

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB NEWSMAKER LUNCHEON WITH I. KING JORDAN,
PRESIDENT, GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY

MODERATOR: JONATHAN SALANT, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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MR. SALANT: Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club. I'm Jonathan Salant, a
reporter for Bloomberg News and president of the Press Club.

I'd like to welcome club members and their guests in the audience today, as well as those of you
watching on C-SPAN.

Please hold your applause during the speech so we have time for as many questions as possible.
For our broadcast audience, I'd like to mention if you hear applause, it is from the guests and the
working press -- the guests and the members of the general public in our audience, not from the
working press.

The video archive of today's luncheon is provided by ConnectLive and is available, to members
only, through the National Press Club website at www.press.org. Press Club members may also
get free transcripts at our website. Nonmembers may buy transcripts, audio tapes and video tapes

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Before introducing our head table, I would like to remind our members of future speakers. On May 12th, Senator Mel Martinez, a Republican from Florida, will discuss immigration. On May 19th, Mayor Beverly O'Neill of Long Beach, California, and president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, will be our guest. On May 22nd, Senator Arlen Specter, a Pennsylvania Republican and chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. And on May 23rd, a special breakfast appearance by Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, a New York Democrat.

If you have any questions for our speaker, please write them on the cards provided at your tables and pass them up to me. I will ask as many as time permits.

I would now like to introduce our head table guests and ask them to stand briefly when their names are called. Please hold your applause until all the head table guests are introduced.

From your right, Stephen Trachtenberg, the president of George Washington University; Max Schindler, a director and producer for NBC News; John Williams; the president and founder of Assistive Technology News; Peter Schmidt, deputy editor of The Chronicle of Higher Education; Dr. Jane Fernandes, the newly appointed president of Gallaudet University and the current provost of the school; Jesse Holland of the Associated Press; Linda Jordan, wife of our speaker; Angela Greiling Keane, associate editor of Traffic World Magazine and vice chair of the Speakers Committee.

Skipping over our speaker for a moment, Ira Allen, Center for the Advancement of Health, and the member of the club Speakers Committee who arranged today's luncheon. And Ira, thank you very much. Tom Humphries, a member of the Gallaudet Board of Trustees; Timothy McDonough, director of Public Affairs for the American Council on Education; and Curtis Eichelberger, sports business reporter with Bloomberg News. (Applause.)

Dr. I. King Jordan's tenure as president of Gallaudet University is ending the way it began, with student protests. Students at Gallaudet, the nation's only liberal arts college for deaf people, have been protesting the selection of college provost Jane Fernandes as the next university president.

Yesterday, the faculty said it passed a no-confidence motion in Dr. Fernandes. Like Dr. Jordan, Dr. Fernandes is deaf. Protestors object to the fact that she grew up speaking, and did not learn sign language until adulthood. Dr. Fernandes has said that the protestors feel she is not "deaf enough." The president of Gallaudet is seen by many deaf and hard-of-hearing people as more than just another college president, but a leading voice of the deaf community.

Dr. Jordan, who has endorsed Dr. Fernandes as his successor, knows all about protests. They led to his installation as the university's eighth president.

In 1988, after another hearing person was named to head the university, founded during the administration of President Abraham Lincoln, students and faculty rebelled. In a weeklong

protest, they demanded a deaf person as president. The board of trustees reversed its decision and named Dr. Jordan to the presidency, the first-ever deaf person to hold the post.

"Deaf people can do everything other people can do except hear," Dr. Jordan said at a rally after he was named university president. During his 18 years in office, he has led campus expansion, raised academic standards and served as a mentor and spokesman for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. He holds 11 honorary degrees, and served on the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities.

For deaf and hard-of-hearing students at Gallaudet, the fight for a deaf president was nothing more than a civil rights issue. Indeed, Dr. Jordan has been likened to the late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as a symbol for people outside the American mainstream. The Deaf President Now protests led to more opportunities for all people with disabilities.

Dr. Jordan lost his ability to hear as an adult following a motorcycle accident in April 1965. A car coming the other way crossed over into his lane and smashed into him. He was so severely injured that a priest administered last rites.

