

PatchWorks Films presents



speaking in ԻՓՆՁՄԷՏ

a film by marcia jarmel & ken schneider

In the 21st century,
is English enough?

PRESS KIT

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4 KIDS, 4 LANGUAGES, 1 CITY, 1 WORLD

Logline:

4 kids become bilingual in an experience that transforms both themselves and their country.

Paragraph:

In a time where 31 states have passed English Only initiatives, one urban school district is exploring the provocative notion that speaking a foreign language can be a national asset. We follow four diverse students and their families as they encounter the challenges and delights of becoming fluent in two languages. As we witness their journey, we see how speaking more than one language changes them, their families, their communities, and maybe even the world.

Synopsis:

Speaking in Tongues begins with an ordinary first day of public school kindergarten—except that the teacher speaks only Chinese. Most of her primarily white and Asian American students look confused but curious; a few nod knowingly. They are all in a language immersion class, where, from day one, they will receive 90% of their instruction in Cantonese. Remarkably, their school will test first in English and math among their district's 76 elementary schools.

The film's four protagonists come to language immersion programs for very different reasons. **Jason** is a first generation Mexican-American whose immigrant family embraces bilingualism as the key to full participation in the land of opportunity. **Durrell** is an African-American kindergartner whose mom hopes that learning Mandarin will be a way out of economic uncertainty and into possibility. **Kelly** is a Chinese-American recapturing the Cantonese her parents sacrificed to become American. **Julian** is a Caucasian 8th grader eager to expand his horizons and become a good world citizen. Together, they represent a nexus of challenges facing America today: economic and academic inequities, de facto segregation, record numbers of new immigrants, and the need to communicate across cultures. Using a verité story-telling approach, the film follows our characters as they enter the portal of language and open their minds to new ways of thinking and being in the world. In a time of globalization and changing demographics, bilingualism offers them more than an opportunity to join the global job market. Language becomes a metaphor for breaking down barriers between ourselves and our neighbors—be they around the corner or across the world.

While the kids grow in ease and skill with their second tongue, the grown-ups argue. **Durrell** orders his first Chinatown meal in Mandarin; an uncle at a family dinner praises bilingualism, citing the needs of the global economy. **Kelly** learns traditional cooking from her Chinese-speaking grandma; yet her great aunt scoffs at any form of bilingual education, citing tax burdens. **Jason** becomes the first in his family to read, write, and graduate elementary school; meanwhile at a school enrollment fair, a concerned Latino father asks where his daughter can learn more English. Julian travels to China and bargains for clothes in Mandarin at a Beijing marketplace; an angry Chinese dad at a school meeting bellows, "We are in America! We need English!"

To explore these contentious debates at the national level, *Speaking in Tongues* turns to Ling-chi Wang, a community activist who pioneered efforts to

establish multilingual education in the United States. He takes us on a brief You Tube tour of the national discourse: critics bemoan a loss of national identity and warn of an impending Balkanization of the United States, while others warn of the national security risks of having too few Arabic speakers. Ling-chi laments the nation's stubborn attachment to monolingualism, a phenomenon that masks deeper social tensions about diversity and difference. His rallying cry is that the United States is a nation whose linguistic richness is among its greatest assets. Employers need multilingual skills, universities spends millions teaching foreign languages, and our national security apparatus pours millions into teaching "strategic languages." Yet the U.S. congress routinely considers "English-only" legislation, and 31 states have already passed such laws.

But Ling-chi doesn't have time for hand wringing; A gavel brings us to a packed school board meeting where he's spearheading an initiative to offer every public school child in San Francisco the opportunity that Jason, Durrell, Kelly, and Julian have. Will one city's bold experiment become a model for transforming Americans into global citizens?

speaking in 中文

CHARACTERS



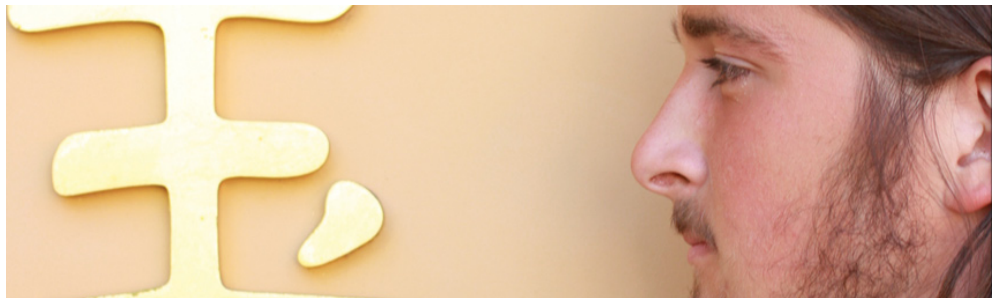
Durrell Laury is a 2nd grader at Starr King Elementary. He and his classmates are already reading and writing in Mandarin.



As a 7th grader at Alice Fong Yu Alternative School, **Kelly Wong** reads and writes both Cantonese and Mandarin. To hang onto their city basketball championship, she and her classmates sometimes fool their opponents by calling plays in Chinese.



Jason Patiño, is maintaining a 4 point average in middle school, testing above grade level in both English and Spanish. He hopes to attend the University of California at Berkeley.



Julian Enis is a sophomore at Lowell High School where he is currently taking the highest level of Chinese offered in the school district. He is looking for ways to continue studying Mandarin, and intends to use it in his career as an aerospace engineer.

speaking in ΤΦΝ&ΠΞ

DIRECTOR BIOS

PatchWorks Films (www.patchworksfilms.net) is a San Francisco based production and distribution company. We specialize in films that explore contemporary social issues through intimate character stories, and innovative partnerships with the constituencies working with the issues are films explore. Our award-winning documentaries have been broadcast worldwide and have screened at museums, film festivals, schools, universities, and libraries. *Speaking in Tongues* is PatchWorks' third feature documentary.

Ken Schneider is producer, editor, and sound recordist for PatchWorks films. He is also an accomplished freelance editor whose credits include award-winning documentaries on a broad range of subjects, from art and literature to war and peace, immigration, disability and social justice. Ken co-edited the feature documentary *Regret To Inform*, winner of the Peabody Award, Indie Spirit Award and Sundance Film Festival Directing award, as well as the IDA Award for most distinctive use of archival footage. *Regret* also was nominated for an Academy Award and a National Emmy.

Other editing credits include *Bolinao 52* about Vietnamese boat refugees; the PBS *American Masters* specials *Orozco: Man of Fire* and *Ralph Ellison: An American Journey*; P.O.V. special *Freedom Machines*, about the convergence of disability, technology and civil rights; PBS primetime special *The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It*, which aired on Martin Luther King's birthday and won best historical documentary awards from both the American Historical Association and Organization of American Historians; PBS special and Golden Gate award-winner *Store Wars: When Wal-Mart Comes to Town*; Frontline's Columbia-Dupont Award winning *School Colors*, a look at integration and segregation 40 years after *Brown v. Board of Education*; and *Ancestors in the Americas, Part 2: Pioneers in the American West*, about the Chinese-American experience.

Ken has collaborated with Nina Wise, the dancer/performance artist; Charlie Varon, the solo theater performer; Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, Academy award-winning filmmakers, and Richard Beggs, Academy award-winning sound designer, among others. Ken has consulted on dozens of documentaries, and lectures at San Francisco City College, the San Francisco Art Institute, and New York University.

Marcia Jarmel founded PatchWorks with Ken Schneider in 1994. She has been producing and directing documentaries for over 15 years. Her best-known work is the ITVS-funded *Born in the U.S.A.*, which aired on the PBS series *Independent Lens* and was hailed as the "best film on childbirth" by the former director of maternal health at the World Health Organization. The documentary has been used to educate hundreds about childbirth options, and to lobby legislators to reform midwifery laws. Nine years after its national broadcast,

Born in the U.S.A. continues to engage families, communities, and health care professionals.

Marcia's other films include *Collateral Damage*, a mother's lament about the human costs of war that screened worldwide in theatres, museums, festivals and schools as part of *Underground Zero: Filmmakers Respond to 9/11*. Her *Return of Sarah's Daughters* examines the allure of Orthodox Judaism to secular young women. The hour-long documentary won a CINE Golden Eagle, National Educational Media Network Gold Apple, and 1st Place in the Jewish Video Competition. It screened on international public television, and at the American Cinematheque, International Documentary Film Festival, Women in the Director's Chair, Cinequest and numerous other film festivals. Her first film, *The F Word: A short video about Feminism* uses whimsical animation and interviews to foster discussion on this so-called contentious topic. Still in distribution after 15 years with Women Make Movies, *The F Word* screened on KQED's *Living Room Festival*, AFI's VideoFest, and the Judy Chicago film series at the Brooklyn Museum of Art.

Marcia's additional credits include producing and directing films for the San Francisco World Music Festival, co-editing the Academy-award nominee, *For Better or For Worse*, and assistant producing the Academy Award nominees *Berkeley in the Sixties* and *Freedom on My Mind*. She was a resident at Working Films Content + Intent Doc Institute and has guest lectured at Stanford University San Francisco City College, San Francisco State University, and New York University.

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DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

Sometimes a small idea has big implications. Consider America's resolute commitment to remaining an "English only" nation. It turns out that our attitudes about language reflect much bigger concerns: that language is a metaphor for the barriers that come between neighbors, be they across the street or around the world.

Our idea in making *Speaking in Tongues* was to showcase a world where these communication barriers are being addressed. An African-American boy from public housing learns to read, write, and speak Mandarin. A Mexican-American boy, whose parents are not literate in any language, develops professional-level Spanish while mastering English. A Chinese-American girl regains her grandparents' mother tongue—a language her parents lost through assimilation. A Caucasian teen travels to Beijing to stay with a Mandarin speaking host family. Their stories reveal the promise of a multilingual America. Each kid's world opens up when they start learning two languages on the first day of kindergarten; each is developing both bi-cultural and bi-lingual fluency.

Support for this idea comes from an odd cross section of America. Business leaders point to a "flattening" world, seeking workers with multilingual skills like those displayed by many from rising nations; the Department of Defense pours hundreds of millions of dollars into teaching languages deemed "strategic" to national security (today Mandarin, Arabic, Russian. Tomorrow, Hindi? Portuguese? Malay?). And many educators tout the improved test scores of bilingual children—whether they speak English as a first language or not. Why then, is bilingualism not *de rigueur* in the U.S. as it is in most nations?

