# Actually Autistic Educator
# Episode One: Rejecting the Blue
# TRANSCRIPT

**Jeanne** [00:00:07] Hi, I'm Jeanne, the Actually Autistic Educator. The goal of this podcast is to share the perspectives of autistics such as myself to better inform teachers, counselors, health care workers, anyone who interacts with autistic individuals. I've worked as a teacher in different parts of academia for more than a decade, and while we are starting to really comprehend the importance of including marginalized voices in research and education, we still have a long ways to go and a lot of questionable research in the past that we need to overcome. So, thank you for listening and being a part of looking forward. Our topic today is rejecting the blue, examining how historic and current biases in research and education have impacted autistic individuals who are outside of the stereotype of autism as a white male condition.

So, autism has historically been primarily associated with boys, hence the color blue used by so many non-autistic-led groups talking about autism. The very classic blue puzzle piece, which for a wide array of reasons many of us who are actually autistic do not particularly support or make use of. For much of the past 20 years, " extreme male brain" theory of autism has been common in our societal understanding of ASD. A recent study titled A Qualitative Exploration of the Female Experience of Autism Spectrum Disorder, published in the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders in 2019, details some of the research on this disparity. And it does point out that many studies on autism have used exclusively male subjects, but then made broad statements about the entirety of autism and autistic individuals based only on those male perspectives. A study that I recently read and for a variety of reasons, was filled with seething rage by, made very large statements about lack of empathy but used only boys as the research because of this perception that autism is a thing seen primarily in boys and also likely because historically there is a lot of sexism present in how we view research and how we consider women to be a separate side category and men as the default. All of this research has shown that there is likely a serious underdiagnosis of ASD in women. And as a note, I'll be referencing quite a few different studies and papers throughout this podcast and future ones. These may have questionable language and may be very flawed in different ways, but I think it's important to cite them here for those looking for evidence to support some of these general theories and ideas that I am stating. But as a warning to anyone looking them up, they will likely have a lot of pejorative language and do a lot of pathologizing of autistic traits.

Despite the artistic community for years reporting that we have very high percentages of trans and nonbinary autistics, it's only been within the last few years that larger studies have been shown to confirm this and that this is really being or starting to be accepted in the wider mental health world. Many of us are members of the LGBTQIA+ community, myself included, but especially trans and non-binary autistics frequently report that they are denied care or face barriers in accessing gender affirming care because a clinician considers their gender to be false and merely a symptom of autism. Additionally, trans and nonbinary autistics who are assigned female at birth also frequently missed access to diagnosis at that younger age because of the gender they were assumed to be.

Finally, while it's not said publicly as often as comments about the color blue, multiple studies have confirmed serious underdiagnosis of autism within communities of color. Another article from the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders titled Disparities in Diagnoses received prior to a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, published in 2007, found that African American youths were sometimes more than five times as likely as white children to be misdiagnosed with a behavior problem rather than correctly with autism or ADHD.

Today, we'll be hearing from a variety of autistic voices who fall outside of this classic yet very narrow view of autism.

Our first guest today is Gigi. Gigi is a sociologist, environmental scientist and historian who studies and writes about Italian history, people of color and more. You mentioned that you had multiple misdiagnoses between the ages of 12 to 43 before finally getting an accurate diagnosis of autism. So, for you, how did the intersection of racism and sexism in both autism research and educational and mental health fields impact your experiences?