After recovering, he enrolled in Gallaudet. He taught psychology at the university and later was dean of arts and sciences before becoming president. He and his wife live on the Gallaudet campus. They have two grown children.

An accomplished runner, Dr. Jordan has competed in more than 200 marathons, including several 100-mile races. Yes, more than 100-mile races.

The good news is that our luncheons end a lot sooner than a marathon. (Laughter.) Even the normal the 26-milers.

Let's welcome Dr. Jordan to the National Press Club. (Applause.)

MR. JORDAN: Thank you, Jonathan. Thank you very much.

Good afternoon. I'm very honored and privileged to speak to the National Press Club. I know that you know without media, I wouldn't be standing here. Without the large, large attention that happened as a result of DPN 18 years ago, I wouldn't be standing speaking today.

I know that it probably is a mistake to point to individuals in the audience when this big audience -- all the individuals are important. But two people I have to recognize.

One is my colleague and good friend, Steve Trachtenberg. I thank you for coming to this afternoon's speech, Steve. Thank you very much.

STEPHEN JOEL TRACHTENBERG: Thank you.

MR. JORDAN: I said two. It's more than two.

I also want to say thank you to John Hager, assistant secretary of Education. The assistant secretary has oversight responsibility for Gallaudet. I'm glad you came to join us.

Also, I want to say thank you to Tom Humphries, who is sitting here at the head table, member of the Gallaudet Board of Trustees.

And finally, most importantly, perhaps, I want to thank my wife, Linda, because she's been right by my side for 18 very exciting and positive years. Thank you, Linda.

I listened carefully to Jonathan's introduction. He took a lot of my speech -- (laughter) -- when he introduced me. I don't know if that's a common thing to happen during the introductions, but thank you, and I'll find a way to tweak a couple of the things you said during the speech, I think.

Many of you, especially our friends, many of you will remember the events that led to my appointment as the eighth president of Gallaudet in 1988. That event came to be called Deaf President Now, or DPN. That happened, as Jonathan said, when the Board of Trustees announced the anointment of a hearing woman to be the president of Gallaudet University, and the students rose up, with support from faculty, staff, alumni and friends outside the university, to protest the decision.

The protest received extensive media coverage, extensive media coverage. I think that if I had been named first, if the Board of Trustees had named me president at first, instead of the woman, then there would have been little attention given to it in Washington, D.C. Gallaudet is small, and I can envision something like one column inch on page B-6 that said Gallaudet has a new president. Certainly there wouldn't be anything even on local TV, certainly not national TV and certainly not the front page of The New York Times. But all of that happened, and all of that allowed Gallaudet to lead very important social change for deaf people.

One thing, I want to tweak one of the comments Mr. Salant made when he introduced me. He said that the board reversed itself and named me as president. The board did not reverse itself. I think it's a very important distinction. The board stayed firm, but the president resigned at that time. When the president resigned, then the board had found another president.

The DPN social movement started when that president, Dr. Elizabeth Zinser, said, and I quote, "That she was retiring to pave the way for the civil rights movement to progress." She recognized that DPN was a civil rights movement, and she set aside to let that civil rights movement progress.

As you all know, there's another protest going on right now at Gallaudet campus, and out front of the National Press Club there's a protest going on. And since that's happening, I thought I should put into my speech some comments about that protest. As you can probably guess, I wrote a different speech a couple weeks ago, and now, I think I'll pay attention to this for a little bit.

Last Monday, Gallaudet Board of Trustees announced the appointment of Dr. Jane K. Fernandes as Gallaudet's next president. She will also be the first woman that's president at Gallaudet. She will assume office in January 2007. I want to tell you that Dr. Fernandes has outstanding

qualities and credentials. She's been provost of Gallaudet University for six years. Prior to that, she served as vice president of Laurent Clerc Deaf Education Center. I want to -- a few of her qualifications.

She has a very bold vision for Gallaudet's future, and she has demonstrated leadership to develop strategic plans to carry out that vision. She has a very strong commitment to diversity. Dr. Fernandes led the effort to develop a diversity plan that would be viewed by the Board of Trustees at their meeting later this week. She has a strong plan for raising academic standards and recruiting highly-qualified students, especially diverse students. She has success in K-12 education and in higher education, and very importantly, she has proven success during crises that show her unparalleled strength and clarity of thought -- thought and action, both, under pressure.

