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Recognizing Trailblazers, Leaders, and Mentors

Western Oregon University

by

Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies students, 2018 cohort

Edited by Krystle Chambers

June 2021

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Introduction

Over the past fifty plus years, many individuals have contributed to the growth of the American Sign Language (ASL)-English interpreting field. Some of these individuals have been recognized in the history of ASL interpreting, but many have not. There are individuals who have shared their knowledge and experience with the newer generation of interpreters and colleagues for many years through leadership and mentoring. Some of these individuals have been trailblazers in their interpreting communities, and yet still have never been recognized for their work, contributions, and accomplishments.

The cohort of students that started in June 2018 at Western Oregon University and the faculty wanted to recognize the leadership of interpreters from various local communities. With that vision and goal in mind, the cohort set out to interview and gather information from various interpreters who embarked on a journey that would lead them to become leaders in interpreting communities today.

The following are a collection of case studies showcasing the hard work of many untold stories of individuals wanting to improve and leave a legacy for the next generation of interpreters to embrace and continue the work. We hope that when you read these stories, you will feel inspired to follow in the footsteps of these trailblazers, leaders, and mentors within the field of ASL-English interpreting.

Krystle Chambers

June, 2021

Collaboration in the Face of Emergencies: The Birth of the First Emergency Response Interpreter Credential in the United States

Cameo Hunsaker

Western Oregon University

Abstract

In 2015, various agencies in the state of Arizona developed a unique program for providing communication access to Deaf and hard of hearing citizens during emergencies. The training for American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters and Communication Access Real-Time (CART) captioners, the support of state and local emergency response management teams, and the wide-spread utilization of these services is unprecedented. This paper spotlights Vicki Bond, the developer and coordinator of the Emergency Response Interpreter Credential (ERIC) program, the first of its kind nationwide.

A Call for Help

In 2017, Hurricane Irma devastated parts of Florida. Many state and local officials were seen on television, providing updates and safety information about evacuations. For the Deaf individuals in Manatee County, however, the emergency messages they received were gibberish. "Pizza...bear monster...pray wait water," (Caron, 2017). Although the path of the hurricane had been known for days, county officials failed to prepare a qualified interpreter for their televised briefings and instead utilized the services of a local lifeguard who was not fluent and had no interpreting experience.

This event made national news. It highlighted an issue that has long been recognized in the disability communities but is fairly unknown in the mainstream - a systemic lack of effective communication for Deaf and hard of hearing residents during emergencies. Unfortunately, this issue often does not get the attention it deserves until disaster strikes. Several Deaf families were affected by the 2018 Camp Fire near Paradise, CA, the deadliest fire in the state's history (The Daily Moth, 2018). Deaf individuals have also been evacuated without warning from the 2017 Tubbs Fire (The Daily Moth, 2018) and the recent unprecedented flooding in Nebraska (The Daily Moth, n.d.). Although the danger in these situations is clear, most states have no protocol in place for communicating emergency information to their Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and hard of hearing citizens. According to Ivey, et al (2014) researchers "review(ed)...55 Emergency Operation Plans (EOP) from various states and territories in the United States...55% of the EOPs mentioned vulnerable populations, but only 31% of the EOPs specifically mentioned Deaf and hard of hearing populations" (Russell, et al, 2018).

Emergency response agencies and advocates in the Deaf and hard of hearing communities in Arizona set out to change the way information is disseminated to these vulnerable populations. The product of their ongoing partnership is the Emergency Response Interpreting Credential (ERIC), a one-of-a-kind training program for a core team of interpreters who are assigned to emergency incidents all over the state. The person at the forefront of the design and implementation of this program is local Phoenix interpreter, interpreter educator, and Deaf community ally, Vicki Bond.

The Playdate that Changed a Life

Bond's first introduction to the world of Deaf culture and ASL was during her idyllic summers on her grandpa's Arkansas farm. She befriended a Deaf boy in the area who was lonely for playmates during summer break. This was Bond's first exposure to sign language.

As time went on, sign language was "always in (her) peripheral" (Bond, personal communication, July 10, 2019). Whether it was seeing interpreters at church or practicing fingerspelling with other kids in school, Bond was often surrounded by some aspect of Deaf culture.

It was not until she was ready for college that she discovered signed language interpreting was a feasible career. Choosing interpreting as her major at the University of Arizona, she set her sights on becoming a professional interpreter and set in motion a series of events that would change the interpreting community in Arizona.

A Journey Through the Field

After graduating from the University of Arizona, Bond began her professional career as an educational interpreter in a K-12 setting. She was quick to realize that the K-12 environment was not the best fit for her and, after a year, decided she wanted to pursue aspects of the field that would give her more professional autonomy.

To gain the skill and experience she felt she needed to become an effective freelance interpreter, Bond enrolled in the Masters of Interpreting program at Gallaudet University, the only liberal arts university in the world to cater to Deaf and Hard of Hearing students, faculty, and staff. Additionally, Gallaudet houses "the world's only interpretation B.A., M.A., and PhD program in an American Sign Language-immersive environment" (About Gallaudet, n.d.). During her time at Gallaudet, Bond was able to expand her professional experience by working in various settings. She credits much of her professional growth to the amazing professional mentors that she worked closely with during her time in Washington, D.C.

After passing the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) National Interpretation Certification exam in 2009, Bond moved back to her home state of Arizona where she was employed as a senior public interpreter at the Phoenix Day School for the Deaf. While working at the Deaf school, she was also instrumental in developing a grassroots mentorship program with the help of the Arizona chapter of RID.

In 2013, Bond accepted the position of Interpreter Outreach and Development Coordinator with the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHH). She was able to continue the mentoring program, as well as various other curriculum development and training opportunities, coordinating the interpreting services for the Commission's several Deaf employees, and acted as the staff interpreter for the agency. Her most challenging role at ACDHH, though, began after discussions with local emergency management agencies who were interested in developing a more accessible communication protocol for Arizona's 1.1 million residents with hearing loss (Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, n.d.).

The First Program of Its Kind

According to the Barrier-Free Emergency Communication Access and Alerting System Research Report (Russell, McLaughlin, and Demko, 2018), "there is awareness on the part of some Emergency

Management Organizations (EMOs) about the need to improve access to broadcast communication during times of emergencies” (p. 2), however laws and policies at every level of government neglect to provide consistency for a systemic solution. In Arizona, this issue was originally addressed by the Maricopa County Department of Emergency Management (MCDEM) and the Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs (DEMA). These agencies had identified a gap in their public-facing communication system designed to disseminate information to local communities in the event of an emergency. The issue of emergency communications for Deaf and hard of hearing citizens had been broached several times, however no one knew exactly how to put the pieces together to form an effective solution.

With Bond’s previous experience providing trainings and developing curriculum, she was the perfect person to address the issue. She recognized several challenges: convincing state agencies that ASL interpretation and CART providers were necessary, training interpreters for a wide range of emergency response settings and integrating a request for these services with emergency management’s existing deployment systems.

Every state has an established state-wide emergency response plan. Little to no consideration is given in these plans for the Deaf and hard of hearing populations within that state. According to Bond, “Unfortunately, historically, (emergency) information has just not been accessible. Media broadcasts are supposed to be captioned. Sometimes they are, sometimes they’re not. Or sometimes the way that they’re captioned is such that a person with any level of vision loss can’t see them. And then there’s almost never a sign language interpreter on screen. So, for Deaf community members whose primary language is American Sign Language, they have a really hard time accessing the information they need to be safe” (ERIC video, 2017). Many emergency managers and broadcasters erroneously believe that captioning alone provides the access needed to the Deaf and hard of hearing communities. However, studies have shown that captioning of TV broadcasts is not necessarily effective in communicating information to all Deaf people, due to the literacy demands of technical language that may be used during such events, and variability in the accuracy of real-time captioning. Information delivered in sign language is preferred by many Deaf people, as being more immediately accessible than speech represented imperfectly in print (McKee, 2014, as cited in Russel, et al, 2018).

To address this, Bond met with leadership from several emergency response agencies to explain why their current communication systems were ineffective for the Deaf and hard of hearing communities. She proposed that specially-trained interpreters and CART providers should be automatically included in any deployment of emergency response services, whether a request for these services was received or not. She encouraged interpreters to be included in all video recorded briefings, both for news broadcasts and for social media postings. She also emphasized the need for both interpreters and CART providers to be available at all community meetings, evacuation shelters, and press conferences for any emergency or emergency preparedness training.

Bond emphasized to these agencies that an emergency situation, coupled with a lack of communication, put the Deaf and hard of hearing populations at an increased risk and, therefore, made their chance of injury or death significantly higher than the hearing community. “Because (these) organizations are government-based, it's easy to assume that they don’t care. But the individuals within these very robust and cumbersome systems do care - they care very deeply, or they wouldn’t do this work” (Bond,

personal communication, July 10, 2019). Bond was able to convince all of the agencies involved that this was a relevant issue and her innovative program was the solution.

Her next challenge was integrating the request for ASL interpreting and CART services into the current deployment systems used by emergency management agencies. Seeing as how these services had never been requested for emergencies before, Bond knew that designing a separate request protocol for the agencies would be a futile effort. Her goal was to avoid situations where interpreters were an after-thought, a last-minute addition to the emergency communication process. A system like this had never been implemented before, causing many hurdles for implementing Bond's plan. Eventually, agencies were able to integrate interpreters and CART providers into the two systems currently used by Arizona emergency response agencies: Resource Order Support System (ROSS), used primarily for wildland fire response, and Web-Based Emergency Operations Center (WEBEOC), used for all other types of state-wide emergencies. Considering the multiple agencies involved and the bureaucratic complexities of these systems, the significance of this achievement cannot be overstated.

