

One Saturday afternoon, a family recently arrived from Mexico, an EPA residents, went to the supermarket to buy food for the week. The mother told the oldest son to go to the deli and ask for a pound of "Roast Beef." The brave young man approached the counter and said in his strong Spanish accent, "can I have one pound of Root beer"? The people around him couldn't stop laughing. The person tending the cold cuts section laughed and said, "Roast Beef! Learn English, boy!" The brave young man lost his self-esteem and confidence in a moment.

Stories like these are part of the daily life of the EPA community. First and second generations (the dreamers) of immigrants from the LatinX community live in fear of being discriminated against for their English.

For this community, the language barrier is much more than the lack of a tool to survive on a day-to-day basis. It is a target of discrimination, insults, and slights. Due to the lack of language, we are branded as people; uneducated, stupid, and "bad hombres." The impact of this discrimination causes systematic problems that bring; isolation, anxiety, low self-esteem, fear of being with people who do not speak Spanish, or aggression towards other English-speaking communities to defend one crucial human right: **dignity**. The concept of human dignity is the belief that all people have a unique value that is linked only to their humanity. It has nothing to do with class, race, gender, religion, language, immigration status, abilities, or any other factor other than human beings. Let us remember that the mere fact of leaving the country of origin, a person feels they lose part of their dignity by leaving their nation, their family, and friends and arriving in a country where no one, literally, knows or recognizes them. The reality of this community, even with their lack of language, is that they are hardworking people who work up to 16 hours a day to pay the high rent costs in the Bay Area. These people do not want problems with anyone. It is people who go to adult school to learn better English after work. The LatinX

community values the concept of family in high esteem. Which, unfortunately, is lost when both parents must work for more than 40 hours a week.

I was that young man who was made fun because my English. It was and continues to be a deep wound in my life that I continue to heal. The injury of mockery, discrimination, lack of credibility in myself cannot be justified just because my pronunciation is not the best or because I make mistakes when speaking the language. Thanks to the empathy and support of my faith community and people of the majority culture, I was able to finish my university, finish a master's degree, enter a specialization program at Stanford, and now, starting a doctorate program at Berkeley School of Theology.

My call to action for change is practical and straightforward: **social inclusion**. Do not minimize, denigrate, or mock a child, youth, an adult, or LatinX seniors who cannot speak English. Instead, listen and interact with them; show interest in what they have to share. If they make a mistake when speaking, diplomatically correct their mistake and encourage them to keep practicing. You can value their effort and courage in trying to speak another language. You can sow a seed of self-esteem in the heart of this community, thus raising a strong tree full of fruits for the entire community, full of dignity and nobility.