**Bios of Panelists & Presenters**

**Isidore Niyongabo**

Isidore is originally from Muyinga, Burundi, and has resided in California since 2005. He earned his B.A. in psychology from San Diego State University (SDSU) in 2011, where he founded the American Sign Language (ASL) Club to provide support to undergraduate ASL and Deaf Studies students, whose program had been placed on hiatus at SDSU. Niyongabo also served as co-chair on the student advisory board for SDSU’s Student Disability Services from 2010-2011. His dedication to campus community improvement and bridging hearing and deaf world led him to wining Homecoming King Honor making him the first Deaf student to win such prestigious award in the History of SDSU. His experience of becoming deaf at age 10 and growing up as a displaced person in post-genocide Burundi strongly influenced him to become an advocate for the educational and social rights of Deaf children and women in East Africa and other developing countries. He is currently establishing a nonprofit organization, International Deaf Education, Advocacy & Leadership (IDEAL). I.D.E.A.L. came from his various life experiences, education adventure, and a promise that he made to his childhood classmates 15 years ago that one day he would get a better education in America and go back to advocate for them. Through I.D.E.A.L, Isidore hopes to reach out to millions of Deaf children and youth, their families and their communities! “Bridging the world, One Community at a Time” In addition to his native languages, Kirundi and Burundi Sign Language, Niyongabo is fluent in, French, English, American Sign Language, Ugandan Sign Language, and is learning Spanish.

**Amy Seaman**

Amy was born and raised on the Central Coast of California.  She has been involved in Deaf Education since the age of 18, when she started as a teacher's assistant.  By the age of 24, she had completed her MA in Special Education and Education Specialist Teaching Credential from California State University, Northridge. She has worked with deaf children from preschool through college in both residential and mainstream settings. She will soon be completing her 15th year as a teacher and feels just as passionate about Deaf Education as when she first started out. She currently coordinates and teaches in the DHH program at Helix Charter High School.  Amy is a mother of two beautiful girls, Karly, age 11 and Shelby, age 9. In her spare time, she enjoys reviewing recent research in Deaf Education, traveling, exploring the great outdoors, and competing in running events with her husband, Alex.

**Liz Mendoza**

Liz has been an interpreter since 1984 and a staff interpreter with Network Interpreting Service since 1993. She has been teaching fingerspelling and interpreting classes since 1989 and is currently a faculty member at Palomar College in San Marcos, CA. Liz is author of ABC-123: Fingerspelling and Numbers in American Sign Language (2006) and has been actively involved in the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf on the local, regional and national levels, as well as the Conference of Interpreter Trainers as Board Secretary. Liz received her Associate of Arts degree in Sign Language Interpreting from San Diego Mesa College, Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics from San Diego State University, Master of Arts degree in Teaching and Learning, Curriculum Design, and her Doctor of Education, both at University of California, San Diego.

**Branton Stewart**

Branton Stewart grew up with his Deaf family in Atlanta. Throughout his school years, he used several modes of communication such as using SEE, Oralism, Cued Speech and managed to communicate the use of with and without interpreters. He completed his Bachelor’s degree in Government and minored in Business Administration at Gallaudet University.

His experience includes involvement with volunteer positions in both NAD and RID. Some positions held are; four years as the Vice chairperson for the Deaf Caucus under RID, the NAD delegate for GA and NY during four NAD conventions, President of Empire State Association of the Deaf, and involvement with several organizations in Atlanta, NYC, Rochester and Southern California which primarily focused on issues to help improve the quality of communication for the Deaf Interpreting and Interpreter communities. He used to be chairperson for Deaf Advisory Council for RID. He was appointed for interim RID Board of Directors in fall 2013.

Branton’s career has always included some type of partnership with the Deaf and interpreting field. During the last sixteen years, his career endeavors have centered on the interpreting industry.  Other positions, Branton have held include; lobbyist, coordinator, director, marketing, recruiter, and a VRS manager. He currently owns a company called CDI Network ([www.needCDI.com](http://www.needCDI.com)) and started as a stand-up comedian for pleasure.

Branton currently resides in Temecula, CA since 2006 with his wife, Susan and two Labradors.

**Lisa Sands**

Lisa Sands has been interpreting professionally since 2002, and holds CI & CT and NIC-Advanced certification from RID. She started learning sign language as a foreign language in high school, and after meeting members of the deaf community shortly after, it became her passion. She graduated from Palomar College in 2004 with a certificate in ASL-English Interpreting and also has completed courses at the University of Northern Colorado. She has worked in many facets of the profession including educational, VRS, community settings, DeafBlind and conferences. She left San Diego for a short time and worked as the ASL interpreting service coordinator for Children's Hospital Colorado. She currently works as a staff interpreter at Deaf Community Services, and wants to work on improving medical interpreting services for the Deaf community in the future.

**Main Presenters:**

**Lynnette Miller**

Lynnette Miller is a Chicago native and a graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champagne with a Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Arts (focus on Sociology) and a minor in Psychology. Lynnette is the only Deaf child in her family and did not learn ASL until her high school years. Lynnette served on the Board of Directors for Deaf Community Services in San Diego and served as a committee member and co-chair for several years for Deaf Awareness Day, also here in San Diego. She has worked as a social worker with San Diego County for the past 12 years, focusing on working with Deaf families. Lynnette recently joined SDCRID as co-chair for the Professional Development Committee!  In her free time, Lynnette enjoys going on adventures with her two children, socializing with friends, and chilling out at home or on the beach!

**Mala S. Poe**

Mala Poe has an Education Specialist degree (Ed.S.) in Deaf Education: Applied Linguistics as well as a Masters degree in Linguistics, both from Gallaudet University. She has been a member of the Deaf community since 1986, and holds national certification in interpreting from RID and NAD. She is a staff interpreter at the University of California San Diego for the Deaf faculty. She also works as a freelance interpreter and presenter on working with individuals who are Deaf-Blind. She is serving her third year as President for SDCRID, prior to that she was Vice-President and Professional Development Chair. On the state level, she is now RID’s Region V Representative for the Deaf-Blind Member Section, after three years of Vice-Chair, though still continues to the their Listserv moderator. Her passion is traveling to provide workshops within her Region exposing people to interpreting with Deaf-Blind people. In the little spare time that she has, she enjoys volunteering at Deaf Community events and working with the Susan G Komen Foundation as part of the Moto Route Safety Crew. When not working, she is actively involved with activities relating to the Eric Poe Memorial Fund.