

ASL NEWS

Volume 13, Issue 1

Fall 2011

Welcome Back to School

Just that quick, summer vacation is over and school is in session again. Welcome to all the new and returning students! The ASL department begins the 2011-12 year with some changes. Cheri Smith retired at the end of the spring semester in May. Smith taught at BCC and Vista for many years. She is one of the authors of the Signing Naturally curriculum and a founder of the ASL program here. She may return in the future to teach part-time but for now isn't on the schedule.

We are offering an afternoon ASL 1 class, which we only have done once before a number of years ago. The time proved to be popular and the class filled up completely. Due to budget cuts, however, we are only offering one section of ASL 3 this semester and ASL 4 is not being offered until spring 2012.

The college homework lab relocated at the end of the spring semester to room 125 on the first floor in the Learning Resources Center. In addition to providing tutoring sessions and hosting a computer usage area, the organizers hope to have other supplemental instruction workshops this term.

Peralta students who need to commute between the College of Alameda and Laney College/Lake Merritt BART can now ride the new, free Estuary Crossing Shuttle. The shuttle, which runs about every 30 minutes on weekdays, has room for 24 riders and up to 13 bicycles. The project is funded by a one-year grant

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The Black ASL Project

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

Editor's Note: ASL does not have a written form, therefore signs are represented in writing with glosses, as you will see in this article. "Gloss" is a linguistics term that means representing one language with another language's written characters, like a transcription. A gloss is not a translation; it is only a label. Glosses for signs are typically written in all capital letters.

Without a doubt, the question asked most frequently by laypersons as they turn their attention to sign languages and Deaf communities is whether sign language is universal, i.e., whether there exists only one sign language that is known and used by Deaf people all over the world.

The answer, which is most often greeted with surprise, is that there is no universal sign language in the sense that the questioner intends it. That is, there have been attempts to devise and implement systems that can be understood by deaf people in situations such as international conferences, with decidedly mixed results. But there is no one naturally occurring universal sign language to which all deaf people somehow have access.

Not only are there basically as many sign languages as there are viable deaf communities—sign languages that exist alongside the spoken languages of the majority communities—these sign languages are also differentiated internally according to social criteria, in the same way that spoken languages are.

That is, sociolinguistic varieties of sign languages exist, and the social factors that help define these varieties



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Events & Announcements

Three Free Places to Park Your Bicycle in

Downtown Berkeley. 1. BCC Bike Room. Enter the building through the main doors and take the elevator on your left down to the ground floor. Do not bring bikes up or down on the stairs. 2. Across the street from BCC at the City Garage. **Also FREE vehicle parking for people with disabilities available here.** 3. At the Downtown Berkeley Bike Station at 2208 Shattuck Avenue, just beyond the intersection of Shattuck and Allston Way. Minimal fees may apply for night parking. (510) 548-7433 or bartbikestation.com.

Information about local Deaf events is available at DCARA's web site, dcara.org and click on "events". One-time and on-going events are listed as well as a captioned movie finder.

ASL COFFEE SOCIALS

Antioch. 1st Friday of the month 7-11 pm. Starbucks, 5779 Lone Tree Way #G in the Slatten Ranch Shopping Center (across from Target). For more information: melissachildcare@gmail.com.

Berkeley. 2nd Friday of the month, 7-10 pm. Royal Grounds Coffee & Tea, 2409 Shattuck Avenue. For more information: Daniel at pah_daniel@aol.com or Pam at pmbrawl@aol.com.

San Francisco #1. 1st & 3rd Fridays of the month, 6:05-9:05 pm. Starbucks at 2727 Mariposa Street, near KQED. For more information: sanfranasclub@gmail.com.

San Francisco #2. Every Thursday 6-8:30 pm. ASL Cafe by Project Insight. Moscone Recreation Center, 1800 Chestnut Street. For more information, including changes, cancellations, moves, etc.: contactpi@sfgov.org or projectinsight.org.

