

## OUR HANDS WILL STILL WAVE

Lynnette Taylor, CSC, Forum Co-Moderator 2011, New York

At the 2011 Community Forum, a Deaf child spoke to us in a film about his experience being in a mainstream setting and feeling left out, shunned because he is deaf, because no one signs. "They push me aside," he said, "tell me to go away." When I asked him what he wished for, he said, "the whole world to sign."

What can we do to help a little boy's dream come true?

Across the globe, sign language and deaf people are under attack. The recent incident with the Indiana School for the Deaf and the attack on Italian Sign Language are current examples. The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) CEO Howard Rosenblum's recent VLOG declares NAD's number one priority as saving Deaf Education, and he asks for our help. Our community is asking for support, for help in keeping it alive, for making sure it – and we – will 'still wave' after the storm.

From its inception, the Community Forum was meant to be an invitation to our interpreter and Deaf communities to come together and talk. In its simplest form, it was meant to provide a physical space so we could build or rebuild, kindle or rekindle, community relationships through dialogue.

This year's forum, "Exploring Our Shifting Borders," began with a viewing of poet/activist Ella Mae Lenz's evocative and beautiful reworking of our *National Anthem*, an anthem that inspires us to save American Sign Language.<sup>1</sup> Panelist Virginia Moore responded to the anthem, "*It makes me feel like an immigrant being welcomed in, I am being recognized and invited to be a part of America.*"

The amazing panelists, Greg Hlibok, Daisy Blackwell, Jason Norman, Virginia Moore, David Rivera, Lillian Garcia-Peterkin, Cheryl Moose, Leandra Williams, Marko Vuoriheimo (Signmark) and special guest, MJ Bienvenue, all spoke to the fact that collaboration, deep listening and signing in public regardless of fluency, are key factors in keeping the language alive and keeping us connected.

Next, we divided into small group discussions (ideally with deaf, hearing and coda participants). This was an important part of the process; engaging audience members to participate in discussions rather than be passive listeners. The groups

discussed current issues, identified hot topics and created doable actions that they could return home with and begin to realize. These doable actions were shared with the group at large, modeling the collaborative nature of the forum.

Finally, we know that to keep the language alive and healthy we also need a language-rich environment with a wide range of language use, from conversational to heightened. With that in mind, and also to celebrate the grand tradition of Deaf performers, we invited ASL poet David Rivera and Finnish hip-hop artist Marko Vuoriheimo of Signmark, to perform.

"Shining the spotlight on Deaf performers and the beautiful creative ways they explore and express themselves with sign language was inspiring." - Candace Broecker-Penn

David Rivera premiered a new ASL piece he created for the forum, a poem that brings us on the journey of ASL since the beginning of time to its uncertain future.<sup>2</sup> His performance and message was simply sublime. Deaf Finnish hip-hop artist, Marko Vuoriheimo of Signmark, and his team joined us fresh from the World Federation of the Deaf conference in South Africa. Signmark performed his Silent Shout<sup>3</sup> and closed the forum with people on their feet, hands waving, signing along to his smash hit, "Smells Like Victory." Because after all, he said, that was the forum.

Let us return to the deaf child who wants the whole world to sign. With the amazing wealth of braintrust and hearttrust available to us in RID, I feel this child can grow up to a world where our hands still wave.

Even if you weren't at the Community Forum, we are launching a campaign, **Sign Up, Sign On!** We ask you to join us in our goal of making 1,000,001 doable actions to keep our language and community alive and vibrant. Join us on our Community Forum Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/222354274449479/>) for the launch date and also to see what doable actions have been suggested so far. We are looking for simple, tangible actions that a person *can do*. If many of us pursue them, think of the collective difference we can make.

<sup>1</sup> Ella's piece can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/user/ASLElla?blend=1&obs=5#p/u/0/DWotV1CW5mo>  
<sup>2</sup> David Rivera's poem can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueTrYy70A4g>  
<sup>3</sup> Signmark's Silent Shout can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=skhAwly1A4Qg>

"You have inspired me to be... the marvelous cause outline... expect to see me again a... regardless of what role I would

"I have grown from the exp... and inspiring to see the po... on solutions and moving... relationships... That is exciting... solution." - Cheryl Moose

"...the model of openness, simply awesome, inspiring a... Dennis Cokely

"...over the years I have beca... we were able to accomplis... had lukewarm enthusiasms ab... Now that I found out about... wait for the next one."  
- Leah Subak

"I am so rejuvenated and e... the spirit of change and... levels... We have the choic... D/deaf community or mar... emotionally and culturally... level, many of us are not aw...  
- Brenda Dencer

## DEAF CAUCUS: MA

Juliann Wasisco, CDI, Deaf Co

Even though the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed 20 years ago, tonight, as I write this article, I sit here frustrated because I was told there would be no interpreter for my meeting tomorrow.

