

# Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies (MAIS) Case Studies

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Volume 1 *Celebrating Leadership: Turning Passion into Action*

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## Celebrating Leadership: Turning Passion into Action (full issue)

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**Celebrating Leadership:**  
**Turning Passion into Action**

Western Oregon University

*by*

*Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies students, 2013 cohort*

*Edited by Christopher Grooms*

*June 2015*

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## Introduction

Ball State Teacher's College, Muncie, Indiana, 1964: a small group of American Sign Language interpreters and Deaf professionals come together to turn their passion into action. These leaders instigated the birth of a national organization for interpreters in the United States and the beginning of the professionalization of the signed language interpreting field. These leaders are recognized for their contributions, their actions, and their accomplishments.

In the ensuing fifty years there have been many leaders in the profession that have selflessly stepped forward and given of their time and energy to further advance the profession of signed language interpreting. As a result, there are now affiliate chapters of the national organization in the U.S. (the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf) in almost every state and national professional organizations in many countries who cater to the professional development needs of their members and establish ethical and professional standards of conduct that guide our behavior. These leaders have ushered in the advent of credentialing for interpreters, professional standards for interpreters, and education for interpreters up to the PhD level. Some of these leaders are readily recognizable by name and by their contributions and successes. But, most of them are unknown and unrecognized. Their contributions, their actions, their accomplishments are enjoyed by all in the profession. Yet, their stories remain untold.

The faculty in the Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies at Western Oregon University and the cohort of students that began the program in June of 2013 embarked on a project to recognize leaders that have made an impact on the profession but whom remain under the radar of most practitioners that benefit from their actions. That project has resulted in this manuscript in which we get to tell their stories. Each student chose a person who they felt had made major contributions to advance the profession as well as being a contributor to our own professional development and practice as interpreters. We interviewed these leaders in order to gain an understanding of what it takes to turn passion into action. We tell their stories here; stories of grass roots activism in local communities to stories of global collaboration, stories of overcoming obstacles to stories of challenging the status quo, stories of giving back to the

community to stories of taking the lead, stories of building bridges to stories of effecting positive change.

We hope that readers will join us in celebrating and honoring the contributions of these leaders whose stories are finally being told here and whose ability to turn passion into action has resulted in the profession that we enjoy today. We also hope that readers will be inspired by these now told stories to turn their own passion into action.

*Christopher Grooms*

*June 2015*

## **A Spirit of Service**

Ali Ann Artis

*Western Oregon University*

### **Abstract**

From 2005 to 2010 Xenia Woods served as a leader and mentor in my rural community of Humboldt County, CA, and has paved the way for many interpreters to gain the skills they need in the profession. Her contributions to the community have been long-lasting and have had a huge impact on me personally. Her long term commitment to reach out and assist newer interpreters in the profession is impressive. Xenia has a giving spirit and is generous with her time and energy. Her passion to support the students she teaches, the profession of interpreting, and the Deaf community is exemplary, as I have witnessed first-hand and as her record demonstrates.

I was contemplating the question “What makes an effective leader?” on my way to a Salem coffee shop on July 23, 2014 to conduct an interview with my friend and mentor, Xenia Woods, to discuss this very topic. When I walked in I found her sitting at a corner table studying Japanese flashcards, taking advantage of the few spare moments she had in her day. I had not seen her in some time and was glad to have the opportunity to sit down with her in person and formally address the topic of leadership. Xenia is a seasoned teacher and professional interpreter and I was curious about her upbringing and exposure to the field of sign language interpreting.

### **An Interpreter in the Making**

Xenia grew up in Berkeley, CA in a family of professors and polyglots. Her parents attended the School of Interpreting in Geneva, Switzerland as they both spoke several European languages. Xenia began learning American Sign Language (ASL) when she was about 11 years old and fell

in love with the language. She continued to learn ASL throughout high school by attending night classes offered at the local community college. She recalls, “When I was taking Deaf culture and sign language classes at Vista College in Berkeley, Ella Mae Lentz approached me one day at the end of class and said, ‘You know, I think you might make a good interpreter. You should apply to the interpreting program in Fremont.’ And so I did.”

Xenia graduated from the interpreting program and received her Associate of Arts degree in Interpreting from Ohlone College in Fremont, CA in 1995, as well as her Associate of Arts degree in ASL from Vista College in Berkeley, CA. She started interpreting professionally at the age of 20 at Laney College in Oakland, CA and began working as a team interpreter with experienced and certified interpreters. She eventually became a lead interpreter and began mentoring other interpreters she worked with. She saw and was exposed to a multitude of very skilled and talented interpreters in the Bay Area. She recalls, “I emulated their interpreting and I learned a lot that way.” Xenia went on to receive her Bachelor of Arts degree in Liberal Studies and her Masters degree in Adult Education and worked as an interpreter and mentor in the Berkeley area until she relocated to Humboldt County.

### **Change in a Rural Area**

I met Xenia in 2005 when she moved into my community. At that time there was only one recently certified interpreter in the entire county and she was entirely devoted to providing interpreting services in the K-12 educational setting. There were a few of us providing community based interpreting services every once in awhile, however, we had no professional affiliation, were not members of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), and did not communicate with one another on a regular basis. I personally had no formal interpreter training as I had learned sign language from some close friends and had taken a few ASL classes. Xenia must have felt a bit of shock to relocate from a community with a network of certified interpreters to our community of non-certified interpreters.

At the time of her move to Humboldt County Xenia was serving as editor for the Northern California chapter of RID (NorCRID) newsletter and continued in that role after leaving the Bay

Area. She started interpreting and coordinating interpreting services at the College of the Redwoods and Humboldt State University. She single-handedly tracked down every one of us semi-working interpreters and created a network. She began mentoring me and the other local interpreters individually on her own time on a completely voluntary basis. She created and taught workshops and developed interpreting courses through College of the Redwoods, the local community college. To reach out to deaf people and signers in the Yupa-Hurok-Karuk community, she taught ASL on their reservation in the mountains east of Arcata. She also developed a formal mentoring program through Humboldt State University so that newer interpreters to the field could move into the area and provide interpreting services with her in teamed situations in order to acquire the needed experience and skills required to advance toward certification. When she realized that there was no qualified sign language interpreter for the court system within a four-hour drive of Humboldt County, she obtained her Specialty Certification: Legal (SC: L) from RID in order to better meet the needs of the community.

Xenia also engaged in an incredible amount of advocacy at local agencies in order for Deaf people to have better access to community services. At the same time she established Terp Savvy, a company which provides online courses for interpreters. She also designed and conducted a series of skill-building workshops for local interpreters in K-12 educational settings for the two counties of the North coast. Several K-12 interpreters and transliterators prepared for and took the EIPA. Eventually, four of us local interpreters took and passed the NIC test and became certified. Three other interpreters she mentored acquired certification shortly after moving out of the area. Xenia published her account of how she was navigating the long, slow road for change in Humboldt County in the July 2006 Conference of Interpreter Trainers (CIT) newsletter.

### **On Leadership**

Xenia has since left Humboldt County and spent four years following her passion teaching many promising students at Portland Community College's Interpreter Training Program. In our interview she responded very candidly and honestly in all things. Her ability to articulate and



share her views so readily is further evidence of the amount of reflection and soul searching she has done while on her path as a leader in the field.

We spoke of who her role models have been throughout the course of her career. She named many, but one stood out particularly:

Sharon Neumann Solow is all about inspiring people. She's not about techniques, she's not about drills, she's not about any of that. But seeing her present and realizing how warm and peaceful and loving she was made me realize that I wanted to include that in my leadership style.

As a leader and a teacher, she explained to me a little bit about her approach to both:

My teaching philosophy is to always focus on what somebody can do, what their emerging abilities are, what their emerging skills are, and then foster those and focus a lot less on what they're not good at... They need to see incremental progress in order to stay motivated. The fact is that there are too many teachers out there who don't realize the importance of breaking things down into smaller and smaller pieces, and acknowledging every bit of progress that's made along the way... They ultimately have to choose what their professional personality is going to be and ideally it's going to be a balanced one, like I wrote about in the Street Leverage column.

What I really wanted to know from Xenia was what drives her as a leader and what is the motivation behind the sacrifice. She stated:

It's fulfilling to me to see people succeed and to see people learn and grow. It's fulfilling to me to see people satisfied by going through that process. And it's also fulfilling to me to know that the community is being better served.

As a leader, one will encounter obstacles and challenges. How does one face and overcome these challenges? How we face these challenges is what defines us as a person and a leader. Xenia's approach was insightful:

Take the long view. The kinds of questions I ask myself when I have a hard time making a decision would be like 'if I could travel in time and talk to myself 10 years from now, what would that person tell my current self. What would she say? What words of wisdom?' and try to imagine what that would be.

To those of us who want to take on more of a leadership role, she could not be more supportive. She firmly believes our profession needs more strong leaders. Her advice:

Know your strengths, know your weaknesses, know your boundaries. You need to establish your boundaries very clearly so that you don't get pushed and pulled. Many of us in the interpreting community just want to interpret. There aren't a lot of people who have the time or energy or resources to do more than that. It's that old 80/20 rule: 20% of the people in our community do 80% of the work, and I don't mean interpreting work. I mean the work that needs to happen, to effect change.

Xenia is currently serving as a mentor to interpreters in the Portland area, conducting workshops, and interpreting at conferences throughout the United States. She also continues to teach courses

online through Terp Savvy. But, first and foremost, she is a very loving and devoted mother to her beautiful and brilliant young daughter.

### **About the Author**

Ali Ann Artis works as an educational and community interpreter in Humboldt County, CA. She is originally from the San Francisco Bay area where she was introduced to ASL as a child. She moved north and graduated from Humboldt State University in 2000 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resources and discovered the interpreting profession shortly thereafter. She is currently conducting research in English/ASL translation as a student in Western Oregon University's Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies program.

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## **Chuck Gramly: Heart, Commitment, Respect**

Grace Artl

*Western Oregon University*

### **Abstract**

Chuck Gramly has been an inspiration to several generations of American Sign Language (ASL)/English interpreters in the Central Ohio community. His leadership, guidance, and passion for ASL and the Deaf community lives in the hearts of all whom have had the pleasure of knowing him. As an interpreter and interpreter educator, Chuck made his mark on the budding profession of interpreting that has come to be what it is today. Through his teaching, involvement in the local community as well as state and national organizations, Chuck's life work has ignited a passion in others that boils down to three things: respect for language and community, respect for the profession, and respect for one another.

### **The Heart of a Local Leader**

It does not take long to bring to mind those who have had the most profound impact on my development as an interpreter, an educator, and most importantly, an individual. Their guidance and wisdom, however long or short a period of time I spent in their presence, continues to resonate with me and permeate through my beliefs, values, and interactions. One specific individual comes to mind, a genuine embodiment of what it means to be a leader, a guide, a mentor, and a friend: Chuck Gramly.

### **Farm Boy**

Fondly referred to as "CG" by those who know and love him, Chuck was born and raised on a farm north of Mansfield, Ohio. His father was a self-taught engineer and part-time farmer and his

mother was a registered nurse and stay at home mom. Chuck attended a rural school with his older sister where he was a participant in a variety of sports, held several student council positions, and was an active member of 4-H. Growing up in a rural community, Chuck quickly learned the value of family love and support. His family farm was down the road from where his father was born and raised which fostered a strong sense of family togetherness. Chuck fondly recalls that, “Helping others was a *big* part of what my family was in this rural community (C. Gramly, personal communication, July 24, 2014).”

Chuck eventually enrolled in Ohio State University – Mansfield and, following in the footsteps of his father, majored in Engineering. Though he did fairly well, he changed his major during his third year of college to Industrial Technology Education with a minor in Comprehensive Sciences. Over the next four years, Chuck ardently worked towards the completion of his degree while also balancing a full-time job. Though he realized during this period that he didn’t really want to teach he was, nevertheless, required to complete a student teaching experience. Little did he know that this experience would be the one to change the course of his life.

### **A Happy Accident**

Feeling disillusioned by the public school system, Chuck requested a student teaching assignment that would be “different.” It was then that his advisor suggested a placement at either the Ohio State School for the Blind (OSSB) or the Ohio School for the Deaf (OSD). After initial contact with OSD, Chuck observed an elementary school classroom. Though he had absolutely no prior experience with deafness or signing he says he, “found the communication fascinating (C. Gramly, personal communication, July 24, 2014).”

