



Ken Wagner, Ph.D.  
Commissioner

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Shepard Building  
255 Westminster Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Enclosure 6a  
April 6, 2016

April 5, 2016

**TO:** Members of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education

**FROM:** Ken Wagner, Ph.D., Commissioner

**RE:** The R.I. School for the Deaf Board of Trustees – Recommendation of appointee

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The Rhode Island Department of Education has received the following nomination from the R.I. School for the Deaf Board of Trustees to fill one of three current vacancies on its Board:

**- Octavian Robinson**

I have reviewed Mr. Robinson's resume as well as the feedback on his background, qualifications, and goals, and I trust that he possesses the qualifications and commitment to advance the goals and mission of the R.I. School for the Deaf. Mr. Robinson is deaf, a constituency that the statute requires to be represented on the Board.

# Candidate for Board of Trustees at the R.I. School for the Deaf

## Octavian Robinson

### 1. Background:

#### **What led you to be interested in serving on the Board of Trustees?**

Personal and professional experience has affirmed the central value of schools for the deaf in educating and nurturing future generations of healthy, whole productive citizens. Schools for the deaf need ethical stewards who believe in the value of linguistic and educational access for all children regardless of background. When I was approached about the possibility of serving on the RISD Board, I thought it would be an excellent opportunity for me to serve my community and return to deaf children what was given to me as a deaf child that led to my current success. My tour of the school and conversation with Nancy Maguire Heath impressed me. The energy, the love, the care that came from the people I met that evening at RISD affirms a wonderful community of people making some really exciting changes for a brighter future. I'd love to be a part of that endeavor.

### 2. Qualifications:

#### **What qualities and strengths from your background and experience will you bring to the Board if you are chosen to serve?**

I have taught briefly in a K-12 setting and in higher education for a decade. My experience in K-12 teaching has exposed me to the unique challenges confronted by teachers who teach deaf children, especially those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, with issues of either language deprivation or English as a second language learning, and the political realities of operating schools for the deaf in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And so I have an understanding and empathy for those who do the work of educating our children. My experience as an educator in a Jesuit institution has emphasized the premise of *in cura personalis* – care of the whole being – and this is the philosophy I carry with me in thinking about how we approach education. This is a particular quality I bring with me. As a historian, my research has focused on the value of education, language, and schools for the deaf for deaf people and for American society at large. This knowledge can help us showcase the value of what we do at RISD, consider our guiding educational philosophy, and shape our approach to student well being.

### 3. Goals:

#### **Is there any particular area or initiative that you would like to focus on as a new member of the Board of Trustees?**

I am very interested in holistic well-being and would like to work on areas related to student health and well-being such as extracurricular activities, nutrition and health, creative outlets in addition to academic and athletic activities, counseling for emotional and mental health, and so on.

**Octavian E. Robinson**  
[orobinso@holycross.edu](mailto:orobinso@holycross.edu)

## **EDUCATION**

2012 The Ohio State University, Ph.D., Modern U.S. History.  
2004 Gallaudet University, M.A., Deaf Studies  
2002 Gallaudet University, B.A., History

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

2014-present Assistant Professor, College of the Holy Cross  
2013-2014 Adjunct Faculty, Massachusetts Bay Community College  
2012-2013 Faculty, Maryland School for the Deaf  
2007-2011 Graduate Teaching Associate, The Ohio State University  
2006-2007 Fellow, The Ohio State University  
2004-2006 Digital Collections Archive Technician, Gallaudet University  
Archives  
2004-2005 Lecturer, History, Gallaudet University

## **FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS, and AWARDS**

2011 History Department Quarter Award, The Ohio State University  
2010 Humanities Summer Research Award, The Ohio State University  
2009 Humanities Summer Research Award, The Ohio State University  
2009 College of Humanities Small Research Grant, The Ohio State  
University  
2007 College of Humanities Small Research Grant, The Ohio State  
University  
2006-2007 Diversity Enrichment Fellowship, The Ohio State University

## **SELECTED PUBLICATIONS**

"The Deaf Do Not Beg: Making a Case for Citizenship through Anti-Peddling Campaigns," in Brian Greenwald and Joseph Murray, eds., *Citizenship in Deaf History: Studies of Deaf Agency, 1820-1990*, Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, forthcoming.

"And Then There Were Three: A New Generation of Scholarship in Deaf History," review of Rebecca A.R. Edwards *Words Made Flesh: Nineteenth Century Deaf Education and the Growth of Deaf Culture in Common-Place: A Common Place, an Uncommon Voice*, 14:1 (Fall 2013).

"We Are of A Different Class: Ableist Rhetoric in Deaf America, 1880-1920," in Alison Kafer and Susan Burch, eds., *Deaf and Disability Studies: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2010, 5-21.

"Remembering the Forgotten: May Martin Stafford," *Gallaudet Today*, 36, no. 2 (Spring 2006), 34-35.

"Deaf Women in Organizations, 1880-1940," in Brenda Brueggemann and Susan Burch, eds., *Women and Deafness: Double Visions*, Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2006, 40-56.

### **SELECTED SCHOLARLY PAPERS, PANELS, AND INVITED TALKS**

"Assessing Disability Rights: Perspectives on Activism, Schism, Public History, and International Law." Invited presentation, Organization of American Historians Conference, St. Louis, MO, April 2015.

"Deaf People Do Not Beg: The Quest for Citizenship." Invited presentation, Boston University School of Education Deaf Studies Lecture Series, Boston University, Boston, MA, February 2015.

"The Role of Anti-peddling campaigns in the American Deaf Community's Quest for Citizenship," 7<sup>th</sup> International Deaf Academics and Researchers Conference, Leuven, Belgium, February 2015.

"25 years of *A Place of Their Own: Creating a Deaf Community in America* Panel," Celebrating 150 Years of Visionary Leadership Symposium, Gallaudet University, Washington, DC, April 2014.

"Deaf Women and Their Campaign for Higher Education," Deaf President Now Lecture Series, Gallaudet University, Washington, DC, March 2013.

"Anti-Peddling Campaigns and Political Citizenship in Deaf America, 1880-1950s," Guest Lecture, Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, NY, October 2011.

"The State of the Field: Deaf History," Organization of American Historians Conference, Seattle, WA, January 2009.

"Uncovering Bodies: Gender and Deaf Identity in America," The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, March 2008.

"Deaf Women and Organizational Activism," Society for Disability Studies, Seattle, WA, June 2007.

"Through Deaf Eyes Panel," 150 Years on Kendall Green: Celebrating Deaf History and Gallaudet Conference, Gallaudet University, Washington, DC, April 2007.

"Expressing Themselves: From Merging Identities to Setting Individuality," Society for Disability Studies, Washington, DC, June 2006.