

AUTISTIC PRIDE MONTH

APRIL



GRETA THUNBERG

Greta Thunberg (b. January 3, 2003), is a climate change activists who grew up in Stockholm, Sweden. She started campaigning for climate change in May 2018, at age 15, when she won a climate change essay competition in a local newspaper. She led a campaign outside Swedish Parliament to call for action on climate change by holding up a sign reading *Skolstrejk för klimatet* ("school strike for climate"). She went on to become a leading voice on the issue, inspiring millions to join protests around the world. Thunberg was named *Time* magazine's person of the Year in 2019.

Thunberg has shown the world that nothing can interfere with the fulfillment of her mission of climate activism. Not cyberbullying. Not expressions of opposition, some from prominent players. And perhaps most remarkably, not an autism spectrum diagnosis. In fact, her autism profile is arguably an asset as she sets forth in winning over hearts and minds across the globe. Asperger's syndrome, which is Greta's autism spectrum diagnosis, is frequently accompanied by other disorders. In her case, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is relevant, which likely contributes to her intense and unrelenting focus on speaking truth to power in urging action on climate change. She has even described her Asperger's syndrome as a gift and said being different is a "superpower."

AUTISTIC SELF ADVOCACY NETWORK

Autistic self-advocacy became organized in the 1990s as a part of the disability rights movement. The Autistic Self Advocacy Network was founded in 2006 in response to the lack of representation of autistic voices in the national dialogue on autism, and became widely known in December 2007 after a successful letter-writing protest campaign led to the removal of the "Ransom Notes" billboards in New York City, which had compared autism to a kidnapper snatching children from society.

The founders believed that in order for autistic people and all people with disabilities to enjoy equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic

self-sufficiency – the four goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act – they needed representation wherever issues that impacted their lives were under discussion. ASAN was started by autistic adults who were unhappy with the prevailing public dialogue on autism, believing that the autism world would be better served by ending the misguided search for a "cure" and focusing on empowering and supporting autistic people and all people with disabilities to live the lives they wanted.

To learn more, visit autisticadvocacy.org.

(Excerpt from <https://autisticadvocacy.org/about-asan/our-history/>. Biographical information from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-49918719> and <https://thehill.com/changing-america/well-being/468091-opinion-activist-greta-thunbergs-autism-doesnt-hold-her-back>.)



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