

Why History Matters:

The Impact of Educational and Research Decisions on Black ASL

Joseph C. Hill

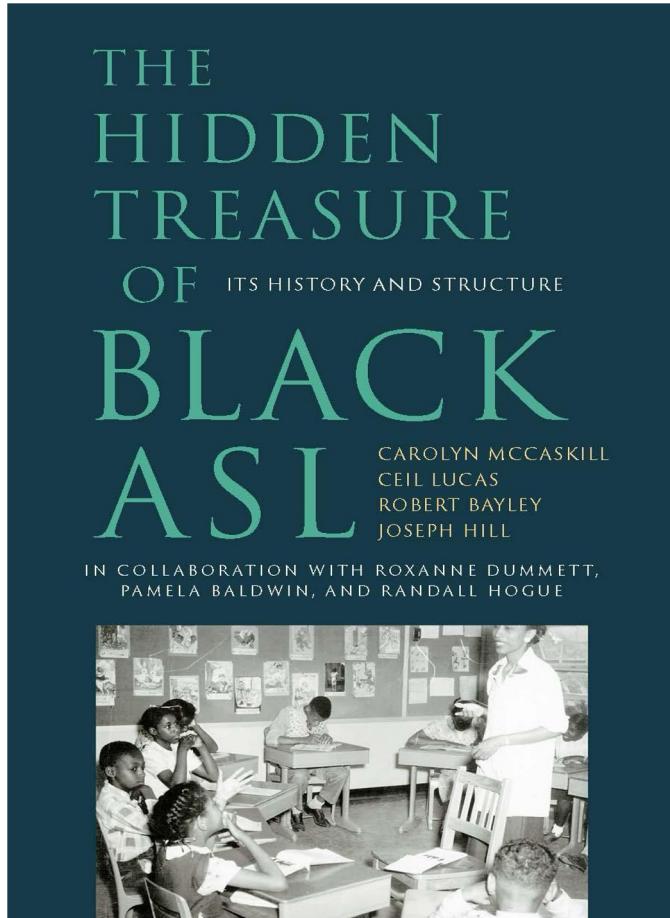
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The History and Structure of Black ASL: Research Team, 2007 - 2011



black asl



The Hidden Treasure of Black ASL: Companion Video to the Book

10 videos • 6,253 views • Last updated on Feb 10, 2020



The Hidden Treasure of Black ASL: Its History and Structure

Companion video to the book:

