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Abusing Deaf Immigrants and Hearing No Evil

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Title: Trends. Abusing Deaf Immigrants and Hearing No Evil

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One of the less flattering human characteristics is the penchant to develop unflattering attributions towards people perceived as different--e.g., manifesting different religious practices, social behaviors, physical characteristics. Take the deaf. In some parts of the world the deaf are viewed as possessed by evil, reaped by the evil sown by their parents, causing discomfort for "normal" people, worthy of ridicule, unintelligent, less than the "good" normal people of the community.

A related unflattering human characteristic is to take advantage of those who are different--to cheat them, trick them, threaten them, abuse them. So the recent expose of deaf immigrants from Mexico being smuggled into the United States to be economically used and in many ways abused merely supports an unfortunate and timeless aspect of the human condition. However, there is one aspect of the Mexican immigrant case which has not received due notice--the controllers, the abusers, the masterminds of the criminal enterprise also were deaf. There were deaf con men (and women), deaf smugglers, deaf thugs, deaf liars. Even among the victims there were those who were deaf victims of their own greed, there were deaf physical, emotional, and, perhaps, sexual abusers of deaf women.

Can a psychological case be made that this unflattering picture of the deaf may inadvertently serve as a means to attenuate the more common unflattering pictures of the deaf? That hearing of evil can result in hearing no evil? (See Dillon, S. (July 23, 1997.) Differing views of family that ruled an underground of the deaf. *The New York Times*. (<http://www.nytimes.com>); Pollard, R.Q. (1996.) Professional psychology and deaf people: The emergence of a discipline, *American Psychologist*, 51, 389-396; Sexton, J. (July 23, 1997.) Investigation of Mexican smuggling operation widens. *The New York Times*. (<http://www.nytimes.com>); Zahn, S.B., & Kelly, L.J. (1995.) Changing attitudes about the employability of the deaf and hard of hearing. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 140, 381-385.)