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AUCD

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OPENING PLENARY SESSION

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>> We have Early Career Professional Scholarship recipients here from Oklahoma, Alaska, and from the State of Washington. In order to send more Early Career Professionals, family members and individuals to this conference, we need your support. We're asking everyone that can to use this card on your seat, or go on to the website. There is a button that will say "Donate Now."

And everyone who gives $25 or more during this conference to support the emerging leaders scholarship will get entered into a raffle for which numbers will be chosen on Wednesday, and the prizes are great. There is a FitBit Flex™, a weekend hotel stay. But, you know, even if you don't care about the prizes, I know all of us care about supporting emerging leaders in our network. So please give ‑‑ if you need any help on how to do it, you can talk to me, or any AUCD staff or Board Member.

One of the ‑‑ well, probably the biggest thing we worked on over the last year as a Board has been our new strategic map. And many of you have already heard us talk about that. In fact, can anyone tell me what page of the program the Strategic Map is on? Page 79! I'm glad. You've already ‑‑ at least a quarter of you have already learned that

With Andy's leadership and broad participation by staff, the Board, and the Membership, we've developed five strategic priorities to work on over the next two years. These priorities reflect the values of our organization and are the important work that will make us stronger and bring us closer together.

Do we have those on the ‑‑ no?

(pause)

No? It's okay! The five goals which are on Page 79 of your program ‑‑

[ Laughter ]

‑‑ are to enhance our visibility and reach as a network. To increase our public policy work, particularly in the area of policy to practice, research‑to‑policy‑to‑practice. To increase the engagement of all of our networks. And this was really in response to what all of you told us was really important. You want to work together. You want to be engaged. And you want to know people working on the same issues and know that by collaborating we can all be stronger. To do that we also need to have sustainable funding. We'll work with our federal partners who we have great partnerships with, as well as building new partnerships and collaborations both in the Government and Private Sectors. And finally, we'll build on our work in the area of diversity inclusion and equity by ensuring that we're creating future leaders of tomorrow who represent the great diversity of ethnicity, and race, and disability that our country has.

So as you have time to look at this map, we have a work plan under it. We have goals under it. We're fleshing that out. It's a work in progress. It's not going to be something up on a shelf, but it's a living document that we would love to have more feedback on now, or as you go through it in your own UCEDD and LEND during the year. So before I turn this over to Andy, I have a few housekeeping notes. For the plenaries, we have computer‑assisted realtime transcription which means if you are going to speak during this plenary or any of the plenaries, please use a microphone. Otherwise we don't get the audio portion.

So now it's my great pleasure to introduce Andy Imparato. I have had a fabulous time over the last 12 months, 13 months, working with Andy. He brings to AUCD passion, commitment, and more ideas than I have ever seen. In fact, we joke about that. You know Andy, you know, you have to kind of eventually say, "Wait, wait, wait! Let us catch up with you!"

And we are so pleased to have Andy on board. He led us through the strategic planning. He has made visits to many of you in the audience. He has gone to 27‑something UCEDDs and LENDs. He has learned a lot about us, and he is positioned well to lead us into the future. In fact, he wanted to show us a very short video of his travels before he comes up. So I will move to that. Thank you, and thank you for this opportunity!

[ Applause ]

(music)

>> I've been everywhere (music)

[ Applause ]

>> ANDY IMPARATO: Please raise your hand if I visited you in your home state in my first year? I promise that I will be visiting more centers in the years to come. But I really want to thank the folks that hosted me my first year because you really have been my most important part of orientation as executive director. I don't learn anything more important than when I'm visiting the centers, and I'm inspired from each trip. And each of you is doing something extraordinary, and oftentimes it's different than something that I saw at the Center before. And I'm going to be very brief, because we have a phenomenal panel and I want to get to the panel quickly. I really want to thank Leslie for mentoring me in this role. It helps that Leslie is a lawyer, and ran the protection and advocacy agency. So she speaks lawyer, and she can help me understand what I need to do now that I'm representing a group of academics and clinicians, and a much more diverse constituency professionally than I have up until this point in my career. And it's also just been a real pleasure working with Olivia on this conference. Olivia really ran with a lot of the crazy ideas that came on our Friday calls from her bipolar executive director.

[ Laughter ]

So I think that it helps that she is from Los Angeles and she is not intimidated by eccentricity.

[ Laughter ]

But I really do think that this will be the most interesting opening plenary in the history of disability conferences. So I want to get to the plenary. My main message for all of you is that we are a $600 million network when you put us altogether. And there is no other network in the disability space that has as much capacity, has as many committed people, and has as diverse a range of expertise and perspectives as we have and I think if you look at where we are as a country in labor force participation rates for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and for people with disabilities at large, where we are in high school graduation rates, where we are in early childhood screening detection, and finally where we are around health promotion, every outcome that we care about as we come up on these milestone anniversaries, we are nowhere near where we should be as a country. And I feel like my primary job as your leader is to bring your expertise to bear so that we can get better policy, better practice, and better outcomes. And that's really what the Six-By-‘15 campaign that we launched this year was about. We want to celebrate these anniversaries, but we want to get better outcomes in the process. And we want to demonstrate unity. So a group of us met with the Secretary of Labor this morning. We were organized. We supported each other. There were 15 of us in the room. And it was like a symphony. Everybody had their part to play. And I think that AUCD can help make that happen on a wide range of issues. So without further ado I want to introduce our conference chair who has put lots and lots and lots of hours into setting this up conference, Olivia Raynor.

[ Applause ]

>> OLIVIA RAYNOR: Thank you, Andy! My own personal “Where's Waldo,” and it's been an extraordinary year, and probably other than Andy's experience of actually being able to physically visit all of the sites around the country that he has, I had the honor of reading about almost 300 proposals that were submitted by all of you. And if you’re going to be an arm‑chair traveler, that was an incredible position to be in to see the magnificence of our network carried out in the interesting, innovative, exciting proposals, in the innovative work, passionate ideas engaged in the work. I'm so excited that our network so embraced our theme of "AUCD Unleashed."

And I think that's a message for all of us: the power of engagement. And I am really pleased that all of you have made it a priority to be here, to get involved in the sessions that are to come in the days that follow, and, importantly, speak to one another because this is where a lot can happen that leverages a lot of energy as you go back to your home states.

For a few minutes, I'm going to do a little bit of an overview of what's to come, and recognize those that have contributed greatly to our conference today. So why this theme, and why now? What does it mean to "engage?” What does it mean to engage? Well, I hope some of that came out in what you heard about our strategic plan. Over the last year, aside from planning this conference, the Board, the Network, and many others who collaborate and engage with us, have contributed to our developing important strategic directions that have really resonated in the engagement that we hope that happens here. I hope that you'll introduce yourself to someone who might be sitting next to you who you may not know and want to ask them, "What is it that do you? What is your passion? What gets you going in the morning?"

