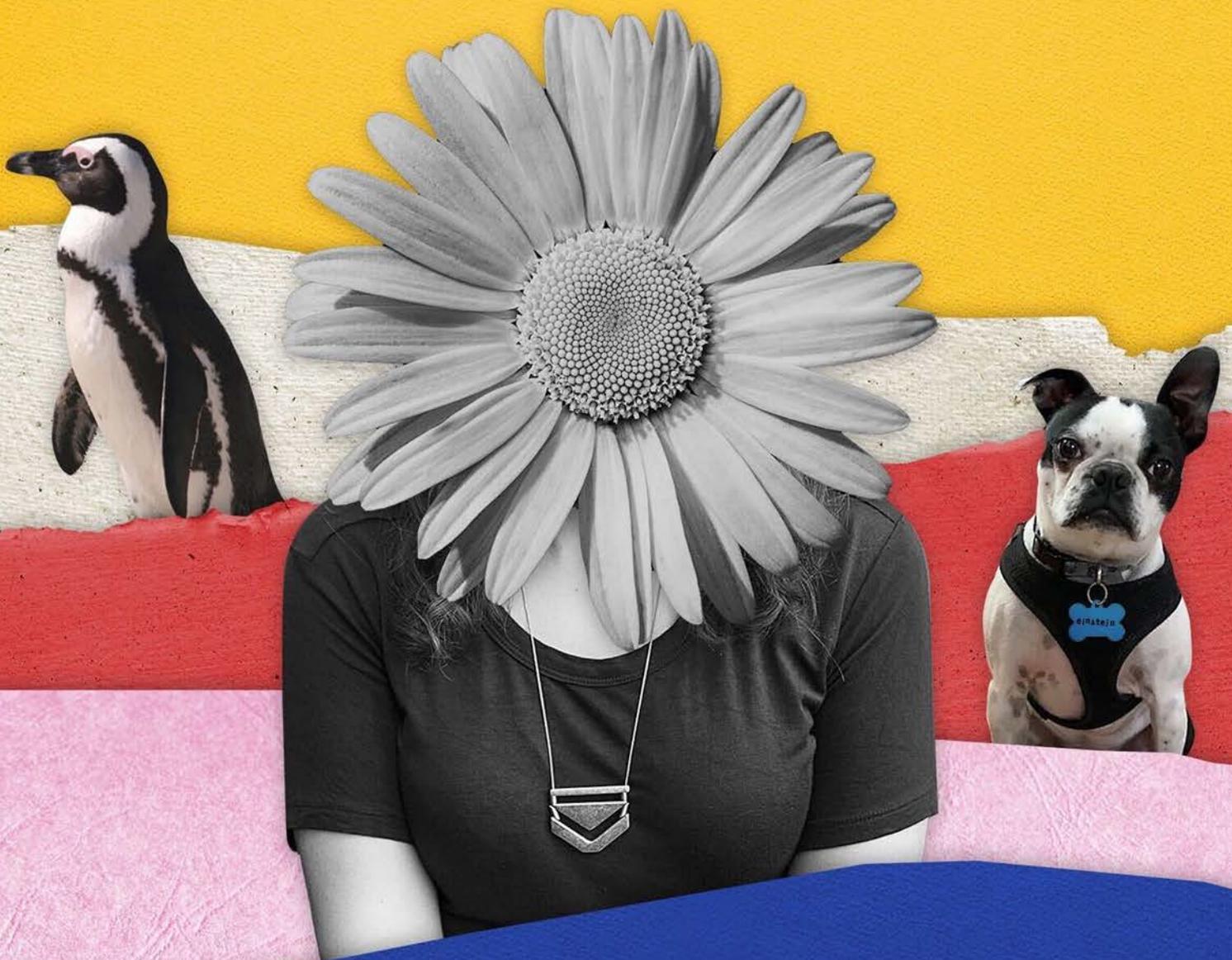


a film by Marco Niemeijer

this is not about me

a story about growing up
non-speaking



with the support of:



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School to Prison Pipeline

Introduction: What is the School to Prison Pipeline?

In "[This is Not About Me](#)", Jordyn is restrained and secluded. Many students with disabilities, especially disabled students of color, are put through restraint and seclusion. Disabled students of color are more likely to be punished this way in school, and are more likely to have law enforcement called on them. These experiences can be very traumatic, and feed into the school-to-prison pipeline. This toolkit will explain what the school-to-prison pipeline is, and provide discussion questions.

The School-to-Prison pipeline is a phrase used to explain the idea that students of color are more likely to be punished by being put in jail than white students. Students of color who have disabilities are a lot more likely to be punished than students who are not disabled. Students of color are more likely to be labeled as having an "emotional disturbance" instead of other disabilities, even if they have other disabilities. This means that students of color often do not get accommodations, which would make it easier for them to be in class.

This is a problem because it means that disabled students of color are more likely to have time taken away from their classes than white students as a punishment. Spending more time away from class means that those students are likely to miss important information. That can lead to them having lower grades and worse performance on tests.

School staff are more likely to call law enforcement on students of color. When students are punished by law enforcement they are criminalized. This can include them being put into jails and related locations, such as juvenile detention.

Law enforcement, like police or school resource officers, sometimes cause trauma. When someone has a very frightening, upsetting experience, that can change the way they think and feel later on. Those changes are called trauma. An example of trauma caused by involving law enforcement might be the police arresting a student, or holding them down on the ground.

When someone goes through trauma, it makes it harder for them to do daily activities like going to work or school. Trauma can be hard for students to communicate about. That makes it harder to get help. Trauma can sometimes make it likelier for students to break rules. Schools sometimes respond to this by punishing students more. This can make the problem worse.

What are restraint and seclusion?

Restraint and seclusion are two types of punishments used against students. Restraint is when students are prevented from moving around. One example would be putting a student's hands behind their back. Prone restraint is when a student is held in a position where they lie face down. This is very dangerous. Prone restraint is very likely to cause injuries or death.

Seclusion is when a student is placed alone in a room away from everyone else against their will. Seclusion can make it difficult or not possible for a student to ask for help. An example of seclusion is putting a student in a locked closet. Students in seclusion have been injured and died.

What can staff members do instead of restraint and seclusion?

People sometimes say that restraint and seclusion are only used in emergencies. But in reality, school staff sometimes use restraint or seclusion as a way to handle students breaking the rules. Restraint and seclusion do not help staff members understand why a student is breaking the rules. It does not help them understand how to help the student follow the rule. It does not help them understand if the rule needs to be changed.

Instead of restraining or secluding the student, it is important to pay attention to the student to understand what is causing their distress. If they are nonspeaking, you need to communicate with them on their terms. If you need help understanding how to do that, or help understanding how to get communication support for a student, look at [this guide](#).

It is important to remember that disabled students can have problems they are dealing with outside of school, such as abuse, discrimination, or relationship problems. Just like it is important to think about those possibilities for non-disabled students and white students, it is

important to look for signs of problems in disabled students and students of color. If school is causing a student distress or harm, that can also make a student feel upset and cause them to act out. Professionals need to look at these students as complete people, and not as a set of behaviors to correct.

In an immediate crisis, there are alternatives to causing harm to the student. You can learn more about research on different methods [here](#).

Where can I learn more about the school to prison pipeline?

Here are some resources where you can learn about the school to prison pipeline and legislation around it.

- [ASAN - Keeping All Students Safe Act](#)
- [The Alliance Against Seclusion and Restraint](#)
- [The Pedagogy of Pathologization: Dis/abled Girls of Color in the School-prison Nexus](#)
- [Communication First: LISTEN](#)

Discussion Questions (K-12)

1. In the film, Jordyn is put in restraint and seclusion. We later see that this makes her afraid to interact with other teachers. Why might that be?
2. Why do you think disabled students who are not white are more likely to be punished for the same actions?
3. Students who are breaking rules or doing something that upsets a staff member might sometimes be frustrated or upset. When you are frustrated, what are some ways that the people around you help you feel better?
4. When you have trouble explaining what you are feeling, how do the people around you try to understand? Could some of those strategies work with a distressed student?
5. Jordyn sometimes got overwhelmed by lots of stimuli. What are some ways to make it easier to handle lots of sensory input, or to make there be less sensory input?
6. What does communication look like between you and your teachers? How can your teachers communicate more respectfully and directly with nonspeaking students?

Discussion Questions (College and University)

1. Jordyn had many sensory sensitivities in response to external stimuli. Her team came up with a plan where the principal ran with her each morning before school. What creative solutions can you think of that may help your students?
2. Do you regularly read blogs, books, or other content from autistic people or non speaking people? Why or why not, and do you think that's important?
3. Jordyn's school professionals at the start of the film assumed she could not do anything. She was sometimes punished for acting frustrated. Why is it important to presume competence?
4. Students with intellectual disabilities are often not treated as though they can learn, or that their ability to learn is limited. Why is that harmful?