San Francisco #3. Deaf LGBT. 1st Friday of the month, 6-8 pm. Cafe Flore, 2298 Market Street, San Francisco (across from LookOut). For more information go to <http://rlsdbayarea.googlepages.com/calendar>. All hearing and deaf LGBTIQ and straight folks are welcome.

Santa Rosa. Meets every Sunday at 10 am at Aroma Roasters at Railroad Square on 4th Street.

Vallejo. 1st Wednesday of the month, 7-11 pm. Starbucks at 400 Lincoln Road East. Contact: tatobud@sbcglobal.net

ASL MEETUP GROUPS

Berkeley/Oakland. meetup.com/Berkeley-Oakland-ASL-Meet/

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include those that play a role in spoken language variation—region, age, gender, socioeconomic status, race—and others that are unique to language use in Deaf communities, such as the language policies implemented in deaf education and the home environment (e.g. Deaf parents in an ASL-signing home versus hearing parents in a non-signing home).

The Black ASL Project, sponsored by the Spencer Foundation and the National Science Foundation,

began in 2007 with two goals: 1) to determine if specific linguistic

features could be identified to characterize the signing of the black

Deaf community as a distinct variety of American Sign

Language; 2) to describe the sociohistorical reality that

would make the emergence of this variety possible.



While there is abundant anecdotal evidence that Black ASL exists, and while studies have examined lexical differences between ASL used by black signers and the ASL used by white signers, no large-scale empirical studies have documented the linguistic features unique to Black ASL.

As of this writing, we have clear empirical evidence for one such variety of ASL, the tactile ASL used by deaf-blind signers, distinct in its phonology, morphosyntax, lexicon and discourse structure from “sighted ASL.”

Yet, although there is a widespread perception in the American Deaf community of the existence of Black ASL, and mostly anecdotal reports that it is as distinct from the ASL used by white signers as African American vernacular English is from middle-class white English, empirical descriptions of Black ASL based on natural language use data did not exist.

The formal education of deaf children began in the United States with the founding of the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1817. Schools for deaf children were never formally segregated in the North, but education was not allowed for black deaf children in the South until 1869, when the first school was opened in Raleigh, North Carolina.

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San Francisco. [meetup.com/asl-204/](https://www.meetup.com/asl-204/)

Vallejo Bible Church of the Deaf. Sunday and Friday services. 1640 Broadway Street, Vallejo. For more information: vallejodeafchurch@yahoo.com; vallejodeafchurch.org

Hands On Travel tours. Small group tours in ASL. 2011 tours are full, some 2012 tours have places remaining. Locations include: Thailand, Japan, Italy, Honduras, France & Spain, Costa Rica, China, Russia, Finland and the Baltics, and Peru. Hands On Travel has partnered with Aqua Hands to offer scuba tours! For more information and a listing of all tours go to handsontvl.com

Julie Rems-Smario has resigned as the executive director at DeafHope to take a position at the California School for the Deaf Outreach Department. She will continue to serve on the DeafHope board of directors. The board is currently searching for a new executive director. The interim director will be Trina Licht. You can see Rems-Smario's farewell video and a message from the board at deaf-hope.org.

DeafHope's 10th Annual Tea Party. September 25, 1-6 pm at Barone's, 475 St. John Street, Pleasanton. Fund raising event. Tickets: \$75 per person, payable by PayPal or check. See details at deaf-hope.org

Oktoberfest. October 1, 4-9 pm. Deaf Community Center, 1550 San Leandro Blvd., San Leandro. Food, games, auction, beer, DJ, Miss Oktoberfest and more! Ages 21 and over only. Admission: \$35 before Sept. 23; \$40 starting Sept. 29. For more information: info@dca.org or (510) 343-6670 VP/voice. Buy tickets at dca.org or in person at 14895 E. 14th Street, Suite 200, San Leandro.

Deaf Nation Expo. October 8, 9 am-5 pm. Trade show for, by, and about deaf people with entertainment and workshops. Alameda County Fairgrounds, 4501 Pleasanton Avenue, Pleasanton, CA 94566. Free admission. deafnation.com

DeafHope Annual Charity Golf Tournament. October 9. Tournament at 1:30 pm; dinner at 6 pm. Metropolitan Golf Links, 10051 Doolittle Drive, Oakland. Entry fee per golfer: \$125; dinner only: \$40. More information: deaf-hope.org.

