

Not Going Quietly Lesson Plan:

ALS and the US Healthcare System

Grades 9-12 & Higher Education



Overview:

Nicholas Bruckman's film **Not Going Quietly** exposes some of the gaps in today's health care system. We see a group of advocates attempt to challenge elected officials and the status quo through the eyes of activist Ady Barkan. Viewers are given an often very intimate perspective on how health care policies impact the lives of all people and what it takes to fight for the changes that are necessary to meet the health care needs of so many Americans. At the same time, we are able to see the dignity, character and strength of a man when he receives a devastating diagnosis and witness the power of love between Ady and his equally strong and committed wife Rachel King and their son Carl, and daughter Willow.

This lesson will allow you and your students to learn about ALS as well as the broader health care delivery system of the United States. Students will see the impact that policies can have on the lives of millions of people and the seeming disconnect between those enacting the laws and

the people whose lives are often destroyed by them. Your students will have the opportunity to consider how health care policies have impacted them, members of their families or others they care about. Students will have the opportunity to identify an issue they are passionate about and to formulate a plan, including something they can do today to address it.

A Note from Curriculum Creator, Charles L. Robbins

While watching the screening of this film at the SXSW Festival, I immediately wanted to be involved with it, in whatever way would be possible. I am thrilled to create this lesson plan around Not Going Quietly. My life has been committed to working for social justice and equality for all people. A significant portion of my career has been working in health care and health care policy as well as teaching it at the university level.

This lesson will allow you and your students to broaden your perspectives on health care and the health care delivery system. Through a lens of social justice, you will see the impact of health disparities on so many people without access to quality services or the ability to pay for them.

This lesson will empower your students to see what they can do today to address a health care issue which they are passionate about. This will lead to increasing the ranks of engaged young people who are no longer willing to be spectators on the sidelines, but rather to fight for what they believe in.

Students can also make the connection to the COVID Pandemic and the impact it has had on their lives and those people they care about.

Subject Areas

- Health – ALS
- US health care delivery system
- Government/civics
- Political Science
- Political action – bird dogging
- Social emotional learning
- Relationships
- Organizing

Grade Levels: 9-12; can also be adapted to higher education

Objectives:

In this lesson, students will:

- Learn about ALS and the impact that it has on individuals
- Understand the downstream consequences that laws can have on all people
- See the importance of organizing and activism
- Understand the importance of knowing what is happening on the local, state and national level
- Witness the power of one person's commitment to a cause
- Identify something that they are passionate about and consider what they would be able to do in order to bring about change

Materials:

- Equipment to project film clips
- Each student will need to be able to write their thoughts either electronically or on paper made available to them
- Equipment to be able to do some basic online research
- Access to supplementary links and resources

Time Needed: This lesson can be completed in three to four fifty-minute periods over the course of a week

Film Clips

Clip 1: Ady considers his diagnosis of ALS.

(Length: 1:22 mins) The clip begins at 3:30 with Ady and his family sitting together on a bench and ends at 4:52.

In this clip we see Ady, in bed, unable to sleep as he considers the impact that his diagnosis will have on his life, his family and his activism. We can see in his eyes the sadness and fear as he confronts the inevitable reality that is in front of him. While we see this, viewers cannot help but consider how they would respond in the face of such devastating news. One of the things you would want to do is to find out everything you can about ALS, its impact and prognosis.

Clip 2 #Flakes on the Plane. (Length: 2:27 mins) The clip begins at 13:54 with Ady in the airport and ends at 16:21 with Twitter followers

While boarding his flight home after demonstrating in Washington DC, Ady meets Liz Jaff who will go on to be one of his closest partners and co-founder of the Be A Hero Foundation. Liz records an encounter on the flight between Ady and Senator Jeff Flake during which Ady explains the negative impact of the Trump tax cuts on Medicare and other human services and calls on Senator Flake to be a hero. Liz recorded the encounter and it went viral before the flight landed. Ady Barkan was a guest on countless news programs and the subject of many stories in newspapers across the country. This chance encounter changed the course of Ady's life and the fight for Medicare for All.

