

>> BECA BAILEY: Hello.

I'm Beca Bailey and I'm the
Community Engagement Liaison with the
Arizona Commission for the Deaf
and the Hard of Hearing.

And I'm thrilled to be here today
with a special guest.

Our theme today is
diversity in communication.

So this is a conversation that I'll be having
with our special guest about diversity
in general
and how we interact with the world
through communication.

Thank you so much for being here
with us today, Vanessa.

Do you mind briefly introducing yourself?

Telling us your name, your age,
your grade, and how you identify.

>> VANESSA BURD: My name is Vanessa Burd.

I have two name signs.

This one and this one.

But I prefer the second one.

I just finished up my junior year.

So next year I will be a senior.

I'm studying psychology at ASU.

I identify as fully deaf but I generally use
the little d in the word "deaf" rather than

a capital D in the word "deaf."

>> BECA BAILEY: Can you tell us what a day in your life looks like with communication as you're communicating with your friends, your family, and school?

>> VANESSA BURD: Well, it's different between the three different groups.

At home with my family, I generally use my voice to speak in English.

I don't sign with my family.

At school I try to use sign more with my friends.

And I've met a bunch of different Deaf people and I've learned some Sign from them.

When it comes to work and when I'm out in the community, I primarily use my voice.

I'll occasionally sign.

I actually taught my boyfriend some sign language.

Just some basic sign language.

But his sign is getting better and better, and I feel like my sign is also getting better.

I want to work on my ASL grammar.

I generally use my voice, but I plan on signing more.

>> BECA BAILEY: So what do you see in the world in regards to access to communication and Deaf representation?

>> VANESSA BURD: Gosh, I'm thinking.

I think things are getting better for the Deaf community, but there's still room for improvement.

I was excited to watch the Super Bowl and to see some Deaf representation on my screen.

But it didn't happen.

I wanted to see Sean Forbes and Wawa on TV but it didn't happen.

I know that there is a director, his name is Tony and he was in a movie.

And I learned more about him, and I want to see more representation like that.

So I want more access to captions on YouTube.

YouTube captions suck.

>> BECA BAILEY: Yes they do.

>> VANESSA BURD: But I think it varies.

>> BECA BAILEY: You made some good points in there.

What changes would you like to see happen when it comes to Deaf representation and access to communication?

>> VANESSA BURD: What I would like to see,

I would like movie theaters to have more open-captioned movies.

I hate those captioning devices that they make you use.

Sometimes they don't work.

Sometimes it's difficult to see the captions.

I would like to see more of that.

In education, I would like there
to be more resources.

I was mainstreamed,
and school was difficult for me.

I really didn't get much help
in the way of accommodations.

I didn't know that CART even existed.

It was once I was a student at ASU
that I started to really get a lot of help.

I learned a lot of new things then.

>> BECA BAILEY: What challenges have
you experienced with communication access?

>> VANESSA BURD: I've experienced a
lot of challenges because

I've mostly used my voice to speak,
with my family and with my friends.

When I started to learn sign,
my world really changed.

I wanted to communicate through reading lips.

I always wanted to learn sign,
and I really just fell in love with ASL.

I learned sign when I was
a senior in high school,
and I wished I had learned it
a lot earlier than that when I was younger.

I do like using my voice.

I have a cochlear implant.

But I wish that I had ASL in my tool box as well.

>> BECA BAILEY: A follow-up question for you.

How has ASL been helpful

since you've learned it?

What do you mean by

"it's changed your world"?

>> VANESSA BURD: Well, in restaurants,

it's changed there for me.

A lot of restaurants are dimly lit.

It's really dark in there, and it's hard to

see if you're trying to read someone's lips

or if you're in a large group of people where

a lot of people are talking at the same time.

I'm not always able to see and hear.

But when I'm in a group and we're signing,

it's so much easier to communicate.

I can see everyone.

And I can communicate better in the

educational setting as well

because I can see the interpreter,

I have access to the sign language.

And even though I see the interpreters,

I learn from them as they're signing to me.

I learn new signs.

It's just easier.

Just easier to learn.

>> BECA BAILEY: So outside of your family

and your close friends, what successes

have you had with communication?

>> VANESSA BURD: Hmm.

I do like to talk, and I do like
to use my voice.

So I've had some success there.

In my employment,

I have a job where I work on the phone.

It's hard, but

it's going to lead to more opportunities,

different jobs with different people

who are hearing or with people who are deaf

or people who are somewhere in between.

I feel better knowing that people have

variety of communication needs as well.

>> BECA BAILEY: Thank you,

Vanessa, for your time and for the interview
and diversity in communication.

What a lot of people don't realize is that

each person, whether they identify as Deaf,

Hard of Hearing, or DeafBlind, are still an

individual based on how they were raised,

their exposure to language,

whether they speak or sign.

I think the most important thing for our

audience to realize is that access to

communication is critical, and it's important

to ask the person you're working with what

their preferred mode of communication is.

And I love what you said and

how you view Deaf representation lately.

Thank you so much, Vanessa.

>> VANESSA BURD: Of course.

I think people need to learn that accessibility to captions -- access to captions and to CART are not just for deaf people.

A lot of my friends and family members use captions as well.

And they know some sign as well.

So -- and even when we're in the dark, we can still text with each other, so it always helps.

>> BECA BAILEY: That's a great point, and that is a great way to wrap up today's interview.

Communication really runs the gamut, and it's a two-way street.

So it's important that everyone understands each other.

Thank you, again!

Have a great day.

>> VANESSA BURD: Thank you.