In the spring of 1971, as Chuck progressed through his student teaching experience, he remarks he, “found himself quickly falling in love with the people, language, and culture (C. Gramly, personal communication, July 24, 2014).” Much of this love was fostered by the mentorship of two older Deaf gentlemen, Everett Kennedy and Jimmy Flood, who took him under their wings. As the end of his ten-week student teaching experience drew closer Chuck approached the superintendent of OSD, Ed Grover, about possible job opportunities. He knew he absolutely *had*

to work there and, upon finding out that there were no vocational education positions open, asked if they needed any janitors. As Chuck recalls, Ed took a glance at a list on his desk and then proffered, “You want to teach third grade (C. Gramly, personal communication, July 24, 2014)?” With no training or background, he agreed.

As fate would have it Chuck was soon offered a position teaching vocational courses, specifically woodworking, photography, and driver’s education. During his time in this role, Chuck recalls, “I quickly made strong connections with students as I had something valuable to teach them and ... they had *much* to teach me (C. Gramly, personal communication, July 24, 2014).”

### **A Budding Profession**

During the nine years he spent teaching at OSD, Chuck worked diligently to improve his ASL skills. “Though”, as he states, “it wasn’t really called that back then (C. Gramly, personal communication, July 24, 2014).” Regularly communicating with students helped him to become comfortable using the language and acquiring a skill that would come to feel natural to him. As it so happened, teachers at the school would take turns interpreting for the students when assemblies were held. Chuck readily admits, “I started doing this and took it seriously (C. Gramly, personal communication, July 24, 2014).”

Never having had any formal training, Chuck quotes Lou Fant in saying, “[He] graduated from the school of watch and do (C. Gramly, personal communication, July 24, 2014).” At the time of his initial development as an interpreter the concept of interpreter training was truly in its infancy. The majority of formal programs were ten-weeks long though some were beginning to shift into full-year formats. During the first year of the one-year program at Columbus Technical Institute (now Columbus State Community College) Chuck was recruited to teach ASL courses. As the program transitioned into being a two-year program he applied for and was offered a full-time teaching position.

During his time at Columbus State Chuck continued to teach ASL courses and dabbled in teaching interpreting courses, also. He developed a Linguistics of ASL course – his favorite subject to teach during his thirty-five year teaching career. One of the biggest struggles of this time was the incredibly limited amount of resources available to utilize in order to teach such courses. There were very few curriculum materials available at the time that reflected what Chuck felt to be “an awareness of what ASL really was (C. Gramly, personal communication, July 24, 2014).”

Over several years Chuck worked consistently to transform the interpreting program’s understanding and philosophy of ASL and the interpreting process. In the infancy of the interpreting profession the general consensus maintained that if interpreters could be *trained*, anyone could do it. Chuck worked diligently to grow and transform perceptions of the use of ASL. For instance, he recalls vividly an experience negotiating the program’s use of both ASL and Signed English. After teaching both courses for two years Chuck approached the program’s coordinator and, using his knowledge of ASL linguistics, expressed that teaching both courses just did not feel right to him. The Signed English courses were dropped from the curriculum shortly after this discussion.

### **Organizing for Action**

Over the course of his career Chuck was involved with several professional organizations. He joined the Sign Instructors Guidance Network (SIGN), which has since evolved into the American Sign Language Teachers Association (ASLTA), and as he states, “was one of only two hearies” on the board at the time (C. Gramly, personal communication, July 24, 2014). Parallel with his experience at Columbus State, Chuck wondered why the organization assessed and granted teaching certifications for the teaching of Signed English. After bringing this notion to the attention of the other board members, the Signed English certifications were soon dropped.

After being awarded Professional Level certification from ASLTA, Chuck served on the evaluation committee for over twenty years. This, he said, was one of the most rewarding things he was involved in. His passion and respect for the language and community were likewise

echoed in the goals of the ASLTA due to their mission of ensuring that ASL was being taught by qualified individuals (ASLTA, n.d.). Chuck worked tirelessly to make sure this goal was met. Locally, he was instrumental in working with Kellie Mills Stewart in bringing the first local chapter of what was then called SIGN to Ohio.

Chuck was likewise active in both the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and the Conference of Interpreter Trainers (CIT). He was awarded certification from RID around 1981 and was heavily involved with RID's Ohio chapter, having held several offices. In the mid-eighties Chuck became involved with RID on a national level and was asked by Dennis Cokely to chair the National Evaluation Board. During this time he was involved with making major revisions to the provision of the national certification test. He recalls, "The eighties were truly a crazy time for the field of interpreting (C. Gramly, personal communication, July 24, 2014)!"

Though he never held any offices within the organization, Chuck greatly valued his experience as a member of CIT. Attending yearly national conferences gave him the opportunity to interact with his peers, exchange knowledge and camaraderie, and continue to grow in his own practice. As he states, he was present during "a time of many new ideas and research into not only interpreting but the process of teaching this complicated task (C. Gramly, personal communication, July 24, 2014)." Each CIT conference continued to ignite Chuck's thirst for more knowledge. One experience in particular made a lasting impression on him. Danica Seleskovitch, well known for her work on spoken language conference interpreting, spoke at a CIT conference. Talking with her truly impressed upon him how little the ASL-English interpreting field knew and how far there was still to go.

### **Finest Moments**

As an interpreter and as an educator, specific experiences are always bound to stand out among the rest. Still filled with a feeling of awe and respect, Chuck recalls interpreting for MJ Bienvenu at her request when she gave a presentation on ASL linguistics at the Ohio School for the Deaf. To add even greater thrill to this experience another prominent member of the interpreting



community, Betty Colonomos, was present in the audience. Chuck also fondly remembers interpreting for Patrick Graybill's poetry performance at a workshop in Indianapolis.

Chuck truly looks at his career, he states, as an "attempt to pay forward" following what his two mentors from OSD did for him in his younger days (C. Gramly, personal communication, July 24, 2014). As a teacher his finest moments occur any time he sees one of his former students interpreting, or even yet, as he says "when I see a former student of mine following in my footsteps and becoming a teacher (C. Gramly, personal communication, July 24, 2014)."

### **Paying It Forward**

Throughout his career Chuck consistently impressed upon his students the seriousness of the act of interpreting, how important it is to respect consumers, and to act in a way that brings respect to the profession. As a teacher and second language user of ASL he wanted to ensure his students had strong respect for and involvement in the Deaf community. Most importantly, he wished to serve as a reminder, in his own words, that the language "isn't ours. We've been granted use of it; never forget that! It's not ours to change (C. Gramly, personal communication, July 24, 2014)."

Chuck supported this philosophy by running Silent Weekend, a voices-off camping event sponsored by Columbus State, for twenty-five years. Each school term students of ASL and interpreting, interpreting practitioners, and members of the Deaf community gathered for a weekend of activities, friendship, and learning. This opportunity greatly benefitted students by promoting engagement in the community in a non-judgmental and open environment.

For new graduates into the profession, Chuck has this advice to offer:

Be humble! Continue learning and refining your craft. *Never* be content with [your] present skills or knowledge. Network with peers; they're the *only* people who understand what you do and appreciate the level of difficulty involved. *Balance* your life; don't

let interpreting consume you either mentally or physically. Get a hobby! Stay healthy! Have respect and admiration for the interpreters who have gone before you; who advanced the field of interpreting. Never look down your nose at them because you “know more” than they ever did or will. Above all: be grateful for all those who helped you get where you are today – let your old teachers know what you’re doing and let them know you really do appreciate all the work they put in *for* you and your success. (C. Gramly, personal communication, July 24, 2014).

### **About the Author**

Grace Artl is a certified freelance interpreter and adjunct instructor at Columbus State Community College in Columbus, Ohio. She is currently finishing a master’s degree in interpreting studies with a focus in teaching interpreting at Western Oregon University. Her thesis focuses on gender socialization and its impact on the role space formation of American Sign Language – English Interpreters.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Chuck Gramly for his invaluable contribution to both my development as an interpreter and to the field of interpreting in general. I would truly not be the practitioner I am today without his insight, experience, and giving heart. I would also like to thank the members of the Western Oregon University Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies 2013 cohort for their constant support and collaboration.

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## **Always Look on the Sunny Side**

Cari Carter

*Western Oregon University*

### **Abstract**

This paper is a look into the life and accomplishments of Marilyn Mitchell. She has used role models to exemplify what it means to be a leader in an emerging profession. Through her involvement she has helped to shape the face of interpreting education and services to allow it to become what it is today.

### **The Beginning**

When asked how she came to be involved in many of the important movements in the history of interpreting she responded, "...I received invitations to apply for positions, applied and was accepted to be involved in a small way." Marilyn strongly believes that involvement should start at the local level. (M. Mitchell, personal communication, July 26, 2014). To tell the story of Marilyn Mitchell and how she has become a leader in the field of interpreting one first needs to know how she started. Marilyn was raised in a small town in Minnesota by hard working Norwegian parents. She did not find herself a part of the Deaf world until college when she started dating a man whose sister and brother are Deaf (1960). Marilyn recounts her story of meeting the siblings of her future husband. She was eager to communicate with them directly and not rely on her future husband to interpret. This was her invitation into the Deaf world that extended to various other communities and through numerous opportunities and hard work eventual job opportunities. The Deaf community welcomed her and she excelled, learning sign language directly from the people who used it and only taking one class offered at the school for the Deaf that taught vocabulary and the fingerspelling. "...we learned 20 or so signs in each class but not in context...I would go home and practice and practice..." (M. Mitchell, personal communication, July 26, 2014). That was the only formal sign language training though she took numerous classes and workshops all throughout her career. In those years, ASL was not yet a

formal language. Marilyn's best teachers were those Deaf people at the school for the Deaf and the deaf club in Sioux Falls, SD. No formal classes could have equaled total immersion.

### **How to grow as a leader**

According to Marilyn to grow as a leader one needs to trust in mentors and at some point stretch oneself. She points to three distinct opportunities that guided her in becoming an effective leader. In her first leadership role she found courage to take this role through looking back on the role models she had growing up (teachers). The first opportunity was her work with the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA). She was tasked with creating Y-teen programs and camping experiences through activities in the local middle schools. Through this leadership experience, she was able to bring together two interests by creating a club of the young girls in the South Dakota School for the Deaf (SDSD) in Sioux Falls and hearing girls from the public schools. After three years working at the YWCA with the Deaf and hearing programs, Marilyn was considered fluent in sign language and offered a teaching position at the School for the Deaf. At that time, she was offered a teaching job at SDSD, the beginning of a long career in teaching, a profession she never planned to enter and realized this was a very rewarding and challenging career. Without the support of the Deaf community, the cultural opportunities at the local Deaf Club and SDSD, she may never have been offered this opportunity. She is forever grateful to Jim and Janice Mitchell and Barbara Mitchell Morrison, the siblings of her first husband and to the many Deaf students and adults in Sioux Falls for welcoming her into their culture and community.

The second opportunity came when Marilyn and her family moved back to Minnesota where she started to work at the St. Paul Technical Vocational Institute. At this point she further learned the value of a good mentor. The director of the program for Deaf students, traveled often between Washington, D.C. and St. Paul on matters concerning Deaf education and federal budgeting. Marilyn took this opportunity to ask the director about his trips and who he had met. The director, a CODA himself, would tell her the names and positions of the high ranking people working in Washington, D.C. Marilyn took note knowing that one day she would meet each and every one of those people. "...He took the time to, I believe, mentor me. Without him spending

the time to teach me about the leaders in the field I might never have taken notice” (M. Mitchell, personal communication, July 26, 2014). During her career, Marilyn met every one of the individuals. Many are great leaders in Deaf education and in the Deaf community and some became Marilyn’s good friends.

The third opportunity came about when Marilyn worked as an Interpreter/Actress with the film department at the St. Paul Technical Vocational Institute. This time, she worked under a supervisor who had no ties to the Deaf world other than a wife who worked in Deaf education. In the four years she was there she was able to thrive working as an Interpreter/Actress, a captioner, script editor, and author of two books. “I was able to stretch and do new things in that position because of the confidence my supervisor had in me and willingness to try new and different tasks.” (M. Mitchell, personal communication, July 26, 2014).

### **The Journey Continues**

Marilyn’s journey then took her to the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) in Rochester, NY. It was there that she worked as an ASL educator to Deaf and Hard of Hearing students who had previously accessed their education orally as well as teaching faculty and staff members.