Clip 3 Last Breath. The clip starts at 47:11 and ends at 50:01. (Length 2:50 mins)

We see Ady meets Bernie Sanders and speaks to an enthusiastic crowd of primarily young people. He indicates that at the end of his life he wants to be proud of what he has done. He states that he is willing to give his last breath to fight for our democracy and asks what they are willing to do. This is a particularly important clip given our current political situation. Students can be asked to write about what they are willing to do, for something they are passionate about.

Clip 4 Young Couple. The clip starts at 33:11 and ends at 35:23. (Length 2:12 mins)

In this clip we see a young couple that is expecting their first child; the husband has been diagnosed with ALS. They are thrilled to have the opportunity to meet Ady and discuss many issues that they will have to confront going forward. The young man states that this is the first time, "I ever felt that I was not included in the people our country cares about." With his privilege of being male, heterosexual and white, of course he always felt that the country cared about him. For many of your students, they never felt that the country cared about them. This is true for people of color, indigenous peoples, members of the LGBTQA+ community and the poor.

Clip 5 Hope is a Hammer. The clip starts at 42:44 and ends at 43:33 (Length 49 seconds)

It is here that we see Ady, on the stage the first time he publicly loses his ability to speak. He begins offering the quote 'Hope is a Hammer' but is obviously struggling and unable to continue and complete the thought. We are watching the horror on Ady's face, but we can also gaze into the eyes of those in the audience and the health professionals on the stage. The discomfort they feel is palpable.

Clip 6 Bird Dogging. The clip begins at 26:53 and ends at 29:14 (Length: 2:21 mins)

Here we see Tracey Corder leading a training with local activists on Bird Dogging, a technique utilized to get elected officials or candidates on the record with a direct response to a question that is posed to them. The encounter is recorded and then released to the news media and

uploaded to multiple social media platforms. You can use this technique as a part of any organizing campaign you are committed to.

Clip 7 Kavanaugh Hearing . The clip starts at 55:43 and ends at 1:01:42. (Length 5:59 mins)

Ady returns to Washington, DC to join protests against the confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court because of his opposition to the Affordable Care Act. Then the charges of sexual assault became public. One of the first things we see is Ady recognizing that he has to take a step back and let the spotlight be on the survivors of sexual assault and violence. This is a very important lesson – when it is important to create space for others. Unfortunately, many leaders today do not understand this. We then see Ana Maria Archila confront Senator Jeff Flake as he tries to run onto an elevator to cast his vote. This was an incredibly powerful moment. The video was shared widely and should have been #Flakes on the Elevator. Students should consider if there are situations where they would be willing to share their truths and confront those in power?

Clip 8 Congressional hearing on Medicare for All. The clip starts at 1:15:34 and ends at 1:1:19:49. (Length 4:15 mins)

Ady returns to Washington to testify at the first ever Congressional hearing on Medicare For All. We watch as Ady responds to Congresswoman Lesko when she states that she does not understand why they are even having the hearing. He then goes on to offer his testimony to members of the Rules Committee, their staffs, the assembled advocates and the public. He ends by offering a message to the American people. How do students react to that message? If they could send a message to the American people, what would it be?

ACTIVITIES:

ENGAGING FILM CLIPS 1-3

NOTE: You may choose to engage students in all three activities, or select one activity from the following options that would best serve your student community.

Learning about Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS): CLIP ONE

Early in the film we learn that Ady Barkan is diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). While many people have heard of ALS, few really know what it is. This activity is designed to support students in understanding more about ALS.

STEP ONE: Share Clip One with Students.

STEP TWO: Ask students what they know about ALS. Give students 10 minutes to list 3 or 4 things they think they know, or what comes to mind, when they think about ALS.

STEP THREE: Share [this 2 minute video about ALS](#) with students and have them take notes as they watch.

STEP FOUR: Students should now be able to list 3 or 4 additional learnings about ALS that they did not know before viewing the video.

STEP FIVE: The teacher should end the lesson by broadening the discussion to discuss the reality that millions of people are living with disabilities or chronic health conditions, in fact most of the students know someone impacted by disease or disability, and the importance of understanding their situations and having programs in place to support them in living their lives.

