

Alan Toy Bio

Alan Toy, Associate Director of the UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge, is a community organizer, a dedicated civil rights activist and an accomplished actor in motion pictures and television. He is an elected and appointed member of several boards and commissions. He has been a consultant on many disability-related projects and is a frequent keynote speaker and panelist. Alan has worked tirelessly in the disability and senior communities to increase the level of individual and community-based self-sufficiency. His advocacy in mass media has not only paved the way for many other disabled performers to have successful careers, but has also given viewers around the world a new way of seeing people with disabilities on television and in films.

Alan, who contracted polio when he was three, has spoken and written about issues of disability and media images from Hong Kong to London to Hanoi to Montreal and throughout the United States. Magazines, newspapers and television programs regularly seek his insights on the subject of how mass media depictions of disability influence that community's place in society, in affirmative and negative ways.

As an actor, Alan has worked in dozens of films and television shows. He is widely recognized as *Professor Finley*, the cult leader on "Beverly Hills 90210." In over two hundred television, theatre and film roles, audiences have seen Alan playing a wide diversity of characters, including parents; lawyers; doctors; scientists; veterans; teachers...even a wheelchair-using mountain climber. Alan's film and television credits include the recent Martin Scorsese film, "The Aviator," "In the Line of Fire," "Kansas," "Alias," "Born on the Fourth of July," "West Wing," "Matlock," "Profiler," "Diagnosis Murder," "Highway to Heaven" and "M*A*S*H."

While serving as the president of the Media Access Office in Hollywood from 1984 to 1989, Alan constantly lobbied with entertainment industry movers and shakers to create characters, storylines and images that broke down or worked against age-old negative stereotypes of people with disabilities.

As a union activist in the Screen Actors Guild and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, Alan initiated the inclusion of people with disabilities in the protected groups contract language. He subsequently helped create and was the first co-chair of the Interguild Committee of Performers with Disabilities. He has actively encouraged fellow performers with disabilities to participate in the guilds' efforts to create a more positive working environment for their disabled members. Alan often participated in union negotiations with the producers over such issues as non-stereotypical employment and discrimination in the casting process.

Alan won an IDEAS Scholar fellowship from the World Institute on Disability In 1989, to study television programming by and about people with disabilities in England (where he had also lived for almost three years as a child). He later was a segment producer and on-camera reporter for several segments of "Same Difference," one of the English programs he studied. Alan's on-camera reporting continued in the U.S. as the guest host of a segment of "City View," a Los Angeles ABC public affairs show, and as the host of Evan Kemp's TV pilot "One Step Ahead."

In 1992, because of his union activities in the Screen Actors Guild, Alan was granted a Community Scholars fellowship to study for a year at the UCLA Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning, where he subsequently enrolled in the program and received a Masters Degree. While at UCLA, Alan was on a team that won second prize in a national planning competition to envision a place for electric vehicles in the American community.

Also while in school, Alan took the position of Community Advocate in policy and legislative affairs for the Westside Center for Independent Living in Los Angeles, one of the first independent living centers in the world. In 1995, Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky appointed Alan to the LA County Accessibility Appeals Board. That same year he was also elected to the Board of Directors of the ACLU of Southern California, where he continues to serve as an officer on the board. In October of 2004, Alan was elected to an at-large seat on the National ACLU Board. He is the Chair of the 2005 Nominating Committee and the Disability Outreach Committee.

After UCLA, Alan joined the staff of the Los Angeles Homecare Workers Union, where he was the Community Organizing Coordinator. His work on In-Home Supportive Services policy issues was critical to the development of a model IHSS Public Authority in Angeles County to improve the Independent Provider model for both consumers and personal assistance service workers, while allowing IHSS workers the opportunity to be represented by a union to improve their pay and benefits negotiating powers..

Alan left the Homecare Workers Union to take the position of Senior Policy Analyst to the Executive Director of Access Service Inc., LA County's paratransit delivery agency. While at ASI, he successfully wrote and shepherded through state legislation to benefit all of California's paratransit delivery programs. The bill, which was carried by State Senator Tom Hayden, exempted paratransit vehicles from DMV licensing fees and allowed the agencies to put that money back into service delivery programs.

Alan has also served in a voluntary citizen participatory role as the vice-chair of Santa Monica's Social Services Commission; he was chair of the City's Americans with Disabilities Act Community Advisory Committee and was a member of the City's Accessibility Appeals Commission, until elected in November 1998 to the Santa Monica Rent Control Board. He was re-elected to a second term in November 2002 and is currently the Chair. He continues to collaborate with State and local officials to mitigate the negative effects of state mandated vacancy rent decontrol, in order to maintain the historical socio-economic diversity of Santa Monica's population.

Alan is a leading force in the effort to create a citywide "Visitability" ordinance in Santa Monica, which would require that all new homes be built with a focus on fuller inclusion for those who use mobility devices. In this capacity, he is a member of a statewide advisory committee to create a statewide model ordinance for cities to follow.

In August of 2000, former California Governor Davis appointed Alan to the State Independent Living Council, which oversees the policies and funding of the independent living centers throughout California. Governor Davis reappointed him to a second three-year term in January 2003.

At UCLA, Alan developed and directs an Internet technology project called LILA (Living Independently in Los Angeles – <http://lila.ucla.edu>) to assist Los Angeles County residents with disabilities in their day-to-day independent living needs. LILA is a unique collaboration of private (local independent living centers), public (Los Angeles County and City) and academic (UCLA) efforts to map local disability resources and to create an online place to share information and develop advocacy initiatives. In 2003 and again in 2004, the Center for Neighborhood Knowledge, including LILA, was a finalist in the prestigious Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government “Innovations in American Government” awards. LILA was also a finalist in the 2004 international Stockholm Challenge information technology awards competition.

The LILA project has led to a similar web site project with the LA County Office of Emergency Preparedness to map disaster preparedness and response volunteer opportunities throughout the County under a federal Citizen Corps development grant. Alan is the disability community’s liaison to the LA County Emergency Preparedness Commission and to the California Citizens Corps Council in Governor Schwarzeneger’s Office on Service and Volunteerism (GOSERV).

These and other community efforts resulted in the Los Angeles County Commission on Disability giving Alan its 2001 Jane Small Award for outstanding advocacy.

Alan is married to Theresa Karanik, a licensed clinical social worker. They are the parents of a fourteen-year-old son, John Henry Toy