



Playback Your Story asks the community around Gallaudet University to reflect on and unite through their connections to community, narrative, and place. Sponsored by Van Alen Institute and the DC Office of Planning, John Johnson conducted interviews throughout the community. The interviews culminated in a final performance by John Johnson's theater troop, Playback Theatre, on the Gallaudet Campus in 2016. The initiative weaves together the stories of locals, inspiring us to cross the street, interact with one another, and understand the roots of our community.

Daun Duvall: My name is Daun Duvall and I work in the Hearing, Speech, and Language Sciences Department.

John Johnson: How have long you've been able to sign?

Daun Duvall: I didn't know how to sign when I came here and when I started, I started taking classes, and then had some tutoring. A lot of it is just from experience: from being here on campus and interacting with the deaf community.

John Johnson: How long did it take you to build up that capacity?

Daun Duvall: Honestly, I would say that it was right around my tenth year I became comfortable. When you first come to this campus community, the culture itself can shock you. Especially as a hearing person: Because I can't communicate with you, you don't know what I'm saying and I don't know what you're saying. So, I found myself in a lot of situations where I was more nervous than anything. Honestly, it was right around the tenth year I became very comfortable with signing and communicating.

John Johnson: What would you tell someone who has never been on this side of the wall? What would you do to encourage them to come over here and work with this community?

Daun Duvall: It's almost like a whole different world behind these walls. I think a lot more people should be aware of the deaf community and the deaf culture because I learned that a lot of people are very ignorant about it. I don't know what I would tell anyone. If you come into the community, embrace it. Be willing to learn how to sign and communicate because it's a very sensitive thing for people who are deaf, the whole communication factor. If a deaf person walked in here right now I would immediately begin to sign even though you guys don't know how to sign, but it's

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out of respect to them because other than me signing, they can't be a part of this communication, and you can't be a part of our communication. So I would probably voice and sign.

John Johnson: What would you tell again the hearing world in addition to learning how to sign? What other advice would you give the folks outside of these walls in order to bridge those communities and cross those streets?

Daun Duvall: I really just think that it's a matter of being educated and being aware of the community and how to sign. They've been here for years so it's really surprising that you still have so many people in the community who are oblivious to what's here--there's a lot of good things that go on here.

*This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity