Is there disruption in the sign language interpreting profession?

Jemina Napier
Deaf sign language users

- 70 million deaf sign language users in the world (WFD)
- 138 sign languages listed on Ethnologue

How many sign language interpreters worldwide?
26,000-30,000??
Professionalisation of sign language interpreting
Disruption

Dis.rupt.ed, dis.rupt.ing, dis.rupts

1. To throw into confusion or disorder
2. To interrupt or impede the progress of
3. To break apart or alter so as to prevent normal or expected functioning
Outsiders looking in...

Key issues in the US

(Many previous Street Leverage presentation themes)

- Lack of deaf heart
- Lack of trust
- Lack of SL fluency
- Who is the public ‘face’ of the community & profession
- Deaf-hearing tensions
- Loss of Deaf community gatekeeping role
- Disempowered Deaf community
- Lack of transparency in standards
- Language shaming
- Hearing privilege
Disruption: Another way of looking at it

**Keywords:** complication, complicated, complex, complicate, confuse, jumble, mix up
The bigger picture…. What is causing disruption?

Changes in:

• Sign language acquisition
• Sign language recognition
• Deaf identities (intersectionality)
• Deaf education
• Deaf community boundaries (transnationalism)
• Migration patterns (translanguaging)
• Technologies
Disruption? Or change?

“Be the change that you wish to see in the world”

— Mahatma Gandhi