



Deaf Women's Lives: Three Self-Portraits (Deaf Lives Series, Vol. 3)

Bainy Cyrus, Eileen Katz, Celeste Cheyney, Frances M. Parsons

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Three deaf women with widely varying stories share their experiences in this unique collection, revealing the vast differences in the circumstances of their lives, but also striking similarities. In Bainy Cyrus's *All Eyes*, she vividly describes her life as a young child who was taught using the oral method at the Clarke School for the Deaf in Northampton, MA. Her account of the methods used (for example, repeating the same word over and over again, as many as 35 times), animates the extraordinary amount of work performed by deaf children to learn to read and speak. Cyrus also relates the importance of her lifelong friendships with two girls she met at Clarke, and how the different paths that they took influenced her as an adult.

Eileen Katz's story, as told to Celeste Cheyney, offers a glimpse into a deaf girl's life a generation before Cyrus. In *Making Sense of It All: The Battle of Britain Through a Jewish Deaf Girl's Eyes*, Katz juxtaposes the gradual learning of the words *who*, *what*, *where*, and *why* with the confusing events of 1938 to 1941. As she and her fellow students grasped the meanings of these questions, they also realized the threat from the Nazi air attacks upon England. Katz also understood the compound jeopardy that she and her classmates faced by being both deaf and Jewish.

In contrast to the predominantly oral orientation of Cyrus and Katz, Frances M. Parsons writes of a year-long journey overseas in 1976 to lecture about Total Communication. Parsons traveled to Iran, India, Ceylon, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taipei, the Philippines, Australia, and seven countries in Africa to teach administrators, teachers, and deaf students to communicate using sign, speechreading, writing, and any other means available. Her harrowing and fascinating anecdotes detail visits to ministries of education, schools, hospitals, clinics, palaces, hovels for the poorest of the poor, and all kinds of residential homes and apartments. Taken together, her travels testify to the aptness of her title *I Dared!*

The combined effect of these three Deaf women's stories, despite the variation in their experiences, reveals the common thread that weaves through the lives of all deaf individuals.

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