

BSL Zone Live Stream: Black Lives Matter and Black Deaf media representation English translation by Helen Foulkes

Presented by David Ellington, a director, with Ahmed Mudawi, a TV presenter, Kelsey Gordon, an actor, and Heroda Berhane and Hermi Berhane, actors/content creators.
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David: Hello and welcome to this **BSL Zone** live stream! My name is David Ellington and we're all connected remotely from home. With me today are Kelsey Gordon, actor, we also have Hermi - have I the correct sign name? - and Heroda. We have Ahmed... sorry I should go back to the twins, both of you are actresses and content creators... Finally, we have Ahmed Mudawi, a TV presenter - thanks to you all for joining us today.

I want to introduce our session with an explanation about Black Lives Matter. This started in 2013 when a 17-year-old boy, Trayvon Martin, was killed by a man who was arrested and later acquitted, and as a result of this, there was an outcry. We see similar incidents of police brutality and systemic racism happening all over the world. The BLM movement is to stop this from happening again. So, I would like to ask you how recent events have made you feel and how this has affected you?

Heroda: We knew about Black Lives Matter even before 2013, we knew racism exists for the Black community due to police brutality, oppression, systemic racism and so on.

Hermi: We have been fighting for human rights and equality for so many years. We are praying we finally have a "voice" because the world is now watching what is happening. The world is now waking up and supporting anti-racism, we are now educating ourselves and being assertive about what is right and wrong. We need to remove white supremacy brutality. If it wasn't for the current lockdown, would people still pay attention to what is happening, or ignore what is happening and get on with their own lives?

David: That's right. Kelsey, what do you think?

Kelsey: I am still young, so I am still learning about this whole topic. My parents did not teach me as they still feel traumatised from their own personal history, and their own parents went through racism too. I am trying to teach myself and asking people how they feel. Some people from my school days and my university days have apologised to me for being so ignorant. I can see small changes, although I am disappointed that signed petitions have been rejected. We want people to listen to us more. I am hoping that those little changes I see will change into more significant changes in the future.

David: I agree with you Kelsey. I would like to ask Ahmed, you used to report for See Hear and present Vee TV - if you could share your experiences working with Ray Harrison Graham and Bim Ajadi?

Ahmed: When I first joined Vee TV, it was wicked! This programme was aimed at younger people and they were encouraged to create their own stories and short films. We went out on location to different places such as internet cafes which was the fashion then, where we met lots of people - I know internet cafes no longer exist as much as then - in internet cafes we met local people who reported their own stories which was amazing.

Bim and Ray both had a great impact on me, there was a big story in 2003-2004 on the "Make Poverty History" campaign to reduce poverty in Africa. A decision was made for the three of us - Bim, Ray and myself - to go out to Tanzania, Africa, which was an amazing experience because there were a lot of media projects going on focusing on how to reduce poverty in Africa and other countries. Ray was the director,

producer and writer; Bim was the camera operator, while I presented in front of the camera, so it was good to have an all-Black team. Ray monitored my signing to ensure that everything was covered and very often we had several takes which was difficult in the hot weather! At the same time, we had crowds of young Black boys watching us in awe as they had never seen Black media professionals working before. This experience had a great impact on me.

David: It is important to show others what a difference you are making. I would like to ask Hermi and Heroda a question - what is it like to be one of the few Black female actresses? What barriers have you experienced in training and working in this field?

Hermi: I want to be a Black role model, a Deaf role model for Black or ethnic communities. There are always barriers because I am Black, Deaf and a woman, which means triple oppression. For the last five years I have attended a number of auditions to show my skills and have had to be resilient, knowing that others looked at me and thought I could not do it because I was Black and Deaf, therefore impossible to be attractive. I felt disheartened every time and tried to keep going. I have had amazing opportunities, but at the same time, I am aware that there are so much more opportunities for white women than there are for Black women. When people tell me how well I am doing, I am not completely satisfied.

Heroda: We have to make ten times the effort - it is really difficult being a Black Deaf woman.

Hermi: I have also experienced being ignored and being put aside. I have noticed that compliments are always paid to white women colleagues, they show favouritism to white women. I feel like saying "hello? Remember I am here too!"

David: I am sorry to hear that, I am sure your experiences have happened to others too. I would like to ask Kelsey a question; as a newcomer to acting, what has training been like? What barriers have you faced?