<http://gupress.gallaudet.edu/bookpage...>

Carolyn McCaskill, Ceil Lucas, Robert Bayley, and Joseph Hill

BLACK ASL

1869 - now

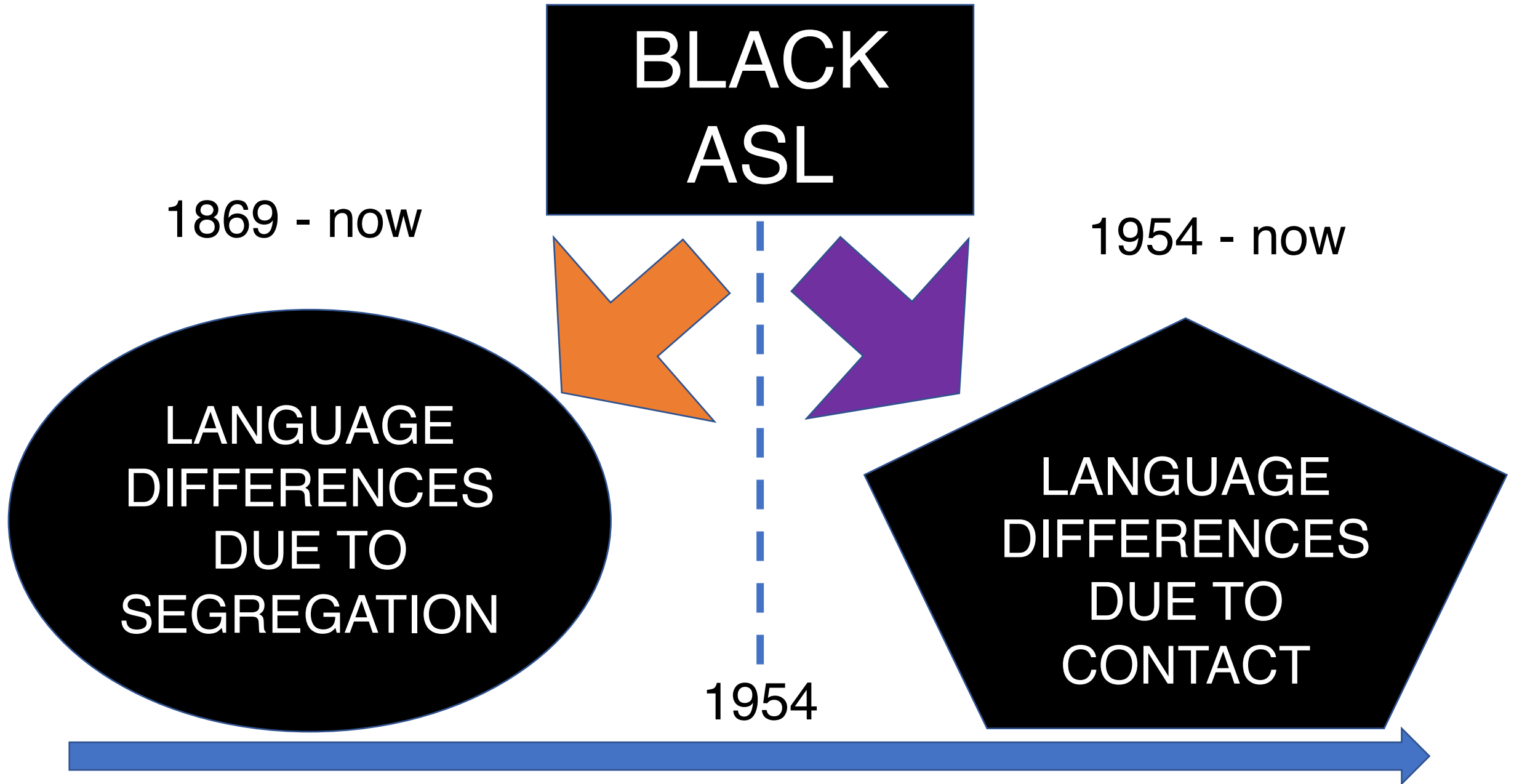
1954 - now

LANGUAGE
DIFFERENCES
DUE TO
SEGREGATION

LANGUAGE
DIFFERENCES
DUE TO
CONTACT

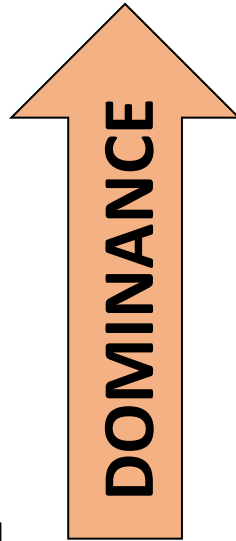
1954

Brown vs. the Board of Education

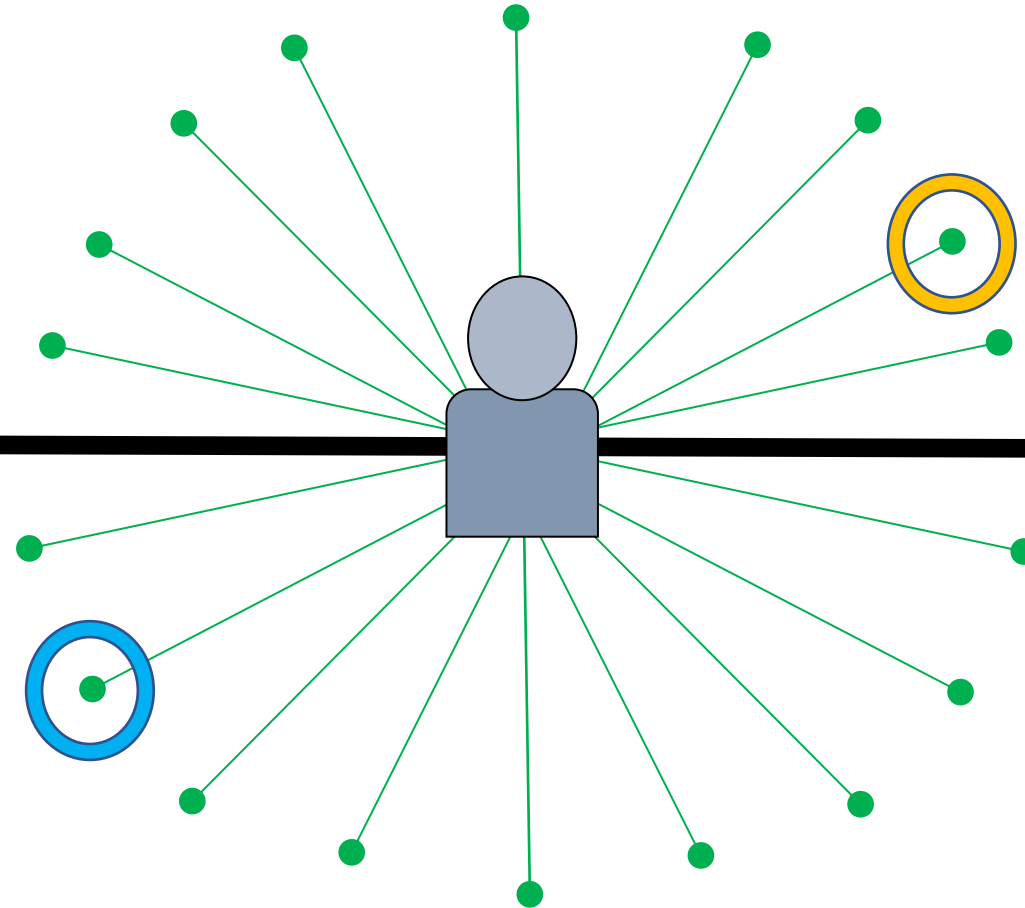
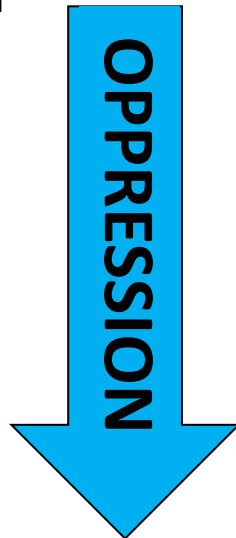