Many Americans have a different perspective. We are becoming a modern-day Babel, detractors warn; our national identity is at risk. Witness Nashville's recent vote aimed at making English the city's "official language," something 31 states have already voted to do. New York City, in turn, felt the hostility last year when street demonstrations erupted over the opening of an Arabic immersion public school named after Khalil Gibran, the Lebanese Christian writer who once lived in New York. Even liberal Palo Alto, California, had a hard time allowing a Mandarin immersion program to open. Some said there was fear it would attract too many Chinese to the neighborhood. Attitudes toward bilingualism can be a mask for complicated fears that are hard to talk about: the impact of new immigrants, and global competition, to name two hot button issues. But in our diverse country, in our increasingly international world, is knowing English enough?

The ensemble cast of *Speaking in Tongues* answers on camera. As their educational adventure unfolds, we witness how learning a second language transforms their sense of self, their families, and their communities. In a time of globalization and changing demographics, bilingualism offers these kids more than an opportunity to join the global job market. They connect with their grandparents, they communicate with their immigrant friends, they travel comfortably abroad. They are becoming global citizens.

We've witnessed this transformation in our own home. Our sons are in their fourth and eighth year in a public school Chinese immersion program. They cause a stir when they order in accent-less Chinese at local restaurants. But they also have translated for a confused Chinese speaker lost at the doctor, visited shut-in Chinese speaking elders, felt at home in a traditional Chinese home, and very important for us, helped us understand our film footage. When spoken to by a native speaker, they don't pause to translate; they think in Chinese, having learned it like a baby, by hearing it spoken around them. Their experience prompts the telling of these small stories that in turn provoke one of the most compelling questions of our day: what do we as a nation need to know in the 21st century?

speaking in **ἸΦΝᾠΠΞ**

CREW BIOS

ANDY BLACK (PRINCIPAL CINEMATOGRAPHER) is an award-winning cinematographer who has been shooting documentary, short, and feature films for the past fifteen years. His work has been broadcast on AMC, PBS, MTV, BBC, ARD, Channel 4, and Discovery and honored at the Sundance, San Francisco, and Berlin International film festivals. Recent credits include *Sicko*, *The Weather Underground*, *Scout's Honor*, and *Self-Made Man*. Andy became "somewhat street fluent" in Marathi in college and understands a bit of Spanish.

VICENTE FRANCO (CINEMATOGRAPHER) has been shooting and producing award-winning documentary films since the 1980s, most notably the Academy-Award nominated *Daughter from Danang*, which won the Sundance Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary in 2002. He was nominated for a national Emmy for his cinematography on *Daughter for Danang* and has recent director of photography credits on *The Judge and the General*, *The Summer of Love*, *Thirst*, *The New Americans*, and *Discovering Dominga*. He's a native Spanish speaker and fluent in English.

DAN KRAUSS (CINEMATOGRAPHER) Dan Krauss is an Academy Award and Emmy nominated documentary with directing and cinematography credits on projects for PBS, HBO, and National Geographic, among others. His work has won awards from the Tribeca Film Festival, The International Documentary Association, and the San Francisco International Film Festival. Dan speaks passable French and reads phonetic Hebrew.

NATHANIEL DORSKY (EDITING CONSULTANT) is a world-renowned experimental filmmaker who has served as editing consultant on many documentaries. Of recent note, *Ballets Russes*, *Monumental: David Brower's Fight for Wild America*, *Night Waltz: The Music of Paul Bowles*, and *Regret to Inform*. Nick consulted on PatchWorks' *The Return of Sarah's Daughters* and *Born in the U.S.A.* and speaks "survival French."

JON JANG (COMPOSER) is an internationally-known composer and jazz musician whose work draws from his experience as an "American, born Chinese." In addition to composing symphonic works, he has scored theater, dance, and films, recently including, *Race is the Place*. As a parent at a San Francisco public immersion school, he has intimate knowledge of the stories told in *Speaking in Tongues*. Music is his first language, English second.

WAYNE WALLACE (COMPOSER) is a world-class trombonist-arranger-composer, who has worked with the likes of Count Basie, Benny Carter, Ray Charles, Celine Dion, Aretha Franklin, Lionel Hampton, Joe Henderson, Lena Horne, Bobby Hutcherson, Tito Puente, Sonny Rollins, Carlos Santana, Sheila E., McCoy Tyner, Stevie Wonder, Pete Escovedo, and John Santos. He co-wrote the score for PBS's *Race is the Place* with Jon Jang, and speaks "passable" Spanish.

RICHARD BEGGS (SOUND DESIGN & MIX) a sound designer and mixer on more than 60 feature films since 1976, has worked with Francis Coppola, Barry Levinson, Sophia Coppola, Alfonso Cuaron and other major directors. He won an Academy Award for sound for *Apocalypse Now* and a TEC Award for Outstanding Creative Achievement in Film Sound. He has received five Golden Reel sound nominations. He designed and mixed Avon Kirkland's *Ralph Ellison*, which Ken edited, and consulted on Marcia's experimental short, *Collateral Damage*. He retains a "smattering" of German from childhood.

speaking in ἸΦΝἄΠΞ

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Produced and Directed by

Marcia Jarmel
Ken Schneider

Featuring

Julian Enis
Durrell Laury
Jason Patiño
Kelly Wong
&
Dr. Ling-chi Wang

Cinematography

Andy Black
Vicente Franco
Dan Krauss

Editor

Ken Schneider

Associate Producer

Lorna MacMillan

Sound Design

Richard Beggs

Original Score

Wayne Wallace
Jon Jang

Additional Music

B. Quincy Griffin

Animation & Graphics

Catherine Kelly

Graphic Design

Kelly Riggio

Consulting Producer
Janet Cole

Consulting Editors
Nathaniel Dorsky
Gary Weimberg

Writing Consultants
Laurie Coyle
Tucker Malarkey

Additional Editing
Sally Rubin

Assistant Editor
Tupac Mauricio Saavedra

Additional Camera
Michael Anderson
Jim Choi
Kevin Mogg

Location Sound
Adriano Bravo
Jim Choi
Doug Dunderdale
Josh Harris
Matty Nematollahi
Tupac Saavedra
Ken Schneider

Re-recording Mixer
Richard Beggs

Music Recording
Gary Mankin

Production Assistants
Julia Lai
Marvic Paulo
Emily Stone Wallace

Transcription
Raina Glazener

Still Photography
Najib Joe Hakim

Post-Production Supervision
Ken Schneider
Lorna MacMillan

Colorist
Gary Coates

Online Editors
Ben Zweig

Online Video Editing Services
Video Arts/SF

Legal Counsel
Daniel Riviera
Richard Lee

Chinese Translation
Jaden Jarmel-Schneider
Mica Jarmel-Schneider
Julia Lai
Amy Lee
Nicolas Li
Sophia Rutkin
Gary Yip

Writing in Tongues
Fana & Eyasu Aregawie
Sadiq Bouhamama
Cléo Charpantier
Connie Chong
Gabriel Onderdonk
Niko Romer
Dmitriy Smirnov
Sami & Sandra Totah
Aren Williams

Fiscal Sponsor
Center for Independent Documentary

Executive Producer for ITVS
Sally Jo Fifer

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Lenore and Howard Klein Foundation
Lucius and Eva Eastman Fund
Film Arts Foundation

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PRODUCTION NOTES

There is always a point during the production where you look at your co-Producer, or at yourself, if you are flying solo, and say, "We've got it. We've got a movie." Fortunately for us, this happened on our first shoot. I say fortunately, because it took nearly three years from that moment to fund the movie, or, as we say on a bad day, "that damn movie."

Our "A-ha moment" came when we filmed the first day of kindergarten at a Chinese immersion public school, where the teacher speaks to the children exclusively in Cantonese. The children in her class are mostly Asian or Caucasian, with a few Latino and African-American kids. Regardless of their ethnicity, all but a few were native English speakers and most had never heard a word of Cantonese. Yet by the end of the first hour, each child had been called to the front of the class, shown the hook where they could hang their coat, the shelf where they could put their lunch, and the bucket where they could deposit their backpack. And by the end of that hour, each one of them, and each of us, knew that *shoo-bow* is the Cantonese word for backpack.

When Alex, a flaxen-haired boy born of Swedish parents, placed his *shoo-bow* in the bucket and sat down with a bewildered expression, our cinematographer, Andy Black, zoomed slowly in on his face. We each looked at each other with a knowing look: we've got a film.

speaking in ἸΦΝ&ΠΕΞ

4 kids, 4 languages, 1 city, 1 world

SPEAKER'S LIST

SAN FRANCISCO STORY

Laurie Olsen / Consultant & Educator

languages: English

e-mail: lolaurieo@gmail.com

phone: (510) 649.0234

Laurie has more than 30 years experience developing new models and strategies to bring about inclusion and equity in a multiracial, multicultural and multilingual society. An academic and former executive director of the nonprofit organization, California Tomorrow, she is currently helping the San Francisco public schools develop an implementation strategy for their groundbreaking resolution to offer all public school students the chance to become bilingual.

Ling-chi Wang / Emeritus, UC-Berkeley & Community Activist

Languages: English, Mandarin, Cantonese, & Taiwanese

e-mail: lcwang@berkeley.edu

phone: (415) 922.4380

Ling-chi has been active in issues related to language minorities since the 1970s. He spearheaded the landmark *Lau v. Nichols* Supreme Court case that created the legal mandate for bilingual education and co-authored San Francisco's school board's resolution to offer all students the opportunity to become bilingual.

SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Francisca Sanchez / Associate Superintendent

Karling Aguilera-Fort / Assistant Superintendent: Learning Support & Equity

Pilar Mejia / Supervisor, Family & Community Engagement

Languages: English & Spanish

contact through:

Gentle Blythe, Director

Office of Public Outreach and Communications, SFUSD

e-mail: blytheg@sfusd.edu

phone: (415) 241-6565

KELLY & JULIAN'S STORIES

Liana Szeto / Principal, Alice Fong Yu Alternative School

languages: Cantonese, English
phone: (415) 759.2764

http://portal.sfusd.edu/template/default.cfm?page=es.fong_yu

The first public Chinese Immersion school in the U.S., opened twenty years ago. A K-8 school that teaches both Cantonese and Mandarin, it tests first in the school district in English and Math.

Julia Gourd / Chinese immersion parent & Julian Enis's mom

languages: English
e-mail: jullip@gmail.com
phone: (415) 254-9440

Julian Enis / High school sophomore & Chinese immersion graduate

languages: Mandarin, Cantonese, English
e-mail: jullip@gmail.com
phone: (415) 254-9440

Victor & Jenny Wong / Chinese immersion parents & Kelly's mom & dad

languages: English
e-mail: wongs88@pacbell.net
phone: (415) 661.3325

Lucia Wong / Chinese immersion grandparent, Kelly's grandma

languages: Cantonese
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phone: (415) 661.3325

DURRELL'S STORY

Chris Rosenberg / Principal, Starr King Elementary

languages: Spanish & English

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phone: (415) 695.5797

Chris's school hosts the first public Mandarin immersion program in the San Francisco schools. Starr King is a rising star in the SFUSD system and hosts programs in Spanish bilingual, mainstream English, and inclusion for kids with special needs, in addition to the Mandarin program.

