

# The Riot!

**Youth Issue!**

A National E-Newsletter from the Self-Advocate Leadership Network @ HSRI

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## Listen Up Everyone... Youth Rule!

This issue of The Riot! belongs to us... youth with disabilities. We planned this issue and wrote the articles. So listen up everyone! Listen to what we say! The future is **ours!**

There are about 60 million young people in the United States aged 15 to 29 years old. Many of these youth have a disability. How many? Let's say that there are plenty of us. We are everywhere! We just want to live like anybody else.

But it's not easy for us. Too many of us can't find a job when we get out of high school or can't get to college. Or maybe we can't live where we want or get the services we need. We wonder... "why are there wait lists?"

Look, first off, we want to thank everyone who, over the years, helped to build the service system. Thank you. But here's the thing. Come closer. Listen... **A lot of what you built ... we don't want!**

You know? Institutions. Sheltered workshops. Group homes. We don't want any of that stuff.

We want to live like other people. Real jobs. Real apartments and

homes of our own. Boyfriends and girlfriends. A real community life. And here's another thing. **We want to be heard!** We want to make decisions about our lives! A lot of people think that because we are young, that we don't know what's

up... that we can't have an opinion. Sure we need support and some good advice. But it's our life! We should have a say!

There is a new generation of self-advocates coming up and ready to lead! A lot of times though, other people

aren't ready for us to lead. Sometimes they won't even listen to what youth have to say! This is not okay. **The Next Generation of leaders aren't going to take it anymore.**

Today, around the country, young self-advocates are getting together and learning how to work together. You don't have to be a certain age or have a certain disability to be a self-advocate. True full inclusion means including everyone! Self-advocacy and self-determination are rights that everyone has!

**The challenge for all advocates, young and old, is to listen to each other, support each other, and grow self-advocacy everywhere and for everyone. Let's do it!**



## About The Riot!...

The Riot! is produced by the Self-Advocate Leadership Network at the Human Services Research Institute.

We work together with self-advocates to develop and write each issue.

Here's who "we" are:

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## Rebecca's Rant

At a lot of conferences I go to, I hear older self-advocates complain about younger self-advocates. *"They have it so easy! We did all the work around the Americans with Disabilities Act, and IDEA, and they get to enjoy it!"*

At the same time, I hear that young advocates complain too... *"Those old self-advocates never want to include me in anything, or if they do, they treat me like a kid."*

Neither of these attitudes is good. When we act or think like that, it makes it hard for all self-advocates, young and old. Older self-advocates do not think we value their experience, and the younger self-advocates think that the older ones are leaving them out.

We're forgetting two very important things. First, we forget how to listen to each other. A lot of times we're fighting on the same side, but have different opinions about the issues. This is okay! All

people with disabilities don't feel the same way about everything.

Second, is the importance of the phrase "nothing about us without us." This doesn't say "nothing about us without YOUTH" or "nothing about us without OLD PEOPLE." All means all.

If you're a young self-advocate, this is what you can do. To start, find a mentor who can help guide you through the process. Next, let people know that you're interested and want to learn. Finally, be patient. Leadership takes time.

If you're an older self-advocate, don't get greedy with your power. Be available to teach someone younger than you. Open up new opportunities for young people to get their input as the next generation of self-advocates.

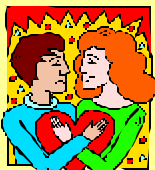


Rebecca Hare coordinates the National Consortium on Leadership and Disability at the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, DC.

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By Joe Meadours



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## The "R Word" Doesn't Belong in Classrooms

Once, I was in English class. We were talking about how people see other people. One kid said a bad thing about African Americans. My teacher was upset. When another kid used the phrase "that's gay," Ms. O was upset again. She talked to us about negative messages behind some of the words that we use. There was no place for such words in her classroom!

Then, Ms. O gave us a worksheet that she typed up. It described a person, "Bobby," as a "mentally **retarded** boy with an IQ of 70". "Retarded, what?" I complained. Ms. O asked what words we should

use. I gave her some suggestions. But she put me off. She said I had no right to be offended. And that the term "retarded" was made slang by of **my** generation. She was wrong. I was disappointed in her. How is "retarded" any different from any other slang word? These are the attitudes that need to change. Ms. O lost a good chance to teach us about disabilities. We won't miss our chance to change these attitudes. It's up to all of us!



By Carly Fahey, age 16, Florida Youth Council

# What We Want!

We have all struggled to find, get, and keep the services that we need. A lot of good things have been done to create the current service system. Even so, it is hard to understand that even with years of battling to get services for people with disabilities, there are still many problems within the system.

These problems may seem small to people who don't have to depend on services for survival. To those of us who depend on supports and services, though, these "small problems" are HUGE! They can mean the difference between a person living a good life or not. Or even life and death.