Lastly, Bond knew that training a core group of service providers was going to be the key to effective communication for Deaf and hard of hearing people during emergencies. Communication used by emergency responders is "nuanced and specific" (Bond, personal communication, July 10, 2019). While emergency incidents are high stress, high risk, and seemingly chaotic, for professionals within the field, the system is also highly structured. These incidents come with their own unique demands, including a heavy emphasis on the specialized jargon used by responders. It was clear that contacting an interpreting agency and asking for any available, untrained signed language interpreter would be a disservice to all parties involved.

To remedy this, Vicki set out to choose an elite group of highly skilled interpreters. They went through a rigorous screening process, not only for interpreting skill, but also for requisites such as availability, personal and family-level preparedness for extended deployments, the ability to work well under pressure, and ethical decision-making. She felt it necessary that ASL interpreters and CART providers received the same kind of training as anyone else who was involved in emergency response. To make sure interpreters were receiving the highest quality education, Vicki arranged for subject matter experts from all of the major emergency response agencies to provide intensive training classes to the ASL interpreting and CART pool. The result of this robust training was a state-recognized certification called the Emergency Response Interpreter Credential (ERIC).

ERIC is now touted as "the first of its kind in scope for training and dispatching American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters and Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) captioning providers to effectively communicate with the Deaf and hard of hearing in case of fire, flood, nuclear disaster, power outage or extreme heat" (Longdon, n.d.). The ERIC program is utilized by several emergency response organizations in Arizona, including the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management, the Southwest Area Incident Management Teams, the Bureau of Land Management, Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station, DEMA, and MCDDEM.

The ERIC program and Bond's role as program director transitioned from ACDHH and is now under the purview of DEMA. To date, ERIC interpreters and CART captioners have been involved in over 35 emergency incidents and emergency preparedness trainings (Bond, personal communication, August 10, 2019). Countless community members have benefited from the services, having access to communication during emergencies like never before.

The Future for ERIC

Bond's ambitious goals do not stop there. She admits that, "government systems are challenging to navigate and even harder to change. Convincing all of these state agencies that they should do this because it's the right thing to do," (Bond, personal communication, July 10, 2019) is no small feat. However, this does not deter Bond. Recent research has shown that there is a dire need for "pro-active preparation via policy development and protocols at the municipal, provincial and federal levels of government" (Russell, et al, 2018, p. 2). As more and more viral videos of unqualified interpreters at press conferences and other emergency incidents spread throughout the internet, the need for a well-designed, robust program like ERIC is evident. Her dream for the next ten years is for more states to institute programs like ERIC, either using her model or designing a new plan that will benefit the communities in their area.

The secret to a successful program, according to Bond, is collaboration. Without the buy-in from various agencies and support from the Deaf and hard of hearing communities, the ERIC program would still be a pipe dream. Bond encourages other leaders to analyze the system in which they function to better understand how to benefit various communities. She also encourages working with people who provide insight to various perspectives, stating that the inability to see issues from varied viewpoints can limit the creativity needed to solve the bigger, more impactful problems. Understanding stakeholders' objectives and building on what is already in place are vehicles to help other leaders achieve their goals.

Bond recognizes that her work and the work of the emergency response agencies typically go unnoticed until their services are desperately needed. "I'm glad when people don't know or care," she says, "because they haven't been in an emergency situation" (Bond, personal communication, July 10, 2019). Her humility, however, does not dampen the impact her program has had on the community, and the potential impact it could have on Deaf and hard of hearing communities nationwide. It is this author's unmitigated hope that agencies on the state or federal level will recognize the dire need for this type of program that can potentially save the lives of Deaf and hard of hearing citizens. It is an avoidable loss. Because of the path paved by Vicki Bond's ERIC program, there is no longer any excuse for a life lost due to lack of communication. The impact of this program is unquantifiable.

About the Author

Cameo Hunsaker is an American Sign Language Interpreter and educator from Phoenix, AZ. She currently holds national certification from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and a state designation of the Emergency Response Interpreter Credential. She is currently pursuing her master's degree in Interpreting Studies from Western Oregon University.

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Royce Carpenter: Trailblazer

Chevon Nicole Ramey

Western Oregon University

Abstract

The interpreting field is still a growing profession. When it comes to interpreter education there have been strides made to educate leaders in the field. Educational requirements for interpreters have increased over the years and more and more Associate and Bachelor level programs are becoming available. Interpreter educators have a few options to choose from when it comes to pursuing graduate studies at the Masters level, however there is only one doctoral program currently in Interpreting Studies.

Several graduates who have completed the Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies (MAIS) at Western Oregon University have gone on to do amazing work in the field. In an effort to shine a light on the impact Western is having on the field of interpreting, nationwide and internationally, the MAIS graduating class of 2020 has taken on this case study project. This article highlights Royce Carpenter, M.A., NIC Master.

Introduction

As a Black interpreter in a field dominated by White women, finding someone to look up to that looks like me has been tough. I graduated from the Interpreter Training Program at San Antonio College in San Antonio, Texas and prior to me graduating, roughly five Black interpreters had successfully graduated from the program. Five! I was fortunate enough to attend a Black Interpreter Summit hosted by Sorenson Communications in Salt Lake City, Utah a few years ago and a common theme we discussed there was representation. How important it is for young Black aspiring professionals to see us in our roles as interpreters, as interpreter educators, to show that WE can do it too. Shortly after attending the summit I decided to take action and put myself in a place to provide that representation I so desperately was looking for as I went through my program.

When our cohort decided to do case studies on graduates of Western Oregon University's MAIS program who are now leaders in the field, I knew I wanted to select one of the graduates who looked like me. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to meet and interview (virtually) Royce Carpenter.

Background

Royce was first introduced to deafness through her grandmother who was employed at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf in her hometown of Philadelphia. Royce would accompany her grandmother to work and during the weekends and summers some of the Deaf students would come home with her grandmother. At the time, she did not learn the language. She would play with the kids, but her knowledge of the language stopped at the manual alphabet.

Fast forward to Royce's adult years; she had relocated to Ohio (her current place of residence) and was working as a business manager at one of the local hospitals. One of her friends' son suffered a severe fever and lost his hearing as a result. Royce remembered her days growing up in Philadelphia and recommended taking a sign language class with her friend so that she could communicate with her child. Taking that one class at Columbus State Community College in support of her friend re-opened the world of deafness to Royce and she learned that she could pursue a career in interpreting. With a husband and three children at home, Royce successfully obtained her first degree, an Associates in Interpreting/Transliteration, at the age of thirty.

She got a Bachelors in Organizational Management since there were no programs in her area or online at the time, while working as an interpreter at Columbus State.

Royce got her exposure to teaching five years later when one of her former teachers asked her to team teach a class with her. She stayed on as an adjunct professor for several years. She pursued her Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies at Western Oregon University after looking into other programs. Royce chose Western because of the reputation of the program and the faculty. She knew she made the right choice after sharing her thesis topic with the faculty. As a Black person in the United States, we often experience a lot of resistance and push back when we want to address the racist elephant in the room and pursue change. Royce's thesis, "Let's bridge the gap! Cross-cultural mentoring", addresses these race issues in the field of interpreting and she had full support from the faculty at Western Oregon. The MAIS program also prepared her for the doctorate she is currently pursuing. She would have loved to complete her doctoral studies at Western as well, however, do to the lack of a program she was forced to pursue those studies at a different institution.

Royce is currently a full-time, tenure track faculty member and the first person of color to serve as the coordinator of the Interpreter Education Program at Columbus State.

A Push for Diversity

It is a sad reality that there is a dearth of interpreters of color. According to the most recent statistics from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, of the 14,284 registered members, only 449 identified as Black, 463 as Hispanic/Latino, 169 as Asian American/Pacific Islander and 114 as American Indian/Alaskan Native. At 1,195 that is a mere 8.4% of the registered interpreters. Less than 9%! This lack of diversity is especially felt in the Black Deaf community, where many of its members do not have access to an interpreter that is familiar with Black culture or familiar with Black ASL (often used by the members of the Black Deaf community).

One of the biggest accomplishments Royce can boast is her determination to not allow those naysayers to distract her from her efforts to push for more education regarding Black culture and more diversity in the field. She is actively conducting workshops and making strides in the profession, paving the way for future Black interpreters. I myself can walk in her footsteps as a Black interpreter and Black interpreter educator. I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to interview her for this project. She is already inspiring this next generation of leaders by simply being in the leadership positions that she is in.

Leadership

In the interview I conducted with Royce, she talks about the need for leaders in general to be cognizant of their words and actions. Words and actions have an impact on not only the person who speaks and does them but on others as well. Royce stated, "What I say, good or bad, is not going to represent just myself." This idea is a common understanding in the Black community, that we represent the community as a whole with our actions.

Royce also mentions the importance for leaders to be strong in the personal beliefs and values, have tenacity and be willing to fight the fight and see through those things that need to be done.