Ijnanya Foster, Starr King Mandarin immersion parent / Durrell's mom

languages: English

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JASON'S STORY

Maria E. Aldaz / Spanish Immersion parent

languages: English & Spanish

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email: maria.e.aldaz@ceridian.com

Maria is a Spanish Immersion parent, involved with community group pushing for more multilingualism (SFAME).

Laura Gold / Spanish Immersion teacher / researcher

languages: English

phone: (415) 531-6430

email: lauragold@comcast.net

Laura was Jason's English teacher during 5th grade Spanish Immersion. She has conducted research on the efficacy of immersion programs for children learning English at school.

NATIONAL STORY

Mimi Met / Educational Consultant

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Elena Izquierdo / Professor of Education & Vice-President, National Association of Bilingual Education

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Watching language: San Francisco filmmakers Marcia Jarmel and Ken Schneider look at immersion programs in "Speaking in Tongues." (Photo by Najib Joe Hakim)

"Tongues" cracks the language barrier

By Michael Fox

If there is such a thing as good timing in the documentary world, and we daresay there is, Marcia Jarmel and Ken Schneider are poised to be major beneficiaries.

The San Francisco couple's forthcoming film, *Speaking in Tongues*, follows four diverse local public-school students enrolled in language-immersion programs. The goal of the curricula is not merely to turn out bilingual children who will thrive in the global economy, but to dissolve the suspicion and stigma that attaches to "the other."

"Bilingualism is a metaphor for what could be breaking down those barriers between our neighbors and us, whether it be around the corner or around the world," Schneider explains. "This is very much about how we understand and are understood by the rest of the world—how we engage with the rest of the world. We're talking about transformation, personal, cultural and national."

"We're putting out a vision of what could be," Jarmel elaborates, "because these kids are pioneers in a world we hope is coming. San Francisco is on the cutting edge because it's made a public-policy statement that every public school kid has the opportunity to be bilingual."

Jarmel and Schneider (whose previous films include *The Return of Sarah's Daughters* and *Born in the U.S.A.*) come to bilingualism from personal experience. Their children go to a language-immersion school, with the 13-year-old conversationally fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese and English while

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the eight-year-old speaks Cantonese and English and understands some Mandarin. (The couple makes a trip to Chinatown with the kids sound like a real hoot.)

Between their experience on previous films and their familiarity with San Francisco's language-immersion program, the filmmakers didn't find it particularly difficult to cast **Speaking in Tongues**. "You can see which kids have a story just in the way they are," Jarmel says nonchalantly. The tougher task was integrating personal arcs and big-picture themes into a fluid, emotionally compelling cut.

"It's definitely been a challenge to figure out how to bring a very big question into a single story," Jarmel admits. "Is it a social-issue or a character-driven story?" Schneider, who's widely viewed as one the Bay Area's top documentary editors, evinces no such ambivalence. "I learned a long time ago you can do an ensemble cast as long as the issues you're exploring are embedded in character stories."

The kids in **Speaking in Tongues** – an African American, Mexican American, Asian American and Caucasian—represent different facets of the complex bilingual issue, and the film invites the audience to root for each child in a different way. A different musical motif, with Jon Jang and Wayne Wallace providing Asian-fusion classical jazz and B. Quincy Griffin contributing contemporary hip-hop, has likewise been conceived for each character.

"What they collectively add up to is the core idea of the film, encouraging Americans to rethink our allegiance to English only," Jarmel explains. "Language is a doorway to understanding other cultures. In that way, language is kind of a metaphor for Americans opening their [minds] to other ways of thinking and being in the world. It's very concrete—you learn a skill that can help you communicate—but it also does something else to your worldview. And we're talking about both of those things [in the film]."

The filmmakers shot throughout the 2006-07 school year, and expect to wrap postproduction with a finished film by mid-February. They're beginning to apply to festivals while waiting for news from PBS— **Speaking in Tongues** is an ITVS project—regarding an anticipated fall broadcast date.

Hence the documentary gods synchronizing their watches. We're about to bid a hearty goodbye to the fellow who declared himself the Education President but was more like the class clown. The new guy is a law professor who writes books and told English-only advocates on the campaign trail last July, "Understand this: instead of worrying about whether immigrants can learn English, they'll learn English, you need to make sure your child can speak Spanish."

"Certainly we're in a more favorable climate than we would have been a year ago," Jarmel concurs. "Just a few years ago, this wasn't on anyone's plate. Nobody was connecting [job opportunities] with language skills. Colleges say recruiters are looking for multilingual skills. I think part of the reason the film has taken so long is we really had to make the case for people that the issues are related, that this is not just a sweet program where kids are enjoying their education. This is a model for transforming our society into a global partner."

To watch a clip from the film, go to www.speakingintonguesfilm.info. Contact info for the filmmakers is also available at the site.

1. When did you first encounter language immersion education? When did it occur to you to create a film about it?

In the Spring of 2001, we began telling friends and family of our decision to enroll our older son at AFY. Inevitably, we heard one of 2 responses: a quizzical look followed by, "Hmmmmm, interesting," or, more simply, "Why Chinese?"

Four years later, when we told friends about our younger son's enrollment at AFY, all replied, "Oh, how wonderful!" What had changed? Not us. Not the school. The world had changed, and with it, America's view of language. The subsequent discussions we had with friends provided the seeds of what became our current documentary film, *Speaking in Tongues*.

2. What were the challenges of filming inside school(s); what were the benefits?

Our story starts in the classroom, where our characters are having an unusual and provocative experience. Yet filming in a school also has its limits, as the structure of a school day makes it difficult to get close to characters. To deepen our characters' stories, we needed to go home with them, and film them with their families and in their communities.

Some challenges of shooting in a school are predictable: some teachers are shy, some children mug for the camera, some Principals are initially resistant to the idea of filming, which they feel will disrupt classrooms. We always try to build relationships before shooting, and spend plenty of time in an environment, rather than the news crew style of parachuting in, getting the footage, and taking off.

3. I'd love if you could delineate a little about the differences -- where you see them -- between the old model "bilingual" education and what the San Francisco schools are doing with "dual immersion."

San Francisco has both bilingual and dual immersion programs. Many people do not realize that all such programs share a common goal: for all students to learn English. There is debate about the best way to realize this. In "traditional" bilingual education, English Language Learners (non-native English speakers) are segregated in a class in which they receive instruction both in their home language and in English. The goal is to transition them out of Bilingual education and into mainstream, English-only classrooms.

In a dual immersion class, there is a mix of native English speakers and non-native speakers. Depending on the school, they receive from 50-90% of their instruction in the "target language," and the remainder in English. Counterintuitively, researchers have found that kids learning English in these environments learn English better than their counterparts in English-only classes... The most current data and brain research suggests that these kids benefit from continuing to develop their mother tongue while achieving mastery of English. Meanwhile, they are learning side-by-side with native English speakers who are also becoming bilingual.

4. The teachers in your film are incredibly charismatic. Did you do much scouting, and/or "casting"? (I know it's documentary, but...)

One great discovery in making this film was just how many wonderful educators are working in the public schools. We have visited many classrooms in our lives, and have a sense for which teachers can fill up the screen. We also seek characters in whose stories are embedded the issues we are exploring. It's always character first, information second--or third--or fourth. For example, Gina Chow, who teaches Cantonese immersion to kindergartners, is one of the pioneers of the field. She has taught children from the first year Alice Fong Yu--the nation's first Chinese immersion school--opened its doors.

5. You raised interesting points about the shifting perspective toward language in the United States, with a quote from our new President about encouraging citizens to learn (I think) Spanish. Do you think there's going to be some changes nationwide in the push toward English-only?

It's hard to predict national policy, but we have seen this landscape change in the few years since we started filming. The debate around language produces strange bedfellows. The Department of Defense has poured huge resources into creating a kindergarten through high school pipeline for language acquisition in Portland, Oregon, focusing on "strategic languages." And opposition comes from surprising corners; new immigrant families often fear that their children's English will suffer if they attend immersion programs.

The English-only movement has framed this as an either/or issue: either you learn English only or you don't succeed in our society. Advocates for bilingualism see it as a both/and: master two languages simultaneously, and we all reap the benefits.

6. Have we come a long way since 1994, when California was trying to eliminate non-citizen immigrants from the educational system?

We don't feel capable of answering this one...but we have found that many in the English-only movement are conflating the idea of becoming bilingual with their concerns about immigration, our southern border, and what they see as the loss of American identity.

7. San Francisco is expanding its language-immersion programs. Your film shows feedback of various kinds, but I wondered if you can quantify: Is there, on the whole, satisfaction with the new schools? and, related: I saw some critical points raised by Spanish-language-speaking families in the film. Has there been enough time to gather statistics on how these programs work or don't work for the native speakers of those languages? Or: information on how the different language schools are doing compared to one another?

There are huge waiting lists at most of these programs in the SF Public schools. The School District continues to open new programs, and is trying to create more slots in

middle and high schools. This speaks to the popularity of these programs. That said, both African American and new immigrant students are underrepresented in virtually all the city's immersion programs. I think enough information about the benefits of immersion hasn't gotten out to those communities.

Dual immersion remains controversial, and researchers in the US and Canada have been studying it for nearly 40 years. There is compelling data that English Language Learners, if they remain in these programs through 7th grade (the longer the better), they will equal and/or exceed the performance of their counterparts in English-only programs--and they will do it in 2 languages.

8. Your company, Patchwork films, has a long resume of films on potentially divisive cultural topics ranging from childbirth in the U.S. to traditional religion to war. Could you offer one or two areas where you think this film fits with or departs from your previous work?

We say that our films are largely autobiographical, but they are not actually about us. They tell stories of the lives that have intersected with our own, usually involving people we respect and love. And our films often start, quite literally, at home. When an old friend became part of an Orthodox religious community, we filmed in her new community. When we became parents, we explored the culture of childbirth in America. And when we became involved in a language immersion school, we began thinking deeply about the local and global implications of becoming bilingual.

Like our other films, we are exploring social issues through the intimate, verite-style portrayals of characters. Inside the characters' lives are embedded the issues that interest us. Our four kids each represent a distinctive aspect of this story:

Durrell Laury, an African American kindergartener from a single parent home in public housing, whose mom understood that putting him at Starr King Elementary's Mandarin immersion program would open up possibilities in his life.

Second generation Chinese American, Kelly Wong, whose parents lost the Cantonese she is now mastering. In 7th grade she has command of Mandarin and Cantonese and can communicate with her grandparents in a way their own children can't.

