

SPOKEN WITHOUT WORDS: POETRY WITH ASL SLAM

Transcribed by: Adrienne Smith & David Widman - Humber College

[jazzy horn music]

DOUGLAS: It's harder for Deaf people out in the world...

[jazzy horn music]

DOUGLAS: ...because this world is designed for hearing people.

[jazzy horn music]

DOUGLAS: We have to do double the work.

[jazzy horn music]

DOUGLAS: Slam poetry helps me to express myself, it makes me feel alive.

[applause]

[lively classical melody]

DOUGLAS: I'm Douglas Ridloff. I was born profoundly Deaf, and I run ASL SLAM. It's a monthly event based here in New York City, where the Deaf community can gather and perform.

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DOUGLAS: The poetry at ASL SLAM uses American Sign Language. When ASL is translated into English for poetry, 95% of the time it's lost in translation. That's why I ask the interpreters not to translate the poems. You have rhyme in English poetry and patterns of verbal repetition. ASL is more about the movement, a visual rhyme versus an auditory rhyme.



DOUGLAS: The face accounts forth 50% of the grammar. The way vocal inflection might show emotion and mood in English... the mood is here.



DOUGLAS: ASL poetry is very important to my family. We are a Deaf family. Both my sons are Deaf. When they were born and I found out they were Deaf, I just felt so lucky, so fortunate. Now they're doing their own poems in the house. My work so far typically relates to my experience. My father and I had a very close relationship. When he passed away, I wanted to create a poem for him.

[On screen graphic: "FOREVER LOVE" DOUGLAS' POEM]

DOUGLAS: My purpose is to ensure that ASL SLAM is here, and that it continues. I want to show the world outside the Deaf community the sophistication of American Sign Language.

END OF VIDEO

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