

Hasan Ko



I come from a different country. The reason I am my own guardian is because of my culture. In my culture, we don't believe in somebody else to be in control. We don't have guardianship.

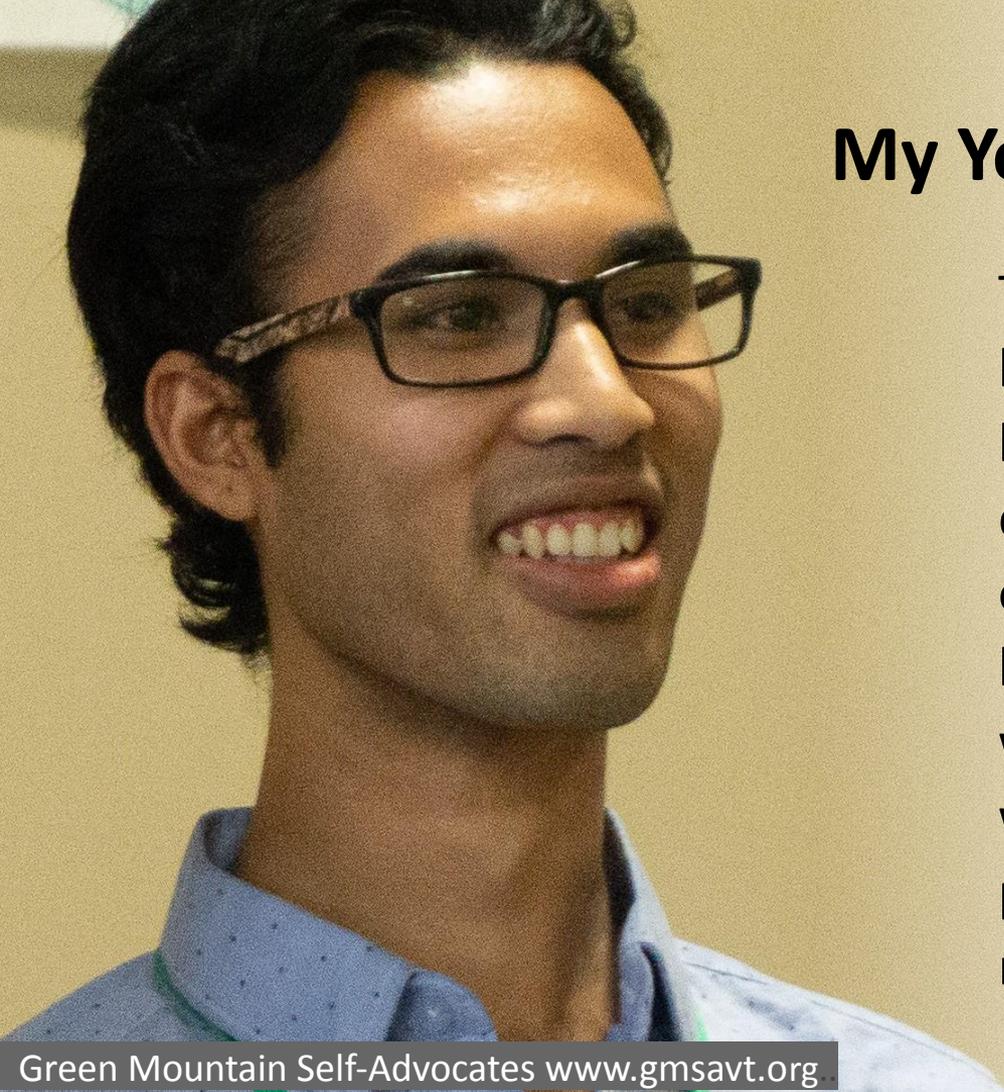
When I was in high school, I found out I have a disability. They said I needed guardianship, somebody to watch over me. My parents said, "We don't want that." And my Grandma said, "Oh, you got it."

Well, in my family we just talk to each other. In my culture, the family is the first person that needs to know about what is happening with my life.

Goals

I want to help people who have disabilities. I want to know about guardianship and how people live their lives. It's very important to know when someone is trying to control our lives. I want to learn from people who have experienced this.





My Youth Ambassador Project

To listen to senior people. I want to learn how they lived their everyday lives. How they have made decisions. I want to know what kinds of regrets they have. Every person has regrets in their life based on what path they choose. We, people with disabilities, as we choose our paths, we do not want to have as many regrets.

Elders Without Disabilities Said

- Parents taught them at a young age how to use money, make decisions and understand consequences
- Opinions of friends and spouse were more important than family
- After turning 18, other people did not control their lives
- They felt lucky, they had lots of opportunities
- Most important decisions happened somewhat randomly, not a lot of long term planning
- For many Vermont elders, when they have a problem they reach out to professional people trained in counseling or someone connected with their faith community.





"Sometimes I was fearful, when life involved risks. But I realized I wasn't alone. I have people. We might not call them guardians, but I had people to journey with - companions. And that's helpful."