Intersectionality

PRIVILEGES



SYSTEMS

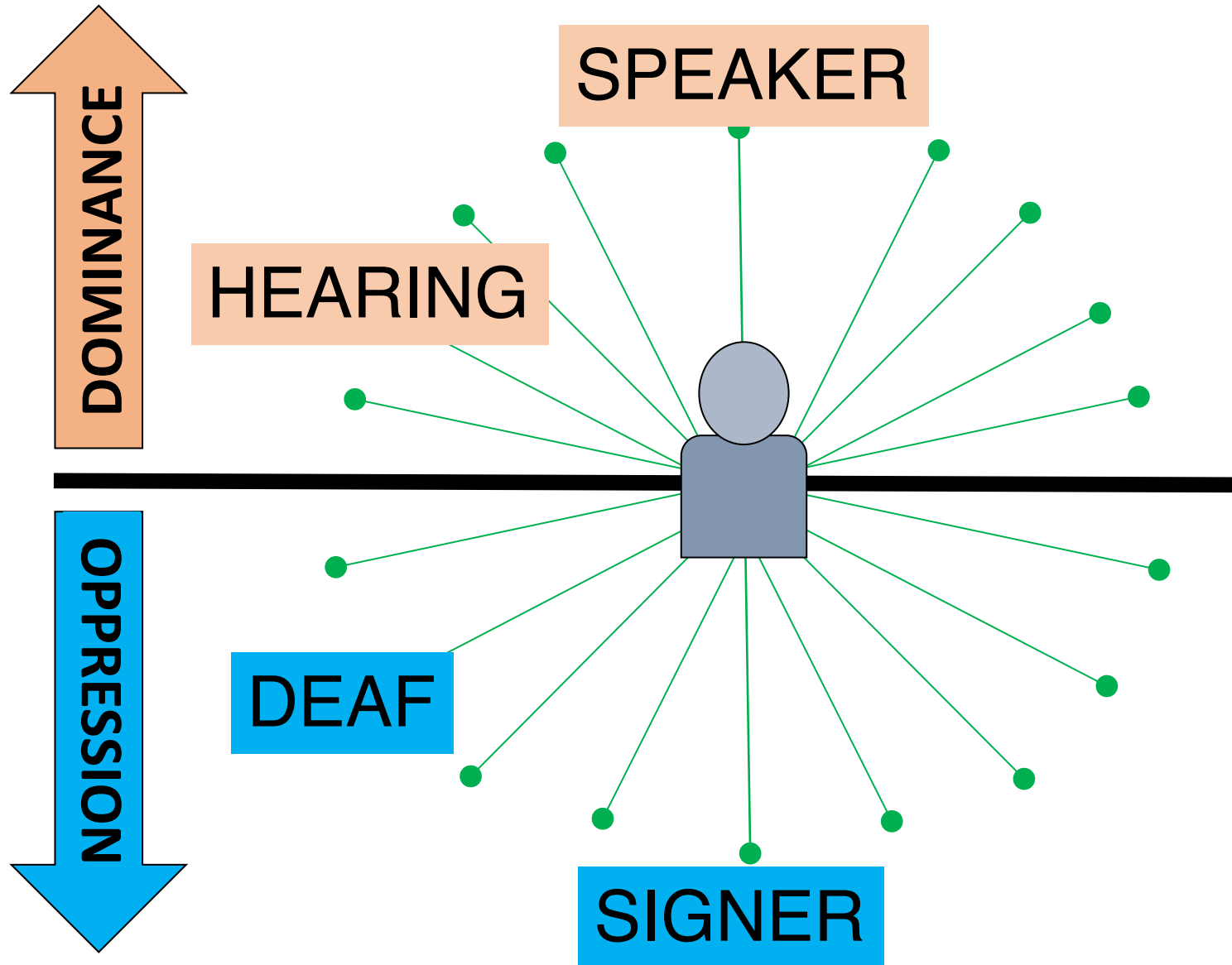


IDENTITIES

DISPRIVILEGES

The term coined in 1989 by Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, a black womanist lawyer and scholar.

Audism: Devaluating Ideology and its Effect on Language Policies



“The devaluating ideology places sign languages low in an imagined hierarchy of languages or claims that sign languages have no morphology or simply states that they have no value for children”
(Krausneker, 2015)

Educational and Language Shifts in United States

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

2010s

2020s

Education before 1960s

- Nearly **80%** of deaf and hard of hearing children attended residential schools for the Deaf (Lane et al., 1996).