Jason Patiño, son of new immigrants, and the first person in his family ever to attend school at all. After testing above grade level in both English and Spanish, and earning a 4.0 last semester, he hopes to attend the University of California at Berkeley.

Julian Enis, a middle class Caucasian, who has studied Chinese in an immersion school since kindergarten. His Chinese is so advanced now that he will take the advanced placement test as a highschool sophomore and can feel at home as the guest of a Mandarin speaking family in Beijing.

9. How big was your crew in the production and post-production of the film? Did you have a favorite piece of equipment?

Our typical crew is a crew of three: Marcia Produces and Directs; Ken records sound and co-directs; and we have a Cinematographer: either Andy Black, Vicente Franco, or Dan Krauss. When Ken hurt his knee, we hired a sound recordist and thus had a crew of four.

Our post-production team: Ken edits, Marcia produces, Lorna MacMillan Associate Produces, and Tupac Saavedra, our assistant editor, comes in as needed. Our new camera, the Panasonic HVX-200 is our current favorite piece of gear.

10. Any major "lessons learned" from your filming experiences prior to this, or during?

One important lesson--we missed stuff. We didn't hear about important events in time to shoot, and in one case, we were grappling with our camera's unfamiliar technology and we missed a key moment in a School Board meeting. I spent numerous hours trying to recapture that lost moment, using a web-only version of that same moment--until conceding that we didn't have it. And then we move forward. The lesson--we make films with the footage available to us. And in filming over time, we will both miss moments and then discover other ways of telling that same story.

We have had a transcendent experience working with sound designer Richard Beggs, who usually works on feature films. He tore apart all of Ken's painstaking sound work, re-mixed all of our music, and elevated the film several notches. We think that the film will feel different, particularly in the theatrical screenings, as a result of his work, and we will never think about sound the same again.

The New York Times

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Where Education and Assimilation Collide

By [GINGER THOMPSON](#)

WOODBIDGE, Va. — Walking the halls of Cecil D. Hylton High School outside Washington, it is hard to detect any trace of the divisions that once seemed fixtures in American society.

Two girls, a Muslim in a headscarf and a strawberry blonde in tight jeans, stroll arm in arm. A Hispanic boy wearing a [Barack Obama](#) T-shirt gives a high-five to a black student with glasses and an Afro. The lanky homecoming queen, part Filipino and part Honduran, runs past on her way to band practice. The student body president, a son of Laotian refugees, hangs fliers about a bake sale.

But as old divisions vanish, waves of [immigration](#) have fueled new ones between those who speak English and those who are learning how.

Walk with immigrant students, and the rest of Hylton feels a world apart. By design, they attend classes almost exclusively with one another. They take separate field trips. And they organize separate clubs.

“I am thankful to my teachers because the little bit of English I am able to speak, I speak because of them,” Amalia Raymundo, from Guatemala, said during a break between classes. But, she added, “I feel they hold me back by isolating me.”

Her best friend, Jhosselin Guevara, also from Guatemala, joined in. “Maybe the teachers are trying to protect us,” she said. “There are people who do not want us here at all.”

In the last decade, record numbers of immigrants, both legal and illegal, have fueled the greatest growth in public schools since the baby boom. The influx has strained many districts’ budgets and resources and put classrooms on the front lines of America’s battles over whether and how to assimilate the newcomers and their children.

Inside schools, which are required to enroll students regardless of their immigration status and are prohibited from even asking about it, the debate has turned to how best to educate them.

Hylton High, where a reporter for The New York Times spent much of the past year, is a vivid

laboratory. Like thousands of other schools across the country, it has responded to the surge of immigrants by channeling them into a school within a school. It is, in effect, a contemporary form of segregation that provides students learning English intensive support to meet rising academic standards — and it also helps keep the peace.

In a nation where most students learning English lag behind other groups by almost every measure, Hylton's program stands out for its students' high test scores and graduation rates. However, at this ordinary American high school, in an ordinary American suburb at a time of extraordinary upheaval, those achievements come with considerable costs.

The calm in the hallways belies resentments simmering among students who barely know one another. They readily label one another "stupid" or "racist." The tensions have at times erupted into walkouts and cafeteria fights, including one in which immigrant students tore an American flag off the wall and black students responded by shouting, "Go back to your own country!"

Hylton's faculty has been torn over how to educate its immigrant population. Some say the students are unfairly coddled and should be forced more quickly into the mainstream. And even those who support segregating students admit to soul-searching over whether the program serves the school's needs at the expense of immigrant students, who are relentlessly drilled and tutored on material that appears on state tests but get rare exposure to the kinds of courses, demands or experiences that might better prepare them to move up in American society.

"This is hard for us," said Carolyn Custard, Hylton's principal. "I'm not completely convinced we're right. I don't want them to be separated, but at the same time, I want them to succeed."

Education officials classify some 5.1 million students in the United States — 1 in 10 of all those enrolled in public schools — as English language learners, a 60 percent increase from 1995 to 2005.

Researchers give many causes for the gaps between them and other groups. Perhaps most paradoxical, they say, is that a nation that prides itself on being a melting pot has yet to reach agreement on the best way to teach immigrant students.

In recent years, students learning English have flooded into small towns and suburban school districts that have little experience with international diversity. Meanwhile, teachers and administrators have come under increasing pressure to meet the requirements of the federal [No Child Left Behind Act](#), which links every school's financing and its teachers' jobs to student performance on standardized tests.

The challenges have only intensified with a souring economy and deepening anger over illegal immigration, provoking many Americans to question whether those living here unlawfully should

be educated at all.

Political Responses

Across the country, politics is never far from the schoolhouse door. Arizona, California and Massachusetts adopted English-only education policies that limited bilingual services. By contrast, school districts in Georgia and Utah have recruited teachers from Mexico to work with their swelling Latin American populations.

Near Washington, officials in Frederick County, Md., floated the idea of challenging federal law by requiring students to disclose whether they are in the country legally, an idea also proposed by the authorities in Culpeper County, Va.

Then there is Hylton High School's home county, [Prince William](#). What was once a mostly white, middle-class suburb 35 miles southwest of the nation's capital has been transformed by a construction boom into a traffic-choked sprawl of townhouses and strip malls where Latinos are the fastest-growing group.

Neighborhood disputes led the county to enact laws intended to drive illegal immigrants away. White and black families with the means to buy their way out of the turmoil escaped to more affluent areas. Hispanic families, feeling threatened or just plain unwelcome, were torn between those who had legal status and those who did not. Many fled.

By last March, educators reported that at least 759 immigrant students had dropped out of county schools. Hylton, whose 2,200 student population is almost equal parts white, black and Latino and comes from working-class apartment complexes and upscale housing developments, was one of the hardest hit.

The school's program for English learners — a predominantly Latino group that includes students from 32 countries who speak 25 languages — is directed by Ginette Cain, 61, who says she was inspired to teach immigrant students because she was once one herself.

Petite with a shock of red hair, the daughter of a lumberjack and a cook, Ms. Cain was the first in her French-Canadian family to master English when they arrived in Vermont in the 1950s. She served as a bridge between her parents and their new homeland, helping them in meetings with landlords, teachers, doctors and bill collectors.

The hostilities that today's immigrants face, Ms. Cain said, have shaken her faith in bridges.

"I used to tell my students that they had to stay in school," Ms. Cain said, "because eventually the laws would change, they would become citizens of this country, and they needed their diplomas so they could make something of themselves as Americans."

“I don’t tell them that anymore,” she continued. “Now I tell them they need to get their diplomas because an education will help them no matter what side of the border they’re on.”

A Crash Program

It was crunch time at Hylton High: 10 minutes until the bell, two weeks before state standardized tests, and a classroom full of blank stares suggesting that Ms. Cain still had a lot of history to cover to get her students ready.

The question hanging in the air: “What is the name for a time of paranoia in the United States that was sparked by the Bolshevik Revolution?”

“What’s that?” Delmy Gomez, a junior from El Salvador, said with a grimace that caused his classmates to burst into laughter.

The question might have stumped plenty of high school students. But for Ms. Cain’s pupils, it might as well have been nuclear physics.

Freda Conteh had missed long stretches of school in war-torn Sierra Leone. Noemi Caballero, from Mexico, filled notebooks with short stories and poetry in Spanish, but struggled to compose simple sentences in English.

Nuwan Gamage, from Sri Lanka, was distracted by working two jobs to support himself because he found it difficult to live with his mother and her American husband after spending most of his life apart from her. And Edvin Estrada, a Guatemalan, worried about a brother in the [Marines](#), headed off for duty in some undisclosed hot spot.

Few of these students had heard of the Pilgrims, much less the history of Thanksgiving. Idioms like “easy as pie” and “melting pot” were lost on them. They knew little of the American Revolution, much less the Bolshevik.

“American students come to school with a lot of cultural knowledge that other teachers assume they don’t have to explain because their kids get it from growing up in this country, watching television or surfing the Internet,” Ms. Cain said. “I can’t assume any of that.”

Education experts estimate that it takes the average learner of English at least two years of study to hold conversations, and five to seven years to write essays, understand a novel or explain scientific processes at the level of their English-speaking peers.

High schools, the last stop between adolescence and adulthood, do not have that kind of time. Getting students to graduation often means catching them up to a field that has a 15-year head

start.

In recent decades, some degree of segregation has often been involved in teaching immigrants. Through the 1980s, schools generally pulled them out of the mainstream for at least an hour or two each day for “English as a Second Language” courses that were largely focused on basic English and vocational training.

As national education standards were adopted in 1989, some school districts established dual-language programs that allowed students learning English to study core subjects in their native languages until they were able to move into mainstream classes. Other districts, hit by the largest waves of immigrants, established so-called newcomer schools, where immigrants were clustered to help them adapt to their new surroundings and develop their English skills before moving on to regular schools.

When significant numbers of immigrants began arriving in Prince William County, the school district, like others across the country, essentially created newcomer schools-within-schools, where students learning English are placed for all but a few electives like art, R.O.T.C. or auto mechanics. The goal, educators say, is to give them intensive attention until they are ready to join mainstream classes.

The reality, experts acknowledge, is that only a few high school students ever make that jump.

“I would love nothing better than to have my kids in classes all over the building,” Ms. Cain said. “But you know what would happen to them? They’d move to the back of the class, then they’d fail, and then they’d drop out.”

She began building her program — known formally as English for Speakers of Other Languages, or ESOL — in 2001, when she enlisted a colleague to teach a separate world history class for those learning English.

Ms. Cain sat in to learn the information, then taught a review class so her students understood the material well enough to pass state tests.

The following years, she set up similar pairs of classes in earth science, biology and American history. A Peruvian teacher, who made fun of his own thick accent so the students would be less self-conscious about theirs, began teaching algebra and geometry. And the head of the English department agreed to teach a class that would help students complete a required research paper.

The curriculum for those learning English covers most of the same material taught in mainstream classes, except that teachers move more slowly and rely more on visual aids. Students in Ms. Cain’s program generally outperform other English learners in the state on standardized tests,

and do as well or better than Hylton's mainstream students. Last year, for example, all of the English learners passed Virginia's writing exam; by comparison, 97 percent of the general population passed. In math, 91 percent of Hylton's ESOL students passed the exam, the same percentage as other students. And 89 percent of the English learners passed the history exam, compared with 91 percent of the others.

Teaching to Tests

The consistently good scores turned out by Hylton's English learners gave rise to suspicions of cheating a few years ago, which a state audit concluded were unfounded. But watching the program up close reveals that certain tricks and shortcuts are built in.

Sample tests are published on the Internet, for example. Ms. Cain studies them and uses them as guides. "It used to be that we were told not to teach to the test," she said. "Now, that's what everyone tells us, from state administrators on down."

"Teachers know what's going to be on the test," she added. "And if you only have a limited amount of time, that's what you're going to teach."

Compared with mainstream students, the average English learner at Hylton spends twice the time with twice the number of teachers on core subjects needed to graduate. Their classes are light on lectures and heavy on drills, games and worksheets intended to help them memorize facts about topics as varied as European monarchies, rock formation and the workings of the human heart.

At Hylton, freshmen finish Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" in a month, while immigrants pore over it for an entire semester. Most mainstream students take tests with essay questions on the phases of the water cycle; the English learners have the option to draw posters, like one by a Bolivian-born boy who depicted himself as a water molecule rising from an ice cube, drifting into a cloud and raining over his homeland.

The immigrant students are given less homework and rarely get failing grades if they demonstrate good-faith efforts. They are given more credit for showing what they know in class participation than on written assignments. And on state standardized tests, they are offered accommodations unavailable to other students.

Teachers, for example, are allowed to read test questions to them. In some cases, the students are permitted to respond orally while teachers record their answers.

In Ms. Cain's 90-minute history review classes, which can touch on topics from the reign of Marie Antoinette to the Iraq war, getting ready for tests often seems the sole objective. Ms. Cain routinely interrupts discussions to emphasize potential questions.

“Write this down,” she told a class one day. “There’s always a question about Huguenots.”

Significant historical episodes are often reduced to little more than sound bites. “You don’t really need to know anything more about the Battle of Britain, except that it was an air strike,” Ms. Cain told one class. “If you see a question about the Battle of Britain on the test, look for an answer that refers to air strikes.”

Often, she manages to combine her test tips with comparisons to historical struggles and the ones her students face today. That is how she taught them about the aftershocks of the Bolshevik Revolution. The period of paranoia that gripped the United States, she told students, was known as the Red Scare.

“If you see a question about Bolsheviks on the test,” Ms. Cain said, “the answer is probably Red Scare.”

Unsatisfied, Delmy asked whether Americans were right to have been afraid of a Communist invasion.

“This kind of fear has happened a few times in our history,” Ms. Cain said. “You know, where we blame foreigners for our problems, for wrecking the economy, for stealing our jobs. You see where I’m going?”

Melting Pot/Pressure Cooker

Like so many other suburban communities transformed by immigration, Prince William County was overwhelmed as much by the pace of the change as by its scale.

In a blink of history’s eye, this commuter community became one of the 12 fastest-growing counties in the country, with a Hispanic population that surged to 19 percent from 2 percent, far outpacing growth by any other group since 1980. The enrollment of children with limited proficiency in English grew 219 percent. The county, the scene of some of the first skirmishes of the Civil War, became a battleground again.

Corey A. Stewart, chairman of the all-white, predominantly Republican Board of Supervisors, led the cause of those who argued that illegal immigrants — an estimated 30 percent of all those moving into the county — were an undue burden on taxpayers. It cost Prince William \$40.2 million, about 5 percent of the school budget, to provide additional services to students with limited English last year, for example.

Mr. Stewart ordered his staff to identify services the county could deny to illegal immigrants. And he was a co-author of an ordinance that would have allowed the county police to check the

immigration status of anyone they stopped whom they also suspected of living in the country illegally. (The authorities later backed off, limiting the police to checking the status of anyone arrested.)

“We didn’t set out to pass a law addressing immigration,” Mr. Stewart said in an interview. “We wanted to address issues involving problems in housing, in hospitals, in schools and with crime. And we found that when we looked at all those areas, illegal immigration was driving a lot of the problems.”

In neighborhoods, however, many people did not make distinctions between legal and illegal immigrants. Some residents complained of a “foreign invasion.” Constructive dialogue was often drowned out by hate-filled blogs, headlines and protests. And school boundaries were bitterly contested, with some families moving their children into schools with lower populations of immigrants, and others flexing their political influence to try to keep the immigrants out.

Many parents worried that the Latino influx strained schools’ resources, eroding the quality of their children’s education.

“I have no problem with immigrants,” said Lori Bauckman-Moore, a mother of five who said her mother came through Ellis Island. “But so many of these kids don’t speak English. I’m talking fourth, fifth and sixth grades, where half of the kids don’t understand what their teachers are telling them. How can my child learn when teachers have to spend most of their time focused on the kids who cannot keep up with the curriculum?”

At Hylton, Ms. Cain’s school-within-a-school began to feel like a bunker. Two brothers from El Salvador vented in class about always having to look over their shoulders, and then stopped coming to school. A boy from Mexico disappeared, calling a month later to ask Ms. Cain to send his transcripts to Houston.

Eventually the tumult threatened the teacher’s pet: Jorge Rosales, a shy, strapping Mexican who wore gel in his hair and a medallion of the Virgin of Guadalupe around his neck.

When Jorge arrived at Hylton his sophomore year, he was reading at a sixth-grade level and failing most classes. Two years later, he was playing on the soccer team and on his way to graduating with honors.

But early last year, six months from getting his diploma, Jorge told Ms. Cain his father had lost his construction job, his parents had fallen behind in their mortgage payments, and, since no one in the Rosales family was in the country legally, his mother lived in fear that a minor traffic infraction could lead to deportation.

Ms. Cain called each member of the County Board of Supervisors and told them the crackdown was infringing on immigrant students' rights to an education. "They told me I was the only person calling to complain," she said. "All their other calls were from people who supported what they were doing."

Before long, the polarization outside Hylton reinforced the divide between the two groups of students inside the school.

Teachers set the tone. In their classrooms, some tiptoed around the immigration debate or avoided it altogether. Advisers to student groups created to examine pressing issues — including the school newspaper, the Model [United Nations](#) and the World of Difference Club — similarly ignored the matter. And the teachers for those learning English made little effort to organize activities that would bring them and mainstream students together.

"To create a positive environment for my kids," Ms. Cain said, "I've had to control who they're exposed to."

The silence and separation fueled an us-versus-them dynamic. The president of Hylton's parent-teacher-student organization recalled her daughter complaining about an immigrant student wearing a T-shirt that said, "They Can't Deport Us All." A Peruvian mother remembered her son coming home and asking, "Are we legal?"

When asked why they did not have any friends among the immigrant students, some mainstream students responded by mentioning a worker who did not finish a job their parents had paid for, or a line of pregnant women at the clinic where their mother works, or a gang member who stole a friend's books.

"I identify with the people I hang around with," said an editor of the student newspaper, who is not named because she spoke without her parents' permission. "My friends' parents are not cashiers or people who wash dishes."

When Ms. Cain's students are asked why they have not made friends outside their group, they often tell stories about a customer who cursed at them while they were working at McDonald's, or an employer who cheated their father of his wages, or a student who told them to stop speaking Spanish on the school bus.

Romina Benitez Aguero said that a neighbor greeted her cheerfully on the street, but that the woman's daughters — both Hylton students — snubbed her.

And Francisco Espinal, from Honduras, said a teacher once shouted at him for running in the halls. "This is not your country," he recalled the teacher saying. "You are in America now."

Costs Versus Benefits

The more Amalia Raymundo goes to school, the more she feels her options narrowing. She was a rising star in her remote village in Guatemala, the region's beauty queen and a candidate for college scholarships. But she came to this country two years ago to get to know a mother she had not seen since she was a baby, with the belief that an American education would help her fulfill her dreams of "becoming someone."

She works hard to make all A's. But this year, she started to wonder whether the work was worth it, and she nearly dropped out.

Amalia's classes are all in English. Still, Amalia, 19, worries that because she spends most of her school day speaking Spanish with other students, and then with her parents at home, it could be years before she is able to speak, read and write English fluently enough to compete for college.

It means she has had little access to peers and networks that might help her learn to better navigate her new country, apply for scholarships, make her own [MySpace](#) page or drive a car. She lives an hour's drive from Washington, but has visited only once, on a field trip with other immigrant students.

"If I am going to end up cleaning houses with my mother," Amalia said to explain why she almost quit Hylton, "why go to high school?"

Hylton's program has become a source of pride for helping immigrant students succeed in school, but also a target of criticism that segregated classes have handicapped students by isolating them and "dumbing down" the curriculum.

"High schools have to make a pragmatic choice when it comes to these kids," said Peter B. Bedford, a history teacher who supports the program. "Are you going to focus on educating them, or socially integrating them?"

"This school has made the choice to focus on education," he added. "The best tools we can give them to function in this society are their diplomas."

But Amy Weiler, an assistant principal, worried whether the program had turned high school into more of an end than a beginning. "If you ask whether our program is successful at getting our students to pass tests, the data would indicate that it is," Ms. Weiler said. "But if you ask whether we are helping our students to assimilate, there's no data to answer that question."

"My fear," she added, "is that if we take a look at where our ESOL students are 10 years from now, we're going to be disappointed."

Studies suggest that English learners in separate, so-called sheltered classrooms perform better in school than do the majority of their peers who are immersed in the mainstream with little or no language support. There has been no systematic tracking, however, of English learners beyond graduation to determine whether schools are leveling playing fields or perpetuating the inequalities of a stratified society.

Some students, of course, successfully climb into the middle class and beyond, as generations of immigrants before them have. But Hispanic college graduation rates — 16 percent of 25- to 29-year-old Hispanics born in the United States hold a college degree, compared with 34 percent of whites and 62 percent of Asian-Americans — suggest that many recent immigrants and their children are not going to college.

Ms. Cain's anecdotal evidence bears that out. A handful of her students go on to four-year colleges, while others enroll in community colleges or join the armed services. The majority, however, eventually move into the same low-skilled jobs as their parents.

"I love hearing from my students," Ms. Cain said. "But then again, I don't, because I usually don't hear what I had hoped."

