

06_12_344_Ralph_ENG
Why Black American Sign Language Matters
The Past, Present & Future

Black Deaf Studies Symposium Proceedings

Laurene Simms

Gallaudet University, www.gallaudet.edu
laurene.simms@gallaudet.edu

Candace Jones

Gallaudet University, www.gallaudet.edu
laurene.simms@gallaudet.edu

Abstract

Dr. Laurene Simms and Candace Jones address the systematic and historical barriers faced by Black Deaf students. Dr. Simms focuses on the history and existing disparities due to a lack of resources, role models, and white-centric educational systems. She underscores the dearth of Black Deaf teachers due to biased licensing requirements. Jones emphasizes the importance of recognizing and nurturing the distinct culture and language of Black Deaf students, criticizing the predominance of a white-centric approach in ASL education. Both presenters advocate for an educational transformation that includes a curriculum fostering a multicultural and bilingual perspective, tailored to uplift Black Deaf students' cultural and linguistic heritage.

Keywords

Black Deaf Education, Language Deprivation, Cultural Representation, Bilingualism, Heritage Sign Languages, Curriculum Diversification, Cultural Duality

Presentation Transcript

[00:05 – Slide 1]

LAURENE SIMMS —

The worst thing that you can do for a teacher is to have students late in the afternoon after they have eaten. So, let's try to work with one another. If you see someone next to you asleep, nudge them a little bit so we can get through this. All right? Okay.

Bilingualism. This afternoon, I'm going to be talking about the impact of language in Deaf Education.

I grew up in the Deaf education system and am still involved. Some experiences were not that great, but I have hope for the future, and Candace will discuss more about that later. I'm very realistic; I've seen it, experienced what it is like. So, the presentation title is: "The Past, The Present, and The Future of Black Deaf Education."

Are we ready? Next slide.

[01:14 – Slide 2]

Go ahead and read this quote. The past is experience. All day, we have been talking about the past and documenting experiences. Now is the present – you are all present as you observe, reflect, and discuss. Next, the future. The future is an expectation. What do we expect should happen? Use your experience in your experiments to achieve your expectations. Make sense? Everybody clear on that concept? Are my interpreters good? All right.

Next slide.

[02:03 – Slide 3]

I will not explain all the details about this article. For my publication in 2008, my job (at West Oregon University) was to do a study at various schools where there were Deaf children. First, we asked, where are the Deaf children? Where are they? Secondly, we included BIPOC (Black indigenous people of color), Latin X, indigenous people, and others, but we centered our focus on Black Deaf students. Where were they? From birth to present, where are they? From then to now, how many Deaf people have become professors, professionals, researchers? This number encompasses a miniscule amount. They are stuck in a bottleneck as numbers are dwindling.

Why is this? I will explain. I will fast forward as I touch on this as I can't discuss now – you can read my article which goes into more depth about what this all means and the impact of all these things you see before you on the slide today.

Next slide, please. Next.

[03:18 – Slide 4]

I will hit three points here. First, what does underserved early education look like? Black Deaf parents discover their child is Deaf– I will expand on this briefly in a moment. As they

progress, we ask questions like– are there enough Black Deaf professionals, teachers, social workers, counselors? Then, going forward, are there professional role models? All three of these things have a domino effect on language development from birth to present. The domino effect. You know those black and white domino tiles with dots? *That wasn't just my time period*, right? Do we still play dominoes now? Still, still, still. Okay we still play. The effect of when one domino tips over and causes all the rest to topple over as well. That represents what's being shown here on the slide.

Okay, next slide.

[04:17 – Slide 5]

From birth, what happens? We are going to watch this brief video. Hit play.

Understand that this is still occurring. This isn't something deep in the past. It has been persisting since my research publication in 2008. Some of you may say, there are more and more Deaf mentors working with families – cool, we have more now. But wait, the majority of these Deaf mentors are white.

Now imagine white Deaf mentors working with Black families. White people are fine, they may have a good heart. But imagine, even better would be for a Black Deaf mentor to work with Black families. Even better! Imagine. Imagine me striding in and being comfortable in a Black space, of course eating soul food. Chicken wings, no complaints. I have no objection with soul food. I can comfortably sit down, chat with the student and the parents can see this – a Black Deaf mentor– and realize they have hope for their baby. A white Deaf mentor – it can be hard and very awkward to explain things like intersectionality, racism. It's difficult and awkward for the white person although they mean well, they're good-hearted and they work hard to support those families. But an important cultural connection is missing and there is not enough support for these families which creates significant delays like language deprivation, and cultural deprivation.

