

OUR LANGUAGE, OUR STORY

Photographs by Joyce Xi

¡GALERÍA!
DE LA RAZA



ASIAN LAW
CAUCUS

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Thank you to all the interpreters, translators, and organizers who made this project possible. Their guidance and knowledge were invaluable.

Most importantly, thank you the community members that participated and shared their lives for this project.

CURATORIAL NARRATIVE

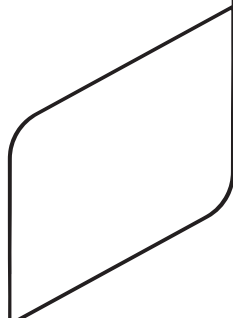
Galería de la Raza presents *Our Language, Our Story*, a powerful photographic exhibition by artist Joyce Xi in collaboration with the Asian Law Caucus. Through striking portraits and deeply personal narratives gathered from immigrants across the Bay Area, the exhibit asks: What does it mean to be seen, heard, and understood in the language of your heart?

Conceptualized in 2023, this project was initially created to document immigrant experiences and highlight the need for language access in everyday life. Expanding from the first six stories exhibited at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in 2024, the project now encompasses more than 20 cultures throughout the Bay Area that are reflected through their language and stories. In today's political and social climate, this body of work celebrates and centers the fullness of these community members and leaders; friends, family, elders, neighbors, co-workers, teachers, entrepreneurs, artists, students, vendors, and people of faith. Together, they represent the backbone of our communities and an essential part of our social fabric. These images highlight the deep relationships we foster, and the joys and hardships immigrant communities face living in an English-dominant society.

Over several months of interviews and visits to community centers, family celebrations, neighborhood hangouts, and organizing meetings, Xi built relationships with these individuals and listened to their aspirations, struggles, dreams, love, and resistance. Visitors are encouraged to consider the experiences of immigrants and refugees by reading their stories, listening to their language, and witnessing their day to day lives. *Our Language, Our Story* affirms that language is far more than a means of communication. It is a vessel of memory, a source of cultural continuity, and a powerful assertion of self. To speak in your native language is to resist erasure, to demand dignity, and to claim space.

"Language helps you identify your people in a new place, it fills your ears with familiar warmth."

— Alejandra Oliva, *Rivermouth*



PRESENTING PARTNERS

ASIAN LAW CAUCUS

The Asian Law Caucus was founded in 1972 as the nation's first legal and civil rights organization serving low-income, immigrant, and underserved Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. Within that broad political umbrella are shared histories and stories, as well as unique systemic inequities and barriers to justice and freedom for different ethnicities. We are committed to serving the vast diversity of communities of Asian descent, including Arab, Middle Eastern, and Muslim communities. Our fights for justice and equity are deeply informed by and in solidarity with fights for liberation by and for Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities.

We bring together legal services, community empowerment, and policy advocacy to fight for immigrant justice, economic security, and a stronger, multiracial democracy. Our work is rooted in the San Francisco Bay Area and California and expands to states across the country, including places where immigrant, Asian, Arab, Middle Eastern, and Pacific Islander communities are rapidly growing.

GALERÍA DE LA RAZA

Founded in 1970, Galería de la Raza | Studio 24 is a non-profit dedicated to promoting Xicano/Latine art and culture. Our "creative place keeping" ethos is rooted in social inclusion and justice, where community arts are central to navigating the complex intersection of urban development, social inequality, affordable housing, and the historical-cultural legacies of communities of color. To implement our mission, the Galería supports Latine artists in the visual, literary, media, and performing art fields whose works explore new aesthetic possibilities for socially committed art.

ABOUT THE ARTIST- JOYCE XI

Joyce Xi is a community photographer and activist based in the Bay Area. Her work covers Asian American and immigrant communities, solidarity building, and social movements. She makes photos as a way to envision and create a more just and free world, and works in relationship with the people, communities, and organizations involved. Her work has been exhibited across the Bay Area – most recently at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts and the Oakland Asian Cultural Center, in media publications, and as part of advocacy campaigns. She was an awardee for the California Creative Corps Initiative, which helped support the Our Language, Our Story project and exhibit.

ARTIST STATEMENT

I am an activist and human being before I am an artist. Photography is the medium I use to bridge art, storytelling, and creating possibilities for a more just world. My work aims to shine a light on people for who they are, encourage deeper connection and reflection, and to question dominant narratives and structures in our society that cause separation and harm. I want us to be more expansive about what our future could look like.

My photography practice started as a way to document organizing and activism in the Bay Area, and to share community stories that were often at the margins. I began with relationships and communities I knew, and through that more relationships formed. Historically photography has been an extractive medium, so for me it is important to have the trust of those I am working with and to flip that dynamic– to use photography as a tool for empowerment, agency, and creating fuller and more nuanced narratives. My work and projects have often centered Asian American communities, solidarity building, and various social issues as part of advocacy campaigns.

This project involved interviewing Bay Area immigrants and refugees about their experiences with language and life, “hanging out” with them in their homes, at cultural and religious celebrations, at community workshops, rallies, and more. This is where the photos were made.

The idea for this project emerged in conversation with Niketa Kumar, who while at the Asian Law Caucus noticed how policy conversations around “language access” were often dry and filled with jargon. We wanted to breathe some life into the conversation, to inspire a more back-to-basics understanding of why language is so important for everyone, no matter where you are from. How it is inextricably tied to being our full selves, to being understood, and to having a say over the decisions that affect our lives.

As a daughter of immigrants, I could personally relate to the complexities of navigating life in multiple languages, the adaptations, barriers, and losses experienced in the process, and the comfort and joy of being in community with those who share your language and culture.



ARIAM

Tigrinya, English

My first language is Tigrinya. It's an Eritrean language. I feel more comfortable using Tigrinya than English. It's been seven years since I've been in the U.S. I'm an artist, writer, filmmaker, and performer. I was working in national TV and radio [in Eritrea]. Since I was a kid, I used to watch Hollywood movies. I always thought about coming here [to the U.S.] and sharing my stories with the film industry and working in the media. So I moved here to start a new life.

When I write, when I do art, when I make films, I feel joy. I want to produce more films, and I want to create more storytelling events for my community and other immigrant communities. I found so many similarities

with other immigrant communities as well. So I want to share my stories with different communities and organizations.

We have a big community in the Bay Area. I have friends and relatives and community members that I met here. We just visit each other. We have a church. We have restaurants, stores. We have places to meet. I create storytelling events and film screening events to meet my people. It feels like home when we talk our language. It brings up joy because we can express our feelings without any problem, and we can talk [about] whatever we want in our language. Language has some internal connection so we can enjoy our culture together. We can chat. We can laugh. With your language, you can understand each other easily. That makes us very happy.

We are an underrepresented community. For my community, when you go to any website, when you try to find the Tigrinya language, you cannot find it. We have big numbers of people who use Tigrinya, we're trying to put the language everywhere. In Alameda County, in Contra Costa County, San Francisco, it's really hard to find the language. When I try to help clients with getting housing services, most organizations don't have Tigrinya interpreters. At the DMV, they don't have Tigrinya, so people have to take the test in English. We need to advocate for our community to get access. I always work on that, on advocating for the community and the people.



Listen to Ariam share one of her poems in Tigrinya.



