Bapin’s Work

* I am totally DeafBlind and currently work as the coordinator of the National Outreach Technology Development and Training Program at the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) based in NY, but have a branch office in California. My responsibilities involve 1) training consumers and technology trainers from all over the nation who have a wide range of vision and hearing loss to use computers via braille access, screen magnification, and speech output, 2) evaluating and beta testing various Windows- and Mac OS X-based applications, prototypes of new products, and telecommunications equipment and services for people with access needs, and 3) communicating with key people involved with designing and manufacturing these products to ensure they are accessible, user-friendly, and cost-efficient.
* I am also in charge of the Florida and Iowa DeafBlind equipment distribution programs and travel back and forth between these states every 2-3 months to provide technology assessments, distribute equipment, and training to all eligible consumers. In addition, I am responsible for researching, purchasing equipment, and installing and configuring equipment prior to distribution.
* On the side, I run a digital online store business and am the chief executive officer of the company, Bapin Group, LLC. The company sells all digital products to customers with all kinds of backgrounds, as well as to educational and government establishments. For details, go to the website at www.bapingroup.com and my personal website is [www.bapin.info](http://www.bapin.info). I also founded the first-known International DeafBlind Expo to serve as a venue for DeafBlind attendees to touch and feel various products and have access to interacting with vendors. Also, many professionals, government officials, educators, business people, etc. are enriched by the experience of interacting with DeafBlind people and learning more about products and services they rely on in their daily life. Two expos took place – Las Vegas in 2014 and Orlando in 2016.
* I am a member of the Coalition of Organizations for Accessible Technology (COAT) to make contributions and monitor legislative activities that improve accessibility for people with disabilities including DeafBlindness. In 2010 I, along with a representative from American Association of the DeafBlind (AADB), met with several members of Congress to push the passage of the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act where 10 million dollars was designated for DeafBlind people to receive telecommunications equipment and services. I also served on the 2010-2014 Equipment Program Advisory Committee (EPAC) under Deaf and Disabled Telecommunications Program (DDTP) in California to ensure that DeafBlind Californians receive adequate telecommunications equipment and services.
* During every spring semester from 2009 to 2016, I taught a course on DeafBlind interpreting at Ohlone College in Fremont, CA. This course provides the tips and tools to prepare interpreter students to work effectively and comfortably with individuals who are DeafBlind. This course serves as an introductory mechanism for these students to learn about the basic principles of DeafBlind interpreting and/or serving as a support service provider (SSP) and then requiring that they build on these basics during the semester. Emphasis then placed on how these interpreter students feel working with DeafBlind individuals (tactile signing, close-up signing, hand-tracking, signing in a small field of vision, etc.).

Bapin’s Education

* Prior to my employment at HKNC’s headquarters in February 1999 in Sands Point, NY, I graduated from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) with a bachelor's degree in political science. I was the first totally DeafBlind student in the university and served on the Chancellor's Committee on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to make the university a better and more accommodating place for students with disabilities. I made all facilities including computer labs fully accessible and educated the staff and faculty on the importance of the ADA.

Bapin’s Bio

* I grew up in a village twenty miles south of Kolkata (formerly known as Calcutta). I was born deaf (the cause is unknown) and became blind at age nine due to retina detachments. My mother was the one who worked very hard to make it possible for me to achieve education as there were no agencies to provide her information on how to raise a deaf child. She taught me how to speak in my native language, Bengali. Because of her, I was able to attend a mainstream school as I could speak and understand by lipreading my teachers.
* At the age of nine, I lost vision in both eyes. I was forced out of school as I could no longer lipread and there were no interpreting services available. After my father and youngest paternal aunt searched four years for a suitable school, I was sent in 1983 to Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, Massachusetts. There I tirelessly learned English, Braille, and American Sign Language (ASL) all at the same time! I graduated from Perkins in 1992 and started my college years afterwards.
* Throughout many years in the United States, I developed a strong interest in helping others who were in similar situations as mine. I traveled around the country and to many other countries including Australia, Europe, Brazil, Colombia, India, Japan, Singapore, Russia, Uganda, South Africa, the Philippines, and some others to attend conferences and present on topics pertaining to technology, advocacy, and education.