

# CARIBBEAN CHRISTIAN CENTRE FOR THE DEAF



## Deaf Identity

### Position Statement

The Caribbean Christian Centre for the Deaf (CCCD) is being guided by the following mandate:

- **Purpose:** To steward God's resources for His glory. ~1 Peter 4:7-11
- **Vision:** Reach, Teach and Nurture the Deaf. ~ Psalm 144:12; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4
- **Mission:** Enabling full language access (JSL and written English) and affirmation in an inclusive community whereby knowledge is empowered to know the Lord, appreciate diversity and understand the functions of the world. ~Romans 12

With that mandate stated, our position statement on Deaf Identity is described as follows:

- The Deaf are wonderfully and marvelously made by God, and are God's image-bearers.
- The Deaf are people who have incredible abilities to do anything except hear, as stated and encouraged by our own co-founder, Mrs. Paula Montemegory Hardy, who is Deaf and started the CCCD ministry.
- The Deaf communicate visually through eyes and hands to listen and express thoughts and feelings, and not through ears or mouth (except for those with partial hearing loss, also known as hard of hearing individuals who have the ability to hear and converse in spoken English to some degree).
- The Deaf can have full lifestyles including healthy relationships with God, self, others and creation.
- The Deaf will not be defined by what they are not able to do (hear/speak in spoken English or by the "ear"); rather, the Deaf are defined by their ability to adapt, cope and survive bilingually (using both JSL and English) and bi-culturally (living as deaf individuals in the hearing-dominated society).
- The Deaf wish to be respected and identified with culturally appropriate terms and signs including but not limited to "deaf," "hard of hearing," etc, and not "hearing-impaired," "people who can't talk," etc.
- The Deaf desire to be given equal opportunity and full recognition for accessibility to more essential support services that honour and esteem their dignity and personhood, particularly regarding communication access and accessible formats in all settings of life.
- The Deaf desire the public to recognise and ensure their rights to contribute to the development of Jamaica and the world at large.

Therefore, the sign for Deaf Identity must be one that represents the above description, particularly one that establishes recognition of the dignity, abilities, and personhood of the Deaf and hard of hearing communities. With the recent sign being promoted, while the reasons provided for the sign are understood, it is the consensus of the CCCD organisation that it does not convey the values identified above. For that purpose, CCCD therefore remains with the existing "Deaf" sign- with an "1" handshape moving between the ear and the mouth or vice versa as the sign is more neutral, as opposed to a sign placed on the ear only, and is also observant and considerate of those with partial hearing loss.

It is at the discretion of the Deaf to use the new sign for unique social purposes among deaf people only as is the case of "nigger" within the Black community or for gestural purposes with the general hearing public.

Should there be a participatory approach involving all Jamaican Deaf Communities (schools, organisations, ministries, child/ren of deaf adults, interpreters, agencies, etc) island-wide for deliberation undergirding the desire of replacing the existing sign by collectively brainstorming and determining a more appropriate sign for "Deaf" that honours the above-identified position statement, CCCD stands ready to engage in such deliberation towards mutual and collective consensus on a potential sign.