

**Transcript: The D: Detroit Deaf Education**

Film opens with a montage of scenes from the city of Detroit (both day and night shots). Shots of school signs included.

Fade into: "facundo element presents"

Intro footage (teaser): Opens with a shot of three students sitting side by side. "I don't understand my teachers." Cut to a young woman "The hearing people think that Deaf people are dumb." Cut to two students: "Sure enough, I failed my class." Cut to woman: "Her teachers do not know how to sign." Cut to students: "I feel devalued." Cut to woman: "Why is something so simple made so complicated?" Cut to students: "I work hard even though I don't understand nothing." Cut to man: "But if you miss half hour every day, you miss a lot." Cut to students: "I've asked for help over and over but I still don't get it." Cut to woman: "Everything for the Deaf has ben cancelled." Cut to students: "I want my education."

Shot of apple and lemon side by side. Flashes to clip of lemon (close up) with a D marked on it. Next shot the lemon disappears: "the D: Detroit Deaf Education" appears.

Film opens:

Young male student: "My name is Lontez Johnson. I'm 17 years old and in 12<sup>th</sup> grade." I go to Frederick Douglas High School."

Young female student: "My name is Ajena Baldwin. I'm a junior, and I'm 16 years old. I go to Detroit School of Arts (DSA)."

Young male student: "My name is Alvonte Bridges. I'm 17 years old, and in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. I'm a senior. I go to Lahser High School, which is now called Bloomfield Hills High School."

Young female student: "My name is Tianna. This is my sign name (T curling downwards from forehead to shoulder). I'm 16 and I go to Detroit School of Arts."

Young male student: "My name is Pedro Ramirez, and this is my sign name (P tapping top of hand). I'm 17 and I go to Detroit School of Arts."

Young male student: "My name is Willie Mosley. This is my sign name (W - M on side of forehead). I'm 17 and I'm in 12<sup>th</sup> grade at Detroit School of Arts."

Interviewer (Kenya): "Just a little bit of who you are and why you are here today?"

Older woman: "My name is Edna Woodward. I am from Southfield, Michigan. I am here today because I have a grandson who is Deaf. He told me about this event, and I thought I needed to be here, so that I can express some of the feelings that I have as far as their future and their education."

Woman: "My name is Karla Merritt. I'm the mother of a junior at Detroit School of Arts."

Woman: "My name is Senequa Baldwin. I have a daughter, that's Ajena Baldwin. She's 16, I'm 31. My daughter is deaf. She was born deaf. And, um, I'm really here on behalf of my daughter to get some of the services and education that she needs. Well, she's in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, so it will be her last year next year. So I'm really just here on behalf of her so she can, um, get the right education. And, you know, Ajena sometimes feels that people that's deaf, they think that hearing people think that deaf people are dumb. I just want my daughter to have the education that people that can't hear, people that's with one leg, one arm, be equal."

Deaf Woman: (Text: Toni: Mother) "I have four boys. One of my sons is deaf, and he is a student... well I'm not going to say a student... a victim of Detroit Public Schools."

Man: "My name is John. I'm a public school teacher for the Detroit Public Schools." I've been teaching in Detroit for 22 years. And in the last 5 years, umm...deaf and hard of hearing students were, er...introduced into my classroom."

Woman (text notes M.A. in Deaf Education): "I'm Christina Harucki. I'm from Toronto, Canada. I moved to Detroit four years ago. Before I moved here, I taught both Deaf schools and mainstream programs for approximately 10 years."

Kenya: "So first tell us what concerns you have related with your grandson's education."

Edna: "Well...I'm very concerned that he would be able to have the tools and things that he needs to be a productive adult the same as hearing children. I know they'll take a little more, but I really want him to have every opportunity that's available, so that he can be... um...as successful as a hearing student."

And I'll always tell him that you are not disabled, you're differently abled, so it takes a little longer, or another method, for you to get the same information."

Toni: "I'm here because I want deaf children of Michigan, not only in Detroit, excuse me I mean especially in Detroit, to have better access to education., their literacy, their fluency in written English (and not writing in ASL word order). They need... look, some students are 13 years old and read at first grade level, some of the high school students can't even read at all. I'm here to fight for that access.