**Gigi** [00:05:34] I believe that biases affect everyone in so many ways that they don't really even understand, right, even myself. There are thoughts that I have in my head that come up when I meet certain people or are in certain situations. So, my saying that I feel that racism and sexism affected my diagnoses over the past 30 years isn't to bash the medical professionals or to put them down. I think it's mainly because I want to be clear to people what areas of opportunity there are for growth and for being better so that you can improve the quality of life for other people like me. If I had known as a teenager that this was what was going on with me, I could have gotten skills on how to understand myself better. So being a woman and being a black woman put me in a lot of, it put me in a different light to some of these doctors who are used to treating males or white males, and maybe they didn't even realize that they were uncomfortable with me. So they gave me the diagnosis they thought fit, which at the time was depression. And they sent me on my merry way with medication and told me I probably would be on it forever. And that I would have to have therapy to help, you know, cope with major depressive disorder. It is funny to me that now I look back through the lens of autism and I know that those things that were happening to me weren't depressive episodes. They were meltdowns, they were shutdowns. It was that I was such, I was so good at masking because I was really intelligent. I guess I still am. But I picked up on what was OK to other people and what made other people uncomfortable. And I hid all those things that I got messages that they were uncomfortable about. And for a young black female in the Deep South in the eighties, there were a lot of things about me that made other people uncomfortable. So it wasn't just the autism. I didn't know why I didn't get invited to birthday parties. I didn't know why girls weren't supposed to like math or science. Like, I didn't understand all of those things as a five, six, seven-year-old that were in play. But all of those have to do with bias. Right. So I think that when we're talking about educational professional professionals or mental health professionals, they have to really be willing to understand and evaluate themselves to see where there are places they could improve so that they can really help the people who come through their door no matter what they look like.

**Jeanne** [00:08:15] Thank you. That is incredibly true and so important, and I feel like we have such a clear history of seeing this when we look back at oh further, longer times ago, then professionals in different fields be that medicine or education, made these mistakes. But we enlightened people of now we are not still making them it's this perspective we always fall into when we look at things like how heart attacks, we're now realizing there is a huge gender difference between how heart attacks often present in women versus men. But when all of the diagnostic criteria were done looking at exclusively men, then that's going to change what you decide makes for a diagnosis. And when we talk about these different perspectives, I think it's so important for people listening to really think about, hey, if people weren't involved who were from communities of color when we started building out these diagnostic criteria, how is that going to impact how many people are getting misdiagnosed? It's such a clear issue when you think about it. But I think for so many people, such as myself as a white woman, why it's so very essential for those of us who are not in different, marginalized communities to really pay attention to what people within those communities are saying and what their experiences are and really seeking those people out because you very clearly exist. There are lots of autistic people from all sorts of backgrounds. And unless we do a better job of really seeking you out and getting your perspectives on these things, we're not going to be able to fix this. So thank you. I really appreciate this.

**Gigi** [00:10:05] And in addition, I think one of the things I would suggest is that if you're in those fields and you want to learn more, look for the professionals who are working in that and working in education and have allotted the energy banked so that they can spend time helping other people understand these things. Look for researchers who have been researching this type of thing for years. They write books. They have podcasts of their own. They have TED talks, find out their names and see what they've written. Go read the articles, use the resources from the people who have the spoons to give it to you, because as much as I do want to educate people to help them be better, a lot of the times I'm so busy with my own functioning in this world that I don't have the energy to help other people in the way that I think would best serve them. And I have to say, I can't do that today. So, look for the people who are promoting themselves as educators and who have banked that energy.

**Jeanne** [00:11:11] I found so many people on Twitter, you can find people using the #ActuallyAutistic hashtag, but then tying into other things. So #AutisticWhileBlack, there's some other, #BlackAutisticJoy are some hashtags that I've seen used. And there are so many people who have, as you said, already volunteered the energy. They've already created videos. They're engaging with people and, with social media it's really easy to find these people, even if you don't have any personal, direct connection to them. So, spending that little extra time is definitely recommended for listeners listening to this. If you check out Actually Autistic Educator on Facebook or Twitter, along with this post when it's aired, we'll have a collection of links for various social media profiles that you might find useful to follow to get some of these different perspectives. So, thank you so much, and this was also just really fun to chat with you. Yes. And also, just thank you for talking to me.

**Gigi** [00:12:13] And I know you guys can't see because we're on a podcast, but I am making a little heart symbol with my hands. Thank you so much for inviting me to chat with you. I did enjoy it. And hopefully we can do this again on some other subjects, especially as I learn more about myself and about autism.