A Feast for the Eyes. October 15, 6 pm light refreshments, 7 pm show. Performances in ASL to include stories,

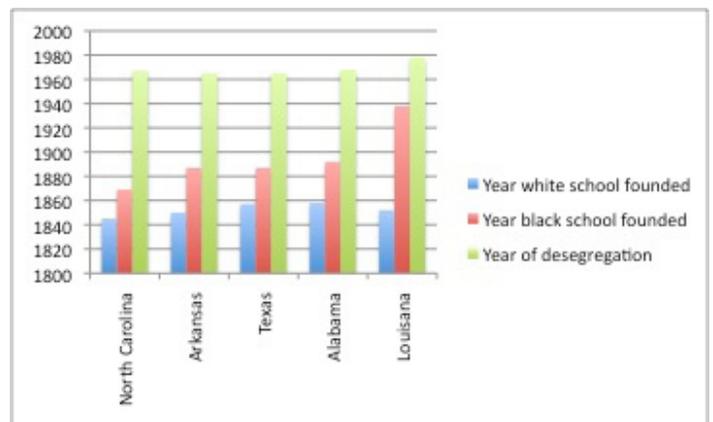
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Sixteen other Southern states and the District of Columbia established schools for black deaf children, the last one being Louisiana in 1938. Most resisted the integration mandated by *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, finally allowing desegregation in the mid-1960s, with Louisiana desegregating in 1978.

Given the importance of residential schools in the transmission of ASL and the long history of segregation of black and white deaf children in the South, the region possessed the social conditions necessary for the development of a separate language variety.

Between the founding of the first school for black deaf children in 1856, and the time when schools for the deaf were all finally desegregated in the late 1970s, black deaf children and adults did not interact with white deaf children and adults on a regular basis. In some areas, they still do not interact today. This sociohistorical reality allowed for the emergence of a distinct variety of ASL.



To conduct our research, the project team filmed free conversations and interviews with 96 signers in 6 of the 17 states that had schools for black Deaf children—North Carolina, Alabama, Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana and Virginia—and these data were used for the linguistic analysis.

The signers included individuals over the age of 55 who, by definition, attended segregated schools, and individuals under the age of 35, who attended integrated and/or mainstreamed schools, such that their white classmates might have been both deaf and hearing. The analysis identified a number of linguistic features that distinguish this variety and also shows that, as a result of integration and mainstreaming, the variety is changing.

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poetry, jokes and sign play. Tickets: \$10 general admission; \$7 elementary-high school students; \$7 senior citizens if purchased in advance; prices higher at the door. Tickets available from CSD Outreach, Cottage 18 or deafmedia.org/events/events.htm. Voice interpreting provided. For information: Cheryl Boyd at cboyd@csdf-cde.ca.gov or (510) 344-6076 VP or Susan Rutherford at drsr@deafmedia.org or (510) 841-0163 or -1065 TTY.

The Anderson Twins. October 21, 7 pm. Klopping Theatre, California School for the Deaf in Fremont, 39350 Gallaudet Drive. Admission \$10. Performance in ASL with voice interpretation. Advance ticket sales: CSD Outreach, Cottage 18. For information: Cheryl Boyd at cboyd@csdf-cde.ca.gov. Proceeds benefit Families of Deaf & HOH children.

Superfest Showcase. October 22, 12-5 pm. Selected films from the international disability film festival screened at the San Francisco Main Library. 8 award-winning films will be shown, including two deaf-related documentaries: "Voices from El Sayed" (3 pm) and "The Greatest Show on Earth" (4:20 pm). 100 Larkin Street, Latino/Hispanic community room. The program is free. Films will be audio described and captioned, film intros interpreted, assistive listening devices available, programs in large print and braille. For questions or requests for accommodations contact mgoddard@sfpl.org. Avoid using perfumes or other chemical-based scented products. More info: sfpl.org and culturedisabilitytalent.org

Homecoming at the California School for the Deaf. October 22. Volleyball at 10 am, football at 2 pm. California School for the Deaf in Fremont, 39350 Gallaudet Drive. Admission \$10 adults; \$7 senior citizens & students, ages 4 and under free. Contact info: Athletic Director Kevin Kovacs at kevin Kovacs@csdf-cde.ca.gov or csdeagles.com

ALDAcon. October 26-30. Indianapolis, Indiana. National conference of the Association of Late Deafened Adults. ALDA.org

Open House at the California School for the Deaf. November 11, 8:30 am-3:15 pm. Classroom observations, cottage visits, displays & exhibits, deaf services fair, student variety show, fun fundraisers & sales, lunches available from APTC & FEAST. California School for the Deaf in Fremont, 39350 Gallaudet Drive. For information: (510) 794-3707 TTY/voice or (866) 790-4035 VP. csdeagles.com

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We looked at the use of two-handed versus one-handed signs. One hand can often be deleted in two-handed signs, as in WANT, HAVE, TIRED and DON'T KNOW. The results of our analysis showed that the black signers in the study were more likely than white signers to use the two-handed variants.

We also looked at the lowering of signs produced on the face in citation form, such as KNOW, FOR and WHY (citation forms being those that appear in dictionaries and are taught in sign language classes). We found that black signers favored the non-lowered citation forms of signs produced at the forehead level.

We also analyzed the size of the signing space. Claims have been made that Black ASL uses a larger signing space, i.e. signs that exceed the rectangle that covers the area from the top of the head to the waist, from shoulder to shoulder, and a foot in front of the signer. We take into account that this feature may be used for emphasis or as a function of constructed action and constructed dialogue (also known as role shifting).

Black and white signers at the five data-collection sites were asked to view a portion of a wordless cartoon

and then were filmed as they told it to another participant. Two cartoons were used.

Using the cartoon retellings allowed us to control for topic. To capture the size of the signing space, a grid, adjusted for the physical characteristics of the signer, was superimposed on the video screen for each retelling, allowing us to measure the size of each signer's signing space and compare it empirically with others. Additionally, the camera was positioned the same distance from each signer to assure comparability across signers.

We found that both older and younger black signers



The Southern School for the Colored Deaf & Blind in Scotlandville, Louisiana.

Used with permission from the Black ASL Website.

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DCARA 50th Anniversary Gala. March 24, 2012, 5-10 pm. Richmond, California. Save the date. More details will be posted at DCARA.org

2012 World Deaf Athletics Championships. July 14-21, 2012, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. facebook.com/groups/124626724227311. Volunteers needed, contact Macklin Youngs at myoungs@cogeco.ca. Note that the Deaf Canada Conference hosted by the Ontario Cultural Society of the Deaf (OCSD) and the 8th Deaf History International Conference (DHIC) hosted by the Deaf Culture Centre (DCC) will also take place around the same time as this event, July 16-22 and July 24-29, respectively.

National Council of Hispano Deaf & Hard of Hearing Conference. September 13-16, 2012. Austin, TX. For info: nehdhh.org

9th World Deaf Golf Championships. October 8-12, 2012. Tsu Country Club, Tsu-city, Mie Prefecture, Japan. Organized by the Japan Deaf Golf Association. More information: 2012wdgcjapan.com/

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use a larger signing space than do older and younger white signers. Regarding sentence structure, claims have been made that black signers may use clausal or phrasal repetition more frequently than white signers.

Randomly selected 10-minute clips from the current project, as well as randomly selected clips of white signers from an earlier study, were used for the analysis of repetition. The number and kind of repetitions have been counted and analyzed for form and function, and we found that both older and younger black signers do use more repetition than do white signers.

Constructed dialogue and constructed action are commonly used in ASL discourse. You may be more familiar with the term role shifting, where signers report conversations and take the role of individuals or entities they have interacted with. It has been said that black signers use these strategies

more than white signers but, based on the analysis of cartoon retellings, as well as selected narratives that occur spontaneously in the free conversation and interview data, we did not find any significant differences.

We analyzed sections of the free conversation and interview data to



The Virginia State School for Colored Deaf & Blind in Hampton, Virginia.

Used with permission from the Black ASL Website.

compare the mouthing behavior of black and white signers. We found that older black signers mouth significantly less, but the mouthing of younger black signers and older and younger white signers is not very different.

We also analyzed how black signers borrow expressions from spoken African American English into their signing, such as “Girl, please,” and “My bad.” This is mostly done by the younger black signers.

Berkeley City College Library Fall Semester Hours

The library is open for service through December 16. It will close for all school holidays.

Monday-Thursday
8:30 am-7:30 pm.

Friday
8:30 am-4:00 pm.

Closed Saturday &
Sunday.

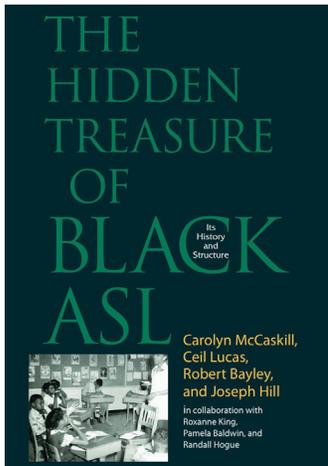
Be sure to get your BCC I.D. card to use library resources and to check out materials.

berkeleycitycollege.edu/wp/library/
Library circulation desk: (510) 981-2824



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Finally, as we expected, there are many unique vocabulary items in Black ASL, many of them specific to the signer's region. One very striking finding is that black signers, young and old, consistently use more traditional and standardized forms of signs, directly challenging perceptions of the signers themselves that black signing is somehow inferior.



To learn more about this project and the results of this study, the book-and-DVD set, *The Hidden Treasure of Black ASL: Its History and Structure*, is available from Gallaudet University Press (gupress.gallaudet.edu). The project's Web site is <http://blackasl-project.gallaudet.edu/Black-ASLProject/Welcome.html>.

Project Collaborators:

Ceil Lucas was raised in Guatemala City, Guatemala, and Rome. She is professor of linguistics at Gallaudet University, where she has taught since 1982. She is a sociolinguist with broad interests in the structure and use of sign languages and has co-authored and edited many articles and books, including *The Linguistics of American Sign Language*, 4th ed. (with Clayton Valli and Kristin Mulrooney, 2005). She is the project co-director with McCaskill and Bayley.

Carolyn McCaskill, attended the Alabama School for the Negro Deaf in Talladega and was in the first integrated class in 1968 at the Alabama School for the Deaf. She received her master's degree in Counseling with the Deaf, bachelor's in psychology and doctorate in Administration and Supervision all from Gallaudet University. She has been an associate professor in the ASL & Deaf Studies Department at Gallaudet University since 1996. McCaskill has conducted numerous seminars and workshops related to black Deaf people. She is the project co-director with Lucas and Bayley.

Robert Bayley is a professor of linguistics at the University of California, Davis. He has conducted research on variation in English, Spanish, ASL and Chinese, as well as ethnographic research in Latino communities in California and Texas. His books include *Language as Cultural Practice: Mexicanos en El Norte* (2002, with Sandra Schecter) and *Sociolinguistic Variation: Theo-*

ries, Methods, And Applications (2007, with Lucas). He is the project co-director with McCaskill and Lucas.

Joseph Hill recently completed his doctoral studies at the Department of Linguistics at Gallaudet University. His doctoral dissertation is titled *Language Attitudes in the American Deaf Community*. He was born and raised in Cincinnati, with a family of deaf and hard-of-hearing siblings and a hard-of-hearing mother. He has a bachelor's of science in systems analysis from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and a master's degree in linguistics from Gallaudet University. He is currently an assistant professor in Professions of Deafness programs in the Department of Specialized Education Services at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro.