So I cite all those positive things, that you ask, why a protest? Why are people protesting if she's so highly qualified? And unlike DPN, among the protestors there are many different reasons given for why she should not be president. Unlike DPN, all six semi-finalists were deaf people. Therefore, deafness is not the issue. In fact, I have to say that it's a real tribute to DPN that 21 of the candidates who applied to become president were deaf or hard of hearing.

The issues that are happening outside and at Gallaudet are the kinds of issues that would be present at any college or university presidential appointment when people care deeply about who becomes their leader. Some people talk about personality. Jane Fernandes' personality is not like mine. Jane describes herself as a quiet leader. I'm much more extroverted; some people say too extroverted. (Chuckles.) (Laughter.) I also should say that quiet leaders are very common in leadership positions in higher education.

Some people question the search process and say there wasn't enough diversity during the search process. But half of the semi-finalists were deaf people, of color, or women. Three out of six.

Some people also raise questions about specific individuals who they know to be highly qualified who weren't among the final three. Some people have said openly they suspect I influenced the board's decision to name Dr. Fernandes president, but I have to tell you very strongly that the board kept me out of the process until the very end, when I had the opportunity to meet one on one with the three finalists. Also, the board never received any report from me about my meeting with those three finalists.

I think it's also important to note that the search committee was comprised of 17 members, 17 members, 13 were deaf. About one-third of the members were board members, which is very different than the typical higher ed search, where the majority of the members are from the board.

In order to make sure that they followed best practices, the search committee hired a national search consultant.

That firm does nothing but academic, senior administrator searches, so they're very highly skilled.

I brought with me for the press copies of a memo from the board chair sent to the campus that explains in detail the whole search process. I also brought something very interesting. I brought copies of e-mail I received from Elisabeth Zinser, the woman who was named president in 1988 and stepped down. Her e-mail describes how she sees what's happening today as very different from DPN, and this is not another DPN.

So, it's clear that the process was fair and open. The board has indicated that they won't reopen the search. And Dr. Fernandes has said she intends to leave the university.

Where does that bring us today? It brings me to an appeal that I make -- I call to all the students, faculty, staff, alumni, people involved in the protests and ask -- invite you to come sit down, meet, talk about what we can do together to achieve a better and stronger Gallaudet University. I call on the community, the whole community, to come together and join Dr. Fernandes in helping to build Gallaudet and take it from strong to stronger.

I want now to go back to DPN, because I want to talk more about the theme of civil rights and about what happened in 1988 and how that changed the world for deaf people and people with disabilities.

Civil rights movements have important memorable events that people keep in their minds. Many of you know when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus, you know about the women suffragettes who wanted to fight for the right to vote, and of course you know about Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech. They're obviously some of the most important memorable moments in civil rights.

I honestly believe that what happened during DPN stands with those moments when it pertains to deaf people and people with disabilities. Sometimes I'm challenged to make that analogy, but I feel very strongly that what happened 18 years ago really stands equal to those events.

Often people ask me, list your most important accomplishment as president. What's the best thing you did as president of Gallaudet, and really the answer's very simple. My most important accomplishment was I succeeded. I was successful as university president. Think about it. If I hadn't succeeded, then that would have set back the advances that were starting to happen and would have made it worse for deaf people than without any DPN. I had to succeed.

Now, it's easy for me to talk about success, but in 1988, there were a lot of skeptics, a lot of them. A lot of the people in the media were very upfront with me telling me they wondered if a deaf person could lead a university. And worse, I say worse, a lot of deaf people had doubts. Deaf people came up to me and said, "President of a university? I don't know." So you ask, why would deaf people have doubts? And really that's all part of oppression. It's really easy to understand if you think about oppression. Deaf people, including me, for years and years, maybe for centuries, were told you can't do this, you can't do that. We internalize it, we start to accept it, we begin to believe that we can't. DPN's biggest success was to blow off that cap that put limitations on what we could do, and for that cap to stay off, I had to be successful.