In the same way that we are trying to engage both within the network, we're also trying to engage with external partners, and I think that the plenary this afternoon really exemplifies that, that we want to bring new voices, new informants, people that we can engage with to move our association forward.

There's a lot of interconnectedness and interrelatedness between all of what we do, and the larger disability community. So we need to move beyond our own, at this time, walls to be working within others. Where there is a world without walls where we're talking about disability as continuum of life experiences. It's all very powerful stuff. And before I turn our attention to the panel, I do want to spend a few minutes just saying to you that a lot has happened already. I participated in the poster session this morning where there were exciting conversations happening, and really an opportunity to spend some time with those that have dedicated a lot of time putting their research or program together to share with one another. And that's the tenor we want to set for the next few days of the conference. I would like to say thank you to those who played an integral role to make sure that all of the seamless things happen behind the scenes. Everything from the submissions of the conference proposals to its sessions we're holding today get recognized. And specifically we need to applaud and recognize Laura Martin and Crystal Pariseau.

[ Laughter ]

Today I saw Crystal running around with her camera, and some of us got to get a glimpse of her with her newborns. We got a peek at two beauties! So I think that you've missed out on something if you didn't get a chance to see that.

But without their dedication and incredible organizational skills, we would not have the full benefit of this conference today, and I'm very, very grateful.

Who is new here at this conference? Would you raise your hand if you are here for the first time?

Oh, my goodness! We've done a good job with engagement I'm really happy. Welcome to all of you.

[ Laughter ]

The Board has something on their name tag that says "Ask Me."

I think that everybody at the conference should have that because I'm hoping that we create the kind of environment that invites each of us to ask meaningful questions. Welcome to those of you who are new, and you are part of what makes this experience so powerful and meaningful.

So I challenge each of you to meet someone new, someone that you've not previously spoken to while you are here at the conference. Get some new ideas, and be brave and introduce yourself. I've been heartened by the fact that the trainees have been assertive in introducing themselves to me, and I really enjoy those conversations. I'm sure that everybody in this room would feel the same way.

I also want to spend the few minutes and thank the sponsors. Without their support we, too, wouldn't be able to have such a wonderful event such as today. Especially I would like to thank WellPoint, one of the nation's leading health benefits companies for being our top contributor and sponsor to the conference, and sponsoring the opening plenary, welcome reception, and poster session. Merrill Friedman is the Vice President of advocacy with WellPoint working closely with consumers, advocates, and stakeholders to ensure that the diverse needs and preferences of people with disabilities and aging adults are addressed within Medicaid and Medicare, and their managed care programs. We are pleased that she could join us today. Merrill, are you here? Could you please stand up so that we can acknowledge you properly?

[ Applause ]

She is not here? So Andy's social media hotline says she’ll be here at 5:00. So we'll have to make a point of meeting her at the reception. Thank you.

We're also delighted to announce a few new sponsors, AT&T, LifeShare. And we're proud of our returning sponsors Walmart, Comcast/NBCUniversal, AAIDD, and Verizon. Also I would encourage you to thank and acknowledge our exhibitors. Stop by and see what they have to offer. And that we also hope that you will spend some time introducing yourselves to our sponsors who I hope will be in attendance at our reception.

So what’s to come in the next few days? Well, some of you have already participated in concurrent and poster symposium, council meetings, and other events. Well, we have another 33 concurrents and 60 posters that will be featured at our upcoming reception. We'll be hearing from PBS news anchor Judy Woodruff and a dynamic federal panel tomorrow at the plenary at 8:45 sharp! We're going to be honoring exceptional individuals who have made important contributions to the lives of people with disabilities, and recognize them with awards from our association tomorrow at our awards celebration.

Wednesday morning is our ever popular prize drawing. I know that Leslie gave a coming attraction of what some of the prizes are. You get your golden ticket for the award, for your prize, at the award ceremony. We want this to be an equal opportunity that everybody here will leave with some recognition, get your ticket, and you, too, may be an awardee of the AUCD conference. The closing plenary which we're excited about will start on Wednesday at 9:30, and feature bipartisan prose which can help us interpret last week's national elections and their implications for what we do. This will include Senator Tom Harkin, Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers, and Taryn Williams. You're not going to want to miss the opportunity to see and hear and be informed by what's to come. Each of you has the power to influence each other and the power to influence what this conference is all about. It's you, you as individuals that are at the part of this conference. We also want you to influence future conferences. The only way that that can happen is if you fill out the evaluation form. We know that on the mobile app is a copy of your evaluation, and there are hard copies also available at the registration desk. I can't emphasize this enough that we really do listen attentively to the feedback that you give us that we can make our conferences a more meaningful event for all of you. Seeing the newcomers today, again, it's very heartening. We also want to make sure that they come back so that next year there is a whole new group of people that are raising their hands and saying that they're newcomers.

So now, with no further ado I have the honor of introducing our plenary moderator, Leon Dash so that we can begin the real heart of our conversation this afternoon.

Leon Dash is a former "Washington Post" and Pulitzer Prize winning journalist. He is presently a professor of journalism, African‑American studies, and law at the Swanlund Center for Advanced Studies at the University of Illinois. With no further ado I would like to turn the microphone over to Leon who will introduce the other panelists. And thank you all!

[ Applause ]

>> LEON DASH: Immediately to my left is Bob Boorstin, former public policy director of Google, and former Presidential speech writer. I have a long biography, but I don't think that I will go through that.

To his left is James Ferg‑Cadima, national public policy office of MALDEF. And this is Emily Ladau, disability rights advocate and blogger. And then Shankar Vedantam is a science correspondent for NPR, a former reporter with "The Washington Post".

To open the discussion, I would like to say that the disability community is sometimes told it's spent too much time talking with with itself and not enough time talking with the public at large. Next year presents a unique opportunity to engage the public about the Americans With Disabilities Act, and the 40th anniversary of the special education law. What should the message to the public be in 2015? I would like all of the panel members to respond to that. You can take it any which way you want to go.

>> EMILY LADAU: Is it okay if I jump in?

>> LEON DASH: You can jump in any time.

>> EMILY LADAU: I want all of you to smile because we're going to take a picture right now!

[ Laughter ]

We're talking about getting engaged? This is how do you it! And then I challenge you all to re‑Tweet it. I want to see a lot of re‑Tweets. Everybody smile!

[ Laughter ]

Awesome! Okay. So now that we got that out of the way, the message that I think that we need to be sending as the approach of the ADA's 25th anniversary which is a huge deal to all of us coming up is that we're really focused on making disability ‑‑ or having accessibility within the disability community. We want world to make it accessible for us. But what about making disability accessible to everybody else? Because we spend a lot of time talking to ourselves as we mentioned a little bit before. And we have some really great ideas going on right in this room. But we throw around academic jargon, we throw around information and acronyms that people might not know. It's time for us to make disability accessible to everyone one else. That's how we can start making changes as the 25th anniversary of the ADA approaches.