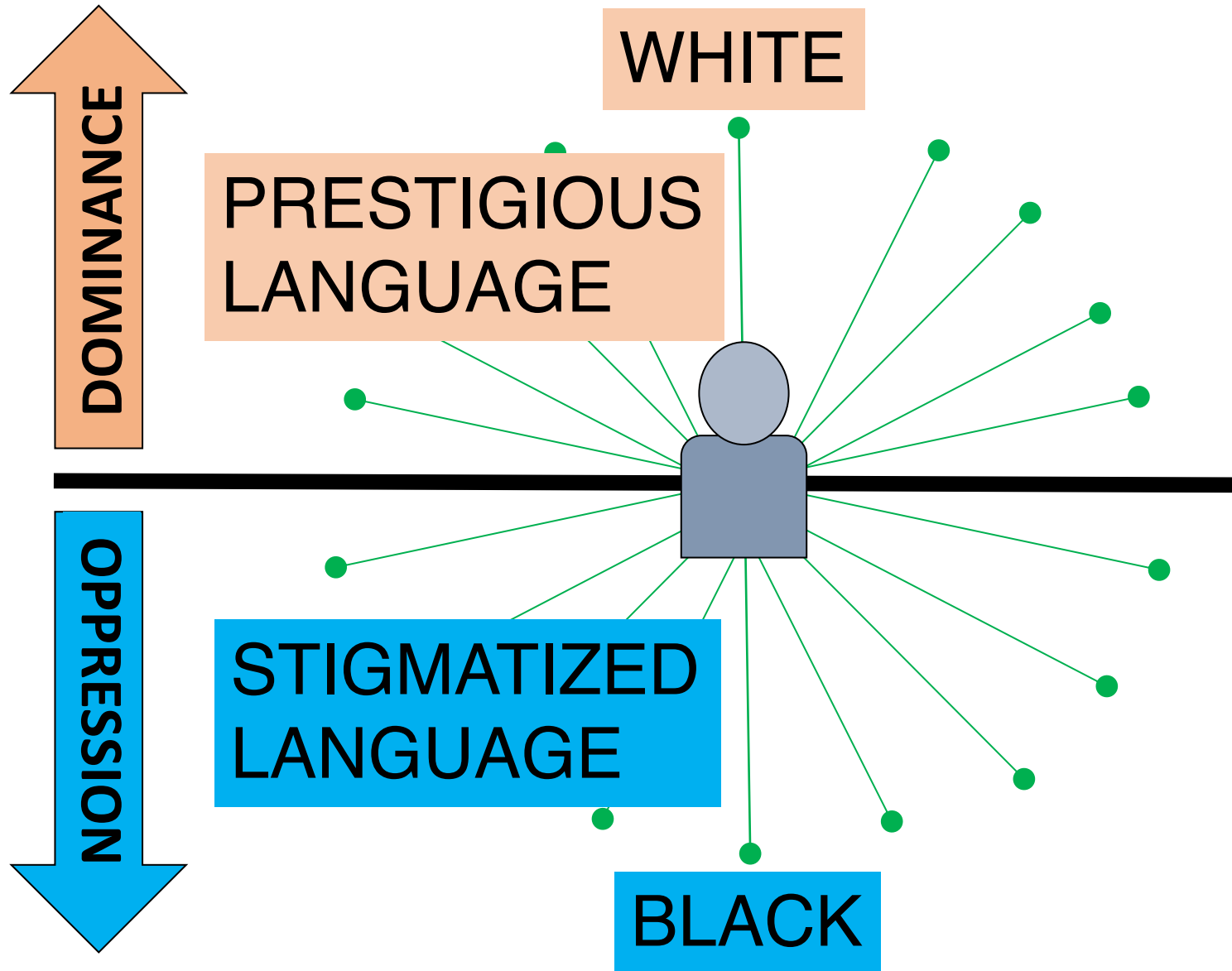
Institutional and Legal Changes in Education

- *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973*
- *Public Law 94-142: The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975*
- *Individuals with Disability Education Act, 1990*
- *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*

Education in 2010s

- Percentage of students attending residential schools has gone down to **24.3%** (Gallaudet Research Institute 2011).

Racism: Displacement, Exclusion, and Segregation



“Systemic and structural racism are forms of racism that are pervasively and deeply embedded in and throughout systems, laws, written or unwritten policies, entrenched practices, and established beliefs and attitudes that produce, condone, and perpetuate widespread unfair treatment of people of color” (Braveman et al., 2022)

Educational and Language Shifts in United States

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

2010s

2020s

Desegregation in Education

Black deaf children were expected to **assimilate** linguistically and culturally

Institutional and Legal Changes in Education

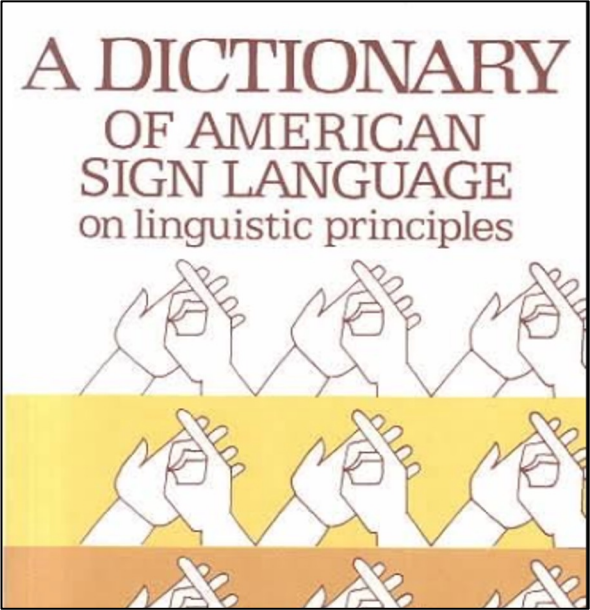
Black ASL was rendered **invisible** in education and research due to neglect and was limited to family and community use only

Education in 2010s

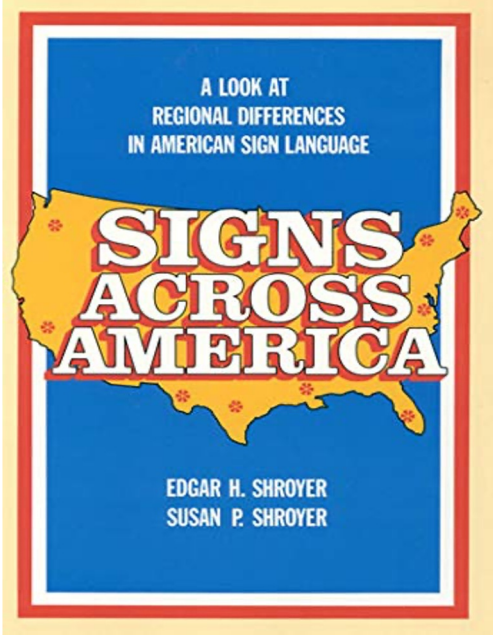
Not much is known about Black ASL in education due to **exclusion and neglect**