Those hopes, for example, had propelled Ms. Cain's star student, Jorge, to graduation. After his family moved to Alexandria, she adjusted his schedule so his mother could drive him the hour to school.

He loved Hylton, he recalled in an interview. "It is the only place where everybody has the same chance," he said. But now, without enough money for college — and English skills still so weak that completing community college seems a much more daunting prospect — he installs drywall with his father.

He still remembers the architectural design class he took at Hylton and the ambitions to become a foreman it inspired. "Sometimes when I see the floor plans," he said wistfully, "I think about high school."

Amalia, who once thought about becoming a doctor, has also learned to adjust her sights.

"When I came to this country, I had my bags packed with dreams," she said. "Now I see my dreams are limited."

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The Washington Post

Preserving Languages Is About More Than Words

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By Kari Lydersen
Washington Post Staff Writer
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The traditional Irish language is everywhere this time of year, emblazoned on green T-shirts and echoing through pubs. But Irish, often called Gaelic in the United States, is one of thousands of "endangered languages" worldwide. Though it is Ireland's official tongue, there are only about 30,000 fluent speakers left, down from 250,000 when the country was founded in 1922.

Irish schools teach the language as a core subject, but outside a few enclaves in western Ireland, it is relatively rare for families to speak it at home.

"There's the gap between being able to speak Irish and actually speaking it on a daily basis," said Brian O'Conchubhair, an assistant professor of Irish studies at the University of Notre Dame who grew up learning Irish in school. "It's very hard to find it in the cities; it's like a hidden culture."

Irish is expected to survive at least through this century, but half of the world's almost 7,000 remaining languages may disappear by 2100, experts say.

A language is considered extinct when the last person who learned it as his or her primary tongue dies. Last month, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) launched an online atlas of endangered languages, labeling more than 2,400 at risk of extinction.

Hot spots where languages are most endangered include Siberia, northern Australia, the North American Pacific Northwest, and parts of the Andes and Amazon, according to the Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages, a nonprofit partnering with National Geographic to record and promote disappearing tongues.

Language extinction has been a phenomenon for at least 10,000 years, since the dawn of agriculture.

"In the pre-agricultural state, the norm was to have lots and lots of little languages," said Gregory D.S. Anderson, director of the Living Tongues Institute. "As humans developed with agriculture, larger population groups were able to aggregate together, and you got larger languages developing."

Languages typically die when speakers of a small language group come in contact with a more dominant population. That happened first when hunter-gatherers transitioned to agriculture, then during periods of European colonial expansion, and more recently with global migration and urbanization. The spread of English, Spanish and Russian wiped out many small languages.

"As long as people feel embarrassed, restrained or openly criticized for using a particular language, it's only natural for them to want to avoid continuing to do what's causing a negative response, whether it's something overt like having your mouth washed out or more subtle like discrimination," Anderson said.

Russian-language-only policies have virtually extinguished many Siberian languages, including Tofa, which lets speakers use a single word to say "a two-year-old male, un-castrated, rideable reindeer."

In the United States and Australia in past decades, the government forced native peoples to abandon their languages through vehicles such as boarding schools that punished youth for speaking a traditional tongue. Many Native American and aboriginal Australian languages never recovered. The United States has lost 115 languages in the past 500 years, by UNESCO's count, 53 of them since the 1950s. Last year, the Alaskan language Eyak disappeared with the death of the last speaker.

Indigenous groups also may abandon localized tongues for a dominant indigenous alternative, such as Quechua in South America. Or they might shift to a pidgin, or hybrid, of various local languages.

Extinct languages can be revived, especially when they have been recorded.

"But when you skip a generation, it's hard to pick a language back up again," said Douglas Whalen, president of the Endangered Language Fund, which gives grants to language-preservation projects. "You need a community that is really committed and will bring children up from birth in the second language, even if they themselves are not the most fluent speakers."

Michael Blake, an associate professor of philosophy and public policy at the University of Washington, said languages have always changed and disappeared over time, and he argues against the idea that all languages should be preserved.

"When we have indigenous languages in danger because of what we've done to these communities, that's the real reason" behind preservation pushes, he said. "But it's a much more complicated argument. It doesn't mean every language now has the right to be immortal."

Preservation proponents say there are cultural and pragmatic reasons to save dying languages. Many indigenous communities have in their native tongues vast repositories of knowledge about medicinal herbs, information that could provide clues to modern cures. The Kallawaya people in South America have passed on a secret language from father to son for more than 400 years, including the names and uses of medicinal plants. It is now spoken by fewer than 100 people. Preserving languages is also key to the field of linguistics, which could offer a window into the workings of the brain.

The Living Tongues Institute recruits youth who are not fluent in their traditional tongue to become "language activists," using digital equipment to document their elders' voices and learn the language themselves. This creates a record and builds pride in the language.

Such pride has been key to a modest popular resurgence of the Irish language. Paddy Homan, an Irish musician and social worker who immigrated to Chicago two years ago, thinks the 1990s' "Celtic Tiger" economic boom was a major boost for Irish.

"It used to feel like a sin to speak the Irish language; the English made us feel bad about ourselves, like we were just a nation of alcoholics," said Homan, 34. "Now we feel proud, and speaking Irish is the fashionable thing to do."

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Despite heavy recruitment, CIA still short on bilingual staff

By Pete Eisler, USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — Just 13% of CIA employees speak a foreign language nearly five years after the 9/11 Commission urged the agency to expand its ranks of bilingual operatives and analysts to help thwart future terrorist attacks, according to CIA data provided at USA TODAY's request.

The overall number of CIA workers with foreign language skills has risen 70% in the past five years amid broader recruiting efforts that have included Internet ads on YouTube and Facebook, the figures show. The data are limited to percentages because specific staffing levels are classified.

Still, bilingual employees account for 18% within the agency's Directorate of Intelligence, which handles all analysis of information gathered by the agency. Within the National Clandestine Service, which runs foreign spy operations, 28% of employees speak a foreign language.

The CIA's lack of foreign language speakers has fueled criticisms from congressional committees and commissions since the 9/11 attacks of 2001.

CIA Director Leon Panetta said after his confirmation earlier this year that expanding foreign language proficiency among new and existing staff is a top priority. "I'd like to ... get to a point where every analyst and operations officer is trained in a foreign language," he said. "Foreign languages are extremely important ... to understanding that part of the world that we have to gather intelligence from."

Besides Internet and TV ads, CIA officials are recruiting first- and second-generation Americans in immigrant communities, such as Detroit, which has a large Arab-American population. The CIA also offers hiring bonuses of up to \$35,000 to recruits with "mission critical" languages, such as Arabic, Chinese, Dari, Korean, Pashtu, Persian, Russian and Urdu.

House Intelligence Committee member Pete Hoekstra, R-Mich., wants the CIA to do more to make foreign language development an integral part of its operation for both new and existing staff.

"Does this look like significant progress after eight years of ... pressure?" he said of the new figures. "Their performance is mediocre at best."

The agency's need for more foreign language speakers, particularly Arab linguists, was raised in various assessments of problems that helped enable the 9/11 attacks, including the independent 9/11 Commission report. In 2004, President Bush ordered the CIA to boost its ranks of foreign language speakers by 50%.

Find this article at:

http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2009-04-19-language_N.htm

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April 2, 2009

Nation

In Rural Wisconsin, German Reigned For Decades

by Jennifer Ludden



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[All Things Considered](#), April 1, 2009 · In the contentious debate over immigration, critics often assert that immigrants and their children aren't learning English as quickly as previous waves of newcomers did. But did European migrants of yore really assimilate quickly?

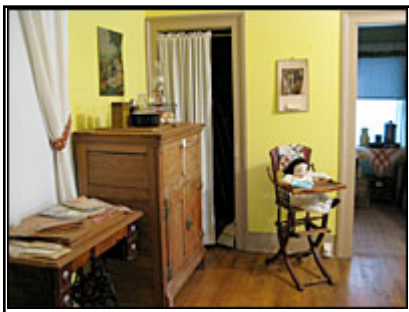
You might be surprised if you explore that question in the tiny town of Hustisford, Wis., an hour west of Milwaukee. There, local members of the town's historical society can give you a tour of the well-appointed, two-story white frame house of the town's founder, an Irishman from New York named John Hustis.

About The Series

Immigrants bring many things to the U.S., but their lasting contribution to the country has always been their children. NPR's series *Immigrants' Children* looks at that legacy, telling the stories of those children and examining the issues they face.

More From Hustisford

- [Keeping Up The Mother Tongue](#)



Ailsa Chang/NPR

The Hustis house contains original furniture, clothing, books, dishes and

Hustis bought some 200 acres of rolling prairie here in 1837 and attracted enough Irish and English settlers to create a frontier town. But within a decade or so, a new wave of pioneers had arrived. In the mid-19th century, in a pattern repeated across the Midwest, large numbers of Germans began buying homes and farms. It was part of a mass migration that would profoundly change Hustisford — and the nation.

Speaking German At Home

Mel Grulke's great-grandparents came to Hustisford from a German speaking part of Europe in the 1880s, toward the end of the big migration. Some say Wisconsin's cold winters and good soil reminded the Germans of home. In any case, they brought a lot of home with them. Soon, two of three schools in Hustisford were teaching all their classes in German. Two churches worshipped in the hallowed language of Martin Luther. And German was the language of commerce.

As Grulke strolls down Hustisford's now largely abandoned main street, he points out the places where he remembers his parents chatting in German with the shopkeepers.

"This was a grocery store on the bottom; it was called Siefeldts." As with several other buildings, the German name of this one is still engraved along the top of the facade. "They had hand-packed ice cream cones, the best in town."

Though Grulke was born in 1941 — a fourth-generation American on one side and third on the other — his first language at home was German. He says of his grandmother, who was born in the U.S., "I don't recall her ever saying any more than three words in English. In fact, my grandfather was rather staunch. He

tools that belonged to John Hustis and his family.

Hear German Music

Along with their own language, Hustisford's immigrants brought German music with them. Irving De Witz remembers becoming interested in the concertina, an accordion-like instrument, when he heard one played at a house party in 1909, when he was just a boy. Many decades later, he recorded some German dance tunes with James Leary, now co-director of the Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures at the University of Wisconsin. Here's a recording of De Witz playing "Landler," from the CD *Ach Ya! Traditional German-American Music from Wisconsin*.

- [Listen: "Landler," from the album "Ach Ya! Traditional German American Music from Wisconsin"](#)
- + add



Ailsa Chang/NPR

Lake Street, a bustling thoroughfare in Hustisford through the mid-1900s, is now quiet and deserted, though many of the original storefronts remain.

across evidence that as late as 1917, a [German version](#) of the "Star Spangled Banner" was still being sung in public schools in Indianapolis.