She went on to chair the Department of Interpreting Services at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) and eventually work as an assistant to Alan Hurwitz the Dean of NTID and a well-known national Deaf leader. It was in this position that she was invited, by TJ O’Rourke, another national Deaf leader, to teach a workshop on mainstreaming of Deaf students and eventually offered a job at the Louisiana School for the Deaf (LSD) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Marilyn’s dream was to change how Deaf children were mainstreamed in public education. This was her chance to be involved in those changes, in the appropriate environment and at a local and state level. Deaf students at LSD were being mainstreamed with other Deaf classmates; parents supported their decisions to mainstream; and social interactions continued at the School for the Deaf. The students were not alone with a room full of hearing students; their interpreters were qualified; they had Deaf adults to confide in and to model themselves after.

She took the position with two goals in mind, "...that no child should go through their education alone...[and]....interpreters should be qualified for the positions they held" (M. Mitchell, personal communication, July 26, 2014). She did just that by providing interpreter training courses that resulted in the number of certified interpreters, (there were only two certified at the time that she moved to Louisiana), to increase exponentially. This was partly due to her taking the reins and walking into the Deaf Club and, "I stood on a table and asked the people at the Deaf Club if they had children who could sign. Of course they said yes." (M. Mitchell, personal communication, July 26, 2014). Those children of the Deaf adults (CODAs) contacted Marilyn and interpreting classes began. Marilyn went on to design ASL programs, statewide interpreting services, state certification for interpreters, created the first sign language assessment for faculty and staff, and to increase the knowledge and skill base of all those involved in Deaf education in Louisiana. This was her first foray into establishing standards requiring state certification for interpreters that would serve her well on a later project.

### **A Leap and a Stretch**

Upon her return from Louisiana to Rochester, NY, in 1983, Marilyn applied to and was hired as a faculty member with the interpreting education program (American Sign Language and Interpreting Education – ASLIE) at NTID. There she taught students in the two-year associate degree in interpreting until 2000. During the years with ASLIE, she received her master's degree and was awarded the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) Eisenhart Award for Outstanding Teaching. She loved teaching, interacting with students from entrance to graduation, and when the opportunity arose for her to design a change in mainstream education in New York State, she took it. Laurie Brewer, Marty Nelson-Nasca, and Marilyn wrote and were awarded a federal grant to, "...find, access skills and knowledge, design training, and deliver training to all (K-12) educational interpreters in New York State (approximately 1,000); with the intention of the interpreters becoming state certified" (M. Mitchell, personal communication, July 26, 2014).

Having took the leap to apply for the grant Marilyn then decided to stretch herself further by becoming the director of this 10-year, \$8,000,000 grant. She oversaw five independent centers each with their own coordinator. There she, and a team, designed workshops and curriculum for

local and distance education for interpreters across New York State. Interpreters even had access to a bachelor's degree track offered through Empire State College.

### **Raising the Bar**

Having a strong foundation in designing and implementing competencies and standards for interpreter education, first in Louisiana then in New York State, Marilyn found herself invited to join the task force on entry to competency standards put together by Leilani Johnson. It was because of her work with distance education that opened the door to this opportunity. The grant program Marilyn was directing also allowed further opportunities to design standards leading to two publications, one learning outcomes educational interpreters needed upon graduation from an interpreter education program. The other publication designed the learning outcomes students in ASL classes needed from level one through level four. "...Think tanks, with the Drs. Marty Taylor, Carol Patrie and Kim Brown Kurz leading. This brought us together to share and decide what competencies were needed..." (M. Mitchell, personal communication, July 26, 2014).

When the opportunity for designing and creating a new national certification for interpreters, through RID, Marilyn applied to serve on the RID committee to develop the interview portion of the new National Interpreter Certification (NIC) test. She had previous experience from her work with passing certification standards through the Louisiana State legislature and knew she enjoyed test development. "...we were at a time in which we needed a new test. We had outgrown the CI/CT" (M. Mitchell, personal communication, July 26, 2014). Her work, along with many others, helped further professionalize the field. "...no test is perfect but neither is the bar exam that lawyers sit for, it is a snapshot in time" (M. Mitchell, personal communication, July 26, 2014). The NIC became the most appropriate examination at the time and was appropriately tested by qualified researchers proving to be valid and reliable.

Some of Marilyn's other proud achievements were tenure at RIT, Master's degree at RIT, Eisenhart Award for Outstanding Teaching, Genesee Valley Region Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (GVRRID) Outstanding Service Award, RID Judie Husted Award for RID Region I. All of this Marilyn attributes to being surrounded by many outstanding role models to do what



she felt needed to be done, stretching in the profession, and working to the best of her ability, always in tandem with others.

### **Looking from the past to the future**

All the while Marilyn has worked to stretch her strengths and abilities. She did work through the GVRRID, the Registry for interpreters of the Deaf (RID), the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and the Conference of Interpreter Trainers (CIT) conferences as often as possible. She currently serves on the Sacramento Valley RID Professional Development Committee and has served and serves as a reviewer/rater for the Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education (CCIE). “We often didn’t get paid but we didn’t expect it either. Most of the work was volunteer work. No monetary pay was expected. The professional and personal growth was and is sufficient compensation.” (M. Mitchell, personal communication, July 26, 2014). Times were different then, according to Marilyn, and the interpreting field has changed over time. It has become more professional, more manicured. This has had a positive and negative impact on how interpreters are welcomed into the Deaf world. That warm welcome that Marilyn experienced and is so grateful for, is something that is becoming a thing of the past. However, according to Marilyn, if interpreters will maintain a positive outlook and not “burn their bridges” the possibilities for growth and success are endless.

For advice on becoming a leader Marilyn states, “Every leader should have problem solving (focus on the solution not the problem) and critical thinking [skills]. We all have our own PTSD. If there are road blocks, due to traumatic experiences, it is valuable to look at what the opportunity in the situation and not feel prevented from success.” (M. Mitchell, personal communication, July 26, 2014).

### **About the Author**

Cari Carter MA, NIC Advanced has been a practicing freelance interpreter and interpreter educator for eleven years in the Sacramento, CA area.

## **Debra Russell: A Leader for All Occasions**

Christopher Grooms  
*Western Oregon University*

### **Abstract**

This article is part of a collaborative project by students and faculty in the Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies program, class of 2014, at Western Oregon University. The goal of the project is to recognize and honor leaders in the interpreting and interpreter education fields. Debra (Deb) Russell has a long history of serving in leadership roles in varying capacities from local communities to the international stage. She is known as a person of integrity and humanity with a passion for building and connecting communities at home and across the globe. I had the privilege of meeting with Deb to find out where her passion stems from and where she finds inspiration and the motivation to serve. What follows is an inspirational tale of one person's unselfish determination to engage in and foster collaborations across communities that serve to uphold the linguistic, cultural, and human rights of what have long been an underserved, underrepresented, and oppressed people.

Deb's journey began in a small farming community in rural Canada where she learned the value of contributing to the well being of the whole by seeing her parents unselfishly provide moral and physical support to the neighbors around them. When tragedy struck the family during her teenage years those same neighbors stepped up to ensure that Deb's family was able to maintain an integral role in their community. Not only did they provide food and emotional support, they assisted in the planting of crops and, months later, the harvesting of those crops in order for the family and their farm to remain a valued asset in the local community. At the same time, Deb learned the values of acceptance and forgiveness through the actions of her father who she reveres to this day. Without knowing it at the time these values, engrained at an early age, would drive Deb in her passion to build and connect communities to advance the cause of social justice from the local to the global level.

Deb's first encounter with the Deaf community and sign language came while she was attending college. Like many of us with the same experience, a whole new world opened up. She learned American Sign Language (ASL), discovered the richness of Deaf Culture, and eventually became an interpreter and later an interpreter educator. She began to take on leadership roles, much like her parents, where she saw the need. Deb was an integral part of the team that established the Alberta Chapter of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (ACRID). Later, she would also play a similar part in the founding of the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC) (AVLIC, n.d.). Deb saw herself as a builder working with other builders and took on various leadership roles, including President, in both organizations. In this endeavor, she recognized the power of collaboration to effect positive change across communities and used the experience to drive future efforts to advocate for working in collaboration locally and globally.

The World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) was officially established in July 2003 as the result of a collaborative effort between interpreters from around the globe and the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD). The overriding mission of WASLI is to advance the profession of sign language interpreting worldwide (WASLI, n.d.). This mission cannot be accomplished without intense collaboration among interpreting and Deaf communities across the globe. With this mission in mind and a passion that was fueled by an already long list of leadership experiences, Deb stepped into the role of North American Representative on the WASLI Board of Directors. With two colleagues, she was able to work collectively to coordinate the 2011 WASLI Conference in Durban, South Africa. It was during this conference that Deb was elected President of WASLI with her determination to foster community connections on a global scale and advance human rights and social justice in underserved and underrepresented Deaf and interpreter communities.

Along with the building and founding of ACRID, AVLIC and WASLI, Deb has celebrated many other accomplishments as a leader in various capacities throughout her career. She is most proud of those moments when communities have come together on equal footing to collaborate on projects that accomplish the goal of addressing the needs in those communities. One of her fondest memories and proudest moments was the collaboration between the Canadian Deaf and interpreting communities that led to the development of the AVLIC Interpreter Certification

system for interpreters in Canada. “The shared development of that system and recognizing the power of collaboration was a big high for me,” she fondly recollects (D. Russell, personal communication, July 18, 2014). Recently, Deb traveled to Saudi Arabia to encourage and realize collaboration between the Deaf and interpreting communities there; a successful trip and another proud moment in her illustrious career as an effective leader. Her work with Critical Link to engage the profession of spoken language interpreting in collaborative efforts of training and sharing information and research is another endeavor of which Deb is proud to be a part of. As the profession of sign language interpreting and interpreter education continues to grow and evolve, connections and collaborative efforts with our spoken language interpreting colleagues will become imperative in order to advance research, assessment development, and the use of novel teaching techniques across both fields. Deb is, yet again, a pioneer in this current effort.

While Deb may make it look easy, taking on effective leadership roles in any field is not a trivial task and requires dedication, integrity, and commitment. Transformational leaders serve to motivate others to see the possibilities within themselves and work collectively towards positive change. Facilitative leaders encourage others to think outside the box and explore non-traditional ideas and ways to move organizations forward to serve the common good. Deb is a leader who incorporates both of these styles of leadership, along with a healthy dose of personal attention, into her everyday actions as a leader in both the field of interpreting and interpreter education. She has an innate ability to inspire and foster a sense of purpose in a group and unite people around a common cause. She models openness to novel ideas and encourages others to think of creative solutions and ideas and explore the possibilities they may afford. She is able to motivate others to find the best in themselves and use those attributes to contribute to championing common causes in the communities in which they serve. Deb listens openly and attentively to those that approach her with ideas and issues and responds with an uncanny ability to empathize as well as encourage. She attributes her development as a leader not only to her own experience and education, but mostly to those that have mentored her along the way, guided her, and provided models of effective leadership. She specifically acknowledges Phyllis Joynt as a mentor who took her under her wing at an early age as well as Richard Letourneau, Angela Stratiy, Liz Scott-Gibson, and Markku Jokinen. Colin Allen, President of WFD, is one of her current mentors. “Watching Colin work with the global Deaf community toward positive collaboration

from a human rights framework has had a huge impact on me recently,” she states (D. Russell, personal communication, July 18, 2014). Deb also pays homage to a long lineage of Yoga teachers, especially Val Petric, who have guided her in approaching the world and her work through a philosophy of Yoga. Also, outside the field of interpreting and interpreter education, Deb has great admiration for former Canadian Ambassador, Stephen Lewis, whose global work in the AIDS crisis and style of leadership exemplify a passion for humanity. Deb has been able to see the exceptional qualities of leadership in others and learn from them, adapt them, and make them her own. She is forever grateful to those that have had such a huge influence on her life and leadership journey.

When asked about current challenges that leaders of today face, Deb responds, “We have to actively work with and on our current relationship with our Deaf communities and not just assume that the relationship will always be there (D. Russell, personal communication, July 18, 2014).” Deb attributes some of the disconnection between the interpreting and Deaf communities to the way the profession and interpreter training has developed. In North America, especially, business and profit have taken over as drivers in the market and have led to the development of attitudes that do not value community and service which were once the motivating factors for most interpreters. A deep and heartfelt understanding that what we do as interpreters is, indeed, providing a service to the community would help rebuild some of the connections that have been lost over the years. Working in collaboration with our Deaf communities with the shared goal of advancing and realizing social justice, as well as the human and linguistic rights of individuals, would make a powerful impact on the world in which we live. When the scandal regarding the “fake” interpreter for the Nelson Mandela memorial broke internationally, Deb and Colin Allen worked together to respond with a joint press release from WFD and WASLI condemning the debacle; they published the release within 24 hours and worked collaboratively across 16 time zones to accomplish this effort. Deb says, “If Colin and I can collaborate like that on an international level, why can’t it be done between communities on the local level (D. Russell, personal communication, July 18, 2014)?” Certainly, the collaboration between WFD and WASLI, as practiced by Deb and Colin, is a model for communities everywhere.