>> JAMES FERG-CADIMA: I'm here on behalf of MALDEF, a high‑impact organization on behalf of Latinos. I will try not to speak lawyer and try to harken back to the academic frame I had prior to going to law school. The question is: is there a message on the importance of the anniversary to us? I think my response would be to ask back are there messages ‑‑ different messages that we need to have on the anniversary depending on different populations and groups across society we need to reach?

The one thing that I always harken back, to the most successful mobilization for the Latino community I've seen in the last 10 years has not been focusing or targeting a communication to parents, to adults, rather focusing on the youth and watching them go gang busters with social media. So I think how you engage young people, whether they're in their 20s or younger, and the character limitations, and what language format you need to put that in English or other languages, matters. Speaking in hashtags, speaking with images, speaking with things that invite people in. I'm looking at the example of what the Latino and other ethnic communities have done within documented youth. We've branded them. We've mobilized them under the label of "dreamers."

We've also in the more modern era talked about the preferred action they received in regards to the White House. But we've gone from the last 13 years from being anonymous to them wanting to be out and proud. They've looked to other movements. They've moved to LGBT movements, disability movements, and the status of being undocumented which is, you can't pick that out? A politician says you can pick them out based on their calf size or what shoe they wear. Wrong! There is no way to know that unless someone discloses that and watching them mobilize their parents in previous generations has been humbling. So the question for us is messages. And which forms to send those through.

>> BOB BOORSTIN: I would add briefly that I think about this in terms of the frame of the message. And when I say that I mean it should not be backwards looking, but forward looking. The idea that people are going to get excited by the notion that this is the 25th anniversary of something, it's always the 25th anniversary of something.

[ Laughter ]

And for all of us in this room, what is an extremely important law is for most people out there something that they weren't aware of when it happened, and certainly will not be aware of when it happens after 25 years again. So my plea to you would be to avoid talking about legislation, avoid talking about anniversaries, and focus instead on what the disability community can give to America if that's your focus, or to another area of the world if that's where your focus is.

Specifically I was thinking about a message that focuses ‑‑ I'm sorry about this ‑‑ on economics. If I was part of this community today that was planning anything, I would launch a study immediately that demonstrated how much money we actually saved when we employ people with disabilities, and when we invested in research on people with disabilities. And I would have that study ready for release on the day of the anniversary. Because that's what's going to interest especially all of those new Republican Senators.

[ Laughter ]

>> SHANKAR VEDANTAM: I will piggyback on what the others have said. Really I think the issue of trying to reach people, the important thing is to speak their language and not to speak your language. There is a story, and I don't know but during the Apollo space mission where the United States and the USSR were planning these joint space missions in the early days of the Space Age, and the rule was the American astronauts were only allowed to speak to the Russians in Russian, and the Russian cosmonauts could only speak to the American astronauts in English. Now, this seems actually ridiculous because you are asking people to communicate in a language that they don't know very well.

But, of course, the value is that this is even when you speak in language you don't know very well, when you are speaking in somebody else's language, that person understands your language far better than when you speak very eloquently in your own language.

>> LEON DASH: My next question is, again, for the entire panel, and it comes out of my experience for doing a research on a documentary film on disability in the United States.

Is the disability movement, in terms of leaders and members in the U.S., inclusive of all ethnicities and broadly representative of all lines of gender? Bob, you would like to take that first?

>> BOB BOORSTIN: Boy, I knew you would do this. I'm not an expert on this I think that it's best to take an "I don't know stance" when you really don't know. My guess would be no.

[ Laughter ]

>> EMILY LADAU: I'm happy to jump in.

>> LEON DASH: Emily, jump in.

>> EMILY LADAU: This is what I'm studying right now and this is what I do hopefully for a living one day. Recently in my graduate school class we were discussing the fact that there was a sort of white disability studies. We have a bit of a white savior complex. We think because we have this position of privilege we're able to fix things for people. And I know that this is a bit hypocritical for me because I'm a white person sitting here telling you this, but however the real issue is that we're kind of focused on a disability narrative and discounting the narratives of other minorities that intersect directly with disability. If you're African‑American and disabled, that's your story. You're not just disabled, you're not just African‑American. I'm Jewish and disabled. That's my story. I'm not just Jewish. I'm not just disabled. And so I think that a large part of the disability leadership is definitely, definitely white, for lack of a better way to put it.

But then when I look in this room, I see the exact opposite. And I see that we need to be the ones that are rising up to the occasion of eliminating that one color in the room at the table for disability advocates. And we can change the color to be, I hate to say a rainbow, because that's cheesy, but that's essentially what I'm looking for as we move forward in disability advocacy.

>> JAMES FERG-CADIMA: I agree with the observations that have come before. I don't think that there are enough members of other communities that are representative of the leadership or in the evolution of efforts on behalf people with disabilities. I think of any Latino discussion, there are always data points that are missing in any group membership conversation around Latinos. And for very solid reasons. When we look at the data for disabilities for Latinos, we're underrepresented. If we were to believe the certain prevalence of certain medical conditions are equal around certain populations and sciences would lead us to believe that there is this interesting disconnect with people who are identified and receiving services or legal protections, and so what is it about certain communities that have them additionally invisible for a second form of invisibility? And for us it's both looking at overrepresentation, underrepresentation, but most importantly delayed identification. So I think that with certain populations including Latinos but not just Latinos, there is this interesting not yet a member of the disability movement, and that's an important thing to gain ground on.

But once someone identifies, I think that there are legal barriers that are certain to ethnic communities and Latino legal restrictions. We have a disconnect in the health system. And repeatedly Congress is good about finding ways to disconnect non‑citizens from medical systems. I saw an earlier discretion of Medicare and Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, most of those symptoms for many non‑symptoms are an option. To the extent disability is operationalized around identification or medical diagnoses, or the delivery of services. We have people living out of the mainstream. We have people living in isolation. Isolated from information. Isolated from medical access. So however we need to change leadership or the conversation, it has to include those double‑invisible populations.

>> I just want to piggyback on something that Emily said. She used the word "intersection," and I want to raise intersectionality which many of you will be familiar with. So when our conventional understandings of many of the categories have been thinking of one category by itself, or thinking about gender or race or sexual orientation, and really, of course in real life these things intersect with one another, sexual orientation, and class, and the religious belief, and where you live in the country, and your age are intersecting with everything else at the same time. And I think really it raises the idea that this notion of diversity is really being challenged here. Because even the category like disabled or category of Latino, within that category there are hundreds of sub‑categories. And, of course, the answer really is that we'll never get past the point of diversity. Because no matter how much diversity you will get, there are always new areas to think about, and new people to bring to the table. And I think it's this way of looking at diversity, this perspective of saying that we've reached our goal, this is a job that's done. But to see it as a continual process is really the sense of what your question was raising which is to see diversity as this never‑ending process, saying how can we bring more inclusion in? How can we bring more difference?

