professional Development:** The 2E Center for Research and Professional Development, which is affiliated with but a separate entity from the Graduate school, is a "first-of-its-kind multidisciplinary hub where professionals, scholars, and practitioners combine expertise to enhance understanding of the growing population of 2e students. The primary goals of the Center are to create awareness, offer professional development, provide outreach, and generate projects that will



improve services for the special population of children known as twice-exceptional (2e). With the unique opportunities afforded by working with a lab school, the Center encourages and undertakes research, courses, workshops and resource sharing.”

<https://2ecenter.org/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with the team on accessible and culturally-sensitive techniques and content and subsequently gave a free presentation entitled “Elevating your 2E culturally diverse child: Fostering the intersection of your child’s identities.”

17. Rice University Center for Civic Leadership (CCL): CCL, a multidisciplinary center at Rice University, empowers students and faculty to transform the structures that perpetuate oppression locally and globally through ethical community partnerships and critical pedagogies. <https://ccl.rice.edu/>

- CCL convenes university and community leaders to “take actions towards achieving an equitable, inclusive, and just society” and to “recognize, respond to, and condemn all forms of discrimination and harassment by addressing systemic barriers of injustice, exclusion, and oppression.”
 - Annually, CCL sponsors an Alternative Spring Break (ASB) program that enables students to “advance their understanding of one social issue; to engage communities on this issue through service, social justice, advocacy, and/or public policy and reflection...ASB leaders identify a social issue that they care about and engage in a comprehensive, year-long development and training process to acquire a deeper understanding of that issue through pre-trip education and a dedicated week of service.” <https://ccl.rice.edu/asb-sl-info>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with ASB leaders to create a semester-long curriculum for a group of 10 students on the neurodiversity movement and disability justice, culminating in experiential learning that included a formal talk plus campus visits to two neurodiversity centers out of state.

18. Best Buddies International DEI Program: This partnership with Best Buddies and the Institute for Corporate Productivity hosts outreach and educational events, promotes DEI initiatives addressing BIPOC with IDD, supports mentoring and training programs at HBCUs and urban high schools, and offers scholarships and vocational training. <https://www.bestbuddies.org/diversityfund>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with Joseph Canty and subsequently provided critical training to over 100 service providers, family members, and educators from different regions of the country serving Black people with IDD.



19. Urban Collaborative: This national network of 100+ school districts seeks to increase effective and inclusive special education services by improving educational outcomes and life opportunities for children and youth with disabilities in urban schools through leadership development. Believing that improving education for children with disabilities improves education for all students, Urban Collaborative shares “knowledge, research and policy to increase inclusive special education services in schools to decrease the disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in classification rates, separate educational environments and disciplinary actions.” <https://www.urbancollaborative.org/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with the team on accessible and culturally-sensitive techniques and content and led a panel discussion and training.

20. Black Information Network: the first and only “24/7 comprehensive national audio Black News service dedicated to providing an objective, accurate and trusted source of continual news coverage with a Black voice and perspective.” <https://www.binnews.com/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with Esther Dillard, a journalist affiliated with the network, to provide insight for the development of an episode of a four part special report exploring the intersection between race and autism: "Black, Autistic, and Safe" with specific emphasis on the complexities that can arise in police encounters.

- Special Report: Black, Autistic, and Safe Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FftYyj9ja0o>

21. Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE): Founded in 1957, Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) is the bridge between the state’s Department of Children & Families, private adoption agencies, and adults interested in adoption. As the Commonwealth’s central clearinghouse for adoption information and referral, MARE engages in recruiting, educating, supporting, and advocating for families throughout the adoption process and works to identify potential matches between children and families. <https://www.mareinc.org/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with MARE on outreach and services to autistic individuals from underrepresented communities. Subsequently, we led a virtual MARE event, “Autism and Adoption” for 22 families (current and prospective foster/adoptive parents), 8 DCF social workers, and 14 MARE staff (social workers, etc.) with the goal of educating families about providing permanency for autistic children/teens, as well as about autism in general.

- Article and link to event: <https://www.mareinc.org/articles/autism-and-adoption>
- In addition, Advocacy Without Borders also provided educational resources and a subsidy for Spanish and Sign Language interpreters.



- 22. Gifted Homeschoolers:** A nonprofit organization whose mission is “to empower every gifted and multi-exceptional family to make strategic, proactive, and intentional educational choices.” GHF envisions “a diverse world of multi-generational families, educators, and professionals supporting each other through community, education, and creating content relating to gifted home education” and seeks to “empower gifted families to make strategic, proactive, and intentional educational choices.” <https://ghflearners.org/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with GHF Leadership to coordinate a speaking engagement for the Gifted Homeschoolers’ Virtual Conference, “How to support your multi-exceptional child.”

<https://ghflearners.org/choices/ghf-conferences/ghf-conference-2023/ghf-2023-conference-day-3/>

- 23. Brilliant Minds Collective:** a U.S. based culturally centered non profit think tank focused on economic growth in marginalized communities.

<http://www.brilliantmindscollective.org/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with their neurodivergent undergraduate intern to plan and be the featured presenter for a virtual symposium, Disability & RACE: The Intersectionality Between Identity and Disability Advocacy.

- The presentation focused on the intersection of autism and race and “dismantling ableism and racism and promoting disability inclusion and equity by recognizing the voices of individuals with disabilities from underrepresented groups.”

