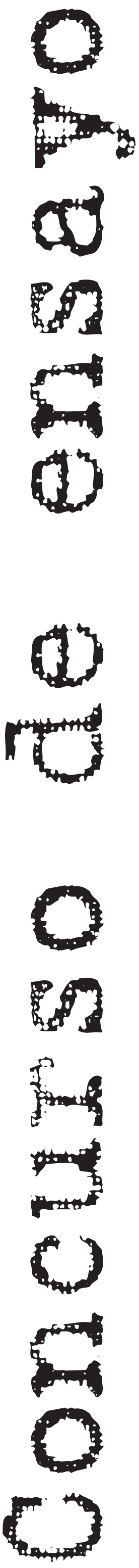


Ganadora

nivel avanzado – 2014



How do my experiences as a heritage speaker of Spanish affect my sense of self as a global citizen?

My experiences as a heritage speaker at first were built upon changing my accent and learning more English. Living in Oregon, I was actively told not to speak Spanish and to only embrace *inglés*, the only language I “needed” to have. I grew up feeling conflicted on who I was. At home I was my mom’s *hija* and Tata’s *nieta*, but at school, my name was mispronounced and always shortened. As a young girl in the suburbs of Portland, speaking Spanish set me apart; it left me between two cultures and my experiences at that time made me feel stuck. Spanish was my connection with a place that was no longer there, and I was unaware of the potential to connect on a greater level all through Spanish. My connection as a global citizen when I was younger was feeling the effects of diaspora.

As I grew older, I soon discovered that Spanish was a tie that connected me to many people sharing a similar journey. I always felt that Spanish gave me a special connection to a place that as an immigrant, I had long ago physically given up. My global identity was developing around my experiences of solidarity with people forced to say goodbye to their homelands and having to call a new place home. That connection was through my ability to speak Spanish. I began slowly realizing that I didn’t just want to speak Spanish, I needed to speak Spanish, I could be connected and feel a tie with people all over the world near and far. Spanish allows me to have a sense of belonging; it gives me a sense of home and of community.

In Spanish I can talk about my Tita’s *huitlacoche* recipe without having to translate the beautiful word into “corn smut,” I can share *una platicadita* in the halls of PSU, I can hear where people are from by listening to the different *acentos y palabras que usan*. En español puedo hablar con alguien de España, la República Dominicana, Chile y Guatemala y poder tener una conexión, compartir algo en común, sentirme parte de algo más grande. Spanish allows me to feel a global connection with people all over the world. Being a Spanish speaker allows me to have a global identity of survival, struggle and connection.

My experiences of being a heritage speaker were not always easy, but they taught me to be proud of possessing something that allows me to share a bond with millions of people. I feel part of a global community made up of a rich and diverse group of *personas*.

It makes me happy that more than 350 million people speak Spanish as their native tongue, and it fills me with greater joy to know that I am part of that global community.



Spanish allows me to have a sense of belonging; it gives me a sense of home and of community. — Jackie Altamirano

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