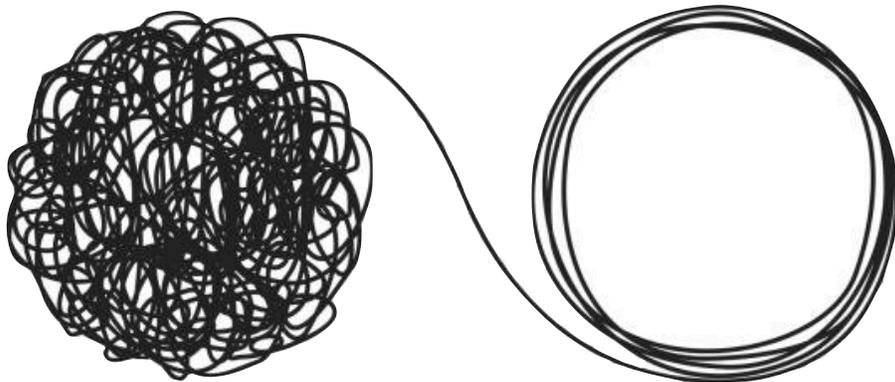


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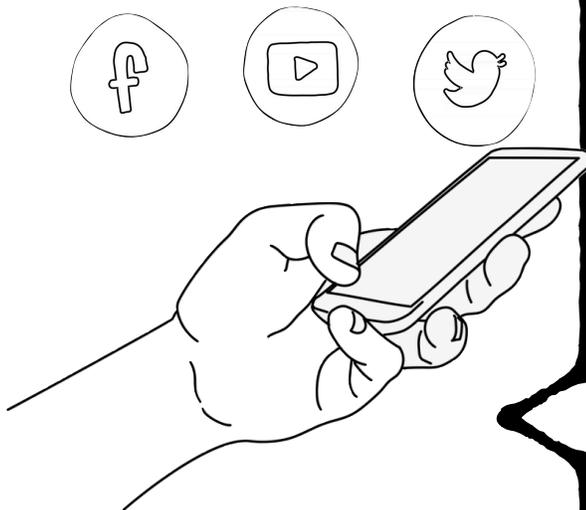
*Navigating broken structures
controlled by English*

*By: Bridget, Gurleen, Mina,
and Naazley*

Explicit disorder is not only permitted to Whites, it is an essential element of a White public persona. To be White is to collude in these practices, or to risk censure as having no sense of humor or being politically correct. (Hill 1998).

File Options Window Help

In an ever-expanding technological world where being a social media influencer is a "thing" typically predicated on going viral, **how does language play a part** in platforms that uplift 30-second dance videos, reality-tv snippets, and trauma porn ranging from homicide to violent accidents? Within the confines of the comment section, one will find a plethora of antagonistic proponents for prescriptive grammar, screaming at the top of their keyboards the difference between 'their' and 'there' while using AAVE incorrectly, and white washing it by calling it "internet speak." It makes no sense that 'to' and 'too' must be spelled correctly for the online grammar gods, but AAVE, mistakenly labeled a language constructed just for the world-wide web, can be used loosely and poorly. "Onna", and "finna", can sound off to some (even uneducated), yet "facts" (usually followed by the emoji), and "periodt" are casually used. All terms fall under the umbrella of AAVE, but because the first two terms are morphologically "incorrect" contractions, the latter two have been more publicly accepted even when used incorrectly. What's most frustrating about the pursuit for perfect punctuation in posts ranging from petty celeb gossip, and pressing subjects such as war crimes, is the constant invalidation of the importance of social media. If social media is so unimportant, with accounts commenting "I'm not going to argue with someone on the internet," then why the constant push for grammatically correct content? We've been plagued by the need to properly pronounce French terms, yet the misuse of AAVE can exist alongside of it. Have a BIPOC stray away from prescriptive grammar, miss an Oxford comma here or there, their intelligence comes under fire. We are not afforded the opportunity to speak or write with flair, while for others it's considered necessary in order to be hip and "with the times." The times are bringing about unwanted change through a medium that's not going anywhere. Social media is providing a space for the underrepresented and misrepresented, as well as for bigots, but the point being is that people are no longer constrained by the grammatical rules of essays, resumes, cover letters, or any other forms of formal writing and THIS is pissing people off; social media is lax enough to embrace a multitude of voices, but not restrictive enough so that those voices can be policed. If AAVE doesn't belong in the classroom, then the classroom does not belong on social media. Think about this when you want to correct someone's misspelling of a homophone in the comment section. LOL.



