

Deafhood: Your Journey

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Deafhood Concept



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Message from Paddy Ladd

Our Deafhood Journey

Museum of deafness

Reflection

Define the sign 'DEAF'
(in English: the generic word 'deaf')



(without reference to 'hearing')

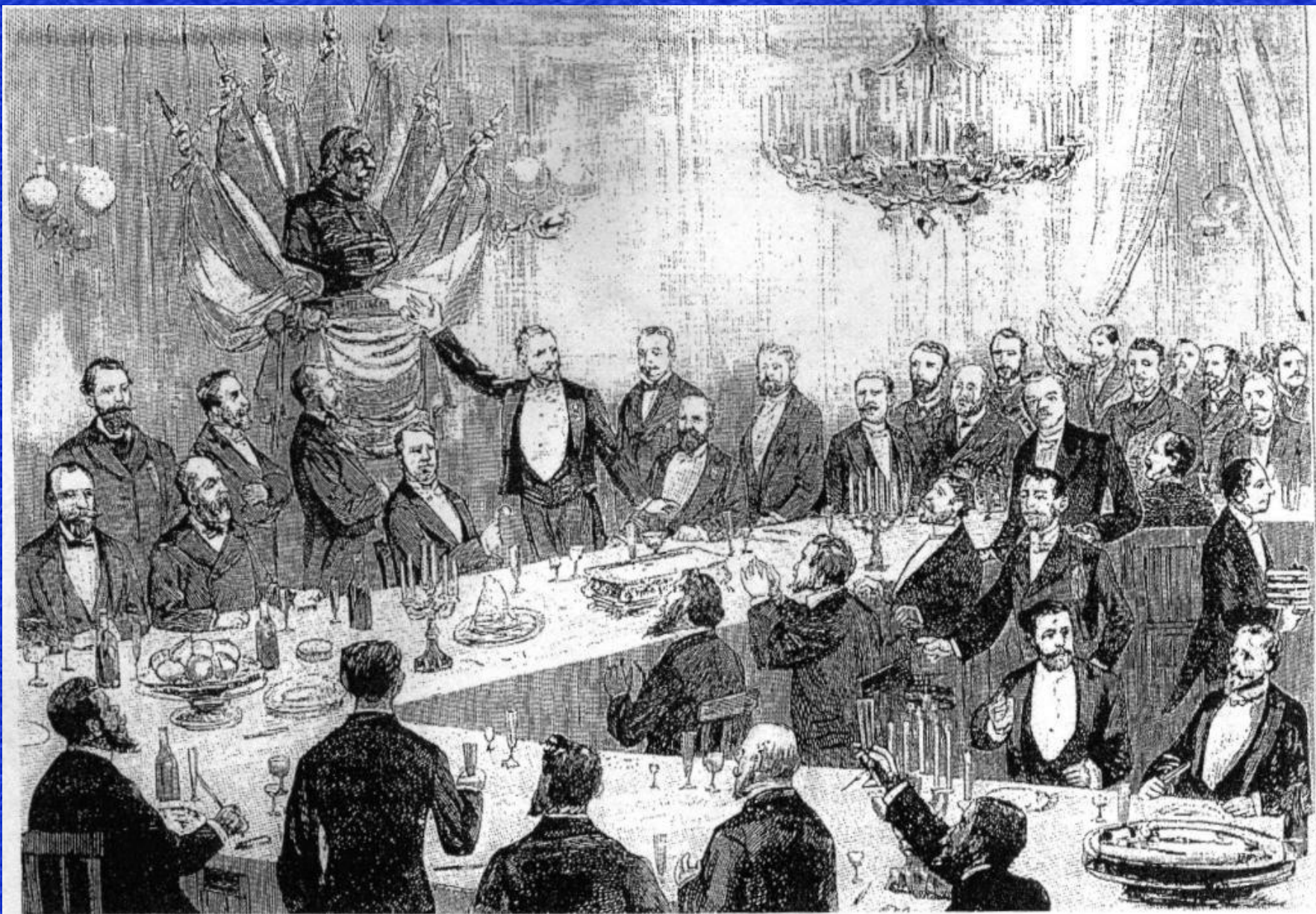
*“...today’s problems cannot be
solved without a sound
understanding of the past.”*

Tage Erlander
Sweden’s former Prime Minister

The Deaf World Before 1880

The Paris Deaf School

- Established by l'Epee in 1700's
- Birthplace of academic and formal Deaf and Sign Language community
- Results



The Parisian Deaf banquets from 1840 onwards have bequeathed to us indications of a more powerful vision of Deafhood, Deaf spirituality and Deaf Nation politics, existing before the rise of Oralism. (From Fischer & Lane, 1993)

The Paris Banquets

- Deaf speeches aimed to illustrate the highest levels of Deaf philosophies
- Influential hearing persons invited
- Most speeches translated to French and printed



Ferdinand Berthier

Excerpts from the Records

“[Sign Language] easily wins out over all the separate limiting languages of speaking humanity... Our language encompasses all nations, the entire globe.”