Cinemark and ALDA Announce Greater Movie Theatre Accessibility for Customers who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing

April 26, 2011, Plano, Texas. Cinemark Holdings, Inc., one of the world's largest motion picture exhibitors, today announced that it will provide a closed captioning option for people who are deaf or have significant hearing loss in all of its first-run theatres. Cinemark is installing captioning systems on a rolling basis across its circuit in conjunction with the chain's conversion to an all-digital format. Installation started early this year and about half of Cinemark's theaters in California already have captioning capability. Cinemark will be able to offer closed captioning at all of its first-run theaters by mid 2012.

Movie captions convey the dialogue, narration, musical cues, and key sound effects, speaker identification and other auditory information, in the form of written text for those viewers who have significant difficulty hearing the movie sound track. Closed captions are

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relayed—in sync with the movie—only to members of the audience who choose to receive them via a personal display device. The captions are not visible on the screen to the rest of the audience.

The Association of Late-Deafened Adults (ALDA), an advocacy group for those with lost some or all of their hearing, applauded Cinemark’s commitment. Cinemark has worked closely with ALDA in setting the time-table for installation of captioning capability in California. ALDA also agreed to dismiss a lawsuit the organization filed in late 2010 over captioning issues in Cinemark’s California theatres. They were represented by Sid Wolinsky and Kevin Knestrick of Disability Rights Advocates (DRA), a non-profit legal center, headquartered in Berkeley, California, and John Waldo, an attorney whose practice focuses on the needs of those with hearing loss.

“We are pleased with Cinemark’s support for captioning. This decision makes first-run movies available to millions of patrons who are deaf and hard-of-hearing in California. They deserve to participate in this quintessential American experience,” said Mr. Knestrick. “We want to commend Cinemark for the prompt and cooperative way it resolved this case,” Mr. Waldo said. Linda Drattell, a plaintiff in the case, commented “I am delighted that around this time next year people who are deaf and hard-of-hearing will be able to watch first-run movies at Cinemark theaters throughout California.”

Cinemark selected the CaptiView Closed Caption Viewing System from Burbank-based Doremi Cinemas LLC to transmit the closed captions to audience members who desire the assistance of captioning. CaptiView provides captioning to those who have significant difficulty hearing the movie soundtrack via an OLED display on a bendable support arm that fits into the theater seat cup holder. This device, provided to movie patrons upon request, operates on an internal wireless system and can be used in any seat in the theatre. The OLED screen provides exceptionally clear captions. The device is also equipped with a privacy visor, which ensures that the captioning has no impact on neighboring movie patrons.



“Cinemark was pleased to collaborate with ALDA,” said Michael Cavalier, General Counsel and Senior Vice President of Cinemark, USA, Inc. “The conversion to digital cinema has facilitated the development of closed captioning systems like CaptiView. We now have a platform that makes full implementation of a captioning system viable. Cinemark has worked closely with our suppliers to make certain that we are providing the highest quality closed caption system,” he added. Laura Franze, a partner with the law firm of Hunton & Williams LLP, who represented Cinemark in working out the settlement with ALDA, commented “Cinemark has long recognized the importance of making the movies it exhibits accessible to deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences and has supported captioning in different forms for many years. With the conversion to digital cinema and the development of digital closed captioning systems like CaptiView, Cinemark was moving ahead to full implementation of closed captioning even before this lawsuit was filed.”

Michael Archer, Vice President of Digital Cinema at Doremi noted, “When we began the in-house design of the CaptiView product two years ago, we worked closely with Cinemark, our long-term partner, to create a viable, high-quality product that displays closed captions for digital cinema. We are pleased to have this opportunity to work with Cinemark to provide captioned movies to their patrons across the country.”

About Cinemark Holdings, Inc.

Cinemark is a leading domestic and international motion picture exhibitor, operating 430 theatres with 4,945 screens in 39 U.S. states, Brazil, Mexico and 11 other Latin American countries as of December 31, 2010. For more information go to cinemark.com.

About the Association of Late-Deafened Adults

The Association of Late-Deafened Adults (ALDA) is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the laws of the State of Illinois. The Association of Late Deafened Adults advocates on behalf of the 38 million Americans who have lost some or all of their hearing. For more information, please visit alda.org.

