

# The Riot!



Groundhog Day!  
February 2nd!

A National E-Newsletter from the Self-Advocate Leadership Network @ HSRI

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## Self-Advocates Declare WAR on the "R Word"

"Get rid of the infamous and hurtful "R" word. Do not label us. We will not put up with the "R" word continuing as part of an organization's name even as initials. If you are working with me and for me then do not disrespect me." (SABE, 2005)

These words from SABE are strong and true. Yet, words like these do not mean much until people take real action to change things.

SABE is talking about "R" words that make self-advocates everywhere angry. These are words like *retardation, retard, and retarded.*

When "R" words like these are used to describe people, they keep alive old and unkind ways of thinking about people. Words like these hurt people's feelings and put people down. Self-advocates don't want to be put down. They want to rise up

and live life like anybody else.

Self-advocates are not afraid to speak up. All over the country they are demanding that "R" words no longer be used to talk about people. It is a simple demand. Public officials, professionals, service providers, direct support staff, and family members should listen and take action with self-advocates to make this change.



Many people have listened and taken action, but many have not. Self-advocates claim they have talked enough and waited too long. Now, they are joining together to change the words people use to talk about people with disabilities. "The 'R' word must go," says one. Who would disagree?

**Down With the "R" word!**

## What Can YOU Do to Help?

Are you tired of hearing the "R" Word? Are you tired of seeing it used by service agencies that say they want to help you? Are you going to sit around and do nothing about it? Or will you speak up?

Self-advocates all over the country are taking action! They are getting

laws changed, helping to re-write rules, and pressing agencies to change their names. You want to help? Look inside and see how!



## About The Riot!...

The Riot! is produced by the Self-Advocate Leadership Network at the Human Services Research Institute.

We work together with self-advocates to come up with ideas and write the stories.

Here's who "we" are:

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## Chet's Chat

Sticks and stones may break my bones and YES some words do hurt me. Words like the "R" word hurt. In fact, I can't even say it out loud - it stings every time I hear it.

The "R" word singles out people with certain disabilities just as the "N" word singled out African Americans. The "R" word is commonly used to describe a person with a type of disability. In the 1970's, the word shortened to "Tard." It is used in movies as slang. You hear it on TV too. You can hear people use it everyday. These words are neither trendy nor slang. They are disrespectful and devalue people.

The "R" word gives people the idea that people with disabilities are not capable or smart. This is not true.

Self-advocates know the "R" word is insulting and humiliating. We are offering a solution. SABE and self-advocates across the country want agencies and organizations to remove the "R" word from their name. According to federal agency

staff, using this word in their name does not help them get funding.

Agencies use it to identify what they do – support people with disabilities. How does the "R" word show that these agencies are supportive of people with disabilities when we find it so disrespectful?

Finally, there are some agencies that remove the word but keep the letter "R" in their name. This is unacceptable too. People who know what "R" stands for will still associate it with this insult.

I, and self-advocates across the country, call on agencies to remove the "R" word from their name and all official documents. Let's call each other by our proper names because that is who we are. Or at least, call us by a name that values people and is one we can be proud of using.



**Chester Finn**

Psst...

Say there...

How About a

Riot T-Shirt?

We know you want one!



See Page 8!!

## Cindy Says...

Once when I was in junior high, a couple of girls pointed to the Special Ed room and said, "That's where the "MRs" are." I didn't know what an "MR" was. Years later, when I got into the field, I understood that they were talking about me. I can't even say the word anymore. It makes me sick.

We need to drop the "R" word. It hurts people. We need to educate others about how hurtful this word is. We can:

✓ STOP using the "R" word.

Our guest contributor is Cindy Helvington. Cindy lives in Oregon. She is the Executive Director of Self-Advocates as Leaders.

- ✓ Lead by example. Use words like "cognitive" or "intellectual" to talk about challenges.
- ✓ Tell professionals and others that we don't like the "R" word used in front of us or about us.
- ✓ Help each other to speak up about losing the "R" word in state laws and agency names.

Self-advocates have made many changes already. We have accomplished a lot. But there is still work to do.

# Self-Advocates Say “Lose the R Word!”

Self-advocates everywhere are demanding that agencies stop using the “R” Word. Look at what they are doing! What will you do?