She advises up and coming leaders to have a mentor who is in a position they are striving to attain. Having a mentor will aide in guiding you and showing you different strategies and techniques that will help you achieve the goals you have set out to accomplish. Royce also suggests that you work at the level at which you aim to be. Surround yourself with like-minded positive individuals. Avoid those individuals who simply complain. There is a difference between a fighter and a complainer; sometimes they may look the same but deep down they really are not. A complainer will say something is not right, while the fighter will acknowledge something is not right and then do something to rectify the situation. Royce also is a proponent for continued education. Attend those professional workshops to stay abreast of what is going on in the field of interpreting.

Mentoring

Royce, as mentioned earlier, is well versed in the mentor/mentee relationship. She has and continues to serve in both roles as a professional, and benefits from them both. In the mentor role, Royce loves seeing the growth that happens in her mentees the most. Nurturing the potential that she sees in her mentees that they often do not see for themselves at the outset. In the mentee role, Royce enjoys seeing individuals doing what they love and figuring out their strengths, strategies, and techniques they use and how she can adapt those to her personal journey.

Interpreting Stories

Royce enjoys sharing her interpreting stories with her students, those that show that she is human and still makes mistakes like humans do. It is important to show students that we are not perfect just because we have been doing this for a long time or because we are certified.

Although she does not enjoy sharing them, she still shares those stories we as Black interpreters have regarding racist comments. For example, being rejected because of your skin color without even having the opportunity to lift your hands and show that you are qualified to do the work. Sharing these tough stories is important, especially for those students of color, who will unfortunately have to face these same experiences once they begin their career. Being aware that it happens and having controls to use when those intrapersonal demands arise will be a great benefit. These stories are also beneficial to White interpreters as well, who want to act as an ally.

Final Thoughts

Royce's success thus far did not come easy. She has had to fight her way to get to where she is. In order to be successful, often comes hard work. Rarely does it come easy. Be ready for the challenge and do not give up.

About the Author

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To my family and friends, thank you for your love and support.

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Sharon Hill: Getting Off of the Bus

Kiarah E. Moore

Western Oregon University

Abstract

Sharon Hill is an interpreter and interpreter educator born and raised in Houston, Texas. She is a natural born leader that has worked tirelessly to improve the professional quality and standards of interpreters in the Houston area. Her hard work and dedication have impacted numerous students and colleagues. For these reasons, Sharon was chosen for an interview in an attempt to shine a spotlight on leaders in the field of interpreting.

“Once you know who you are, you don’t have to worry anymore.” -Nikki Giovanni

In the Beginning

At a very early age, Sharon Hill was a business woman. She grew up in Houston, Texas with a tight-knit family and did her part to contribute to her father’s accounting business. She fondly remembers working on contracts, financial statements, long proposals, and whatever else her father assigned to her at only eleven-years-old. The work’s rigid and structured nature required a no-nonsense mindset.

When Sharon was in the sixth grade, she began learning Signed English. Upon graduating from high school, she was made aware of an interpreter training program at Houston Community College. She decided to enroll in the program in 1995. In 1996, Sharon sat for BEI Level 1 Certification and passed. As she completed her studies, she also had the opportunity to work as an interpreter, which she admits was both amazing and frightening. This experience made her realize how little she knew at the time. Since completing the program at Houston Community College, Sharon has worked in the field as a freelance community interpreter.

Growing as an Interpreter

When someone spends over twenty years in a profession, learning and growth are inevitable. Sharon notes that over the years, her understanding of the Deaf community and the role of an interpreter has totally shifted. She has realized that interpreters are not the sole facilitators of communication. Sharon says that “communication happens without me all the time. In fact, I’m actually doing my job better if I can interpret less and get these people to communicate.” She has also recognized the great power interpreters hold, and is aware that she can manipulate that power to the advantage of whom she chooses.

Sharon's growth as an interpreter did not happen overnight, nor did she become a better interpreter on her own. There have been multiple people supporting her on her path to success, including a Deaf mentor that may not have known they were mentoring her at the time. This person allowed Sharon the flexibility to experiment with her interpreting and develop a style of her own. Since she learned Signed English first, transliterating was naturally easier. Therefore, she was working to develop her expressive interpreting skills. Sharon developed a relationship with this Deaf mentor that allowed them to challenge one another. She practiced with her decalage (lag time), use of more complex English words, and concepts and phrases in ASL. Sharon chuckled as she realized that since she was not this person's interpreter for the entire week, interpreting services and techniques were not consistent. "I don't know that I did my fellow colleagues any good," she said, "but it helped me." The experience of having a Deaf mentor kept Sharon interested in the profession.

Breaking through Barriers

Sharon has not become successful without facing challenges. Two equally "ginormous" challenges she notes since becoming an interpreter are her shyness and her ethnicity.

There are times when Sharon is hesitant about meeting and interacting with new people. Although she realizes that, as an interpreter, avoiding new interaction is impossible, she still experiences spells of reservation. In order to cope with her introvertive tendencies, Sharon makes sure that her home is her sanctuary, only inviting peace into her space. She has learned to stay in-tune with her emotions and acknowledge her breaking point, allowing her to let go of elements that cause overstrain rather than push herself over her threshold. She told a story of accepting a lucrative, ongoing assignment, and thinking, "I would rather be anywhere but in here." She let go of this assignment immediately because it was the best interest of both herself and the consumer. When feeling fearful or in the wrong frame of mind, she declines assignments. Sharon proclaims that she has built her life around the ability to let go of any job or assignment that she does not feel aligned with.

The fact that her ethnicity would pose a challenge came as a surprise to Sharon. She assumed that, as a Black woman, she would be a minority in the field, but she had no idea of the true lack of Black interpreters. Looking back on her career, Sharon remembers instances that her ethnicity had direct negative impacts. Colleagues, consumers, and employers have made assumptions about her competence and hiring worthiness based solely on her appearance. Despite the fact that Sharon is a highly skilled professional, there is nothing she can do about the misinformed perceptions of others. She says that instead of dwelling upon ignorance, she works diligently to prove herself with exhibiting her expertise and passion in everything she does. Sharon says that she never wanted to be "the Black interpreter that talks about Black people stuff," but after a push from Dr. Cynthia Roy, she conceded. Sharon has realized the importance of sharing her experiences and knowledge gained over the years.

Raising the Bar in Education

As the Program Coordinator of a Bachelor degree program, there is an immense responsibility on Sharon's shoulders. The University of Houston, a Tier One university with the only Bachelor degree program for American Sign Language interpreting in the state of Texas for many years, serves as a role model for other types of programs across the state. The rigor and quality expectations are high. Sharon and her team set standards so that students are prepared to sit for the BEI Basic certification exam and/or apply for Master degree programs upon graduation.

Sharon ensures that her students have a dynamic learning environment, which mirrors the life of working interpreters in the field. Every year, she seeks out for new venues to partner with to provide assignments that challenge both the students and herself. Whether Sharon is an expert in the chosen setting or not, she figures out a way to mentor her students effectively. For example, in the Fall of 2016, Sharon began a partnership between the American Sign Language Interpreting program and Main Street Theatre (Lindsey, 2016). Seniors in the program provided shadow interpreting services for a children's musical entitled "Duck for President". Sharon had witnessed shadow interpreting in the past, but had never participated in it herself. Furthermore, it had been many years since the city of Houston had seen a shadow interpreted performance. Sharon did not let any of this stop her. She utilized all the resources at her disposal and has continued to partner with the theatre as a venue for students to gain invaluable skills while providing a unique service for Deaf children and adults in Houston.

Sharon shared a story that lends to her current philosophy of educating and interpreting:

I remember that there was a year that we did the BEI Forum as TSID (Texas Society of Interpreters for the Deaf). At the time, I was a new chair of BEI and still trying to figure and sort out my way. Of course, I was overcompensating because that's what I assumed I needed to do. I assumed people would assume that I didn't know what I was doing – which they did. I was so frustrated because I wanted to change things, and they weren't moving as fast as I wanted them to move. I just thought, "this is so exhausting!" And my mom said to me, "If the bus was going in the right direction – if it was even moving – no one would have to get out and push it. So, push already!" I was like, "Oh, okay." So instead of sitting on a broken-down bus complaining about how hot it is and where you need to go, just get out and let's move. At least you will go one inch further than where you were before. And that manifests in the way that I educate and interpret. It's all about let's go, let's move, let's change, let's get to it!

Sharon's acceptance of the job at the University of Houston was because she saw a need for change in the interpreting community. She noticed several areas that could benefit from some "polishing" and increased professionalism. She hopes that her work will continue to impress upon people the need to be professional and put together when providing a service to the Deaf community. Above all, she hopes to encourage interpreters to respect all consumers at all times.

Some of Sharon's favorite stories about interpreting she shares with students are the ones that students can typically relate to. She tells stories of being petrified, but successful in the end. She also enjoys sharing stories of interpreting in happy, heartfelt settings, like weddings. Students often are blinded by the skills of an interpreter who has been working at their craft for decades. They think that they will never reach that caliber. Sharon believes that it is important for students to realize that she was once at their level, and that she is still not perfect.

A Leader in the Field

When asked about her work as a leader, Sharon immediately responded, "I don't think I am a leader... yet." Although she is an educator and many people in the field look up to her, she does not presently label herself as a leader. However, she does believe there are some qualities that every leader should possess. Leaders should be humble and open-minded. It is important to realize that no matter how much knowledge a person acquires, there are still things that can be learned. They must be receptive to the ideas of others and consider perspectives other than their own. Leaders should also be open to and encouraging of change, because without change, growth is impossible. Good leaders should have a heart that is not afraid to cry, laugh, be approachable, or show emotions. Lastly, great leaders are fierce. They have the strength to stand up and correct a problem. They are not afraid of seeming like the 'bad guy' for the greater good.