**Jeanne** [00:12:29] I would love to have you back for more. Thank you. To read more of GiGi's work, visit, Labelladonna.net or follow her on @labelladonna history or @Reenactors of Color on Instagram or Gigibelle77 on Tic Tok.

Our next guest is Morgan Leander Blake, they have worked as a disability advocate, a social media manager, poet, and they have appeared as a guest on various productions, including Dear Prudence for Slate. Their omnibus book of poetry written during 2020. These Cold Equations will be out later this year. A note on some of the terminology we use, if you're not familiar with it, afab is short for assigned female at birth. Likewise, amab for assigned male at birth. We also use POC for people or a person of color and N.T. for neurotypical. Thank you so much for meeting with me and chatting with me. We've had a lot of great interactions not being recorded, talking about autism, various other areas of disability advocacy. And I really appreciate you sharing your perspective here.

**Morgan** [00:13:52] Well, thank you, I'm happy to be here. I feel like this is really important stuff to talk about, especially for those of us who are actually autistic to talk with each other about this, because I feel like a lot of what happened to us is being told what we are by other people and talking more about what we are. It's really important.

**Jeanne** [00:14:13] And it's why I wanted to do this with multiple autistic voices, because we often fall into very tokenism, other things of like even when an autistic individual is brought on to a panel about autism or something, so often they might be the only autistic voice there or at least the only one being listened to. But we all have such different backgrounds and experiences and other marginalizations that are all going to impact our perspectives and views. And the best way for people to get a broad and accurate understanding of autism is going to be just to listen to a lot of different autistics talking about the various things that impact our lives.

**Morgan** [00:15:02] I think that one of the things I run into fairly often working in disability advocacy is that people have a tendency to couch reactions to us, interactions with us through a lens that may not be accurate, I can't even say all the time that it's a bad lens or that it's inaccurate because their intentions are bad, but fairly often it just unfortunately addresses us in such a way that it presumes why we do something. It pathologizes us.

**Jeanne** [00:15:34] Yeah, it seems such a constant issue that we as autistics have of people ascribing motive or malice to what are just our normal behaviors or facial features.

**Morgan** [00:15:49] Yeah, resting bitch face has definitely been one of the watchwords of my professional life, there was the job I had at one point where both my boss and my boss's girlfriend were so paranoid about me and so terrified of how angry I looked at all times, which as far as I could tell, with my face being relaxed, that they requested that I wear bunny ears or boppers during meetings because I just looked too intimidating and grim otherwise, I was just, oh my God, people.

**Jeanne** [00:16:22] I also love how ridiculously gendered that concept of resting bitch face is.

**Morgan** [00:16:29] Oh, it definitely is.

**Jeanne** [00:16:31] Yeah, men don't get that. And what's ridiculous is you're not a woman, you're nonbinary, but because you're a fab and some people insist on trying to view you in that perspective, you're still having to deal with all of the gendered bullshit that goes along with that. And it's incredibly frustrating because I feel like. People who are assigned female at birth have the socialization pattern drilled into them from such an early age about how we're expected to smile, we're expected to be empathetic. We're expected to emotionally support and validate other people that people who are assigned male just don't have that same level by a landslide. But then as a result, if we are only viewing autism through the lens of these young boys and disproportionately white boys who are from middle and upper middle-class families even, so it's a very limited selection of the population. It completely misses how that socialization impacts the ways that autism comes out in us. It misess how that socialization has changed the way the extra stressors that we get put under. Like I found, you know, obviously anxiety and depression can be comorbid with autism in not just people who are afab, but the social anxiety around the terror of being seen as rude or pushy is so much stronger and it seems so clear that that has to be tied into the socialization differences.

**Morgan** [00:18:20] It does, and I do see it with some male autistics, but it's definitely less prevalent and I've noticed that their behavior has to go to much higher extremes in order to be noticed than it does for an afab or nonbinary presented person.