ኢርያም

ትግርኛ፡ ኢንግሊሽ

ቀዳማይ ቋንቋይ ትግርኛዮ፡፡ ኤርትራዊ ቋንቋዮ፡፡ ካብ ኢንግሊዝና ትግርኛ ክዛረብ ይቐለኒ፡፡ 7 ዓመታት ውን ኣብ ኣሜሪካ ኣሕሊፊ ኣለኹ፡፡ ስነ-ጥበባዊትዮ፡፡ ጸሓፊት፡ ደራሲት፡ ተራኺት ከሙኡ ውን ሰራሒት ፊልም፡፡ ኣብ ኤርትራ፡ ኣብ ሃገራዊ ተለቪዥን ራድዮን እሰርሕ ነይረ፡፡ ካብ ህጻንነተይ ኣትሒዘ፡ ኣብ ሆሊዉድ ዝፈሪ ፊልምታት ይርኢ ኔረ፡፡ ናብ ኣሜሪካ ናይ ምምጻእን ፊልምታት ናይ ምስራሕ ሕልሚ ሓሳብ ክመጻኒ ጀሚሩ፡፡ ብድሕሪ ውን ናብ ኣሜሪካ መጺኤ፡፡

ክጽሕፍ፡ ኣብ ስነ-ጥበብን ፊልምን ክሰርሕ ከለኹ ሓገስ ይስመዓኒ፡፡ ብዙሕ ፊልምታት ከፍሪን ናይ ምንጋር ዘንታታት መደባት ንናተይ ኮሚኒቲን ካልኣት ኮሚኒቲታትን ከቐርብን ክሰርሕን እደሊ፡፡ ምስ ዝተፈረላለዩ ማሕበራትን ኮሚኒቲታትን ዘንታተይ ከካፍል እደሊ፡፡

ኣብዚ በይ ኤርያ ዓቢ ኮሚኒቲ ኣለና፡፡ መሓዞት፡ መቐርብ ካልኣት ኤርትራውያን ኣብዚ ዝረኽቡኦም ኣለዉ፡፡ ንባጻጻሕ፡ ቤተ-ክርስቲያናት ውን ኣለና፡፡ ቤት መግብታት፡ ካፊታት፡ ዱኳናት ውን ኣለና፡፡ ንራኽበሉ ቦታት ኣለና፡፡ ህዝቦይ ንምርካብ ስነ-ጥበባዊ ምርኢት ይገብርዮ፡፡ ብቋንቋኻ ክትዛረብ ኣለካ ኣብ ዓድኻ ዘለካ ኮይኑዮ ዝስመዓካ፡ ስምዒትካ ብዘይጸገም ስለትገልጽ ትሕጎስ፡፡ ብዛዕባ ዝኾነ ኣርእስቲ ውን ከይተሸገርና ንዛረብ፡፡ ቋንቋ ዉሽጥኻ ስለዘራኽብ ባህልኻ ባደ ኮይነካ ተስተማቐር፡፡ ተዕልል፡ ትሰሕቑ፡፡ ብቋንቋኻ ክትረዳዳእ ቀሊልዮ፡፡ ብጣዕሚዮ ድማ ዘሓጉስ፡፡

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BUSHRA

Arabic, English

I came from Yemen as an asylum [seeker]. We came here for freedom. I've been here for about 30 years. I have been working at the Cross Cultural Family Center for almost 18 years.

When I was doing my immigration case, it was difficult for the lawyer to understand everything I was saying to her. I would babble a lot and she would understand 20% of what I'm saying. When I went to meetings, I wanted someone to support me, to walk with me inside. It was hard for me to go to the immigration office. It was a really scary place.

Later this month, I'm going to go with a parent. She's doing her citizenship, and she's like, "I need your support. I need you to translate for me, but also I need your support. Just walk with me." And I say yes because I went through that. I wish I had someone then to hold my hand.

It's different when you speak your own language. You speak freely. You don't have to make up words. In English, I have to look for words, to be sensitive, to not hurt people if they misunderstand you... In Arabic, you speak freely. You speak your heart, you speak your emotions. You speak with words but also with your hands and body. It's different with Arabic. It's totally different.

Before anything, I'm a teacher. I was a teacher back in Yemen as well. I love to work with kids. I love to make a difference in their lives. I hope for peace to exist on this earth. I hope for people to understand what is happening in Yemen and Gaza. I hope for stopping blood, and for children to live their life in peace. I know adults do bad things, but children have nothing to do with it. I work with kids. They are innocent and beautiful and have their own mind. We cannot judge them when they are little. If we teach them well they will be okay. They need to live their life in peace with their families... I know it is difficult, not only in Yemen or Gaza but around the world. I just wish for peace. I hope people can open their hearts and minds. We are all special. We are all human beings. I hope for people to understand each other, and other cultures.

بشري عربي وانجيزي

جنبت من اليمن كطالبة للجوء، فقد جننا إلى هنا من أجل الحرية. أنا هنا منذ حوالي 30 عاما، وأعمل في روضة الأطفال "كروس كيلتشر فملي سنتر" منذ ما يقرب من 18 عاما.

عندما قدمت علي قضية الهجرة الخاصة بي، كان من الصعب علي المحامية أن تفهم كل ما كنت أقوله لها. كنت أتلثم كثيرا وتفهم 20%. مما أقوله. عندما كنت اذهب إلى الاجتماعات، كنت اريد أن يدعمني شخص ما، ويمشي معي إلي الداخل. كان من الصعب علي الذهاب إلى مكتب الهجرة، فقد كان مكانا مخيفا حقا.

في وقت لاحق من هذا الشهر، سأذهب مع أحدي الأمهات، فهي قدمت علي الجنسية، وقالت لي "أحتاج إلى دعمك. أريدك أن تترجمي لي، لكنني أيضا بحاجة إلى دعمك. فقط اذهبي معي"، وأنا أقول نعم -لأنني مررت بذلك، فقط كنت أتمنى لو كان لدي شخص يمسه بيدي ليدعمني.

يختلف الأمر عندما نتحدث بلغتك الام. فأنت تتحدث بحرية، ليس عليك ان تخلق الكلمات. بينما بالإنجليزية، يجب ان ابحت عن الكلمات، واكون حساسة بحيث لا ارح الآخرين إذا اوسىء فهمي. بالعربية، انت تتحدث بحرية من قلبك، وبمشاعرك. انت تتحدث بالكلمات ولكن ايضا تعبر بلغة جسدك وبيدك. بالتأكيد، فالأمر مختلف باللغة العربية جملةً وتفصيلاً.

قبل أي شيء، أنا معلمة. كنت معلمة في اليمن أيضا. أحب ان أعمل مع الأطفال، وأحب أن أحدث فرقا في حياتهم. أمل أن يعم السلام على هذه الأرض، وأن يفهم الناس ما يحدث في اليمن وغزة. أمل أن يقف نزيه الدماء، وأن يعيش الأطفال حياتهم بسلام. أعرف أن الاشخاص البالغين يفعلون أشياء سيئة، لكن الأطفال لا علاقة لهم بها. أنا أعمل مع الأطفال، وهم أبرياء وجميلون ولديهم عقولهم الخاصة، فلا يمكننا الحكم عليهم عندما يكونون صغاراً. إذا علمناهم جيدا سيكونون بخير. إنهم بحاجة إلى أن يعيشوا حياتهم بسلام مع عائلاتهم. أعلم أن الأمر صعب، ليس فقط في اليمن أو غزة ولكن في جميع أنحاء العالم، أنا فقط أتمنى السلام. أمل أن يتمكن الناس من فتح قلوبهم وعقولهم. كلنا مميزون. نحن جميعا بشر. أمل أن يفهم الناس بعضهم البعض وكذلك الثقافات الأخرى.



CHRIS

Vietnamese, English

My family came here after the Vietnam War in the early '80s as refugees. They were sponsored to go to Florida, then went to Alabama, and eventually migrated to Ohio. A lot of places where there were zero resources for Vietnamese communities in terms of language. Growing up as a kid I watched my family struggle with language barriers, with judgement and with prejudice from others because their English was broken.

When you're a kid, you know English, but you don't know taxes. You don't know the words. When you're the middle person at a young age, it can be very diminishing. Your parents expect you to translate. "You're supposed to know how to speak English. Why can't you translate for me?". But, you just don't know the words. Sometimes the topic is too complicated as a kid, as a 10 or 12 year old. You have to build tougher skin. You stay focused on the words and being the bridge between whoever and your parents.

At Asian Health Services, our view on health encompasses more than just physical well being—health also includes your mental and emotional health, which is affected by the community you live in, how well you know how to navigate resources, and your quality of life.

The Community Liaison Unit (CLU) manages language access work for Asian Health Services. What makes us unique is that we do mass outreach and advocacy work to educate our community on various topics. When we do outreach with CLU, we make sure we bring folks who speak the languages of those communities. We talk about topics and resources that are underrepresented in the Asian community. We answer questions like "How do we stay safe during extreme heat in the summer?" or "Where can I get a COVID vaccine and a COVID test?"