## Some Things Need To Change

There are a lot of parts to the service system that are not so good. Here are a few...

- ☠ Red Tape. Do workers really need all that paperwork? It's too much. It makes it hard to find and get the right services.
- ☠ Gaps in Services. As we get older, we can lose the services that were offered to us when we were younger. We are then left with no services and nowhere to turn. Why?
- ☠ Waitlists. Ever been on a wait list? Too many people are waiting for services. Why?
- ☠ One-Size-Fits-All Services. Why are we forced to use a specific service, regardless of our needs or preferences? Why do we have to live in institutions or group homes or work in places we don't want? Why? Just because we need services, we may accept services that don't truly meet our needs. This has to stop!
- ☠ Service Silos. There are many organizations and service providers across the country. However, they often do not know that other organizations and service providers exist. The lack of communication between service providers wastes money. Why?

## The Good, the Bad, and the Future of Service Systems

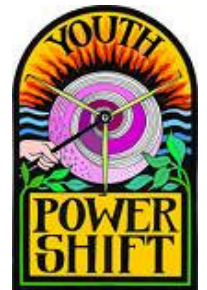


- ☠ The Lack of Youth Leadership Opportunities. There are countless youth who have leadership potential but unfortunately, few are able to meaningfully participate and use their gifts.

We Want The Future Now!

Wouldn't it be great if we made a few changes? How about if...

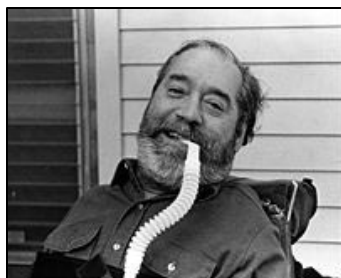
- ★ Services are easy to locate, understand, and receive. The system should be easy for us to use, find, and understand. Information should be easy to find and understand.
- ★ Services are seamless and fully inclusive. Age limits on services that people need are ridiculous. The decision to provide services or not should be made on an individual basis. How about if we just get what we need?
- ★ There are no more waitlists. This seems so basic. We should not have to wait for services... Nobody should have to wait.
- ★ Services are flexible and promote community life. Services should fit the needs of people. We shouldn't have to fit our needs to what a provider offers. Let's get serious about including people in their communities. We want to be in the middle of community life.
- ★ Cross-agency communication. Communication lines need to be open between service providers, organizations, and with individuals. Providers should know what services are provided by others. This would allow us to receive services that best fit our needs and could also reduce the costs of these services.
- ★ More opportunities for youth to lead. Youth should be invited to "sit at the table." And we need to do more to help youth become strong leaders so we can be effective.



*By Josie Badger, a senior at Geneva College in PA and President of the National Youth Leadership Network*

# Lead On!

Years ago now, Ed Roberts and the Rolling Quads started the Independent Living Movement while they were in college. They were young.



Ed used a wheelchair and a ventilator to help him breathe. Still, he went to college and founded the first Center for Independent Living (CIL) in America. After founding the Center, Ed

went on to become a national leader.

Many of the disability leaders we admire made their biggest impact while they were young. It is important for young people to make an impact too (nothing about us, without us, right?). It's also our duty to be leaders. So many sacrifices were made for the rights and services we use everyday. We must become leaders and do the same for the people who come after us. If we do not, everything that has been gained will be lost.

Leadership is finding something you care about and then doing your best. I recently saw the movie "The Pursuit of Happyness," starring Will Smith. In the movie, the main character has no place to live, no job, and no one to help him take care of his son. However, he succeeds because he has the courage to keep trying. Every time he faces hard times, he keeps going; he doesn't give up. Instead, he focuses on his goal.

Marian West, a self-advocate from New Hampshire, has lived her life the same way. She says, "If you want something, really go for it. Go all the way until you can get it. Everything is hard but if you put your mind to it, you can do it."

Leadership is about community. It is important that we, as leaders in the disability movement, work to build a space where we can celebrate our culture and be proud of who we are as a people. In the past, the disability community has often worked by "rallying the troops" (gathering supporters) when we faced a certain issue. This

## Being A Young Leader in the Disability Movement



worked in the past but things are changing.

If people with disabilities want real power, we must make ourselves powerful. We must unite together. We must be proud of who we are and our community. We must work to build our community—and not just around a single issue. It doesn't matter how many programs and services we have if people are ashamed to use them, or if they use them and then go away without staying connected. If we build a community focused on pride and solidarity (unity), we will be able to tackle many issues and win.

Leadership is about mentorship. Mentorship is a relationship between two people that help each other. Mentorship often happens between an older and a younger person but can also happen between two people of any age. Mentorship is important because people can comfortably ask questions, learn where to go for help, and learn new ideas. Mentoring relationships are like a bank: we can take out things but we must also deposit (put in) things to keep the bank full. This means that we must continually help cultivate (build) new leaders in the movement.

