



CommunicationFIRST
Because communication is a human right.

Documentaries We're Watching



Members of the CommunicationFIRST team gather on Zoom for a film screening. Pictured from top left to bottom right are Ren Koloni, Marrok Sedgwick, Katie Pagett, and Bre Mercier. A film strip border surrounds the screenshot.

Documentary films are an excellent way to **become more informed**. This year, CommunicationFIRST staff, Board members, and Advisory Council members learned together while we viewed and discussed a series of disability-themed documentary screenings. As part of a nearly year-long internal film festival funded by a Joy Grant from the WITH Foundation, we were able to screen the following impactful films!

CommunicationFIRST's 2026 Film Festival Lineup

[Sins Invalid](#), featuring [our Board Member Lateef McLeod](#): “*Sins Invalid* witnesses a performance project that incubates and celebrates artists with disabilities, centering Black and brown, queer, trans, and nonbinary artists. Since 2006, its performances have explored themes of sexuality, beauty, and the disabled body, impacting thousands

1629 K Street, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20006

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through live performance. *Sins Invalid* is an entryway into the absurdly taboo topic of sexuality and disability, manifesting a new paradigm of disability justice.”

[The Ride Ahead](#), featuring [our Policy Advocacy 101 presenter Samuel Habib](#): “Samuel Habib is a typical 21-year-old, itching to move out, start a career, and find love. But no one tells you how to be an adult, let alone an adult with a disability. Can a community of disability activists help him follow his dreams?”

[The Reason I Jump](#): “Based on the bestselling book by Naoki Higashida, *The Reason I Jump* is an immersive cinematic exploration of neurodiversity through the experiences of nonspeaking autistic people from around the world. The film blends Higashida’s revelatory descriptions of his autism, written when he was just 13, with intimate portraits of five remarkable young people. It opens a window into an intense and overwhelming, but often joyful, sensory universe, a rich tapestry that leads us to Naoki’s core message: not being able to speak does not mean there is nothing to say.”

[Păh](#), featuring [our Future of AAC Research Summit presenter Coleman Watson](#): “A young attorney’s life is disrupted by a massive stroke with lingering effects of two speech disorders as he struggles to overcome permanent disabilities, forcing him to reinvent himself with phonomotor treatments. ... Although there is no magic pill for the brain, Coleman Watson sets out on a quest to learn from other aphasia and apraxia survivors and discovers the “ingredients” he needs for his placebo. Hopeful, and forward-facing, the story ends posing the question many people with disabilities grapple with: when is healing enough and what can you live with?”

[Life After](#): “A gripping investigative documentary that exposes the tangled web of moral dilemmas and profit motives surrounding assisted dying. Disabled filmmaker Reid Davenport uncovers shocking abuses of power while amplifying the voices of the disability community fighting for justice and dignity in an unfolding matter of life and death.”

[Deej](#), featuring [our Advisory Council Member DJ Savarese](#): “Abandoned by his birth parents and presumed incompetent, DJ Savarese (“Deej”) found not only a loving family but also a life in words, which he types on a text-to-voice synthesizer. As he makes his way through high school and dreams of college, he confronts the terrors of his past, society’s obstacles to inclusion, and the sometimes paralyzing beauty of his own senses.



In his advocacy on behalf of other nonspeaking autistics, he embraces filmmaking and poetry, and discovers what having a voice can truly mean.”

[Being Michelle](#): “*Being Michelle* is an award-winning feature-length documentary film about a deaf woman with autism who survived incarceration and abuse and now uses her artwork to depict the trauma she survived and heal from her past.”

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