Sharon has utilized multiple avenues to aid in her growth as an interpreter and interpreter educator. She constantly tries new things, especially in the classroom. She is also continuing her education both formally and informally. While currently pursuing a doctoral degree, Sharon also makes time to read the news online and watch shows that she would not typically watch. She is intrigued by things unknown to her. Her informal studies have taught her lessons that have helped her in her work as an interpreter and beyond. She also engages in reflective practice and impresses the importance of it upon her students, requiring them to keep a reflective journal as they go through their internship. She saves these journals in hopes that, one day down the line, a student will ask to see their reflective journal and realize how much they have grown over the years. Sharon also expands her world knowledge by traveling either down the highway or to other countries, because traveling "helps you see the world from a different point of view." She also sipped from the martini her dear husband made for her and declared that drinking also supports growth and "is a great stress reliever."

As a leader in any regard, some conflict is inevitable. When asked about techniques for resolving conflict, Sharon answered that it varies greatly upon the situation at hand. There are times where she allows the conflict to happen so that it becomes a learning experience for those involved, as well as times where she relies on her people skills to resolve the conflict. She attempts to use multiple perspectives to help people understand reasons and rationale. There are times that gaining team buy-in is helpful – whether the team is a class of students, a faculty team, or a team of interpreters. When resolving conflict in this way, she presents the problem to the group and gains multiple perspectives about how to approach it. Reaching a consensus in this manner makes decision making and implementation occur much more seamlessly. Resolving conflict as a group also makes it easier to hold

one another accountable for the decision that was made. Sharon mentioned that when dealing with conflict, a person must be creative. There are many components that go into handling conflict successfully, and it can be complex at times.

Currently

Sharon continues to fill her role as an interpreter educator at the University of Houston and as a freelance interpreter in Houston and the surrounding area. She is currently a Master level interpreter, the highest certification level granted in the state of Texas. She also holds the Medical certification offered by the Board of Evaluators for Interpreters. Despite a career spanning over 20 years (so far), there are still settings that she has yet to work in. She hopes to one day interpret the birth of a baby, work in the legal interpreting realm, and interpret in the insurance setting using knowledge gained from years of marriage to an insurance adjuster.

Sharon believes that when she no longer feels the healthy fear and doubt that happens before an interpreting assignment, she will know that it is time to retire. Until then, she will continue to “push the bus” towards positive change in the interpreting field.

About the Author

Kiarah Elyse Moore, BEI Basic, B.A. American Sign Language Interpreting and B.A. Liberal Studies with emphasis in Psychology and Health at the University of Houston. She has been working as an interpreter in the state of Texas since 2017. She is currently pursuing a M.A. in Interpreting Studies specializing in teaching from Western Oregon University. Her thesis will focus on developing and embodying confidence in novice interpreters. She currently works in settings that include community, K-12, post-secondary, VRS, and theatre.

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I would like to thank my mentor, Sharon Hill, for taking the time out of her very busy schedule to be interviewed for this case study. She invited me into her “sanctuary” and was very accommodating to my needs. I also would like to thank Sharon for inspiring me to go further and to be a “boss”. Without her support, I am not sure where I would be. I would also like to thank my cohort-mates and the MAIS faculty at Western Oregon University. Their support and encouragement have been invaluable to me during this journey. Lastly, I would like to thank my family for love and support through it all.

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Colleen Jones: The Journey to Big Girl Jobs

Stephanie K. Ehrlich

Western Oregon University

Abstract

As interpreters, we must stretch ourselves and reach out beyond our comfort zones in order to improve not only ourselves but our field. That is exactly what Colleen Jones has done and will continue to do. Colleen is taking on more challenging interpreting assignments, working with other highly respected teams, and presenting at prestigious colleges and universities. Colleen has just started her journey and will continue to leave her mark on the profession by continuing her research on orientation. Be on the lookout for when the United States elects the first female president, because Colleen strives to be right there to interpret for her.

The Beginning

As with any story, we will start at the beginning. Colleen Jones, much like other interpreters, attended a high school alongside a Deaf classmate who utilized sign language interpreters in the classroom. There was an interpreter that taught a sign language class in hopes that more hearing students would be able to communicate with the Deaf student. Colleen took this sign class and it seemed to be working for her. She began to pick up the language and found a love for it. However, after high school, Colleen didn't go to college for interpreting. Going to college to become an interpreter didn't happen until later.

Colleen attended college and received her bachelor's degree in kinesiology. "Kinesiology is the science of human movement, applying the latest evidenced-based research to improve function, health and wellness of people in all settings and populations" (What is Kinesiology? (n.d.)). She set out to build a career and began working in the special education setting. Fairly quickly, Colleen realized that special education was not the best fit for her and she wanted to do something that brought more happiness into her life. However, she doesn't regret her kinesiology journey or wish she had taken a different path. Each experience was a learning opportunity to her. By going through that journey, she not only gained important life lessons but also long lasting friendships that she still maintains today.

At the age of 26, Colleen said goodbye to kinesiology and rekindled the relationship with her love of language. During this time, she went through her first interpreter training program at Seattle Central Community College. This interpreting program is no longer available at Seattle Central Community College. She graduated in 2011, with an associates degree. This program provided her with more language classes, got her into the field, and helped her connect with a lot of people in the community. Colleen says that these connections were "key" to her journey to be an interpreter. The next step in her

journey would be at Western Oregon University. Colleen began the Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies in 2016 and graduated in December of 2017.

Reflection

“I was just thinking about this the other day. I’m so glad that I have a job that I love. I mean, I don’t love it every single day but in general, I love my job. And that’s nice because I don’t think a lot of people have that (Jones, C., personal communication, August 21, 2019).” While Colleen loves her job as an interpreter, she also makes mention of the fact that if she worked 40 hour weeks that she might not enjoy it as much. She is able to recognize that she is lucky in regards to the fact that she is able to make her own schedule. The flexibility is definitely a perk of the job. The downside, with this, is that she finds there are times when she will over-commit herself and that impacts her life. However, the pendulum also swings the other direction. There are also other times when she under-commits to work. She does this in order to “give herself space” (Jones, C., personal communication, August 21, 2019) but then she quickly realizes that she might need to return to work because we all need to earn a living. Overall, Colleen thinks that swing of the pendulum works in her favor because “inconsistency keeps things interesting” (Jones, C., personal communication, August 21, 2019).

Confidence and self awareness are two things that Colleen has improved on since entering the interpreting profession. She has a clear understanding of her skill level and her abilities. She knows when to stretch her abilities and she knows when to pass on an assignment. Another strength that she possesses is communicating about her limitations. By far, one of the most impressive qualities about Colleen is that she is able to sell herself. “I can own what I am good at. This is something that as women, we are not necessarily good at. If you have a skill, it is ok to say, this is one of my strengths” (Jones, C., personal communication, August 21, 2019). As a new presenter, Colleen is still working on increasing her confidence, but hopes to see it progress as she experiences more. Right now, as a presenter, she feels “unconsciously incompetent” (Jones, C., personal communication, August 21, 2019) which is a relatable feeling to those who are trying something new. In these situations, she has learned to use positive self talk and to lean on her mentors and community for support.

Lessons Learned

When Colleen looks back at her interpreting journey, she reflects on one lesson that we can all learn from. “Not everyone is going to like you. You are not going to be a good fit for everyone, even if you are skilled and a reasonable person. That is a lesson that I am still learning, and I have to be okay with” (Jones, C., personal communication, August 21, 2019). Even with that being so, she realizes the importance of communicating and assuming positive intent of others. It may not be the easiest part of the journey to take but it is definitely worthwhile in her eyes.

Another lesson, we could all learn from her is one of honesty and responsibility. Hearing interpreters are human, Deaf interpreters are human, and consumers are human. So why is it that sometimes we do not communicate as humans? Colleen believes that this is where honesty and responsibility take hold.

“We need to be honest with consumers. Deaf interpreters are not afraid to say, “Hey, as a human in this situation, here is a hint about what is going on right now. They step ‘out of role’ more often” (Jones, C., personal communication, August 21, 2019). Hearing interpreters tend to not do this, but Colleen is attempting to be “more human” more often and believes that it helps build trust between her and the consumers. Like some others in the field, she is moving away from the thought process of “what would happen if I wasn’t here?” and more to a humanistic approach to miscommunications.

Everyone makes mistakes, but not everyone owns their mistakes. Colleen owns her mistakes, sees it as an opportunity, and learns from it. She instantly began to laugh, when asked if there was anything about her journey that she regrets or would change. She tells a story about a job, that in hindsight, she shouldn’t have gone to and ended up being kicked out of. If she could go back, she would “turn the job down” (Jones, C., personal communication, August 21, 2019).

Would you believe it if I told you that there are still assignments that still scare Colleen? To her, those assignments are called a “big girl job” (Jones, C., personal communication, August 21, 2019). Those are the kinds of jobs that require you to dress up formally or the assignments are with a person that is an influencer, someone that has a higher power or authority, or people with a big name or reputation to be upheld. But it’s not just consumers that make her nervous. Working with teams, that are highly respected but don’t know Colleen, makes her feel intimidated. To combat those intimidating and nervous feelings, Colleen uses positive self talk as a strategy.

