

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
2020 MIDWINTER MEETING
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2020
11:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.
DEAF CULTURE FORUM

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Advocate for Deaf Culture Digital Library

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: Thank you very much. We have one more presentation as you know from your agenda which is supposed to be Alec McFarlane, Alec as we told you is unfortunately sick. He has become a fixture at ALA conferences, a member of ALA and so many of you do know him, but Carrie Banks from the Brooklyn Public Library is going to step in -- Alec put together a slide presentation and she has Alec's notes so she is going to try to illuminate the slides that we see and take it away, Carrie.

>> Hi, try and imagine me as a slightly younger much taller deaf man. I'm sorry, I need one more thing.

I was so engrossed in the previous discussions that I did not get this entirely ready. So, I'm going to be working from Alec's notes. I hope that I do him justice. Alec's expertise is delineated in this, in this slide. He is the president of the National Literary Society of the Deaf, Inc., the proprietor of New Image Associates Construction Consultants (and once or twice I have tried to get in touch with him when he is on a job site and it's impossible). And [he is] a member of the Association for Specialized, Government, and Cooperative Library Agencies

and [of] United for Libraries. He is the author of seven legislative Bills, three of which have been passed into law since the year 2000.

When we were discussing my doing this, he said that I just want people to understand that deafness is not absolute, that labels aren't really helpful and that there are many more people who need to be included both for their deafness and for the fact that they are not deaf. Now, we can go to the next slide.

And this is his audiogram. To be honest, I don't know how to interpret this. Alec is somebody who signs and speaks. He became deaf as a result of an illness. He goes into this more later. But he had planned to integrate the remarks of the people who had been here and speaking all along into his closing discussion and I'm not going to be able to do that.

As a legislative advocate, one thing he really wants to do is to explain the challenges as a deaf advocate. As a legislative advocate Alec's job is for the greater good. It follows that his approach is based on the system or the systematic. He works in libraries schools, museums, organizations and government. The systematic is the thing that this is intended to illustrate and build upon. What is the system and how can we use it for the greater good? How can we answer the matter of deafness?

He wants to talk about the deafness in numbers. And generally, these are the numbers used by deaf run organizations and the international, national and privately funded celebrity forums. The point is they are basically making the same claims, that about, and you can see -- they are basically making the same claims of about 70 million deaf people worldwide. That's the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. The Nyle Dimarco Foundation. There is nothing wrong with those claims per se, but this slide [World Health Organization - WHO] introduces the question about the other 400 million or so people who are deaf without regard to culture, geography, identity, circumstance, or language modality. This is about where deafness is happenstance and further where deafness is oftentimes preventable or temporary. When we speak of the Deaf Culture Digital Library, we are essentially talking about the other 400 million people and their family, friends, neighbors, classmates, educators, employers, doctors, care give givers, merchants and private industry bringing the world total to 7.3 billion people or so who need to know and understand and accept deafness, who need to know and understand human fragility.

And then back to this slide again, this is, again, Alec's audiogram. What he had not said before is he became deaf overnight at the age of seven years and six months due to a flu virus. We must consider human fragility and the potential

destructive power of a common affliction.

And here the "Hill" talks about a young child who became blind after getting the flu and not having been vaccinated. Recall the slide the 466 million people considered by the WHO to be deaf.

It is not his intention to be alarmist about the virus, but to bring to attention human fragility which is the underlying of equity diversity and inclusion as well as universal access and design. Alec does not wish to minimize deafness either but rather show that it's place in society and how together the many needs we have are actually common.

Further that common understanding gives way to true cradle to grave solutions that the Deaf Culture Digital Library is intended to implement as part of a larger system that is both a platform and pathway. It is intended as a way for the deaf community and others to transform the library by leveraging the power of the library and its place in our public private partnership.

And that was all of Alec's remarks. Thank you very much for your patience as I read through them.

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: Thank you, Carrie.