Lontez, Alvonte, and Willie in screen:

Lontez: "About DDSD, when we were little, we were focusin', we were in the same classroom, from 6<sup>th</sup> grade to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, growing up together. We were best friends. What happened was, we weren't learning most of the time. We just played around. Our teacher wasn't teaching us. Then when we graduated from middle school we all went to different high schools. I went to Frederick Douglas, Alvonte went to Lahser High, and Willie to DSA. I haven't had contact with you guys since then."

Willie (scratching neck): "We were at DDSD together, we worked well together in classes, we passed. And now, since we're all at different schools, on our own with hearing kids, I feel worthless. Where are my friends?"

Black screen with white text: "Students going to the mall together for the first time."

Footage of students walking through parking lot, signing, laughing. It appears cold (snow on ground, fog coming out of mouth when breathing).

Christina: "It is my understanding that right now students who used to attend DDSD are now spread out in different schools across Detroit. (Shakes head, appears disappointed). There's no words to describe how that makes me feel. First of all, that's just wrong. Those students should be together. Right now, spread out the way they are, those students are isolated. They've lost their friends, and are losing their sense of culture. What justification is there for them being alone in the mainstream?"

John: "Now I don't, I'm just going to give you my opinion of why deaf and hard of hearing students are in our school. And I don't, I, I haven't seen any paperwork. I'm just talking. But, um, our school is fairly new. And the parents that brought the first class to our school wanted their students, their children in a building with, um, fire alarms that blink. So, at that time, there were only three high schools in Detroit that had fire alarms that blink. So the decision for these students to come to the art school wasn't ever presented to people in a manner of, "Do you wanna go to art school?" "Do you wanna be in a, an audition school?" It was never about that. The parents wanted their students, their children in a safe environment. And

the administration at the time wanted to fill the classrooms, because the more students there are in the building, the more funding the school receives.”

Christina: “I worked for DDSD for a short time and I witnessed enough to get a sense of how the system operates here in Detroit. A lot of changes are needed, improvement is needed. I saw the students suffering. They had no real access to education, teachers were not qualified. I worked with 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> graders who couldn’t even spell simple words that they should have known how to spell by pre-school. Some couldn’t do math. There’s something wrong with that. DPS wasn’t attending to DDSD, wasn’t providing the resources and funding they needed, providing the training that teachers needed- or hiring the right teachers to begin with, such as teachers who have a Deaf Ed degree, teachers who sign. When I was there I didn’t see teachers signing much at all, and they didn’t seem to know anything about Deaf Ed pedagogies. I was shocked that any parent would allow their child to attend that school with those kinds of problems. But then again, did the parents even realize what was going on? Probably not. It goes back to the administration at that time. Were they doing anything? Were they oppressing DDSD staff? Were their hands tied by higher ups in the DPS system?”

Kenya: “Can you give me an idea of what a typical day looks like in your classroom with deaf students? What’s that like? You know, are people kind of looking at you like, you have hearing students and then deaf students, how does that work? What does that look like on a day-to-day basis?”

John: “Well, our high school is a little unusual because it’s not a neighborhood school. Our high school is a, a magnet school where most of the students have to audition. So our day begins with most of the Deaf population arriving about 10-30 minutes late.”

Kenya: “Okay, wait, let’s go back here for a moment. So, you’re in the classroom, and you are in the middle of your instruction, and so 30 minutes later, you have Deaf and hard of hearing students showing up?”

[John: “Right. And it’s...”]

Kenya: “How long is your class period?”

John: “This year, the classes are 55 minutes. So it can range from a few minutes up to 30 minutes late. But it’s pretty much every day. So right away the day starts with...um...a disadvantage for my students that are Deaf and hard of hearing because they’re not, they’re not there for the whole class. The class does meet every day. But if you miss half hour every day, you miss a lot.”

Kenya: “So, are there parents aware that their students are arriving late? And they are missing most of the class period? Are they aware of that?”

John: “um, I don’t, I’m not a..,I’m not sure. I don’t have a lot of contact with the parents.”

Footage: Lontez pointing at display case (slightly blurred background).

(Alvonte and Lontez in frame) Lontez: “I want my education. I want to work and improve on my academics. The circumstances at this school is really hard for me.”

Footage: Ajena standing in front of buffet in food court area, waiting for food. Lontez is visible in background.

Ajena: “I really hate English and Math. I've really struggled with Math. My teacher makes me mad because I don't understand. I've had to ask teacher to explain repeatedly. It's upsetting.”

Footage: Ajena, Willie, and Lontez walking side by side through mall. Camera mostly focused on Willie.

Willie: “Well, for me, some classes, especially English class is really difficult for me. but, without an interpreter...actually, when the interpreter signs fast, sloppy, or is unclear, and I have difficulty keeping up so I can't follow and complete my classwork. That's why I feel I'm failing ...kinda. because.. umm.. well, I have a C now. I'm not happy with it.”

Footage: Ajena and Tianna looking through clothes at a store. Ajena starts out with her back to the camera/ blocking Tianna then turns towards the camera and is signing, “...for women...”

Tianna: “I hate chemistry. The class is too hard for me. I've studied hard, I've asked friends and others for help. It's overwhelming. I am failing the class but I keep on going, doing my best.”

Footage: Alvonte and Lontez in store, baseball hats visible in background on shelves. Lontez signing, “New year, New look!” He points at shirts hanging on the racks. Alvonte laughs.

Lontez: “Yea, I remember when we were getting ready for high school; Michigan School for the Deaf. So we asked our moms, they all said No, no. That's why we're stuck in Detroit Public Schools.”

Alvonte (nudges Lontez with elbow), “Yea, our families didn't like MSD, because they thought they do not give out an actual diploma.”

Lontez: “If I went to a deaf school, learning would have been easier.”

Alvonte: "Yes, Yes"

Footage: Ajena and Tianna looking at mall directory, Ajena is pointing at the directory. She signs, "Man, not sign man, Woman" and then Tianna points at a different place on the directory map. Tianna signs, "We go there"

Ajena: "I struggle because I don't understand what my teachers are saying. I've asked the interpreters to repeat the information but I could tell what the teacher was saying and what the interpreters was telling me were not the same. So I tried to figure out the sentences on my own. I don't like math because I don't understand my teachers because they talk without signing. So, instead, I focus on my own. And that's why I have a C in math."

Kenya: "So, right now, do you feel like...the school where she's attending right now, she's not getting the resources that she needs to prepare her for her future?"

[Senequa: "Na...She's..."]

Kenya: "What...what do you feel is missing?"

Senequa: "She's been there since September. And with...um...Detroit DPS, they really don't have no Deaf programs. Everything for the Deaf has been cancelled. No funds. So like they say my daughter readin' on a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level, and I feel that my daughter's readin' on a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level because she can't understand some of the readin' material, because her thinking process and learning process is different than another person's. And I don't think that she should be graded as a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level. I think that she should be able to... they should be able to have something to accommodate my daughter as of that. You know, and sometimes, she say she's messing up at English. They really not helpin'. You know, help her understand!"

Toni: "My son's homework is watered down. Weak. It does not tell me that he is learning enough."

Kenya: (opens with shot of Edna) "So I want you to tell me how that makes you feel? When you explained about everyone that you went to they seemed to kind of push it aside, they didn't really give you satisfactory answers. You know, how that make you feel?"

Edna: "It made me feel like, why is something so simple made so complicated. I mean... this is our... these are our children! If they don't hear, they don't speak, They're still our children and they deserve an adequate future. That's how it makes me feel. And it made me feel that I'll do whatever I need to do to make that happen."

Toni: "For me, at home, what I do with my son...I would go to a teacher's store, forgot the name of it, but anyway, I went and bought some books, picked them out and showed them to his teacher. I asked his teacher, "Do you think my son can raise his reading level with this book? Do you think you can help my son reach that level?" The teacher said, "Maybe, we'll see, he needs more practice. "So I went home and gave my son worksheets from the book everyday. At first he struggled a little so I worked with him on them. It does help, he learned from the worksheet. So, I proactively went to teacher's store, bought a workbook so my son can practice at home."

Willie: (to Alvonte) "So, how are you doing in English class?"

Alvonte: "Well, really..." Camera pans to include Lontez in footage.

Lontez: "I have a C, a D... or F. Definitely not B or A."