- 24. Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG):** SENNG is nonprofit that empowers families and communities to guide gifted and talented individuals to reach their goals: intellectually, physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

<https://www.sengifted.org/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with the team on accessible and culturally sensitive techniques and content and subsequently led a SENNG webinar (SENGinar):

<https://www.sengifted.org/events/senginar-eye-of-the-beholder-our-obsessions-opportunities>

- 25. Advocate Today,** April 2023. Neurodivergence in BIPOC & LGBTQ+ Communities and the common myths about Autism. Link(s):

https://youtu.be/aicD_642IAI?si=_vDHMWyq8y3dCuMs

Summary: Discussion with Tracy E. Gilchrist for Advocate Today to talk about Advocacy Without Borders’ work in fighting for understanding, acceptance and the liberation of people with neurodivergence and autism. The discussion also addresses the intersection of race, culture, and disability, as well as medical racism and unconscious bias. (Advocate Channel)



- 26. All Neurotypes, July 2023:** When neurodivergence is used to excuse harmful behaviors. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AS7EyMDzRXI&t=1s>

Summary: Morénike, Jenna, and Sam discuss how to be accommodating and neurodiversity-affirming while still maintaining personal boundaries and recognizing potentially harmful behaviors. Several specific case studies are explored with an emphasis on "edge cases" where it may be difficult to distinguish between what is neurodivergence versus controlling or unhealthy behavior. (These are generally uncommon scenarios as neurodivergent individuals are much more likely to be the victim of abuse or controlling behavior. However, neurodivergent people are humans and are capable of both wonderful and harmful actions just like any other human.)

- 27. Neurodiversity and DEIB, Lantern Group for BOA.**

Summary: This report seeks to help Bank of America stakeholders—HR executives, talent managers, etc.—better understand the benefit of creating a workplace that enables employees to bring all their identities to the table as well as offer strategies and tactics that these stakeholders can use to further that goal.

<https://about.bankofamerica.com/en/making-an-impact/neurodiversity-in-the-workplace>

https://business.bofa.com/content/dam/flagship/workplace-benefits/id20_0905/documents/neurodiversity.pdf

- 28. NCSA, Autism Confidential blog. April 2023.** Autism Advocacy: Bridging the Divide. https://youtu.be/Xjb_pjf55D0?si=lb13wY5p_9akE_hs

Summary: Special podcast episode about the splintered autism community and tangible progress in the field of lifespan autism care and housing.

- 29. Diverse podcast, October 2023. Championing Inclusion:**

<https://swe.org/podcast/episode/ep-241-championing-inclusion-with-global-activist-scholar-morenike-giwa-onaiwu/>

Summary: Morénike Giwa Onaiwu joined us live in the WE23 Diverse Podcast Studio to share insights on inclusion and equity, particularly for the neurodivergent community. Interviewed by Laurie Shuster, editor-in-chief of SWE Magazine, Giwa Onaiwu discusses their journey as an advocate, educator and founder of the nonprofit Advocacy Without Borders. Learn the best piece of advice Giwa Onaiwu ever received, what drives her commitment to social justice, and practical ideas that STEM workplaces can implement to become more accessible to all.

- 30. SPHARC, April 2023.** 2023 Autism Acceptance Month: Celebrating Autistic Joy. <https://youtu.be/CCGGd7sGyhc?si=NRa0KoAI0m8WVWRf>

Summary: State Public Health Autism Resource Center (SPHARC) held a Fireside Chat focused on "Celebrating Autistic Joy" on April 27, 2023. The event featured two



speakers, Heidi Lieb-Williams and Sam Brandsen, and was moderated by Dr. Dave Caudel, Dr. Morénike Giwa Onaiwu, and Haley Moss.

31. IACC, World Mental Health Day. Oct 2023: Panel, Community Perspectives on Mental Health Needs in Autism.

<https://iacc.hhs.gov/meetings/iacc-meetings/2023/full-committee-meeting/october11/>

Summary: Panel discussion about mental health and autism.

32. Crash Consulting podcast, Kayla Concannon: Lived Expertise > Degrees, Feb 2023.

<https://lived-expertise-degrees.pinecast.co/episode/4ca39376/interview-with-mor-nike-gi-wa-onaiwu-advocate-public-speaker-writer>

Summary: Podcast discussion about the value of lived experiences.

33. UPitt Autism Center of Excellence, April 2023. Suffering in Silence: Suicidality in Neurodiverse Communities of Color.

<https://youtu.be/B1yq7D1wF8A?si=qyNKc4ppoAshWNhK>

Summary: This webinar, coordinated by researchers, self-advocates, parents, and clinical experts in autism, crisis support, and suicide, will blend learned and lived expertise, cultural considerations, and neurodiversity to examine suicidality through an intersectional lens.

34. & 35. University of Alberta Centre for Autism Services Alberta Students' Association (CFASA): This group strives to “increase awareness and educate the students on the UAlberta campus and the general public about autism.”

<https://www.cfasa.ca/>

Advocacy Without Borders consulted with the team on accessible and culturally-sensitive techniques and content and subsequently planned and led two breakout sessions on Culture and Autism at CFASA's 10th annual conference “Discovering Autism and Intersectionality.” <https://www.cfasa.ca/cfasa-annual-conference>