**In Arizona...** Self-advocates want the Division of Developmental Disabilities to replace the “R” word with “cognitive disabilities” and use “people first language” in the agency’s rules.

Some people disagree with this. They say that the changes would cause problems with funding or service definitions. Self-advocates insist that they want to get rid of the hurtful language used to describe people. One self-advocate says, “What proves our point is that people with brain injuries or learning difficulties don’t want to get lumped in with the ‘MR’ crowd. The ‘R’ word is so ugly no one wants to be associated with it.”

## People First Language...

Puts the person before the disability. It describes **what a person has, not what a person is.**

Respectful → People with disabilities

Disrespectful → Disabled people

**In Arkansas...** People First managed to get Senate Bill 1121 introduced at the legislature. If passed, it would do three things. First, it would require programs, advisory groups, and task forces to include people with disabilities. Second, people first language would be required in new and revised laws about people with disabilities. Third, it would assure that people with disabilities have a say in state activities that affect them.

**In Idaho...** The Idaho Self-Advocate Leadership Network, spoke out against the “R” word at meetings on changing the service system. For example, people wanted to use a tool called the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) to figure out how much support a person could get.

The SIS was put together by people at the American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR). Self-advocates did not like some items in

it and hated to see AAMR’s name stamped on each copy because AAMR has the “R” word in its name. They wrote a letter to complain and ask that the “R” word be removed from the SIS.

In response, AAMR and the authors of the SIS brought 20 self-advocates to a meeting in Philadelphia to make things better. They worked together to change some things about the SIS. AAMR plans to remove the “R” word from the SIS when it is revised.

**In Oklahoma...** This year, Oklahoma People First asked a state Representative to introduce a people first language bill to the legislature. The bill, if passed, would require state agencies to use people first language in future legislation, policies about people with disabilities, and spoken and written language about people with disabilities. Oklahoma self-advocates believe the bill will pass.

**In Oregon...** Oregon’s Self-Advocates As Leaders (SAAL) and others worked together to pass a respectful language law. On July 1, 2005, the governor signed the bill into law. The new law requires the state to use people first language in all new laws and documents. “Individual with disabilities” will replace language that does not put the person before the disability.

**In Utah...** Utah People First and their supporters have recently drafted a house joint resolution urging state agencies to drop the “R” word. If the resolution becomes a bill and passes, all state agencies in Utah will be required to replace the “R” words with language that is sensitive to people with intellectual disabilities.

**Just this week** I was riding the bus in Salt Lake. Two high school boys started calling me names and started to make fun of me. I just ignored them because now I know that they are the ones with the problem. They don’t understand that I am just like them. I want to be liked and accepted for who I am just like everyone else.

~ Eric Matthes, Utah

## State Agencies and the “R” Word

We found the “R” word in the names of several state agencies. For example, a state agency could be named the *Office on “R” word*. We wondered why that was and if there were plans to change things. To find out, we called the director of each agency. Several state directors agreed to answer our questions. Some did not get back to us. Here’s what we learned.

### State directors have not heard from self-advocates!

Some directors said they haven’t heard self-advocates in their states say they do not like the “R” word in their agency name.

“If there were complaints, those objections would be given proper attention,” said Tony Troiano of Tennessee. Likewise, Susan Neal of Virginia said “If it is an issue, we want to be sensitive to what our advocates say.”

**State directors are willing to listen.** The good news is that most people we spoke with are willing to listen if self-advocates do complain. Lee Price in Virginia asked what words self-advocates would prefer. He asks an important question.

Meanwhile, Marsha Thompson in Washington DC gets it. “We don’t like that word... it gets in the way of seeing [people’s] talents and gifts. We don’t want to use any words that do that.” In the future, they will change their name as their agency expands and they plan to ask self-advocates to help them find the right words.

### Self-advocates need to speak up!

Not everybody understands how self-advocates feel about the “R” word. If YOU want things to change, then YOU have to speak up and be heard.