Alvonte: "I almost had a B then it dropped to C because I fell behind I don't get my teacher...It is frustrating because my grades keep on dropping"

[Lontez, while Alvonte still signing: "Yeah, yeah"]

Alvonte: "Even if I did my work & passed tests my grades dropped. I don't even know what my teachers want from me."

Lontez interrupts: "Yea, yeah, and my teacher's crazy 9th grade, I was placed at Frederick Douglas 10th grade, they moved me to a middle school. 11th grade, they sent me back to FD with all the hearing students. 12th grade, I'm here at FD. But anyway, in my English class, I've never received an A or B on my report card. because its hard for me. I don't know what to do. So they told me if I don't improve my grades then I'll have to repeat another year. [Mouths/not signing] What??"

Alvonte (new shot, different shirt): "Learning ASL and English... English is difficult for me. I need a Deaf teacher to teach me how English works. Then I'd understand more clearly."

Edna: "Well... it makes me feel a little sad. It makes me feel a little sad. Because he's about to be 18. And um... It's not a good feeling to... for him to think that - I read like a second grader. that I mean, I...how do you process that, if you're...if you're about to be 18. and embark on the things of young adulthood, How do you process? But I only read at a second grade level. How? You know, how do you do it?"

Footage: black screen with white text: "You're 18 years old and you read at 2nd grade level. How do you process that?"



Kenya: "So, what is your biggest fear as a parent? You know, I'm a mom too, when I have some fears and worries, and I want to make sure that my kids are prepared for their future. You know, I want to give them all the tools that they need to be strong. Because you know it's a dangerous world out there, and so you as a mother, what are... what do you worry about? What are some of your fears?"

Senequa: "Um...some of my fears, is you know... my daughter going to a school that's have hearing impaired, and normal kids that can talk, and I just don't want them to pick on my daughter, because my daughter is a person. Just 'cause she can't hear you, that my... treat my daughter as the same. And I just want my daughter to know that, you know, you are the same as me, you are same as everybody, and I don't her to get discouraged. Or, you know, thinkin' that, don't nobody like her because she's Deaf. And I want her to understand that, um and the other people to understand that, treat my daughter as a person.

Don't say mean things to her, you know, because that breaks down her self-esteem."

Footage: Ajena near clothes rack, waving hand to get someone's attention off camera : "Fresh-Fresh...Black people used to dress..."

Tianna asking Ajena: "Ok. Why don't you socialize with other students at school?"

Ajena responds: "Because I've been bullied...because I'm fat."

Senequa: "I just want my daughter to be seen as a person."

Karla: "Well, one of the biggest fears, I would say is her... she hasn't been...but I know that's a possibility of other students bullying. You know, be...because of society, every student is already at risk to be abused or become a bully from some other children for little reasons because she has a handicap and she's put into the environment with all children that do not have handicaps. That...they may pick on her... They may tease her. She's now out of her culture. You know, she's no longer in that environment where she feels safe to interact with her peers as she used to be because she was able to use her sign, use her words to speak to her teachers and be confident that they understood what she said. And she could get the same thing back from them."

Toni: "My biggest fear as a parent in Detroit, of a DPS student, is that my son will not succeed because his teachers aren't qualified or skilled enough to teach him."



Willie, talking to Pedro: "Our class, Life Skills, ... you were absent that day and someone overheard some hearing person saying, "You know, this class is for the slow and retarded." I was offended and embarrassed."

Ajena, to Tianna: "Hearing people think you're slow. Pfft, oh no. THEY are slow."

Tianna responds, "Right! But it's not true, not.. Oh come on, not all hearing people but really, we Deaf people aren't slow. We fast learner. We learn fast, but yes, some hearing think we're slow. But, we're not really slow."

Willie (Pedro in frame too): I'm worried that in the future, I won't know anything and I will lose what I do know. (new shot, Willie close up) I'm a little scared."

Kenya: "So, most of the students who are in your school, they have to audition, they are to prepare. They have goals of being in the Art field. And you said that the Deaf and Hard of Hearing students never have the audition of... the opportunity to pick a major. They are just admitted without having to be auditioned, or asked about their goals are if their goals and dreams even are pertaining to Art, is that correct?"