Next slide.

[06:03 – Slide 6]

Early education. From looking around the auditorium, I feel maybe three-fourths of you grew up with curriculum and textbooks that were white based. I see many audience members nodding and agreeing – it seems about three-fourths of you. I grew up reading and learning about Christopher Columbus and how he came here and discovered America; Shakespeare; blah, blah, blah and so on. Grew up learning this white-based history. It's the system; I learned and became intellectually and mentally colonized with whitewashed

“facts.” But what do I know about Black history? I know about slavery because of a tiny paragraph but as I flipped through the books, there was really nothing at all. Huge impact. My experiences growing up were predominantly whitewashed, because I didn’t see much of Black representation.

Now, presently, more content is being made for the future that is brought to families. These families see the material and think- cool, we have all these cool things now. In school, curriculums are being replaced and changed so that Deaf children can see themselves in it and feel a sense of sameness. Yet we still see strongly white based curriculums. When we look at the curriculum, there are only bits and pieces of Black History. A little about famous President Obama, a little about Martin Luther King, Jr. – and that’s all. Still. This is still the case.

We should get rid of that altogether, create something new. White people will benefit; they’re still included. All people will benefit. There is a benefit for ALL. But what we have today with the bits and pieces – nope.

I should warn my Black audience that I can sometimes be radical. Just a warning. I feel safe, are you safe with me, you feel me? All good. Great.

Funny, this morning, Jeff Lewis and I were sitting. Jeff Lewis, after witnessing a purely Black cultural response to a conversation amongst myself, Carolyn, and other Black symposium participants, commented: “I’ve never seen Laurene act that way.” Yep, I know. Here at Gallaudet University, I am different and have to present myself a certain way, very “professional”. But watch me change later. When I get to get “down.” (*referring to her authentic Black cultural attitude when outside the “professional” [White] environment which requires constant code switching for non-white people).

Next slide.

[08:36 – Slide 7]

We just touched on early education, now we are talking about professional licenses. Really sad. This is from 2016. My research was done in 2008. This is eight years later. I’m still alive if you were wondering – anyway, in 2016, it’s still the same. 74%, the dark green color, of Deaf individuals failed to become a licensed teacher. This is shown strongly in that green color. Next, the dark green for hearing people shows a small failure rate. Next, hard of hearing also have a high failure rate.

Next slide - about Black Deaf specifically, look.

[09:28 – Slide 8]

Analysis shows that the pass rate for Black Deaf individuals was zero. This was in 2016. You know, schools have a hard time hiring Black Deaf teachers. Why? Because of license requirements – license requirements which are white based. Remember that – licenses are biased. Some of them have to take the test again and again and again. They pay for it out of pocket over and over again. But let me tell you, many of them fail and don't get a license. Some schools are nice and will make adjustments so that they can get Black Deaf teachers in the school system, supporting them. Thank you to our allies at these Deaf schools for trying to get more Black Deaf professionals. We have to continue that - it is one way to break the cycle from birth to the point of having role models.

Next slide.

[10:32 – Slide 9]

Take a look here.

Presently, eight five percent of teachers of the Deaf are hearing. Eighty-five percent right now. Deaf professionals – fifteen percent. Before the Milan Conference– before oralism in 1880 – before that, there was a huge number of Deaf teachers with formal positions. Huge! Many of those Deaf people founded Deaf schools – highly professional and elite.

But now, look at the statistics. Even worse, within that fifteen percent, how many are Black and Deaf do you think? .5? Someone says zero – we have some though. We have some, a small amount. Let's be hopeful. We have some, not zero. Here – Reggie Bess over there in the audience – he is a Black man, Deaf – he got his license, after he took it – how many times? Twelve. Twelve years of constantly taking that test. Finally, he got his license. Let's clap for him. And he is now in our PhD program, and I have been whooping his butt. Clap some more!

Okay, next.