**Jeanne** [00:18:39] So something I think is very interesting is I've often seen the excuse given in various artistic depictions in media around the concept that autistic people themselves wouldn't be capable or a good enough actor to portray it effectively or be too stressed out. There was an issue with the movie that came out recently that got nominated for awards, despite the fact that the autistic character was not portrayed by an autistic individual. But then at the same time, we have I think it was Anthony Hopkins coming out as autistic. And there are so many autistic actors and writers and researchers who are out there and are very clearly capable and amazing people and options that people could take advantage of. But then we fall into this pattern of saying, oh, but my perspective from this position of privilege is that I want to tell my story the way I want to tell it and miss the fact that, well, if you want to tell a story that's entirely focused on a marginalized group and you're not a part of that group and you're not including writers or actors or anyone who's a part of that group, frankly, you're probably not going to do a great job of telling that story. And maybe you should really examine that. And I feel like it's a similar thread throughout. A lot of this is of assuming that those of us who come from different intersections of privilege going, oh, but my perspective here clearly would be welcome. And I think it's really important for all of us to really look at how have our privileges possibly blinded us to making us believe that our perspective is the baseline and is normal and we can judge it objectively, whereas other people can't.

**Morgan** [00:20:35] I do want to take a moment, because this was a very good opening for it, and I want to make sure that we address the fact that the restraint used in the movie are completely and totally unacceptable and that the restraint used in the movie are, in fact, a direct cause of death in many, many disabled and autistic children and adults. Prone restraint, any restraint where you are putting weight on the person's back or chest, where they need to breathe or restricting their breath in any way can lead to death.

**Jeanne** [00:21:06] And that's a great example of the type of serious flaws and issues that we can run into, both as storytellers in media and as researchers and educators when we want to speak about a topic but we're speaking and looking at it from this outsider's perspective rather than consulting and learning from people within these communities that we want to talk about. So, for those people listening to us now, do you have any final thoughts you'd like to share about how your experiences have been influenced by these past issues in research and education around autism and seeing it from this very narrow perspective?

**Morgan** [00:21:58] When I was a kid there, there wasn't really any emphasis on boys or girls with autism because we had gotten to that point yet. I think I was in high school before they started really stratifying that that autism was for boys and other things were for girls. And that's how I got misdiagnosed. Actually, I was diagnosed with bipolar for the first 15 years of my adult life. And that was actually really detrimental because when you think your emotions are the problems, but it's actually sensory input and communication, it can really mess up your head. I've seen moreover, not just in terms of the ways in which we're misdiagnosed, but also in terms of how we present, I've seen so much reference given to autism being mutism, autism meaning stimming, like autism being reduced to a single behavior. And almost always that single behavior is associated with a white male person. I have very, very, very rarely seen any sort of, I don't know, penultimate behavior or specifically typified behavior of an autistic person that was not exemplified by a white man or white young man. And I found through my own experiences that other people do present very differently. And a lot of it has to do with the ways in which they have had to sublimate themselves. Like you've said yourself, that you had to, like, learn ways in which to handle it if you weren't allowed to use your hands. Sort of similarly, when I talk to people on the spectrum who are POC, they said that they had to learn to be much more much quieter and try not to make a lot of noise or movement if they need to stim, because they didn't want to attract any attention to themselves and be called out as, you know, a problem in some way because they could be called out for even the most minor things and put themselves in danger. I think. I think the way in which light it up blue and all of the classic problematic tropes around a classically male presentation of autism bring home for us is that our community, our community is more diverse than anybody knows it. And. On top of being more diverse than they know. We've also spent way too much time allowing people who aren't us to define what we are. And that sort of ties back to what I was saying at the opening. We have this right to define ourselves, and I'm really glad that you're reaching out to people who are on a spectrum and also part of other communities, because personally, I want to learn more about how we can develop this culture and its language for ourselves that maybe people can code switch into.

