

# **SOUND AND FURY**

## **PRODUCER'S STATEMENT, by Roger Weisberg**

I was in the middle of producing and directing two documentaries - one on welfare reform and another on children in foster care - when I got a phone call out of the blue from Josh Aronson. When he described his production on the conflict in the deaf world, I had to admit I was intrigued and that I knew very little about this centuries old battle.

As a parent, I was not surprised to meet parents of deaf children who would move heaven and earth to enable their children to hear. I was, however, shocked to meet people who loved being deaf, celebrated when they had deaf children, and wouldn't choose to be hearing even if they could. I was even more surprised by how compelling and persuasive their arguments were. As I learned more about sign language and deaf culture, I began to recognize what a threat the cochlear implant posed to an entire way of life. I also began to realize what Josh already knew - there was a story here that was waiting to be told. I was thrilled to join forces with Josh as we set out to tell the story of the communication wars of the deaf.

We began by profiling several deaf subjects who were bright, sympathetic, and engaging, but they were by and large content with the communication choices they had made many years ago. Josh and I realized we needed to capture the struggle and turmoil that many deaf individuals as well as parents face as they confront painful identity choices. When we found the Artinian family, we were amazed that so many of the tough choices facing the deaf community could be found in one close-knit family. Their story injected more tension, conflict, and drama into the film than we possibly could have imagined. We watched and filmed as two families headed by two brothers were torn apart by the question of whether to give their deaf children cochlear implants. As the editing process progressed, we began eliminating other stories one by one, because the Artinian family drama seemed to address all of the questions facing the other subjects in a more immediate and compelling way. Eventually, we were left with just the Artinian family's story, a perfect microcosm for the broader conflict in the deaf community.

The documentaries I appreciate the most are the ones that take viewers inside a world they have never seen or that is difficult to penetrate. I hope that the public shares my fascination with discovering the embattled world of the deaf. Unfortunately, documentaries often get a bad rap. They are perceived as dry, informative, or didactic. But, I believe documentaries can have every bit as much drama and pathos as the best fiction features. With SOUND AND FURY, Josh and I found ourselves constantly repeating a common documentary filmmaker's mantra - "you can't make this stuff up." The Artinian family story evolved in ways that astonished us and could never have been predicted, much less scripted. The realism, intimacy, candor, and raw emotion that we were fortunate enough to capture is a phenomena unique to non-fiction filmmaking.

In addition to revealing a world that is virtually unknown and inaccessible to most hearing people, the Artinian family battle raises some powerful universal questions about personal limitations, generational conflict, the search for personal identity, the meaning of culture, and the definition of community.