Social media is approachable to most people with a basic understanding of a smartphone, so this has allowed people of different ages and literacy levels to access it, but the constraints of the classroom are still prevalent throughout the comment section and beyond. All of us in our pod have encountered being corrected or misunderstood, been seen as not enough or less than, but through these moments of having others police our being we've been made privy to their ignorance. These slivers of supposed intelligence pushed upon us have left us with a thirst for change. We demand a classroom, an education, and a comment section which allows US "explicit disorder."

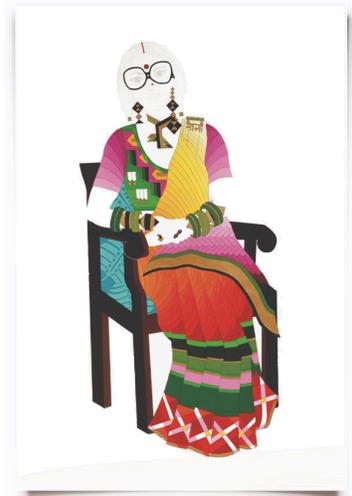
Speaking good English is usually associated with a good accent. As a South Asian non-native* speaker and teacher of the English Language, white students in my classroom have often corrected my foreign accent. I have to explain to them the various ways of pronouncing the same words. Is deep-rooted British English at fault?

Try clicking different pictures/links to interact with our zine!

*Read: non-native speakers of English as international, novices in English, non-White or non-Anglo, have accents, are incomprehensible (Shuck's 'Some Components of Native/Nonnative Dichotomy, 262).

Gail Shuck (2006) states it is “not only race but also national origin [that] is semiotically linked to nativeness in English” (264).

The idea of hailing from the Indian land of masalas, butter chicken, and yoga is exoticized, yet my non-native accent is connected with a non-whiteness leading to stereotypes about my identity. The control of language in education refers to the preconceived notions about how even in learning spaces a certain accent becomes targeted, even though that accent comes from an educator.



“Firangi Rang Barangi (Hindi for ‘Colourful Stranger’) explores the relationship between identity, dress and hybridity. Combining North American street style with Indian textiles, garments and jewellery, this series re-imagines identity across borders.”
– Meera Sethi

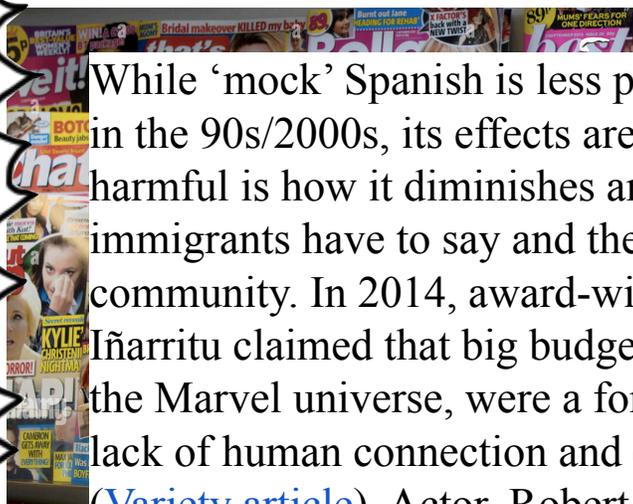
"Mock Spanish" is a term coined by prominent anthropologist, Jane Hill, that "incorporates Spanish-language materials into English in order to create a jocular or pejorative 'key'" (Hill, 682).

This type of language ridicule was at its peak during the 1990s and early 2000s, with an example being "Hasta La Vista Baby" from The Terminator franchise. Hill explains that, "While Puerto Ricans are extremely self-conscious about their 'Spanish' accents in English, heavy English 'accents' in Spanish are perfectly acceptable for Whites, even when Spanish speakers experience them as 'like a fingernail on the blackboard'" (Hill, 682). Mock Spanish is an example of control within the media because it reinforces the power imbalance between media professionals and Hispanic immigrants, which then transcends to colloquial language that is even used in political spaces.