[12:07 – Slide 10]

You said 0.0, really, it's 2.5. From 2008 to 2016, there's been a slight improvement. Now eight years later after 2016, what's the number? Give me some numbers. 2022? Is that the math...? What's the number? 2024. An A+ for you! Too bad I don't have any M&Ms, but anyway, yes – 2024, I will be continuing this study in 2024. Following the eight-year intervals on the cycle. This shows how from the past to the present there are small incremental increases. I hope now all of you from Black Deaf Studies can break through. I

want to see you all eight years from now – God, I hope I’ll still be alive eight years from now, I’ll be 79 – is the math right? Yep, I’ll be 79. I want to see you change this. Okay. Thank you for your time. Now I’m going to turn this over to Candace Jones. Candace is the hope for our future. Here she is.

I hope I’m still alive in eight years. I’ll be 78, right math? 79, 79, I will be 79 (in 2032). I’ll be old, you all will change the stats (in eight years.) Ok, thank you for your time, now I will pass down to the next person, Candace Jones. I have hope from now on for the future.

CANDACE JONES —

Before I go ahead and say my part, first, I want to say thank you to Laurene Simms for the vote of confidence in me. Honestly, this is my 2nd conference as a presenter, for real. However, I’ve been a teacher in the classroom for 14 years.

I am a licensed, certified teacher. I would like to let you know that I never took the praxis test. I took GACE (Georgia Assessments for Certification of Educators) in the State of Georgia. I taught in the Atlanta area school for the Deaf, roughly 85% of my students were Black and Brown and they were Deaf, and hard of hearing.

Laurene strongly encouraged me to join her in this presentation and I was kind of nervous. And wow, I really feel honored – this is a special place with all the scholars, linguists, and researchers in this room, and I am feeling inspired.

I feel like Dr. Carolyn McCaskill’s presentation already said everything that needed to be said and I feel like I can sit down and watch as a spectator. But I’m going to go ahead with this presentation, drawing from my “teaching experience” perspective. Yes, I am one of that 2.5%. I am also a first year PhD student. During my research, I noticed that 95% of Culturally Deaf and hard of hearing people have hearing families, but I wondered what is the percentage of Black Deaf people with hearing families? I’m curious about that. There is a need for documented research about that.

What is the percentage of Latinx Deaf with hearing families? I want more accurate details instead of the general standard 95% Deaf. This paucity of data needs to end. Honestly, what I am about to say, I’m going to keep real with you all, okay? I am not here to attack; I am speaking one hundred percent facts. You feel me, right? Okay.

[15:04 – Slide 11]

Yep, there are not enough Black Deaf teachers, unfortunately. But, has there been investment in Black Deaf teachers who have potential – showing them support and training them to prepare to take the test? Also helping to pay for their tests, and uplifting them? This will take a while, but at the same time now, we cannot change overnight. It's not like all of a sudden, we will get a one hundred percent increase in Black Deaf teachers tomorrow. That's impossible. Glennis Matthew will be presenting later. I used to work with her as she was a science teacher at that time (at the Atlanta Area School for the Deaf) and Reggie Bess was a math teacher. The three of us just happened to be Black Deaf teachers with certifications and licenses, and there were several other Black Deaf people working at the Atlanta Area School for the Deaf as well. That school is in the culturally Black city of Atlanta. Wow, I am really proud to have worked there for 14 years as what I saw at my workplace really helped inspire me to study for a PhD, focusing on Black and Brown Deaf people.

Now what does language acquisition look like for the Black Deaf community? Academic BASL, what is it supposed to be like? Do we need to change our signing style, facial expression to meet the standard of Academic ASL, the white Deaf way of signing? What does the Black Deaf way look like? I want to study that area, that's why I went ahead to study for my PhD.

I want to let you know that I am tired, but I am going to persevere for the next future generation. I have to do this because who else will do it?

Okay, next slide.

Please go ahead on the next slide.

[16:32 - Slide 12]

You see Laurene's published work on epistemology. Are you aware that for many years, hearing people always decided and made decisions on what is best for Deaf children? Also, they (hearing people) decide on what strategies on bilingual learning would work for the Deaf children such as reading, writing, reception, speech therapy, cochlear implant, etc. They always make authoritarian decisions for Deaf people and Deaf people despise that, right?

Would you let hearing people make the decision for you? You (Deaf people) be like "Whoa! Hold up, no! I know what's best for myself and Deaf people because of my upbringing and experience as a Deaf person," right? That's the same concept for Black Deaf people because we know what's best for Black Deaf children in the Deaf education system. This is not up to debate and don't challenge us (Black Deaf) because we know what's best for them (Black Deaf children).