When you have language access, what becomes possible is that you truly can learn about the minds, the concerns, the issues that communities are facing. Without speaking the language or providing resources in their language, you don't really find out what's going on. When you break that barrier, it starts the dialogue. I can tell people that there's a cooling center, but because I'm in conversation with our clients, I also learn that they can't get there.

CHRIS

Tiếng Anh, Tiếng Việt

Vào đầu thập niên 1980, sau chiến tranh Việt Nam, gia đình tôi đến Hoa Kỳ theo diện tị nạn. Ban đầu, chúng tôi được bảo lãnh đến Florida, sau đó chuyển sang Alabama, và cuối cùng định cư tại Ohio. Khi ấy, ở nhiều nơi, hầu như không thấy có bất kỳ nguồn lực hỗ trợ về ngôn ngữ cho cộng đồng người Việt. Khi còn nhỏ, tôi chứng kiến gia đình mình phải đối mặt với nhiều khó khăn do rào cản ngôn ngữ, đồng thời chịu những định kiến sai lệch và hiểu lầm từ những người khác vì vốn liếng tiếng Anh ít ỏi.

Khi còn là một đứa trẻ, tôi biết tiếng Anh nhưng không hiểu về thuế má hay các thuật ngữ chuyên môn mà cha mẹ cần. Việc trở thành cầu nối giữa ba mẹ và thế giới bên ngoài khi còn là một đứa trẻ thật sự là một áp lực lớn. Ba mẹ thường mong là tôi dịch được – “Con biết tiếng Anh mà, sao không thể dịch được cho ba mẹ?” Nhưng đơn giản là tôi chưa biết những từ ngữ đó. Một số vấn đề quá phức tạp đối với một đứa trẻ ở độ tuổi 10–12. Tôi phải rèn luyện bản thân, tập trung tối đa vào việc truyền tải ý nghĩa và làm cầu nối giữa ba mẹ và người ngoài.

Tại Asian Health Services (Dịch vụ Y tế Cộng đồng Châu Á), chúng tôi quan niệm rằng sức khỏe không chỉ giới hạn ở tình trạng thể chất lành mạnh mà còn bao gồm cả chất lượng cuộc sống của quý vị về phương diện tâm thần và cảm xúc, vốn chịu tác động từ cộng đồng nơi quý vị sinh sống, khả năng hiểu và biết cách tiếp cận đến các nguồn lực hỗ trợ cho cộng đồng.

Đơn vị Liên kết Cộng đồng (The Community Liaison Unit -- CLU) quản lý các hoạt động tiếp cận ngôn ngữ tại Asian Health Services. Điều làm chúng tôi nổi bật được thể hiện qua các hoạt động quy mô – tuyên truyền tiếp cận và vận động cộng đồng, nhằm nâng cao nhận thức về các chủ đề thiết thực mà lại ít được truyền tải trong cộng đồng người châu Á. Khi triển khai các hoạt động này, chúng tôi đảm bảo có sự tham gia của những đại biểu thành thạo ngôn ngữ của cộng đồng địa phương. Chúng tôi trao đổi về các chủ đề quan trọng, từ các biện pháp an toàn trong điều kiện thời tiết khắc nghiệt đến quyền tiếp cận vaccine và xét nghiệm COVID-19.

Khả năng tiếp cận ngôn ngữ thật sự mở ra cơ hội để hiểu được những mối quan tâm, nhu cầu và vấn đề mà cộng đồng đang đối mặt. Khi rào cản ngôn ngữ được phá bỏ, cuộc đối thoại mới bắt đầu. Người dân trở nên tự tin hơn khi chia sẻ quan điểm, đặc biệt khi các chính sách mới được ban hành và thông tin ban đầu vẫn bằng tiếng Anh.



EDER

Spanish

I worked at [the restaurant] Voodoo Love about three years ago and it was very stressful for me. When I first started working with [the boss] everything went well. After some time, she started to show that she was different from the image I had of her. It was stressful. So sometimes I would not sleep due to thinking about the things I had to do the next day.

She owed me money, but she disappeared. I called her, I texted her, and she never responded. I had no money for my rent. With everything that she owes me up until today, it's almost \$12,000. She violated many of my rights, such as my paid sick days and some of my breaks and lunches.

If TUWU, Trabajadores Unidos Workers United, didn't exist, many people would be left without being able to fight for their rights, without being able to claim what is owed to them. I feel like it would make a big difference [if I had to fight my case in English], because if someone talks to me quickly in English, I don't understand. It would almost be like going to fight a war without weapons. I wouldn't know how to defend myself. Maybe I feel it would be impossible. They help a lot because I feel like I can understand the [wage theft] case a little more. I feel more comfortable because I feel I can express myself more freely. I know that I'll be understood, and you will know what I feel when I communicate it to you.

It's good to express yourself [in your native language] because it's the first language you learn, and if you forget about this language, it's like you're forgetting your roots.

What motivates me is to see justice done, because I feel there is so much injustice. Not only [in my job], but in other types of work as well. Perhaps through my testimony, more people can raise their voices to claim and fight for their rights. Fighting for my rights is something I didn't know about when I worked there. I didn't know about my rights.

EDER

Español

Trabajé en [el restaurante] Voodoo Love hace ya como tres años y fue algo muy estresante para mí. Cuando yo empecé a trabajar con [la jefa], todo iba bien y después de cierto tiempo pues, ella fue enseñando que era [diferente] de la imagen que yo tenía de ella. Era estresante a veces, pues no dormía por estar pensando en las cosas que tenía que hacer al siguiente día.

Ella me quedó a deber dinero, se me desapareció, le llamé, le mandé textos, y nunca me contestó. No tenía dinero para mi renta. Con todo lo que me debe hasta hoy, son casi \$12,000. Violó muchos de mis derechos, mis días de enfermedad y parte de mis breaks y lonches.

Si TUWU, Trabajadores Unidos Workers United, no existiera, mucha gente se quedaría sin reclamar por sus derechos, sin reclamar por lo que es de ellos. Siento que sería una gran diferencia [si tuviera que pelear mi caso en inglés] porque si alguien me habla rápido en el inglés, no lo entiendo. Sería ir a pelear una guerra sin armas, prácticamente. No sabría cómo defenderme. Quizás, siento que se me haría imposible. Sí, me ayudan bastante porque siento que puedo entender un poco más el caso [de robo de salarios]. Pues me siento más comfortable. Porque pues, siento como que me puedo expresar más libremente. Sé que me, pues me van a entender, y van a saber lo que pues yo siento cuando yo se los comunique.

Es bueno expresarse [en su idioma natal] porque es el primer idioma que uno aprendió y prácticamente olvidándote de este idioma es como que te estás olvidando de tus raíces.



FATIMA

Arabic

I've been here for 28 years in America. First, we moved to Florida, and then we moved here to San Francisco. My husband was a doctor, but he died. Me and my kids were living together in Sanaa, in Yemen. I raised my kids with no father.

Two years after I came to San Francisco, I was riding the bus and the bus broke down. I didn't move because nobody explained to me. I waited for the bus to move or be fixed. I stayed and waited, waited.

Then, someone told me, "No, why are you staying here? You have to go across the street or to another place to take the bus."

I was scared. I just stayed there because I needed to go back home or go to the place where I was supposed to go. I just waited and I was scared. I did not know any words in English and I didn't know what to do. With time, I could figure out and take buses. I now know how to go down to the Richmond District from the Tenderloin.

Even if there is no language, the neighbors [in my apartment building] eat together. The Chinese, Russian, and Vietnamese neighbors all eat together. That's how we walk and live together, as if we understand [all of] the languages. Sometimes we say, let's eat at one of the community rooms. "Eat, eat." Everybody understands that. Meeting over food makes us happy.

One of my neighbors is from Armenia. I'll make a cake for her and will knock on her door and say, "Oh, that's cake for you, mama!" She understands, "cake", "mama", and she's so happy. She'll say, "Thank you!" She'll smile and she'll do the same thing. She'll give and say "eat" and I'll say "Oh, thank you, mama."

You can see from their eyes and feel their hearts. You live with and understand people.

It's much better when I speak my own language with someone and they understand me. I speak all of my heart. Everyone loves their language. It's a blessing.

