

Deaf Culture and Race

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NCORE

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Overview

- The History of Deaf & Black Deaf Education
- Geographical and social factors
- Pre & Post Era of Brown vs. Board of Education
- Communication Policy
- Teaching Method
- Linguistic Features of Black ASL
- A Personal Account
- Questions & Answers

The History of Education of Deaf &

- The education of White Deaf Americans
 - began in 1817 in Hartford, Connecticut with the establishment of the American School for the Deaf (ASD) (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989).

- The education of Black and Black Deaf Americans
 - began in 1865 after the Civil War

Pre & Post Brown vs. Board of Education

- Pre Brown Era
- Segregation of the Schools for Deaf
- *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v Canada*, 305 U.S, 337 (1938)
- *Miller vs. DC School Board, Kendall School and Gallaudet College*
- Post Brown Era
- Desegregation of the Deaf Schools
- *Christie Archie vs. Alabama School for the Deaf*

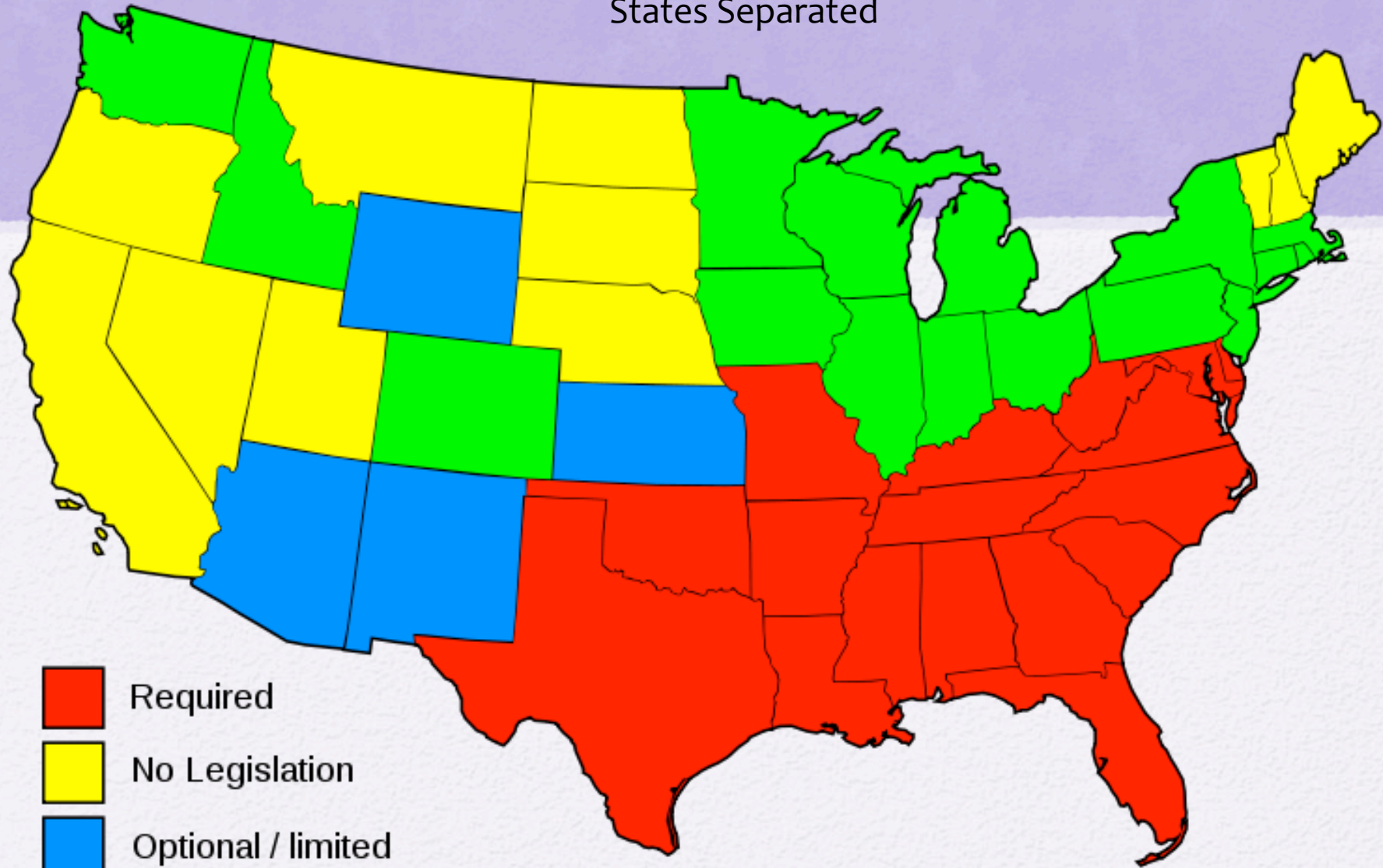
Policy Implications

- Seventeen states in America had public school systems which required that White and Negro students be taught separately and in some cases the law required that Negro teachers must teach Negro students (Doctor, 1948).