Even with the law behind me, even though I know how to advocate for my rights, even though I am well connected to the field of interpreting, I still don't have access!

I recall what Lynnette Taylor said in her thank you letters to all volunteers, "Slowly, one by one, we can make a difference for the better."

Then I remember the recent Community Forum at the 2011 RID National Conference in Atlanta GA, and instantly I get this warm fuzzy feeling.

I attended the first Community Forum in San Francisco, CA, in 2007 as a participant. Then, in 2009 and 2011, as Chair of Deaf Caucus, I worked with Laurie Nash, the Chair of Interpreters with Deaf Parents (IDP), as co-sponsor for the forums in

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...nd a true thing of beauty." -

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### MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Laurie Nash, CI and CT, NIC, IDP Chair 2007-2011, Arizona

Philadelphia, PA and Atlanta, GA. Working together with IDP to make these events happen has been an incredible journey. I feel humbled to have played such an important part in such a powerful event that really impacts our community. Working behind the scenes with facilitators, moderators, interpreters and the many volunteers it takes to put this on has been nothing short of wonderful collaboration.

This year the forum opened with Ella Mae Lentz's National Anthem in ASL and closed with the hot Finnish hip-hop artist, Signmark, performing his awesome Silent Shout. I walked away feeling dizzy and rejuvenated!

I look forward to the next one in 2013 in Indiana! I can't wait to work again with Janis Cole, Lynnette Taylor, Laurie Nash, our new Deaf Caucus chair, Shelley Herbold, and all of our amazing volunteers. Thanks for the most amazing Community Forum ever- until the next!

Laurie Nash, CI and CT, NIC, IDP Chair 2007-2011, New York

For the past six years, the Interpreters with Deaf Parents (IDP) Member Section of RID has collaborated with Deaf Caucus and Deaf Members in Leadership, volunteering hundreds of hours, endless effort and an undying commitment to implement the vision of the Community Forum and provide an incredible experience for our communities. Time and again, past forum attendees have claimed, "This type of thing needs to happen more often." We agree and are motivated to keep this event as a regular occurrence during the RID national conferences.

The first Community Forum, "What's Your IQ: Impact Quotient" raised the question: are you aware of your impact on the Deaf community as individuals, (whether you are coda, deaf or hearing,) as interpreters, as a field and as an organization? The forum offered a safe place to rethink and explore our relationships. Through sharing our stories, we recognized our relationships are intertwined and what hurts or helps one community, ultimately hurts or helps the other. We need to believe and behave as if "we are in this together" because, in fact, we are.

Over the past six years, the collaboration between IDP and Deaf

Caucus has become richer, and by the third forum, after much discussion, we created a framework and attained a level of trust that allowed us to sit back and enjoy each other's successes.

There are financial demands for an event of this magnitude and significance. The space must be conducive to the work and visually accessible. Technology must be readily available. And, as we believe the knowledge the Deaf community offers us and the gift of their presence deserve appreciation and acknowledgment, we offer a stipend to help with travel costs for panelists who otherwise may not attend an RID conference.

However, the forum does not happen through financial support alone. A myriad of individuals donate their time and expertise, including: Moderators, Lynnette Taylor, Janis Cole, (previously) Lillian Garcia-Peterkin; panelists, facilitator coordinators, 40+ small group facilitators, interpreters, support service providers and additional volunteers. The work of these many individuals has inspired me to do what I can in hosting the Community Forum and similar events throughout the country. So, now I ask...what will you do? Any small action helps.

### HEART OF THE COMMUNITY FORUM

Janis Cole, CDI, Forum Co-Moderator 2011, Maryland

The Community Forum invites the Deaf community back into RID, asking interpreters to listen to *their* vision. Historically, deaf people were held in esteem as teachers and regarded as the rightful gatekeepers to the Deaf community and interpreting field. Those entering the field approached interpreting as a 'service' to a community they loved. Their actions were guided by the values instilled in them from the Deaf community elders; values that emphasized the preservation of language and culture above all. Interpreters who embraced this were not only nurtured and groomed, but also welcomed whole-heartedly into the Deaf community. This, in essence, is what I call the "deaf-heart" of our joined community. This is what we need to revitalize, and the only way we can do that is through shared dialogue.

The Community Forum is a place to collaboratively examine the issues we face as an entire community. What important attributes contribute to the success of an ASL/English bilingual interpreter? What does it mean to use ASL within a pluralistic Deaf world? What does it mean to master the use of ASL as a second language? What is our responsibility to preserve the language in its most natural form for future generations of deaf global citizens? As invited guests into a culture, is it possible for interpreters to move forward *without* building community?

We hold the following truths as the foundation to effectively engage dialogue among and between our communities: compassion, truth, courage, integrity, authenticity, listening, sharing, respect and understanding one's impact. The Community Forum provides a place where members have equal participation and discuss important current issues that affect us, the field, the Deaf and interpreter community, as well as our sister organizations, RID and NAD.