Kelsey: I started acting training when I was three, stopped when I was about eight, and then went back to acting when I was about 14 or 15 and carried on from there. There are definitely barriers. I went to school where most children were white, so it was difficult to get their attention and tell them that I am here and I am an actress. I kept telling them "look I am here, I have the talent to act", it was so difficult. When I started college, I decided I had to be more assertive and work hard on my good reputation to have my talents recognised. When I started university, it was so difficult because I realised I am a Black woman and had to work ten times harder. There are so many barriers because I am Deaf, because I am Black, because I am a woman - just like what Heroda and Hermi said, we face so many barriers. Things have been good so far, I have a good reputation, I have opportunities and get good jobs. But I need to develop my reputation more.

David: That is true. I would like to ask another question to the panel, have you had any experiences about white make-up artists and white hairdressers not having enough training on how to do this for Black actors, any examples you would like to share?

Heroda: This has happened to both of us....

Hermi: ...yes, it has happened to us, what happened, Heroda?

Heroda: It was a campaign, a press campaign for a big company. We thought it was going to be a great opportunity. The two of us sat down and there was a Black make-up artist for Hermi and a white make-up artist for me. They finished doing our make-up and I looked into the mirror and was shocked to see what had been done to my face. Hermi's make-up was perfectly matched for her skin. My make-up was too light

and it looked a weird colour! I wasn't happy, she wasn't qualified with Black make-up application, so I complained to the Black make-up artist who was professional and apologised and she had to do my make-up again.

Hermi: Another example; we did an assignment in the travel industry in which they did not pay us for our content creation work. They offered us a deal with a free hotel, free flights and free food, so we travelled to a particular country and they were satisfied with what we had done. We realised afterwards that another content creator who was white was actually paid for this assignment.

Heroda: So we were treated unequally. We did ask this person who we knew to confirm if they were paid and they said yes. I thought "oh!"

Hermi: That was racial discrimination against us.

David: Yes, this is an area that we are aware of and it certainly needs to be looked at. I would like to inform the audience that questions will be opened at 7.30pm if you would like to ask any questions. I would like to move onto a different question. Looking at Black Deaf media representation. What does the word "representation" mean to you?

Heroda: Really....

Hermi: Let the others reply to this question.

David: Hermi? Heroda? Ahmed? (laughing)

Ahmed: I am happy to respond! Thinking back to my days as a Black presenter for Vee TV, I felt I had a responsibility to represent my Black Deaf community, but at the same time I was aware that I also represented the BSL community - I had to think which signs to use, signs used by Black Deaf or mainstream BSL signs? I started used mainstream signs, but was asked by others who I was actually representing – "Who are you? Who do you identify as?" - I was asked why not use Black signs as I am Black myself! So, I signed BSL and incorporated some Black signs too such as "wicked", with some Black humour and Black culture. Representing Black people means that I had to have a good reputation - if I messed it up, the Black Deaf community would also be damaged. It was hard work to keep it up!

David: That is true, I would like to ask a follow up question looking at stereotyped characters, can any of you give examples, both positive and negative, of typical stereotyped characters in the media?

Hermi: Stereotyped characters - troublemakers, violent, Black women portrayed as strong, "Black best friend" all are negative stereotype... positive ones, erm... help me out here! Lawyers...

Kelsey: There are only a few.

Hermi:doctors...

David: Kelsey?

Kelsey: Whenever I see Black characters on films or shows, stereotyped characters are usually portrayed negatively in gangs or as criminals, Black women are usually shown as angry. Usually the first one to die!

Hermi: I agree! The sassy character, this is a negative one. They all think of sassy characters.

Heroda: They think that we are all the same, but no there should be diverse casting, we can be nice, we can be sweet. Whenever I see a Black woman on screen, I find it hard to relate the character to myself.

Kelsey: That's right!

Heroda: That's why white people portray us into stereotypical characters and think we are all the same bad people.

Hermi: That's why white supremacy chooses to believe those Black stereotyped characters.

Heroda: This is why representation is so important. For Black Deaf women to identify themselves with appropriate Black Deaf characters as positive role models, this means that they are proud of their own lives.

David: Let's move on. Before we look at some of BSL Zone's programmes which have Black Deaf people in front of the camera and behind the camera, I would like to ask another question about representation. How can we improve Black people's lives and cultural representation in the media? How can we avoid tokenism? How can we raise the profile of Black Deaf people?

Hermi: Make the commitment. It is important to show representation. Listen to those who have been through oppression. Ask yourself who is not present, ask yourself why they are not present. How can we make those unrepresented people come in? Open up your minds.

David: I agree. Ahmed did you want to say something?