Social Factors in the Formation of

- Black deaf people were affected by the same racial discrimination of the era that affected Black hearing people and the same social isolation and marginalization due to race that contributed to the development and maintenance of AAVE.
- Black deaf children were impacted in particular ways, e.g.,
 - Some states had laws requiring that Black students only be taught by Black teachers (Doctor 1948).
 - Tennessee passed such a law in 1901 (Gannon 1981).
- So, the same *geographic* and *social* factors that promote the formation of spoken language varieties also surround the formation

States Separated



-  Required
-  No Legislation
-  Optional / limited
-  Forbidden

**Educational Segregation in the US
Prior to Brown v Board of Education**

Source: Wikipedia

Black and White Deaf Schools: Founding and Desegregation 1

State	1. White school	2. Black sch./ dept.	3. Desegregation	Years bet. 1 & 2	Years bet. 2 & 3
DC, KDES	1857	1857, dept.	1958	0	101
N. Carolina	1845	1868	1967	23	99
Maryland	1868	1872	1956	4	84
Tennessee	1845	1881, dept.	1965	36	84
Georgia	1846	1882	1965	36	83
Mississippi	1854	1882, dept.	1965	28	83
S. Carolina	1849	1883, dept.	1966	34	83
Kentucky	1823	1884, dept.	1954-60	61	70
Florida	1885	1885	1965	0	80

Black and White Dual Schools, Funding, and Desegregation ?

State	1. White school	2. Black sch./ dept	3. Desegregation	Years bet. 1 & 2	Years bet. 2 & 3
Texas	1857	1887	1965	30	78
Arkansas	1850	1868	1967	23	78
Alabama	1858	1892	1968	34	76
Missouri	1861	1888, dept	1954	37	66
Kansas	1861	1888, dept	1954	27	66
Virginia	1839	1909	1965 (2 schs)	70	56
Oklahoma	1898	1909, dept	1962	11	53
Louisiana	1852	1938	1978	86	40
W. Virginia	1870	1926	1956	56	30

Table 2.2 Schools for the Colored/Negro Deaf & Historical Black Colleges/Universities

Schools for the Colored/Negro Deaf	Historical Black Colleges/ Universities
Kendall School for the Deaf	Howard University
North Carolina State School for the Deaf & Blind	Shaw University
Alabama School for the Negro Deaf & Blind	Talladega College
Virginia School for the Colored Deaf	Hampton University
West Virginia School for the Colored Deaf	West Virginia State College
Florida State School for the Deaf	Florida A& M University
Southern State School for the Deaf	Southern State University
Mississippi School for the Negro Deaf	Jackson State University

William Holland



(1841-1907)

- Ex-slave
- Established the Deaf Dumb & Blind Institute of Color (1887)
- Superintendent (1887-1870) & (1904-1907)
- Established the Prairie View A&M University
- Hired Black Deaf teachers
- Merged State Orphans School with Black Deaf School

William C. Ritter

(Dec 9, 1872 - Feb 10, 1952)



- Established the Virginia School for the Colored Deaf & Blind in Newport News, VA
- Graduate of Virginia School for the Deaf & Blind in Staunton, VA
- Graduate of Gallaudet College
- Honor Degree from Gallaudet

Oralism and Signing in White and

- Even though deaf education started out with ASL as the medium of instruction in 1817, by 1880, the oral method of instruction was well established in the White schools.
- However, oral education was not extended to Black students on the same basis as to White students. A 1940 survey by Settles in the American Annals of the Deaf shows that in 11 of 16 schools or departments for Black deaf students, the approach is still entirely manual, i.e. signing (Baynton 1996).

