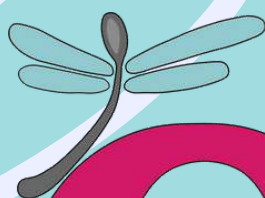


**AUTISTIC WOMEN &  
NONBINARY NETWORK**

**2020**

**YEAR IN  
REVIEW**



**a**

**awn**network.org

# 2020 SUMMARY

2020 was a watershed year for AWN, as the “triple pandemic” of COVID-19, economic injustice and oppression (racism, ableism etc.) posed new challenges, and highlighted and exacerbated existing inequities. As always, AWN rose to meet these challenges, coming through for our communities with the wisdom, flexibility and radical solidarity that we have had to learn in order to survive as autistic gender minorities.

**We also found ourselves in a time of great organizational growth and change, and we are committed to shepherding AWN’s development conscientiously and deliberately so that we remain effective, inclusive, and guided by our radical values.**

As we worked hard to meet our community’s needs during the COVID-19 crisis, AWN was thrust into a broader leadership role in the rising movement demanding intersectional justice, due to our expertise in organizing at the margins of the margins, and our unique ability to do radically inclusive dissent. This is not something we take lightly, as we are intimately aware of the intersecting systems of oppression that work together to keep our communities down, and which were highlighted by the pandemic. And we are deeply committed to combating these systems of oppression at their roots.



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# **2020 HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS**

**FINANCIAL GROWTH**

**FISCAL SPONSORSHIP**

**COVID-19 RESPONSE**

**NEW RESOURCES**

**LIBERATING WEBINARS**

**SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT**

**ANTHOLOGY SECOND EDITION**



[awnetwork.org](http://awnetwork.org)

# **2020 HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS**

**POLICY ADVOCACY**

**INTERNAL CHANGES**

**SUSTAINABLE GROWTH**

**GRANT EXPANSION**

**OTHER PROJECTS & PROGRAMS**

**APPENDIX A: LIBERATING WEBINARS**

**APPENDIX B: GRANTS RECEIVED**



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# FINANCIALS

**\$200,000+**  
**IN GRANT FUNDING**

We more than tripled our grant funding in 2020, receiving nearly \$200,000 in grant money, including two separate grants from the Disability Inclusion Fund as well as funding from Felicity House for the third year in a row. Grants received are listed in Appendix B.

