

## **Speak English**

“Speak English you’re in America”. I was at the age of 8, in second grade when my friend and I were just in line talking while waiting to go to the bathroom and we were told to talk in English instead of the language our parents first taught us, Spanish. We looked at each other in shock and confusion as to why that lady told us to speak a certain language with rudeness. I felt as if my culture, race, and language were something to be ashamed of. I was young and shy when that happened but as I grew up, that day stuck with me which has built up anger as to why I let myself get treated that way. I promised myself to never let anyone make me feel ashamed or disrespected of my race.

Whenever my mom had to go do errands or to government organizations to pay bills or insurance, usually there weren’t many employees who were bilingual that would help my mom communicate. I had to step up and help my mom translate everything she was being told and translate back what my mom was saying to the person who was helping us. It was so hard for me because I was still too young to know all the big words my mom made me translate while also still learning English in school. Sometimes people were really kind and patient with us and would actually make an effort to understand us and help us through the process but other times we would have situations where people would get frustrated and rude and give us attitude just for not speaking their language, English. They would tell me my mom needed to learn English cause we were in America. But why did she have to? I knew every country or state had its own rules and laws but never have I heard we had to speak a certain language in each country. And not only that, but English is classified “above” all languages. Why is America still racializing?

There was also once a time that I can recall when I was younger when my mother and I were walking home from school and we stopped by a park to get some ice cream when this man said “This is America, we speak English” as my mother and I were speaking Spanish. Although we both have papers and are U.S. citizens, it was a prejudgment of what our color looked like to him and not because he knew us or anything. This is an example of what people have associated with these bad images of us people of color. Which shows how Americans are classified as “better” than others.

I am a United States Citizen, and so is my mom. My Dad is now legal but both of my parents were raised in Mexico and didn’t learn English so my first ever language was Spanish and learned English throughout my education. Throughout my first school years, I felt more comfortable talking in Spanish with my Hispanic friends while I was getting the hang of English. I wasn’t embarrassed to speak in Spanish because my parents always told me that learning more than one language would be beneficial for me when I apply for jobs because I would be able to help communicate with so many people like my parents who don’t know English, which would probably get me hired quicker than others. That was my parents’ perspective, which was true in some cases, but there have also been situations where people are discriminated against because of their race or skin color and are denied jobs.

English has been elevated in America while throwing other languages below them. Racism continues in America, the country where many believe in “freedom” and “perfection.” America is still not yet what we believe or get told it is, racism is still an issue in this country.

Why is it that depending where you are, can possibly shape how you speak, who you can be, being categorized, etc. There are people who are denied jobs based on their accent, race, or color.

These situations are what make Americans who speak English better suited for any job or just classified as “superior” over any other person in general, which is an issue that needs to be addressed here and many countries. Racialization discourages people who do not benefit from the privileges that others are receiving. All citizens should be treated equally no matter what language they speak, what color they are, or where they come from. We all deserve to have the same opportunity as another, no one should be classified as “superior” or “lower” than one another. We are all human and have the right to be in a country or speak any language no matter who or where we are.