فاطمة

عربي

لقد كنت هنا منذ 28 عاما في أمريكا. أولاً، انتقلنا إلى فلوريدا، ثم انتقلنا إلى سان فرانسيسكو. كان زوجي طبيباً ولكنه توفي. كنت أنا وأطفالي نعيش معا في صنعاء في اليمن، ولقد رببت أطفالي بدون أب.

بعد عامين من مجيئي إلى سان فرانسيسكو، كنت أركب الحافلة وقد تخيلت انها تعطلت، فلم أتحرك لأن لم يشرح لي أحد. فانتظرت أن تتحرك الحافلة أو يتم إصلاحها، وبقيت وانتظرت وانتظرت. ثم قال لي أحدهم: "لا، لماذا تجلسين هنا؟ عليك أن تذهبي عبر الشارع أو إلى مكان آخر لركوب الحافلة".

كنت خائفة، وبقيت هناك لأنني كنت بحاجة للعودة إلى المنزل أو الذهاب إلى المكان الذي كان من المفترض أن أذهب إليه. فانتظرت فقط وكنت خائفة. لم أكن أعرف أي كلمات باللغة الإنجليزية ولم أكن أعرف ماذا أفعل. مع مرور الوقت، تمكنت من معرفة كيفية ركوب الحافلات، وأعرف الآن كيف أنزل إلى منطقة ريتشموند من منطقة التندرلوين.

حتى إذا لم تكن هناك لغة، فإن الجيران يأكلون معا، حيث يأكل الجيران الصينيون والروس والفيتناميون معا. فهذه هي الطريقة التي نسير ونعيش بها معا، كما لو أننا نفهم [كل] اللغات. أحيانا نقول، "دعونا نأكل في إحدى الغرف المجتمعية - كل، كل". فالجميع يفهم ذلك. الاجتماع على الطعام يجعلنا سعداء.

علي سبيل المثال، إحدى جيراني من أرمينيا، أصنع لها كعكة وأطرق بابها وأقول، "أوه، هذه كعكة لك يا ماما!" فهي تفهم وتقول، "كعكة ماما، شكراً لك!"، وهي سعيدة جداً. سوف تبتسم وستفعل نفس الشيء. ستعطي وتقول "كل" وسأقول "أوه، شكراً لك يا ماما".

يمكنك أن ترى من عيونهم وتشعر بقلوبهم. أنت تعيش مع الناس وتفهمهم.

فإنه افضل كثيراً أن أتحدث لغتي مع شخص ما ويفهمني، فأحدث من كل قلبي. الجميع يحب لغتهم، فإنها نعمة.



FIFI

Swahili

I speak my language, which is Swahili, alongside French and Lingala. When I arrived here, I came as a refugee. We came here because of the war [in Congo]. We were fleeing, people were dying, and we encountered lots of hardship. That's why we've come here.

I don't speak [English] well. My son was shot [and killed]. When I go to court, I sit there and don't understand what they are saying. I go to the hospital and I can't understand. This is the challenge I am facing.

He loved to work. He liked doing house work, installing things. He also loved me as his parent. He'd take care of me, take me shopping, buy me things. He made me happy. Since he passed away, now I've lost everything. That child used to help me with everything, even paying the house rent. But now that I've lost him, I don't have any support by my side.

There is a very big problem because [of] the language. [If] you don't speak the language, even the things you could do, you can't express yourself because of the language. I am stuck in so many things that trouble me, all because of the language. It really affects me.

[If I was able to speak English] I would want to ask about my child's case. To reach, if I could, even the president. I could talk to him about my child who was killed. My son is in the grave, in the soil, but [the person who killed my son] is in prison and his family still comes to see him. I can't see my son, you see?

—

It's the end of Ramadan. We were fasting and when the thirty days are over, we must now celebrate. All the family members come, we eat together. Some come speaking Swahili, others come speaking English. They all come and we share the meal together. It's about joy and celebration.

It's good because it's about living well with others. That's what being family is. People sharing together. It's the spirit of brotherhood.

FIFI

Kiswahili

Naongea lugha yangu ni Kiswahili na French na Lingala. Kama nilifika hapa, nilikuja kama vile mkimbizi. Tulikuja juu ya vita. Tunakimbia, watu wanakufa, na sisi vile vile tulipata shida sana na ndio kwa maana unaona tumefika hapa.

Ni kama kawaida juu lugha, siongei vizuri. Mpaka leo, nina mtoto wangu alipigwa masasi (risasi). Nikienda court, nakaa court, sisikii mambo wanasema. Niende kwa hospitali sisikiee, yaani ndio shida yenye niko nayo.

Alikuwa anapenda kufanya kazi. Anapenda kufanya kazi ya myumba, kutia ma... mainstallation ya kutia vitu vya mnyumba. Na alikuwa anapenda mimi mwenyewe kama muzazi, ananitoshia, ananitembeza kushopping, ananiuzia kitu. ananifurahisha kama vile muzazi. Lakini juu aliishakufa sasa ndio nimepoteza sasa. Juu yule mtoto alikuwa ananisaidia, hata kulipa rent ya nyumba, ananisaidia kila kitu. Lakini nimepoteza, sina tena usaidizi pale pembeni.

Na iko shida kubwa kutokana na vile... ni shida kubwa kutokana na vile, unaona, lugha, hauongei lugha, na kitu kenyewe unaweza kufanya, lugha, hauongei kenye unapaswa kufanya kutokana na lugha. Unaona kama mi nakuwamo vitu vingi venye vinanisumbua sana kutokana kuongea lugha. Ile inanisumbua sana.

Swala yenye mimi nilikuwa napenda kufanya, mimi mwenyewe hii swala nilikuwa na swali yenye nilikuwa nayo nilikuwa napenda, juu ya kuuliza kesi ya mtoto wangu. Kufika, kama naweza, hata president naweza nikaongea naye juu mtoto wangu walimwua bure tu, hakuwa na, lakini kusema nipate ile audience, nimwone, tuongee naye hiyo kesi, waikate vizuri kama vile mtoto wangu mwenyewe alikufa. Yule mwenye alimwua, alimwua bure, na anakubali kama kweli alimwua, unaona? Lakini, kama uko uliua, utasaidia nini? Yeye aliua, si ndio hivyo? Mtoto wangu yuko mkaburi kwa mudongo, lakini yeye anafungwa lakini familia yake inakuja inamwona, mimi wangu sijamuona, unaona?

—

Ni muhimu juu, tulikuwa tunafunga, na zile siku thelathini zenye tunamaliza ni lazima sasa tunafungua. Wale wa familia wote wanakuja tunakula, wenyewe wanakuja wanaongea Kiswahili, hata wenyewe wanakuja wanaongea English, wanakuja tunachangia juu ni wa. Ni kawaida, ni kufurahi tu.

Ni vizuri juu, ni kuishi na watu vizuri. Ndio undugu. Watu wakichangia. Ndio undugu.



GUADALUPE

Yucatec Maya

(Interpretated from Spanish)

[With Trabajadores Unidos Workers United] I am an advocate for workers who have work-related problems. I like to help them so that they know their rights. I like to do this work because I want them to know to not be afraid to defend their rights.

In my work, because I speak more Mayan than Spanish, it's hard for me. When people speak to me in Spanish I can try to understand, and not knowing a lot of English makes it even harder because they speak to me in English. I had a job where the

language barrier was a problem because I didn't understand them in English. I'm more Mayan than a Spanish or English speaker, and so they told me that I didn't have a job with them anymore because I didn't understand them.

I am motivated because of the situations that I have gone through, as in the case of the job that I lost. At least, to make them understand by showing them what I went through so that they do not have to go through those situations that I personally experienced. I would like my community to have the opportunity of developing themselves and to not be fearful or afraid. Let it be something truly good for us as a Mayan-speaking community here.

It's very important to be understood in our language, particularly in this community here in San Francisco, because we're a large Mayan community that is living in the city now. It's important that we have at least one way of communicating with other people so that they can understand us and we can talk with them. [When communicating in Mayan] I feel safe. I feel confident because I know that this person is understanding exactly what I am saying.

It's very important to me that the San Francisco community know the Mayan language. We are a big community now. Also it's important that we're given more opportunities to work and do other things here in San Francisco.