**\$252,000+**  
**IN PRIVATE DONATIONS**

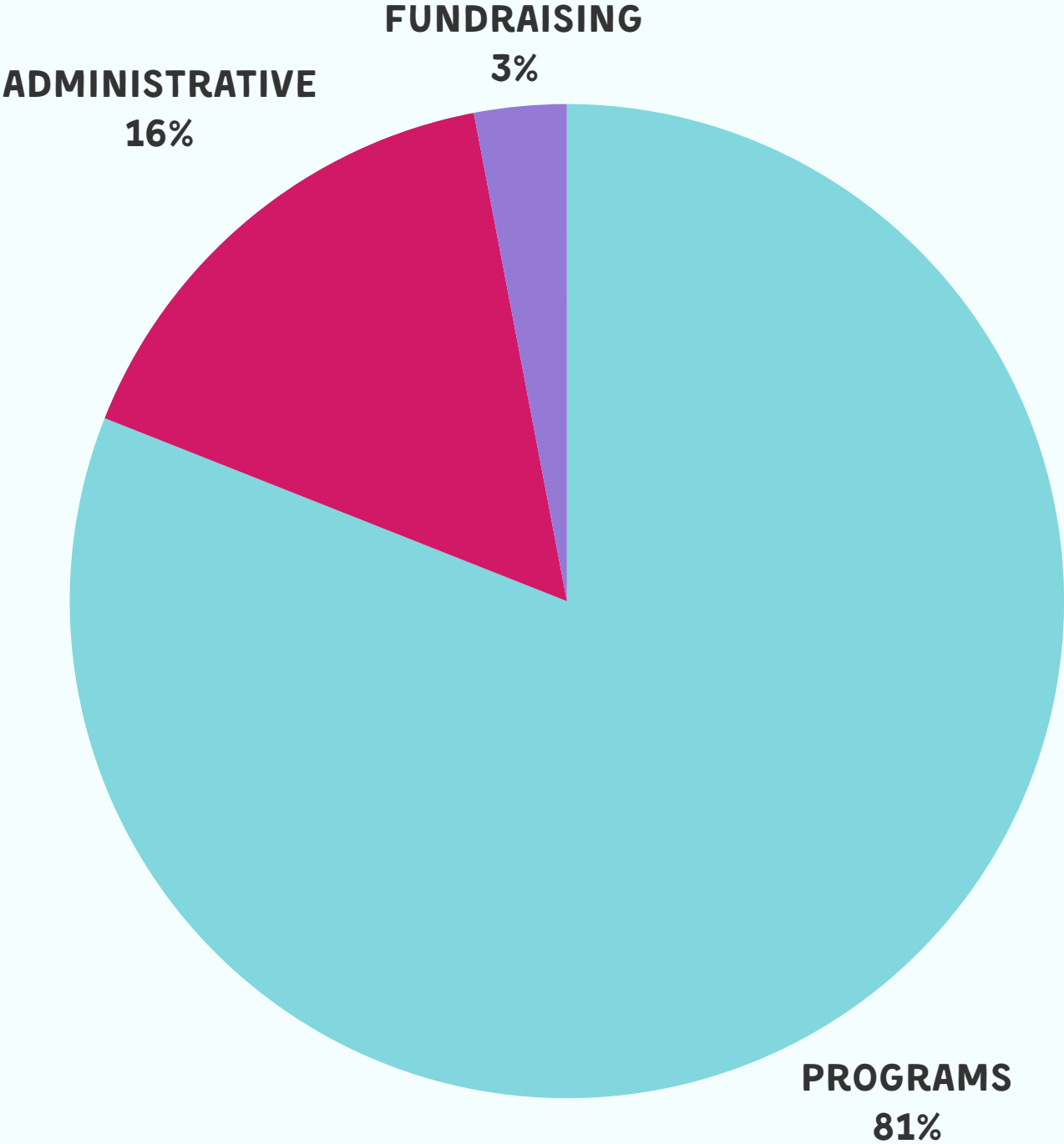
We also raised a total of over \$252,000 in private donations - more than five times the amount donated in previous years. These donations came through a variety of sources, including our website, Facebook, PayPal, Benevity, and MightyCause.

**\$125,000+**  
**RAISED BY THE APOC FUND**

The Fund for Community Reparations for Autistic People of Color's Interdependence, Survival and Empowerment (APOC) raised \$125,000 this year. The APOC Fund is fiscally sponsored by AWN but operates independently.



# FINANCIALS



# FISCAL SPONSORSHIP

AWN is proud to help smaller organizations do important, liberative work. In 2020, we served as a fiscal sponsor for three disability and racial justice organizations that did not have their own 501(c)3 status. Through our fiscal sponsorships, we build long-term ties with our community.

## APOC FUND

The Fund for Community Reparations for Autistic People of Color's Interdependence, Survival and Empowerment raised \$125,000 this year! All funds are distributed as microgrants of up to \$500 to autistic people of color, making this a truly lifesaving and liberatory fund.

## THE DISABILITY & INTERSECTIONALITY SUMMIT

A biennial national conference that centers the multiple oppressions that shape the lived experiences of disabled individuals.

## CRUSHING COLONIALISM

An Indigenous-led organization uplifting Indigenous people through arts, media, and traditional storytelling.



# **COPING WITH COVID AND LEADING THE WAY**

AWN took a leadership role during the COVID-19 pandemic by drawing on our expertise in making the fight for intersectional justice inclusive and accessible.

**AWN anticipated many of the upcoming challenges at the start of the pandemic, and seamlessly moved into a leadership role, both within the disability community and across movements for social justice, as we modeled what truly inclusive uprisings can look like.**

To meet the unexpected demands of responding to COVID-19 and supporting our community through the pandemic, AWN applied for and received grants from the Disability Inclusion Fund, the Urgent Action Fund for Human Rights, and the Collective Future Fund.