For those aspiring to become leaders in the field, Deb suggests, first and foremost, find out what you don't know. Knowledge is power. When you know your community you can begin to understand its needs and work innovatively to build a strong team that will address those needs in creative and meaningful ways. Deb also stresses the importance of looking to mentors or advisors, persons that you can trust and honestly reflect with regarding your own journey to leadership. To be an effective leader one must be dedicated to seeing tasks through to completion and have the courage and integrity to admit when something is not quite working. It is important to learn how to communicate in whatever ways we can in order to inspire and encourage others to think creatively and step up to address the various challenges we are experiencing in the field and our communities. Supporting others in their leadership roles and acknowledging what we can learn from one another is a huge step in bringing our communities together in collaborative efforts that will translate into the power of making positive and forward moving changes to advance social justice for all. Deb exemplifies the qualities in leaders that serve to impact the communities in which they live and work. She is adamant that collaboration within and between our communities is the answer to solving social justice issues. She has jumped in to leadership roles from the local to the global community to model and encourage those collaborations. Deb is, indeed, a leader for all occasions.

### **About the Author**

Christopher Grooms is an ASL/English Interpreter and Interpreter Educator currently residing in Houston, Texas (by way of Seattle, WA and Portland, OR). He has a passion for lifelong learning and recently earned his Master of Arts degree in Interpreting Studies from Western Oregon University. Chris has served in leadership roles at the local, state, regional and national levels and is thrilled to be a part of a project that honors the leaders he has learned so much from throughout his career.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to extend a heartfelt ‘Thank You’ to Deb Russell for taking the time in her busy schedule to participate in this project and for inspiring myself and countless other interpreters and leaders in the field. I would also like to thank my cohort mates at Western Oregon University for their unconditional and continued support in all my endeavors. Also, I owe a debt of gratitude to the faculty of the Western Oregon University Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies program for encouraging me to think creatively about my research efforts and their guidance throughout the program and beyond.

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## The Quiet Leader

Sandra L Maloney  
*Western Oregon University*

### Abstract

Leaders are thought to be the ones who are bold, do big things, and make big changes. We have made leaders into individuals who ‘change the world’ (Dudley, 2010). The reality is that there are leaders who do not live to have their names in the headlines or seek to do extraordinary, heroic acts. They are those who live in our community with humility. They impact the lives of others by being themselves, fulfilling the task at hand, and showing respect to others. In the field of sign language interpreting, Marian Lage is a leader.

### Getting Started

I have observed that the most effective leaders are rarely public heroes. These men and women aren’t high profile champions of causes, and don’t want to be. They don’t spearhead ethical crusades. They move patiently, carefully, and incrementally. They do what is right—for their organizations, for the people around them, and for themselves—inconspicuously and without casualties. (Badaracco, 2011)

On a typical work day, Marian Lage appears to be a confident, competent interpreter. On the surface, she is no different than hundreds of other sign language interpreters in America. Her foray into the field of sign language interpreting is similar to that of many others and yet uniquely her own. She has experienced set-backs in her journey and moments when it has all come together. Her approach to learning, mentoring, and teaching is a product of her experiences. How she interacts with her colleagues, the Deaf community, and her students is why she is a leader in the field of interpreting. She is the daughter of Rita and Larry Lage of



Ann Arbor, Michigan. As a child of deaf adults (coda), American Sign Language is her first language. The common misperception is that interpreting would be the natural choice for most codas. To the contrary, Marian initially enrolled in Eastern Michigan University's Deaf Education Program. It was not long before she intuitively knew the program's philosophy of teaching deaf children orally with no inclusion of a manual or signed education was not what she believed to be optimal for educating young deaf and hard of hearing children. She transferred to Madonna University, also in Michigan, with the intent of becoming an interpreter due the University's robust sign language studies and Deaf Culture program. Again, she was met with obstacles and discouragement from the faculty and staff. According to her instructors, coda interpreters, such as herself, were 'not ethical' and did not make for good interpreters. With this advice, she changed majors and finally graduated with a dual major in social work and sign language studies. She worked for a few years in the social work field before learning of a mentoring opportunity at Arizona State University (ASU) for pre-certified sign language interpreters. Under the guidance of skilled interpreters and mentors, Marian obtained her Certificate of Interpretation (CI) and Certificate of Transliteration (CT) through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) within six months of starting the program. Her plan to move back to Michigan was postponed by a move to Los Angeles, CA instead. While there she had the good fortune to surround herself with exceptional language mentors and skilled teachers who influenced her work every day.

### **Mentoring and Teaching**

Marian could have let the advice from her instructors at Madonna University detract her from pursuing a career as a sign language interpreter. Instead, she seized an opportunity across the country at ASU to participate in the mentoring program which provided a rich environment for developing the skills and confidence of a beginning interpreter. The program ensured she was teamed with qualified interpreters for all of her assignments and set the bar for effective teaming among interpreters that she emulates to this day. The positive approach to mentoring young interpreters and welcoming her as a part of the team gave her the skills and confidence to not only pass the RID CI/CT exams within six months of being in Arizona, the experience also set the standard for how she teams with and mentors others. Given her early experience, it could

have been all too easy for Marian to become jaded and skeptical of other interpreters. Instead, she has used that experience in her mentoring and teaching to be accepting of others, their diverse backgrounds, and to find ways to constructively criticize without destroying the spirit or drive to learn that is present within her students.

Marian vividly recalls her mentoring experience with Paula Browning while in Los Angeles. Paula would talk to her about everything and anything. At the time, she didn't understand why Paula was telling her so much as it did not seem relevant to interpreting and it certainly was not discussion about Marian's interpreting work. Years later, wisdom and experience led her to realize that Paula had given her invaluable insight into the L.A. interpreting and Deaf community. In her reflection of that time in her life, she recognizes that dialogue allowed her to become an active member of the community. It also enhanced her interpreting ability since she had more contextual information outside of only what was said or done in any one given interpreting environment.

Her time in Arizona and in California influenced how she values the humanity of the work she does. When working with a new student, especially in a mentoring situation, the underlying principle she works from is that effective interpreting cannot happen in a bubble. She acknowledges the importance of discussing current events and getting to know the person and what challenges they face in their daily life. That dialogue gives her a sense of where to start in their work together, builds trust and rapport, and provides the building blocks for her ability to scaffold their learning experience. It also builds a common language so that eventually they are able to discuss the work in a more diagnostic way. Marian does not shy away from having tough and honest conversations with her students and the work that is required to get them to their end goal. Throughout it all she still feels the scars left from being told she would never be ethical enough to be an interpreter based on her upbringing. She is mindful to not perpetuate this myth while enhancing the skills of her students. Her belief is that we must respect each other as individuals and respect the culture and communities we work in by immersing ourselves in them in order to incorporate the norms and ever changing language into our daily work.

## **Learn by Doing**

Marian's approach to learning is organic and refreshing. She is driven by the value of life-long learning and she has always sought out challenging learning opportunities. Ironically, she still laments the fact that she has not pursued a Master's degree. She expresses envy and admiration for her friends and colleagues who have or are in the process of obtaining a higher degree. Marian probably has as much knowledge and information to share as those who have a diploma. Her passion for learning has taken many forms throughout her career and each continuing education opportunity is chosen with a purpose. You will not find her attending each and every conference available. In fact, she has never been to an RID National Conference even though she has been a member of the organization for years. She chooses her learning opportunities depending on how to improve her own work or what she needs to know in order to mentor and teach. She notes a few poignant learning experiences that are both based in the community around her. The first was an opportunity to work with Deaf West Theatre. She describes the opportunity to watch Deaf adults working with one another and debating language use and deliberate language choices. The other is to be around her sons, both Deaf and current students at the Indiana School for the Deaf. Their language at home and with their friends has given her a new perspective on the value of being a part of the community and the impact interpreters can have on the next generation of Deaf individuals.

## **Leader Qualifications**

Today, she does not consider herself a leader, at least not in the big, heroic definition of leader our society has come to put on a pedestal and admire from afar. To hear her tell it, she is not a leader because she does not have a degree, is not a workshop presenter, and does not engage in formal research. Her actions tell a different story. Marian leads by example. In her own words she asserts, "I want to walk the walk and know what is current. If I will mentor or teach, my certification should be current (M. Lage, personal communication, July 29, 2014)." She holds an RID CI/CT, National Interpreter Certification-Advanced, Michigan-Board for Evaluation of Interpreters: Level III and next on her agenda is to take the Educational Interpreters Performance Assessment. She also feels the enormity of the responsibility that comes with interpreting and teaching interpreters. In the end, she does acknowledge that she is a leader amongst her

colleagues and in her local community because she has information to share and a passion for the work that is inspiring and infectious.

## **Conclusion**

In the young history of the sign language interpreting profession, there are many unknown and unrecognized leaders, teachers, and mentors who impact the lives of many solely by being genuine and doing what they do day by day. Too often, leaders are identified as those who serve on the National or State level RID board, own or manage an interpreting agency, etc. The quiet leaders are overlooked yet have a greater impact on individuals and the entire profession. When good events happen, some look back and chalk it up to fate, good fortune, or being in the right place at the right time. Marian's path to becoming the leader and role model she is today is a testament to her tenacity and love of learning. She did not give up on her desire to become an interpreter even after being told it was not the career for her. Instead, she made the bold move to relocate across the country and was blessed to be surrounded by like-minded individuals who were committed to the development of the next generation of interpreters. She has learned the value of teamwork, leadership, and mentoring with a constructive and supportive approach from those she worked with along the way. Her name is known and honored amongst those who have worked beside her because she does "what is right—for [her] organizations, for the people around [her], and for [herself]—inconspicuously and without casualties" (Badaracco, 2011).

## **About the Author**

*Sandra L Maloney, MI-BEI III, CI, CT, SC:L*

Sandra is a private practice interpreter in the Metro Detroit area. She serves on the Registry of Interpreters for Deaf Board of Directors as the Region III Representative. She received her Bachelor of Science in ASL-English Interpreting from Northeastern University in 2001 and is pursuing her Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies from Western Oregon University.

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## **Doing Leadership: Caring for our Communities**

Erica West Oyedele

*Western Oregon University*

### **Abstract**

This is the story of one interpreter's pathway into the field of interpreting. During an interview that took place on July 24, 2014, she shared her concerns for the community of signed language interpreters and her aspirations for us to do more. She demonstrates for us that leadership may take a variety of forms; It can happen behind the scenes, in service positions, or through the encouragement and support of others. We learn that personal growth happens just by virtue of being present and open to the people and opportunities that surround us. Always fueled by a desire to do, give, and love more, Jeannette Ocampo "JO" Welch teaches us how to be compassionate practitioners and leaders in the field of signed language interpreting.

### **The early years**

Jeannette Ocampo "JO" Welch lovingly tells the story of how her parents arrived in New York as a result of her father chasing her mother to America. Though she did not realize it early on, as the first daughter of two Columbian immigrants who are now citizens, JO has always been an interpreter at heart. At home, JO's parents thought it was important as immigrants to focus on English language acquisition. Two years later when her brother was born they switched the focus back to Spanish, and then, when they thought that was confusing, they moved back to English as their primary language. As a result of those early years, JO's first language is English. Spanish and American Sign Language (ASL) are her second languages. JO describes her expressive Spanish as accented. While she identifies as a Latina woman who is trilingual, she currently avoids marketing herself as an ASL/English/Spanish interpreter because she is aware that Spanish language interpreting is complex and requires the same dedication as ASL interpreting.

## How she got here

JO's first exposure to ASL came in the eighth grade when she met a classmate who was Deaf. Their schooling took them separate ways and it was not until after high school that JO re-encountered her former classmate and friend, John Paul Jebian. "Mortified" that she had nothing to say because she had forgotten the sign language that she learned from this friend, she turns from her degree in theater that she is not really happy with and begins taking ASL courses in 1993 at Miami Dade College.

