

Nightline, ABC News

Wednesday, March 9, 1988, live television broadcast, 11:30 pm ET

Host: Ted Koppel, guests: Greg Hlibok, Marlee Matlin, Elisabeth Zinser.

Video: <http://tinyurl.com/nightline-dpn>

TED KOPPEL (voiceover): The charge made by students at Gallaudet University for the deaf is that their school administration refuses to listen, and so the students have closed the school down.

[On screen: ALLEN E SUSSMAN PhD, Gallaudet Faculty Spokesman]

[On screen: Voice of Interpreter]

ALLEN SUSSMAN (signing): –an end to this plantation mentality. We will *not* back down. We will *not* concede.

TED KOPPEL (host, in studio, speaking with a strongly confident, professional newscaster's voice throughout the program): Good evening. I'm Ted Koppel, and this is Nightline.

[*Fire alarm bells*]

TED KOPPEL (voiceover): The spark that set off the controversy at Gallaudet, the Board picked a new school president who can hear. She will be among our guests, and so too will be the president of the Gallaudet student body, and actress Marlee Matlin.

[*Theme music, dramatic trumpet fanfare*]

(Announcer): This is ABC News Nightline. Reporting from Washington: Ted Koppel.

[On screen: TED KOPPEL]

TED KOPPEL (in studio): You may find it momentarily distracting, but if ever the content of a program ought to be accessible to the nation's hearing impaired, this one, tonight, is it. The captioning at the bottom of your screens is normally seen only by people whose television sets have a special decoder. That is why it's usually referred to as "closed captioning." It's been brought to our attention that a great many deaf or hearing-impaired people don't have access to a closed caption set, so tonight you can all read along as you listen and watch, a story that is profoundly important to the hearing-impaired among us.

Let it be said first of all that each of our guests tonight has the best interests of the deaf at heart. The question is to what degree good intentions are enough, or whether, in this case, they amount to a form of outdated paternalism. We begin with this report from Karen Stone.

[On screen: WASHINGTON]

[*Cheers, car horn honking*]

KAREN STONE (speaking with a professional news correspondent's voice): Although the occasional silence of deaf demonstrators may appear unusual to the hearing, Gallaudet students have made their demands loud and clear.

[*Chanting*] Deaf president now! Deaf president now! Deaf president now!

(Protester wearing sunglasses, signing and speaking): We deaf people have our rights, and now it's time that we need a deaf president. We don't "want" one, we *need* one.

KAREN STONE (voiceover, cont.): The controversy was ignited by the university trustees selection of a new president, choosing a hearing woman who is just now learning sign language over two deaf candidates.

[*Jeers*]

KAREN STONE (voiceover): The students' reaction when the board chairman faced them on Monday was outrage.

[On screen: Voice of Jane Spilman, Gallaudet Univ Board Chmn]

JANE BASSETT SPILMAN (mild Southern accent): If you'd like for us to *listen* to the students, the students will have to be a little quieter.

[*Very loud fire alarm bells ringing and reverberating in a large gym*]

[On screen: GREG HLIBOK, Student Body Govt Pres]

GREG HLIBOK (signing): We want Dr. Zinser to resign as the president-elect, and we want to have a deaf person selected immediately. We want Ms. Spilman to resign. We want to have at least 51% deaf representation on the board—

KAREN STONE (voiceover, cont.): —since then students have virtually shut down the campus, marched on the Capitol, and brought national attention to the issue of deaf pride. Support has swelled to include alumni, staff, national deaf organizations, and today the university's faculty.

[On screen: TRUMAN STELLE PhD, Faculty Member]

TRUMAN STELLE: Therefore be it resolved that the collegiate faculty, meeting on March 9th, calls for the Board of Trustees to withdraw its offer to Dr. Zinser and to offer the presidency to one of those qualified hearing-impaired candidates.