### States That Use the “R” Word in Their Agency Name:

Alabama  
 Connecticut  
 Kentucky  
 Massachusetts  
 Missouri  
 Mississippi  
 Ohio  
 New York  
 Pennsylvania,  
 Tennessee  
 Virginia  
 and  
 The District of  
 Columbia



## AAMR and the “R” Word

The American Association on the *“R” Word* was formed in 1876. It’s an old organization. It has over 9,000 members. AAMR works to promote the rights of people with disabilities. They see self-advocates as partners to make service systems work better. Still, AAMR has a big “R” word problem.

AAMR has heard many complaints about the “R” word in their name. “You would have to be living under a rock not to know that the “R” word bothers self-advocates,” says Hank Bersani.

Let The “R” Word  
 Rest In Peace



Valerie Bradley says she’s working on it

AAMR knows that it’s time to change. The “R” word is out of step “with the ways in which we want to respect our [partners] who are self-advocates,” says Valerie Bradley, the current AAMR president. She also said that their name is getting in the way of their doing their work. “I am working to change it.” AAMR changed its name 56 years ago. Now, they are working with their members to do it again.

The Riot! hopes that she and AAMR succeeds this year! If not, then self-advocates will need to push AAMR along to help them change. The time has come for AAMR to lose the “R” word and change their name.

*One time* in an airport restroom a woman said “she’s a retard.” She saw me on the plane refuse to use a wheelchair.

On 122<sup>nd</sup> going on the bus somebody yelled “you’re retarded!” They were grown up enough to know better.

[The word retarded] has been used as a terrible putdown that makes you feel ashamed and miserable and lonely.

I am not retarded. I am Gayle.

~ Gayle Bernice Gardner, Oregon

## WINTER HOROSCOPE

A horoscope predicts the future based on the position of the planets and your birthday. Find the sign that fits with your birthday. Then read on to discover what's in store for you!

**Aries** (March 21-April 19): You feel an urge to visit your friends whose names starts with an "S". Wednesdays are your lucky days.

**Taurus** (April 20-May 20): People around you need help with their love lives. You know just what to do to help them find romance!

**Gemini** (May 21-June 20): Good things are in your future, especially in February. Remember your goals and keep an open mind.

**Cancer** (June 21-July 22): The holidays slowed you down but now you're ready for action. Busy days are the 3rd, 17th, and 25th of each month.

**Leo** (July 23-Aug. 22): Take walks with friends and eat fruits and veggies each day. Your lucky veggie is the cucumber!



**Virgo** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Your social life needs some attention! Romance is best on Tuesdays and the 15th of each month.



**Libra** (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Time to stop sticking your nose in other people's business. Be less nosy—especially on the last day of the month.

**Scorpio** (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Speak up about what you think and believe! Your voice is most powerful during the full moon.

**Sagittarius** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Be prepared for good news! A message will come to you while you're at the mall. Don't wear headphones.

**Capricorn** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): You feel the urge to call an old sweetheart. Stay away from the phone on Thursdays and on the 13th.

**Aquarius** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Your financial future looks good but plan ahead. Don't spend more than \$10 on Mondays.

**Pisces** (Feb. 19-March 20): You need some inspiration! Go to the theater to see a movie with a friend. Pick a seat. Your lucky row is 14!

## Need Romance Advice? ...Ask Cubby!

**Dear Cubby:** My boyfriend wants to go out of town for Valentine's Day. But he wants to go with his friends—not me! I've told him that I really want to spend the day with him, but he won't change his mind. What should I do?

—Tired of it in Texas

**Dear Tired:** That's a tough one. If you still love him, talk to him about celebrating Valentine's Day before or after his trip. If he doesn't come around then give him the boot!



**Dear Cubby:** My friends told my crush that I like her. Now, every time I see her, I can't help but run away. Can you help?

— Embarrassed in Estacada

**Dear Embarrassed:** You've got to stop running. If you want to get to know her, at least smile

when you see her. Then, try saying "Hi". She might say "Hi" back. Soon, you'll get enough confidence to talk with her. Don't rush. Getting used to a new person takes time. Especially when you're distracted by how cute she is.

**Dear Cubby:** I am head over heels for a woman who works at the post office. She's cute, we talk about things we like to do, and I like the way she handles my mail. Should I ask her out?

—Going Postal in Pennsylvania

**Dear Postal:** You have my stamp of approval. The worst thing that could happen is that she could say "No." But she might say "Yes!"