>> BOB BOORSTIN: May I ask a question of the audience on this topic? How many in this audience are Veterans? So we have very, very few people in this audience who are Veterans. I have to say that if I was a professional organizer and trying to help the disability community get more strength, particularly in the next two years, one community that I would look at very carefully, and it's not a community of color, per se, but it's a community out there, it's the Veteran's community. Why? Because now so many more Veterans are coming back from war disabled. It's very clear. The studies are just unbelievable at this point both with mental and physical disabilities. But more importantly they have a lot of power in this town. And so if you want to increase your power, what do you do? You work with the people who already have some.

>> LEON DASH: So following up on that note, Bob, you have helped people like President Clinton and treasury secretary Rubin vote on complex policy issues. If you were advising President Obama on a message to the American people on the 25th anniversary of the ADA, what would you encourage him to do and say around this milestone anniversary?

>> BOB BOORSTIN: Well, I should say that I had a part in the wildly successful Clinton healthcare reform.

[ Laughter ]

[ Applause ]

So I'm not sure that I would trust anything that I have to say about this.

[ Laughter ]

I would advise him to do two things. Again, I would advise him to pitch it as an economic advantage for the American people. If you treat people with disabilities as you do others, and you employ them, you give them jobs, you help them find housing if necessary, so forth and so on, supportive services, they are going to be productive members of society. They are not going to be a tap on the economy. They're going to be generators of a better economy.

The second thing that I would tell them is to tell stories. Tell stories of people. Because once you present that big number that one number, and Shankar knows about presenting numbers than anybody I've heard in the last few years, you can really lose people if you go to the second number, the third number, the fourth number. So give them the study, tell them how much they're going to save overall, but then make it real for them by using personal examples.

I'm here because I'm personally involved in disabilities. I was diagnosed in 1987 with bipolar disorder - manic‑depression I like to say because people actually understand what that means. And I have a son who is on the spectrum. I say I have a son who has learning and social problems. Why do I say it that way instead of on the spectrum or has Asperger's disorder? Because nobody understands that. Nobody outside of this room, and down the road at Autism Speaks knows what it means to be on the spectrum. It sounds scientific, but that's about it.

>> LEON DASH: Any additions from any other panel members? No? Okay. Emily, I will call on you then.

The disability movement in the U.S. and globally is fighting for meaningful work. Progress has been slow at home and abroad particularly for people with more significant or complex disabilities. What can disability advocates do differently in the coming year that might accelerate progress?

>> EMILY LADAU: So I'm going to go back to my favorite topic which is social media. And it used to be that I was spending time on social media, and not really realize the fact that it was happening. Now I realize for me personally I've gotten a lot of the job opportunities that I pursued via social media. So what advocates can do is start embracing what the younger generation is doing in their free time, start keeping an eye out for how the disability community is engaging on social media. Because we are there. We have a huge presence on social media. And, again, the goal is not to talk to each other so much as it is to talk to people outside of our community and show the work that we do on a silly thing like a Facebook status shows that we are actually engaged with what's going on in the world.

And that is a really great way for future employers to see what we're capable of. I know it sounds silly. It's just social media. But disability advocates can strengthen our presence online, and that's the best way to get the word out there fast about what you are capable of doing.

>> LEON DASH: Jim? You have non-apparent disabilities, and you have at times drawn on your personal experience to form your policy work. Do you feel that the U.S. disability movement does enough to speak to and inspire people with non‑apparent disabilities like bipolar disorder and learning disabilities, to be members of the disability community and to be out with their disabilities at work and in their communities? Is that an important goal?

>> JAMES FERG-CADIMA: I think so. I think that there is a disconnect. I mentioned some of this a few minutes ago. But I'm a person who was diagnosed with a learning disability way too late in life. I should not have been diagnosed in college. I am a native speaker of English and not Spanish. But somehow throughout all of my K‑12 existence I kept getting enrolled in English as a second language.

[ Laughter ]

This is the '70s, and things have changed over the decades and over systems. But it really challenges me as someone who has a disability, and it was so late in life, and what that means. So it always challenges my assumption as an advocate for whether the data that we have is sufficient. Whether that's collected through government or collected through the different sciences, hard and soft, and I never discount anecdotal evidence. Because I think anecdotal narratives, story‑driven things fill in that gap of what our systems for collecting trends doesn't show. I think it's a powerful tool to lay the foundation for aid and remedy, a different approach for enforcement by a branch of government. It's highly influenced. It speaks to our disconnect. I think that Latinos are underrepresented in disability categories because of the lack of bridges to medical resources in getting a test for confirmation. It requires when someone finds out that they have a disability ‑‑ and it's not invisible, to constantly plead that. That's exhausting. It's comparable to being in the LGBT community. It's comparable to being, in a way, an immigrant. It requires different tales in each of your life's transactions. And so particularly in the space of non‑visible disability categories, it requires you to tackle whether disability equals inability. And that can be an exhausting prospect in every life transaction. And to Shankar's point about intersectionality, there are those that are members of multiple categories where there is a brave transaction, and sometimes it's just not possible. So I think of immigrants or highly mobile Latinos that are children of migrant and seasonal farm workers, the different legal protections that we have operate, but particularly protecting those that have disabilities, there is a huge disconnect. I think of the way that we do English language learner services and how we diagnose - the most absurd point under the law is we look at English language learner as a categorical designation in special education. The very important thing in special education law is the individual. IEP: individualized education plan. So our schools are forced to enforce by a legal matter, and enforcement by parents who have the ability to sue, and they have to look at each student on each of their needs and merits. But for these English language learner students, you have to do more than open the door. It's done as a whole categorical designation. Oh, they'll get this type of intervention, and only one intervention, and that's a blunt approach. There is much to be learned, I think, from the disability rights movement, and particularly we need to link the non‑visible disability categories more into this movement to feel the ability to be out, and to be proud, and to be empowered.

[ Laughter ]

>> SHANKAR VEDANTAM: I want to add an interesting observation here. From the point of view of an observer, there are interesting parallels with what happened in the gay rights movement in the last 10 or 20 years, because when you look at it, it's actually been ‑‑ what's been astonishing is the speed at which American attitudes about the LGBT community have changed. They've changed so dramatically and in such a short period of time it's very clear that people who have one a view 10 years ago have a different view today. And so one really interesting question is: How has it happened? How has this change come about? And I think that there are many theories, but the theory that I find the most plausible and interesting, that speaks to this issue of being visible or not visible, is that in the gay right's community, they made a strong movement to have people come out of the closet and identify themselves as being gay. Of course, when you are a member of a class that is being discriminated against, this is difficult to do. All of your instincts tell you to stay hidden because when you present yourself you will be potentially discriminated against. But I think that it was a very, strategically, a smart idea because it raised ‑‑ what it did was it forced people to come into contact with people who are openly gay and lesbian. So you might have had views about the LGBT community, but you were also friends with Mary who worked down the hall. And psychologists have known for a very long time about this idea called cognitive dissonance which means that it is difficult in our head to hold two conflicting ideas at the same time. So on the one hand, if you like Mary down the hall who happens to be gay, it's difficult to hold two ideas in your head simultaneously. So when you see the speed at which the culture has changed in attitudes towards gays and lesbians, making the invisible visible has probably had a very important role in the speed of the psychological transformation.

