

The National Association of the Deaf (NAD), the premier civil rights organization for deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the United States, responds to the urgent concern regarding the interpreter on stage during Nelson Mandela's Memorial Service on Tuesday, December 10, 2013 with three points.

The NAD is always pleased when interpreters are provided at noteworthy events such as the inspiring memorial services for the beloved Nelson Mandela. The NAD wishes to emphasize that in all such situations the interpreter must be vetted and chosen on the basis of qualifications to clearly, accurately, impartially and effectively convey what is being communicated during any such event.

Each country has its own national sign language and sometimes even regional sign languages. In the United States, we use American Sign Language (ASL) while in South Africa, most people use South African Sign Language (SASL), which is distinct and uses different signs than ASL. We, at the NAD, cannot assess the qualifications or fluency or lack thereof of the interpreter in this video, but are informed by the South African deaf and hard of hearing community that this interpreter is not legitimately interpreting in SASL.

The NAD urges all who plan for events such as the Mandela memorial services need to include deaf and hard of hearing people when determining who should be considered to provide the interpreting services at these events.

It is well known that Nelson Mandela taught the world important lessons; we must take a step forward from this and remember what Nelson Mandela fought for.

"A fundamental concern for others in our individual and community lives would go a long way in making the world the better place we so passionately dreamt of." – Nelson Mandela

The NAD was established in 1880 by deaf leaders who believed in the right of the American deaf community to use sign language, to congregate on issues important to them, and to have its interests represented at the national level. As a nonprofit federation, the mission of the NAD is to preserve, protect, and promote the civil, human, and linguistic rights of deaf and hard of hearing people in the United States. The advocacy scope of the NAD is broad, covering the breadth of a lifetime and impacting future generations in the areas of early intervention, education, employment, health care, technology, telecommunications, youth leadership, and more.

<http://www.nad.org/news/2013/12/nad-responds-interpreter-nelson-mandela-memorial-service>