Pre-Milan Discourse

...an “incomplete” man according to these [Deaf] gentlemen, a “wretch” deprived of the language of mimicry...having to resort to a pencil to converse with the evening’s heroes. An expression of ineffable pity could be read on their faces at his approach.

-Mottez

Tenets of Paris Banquets' Discourse

- Deaf people were highly literate in English and other languages
- Sign Languages cross international boundaries
- Signing is a gift to hearing people
- Deaf's existence should not be called into question
- Deaf people have the potential to become the world's first truly global citizens

By the 1870s, Deaf people...

- established and administered schools
- edited hearing newspapers
- were artists and publishers

Gallaudet University

- Established in 1864
- Result of Paris school and Clerc's training
- Deaf people were highly literate in English and other languages

BUT...

“The deaf believe that they are our equals in all respects. We should be generous and not destroy that illusion. But whatever they believe, deafness is an infirmity and we should repair it whether the person who has it is disturbed by it or not.”

-Propser Meniere (1855)

September 1880

**International Congress on
Education of the Deaf
Milan, Italy**

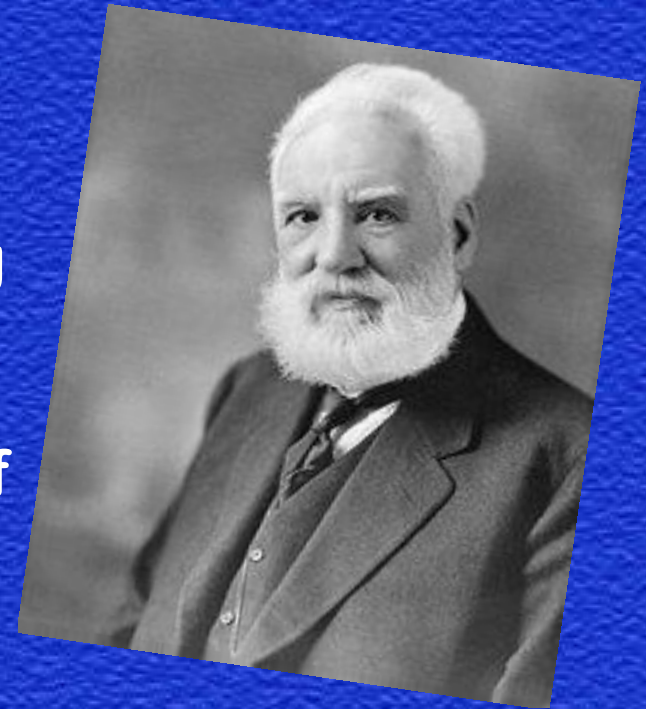
1880: The Milan Conference

- 164 delegates in attendance
- Only 1 Deaf in attendance
(James Denison- Kendall School principal)
- “...the Pure Oral Method ought to be preferred” ... passed with only six in opposition

(James Denison, Edward Miner Gallaudet, his brother Thomas Gallaudet, Isaac Lewis Peet, Charles Stoddard, & Richard Elliott- a British teacher)

Alexander Graham Bell

- Advocated oral education
- Claimed to invent a telephone while trying to make a hearing aid
- In 1921, honorary president of the Second International Congress of Eugenics



<http://www.italianhistorical.org/MeucciStory.htm>
http://www.esanet.it/chez_basilio/us_bell.htm

We should try ourselves to forget that they are deaf. We should try to teach them to forget that they are deaf.

Alexander Graham Bell (1884)

I admit the ease with which a deaf child acquires sign language and its perfect adaptability for the purpose of developing his mind; but after all it is not the language of the million of people among who his lot is cast.

- Alexander Graham Bell (1884)

Colonialism

Colonialism

The destruction and replacement of indigenous cultures by powerful cultures:

- Language
- Way of thinking and acting
- Conception of world and society
- Values

Colonialism of the Deaf World: 1880-present

Colonialism of the Deaf World

- Teacher training programs
- Science
- Technology
- Education
- Parent discourses
- Research funds

Colonialism

The colonialist mind may be impervious to most forms of logic.