KAREN STONE (voiceover, cont.): During its 124-year history, Gallaudet University, the *only* liberal arts university for the deaf in the United States, has built an international reputation for excellence. It is the alma mater for 95% of the nation's deaf college graduates. Gallaudet offers 30 undergraduate and graduate degrees, along with pre-school, elementary, and secondary school programs. It is a research institute and national clearinghouse for information on deafness.

[On screen: HARLAN LANE PhD, Visiting Prof Gallaudet Univ]

HARLAN LANE (professorial tone of voice): It is to the Deaf people of the world what Mecca is to the Arab people of the world or Jerusalem is to the Jewish people of the world.

(Dancer) (signing:) They say I'm deaf ... Those folks who call me "friend" ...

KAREN STONE (voiceover, cont.): The reality of deafness is an integral part of everything here: the arts...sports—in fact, the football huddle was invented here to hide hand signals; communications—

[On screen: Hello. Welcome to Deaf Mosaic]

KAREN STONE (voiceover, cont.): Gallaudet produces national television programs for the deaf.

HARLAN LANE (voiceover): Gallaudet is America's face toward deafness. It's not just a university with a lot of deaf students. The history of the relations between deaf and hearing people is the history of the struggle, sad to say, between hearing people who thought they knew what was best for the deaf, and deaf people who had very different views.

KAREN STONE (voiceover, cont.): It's a struggle that many feel goes beyond the question of who will lead Gallaudet University. It's a struggle over civil rights.

[On screen: GARY W OLSEN, Exec Dir Natl Assoc of the Deaf]

GARY OLSEN (signing, voice of interpreter): Black people have developed their image. Women have developed their image. People in New York City have—there's *many* kinds

of ethnic groups. We have our own opportunity to develop our image, too. Why are we not being given this opportunity?

KAREN STONE (voiceover, cont.): Today, despite the overwhelming vote by the faculty and staff to side with the students, trustee chairman Spilman and newly selected president Dr. Elisabeth Ann Zinser said they will not be swayed by the students' demands.

[On screen: ELISABETH ANN ZINSER PhD, President Gallaudet University]

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: I am committed to providing leadership to this great university. I have no illusions that it will be easy at all.

[On screen: JANE SPILMAN, Gallaudet Univ Board Chmn]

JANE BASSETT SPILMAN: I am *not* willing to say I made a mistake, and I am pleased to report to you that the majority—the board members who voted in the majority opinion do not believe that *they* made a mistake.

[On screen: Karen Stone, Washington]

KAREN STONE (in studio): Today the two deaf candidates for president expressed support for Dr. Zinser, and the trustees are adamant that she *will* remain president, but the students, buttressed by growing outside support, vow to continue their fight, until a deaf president takes office.

GARY OLSEN (signing): I don't want my deaf children to believe that their only salvation is to be a hearing person.

HARLAN LANE: So throughout the world, the resolution of this is a message to deaf people everywhere. It may be a message of: You can do it. You can determine your own fate. Or it may be a message of: No, you can't, not yet.

KAREN STONE (voiceover): This is Karen Stone for Nightline in Washington.

TED KOPPEL (in studio): Later, we'll be joined by actress Marlee Matlin who is deaf and who won an Academy Award for her role in "Children of a Lesser God." But joining us first when we come back, the new president of Gallaudet, Elisabeth Ann Zinser, and the president of the Gallaudet student body, Greg Hlibok.

[Commercial break]

TED KOPPEL (in studio): I must say at the outset that we asked the Board of Trustees to send their chairman, Jane Spilman, or any other member of the board to join us tonight to explain their decision to appoint Elisabeth Ann Zinser as president. The

invitation was declined. The spokesperson said, the trustees decided to send President Zinser herself to represent *their* views. Dr. Zinser, whose doctorate is in educational psychology served as vice chancellor at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro from 1983, until this week. She is with us in our Washington bureau. Also joining us in Washington, Greg Hlibok, whose name I mangled a moment ago, a junior at Gallaudet, majoring in engineering, who is president of the student government and also a leader of the student protest. Greg, his parents, and brothers and sister are all deaf. Interpreting for him tonight is Betty—do me a favor, pronounce *your* name for me, please, so that—

BETTY COLONOMOS (interpreter speaking for herself, mild New York accent):
"Colonomos" [kuh-LON-uh-mus].

