

Chapter 3: Who Am I?

1. **Deaf Canadian Chinese:** signed
2. **Deaf Poet:** *signed with captions*
3. **Deaf White Men:** *signed*
4. **Deaf White Woman:** *signed*
5. **East Indian Deaf Woman:** *signed*
6. **French Canadian Woman:** Um, I was born into a French speaking family, both my parents are French. Um, I grew up, my first language was French and I learned to speak French first and then I learned English probably when I was 3 or 4 years old, from the TV. And, uh, I was bi-lingual when I started school. Um, sometimes I remember when I was a kid and I went to school I didn't want people to know that I could speak French. I was embarrassed about it and when kids found out and they would ask me to say something in French, I never wanted to. Uh, I just don't know why, I thought it was a bad thing, I thought I was different and I didn't want to be different. But when I went back home, it was only French spoken in the house, no English. If we spoke English to my Dad, he wouldn't even answer, um, when my Mom and Dad would go out, we would speak English but if they came back, when we heard the car door, we would automatically start speaking French. So, I didn't value it as a child but, now that I'm all grown up, I do value it. And, I'm married, and my husband is English, from England, and I didn't change my last name when I got married and part of the reason is that my last name is very French and, when people see it, they automatically know I'm French and I want to keep that. When I was young, I didn't want to be different but now I want to keep it because it makes me a little different. And I think that it's helped me be a better interpreter because, well, linguistically, a lot of the grammar in ASL is the same as the grammar in French, the noun and verb order and adjectives, adverbs, the order of things is the same. So, sometimes I don't need to think about it, it just comes out and I've also had the opportunity to interpret in some French classes, so it comes in handy.
7. **Interpreter of Color:** Um, it's funny, I, um, never really understood oppression until I started taking these courses and understood what it really meant. Then, looking back on my life and thinking, yeah, I was oppressed in that situation and that situation, more times than I thought that I ever, because I think of myself as, just like everybody else. So, I never think of myself as a colored person but I remember when I was 18 and I went to a party and I was the only colored person in that room and, I never, didn't hit me until the end of the night when I looked around and I'm thinking, holy crow, like, I have a lot of Caucasian friends. And, um, my friends told me they never ever think of me as a colored person either so um, that to me is, now that I'm getting older, I'm noticing a lot more. So, um, I think the more I'm educated about oppression, the more I understand it and notice it in my own life. I find two, two camps, I find that when I'm in a post-secondary institution where the majority is a Caucasian group and I am the only minority in that class, I find it a bit uncomfortable because I don't, uh, I feel that I don't get the respect that I deserve in terms of myself being a professional. Especially from an instructor, they look at you like you're just a student here who is volunteering your time out of the goodness of your heart

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and, uh. So, that's one thing that I find. When I work with Deaf minorities, there is an automatic connection because I'm, I'm a woman of color and the comfort level is there automatically and I sense that because if I team with a Caucasian person, they're looking to me for guidance and not them which empowers, um, me a little but there is also that danger zone where, you know, you end up being a buddy-buddy to them and, you know, that isn't what you're there to be. But that's one advantage, I think, that the comfort level is automatic there and for me too, uh, you know going into a room where you're the only colored person is, it still strikes me even though I feel that I'm, I'm very Canadian. It still strikes me that I, uh, feel the underlying oppression, if you can call it that and, uh, when it comes to interpreting, like I said before, I think it's, uh, when I come in with a teamer who's Caucasian the person that we're working for automatically talks to them first before they speak to me. So, yeah, so it's, I feel it but, like again, you have to be that much more, to be a little bit more aggressive and to be right in there and letting them know, hey, I'm here too, I'm a professional as well.

8. **Kenyan Woman Preacher:** *captioned.*
9. **Late-Deafened Adult:** I would say interesting for the first word. Some other adjectives that comes to mind, certainly frustrating, tiring sometimes, um, those are the predominant, predominant adjectives I would say. It's been a growing experience for me actually. I've met many new people and I've learned quite a few new things too. Well, when I first recognized that I was no longer hearing the students in my class, I thought, oh my, now what. So, I started compensating by asking parents to send me notes instead of telephone, so on and so on, but it got, it got to be a huge problem. So, I thought that I will start to learn to lip read. Well, I signed up for a lip reading course and the instructor said, 'You've been lip reading for a long time', and I said, 'oh, have I', and she said, 'oh yes'. Well, that wasn't quite doing it either because to lip read, the person you are looking at has to have their mouth in plain view, not have a mustache, so on and so on. So, I thought, alright, I'll learn to sign which I tried to do and I took some courses in that. I was not very successful but I can sign enough to communicate with Deaf people and that brought me into a whole new world. I now have some Deaf friends and a whole Deaf community that are very kind to me, and very patient, and will sign over and over again until I get it. So, that's what I mean by interesting. Let me give you just an example of different reactions that people have. One woman looked at me very, very closely and said, 'To look at you, you would think you were normal'. Now being that I have a sense of humor, I thought it was very, very funny but that's the reaction of some people. They look at me and think, you don't seem that bad. Now, people I call my close friends, are very different. They seem to think I do very well and they will make sure that they are looking right at me and we can visit, and I can lip read and hear. So, my close friends have totally accepted me. With hearing people, I say I am Deaf if I have to introduce myself because to hearing people, I am Deaf. When I meet Deaf people, I tell them I am hard-of-hearing but I know they really think I am hearing and so, I don't really fit anywhere.