**Jeanne** [00:24:49] Thank you so much for being on the show and sharing your perspective. I look forward to having you on again. For our listeners to hear more of Morgan's work, visit YouTube, Facebook, Twitter or ticktock under Morgan Leander Blake. And for more poetry, check out their Patreon under Morgan Blake. Our final guest for today is Amanda. Thank you so much for being on the show and sharing your perspective with us. I'm curious how this narrow definition of autism, as well as historic biases in both research and education and really in society overall, have impacted your experiences.

**Amanda** [00:25:33] Hi, thank you for having me on. So, I grew up in an extremely white area of northern Maine, which I'm sure did not help with this issue. One of the things I found deeply problematic about the way I was treated as a child who is obviously a neurotypical is the consideration that what I was doing was not coming from a place of malice or aggressiveness was denied to me as a black person because of the way we stereotype black people. Like I was not given the grace of being a child who makes mistakes or might be overwhelmed. In fact, at one point my parents were looked at. My parents are admittedly white, but still very upset about this and were told that, I mean, we would consider autism, but that's really more of a white boy's thing. So, I did not get any actual medical confirmation that that was what was going on until I was in my 20s. Many other diagnoses that were not accurate, but not that. I think a lot of people discounting my sensory problems ties back into people assuming black people do not feel the amount of pain that they do, because I would say that things hurt. I got pulled, I was in elementary school. I was in third grade, and I was pulled out of recess for a semester to practice my cursive every recess. And I told them writing by hand hurts, it hurts. And they told me it hurts. Everybody suck it up.

**Jeanne** [00:26:58] Yeah, I I'm dysgraphic, I had that I was in college before I found out that no, that's a lie. And I am still filled with seething rage about that.

**Amanda** [00:27:09] Yeah, it's. Even if I was just a kid who had been struggling with handwriting, taking away recess is not the way you build a healthy relationship between a child and something that might be difficult for them. I think I'm being punished or struggling with basically what I took away from that a child. It's not great. I think one thing the educators could do, I mean, this is not like as much of a thing for me because I was raised in like a very. Very not intentionally whitewash, but I mean, my parents are both white people, manner is like take some cultural stuff just into consideration before you make assumptions about a child's motivation or behaviors, because, like, there are really small things that people don't think about, like as a general rule. And this is a generalization. Black Americans tend to have a bigger bubble of personal space than white Americans. And that, combined with someone having sensory issues, can very much make them feel like you're all up in their space when you're like, oh, I'm not I'm just I'm just doing a thing. And it's just like stuff like that that we sometimes just don't think of.

**Jeanne** [00:28:14] The other day on social media, you had a great comment talking about the misunderstanding of the term intersectionality and I feel like that's very applicable here where historically we have looked at autism from this one specific perspective. And it's not enough just to say, OK, well, you're autistic and you're also a woman and you're also black. It's also really important that researchers start looking into how might, you know, the behaviors look different because of that intersection of these different marginalizations and how the socialization might change things, because historically, there's a lot of problems for so many different communities who are outside of that white male, certain socioeconomic class perspectives. And when those marginalizations overlap, there's been so little research into correctly identifying people in that intersection when they clearly exist. And we really have not been doing nearly enough to learn more about them and support there.

**Amanda** [00:29:25] Absolutely, that's a major issue, like even just like people would think, like, oh, I have some friends who are artistic collaboration and obviously there is different stereotyping that Asian-Americans are dealing with. But it doesn't help if someone's response to a child who is quiet and withdrawn because they're Asian and not perhaps this child is struggling in some way, like they also might just be naturally quiet and withdrawn. That's fine. But sometimes we see what we've been trained to look for instead of what is actually in front of us. There is a lack of consideration of the experiences of people of different races and different neuro types and different socioeconomic statuses because. A choice that might not make logical sense to you. You don't know what calculation someone else is making to make those choices.