TED KOPPEL: Colonomos. Betty Colonomos. So please do not be confused of the person whose views you are hearing expressed is of course Greg Hlibok, but you will be hearing a woman's voice. Now, Greg. Just give me very quickly the conditions that you and the rest of the student body have set forth.

[On screen: GREG HLIBOK, Student Body Govt Pres]

[On screen: Washington]

GREG HLIBOK (signing): OK, there are four conditions that we have established, and all four of them have been supported by both the hearing and deaf, faculty and staff, and the Deaf Community, as far as we can tell, worldwide has supported these. First, that Dr. Zinser resign and that we have a deaf president selected. Second is that the chairman, Spilman, resign from the board and as chair. Third, that at least 51% of the Board of Trustees be deaf, and fourth that there be no reprisals against the students, faculty, and staff for their participation in this protest.

TED KOPPEL: What you are really asking for, or what you are really demanding here, amounts to an unconditional surrender, not only on the part of the newly appointed president, but also on the part of the board. Is there any room for compromise in your position at all?

GREG HLIBOK: We regret that we do not want to compromise at all, because we have been making many concessions for many, many years, and this time we feel very firm that we will not bend on these issues, and we will stay on these four demands—and—it's becoming harder and harder for us to compromise, because we're getting increasing support from more and more people, and we're getting financial support, moral support, and so the—We feel that the Board has very little support at this point and theirs is decreasing, so we feel it's—it's time for them to make the concessions.

TED KOPPEL: Dr. Zinser, what we have heard from both you and from the chairman of the board, and other members of the board, indicates that there is little or no room for compromise in terms of your position either at this point. What's happening, of course, is that a whole lot of youngsters here are not getting an education, you are not really to begin—not able to begin your job. You seem to have neither the support of the faculty, nor of the student body right now. Surely, everyone must sympathize with you to a certain degree, but doesn't there come a point where you have to say: the university has got to be able to do its business, and if it can't do it with me, then it's going to have to do it with someone else.

[On screen: ELISABETH ANN ZINSER PhD, Pres Gallaudet Univ]

[On screen: Washington]

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: Well Ted, I've taken the position, having been invited to serve as president last Sunday night and not intending to be available until July, but coming to Washington this week and discovering the situation, I elected to go ahead and assume my duties immediately, in order to attempt to resolve some of the concerns and difficulties that are occurring on the campus. I believe very deeply in the work and the mission of Gallaudet University, and I believe that this is not only an issue in the Deaf Community, which is a very serious issue, but it's also an issue in the Higher Education Community. So I'm committed to assuming the responsibilities that I agreed to assume last Sunday night, until such time as the Board of Trustees may elect to ask me to step aside. At this point they have not done that, and I'm fulfilling my duties and am in place at the present time as president.

TED KOPPEL: Please understand. I don't question—and I don't think anyone else does—your credentials—

GREG HLIBOK: Excuse me

TED KOPPEL: Yes?

GREG HLIBOK: Excuse me. I would like to make one clarification here. The Board of Trustees has invited Dr. Zinser to take her place as the university president, but there's no support on the campus for that and we have *not* accepted her and recognized her as the president of Gallaudet University.

TED KOPPEL: No, I understand, but you must also understand that normally the president of a university is not elected by the student body, and the question that I was just posing to Dr. Zinser and was about to repeat to her is, while it is true that you can only be invited to serve, or invited to step down by the board, are you not facing an

impossible position when *neither* the faculty nor the student body appears ready to support you, indeed when *both* are calling for you to step down.