1880 – 2nd
International
Congress on
Education of the
Deaf in Milan, Italy

1913 –
Preservation of
ASL film with
George Veditz



1965

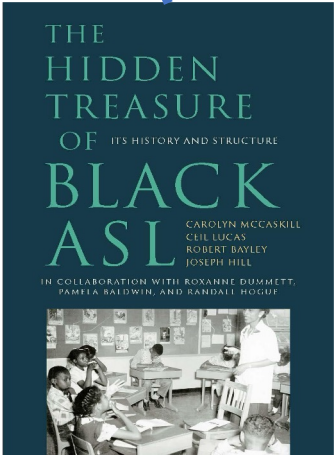


1984

1817 –
American
School for the
Deaf

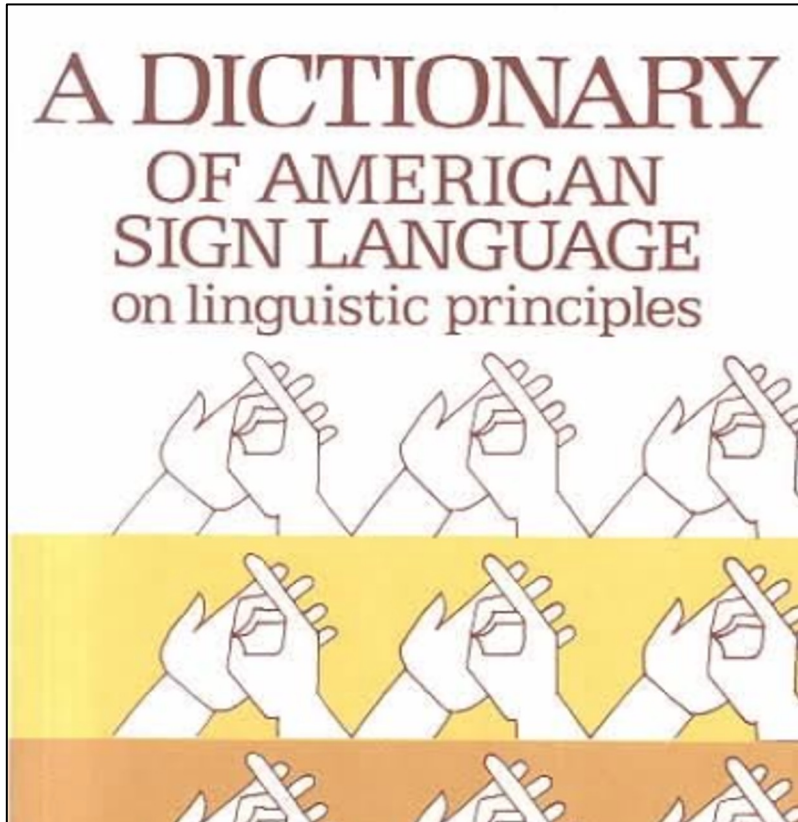
Over 200 years of ASL

~150 years of Black ASL



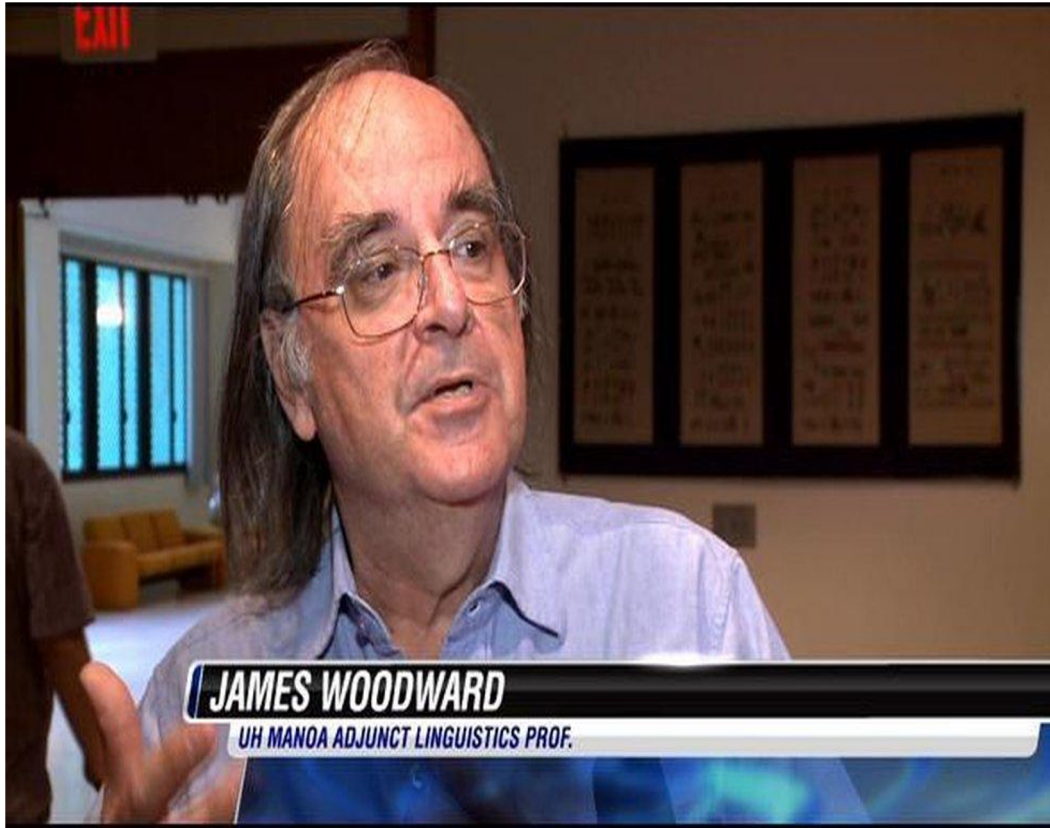
2011

1960s: Black ASL in North Carolina and Virginia Excluded From Research



“...it has been the distinct impression of the writer that the Negro deaf population of the United