#Flakes on the Plane, Clip Two

While returning home from demonstrating against the proposed tax cuts in Washington DC, Ady's life was forever changed by two chance encounters. As he was waiting to board his flight home he met Liz Jaff and on the flight they encountered Senator Jeff Flake. See clip 2. Liz's video of Ady's interaction with Senator Flake went viral and directly led to the birth of the Be A Hero movement and foundation.

First ask the students to research who their two senators and congressional representative is. They should then determine what committee assignments they have. Students can use the website , www.congress.org , to gather this information based on their home address.

Ask your students to consider what they would do if they had a chance encounter with one of these three elected officials?

Have the students write brief answers to the following questions:

- What issue would they want to discuss with their elected official? You can offer examples such as climate change, health care, gun violence, education, voting
- Would they approach the elected official?
- What would they say to them?
- What would they hope to hear from their elected official?

Have each student share with the class who they would meet, what they would want to say to that person, and what they hoped would come of the encounter.

The teacher can close the activity by discussing how important it is to be an educated engaged citizen and the power they can have if they worked together on those issues that many of them cared about.

Last Breath, Activity Two

In clip 3 we see Ady state that he is willing to give his last breath to fight for our democracy and asks the crowd what they are willing to do.

Have students write one page discussing an issue that they are passionate about and what they would be willing to do to achieve a goal or preserve previously won gains?

You can ask a few students to present to the class the issue that they are passionate about and what they would be willing to do for it.

Elevator Speech, Activity Three

One of the key qualities of successful activists and leaders is the ability to communicate their ideas in a very clear and succinct fashion.

Ady reflects that losing his voice was the hardest thing for him.

The teacher can introduce the importance of being able to communicate your ideas and the things that you are most passionate about. One way to do this, is to be prepared with an elevator speech they can utilize in the right circumstance.

Ask the students, out of class, to prepare a successful 3-minute elevator speech.

The first step is to decide what they want to communicate.

What is the desired outcome – the action they hope the listener takes.

They must find a way to communicate in simple language why they are passionate about this issue and why the listener should want to take action.

The following day, each student will get to present their elevator speech to the class. After each one, other students will offer some feedback.

The students will then vote on who had the strongest presentation.

The criteria should be the clarity of the message, the degree of passion conveyed and how moved the audience was to help. It should not be a popularity contest.

A helpful resource to support students can be found here: [How To Give an Effective Elevator Speech](#)

ENGAGING FILM CLIPS 4-8

ACTIVITY & QUESTIONS FOR REMAINING CLIPS:

Invite students to list one or two questions as they screen the clip. You may want to play it twice and give students time in-between so they can write thoughtful discussion questions.

After everyone has written questions, ask volunteers to share their questions and engage in whole group discussion using students' questions as a guide.

Sample Question:

In what ways has social media impacted the power for everyday people to engage in political conversations? What are some positive and negative implications of social media being a part of movement-building?

About the Author

Dr. Charles L. Robbins



Charles L. Robbins is a Professor in the School of Social Welfare, Affiliated Faculty in the Program in Public Health and Executive Director of the Center for Changing Systems of Power at Stony Brook University in New York. Previously he served as the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Student Success at Stony Brook University. Dr. Robbins received his BS Degree from the State University of New York at Cortland; MSW from Adelphi University and DSW from the Wurzweiler School of Social Work at Yeshiva University.

The focus of Dr. Robbins' scholarship and work is on social justice, gender equality, masculinities, the LGBTQA+ community and health care disparities. He is a frequent speaker at local, national and international conferences. In addition to North America, he has worked in Africa, Australia, South America, Asia and Europe. Dr. Robbins consults with universities, not for profit organizations and corporations around gender and diversity, equity and inclusion.

Dr. Robbins is a member of the Global Board of MCW Global whose mission is to address communities' pressing needs by empowering current leaders and readying leaders of tomorrow. His primary focus has been on working with emerging young leaders. Dr. Robbins has been an official NGO delegate to the United Nations.