HOLLYWOOD

While 'mock' Spanish is less prevalent in Hollywood today than it was in the 90s/2000s, its effects are still there. What makes it especially harmful is how it diminishes and often dehumanizes what Hispanic immigrants have to say and the unique struggles they face as a community. In 2014, award-winning director Alejandro Gonzalez Iñárritu claimed that big budget superhero movies, such as those from the Marvel universe, were a form of "cultural genocide" due to their lack of human connection and overexposure to plot and violence ([Variety article](#)). Actor, Robert Downey Jr. who portrays Marvel superhero Ironman, responded to Iñárritu's claim by saying that "For a man whose native tongue is Spanish to be able to put together a phrase like 'cultural genocide' just speaks to how bright he is" (Variety article). Although Downey Jr. did not use mock Spanish to directly insult Iñárritu, he did use Spanish to make a point about how Iñárritu's intelligence is directly connected to his ability to articulate in English, and as a result completely evade the valid critiques to his profession.





SO WHAT?!

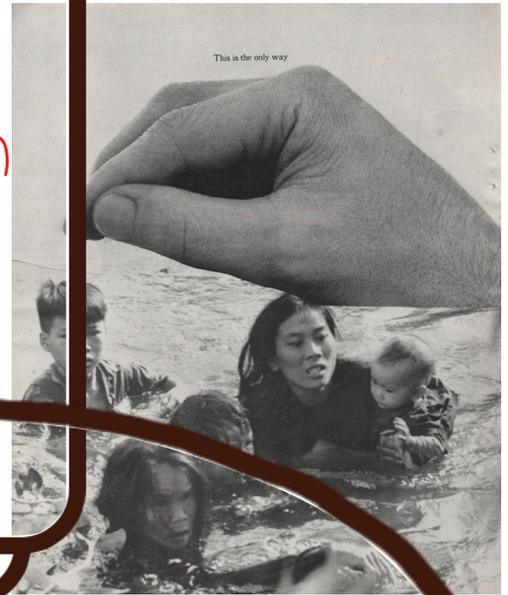


Ultimately, mock Spanish is only one form of language control within pop culture, and the truth is that stereotypes and tropes are used against almost all minorities through the media. It is important to remember that often when a character or individual is being ridiculed for their cultural identity or language skills, this is often a stereotype that results in their dehumanization, and that we must learn to recognize the humanity within one another.