In her second semester of ASL, JO, along with about six others, was recruited by Jason Southwell Hay, along with several dedicated colleagues, to fill the need for interpreters in the educational system that existed at the time. JO both says, "Don't try this at home", and "it was magic". Her passion for mentoring, expanding her knowledge base, and ASL advocacy were sparked. By 1994 she worked for the school system, was state screened at a QA (quality assurance) level 2, and received her Educational Interpreter Evaluation,(EIE) a credential for interpreters working in the state of Florida. Just one year after her first ASL class, JO was not only a credentialed interpreter, she was accepted into the week long intensive program for interpreters held at Gallaudet University.

## On being present



When I asked JO how she created leadership opportunities for herself, her response was humble. She says, "I wasn't prompted to make leadership opportunities for myself. I was present and open to being a part of something." Being present afforded JO the opportunity to touch many paths throughout the course of her career. One such opportunity presented itself when Betty Colonomos came to JO's community and encouraged the interpreters within the educational system to strive for something greater. At the time various coding systems for English were being heavily used in the Florida educational system. JO and her cohort were passionate with their desire to learn ASL and traveled across the state taking linguistic courses as well as a course on idioms which was taught by Dr. Jeff Davis who eventually became JO's mentor.

Dr. Davis could see JO's potential for more, but without holding her bachelor's degree her opportunities would be limited. JO was also aware of herself as a person, she knew she had energy, and she frequently refers to herself as action verb. She is a doer! What she understood then was that the field of interpreting was a fertile environment and that something was going to happen for her. It was being open and present that allowed JO to act on the advice from Dr. Davis. Though she had family, friends, a boyfriend, a dog, and a career in Miami, JO packed up and moved from sunny Miami to Boston in the middle of winter. She began attending Northeastern University (NU). By the time JO graduates with honors from NU in 1997, she holds two state certifications, and is already a working interpreter.

It was during her time at NU that JO's identity as an interpreter of color emerged. She was the only student of color in her class. While living in Miami it never occurred to JO that she needed her interpreter of color identity because in that world everyone was a person of color. At least, "they were all brown to me," she says. The environment at NU invited her identity as an interpreter of color to grow. She reflects, "It had to in the absence of having that part of myself nurtured and wanting to nurture it for and with other people."

Between 1998 and 1999 JO held part time positions at the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing as a referral specialist, at the Boston Arts Academy high school as an interpreter (perfect given her background in the arts), and she took on part time work with the Deaf Blind Contact Center (DBCC) which is a social and recreational program for Deaf Blind adults where she was also introduced to American Association for the Deaf Blind and the supportive Deaf Blind community network. 1999 was a good year! It was also during this year that the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) National Conference came to Boston. JO attended the RID conference for the first time and remained open to the leadership opportunities that would begin to present themselves to her.



## **Doing leadership**

Although accomplished in a very short period of time, JO was still new to the field of interpreting. This was her first time attending the RID national conference, and it was also the first time that Mano a Mano, an organization which promotes the growth of Spanish/ASL/English interpreters (Mano a Mano, 2014), hosted a pre-conference session. She thanks Christopher S. Robinson, who JO describes as a connector, for finding JO and soliciting her help. Connectors are people who have relationships with an above average number of people and who seek to bring other people together if they seem to have a common purpose (Bowen-Bailey, 2014). As a result of the connections that were made, JO volunteers and does whatever is needed in order to help. “Whatever you need me to do”, she says, “that is how involvement begins.”

Two years later, Mano a Mano hosts its pre-conference at the RID national conference in Orlando, Florida. Angela Roth, now the international chair for Mano a Mano, asks for help with entertainment back stage. JO handles costumes backstage for all of the artists, as well as for the outgoing and incoming RID presidents. Being present to, and being a part of something is what allowed JO to make connections with the then current president of RID. Mano a Mano has had a huge impact on JO’s entry into leadership and she has been involved with the organization ever since.

JO is a promoter for trilingual interpreting. Although she is not a current practitioner of trilingual interpreting, she understands that there is still space for her to be able to make contributions to her community. As a Latina and an interpreter, while she has had substantial opportunities to nourish the ASL and Deaf culture part of her world, she does not have enough exposure to the larger picture in Spanish and actively seeks ways to improve in that area as well.

She went to the Mano a Mano pre-conference in Orlando one week early and with the support of Gilberto García Camacho, a trilingual interpreter from Puerto Rico, and her father by phone, she worked to translate the program book. She slept on Angela’s couch for a week. When the opportunity was there, JO stepped into it and as a result built her understanding of the politics of

the profession and of how things were run behind the scenes. She credits her knowledge of politics to the great people who were willing to talk things through. Being present and open allowed her to work with people who could provide a variety of perspectives.

Prior to 2004, JO began her service to the RID Special Interest Group (SIG), Interpreters and Translators of Color (ITOC). Persis Bristol and Emilia Lorenti-Wann, among others, suggested that JO run for the Region I ITOC representative position in 2004. When the Chair position became available JO accepted the nomination. She remembers being in the middle of a job, walking to the bathroom, and being asked if she accepted the nomination. She said yes. When the job was over, she was congratulated, and then, through her work with the SIG, she began the work of learning how to further navigate the system of RID.

“In leadership I think sometimes we lose that institutional memory. With ITOC I saw so much but it was never clear how the people who follow will have access to that rich history and we should know it,” she says. JO saw ITOC through the transition from Special Interest Group to that of Member Section with the help of Bruce King and other SIG leaders. She spoke about the powerful response received from the membership in regards to a policy that required 50 trilingual participants to be registered at RID conferences before providing trilingual interpreting services. She was also present when RID issued an apology to the ITOC membership for creating such a policy. A part of being present is recognizing that there is a lot of history that comes with being at any place at any given time and there are lessons learned. Later, JO moved from leadership in ITOC into leadership with RID’s Interpreters in Educational and Instructional Settings (IEIS) Member Section where she also served as their Region I representative.

I have seen JO as a role model working as a conference interpreter at several national conferences. In fact, she has worked every national conference since 2003 and even when not hired, by being available and open, she still managed to be involved. She attributes the beginning of her conference interpreting experience to Laurie Shaffer and Boston’s local Interpreters of Color leadership who started a mentorship program for conference interpreters of color under the Boston University Center for Interpreter Education (BUCIE). The goal was to provide support for and increase the number of interpreters of color at conferences. JO strongly believes in

connecting with interpreters of color. She says, “if people of color are coming together to do something locally, then I am going to show up over there because I need to feel supported by the community and cultural values that we share...because you notice that when it is missing.”

### **Community, culture, and identity**

JO says that the most important skill for interpreters to have, “is the ability to know that you don’t know something.” We all want affirmation and to be loved, but knowing when you do not have the answers and being able to have humility can be tough and time consuming. This is especially important considering the multicultural conversation. This means that as interpreters we work with consumers and colleagues from a variety of diverse backgrounds. Understanding each other requires that we become sensitive to the needs of the communities that we work with and serve. The work we do requires sacrifice and effort. One does not begin to arrive at that understanding of others without making deliberate moves in that direction. She believes that because interpreters work with individuals from various backgrounds its worth, “finding out more about that culture because there is stuff we are not able to see until we know more.” JO recalls the Minority Interpreter Group (MIG) that started out as the Minority Interpreter Support Group/TRIBE under BUCIE. She says, “When I moved to Boston these interpreters of color were part of the community that shaped me and my work. I am grateful and blessed for the years and the work we have done together.”

Today, she has been in the profession for over 20 years and currently works at Boston University as the Coordinator of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, and is the Director for BUCIE. Though she has a wide range of skills she has little to no experience in medical, social services, or legal interpreting settings, but foresees this work in her future. She is a reflective practitioner who engages in deliberate practice opportunities to increase her skills in ASL. The Etna Project trainings by Betty Colonomos (2014) and the Demand Control Schema by Dean and Pollard (2013) have had significant impact on her work.

She has participated in the Julliard theatrical interpreting program, she went to Big Spring, Tx for the trilingual interpreting program, and went to Helen Keller National Center for their Deaf

Blind program. She has attended several other niche, week long immersive trainings which have impacted her professional development. As a profession, she says, “it is important to keep moving forward and looking at the larger picture in terms of how do we improve our practice?”

JO still does conference interpreting and Deaf Blind work. Work in K-12 educational settings is peripheral now, but she still keeps up with what is happening in the state. This year has been a big one for her with bringing ITOC back onto the table. She recently co-presented with Holly Alfred, Chair of the Minority Interpreter Group, in Massachusetts where their goal was to highlight the availability of resources in the region that focus on multicultural issues.

In October 2014 JO hosted the BUCIE conference, “Building your Comunidad IQ: Working with, in, and alongside the Latino Deaf Community.” She wants to see more community collaboration. She wants majority culture interpreters informed and educated so that they know more and can do better with the communities they serve. Even when you are not a trilingual interpreter, there are still tools that you need to have when you are working with a Deaf person who is also Latino. She comments, “If they [Deaf person] have another culture and you don’t have access to it, it’s being left on the cutting room floor at the end of every job.”

JO is passionate about connecting and networking. She believes that just by working together we will see an impact because, as she states, “the learning that you can do by the virtue of being present is better than the one you can do by being on the job.” JO suggests that leadership is stuffing envelopes, being the support person, and sometimes just sitting there. She claims, “it allows you to gain access and proximity in a way you do not get to do on the job.”

Because of social media we are getting a better idea of how people think. In our professional dialogues the discussion of diversity is often between Deaf and hearing, but we do not discuss multicultural groups often. What happens when you are also a person of color who is Deaf? The Deaf/hearing binary is not our only issue, as a profession we need to look at other factors. When you look at United States Census Bureau projections, Latinos will be the largest minority by 2060 (2012) but when you look at RID statistics (2013) we have under 400 Latino interpreters in RID which is not representative of the cultures that are out there.

Another concern and motivating factor is the unstable socioeconomic settings of many interpreters, especially those in rural settings, who have little access to resources. This lack of resources inhibits their ability to grow professionally. Many are out there making \$10 or less per hour, which doesn't promote the ability to fly to another state and go to a conference. JO urges us to look at the profession as a whole and figure out how we can reach out to everybody. We have a lot of interpreters in places where they are forced to work alone, without teams. With or without credentials, they are interpreting and they are one of us and we need to figure out how to reach them.

Over time JO has learned to become more patient. She thinks one thing we could do differently is remember that people want to be approached personally. When you directly reach out, people are more likely to step up in community cultures. Our field often refers to the Deaf community as a collectivist culture, and to the hearing community as individualistic. This statement is too broad and is not true for many of us who are from marginalized racial and ethnic groups. Many of us are from backgrounds where caring for our community as a whole supersedes the immediate needs of the individual. When working with and among these community cultures we need to remember the value of direct contact. If we want more involvement from a group, then we need to understand what they need. We are all busy, many people don't have resources and it takes effort and time but, she says, "We need leaders to say I want to do something different today."

There is a long history of approaches and attempts to reach out to the community of interpreters and stakeholders that have not been successful, though JO sees that the RID is currently trying to make changes in the way the organization reaches out to its constituency. While the climate is shifting in our field, the playing ground remains uncertain. We have different leadership now and their approaches to doing leadership are remarkably different when compared to where we were just a few years ago. JO remarked that in the instances when the opportunity for leadership was declined it was because of where she was at the moment. She doesn't regret saying no when she has turned offers down because leadership is such an important value. It requires time and effort, and she really wants to be attentive to what people think about where we should be going as a practice.

Family is her first priority. She says her son is at the perfect age “to be loved and squeezed” so she is focusing on family when she is not working. She believes that balance is important. We must balance being a business with being an ally. She believes we need to learn how to talk about these things. She sees herself returning to leadership positions in the coming years and needs to figure out what is the best place for her to be able to make change. She also admits that as a Latina who works in a majority culture, sometimes there are extra doubts that come up for a number of reasons. Yet, she says “if you take the chance to be present you are going to learn so much which makes you a better practitioner and a better person.”

JO accepts being seen as a leader, but says she is also a “fantastic follower”. She says that maybe it is not her place to lead and if someone else is leading, then she can be a follower. Knowing when to support others in whatever it is that they need to do is a form of leadership. She is able to understand that we are constantly changing as a profession and as people. We all have multiple skills and talents and we will not always know what to do. She defines herself as, “a leader, a follower, and sometimes as something else.”

JO holds national certification: CI, CT, ED: k-12, and NIC-Advanced through RID. More importantly though, she is a woman, a mother, a wife, and a friend. She always loves first and cannot say her son Joaquin’s name without undertones of adoration and pride. She says she is fallible and quick to accept when she is wrong. She is passionate about making things right. She believes that communication and honesty are our biggest faults. She says, “If you have it [honesty] then we get much further, but it takes so much risk.”