GUADALUPE

maya yucateco

(Interpretado al español)

Soy promotor [con Trabajadores Unidos Workers United] para los trabajadores que tienen dificultades relacionadas con el trabajo. Me gusta ayudarlos para que ellos sepan sus derechos. Me gusta realizar este trabajo, porque yo quiero darles a saber que no tengan temor de defender sus derechos.

En mi trabajo, cuando hablo, [porque] hablo más maya que español, se me dificulta, trato de entenderlo en español y el hecho de no saber mucho el inglés o español se me dificulta a veces porque me hablan en el idioma inglés. Ese problema tuve en un trabajo por la misma situación de la barrera del idioma, no les entendi en inglés y soy maya, hablo mi lengua natal, más que hablar español o inglés [hablo maya], entonces me dijeron que ya no tenía más trabajo porque no les entendía.

Me motiva el hecho de que por las situaciones que yo haya pasado como en el caso de mi trabajo que perdí. Por eso yo siempre invito a mi comunidad a que también se unan, lo traten de hacer. Al menos darles a entender a ellos como yo, como motivo de las situaciones que yo pasé, que también ellos no pasen esas situaciones por las que yo personalmente he vivido. Me gustaría que mi comunidad tenga la oportunidad de desarrollarse, de no tener el temor o el miedo. Que sea algo realmente bueno para nosotros como comunidad maya hablante aquí.

Es muy importante que nos puedan entender en nuestro idioma, sobre todo en esta comunidad que estamos aquí en San Francisco porque hay mucha comunidad maya que vivimos actualmente en esta ciudad y es importante que tengamos al menos un tipo de comunicación con otras personas que nos puedan entender y platicar con ellos.

Es importante para mí que también la comunidad en San Francisco conozca el idioma maya. Somos una comunidad ya grande y para que también se nos habran más oportunidades de trabajo y otro tipo de oportunidades acá en la ciudad de San Francisco.



Escucha una grabación en maya yucateco de Asociación Mayab.





HSER PAW

Karen

I am Karen, and I speak the Karen language, which is my native language. I was born in the Karen State of Burma and when I was 5 years old, both of my parents passed away and my uncle had to raise me. I attended school in the village until 9th grade. After that, the Burmese military forced the villagers to relocate to the city. During that time, many Karen villagers moved to the city, but my uncle who raised me took his family and me to travel to the refugee camp in Thailand. After that, I moved to the U.S. due to the war and ethnic conflicts in my homeland.

We are blessed to be in the U.S. where we can practice our culture and traditions freely. It's important for us to speak in Karen, sing in Karen, worship in Karen, and read in Karen. It's our responsibility to make sure my children and my community's children fully participate in cultural events. Our past generation had to fight long and hard to ensure our Karen culture was never destroyed by the Burmese military. It's important for our children to learn about the dance, the music, the song, the language, and the traditions.

—

One time, I was riding the bus with my two daughters. The bus was tight and I wanted to tell the guy next to me, "Excuse me." I thought it was "Kiss me." So, I said, "Kiss me." The guy was like "Really?!" And I said, "Yes!" And then, he kissed me on the cheek and I was like eww.

I thought he was going to move, but instead I thought to myself, why did he kiss me when I asked him to move? When I went home, I asked my son, "How do you say excuse me in English?" He said, "Excuse me." Oh, because I said, "Kiss me." *laughs a lot* It's very challenging to not speak English. It was better for him to kiss me than hit me! I meant to say excuse me, I accidentally said kiss me.

When I have a conversation or want to make a joke, I feel so much [more] energetic and enthusiastic when I speak in Karen because I am fully expressing what I want to say. People will [understand] and laugh. It is difficult to make jokes in English. If I do, I don't think people will laugh.

ကညီကုန်

ယမ္ဗိရတလၢပုၤကညီအကျိၣ်န့ၣ်အါယးပါယးဒီးယတဲလီၤနံၤတၢ်ကျၢၤသ့ၣ်ကျၢၤသးဒိၣ်မးလီၤ.
ဒီးပုၤနံၤအါအါဂီၢ်ဂီၢ်လီၤ. ဘၣ်ဆၣ်ယမ္ဗိရတလၢကီၤလၢဝါအကျိၣ်ယတဲတဘၣ်ဘၣ်
ဒီးပုၤနံၤဝဲတသ့စ့ၢ်ကိးဘၣ်လီၤ.



JOSSELINE

Spanish

I am the mother of three, two girls and a boy. I live with my husband, my mother, and my sister. I am from El Salvador. The reason I immigrated from my country was problems due to threats. And for my family, for my children.

When I had just arrived, I dealt with hunger because I was too scared to talk. I was embarrassed to talk about it. Because it's very difficult not to understand the language. I continue to have problems with the language.

I have been looking for work for over a year. One of the first times I went looking for work, when I got there, the woman who was in charge didn't want to take care of us in Spanish because we didn't speak English, and the woman did speak Spanish. But they left us standing there, they didn't turn around to look at us, they didn't acknowledge us, and they left us there for not speaking English. I was there with a friend, and we left feeling completely hopeless.

[When I can communicate in my primary language] it feels great, because you have more confidence, you can speak to the person, express yourself. It feels great when someone understands you well. You feel like you're at home... It feels nice to help others, because of what I've been through. I think about what they might be feeling when people don't understand them in their language or when they don't understand. Because of my personal experiences, I try to help the community.

The way they see immigrants; they should treat us all the same, because we are all equal, we are all human beings. Maybe we weren't born here but we all have the same feelings. I would like for this change to happen, for us all to be treated the same and if there is a resource for one person, that it might be available to all people.

JOSSELINE

Español

Soy madre de tres, dos niñas y un niño varón. Vivo con mi esposo, mi mamá y mi hermana. Soy del Salvador. La razón por la que emigré de mi país fue por problemas por amenazas y por mi familia, por mis hijos.

De recién llegada yo aguantaba hambre por no hablar porque me daba miedo. Me daba pena hablarlo. Porque el idioma, pues es bien difícil no entenderlo. Sigo teniendo problemas con el idioma.

Ya voy casi para un año buscando trabajo. Una de las primeras veces que fui [a buscar trabajo, cuándo llegué], la muchacha que estaba atendiendo al personal no nos quiso atender en español porque no hablábamos inglés, y la muchacha sí hablaba español. Pero nos dejaron paradas, no nos voltearon a ver, no nos saludaron y ahí nos dejaron por no hablar inglés. Fuimos con una amiga y salimos sin esperanza de nada.

[Cuando puedo comunicarme en mi idioma natal] se siente bien porque uno tiene más confianza hablar con la persona, poderse uno expresar es muy bueno que alguien lo entienda bien. Se siente como en casa... Se siente bonito ayudar a las personas porque pienso en cómo se sentirían ellos por lo que yo he pasado que no las entiendan en su idioma o que no entiendan. Por experiencia propia, uno trata de ayudar a la comunidad.

La manera de como miran a los inmigrantes; deberían tratarnos igual que todos, porque yo siento que todos somos iguales, todos somos seres humanos y tal vez no nacimos aquí pero me imagino que todos tenemos los mismos sentimientos y me gustaría que hubiera este cambio, que nos tratara por igual, que el mismo recurso que va a haber para tal persona fuera para todos.



KO

Karen, English

My native language is Karen, a native language from Burma. When I came to the U.S. from Burma in 2011, English became my second language. I am Karen American.

My family immigrated to the U.S. due to a civil war that was erupting in Burma. When I was six years old, I fled my village in the Karen state in Burma. I remember vividly that my dad held me above his neck and my mom was pregnant with my younger sister. We were on the run. Behind us was bombing, airstrikes, shooting, killing. I could hear children crying and people were screaming. Houses were burnt down. Churches were burnt down. We had to travel from our village to the refugee camp. It took us three days with limited food, water, supplies, in order to survive.

My family immigrated to the United States with no English, no access to resources. Thanks to Lao Family Community Development, we had one Karen case manager who was able to help us fill out food stamps, aid paperwork and provided support for us navigating the system and navigating the resources here.

I am the president and chief executive officer of the California Karen Youth Connection (CKYC). We were founded in 2014. Our purpose is lifting up the Karen community and Karen youth so that they can be strong leaders within their community and the state of California.

Having these kinds of community spaces and resources is very important. If every community has support, then Oakland will be a much more beautiful, peaceful, and safer place.

