

Audism

Audism (from Latin *audire*, to hear, and *-ism*, a system of practice, behavior, belief, or attitude) has been variously defined as:

- The notion that one is superior based on one's ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who hears. (Humphries 1977:12)
- ...the belief that life without hearing is futile and miserable, that hearing loss is a tragedy and "the scourge of mankind," and that deaf people should struggle to be as much like hearing people as possible. Deaf activists Heidi Reed and Hartmut Teuber at D.E.A.F. Inc., a community service and advocacy organization in Boston, consider audism to be "a special case of ableism." Audists, hearing or deaf, shun Deaf culture and the use of sign language, and have what Reed and Teuber describe as "an obsession with the use of residual hearing, speech, and lip-reading by deaf people." (Pelka 1997: 33)
- ...an attitude based on pathological thinking which results in a negative stigma toward anyone who does not hear; like racism or sexism, audism judges, labels, and limits individuals on the basis of whether a person hears and speaks. (Humphrey and Alcorn 1995: 85)
- ...the corporate institution for dealing with deaf people, dealing with them by making statements about them, authorizing views of them, describing them, teaching about them, governing where they go to school and, in some cases, where they live; in short, audism is the hearing way of dominating, restructuring, and exercising authority over the deaf community. It includes such professional people as administrators of schools for deaf children and of training programs for deaf adults, interpreters, and some audiologists, speech therapists, otologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, librarians, researchers, social workers, and hearing aid specialists. (Lane 1992: 43)

Persons who practice audism are called *audists*. Audists may be hearing or deaf.

The term *audism* was coined by Tom Humphries in *Communicating across cultures (deaf-hearing) and language learning* (1997: 12). The term lay dormant until Lane revived its use 15 years later. It is increasingly catching on, though not yet in regular dictionaries of the English language. Humphries originally applied *audism* to individual attitudes and practices, but Lane and others have broadened its scope to include institutional and group attitudes, practices, and oppression of deaf persons.

The first half of Lane's book *The mask of benevolence: disabling the deaf community* is the most extensive published survey and discussion of audism so far (Lane 1992).

References:

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