Ahmed: I agree with Hermi. Also, you need to think how to see the talent and skilled Black Deaf individuals as individuals, not to see them as Black. Think about giving more opportunities such as workshops, training, as they are few and far between. We need to upskill.

Heroda: So Black people have to represent and take responsibility.

David: Now, let's take a look at BSL Zone since 2009 to date, showing Black Deaf people.

[MONTAGE]

David: That looked amazing. Do you feel there is enough content? What are your views?

Ahmed: First of all, I would like to congratulate BSL Zone for bringing in Black actors, Black directors and others - especially Bim and Ray. There have been a lot of new faces recently compared to the 90s, there was only one Black actor, David Ellington then. Now I see a lot more. But, is it enough? I would like to see more. There has been the occasional in 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015 so there have been gaps. There is plenty, plenty of Black talent out there but I still want to congratulate BSL Zone. I am sure that BSL Zone are thinking now how this can be improved in the future.

Heroda: I agree with Ahmed, but for me, I don't watch BSL Zone. There has been the occasional instance when I am initially attracted and hope that it continues, but it was just a one off. Then another one-off appears later and so on. I feel frustrated at the lack of continuity. We need to see more Black stories, we need to see more Black culture, more Black identity....

Hermi: ... More Black history...

Heroda: More Black history.

Hermi: So that we can relate more.

Heroda: We want the whole Deaf community to watch and understand Black culture and so on. So, I do feel disengaged from BSL Zone.

Hermi: We need to push for more action.

David: Kelsey, do you want to add anything?

Kelsey: I would like to add that, yes, I was in one BSL Zone film which was a great opportunity, but where was the next opportunity? We need to see more Black Deaf involvement. I have lost interest in BSL Zone because I need to see more. I get excited when I see something, but it doesn't happen often enough and I lose interest. Hopefully we will see more Black Deaf involved with BSL Zone, not just in short films, but in longer films with main characters played by Black Deaf people in the future.

[All signing at once]

David: Ahmed, would you like to add anything?

Ahmed: Good points have been made by Heroda, Hermi and Kelsey. What is important is having Black Deaf mentors. We have not yet seen this happen yet.

Heroda, Hermi and Kelsey: No, we have not seen this happen yet.

Ahmed: We need to have Black Deaf mentors who have full Black culture, grassroots knowledge. I am sure BSL Zone could film behind the scenes to show how Black Deaf actors work, how Black Deaf directors work, how we all work. This would be great for young Black Deaf viewers to see this is something that they could do themselves. I am aware BSL Zone has filmed behind the scenes for other programmes; why not for Black Deaf programmes to make it more attractive for young Black Deaf people?

David: Talking about Black Deaf mentors, what about Black sign language, urban sign language, the use of streetwise signs?

Ahmed: I have to get this off my chest, this topic of urban sign language... I grew up in boarding school environments, where the majority of people were white; there were only one or two Black children. My friends who attended other deaf schools were also of a small minority where there were two, three or four Black children present. Some schools had a lot more Black children. After school I attended a Deaf Club in North West London and was shocked to see so many Black Deaf people who signed differently to me and my friends. I quickly joined them and learned more about my own identity and our shared culture. My knowledge of the Black Deaf community grew from this and other people would say that this group was distinctly using their own signs. It was beautiful to be part of and I learned a lot from them.

When I was asked to present in BSL, I would occasionally throw in a couple of signs from urban sign language which was hesitantly accepted. I became more confident as a Black person and after doing some presenting work, I had lots of feedback from other Black Deaf people who said they were so happy to see

their signs used on TV and thanked me for representing them. We need to let people know that urban signs are not a bad thing!

David: Hermi?

Hermi: People think of urban signs as rough. They think of signs like “bredren” or “what’s going on” and other slang words.

David: Moving onto another question: Who do you think is responsible for improving things specifically for Black people? Should producers or directors make sure that Black writers should be involved in writing stories? Anyone?

Heroda: Who should be responsible?

Hermi: It should start with the writer, if they are Black themselves. If the writer is white, they need to ask others to contribute their stories. As for the producer or director... From my experience...

Heroda: We need to see more diversity.

Hermi: From my experience, when I read a script about Black people related to the history of slavery, I wouldn’t feel comfortable. Has the director picked this? They need to be aware and be careful who they pick, I know this is difficult as there could be undercurrent feelings about particular scripts.

David: Ahmed?