John: "That's correct. They didn't say...um...to the students "Do you want to study art?" They were never...um..."

[Kenya coughing]

"auditioned as the other students were. They were never given the opportunity to choose a major as far as I know. We have, er, six majors. And I think, um, they are only allowed to be in two. Either art or radio television. And I think it's stemmed back to the fact that the decision wasn't there to bring in students to be art students. The decision was to bring students into a safe school and to fill the classrooms, which I think is completely unfair."

Kenya: "So I see that you're very emotional. Would you like to tell us why? Are you.. are you feeling upset, or how are you feeling?"

Karla: "Well... As a mom, we always want what's best for our children. And I believe that because the limited resources that are now offered in our school system is hindering my baby. She's not gonna be able to compete with other kids at her level because it's holding her back. Um, she used to sign more often, because she was in the community, and involved within her middle school and her elementary school. But, now that she's away from it because they mainstreamed her into a regular class, she's not getting the time to utilize her sign language. Her teachers do not know how to sign. So there's no benefit in school at all for her to use her language, which is her only form of language. Her spoken language – anybody else would not understand it. It's a voice that only a mother could love. You know, a stranger would not understand

anything she said. If she was to, you know, read a, a sentence to someone they wouldn't be able to understand what she's saying. But if she was with Deaf students and Deaf teachers at all times during her educational process, she would better be able to be more confident, and have more self-esteem and know that it's OK that you don't speak the same way that the majority speak or the hearing world speaks."

Kenya: "So what do you think will help? What would, you know, all these things that you've listed, what would...what do you need to make that happen, you know?"

Senequa: "I think as living in Detroit, they need to fund some of these Deaf programs. They need to open them back up. You know it's a lot of stuff for people that can hear. Why single them out? Why cut their funding? They...they people too. They need to understand and be around they Deaf community too. Just not all mixed up in one. Not the Deaf and Hearing mixed up in classes together. Single them out, let them, um, let them, um, let them learn something with each other."

Kenya: "So do you think if the parents were aware of that fact that they would be able to change that?"

John: "I think so. I think that the one group of people in the school system that are heard are parents. I've been told countless times I'm just a teacher. And students are kind of viewed as, um, a number. They're viewed as a number to fill a classroom. But, if a parent complains, or not even complains, if a parent is willing to voice, um, backing for their students in whatever way, people...people get nervous. I don't get nervous, but people listen to the parents. They'll listen to parents."

Christina: (28:31) "Researches have proven this over and over...a researcher by the name of Cummins show that L1 (primary language) must be acquired to pave the way for L2 (second language) acquisition. For instance, American Sign Language (through daily use) must be learned to give way for English language development (through reading and writing). Now, speech is completely separate from language development. Speech is not a language, it is a skill. A skill that not everyone can acquire. It should be kept outside of the academic setting. It has nothing to do with language learning or academics. Nor does it help you to "understand the world". The goal here is for all Deaf children to learn and become successful to be able to relax in their learning environment, learning directly from teachers who are fluent in ASL, as their hearing peers would with teachers who are fluent in spoken English. This is the reason why having interpreters in the classroom isn't always a good idea."

Footage: Willie, Pedro, and Alvonte standing near rack of shoes, chatting.  
Alvonte's back is to the camera.

Pedro (Willie in frame as well): "We have only one teacher in the Hearing Impaired program and she signs. As for the rest of the classes, just interpreters. Some I understand, some are alright and one is really bad. I just suck it up and go with it."

Ajena: "Yea, I agree with Pedro. Some teachers aren't clear, same with interpreters. My point is, I want teachers to sign. I expect teachers in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing program to sign. I want you to sign. Do not speak. The students are Deaf. Who cares if other people speaks, I want my teacher to sign."

Willie (Pedro in frame): "Sometimes, the problem is, when the interpreter is missing and the teacher is speaking, I don't understand. Writing back and forth pointless." [Pedro: That's true]

Ajena (signing to Tianna): "Some interpreters would check their iPhone during class."

Tianna Responds: "That's true! They'd be on the phone all the time!"

Ajena: "Interpreter would leave for bathroom in middle of presentation. They shouldn't have done that."