### Want Advice From Cubby?

Send your question to our address on page 8 email Cubby from our website.

# Will He or Won't He See His Shadow?

February 2nd is Groundhog Day. On this day, we watch for a groundhog to come out of his den. If he sees his shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter. If he doesn't see his shadow, there will be an early spring. That would make us happy!



Groundhog Day started in Europe years ago. It was part of a tradition called Candlemas Day. This day marked the halfway point between winter and spring.

People believed that if the sun came out on February 2nd, there would be six more weeks of winter. They would watch a badger to see if it could see its shadow. If it didn't, it meant that spring was right around the corner. The Germans brought this tradition to America a long time ago. In America, we watch a groundhog.

Groundhog Day became popular in 1886 – 120 years ago! It all started when a reporter wrote about the tradition in a Punxsutawney newspaper in Pennsylvania. In fact, they named the groundhog whose shadow they watched for **Punxsutawney Phil**. He is the most famous groundhog of all. Every year people gather to see if he will see his shadow.

Here are some things you should know about Punxsutawney Phil.

- He is 120 years old. He is a "one and only."
- To keep him young they feed him a special magical drink once a year.
- He lives in the town library most of the year.
- His burrow is heated and very comfortable.
- He can whistle, especially at girl groundhogs.
- Since 1886 he saw his shadow 95 times!
- He is NEVER wrong about his predictions.



Have Fun!!

## WORD FIND PUZZLE

R	E	N	E	G	A	D	E	S	K
O	S	L	E	B	E	R	U	P	N
C	R	O	W	D	Y	E	S	I	R
K	I	I	J	X	S	A	M	E	E
N	S	T	G	O	V	L	O	L	F
R	I	S	E	H	F	C	P	B	O
O	N	U	R	R	T	O	L	A	R
L	G	B	I	B	E	O	D	K	M
L	V	O	T	P	A	L	N	R	E
E	T	R	L	A	C	I	D	A	R
R	A	A	R	O	G	U	E	M	S
S	E	S	R	A	L	U	G	E	R
R	S	R	E	L	E	V	E	R	S

Who needs the nasty "R" word when there are so many better "R" words out there to describe people with (or without) disabilities? These better "R" word choices are hidden in the puzzle. Can you find them all? Look up and down, left and right, and diagonally.

- |             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
| RADICAL     | REVELERS        |
| REAL COOL   | RIGHT ON!       |
| REAL PEOPLE | RISING stars    |
| REBELS      | a RIOT!         |
| REFORMERS   | ROBUST          |
| REGULAR     | ROCK 'N ROLLERS |
| REMARKABLE  | ROGUE           |
| RENEGADES   | ROWDY           |

(See page 7 for the answers.)

# Craig Says... "The 'R' Word Stinks!"



Yes, it's true; the "R" word really does stink. Think about it. Can you think of a word that stinks more? I sure can't.

How much does it stink? Let me tell you! The "R" word stinks worse than...

- ✓ A garbage dump in July.
- ✓ My dog after he met a mean skunk.
- ✓ A rotten pile of fish on your back porch.
- ✓ Your cat's overloaded litter box.
- ✓ The elephant pen at the zoo.

Get the picture? Can you smell it? EWWWW!

Don't get me wrong. Not all "R" words stink. Think about Rachel. Her name starts with an "R", but she sure doesn't stink. In fact, she wears nice perfume and smells just fine. What about a rose? Now, that's a flower whose name starts with an "R". It smells as pretty as can be. And there is The Riot! We all love The Riot!

There's just one kind of "R" word that stinks! And I'm going to name a few of these filthy, stinky little critters. Here they are...

Retard -- Retarded -- Retardation

Now, these words and words like them just plain stink. They stink because they were used for years in ways to label self-advocates in ways that were not nice. These words keep that ugly old thinking alive. They refer to people in ways that put people down and make people feel like something is wrong with them... and that they can never be a person like anyone else. That thinking is dead and so is the "R" word. It can Rest In Peace.

You see the "R" word in the name of an agency? Tell them to get rid of it. They don't know what new name to use? Tell them to ask you to help! Here's one last thing...if someone uses the "R" word to describe someone. Tell them to stop.

