

Tuesday, December 23, 2014, 3:00 pm ET

Commentary on Steve Weiner as The Indispensable Man

As the green glow of sunrays, bouncing off the leaves of grass of our cherished, youthful stomping grounds, ascends to greet the eye in this time of great transition from morning to noontime, the question arises as to the identity of the one who will become the Eleventh President of our beloved institution.

Eleven seems like a large number – the number of an institution of higher education coming of age. It seems very strange to contemplate the fact that Gallaudet did not have a president officially installed who had an earned doctoral degree until after Neil Armstrong took humanity's first giant leap on the Moon. Yet here we are now four-and-a-half decades later with a [long list](#) of Deaf role models who have successfully obtained meaningful doctorates. Since then our alma mater has become a full-fledged university, yet is still waiting for its magnificent moment of transformation to meet the future, as our new Board of Trustees chair, Heather Harker's, [recent vlog](#) so brilliantly attests.

It has now been eight years since Unity for Gallaudet – the second major protest, which was made necessary in order to show the powers that be that “we mean business,” i.e., “true biz” in ASL. The old Establishment in deaf education that persisted throughout most of the 20th century, the evil Axis of Oralism, along with its associated bad premises, *had* to be brought down, hence the necessity of Deaf President Now. Our new president back then, instead of rising to meet the challenge of nurturing the necessary new growth, ended up to our great astonishment attempting to resurrect the old dead growth. For that he can never be forgiven, even though we're stuck having to keep him at home, like a crazy uncle who lives in the basement, because he has no place else to go.

Back in the 18th century, the American colonists did not *want* to go through all the trouble of waging war against King George III, but George III forced their collective hand. In the final analysis, it was George III who, by his own misbegotten decisions, caused the war and made it necessary. In those fragile days after the Revolution, there was really only one person who, by his shining example and capabilities, could hold everything together – another man called George. For that he has been called “The Indispensable Man.” Although the parallel is not perfect, I believe that we're in a similar situation today where only one person has the experience and capability to bring everyone together and provide that spark of leadership needed to nurture the necessary growth that will carry us into the new educational age.

We don't know who the candidates for Eleventh President will be, because they have not yet been chosen and the entire process is only just now in its beginning phases, but many expect that Steve Weiner will apply and be chosen as a finalist. I have decided to issue my personal endorsement now before we even know who the candidates will be, since it seems very clear to me that at this point in this history of our institution there

really is only one person who has necessary experience and capability and who, like George Washington, has become “The Indispensable Man.”

As [a battered and scarred protest veteran](#), it is difficult for me personally to let go of old grudges that came about as a result of the recent protest. I woke up this morning thinking about this and realized how I felt that a weight was being lifted when I considered the possibilities that Steve would bring to office. I sincerely believe that he is the only person who has the heart and patience of mind to work with those who, by their own bad choices in 2006, ended up on “the wrong side of history.” The Deaf Community is relatively small compared to the mainstream and so we don’t have the luxury of sticking only with those who made the right decisions and have the wind of history on their backs. The others are still around and should not be pushed to the side. As the saying goes, we’re all in this together. They need to be encouraged to go forward, too, with a helping hand.

I wrote [a commentary in 2009](#) saying that Steve, as provost, was indispensable. That was where we needed him most at that time, in the provostship, due to the nature of the situation at hand. [That crisis](#) has been averted and I believe that Steve is just as indispensable now as he was then, only this time, in 2016 and beyond, the logical role for him to play should be the role as president. Steve also has tremendous experience as a teacher at the university level, and I believe that it is someone with a teacher’s mentality who we need as president in this stage of GU’s history. Down the road, when the time is right, we will need someone with a researcher’s mentality, but that’s for another time and for another stage in the development of GU, when the institution, as a university, has more fully matured in the research direction.

Good luck to all the candidates and finalists, whoever they might be.

–BR

Addendum (Sept. 5, 2015):

See the list of finalists on Gallaudet.edu:

<http://www.gallaudet.edu/news/presidential-search-three-finalists.html>

Second addendum (Sept. 26, 2015):

Per [Marlon Kuntze's question](#) (starting at the 17:56 mark) during the question period of Pamela Lloyd-Ogoke's presidential finalist presentation, this commentator agrees that deaf-related research should remain a high priority at Gallaudet, with a continual focus on improving and enlarging the intensity and scope (depth and breadth) of such. The reference to research made in the commentary (above) was in relation to the issue of research in general.

(Hyperlinks added: Sept. 5 and Sept. 27, 2015; “Deaf_docs” hyperlink added on June 30, 2018)