Tianna: "Right! It's annoying when interpreters leave the classroom without letting us know."

Ajena: "Right! Especially while the teacher was talking."

Alvonte, to Lontez: "If the interpreter doesn't understand you, doesn't care about you, you should stand your ground and express how you feel, then the interpreter will respect you."

Willie, to Pedro: "Math class...I really don't understand nothing. sometimes I think I get it so I'm surprised I'm even getting passing grades, A's or B's."

Pedro: "Sometime, I think teachers would give us fake grades."

Tianna, to Ajena: "Yes! It's annoying when teachers give us fake grades!"

Ajena: "Right."

Tianna: "Still, I struggle with class work. I've asked teachers for help. and they refused. They'd say "You'll be alright, don't worry. You'll do well on test." I'm like, huh?"

Kenya: "So...what advice would you give to someone else? A person who is facing what you have experienced all of your life? What...what advice would you give to them?"

Edna: "Never stop. Never stop. Do as much as you can do. If...if they're not getting what they need in school, then do as much as you can to help them be total people. Never never stop. And never stop asking why. Never stop trying to get what you need."

Senequa: "No... I am learning, I'm 31, I don't sign language. um... in sign language classes at our school with the social worker, be more involved, you know, see where they... see where they're coming from. You know, get they point of view. Cause I...it took me...I'm still learning... I'm still learning her feelings and her emotions, as, you know, as my daughter. I think that, just be involved, listen, talk to 'em, understand what they're goin' through."

Karla: "Well...more than anything...I think that they should bring back the Deaf program into the school system. I think that taking the Deaf program from Deaf students was hindering the students in itself. I don't think they never should have taken it away. It would be like trying to teach a blind child how to read Braille, without giving him books that's in Braille. You know, you...you're taking away their only resource to be able to understand what's going on in their environment, as far as their education."

Toni: "I'd like to explain to the parents, especially the hearing parents of Deaf children, get involved with your children's education, if you do not know sign language, take a class, find out where ASL classes are offered, also, to the teachers, those who "think" they can teach a Deaf child, but not, improve your skills. Take upon yourselves to improve your knowledge about Deaf Culture. Improve your... I'm not sure what's the right word is... but there are a lot of things out there that even these Deaf teachers are not giving the message to the Deaf students, especially to the Black Deaf students....that's it."

Kenya: "So, but do you feel that there is more training that's needed so that everyone is on the same page. So that there is an effective use of the interpreters for the students? Do you..."

[John: "Yes."]

Kenya: "...feel like the school district should provide more of that?"

John: “Definitely. They should not only provide interpreter, service training, but as I’ve mentioned, I think that if we’re gonna teach students that are Deaf and hard of hearing, we should be trained. I should at least know my content area. I should... I should at least know how to sign in my content area.”

Christina: “I think the key here is to...invest (signs with emphasis) invest in those students. So they feel validated and empowered to be able to grow and set goals and become successful. so they can go wherever they want. Then they will come back and contribute to our community. That is what’s missing right now.”

Footage:

An email was sent to Regina Baker requesting an interview. Footage of email from Facundo Element to Regina Baker, Supervisor of DHH Program in DPS. Subject: Request for interview. “Greetings, Ms. Baker, Our organization is currently working on collecting narratives of Deaf & Hard of Hearing students and their families who live in the Detroit area. We are producing a film with hopes of effecting positive change. We understand that you are the current special education director, charged with overseeing deaf students and their educational needs in Detroit. We’d very much appreciate the opportunity to interview you for the film. We feel you have valuable perspectives to share. Please let us know whether this is a possibility. Looking forward to your response. Thank you for your time, from Facundo Element.”

Response from Ms. Baker: “Dear Facundo Element, Thank you for your interest in the Detroit Public Schools Deaf/Hard of Hearing Program. An interview is not possible. From Regina Baker, Supervisor, Deaf/Hard of Hearing Program, Detroit Public Schools.”

Tianna (Ajena in frame): “Umm...honestly, I’m really angry with DPS. because, really, they do NOT help Deaf people. Deaf people need sign language classes. Deaf students need Deaf teachers. Our educational needs are different from hearing kids. I want Detroit Public Schools to understand our needs and to be committed to our education.”