It has always taken immigrants a generation or two to fully transition to English, Kamphoefner says. Languages like Italian, Polish and Czech also popped up briefly in public schools. But German was unique.

"It was in a similar position as the Spanish language is in the 20th and 21st century," he says. "It was by far the most widespread foreign language, and whoever was the largest group was at a definite advantage in getting its language into the public sphere."

would reprimand us that it was more like a slang language, English. He wanted us to speak German in his presence, which we did."

Grulke's grandparents apparently had plenty of people in Hustisford with whom to speak German.

"In 1910," says Joseph Salmons, a linguist at the University of Wisconsin, "a quarter of the population told the census taker they spoke only German and didn't speak English — a quarter of the population."

That fact stunned Salmons. When he set out to study the area's census, church and court records, he had no idea the language had thrived for so long. The year 1910 was already a full generation after the mass migration had dropped off, yet Salmons discovered not only that many in Hustisford and other farm towns were still bilingual, but that a sizeable portion was monolingual.

"It turns out a lot of these people were born in Wisconsin," Salmons says. "And a fair number were born of parents born in Wisconsin. That is, these guys were not exactly killing themselves to learn English."

Salmons says some Anglos in town even learned German to be able to do business. Court records show some of them used it to swindle the non-English speaking immigrants. Salmons also found records of Anglo children baptized in German churches, even attending German schools. And Wisconsin was not alone.

Taxpayer-Funded Bilingual Schools

"A number of big cities introduced German into their public school programs," says Walter Kamphoefner, a historian at Texas A&M University. Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Cleveland and other cities "had what we now call two-way immersion programs: school taught half in German, half in English," Kamphoefner says. That tradition continued "all the way down to World War I."

In other words, there were taxpayer-funded bilingual public schools in the U.S. a century ago.

How did that happen? "The simplest explanation is ethnic politics, ethnic lobbying," Kamphoefner says, "especially just after the Civil War, when the German vote was kind of up for grabs."

Not that the notion wasn't contentious. In 1889, Wisconsin and Illinois passed laws mandating that schools teach only in English. But Kamphoefner says the ethnic backlash was strong, and the laws were soon repealed. He has come

A Fading Legacy

At St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Hustisford, Bob Scharnell and other historical society members pore over musty, handwritten records of religious life. The baptisms, confirmations and marriages are still noted in German through the 1920s — well after the anti-German hysteria sparked by World War I. Then, in the 1930s, Wisconsin record keepers switched to English. Historians say not much daily use of German lingered anywhere in America after World War II.

In fact, the folks gathered around these old books represent a turning point. Bill Germer, who is the oldest at 79, can speak German but cannot read it. Mary Zastrow, 65, says when she's frustrated, she blurts out a German phrase her Dad used to say, but she's not exactly sure what it means. Scharnell, 68, never learned German, but he has held on to one small tradition. "We can say, 'Come Lord Jesus.' That's a table prayer that we pray around our table, that's in German. And every time we get together, that's what we do," Scharnell says.

Scharnell likes to recite that prayer in German when his grandchildren visit. But that may be about all that gets passed on around here. After all, Hustisford schools don't teach German anymore. Instead, these local keepers of history say, their grandchildren are studying Spanish.

Nation

Keeping Up The Mother Tongue

by Jennifer Ludden



Ailsa Chang/NPR

Mel Grulke, president of Hustisford State Bank, grew up speaking German and realized in high school that being bilingual was a great asset.

Music From Madison Maennerchor

The first known record of the original German verses from the song "Lo, How A Rose Is Blooming" were from a German hymnal, which was published in Cologne in 1599. The song tells the story of how Mary realizes she is giving birth to the Messiah, as foretold by the prophets.

While the German language is a cherished but distant legacy for most folks in the tiny town of Hustisford, Wis., 67-year-old Mel Grulke works hard to keep it up. Grulke's great-grandparents immigrated to the U.S. in the late 1880s, yet three generations later, his farmer parents still spoke German at home, attended German language church services and chatted in German with shopkeepers when they brought their farm eggs into town to sell. As a child, Grulke remembers feeling shame about this.

"It was old-fashioned," he says — just like the homemade summer sausage his mother put in his lunchbox, instead of the coveted Oscar Meyer hot dogs and Twinkies that his town friends ate.

But by high school, Grulke says, it dawned on him that being bilingual was a great asset. He joined the military hoping to be stationed in Germany (he was sent to France instead). He did eventually travel to his ancestors' homeland, and keeping in touch with friends there is one way he hones his language skills. Grulke married into a family of German heritage, and he and his wife practice speaking together.

[Blooming, performed by the Madison Maennerchor](#)

[3 min 3 sec]

+ add



Madison Maennerchor, founded in 1852, is the second oldest German singing organization in the U.S. Madison Maennerchor

Grulke also sings with [Madison Maennerchor](#), founded in 1852, the second oldest German singing organization in the U.S. Its goal is "the perpetuation of choral music, both German and American, German culture, and Gemuetlichkeit."

More From Hustisford

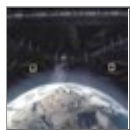
- April 1, 2009 [In Rural Wis., German Reigned For Decades](#)

Even as German died out in every other aspect of daily life in Hustisford, Bethany Lutheran Church offered German language

services into the 1970s. Last Christmas, in an effort to make its holiday service special, the church asked Mel Grulke to deliver a Bible reading in German.

Pastor Timothy Bauer says worshippers enjoyed it, even if many didn't understand every word, "because it's how they were raised." He says some feel so strongly, "it's almost as if they believe God spoke German."

Recent First



[Don Dowd \(Enigma Too\)](#) wrote:

Hotblack - with all due respect, if Yellowstone National Park, or any other American park, looked anything like those pictures, the area would be declared unsafe and shut down until cleaned up.

"It's okay because other people sometimes do it" is a lousy justification for immoral behavior...in my humble opinion.

Thu Apr 2 18:26:15 2009

[Recommend \(0\)](#) ↑

[Report abuse](#)



[Hotblack Desiato \(doerofthings\)](#) wrote:

That's nothing, Don. You should see what the Americans do to the desert...

Thu Apr 2 17:37:49 2009

[Recommend \(0\)](#) ↑

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[Don Dowd \(Enigma Too\)](#) wrote:

Jane W (jofga) wrote:

I find it HILARIOUS to complain that new immigrants (legal or illegal) will increase any negative environmental impacts.

Jane, I felt compelled to single this out from your otherwise fairly accurate post.

It isn't hilarious, it's disastrous:

Desert Trash: Illegal Immigrants' Impact on the Environment

<http://www.nyu.edu/classes/kefer/EvergreenEnergy/oakesr.html>

It's a long piece; skip to the pictures, they each speak a thousand words.

Thu Apr 2 16:41:18 2009

[Recommend \(0\)](#) ↑

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[Jane W \(jofga\)](#) wrote:

I see two streams in the story and the comments.

1. Immigrant culture is quaint when retained longer than one would expect.
2. Immigration now is bad

Not everyone agrees with either or both of these premises. It is unfortunate that blowhards in the media don't bother to base their discussions of immigration in fact - thus promulgating strongly held opinions based on few facts.

I'm not personally aware of the net impact, but one thing that the Social Security Administration knows is that illegal immigrants often DO pay taxes while not asking for benefits.

The immigrants with home loans (legal and illegal) apparently are apparently better at repaying.

Given the resources devouring lifestyle of 'born here' Americans, I find it HILARIOUS to complain that new immigrants (legal or illegal) will increase any negative environmental impacts.

The most ridiculous idea is that one is somehow superior based on where your mother 'popped' you out - we have immigrants fighting for this country and folks born here who are drains on society.

I do think that learning English and US history should be core activities to tie us together as a nation and people should be judged on their OWN contributions.

Thu Apr 2 15:16:55 2009

[Recommend \(1\)](#) ↑

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[Ann Kunkle-Jones \(Libbyj\)](#) wrote:

I grew up in a small German founded village south of Oshkosh, WI. My ancestors had been there since the 1860s. Our Lutheran church had only German services and Catechism until the 1930's when they switched to 2 Catechism classes - one English and one German. We sang Christmas carols in German and English until the late early 80s. Kegs of beer were still served at church council meetings and church picnics in the 70s. I believe some of the reason the Lutheran churches hung unto German so long was the fact it was Martin Luther's language. I have no facts on this, of course, just theory. In my own family, WWI time was a major reason the German language was de-emphasized. The suspicion towards German-Americans being less patriotic made my great-grandparents decide to show outright where their loyalties lay. Though those adults who still spoke German reserved it for swearing and talking secrets about their kids! My grandfather knew nursery rhymes, songs, and swear words in German and that was all!

Thu Apr 2 13:07:33 2009

[Recommend \(1\)](#) ↑

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Xenophobic Attempt to Put "English First" in Nashville Fails

By Marcelo Ballvé, New America Media. Posted January 30, 2009.

Voters resoundingly defeated a councilman's quest to make English the Tennessee city's official language.

Editor's Note: A proposal to make English the official language of Nashville, Tenn. was defeated on Jan. 22. While the coalition that came together to defeat the measure is celebrating, English-only proponents claim they are winning in state capitols around the country. NAM contributing editor Marcelo Ballvé reports on immigration. This is part of NAM's Reports from the Frontlines.

"No más." No more. Those were the words of surrender reportedly spoken by a Nashville councilman on January 22, after voters defeated his quest to make English the city's official language.

Eric Crafton, whose "English First" effort fetched national headlines, was alluding to words supposedly spoken by Roberto Duran as he quit his 1980 boxing match against Sugar Ray Leonard.

But leaders of the broader movement to legislate English as an official language are not quitting the fight. They say despite the Nashville defeat they stand to make gains in state capitols.

Nashville English OnlyMeanwhile, Nashville immigrant rights activists vowed to spread the successful strategies they deployed to fight the legislation-- including mobilizing ethnic media and immigrant voters-- to like-minded groups in states where language battles are brewing.

... .

The "official English" movement sees its agenda gaining in state legislatures. Thirty states already have some form of legislation designating English as the official language.

In November, Missouri voters overwhelmingly approved a ballot to that effect. A half-dozen states are likely to pass similar laws within the next three years, according to Schultz: Oklahoma, West Virginia, Rhode Island, Ohio, Texas and Michigan. A few others, like Georgia, are likely to strengthen existing statutes.

In Iowa, however, the reverse is happening: support is building for a repeal to a 2002 law declaring English the state's official language.

If it had passed, Nashville would have become the first major American city with "official English". Smaller communities, like Hazleton, Pennsylvania (population 23,000) have already passed such laws.