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# **COPING WITH COVID AND LEADING THE WAY**

Some of the ways that AWN responded to COVID include:

## **ACCESSIBLE ONLINE PROGRAMMING**

**INCLUDING CAPTIONING, IMAGE DESCRIPTIONS, ASL  
INTERPRETERS, AND CART**

## **POLICY ADVOCACY**

**INCLUDING PARTICIPATION IN A COALITION THAT  
SUCCESSFULLY ADVOCATED FOR DISABLED PEOPLE'S  
INCLUSION IN STIMULUS PAYMENTS**

## **LIBERATING WEBINARS**

**PROVIDING A PLATFORM FOR RADICAL ACTIVISTS,  
TEACHERS, AND HEALERS, AND MAKING THE SERIES  
ACCESSIBLE FOR FREE ON OUR WEBSITE**



[awnnetwork.org](http://awnnetwork.org)

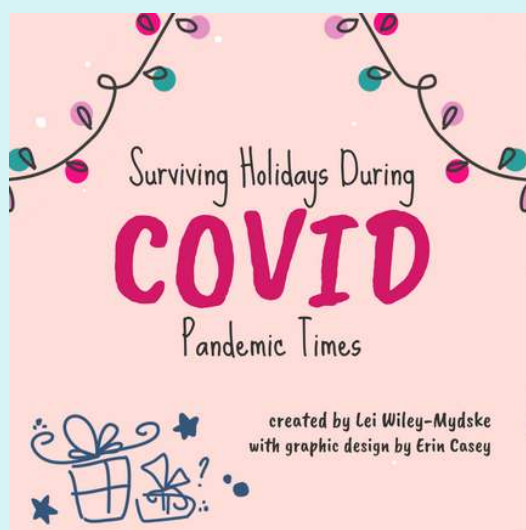
# NEW RESOURCES ARCHIVED BY THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

We are proud that our website is being archived by the Library of Congress, and were excited to add two new resources in 2020, with more planned for future release.

As always, these resources are available for free, providing needed information and representation to our communities.

## SURVIVING HOLIDAYS DURING COVID PANDEMIC TIMES

BY LEI WILEY-MYDSKE, WITH ART BY ERIN CASEY



A guide for our community during the current pandemic. It includes suggestions for new COVID-safe traditions, affirms the many feelings autistic people might be experiencing, and provides practical suggestions for coping.



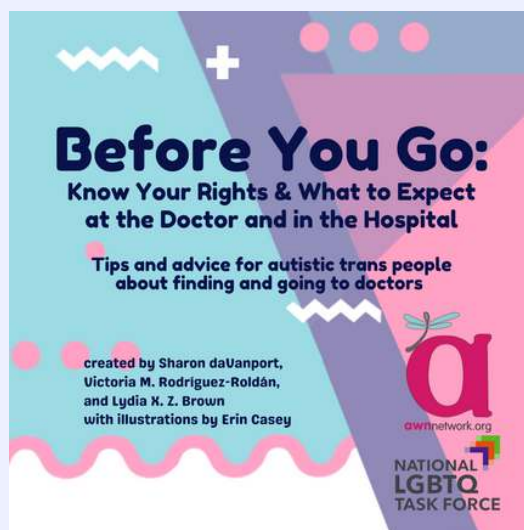
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# NEW RESOURCES ARCHIVED BY THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

## BEFORE YOU GO: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AND WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE DOCTOR AND IN THE HOSPITAL

IN COLLABORATION WITH  
THE NATIONAL LGBTQ TASK FORCE

BY VICTORIA RODRÍGUEZ-ROLDÁN, SHARON DAVANPORT,  
AND LYDIA X.Z. BROWN, WITH ART BY ERIN CASEY



AWN was proud to collaborate with the National LGBTQ Task Force to develop this guide, which talks about accessing health care for autistic trans people and provides practical tips from a trauma informed lens, with the goal of reducing health inequities.



