



# THE DEAF WAY

*Perspectives from the  
International Conference on  
Deaf Culture*

Material com direitos autorais

Livro - 907 pagina - Mundo dos Surdos - Minha Primeira Palestrista destes 1989

Antônio Campos de Abreu

Historiador

# *The Deaf Social Life in Brazil*

ANTONIO CAMPOS DE ABREU

**T**here are no historical statistics about deafness in Brazil from the age of its discovery by Europeans in the sixteenth century to the year 1855, when a deaf Frenchman, Hernest Huet, arrived in the country. With the help of the Brazilian government, he founded the National Institute for the Deaf and Dumb in Rio de Janeiro, with the aim of developing cultural and educational activities. The Institute opened on September 26, 1857.

Many deaf people attended the school, and the use of sign language increased in the country. Yet the problems of the deaf Brazilians using that language also increased because of discrimination and prejudice that continue today. In contrast, it is said that the situation is easier for the deaf Brazilian Indians. In their tribes, deaf and hard of hearing people are respected, and sign language is used for communication.

Today, Brazilian cities are experiencing a decay in the education and social integration of deaf people. Specialized institutions for deaf people are weak and inactive, which causes feelings of anger and mistrust within the deaf community. In the area of special education, the government lacks such fundamental statistics as the number of disabled people in the country. As a result, there is only one school for deaf-blind youngsters in Brazil. The population must be made aware of the problems that deaf-blind people face. Society discriminates against them, and many do not have the right to attend school.

At present, deaf people in Brazil are struggling to develop themselves in spite of education-related problems. The Ministry of Education has established an educational policy which, from the point of view of deaf people, is inadequate; thus the crisis continues. Discrimination occurs frequently. Deaf people now compare their plight to that of the black people upon whom slavery was imposed, or the Brazilian Indians who are about to lose their lands for political and economic reasons.

Brazilian deaf people continue to demand an educational program to accomplish their social integration, but they receive almost nothing. The government and the professionals in deaf education seem to have become more and more distant from and unconcerned about issues of communication. As in the past, the majority advocate only oral communication, using teaching methods from France, Germany, Italy, and Yugoslavia. Brazilian professionals imitate these methods without respect for the deaf community and without listening to their grievances.

For these reasons, we feel that the deaf associations are critical, as they provide a place where deaf people can gather to discuss these issues and develop strategies to combat them. The first deaf association in Brazil was founded in 1913, and today there are about forty associations all over the country. They keep in touch with each other through sports competitions and correspondence.

The National Federation for the Education and Integration of the Deaf (Federação Nacional de Educação e Integração dos Surdos or FENEIS) was founded in 1987. This organization has begun a program to expose the discriminatory behavior of the professional community and the government toward the deaf community. FENEIS aims to secure the rights of deaf people to social integration and to persuade professionals and the schools to adopt the Total Communication philosophy.

By espousing the oral methods of Europe, professionals have become biased against the use of sign language. A few years ago, some Brazilian professionals visited the United States to observe the educational methods used at Gallaudet University. Despite what they said, they did not accept the Total Communication philosophy, not even trying to obtain the materials necessary for its use in this country. Oralism continued to dominate the field of deaf education in Brazil until very recently.

Many teachers reject the use of sign language, believing that intelligent deaf people must be taught speech in order to achieve high school graduation. In the opinion of these teachers, the use of sign language interferes with the deaf person's learning to speak.

During the International Year of the Disabled (1981), a warning cry was issued about the situation for deaf people, and as a result the government began to change its policies regarding deaf education. This change grew out of a series of disclosures about the state of social integration of deaf people in Brazil. In 1984 and again in 1988, I travelled around Brazil, visiting almost the entire country and standing face to face with deaf people who worked within deaf communities. The power of the deaf community has grown, but there are still many difficulties and problems that remain owing to the communication gap between deaf and hearing people. Deaf people must push the professionals in the field toward courageous and thoughtful change.

At present, the professionals in deaf education are beginning to accept and understand some of the concerns of the deaf community. This understanding and acceptance, in turn, is beginning to diminish the dominance of the oral method. Total Communication is now accepted in a few institutions, and although small, this acceptance is growing.

The lack of educational opportunity at the secondary and university levels remains a problem for the deaf people of Brazil. The only secondary school for deaf people in Brazil is Escola Especial Concórdia, located in Rio Grande do Sul. (This school used the oral method for thirteen years, adopting the Total Communication philosophy after visiting and observing schools in Europe and the United States.) A few deaf people have succeeded under oralism in learning to speak and have attained positions as lawyers, engineers, librarians, dentists, architects, computer analysts, psychologists, and mathematicians. But these people have had the economic support of their families, and they are very few.

I would like to make one last point on the subject of education. Families usually receive no orientation about how to deal with a deaf child. Thus, they often lack patience with their deaf children and may neglect them. As a result, deaf youngsters look to the deaf association as a place to communicate with each other and to develop socially. The association is a place for them to gather together, to share information, and to enjoy parties. So the association serves a vital role for deaf youth as well as deaf adults.

The major focus of many of the associations for deaf people in Brazil is on sports. To provide opportunities for these athletes to compete with each other, the National Confederation of Sports for the Deaf (an organization recognized by the Brazilian federal government) was formed in 1982. Here deaf athletes can associate and remain united in the struggle against prejudice and social discrimination. Despite the efforts of the associations, however, difficulties in social integration continue to exist.

- "Brazilian Sign Language", in EDHD2 p.38.
- Campos de Abreu, Antonio. "The deaf social life in Brazil", in DW, p.114-116.

•

- The deaf social life in Brazil

Abreu, Antonio Campos de. In: Erting, Carol J. et al (eds): The deaf way : perspectives from the International Conference on Deaf Culture. ...

[bibweb.sign-lang.uni-hamburg.de/BibWeb/LiDat.acgi?ID=8416](http://bibweb.sign-lang.uni-hamburg.de/BibWeb/LiDat.acgi?ID=8416) -

## 1. Works contained in (ed.): XII World Congress of the World

...

- [ [Traduzir esta página](#) ]

Abreu, Antonio Campos de: The fight for the rights of the deaf.

..... Goldfinch, Ann: Deaf-LED interpreting agencies: The way forward? ...



Conference  
and  
Festival  
Program

1993-94, 2002  
Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

September 1999 \$3.00

# DEAF LIFE



THE **DEAF** WAY

CELEBRATING OUR CULTURE



*The enormous space in the Omni Shoreham Hotel's Regency Ballroom made videoscreen enlargement of presentations and interpretations a vital part of communication accessibility.*



*Applause was made visible—the Deaf way.*



*Even T-shirts played a role in promoting cultural and linguistic awareness.*



*Gallaudet University's President I. King Jordan uses the Gestuno (international) sign for STRONG FRIENDSHIP to emphasize the importance to deaf people of international solidarity.*



*Deaf Way coordinator Mero Garretson sees a future of global cooperation among deaf people.*



*U.S. Senator John McCain, chief cosponsor of the Telecommunications Accessibility Enhancement Act of 1988, addresses Deaf Way participants. Dr. Zaid Abdullah Al-Moslat (Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia-far left) also participated in this symposium, moderated by World Federation of the Deaf President Yarker Andersson (Sweden/U.S.-center). American Sign Language (ASL) and Gestuno interpreters provide translations.*



*President I. King Jordan greets Prince Bandar bin Sultan Al-Saud, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the U.S. and member of the Deaf Way Honorary Board. Abdul Aziz Al-obaid (back, right) arranged this historic meeting heralding Saudi Arabia's commitment to quality deaf education.*

Material com direitos autorais