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: I believe at the present time that a very strong sentiment is being sent to me with regard to asking me to step down, but I am not convinced at this point that it is uniform. I've had many indications of support from the Campus Community. I have had indications of support from Harvey Corson and from King Jordan, who were also candidates for this post, and I'm—I believe that if I'm given an opportunity in the next couple of days to engage in person-to-person conversations with the leadership in the student body and the faculty and the staff, the alumni, that we might begin to establish the contact that is needed in setting the agenda for the future of the university. It is a great university. It deserves to have strong academic leadership, and I'm hoping for those conversations.

TED KOPPEL: Alright, we're going to have to take a break right now and when we come back we will be joined by actress Marlee Matlin.

[*Commercial break*]

TED KOPPEL (in studio): Last year she received the Academy Award for Best Actress for her role in “Children of a Lesser God.” This year, Marlee Matlin will be one of the presenters at the award ceremonies. Ms. Matlin, who holds an honorary doctorate from Gallaudet, joins us now in our Los Angeles bureau, and interpreting for her is Jack Jason. You have become certainly a symbol of pride for many deaf people around this country. It's in that capacity that I want to talk to you tonight. Why do you think it is so terribly important to so many people at Gallaudet and in the hearing-impaired community that there be a deaf president?

[On screen: MARLEE MATLIN, Actress]

[On screen: Los Angeles]

MARLEE MATLIN (signing): Well, I know why it's important to be here. I mean, I think it's important as a role model to deaf people. First of all, let me thank you for inviting me. What I see happening at Washington, DC with Gallaudet University is something that really—is really disappointing to me. I know that there is a board of trustees who have chosen a hearing president, and the disagreement on the part of the students, but there's also a university that for 124 years has never had a president who's deaf, and I think it's time to have a deaf president. I'm not familiar with Dr. Zinser, and I respect her as a human being, and I understand exactly what she does, but I disagree in the fact that—in the fact that there have been only two or three deaf board members, and they were the ones who voted for the deaf candidates, and the hearing people have voted for

the hearing candidate. I think it's time that—[*confident tone*] I mean, that shows that there's something wrong. There needs to be a change.

TED KOPPEL: If—and I don't know for a fact that this is so—but if it were true that the other two candidates simply were not of the same caliber as Dr. Zinser. If they simply would not make as good a president, is it so important that there be a deaf president that someone be selected even though their credentials are not as good and their qualifications are not as high?

MARLEE MATLIN: [*emphatic tone*] I think—I mean, there just has to be somebody who's qualified and deaf. There *are* deaf people out in the Community. I mean, you don't know how *many* deaf people there are. There are *lots* of qualified people out there. It's unbelievable. And I have to tell you that I've talked with a lot of people here in California about what they think, that's happening in Washington, and they support the students 100%. I've seen children here at deaf schools who have dreams to go to Gallaudet College to become whatever they want to be, and now they see students protesting on the street against the fact that they have a hearing president, or whatever's happening there, and their dreams are shattered. It's not good. They're not providing the role model that they need, and I'm just letting them know that I'm a bit embarrassed to *have* this [honorary] degree from Gallaudet University, because I was chosen by the Board. Those are the people, I'm sorry to say, those are the people who I think are really deaf.

TED KOPPEL: Let me talk to Dr. Zinser again for a moment, and the question I would put to you, Dr. Zinser is given the intense passion, the feelings here, given the importance of the symbolism, given what Marlee Matlin has just said—

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: Hmm, hmm.

TED KOPPEL: —I know you can understand it, because you're an empathetic person. Can you understand it to the point that you might even say: If it's that important to all these people, under those conditions, that you *would* step down?

