

Actually Autistic Educator

Episode 3.5: Famous Autistics in Popular Culture, August 2021

Overview

As a break from some of our heavier topics around ableism and the trauma autistics face, in this mini episode Jeanne (she/her) highlights some famous autistic actors, writers, and athletes (and a few wonderful autistic advocates who might not be famous but should be) to remind us that there are always autistic professionals in any field if you're willing to find us. We then discuss the importance of including autistic voices in autistic-focused projects, from media to professional development trainings.

Key Points:

- Autism presents differently in every autistic, but like any individual we all have things that excite us and that we can be exceptional in if given the opportunity. Many skilled professionals in a variety of fields are autistic, including a wide array of people connected to theatre and film.
- Autistics often have interests that are a special passion of theirs - many autistics have channeled their passions into amazing careers, from film, to sports, to writing. By encouraging autistics' interests, we can help them grow in their passions to achieve great heights.
- There are skilled autistics in every professional field, from Hollywood to academia. If your project centers on autism it's imperative that you include autistic voices and perspectives, both to avoid exploiting the community, and to ensure an accurate representation of autism rather than perpetuating stereotypes.
- Time: 10:00

Quotes:

"As we discussed in our last episode, masking is a common thing autistics are forced to learn, with an interesting side effect being that many of us end up connecting strongly with theatre, where performing is what everyone does, and some common autistic traits around creating scripts and formulas for facial features can end up putting us ahead of our non-autistic peers."

"If you want to profit off a marginalized group but refuse to employ them – to be clear, you are being exploitative, and you're almost certainly going to get your depictions wrong, because you will only ever have an outsider's perspective about our lives."

"[Hannah Gadsby] is a great example of what I often see in autistic senses of comedy. We frequently notice patterns of behavior or socialization that others gloss over. By being forced to the sides we get a great view of human nature and the many weird things neurotypicals do that are so ingrained no one realizes how weird they actually are."

"Think of the 'experts' who are teaching about autism in your field – how many are actually autistic? If you have been to a training about autism, was the lead presenter autistic? Are the books and resources you recommend to autistics or non-autistic parents written by actual autistics to get a firsthand account?"

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