Next slide.

[17:20 – Slide 13]

The research shows that- wait, let me go back. Let me ask you all a question - How many of you experience having a white Deaf teacher? Raise your hands. White teacher? It should be all hands up. Let me repeat the question again. How many of you had a white Deaf teacher in Kindergarten, K-12, or college? Almost all, now put your hands down. How many of you experience having a Black Deaf teacher? I see few people, I can count with my hands since the numbers are few, wow. Can you imagine that Black Deaf children don't have a language model where they can look up to Black Deaf teachers who look like them? None of them had experience of having role models to look up to. This has a significant impact on Black Deaf children, as they lack role models and language models. When they don't see anyone who resembles them succeeding in their academic journey, it can lead them toward destructive paths such as the streets, incarceration, drug use, and reliance on SSI.

Honestly, I want to express my pride and I am proud that there are 4 students, all Black and all Black Deaf Gallaudet students who will be graduating this May. I taught them from elementary school to middle school to high school, and now they are graduating from Gallaudet University with a Bachelor's Degree! I am so inspired!

Also, one more thing, this year, 2023, – you all are familiar with Gallaudet's Bison song. I will talk about one of the students I used to teach and tried to convince this student to perform the Bison song. That student scoffed at me and said, "No! I don't want to!" I told the student, it'll be fun, so I tried to encourage, expose and teach the student. I recently saw her performing the Bison song during Gallaudet Homecoming and I was really proud of this former student! I was overwhelmed with pride as the student led the cheers (with Bison Song) and it was deeply touching.

The research indicates that having either Black Deaf or hearing with Black teachers to look up to as role models can significantly impact their motivation to thrive academically.

There is a technical problem with the next slide. Next slide please.

[19:30 – Slide 14]

I'm curious, have you watched Dr. Laurene Simms's webinar that happened around 2 or 3 years ago, I think? The webinar called: "Is ASL too white?" - Have you watched it? Okay, Dr. Carolyn McCaskill, Dr. Joseph Hill, Dr. Rezenet Moges-Riedel were involved as panelists, and they confirmed that: Yes! ASL is too white! Yes, this is a fact, because I am a Black Deaf ASL instructor and taught Black and Brown students (Deaf) ASL course, the white way. As I

was teaching for 10 years, I was uncomfortable then the last 4 years I was furious and pissed off. I will elaborate more later.

Okay, you see the word “Creole”, which means a mixture of various languages. America declared that ASL was created and established here, but no, that is not entirely true.

ASL is influenced by different sign languages such as Martha’s Vineyard Sign Language, Black Sign Language (BASL), Mexican Sign Language, Indigenous American Sign Language, French Sign Language, and others. 75% of ASL were influenced by French Sign Language.

Next slide.

[21:02 – Slide 15]

I want to take the opportunity to show BASL’s timeline and history, such as how BASL first came up. Dr. Carolyn McCaskill explained it beautifully and Dr. Joseph Hill explained the history depth (of BASL) beautifully as well. Many people discussed how the American School for Deaf (ASD) was finally established in 1817 in Hartford, Connecticut. Black Deaf students were not allowed to enroll in ASD because of their Blackness, unfortunately.

****[Editors note:** *The Center for Black Studies (CBDS) Research Scholar and Interim co-Director Mr. Lindsay Dunn points out that Charles Hiller enrolled at ASD in 1825 and there were several other Black Deaf students at ASD in the 19th Century (Burch, 2002 & Sayers (2018). The first Black Deaf student to receive a formal education, Horace Crawford, enrolled at the New York School for the Deaf with the first cohort of students when it opened in 1818].*

I want to explain BSL as Black Sign Language, not British Sign Language. ASL had no influence on the BSL where it originated in the 1600s. How did BSL originate during the 1600s? Through the slavery era, when the white colonizers went to Africa and stole Black people and transported them to America to build the capitalist economy, not realizing that they already had Black Deaf slaves already with their own sign language. We need to do more research on what exactly sign language the slaves use and document it.