States has a slight if any social contact with the non-Negro deaf population. Since this was suspected from the beginning of the exploratory dialect study, and since economy of effort was necessary, interviews with Negro deaf people were **intentionally omitted**” (Croneberg, 1965, p. 315)

1970s: Initial Studies of Black ASL in Georgia and Louisiana

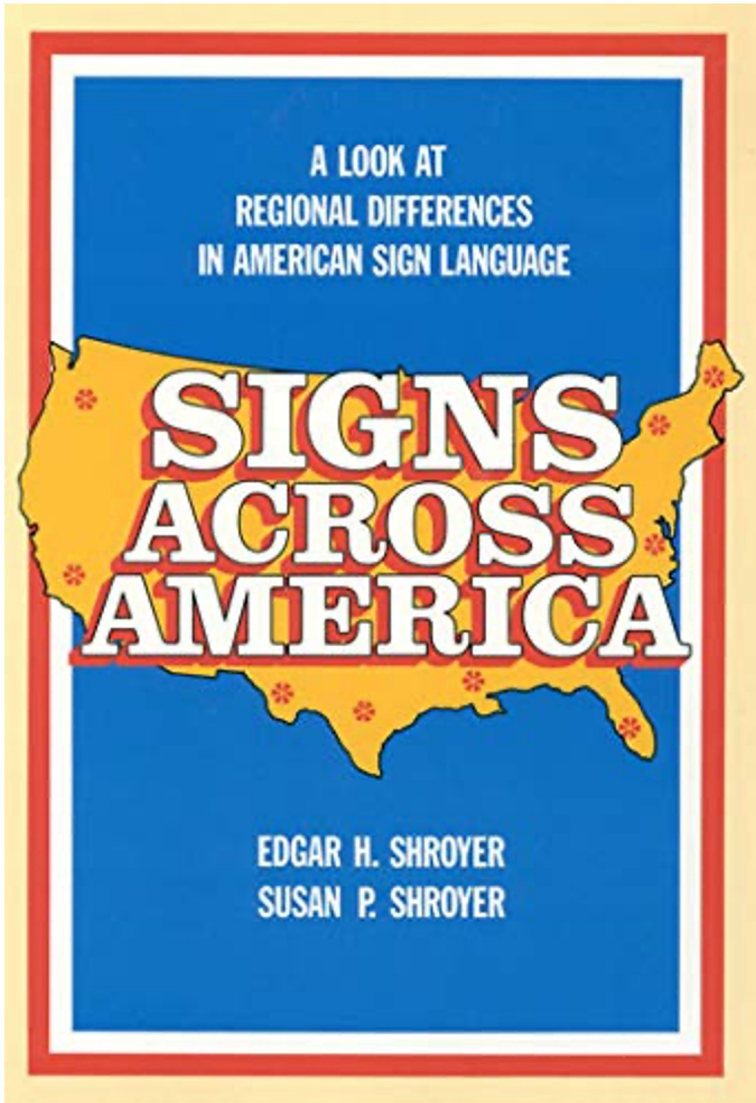


Woodward (1976): Black Southern Signing

Woodward, Erting, & Oliver (1976): Facing and Hand(l)ing Variation in American Sign Language