- Paddy Ladd

Colonizing American Deaf Education

- 1880- the Milan Conference
- 1882- 7.5% of students taught orally
- 1900- 47%
- 1905- 51%
- 1919- 80% (approximately)

The Rise of Oralism

After 1880: a sharp decline in...

- Educated Deaf people
- Deaf teachers & administrators
- Deaf people with high-level occupations
- Deaf people with language

Post-Milan Discourse

Since Oralism was everywhere, Deaf discourses were now limited to...

- defending sign language
- defending the Deaf existence

Reflection

Envision a current Deaf World where
128 years of Oralism never happened

Effects of Colonialism

Other Characteristics of Colonialism

- *Systematic* development
- Colonizing society delegates work of running colonies to 'specialists'

In Deaf colonization, these are drawn from:

- Scientists
- Medical Professionals
- Educators

Effects of Colonialism

As a result of the fragmentation caused by colonialism...it has created minorities within our minority group...

- Differing languages and communication systems
- Differing attitudes and behavior...leading to aggression and conflict towards one another.

Effects of Colonialism

Deaf communities' energies are spent in two directions at once;

1- external; defending gains or resisting oppression

2- internal; rebuilding and strengthening the community by making explicit its cultural beliefs

Subsistence Level

The effect of colonialism...reduced Deaf communities to a kind of “*subsistence level*”

- Sports organizations OK
- Political & artistic domains damaged
- Our club, organizational experiences

Effects of Colonialism

“When Deaf children receive such shamefully oppressive education, it is not only the individual who is damaged, but the community (as well).”

“Oppression visited on Deaf children is in fact a double oppression.”

Colonialism's #1 Success

The most important success of colonialism is NOT “Deaf versus hearing”, but setting...

Deaf against Deaf!

Pockets of Resistance (1880 - 1960's)

- Gallaudet University
- Associations of the Deaf
- NAD's films (1910's)
- Deaf clubs
- “1001 Victories”
- Deaf mutes (added by E. Lentz)

Critical Examination

Critical Examination

Unexamined Examined

Blaming the Victim

“victim-blamer” - “victim”

Deficit Thinking

Deficit thinking is tantamount to the process of 'blaming the victim'. It is a model founded on imputation, not documentation.

Valencia R. (Ed.) (1997) *The Evolution of Deficit Thinking: Educational Thought and Practice*. Washington, DC: The Falmer Press.

Theory of Deficit Thinking

- Blaming the victim
- Oppression
- Pseudoscience
- Temporal changes
- Educability

A child may sign a lot of information and get it right, but get criticized for signing it. Yet for just pronouncing two words correctly, they get praised. That leads to an obsession with “getting it right”, but only with regard to very small things. Or big things will be picked apart for very small reasons, or there is an obsession with small details of procedure, not the wider picture.

- a Deaf community member in UK

deafness \neq Deafhood

“The unexamined life is not worth living.”

- Socrates

Dimension

A level of consciousness, existence, or reality.

DEAFHOOD!

Linguistic Minority

Human Rights

Social Welfare

Medical

Medical

Medical Dimension (deafness)

- **Deaf person = helpless isolated hearing-impaired person**
- **Goal = restore that person to society through technology and Oralism**



Social Welfare

Medical

Social Welfare Dimension

- **Aims to solve “problems of deafness”**
- **Sees Deaf person as a client or a reason for charity**

Human Rights

Social Welfare

Medical

Human Rights Dimension

- Aims for equal opportunities (“access”)
- Supports disability discrimination legislation (i.e. ADA)

Audism

Institutionalized prejudices based on auditory and speech competency.



Linguistic Minority

Human Rights

Social Welfare

Medical

Linguistic Minority Dimension

- Sees oralism as genocide or ethnocide
- Aims for bilingualism (natural Sign Language and written system of majority language)

Linguicism

Linguicism is a language-based form of audism.

DEAFHOOD!

Linguistic Minority

Human Rights

Social Welfare

Medical

Deafhood Dimension

Recognizes and preserves Deaf people's potential and desire in collective sense.

Deafhood Dimension

Realizes the Deafhood experience has much to offer to:

humanity,

science,

academy, and

Deaf people now and in the future.

Reflection

From which dimension(s) does your Deaf organization operate?

DEAFHOOD!

