



# LISTEN

*A short film made by and with nonspeaking autistic people*

## TRANSCRIPT

*CONTENT WARNING: This film contains a description of the experience of being restrained. This section of the film has a warning immediately before it and is filmed in black and white to make it easy to skip past if you decide not to watch it.*

[GRANT BLASKO] Hi. I am Grant Blasko, a college-bound high school senior.

[JORDYN ZIMMERMAN] My name is Jordyn Zimmerman. I communicate by typing on an iPad.

[ENDEVER\* CORBIN] My name is endever\* and I am a multi-modal communicator.

[ISAIAH GREWAL] Hi, I'm Isaiah Grewal from Canada. I type and spell to communicate.

[NARRATOR] We are all autistic and we are unable to rely upon speech to be understood. Most of us are nonspeaking. Some of us can speak a little, or from time to time.

People have a lot to say about us. They write stories and biographies. They produce plays and make movies about us. But they are not listening to us.

[RHEMA RUSSELL] Just because I cannot speak does not mean I don't hear. I hear everything people say to me or about me. I may not show understanding in my face, but I know and understand. Not a word said escapes my so strong ears.

[NARRATOR] We may be nonspeaking and need help with many things, but that doesn't mean we can't contribute to a book, a play, or a movie. If you always leave us out, people think we are not able to participate. That's why most people don't realize that we have a contribution to make. Include us and you will see that we have so much to give.

[DAMON KIRSEBOM] To anyone who wishes to represent nonspeaking people, I ask that you communicate with us directly. Misrepresentation of nonspeaking people leaves us more vulnerable to abuse.

[JORDYN ZIMMERMAN] I should not be left out of conversations or presumed incompetent simply because I don't rely on spoken language.

[ENDEVER\* CORBIN] There needs to be more representation of diverse autistic identities.

[HARI SRINIVASAN] The media often shapes how we view ourselves and how others around us view and esteem our place in society. When there is lack of representation or improper representation, it directly feeds into the internalization of stigma, where your membership in a group is the very cause of your negative self-esteem, feelings of inferiority and even feelings of self-hatred.



[NARRATOR] If your story says there's no hope, people may not realize how many of us can share solutions about how to support nonspeaking children and adults. People who write about us tell the world what *they* think is best. Other people who follow their example could hurt us rather than help us.

To be treated like a child just because you can't communicate in the usual ways is humiliating and traumatic.

[RHEMA RUSSELL] The way to demean me is to speak to me as if I am a baby.

[PHILIP REYES] I don't like people talking about me like I am not there.

### ***WARNING: Restraint***

[NARRATOR] Some books and movies include scenes of restraint. These can be painful to watch. You may want to fast forward the next few seconds that are in black and white, where an autistic survivor talks about his experiences with prone restraint.

[CAL MONTGOMERY] Every escalation was blamed 100% on me no matter if they had just done something illegal to me, cornered me, taunted me, taken something I needed, whatever. Your body is tensing up. Your breathing tightens up. Your fists want to clench. You can feel your body betraying you. You can fight or fold. It's up to you. You are hitting the ground either way. You are face down on the floor. You may relax, you may beg, you may play dead. None of it works. If you show pain, they will show you more pain. I thought I was suffocating and I called out to say so, and they laughed. The way people who use restraint talk, you might think it is an almost surgical procedure. It's not. It is a fight with a predetermined winner, who isn't you.

### ***End of Restraint Section***

[NARRATOR] How do we get it right? Consult nonspeaking autists from the start and at key points throughout your project. Read our blogs and books. Watch our movies and videos. Learn about our lives.

[HARI SRINIVASAN] If you have a voice, you can use it to help bring dignity back for the members of the more marginalized autistics. Let's change the plot lines and the narratives around nonspeaking autistics so more and more are allowed to be visible in society and avail of opportunities in all kinds of areas. Then we will truly see more and more nonspeaking autistic actors who will be able to provide us with more positive and authentic representations.

[NARRATOR] Ask us. Listen to us. Nothing about us without us.

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