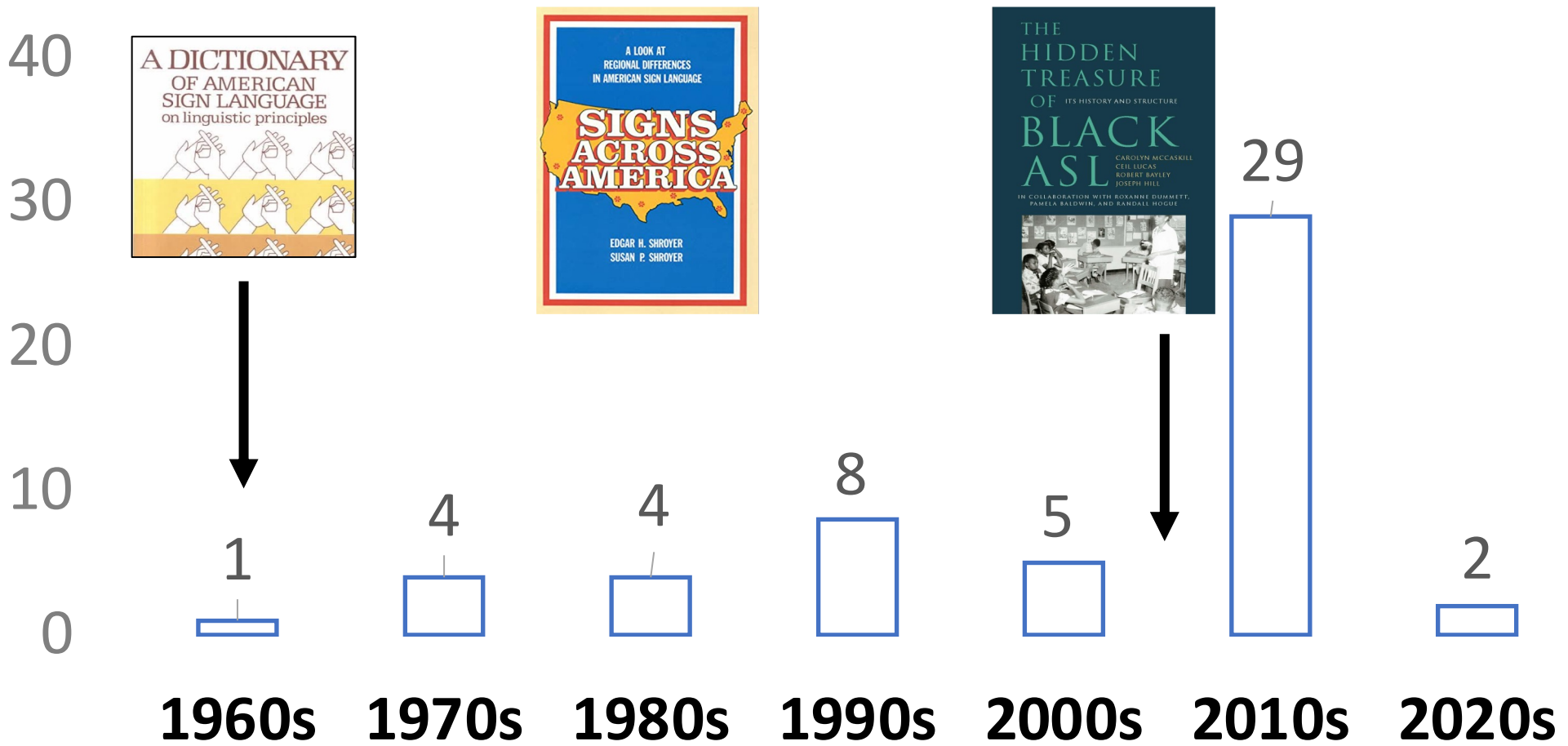
Woodward & DeSantis (1977): One- and Two-Handed Variants in Black and White ASL

1980s: Black ASL Across America Excluded from Documentation



“The individuals who served as contributors represented what we considered a very good cross section of the deaf population... We also did not include black deaf signs in our research because of the many differences between black and white signs in the southern states. This area has been researched and been reported in the literature on signing (see Woodward, 1976a).” (Shroyer and Shroyer, 1984, p. ix)

Count of Black ASL-Related Publications Per Decade



Note: The count is based on the number of references I have collected



2023



?????

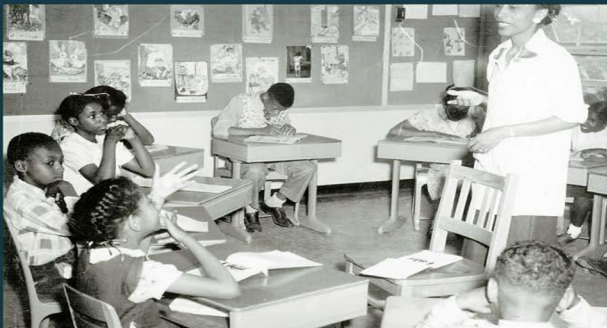
***Creating Our History
For the Future***

Publications

THE HIDDEN TREASURE OF ITS HISTORY AND STRUCTURE BLACK ASL

CAROLYN MCCASKILL
CEIL LUCAS
ROBERT BAYLEY
JOSEPH HILL

IN COLLABORATION WITH ROXANNE DUMMETT,
PAMELA BALDWIN, AND RANDALL HOGUE



LANGUAGE AND PUBLIC POLICY

Segregation and desegregation of the Southern schools for the deaf: The relationship between language policy and dialect development

CEIL LUCAS

Gallaudet University

ROBERT BAYLEY

University of California, Davis

JOSEPH C. HILL

*National Technical Institute for the Deaf,
Rochester Institute of Technology*

CAROLYN MCCASKILL

Gallaudet University

Recent research has shown that a distinct variety of American Sign Language, known as Black ASL, developed in the segregated schools for deaf African Americans in the US South during the pre-civil rights era. Research has also shown that in some respects Black ASL is closer than most white varieties to the standard taught in ASL classes and found in ASL dictionaries. This article explores the circumstances that resulted in the creation of a distinct ASL variety, with attention to the role of language in education policy in both the white and Black Southern schools for the deaf. Archival research shows that while white deaf students were long subjected to oral instruction and forbidden to sign in class, Black students, although their severely underfunded schools provided only basic vocational education, continued to receive their education in ASL, with classes often taught by deaf teachers. The differences in language education policy explain the difficulties Black students experienced in understanding their teachers and white classmates after integration occurred, despite great resistance, in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the fact that Black signers