Respecting your elders

Colleen plans on being in the interpreting field for a long time and looks up to several interpreters that have been in the field for a while. There are certain qualities that she sees within them and hopes to possess herself for many years to come. She wants to continue to be: passionate, open minded, open to new information, caring about the people, gracious with newer interpreters, compassionate, and she jokingly thinks that “communication skills might be nice” (Jones, C., personal communication, August 21, 2019). It isn’t surprising that Colleen wants to avoid qualities such as: being stagnant, grumpy, and burnt out.

Colleen’s interpreting journey has been filled with encouragement and support by others. As interpreters, we all have milestones we are working towards and sometimes we have to stretch ourselves to get to the next milestone. When Colleen would be asked to do an assignment that would be a stretch for her, her mentor or team would tell her “I’m here for you” (Jones, C., personal communication, August 21, 2019). She knew that this was true and could feel it. How nice would it be, if as a profession, we would all lift each other up in this way? Colleen’s community has a positive impact on her reaching different milestones in her career and has had a huge hand in getting her into platform interpreting. In fact, she wants to make sure it is known to the community and her partner that she “couldn’t have done it without them” (Jones, C., personal communication, August 21, 2019).

From death to the spotlight

When speaking to Colleen, she appears calm, cool, and confident. But it hasn't always been that way. She tells a story back from one of her first days of ITP. Her professor told them to write down any burning questions that they need answered. All Colleen wanted to know was the absolute worst thing that could happen on an assignment and how to work through that. Once she knew what the worst-case scenario was, she felt that she would then be able to work backwards from that, and everything would be fine. Jokingly, Colleen said, "I'm definitely going to kill somebody. Tell me how to not kill someone. Tell me how that could happen because I don't even know how that could happen. And then tell me how not to do that. Then I can focus and move on" (Jones, C., personal communication, August 21, 2019). Colleen said this out of anxiety and the fact that she felt like this job would have a tremendous amount of responsibility riding on her. Colleen never did get her question answered by the professor.

One would think that Colleen would consider presenting at a university to be one of her biggest accomplishments, but it's not. When asked about her biggest accomplishment, she responded by saying "I work with a lot of Deaf interpreters and they trust me" (Jones, C., personal communication, August 21, 2019). Gaining trust of others is a huge accomplishment in her eyes and presenting at Gallaudet was "pretty cool" (Jones, C., personal communication, August 21, 2019). According to Colleen, the only thing that would be cooler than that would be to interpret for the first female president.

Making Space for Orientation

Colleen might downplay how cool she really is. Her thesis was written on orientation and she recently presented on that at Gallaudet. "I wish everyone knew about my research. I'm actually writing an article for VIEWS now because I think it's important and it needs to be out there. I wish men understood their privilege. I mean, I wish all of us understood our privilege. That is a journey we are on as a society, profession, and a community. And it's important" (Jones, C., personal communication, August 21, 2019). Colleen's thesis is titled *Perception in American Sign Language interpreted interactions: gender bias and consumer orientation* and was done to look at gender bias towards the interpreter and the impact it has on the Deaf consumer.

The age-old question was asked to Colleen, about where you see yourself in the next 5-10 years. Obviously while she waits to interpret for the first female president, she plans to keep herself busy by interpreting, presenting, writing, and researching. Researching on orientation is what she would like to

focus on, but as many people know that research after graduate school can be difficult to do. The profession needs this kind of research and we are anxiously awaiting to learn more on orientation.

About the Author

Stephanie Ehrlich is a certified Ed: K-12 interpreter and received her B.S. in Interpreter Training at Troy University with Magna Cum Laude honors. She did their educational interpreter internship with Wichita State University, and her community interpreter internship with Florida State Mental Health Hospital. She is currently working as a staff interpreter at Unified School District 261 and has been in that capacity for the past nine years, and has been working in Video Relay Service setting as an interpreter for the past three years. She is currently attending Western Oregon University to obtain her M.A. in Interpreting Studies with an emphasis in Teaching.

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Laura E. Metcalf: Agent for Change

Chevon Nicole Ramey

Western Oregon University

Abstract

In an effort to recognize and honor the leaders of the interpreting profession as well as interpreter educators, this article is being written in collaboration with the 2020 cohort of Western Oregon University's Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies. This article chronicles the life, professional career, and leadership of Laura E. Metcalf, BEI Master, Court, Medical and Level V; RID IC/TC, CT. She has worked as a teacher, interpreter and leader in the field across the United States, inspiring and encouraging others to reach their full potential.

Introduction

In life, we face situations and circumstances that we do not like or agree with. They may not always have a direct effect on us, however, the same options always present themselves. Do we simply endure the situation and go along with it because that is just how things are? Do we sit back and complain about the situation without taking any action to change it? Or do we take action by offering suggestions on how to improve or change the situation? Or take an even more proactive approach and become an active agent of change? Laura E. Metcalf was faced with this same dilemma early on in life and throughout the beginning of her professional career. It was her decision to be an active agent for change that has solidified her in the ranks of leaders of the interpreter education field.

Background

Laura (known as Lauri to most) was born to Deaf parents and began interpreting in an unofficial capacity at an early age, as most CODAs (children of Deaf adults) do. She tapped into her capacity to teach at a young age as well, teaching sign language classes in the second grade. Upon entering college, Lauri first majored in speech pathology. The program did not promote the use of sign language however and she decided to change majors and ultimately graduated with a degree in early childhood. During her undergraduate studies Lauri did some interpreting here and there and was hired to teach sign language to speech pathology graduate students.

She entered the interpreting field with her first official job as an interpreter in the public-school system in the early 1970s. It did not take long for Lauri to realize that she would much rather be the teacher in the Deaf Ed classroom. She continued working as an interpreter while pursuing graduate studies in Deaf Education at University of Northern Colorado. After getting certified Lauri spent the next 20 years as a Deaf Ed teacher. In those 20 years she taught at several different schools, developed a Deaf Ed program and taught sign language and Deaf Ed courses at the area university or community college. She also continued interpreting along the way.

Lauri eventually ended up moving to San Antonio, where she currently resides. She had been teaching interpreting classes for a few years prior to her move. She had become burned out from teaching Deaf Ed and all of the fights that come along with it regarding the use of sign language. It was at this time that San Antonio College was looking to start their program. Lauri was not interested in being hired on initially, however she agreed to consult and help put the program together. Lauri was ultimately hired to run the program and recently retired after 25 years.

Accomplishments

There are a number of accomplishments that Lauri has attained over her 45+ years of being involved in interpreting and interpreter education. The greatest one, according to Lauri, would be her work in establishing the Interpreter Training Program at San Antonio College (SAC). The program has graduated an astonishing number of skilled and qualified interpreters. According to the most recent numbers Lauri could recall, almost 15% of the interpreters in Texas graduated from SAC. The program has had a marked impact on the field of interpreting.

Leadership

When it comes to leadership qualities, humility, empathy, and respect are at the top of Lauri's list. Respect for the Deaf community. Humility in knowing that you have an influence on the next generation and that should not be taken lightly. As a leader Lauri has demonstrated these qualities and instilled them in her students as well. Passing along that respect for the language, people and culture, as well as for colleagues and students of the field.

When one is seeking to advance their skills, even in leadership, mentorship is key. Carol Patrie served as one of Lauri's main mentors. When it comes to seeking a mentor, ensure that their leadership style and approach matches that of your own philosophy, Lauri advises. She indeed found that in Patrie.

Something Lauri warns against, when it comes to leadership, is to be careful not to abuse the power that comes with being in a leadership role. Be careful not to state your beliefs as facts, to not abuse your influence. In leadership it is important to be open to new ideas and not feel like you are the expert.

Mentoring

As a mentor, Lauri feels as though she benefits from the mentor/mentee relationship as much, if not more than the mentee. Since retiring from her position at SAC in 2018 she has been working with students and novice interpreters. She enjoys seeing them grow in their skills and confidence in their work. While mentoring for SAC as well as the Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI), Lauri is always on the lookout for individuals she believes would serve well as future leaders and teachers in the field.

She continues to develop leaders by helping them realize their potential and what they can contribute to the field. It is a common saying at SAC in the Interpreter Training department that ‘We grow our own.’ The majority of the faculty and staff are products of the program. This is a testament of Lauri’s passion of pouring into the next generation of leaders.

Charge from Mom

Lauri has been a broker between the Deaf and hearing world throughout her life. Her mother challenged her early on to do just that. Everything she has done in her professional career has been a reflection of that charge. Teaching the hearing world about Deaf culture and teaching the Deaf community about the hearing world as well.

Interpreting

Lauri enjoys sharing interpreting stories to illustrate a point or concept to her mentees or students. Having an anecdotal, real world connection helps drive the point home and also helps bring the Deaf consumer to the forefront and serves as a reminder that we are dealing with their personal lives.

Message to New Interpreters

“Interpreting is challenging. It requires a lot of work and practice. It is not just about the prettiness of it. It rarely comes easy. You must put in time. You have to do the work. In order to be successful, you must do a lot of that work alone, in the practice zone.” – Laura E. Metcalf

Conclusion

Mahatma Ghandi said, “Be the change that you wish to see in the world.” Lauri has not traveled the entire world effecting change, however in the course of a 10-year span, she moved to six different cities across the United States effecting change in each one. She has truly had an impact on the interpreting field and Deaf community.

There is some change that needs to occur within the current climate between the interpreting field and the Deaf community. This change needs to be rooted in respect, one of the qualities Lauri mentions every leader must possess. Let us all strive to be agents of change.