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: [*somewhat haltingly*] I feel that a first step needs to be having some conversations with students, sharing these views with me and helping me to understand this perspective. I would like to ask what I may—

MARLEE MATLIN: [*aggressive tone*] Excuse me, why didn't we have the conversations before?—[Jack Jason:] Marlee says—

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: I would like to ask—

MARLEE MATLIN: —Before the decision was made?

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: [*finding her stride*] There *were* individuals on the search committee and on the Board of Trustees that had that opportunity, and that's where the action normally takes place, when a selection of a president is going on. But I would like to ask Marlee a question. I understand that not long ago she encountered a considerable amount of controversy on the Gallaudet University campus herself, and I wonder how she overcame that controversy when she faced it.

MARLEE MATLIN: A lot of controversy about what?

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: When—when it was being considered for your honorary degree—

MARLEE MATLIN: Yes.

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: —And I wonder how you overcame that, Marlee?

MARLEE MATLIN: Well, I overcame—I mean, I understand the question that you're asking. But I accepted the honorary degree that they gave me, because [*incredulous tone*] I mean, there was *no* protest. I never saw it myself. I can let you know, that I'm just—again, I have to repeat it again, I'm embarrassed about what's been happening there. I really am.

TED KOPPEL: I tell you what. Let me interject here for a moment, because I'm afraid we're going to get—we're going to get lost on another issue, and what I'm trying to get to is, clearly whatever room there was for conversation now seems to have been lost in the middle of demonstrations, and I must say, Dr. Zinser, I'm reading in tomorrow morning's Washington Post that several members of Congress are threatening, or saying, that the possibility exists that they will have to cut off some of the *funding* to Gallaudet College, unless you are withdrawn, and 75% of Gallaudet's funding comes from Congress.

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: Yes, I understand, and I would find that to be a very unfortunate circumstance, because Gallaudet University is a private institution, admittedly funded largely by the federal government, and I'm hoping that the Congress will allow me to take my place as president and provide the opportunity for leadership in moving the university into the 20th Century.

GREG HLIBOK: Excuse me, Ted?

TED KOPPEL: No, I tell you what. Hold on one second, Greg. We have to take a break. I promise when we come back, I'll come to you first of all, OK? We'll continue our discussion in a moment.

[*Commercial break*]

TED KOPPEL (in studio): Continuing our conversation with Greg Hlibok, the student representative from Gallaudet. Greg, you indicated at the top of this broadcast that you are not prepared to have any compromise. But let me ask you this: Would you be prepared, together with a representative from the faculty and perhaps even a representative from one of the Congresspeople who serves on the Board to meet with a Board representative and Dr. Zinser, in order to try to create some kind of a solution that will be to everyone's benefit. What's happening right now is to no one's, clearly.

GREG HLIBOK: [*Earnestly*] OK, Ted, my remarks now are addressed to Dr. Zinser, because I really feel it's important to address what she said. She said she was not convinced, because she got some indication of support, but I think that the reasons that she's not convinced is because she doesn't have access to the Community and there's no dialog. I mean, there really is no one solution that can be reached, unless these demands are met. There's been a lot of damage, because we may lose funds from Congress. We already have a lot of destructive forces now on the Deaf Community. We have to—it's something you're going to kind of have to clean up yourself, because you kind of created this.

TED KOPPEL: Well, let me, before Dr. Zinser responds, let me just ask you to be a little more directly responsive to the question that I asked you, and that is, since there's been all this talk about dialog, would it be possible, for example, tomorrow, for you and a representative of the faculty and a representative of the Board and Dr. Zinser and perhaps a Congressman to sit down and try and work something out? We're coming to the end of the school year. I'm sure a lot of people's lives are being disrupted here. Cannot something be done by dialog even at this point?

GREG HLIBOK: We have had some dialog with Dr. Zinser in the past, and we came out with no positive solution, so we have decided on the basis of this that there will be no dialog until the four demands are met. We are not ready to have any more dialogs. It's a very, very simple request, and that request just may have to be, you know, our command in the future.