Being able to experience togetherness in one's common language is so critical because you are able to share your authentic feelings and your authentic self. You are able to display your fullness of what you want to say. We want our youth to be able to speak Karen too...Of course, learn English, but do not forget your language. As community leaders, we have an obligation to teach our youth and young adults to learn their language so that one day, the children will continue to keep speaking our language. When my parents are gone and I'm gone, I want the legacy to carry on.

စီမံခန့်ခွဲမှု

ကညီကျိန်ဒီးကိလၢကျိန်

ကျိန်လၢယအိၣ်ဖျၢၣ်ထီၣ်ဒီးကတိၤအိၣ်မ့ၢ်ဝဲဒၣ်ကညီကျိန်, မ့ၢ်ကျိန်လၢဟဲအိၣ်ထီၣ်လၢကီၢ်လီၤန့ၣ်လီၤ. ဖဲယဟဲအိၣ်ဟဲဆိးသုးလီၤသုးကျဲဖဲကီၢ်အမဲရံကျဲဖဲ ၂၀၁၁ နံၣ်န့ၣ်, ကိလၢဝါကျိန်ကထီၣ်က့ၤကျိန်ခံကျိန်တကျိန်လၢယဂီၢ်န့ၣ်လီၤ. ယမ့ၢ်ကညီအမဲရံကၤဖိတဂၤန့ၣ်လီၤ.

ယဟံၣ်ဖိယိဖိဟဲသုးလီၤသုးကျဲလၢကီၢ်အမဲရံကၤခိဖျိလၢထံလီၢ်ကီၢ်ပူၤတၢ်ဒုးတၢ်ယၤကဲထီၣ်လၢကီၢ်ပယီၤန့ၣ်လီၤ. ယသ့ၣ်နီၣ်ထံမ့ၢ်က့ၤယပါတိကိၢ်ယၤလၢအကိၢ်ဘိဒီးယမိန့ၣ်ဒၢဝဲဒၣ်ယဒိပုၤဝါမုၢ်ဆဲးတဂၤလီၤ. ဖဲန့ၣ်ပဘၣ်အိၣ်လၢတၢ်ယုၢ်အကတီၢ်လီၤ. လၢယဂီၢ်ခံန့ၣ်မ့ၢ်ပိၢ်ပိၢ်ဖး, ကဘီယူၤခးတၢ်, ကျိသီၣ်ဒီးတၢ်မၤသံမၤဂီၢ်အိၣ်လီၤ. ယန့ၢ်ဟူဖိသ့ၣ်သ့ၣ်တဖၣ်န့ၣ်ဟီၣ်ဒီးပုၤအါဂၤကိးကလူမးလီၤ. ဟံၣ်ယိ, သရိၣ်, ဒီးကွီတဖၣ်ဘၣ်တၢ်ဒွဲၣ်အူအိၣ်န့ၣ်လီၤ. ဖဲန့ၣ်ပဘၣ်ယုၢ်ထွဲထီၣ်ဆူသဂီၢ်ပူၤဆူဘၣ်ကီၢ်ဘၣ်ခဲဒဲကဝီၤန့ၣ်လီၤ. ဖဲန့ၣ်ယဘၣ်လဲၤလၢပခိၣ်ယုၢ်ဒီးတၢ်အိၣ်တၢ်အိၣ်တလၢတလီၢ်ဒီးထံဖိနိဖိစူးကိးတလၢဘၣ်န့ၣ်လီၤ.

ယဟံၣ်ဖိယိဖိဟဲတုၤလၢကီၢ်အမဲရံကၤတဲတၢ်ကျိန်တၢ်ကျိန်တဘၣ်နီၣ်တဖျၢၣ်ဒီးတၢ်တိစၢၤမၤစၢၤဆိၣ်ထွဲတအိၣ်စ့ၢ်ကိးဘၣ်လီၤ. ဘၣ်ဆၣ်ခိဖျိလၢလိမဲလံၣ်တၢ်ကရၢကရိဒီးပုၤကညီမၤစၢၤတၢ်ဖဲန့ၣ်တဂၤအယိ, ပတီၣ်ထီၣ်ဘၣ်တၢ်အိၣ်တၢ်အိၣ်, လံၣ်လဲၤလၢဘၣ်မၤပွဲၤလီၤ, ဒီးမၤစၢၤပုၤဒ်သိးပကနၢ်ပၢ်အါထီၣ်တၢ်တိစၢၤမၤစၢၤအကျဲန့ၣ်လီၤ.

ယမ့ၢ်ကရၢခိၣ်ဒီးပုၤန့ၣ်တၢ်အိၣ်တဂၤလၢခဲၣ်လံၣ်ဖိနံၣ်ယါကညီသးစၢ်ကရၢတၢ်ဘၣ်ထွဲတုၤအိၣ်လိၣ်သးန့ၣ်လီၤ. ယတၢ်ကရၢကရိအံၤသ့ၣ်ထီၣ်ဆိလီၤအသးဖဲ ၂၀၁၄ နံၣ်ဒီးပတၢ်မုၢ်လၢတၢ်တိၣ်ဟံၣ်အံၤဒ်သိးကညီသးစၢ်ဒီးကညီတဝါကဖိၣ်လိၣ်စု, မၤသကိးတၢ်, ဒီးကဲခိၣ်ကဲနၢ်လၢတဝါပူၤဒီးလၢကီၢ်ဖဲၣ်.

ပမ့ၢ်အိၣ်ဒီးတၢ်တိစၢၤမၤစၢၤအလီၢ်န့ၣ်, မ့ၢ်တၢ်လၢအရူဒိၣ်မးမ့ၢ်လၢပုၤတဝါသ့ၣ်တဖၣ်မ့ၢ်န့ၣ်ဘၣ်တၢ်တိစၢၤမၤစၢၤန့ၣ်, အိၣ်ကလဲၢ်ကပွဲၤဒီးတၢ်ယံတၢ်လၢ, တၢ်ယူတၢ်ဖိး, ဒီးတၢ်ဘၣ်တၢ်ဘၢဒိၣ်မးလီၤ.

ပအိၣ်ဘၣ်တပူၤယိဒီးပသးလီၤပလိၣ်တပူၤယိခိဖျိလၢကျိန်ဒ်သိးသိးန့ၣ်မ့ၢ်တၢ်လၢအရူဒိၣ်ဒိၣ်မးလီၤမ့ၢ်လၢတၢ်လၢပအိၣ်ဒီးတဲဒီးပအိၣ်ဒီးမၤသ့ၣ်တဖၣ်န့ၣ်, ပမၤလၢပကျိန်ပျီပျီဆဲးဆဲးသ့ၣ်တပယူၢ်ယိန့ၣ်လီၤ. ပအိၣ်ဒီးလၢပပုၤသးစၢ်သ့ၣ်တဖၣ်ကဂုၢ်ကျဲးစးစ့ၢ်ကိးလၢကညီကျိန်စ့ၢ်ကိးန့ၣ်လီၤ. ဒ်ပမ့ၢ်ကညီတဝါခိၣ်န့ၣ်သ့ၣ်တဖၣ်ပအိၣ်ဒီးမူဒါဖးဒိၣ်လၢပကဘၣ်သိၣ်လိ, မၤယုၤ, ထုးစုနဲၣ်ကျဲ, ဒ်သိးအဝဲသ့ၣ်ကနၢ်ပၢ်က့ၤအသူးအသ့ၣ်, အထူသန့, တၢ်ဆဲးတၢ်လၢ, ဒီးအလုၢ်အပုၤဒ်အမ့ၢ်ပုၤကညီတဂၤအသိးန့ၣ်လီၤ.



MA

Rakhine

When I first arrived in America, there were people who invited me to have lunch and dinner. They invite us when they have events like birthday parties, and we also invite them when we have birthdays or

other celebrations. They invite us to their homes for meals, and we also invite them to ours. We talk, laugh and have a good time together. That's how we become a community.

I work in a sushi restaurant, and also I work in a Lucky, the deli department. Since I have been working, I am starting to lose fear and I am starting to feel more comfortable communicating with people. It is starting to feel like this is my village.

I work with people who speak Spanish, so they also speak English as a second language. I see that they are learning too, and I feel motivated to learn more English with them.

