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### **The History and Continuing Impact of The Gallaudet Revolution**

Gallaudet University was founded by Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, for whom the university is named after. The university first started in 1856 thanks to a kind donation of 2 acres from a wealthy business named Amos Kendall, who had previously been postmaster general in the prior two presidential terms.

T.H. Gallaudet had been frustrated in attempts to find a better method of communication and teaching deaf children. He traveled the US, and then Europe before he came across sign language from France that he could use and brought back to the USA.

In the US there was a developing eugenics movement, and Alexander Graham Bell was of the belief that Deaf People should be taught to lip read and not sign. He also discouraged Deaf People from marrying, because he believed this would help “weed them out” of the human race if they were not allowed to propagate. The Oral versus Visual methodologies are still a strong point of contention to this day for the reasons have changed somewhat over the years.

In 1857 Congress allowed the school to be incorporated. By 1864 Congress and President Lincoln signed a bill authorizing the institution to bestow college degrees. All of the institution's presidents until 1988 were hearing people.

This all changed dramatically in March 1988, with the DPN movement. This “Deaf President Now” movement was founded by university alumni, staff, and students who protested the selection the board made of a hearing candidate over deaf candidates. Worse yet, the selected candidate, Elisabeth Zinser didn't even know how to sign and did not have experience with the Deaf culture. This outraged

many both within and without the Deaf Culture.

In reaction thousands of students barricaded and shut down the school for several days until their demands were met. Those four concise non-negotiable demands were:

1. Elisabeth Zinser, the new president elected by the Board, must resign and a deaf person selected for president instead.
2. Jane Spilman must step down as chairperson of the Board of Trustees.
3. Deaf people must constitute a 51% majority on the Board.
4. There would be no reprisals against any student or employee involved in the protest.

After this intense 5 days, the school board agreed to the terms and elected I. King Jordan; a man who had lost his hearing many years ago from a motorcycle accident. This was sufficient to end the strike, and the university reopened.

All of the press coverage brought to the world's attention a focus as never before on the challenges and culture of the Deaf society. It also provided significant encouragement to Deaf People, as a very public proof, that they could do what they put their efforts to when they organized and united. This is very important to Deaf people, but it is clear this is just one of many improvements that need to happen to be treated more as equals, reduce prejudice, and improve the quality of life for many.

Some key laws have been implemented thanks to this increased awareness. Some of these improvements include:

- 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act required telephone companies must have operators who can “talk” with deaf people with teleprinters/tty, by 1993.
- 1993 onward all television sets must have caption capabilities.

There is still a lot of contention in the Deaf Culture which has it heavily factionalized. The key issues of contention include but are not limited to:

- Oralists versus Visualists
- Cochlear implants, especially in children
- English versus ASL

The Oralists versus Visualists issue is a continuation from as far as the days of Alexander Graham Bell, and the argument between lip reading, speaking, versus signing. There is a lot of strongly emotional contention between the different factions still ongoing.

Cochlear implants have helped tens of thousands of hearing impaired gain some semblance of hearing, but many Deaf People believe that this is an attempt to “steal away” from their culture, which many of them consider a “linguistic minority” rather than as disabled.

The English versus ASL contention is the debate as to whether students should learn English as a primary versus secondary language, with ASL as a primary language instead.

Unfortunately, there is still a lot of progress to be made, one terrible incident happened November 1990, a student active in the English dispute, got into an argument with an English instructor. University security was summoned and the student named Carl Dupress was handcuffed. This then made it impossible for him to communicate through signing. Soon after he collapsed and died.

## References

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## Washington Post

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/discussion/2006/05/03/DI2006050300971.html>

Notes

Improvements...

Since the Gallaudet protest, at least a dozen members of Congress have hired deaf staff members.

Robert Davila, who is deaf, has been named an Assistant Secretary in charge of the Education

Department's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. - NYTimes 1990.

Cochlear costs about 50,000\$

Many see themselves as a "linguistic minority" rather than a disabled group.

Stolen away when cochlear implant.

But in recent years Galaudet has changed their stance to be more broadly accepting, "

"Our position is that we support students with hearing loss of different types," says spokeswoman

Sherry Duhon through a sign language interpreter. "The technology is changing and we have to adapt."

--Salon.com

The year following the DPN Gallaudet Revolution, when Gallaudet's staff asked congress for the annual budget, congress actually reprimanded the university for not asking for enough funds. Congress granted instead of the usual 2% increase in funding annually, a doubled 4% increase, worth \$66 million USD. Approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of Gallaudet's funding comes from the US Government.

I. King Jordan continued as the first deaf president of the university until he was 62 years old at

the end of the school year in 2006. His successor is Jane K. Fernandes, previously the provost for Gallaudet. She grew up deaf with a deaf mother and brother.

3 Laws passed/changed. Broader than just self-esteem.

3 pages double spaced, normal margins.

Watch out for death, deaf, dead on spellchecking.

Gallaudet is preschool-through-graduate school.

Change good, but no unanimity between deaf culture. Lots of factions with different goals.

Especially conflict over whether to learn to read lips and speak should be done or not.

Whether deaf schools should be allowed to be run by hearing at any level.

Inconsistent methods of teaching English to Deaf.

Gallaudet requires all its graduates to read and write English proficiently.

Impact internationally?

Oralists and and visualists.

Oralists founded by Alexander Graham Bell for lip reading, who was fervently against signing.

He was also a eugenicist, who urged the deaf not to marry for fear of propagating deaf genes, in the hope of eliminating them from the race.

A month ago, Carl Dupree, a student active in the English dispute, got into an argument with an English instructor. Security officers were called; Mr. Dupree was handcuffed, making it impossible to communicate by signing. Soon after, he collapsed and died.

Law-enforcement and university authorities are still investigating the incident. But some Gallaudet students say the investigation, whatever it uncovers, will not change their view that the university remains insensitive to some needs of the deaf despite all the progress since March 1988.