# LIBERATING WEBINARS

In 2020 we launched a new series of online panel discussions and conversations with disabled and/or autistic advocates, experts, leaders and healers, and made the series accessible for free on our website.

This year we planned and produced five Liberating Webinars; a full description of each webinar is available in Appendix A.

**SELF-ADVOCACY FOR SURVIVAL:  
DISABILITY RIGHTS & MENTAL HEALTH**

**ABOLITION, DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION, &  
DECARCERATION IN THE PANDEMIC**

**SURVIVING BURNOUT FROM ABLEISM &  
RACISM IN THE PANDEMIC**

**DISABILITY JUSTICE & ACCESS-CENTERED  
PEDAGOGY IN THE PANDEMIC**

**ENABLING ACCESS FOR AUTISTIC  
TRANS PEOPLE IN HEALTHCARE**



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# SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

In 2020, we saw increased engagement on our social media, across all platforms:

**80,000**  
FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

**40,000**  
TWITTER FOLLOWERS

**3,500**  
INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS

& UP TO **600,000**  
POST ENGAGEMENTS



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# **ENGAGEMENT AND VOICE IN PRECARIOUS TIMES**

This year AWN found many of the issues we've always engaged with - and lived as structurally oppressed peoples - became more visible to the privileged. These included:

**WHITE SUPREMACY & RACIAL INJUSTICE**

**ISOLATION & ECONOMIC OPPRESSION  
OF DISABLED PEOPLE**

**MEDICAL RACISM & ABLEISM  
IN HEALTHCARE**

**ANTI-LGBTQIA+ DISCRIMINATION IN  
MANY FORMS AND SETTINGS**

**MASS INCARCERATION & POLICE VIOLENCE**

**POLICY ADVOCACY & INCLUSION FOR  
DISABLED PEOPLE**



# ENGAGEMENT AND VOICE IN PRECARIOUS TIMES

AWN released thirteen formal statements related to many of these issues on the news section of our website, including:

## COMMEMORATING

Mel Baggs  
Aimee Stephens  
Transgender Day of Remembrance  
Indigenous People's National Day of Mourning

## CONDEMNING

the transphobia & ableism of J.K. Rowling  
federal rollbacks on protections for trans & disabled  
people in healthcare  
the TikTok "Autism Challenge"

## CELEBRATING

the SCOTUS decision protecting queer & trans  
people's rights at work  
the FDA's step toward ending electric shock torture  
at the Judge Rotenberg Center

## CALLING FOR

the release of Matthew Rushin, alongside the  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
disability justice solidarity in fighting against  
white supremacy & state violence

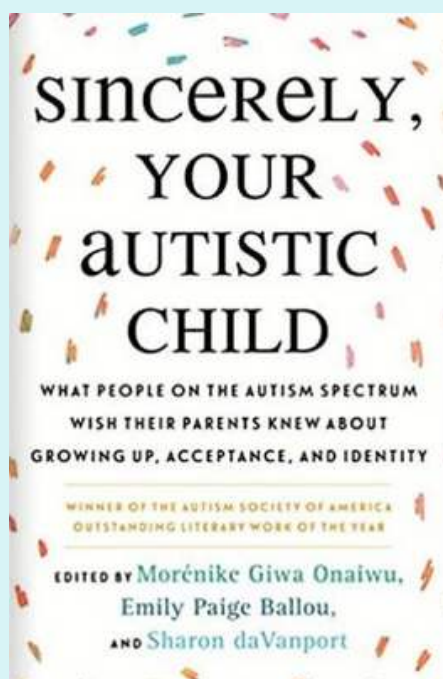


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# ANTHOLOGY SECOND EDITION PUBLISHED BY BEACON PRESS

AWN self-published our first anthology, a collection of letters to parents from autistic gender minority adults, in 2017. It sold widely and has been used in many high school and college classes.

This year we published a second edition with Beacon Press - a respected publishing house that specializes in social justice and equity focused works. Beacon was excited about our mission and suggested to us that it was time to do a second edition of this anthology with a new title that more accurately represents the gender diversity of our community.