About the Author

Chevon Nicole Ramey, BEI Advanced and Medical, B.A.A.S Psychology at Texas A&M University – San Antonio. Chevon currently works as an interpreter educator at San Antonio College and has been working as a certified interpreter in Texas since 2011 in the following settings: community, medical, post-secondary, educational, VRS, performance, platform and conference. She obtained her Bachelor of

Applied Arts and Sciences in Psychology from Texas A&M University – San Antonio and is currently pursuing her Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies at Western Oregon University.

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Michelle Montelongo: Working With the Next Generation

Krystle Chambers

Western Oregon University

Abstract

This case study brings attention to the mentoring and leadership approach of Michelle Montelongo. She has worked as a certified sign language interpreter specializing in mental health, congressional, platform, and post-secondary education with an emphasis on STEM for the past 20 years. Michelle draws from her experience as an interpreter as well as various coaching methodologies from the MLB and the NFL coaches to mentor the students she works with.

Getting Started

Michelle Montelongo has been working with the Deaf community first as an employment specialist and then transitioned into a community and mental health interpreter and mentor. She has now been interpreting for 20 years. Growing up in the central valley of California, Michelle is the third generation here in the United States and youngest in her family. Her grandparents were from Mexico and came to the United States seeking a better life for their family. Michelle's grandmother immigrated to California and worked for a British family who taught her traditional European customs. Michelle's grandmother then passed these European customs to her children and then her grandchildren. "Growing up I took after Granny in following her traditional cooking, hosting, crafting, and moral compass" (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). While growing up and learning from her grandmother, Michelle's parents instilled a desire for education. She was privately educated through high school and was first introduced to public school when attending college. "While attending the private schools it was my responsibility to ask my father for the tuition check, for books, clothing, etc. When I went to college, the first semester I asked my father for the tuition check he was so relieved to see it was cheaper than the tuition back in high school" (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019).

While growing up Michelle's parents showed her the importance of giving back. When she went to college, Michelle learned how taxes can help the community and providing lower costs for higher education through state funded schools. She kept that appreciation in mind through serving and volunteering in her local community. Michelle also recalls when she was younger how someone outside of her family and community could impact the people around her. Nixon was a topic of great discussion in Michelle's family while growing up and she recalls how it is interesting how "someone across the

country could have such and influence on my family” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). She would stay silent and learn as much as she could about what was going on and looking at different perspectives before responding, remembering how much an individual could impact another person’s life, such as Nixon had impacted her family’s life. “This way of growing up has heavily influenced how I mentor, knowing my actions can have an impact on someone else” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019).

Becoming an Interpreter

Michelle’s family also taught her that one’s “education should be well rounded and not specific” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). Michelle attended college in pursuit of a degree in history to become versed in various fields. One of the courses required for the degree was a foreign language, she took American Sign Language. “Having a background in history helped with learning about Deaf culture and ASL. History provided a lens to view Deaf culture and the language by looking at other cultures and languages” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). Michelle continued her passion for community service through volunteering at a local Deaf agency, once she completed the first level of ASL. When she had completed her third level of ASL she started looking at requirements for becoming an interpreter and soon found all local programs focused of Deaf education rather than interpreting. Michelle continued volunteering with the Deaf community, through which she continued to learn language and communication. As time passed the local university started a pilot program for interpreting, to which Michelle applied and was accepted into. She then learned that becoming an interpreter would fall mainly on her own shoulders to pursue.

She sought out a mentor in the interpreting field and started working with Patty Lessard. The biggest challenge Michelle faced in being an interpreter was her shyness. Through mentoring and research, Michelle found herself enrolling in voice lessons. Through voice lessons, she “learned how to project my voice while interpreting as well as overcome my shyness by exposing myself to various settings” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). Michelle’s mentor encouraged her to attend as many workshops and seminars as she could to learn about various techniques in interpreting. “I would attend the same workshop three times: once for content, then to watch the Deaf presenter, and then to just listen to the voice interpreter” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). Michelle noticed this helped her learn how to interpret beyond the lexical level and has brought this approach into her mentoring. During her first several years of interpreting she learned “this is when work ethic and professionalism are being built” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019) and wanted the next generation of interpreters to know this.

Mentoring

Michelle started formally mentoring about ten years ago in Bakersfield, California. A student at a local college needed eight more hours to complete internship and the college contacted Michelle asking if she could offer the student the final eight hours. “It just so happened, an upcoming assignment I had was an eight hour fifty-one-fifty training course that the Deaf consumer had already taken and passed previously and was only taking this course as a refresher” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). Michelle asked the Deaf consumer if it would be all right to bring in the student interpreter. The Deaf consumer did not mind and so it was all set up. “About a week before the assignment, I emailed the student about what to expect regarding the assignment and what my expectations were for him” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). The student

agreed and showed up for the assignment. “After the assignment was completed, I gave the student my analysis of the interpretation the only way I knew how, which was from working with Patty Lessard. The student said he had never seen this type of analysis before” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019).

When asked how she approaches mentoring, her response was it is “predominately based on how coaching is done in sports such as Major League Baseball” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). Michelle also includes a therapeutic approach to mentoring due to how often she works in the mental health setting. One of the coaches Michelle looks up to is Jimmy Johnson of the Dallas Cowboys. “He is what made them comeback in Superbowl XXVII, through his methodology of ‘treat a man as he is and he will remain as he is, treat him as what he could be and he’ll become what he should be’” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). Michelle also recommends anyone in a leadership or mentoring roles should look at “parenting books because I am responsible for them for the next 16-18 weeks and the impact they will have” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). Michelle also recommends any knowledge one can gain about customer service and coaching methodologies to mentor and lead. She emphasizes the need to incorporate customer service skills into interpreter training programs, as well as learning about business skills and gratitude. “Give a thank you to your contracts, like baked goods or a small gift basket” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). All of these things mentioned, Michelle hopes new interpreters can learn from. “I want the student interpreters to become better interpreters than me and really the next generation of interpreters should be a step above us” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019).

When Michelle meets with a student for the first time “I ask where they are at and what their goals are” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). She also takes this time to assess how the student views internship “is it just another class to them or is this a pathway to a profession” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). Michelle also takes note of how prepared the student is “do they ask me questions or am I the one mostly talking, how much ownership do they have in their learning” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). She asks the students about ethics and how they approach ethical situations as well as their view on prep time for assignments. “As a mentor you can’t be afraid to call them on something and you need to be honest with them” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). Michelle emphasizes with the students that it is imperative they are fluent (not proficient) in the English language in order to interpret. “Often we think English being the L1 means fluent, this is not necessarily the case” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019).

Michelle goes on to recall a favorite memory of hers about a student. The student had experienced people labeling her with lower competence levels and unfortunately the student believed that about herself. Michelle mentions she had given the student a script to interpret and the student came back to Michelle saying she was struggling. The student told Michelle that she felt she was getting worse and explained that she watched herself interpret the script and saw it was wrong. The student tried again and then watched herself over and over and still thought it was wrong. “She told me since she wasn’t getting it right that means ‘I’m getting worse.’ I told her actually you have improved. Six weeks ago, you would have signed what you did and thought it was fine” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). Michelle explained to the student that since she had caught the mistakes that showed she was transitioning from interpreting at the lexical level and moving into meaning transfer. Michelle loves to see students grow and improve, and through that she sees herself grow. “Mentoring keeps me

on my toes, helps me improve, and I am always learning. I get to see the next generation of interpreters” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019).

Moving Forward

Michelle believes it is important to tell inspirational stories to students and the next generation of interpreters. “There are enough stories about negative experiences, they are important but I don’t want to dwell on the negative” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). Michelle loves to hear from former students about what they have accomplished since internship and how much they have grown.

When asked if there was anything in her career that she wanted to do but never had the chance, Michelle responded with “I don’t know” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). She went on to explain that many of her experiences she had never known about until she was called in to interpret. “I had the opportunity to interpret at the White house, that was something I never had on my radar and yet I loved it” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019). When prompted further, her answer was not interpreting related. “Ever since I was young, I have always wanted to conduct a symphony” (M. Montelongo, personal communication, July 19, 2019).

About the Author

Krystle Chambers is a community interpreter specializing in DeafBlind interpreting and also teaches at Merced Community College. She is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies at Western Oregon University.

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Nicole Shambourger: Why Not?

Kiarah E. Moore

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Abstract

Nicole Shambourger is a Washington D.C. based interpreter as well as a Western Oregon University alum. She has worked diligently to give back to the interpreting community through teaching and mentoring numerous novice interpreters. Her passion and leadership skills have aided in her successful career in interpreting. Nicole continues to help cultivate minority interpreters in an attempt to more accurately represent the Deaf community we serve.

Take Two

Nicole Shambourger did not grow up immersed in the Deaf community. Interpreting was not the job she dreamed of having from a young age. In fact, Nicole settled on a career path in the accounting world. Nicole worked in finance for almost ten years before even thinking about becoming an interpreter. She recalls sitting in church and noticing the interpreters at work. Lead by her interest, Nicole took her first sign language class at her church. During that time, the leader of the Deaf ministry informed Nicole that Georgia Perimeter College was offering sign language classes and encouraged Nicole to enroll.

