

New Documentary From Woman With Rare Syndrome Aims To Curb Online Bullying



Ralphie Aversa

Trending Now May 2, 2014



New Documentary From Woman With Rare Syndrome Aims To Curb Online Bullying

Lizzie Velasquez has found a way to not only overcome adversity, but also transform it into something positive. After inspiring many with her story, the Austin, Texas-native has launched a [Kickstarter](#) campaign. Velasquez is looking to raise money to produce a documentary that will spread her message even further.

Elizabeth Velasquez was born on March 13, 1989, four weeks premature. Her birth weight was 2 pounds, 11 ounces. Doctors would diagnose Velasquez with a syndrome so rare that it is unnamed and only two other people are known to have it.

This condition affects her skin, vision, and metabolism. Now 25 years old, Velasquez has never weighed more than 64 pounds.

With her family's support, Velasquez did everything she could to live a normal life. But in high school, she found herself the target of an online bully. While browsing YouTube, Velasquez discovered an 8-second video titled "The World's Ugliest Woman." She clicked the thumbnail and saw that the clip was of her. It already had 4 and a half million views.

Determined not to let bullying define her, Velasquez went on to graduate from Texas State University and become a motivational speaker. Her "How Do You Define Yourself?" speech at [TEDxAustinWomen](#) has been viewed more than 9 million times. With a college degree and a successful career under her belt, Velasquez now wants to use film to tell her story to an even larger audience.

"I want people to get to know me more as a person, not just from the 15-minute [TEDxAustinWomen](#) talk," Velasquez told Yahoo!. "I have this sincere passion to make the Internet a more positive place, across all social media.

"I look at the documentary as kind of a little car," she continued. "I want people to come into my car with me and get to know me, and then I want to take them on this big adventure with me to help tackle an issue that all of us have been affected by."

The perils of online bullying are well-documented. Velasquez is certainly aware that the idea of making the Internet a safer place is a large undertaking. But as with every other obstacle that she has faced, the 25-year-old is once again up for the challenge.

"It's kind of like the starfish story," she explained. "There's a little boy by the beach, who was picking up the starfish one by one, putting them into the ocean. An old man came up to him and said, 'It's going to take you forever to do this. Why are you doing that?' And he said, 'I made a difference for that one starfish.'"

Production on Velasquez's documentary will begin after her [kickstarter](#) campaign, which kicked off Friday and runs through June 1. The fundraising goal is \$180,000. More information is available at [TheLizzieProject.com](#).