

The Unseen Chronicles: Understand Ourselves Through Blind History

A Video Series by Emeline Lakrout & Daniel Gutz

2025 Blind Travel Foundation Grant Winners

Series Overview

This 11-part short-form video series follows Emeline Lakrout and Daniel Gutz as they travel across France—and across centuries—to uncover the rich, often overlooked history of blind people from the Middle Ages through the 1950s. Through historic sites, personal stories, and scholarly sources, the series traces how blind people were perceived, educated, and empowered, culminating in the creation and global spread of Braille.

Source Guide

Videos 2 & 3 – The Quinze-Vingts

Focus: The history of the Quinze-Vingts, from asylum to national ophthalmology hospital

Key Sources:

- **Disability Studies Quarterly.** “History of the Quinze-Vingts.”
<https://dsq-sds.org/index.php/dsq/article/view/385/517>
 - **Quinze-Vingts.** *Quinze-Vingts Historical Booklet*. 2022.
<https://www.15-20.fr/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Livret-histoire-15-20-2022.pdf>
 - **Weygand, Zina, and Emily-Jane Cohen.** *The Blind in French Society from the Middle Ages to the Century of Louis Braille*.
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Video 4 – Denis Diderot and the Enlightenment

Focus: The influence of blindness on the Enlightenment.

Key Sources:

- “Galileo Affair.” *Wikipedia*.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galileo_affair
 - **Kudlick, Catherine J.** “Disability History: Why We Need Another ‘Other.’” *American Historical Review*, June 2003.
 - **Maison des Lumières Denis Diderot.** Musées de Langres.
<https://www.musees-langres.fr/en/en-maison-des-lumieres-denis-diderot/>
 - **Margo, Curtis E., Lynn E. Harman, and Don B. Smith.** “Blindness and the Age of Enlightenment: Diderot’s *Letter on the Blind*.” *JAMA Ophthalmology* 131, no. 1 (January 2013): 98–102.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23307219/>
 - “Seeking Enlightenment: Denis Diderot’s *Letter on the Blind* (1749).” *The Public Domain Review*.
<https://publicdomainreview.org/collection/denis-diderot-letter-on-the-blind/>
 - **Wilson, Arthur M.** *Diderot: The Testing Years, 1713–1759*. Originally published 1957; later combined with *The Appeal to Posterity as Diderot*. 1972.
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Video 5 – Valentin Haüy

Focus: Early blind education and the move toward literacy and dignity.

Key Sources:

- **Godin, M. Leona.** “Essay on Blind Education and History.”
<https://drmlgodin.com/2017/07/bobst-library-education-blind-buffoon-saint-ovide-essay-21-52essays2017/>
- **Godin, M. Leona.** *There Plant Eyes*.
- **Musée Louis Braille.** “Valentin Haüy.”
<https://museelouisbraille.com/en/hauy-le-precurseur>
- **Weygand, Zina, and Emily-Jane Cohen.** *The Blind in French Society...*

Video 6 – M. Leona Godin

Focus: An interview with Dr. M. Leona Godin about blind history, modern scholarship, and beyond.

Video 7 – The INJA (Institut National des Jeunes Aveugles)

Focus: The ups and downs of the first institutionalized blindness education

Key Sources:

- ***Crossing the Divide: Representations of Deafness in Biography.***
<https://ebin.pub/qdownload/crossing-the-divide-representations-of-deafness-in-biography-1stnbsped-1563682982-9781563682988-9781563683725.html>
 - **French Exchange.** “Historical Blog Post.”
<https://frenchexchange.canalblog.com/archives/2008/01/17/7597646.html>
 - **La vie et l’œuvre de...** Archive.org.
https://ia802907.us.archive.org/24/items/lavieetloeuvrede00pier/lavieetloeuvrede00pier_hocr.html
 - **Musée Louis Braille.** “Institut National des Jeunes Aveugles.”
<https://museelouisbraille.com/en/institut-des-jeunes-aveugles>
 - ***Vox Humana Journal.***
<https://www.voxhumanajournal.com/langlais2021.html>
 - ***Waggin, Xena.*** *Historical writings.*
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Video 8 – Louis Braille: The Boy Who Refused to Be Quiet

Focus: The life and death of Louis Braille

Key Sources:

- **Disabled World.** “Louis Braille Biography.”
<https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/types/vision/louis-braille.php>

- **La vie et l'œuvre de...** Archive.org.
https://ia802907.us.archive.org/24/items/lavieetloeuvrede00pier/lavieetloeuvrede00pier_hocr.html
 - **Musée Louis Braille.** "Biography."
<https://museelouisbraille.com/en/biographie>
 - **Vox Humana Journal.**
<https://www.voxhumanajournal.com/langlais2021.html>
 - **Waggin, Xena.** *Historical writings.*
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Video 9 – The Creation of Braille

Focus: The creation and evolution of writing systems for the blind

Key Sources:

- **American Foundation for the Blind.** "Book Burning and Resistance to Braille."
<https://www.afb.org/about-afb/history/online-museums/life-and-legacy-louis-braille/braille-recognized>
 - **"Barbier's Night Writing."** *Disability Studies Quarterly.*
<https://dsq-sds.org/index.php/dsq/article/view/7499/5947>
 - **Campsie Transcript.**
<https://dishist.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CL-Campsie-DHA-Transcript.pdf>
 - **"Decapoint System."** *Musée Louis Braille.*
<https://museelouisbraille.com/en/ses-inventions>
 - **"Moon Type."** Archived webpage.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20031011155332/http://www.bsblind.co.uk/full/moon/mmmicro.htm>
 - **New York Institute for Special Education.** "Braille vs. New York Point."
https://www.nyise.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=438103&type=d&pREC_ID=948716
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Videos 10 & 11 – Blindness in the 20th Century

Focus: The personal story of one blind woman in 1950s France

Key Sources:

- **American Annals of the Deaf.** Archive.org.
<https://ia804602.us.archive.org/19/items/americanannalsof2224amer/americanannalsof2224amer.pdf>
 - **Centre Gallieni / Institut Jacques Hugentobler.**
<https://www.centre-gallieni.org/le-centre-gallieni/linstitut-jacques-hugentobler.html>
 - **EREA René Pellet.** “History and Evolution of the Establishment.”
<https://erea-pellet.ent.auvergnerhonealpes.fr/cite-scolaire-rene-pellet-erea-dv/presentation-de-la-cite-scolaire/histoire-et-evolution-de-l-etablissement/>
 - Family interviews
 - **Histoire du Scoutisme Laïque.** “Marguerite and René Pellet.”
<https://www.histoire-du-scoutisme-laique.fr/2012/11/15/marguerite-et-rene-pellet/>
 - **La Nouvelle Revue – Éducation et Société Inclusives.**
<https://shs.cairn.info/revue-la-nouvelle-revue-education-et-societe-inclusives-2021-1-page-241>
 - **Swiss National Museum Blog.** “Switzerland’s Role in Deaf Education.”
<https://blog.nationalmuseum.ch/en/2023/09/switzerlands-role-in-deaf-education/>
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How to Use This Guide

- **Viewers:** Explore sources to deepen understanding after each episode
- **Educators:** Pair episodes with readings for history or disability studies
- **Discussion Groups:** Use episodes as entry points into broader conversations about access, literacy, and cultural memory