**Tell them to start calling people by their names!**

## Department of Mental Retardation



Jazzy ★

You tell 'em!

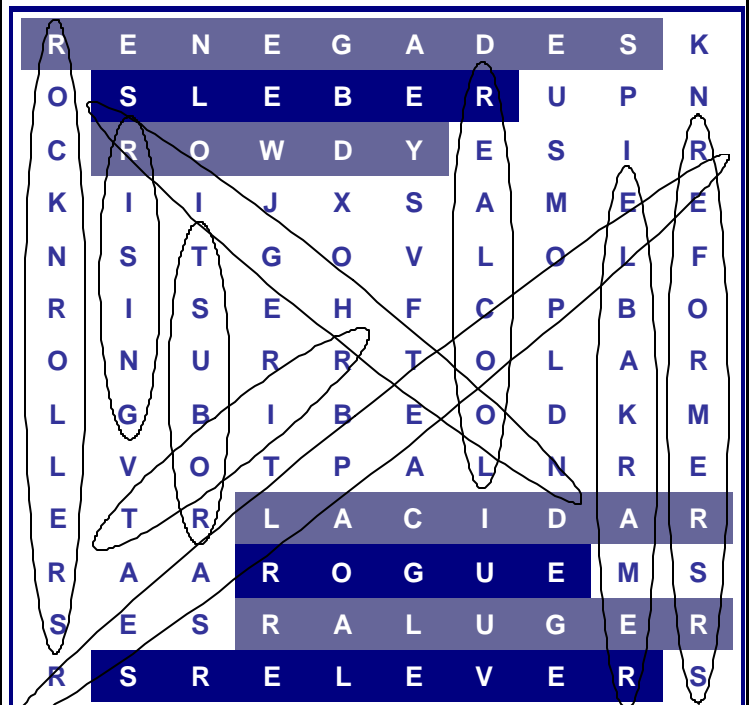
*Some Words Do Hurt.* Using the word "retard" is not cool, funny, or hip. It's just thoughtless. No matter how the word is used, it's hurtful to people with disabilities.

Think about your words.

Don't use words that hurt.

~ Oregon Developmental Disabilities Council

## PUZZLE ANSWER (from page 6)





# The Riot! Action Page



## Self-Advocates Speak Up! and Speak Out!

Do you get angry when people, groups, state agencies, and organizations use the "R" word? If you want to help **Stamp Out the "R" Word**, then you need to **Speak Up and Take Action!**

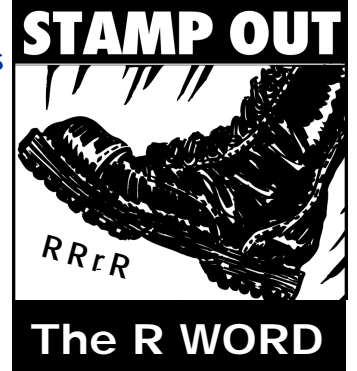
- Talk about it with other self-advocates. Do they see what you see? Do they want to speak up too? You are stronger when you work together.
- Decide what to do and do it. You can talk to people directly, write a letter, make a phone call or send an e-mail!

Here are some ideas for what you can say and do.

1. **Say that the "R" word offends a lot of people because most people consider it an insult.**
2. **Ask why the "R" word is used in their agency name or written materials.**

3. **Ask if they are willing to replace the "R" word with other words or phrases.**
4. **Offer to help come up with new words that are empowering, supportive, and respectful.**

These are just a few ideas. Maybe you have different ideas. What is most important is that YOU tell people how you feel and then help them to change.



**Talk it up....  
Have your selves a regular Riot!!!**

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Thank You!

To all the wonderful people who donated to the Riot! during our recent fundraising drive!

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7420 SW Bridgeport Rd (#210),  
Portland, OR 97224

**\$15.00 each**



**THE RIOT! ROCKS**

*Shake things up!*

(Design and wording on actual T-Shirt)

Name	Address	Phone
------	---------	-------

	Color	Write In the Number of Shirts You Want by Size						Total Number	Cost
		Small	Medium	Large	XL	XXL	XXXL		
	Black							X \$15 =	
	Red							X \$15 =	
	Blue							X \$15 =	
								<b>Total Amount Due:</b>	<b>\$</b>