About Disability Rights Advocates (DRA)

Disability Rights Advocates (DRA) is a non-profit legal center, which for nearly twenty years, has specialized in high-impact class action litigation on behalf of people with all types of disabilities. DRA litigates nationally and has offices in Berkeley, California and New York City.

About Doremi Cinemas LLC

Doremi Cinema LLC is the digital cinema hardware division of Doremi Labs Inc. located in Burbank California. For nearly 25 years, Doremi has been providing award winning hardware solutions for cinema, broadcast, presentation and special venue markets. Having shipped over 22,000 servers into the cinema market, Doremi is the global leader in cinema server technology. CaptiView has helped propel Doremi into a world-wide leader in access technology. 🙌🙌

Congratulations to the 2011 ASL Graduates!

- Marcus Caimi**
- Erin Carper**
- Christiane Crawford**
- Lisa R. Green**
- Todd Histan**
- Perla Ramos**
- Terema Whitfield***



***Also received a Liberal Arts degree.**

Interested students can join the ASL listserv by sending an e-mail message containing your name, class that you are enrolled in, and instructor's name to bcc_vistaaslgroupe-subscribe@yahoo.com. If you join, you will receive information about Deaf events, articles of interest, job announcements, etc. You can also post information, find other students to form a study group, have discussions, to name just a few options. Membership is limited to current or previous Vista/BCC ASL students.

from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. Depending on the success of the shuttle, it may be eligible for a second year of funding. This project is in partnership with Bike Alameda and the Cities of Oakland and Alameda. For more information go to estuaryXINGshuttle.org or (510) 747-7936.

All California Community Colleges have had an increase in enrollment fees. In time for the fall semester, the state legislature raised the price to \$36 per unit. If the change in price is making school unaffordable for you, consider applying for financial aid. You can learn more at berkeleycitycollege.edu/wp/financial_aid/. The financial aid application is at fafsa.gov. You will need to activate your student email account with Peralta to receive information from the financial aid office.

Even if you don't apply for financial aid, you should activate your student email account because official communication to students will be sent only to their Peralta email accounts. To access your student email account go to: <http://outlook.com>. For login ID use your Passport User ID and add @cc.peralta.edu (ex: jacr1234@cc.peralta.edu). The password is the same as your Passport password on first login. Your username and password are all lower case.

Have a good semester! 🙌🙌

New Superintendent at the California School for the Deaf in Fremont

Henry “Hank” Klopping retired as the superintendent of CSD in June after 36 years. The new superintendent is Sean Virnig who officially began working in August. Virnig is a 1992 graduate of CSD, in fact he was the valedictorian. Virnig is the school’s 10th superintendent since its founding in 1850, and its first Deaf superintendent.

Virnig was selected from a nationwide search and extensive process to find the best leader for CSD.

On returning to his alma mater Virnig said, “I am honored to return to the CSD as its new superintendent who truly believes in everything this school represents in the education of children who are Deaf in Northern California and elsewhere. It stands to reason that the CSD is in an enviable position to propel toward the future as a leading school serving the Deaf through teamwork, dedication, and authenticity.”

Prior to being selected as superintendent, Virnig had been the director of education for the Texas School for the Deaf in Austin. Before that he served in a number of positions at the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf, including director of education and K-12 principal. Virnig has also worked as a public policy specialist with the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

A native of St. Paul, Minnesota, Virnig graduated cum laude from Gallaudet University with a Bachelor of Arts. He earned a Master of Education in Educational Psychology from the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis and is currently completing his Ph.D. in Educational Policy and Administration, also from the University of Minnesota.

Source: California Department of Education news release at cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr11/yr11rel44.asp

You can see a brief ASL version of this announcement at youtube.com/watch?v=iYw_l_KL78&feature=dgst_fri 

Feel Like You Need Some Help Learning ASL?

By Orkid Sassouni

School is back in session and maybe you’re thinking about ways to work on your skills besides going to class. How can you improve your ASL skills outside the classroom?