COMMENTS

Nashville rocks

Posted by: jbro434 on Jan 30, 2009 8:11 AM

As a former Nashvillian, I am proud of what the citizens of this city have done. Nashville is a blue island in a sea of red(Tennessee) and the phony conservatives have fled to the outlying counties to mix with their own kind. Crafton assumed that the idiots on the right were there to support him and not realizing that the talk show junkies who bitch and complain about multi-cultural Nashville are living in the suburbs and not in Davidson County proper. For those who do not know, Nashville is full of educated, progressive, free thinkers and not a bunch of hicks like John Rich and Crafton. The city is populated by Latino,Kurdish, Sudanese and a vast number of ethnic groups who would have been harmed by such a vote. Nashville is by no means perfect. However, I am proud of this vote.

The issue here is multiculturalism

Posted by: masthead on Feb 2, 2009 3:11 AM

at the risk of sounding racist and xenophobic i'd say it hasn't worked that well in european countries that have tried it for the last 30 years. it's a complex issue that is catching up with america.

it certainly hasn't worked on the garrison "democratic" state of israel where arabs still do not have the right to vote.if they did, it would be the end of israel.

proponents of multiculturalism in the u.s. should try living in the united kingdom, the netherlands,italy or france for a while before they pound their chests about the benefits of diluting what's left of american culture (a strange of contradiction since it's made up of many cultures).

there are many horror stories in european countries where muslim enclaves have formed amid the indigenous european populations, the europeans, through political correctness, submitting more and more to the demands of these foreigners, to imams who dispise the very culture they are a guest in and profit from.

in the uk, the latest polls showed that 45% of its muslim inhabitants want sharia. read the news about what's happening in holland. learn from europe's mistakes. the netherlands is trying to reverse its multicultural policies.

and don't try drawing a cartoon of the muslim prophet in holland, the dutch authorities once put a amsterdam cartoonist in jail for that.

multiculturalism works as long as religions stay out of it.

Please do not bother to learn English.

Posted by: All For One and One For All on Feb 2, 2009 3:48 AM

I'll always need slaves to scrub my toilet for a sub living wage.

Put Spanish back on elementary cirriculum

Posted by: helenahanbasquet on Feb 2, 2009 3:58 AM

When I was a kid, we were taught Spanish in the second and third grades. Later in high school I took French. To this day I remember more of the Spanish than the French.

If they'd go back to teaching Spanish to second graders, maybe having a few Mexicans around wouldn't feel so threatening. That's what this BS is all about, but it looks like cooler heads realized it might not be worth it to offend all the other international tourists the city of Nashville benefits from every year.



What is the problem with English as the city's official language?

Posted by: Harris20 on Feb 2, 2009 4:09 AM

Nashville is located in America isn't it? So far multiculturalism has been fairly successful in America because immigrants who have come to our country have truly integrated, mostly kept their religion to themselves, and become "American" which is not fully the case in the UK and the rest of Europe.

Syncretism vs. Xenophobia

Posted by: justAnEgg on Feb 2, 2009 6:36 AM

Having been a refugee from Bosnia for five years here in the USA, and now as a US citizen, I am pretty much sure that ALL immigrants need to be integrated into the USA society, especially through an officially standardized common language - English language.

Multiculturalism of a Switzerland, for instance, is not comparable with multiculturalism of USA. In Switzerland, there is one culture, actually, with three historically instituted languages while in USA there really is a rich diversity of cultures but with one officially recognized language.

Having cultural diversity in USA with one official language in use - I don't see it as a problem. The problem is when American culture aggressively penetrates cultures out of the USA.

Just my twopence.

Learning a 2nd language is good for society and for the brain

Posted by: floridahank on Feb 2, 2009 6:57 AM

With Canada (French speaking) to our North and Mexico (Spanish speaking) to our South, in my opinion all schools should offer and impress to our youngsters that learning one or both of these languages in early grades would make them a better all-around person when they become adults. No question it'll help in their careers, and it's factual that learning a second language increases the brain's capacity to grasp new, more involved subjects.

I'm been studying Spanish for over a year and I love the mental challenge of eventually being fluent to speak and understand Spanish speaking people living here in S. Florida.

» [The more languages, the better -- forget about foreigner influx](#) Posted by: floridahank

french isn't very useful in california...but spanish, mandarin, and cantonese sure are!

Posted by: veggiegrrrl on Feb 2, 2009 7:09 AM

french isn't very useful in san francisco...but spanish, mandarin, and cantonese sure are! french is much more useful in new york where there are many africans and folks from the caribbean.

the choice of 2nd and 3rd languages taught in schools should be locally chosen based on demographics.

Why's it always about racism? English-only makes sense.

Posted by: cyr3n on Feb 2, 2009 7:43 AM

Am I naive to say that it saves governments money to pass English-only policy? How much paper is wasted printing documents in different languages that the majority of people won't read. Driver's license tests in other languages.. government employees who translate documents. It's all really wasteful at a time when we all need to be cutting back on redundancy.



» **I agree!** Posted by: BobKincaid

» **RE: I agree! Nonsense** Posted by: Old Skeptic

Here's something to ponder.....

Posted by: Fencerider on Feb 2, 2009 8:12 AM

While I am strongly adamant about keeping multi-culturism alive (just try to stop it), how do we all address the fact that the International language of Banking AND Aviation was always, and will remain to be English? Food for thought, please discuss.

claimed xenophobia

Posted by: Beatrice on Feb 2, 2009 8:39 AM

To want English declared the national language is logical, not xenophobic. We can encourage learning foreign languages and the teaching of them in schools -- a major American failing throughout our history -- but all government business should be conducted in English to avoid a costly Babel.

If ballots are printed in Spanish, why not in Chinese, Korean, Arabic, etc.?

Yes, learn these languages, but government business in English, clear, concise English. We don't have a state religion (blessedly) nor a monarch. What binds us together is the Constitution (written in English) and the English language.

Look at the nations other than Switzerland that recognize more than one language. They split apart along language lines. They become balkanized, ghettoized.

In pre-WWI Hungary, government business was conducted in 17 languages -- disastrously. Group hatred based on who used which language ensued. Now a multi-lingual population thrives, but only Hungarian is used for government business.

I remember when being multi-lingual was something to be proud of.

Posted by: harpy on Feb 2, 2009 9:32 AM

Of course, most people nowadays wouldn't want to admit that "those" immigrants might be better educated because they can speak more than one language. When I went to grade school in the '50's, French was taught 3rd-6th grade. Then it was Spanish or Latin in high school. This was required. Too many people now are just too lazy to learn another language. We have the gall to expect visitors here to learn English, but when Americans go to another country, we expect them all to speak English.

What's wrong

Posted by: jeffr on Feb 2, 2009 10:39 AM

with the official language being English? This is America... right?

I mean, I'm all in favor of multi-culturalism, and being multilingual (I'm working on 3 languages right now myself).

But in government, and other public services, there needs to be one standard language for communicating effectively and clearly, and I think it should definitely be English.

I also think the governments should encourage the hiring of multilingual staff, and having interpreters available, etc. But the language everyone should EXPECT to be understood should be English.

I just don't get what all the big deal is about...

If you *live* in a country, you should learn the language... period. Why is that even an issue? It's just common sense.

How could you possibly move to Tibet, or Viet Nam, or Bulgaria or anywhere the hell else



and EXPECT that the entire government should be responsible for providing translators and interpreters just for YOU, simply because you are too lazy or stupid to learn the language?

You know I really am VERY left-leaning, but this whole issue is just non-sensical to me.

Someone explain to me just what it is about English being the official language of the USA that is a problem, exactly?

During the "Ellis Island" days

Posted by: billwald on Feb 2, 2009 11:51 AM

people came here to become Americans. European immigrants forced their kids to learn English. That is exactly why people whose great grandparents and grandparents were Italian, Greek, German, Polish, Dutch, Irish, whatever call themselves "American" without giving it a second thought.

No one is offended by the Swedish Club or The Sons of Norway or whatever because a real American is happy to party with anyone and eat any kind of good chow. The latest "real Americans" are Chinese, Japanese, Korean . . . Thank God that I live on The Left Coast there is a Teriyaki place in every business district where one can good, cheap chow.

GET AN ESL DEGREE!!!!!!

Posted by: Deep on Feb 2, 2009 12:53 PM

If you feel so passionately about immigrants from countries where you have no clue where they are located learning the English language, then get an English as a Second Language degree. Rather than supporting moronic English only measures and even more moronic politicians like human scum, Tom Tancredo, start teaching immigrants how to speak English. Contrary to popular perception all immigrants do want to learn English, they are fully aware that they will need to know English if they want to be successful in the US. They know that. That is why the subways are filled with ads offering classes de ingles.

The problem with these classes, is that they get filled up fast, and there are not enough teachers for them. There is a HUGE shortage of ESL teachers, not only to teach adults, but also the children of immigrants. If you have a teaching degree and want to make more money, teach ESL. You can enforce English only laws all you want, but if you don't provide more ways for people to learn English, then you will still have people who are stuck speaking their native language. Write all the English only laws you want, but if we don't have enough teachers, then those laws are not even worth the paper they were written on.

ESL teachers are getting jobs when everybody else isn't. So now is a good time to sign up.

It's fine to know extra languages

Posted by: Old Skeptic on Feb 2, 2009 12:53 PM

It's fine, and possibly a good idea, to know more than one language BUT in this country the most important one is English! We need to have a common language, since we are being inundated by foreigners speaking everything but.

It is ridiculous for Americans to be fired or denied a job because they don't speak Spanish. A large proportion of the immigration from Latin America is illegal; why should we alter our society to accommodate illegal aliens? Those who come legally know they are going to need to learn English and are usually willing to do so.

We should look at western Europe, with all the tensions they are having from being inundated with immigrants from the Middle East or Eastern Europe, to see the divisions that are likely to occur here unless we strongly encourage immigrants to assimilate. We can't allow them to form separate blocs based on nationality and language and still expect them to assimilate and become Americans. Not allowing the formation of "multilingualism" will encourage assimilation.



» **Why Ridiculous?** Posted by: Lilly
Posted by: kungfuma on Feb 2, 2009 2:05 PM

Tennessee "might could" better learn to speak english before worrying what others speak

» **RE: very funny...and yet, ironic** Posted by: Caleb Darkstar

What an arrogant SOB I would be..

Posted by: Caleb Darkstar on Feb 2, 2009 3:44 PM

... If I moved to South America, Europe, or Africa and expected to find everyone clamoring to facilitate my cultural differences. The reason you leave one culture to join another is to do just that. Not have it change for you.

I believe the vast majority of persons relocating to the US expect to Assimilate, If they are arrogant enough to expect the country to assimilate to thier culture then they are probably not worth having as neighbors.

They should pass it....

Posted by: gellero1 on Feb 2, 2009 8:15 PM

"Multicultural" societies have consistently been failures. Why does AnterNet wish this upon us??