Ahmed: There is already a Facebook group for Black Deaf, which started last year and has grown. There are lots of skilled actors, experts in history and so on. There is a need for people who have lived experiences as we don’t want to see tokenism as this would be unacceptable. There is a high profile of Black Deaf people already out there, but they are not being picked. Perhaps we need to set up a new group for Black Deaf media professionals, even the four of us could start something and let it grow naturally. When I put together ideas, I am always thinking how to include writers.

David: It is really important to get the right people together to make this happen.

I would like to take the opportunity to open this session to our audience for questions. Let me look at some questions... A question from Memnos: thinking back to your childhood schooldays, what did you like to learn to accept yourself? What would you like to teach your children’s mates? Ahmed?

Ahmed: It was dancing, break dancing for me, I learned this from a person who grew up and lived in a strong Black community. This style of dancing was for everyone, Black and white. I accepted my Deaf identity first then later, I identified myself as Black Deaf, but this person already was Black Deaf - he was the finished product! I grew up in a boarding school environment, so it was later for me. Dancing was a strong influence on me.

David: It was the same for me, I had a white school friend and we both decided to learn to dance and do choreography together.

Hermi: It was TLC’s music for us, our cousin influenced us and taught us about Black culture. When we went to school we did a lot of dancing, signing, signed songs, remember that, Heroda?

Heroda: Yes, that's right.

Ahmed: I remember bringing recordings of MTV videos to boarding school, we would all watch the videos and dance away! There were no subtitles then, but we would follow the music and both white and Black, everyone, would enjoy Black music in the 90s.

Hermi: Yes the 90s were the best for music!

David: Another question from the audience, from Sahera - lovely to see you all! There are no Black Deaf organisations around, will this happen one day?

Hermi: Yes, I would love to see people become assertive and see an organisation set up because we have been oppressed for too long. We need to build up our strength to see this happen, as long as we support one another.

Kelsey: That's right.

Heroda: ...sorry Kelsey you go ahead.

Kelsey: There are now a lot of Black people working harder and going to university and finally being accepted and achieving their education. More and more people are starting to support each other and their reputations and recognition is growing. There will be more Black Deaf people brought in by Black organisations.

Ahmed: I would like to share with you that there was a Deaf Ethnic Minorities organisation back in the 90s; Black Deaf people were recognised and there were projects, but the organisation was small and I was gutted to see it fold. I would like to pay respect to this organisation; now we have potential through Facebook so I do hope to see this happen with allies. It is impossible to set up an organisation now, where would we get our funding from, what other organisations would support this? It was great to see BDA Youth recently full of Black Deaf young people, I have never, never seen this before! Do you agree David? I was flabbergasted.

David: Yes you are right.

Ahmed: So respect to BDA for giving the opportunity at the right time for Black Lives Matter, so much talent and skills, knowledge of Black history and identity, the right mix of people in that group! It is thanks to Black Lives Matter, we will see growth from this. In the past it was difficult to get this in action with underlying racism, but now we are seeing young Black Deaf people which is great. I never had that when I was young.

David: Yes, the same for me.

Hermi: Neither did we.

Kelsey: That's right.

David: I hope the group will go from strength to strength for future generations. Next question is from Reg, do you feel lucky to be part of the Deaf community with a strong unity, compared to the Black hearing community?

Ahmed: A very good question.

Kelsey: Do you mean whether the Deaf community is better than the Black hearing community?

David: Yes that's right. Are we more united in the Deaf community? Ahmed?

Ahmed: I hope I can give Reg the right answer. As I said before, I grew up in the Deaf community with one or two other Black people around me. There was no racism, everyone knew what it was like to be Deaf and we all had that bond. I was lucky to be surrounded by people who were not racists. I was lucky to mix with both white Deaf and Black Deaf people. I also have a sister who is Deaf herself who supported me. If I did not have a Deaf sister, I wouldn't be here. If you don't know what I am talking about, do watch the BSL Zone programme Found in the UK, in which I shared my personal story about my sister fighting for me to get me to move to the UK. I am lucky to have my sister.

David: I have another question from Ben. Do we use the same sign for both Black and white? The problem with using the same sign for Deafblind people who cannot lipread the different lip pattern between the two. Are there any other signs to differentiate between the two? Kelsey?

Kelsey: In the Deaf community we use the same sign for Black and white. Growing up, I would use one finger to sign white and all fingers to sign Black, it would depend on the context when it comes to talking about the colour of your skin. I don't know.

Heroda: This is difficult for blind people.

Hermi: You could type Braille for the two different words?