- Give people a chance. Do not go in with the idea of controlling a person's life, but how can you help somebody be more independent
- Being independent is important, but sometimes you need support from people in your lives too
- **Sometimes a guardian may be too controlling.** It might be difficult for someone to accept having someone take over their lives. It could feel not helpful
- A guardian may not be in tune with the person, responding to their wishes rather what the person wants.

More Problems with Guardianship: *The Elders said*

- I have known of people who had a guardian and they felt depressed from this situation
- The Guardian might not be in tune with the person they are guarding. They might not understand the person.
- The Guardian can be responding to their own wishes rather than listening to the person they are trying to protect.
- "If someone had legal control of me or even just relationship control, I would fight to get out of the situation."



How One Elder Made Decisions

"I think of the possibilities. I don't do it very systematically. I mentally think about the positives and negatives, over and over again. I guess I go with what I really want to do. What seems like it would be good for me. For example, I bought my own home and I've made my own decisions about bank accounts because I was independent."



Who did you trust to help you with decisions?

"In my life when my husband was alive, I trusted him quite a lot but not with everything. I had independence at the same time. "

One Elder Described a Support Group From Her Youth It Sounds Very Much Like a Self-Advocacy Group

When I lived out West, I joined a group. We got together every Tuesday for an hour. We would share who we were and what we were doing. For example, what works in our lives, what doesn't and how could life be better. We would challenge each other to make decisions. We grew to know each other well.



We had a covenant with each other. Once we made a decision the group would check-in to see if we were sticking to it, being faithful to our decisions. For example, I had a habit of buying and wasting a lot of greeting cards. I made a decision to stop buying cards. My group would say to me, "Did you follow your covenant? Were you careful about what you spent your money on?" In this way, we supported each other.

Regrets of Elders Without Disabilities



- Not having enough self-confidence
- Not speaking out forcefully enough for something that I believed should change
- Wishing I was a little more serious about the jobs I was doing.

"I went to social work school after I went to college. I didn't have a good focus on what I wanted to do. I didn't have enough energy to pursue being a therapist. I didn't have enough self-confidence. That's an overall regret."

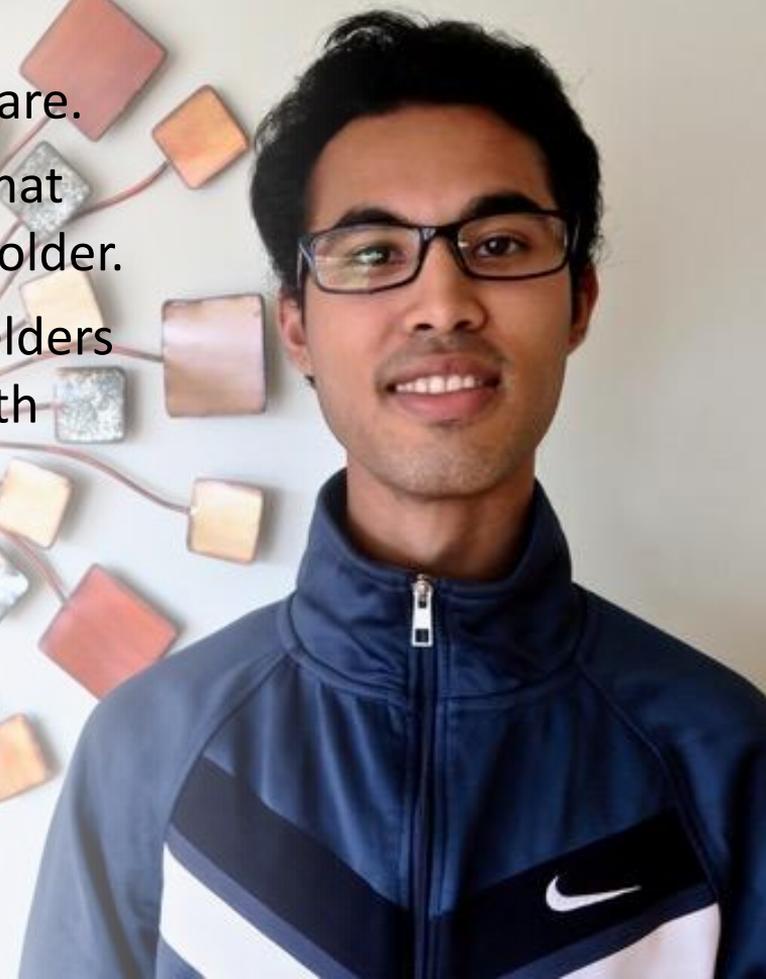
What Hasan Learned From the Elders

When It comes to regrets it makes you who you are.

When you regret things when you are younger that means you want to change things when you get older.

We all come from the same place. The way the elders said they live their lives, it shows how people with disabilities are the same.

It's complicated. We need to find a balance of both sides. There is an important lesson about how it's okay to need help. *And*, when you ask for help, you might lose your independence like with having a guardian.



What Hasan Learned From Being a Youth Ambassador

Now when I have a problem, I see more clearly what I am supposed to do. This is an important change. I don't even need to think about it too much, I know what I want to do.

In life we always have a lesson to learn. It doesn't matter if it's good or bad, it will always help you to guide your life.