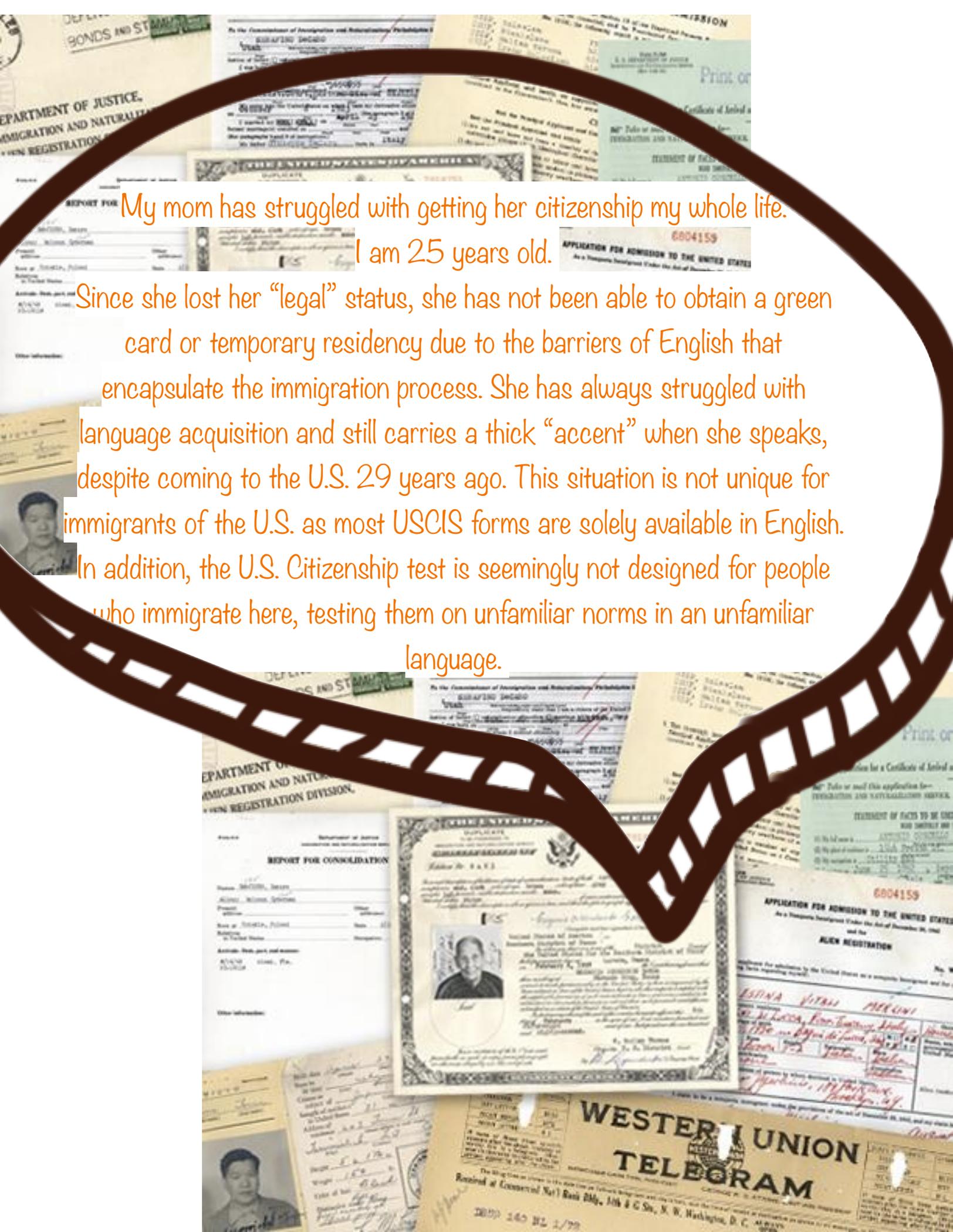


HOW HAS LANGUAGE CONTROLLED YOUR LIFE?

"How do you speak English so well?" — I have often been asked with astonishment that how was my English 'so good' if I moved from India a few years back.



Immigrating to this country at the age of four, meant assimilating to a culture I knew very little about, before I could fully comprehend what I was giving up. As a result, I spent much of my young adult life re-learning my mother tongue and trying to regain some of that cultural identity I had lost. On the other hand, some of my family members who had immigrated to the United States in the 1980s—during the peak of anti-Iranian sentiments—shied away from teaching their children Persian, possibly to avoid facing the same discrimination or ridicule they had faced. Ultimately, language control and cultural identity have been a give and take for my community.



My mom has struggled with getting her citizenship my whole life.

I am 25 years old.

Since she lost her “legal” status, she has not been able to obtain a green card or temporary residency due to the barriers of English that encapsulate the immigration process. She has always struggled with language acquisition and still carries a thick “accent” when she speaks, despite coming to the U.S. 29 years ago. This situation is not unique for immigrants of the U.S. as most USCIS forms are solely available in English. In addition, the U.S. Citizenship test is seemingly not designed for people who immigrate here, testing them on unfamiliar norms in an unfamiliar language.

WESTERN UNION
TELEGRAM

DREAMING OF A WORLD WHERE LANGUAGE RELINQUISHES ITS CONTROL...

“the only way for bilingual education to dismantle racial inequities is by situating advocacy for these programs within a comprehensive approach to community” — Rosa & Flores (2017)

DAILY RHYTHM

VAL

Greetings! Everyone settles in and there is free, unstructured play and stories at Urban Cowgirl Ranch and Joaquin Miller Park

9:15 AM- MORNING MEETING

We center our bodies and check in with our friends about how they're feeling and what ideas they have for the day. The teacher provides the day's offering and we discuss current projects. Children are also invited to have snack at this time.

9:45 AM- MORNING ADVENTURE

We explore the forest/ranch and connect with nature. This is also the time that children choose from offerings such as story workshop, inquiry topics, and creating freedom fighter plays. Sometimes we will have music and movement offerings.