TED KOPPEL: Alright, Dr. Zinser—

MARLEE MATLIN: Ted? Ted?

TED KOPPEL: Hold on folks. Dr. Zinser—

MARLEE MATLIN: Ted, can—?

TED KOPPEL: —We're down to the last 30 seconds—

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: Yes?

TED KOPPEL: I really do feel that Dr. Zinser needs to have a chance to respond to this, so please go ahead.

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: Thank you, Ted. I did have an exchange for about 10 minutes this morning with four of the students, which was very short, attempting to make contact with the students, and I have invited them to join me tomorrow and hope that will be possible. Thank you very much.

TED KOPPEL: I tell you what. We've just made a command decision here—

MARLEE MATLIN: Ted?

TED KOPPEL: —Yeah, we're going to go over [the 30-minute time limit] a little bit. Don't worry about it, Marlee. You've got a chance to jump in here, too, please. Go ahead.

MARLEE MATLIN: Oh, great. Good. Thank you. You know, I think that, to get to the point, 124 years is much too long—124 years of only one-way conversations, you know, and I can tell you truthfully, Dr. Zinser, I really think how arrogant it can be of the University [for them to ask you] to come to a school not knowing a *thing* about deafness, not knowing a *thing* about sign language—And I'm talking to all Board [members]—Hearing people who are "deaf inside." I think they are deaf inside. It's very selfish on their part not to let deaf people *have* the chance to speak, *have* the chance to be the president. And I think the whole time, for that 124 years of one-way conversation, it's something that has to change. It *has to* change and there *has to* be new lives. There *has to* be new everything.

TED KOPPEL: Dr. Zinser?

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: Ted?—Uh, huh.

TED KOPPEL: Yeah, go ahead.

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: If I could make a final comment, I'd just like to say that at this point in time, as President of Gallaudet University, I want to indicate that the University is an extraordinary institution, and it deserves to have the continued funding of the Congress, and the continuing strength into the future in its mission as an educational institution and a significant research institution—

GREG HLIBOK: Excuse me! Are you implying that a deaf person can't continue that, for the future?

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: Not—not at all. As a matter of fact, I would hope—

MARLEE MATLIN: Well, someone said—someone said that. Someone at—someone I have heard on the Board said that deaf people aren't able to function in the hearing world, and I wish I could name that person right now, but I can't.

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: OK, I don't—I do not know about a quote of that sort. I can only speak for myself—

MARLEE MATLIN: [*incredulously*] I'm sure you do [know], Dr. Zinser.

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: I truly believe—I believe very strongly that a deaf individual, one day, will not only be the President of Gallaudet—

MARLEE MATLIN: [*almost shouting*] Why not now?! Why not now? Look at me! Look at me!

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: I'm having a very hard—

GREG HLIBOK: [*boldly*] No, that's old news! I'm tired of that statement: "One day"—again and again: "Someday a deaf person..."—We've gotta break this cycle.

MARLEE MATLIN: [*agreeing*] It is, again and again. It is. It's old news, and come on!

GREG HLIBOK: [*confidently*] The past presidents have always said that: "Someday..."

TED KOPPEL: Folks, I tell you what. We have something approaching anarchy here, because even while the two of you are talking at the same time, which makes it very difficult. We're also hearing the voice of a man speaking for a woman and the voice of a woman speaking for a man. Have a little bit of compassion for the viewer who's trying to keep up with who's speaking.

MARLEE MATLIN: OK, OK.

TED KOPPEL: —And I'm going to have to insist that you do it one at a time. Now Greg, you had a point that you wanted to make. Go ahead.

GREG HLIBOK: OK, this statement: "One day, a deaf president..." is very old rhetoric. We've been hearing this for 124 years. We're getting *tired* of hearing this statement. This is just a cycle. Every time a new president comes in they say: "Well, one day..." So this shows then that the past presidents have failed, then, if they haven't provided any deaf leaders—any opportunities—then obviously Gallaudet hasn't done a good job. If they have done a good job, then there should be a deaf president, someone qualified to do this.