Heroda: No, we are talking about Deafblind people. They can't see the lip pattern for Black and white when we are using the same sign. Perhaps we need to finger spell?

David: We should sign clearly so that they can identify which one it is?

Ahmed: I have worked with Deafblind people using hands-on communication and I would finger spell B-L-A-C-K or use the sign for BLACK, but I always told the person my name and that I am from Africa so that they would automatically know that I am Black. I would explain that I have arrived as a new staff member, it would depend on whether they feel comfortable so that I can tell them at the right time. I hope I have given the right answer.

David: I have a question from Nadia - how do you feel about having a white film director with a full Black cast? Kelsey?

Kelsey: In my opinion, it would depend on their history. Why has the director specifically chosen an all-Black cast? What is the story? The issue with a Black cast is if both Black and brown people have been brought in, such as from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan or other countries. People who are brown have a very different culture from Black people. I have seen some films and programmes where the white director has brought in Asian actors - they are not Black as we do not share the same culture, we do not share the same history or background. It all depends on the history really,

Hermi: As long as it is a Black director.

Heroda: Hermi wants a Black director with an all-Black cast so that they all have a connection.

Ahmed: I question myself why would there be a white director with an all-Black cast? If we had a hearing director with an all-Deaf cast, would this be accepted?

Heroda: Yes.

Ahmed: So the concept is clear, there is no need for me add any more.

Hermi: A good question.

David: A question from Sarah, what do you think about a Black role model teaching Black history to everyone in school? Ahmed?

Ahmed: I agree - let's take a conceptual view of this. If a young person is confused about their sexuality and their sexual identity, and the right person came in to teach about sexuality - we can take the same concept with having a Black person come into school and teach so that young Black children can develop their personal identity. The concept is the same.

Heroda: We were not taught Black history at school. It was our Black cousin who taught us when we were 11 years old. It was our cousin who taught us what racism means. It is so important to have Black role models to teach children now so that they don't miss out on opportunities.

Kelsey: I agree.

David: Ahmed?

Ahmed: It is important to think of the concept of individual circumstances, whether they are Asian, African, or whatever. It is vital to have role models to teach us about our history, otherwise we won't know what race means.

Hermi: Otherwise we won't know...

Ahmed: That is right, if we carry on and don't know what race means, it will bring problems. We need to understand to reduce racism.

Kelsey: That is right.

David: A question from Rachel, any experiences of getting Black interpreters to work in media?

Hermi: it is very difficult!

Heroda: Very hard.

Hermi: It is very difficult to hire Black interpreters. For me, through theatre and acting, I finally found two Black interpreters recently. Just two! We need more Black interpreters.

Heroda: We need interpreters as intermediaries but where can we find Black interpreters? I know we can connect to white interpreters, but with Black interpreters, we understand each other. For example, I gave a presentation about Eritrea in Africa, the white interpreter did not understand what I was signing as they didn't know about Africa. They didn't know about my Eritrean culture.

Hermi: There were two interpreters, one white and one brown - the white interpreter did not get the sign for Eritrea and the brown interpreter did.

Heroda: Interpreters need to know the culture, it is a struggle having to explain to interpreters about Eritrea. I feel an additional burden having to explain.

Kelsey: I would like to add about using appropriate language and non-appropriate words like the N-word or other offensive words. White interpreters have to know what they can and can't say. I was involved with a University project a few months ago and trying to find a Black interpreter for my show was hard. White interpreters came to me and said they could interpret my show, but I needed a Black interpreter. In the end, I had to use a white interpreter but had to spend time with this interpreter and explain what I wanted translated, which meant more time for me to translate as well as acting. We need to see more Black interpreters in the future.

Ahmed: There are Black interpreters out there, but not many. I remember working at Vee TV and See Hear having connections with interpreters and not having to explain my signs. But having said that, there have been white interpreters who immerse themselves into Black culture, having been to Deaf Clubs and being passionate about the Black community. There are white interpreters out there who can interpret, but Black interpreters are few and far between.

David: This is really interesting. Next question from Semhar - do you think there is enough Black leadership at the top to influence funders' decisions to create more opportunities for diversity Black artists in media? Ahmed?

Ahmed: When I was young, there were very few Black people to look up to. I remember seeing a Black deaf presenter on TV in 1992 or 1993, but there was no progression, no encouragement. I see the same person now and the leadership skills are still there, and it is so disappointing. In media, there is Ray Harrison Graham but he is not recognised by the Deaf community, which is unfortunate. He has fought for so many years and he is the only Black Deaf person to get BAFTA awards. Why isn't he well treated? That question goes round and round in my head, why?

