

Deaf-Blind

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SL 361

Micro-Culturalism Deaf Minorities

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We will be looking at what Deaf-Blind is, what they might have gone through, how they communicate, and their history. We will be focusing on Hellen Keller as our Deaf-Blind community member as she is popular and well known well, and even though we are looking at a Deaf-Blind person each would have their struggles and stories.

What is Deaf-Blind?

Deaf-Blind is exactly as it sounds. The person is both Deaf and Blind, the levels can vary. They could be fully Deaf and Blind, like Hellen Keller, they could be fully Deaf mostly Blind, or vice versa, they could be mostly Deaf and mostly Blind. “Deafblind people may have lost hearing and sight to different degrees, and this may have occurred in different moments of their lives. That is, some people may have been born with congenital deafblindness while others may have acquired it later after an illness or an accident. Also, there are people who are deaf and later become blind, blind people who later become deaf or people who progressively lose both senses (Raanes and Slettebakk Berge, 2017).” (Gabarro-Lopez, S., & Mesch, J.), they could be just one until the other happens and then have to relearn how to communicate. Now I know what you're thinking, how does a Deaf-Blind person communicate?

Communication as Deaf-Blind

Many people understand that the Deaf community uses sign language, and the Blind community uses braille. But many people don't understand how communication works as Deaf-Blind, I can't speak braille, and I can't write sign language. Both sign language and braille are used one instead of voice and the other instead of reading, just

as one would if they only have one or the other. I know the thought that's crossing your mind sign language needs eyesight, which is true, which is why the deaf-blind community uses a different type of sign language. Instead of using complex sign language, with motion, fingerspelling and tactile sign language is used instead. "Some deafblind people know the tactile sign language of their countries and use tactile sign language interpreters in their daily lives." (Gabarro-Lopez, S., & Mesch, J.), well some or many use this method, everyone is different and has different needs. "Because of the different profiles of deafblind people, the strategies used by interpreters vary greatly." (Gabarro-Lopez, S., & Mesch, J.), there is not just one set way to communicate with a person in the Deaf-blind community. "Tactile sign languages also require that individuals are close to one another as some signs may be articulated on the other person's face, hands or body (Raanes, 2011). Furthermore, reception of tactile sign languages may be one-handed (e.g., in the United States, Sweden, and France) or two-handed (e.g., Norway and Australia), and this variation depends on different factors including the language itself or the community using it, among others (Willoughby et al., 2018)." (Gabarro-Lopez, S., & Mesch, J.), just like different areas have different languages, so does sign. Now that we know how they communicate let us see their history and the struggles they might have faced.

History

"1789-1832 Victorine Morriseau, first deaf-blind woman to receive formal education, is taught in Paris, France." (Collins, M. T.). "1837 Laura Bridgman, first deaf-blind person educated in the United States, is admitted to Perkins School for the Blind" (Collins, M. T.), the United States was about five years behind France. "1887 Anne Sullivan sent to

Tuscumbia, Alabama, by the Director of Perkins School for the Blind, Michael Anagnos, to teach Hellen Keller. Helen's life created a worldwide interest in the education of deaf-blind children." (Collins, M. T.), we will be going further into who Hellen Keller was and how she lived. "1900-1950's A few schools to teach the deaf-blind children were established in Europe" (Collins, M. T.). "1962-64 A worldwide epidemic of rubella resulted in the birth of thousands of deaf-blind children, most of whom had other mental and physical handicaps. The epidemic highlighted the lack of facilities, manpower, and expertise to meet the needs of these children." (Collins, M. T.), it was the biggest increase the world has seen. "1968 Congress passed P.L. 90-230, which legislated the creation of Centers and Services for Deaf-Blind Children and Youth (Title VI-C)." (Collins, M. T.), it took over one hundred years, four years after an epidemic of rubella, to get Deaf-blind children to be recognized as needing more than their hearing-seeing peers. "1968-72 Federal funding of several programs to train teachers of deaf-blind children..." (Collins, M. T.). "1970 In the 70's we witnessed the creation and development of a network of multi-state regional centers for deaf-blind children. They tended to be staffed by personnel who had specific training in deaf-blindness, and their staff provided ongoing training and consultation to local programs and produced many publications and training videos that were nationally available." (Collins, M. T.). Now that we went through some history let's look into one person's life.

Hellen Keller

Hellen Keller "was born on June 27, 1880." (Digital, I. T.) "In 1882, Keller was 18 months old and fell ill with an acute illness which caused her to become deaf, blind and mute." (McGlenn, I.). Hellen Keller became Deaf-Blind at a young age which also meant

she was mute and had no way of communicating. “Keller lived at a time when there was almost no support for DeafBlind people” (McGlinn, I.), due to the lack of support it was hard to get any help with learning how to communicate. Hellen Keller was able to “developed her own way of communicating as a young child through basic signs and feeling vibrations. Keller was then introduced to Anne Sullivan, who became her lifelong friend and teacher. Sullivan taught Keller how to finger spell and communicate in other ways.” (McGlinn, I.). Fingerspelling communication can be done by letting the Deaf-blind person feel your hands so they can make out the shape. Hellen Keller “was the first deaf and blind person to write her biography *The Story of my Life*, at the age of 22.” (Digital, I. T.). Hellen Keller wrote in her book, *The Story of my Life*, where she “described this childhood experience in her autobiography later as “being at sea in a dense fog”.” (McGlinn, I.).

Conclusion

We learned about what Deaf-Blind is, what they might have struggled with, how they communicate, and their history. We also looked into Hellen Keller who is a well-known Deaf-blind person. We now know more about the Deaf-blind community than we did at the start.

References

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