A lot of people don't realize that deafness itself is not our primary barrier to success. Our primary barrier, really, is attitudes -- attitudes. The social attitudes that people have about disabilities really make it harder for us to succeed than any communication barrier does.

People who don't know deafness, people who don't know deaf people, they say it must be hard to be deaf, it must be awful to be deaf. And I have to tell you, deaf people don't feel that way. Deaf people think it's fine to be deaf.

I became deaf at age 21; my life had changed. But it changed for the better. I became a better person, and I learned things I never thought I would learn. I grew up hearing, a small-town boy in a small-town high school, where I was a very average student. Whew, very average. I enjoyed all five years of my high school experience. (Laughs, laughter.) I never, never dreamed that I would become an academic, never dreamed that once.

After high school, I joined the Navy. And after serving in the Navy for a few years, I was in a motorcycle accident. When I woke up in the hospital, I was profoundly deaf. And at first, I was very shocked. I didn't know deafness, and I didn't want to be a deaf person. But I found Gallaudet. I found Gallaudet, and I found that deafness is very normal at Gallaudet, and I found that I could be very successful as a deaf person because I saw other people who were successful.

So I studied at Gallaudet and earned a B.A. degree. Then I went to the University of Tennessee and earned a Ph.D. degree. I came back to Gallaudet to teach and become an administrator. But even in 1985, I never dreamed that I would become a university president.

I became a university president, and a social movement began. Social movements need symbols. Social movements, to succeed, have to have a symbol to point to. I'm very fortunate that I became that symbol for a time. Deaf children and adults point to the first deaf president as somebody who's very successful and something they can become.

Since DPN -- since that happened, deaf people are succeeding in many, many, many different careers that before were barely opened are not opened at all to them. People are attorneys, university faculty people, administrators, actors, scientists.

I probably should not mention names, again, that I look out, and Gregory Hlibok is sitting out there. He was one of the student leaders during DPN -- just a boy, if i can say that. Now, he's an attorney with the Federal Communication Commission. That's a wonderful example of how successful he is and other deaf people have become.

So DPN had a huge impact nationally, but the impact wasn't limited to a national impact. The impact is really international; it's really global.

One woman I think of is a black, deaf woman from South Africa, who graduated from Gallaudet University, went back home in South Africa, tore down barriers and changed the world there. She was our undergraduate commencement speaker. When she graduated, she gave the commencement address. She spoke about experiencing racism because she was black, handicappism because of her deafness, oppression because of her gender. She talked about her

dreams that someday she would be able to go back to South Africa and vote. When she spoke at Gallaudet, her dream was to vote. Today, she is a member of parliament there. She has been elected twice to the national parliament in South Africa; the first deaf woman ever elected to a national parliament.

We also have a graduate from Gallaudet who was elected to parliament in Ontario, Canada. More recently, a deaf PhD student from Belgium was studying at Gallaudet, and I'll talk about the impact of DPN on deaf Flemish people. Inspired by DPN, a group of deaf Flemish people came and visited Gallaudet, and they worked to empower deaf people back in Belgium. Currently, she's doing her PhD research on Flemish deaf leaders. She talks about one of the individuals, deaf man, who came with her when they visited Gallaudet, and when they came, he looked and said, "A deaf president? I always thought that's not possible." But it is possible -- a deaf president, and deaf people doing other things as well. If he can do that, I can do that too.

So he's back now changing lives in Belgium.

One of our undergraduate students just spoke at Gallaudet about an experience he had in Argentina. He went to Argentina, where he worked with a coalition of deaf people to lobby for changing the law to allow sign language in educating deaf children in Argentina. They passed a law. They passed a law in Argentina, and now deaf children can be taught in sign language, when before only oral education was permitted. That's an amazing accomplishment by anyone, but it was accomplished by an undergraduate student on a two-month internship. Remarkable.

DPN had other global impacts that are interesting and positive. In 1989 here in Washington, D.C., we hosted what we called Deaf Way. That was a conference where we celebrated the history, culture and language of deaf people. It was the first time in history that a conference about deaf people celebrated deafness instead of trying to look for ways to fix it.