>> LEON DASH: And following up on that Shankar, as AUCD and other organizations work to propel the disability rights movement, are they better to talk about how disability rights laws benefit everyone, or how important they are for persons with disabilities, or a combination? In our culture is there more support for collective good or individual rights?

>> SHANKAR VEDANTAM: This is a really fascinating question, because it's been studied, and I don't know if it's been studied specifically in the context of the disability rights movement, but it's been studied in the context of other social causes. If you are sending a message, is it better to make a message of something being in the common good? This is something that we should do because it's in all of our interest. We should fight climate change because it's in our interest. Or should we frame it as a matter of individual rights and individual liberties? So you can frame LGBT issues as a community good. This is a collective interest that everyone is treated equally. Or you can say, look it's an individual right. It's unfair that some people are not treated fairly. I did a story for NPR a few years ago about the work of a researcher from Stanford, and she was looking specifically at attitudes about environmental issues. And she found in her study of students that there was large difference between Asian‑American students and European‑American students. The European‑American students were far more likely to resonate to a message that was framed around individual rights, whereas Asian‑Americans were far more likely to gravitate to a message framed around social good and the larger, better good. And so you can cut that finer and sort of say that within the category of European‑Americans, there are many differences, just like there are many difference within the category of Asian‑Americans. But I think that the point of the study and the take‑away message here is that again, going back to the first thing, you have to speak the language of the person who is doing the listening because different people are going to speak different languages, and if you have one message and one language for everyone, that message is going to resonate to the people who speak your language. And it is going to essentially be ignored by everybody else.

>> BOB BOORSTIN: Let me add quickly that the best message is one that ‑‑ it's a false choice to say you have to choose between a collective message and an individual rights message because you could come up with a message that says if do you this, it's good, because of this larger societal goal. But it will also produce "X." And not as many people will hear the "but" portion, so you can do both in a single message.

>> EMILY LADAU: I would like to give the most basic possible example. Every time that I go to a location that's not wheelchair accessible, I ask: why don’t they have an elevator? Why don't they have a ramp? And I get looks as though I'm being a huge inconvenience to whoever I'm troubling to say ‘why couldn't you take a little extra time to follow the Americans With Disabilities Act and make your location wheelchair accessible?’ And I'm talking just about me, of course. There are other disabilities that are covered under the ADA that I'm not going to get to right now, but at some point in everyone's life, everyone in this room will experience disability in some way. If it is breaking your leg, if it is injuring your hand, you're probably going to need that modification you thought was annoying a little while ago. So that's what I try to explain to people on the most basic level. If you think that installing a ramp is an inconvenience for you or your business right now, it's not going to be an inconvenience when you broke your leg, or your mom just came out of the hospital in a wheelchair. And I'm not saying that I'm looking to be an inconvenience to people and force their hand at things, but simple modifications can benefit everyone in the long run.

>> LEON DASH: Do you have something to add?

>> JAMES FERG-CADIMA: Well, I mean, I think the most interesting challenge for me about talking to different populations in a way that's authentic to them and they have buy‑in to your message, my biggest challenge is dropping the vowels, and dropping capitalization, and punctuation. It seems not normal for generation "X." I'm not that old, but when I have to talk to my clients that are in their teens or in their 20s, it's interesting that I have to do visuals to increase the click‑through message, when I have to change and speak Spanish. It’s important to lead with narrative rather than facts. There are different ways to get to the same point. We just have to be savvier and willing to be more flexible. But I cannot use my phone fast enough in the modern era. I never thought I would have to but that's going to become essential to me ‑‑ my community is bottom heavy. The disability community is ‑‑ many communities are up front. But the Latino community is disproportionately young so it just requires different authentic engagement we have to think through. So what is our experience is definitely the best experience, and we have to be flexible. So I think that it's both. We have to look and test and see if our ‑‑ the good thing about technology is that we can test how well our message has gotten to the intended recipients. We have data.

>> LEON DASH: Emily, what can AUCD and other disability groups do to better engage youth and young adults with and without disabilities?

>> EMILY LADAU: Don't count us out!

>> LEON DASH: Wait a minute. Wait a minute!

[ Laughter ]

>> EMILY LADAU: Okay. I'm excited by this.

>> LEON DASH: We're going to personalize this. Hold on now and let me finish! What got you engaged, and what barriers have you seen or experienced to being more engaged in these efforts?

>> EMILY LADAU: Okay. So you can tell I am really passionate about this.

[ Laughter ]

I'm 23. I think I'm the youngest one on the panel. No offense guys.

[ Laughter ]

So anyway, I became engaged thanks to generations that became before. And when it really started for me was a couple of summers ago. I was an intern through the American Association of People with Disabilities - which Andy started the program during his time at AAPD - and then I worked as the summer intern at AUCD, and just fell in love with what I was doing. And everyone there became a mentor to me. Andy was a mentor to every intern in that program. And that's how we can engage youth. Don't count us out, because I once had an advocate from the pre‑ADA generation tell me that the post‑ADA generation has become lazy, and we've become careless, and we take what comes before us for granted. And I don't know about you, but I don't think that I ended up here by being lazy and careless. And I say that in the humblest way possible.

So please mentor us if you are in the older generation. Engage us. We want to be here. We're ready to be here. Pay attention to us. Offer us the wisdom so that we can follow in your footsteps.

[ Laughter ]

>> LEON DASH: This is for anyone who wants to answer or all of you should do it as we approach major anniversaries of ADA and IDEA, both landmark pieces of civil rights' legislation, how do we empower members of the disability community to embrace our culture and history for inspirations as progress without ignoring the intersection of the rich histories of other minority groups?

Anyone want to jump out?

>> EMILY LADAU: I can go again?

[ Laughter ]

So the most important thing for me when it comes to intersectionality is not discounting any one story. And I'm losing my train of thought. What was I going to say?

>> LEON DASH: Slow down.

[ Laughter ]

>> EMILY LADAU: I’m getting very excited again. Intersectionality is my other favorite thing.

Anyway, so what we can do is we can work together to create an environment where no one story is discounted. And I want to see a day where disability history is in the history textbooks alongside with other Civil Rights Movements. Because I have learned about the suffragettes, I've learned about Susan B. Anthony, I've learned about Martin Luther King. If I said Ed Roberts or Judy Heumann, if I said that to any of my peers in high school, they wouldn't know what I was talking about. But I want to see the day where my history is right alongside other histories of minorities and so that's when we can really start to see the intersection of the disability rights movement.

[ Applause ]

>> LEON DASH: Anyone else? No?