**Jeanne** [00:30:12] I completely agree, it's something that we see a lot of times in research being published about autism is so focused on a very specific and narrow neurotypical perspective because it's not even a broader neurotypical perspective. It's often coming from a certain socioeconomic group, disproportionately white, disproportionately male. And so you get things like, you know, the " Puritan work ethic" that comes in through some of these researchers use. And then that comes out in what they establish as well. These morals are good, and these behaviors are good, and these other ones are bad. And sometimes we're over here watching and going, I don't even know if that's an autism thing, but I'm pretty sure you're just very, very biased in your own perspective of what empathy and morality is. You really should be looking at, you know, understanding there's a lot of different types of diversity out in the world and a lot of different perspectives on what these things mean, assuming that your perspective is the inherently correct one, that your sense of morality is the be all and end all definition it's really just setting up for a lot of pathologizing and often grows out of history of oppression, colonialism, racism, sexism and a lot of other isms that we really need to be doing more to address in academia.

**Amanda** [00:31:42] Absolutely. I read a very good metaphor the other day that was like. People think white supremacy is the shark, it's not, it's the water, it's the thing that has so surrounded you that you haven't noticed it and the water might need some treatment. Nothing's going to improve for any of the fish until we do that. People who want to do this really need to make the effort to come into autistic spaces and accept the fact that you might be uncomfortable in this, because this is not a space that is meant to cater for you. And this might be like a new thing for you. And that's OK. Be willing to accept and learn and take correction. Be willing to do the thing you were asking autistic people to do for you.

**Jeanne** [00:32:24] And I feel like it's one of those rules for social interactions that fits and is useful for so many marginalizations. Any time there is a group that is especially has been historically marginalized or oppressed or otherwise poorly treated, if you want to learn about it, go to people in that group rather than looking at outsiders' perspectives and then listen to what they're saying. And if what they're saying contradicts what you have learned, really heavily examine why you think that your prior experience is more important or more likely to be accurate than what these people are saying is their lived experience. And just listen to what they're saying and be willing to change your understanding of a topic based on the evidence you are now getting straight from the source.

**Amanda** [00:33:16] Absolutely. Although another thing I would caution people in that situation is, are you prioritizing voices who are most similar to you? Are you mostly listening to verbal straights, cis gender, conventionally attractive autistics who can mask well? Because I get it. These are the groups that we are trained to treat as an authority, so even when you're going into an otherwise marginalized place and there's also like, frankly, those people get more reach, they do. So, you have to make a concentrated effort to go. I'm going to find non-verbal people. I'm going to find people who are autistic and do have learning disabilities. People who are autistic and who are living in poverty, people who are different race, than be a different religion. Because just getting someone who's your lived experience plus autism is not giving you up to make a terrible joke, the full spectrum of the experience.

**Jeanne** [00:34:08] Thank you. That is so incredibly important and something I need to make sure I keep in mind as well. This first episode has all been personal friends of mine, which has been very relaxing and fun, but admittedly a limited set of perspectives. I want to encourage any autistics listening. If you have something you would like to share on the show, please reach out to me. We can arrange a live chat I can record, you can send a video or audio file that you have prerecorded, or you can submit a text and I can read it out. I know that's a lot easier of a format for many of us. Every autistic person has a unique experience and I'd love to share yours with others. If you're interested, connect with me on Facebook or Twitter at Actually Autistic Educator. I think it's really important, like you say, to really challenge ourselves of where are we finding people? Who are we connecting with? How similar are they to our own experiences? How likely are they to point out if we're making a misstep and really try to put in the work to not just find people who will validate our own personal experiences, but who will encourage us to grow in our understanding of different topics.

**Amanda** [00:35:22] Absolutely. And sometimes growth is uncomfortable and it's OK. It's OK to even, like, feel uncomfortable and need to withdraw as long as you're not putting your need to do that on the people you've chosen to learn from. Because I feel like sometimes people end up in a situation where they are stretching their understanding of something, they feel uncomfortable, they internalize the fact that they feel uncomfortable. I am uncomfortable. I'm a bad person, so I'm going to withdraw. And that doesn't help anybody.