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: Greg, I apologize for making a statement that aggravated you, but what I'm really saying is that I do believe that deaf individuals have great capacities. There has been a tremendous growth in the positions that deaf people hold—

MARLEE MATLIN: [*half shout*] They have—[*normal tone*] They have abilities.

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: May I finish? May I finish my statement?

GREG HLIBOK: [To Zinser:] Then prove it!

[*pause*]

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: The Board of Trustees has the authority to make a judgment about who should be the next president. I'm not in a position to do that. I would like to say, however, that I think it's a premier institution, and an institution in which the development of deaf individuals into leadership positions and policy positions can occur.

TED KOPPEL: Alright, folks. Let me—Let me—Excuse me one second. Let me ask one more question and then we're going to have to bring this discussion to a conclusion. The question is this: Quite clearly, Gallaudet, at the moment, is an institution that is not functioning at all. It is not functioning because the *students* don't want it to function. It is not functioning because the *teachers* don't want it to function, and if you'll forgive my saying so, Dr. Zinser, it's a— it's a little bit disingenuous [for you] to suggest that you are some kind of a puppet who cannot act on her own because the Board has said: "You're in." If you decided—

MARLEE MATLIN: Right.

TED KOPPEL: —Hold on folks—If you've decided—[*incredulous tone*]—If you decided on your own that what you have here is an untenable situation, you're certainly a free individual to make that decision.

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: That's true, by virtue of resigning. That's true, Ted, but at this point I haven't had enough conversation with the individuals and the parties involved, in order to derive a judgment—

MARLEE MATLIN: Oh, come on, come on.

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: —of that sort—

MARLEE MATLIN: —come on.

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: I had a ten-minute conversation with the students this morning and am attempting this week to set up meetings—

MARLEE MATLIN: What's this?!

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: –in order to help us understand one another, [*matter-of-factly*] and so the time will tell.

TED KOPPEL: Alright, Marlee, go ahead. You've been trying to get into this. Make your—make your comment and then we'll—we'll wrap this up.

MARLEE MATLIN: I mean, I really just—I really can't believe this. I really can't. I could go on and on with this, [*ironically*] but it seems to be her show.

GREG HLIBOK: Ted?

TED KOPPEL: Alright—Yes, Greg, go ahead.

GREG HLIBOK: Can I say one final thing?

TED KOPPEL: Yes, you can.

GREG HLIBOK: [*hurriedly*] OK, remember the Board's got 17 hearing people on it. Almost all of them cannot sign at all. All of them—all of them don't know anything about deaf people. They come in whenever they come in and meet, three times a year, they vote on things, and then they leave. They show no commitment. They don't know anything about deafness, and that's why we want to have a majority of deaf people *on* the Board so they can be in touch with the administration of the school. And so Dr. Zinser should *not* follow the Board of Trustees. She should follow what our demands are and our desires are, because we *know*.

TED KOPPEL: Alright, folks, I'm afraid we have—

MARLEE MATLIN: Ted, can I say one thing?—

TED KOPPEL: No, I'm sorry. I'm a—I'm afraid we *really* do have to bring this to a conclusion right now. If nothing else, I think we've begun to outline the dimensions of the problem. I regret to say I don't think we've come any closer to resolving it. But I hope for all your sakes that it is resolved in the very near future and I'm very grateful to the three of you for joining us this evening.

ELISABETH ANN ZINSER: Thank you, Ted.

TED KOPPEL: That's our report for tonight. I'm Ted Koppel in Washington. For all of us here at ABC News, good night.

[*Music*]

[*End*]

[*Transcript is unofficial*]

LINK TO VIDEO:

<http://tinyurl.com/nightline-dpn>

Alternate link:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxLC0_qTYVw&feature=youtu.be&noredirect=1