****[Editors note:** *An ethno bibliography done by M. Miles reports the existence of sign language in Africa as far back as 960CE. However, its development among African slaves and generations following them is yet to be studied in detail so as to understand the development of an entirely different form of sign language within segregated schools for Black Deaf in the southern states in the 19th century]*

In the 1600s BSL was already established through the US nation, though each state had their own variations. Back then there was no kind of technology video to record and document these languages. In 1817, Indigenous people already had over 12 sign languages in their native homeland here in America. It's amazing that Indigenous had over 12 sign language variants. When entering the American School for the Deaf (ASD), if any of the students (Indigenous) used any Indigenous sign languages they would be severely punished. Your language would have been destroyed and eradicated. The Indigenous (Deaf) people were forced to be submissive and match white ASL, although during that time, it was more so called "sign language," not ASL. Sign language was taught by Laurent Clerc for many years.

Where are the Black Deaf students? Where did they go? There is not enough documentation history about them. In the 1970s, I had to hail the Queen of BASL, Dr. Carolyn McCaskill. I reminisce about when I was an ASL teacher at that time when I was required to attend the ASL Round Table (ASLTA) conference in Arkansas. I frequently attended ASLTA conferences in the past but ASLTA in Arkansas (November 7th-9th, 2018) was one the best and top conferences I ever attended because I felt home as there were a lot of Black Deaf scholars and speakers. Wow!

I remember Dr. Carolyn McCaskill was presenting along with Dr. Joseph Hill on BASL and how it originated and the historical background. I was sitting in the audience watching just like you, I was nonchalant and chatting with the person sitting next to me who was also a Black Deaf ASL teacher just like me. She's Jamaican from, I think she's from New York – I don't remember as my memory is not cooperating with me. Anyways, she's somewhere from New York, we both were chatting with each other while Dr. Carolyn McCaskill presented and said we need more Black Deaf BASL researchers. She pointed at me while I was sitting in the audience and declared, "Candace Jones, come on and get your PhD." I was like, – excuse my language, – hell no! I am not doing a PhD!

For those people who know me, they know I was a young single mother as a Gallaudet student. I had small children when I was 18-20 years old, and I struggled to navigate. Some people in the audience who know me, know that I was in survival mode and barely making it through, relying on my friends' support so I can go to classes. I didn't have a caretaker as I was poor and broke.

Despite barely surviving, I made it to graduate with a Bachelor's degree and Master's degree, and now you want me to take PhD? Whew, I am DONE and retired but was contemplating.

Then BLM (Black Lives Matter) really impacted me as it put me in a different lens, and I realized that I actually experience double deprivation. Language deprivation, as I was born hearing and became Deaf at age of three and since I had no early intervention language support from my mom and family. I was on my own to begin language acquisition in the 80s,

and I struggled to navigate through it. Cultural deprivation, as I attended Deaf School, and they didn't teach anything about Black Deaf studies or history, I mean nothing. As I just nonchalantly nodded my head as I looked at the book and I saw white based information, as Dr. Laurene Simms would say – "Columbus came to America," –oh okay. I behaved like Deaf Power, Deaf way, fluently ASL.

To be honest with you, Reggie Bess, Glennis Matthews, my former teachers, and my students tremendously changed my perspectives on my signing. Where I work, we provide services to 33 counties. This one student was a day student which meant they didn't reside in the dorms and went home every day when school was done. One day, that student came into the school and gave me an attitude, asking me if I was hearing. I looked at the student perplexed and replied, "No, I am Deaf." The student looked shocked and said – you don't look like you're Deaf, because you dress professionally with heels, hair on the point and lipstick on. I asked the student, "Do you mean that Deaf people are supposed to dress like bums?" The student replied, "Yes that's what Deaf typically look like." That was interesting because I grew up with my Black family from South Atlanta, Georgia and Florida. My family had high expectations when it came to our appearances, as we had to look good all the time, okay? That's how I was taught growing up.

The student goes – "You mean... Black Deaf people do dress like that, and you graduated from college?" I said "Yes, I graduated from college." The student asked, "Where did you graduate from?" I said, "Gallaudet University." The student asked, "What's Gallaudet?" I realized the student was not aware of it, so I explained what Gallaudet was. The student insulted me, saying, "You sign fluent ASL, like white people." I said to myself, perplexed, "Me – white?" Because of my sign style. No, I am Black! Blackity Black. But why did the student insult me, saying that I'm "like" white? I realized that it was because there were not enough Black Deaf role models that signed fluent ASL like me.

