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Cochlear Implantown

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“Cochlear Implantown”

My painting, “Cochlear Implantown,” portrays the dramatized position of the Deaf community against the cochlear implant, which is the focus of a vociferous debate between the hearing and Deaf communities. The cochlear implant debate explores the social and ethical factors considered in the choice to accept or reject the cochlear implant surgery for Deaf individuals. The Deaf community is comprised of Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, and within this community, deafness is not only the loss of hearing; it includes their own linguistic, behavioral, and cultural practices. Thus, being deaf is more than an impairment -- it is an identity. The clear benefit of the surgery is the gaining of the ability to hear, but there are also risks to it as well: the implantation is not guaranteed to work and could even lead to injury. My painting depicts a

hearing-impaired person shackled to a city that represents different reasons for the Deaf community's opposition to the surgery. This painting visualizes the perspective of a Deaf person afraid of what the cochlear implant means for their culture by highlighting some specific fears, including the rejection of Deaf culture through isolation from the hearing community and the loss of American Sign Language (ASL). This consequently leads to the overarching fear of reverting to the view of deafness as only an impairment. The elements within my work individually represent a different facet of the Deaf community's criticisms of the cochlear implant.

Keywords: cochlear implant, Deaf community, linguistic minority, Deaf culture, cochlear implant debate.