She is a singer, photographer, does art, and really believes in people. She believes that gratitude is important because we do not travel alone; we have mentors, both Deaf and hearing that add to our lives. She says, “We are never done learning and need to learn more to do better for the people around us.” JO says she doesn’t know if she has had her biggest accomplishment yet, but whatever it is she says, “it will be the next thing that we can all do together.”

## About the Author

Erica West Oyedele is a nationally certified sign language interpreter working primarily in Northern California. She has her bachelor's degree in Deaf Studies from California State University, Sacramento and her Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies from Western Oregon University.

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## **Renaissance Man**

Laurie Reese Reinhardt, MFA, CSC, NIC-A

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### **Abstract**

This chapter chronicles the career of Daniel B. Veltri, certified American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter for over thirty-five years. A maverick that upholds language accessibility and authenticity, he was an early adopter of video production as a tool to assist in developing signed language interpreters. Significant as Dan's video work continues to be, his contribution to mental health interpreting shaped how practitioners view therapeutic triad relationships.

### **Early Years - 70's**

The profession of signed language interpreters is fortunate to have individuals who possess diverse skills beyond the pragmatics of interpreting. These individuals daily contribute to our collective understanding and enrichment of the work. Whether positioned on the cutting edge of the profession's evolution or quietly and steadily striving to implement change that challenges current paradigms, we owe a lot to those brave enough to step forward to meet the challenge. Daniel B. Veltri is one of these individuals whose thirty-five year career has expanded the footprint of ASL interpreting.

A native of Rochester, NY, Daniel Veltri, known to all as Dan, entered Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) as a science major in the fall of 1976; he distinctly recalls observing a professional interpreter on registration day and was riveted! If you ask Dan about this encounter, the name of the interpreter he saw rolls off his tongue as it happened yesterday. Dan grew up next door to a Deaf couple with hearing children and only used fingerspelling and written notes to communicate with them. He had seen sign language being used among them in their daily interactions, but he had not realized there were hearing people, professional interpreters, who could use sign language to bridge the two worlds.

Fate placed Dan in classes with deaf students with whom he struck up friendships, especially in a chemistry class with a passionate instructor who used simultaneous communication, signing and speaking English at the same time. The instructor, Ed Cain, eyed Dan's fascination for the language and encouraged him to apply for the Basic Interpreter Training Program (BITP) housed under the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID). I had the privilege of being a friend of fate as well, by attending BITP '77 and meeting Dan – our friendship has flourished for over thirty-five years. Training meant participation in a 10-week total immersion program, with the expectation of working for NTID/RIT at the student employee rate of \$3.25 an hour - compensation unthought-of by today's standards.

Interpreter training in 1977 was squarely rooted in the conduit role framework. Contemporary thought of the time upheld that a Deaf person's path to empowerment was via an "invisible" conduit to information (Swabey & Mickelson, 2000). Almost simultaneously national legislation on education accessibility for children was making headlines. In 1975 the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (P. L. 94-142) passed, legislating funds for accessibility and training of signed language interpreters in preparation to meet public mainstreaming demands. Hailed as landmark legislation, no one in BITP '77 could have predicted the far-reaching "normalizing" implications as oppressive and the impact legislation like this would have on Deaf America (Cokely, 2000). Living and learning in the times, Dan excelled at his craft, being the first RIT student from our cohort to achieve certification by earning his Comprehensive Skill Certification (CSC) from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) in 1978, just over a year after producing his first signed sentence, a remarkable accomplishment.

Dan interpreted at NTID/RIT for the remainder his tenure as an RIT student; as a science major, Dan was assigned a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) course load. Dan made connections with the students he worked with and when it was apparent they were not following along, Dan deviated from transliteration and incorporated expansion techniques, radical for the day, so radical in fact he recalls being reprimanded by his supervisor. Dan was convinced there was more to interpreting than adhering to contemporary convention, an idea reinforced after meeting several interpreter trainees from California attending the 1980 BITP

who had excellent ASL skills. Fascinated by their tales of a vibrant Bay Area Deaf community, Dan left NTID/RIT for San Francisco, foreshadowing an accomplished career ahead.

### **A Career is Launched - 80-90's**

In a recent conversation with Dan, he was asked to reflect on a pivotal point in his career. Without hesitation he pointed to a single event in the mid 80's when he voice interpreted for an ASL storytelling at the California School for the Deaf in Fremont. Ben Bahan was featured, performing an early rendition of his now famous *Birds of a Feather*, a moving allegorical story of the Deaf experience. Dan marks that evening as the moment the Bay Area community at large recognized his exemplary skill in working from ASL to English. Community mentors came forward fostering his development, just in time as it turns out. In the mid-eighties a call to action galvanized the community as AIDS ravaged the Bay Area, and the Deaf LGBT community in particular. "People were dying; we had a sense of emergency," Dan recalls (D. Veltri, personal communication, July 23, 2014). He goes on to state, "We wanted to take responsibility for the message to assure people understood (D. Veltri, personal communication, July 23, 2014)." His involvement in Deaf community-based AIDS prevention work strengthened his ASL fluency.

The Deaf cultural explosion of the 80's affected interpreting outlooks and interpreting models evolved; the conduit model fell way to facilitated communication and bilingual/bicultural constructs (Swabey & Mickelson, 2000). As the community's perspectives were shifting Dan's work reflected a consumer-centered practice. In 1987, Dan along with mentor Sheila Jacobs, a founding member of Children of Deaf Adults (CODA), was selected to be a part of the interpreting team for the national RID conference in St. Paul, MN. Dan credits Sheila for teaching him in a concrete way how to conduct himself as a guest in the Deaf community. Later, Anna Witter-Merithew, RID President (and his previous BITP instructor) tapped Dan to service in RID by encouraging him to join the National Testing Board. He served on the committee for two years then chaired the committee for the following two years. Simultaneously, Dan chaired the Program Committee for the 1989 national RID conference in El Paso, TX.

Parallel to the cultural explosion in the Deaf community, federal research grants were awarded to institutions such as the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) Center on Deafness, a mental health clinic where Dan held a staff interpreter position. He had the great fortune to work with incredible colleagues. Dan Langholtz, whose professionalism and infectious positive outlook on life and justice, has had a huge impact on him. The eleven years spent in this position honed Dan's interpreting skills, groomed his stature as a national presenter on mental health interpreting and facilitated his ability to conduct service work for RID – having access to a phone kept him connected to committee members and activities.

The Center on Deafness had professional video equipment available, which was very expensive at the time. Given the surrounding influences, Dan was interested in harnessing the power of video to educate. Thinking like a maverick, he identified gaps in video technology expertise within the community. Encouraged by the Center's supervisors Dan continued to pursue video production interests. Sensing a cultural explosion, Dan chose to pursue a Master of Arts. degree in video production. In 1993 Dan graduated from San Francisco State University with the Master's Hood for Outstanding Achievement, one of the university's highest awards.

That same year Dan established Treehouse Video, which has for the past twenty years brought leading edge educational materials to practitioners, designed and produced RID testing materials, and produced numerous videos for Deaf-centered projects nationwide. Dan Veltri is on the short list of names in video production work within the Deaf community.

## **Today**

Dan continues to practice and is well versed in current research trends. He has witnessed the field transition from its infancy. "Interpreting has changed since I first started; case in point: at a recent event I interpreted, a small army of interpreters were strategically positioned around the stage to handle every conceivable access point for interpreting. Years ago, I remember having to jump up and down from the stage to sign and voice a similar presentation," he chuckles (D. Veltri, personal communication, July 23, 2014). He further states, "Our language has changed as well; now there are specific terms for things we used to just do. The field was new and we were

making it up as went along. All of that has become codified and standardized (D. Veltri, personal communication, July 23, 2014).” Musing about now and then he continues, “The younger group of interpreters behind us has raised the bar and expectations. We have become more specialized; interpreters now train to excel in a specific aspect of the language and correlated settings (D. Veltri, personal communication, July 23, 2014).”

Dan’s advice for new practitioners is to seize the moment whenever possible, “When you find yourself in the right place at the right time – go for it (D. Veltri, personal communication, July 23, 2014)!” Dan humbly elaborates, “I was encouraged by people whom I admired – CODAs like Sheila Jacobs, my former instructors, and close friends like Dan Langholtz and many other Deaf leaders. Find a need and fill it... just think about what is needed (D. Veltri, personal communication, July 23, 2014).” Dan’s reflection is sage advice from someone who entered interpreter training thirty-five years ago knowing only how to fingerspell.

### **About the Author**

Laurie Reese Reinhardt, a practitioner with over 35 years experience is a candidate for graduation from Western Oregon University’s Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies program. Prior to pursuing interpreter education Laurie galvanized a group of practitioners to form SignOn, Inc., the Northwest’s largest interpreter agency (1997-2011). She lives in Seattle, WA with her husband, two daughters, and Miss Mille the household cat.

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## **A Passion that Leads to Destiny**

Nicole Shambourger  
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### **Abstract**

In an effort to bring recognition to leaders in the field of interpreting and interpreter education, graduate students pursuing a Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies selected a local community leader to spotlight. Dr. Jacqueline Bruce, affectionately known as Jackie Bruce was selected for interview because of her commitment to the field of signed language interpreting and her passion for educating and mentoring interpreters. Dr. Bruce's educational opportunities served as a springboard for her successful journey. Although she never thought of herself as a leader, she exhibits leadership qualities recognized by everyone she comes in contact with. Her path to becoming a leader has been paved with a colorful patchwork of opportunities filled with twists and turns that have allowed her to settle into a comfortable place that serves the community who supported her along the way.

### **The Early Years**

During the early 70's, Jackie lived in Perris, California and would often visit her grandparent's home. On one specific visit, she vividly recalls watching her Deaf aunt and friends communicating with each other in sign language. From this experience she developed a strong desire to communicate with them during her visits. She knew the only way to accomplish this was to enter their world through their language, American Sign Language (ASL). A few years later after graduating from high school, she moved to the Santa Ana, California area. At about the age of twenty-five, she enrolled in a six-week course in Signed Exact English (SEE) was her first classroom experience in pursuit of her quest to learn sign language. Intrigued by what she was learning, she later moved to Bakersfield, California and enrolled in another course, American Sign Language (ASL). Jackie stated, "This course was definitely different from the SEE course but I did not really understand the difference. My Deaf instructor accurately explained the different between SEE and ASL (J. Bruce, personal communication, July 24,

2014)." As a result, Jackie was well on her way to learning the language that would bridge the communication gap with her beloved family member. Whenever the opportunity presented itself to enroll in a course, she was always eager to attend and actively participate in the classroom setting. Her continued enrollment resulted in earning an Associates of Arts degree from Bakersfield College.

In the late 1970s/early 80's, Jackie moved to the Oakland area. She worked at the Berkeley School for the Deaf. After relocating to Fremont, California, the school changed its name to the California School for the Deaf. Although Jackie was not fluent in sign language when she landed this position, the administration trusted that she would learn American Sign Language (ASL) quickly while on the job performing her assigned duties. She worked as a night attendant in the dorm for elementary school age boys. Jackie fondly remembers one student who interpreted for her when communicating with the other students. This student provided her much needed support while she was adjusting to her new environment.

Jackie also worked as a staff interpreter at the Berkeley Center for Independent Living (CIL). Unfortunately, during this time in her career, she dealt with an annoying lack of self-confidence concerning her skills as an interpreter. This lack of confidence resulted in her feeling nervous all the time. She attributes her success in this position to the other staff interpreter, Joy, who gave her the necessary support and assistance during her tenure at the center. Because the other staff interpreter believed in Jackie more than she believed in herself, they developed a system when team interpreting to shorten her interpreting time so she could build her confidence level. Through her diligence and commitment to succeed, it was only a matter of time before she equally shared the workload. Joys' act of kindness and professionalism had a significant impact on Jackie. As a result she carries that same level of concern when working with novice interpreters who may feel the same way she did at the onset of working in this field. She encourages interpreters to take baby steps and reassures them their interpreting skills will improve over time if they make a firm commitment to continue working on their craft in addition to seeking guidance from Deaf and non-deaf mentors.