Since she was enjoying acquiring the language and craved for more, Nicole thought “why not?” While enrolled in one of the final pre-requisite American Sign Language (ASL) courses, a professor, Marci Smith, urged Nicole to go further than just taking a few classes and pursue interpreting as a career. After a little thought, Nicole took the leap to take a placement exam and enroll in the school’s interpreter training program. Although she already had a successful career in finance, she found the work to be less than fulfilling compared to her new passion for ASL.

Upon graduating from the program in 2000, Nicole found herself trying to figure out what to do next. She did not feel like her skills were up to par to pass Georgia’s Quality Assurance exam, which was required prior to working in the field. While considering her options, a fellow graduate and friend, Pamela Collins, informed Nicole of a mentorship program she was participating in located in Washington D.C. Pamela suggested that Nicole apply for the mentorship, as well, through an agency named Sign Language Associates, Inc. (SLA). Nicole took the advice and planned to stay in Washington D.C. for the duration of her three-month mentorship session. But, plans changed, as they so often do. Nicole

decided to do two sessions of mentorship that lasted a total of six months. At the completion of her second session, Nicole was offered a staff position with SLA and has lived in Washington D.C. ever since. She worked as staff for this company for five years before moving on to become a freelance interpreter. Currently, Nicole works part-time at the Department of Labor and part-time freelance.

Taking Success into Her Own Hands

While attempting to become nationally certified, Nicole and a group of colleagues from SLA formed a peer mentoring group that they named “True-Biz” (Gallaudet University Regional Interpreter Educational Center, n.d.). It comprised of a group of about 6 or 7 women that gathered to improve their skills and work towards their goal of certification. Within a few years, each member was certified.

Within True-Biz, the members developed a deep level of trust between one another. They were comfortable enough to be vulnerable in front of each other. Nicole says that, “because of relationship, because of trust, and because of respect for one another, everyone let their hair down in our sessions.” They were able to trust one another enough to be completely honest and receptive when giving and receiving feedback.

The group was very structured and determined. When they held sessions, they got down to business – hence the name “True-Biz”. All of the members of the group had a common goal and were willing to do whatever was needed in order to meet that goal. They would go from house to house practicing situations they may encounter in the field. Sometimes, they would even invite hearing and Deaf mentors into their sessions to present workshops and give them guidance to improving their skillsets. To this day, Nicole has maintained a close relationship with many of the members of True-Biz.

WOU Proud

While working as an interpreter, Nicole set a goal to teach future interpreters in the classroom. When looking back on her own experiences as an interpreting student, she remembers that despite having professors that were kind and supportive, she did not see herself in any of them. She wanted minority students to feel like that if she could be successful, they could as well. She attended numerous workshops and conferences over the years to further her knowledge of the field, but she knew that these were not enough. There had to be more.

While working in Washington D.C., Nicole befriended Pamela Cancel. At the time, they were colleagues at SLA. The two lost touch for some time, and upon reconnecting, Pamela was now teaching at Western Oregon University. Nicole informed Cancel of her plans for furthering her education and her aspiration to become an interpreter educator. This discussion led to Cancel encouraging Nicole to apply to WOU’s Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies (MAIS) program. Again, Nicole said, “why not?” and pushed towards her goals.

As a graduate student, there were times Nicole wondered how closely the instruction she and her classmates were receiving would resemble the world of interpreter education. She was aware that, as a student, she did not yet know enough to predict all the skills and knowledge she would need after graduation. However, after completing the program, Nicole declares that WOU “prepared us in ways that we never could have imagined.”

Nicole believes wholeheartedly that her experience at WOU opened the door to people and connections that she would not have had access to otherwise. For example, the co-directors of Project CLIMB (Cultivating Legal Interpreters from Minority Backgrounds) are two of her cohort-mates. She was hired as an external evaluator to conduct data collection, write reports and surveys, and provide guidance to the team. Nicole is adamant that without the relationships formed at WOU, she would not have had the ability to work on a national level grant. She remained in the position of external evaluator position for two years (2017-2019) and has now signed up to be a student in the legal interpreting training provided by Project CLIMB.

Expertise through Experience

One lesson that Nicole usually stresses to any interpreter she is working with or mentoring is the importance of the Deaf community. Over the years, she has realized that many novice interpreters have not experienced exposure and growth through the Deaf community. They have learned ASL and the technicalities of becoming an interpreter only in the classroom setting, with little to no Deaf connection. Nicole says she is grateful to have started her journey with the very patient and gracious members of the Deaf Ministry at church as well as with the Deaf and DeafBlind community of the Atlanta Metropolitan area. She believes that interpreters' language fluency and sensitivity are heavily based upon having a strong connection with the Deaf community we serve. Nicole says, "we can't be effective in what we're doing if we don't prioritize [the Deaf community]."

Nicole also emphasizes that interpreting is a skill that must be worked at. Interpreting is not something that is easy or that comes haphazardly. She recalls a sentiment from her past professors at Western Oregon University, Amanda Smith and Elisa Maroney, who emphasized the importance of deliberate practice when improving and refining an interpreter's skill set. Nicole believes that deliberate practice entails more than just showing up to an assignment to do a job. It also involves interpreting videos for self/peer-critique and discussing ethical decision making with colleagues. She also uses reflective practice to improve future situations.

Although Nicole has become a successful interpreter, she still wishes that she could have become fully fluent in ASL before learning anything about interpreting. She critiques the current state of most interpreter training programs, pointing out that often you learn the language and how to interpret at the same time. She believes that this is one of the reasons that novice interpreters often struggle. They have not had the opportunity to fully learn ASL before they are catapulted to learning to interpret messages between ASL and English.

Facing Challenges

Nicole describes one of the biggest challenges she has faced thus far as the inability to get out of her own way. Often, fear, doubt, and apprehension keep people from moving forward. Although she has had very supportive people surrounding her, she still has to allow herself to push past her own insecurities. Nicole says that this obstacle manifests itself not only in her interpreting role, but also in her leadership role. As a self-proclaimed introvert by nature, she prefers to lead from the background. But, sometimes, preferences are not reality. When she is thrust into the foreground, she has to allow herself to portray her capabilities and lead with confidence.

When conflict arises, Nicole tries to address it when it happens rather than waiting for tensions to build. She approaches people in truth and in love. She tries to be mindful of others' feelings while being honest about the situation. She expresses the situation from her perspective and has realized that most conflicts are actually just misunderstandings. It is important to realize that every individual is different and may see or hear things from different points of view. She recalls a phrase that her husband would always say to her: "If I ever say or do something that you can perceive positively or negatively, always think positively first." This has helped her remember that most people have positive intentions, but sometimes humans disagree – and that is okay.

Mentoring

While still an interpreting student at Georgia Perimeter College, a workshop was held by Dr. Jacqueline Bruce that had a major impact on Nicole's journey as an interpreter and, later, a mentor. She and the two other Black ladies in her cohort were awestruck at the fact that Black interpreters existed. It was not something they saw in their program. While Dr. Bruce was visiting from Alabama, she informed the students about the National Alliance of Black Interpreters, Inc. (NAOBI, Inc.). Dr. Bruce told the students that she would be taking her students on a trip to South Carolina for the NAOBI, Inc. conference and graciously invited Nicole and some of her classmates to join. Attending the NAOBI, Inc. conference was a game changer for Nicole. She was able to meet and network with "all the Black movers and shakers in the field" and was shocked to see so many interpreters who looked like her.

Nicole has thrust herself into the upbringing of new interpreters in multiple ways. She has served as a mentor, both formally and informally. She is currently working with a mentoring group, called CORE Interpreters, and has been very involved in mentoring students at Gallaudet University. She has done some mentoring through NAOBI-DC, while also mentoring students when they have just approached her asking for guidance. She completed her student teaching at Gallaudet University and has taught in the interpreter training program at the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC).

Often, you do not realize the impact that you have on others while you are doing the work to aid them towards success. It is also common for people to believe that mentor/mentee relationships are one-sided. Nicole believes that this sentiment is far from the truth. In her experiences, both parties inevitably learn throughout the process. Nicole says the feeling to have someone come back and say they appreciate the time you have given is amazing.

A Continuous Journey

Nicole's leadership style is team-oriented. She realizes she cannot do everything on her own, therefore she relies on the input and support of others. Nicole builds well-rounded teams with her own weaknesses in mind, finding people that are strong in her areas of limitation. Nicole also mentioned the importance of leading with a mindset of humility rather than arrogance. When a person is humble, they are better able to take in the ideas of others and learn from them.

Nicole strives to lead with a vision. She likes to have a goal to pursue, along with a plan to attain that goal. She makes sure to close her mouth and open her ears to those around her, allowing perspectives

from others. She also takes time to encourage, motivate, and push others forward. Her goals are not filled with selfish ambition but rather with others in mind.

As Nicole continues to pave the way for new interpreters, she has no regrets concerning her interpreting and mentoring adventure. She says that it has “definitely been a journey, and the journey continues.”

About the Author

Kiarah Elyse Moore, BEI Basic, B.A. American Sign Language Interpreting and B.A. Liberal Studies with emphasis in Psychology and Health at the University of Houston. She has been working as an interpreter in the state of Texas since 2017. She is currently pursuing a M.A. in Interpreting Studies specializing in teaching from Western Oregon University. Her thesis will focus on developing and embodying confidence in novice interpreters. She currently works in settings that include community, K-12, post-secondary, VRS, and theatre.

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I would like to thank Nicole for being gracious enough to take the time to sit for an interview. I am super appreciative that my numerous emails practically begging her to participate in this case study did not cause her to think that I am a crazy person. I would also like to thank my cohort-mates and the MAIS faculty at Western Oregon University. Their support and encouragement have been invaluable to me during this journey. Lastly, I would like to thank my family for love and support through it all.