Hermi: The effort is not enough. Companies need to do more promotion, they need to bring in Black people, people of colour, they need to change policies to stop discrimination. They need to change the environment so that Black people can feel confident and feel equal and valued. There should be more opportunities.

David: I remember looking up to Ray as my role model and I learned so much from him, he taught me a lot. He was very encouraging and it was a great shame that he was not involved in workshops at that time but hopefully in the future? Another question...

Hermi: Where is the leadership?

David: A question from Tyron, I think this is Tyron Woolfe. What is the best way to reach out to Black Deaf people? There have not been many Black Deaf people at Deaf events, Deaf sports or Deaf LGBTQIA? How can we improve this?

Ahmed: Get Black person in front and everyone else will follow!

Kelsey: Showing photos of Black people ... I had something else in my mind, but I have forgotten... if I remember, I will come back!

Ahmed: Linked to Kelsey, you need to have a skilled person with the right contacts to Black Deaf people. If that person is not the right person with the contacts, how will you move forward? How will you introduce specific themes to Black Deaf people? We need to find the right person with the passion and commitment to bring information forward. Historically we have not seen many Black Deaf people in organisations which has been a big problem. If Black Deaf people do not have a role model to look up to, they will just do the same things again and again and not try something new. If the right skilled Black person is brought in, others will also join in.

Hermi: And don't judge.

David: Ahmed, you are right, need a Black person with commitment and passion for others to look up to and follow so that they can improve their futures. Another question from Justine - do you see yourselves as Black first, or Deaf first, or both equally?

Hermi: I already said earlier, I am Black first.

Heroda: I am Black first, then Deaf.

Kelsey: I feel the same too. I see myself as Black first as I became deaf when I was four. I prefer to see myself as Black Deaf, not Deaf Black as this is something I am not comfortable with.

David: Interesting! I always thought I was Deaf first then Black second because I identified with the Deaf community in terms of communication, football and sports. When I learned about systemic racism and racist discrimination, I became aware and shifted to Black first and Deaf second. It is about respect.

Ahmed: I have a similar experience, I grew up Deaf first, I never thought about the colour of my skin. When I discovered the Black Deaf community at the Deaf Club and realised that I didn't see myself as Black, I always thought I was white! It was an interesting process. Nowadays, when people ask me, I describe myself as Black and Deaf. People who know me don't need to ask me, they know I have double identity as Black and Deaf. This is a new concept.

David: We have three minutes left. A question from Dave, there is racism within ASL using inappropriate signs. Is it the same with BSL?

Hermi: Yes there is.

David: Would you like to tell us?

Hermi: The FIST-IN-FRONT-OF-FACE sign is an unacceptable sign for Africa. I sign AFRICA as in the country. Some say that the first sign is a traditional sign, but it is not acceptable.

Heroda: FIST-DOWN-SIDE-OF-FACE sign for Black is unacceptable too.

Hermi: it is to do with sign linguistics.

David: Ahmed, you wanted to say something?

Ahmed: Thank you for bringing up sign linguistics. For over 100 years, the sign for white SINGLE-FINGER-DOWN-SIDE-OF-FACE was used for a long time and it wasn't until Black and Asian brought up sign linguistics and asked for signs to be changed more appropriately - we are still going through the process of change now. The biggest problem is the system itself, it needs changing and it is static. It needs to change, there is no harm in change in order to improve attitudes.

Heroda: It is about respecting Black people.

David: Last question from Jephta, an important question! What are your tips for young Black Deaf people in terms of leadership? What advice would you give to them?

Kelsey: I finally put my hand up first! Never give up, carry on. Barriers will always happen. Racism will always be there. Keep hitting the barriers until you break through. Never give up.

Heroda: I feel the same. Ten years of barriers, don't expect immediate answers. You need to go through struggles to make you stronger. Be assertive. Be like us, we are role models for Black Deaf women, show them! You can be the same.

David: Ahmed, you can have the last words.

Ahmed: Jephta - this is important, never, never give up. If you struggle, come to us on Black Deaf Facebook page and this will help you 100% to find the right way and achieve what you want to achieve!

Hermi: Take risks!

Kelsey: Yes, take risks, I agree.

David: Many thanks to you four for all your contributions to this interesting conversation. To the audience, I hope you listened and understood more about Black Deaf people and respect us. Thank you also to BSL Zone for making this happen. Thank you and good night!