

# April Newsletter

## Going Strong: Meet the Three Deaf Asian Americans Who Have Something to Say

In the aftermath of a terrible mass shooting that targeted Asian-owned spas throughout metro Atlanta, social media and communities are starting to raise new awareness. It's time to address the elephant in the room; the rapid rise of Asian American hate crimes that have been plaguing their communities. And the Deaf/HH community is not much different.

GCDHH reached out to three Deaf Asian Americans to invite them to share their experience and stories. As you'll find out, each experience is different and unique, but at the end of the day, everyone has the same goal; to unite. What we hope you'll take away from reading these unique stories, is perspective and self-awareness of how we all can do better.



**Makoto Ikegami –  
Japanese  
American**



**Virginia Shou –  
Chinese American**



**Cindy Chen –  
Chinese/Taiwanese  
American**

Tell us about yourself.

- **Makoto** - I grew up in Tokyo, Japan, and moved to the United States in 2005. I studied at Gallaudet University. I lived in Washington, DC for 4 years, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for 8 years, and I have been living in Atlanta, Georgia since December 2017. I work at CaringWorks as an ASL Therapist

working with deaf and hard of hearing homeless men with addiction. I am also a Tele-Mental Health Therapist with National Deaf Therapy, which gives me the capacity to serve in Pennsylvania, Florida, and Georgia. Additionally, I co-founded a non-profit organization called Deaf Access to Quality Life, the mission of which is to provide Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing individuals with linguistically and culturally appropriate mental health and intellectual disability services throughout Georgia.

- **Virginia** - I'm Deaf and a first-generation Chinese American. My parents were also first-generation in Taiwan, as their own parents emigrated there from China. I was born in Virginia and raised in Georgia. I am currently working as a multi-disciplinary visual designer in New York City. Some of you may know me, I am co-founder of Deaf Georgia Vote Blue, and thanks to some of you for turning Georgia Blue! In my spare time, I enjoy cooking vegetarian dishes and making Californian-style Kimchi. My apartment is full of favorite houseplants. I love gardening and also give gardening workshops at Brooklyn Botanic Garden.
- **Cindy** - I'm a Deaf first-generation Chinese/Taiwanese American working as an Occupational Therapist in Queens, NY. I'm blessed to work in such a diverse environment.

Studies have shown that Asian American hate crimes have increased almost 150% recently. Do you feel like this is something you're seeing as well or has this always been the case?

- **Makoto** - Because there are not any other racial populations in Japan, I had never experienced discrimination based on race. Being an Asian was not part of my identity until the COVID-19 pandemic started. Asians were attacked by someone because they were believed to be spreading COVID-19. This made me realize how Asians are discriminated against as well as other races.
- **Virginia** - It feels like it has always been this way over the years, but the news media on COVID-19 caused the drastic increase in hate, especially with the harmful term "the China Virus" that integrated with conspiracy theories and led to some people blaming Asians for the pandemic. We all struggled and endured living in isolation and having financial instability. It's not right for anyone to target and blame Asian people in America. It's the news media that controls the message and divides minorities like Black, Brown, and Asian.
- **Cindy** - It definitely has increased lately, especially here in NYC where growing reports show elderly Asian Americans are being randomly punched and shoved to the ground for no reason. But I'm happy there's dialogue and discussion about this now. It's good that there is increased awareness about the rising hate that's been happening.

Is there an experience you wish to share with us?

- **Makoto** - I am increasingly aware of society's views on me as an Asian as I

grow older in the United States, although I'm not always conscious of that identity. I often forget I am Asian until I am exposed to racism or racial discrimination toward Asians. Although I have yet to experience such examples of prejudice, the events where Asians have been targeted because of their race have made me wonder if it will ever happen to me.

- **Virginia** - I have many stories to tell, but here's one that happened about a month ago. I was in a produce section at a grocery store, and the area was pretty empty. This white guy bumped me with his shopping cart. It was clearly on purpose. My white boyfriend saw what he did and saw him smirking. My boyfriend walked up to him and said "hey, you hit my girlfriend with your cart." He feigned a little and apologized. To the white guy, that "hit" was a microaggression and appears a "joke" because he thought it was funny and assumed I would be forgiving and dismiss his bad behavior. No matter how small it is, you should not let anyone get away with microaggressions because they pave the way for more and more harmful racial attacks.
- **Cindy** - Last year my mother was a target of a robbery so close to her home. We feel she was made to be an easy target because of her appearance. For me personally, my job requires lots of traveling, many times where I park is a big priority for my safety. I try to stay away from areas where I feel like I could be a target. I also always make sure I'm super vigilante by wearing street clothes and sneakers in case I need to run away from someone. I also started learning self-defense techniques from one of my friends who started teaching them to Asian Americans to protect themselves.

