

"Inside Dyslexia is a honest, provocative look into the world of learning disabilities."

- Catherine A. Nugent, National Center for Learning Disabilities

"I highly recommend this film for both parents and professionals interested in increasing their understanding of what it is like to live with a learning disability."

- Debbie Zlotowitz, Head of the Mary McDowell Center for Learning

"The film is not sentimental, but we feel and care. Most importantly, we are enlightened."

- Karen T. Schlesinger, Resources for Children with Special Needs, Inc.

"If education transforms, Inside Dyslexia witnesses a complete metamorphosis... the film turns over the preconceptions and cultivates a new understanding..."

- Jenny Russell, Berkshire Community College

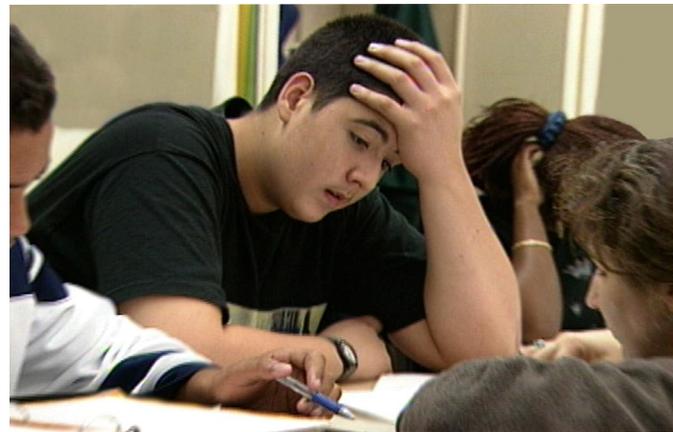
Josh Easdon and Nathaniel Hamlin, Co-Producers of **Inside Dyslexia** have joined forces to create **LD productions**. Their goal is to use the medium of film/video as an alternative to reading in providing information and inspiration.

Inside Dyslexia, a 57 minute documentary, follows three students with learning disabilities in NYC for three years through middle school and high school. It shows the struggles of these individuals in and out of school as it communicates the difficulties, unique perspectives, and obstacles that ultimately may be used as strength.



Ten-year-old Amanda, of Sunset Park Brooklyn, is diagnosed with dyslexia, dyscalculia and attention deficit disorder. She has problems with reading, math and organizing her thoughts. Amanda is constantly disheveled and often loses her homework.

Gio is a sixteen-year-old boy from Spanish Harlem, who struggles to pass his classes in order to avoid summer school. **Inside Dyslexia** documents Gio, a once shy teen transform himself into a young, responsible man.



Carmen, a thirteen-year-old girl from Bedford Stuyvesant Brooklyn, is dyslexic and has a passion for dance. She struggles with reading and math and though her verbal skills are above average, she is self-conscious when faced with her reading difficulties. With the help of her parents and teachers, Carmen makes incredible improvements.

Inside Dyslexia captures moments of struggle and accomplishment as they occur. These experiences are further explored through personal accounts by parents, teachers, and by the kids themselves.





From left to right: Nate Hamlin, Carmen Antonetty, Amanda Gross, Gio Mendoza, Kristy Baxter and Josh Easdon at the New York premiere of *Inside Dyslexia* at Anthology Film Archives.

Josh Easdon and Nate Hamlin the co-producers for **Inside Dyslexia** are proud to have completed this enormous project that took 9 years in the making. Josh and Nate met while attending the Churchill School in the late 1970's. They both went on to attend the boarding school Eagle Hill, where they then graduated and went their separate ways for more than 15 years, before reuniting to begin working on a documentary about students living with learning disabilities that would change their own lives.

Because Josh Easdon and Nate Hamlin, the filmmakers are *dyslexics* themselves they know the importance of distributing **Inside Dyslexia** to students, faculty and the public. People need to learn and explore a common vocabulary that might bridge the gap between those with learning disabilities and those without them. **Inside Dyslexia** is a tool for beginning that dialogue.