Thousands of people came, had to wait in line, because registration far exceeded our expectations. But when they waited in line, they weren't upset or angry. Waiting in line, they celebrated the opportunity to talk with people from different countries who had the same life experiences. Really remarkable week-long event.

Then in 2002 we did it again, and this time brought 10,000 people to celebrate the lives of deaf people.

DPN had a very significant impact on the formation of coalitions in the disability community and helped substantially in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the ADA. Senator Tom Harkin said that in a five-year period between DPN and 1993, more laws were passed providing access for and rights for deaf people than in the 216 years of the country's existence till that time.

DPN did big positive impact.

It still resonates. We must capitalize on that resonance. We must capitalize on the positive memories of DPN and the positive outcomes of DPN.

I conclude by saying that Gallaudet is very, very lucky to have the leadership and skills of Dr. Jane Fernandes to help us move into the 21st century. I'm sure that Gallaudet will become even stronger than it is now.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to talk to you. I welcome your questions. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. SALANT: A reminder to please write your questions on the cards at your table and pass them up to me. We'll ask as many as we can.

The first question. Dr. Jordan, what are your thoughts about the media coverage of the controversy and protests? Do you think the coverage has been fair?

MR. JORDAN: I think that the press coverage, the printed coverage, has been very fair. I think it's difficult for the TV coverage to be fair. Because the press people come and investigate what's been happening and they interview people on both sides of the situation, and therefore, I think if you read most of the print media, it's balanced. I think the TV media just gets pictures that are exciting, and we don't have exciting pictures for them.

MR. SALANT: One of the banners hanging this morning outside of Gallaudet says, "Honk if you support social justice." Do you see the current protests as relating to social justice?

MR. JORDAN: No, quite honestly I don't. I see the current protests as protests about an individual. And I think if anyone has led the way in working to achieve social justice, it would be Dr. Fernandes. I think she's a very, very strong advocate of social justice.

MR. SALANT: What did you learn from your experience becoming president in 1988 that is helping you handle the crisis today?

MR. JORDAN: Hm. I hope my response to this question shows one thing I've learned; that's I try to think before I speak.

In 1987 and all the years prior to that, and too many years after that, I spoke first and thought later. I hope that I've become a better listener. There's a lot, there's a lot said right now that's very important to listen to. There's a lot going on that needs our deep, careful, close attention. And my mind is very open and I'm listening very, very carefully.

MR. SALANT: This questioner writes, "Would you accept a mediator to come in and try to resolve the conflict?"

MR. JORDAN: One thing you need to remember is that I'm president at Gallaudet University, and the Board of Trustees has the legal authority and responsibility to name the president and make that decision. I don't have a vote. I didn't have a vote in the meeting room when the president was named. I think you could see from me that I would very strongly endorse Dr. Fernandes. I didn't have a vote. I don't have a vote about mediation.

MR. SALANT: As president, what do you think it will take to end the protest?

MR. JORDAN: What I would very much like to see happen is an agreement that we can sit down and have a conversation. I think a conversation, a dialogue, I think hard work could end the protest.

MR. SALANT: Are there divisions in the deaf civil rights movement analogous to those in the black civil rights movement? And is that what's playing out at Gallaudet now?

MR. JORDAN: In my mind, I don't see what's happening today as civil rights. I don't see that. The civil rights movement that began in 1988, it was all deaf people working together for the rights of all deaf people. Right now what's happening at Gallaudet is that some deaf people want one deaf candidate, some deaf people want one other deaf candidate, some deaf people don't want a candidate. There are people at Gallaudet who very strongly and openly oppose Dr. Fernandes' presidency. There are also people at Gallaudet who very strongly and openly support her presidency. I think that would be common among universities. It's really not civil rights. It's not a civil rights issue.

MR. SALANT: Can Dr. Fernandes survive the faculty no-confidence vote along with the student protests? Can she unify the campus?

And along those lines, how big of a say should current students, who presumably will be graduating and leaving, have in the selection of the campus president?