**with an official book  
launch set for  
March 30, 2021,  
we have already sold  
over 400 copies in  
pre-sales**



[awnnetwork.org](http://awnnetwork.org)



# POLICY ADVOCACY

**AWN is an active member of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities, a large, national cross-disability coalition of disability and disability justice organizations that focuses on policy and people with disabilities and their loved ones.**

AWN has significant policy advocacy experience, including advocacy at the local, state and federal level, and we are able to mobilize our community and allies rapidly. This year, the Consortium of Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) successfully advocated for disabled people to be included in the stimulus payments, which had direct material impacts on many of us. AWN was proud to play a role in this policy advancement through our involvement with CCD.

To best harness our policy expertise, AWN brought Lydia Brown on to serve as our first ever Director of Policy, Advocacy, and External Affairs. Lydia is a lawyer with a strong background in policy advocacy and disability justice.



# **INTERNAL ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES**

Internally, with AWN's rapid growth and emergence as a leader in inclusive activism during uprisings and upheaval, we realize that we now have our own work to do in order to lead by example and ensure that we are able to continue to bring our best selves to the fight.

As we grew in 2020, changes within AWN have included:

## **REGISTERING AWN AS A CHARITY**

Beginning the process of registering AWN as a charity in all US states and territories expands our fundraising capabilities

## **COMMISSIONING AN AUDIT**

Having passed the IRS's threshold for required financial auditing, we have hired a CPA to conduct an independent audit for AWN; an important milestone in our growth

## **PLANNING A BOARD RETREAT**

Scheduled for the summer of 2021 and supported by grant funding from Felicity House



# **INTERNAL ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES**

As we develop AWN as a healing, sustainable and radical organization leading the charge for justice, we know we must extend this justice to ourselves, rather than replicating the charity-based nonprofit model, in which workers are an expendable resource.

With those values in mind, we are proud that this year we:

## **ADDED THREE NEW BOARD MEMBERS**

Jessica Horvath Williams  
Victoria Rodriguez-Roldan  
Kayla Rodriguez

## **OFFERED A SALARY TO OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Achieving a longtime goal of paying Sharon daVanport as a full time employee, rather than a contractor

## **CREATED A STAFF POSITION FOR OUR POLICY DIRECTOR**

We also created a part-time employee position for Lydia Brown and their work as our Director of Policy, Advocacy, and External Affairs



# **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT & INTENTIONAL GROWTH**

Pending grant funding, we are looking at some additions and changes we could make to ensure that our growth remains sustainable and in line with our values. These include:

## **A TRAUMA SPECIALIST**

bringing in a specialist to better support AWN staff, board members, consultants, and volunteers

## **TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE**

including policies, structures, and trained practitioners in transformative justice for support and responding to internal stressors and other issues

## **INTERNAL ANTI-RACISM AUDITING**

inviting in a facilitator to ensure our growth remains explicitly anti-racist and focused on intersectional justice; to include an audit addressing the structural anti-Black racism within the standard non-profit model

## **ADVISORS ON ETHICAL GROWTH**

bringing in transformative justice practitioners, community elders, and sustainable development specialists to proactively educate AWN as needed



# GRANT EXPANSION TRAUMA & SURVIVORSHIP

In working together in community, we have found ourselves frequently engaging with trauma, especially related to state and sexual violence, and survivorship. This year, we have been more deliberately naming that part of AWN's work is in responding to trauma and survivorship.

To better support this work we have applied for grant funding specifically related to survivorship. Some of the ways we hope to use this funding include:

developing and pilot testing materials for domestic violence shelters to help them be more sensory friendly and welcoming for trans, autistic, and disabled survivors

hiring a trauma specialist to support AWN's board, staff, contractors and volunteers, and to help ensure that our programs meet the needs of survivors

updating and expanding our sensory friendly healthcare provider database and community survey with a focus on survivorship and reproductive justice



# GRANT EXPANSION TRAUMA & SURVIVORSHIP

Statistically, we know that as many as 90% of autistic and disabled gender minorities are survivors of some form of gender-based violence. We also know that ABA and other ableist “therapies” targeting autistic people not only violate our bodily autonomy in the practice itself, but can make us more vulnerable to other violations as a result.