How about the Deaf Services Center at the San Francisco Public Library? It has everything you need to improve your ASL, both receptive and expressive skills. We have several kinds of materials, including videotapes, DVDs and books you can borrow to practice at home alone or with your classmates. Topics range from beginning American Sign Language, baby sign language, interpreting practice, sign language studies, Deaf history and many others.

Don’t have a VHS machine? Don’t worry. The DSC has four VHS/DVD machines that can be used any time the center is open.

Anyone can apply for a free library card at the San Francisco Public Library. Just bring your California driver license with current address or any current utility bill showing your address.



Inside the Deaf Services Center.

Photo courtesy of Orkid Sassouni

We are open 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday, and noon to 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

“But parking is hard to find in San Francisco,” you say.

Yes, parking is a bit tough and costs money, especially if you get a parking ticket! (That will cost \$50.) Trust me—take the BART or Muni: the library is just one

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block away from the Civic Center station. Thank goodness for e-a-s-y public transit access! No car worries gives you the peace of mind to allow you to spend hours seeking the materials for your hungry hands to practice ASL.

If you want assistance, don't be afraid to ask me or the new librarian, Jerry Kapsner. We would be very happy to help you locate what you want or answer questions about materials.

I have worked as a library assistant for 10 years this coming November. Wow, how time has flown by! I really enjoy working with patrons who are motivated and excited about learning ASL, whether they want an interpreting career or simply are studying for personal interest.

In all my time working here, I have watched ASL students, especially from Berkeley City College, have their eyes opened up when they enter the Deaf Services Center.

Yes, we know some of our videotapes are old, but believe me, it's worth your time to come to the Deaf Services Center to peruse the videotapes collection because there are many wonderful Deaf storytellers from all over the United States.

For example, we have Peter Cook, a great poet and a funny man with good stories to tell about his experiences. He will crack you up, yet his stories are kind of serious in visual tone.

We also have great DVDs from Guy Wonder and Nathie Marbury, who are entertaining storytellers and yet are very challenging to watch because their stories are rich with classifiers. We also have "The Treasure," a DVD of poems by local Deaf community member Ella Mae Lentz. While I highly recommend these, there are many, many more great resources; I just don't have room to list everything.

The key to learning ASL is watching interesting stories as often as you can. Sharing history and lessons through storytelling is part of Deaf culture.

So—what are you doing this Saturday? Come to the Deaf Services Center. It's a beautiful, quiet and clean space. My best advice to you is to keep practicing, and you will make it through the tough classes, and work on your signing skills everyday with your classmates or meet Deaf people in the community.

For more information about the Deaf Services Center at the San Francisco Public Library, visit sfpl.org/deafservices.

Orkid Sassouni is a library assistant at the Deaf Services Center of the San Francisco Main Library. Editor's note: the ASL Department congratulates Orkid on the first birthday of her son, Joshua Sassouni-Wagnon, who was born June 11, 2010, and we welcome her return to the library from maternity leave. 🙌🙌

Friends of Libraries for Deaf Action (FOLDA)

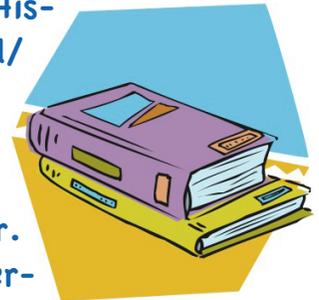
Invites individuals and organizations to join its campaign for the nation's libraries to observe the National Deaf History Month and/or other appropriate annual events during the year.

If you are interested in supporting this campaign, send your name and email address to FOLDA86@aol.com.

Monetary contributions are also welcome. Suggested donations: \$2 or more for individuals and \$25 or more organizations. Checks may be mailed to:

FOLDA
2930 Craiglawn Road
Silver Spring, MD 20904-1816

Contributions, monetary and in-kind gifts, will help FOLDA with the expenses to publicize deaf resources, especially the National Deaf History Month Kit, within the library community. More information is available at www.folda.net.



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