There's a civil war going on in my country. I want others to know about the suffering, the people fleeing in hunger and desperation, the burning down of our homes, and how even if they return, they have nothing left. Some people have also died or gone missing.

Because my family is still there, knowing that they are suffering and having to leave our home behind, fleeing from place to place without enough food or water, I feel a lot of pressure, worry, and anxiety about them. I am not in peace thinking about it. Just knowing that they're not in a stable place, that they are fleeing the home where I used to live, I am very sad. Even though I'm in a good place, I don't have peace of mind.

I have a lot of hopes. There are a lot of hopes for my family. I don't feel strong enough to have all the hopes since I can't speak the language, speak English. I want to work a lot. If I can work, me and my husband will be able to buy a house. We will garden and grow flowers and vegetables. My hobby is gardening. With a little more money, we are going to have kids. I have a lot of hopes for my family.



ရခိုင်

တစ်ယောက်ကိုတစ်ယောက် ထမင်းစားဖို့ ဖိတ်တာတွေရှိပါတယ်။ သူတို့မှာ ပဲတွေ မွေးနေ့တွေရှိရင် ဖိတ်တာရှိပါတယ်။ ကျွန်ုပ်တို့မှာလည်း မွေးနေ့တွေဘာတွေလုပ်လို့ရှိရင် သူတို့ကိုဖိတ်တာတွေရှိပါတယ်။ ထမင်းစာဖို့ အတွက် သူတို့အိမ်ကလည်း ဖိတ်တာတွေရှိပါတယ်။ ကိုယ့်အိမ်ကလည်း သူတို့ကို ဖိတ်ပါတယ်။ အဲဒီကို သွားပြီးတော့ ပြောတာ ရယ်တာ ပျော်တာတွေ ရှိပါတယ်။

ဆုကြည့်ဆိုင်မှာလုပ်နေပြီးတော့နောက်ထပ် တစ်ခုမှာလဲ လုပ်ပါတယ်။ အဲဒီဆိုင်နာမယ်ကတော့ လက်ကံဆိုင်ပါ။ ခုဆိုရင်တော့ လူတွေနဲ့ ပြောဝံ့ ဆိုဝံ့ ဖြစ်ဖြစ်လို့ မကြောက်ပါဘူး။ အရင်နဲ့မတူဘူး။ ခုဆိုရင် ကျောင်းလဲတက်နေတယ်။ ပြီးရင်လူတွေနဲ့ နှုတ်ဆက်လို့ မိမိရွာလို့ ဖြစ်လာခဲ့တယ်။

အလုပ်က စပိန်စကားပြောတဲ့ လူတွေနဲ့ပဲ လုပ်တော့ သူတို့နဲ့ အတူတူ အင်္ဂလိပ်စကားကို သင်နေရသလိုပါပဲ။ ပို ပီးတော့ စိတ်ထက်သန် စေပါတယ်။

စစ်ဖြစ်နေတာနဲ့ ပတ်သက်လို့ ဒီကလူတွေကို အသိပေးစေချင်ပါတယ်။ ဒုက္ခရောက်နေတာတွေ၊ ငတ်ငတ်မွဲမွဲထွက်ပြေးနေရတာတွေ၊ ကိုယ့်အိမ်တွေဘာတွေ မီးရှို့လိုက်တာတွေ၊ ပြန်ရောက်လာရင် တစ်ခုမှ ပြန်မရတာတွေ၊ အသိပေးစေချင်ပါတယ်။ တချို့လူတွေ သေတာပျောက်တာတွေလည်း ရှိပါတယ်။

အဲဒီမှာ ကိုယ့်မိသားစုတွေရှိလို့ သူတို့ဒုက္ခရောက်နေတာတွေ၊ ကိုယ့်အိမ်တွေဘာတွေလွှဲစွန့်ပြီးတော့ အစာငတ်ခံ ပြေးနေရတော့၊ ဟိုနားပြေး ဒီနားပြေး လုပ်နေရတာတွေနဲ့ စားဖို့သောက်ဖို့မရတာတွေက ကိုယ့်ကို စိတ်အနှောင့်ယှက် ဖြစ်စေပါတယ်။

မျှော်လင့်ထားတာ အများကြီးရှိပါတယ်။ စကားပြောမတတ်လို့ အလုပ်လည်းမရပါဘူး။ အလုပ်လည်း အရမ်း လုပ်ချင်ပါတယ်။ လင်မယားနှစ်ယောက် အလုပ်လုပ်လို့ရရင် အိမ်တွေဘာတွေ ဝယ်မယ်၊ အပင်တွေစိုက်မယ်၊ နောက်မှ အဆင်ပြေလာရင် သားသမီးတွေယူမယ်၊ ကိုယ့်မိသားစုနဲ့ကိုယ် ပျော်ပျော် ရှင်ရှင်နေမယ်။ အဲလို မျှော်လင့်ချက်တွေ အများကြီးရှိပါတယ်။



MUZHGAN

Dari, Persian, Pashto, English

I live in San Francisco and I'm studying political science. Before, I was living in Alameda, and before that, I was living in Afghanistan. I was born and grew up there. Life in Afghanistan was good, but not very safe. Most of the day there were bombs and explosions everywhere. Unfortunately we had to leave the country because it wasn't safe for us. We left Afghanistan after the Taliban took over the country.

I have been in the U.S. for three and a half years. I didn't know English before coming here. Talking with people, buying stuff, life was so hard. They put me in school and people were speaking English and I wasn't able to speak English. I pretended to understand but I didn't understand. Even now, there's a lot of things people are saying and I pretend I understand but I don't.

They gave us computers to use. I never used a computer back home...At the beginning, I was arguing with my teacher. "Where's my book? Where's my notebook? I cannot use this computer." It's so hard for me. They were like, "Oh we don't have notebooks or books, just computers." They said, "Oh, you have to submit your homework on Google Classroom." I was like, "What's Google Classroom? What does submit mean?" There were a million things that were so hard...I'm learning everything. I struggle a lot.

I think everybody who is speaking a language, they have their own personality. Like English makes them one personality and another language makes them the other personality. In my language, I'm very, very funny. I can make a lot of jokes. I can say a lot of things or emotions. In English, it's kind of hard. I speak four languages and so I'm like four people.

My hope is to become a lawyer. My goal is to help other people, my Afghan and American family. This country is my second home. I hope everyone can be happy and have opportunities and achieve their goals. For Afghan people, I hope they will have peace, independence and freedom. I hope girls will have education rights. I hope girls will be able to go to school and live free in their own home.

مژگان

دري، فراسی ایرانی، پشتو، انگلیسی

من درسفرانسیسکو زندگی میکنم و حقوق و علوم سیاسی رشته ام است. قبلاً در آلمیدا زندگی میکردم و قبل از آن در افغانستان زندگی میکردم. من آنجا تولد شده ام و بزرگ شده ام. زندگی در افغانستان خوب بود، اما امنیت نبود. بیشتر روزه همه بم و حملات انتحاری صورت میگرفت. متأسفانه ما مجبور شدیم کشور را ترک کنیم بخاطریکه برای ما امنیت نبود. ما پس از تسلط طالبان افغانستان را ترک کردیم.

من سه و نیم سال هست که در ایالات متحده بوده ام. من قبل از آمدن به اینجا زبان انگلیسی را نمیدانستم. صحبت کردن با مردم، خریداری و زندگی خیلی سخت بود. من مکتب را شروع کردم و همه مردم انگلیسی صحبت میکردن و من انگلیسی صحبت نمی توانستم. من تظاهر میکردم که میفهمم مگر نفهمیدم. حتی حالا، چیزهای زیادی وجود دارد که مردم میگویند و من طوری تظاهر میکنم که میفهمم مگر نمیفهمم.

آنها برای ما کمپیوتر دادند تا استفاده کنیم. من در کشورم هیچگاه از کامپیوتر استفاده نکرده بودم... در ابتدا، من با معلم خود جر و بحث میکردم. "کتابم کجاست؟ کتابچهام کجاست؟ من نمیتوانم از این کامپیوتر استفاده کنم." این برایم خیلی سخت بود. آنها گفتند: "ما کتاب و کتابچه نداریم، فقط کمپیوتر داریم." گفتند: "باید کارخانگیات را در گوگل کلاسروم انجام بدهی." من گفتم: "گوگل کلاسروم چیست؟ ثبت کردن یعنی چه؟" هزاران چیزها برایم خیلی سخت بود... من همهچیز را یاد میگیرم. خیلی تلاش میکنم و خیلی برایم سخت هستند.