Ajena (Tianna in frame): “But, I thought it was interesting that DPS doesn’t offer ASL classes. I thought all schools are supposed to offer American Sign Language classes. But DPS doesn’t allow ASL classes in schools.”

Kenya: “So, do you feel your daughter has enough Deaf role models in her life to look up to?”

Senequa: “No.”

Toni: "Detroit has..what? 90% Black Deaf students who go to Detroit Public Schools. With that- DPS students need more role models that look like them so they need more Black Deaf teachers, more staff members who understand Deaf culture. It's very important to have Black Deaf teachers so these kids can look up to them so they can say, "Oh I want to be like you. You can teach? You know how to read and write? I want to be just like you. I'm eager to do my homework. Just like you, I can go to college just like you." That is why it's important to have diversity in the school system."

Tianna (Ajena in frame): "I'm afraid of...what if there are no longer Deaf teachers, no Deaf people, or sign language...nothing? No more Deaf and Hard of Hearing people? What will Deaf people do? That's what I'm afraid of..of the future. What if Deaf kids grow up without learning about their culture and identity?I don't want them to lose their own culture. I want them to understand their culture and to be proud of who they are, being Deaf. I don't want them to be negative, to wish they're hearing, I want them to be positive because they're blessed by God."

Ajena (Tianna in frame): "Right, I agree. I don't want Deaf children to kill themselves. I know some Deaf people wish they weren't born Deaf. I want Deaf children to be proud of who they are."

Pedro (Willie in frame): "I want an actual education, and for teachers to be serious about it, not like before. That's the only change I want to see."

Willie: "I want teachers to be able to sign fluently. I wish I could give them superpowers so they can become fluent signer overnight. Finally...then we will be able to get better grades."

Ajena (Tianna in frame): "I want a good education, and interp... I mean... teachers that can sign fluently."

Tianna (Ajena in frame): "My dream is to have all hearing and Deaf people get along and come together. Coexist. Without judgment. That's it, that's my dream."

End of film- Footage: Black screen with white text: (FE logo)  
[www.facundoelement.com](http://www.facundoelement.com)

With Heartfelt Gratitude

Participants:

Ajena Baldwin  
Senequa Baldwin  
Genie Barney

Monique Barney  
Alvonte Bridges  
Tianna Dudley  
Christina Harucki  
Lontez Johnson  
Karla Merritt  
Willie Mosley  
Pedro Ramirez  
Toni Williams  
John Wood  
Edna Woodward

Interpreters:

Jackie Thompson  
Toi Williams Bogan

Voice Over:

Majallen Cespedes  
Oneal Cespedes  
Zarandi Parker  
LeAndre Pickett  
Jackie Thompson  
Toi Williams Bogan  
Joe Williams

Project Manager:

Kenya Lowe

Project Assistants:

Alison Aubrecht  
Joey Caverly  
Ryan Commerson  
Seth Gore  
Jillian Gruetzner  
Richard McCowin  
Yakata Nichols  
Benro Ogunyipe  
Joe Williams

Sound:

Scott Loudon



Music:

Anthony ( K-LOW MUZIK ) Jackson

Opening and End Credits

"Summer Wind"

Mike Mulliniks

"Beautiful Things"

"Candles"

"Conflict"

"Found"

"Do You See What I See"

"Banks"

"Salim"

"The Past"

YRLK Brad Kelley

"Kaby Lake"

"Not Your Home"

"Mountain"

Transcribers:

Jill Andrews

Hannah Long

Chris Rutledge

SC Schilling

Xenia Woods

Gratitude:

The Emery Family

Deborah Love Peel

Dale Moore

Olivia Roberts

Kendra Rose

April Stotts

Gwen Thorpe

Reichelle "Pam" Tucker

Aired Out Customs - Southfield store

DREAM, Inc.

Hartford Memorial Baptist Church - Detroit

Motion Picture Institute of Michigan

Northwest Activities Center- Detroit

Donors:

Monique Barney  
The Eischen Family  
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The Harucki Family  
Yakata Nichols  
Kendra Rose  
April Stotts  
Gwen Thorpe  
Toni Williams

A shout out to the DPS employees who worked behind the scenes, their names are not listed due to fear of retaliation.