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Sarah Wheeler: Engage, Practice, Learn

Brittany LeGal

Western Oregon University

Abstract

This article is part of a project which aims to recognize and honor leaders in the interpreting and interpreter education fields. I chose to recognize interpreter and teacher Sarah Wheeler. Although she is not directly in my community, her actions have played a direct role leading myself and many other student interpreters. She serves numerous interpreting and Deaf communities in the U.S. both in person and online. She believes we should continue educating ourselves and improve our skills through deliberate practice. Not only does she encourage others to do this, but she also leads by example. Although busy with her own life, she still actively practices, studies, and encourages other interpreters to do the same with a positive growth mindset.

Sarah Wheeler

Sarah Wheeler's journey into the interpreting world started as a young child. She grew up with Deaf parents and was immersed in Deaf Culture and its history. This experience gave her a unique perspective where she could see both the Deaf world and the hearing world around her. These experiences would form who she is as an individual, guide her educational and career choices, and embark her on a journey to inspire other interpreters to bridge the gap between these two worlds to gain true understanding for seamless communication access.

These building blocks into Sarah's future all stemmed from her experiences between the Deaf and hearing worlds growing up. She was privy to seeing a multitude of interpreters interpret for her parents. She witnessed interpreters with a wide range of skills who were able to make communication seamless for her parents and those who seemed to create more roadblocks for them. Observing different interpreters who worked with her parents, Sarah said that those who struggled to provide seamless communication were interpreters whose skills "weren't where they could have been with their language, interpreting skills, or social skills". Observing these interpreters gave Sarah a lot to reflect on. How were they impacting her parents? Why was it happening? What could they do to improve those skills? These are all ideas which would begin to percolate as time went on and would eventually help establish her own values as an interpreter, teacher, human being, and influence how she views the world around her.

Sarah continued to pay attention to the interactions of the world around her as she grew up. She served six years in the Air Force, earned a B.A. in Business Management from Duke Continuing Studies, and an M.Ed. in Interpreter Pedagogy from NorthEastern University. She has been working as a freelance

ASL/English interpreter since 2007. All of these experiences and her work as an interpreter have influenced numerous aspects of her life and how she “shows up in other spaces of her life”. When asked what she meant by this statement she expanded:

I believe the more I get involved with and the more I learn I am able to apply not only to the extra-linguistic knowledge portions of the job, but also to the ways that I am showing up to the job and understanding the human interactions of the interpreting process. This has made a big difference for me in terms of decision making and recognizing and managing the emotions that I bring to an interaction.

Ideas about herself and how other interpreters need to get involved, understand human interactions, recognize their emotions, and how to make decisions all kept coming back up throughout our interview process. Getting ‘involved’ in one way or another is key for interpretation success. According to Sarah getting involved ensures that she is ready for the interpreting assignments that may come her way. Getting involved could mean having the knowledge about the assignment and its terminology already, but it can also mean finding a way to gain information about it so one can become ready to take it on to the best of her ability. This could mean physically getting involved and experiencing the topic first hand, reaching out to colleagues for their experiences with it, or even just reading about it. Another thing that Sarah suggests we get involved with is ourselves. She emphasized that we should know our emotions and be able to recognize them well enough to know how to make decisions based on the interpreter situation at hand and not our gut reaction. Sarah recalled how her emotions impacted her jobs early on:

When I was younger, I was still unsure of myself and how to recognize and label my emotions, so that, sometimes I would make decisions based on the emotion that I was feeling and not the most well thought out decision for everyone there based on the facts.

Sarah emphasized that she practices decision making, identifying her and others' emotional states, and takes part in supervision groups to help her become more deliberate about her growth as an interpreter and interpreter educator. This concept of deliberate practice kept resurfacing during our interview. This concept was first taught to me by her when she was my professor and mentor. She taught us how to use deliberate practice to improve our skills. This type of practice is as it sounds: you choose a specific skill to focus your practice on, build up that skill, and then move on to the next one. Sarah says that if you are struggling with your emotional states and their impact on decisions or just want to improve your skills, then deliberate practice will help. Practicing decision making, identifying my own and others' emotional states, and taking part in supervision groups have helped me become more deliberate about my growth as an interpreter as well as an interpreter educator.

Supervision groups are another thing that Sarah encourages others to partake in. She says that they were a tremendous asset to her career and that being a part of a group that meets to discuss the demands or conflicts that come up helps interpreters think about how they make decisions differently. Each member of the group can share their perspective and give the interpreter different points of view to incorporate while interpreting. Sarah states that participating in supervision groups has made her a much better interpreter.

Sarah has also hosted her own online mentoring services where she offers her insights into utilizing deliberate practice. Although she is the mentor of this group, she also participates because she believes

we can all learn from each other. I had the opportunity to be in a few of her mentoring groups and the debriefs that we did together as a group are as beneficial as supervision meetings. She creates a safe, judgement free environment where we all learned, built connections within our community, and felt equal. Her mentoring style now incorporates Goleman's emotional intelligence to help herself and her mentees identify the emotions and behaviors which may be helping or hindering their interpretations. Once we are aware of our feelings, we can use them to motivate us to succeed. Within her mentoring groups she encourages trust and respect which helps bond interpreters.

The connections we make within the interpreting community are great, but like many others, Sarah encourages interpreters to expand outside of the interpreter community to include the Deaf community as well. Sarah emphasized that being engaged with the Deaf Community is vital to the success of an interpreter. Thinking back to her childhood and the interpreters who struggled interpreting for her parents compared to those who did not, she can clearly identify those who were actively engaged with the Deaf community versus those who were not. She emphasizes that we can learn how to improve our interpretations by paying attention to the consumers' experience. We should strive to make consumers feel so connected that they forget an interpreter is involved, but how can we do this? Sarah states that we need to get out into the Deaf community to experience the culture and stories outside of the interpreting lens so we can understand how we, as interpreters, impact consumers.

If we individually want to improve our work, the most important place to go to understand what is needed for us to be better at what we do, is to get involved with the multilingual and multicultural Deaf community, the multilingual and multicultural hearing communities, professional communities, etc. that use our services. To be a part of it, and to understand the impact that our actions while interpreting have in the lives of people who use our services.

Interpreting is a difficult task and although perfection is something we strive for, mistakes do happen. Sarah states that if an interpretation did not go well, we must use that experience as an opportunity for growth and improvement. We can look back at the experience, out of the interpreter lens, and assess what occurred so we can work to improve ourselves for next time. We cannot change the things we have no control over, but through our assessment we can see what things were in our control and how we can approach the situation the next time around. Sarah wants us to learn from our mistakes and be willing to share not only our interpreting success stories, but to also be vulnerable enough to share times when we could have done better because those are the moments other professionals can learn from.

Sarah is not one of those teachers who just teaches interpreting. She does not tell her students to venture into the Deaf Community and sit at home. She doesn't just mentor others about interpreting or tell them how to improve themselves. She lives it. She works as an interpreter experiencing new jobs each day, lives in the Deaf community, debriefs in supervisions with mentors, and is constantly working to improve her own personal development and education. According to Sarah, this field requires more than just knowledge of ASL, Deaf Culture, and Interpreting Processes. "It requires interpreters to have emotional intelligence, multicultural competence, and to interact with the Deaf community."

There is so much to be learned out there, and I am always encountering new ideas, classes, workshops that help me grow as an individual and as a professional. I know that I am never at the place where I have 'arrived' and that there is always work to be done to improve or become better with the work we do.

Although Sarah is not exactly sure how she will impact the community, she hopes it will be a positive one which leaves the field better than when she started working in it and that the interpreting experience will be a better one for both Deaf and hearing consumers for years to come. In 5-10 years, she hopes to focus more on community development for the d/Deaf community including d/Deaf children and their parents, children of Deaf adults, and interpreters around the topic of emotional intelligence. Sarah's work ethic as an interpreter and student continues today as she works, attends conferences, hosts workshops, and works on her Ph.D. in General Psychology from Grand Canyon University with an emphasis in Instruction and Cognition with a dissertation focusing on emotional intelligence and the interpreting field. All of Sarah's insights, experiences, and her ability to share them with her colleagues, students, and mentees make her a phenomenal leader in our field. When asked about how she will ensure that she grows as a leader she responded stating:

Leadership doesn't rest with one person knowing everything. We all have the ability to lead as well as follow. What is key is that we all recognize this within ourselves and know we all have value and expertise that we can share, as well as value and expertise to learn from others. Once this is recognized, then we each can take the initiative to do our own hard work and growth, which then has an even bigger impact on the field.

Sarah leads by example "setting the bar" at the level of professionalism where she envisions the field heading. She is always working hard to grow and improve as a person and as an interpreter. She knows that creating the change she wants to see begins with changing herself so she strives for improvement and makes sure she puts in the time to develop her skills and knowledge all while inspiring others, like myself, in the field as well.

About the Author

Brittany LeGal works as an educational and VRS interpreter in Clark County, NV. She is originally from Wyoming where she was first introduced to sign language at the Wyoming School for the Deaf. She graduated from Troy University in 2016 with a Bachelor of Science from their Interpreter Training Program. She is currently conducting research on teacher and interpreter relationships and their impact on Deaf education at Western Oregon University's Master of Arts in their Interpreting Studies Program.

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