While working at Berkeley's Center for Independent Living, she enrolled in American Sign Language (ASL) evening classes at Berkeley City College, formally known as Vista Community College. Her professors were instrumental in developing the Vista Curriculum Series, *Signing Naturally*, a widely popular ASL curriculum used by interpreter education/training programs across the county. Jackie was trained by the best teachers and language models namely Ken Mikos and Ella Mae Lentz. Jackie stated, "While in college I was given the chance to learn from some of the best interpreters and attend an unlimited number of community events (J. Bruce, personal communication, July 24, 2014)". Her time at Berkeley City College proved to be the catalyst that established a solid foundation in her chosen career path.

Jackie attended numerous community events hosted by the Oakland Chapter of the National Black Deaf Advocates (NBDA). In 1983, she became involved in the organization and established a greater connection to the African American/Black Deaf community. The members of the Oakland chapter took her under their wings and helped to foster her understanding of working with the unique needs of the community. As a result of their connection, she started attending NBDA national conferences for several years. While at the conference she met several African American/Black interpreters, established a rapport, and became involved with the National Alliance of Black Interpreters, Inc. (NAOBI). She supports their efforts in fostering development and providing support to African American/Black interpreters. Her interests in the education of Deaf youth lead her back to Fort Worth, Texas. While there she earned a degree in Deaf Education from Texas Christian University. Upon graduation, she transitioned into a teaching position. She taught Deaf students in Dallas, Texas for five years while maintaining a private practice as a sign language interpreter. Her passion lies in blending two things together; her love for deaf education and the youth as well as sign language interpreting and mentoring. She later moved to Houston, Texas and worked as a freelance interpreter.

### **The Shift**

Although Jackie studied under some of the best trainers of American Sign Language (ASL) in California, she wanted to take her interpreting skills and knowledge to another level. To accomplish this goal her mentor as well as others suggested she attend Gallaudet University in

Washington, D.C as a fulltime student. Gallaudet's curriculum was attractive and rigorous but it helped her put all the puzzle pieces together. She relied on the foundational content she had already learned through classes and workshops to wholeheartedly embrace the fresh new curriculum this program offered. She admitted, "The program was challenging, but at the same time an amazing and rewarding experience (J. Bruce, personal communication, July 24, 2014)". In 1993, Jackie graduated with her Masters of Arts in Sign Language Interpretation; some think she was the first African American/Black person to graduate from the program. Additionally, while in Washington, D.C., she attended Shiloh Baptist Church where she gained invaluable knowledge while working with their Deaf ministry.

A few years after graduation, Jackie decided to leave the Washington, D.C. area to become the Director of the Interpreter Training/ASL program at Bishop State Community College in Mobile, AL, where she served in this capacity for five years. Teaching and instruction, academic counseling, staffing, curriculum and assessment development, student retention and recruitment, community involvement and workshop development were some aspects under her purview.

In order to effectively meet the needs of the community, Jackie deemed it necessary to improve her cultural awareness of the community in which she was serving. With this in the forefront of her mind, she applied and received a scholarship to attend Lamar University in Beaumont, TX. In 2009, she completed her Doctorate of Education (Ed.D) in Deaf Education/Deaf Studies. Her dissertation was entitled "The Use of Interactive Videoconferencing in Deaf Education: Perceptions of Instructors".

### **Mentor Moments**

As Jackie spoke about her experience at the Center for Independent Living (CIL) in Berkeley, the word "mentoring" came to mind. The other staff interpreter provided her what she needed at that specific moment. This idea rings true when discussing the facets of mentoring. There is no one method or approach to follow but there are multiple avenues to provide support. Jackie spoke of mentoring in two veins. She feels some interpreters seek out mentors to simply have someone to bounce ideas off of or to receive guidance; this mentor behaves as a counselor and

provides sound advice. Mentoring in this capacity ensures their fellow colleagues are taking care of themselves so they can effectively deliver services to the community they serve. Other interpreters seek mentors to work on specific language skills. Jackie spoke a great deal about the concept of “mentoring from afar”. This simply means that the mentor and mentee do not have a formal relationship or they may not even know each other, but the mentee looks up to the “mentor” and watches their professional behavior, interactions, situational protocols and interpreting work from afar. Consequently, the mentor may often never know they are “mentoring from afar.”

I wanted to know more about her experience with various stages of readiness and varying attitudes about mentoring. She welcomes a mentoring relationship, but prefers to work with those who are persistent in follow-up and follow-through. Jackie strongly believes that mentoring is one of the key factors in interpreting success. She gives credence to those who mentor and provide important guidance to their mentees. Both mentor/mentee play an integral role and serve a specific purpose. Both can learn from each other. She strongly attributes her success to mentors who were willing to offer insight and guided her on a successful path for which she is extremely grateful.

### **As a Leader**

When asked about the person who made the greatest impact in her career, Jackie quickly shared an event that happened in the early 1980's while she was enrolled in one of the sign language courses in Berkeley. The instructor who was Deaf informed the class that an interpreter would accompany them on their field trip. To her surprise the interpreter that boarded their bus was an African American female named Brenda Lacosse. Before this event, Jackie had never seen an African American/Black interpreter. Seeing the face of Brenda Lacosse was the inspiration Jackie needed to ignite her passion to continue learning sign language, become an interpreter, and later receive recognition as a leader in the field. A few years later, she had the honor of meeting Shirley Childress Johnson and hear about Zoe Paige.

Although Jackie never thought of herself as a leader, a number of interpreters look to her for guidance. She views a leader as someone who leads by example. She learned the importance of this character trait from her mother; the ability to be a "silent leader." According to Ms. Bruce a leader is a person of integrity, treats people fairly, and has a heart for service. Leaders are compassionate about what they do and encourage others to be and do their best. She developed her leadership philosophy and style by looking to leaders in all fields. She was drawn to personality traits of multiple leaders, especially those who wanted to see their successors achieve greater heights than their own. She feels her traits are a complementary blend from leaders she has emulated. She looked up to them and to developed the characteristics she wanted to embody.

There was a time when Jackie ended up leading, but not by choice. It happened when she attended a National Alliance of Black Interpreters, Inc. (NAOBI) business meeting at a national conference. She did not set out to lead the organization, but others observed her leadership abilities, nominated her for the position and she willingly accepted the nomination of President. The swift vote resulted in her becoming president of an organization with a mission: "to promote excellence and empowerment among African Americans/Blacks in the profession of sign language interpreting in the context of a multi-cultural, multi-lingual environment" ('National Alliance of Black Interpreters, Inc.', 2014). As a leader, she was able to recognize the skills in others and placed them in positions that would allow them to flourish. Jackie stated her presidency would not have been a success without the collaborative efforts of those she surrounded herself with. The team was talented, skilled in certain areas of expertise and ultimately successful. In the Tipping Point, Malcolm Gladwell talks about three personality types: connectors, mavens, and salesmen (Gladwell, 2000). Jackie is definitely a connector. She knows a lot of people and pulled them together to meet the needs of the organization. Her ability to place individuals in areas of strength, ask for help, and sound determination lead to a successful term.

### **Building Bridges**

If you could envision a person who has passion for the language she holds dear, you would catch a glimpse of Jackie Bruce. She is deliberate in practice and strives for perfection. The appetite

Jackie exhibited when she starting learning the language is present today. She works tirelessly to support and encourage interpreters with her kind words, her smile, and her willingness to teach and mentor. She is a trailblazer and a true gem to the profession of signed language interpreting. Her mentorship and leadership will influence future generations of interpreters.

### **About the Author**

Nicole Shambourger, CI/CT, is a graduate student pursuing a degree in Interpreting Studies with an emphasis in pedagogy from Western Oregon University. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Accounting and an Interpreting Certificate from Georgia Perimeter College. She is a member of NAOBI-DC, the Potomac Chapter of RID and served on the board of NAOBI, Inc. for five years. She enjoys mentoring students and discussions with her mentors about the profession. Nicole resides in Washington, DC with her husband Daryl.

### **Acknowledgements**

I want to thank my friend and mentor, Dr. Jackie Bruce, for your inspiration. Before I entered the field of interpreting, you were my “Brenda Lacosse.” I will never forget the day you presented at my interpreter training program. I also want to thank my professors and cohort, without you this chapter would not be possible. And finally, I wish to thank my family and friends for your support.

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## **As Much As Air: Integrating Spirit Into Our Work**

Audrey W. Ulloa

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### **Abstract**

As the field of interpreting has become more professionalized, there are those who feel a disconnect between the work and the spirit of the profession. Gina Gonzalez is a trilingual interpreter and grass roots activist who seeks a return to the roots of the profession: serving the Deaf community with spirit. She proposes a new integrative model of interpreting that challenges the current paradigm. Her activism and pursuit of authentic dialogue puts her at the forefront of change in her community.

### **Wanting God**

A hermit was meditating by a river when a young man interrupted him. "Master, I wish to become your disciple," said the man. "Why?" replied the hermit. The young man thought for a moment. "Because I want to find God."

The master jumped up, grabbed him by the scruff of his neck, dragged him into the river, and plunged his head under water. After holding him there for a minute, with him kicking and struggling to free himself, the master finally pulled him up out of the river. The young man coughed up water and gasped to get his breath. When he eventually quieted down, the master spoke. "Tell me, what did you want most of all when you were under water."

"Air!" answered the man.

"Very well," said the master. "Go home and come back to me when you want God as much as you just wanted air." (Suler, n.d.)

## **The Spirit Of Interpreting**

Interpreting as a profession was born when Deaf and hearing people sought to regulate an activity that had been occurring for generations. The desire to benefit Deaf people socially, emotionally, and financially was the original driving force, or spirit, of interpreting. As the interpreting profession grew and advanced, so did its ability to reflect upon itself and to seek standards of professionalization. However, there are those in the Deaf and interpreting communities who believe that as interpreters have moved towards professionalization, they have lost their connection to the spirit of interpreting. The end result is that interpreters and Deaf people have become isolated from one another, and the schism between the two groups is widening. There are individuals striving to restore that connection to spirit in the profession so that the work of interpreting is authentic and in service to the Deaf community. Gina Gonzalez is one such individual.

Gina works in Austin, Texas as a trilingual American Sign Language (ASL)/Spanish/English interpreter. Her professional interpreting experience spans decades, and she has interpreted in a variety of settings, including medical, mental health, community, education, and video relay. Gina was a member of the Trilingual Task Force that created the first certification exam in the nation for trilingual interpreters (BEI, 2011). She has led many professional development sessions and has been a trainer for intensive skill workshops for trilingual interpreters. Gina is currently one of only six interpreters in the country who holds a Trilingual Master certification.

## **Roots in Grass Roots Activism**

Gina Gonzalez is not a professional speaker. She is not a polished talking head for the masses. She does not call herself a leader and in fact feels uncomfortable with that label. Yet, from the moment Gina begins to share her ideas, it is easy to see the light in her eyes, sense the energy behind her words, and feel inspired. Her passion for the ASL community is palpable, and she has the gift of drawing others into the realm of that passion through her words and stories. When asked what she calls herself, she said, “I see myself as a grassroots activist. Someone who puts her feelings and thoughts into action. Who takes risks, who is willing to stick her neck out there.

A courageous person. Do those things make a leader? I don't know (G. Gonzalez, personal communication, July 25, 2014).”

It is natural that Gina would see herself as a grassroots activist. She has strong roots in both the Deaf and Latino communities. She grew up in a housing project in Brownsville, Texas, on the U.S./Mexico border. Her neighborhood was a tight-knit one that valued interdependence and reciprocity. She and her four siblings were raised by a single mother who was the only Deaf person in her community. She witnessed her mother experience discrimination and prejudice time and again because she was Deaf. However, Gina's mother did not meekly accept her lot, but loudly challenged injustice and made her thoughts known. She was not afraid to cause a scene in order to right a wrong. That made an impression on Gina who learned from her mother that one should take a stand for what is right.

The value of social justice in Gina's family is multigenerational. Her aunt Maria Elena Lucas, a farm worker, served for many years as an organizer for the Farm Labor Organizing Committee and sought to improve the lives of her fellow crop pickers. Lucas is also an accomplished poet and author who chronicled her experiences as an activist in her book *Forged Under the Sun* (Ruiz and Sanchez Korrol, 2006). Gina's family was instrumental in helping her become cognizant early in her life of the importance of positive action.

### **The Profession's Current Paradigm**

The focus of Gina's activism is reintegration of the original spirit of interpreting into work. She strives to inspire reflection and change in other interpreters. She describes the current model of professionalism of interpreting as one based on trait theory, which focuses on the attributes and characteristics of a professional. She believes that in interpreters' desire to professionalize the field, they have created an inward-looking profession instead of one that looks outward to the community it serves. Gina describes the current paradigm as fractured, as separated from the original goal to serve the social, emotional, and financial needs of the Deaf community. She explains, “We have separated the service from the spirit. I call it ‘spirit’, Deaf people call it



‘Deaf heart’ ... ‘love’; those are just words and labels symbolizing that which is undefinable (G. Gonzalez, personal communication, July 25, 2014).”