Nate graduated from Johnson State College in 1992 with a B.A. degree in Political Science. His interest in politics led him to a job at New York One News where he started his television career as a writer, producer and camera operator. In addition to directing various commercials and music videos he has also produced independent films; *The Theory of the Leisure Class* and *The Unsuspected*. He currently lives in Los Angeles where he produces *House Hunters*; a reality based series on Home and Garden Television. Josh graduated from Vassar College in 1993 with a BA in art history and a strong background in film and studio art. Josh has pursued a number of vocations, from working at Sotheby's, to working on commercial and independent films. In addition he is a Squash pro. Josh completed his MA in Media Studies at the New School University in May of 2002. He is currently in production stage for a documentary called *Hashim Khan: A Squash Champion's Story*. For more on this project please visit www.SquashFilms.com

Inside Dyslexia has been officially selected for the 2005 Brooklyn International Disability Film Festival to be screened in July. For more information go to www.brooklyn.liu.edu/bidff. 2005 screenings include: Hunter College in July, The New School in September, Eagle Hill School in November. For more information and updates visit www.INSIDEDYSLEXIA.COM.

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NEIGHBORHOODS

A43

Disability, behind the scenes

■ Film festival gives humorous, serious and insightful look at those struggling with life in able-bodied society

BY AVAZ NANJI

In the opening scenes of "Inside Dyslexia," a documentary set to premiere at the Brooklyn International Disability Film Festival this weekend, 10-year-old Amanda tries to explain her learning difficulties to the filmmakers.

"I've always thought about it this way: All the wires in my brain and my whole body are gold," said Amanda, who is from Sunset Park. "But then there's this one wire, and that one is silver."

Amanda's experience of feeling both very different and very normal is echoed in one way or another in all of the films in the festival, which begins today and ends on Sunday.

"The hope in showing the films is to break down stereotypes," said Anne Scott, an associate professor at Long Island University and the organizer of the festival. "We want to show that while those with disabilities may sometimes seem different, they have the same common core."

The first annual festival, which also features seminars, workshops and a product expo, is being held this weekend at LIU's campus in Downtown Brooklyn. It was organized by Scott to mark the 15th anniversary of the passage of the Americans With Disabilities Act.

"The passage of the act was such a major event for the community, it opened up so much access," said Scott, who teaches occupational therapy. "So I wanted to offer something where people could come together and celebrate, and a film festival seemed like a good idea."

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Josh Easdon is half of the filmmaking team behind "Inside Dyslexia" at the Brooklyn International Disability Film Festival.

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Then, a parody of telethons featuring a deaf lesbian in drag, to "The Brooke Ellison Story," a film directed by the late Christopher Reeve about a paralyzed woman who graduated Harvard with honors.

"The only requirement is that the films somehow deal with disabilities," said Scott. "So some are made by disabled filmmakers, while others fea-

ture some sort of disability."

Many of the films deal with everyday challenges, such as finding love or dealing with family, albeit often with a twist. In the documentary "One Night Sit," the filmmakers explore what it is like to look for love in the gay male community while in a wheelchair, and in the feature "Twitch," a girl begins to fear that her mother's disability may be contagious.

"All the films show a unique experience," said Scott. "But there are some common themes, such as the desire to be included in society."

For Josh Easdon, the co-director of "Inside Dyslexia," the de-

sire to be included was definitely a theme he saw in children that he filmed.

"When you're a kid, you want to be like everyone else, and it's scary when you're not," said Easdon, who has dyslexia. "Our film shows how these children build structures to deal with their situations. And as they mature, you realize that sometimes it's good to stand out."

Easdon and his co-director, Nate Hamlin, who also has dyslexia, met while attending a school for children with learning disabilities. After graduating from college, they decided to make a documentary about people like themselves.

"We followed three kids for two years, and wanted to show their experiences from a personal perspective, without experts talking all the time," said Easdon. "We became part of their lives and got to show how they learn to deal with their disabilities."

