

### **Open reflection on Michael Long's presentation**

Bloody noses, bruised ego, degrading treatment and bitter exclusion were only everyday entanglements Michael Long faced during twelve years in public education. Labeled as slow, retarded and incapable were a few of many mistakes educators made when assessing Long's cognitive and social capabilities.

An individual who has experienced first-hand exposure and talk about it to educate others deserves no such degrading labels. I feel Michael's family support drove him to succeed and become a strong advocate for developmentally disorder people. Due to the fact that Michael underwent such negative abuse due to his developmental slowness he has become a better and stronger individual. This however, does not justify any cruel treatment he received.

Life for Michael growing up and getting a public education was 'unfair'. Children all say life is unfair when a teacher assigns a three-page paper or asks students to memorize a poem. But, realistically, this is not the true test of 'unfairness'. Michael's situation is the true test of 'unfairness'. To want to experience the same learning opportunities is not a crime, but a powerful drive Michael had learned to seek. With family support, Michael had learned to believe in himself.

Like Michael, I was told by educators, I would never graduate from college due to learning disabilities (but not to Michael's horrifying treatment). However, with a high GPA, graduating in May, and within four years, I too, believe in myself. However, if it were not for my parents offering advice, coaching me, providing positive feedback and most importantly be my support team, I would not be able to feel for Michael and know how self-gratifying it is to believe in yourself.