

Attn: Leonard Kniffel, Editor in Chief
American Libraries
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611

November 19, 2007

Dear Mr. Kniffel:

Immigration is a topic that has been in discussion in Washington, DC for over two years now. The issue affects all people living in the United States and I want to thank you for dedicating the cover stories in American Libraries (Nov 2007 issue) to the topic – *I think*.

The point counter-point articles that American Libraries published, under the main heading, “Eyes on Español: Immigration, assimilation, and the right to read” provide two opposing view points that will undoubtedly create controversy. Of particular concern is the Article, “English spoken here” by Julia Stephens.

Stephens’ screed against any language other than English demonstrates her lack of knowledge about the U.S. political process, geography and history. Contrary to her statement that our representatives agree and voted to make English the official language of our nation, our representatives actually do not agree. The Senate and House of Representatives disagree on the issues of immigration and official language. It is also a shame that people who would like to pass a law to make English the official language are not aware of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, 1848. The treaty gave the U.S. acquisition of California, Nevada, and Utah and parts of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Wyoming. It also gave its new citizens the right to maintain their culture, of which language is a part.

Given our profession’s commitment to pluralism and diversity, Stephens’ suggestion, “change our American pluralistic philosophy to an ethnocentric one” is simply racist. Pluralism is a part of American history and an important part of democracy. Stephens’ article only helps to spread fear, hatred, and divisiveness within our profession. In the library field, her vision of library collections would exclude, operas, foreign films, and materials that help library patrons learn world languages.

Stephens is mistaken if she thinks that children and grandchildren of Latino immigrants will not learn English. History tends to repeat itself and like all preceding non-English speaking immigrants that arrived in the United States, first, second, and third generation Latino children will certainly be educated in English and with time will most likely not speak Spanish. *REFORMA* understands this concept and emphasizes it in its name. Hence, it is *The National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking*.

In conclusion, we have to accept that Spanish is part of our lives. It is in the name of our states, cities, streets, and even mountain ranges. This is especially true of Puerto Rico, Florida, and parts of the Southwest. Personally, I would have a hard time purchasing a flight ticket to go back to my hometown, *El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles de Porciúncula* in California if I could not use Spanish. My pueblo consists of approximately 13 million people, you might know it as Los Angeles and they are two of the most beautiful Spanish words that I have ever heard.

Gracias nuevamente,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Mario A. Ascencio". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "M".

Mario A. Ascencio, President