MR. JORDAN: (Pause.) How many questions was that? (Laughter.) Can Dr. Fernandes lead and unify the campus? I'd say yes. I'd say it's a lot of work. A lot of hard work would be required. I don't want to go into a long narrative here. But in 2000, the year 2000, I named her provost without involving the faculty in a search. That was a terrible thing for me to do. I made a grave mistake in making such an important academic decision without involving the faculty. I've apologized a million times for it, but I'll never apologize enough. It was a mistake. But the individual who suffered the most from that mistake wasn't me, it was Dr. Fernandes who suffered the most from the mistake. But I believe that over time she did bring the different factions together. I know that some of her strongest supporters right now were among her strongest critics in 2000, when I appointed her without faculty involvement. So, yes, I believe she can unify the campus, yes.

MR. SALANT: The other time recently the Gallaudet has attracted national attention was a few years ago with the on-campus murders. What did you learn from that experience, and how did the campus change?

MR. JORDAN: What did we learn? One very important thing we learned was how you have to have a plan for how to deal with crisis. Before that time, we didn't have an active crisis management plan. After that, we developed one. And our crisis management team meets regularly and has a written developed plan that I believe is very important.

Another thing I learned was that the one individual who stepped up and led after that crisis was Dr. Fernandes. I talked about her clarity of thought and actions under pressure. I think the parents of one of the murdered students would be quick to tell you how much respect they have for the way in which she handled the aftermath of the murders.

MR. SALANT: What can be done to bring the university more into the Washington, D.C. community scene and get people in the neighborhoods involved on campus?

MR. JORDAN: I think Gallaudet has a wonderful relationship with our neighbors.

We, obviously, can always improve our relationship. But we have a Gallaudet Community Relations Council, we have a program called Hands Across the Fence, we have people who come run and walk on our track every morning -- I see them there.

When other campuses -- I'll look to Dr. Trachtenburg when I make this comment. When other campuses want to put up a building, then they have to wear body armor to fight against their neighbors. (Laughter.) When we want to put up a building, we have strong letters of support from our local ANCs.

So we have great relationships. You know, H Street is changing. Many of the things happening on H Street are done in partnership with Gallaudet.

MR. SALANT: You talked about your biggest success as president. What is your biggest disappointment?

MR. JORDAN: My biggest disappointment happens every year little by little by little. My biggest disappointment is when I see a young person who has all of the ability necessary to excel at Gallaudet University who, for one reason or another, leaves and doesn't obtain a degree. Really, I go to commencement and I go to events that honor and applaud students' achievements, and I'm happy. But when I see them leave, the despair is harder to deal with than the happiness is pleasant. It's really painful to me to see people who can and should succeed at Gallaudet not do that. So that's my biggest disappointment.

MR. SALANT: You have said that deaf people are like everybody else, except that they can't hear. Do you feel there are or are not any limitations for jobs that your students can apply for upon graduation?

MR. JORDAN: Well, obviously there are jobs that require hearing. Linda and I and our children lived for one year in Scotland when I was a faculty member. And there, one of our neighbors was a telephonist -- I fell in love with that word in Scotland -- telephonist. Someone who works in a job like that, which requires hearing, obviously a deaf person can't.

But any job that doesn't require hearing, any one is open to deaf people, and deaf people do aspire to all of them.

MR. SALANT: What are the biggest hurdles that deaf people face today?

MR. JORDAN: As I said in my speech, really the largest single hurdle is attitudes. People who can hear think of deafness as insurmountable; it's some horrible life experience. And the reason for that is that you who can hear, if you try to imagine yourself deaf, then all you can imagine is what you can't do, you know, how would your life be different. Well, I couldn't hear the radio, I couldn't hear my children, I couldn't hear the telephone -- I couldn't, couldn't couldn't. So you start adding up all of the couldn'ts, then there would be like a sense of despair in deafness.

And that's not the deaf community's belief. I feel no despair in deafness. I'm a very happy, well-adjusted person. And when I've traveled and spoken around the country and really around the world, I preach -- I don't think I'm misusing the word -- I preach that lesson every opportunity I have.

Attitudes are the biggest barriers. Open up your minds. Open up your hearts to deaf people and to all people with disabilities, and we'll excel.