Public Education

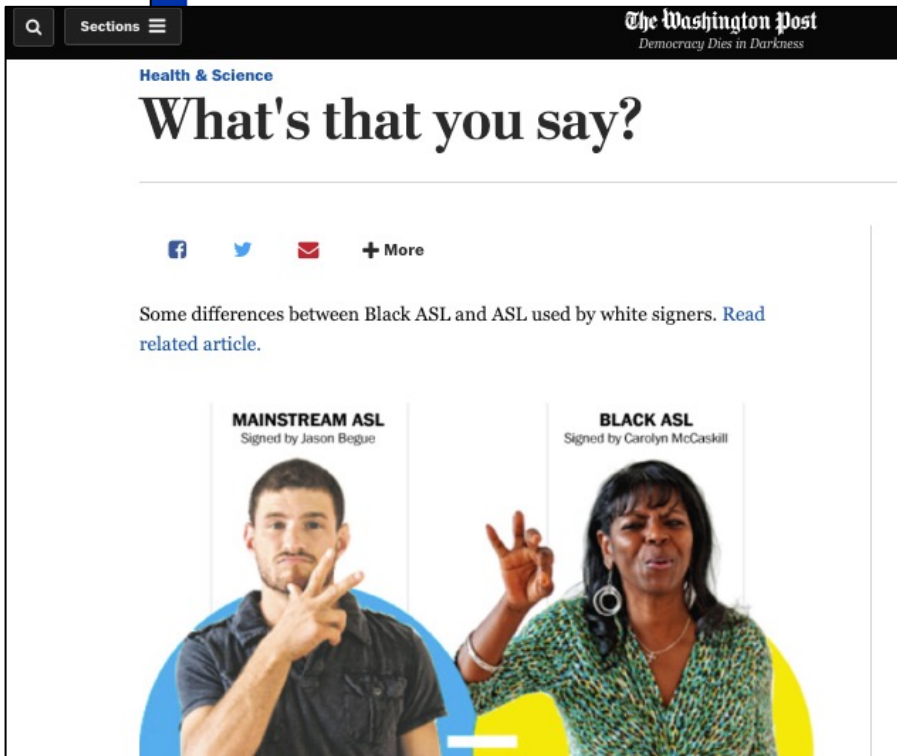
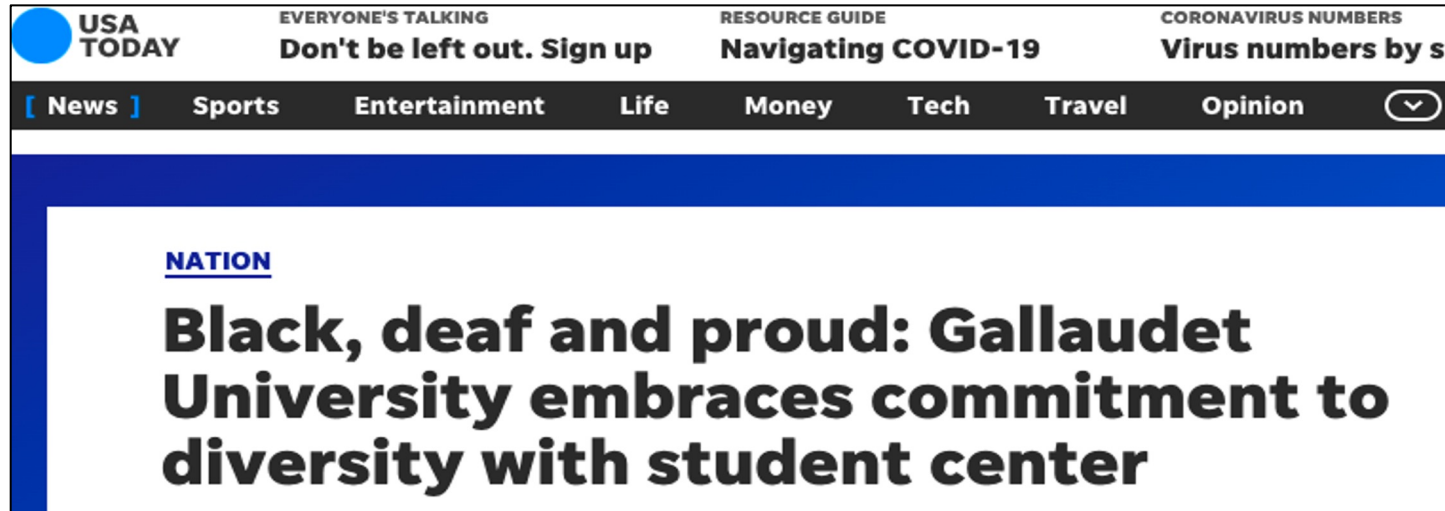


signing black in america



Signing Black in America - more about this project at
www.talkingblackinamerica.org

News Media



The New York Times

Black, Deaf and Extremely Online

On TikTok and in virtual hangouts, a younger generation is sharing the origins and nuances of Black American Sign Language, a rich variation of ASL that scholars say has been overlooked for too long.



Black American Sign Language gains new interest thanks to TikTok app

Dr. Joseph Hill from the Rochester Institute of Technology is using the renewed interest to help preserve the language.



~150 years of Black ASL



TAKEAWAY MESSAGE

THIS IS OUR TIME TO FILL THE GAP WITH OUR
SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, AND TECHNOLOGY AS PART
OF OUR RESISTANCE TO RACISM AND AUDISM

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