Gina believes that the current paradigm gives interpreters a false sense of satisfaction that they are serving Deaf people simply by following the path characterized by professional behaviors and attributes. She thinks that as the interpreting field grows and expands, it perpetuates the illusion that Deaf people are also enjoying similar growth and that interpreters are helping Deaf people. Instead, Gina submits that the profession has lost sight of its reason for existence. She used the metaphor in the story of the young man and the hermit to describe new generations of interpreters. She believes that many interpreters have entered the profession with the desire to serve and benefit Deaf people, but have not dedicated themselves to that goal with their whole heart. Gina feels that in order to affect real change and return to the roots of interpreting, interpreters must abandon the current paradigm.

### **An Integrative Model**

The new paradigm that Gina proposes is an integrative model. If the current interpreting model is divorced from the original spirit of the profession, then interpreters should strive to make it whole again. She advocates retaining the positive advances that have been achieved under the current model, but re-centering the focus on serving the needs of the Deaf community first and foremost. In order to do this, Gina recommends that interpreters develop the competencies of empathy, awareness, and conscientiousness, and intentionally engage the Deaf community as a strategic partner in their work.

Because they use interpreters, Deaf people are more vulnerable in multiple facets of their daily lives. For this reason, interpreters have a responsibility to closely examine their work practices. Gina suggests that interpreters often do not put enough attention into the ways that their presence in an interaction is intrusive or can result in isolating a Deaf person further. In fact, she proposes that the true problem does not lie in the Deaf community, but in the system in which our society functions. The issue is not that Deaf people have difficulty accessing that system, but rather that the system itself cannot accommodate the participation of Deaf people. Gina believes that if

interpreters and Deaf people focus instead on changing the system, Deaf people can enjoy greater participation and autonomy, and less reliance on interpreters.

### **The Process of Change**

In order to open a discussion of these ideas, Gina reaches out to local interpreters and Deaf people who are willing to talk with her. She knows that professional organizations can be intimidating for some people and wants to create alternative spaces to examine important issues. In an effort to reach out to more people, she also creates and shares vlogs on reintegration of spirit. Although opening oneself up to a wider audience entails a greater risk of pushback, Gina says, “That pushback is necessary. It is the friction that we need to grow (G. Gonzalez, personal communication, July 25, 2014).” She credits receiving criticism and authentic dialogue with others in allowing her to evolve and be a better servant to the community.

As any activist is aware, change does not happen overnight. It takes time to change habits of thinking and shift people’s practices. Although she sometimes feels like no one is listening, or that she is standing all alone, Gina knows that things happen in their own time and that she must be patient. In the times that she has felt discouraged, she received crucial encouragement from Deaf people or interpreters who told her that she made a difference for them. It is these moments, and her own inner passion, that do not let her give up. Gina continues to inspire change and to promote authentic dialogue in the profession. She hopes for the day that all interpreters will want to integrate spirit into their work, as much as they want air.

### **About the Author**

Audrey W. Ulloa holds a Master Interpreter certification and Trilingual Advanced certification from the Texas Board for Evaluation of Interpreters. She has worked as a professional interpreter since 1997. She earned a Bachelor degree in Education of the Deaf from the University of Texas at Austin, and a Master degree in Interpreting Studies from Western Oregon University.

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## **Activist = Interpreter = Activist**

Amy C. Williamson

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### **Abstract**

Lianne Moccia has served as an activist within the interpreting community for many years. She has been a constant force in the interpreting communities of Vermont and New Hampshire throughout her career. Her roles have been both formal and informal in moving the profession forward through her thought provoking questioning of the status quo and her commitment to seeking solutions. Lianne has been committed to change within the system of structured formality of certification under the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, but more importantly, through remaining curious and questioning of the services being provided by colleagues on a day-to-day basis. This chapter is part of a collaborative project of the students and faculty of Western Oregon University's Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies. This chapter chronicles Lianne Moccia's path from curious student to change agent within the northern New England interpreting community.

### **The early activist**

In the late 70's, politically active anti-war activist, Lianne Moccia, owned and ran a collective restaurant in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It was in this restaurant that she waited on a group of women who were signing and was immediately fascinated by how communication can happen in different modes.

Lianne Moccia is a curious person and when she is intrigued by something she seeks to explore it further. She educates herself. She works to satisfy that curiosity. The chance instance of having signing patrons in her restaurant led Lianne to one stepping-stone after another, eventually becoming an American Sign Language (ASL)/English interpreter. Today, Lianne is the New Hampshire Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (NHRID) president, has maintained a 30-year

private practice as a professional interpreter, and has both formally and informally mentored dozens of interpreters in her communities. None of this was ever Lianne's intention when the signing patrons caught her attention.

Soon after the group of signing women had a meal in Lianne's restaurant, she found out that sign language classes were being offered at the local adult education center. A non-native hearing signer taught the classes where she learned some basic vocabulary. Even while taking the class, Lianne had yet to meet or talk directly with a person who was deaf and there was no mention that sign language was the natural language of deaf people. Nevertheless, she remained fascinated, was simply interested and, wanted to keep learning.

The Learning Center for Deaf Children (TLC) in Framingham, Massachusetts offered sign language classes around the time Lianne was looking to satisfy her curiosity and learn more. It was in a TLC community class that Lianne claims everything she had learned about signing, up to that point, was turned upside down. At TLC she had her first deaf teacher and felt very aware that she did not know anything about the language or culture of deaf people. Her interest was piqued even more.

Soon after taking the TLC class, Lianne moved to North Carolina where she worked as a secretary in an office that happened to have a deaf employee doing data entry. They would eat lunch together and a friendship began. The friendship encouraged more language development and more intrigue. The friendship encouraged more curiosity about sign language and the community that uses it. The friendship led Lianne back to school.

### **Curiosity opens doors**

In the late 70s, the only educational options for people interested in learning sign language or working with deaf people were to study audiology, speech language pathology, teaching, or rehabilitation counseling. Lianne says that she did not even know there was a thing called sign language interpreting and had never met an interpreter. Sign language classes were dictionary based and taught by hearing people with deaf parents, commonly referred to as Codas, or hearing

people who were non-native users of sign language. Students went to class and were taught vocabulary, but not how to string signs together based on ASL grammatical structure. Lianne did not know any different at the time. She remained intrigued by communication and the people who used sign language. While in school at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Lianne completed a degree in Philosophy and found out about an opportunity to attend graduate school for rehabilitation counseling at the University of Arizona.

Lianne's move to Tucson, Arizona for graduate school put her smack dab in the middle of the federal government's efforts to improve access for deaf and hard of hearing Americans. Funding was provided to establish and maintain several training and university programs throughout the country to educate deaf, Coda, and hearing students in rehabilitation counseling, leadership, interpreting, and education. Lianne happened into one such program and received a tuition free master's degree in rehabilitation counseling. At the time, she was not necessarily interested in being a rehabilitation counselor but saw this as an opportunity to learn more about sign language. The experience proved to be pivotal in her understanding of the Deaf community as it was the first time she found herself in classes sitting next to and working with deaf people. Several classes, years, and states later Lianne started to get a glimmer of a Deaf-world view and the natural use of American Sign Language in various contexts.

While in Tucson attending graduate school, Lianne was offered the chance to participate in a six-week interpreter-training program that culminated with the taking of a certification exam offered by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). Again, with no aspirations of being an interpreter, Lianne took advantage of this opportunity as a way to learn more about sign language. She received a Transliterating Certificate (TC), one of the first certifications offered by RID. This program was Lianne's first foray into interpreting. She says that, at the time, she knew nothing about deaf people, their language, or what it meant to create equivalence between two different languages. Yet, she achieved certification and her name was automatically added to a registry of people deemed qualified to transliterate between the signing deaf community and non-signers.

Lianne moved back to New England to start a family without ever working as a rehabilitation counselor or as an interpreter. Lianne assumed that she had maxed out on her study of sign language until she received a phone call from someone needing an interpreter. They had found her name and phone number through RID's registry of certified interpreters. She still did not know what interpreting was but she accepted the assignment anyway. This decision set Lianne solidly on her path into the profession as it put her in the company of interpreters and an active deaf community.

### **Human rights circling back around**

In Maryland in the early-80's, MJ Bienvenu, Deaf, and Betty Colonomos, Coda, co-founded The Bicultural Center (TBC). TBC was a first of its kind think-tank of sorts that offered ASL classes and interpreter training. The interpreters in Lianne's Vermont and New Hampshire communities urged her to attend workshops at TBC. Lianne was curious. She heeded their urging and has not looked back or for another career since. For the first time, ASL was being talked about and taught as a language. For the first time, the deaf community was being described as a cultural minority. For the first time, Lianne had a frame for understanding the deaf community that made sense, felt right, and tied in with her experience as a politically active anti-war activist.

Cultural anthropologist, Margaret Mead (1928) said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Lianne started interpreting in Vermont at a time when Deaf leaders were strong, assertive, and vocal about their needs and wishes. There were also a good number of interpreters who, like Lianne, were politically aware and active within their respective and diverse communities. Interpreters joined forces with Deaf people and together created standards and set a high bar for an interpreter that has remained the norm for Vermont and northern New England some 25-years later.

Of those early years, Lianne says, "In a small community, you either need to step forward or step away (L. Moccia, personal communication, July 25, 2014)." She stepped forward. She has

served the Vermont and New Hampshire chapters of RID as president several times during the course of her career. She has also held other offices and chaired every committee imaginable; mentorship, professional development, conferences, and community picnics. She has done it all but by her own definition; her service alone does not make her a leader.

Lianne Moccia believes that leaders are people who affect change. An apt description from someone who has a history as an anti-war activist and came of age at a time when a whole generation felt disenfranchised, were suspicious of leaders, and questioned authority. The leaders of Lianne's formative years were firmly entrenched in the church, government, and other institutions. They were viewed as leaders simply by their position or by the power they held over others. They were not necessarily agents of change. The community, led by activists, was.

### **What makes a leader?**

When asked what makes a leader, Lianne could easily be describing her own leadership style. Her leaders are: thoughtful, able to see the big picture, act on their principles, and serve as a morale compass for the community. They remain active and engaged. They invest themselves. They walk the walk and talk the talk. For 30 years, Lianne has done all of these things. She was a student that asked questions and sought to understand the larger context. As an early interpreter, Lianne acted on her belief in basic human and linguistic rights of all people by seeking to become more competent in ASL through resources that required significant travel and money to access.

Unlike what may be a traditional view of what a leader looks like, Lianne believes that a person is a leader even if they have a different approach than the majority. They may not have a large following or they may not hold positions of authority or formal leadership but they are agents of change in some other way. They buck the system. They challenge the community to think differently. They act on their principals. They earn the respect and support of their colleagues, even if those same colleagues disagree.

Again, Lianne has done all of these things.



Lianne has been a constant force within the interpreting communities of Vermont and New Hampshire over the course of her career. Her roles have been both formal and informal in moving the profession forward with her thought provoking questioning of the status quo and her commitment to seeking solutions. She has remained a tireless activist within the Deaf and interpreting communities. She has done this from inside the system of structured formality of certification under the RID, but more importantly, through remaining curious and questioning of the services being provided by colleagues on a day-to-day basis. Lianne has remained curious and open since that first pivotal encounter with signing restaurant patrons and our profession has benefitted tremendously from her activism. Our industry and the people we serve have benefited greatly from her leadership.

### **About the Author**

Amy Williamson is the daughter of Mary Ella Scarboro Williamson and Barney Williamson, both Deaf and both teachers for almost 30 years at the Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf. She has worked as a sign language interpreter since graduating from high school and credits the many interpreters that guided her into the profession along the way with her success. Amy holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology with a minor in Linguistics from the University of Arizona and certifications: CI, CT, SC:L, and Ed:K-12 from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. Amy is currently a Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies student at Western Oregon University and works as a freelance interpreter. She LOVES the work she does and is an interpreter by choice, not by birth.

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Lianne Moccia's genuine curiosity of what I am thinking, feeling, and motivated by has continued to propel me into new and uncharted waters for the 15 years I have known her. Thank you for asking the questions and sitting in quiet while I found my own answers. You are a gift.

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