Jim, how are laws like ADA and IDEA working for Latinos with disabilities and their families? What can AUCD do to better advocate for and engage Latino community and other communities of color?

>> JAMES FERG-CADIMA: So the ADA, to the extent that it functions as an employment protection for people with disabilities, or IDEA, the special education law, which operates to secure meaningful learning experience for those with disabilities, only trigger the disabilities protections, only trigger if someone has that medical record or has that diagnosis. And so for me, I think when we look to move forward, we have a demographic shift in this country. Many demographics are changing. But one thing is our K‑12 systems are becoming browner and browner everyday. And so to the extent that we are framing remedies, opportunities, that we're building systems around the experience of the modern generation of young people, they will be more and more Latino in any part of the country. Many states have already gotten there. Many more to come. So we have to think about not just poverty or think about barriers to full participation for others in either the employment law or the special ed law, we have to think about other intersecting problems. And for me, any way to make an important statute or law relevant to any population is to think about involvement of parents. So we have to think about immigration barriers. We have to think about mobility barriers. Latino families are disproportionately migrant and seasonal farm workers. So that means enrolling into a school district 4 or 5 years. And lack of franchise. The one institution where, as a constitutional matter, Latinos have full access are K‑12 schools. But their parents who are immigrants, who are not citizens, don't have franchise to those. So the system of those who are elected to envision these policies to comply with IDEA often don't live and experience the Latino experience. So I think that as we look to these two laws and how we make them work we have to figure out ways how to right‑size them. And we have the experience of the changing demographic which includes Latinos, but not only Latinos.

>> LEON DASH: Okay. I'm sorry, I meant to identify myself earlier. I'm a father of a daughter with cerebral palsy who is what has gotten me to look at the disability rights movement and research in area.

I meant to say it earlier. Sorry.

Shankar, as we're trying to get the American public to pay more attention to things, sometimes we emphasize statistics related to employment, and sometimes we tell stories about employers. As journalists who have done a good job in benefiting from it, as we look to leverage these anniversaries, are we better to emphasize statistics, human interest stories, or both?

>> SHANKAR VEDANTAM: That turns out to be a very complicated question, Leon.

>> LEON DASH: Well, I'm sure you can take it on.

[ Laughter ]

>> SHANKAR VEDANTAM: I think that it really depends on what you're trying to do. In terms of making policy, the data is what should drive policy. Anecdotes and stories are dangerous when they drive policies because then you end up spending your resource on things that are actually not the real problem but if the challenge is engagement, then statistics don't work the way that we often want them to work, as we all know. I did a story for NPR just last week about a reverse effect that statistics can have, which not only are they less effective than storytelling or an anecdote or powerful story, but they can diminish the ability to relate to powerful stories. This is researched by a smart psychologist out of University of Oregon where he tells people about a little girl starving and he asks volunteers: ‘how much would you be willing to donate to help this little girl?’ And they say ‘I'm willing to donate so much.’ And another group of volunteers comes up, and here is the same girl, and they are told the same story about the little girl, but then he says that there are millions of people suffering from starvation. Now he finds that the volunteers give half as much money to the little girl as they did in the first case. So it's not just the statistics are ineffective, but the statistics actually seem to reduce our ability to relate to the story in an emotional and in a powerful way. So I think that it really comes down again to what the goal is. And to think about the techniques that we use in sort of conscious and deliberate ways. One thing that I have observed as a journalist is that, you know, political campaigns and marketers are increasingly skilled at thinking about market segmentation and ideas. And so, you know, the two of us might go into the booth and vote for the same candidate, but we are really voting for two different people because the candidate that messaged you is completely different than the way that candidate has messaged me. And marketers are skilled at saying that this message will go to this demographic, and this one will go to this demographic segment and so on. So the civil rights community or the disability community has not caught up to the way that marketers and political operators are increasingly understanding how to manipulate behavior.

>> Bob Boorstin: I want to add one note. I was a pollster for many years. We did work on climate change and how you convince people that it's problem, and change their minds and so forth. And the problem that we've determined at the end of spending tens of thousands of dollars trying to figure out, was that the bigger the problem was, the more that you told them about how it affected them, the more disempowered ‑‑ sorry about the word -- they felt. So there is a certain point when the scope of the problem seems so great to people that they kind of go like this and want to get away from it, rather than engage in it and the change.

>> SHANKAR VEDANTAM: In some ways, that was the most central message of engagement of all time, which is give people a sense that they can make a difference. That is true whether they're young people, or old people, or one ideology or the other ideology. If you feel that you can make a difference, you're far more likely to step forward and help. If someone were to slip and fall here, there is not a single person in this room who wouldn't rush to the assistance of the person who has fallen, but there are people who fall every single day in the world far away whom we don't bother to help. The difference in the one case is we say this person is tangible, right in front of me, and I can do something. In the other case this child is halfway around the world. There is nothing really I can do to help. So it's the lack of efficacy that's really a huge driver in disengagement. I think that's an excellent point!

>> LEON DASH: We're going to end the panel discussion now and take questions from the audience. And people are setting up microphones in this aisle, and on the aisle on my left. And those who have questions, observations, please line up behind the microphones.

>> BOB BOORSTIN: While we're waiting for that I do want to say that there was something on the AUCD website that's really scaring me. And that was the dictionary of acronyms.

[ Laughter ]

I just want to say if you are out there advocating for these issues, please do not use acronyms!

[ Applause ]

>> LEON DASH: I am in full agreement with that. In preparing for today's meeting we had a discussion, and some people were talking in acronyms. And I didn't know. So I just stopped the conversation and said ‘what do you mean?’

You'll note that when Judy Woodruff comes and speaks to you, she will do that great thing that you use, which is when somebody says something that's an acronym, they stop them and they say, ‘by that you mean?’

[ Laughter ]

>> EMILY LADAU: And that's what I mean about making disability accessible. If we want things accessible to us, we need to do them a favor and make things accessible to them. It's the least that we can do if we want equal rights.

>> LEON DASH: Okay. Let me hear from you.

>> Audience member: Hi. I'm Katie Arnold. There is an ADA legacy tour going around the country leading up to the 25th anniversary, so it's a bus tour that people can get on and kind travel around to really get the message out and make a difference. So my question is: What advice would you have for people going on this ADA legacy tour in terms of the locations around the country, and the things to do that could really have the biggest impact?

>> LEON DASH: Emily, do you want to take that on?

>> EMILY LADAU: I'm going to answer that by saying that in the same way that AUCD has networks or programs in all 50 states, my big thing is not discounting anyone. So I would really love to see people from every single state being engaged in that tour.

In terms of advice, I'm going to go back to my old standby of social media and, I mean, I know I'm a little bit of a very visibly obvious disability representative here, but I wonder what any of you might add to that?