The film took nine years to finish, and is going to be screened at the festival for the first time. "I'm so excited, not just for my film, but to see the other films," said Easdon. "It's nice to feel like we're part of a community."

For a schedule of films and locations, visit www.brooklyn.liu.edu/bidff/.

Ayaz Nanji is a freelance writer.

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Disability, Behind the Scenes

by Ayaz Nanji

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INSIDE DYSLEXIA: A DYNAMIC VIEW OF LEARNING DISORDERS

By LIZA YOUNG

Attaining a real understanding of the perspectives of children with learning disabilities is a daunting task. Having themselves grown up with dyslexia, filmmakers Josh Easdon and Nate Hamlin are powerfully aware of the educational significance of witnessing a true perspective of children facing disabilities. To shed light on the worlds of students with learning disorders, Easdon and Hamlin created *Inside Dyslexia*, a documentary film that provides a keen view of the trials, but also the triumphs of students with learning disabilities.

Co-producing *Inside Dyslexia* was a task Easdon and Hamlin did not take lightly. Nine years in the making, the final product is a film that portrays, over the course of two years, three students, with different learning disorders, united by the theme of facing major challenges, but with arsenals of courage, wit, and the support from friends and family.

Ten years old at the start of the documentary, Amanda, a student at the Mary McDowell School for Children with learning disabilities has dyscalculia; she struggles with math problems that most students find basic. The emotional repercussions of the learning disability are seen through acting out in class, displaying behavior such as hiding under desks, and being attached to adults.

Amanda is, however, creative—"Adventure is my middle name," she says. She descriptively explains that the "wiring in her brain is gold except for one wire which is silver," the wire for math. Receiving critical attention at school and the support of her parents, Amanda appears at a roundtable discussion following the film. We learn that she recently received an award in the subject area once her tormentor—math, and she hopes to begin a career in film.

A student at the Churchill School, Carmen, who first appears in the film at the age of 12, is dyslexic and fits the profile of such students, to mask the issue of decoding problems. Carmen relates early childhood memories of having memorized a series of Dr. Seuss books.

Her father had noticed she had some difficulty when she was a toddler, but the schools did not pick up on the problem until around the second grade. Carmen is bright, having a high vocabulary and an excellent memory. Her teacher describes Carmen's plight as her having the comprehensive skills to read on a higher level, but insufficient skills to get passed decoding.



Gio

Carmen appears to have a strong sense of self-esteem and resilience—"I don't care if you don't want to be my friend because I have trouble reading—if that's the case, you never were my friend anyway." Today she has reached the point of securing her future; she is working on college applications while a student at the recently established Churchill High School.

Gio, a 15-year-old student—when first appearing onscreen—at the Central Park East Secondary School, has Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and faces difficulty with concentration and organization. His humanities teacher describes him as more of a visual learner and having better comprehension in one-on-one settings than in the general classroom setting. Towards the end of the school year he is in danger of failing if he doesn't get organized and keep up with assignments.

Gio, guided by the "tough love" approach of his mom and teachers, tapped into all his resources to navigate difficulties. By the end of the film, we find that Gio has made significant improvements academically and socially.

Displaying an enlightened perspective, Gio states that he is fortunate to have a learning disability: "It got me more attention." He has a point—as described by his resource room teacher, many children with mild learning problems fall through the cracks. The acuteness of Gio's disability sharpened the attention of adults, and ultimately his own, towards tackling the problem.

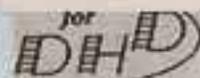
Seeing him onstage following the screening, we find a sophisticated young man who is a student at NYC Tech with a double major, including computer science.

Easdon and Hamlin point out in the film that learning disorders never go away, "that you must learn to build structures, go around them...over time you embrace it...it becomes part of your life." At the same time, in tune with Gray's *Ode To Adversity*, their film illustrates that people often rise to their greatest potential in the face of great challenges.

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