12:00PM- AFTERNOON MEETING

We center our bodies, eat our lunch, and engage in dialogue about everyone's adventures and projects.

12:30PM- NAP/REST

We set up tents and sleeping bags for quiet time nap/rest, listening to stories, and winding down.

1:00PM- AFTERNOON WORK PERIOD

Group projects, Math & literacy skills, Story workshop, freedom fighter studies and other offerings geared toward our TK/K aged students.

3:00PM- CLOSING CIRCLE

We circle up and share reflections and gratitudes from our day.

3:30PM- PICKUP



Sontag writes:

“

Why not eliminate schooling between age 12-16? It's biologically + psychologically too turbulent a time to be cooped up inside, made to sit all the time. During these years, kids would live communally — doing some work, anyway being physically active, in the countryside; learning about sex — free of their parents. Those four 'missing' years of school could be added on, at a much later age. At, say, age 50-54 everyone would have to go back to school. (One could get a deferment for a few years, in special cases, if one was in a special work or creative project that couldn't be broken off.) In this 50-54 schooling, have strong pressure to learn a new job or profession — plus liberal arts stuff, general science (ecology, biology), and language skills.

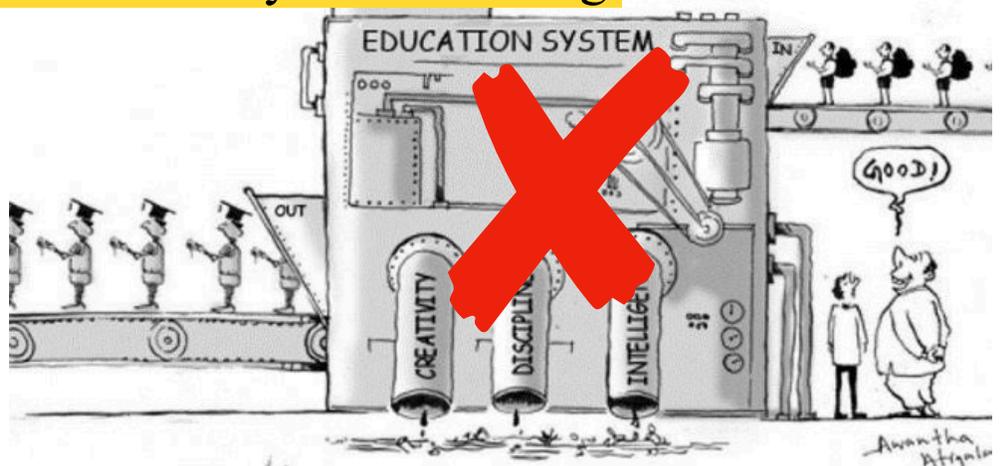
This simple change in the age specificity of schooling would a) reduce adolescent discontent, anomie, boredom, neurosis; b) radically modify the almost inevitable process by which people at 50 are psychologically and intellectually ossified — have become increasingly conservative, politically — and retrograde in their tastes (Neil Simon plays, etc.)