>> JAMES FERG-CADIMA: I think that you are taking the tour to places, you are making it possible for people to have a buy‑in or stake whether it's a small unit of change rather than a large concept. You've got ability to go places so that people don't have the ‑‑ people don't have to come to the Capitol or come to a State Capitol. I think that the ability to go to folks I think is really unique. You've got to engage before you arrive. You have to create opportunities for people to engage while there is social media and other opportunities. To the extent that this is interdisciplinary research, you are getting new populations that are not part of your normal sample? What other opportunities can you build in to the actual bus data in that community, and then you've got to build in a series of things after someone leaves. The ability to kind of connect all the experience with a simple hashtag is phenomenal. So I think that the point of social media is you have the ability of people to sign a petition, or have a range of options on the day that they arrive in their community. And you can't just be at the central place. You have to go to strange rural places, remote places, and sort of build the momentum. If that's a true tour, hopefully a tour bus, hopefully the bus is accommodated so that folks can fully get on board the bus and even ride for little bit, those mechanics of accommodating all of these populations It sounds exciting! It sounds different. It doesn't sound dull. It doesn't sound two‑dimensional. Make it as interactive and make it reachable to age ranges and many disabilities, and visible disabilities and non‑visible disabilities.

>> Audience member: We were talking about statistics versus stories. I have heard from, many people that policy‑makers and others they hear the statistics all the time, and it's kind of fuzzy to them. But what they need to hear are the real stories, and the stories of the people in this room. And that's what's kind of compelling to them. At least that's what I've always heard.

>> BOB BOORSTIN: I don't think there is any disagreement with that because members of Congress are human beings, too. And human beings respond to stories in a way that they don't respond to statistics. I think that the point that I was making a second ago is that when you are actually finally deciding on the policy, a run deciding where money should get spent, if your data is not driving what ‑‑ where your money gets spent, your money is not going to get spent properly. We all know that lots of businesses in our country are not spending money on the areas of greatest need. As a result, that has huge obviously ethical consequences.

>> EMILY LADAU: Disability.gov did a fantastic job of addressing anecdotes rather than just statistics. I have written a blog post for them about my story as a disabled young girl going to a mainstream public school. And so that's a great resource to go to when you are looking for actual stories and not just numbers that will make people go cross‑eyed when they're trying to look at it.

>> SHANKAR VEDANTAM: I think effective communication includes both the ability to communicate your story, or your experience, with the ability to listen. And the one thing that is always forgotten in decision‑making circles is stopping yourself, if you are the advocate, always constantly with your requests, or your story, where your data points. Stop and ask the person who is listening to you for your experience. It's an interesting breakdown in the bipartisanship around disability because so many people from both sides of the aisle have personal experiences. They have a family member. They, themselves have, had a medical condition with a disability. It's important not only to tell but to listen. That creates new opportunities.

>> LEON DASH: We'll go to this microphone.

>> ANDY IMPARATO: I want to commend what I think is an incredible panel. I really appreciate you all!

[ Applause ]

I want to focus on a population now of folks with intellectual disabilities. And my question for you is do you think that the average American believes that people with intellectual disabilities are better off working, and are capable of working? And to the extent that there are some who don't believe that, what are your ideas of how to move the need in terms of how people think about that?

>> EMILY LADAU: I have a personal example, actually. I'm sure that a lot of you are familiar with vocational rehabitation programs, of which I am a part of one. And they've supported me insofar as that they've given me adaptive driving lessons. However, when it came down to me looking for support in finding a job, I was told to meet with a man who runs a mailroom training program. And I do not have an intellectual disability, but just the fact that the only person they were able to refer me to was mailroom training shows right now that we don't have the mindset as a society that we can push people with any kinds of disabilities. So I feel like our first step is to tell the people who are providing these services that regardless of whether you have an intellectual disability or a physical disability, you have the potential to be a little bit more than just working in a mailroom for your whole life.

[ Applause ]

>> LEON DASH: I would like to add to that one of my greatest frustrations with my daughter is the inability to find work that she can easily do. Because when she shows up in her power wheelchair, people have assumptions, and they react to assumptions, Even when we're out dining in a restaurant, even when she is reading the menu, the waiter asks me ‘what is she having?’ And I'm beyond the stage of getting furious about it because I don't want to die of a heart attack.

[ Laughter ]

But it's aggravating. And you understand it's not done with bad intent, but her cognitive abilities have not been affected by cerebral palsy. But none of that counts when she shows up in her power wheelchair and that's her source of mobility.

Okay.

>> Audience member: Emily, you mentioned lot of the civil rights' leaders that we have seen. I think that a lot of us have articulated the vision very well, and have been able to get people to follow that vision. I was wondering, you guys are very involved with policy and inclusion. What is your vision for the next five years? How do you maintain that vision when you are doing what you are doing?

>> EMILY LADAU: I want to see a more unified front. There is too much division within the disability community. Before we even look outside ourselves we need to look within ourselves. And there is too much butting heads. But what I want to see in the next five years especially with the event like the anniversary of the ADA coming up, rather than us pulling and working against each other, I want to see that unified front. So that's really my dream for the next five years.

>> Audience member: I'm Amy from Texas. I want to flip back to the title of the plenary to the tipping point and relate it to working with Veterans and then also working with the aging community.

In my experience, when I have approached aging veterans, they say, oh, disability, no that's really not us. And I'm wondering what the tipping point would be to get the relationship started because the disability support needs, if you go to a functional support needs, you know, model instead of the disability label, the support needs are pretty much the same. So what would be the tipping point? Would it be statistics? Would it be stories?

>> BOB BOORSTIN: I'm sorry, to convince the Veterans you that are there ‑‑ that you have something in common?

>> Audience member: Yeah that we have life goals.

>> BOB BOORSTIN: Well, I think that it's both. Again, it's both the stories and the other. But the most important thing you can do if you want to get another group convinced that they should work you with, or that you should work for them is to actually go in and do something. So let's say in front the Texas legislature that there is a bill ‑‑

[ Laughter ]

>> Ha, ha, ha. Yeah. I was born in Dallas. But let's just say that there is a bill that would do something good for homeless Veterans in Texas. Well, I wouldn't even ask. I would sign on the dotted line and start doing work for the bill and start lobbying for the bill and let them find out that you are doing that. The best ally is one that's actually doing the work. And so that's what I would do to start that relationship. That's been my experience in Washington, and there are really good alliances formed around very specific issues, around very specific moments in time. This is a moment in time when veterans are being considered as a specialty population that needs help when it comes to physical, brain, and mental disabilities, down the line. So there must be something in which you can find a place to kick open the door in your relationship with them. But you don't have to ask, per se. You can just start working.

>> LEON DASH: Yes?

>> OLIVIA RAYNOR: Hi, I'm from California. My question you to in one way or the other have talked about compelling narratives and telling personal stories. I'm wondering if you can deconstruct for us what a compelling story is to you, and the kinds of issues that we might raise, or how we might better use our compelling stories?

>> EMILY LADAU: I can jump in.