Linguistic Minority

Human Rights

Social Welfare

Medical

Medical

Social Welfare

Human Rights

Linguistic Minority

Deafhood

Deafhood

- A term to counter the central colonizing term of 'deafness'
- A term which reflects the true reality of our experience
- Deafhood represents all the possible ways of being Deaf, past, present or future, regardless of oppression's limitations.

deafness vs. Deafhood

- Medically oriented term; a state
- Condition
- Abnormality
- Individualism
- Diagnosed
- Handicap

- A process, not a state
- Cultural and linguistic
- Normality
- Collectivism
- Recognized
- Beliefs & values

Liberation

Colonial liberation or independence
cannot be successful without the
de-colonization of the mind.

- Wa Thiong'O

Liberation

Deafhood = a process to de-colonize our mind, body, and spirit from colonialism.

Discourse

Discourse

... the world is not simply 'there' to be talked about, rather, it is through discourse itself that the world is brought into being...

Post-Milan Discourse

Virtually all discourses about Deaf people have been conceived, controlled, and written by people who were not themselves Deaf.

Oralist Discourse

- Voice = living soul
- Deaf = animals
- Deaf = ‘disgraced beings of nature’
- “Virtual unanimity of preference for oral teaching”

The crucial moment of this transformation was colonialism.

Framing

Frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world.

Reflection

“deafness”
“hearing loss”
“angry-crazy”
“attack”
“militant-radical”
“too Deaf”
“too much ASL”
“must neutral”
“parents decide”

“Deafhood”
“Deaf”
“passionate”
“challenge”
“activist”
“Deaf-centered”
“ASL=English”
“clear position”
“healthy family”

Reframing

Reframing is changing the way public sees the world.

Paradigm Shift

deafness



Deafhood

deficit thinking



possibility thinking

unexamined



examined

Establishing Our Center

“Once a clearly positioned ‘center’ is established, then refinements can be made.”

Deafhood Resurgence 1960's and on

Resurgence of Deafhood

- Proliferation of signing among lay people
- Increased number of Deaf “grassroots” in academic fields, especially in ASL and Deaf Studies fields
- Changing public perception of ASL and Deaf people (Lane, Sacks, etc.)
- Deaf centered bilingual-bicultural education gains credibility

Resurgence of Deafhood

Increase in...

- Signing Deaf people in leadership positions
- Deaf owned businesses
- TV programs, films, and plays with Deaf people
- Books and films by Deaf people
- Vlogging and blogging by Deaf people

BUT...

Backlash from Oralism

- Mainstreaming
- Closing of Deaf schools
- Restricting Deaf leaders and teachers
- Cochlear Implants
- Genetic engineering

Effects of Backlash

Yanking discourses back to a sense of *desperation*, rather than *(re)discovery*.

Effects of Backlash

Today's Snapshot

- 69% of families don't sign
- 84% of schools don't use language
- Only 10% of schools use languages
- 76% of children are schooled alone
- 66% are un- or under-employed
- Only 6% of teacher programs are bilingual

Deafhood Values Challenged

- *“Why should we be allowed to continue being born?”*
- *“Is our existence a biological mistake?”*
- *“Or have some larger forces ensured our presence in human diversity?”*

- Paddy Ladd, 2005

**What Do We Do
Now?**

Deafhood Activism

- Be collective and vigilant
- Examine and understand colonialism
- Oralism recognized as a *child abuse*
- Appreciate our allies
- Alliances not compromises
- Honor our Deafhood heroes
- De-colonize the Deaf community!

*“Where there is no vision,
the people perish...”*

Proverbs 29:18

A Deafhood vision for a world...

*where being Deaf is celebrated
and never condemned.*

Adapted from California Association of the Deaf's Letter to Gallaudet Board of Trustees.

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A Deafhood vision for a world...

*where academic excellence
in a natural Sign Language is
critical and never compromised.*

Adapted from California Association of the Deaf's Letter to Gallaudet Board of Trustees.

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A Deafhood vision for a world...

*where Deaf-related concerns
are "heard" and never ignored.*

Adapted from California Association of the Deaf's Letter to Gallaudet Board of Trustees.

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A Deafhood vision for a world...

*where false divisions among
Deaf people are discarded and
natural diversity is embraced.*

Adapted from California Association of the Deaf's Letter to Gallaudet Board of Trustees.

Embrace Deafhood now...

*so our future generations can
dream big,
think deep,
sign freely,
and walk proudly as Deaf people.*

Adapted from California Association of the Deaf's Letter to Gallaudet Board of Trustees.

Thank You!!!

www.deafhood.us