I recall looking back on growing up attending a Deaf school. There were many teachers, all of whom were white Deaf. All the teachers graduated from Gallaudet University. I was taught by them, and my mind was colonized, I'll admit it. I suffered from the colonization of the mind as my signing was heavily influenced by whiteness. Laurene Simms influenced me to sign it this way: whiteness-on-the-hands. I realized, yes, I do use white ASL, and I'll admit that I am proud of it. Yes, I am proud of it, but I realized I need to adapt my signing and incorporate my Black identity and my Deaf identity as I feel good about my cultures. My cultural identities are Black culture and Deaf culture – both of these are incorporated in one, as I am both.

Now there is more research on modern BASL since it is a hot topic, as Dr. Carolyn McCaskill has commented about African American Vernacular English (AAVE), which comes from

hearing families, as they pronounce various word choices that influence modern BASL signers.

For example, “I ain’t playing” (AAVE), while Deaf ASL would sign “finish-stop.” While Black (Deaf) people don’t sign that, they would sign “I ain’t playing!” (BASL).

My grandmother famously said, “You know I don’t ... play!” sternly.

Another example, “I’m down” (AAVE) which means sure, I want to go out. “I’m DOWN!” (BASL).

Another example, if you understand the person you would say “Oh right, right I understand what you mean” in ASL, while in BASL “I feel you, ya, I feel you,” you feel me, right?

Another example, that’s champ, that’s awesome, that’s the best (ASL), while BASL would sign “Oh! That’s lit!”

This is what the research has been about with modern BASL. However, does the research meet the standards of academic BASL? This makes me wonder. That’s why I’m working on a PhD, as I am curious while researching the stories and history on how BASL originated during the segregated Deaf school era. Each school has their own sign language and their own dialects – they need more research data information.

Next slide.

[28:38 – Slide 16]

I’m curious to ask, do you guys remember growing up and taking English courses during elementary, middle and high school? Your teacher grades and criticizes the paper with a red pen. Remember that? Being criticized ruthlessly while trying to learn English grammar rules?

Honestly, ASL is very strongly white-centric as white people decide what the “correct” ASL is supposed to look like, analyzing and criticizing ASL, when none of us have taken an ASL course growing up. Is that fair? No, no. Today the ASL curriculum is designed, published, structured, for who? Hearing people, not Deaf people. And now you want to criticize our signing skills? No, I don’t think so.

[29:40 – Slide 17]

There is no ASL curriculum designed and published for Deaf and hard of hearing across the United States. The Heritage Sign Languages Center (HSLC) here on Gallaudet University. This program (HSLC) is intended to serve all multicultural communities including Deaf, DeafBlind, Deaf disabled, hard of hearing and hearing allies. It also serves: 1. Family, 2. Education and 3. Community. The HSLC educator team has been working hard toward the goal of having the first in history ASL curriculum. This curriculum involves multicultural perspectives for all Deaf and hard of hearing to use for language acquisition.

Dr. Laurene Simms and I, Candace Jones, our presentations and stories were very touching. There is a quote I would like to share from Martin Luther King's wife, Coretta King, who is a political activist. She stated: "Struggle is a never-ending process. Freedom is never really won; you earn it and win it in every generation."

This is why HSLC was established to lift every voice for underrepresented groups including Black and Brown families, education, professional and community collaboration. I hope you will join our important work, with the goal to acknowledge heritage, language, culture, and identity. This needs to be celebrated and felt proudly, with a sense of belonging, which is essential.

PUBLICATION TEAM

Patrick Boudreault, Executive Editor
Rezenet Moges-Riedel, Co-Editor
Lissa Ramirez-Stapleton, Co-Editor
Megan Konstandtinidis, Assistant Editor
Brenna Smith, Assistant Editor

Carolyn McCaskill, CBDS Director
Lindsay Dunn, CBDS Scholar Fellow
Evon Black, CBDS Associate Director
Kristina McKinnie, CBDS Assistant

Theodore Doresette III, Lead Videographer
Cem Barutcu, Videographer
Amelia Palmer, Videographer
JC Smith, Videographer
Blue20 LLC, Editing and Transcript

PUBLICATION FUNDING

This symposium proceeding was made possible with generous financial support from Sorenson Communications and Gallaudet University; The Office of the Provost, and Gesture Literacy Knowledge Studio.