MR. SALANT: What impact has the No Child Left Behind law had on the education of deaf children and other children with disabilities?

MR. JORDAN: I'm not an expert in the No Child Left Behind Act, and therefore I should probably decline to answer, but I won't. (Laughs, laughter.)

I even began by saying I've learned to listen, but this area is really too important. There are many, many, very serious impacts from the No Child Left Behind Act because for -- it's not just impacting on the children, but it's impacting on the people who teach the children.

The people who become teachers have certification and licensure requirements that are very, very difficult for deaf people, that are very challenging for deaf people to achieve. And so some teachers will be told they can't teach deaf children anymore. The people who will suffer from that are the children. There's too much attention given to tests and to seeing children pass tests instead of seeing children learn.

I know that in Florida -- I know, because my daughter teaches in Florida -- in Florida, you must pass a test in third grade to advance to fourth. You must. You can't advance to fourth grade without passing a test. So there are children in Florida who are 11, 12 years old in third grade, and that's really a tragedy, that kind of thing. There's too much attention to requirements in the law and not enough attention given to children.

MR. SALANT: Please comment on the Americans with Disabilities Act. Has it been entirely positive for the deaf?

MR. JORDAN: The Americans with Disabilities Act has really changed the lives of deaf people.

I can't say enough positive things about all the titles in the Americans with Disabilities Act, but perhaps the most important one is Title IV, when -- telecommunications section of that act. Now in my office and in my home, I have equipment that allows me to call immediately anyone on a video phone that the Federal Communication(s) Commission collects money to reimburse the

calls. Therefore, it doesn't cost me anything to make those calls. Access to the telephone is so different today than it was before the ADA that I can't begin to comment about how important that is.

Access in general is marvelous. If you go to a play or go to a PTA meeting, or you go to a political speech, interpreting is routine. Interpreting wasn't routine before the Americans with Disabilities Act. So ADA basically gives us the rights that people who are not deaf or not disabled take for granted. And those are very, very important rights.

MR. SALANT: You talked about your student's experience in Argentina. What is Gallaudet's role in advancing basic rights for deaf people in other parts of the world?

MR. JORDAN: When I decided to step down, I decided because Gallaudet now has a very strong strategic plan for the future. One part of that plan is to strengthen our international and global efforts.

Right now there's no question that Gallaudet's seen all over the world as the leader in education. We have relationships with other countries, but we also have clear, understood need to increase and enhance those relationships. Gallaudet is the lead university in the world for educating deaf people.

MR. SALANT: Other than the selection of a new president, what are the biggest challenges now facing your university as you leave?

MR. JORDAN: The biggest challenge, I believe, is truly becoming an inclusive deaf university of academic excellence. That's our first goal in our new strategic plan, that Gallaudet will model what it means to be an inclusive deaf university.

The world is changing. The population of deaf people is changing. The agitation of deaf children is changing. I understand that right now already the majority of deaf children in the Gallaudet Research Institute database, the majority are children of color.

So what's going to happen in the future is that Gallaudet will have to become welcoming and supportive for a different kind of student than it currently has. We need to recognize first that Gallaudet's history, that Gallaudet's important support for sign language and deaf culture, that's the very heart and core of our university, but it can't stay the only part of the university. We have to expand and welcome people who are from different backgrounds, and people who define their deafness differently and people from different races and ethnicities. It's really a huge difference and a huge challenge. But I'm very confident we can achieve it.

MR. SALANT: This questioner writes, Dr. King -- Dr. King Jordan, what is a young man like you going to do now that will challenge as much as being president of Gallaudet University?

MR. JORDAN: I'm sorry. I really don't understand the question. What is a young man like me going to do now? Ohhhh, you mean -- (laughter) -- retiring? Ohhh, okay. Got it. Ohhh. Got it.

Actually, for eight months -- I announced by resignation eight months ago, and for eight months, I've responded to that question about not making plans for after retirement because I'm paying attention to Gallaudet. I will make my plans down the road. I got lectured at home that I need to start making plans. (Laughs, laughter.)