**Jeanne** [00:35:48] Yeah, it's learning to work through those feelings of "this is uncomfortable. This is different from what I've known." I remember when I first heard about the Romani people and the slur that is commonly used about them. When I first found out that that was in fact a slur, I had a really negative response internally because I had not been I had not known it. And so, I had been using it for many years and I felt very bad. And it was a process of having to go, OK, I did not know, but that doesn't change the fact that this thing is not OK. So, justifying me continuing to use it just because oh, but I'm not a bad person, that won't help anyone going through and feeling that discomfort and then growing and learning from it and improving is the only way to sort of push through into a better understanding.

This wraps up nicely because I very much appreciate you coming on the show and sharing your perspectives so that people can better understand these different experiences so many autistics have. And to really start to question what biases and misinformation we as professionals have absorbed about autism.
And I'm really excited to have you back again in the future.

I'm hoping this experience

today of four different autistic voices, all outside of this traditional autistic stereotype, helped you as listener see why this bluing of autism, this historic focus on white cis boys is a serious issue to be addressed. The vast majority of autistic characters in media are white men, frequently not even played by actual autistics, and the majority of past research on autism have been white men, and a sizable chunk of autistics observed in studies have been as well. These circumstances all contribute in different ways to the misdiagnoses of people outside this focus, and even harms male autistics who may present with traits traditionally coded as feminine. In recent years, I have seen so many more of my friends, predominantly those who were assigned female at birth, finally getting diagnoses after serious effort and work that help them to understand why their brain works the way it does. Which is wonderful. But we still have a long ways to go and in multiple ways, not just diagnosis.

Autistic empathy, communication styles and comfort have for so long been viewed as wrong, lesser, or unimportant, and it has created a huge number of misunderstandings within and trauma for autistic individuals, diagnosed or not. Future episodes of this podcast will be diving more into our autistic perspective on these different ways our minds and bodies work, along with looking at some newer studies that call into question a lot of our past understandings about autism.

It is imperative, as educators, clinicians, health professionals or parents that we learn from people within the autistic community along with any community we are hoping to be able to help. If you've attended trainings, lectures or panels on ASD, how many autistic individuals were there in positions of authority, were any autistics involved at all, and if they were really treated as experts or just present but without being given a real voice? Many autistics reported being asked to consult only to either be introduced at panels like a pet or a child rather than as a professional with knowledge to share, or that their opinion was wanted for how to phrase things to encourage participation in research from the autistic community, but then were not included in discussions about methodology or how to interpret the results. This tokenism is both wrong and insulting, and it discounts the true value autistics bring to the conversation. So how do we change this? If you are in a position of authority at your workplace, look for trainings that are lead and run by autistics, the title of this podcast comes from the actually autistic hashtag used for over a decade on multiple social media platforms by many in the autistic community. We are pretty easy to find online. If you see a panel about any marginalized population and none of the panelists are a part of that community, say something. Support and share autistic-run resources about autism rather than organizations led by non-autistics. Follow and really listen to different voices on social media; if you check out our Twitter or Facebook page in the post for this episode, you can find a variety of autistic resources and voices to learn from. Uplift the voices of autistics, people with disabilities, and members of other marginalized communities whenever you have the opportunity. We don't need others to save us or "speak for us," we just need people to listen. Thank you for listening to this first episode of Actually Autistic Educator, there is so much more to cover in the future, please subscribe and share to help us grow. New full episodes drop the first of each month with mini episodes in-between. This podcast is produced in conjunction with InterACTT, the International Alliance for Care and Threat Teams, supporting your day-to-day work in counseling, disability services, student conduct, law enforcement, care and threat teams and diversity, equity and inclusion. Check us out at [www.interACTT.org](http://www.interACTT.org).