Oralism and Signing in Black and White Schools 2

- in 1920, 3/4 of the children at the Texas White school were being taught orally, while fewer than 1/3 of the children at the Black school were being taught orally (Baynton 1996: 46).
- Baynton notes: “Because of the continued use of sign language in the classroom, however, the ironic result of this policy of discrimination may have been that southern deaf African-Americans, in spite of the chronic underfunding of their schools, received a better education than most deaf white students” (180).
- Even though some African American children received more comprehensible instruction, they were still placed in vocational rather than academic tracks.

What type of language did Black children

- This is an area that requires more research; there were many Black deaf families in which signing was used, signing which the children brought with them to school. These children no doubt served as sign models, as did White children from deaf families; there were also many children from hearing non-signing families.
- We are examining this question, with emphasis on the children from Black deaf families.

On the other hand ... White Teachers

- The Negro School for Deaf-Mutes and Blind was established in Talladega, Alabama in 1892 had only White deaf teachers until 1968. The June 1952 edition of *The Silent Worker* reported that “The faculty and the administrative staff are white people. The supervisors and domestic staff are Negro.”

Basic Questions for the Project (1)

The History and Structure of Black ASL in the South

- What are the features of the variety of ASL that people call “Black ASL”?
- There are many anecdotal reports about its existence: “Yeah, I see something different...”; and, we have considerable evidence of differences in individual signs (lexical variation).
- Hairston and Smith (1983): there is “a Black way of signing used by Black deaf people in their own cultural milieu- among families and friends, in social gatherings, and in deaf clubs” (55).

Basic Questions for the Project (2)

- ▶ There also exists a 50-year tradition of research on African American English (AAE), with unique features identified at all levels of the language – phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon – showing that AAE is a distinct variety of English (see Mufwene et al. 1998 and Green 2004 for reviews).
- ▶ Can the same kind of unique features that have been identified for AAE be identified for Black ASL,

Signers and Data Collected at Each Site

- Groups of signers “over 55”, i.e. attended school during segregation (N = 63)
- Groups of signers “under 35”, i.e. attended integrated schools (N = 33)
- All filmed in free conversation and in structured interviews. The interviews focused on language use and school experiences

The History and Structure of Black ASL: The Project at a Glance 2

- Sites visited in order of the year in which the schools for Black Deaf children were founded:
 - North Carolina (1869)
 - Texas (1887)
 - Arkansas (1887)
 - Alabama (1892)
 - Virginia (1909)
 - Louisiana (1938)
- At each site, groups of signers "over 55" (i.e. who attended school during segregation, n= 58) and groups of signers "under 35" (i.e. who attended integrated schools, n=32), have been filmed in free conversation and structured interviews.

Conditions favoring the formation of a variety of ASL known as Black ASL?

- The factors that have played a role in the formation of spoken language varieties have certainly been present: geographic and social separation and isolation.
- However, there are complicating issues, including:
 - who the teachers were (hearing or deaf, Black or White);
 - the general pressure to switch to oral instruction (and to suppress signing in the classroom);
 - the nature of the languages) the children brought to school (ASL?, home sign systems? a different variety of ASL?).
- These factors point to a complex picture that we are beginning to see reflected in our results.

A Personal Account

- My journey into the Deaf-World
- Alabama School for the Negro Deaf & Blind (1964-1968)
- ASND's educational policy
- The "Test"
- Alabama School for the Deaf

Black ASL

2-handed vs. 1 handed signs

Forehead location vs. lowered

Size of signing space

Incorporation of AAE into signing

Use of repetition

Use of role shifting???

Amount of mouthing

Vocabulary differences

Coming Attraction!!!!

- Carolyn McCaskill, Ceil Lucas, Robert Bayley and Joseph Hill. (2011) *Hidden Treasure: The History and Structure of Black ASL*. Gallaudet university Press. Book+DVD


Black ASL Project

- <http://blackaslproject.gallaudet.edu/BlackASLProject/Welcome.html>

Welcome Intro Presentations Blog

The Black ASL Project

Text and DVD COMING SOON!



Black ASL project team members, back row from left to right: Pamela Baldwin, Joseph Hill,

The History and Structure of Black ASL:

- Project Co-Directors
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 - Carolyn McCaskill, ASL & Deaf Studies, Gallaudet University
 - Robert Bayley, Linguistics, UC Davis
- Graduate Research Assistants
 - Joseph Hill and Roxanne King, Gallaudet University
- Technical Consultant
 - Randall Hogue, Gallaudet University
- Community Representative and Archivist
 - Pam Baldwin, Washington, DC

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