And one of the things I dearly love and hope I'll be able to do is speak and advocate; speak and advocate for the rights and abilities of people who are disabled and people who are deaf. I want to do that here in the United States. I want to do that in other countries as well. Here in the United States we've made great strides. There are laws that protect the rights of people who are disabled and people who are deaf, but there are still attitudinal issues that I know I can help with, and I want very much to do that.

I also know that in other countries, they don't have the same rights. They don't have the same access. If I can help open one door in a country, I want to do that.

So I hope to use a lot of my time and energy in arguing for the rights and abilities for people who are deaf and disabled.

MR. SALANT: What is the outlook for athletics at an institution like Gallaudet?

MR. JORDAN: Athletics? I'm a very strong, strong supporter of athletics. I'm a strong supporter. But athletics is really not W-L. Start with that, okay? It's not just won-loss records, it's really about building character and teamwork and leadership, and knowing what it means to depend on others and let others depend on you. All of that happens at Gallaudet, all of that. People pay attention to how many games -- 15 wins -- I think recently the baseball season ended. And our baseball team is Division III with a very, very challenging schedule. And they didn't win many games. But if you watch the games and you watch the team and you see how they've grown throughout that experience, athletics plays a very important role at Gallaudet.

MR. SALANT: Will Gallaudet change as more profoundly deaf students get cochlear implants to give them some ability to hear?

MR. JORDAN: Absolutely. Gallaudet will have to change. That's why I said what I said about an inclusive deaf university. How Gallaudet changes? We can change strategically. We can plan to change to welcome and support those students with implants, or we can sit back and then be forced to change when the population changes. We have decided to do the former. We have decided to change strategically. We have decided to welcome students who have implants and tell them if want to speak, that's great. If they want to use their hearing, that's great. But if they come to Gallaudet, they have to learn sign. At Gallaudet, our instruction is in sign. So it will be much to their advantage if they're able to come to Gallaudet and receive support, to learn to sign, and to learn to communicate with other deaf people who don't have implants. We'll learn something from them, they'll learn something from us.

So, will Gallaudet change? We have to change. We will either define our change, or will that then define our change.

MR. SALANT: Both you and Dr. Fernandes know how to speak. Do you see a future where a Gallaudet president exclusively uses American Sign Language?

MR. JORDAN: Sure. Sure. Sure. Absolutely. At some point the president of Gallaudet is going to be someone who doesn't speak, and signs without speech. I think in fairness to Dr. Fernandes, I don't think she speaks when she makes presentations like this. I think she signs and someone voices for her. I think she speaks in small meetings.

But my speaking is both a positive and a negative thing for me. I'd give you a really easy negative example. When I meet parents of young deaf children, then too often they think, "Well, if he can speak, my children should be able to speak, as well." But I grew up hearing. I speak pretty much by accident. Like you, you know, if you grow up hearing, then you speak. So my preferred method of communication is to sign and speak.

That's very controversial in the deaf community. I receive letters from time to time that tell me I would be better if I stopped voicing and signed without voice. But it's a personal choice that I've made to do that.

MR. SALANT: Before I ask the last question, I'd like to present you with the National Press Club coffee mug. (Laughter.) As you enjoy retirement, sit in front of -- sit down and watch TV and a roaring fire and have a nice cup of coffee on us. And also a Certificate of Appreciation for appearing before the Press Club.

MR. JORDAN: Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. SALANT: Our final question: What next for DPN? What should be the next barrier to fall?

MR. JORDAN: Pay attention! (Chuckles.) Attitude is the next barrier. Attitude. Want to learn to finger spell? A-T-T-I-T-U-D-E. That's not just Deaf President Now, DPN; that's "Disability People Now," that's people, that's women now, it's everybody who's different in any way; there needs to be attitudes that we're all in this together.

So the biggest barrier that we have to overcome -- and we still have lots and lots of work to do to overcome it -- is attitudes about people with disabilities and deaf people.

MR. SALANT: Thank you very much. (Applause.)

I'd like to thank everyone for coming today.

I'd also like to thank National Press Club staff members Melinda Cooke, Pat Nelson, Jo Anne Booze, and Howard Rothman for organizing today's lunch. And thanks to the Eric Friedheim National Journalism Library for its research.

We're adjourned. (Sounds gavel.)

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