

YOU ARE HERE: LAT Home → Collections → California | Local

Ads by Google

Voices / A Forum For Community Issues | Community Essay

Can't We All Just Get Along? Yes

June 20, 1998 | RODOLPHO CARRASCO, Rodolpho Carrasco is associate director at the Harambee Center, a neighborhood center in Pasadena

Four Latino boys were chattering in Spanish when a black boy told them to quit speaking Spanish. A verbal argument ensued among these classmates as we drove to a sporting event. From my vantage point as the driver I quelled the debate and asked one of the black boys to explain the problem.

"The Mexicans," he said, "are always talking about us in Spanish!"

Ads by Google

[How To Learn Spanish](#)

Stop Learning Spanish Backwards! The Method Determines Success

VisualLinkSpanish.com

[Teen Adventure Therapy](#)

Get Your Teen Back on Track Now! Academics and Adventure Therapy

AspiroAdventure.net

[10% off Spanish Classes](#)

All levels welcome! Classes starting now in Lakeview

spanishstudio.com

[BP](#)

Info about the Gulf of Mexico Spill Learn More about How BP is Helping.

www.bp.com

A Latino boy piped up, "No, we're not!"

Advertisement

FRESHNESS. VALUE. DELIVERED.

FREE Delivery

ON YOUR FIRST ORDER!



VONS Start Shopping ▶



Earn Your
**MASTERS IN
TEACHING**

TESOL

ONLINE

MAT@USC

Learn More

FEATURED ARTICLES

Cross-racial shootings spark fear in
Monrovia

January 31, 2008

Mother of kidnapped boy, 3, pleads for
his return

May 6, 2009

In the midst of a back-and-forth fray of accusations, I asked all of the boys for possible solutions to this conflict. One Latino boy said that in his home, if a non-Spanish speaker asked what was being said in Spanish, an immediate translation would be made for the person.

All of the boys agreed that this was a good solution. The Latinos insisted that they be allowed to speak Spanish whenever they chose and the black boys agreed, so long as they could be told at any moment of the content of the discussion.

I asked how this agreement would be enforced at our community center? The boys all agreed that if any person broke any rule (not allowing Spanish, refusing to interpret upon request), that person would be last in line for meals.

I like this story because it conveys both the threat and the hope intrinsic to urban youth work today.

The threat involves demographic transitions throughout Los Angeles County. Anywhere an existing population is overtaken by a new group, there is a threat of escalated tensions.

In northwest Pasadena, where I live, the African American population was surpassed by Latinos earlier this decade. In Los Angeles County, there were 44 cities with a black majority in 1970; only one--Inglewood--has not been overtaken by a Latino majority.

Some say the cause of tension is economic, others say it's because other forces pit the two groups against each other. What is certain is that we are dealing with many distinct cultures. At times, as in this example with youths frustrated over language differences, these tensions come to the surface.

What is also certain is that there are many blacks and Latinos working hard, not on behalf of themselves alone, but for peaceful relations with the other group.

I am most amazed by young people who have demonstrated courage and stood up against forces of divisiveness.

Ads by Google

[10% off Spanish Classes](#)

All levels welcome! Classes starting now in Lakeview

spanishstudio.com

YOU ARE HERE: LAT Home → Collections → California | Local

Ads by Google

Voices / A Forum For Community Issues | Community Essay

Can't We All Just Get Along? Yes

June 20, 1998 | RODOLPHO CARRASCO, Rodolpho Carrasco is associate director at the Harambee Center, a neighborhood center in Pasadena

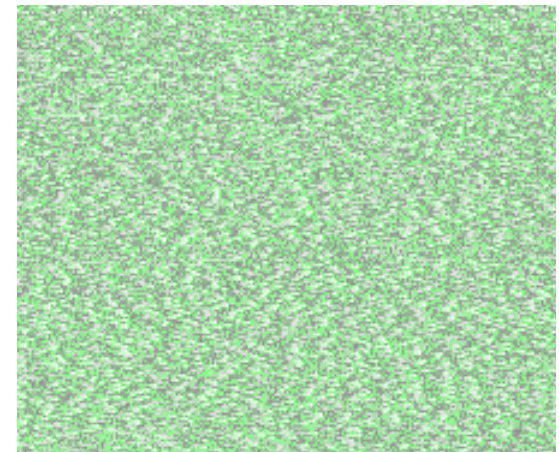
(Page 2 of 2)

One young African American, the only black on his high school soccer team, endured a preseason of abuse at the hands of Latinos claiming soccer was not a "black sport" and then a regular season of abuse from black students who claimed this teen was trying to be "blaxican."

Many in his position would have returned disrespect with disrespect. But this young man persevered, winning respect from all students and opening new avenues for crossing the color line.

Ads by Google

Advertisement



[Learn Spanish for Free](#)

Download your free Spanish BYKI™ software and learn Spanish quickly.

www.Byki.com

[Summer Spanish Immersion](#)

High School Students spend 2 - 4 weeks in Costa Rica!

www.CommonGroundInternational.com

[Español: Master Oficial](#)

Linguística Aplicada a la Enseñanza del Español como Lengua Extranjera

www.funiberusa.org

[Free Trial Class: Spanish](#)

Native speakers use fun & immersion 15 Chicagoland locations for kids

www.languagestars.com/try_free.html

FEATURED ARTICLES

Cross-racial shootings spark fear in Monrovia
January 31, 2008

[How To Speak Spanish](#)

Stop Learning Spanish Backwards! The Method Determines Success

VisualLinkSpanish.com

[Learn Spanish for Free](#)

Download your free Spanish BYKI™ software and learn Spanish quickly.

www.Byki.com

Another Latino youth speaks forcefully in public for peace when racial conflict arises. His Catholic faith has taught him that there are principles higher than race that all people must submit to. He is leading a peer group of blacks, Asians and Latinos to his family's ranch in Mexico, so that his friends may learn about Mexican life, language and culture.

We should all be encouraged by these two young men and by the youths who negotiated their language problem. Theirs is a future of great complexity, and they are already demonstrating an ability to navigate treacherous, cross-cultural terrain. We should all take heart in the youths in conflict over Spanish, for they demonstrated that their pain rose from the conflict itself and not from the ethnic identity of their opposition. It is not a stale platitude to say that these young people are our brightest hope.

*

Rodolpho Carrasco is associate director at the Harambee Center, a neighborhood center in Pasadena. E-mail: rudy@harambee.org.

Ads by Google

[Español: Master Oficial](#)

Linguística Aplicada a la Enseñanza del Español como Lengua Extranjera

www.funiberusa.org