What would you like the Deaf/HH Community to know about Deaf/HH Asian Americans:

- **Makoto** - Everyone has their own experiences as an Asian. Every Asian experiences their own personal journey. Don't make assumptions based on your experience or knowledge. Be curious and open-minded, and listen to them.
- **Virginia** - We all are human beings. We have the same dreams, ambitions, and goals. Please support your Asian American friends when you can. Check on your Asian American friends to see if they're okay.
- **Cindy** - We are an intersectional group. I'm happy we're raising awareness and this is not intended to shift attention away from the Black Lives Matter movement. BLM is so important but we are also experiencing discrimination and aggression. And that needs to be talked about and put to a stop. Our struggles are different and unique but they also help us learn to be more compassionate with each other.

What can the Deaf/HH community do to improve relationships and allyship for Deaf/HH Asian Americans?

- **Makoto** - We can all value, honor, and embrace our experiences of learning about the Asian community and other communities

- **Virginia** - Listen to their stories. Amplify our voices. Make a post about stopping Asian hate and spreading awareness. Go and support Asian business. Treat yourself to Boba tea, Chinese food, Korean BBQ, and other delicious Asian treats! Also, please stand up for Asian Americans if you see something. SPEAK UP. Call out anyone who says offensive stereotypical or racist jokes. Do not let them get away with these things.
- **Cindy** - Listen to our stories. Communicate with each other. Asian American D/HH people don't need to separate from other D/HH groups, we can integrate and bond with each other. Getting to know each other more is a great place to start.

Charities suggested to make donations to help fight Asian American hate crimes:

**Korean American Coalition Metro Atlanta**

<https://kacatl.org>

**Services for Pan Asian Community Services (Atlanta, Georgia)**

<https://cpacs.org>

**Asian American Advocacy Fund (Georgia State)**

<https://www.asianamericanadvocacyfund.org>

**Red Canary Song**

<https://www.redcanarysong.net>

**Stop AAPI Hate**

<https://donate.givedirect.org/?cid=14711>

## GCDHH Client Testimonial



**Ileen Porteous**

Ileen Porteous requested assistance to renew her Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) due to Covid-19 and limited English proficiency. She contacted GCDHH's Community Support Services and was able to receive remote service. With the help of Community Coordinator, Andrea Alston who translated the documentation to American Sign Language, she was approved for a renewal within three days. Ms. Porteous is gracious for the help and mentioned this was the first time she received remote service and that the Deaf/HH community should be taking advantage of this method.

## GCDHH Spotlight

### Marivic Beebe



What is Tobii Dynavox?

- Tobii Dynavox is the leading provider of assistive technology and communication solutions to give people with disabilities a voice.

How long have you worked at Tobii Dynavox?

- 12 years.

What has your experience been like working for this company?

- "Overall, it has been a very rewarding experience working for Tobii Dynavox. Every day, I have the opportunity to work with Speech Therapists and other healthcare professionals to give their patients, children, and adults who were born with a condition or acquired a condition a voice and independence."

What's the most memorable experience you've had with a consumer?

- "I have been blessed and witnessed many memorable moments. The one that always comes to my mind is a consumer who had a stroke and was very frustrated since she could not say what she was thinking. Once she received her speech generating device, her husband added her children's names. Using her speech generating device, she said each child's name followed by the phrase, "I love you". "

How has GCDHH / GATEDP helped consumers?

- "Every year, there seems to be an increase in the number of consumers who do not have medical insurance. Some have insurance but they cannot afford the co-pay. The Georgia Telephone Equipment Distribution program is an incredible funding source and can be a lifesaver for these consumers. A speech generating device allows some consumers to get a job or do volunteer work. They can use their speech generating device to talk with customers in person or over the phone. Consumers who live in nursing homes can leave their rooms and talk with other residents. Younger consumers can participate in school activities. A preacher can use his speech generating device to give a sermon via Zoom. The possibilities are endless."

People may qualify for our GATEDP equipment program to get a Tobii Dynavox. For more information, visit [www.gcdhh.org/gatedp](http://www.gcdhh.org/gatedp) and [www.tobiidynavox.com](http://www.tobiidynavox.com)

# ASL ONLINE CLASSES



American Sign Language is the 3rd most common language in the U.S. and a beneficial skill for everyday life. It is a rich & visual language used by the Deaf community. Don't just learn ASL, open your eyes to a whole new culture-Deaf culture!

AGES 14+ ARE WELCOME TO ASL VIRTUAL CLASSES!

LEARN FROM YOUR SMARTPHONE, TABLET, LAPTOP FROM HOME!

HIGHLIGHTS OF THESE COURSES



ONE-ON-ONE ATTENTION TO EACH STUDENT



INTERACTIVE ONLINE COURSES



GAIN ACCESS TO AUTHENTIC SIGNERS

*Register today!*



VIRTUAL ASL CLASSES : \$90



VIRTUAL SCHEDULE

SATURDAYS

ASL I 10AM-12PM EST

ASL II 1PM-3PM EST

ASL III 3:30PM-5:30PM EST

APRIL 17, 24

MAY 1, 8, 15, 22

JUNE 5, 12

THIS IS A NON-CREDIT 2 HOUR COURSE FOR 8 SESSIONS, PLEASE CHOOSE YOUR CLASSES TO REGISTER

DEADLINE: APR 12, 2021 MONDAY @ NOON



GOT A QUESTION?