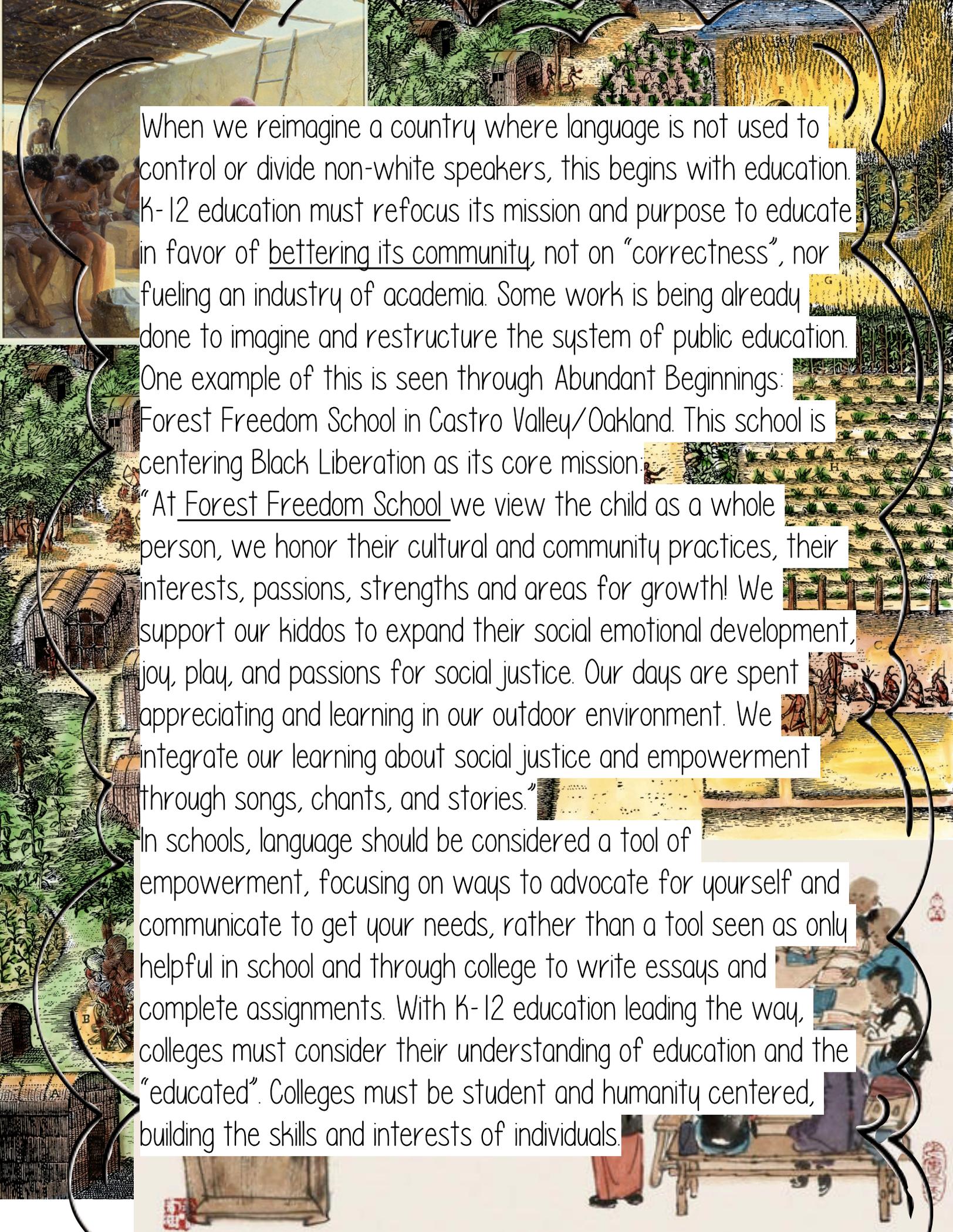
There would no longer be one huge generation gap (war), between the young and the not young — but 5 or 6 generation gaps, each much less severe.

After all, since most people from now on are going to live to be 70, 75, 80, why should all their schooling be bunched together in the first 1/3 or 1/4 of their lives — so that it's downhill all the way

Early schooling — age 6-12 — would be intensive language skills, basic science, civics, the arts.

—As Consciousness Is Harnessed to Flesh: Journals and Notebooks, 1964-1980 by Susan Sontag





When we reimagine a country where language is not used to control or divide non-white speakers, this begins with education. K-12 education must refocus its mission and purpose to educate in favor of bettering its community, not on “correctness”, nor fueling an industry of academia. Some work is being already done to imagine and restructure the system of public education. One example of this is seen through Abundant Beginnings: Forest Freedom School in Castro Valley/Oakland. This school is centering Black Liberation as its core mission:

“At Forest Freedom School we view the child as a whole person, we honor their cultural and community practices, their interests, passions, strengths and areas for growth! We support our kiddos to expand their social emotional development, joy, play, and passions for social justice. Our days are spent appreciating and learning in our outdoor environment. We integrate our learning about social justice and empowerment through songs, chants, and stories.”

In schools, language should be considered a tool of empowerment, focusing on ways to advocate for yourself and communicate to get your needs, rather than a tool seen as only helpful in school and through college to write essays and complete assignments. With K-12 education leading the way, colleges must consider their understanding of education and the “educated”. Colleges must be student and humanity centered, building the skills and interests of individuals.

REIMAGINE

ENGLISH