Don't ever let anyone or anything make you feel like you can't do something. Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, once said, "*No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.*" This means that the only way you can feel bad about yourself is if you let yourself feel that way.



You have control of your life, your potential, and who you are. You have power to lead people, to love people, and to create change. In the words and spirit of Justin Dart, "Lead on, lead on, lead on!"

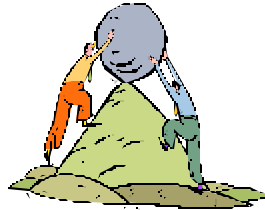
*By Stacey Milbern of North Carolina and Marian West, experienced self-advocate from New Hampshire.*

# Winter Horoscope

A horoscope predicts the future based on the position of the planets and your birthday. Find the sign that fits with your birthday. Then read about what's in store for you!

**Aries** (March 21-April 19):

Think about what you really want to do this year and do it. Hard work will pay off!



**Taurus** (April 20-May 20):

Bored with the same old thing? Focus on what you want and look for opportunities to get there.

**Gemini** (May 21-June 20): It's time to take big steps to improve your love life or get a better job. Really go for it!

**Cancer** (June 21-July 22): You give a lot to your friends and the people you love. Don't forget to take care of yourself.

**Leo** (July 23-Aug. 22): You have opinions but are too quiet. Tell others what you think. Let them hear you roar!

**Virgo** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You will have a chance to lead very soon. Stand up for what you believe and others will follow!



**Libra** (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Find balance between work and play. Make plans with friends to have some fun!

**Scorpio** (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Passion is in the stars for you. Someone cute will light your fire!

**Sagittarius** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): You have been working hard for what you want. Be thankful for what you have accomplished.

**Capricorn** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Are you still single? You know you're fabulous—express yourself! Fridays are your lucky nights out!

**Aquarius** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You'll have a chance to tell that special someone how you feel about him or her. Be brave!

**Pisces** (Feb. 19-March 20): It's time to turn off the cell phone. Don't be afraid to miss a call. Do enjoy the people right in front of you.



## Need Romance Advice? ...Ask Dr. Love

**Dear Dr. Love:** Is it OK to breakup with someone by email? Or maybe text message? I was thinking that I could, but my friends say I should call her. Do I have to?

*Need To Get Free in Decatur*

**Dear Freedom Lover:** No, it's not Ok to break up with someone by email or text messaging. YES, your friends are right. Be a big boy and talk to her in person.

**Dear Dr. Love:** I'm 18 years old. All my friends go out on dates with boys in cars, but my mom won't let me. She says I'm "not ready" yet. What should I do?

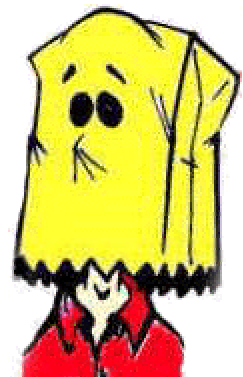
*— Mom troubles in Portland*

**Dear Mom Troubles:** Your mom is afraid of something but you are not. Talk to her to see what she is afraid of. Then see if you can work out something that makes you both happy.

**Dear Dr. Love:** There's a cute girl at work. I want to ask her out. Is there a good line that I could use? I don't want to seem silly.

*— Shy in Cheyenne*

**Dear Shy Boy:** Try not to be so shy! Walk right up to her and start talking. Ask her how her day is going. If she talks with you, ask her if she wants to go get a Coke. Tell her you want to get to know her better. See what happens. Good luck!



*Don't be so shy!*

*Dr. Love is our guest columnist.  
Email your romance questions to Cubby at:  
[www.theriotrocks.org](http://www.theriotrocks.org)*

# Fly Your "Freak Flag"

Acting out, rebelling or finding independence is part of growing up. Youth with disabilities are not any different from other young people. We have the same desires, dreams and goals as any other youth!



So there's no surprise that some of us want to get tattoos or piercings just like youth without disabilities. Anybody have a problem with that? The thing is that in the world we live in, where we are "cared for," it's difficult for caregivers, parents, and tattoo artists to understand that people with disabilities have the right to make the same decisions as other people.

Here is a message to youth with disabilities: "Fly your freak flag with pride. If that involves getting tattoos or piercings, so be it." Just be safe and make sure that you find out about things first. Be informed!

*By Edward Ahern, a tattooed, pierced, gay, Jesus freak, wheelchair user who also happens to be the Executive Director of the Suffolk Independent Living Organization (SILO) on Long Island, NY.*

## Movie Review

★★★★

## Jackass

### Number Two

Rating : R This movie is rated R because it has dangerous stunts and skits that might get some people really upset.