CONTACT ANDREA ALSTON

AALSTON@GCDHH.ORG



GEORGIA CENTER OF THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

# ASL ONLINE CLASSES

## ASL IV



VIRTUAL ASL  
CLASSES : \$90



VIRTUAL SCHEDULE

THURSDAYS

ASL IV

7PM-9PM EST

(PREREQUISITE ASL III)

APRIL 15, 22, 29

MAY 6, 13, 20, 27

JUNE 3

THIS IS A NON-CREDIT 2  
HOUR COURSE FOR 8  
SESSIONS , PLEASE  
CHOOSE YOUR CLASSES  
TO REGISTER

DEADLINE: APR 5, 2021  
MONDAY @ NOON

GOT A QUESTION?



CONTACT ANDREA ALSTON

AALSTON@GCDHH.ORG



Prior to COVID-19, Georgia Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GCDHH) offered American Sign Language (ASL) Courses in-person at the center. When the pandemic started, GCDHH took a new approach with virtual classes for ASL to respect safety concerns. Today, remote classes are available for the community (age 14 and up) and businesses. Below are upcoming available courses:

**ASL I** - Beginner

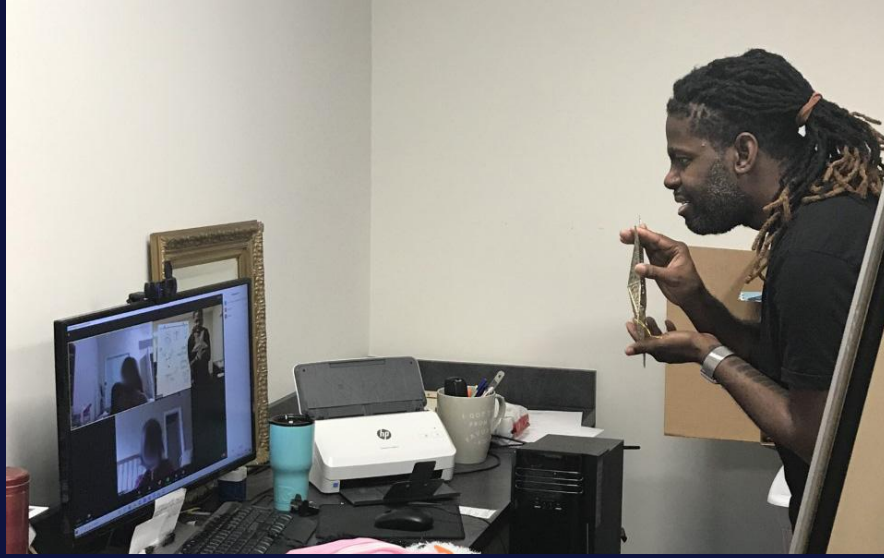
**ASL II** - Intermediate

**ASL III** - Advanced

**ASL IV** - Advanced+

\*There will be eight two-hour-long classes each semester.





Angelo teaching children ASL.

The textbook is highly recommended for all ASL units- **A Basic Course in American Sign Language (Second Edition)**. This can be ordered via Amazon. GCDHH offers online ASL classes for children younger than 14 years old for one hour for eight sessions. We also offer private ASL one-on-one for a separate fee. At the end of the semester, a Certificate of Attendance will be given for those who participated. This is only for the proof of participation in ASL course and this does not count as certified for Sign Language Interpreter. If you wanted to become a certified interpreter, you would have to take Interpreting courses at any college/university that offers them.

**If you are interested to learn American Sign Language, price inquiry or have questions, please email Community Coordinator, Andrea Alston at:**

[Aalston@gcdhh.org](mailto:Aalston@gcdhh.org)

**404-381-8448**

Register Now for ASL I, II, III

Register Now for ASL IV

## Did you know you can sign up your workplace for virtual American Sign Language Classes?

GCDHH offers customized ASL classes for businesses and workplaces. With a flat rate (prices are negotiable), your company can pick the hours and multiple dates for virtual ASL classes. You and your co-workers will take sessions and practice together on learning a new language. If interested, you can bring this available course to the attention of your management and contact us at [Aalston@gcdhh.org](mailto:Aalston@gcdhh.org).

Your company can make a difference in language accessibility for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community!

[Fill out Questionnaire](#)

# Literacy FRIDAY



GCDHH is hosting "Literacy Friday" every second Friday of the month starting this month. There will be a new children's story posted to GCDHH's Facebook page. Be sure to check them out!

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Facebook](#)

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[View Email as Webpage](#)