We are committed to ensuring that all materials and programs are trauma informed and take into account this reality of many autistic people’s lives.

Some of the work we are already doing in the arenas of trauma and survivorship include:

sharing social media posts and discussions about the trauma autistic and disabled people experience as well as our experiences with healing from trauma

including in our guide to healthcare for autistic trans people a section about how to safely talk to your health care provider about intimate partner violence

Sharon has been personally providing transportation and other support to disabled domestic violence survivors and their children/families to help them reach safety



# PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

Because we've done so much this year, in so many different arenas, following is a list of programming and projects AWN has been proud of this year, in addition to those described in more detail above:

supporting the work and growth of autism & neurodiversity  
lending libraries

partnering with Rutgers University and the New Jersey  
Autism Center of Excellence to provide continuing education  
for faculty and staff regarding neurodiversity and autism

continuing to partner with Children's National on studies  
related to autism and gender minorities, as well as  
programming focused on LGBTQIA+ autistic people

blog posts and content development by a team of talented  
writers and content creators

hosting a database of sensory friendly healthcare providers,  
drawn from community surveys

installing Kayla Rodriguez as Committee Chair of the  
Divergent Advisory Board



# 2020 HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

## APPENDIX A: LIBERATING WEBINARS

AWN has produced five webinars in this series so far, all of which included full accommodations for accessibility, and are offered free to the community on our website. Webinars were well attended and have continued to be accessed online. These webinars include:

### **ENABLING ACCESS FOR AUTISTIC TRANS PEOPLE IN HEALTHCARE**

Co-presented by AWN and the National LGBTQ Task Force on October 28, 2020. Panelists included Kayley Whalen, Finn Gardiner, and Noor Pervez, with Victoria Rodriguez-Roldan moderating. Sharon daVanport, Lydia Brown and Victoria Kirby York provided opening remarks. Focused on autistic trans people's access to healthcare, disparities and advocacy strategies to disrupt ableism and anti-trans discrimination in healthcare settings, to enable the survival and well-being of autistic trans people. This webinar relates to the new guide to healthcare for trans autistic people by Victoria, Sharon and Lydia, called *Before You Go: Know Your Rights and What to Expect at the Doctor and in the Hospital*.

### **SELF-ADVOCACY FOR SURVIVAL: DISABILITY RIGHTS AND MENTAL HEALTH**

Presented on December 17, 2020. Panelists included Jess L. Cowing, Elayne Otstot, Natalia M. Rivera Morales, and Kenna M. Chic; moderated by Finn Gardiner. Focused on undergraduate and graduate students' access to mental health support at colleges and universities. Students with cognitive, developmental, neurological, and learning disabilities experience higher rates of mental health disabilities, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Most universities do not provide meaningful, affordable, or long-term mental health services; As a result, students often must advocate for campus-wide access and parity. In this panel, current and recent students with disabilities discussed their work to engage campus partners and advocate for improvements.





# 2020 HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

## APPENDIX A: LIBERATING WEBINARS

### **ABOLITION, DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION, AND DECARCERATION IN THE PANDEMIC**

Presented on January 25, 2021. Panelists were Dustin P. Gibson and Shain Neumeier; moderated by Lydia Brown. Focused on the connections between disability justice and abolition of prisons and other institutions that hold people against their will. The pandemic has hit hardest and deadliest in institutions including jails and prisons, psych hospitals, nursing homes, group homes, and large-scale developmental disabilities institutions. This webinar discussed connections between disability justice and abolition, explained deinstitutionalization and decarceration, and explored strategies that advocates, and organizers are using to challenge ableism, racism, and other forms of violence arising during the pandemic.

### **SURVIVING BURNOUT FROM ABLEISM AND RACISM IN THE PANDEMIC**

Presented on January 31, 2021. Panelists were Allilsa Fernandez and Dom Chatterjee; moderated by Lydia Brown. Disabled people in Black, Brown, Indigenous, Asian, and mixed-race communities live and struggle against the trauma of racism and ableism every day. During the pandemic, our communities have witnessed and experienced constant violence – in the medical and psychiatric systems, in the criminal legal system, in the educational systems, and in our own homes, communities, and movements. We are all burned out and far beyond capacity even though we are often on the frontlines fighting for justice and freedom. This webinar discussed what it means to survive burnout from racism and ableism during a global pandemic, and how we can offer care to each other outside of harmful systems.



# 2020 HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

## APPENDIX A: LIBERATING WEBINARS

### DISABILITY JUSTICE AND ACCESS-CENTERED PEDAGOGY IN THE PANDEMIC

Presented on February 28, 2021. Panelists were Aimi Hamraie and Mimi Khuc. Focused on teaching, learning and schools, with two scholar-activists talking about how disability justice can uplift everyone. Last spring, school went virtual for everyone from kindergarteners to grad students. Some college students had no safe place to go to. Parents and caregivers working in and outside the home have had to contend with competing and sometimes impossible demands on money, time, and energy. Some teachers, faculty, and staff have been pressured to return to in-person teaching in unsafe conditions. Many students have been craving in-person learning and community. Everyone has felt the demands to rush, and above all, to perform and achieve despite the collective trauma and mass death of the pandemic. And still the pandemic has hit disabled people at the margins of the margins the hardest, depriving us of resources, support, and care. This fireside chat between two leading scholar-activists explores what access-centered pedagogy, rooted in disability justice, can offer us all.



# 2020 HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

## APPENDIX B: AWN GETS THE GRANTS

Working with our grant writer, Nechama Moring, AWN greatly increased our grant funding over last year, with almost \$200,000 in funding awarded. In addition to providing AWN with much needed financial resources, we also developed experience in the grant writing process. With every grant we submit, we are developing materials and resources that can be adapted for future grant applications, building AWN's power.

Notably, we received two different grants from one funder, the Disability Inclusion Fund from Borealis Philanthropy, and this is the third year in a row we have received funding from Felicity House. We are actively building strong relationships with our funders, and helping them understand what AWN does, why we are so unique - and why we need their support over the long term.

These grants represent a mix of funding for emergency COVID-19 response and specific AWN programs, as well as general operating support, which can be allocated more flexibly. Having a mix of grant types (funding for programs as well as general operating support) is an organizational development important goal that we achieved this year, and we plan to continue to strategically apply for grant funding to maintain this mix. Our grant funders include:

### **BOREALIS PHILANTHROPY – DISABILITY INCLUSION FUND**

We were awarded \$15,000 in Rapid Response Funding at the start of the pandemic, which helped us bring all AWN programming online, and to develop COVID-19 specific resources for the autistic community. Later, we were awarded \$95,000 in general operating support and to assist us in ensuring accessibility and accommodations, to continue our work teaching other activists to be inclusive, and to conduct a board retreat and otherwise support AWN's rapid growth.



# 2020 HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

## APPENDIX B: AWN GETS THE GRANTS

### COLLECTIVE FUTURE FUND (ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION)

We were awarded \$50,000 in COVID-19 response funding, to support our Liberating Webinar programming and our work around accessible, inclusive protest and helping activists across movements reimagine how we do dissent, so that uprisings are not just accessible, but welcoming, to the neurodivergent and disabled people most impacted. The Collective Future Fund recently invited us to apply for an additional grant that would provide general operating support and help us expand programming around health care, trauma and supporting sexual violence survivors. We will hear back in April 2021 if we were selected for funding.

### FELICITY HOUSE

Sharon's application was awarded \$15,000 to support the board retreat and other projects. Felicity House is an important partner with AWN and has made \$10,000 grants in 2019 and 2018. As one of our explicit goals when we began working with Nechama, this grant was prepared without her assistance, using prior grants as templates, highlighting AWN's growing grant writing capacity.

### URGENT ACTION FUND FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

We were invited to apply for \$8,000 in emergency COVID-19 funding, which helped us move our programming online with the necessary accommodations for accessibility and otherwise respond to the impacts of the pandemic on our communities.

