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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **AUDISM FREE AMERICA PROTEST TARGETS THE VOLTA BUREAU**

Audism Free America (AFA), a grassroots Deaf activist organization, will stage a one-day protest rally on April 3<sup>rd</sup> 2009 in front of the Volta Bureau at 1537 35th St., NW in the greater Washington DC metropolitan area.

The purpose of the rally is to call attention to the denial of linguistic and human rights of Deaf citizens and to highlight how the Volta Bureau/AG Bell Association has worked to perpetuate the denial of these rights.

The newly formed AFA organization serves to expose AUDISM—practices and attitudes based on the assumption that the behaving in the ways of those who speak and hear is best and desired. Audism manifests itself as stigma, bias, discrimination, and prejudice—in overt or covert ways—against Deaf culture, American Sign Language and Deaf people from all walks of life.

The national landmark known as the Volta Bureau houses a shameful history in the establishment and perpetuation of audism in the United States. The Volta Bureau was established by Alexander Graham Bell in 1893 who was the chief architect and advocate of the oral / aural-only exclusive method in Deaf education in the US. Bell never tolerated sign language as part of the Deaf child's

educational program. The primary reason for this relates to his position as a staunch eugenicist. His fear of the formation of an undesired “Deaf race” drove him to work toward denying Deaf people the right to use sign language, be educated together, be taught by other Deaf people, and socialize together.

These ideas provide the historical roots of the AG Bell Association today and its mission “advocating independence through listening and talking.” The organization’s fanatic lobbying for governmental resources for “exclusive” programs which focus on audition and speech “without the use of sign language or lipreading” for Deaf children results in infringing on the rights of Deaf children who would benefit from becoming bilingual---using American Sign Language and English.

Several years ago, the AG Bell Association publicly objected to a Pepsi commercial with two signing Deaf characters---an act which highlights their determination in the promotion of speaking and listening as the only desirable and acceptable means for Deaf people to communicate and function successfully in mainstream society...which is clearly audism.

AFA organizers challenge the assumption inherent in the Volta Bureau’s purpose: that to be “a center of information for deaf and hard of hearing persons,” neglects to the most part the accomplishments of Deaf signing people and their culture (in the United States and worldwide).

The AFA objects to how the AG Bell Association has sought to control the media, the medical establishment, educational professionals and families with Deaf children while outright neglecting the views and experiences of Deaf Americans. As a result of the advocacy of the AG Bell’s Association, the American public is indoctrinated with attitudes of paternalism, bias and discrimination toward Deaf people.

The AFA protest on April 3<sup>rd</sup> serves to direct attention to the audism that is promoted by institutions like the Volta Bureau/AG Bell Association.

In the spirit of the new administration in Washington DC, the AFA organizers call on those working at the Volta Bureau and the AG Bell

Association to work with us to promote freedom from audism in American life for ALL Deaf citizens. Yes, we believe, we CAN!

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For additional information on the **Audism Free America Protest Targets the Volta Bureau**, contact Ruthie Jordan at [AudismFreeAmerica@gmail.com](mailto:AudismFreeAmerica@gmail.com) or visit <http://audismfreeamerica.blogspot.com>.