>> LEON DASH: Okay.

>> EMILY LADAU: I'm a writer and a blogger. My blog is called Words I Wheel By, and since I have the floor I’m going to talk about it! For me, a compelling narrative is one that's understandable by everyone. Because when we throw around acronyms and when we throw around experiences that aren't relatable, it becomes very difficult for a person to follow the story. But for me, I've had a lot of people read my blog who are non‑disabled and they've said ‘I've never thought of it that way.’ My goal is to write in a language that doesn't exclude the very people who I'm looking to gain their acceptance. So, to me, being compelling means being accessible, being relatable, and being willing to be honest about your story, even the difficult parts of it.

>> BOB BOORSTIN: There is always a moment in a story where you grab the listener, the reader, the viewer, whoever it is, and if you can focus on that moment and make sure that you get there fairly quickly in your narrative, then I think you that have a better chance of painting that compelling narrative. I used to speak a lot about when I was first hospitalized in a mental hospital for having delusional manic episodes, which in and of itself is a humorous topic.

[ Laughter ]

See, there is comedy. Comedy always helps the narrative.

[ Laughter ]

But the kicker of what they said was that they wouldn't let me into the hospital the second time around because my health insurance had run out. And so my brother had to guarantee $18,000 on his American Express card to get me into the hospital. Now this was in 1987. $18,000 in 1987 is not exactly chump change today but back then it was serious money! And so people were kind of sitting up and go, oh, so that was what I used to try to get it home.

>> SHANKAR VEDANTAM: You know, you used the word "compelling" and the word "compelling" can mean different things. In terms of holding people's attention, that's one kind of compelling. But I think that you are using compelling not just in terms of holding people's attention, but say I want to get them from place "A" to place "B." And attention is part of it, but it's not the whole story. And I think that in many ways the answer to your question is that you have to actually test and find out on a case‑by‑case basis what happens. There will be many psychological studies that find that stories can have counter‑intuitive and counter‑productive effects. There was a study looking at vaccine safety, where as many of you know there are concerns about childhood vaccines, and public health officials have been trying to get more parents to vaccinate their children. In one of the messages they basically said let's present really compelling stories about what happens to children when they couldn't get vaccinated. What the researcher found was that it had the opposite effect they wanted. People found the stories compelling, but the stories produced so much fear that it somehow made other kinds of fear more accessible, and people became less likely to vaccinate their children. And so when you are thinking about compelling, there are two ways to think about it. You can hold people's attention without necessarily getting the outcome that you want. And in order to determine you are getting the outcome you want, you have to actually be measuring for it.

>> BOB BOORSTIN: Let me tell one more story on this front exactly matching what Shankar said. I did work when I was with that survey company for the American Psychological Association. They were doing ads that MTV was going to run for free. I'm sorry, I used an acronym. I apologize!

[ Laughter ]

But y'all know what MTV is.

And we were trying to do ads about teenagers and people in their early 20s and suicide. And what ‑‑ to discover what they would listen to and what was the right message. And so we tried everything under the sun, and the one thing that really worked was taking a girl who had tried to commit suicide by jumping off a bridge, but had not succeeded, back to the bridge. But it illustrated not only the seriousness of the problem and how far people would go because of depression, but the fact that she had something to live for. And the message that she had something to live for was the message that they absorbed.

>> JAMES FERG-CADIMA: You have to deconstruct, and I don't mean to elongate this, but the important point for me in the work that the Latino organizations and other people do in documenting young adults and youth that are undocumented, it's important to recognize the distinction between writing an auto‑biography and writing a biography. And having the stuff go from the bottom‑up is oftentimes a better mobilizer. If you are using the narrative or what you are testing for is to make sure that people are mobilized or focused on an action no matter how big or how small, there has been a phenomenal grassroots movement where we don't have immigration reform yet. That would be the perfect solution. But there is incredible community‑driven efforts to stop one deportation. So there is this incredible effort from the ground‑up, very not polished as what the consultants and experts would tell, but it has a viral effect. It seems very authentic. It has a greater extent of people picking up and calling and asking a federal agency or asking the White House to stop the deportation of one parent, or one young person. That has gotten further than sort of the collective foundation driven, multiple disciplines sort of approach to something. So sometimes letting the story be the person's story has a tremendous sort of resonance, and trigger for action.

>> LEON DASH: I'm very sorry, but we're only going to take one more question. We've already run over the time. We have this young woman right here. Thank you.

>> Audience member: My question is, I come from a journalistic background, family, and I have always been told that the public isn't interested in disability issues. And your remark that you don't talk about your ‑‑ about having labels because nobody would know anything outside of this room. So my question is how can we get people out there to understand about our issues and care about our issues?

>> LEON DASH: Okay. I don't find that the public doesn't necessarily have a disinterest in issues in disability in society. Because they don't see it as sexy or having a wide readership. When I was researching this documentary on disability, I was astounded really, genuinely astounded, at how much I was finding out that went on here in Washington while I was living here and reading the paper everyday that I never was made aware of. And the ADA Act and its dissolution by the Supreme Court is a great story. But I was learning about it by doing the research after the fact. It was never covered. It was never written about. I was really astounded by that. I think that's a problem in journalism. The issue is not seen as intriguing or as interesting to many journalists as it should be, as a societal issue. Anyone else?

>> EMILY LADAU: I guess I will jump then really quickly.

>> LEON DASH: Okay. Emily.

[ Laughter ]

>> EMILY LADAU: As someone who is working towards a writing career, my goal is, I guess, to make disability sexy. I guess I don't mean that in the literal term, although if that's your thing that's fine!

[ Laughter ]

But what I mean is to make disability an issue that people realize resonates with them in some way it goes beyond the sappy inspirational human interest stories that we see at the end of the news hour where, you know, you feel really good about yourself because that person is so much worse off than you or vice versa because that person is just a super‑disabled person, and, you know, we should all be like them. The goal is to make it so that disability is not something you that pity, or something that you want to achieve. The goal is to make it so that it's relatable to the average person.

[ Applause ]

>> LEON DASH: Okay. And with that, it's the last word from Emily that ends our presentation. Thank you!

[ Applause ]

>> OLIVIA RAYNOR: Please stay seated for a minute. I would like to thank Leon for moderating the panel, Bob, Jim, Emily, and Shankar for your engaging conversation with us. We appreciate it so much! How you elucidated how we could shape ideas on how to frame our message around disability, and shine a light onto the contributions that individuals with disabilities make, and importantly with whom and how we should engage as we move forward toward celebration of the ADA 25th anniversary.

One of the things that we failed to do at the introduction was to shine a light on our AUCD staff. So before we break to the fun of our poster reception, I would like all of the AUCD staff to please stand up and be recognized.

[ Laughter ]

So now I invite you to head out the back‑door. Engage with one another. Continue the conversation that was started in this wonderful panel. And some goodies await you! Enjoy!

(End of plenary session)