**The Story:** There is no story. This movie stars Johnny Knoxville and his friends. They are daredevils and do many dangerous and wild things. The movie shows all their stunts. You have to see it to believe it. Do Not Try Any Of These Stunts!!! They are dangerous!!

**Riot Rave:** Ok, ok... this might be a dumb movie. You'll either love it and laugh, or hate it and be very upset. Maybe you'll even get mad and want to stop watching it. Or maybe you'll watch it again and again. Why do they do these things? Because "it's funny."

**Riot Rumble:** Some of what they do is really weird. It may make you want to puke! Really... we are not kidding. Guys probably like this movie more than gals. Do you think they will make Jackass 3? (Some of us hope so!)



# Youth Trivia

## What Do You Know About What We Know? (Answers on Page 7)

**Directions:** Match the items on the left with the ones on the right. Draw a line to connect the matching items. We did one to get you started.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Holes that hurt to get                      | Cell Phone                                   |
| 2. Way to listen to music                      | Murder Ball, My Left Foot, The Station Agent |
| 3. A cool way to have a say                    | iPod   |
| 4. Year/place of first Disability Pride Parade | Piercings                                    |
| 5. What we want                                | 2004/Chicago, Illinois                       |
| 6. Pick up line that girls hate                | National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN)     |
| 7. Youth-based, youth led organization         | Vote   |
| 8. Razr  | "Hey Baby..."                                |
| 9. Movies about people with disabilities       | To live the life we want                     |

**Becca Says...  
“Not Getting A Chance Stinks!”**



I'm Craig's granddaughter, Becca. I told him that he was **too old** to write about **young people**. I told him to go fishing instead so I can write about us.

Have you ever noticed that it's easier for people to complain about what's wrong with young people than to mentor and teach them? Well that just plain TRIPLE STINKS! Doesn't it?

As a young self-advocate, you don't want to be around people who complain about you... Or people who don't take you seriously... Or who don't respect your goals. Right?

No matter where you go, people like to talk about "inclusion" but most times they don't *include* young self-advocates in meetings or planning that affects them.

Young self-advocates want to be heard. We deserve to be heard! We also want to be around people who will teach and mentor us about how to grow as self-advocates and as people.

Too often adults are not sure we can be grown-up so nobody really teaches us, mentors us, or gives us the chances we need to learn.

In school we don't get many chances to meet older self-advocates who can teach us. And who really takes the time to teach us to be a grown woman? Or a man? You know, to be an adult.

So listen up! Our generation says "No!" to:

- ✘ Living in institutions and jobs that pay less than minimum wage.
- ✘ Adults who tell us what to do just because they're older.
- ✘ People who won't give us a chance to GROW!

But we can say "Yes" too. We say "Yes" to:

- ☆ Involving young people in all parts of the self-advocacy movement.
- ☆ Having the life we want, a real job, a place to live, and the supports we need.
- ☆ Opportunities to learn from our mistakes.
- ☆ Older self-advocates teaching and mentoring us so that we can be leaders too!

**Ready or not... Here We Come!**

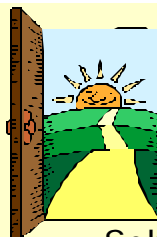


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**Youth Trivia  
Answers**

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. Piercings         | 6. "Hey Baby..."                                |
| 2. iPod              | 7. NYLN   |
| 3. Vote              | 8. Cell phone                                   |
| 4. 2004/Chicago      | 9. Murder Ball, My Left Foot, The Station Agent |
| 5. Live life we want |   |

**Here's an idea:**

Visit the  
National Youth Leadership Network  
<http://www.nyln.org>



# The Riot! Action Page



## Self-Advocates Speak Up! and Speak Out!

Look around at your self-advocacy meeting. Are there any young people there? Anybody there who is, say 16 to 25 years old? Do you think you should have young people in your group but don't know how you can recruit young self-advocates?

Here are three steps you can take:

- 1 Take a look at your group. Ask yourselves: "Why would a young person want to join our group?" Do you have a good answer?  
If you want young people to join, you have to do things that young people like too. Think hard. Make your group attractive to youth.
- 2 Talk with youth at local high schools. Many of these youth may want to join. Talk to their parents too because they'll need a ride!

- 3 Check out other groups that already work with youth with disabilities. They may be in your area. Check out:



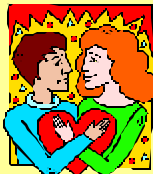
- ☆ Kids as Self-Advocates [www.fvkasa.org](http://www.fvkasa.org)
- ☆ The National Youth Leadership Network [www.nyln.org](http://www.nyln.org)
- ☆ Youth Information Centers [www.addyc.org](http://www.addyc.org)

**Talk it up...  
Have yourselves a regular Riot!!!**

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