

## **Loud Hands**

by Landon Bryce

The Autistic Self Advocacy Network's new publishing effort is about having "loud hands", which means celebrating and preserving Autistic culture and resilience. Fundraising has begun for its first effort, which will include both a print anthology and a multimedia website.

Julia Bascom is spearheading the Loud Hands Project. She heard the phrase from a parent, who said their child wasn't taught "quiet hands" because they would need loud hands one day. "I spent a lot of time thinking about why that sentence struck me so much," she said, "and then I started to use it as a placeholder for a much bigger theory."

"First of all, of course, a lot of Autistic people are familiar with the idea of 'quiet hands.' Quiet hands don't flap, don't tap, don't gesticulate enthusiastically, are indistinguishable from hands belonging to a neurotypical person. 'Loud hands' originated in opposition to this.

"'Having loud hands' is about being proudly Autistic," Julia explained. "I have loud hands when I'm playing with my purple beads while working, or when I see another autistic person at the store and flap at them, or when I get excited about something and allow myself to show it. Loud hands are also inherently defiant--pulling my hands back when someone grabs them, deciding for myself if my priorities are indistinguishability and passing and stealth or being happy and being able to think, being proud of something I'm told to be ashamed of, making a deliberate choice to stim in public because I need to get groceries and the alternative is not being able to finish the trip, signing or typing when I can't speak.

"Basically, 'loud hands' is a metaphor for how I made peace with myself and how I want to see the world changed. I'd love to see a time when people don't notice my hands at all, when flapping doesn't mean I'm inherently lesser and needing to type interviews instead of talking over the phone isn't an accommodation, just one of several neutral options. But until then, I have a choice between loud hands and quiet hands, and I chose loud."

The anthology *Loud Hands: Autistic People, Speaking* will feature essays by Autistic people on autism acceptance, neurodiversity, Autistic pride and culture, disability rights and resistance, and resilience. Julia stresses the importance of getting this work into print.

"We're hoping to use the anthology to hear from a wide number of Autistic people about their experiences and goals so that we can be informed by a variety of voices moving forward. It's also important to document this stuff, to start keeping a record. The internet has been fundamental to the Autistic community, but web pages can disappear and frankly, it's not always entirely accessible. It's also really hard to get a sense of context and history on the internet, at least for me. I think it's really important that we start collecting and archiving all the amazing writing and culture the Autistic community has been producing."

Film and video will be an equally important part of this transmedia project. They will be featured on a website that will also serve as a hub for submissions and planning. Julia has already created a video trailer with the help of Zoe Gross and other Autistic advocates.

Zoe hopes the Loud Hands Project will help young Autistic people gain self-respect. "Most of the messages they get about themselves are so negative -- in some of these settings, they're taught that they have to change everything about themselves. So I loved the idea of creating a project that would allow autistic teens and adults to get the word out that it doesn't have to be that way, to talk about Autistic culture and how we've come to accept ourselves."

In only slightly over two weeks, the project has reached and exceeded its goal of \$10,000, an accomplishment that leaves Julia "overwhelmed, humbled, and inspired. Each donation, each time someone has passed along the link, tweeted us, or shared our facebook page, is a vote of confidence--and the vote has been overwhelmingly this matters to us. This is important. It's not something I can possibly take lightly."

As of this publication, Julia is preparing additional information for the community on new projects that reaching higher fundraising targets will allow ASAN to accomplish, including the development of videos stressing Autistic culture and community, a conference fund to empower self-advocates to connect with the broader disability rights movement, a website focused on the needs of newly diagnosed Autistic adults and adolescents and much more.

Fundraising for Loud Hands will continue through March 15th at

<http://www.indiegogo.com/The-Loud-Hands-Project>