من فکر میکنم هر کسی که به یک زبان صحبت میکند، شخصیت خاص خودش را دارد. مثلاً، زبان انگلیسی یک نوع شخصیت برایشان میسازد و زبان دیگر شخصیت دیگر. در زبان خودم، من خیلی خیلی شوخ هستم. میتوانم شوخیهای زیادی کنم. میتوانم احساسات و چیزهای زیادی بگویم. اما در انگلیسی، این کار کمی سخت است. من به چهار زبان صحبت میکنم، و مثل این است که من چهار نفر هستم.

امید من این است که وکیل شوم. هدفم این است که به دیگران کمک کنم، به خانواده افغان و آمریکاییام. این کشور خانه دوم من است. امیدوارم همه خوشحال باشند، فرصت‌ها داشته باشند و به اهدافشان برسند. برای مردم افغان، امیدوارم صلح، استقلال و آزادی داشته باشند. امیدوارم دختران حق تعلیم داشته باشند. امیدوارم دختران بتوانند به مکتب بروند و در خانه خود آزاد زندگی کنند.



NORMA

Mixteco, Spanish, English

Growing up, me and my family worked in the fields. As a child of farmworkers and then also as a farmworker myself, I experienced first hand many of the abuses that happen in that type of work. [Joining California Rural Legal Assistance] was really an interest in working with that community and helping them enforce their rights. Language justice is a key component of the work.

For Indigenous communities from Latin America, there's an expectation that individuals should be able to speak Spanish, but that's not always the case. When I came to the US, I only spoke Mixteco. I didn't know Spanish, I didn't know English. I learned both at the same time when I started school here in CA. At home, Mixteco was the primary language.

I saw the teasing that would happen towards my parents because they spoke a language that sounded very different – it wasn't Spanish, it wasn't English. Being a 3, 4, 5 year old, I remember those looks they got from people. A look of "oh that looks really weird" or "that sounds funny." Your perception as a child when you see your parents in such a vulnerable position is really disempowering, not just for you but also for your parents. You want to see your parents as your fierce advocates, the folks who can navigate everything for you.

I think most folks who are Indigenous residing in California from Latin America have experienced, at some point in their life, linguicism, discrimination based on their language. With a lot of Indigenous communities that have settled in California, those communities' experience with discrimination and linguicism started back home. It is very critical that we recognize that history and that we strive to do better.

Every time we are engaging with families in our services and there's a validation of their language needs, a respect and a dignified process for providing interpretation, the meaning all that gives is that your language is worthy and something to be respected.

NORMA

Mixteco, Spanish, English



Listen to Norma in Mixteco from
San Miguel Cuevas, Juxtlahuaca,
Oaxaca, Mexico.

English translation below.



The longer we were here, I felt like our language was getting lost. At about five I stopped speaking Mixteco. Because of the discrimination, the teasing, the stares at the family when we were at the grocery store, at church, at work. That all conveyed to me, that for me to fit in and not stand out, I would have to stop speaking the language. That was the message I got as a five year old. I know I'm not the only one who has experienced this. Sometimes I struggle with guilt at giving into the system, not being stronger at fighting off the pressures of society to stop speaking my language. But now as an adult, I try to turn that into compassion. First of all, I was five years old.

What would it have looked like to have schooling that was trilingual, that helped me appreciate the value of being able to speak three languages. What would it have looked like for me as a five year old to go to the clinic, to the doctor, and not have to be expected to translate for my parents. That my parents could communicate. At that age it felt like a hindrance, like a weakness, but now I don't feel that way at all. It's the complete opposite.



PAW PAW

Karen

I completed 4th grade at the Thai-Burma refugee camp before coming to the U.S. When I came to the U.S., I was 16 years old, and I had the opportunity to attend Oakland International High School. I faced enormous challenges, including speaking in English, building

relationships with friends and teachers. At the parent-teacher conference[s], I did not fully understand what the teacher said, and I couldn't explain it well to [my parents] in Karen, but I tried my best.

I could not understand the language and the homework assignments given to me. I had to ask my Karen friend to help me. Sometimes, I felt emotional, I felt down, lowly, and hopeless because I felt like all my classmates who learn fast are the smartest.

I am so glad to be in the U.S., but I never forget my Karen culture, heritage, and [will always] celebrate my roots. We celebrate the Karen New Year once a year to lift up our Karen culture, traditions, dances, and performances for other [ethnicities] and nationalities. This is another way to promote and preserve our Karen culture with food, dances, and dress.

My children do speak Karen a little bit, but not well. My oldest son is in first grade. He came home one day with his homework. He asked me to explain the assignment to him in English. I tried my best to explain to him with all the English I have. But, he said, "Mommy, I don't understand your English. I only understand my teacher's English." So, this is a challenge for me.

It's extremely important to preserve my culture. I want my children and their children to maintain and preserve the culture and the traditions I practice. Looking back at my parents' generation, they had to work extremely hard to protect and hide their culture because once the Burmese military [saw] their dress, attires, written history, or art pieces, they [would] destroy them all. I want my children to know their family heritage, traditions, and history.

နိဂမ္မိ

ကညီကလုာ်

ဖဲယအိၣ်လၢဒဲကဝီၤပူၤခါယထီၣ်ဘၣ်ကွၢ်တုၤလၢယအိၣ်လွံာ်တီၤ.

ယဟဲတုၤလၢကီၢ်အဲရကၢန့ၣ်ယသးန့ၣ်အိၣ်၁၆န့ၣ်, ဒီးယန့ၣ်ဘၣ်တၢ်ခွဲးတၢ်ယၢ်လၢယကလဲၤထီၣ်ဘၣ်တီၤထီၣ်
ကွၢ်ဒီးယသကၢ်ဘၣ်တၢ်ကီၢ်တၢ်ခဲအိၣ်အိၣ်မိၣ်ဖျါလၢတၢ်ခဲတၢ်ကတိၤမ့ၢ်ဂ့ၤ, ဒီးပကဘၣ်သကၢ်လိာ်ပသးဒီးသရၣ်သ
ရၣ်မုၢ်သ့ၣ်တဖၣ်မ့ၢ်ဂ့ၤ, ဒီးပုၤမ့ၢ်အိၣ်ဖျါလၢကွၢ်မ့ၢ်ဂ့ၤ, မိၣ်သ့ၣ်တဖၣ်ကဘၣ်ဟဲ, ဒ်သိးကွၢ်သရၣ်သ့ၣ်တဖၣ်က
ဘၣ်တဲတၢ်ဒီးမိၣ်ပ, ဒီးယဲယကဘၣ်တဲန့ၢ်အတၢ်န့ၣ်ယတနၢ်ပၢၤတၢ်ခဲလၢာ်ဘၣ်. ဒီးအဂၤတမံၤယဲယမၤလိာ်တၢ်
န့ၣ်ယခိၣ်န့ၣ်ယလၢတၢ်ဖဲလိမၤဒီးန့ၣ်လီၤ.

ယတဲတၢ်ဒီးပုၤန့ၣ်ပတနၢ်ပၢၤဘၣ်ဒီးအဲမ့ၢ်ဟ့ၣ်လီၤပုၤဟံၣ်တၢ်မၤန့ၣ်ပတသ့ၣ်ညါဘၣ်ဒီးပဘၣ်ဟးယုသ့ၣ်ညါဒီး
ပကမၤပသကၢ်မၤစၢၤပုၤန့ၣ်လီၤ. တုၤလၢယထီၣ်တုၤလၢတဆံခံတီၤခံယလဲၤလၢခိၣ်မူနထံၣ်ခိၣ်လုာ်ဘၣ်ဆၣ်ယ
တနၢ်ပၢၤတၢ်ခဲလၢာ်ဒီးဘၣ်မုၢ်လၢကီၢ်လၢဝါသ့ၣ်တဖၣ်အကျိၣ်န့ၣ်ကီၢ်ထီၣ်ဒီးယတနၢ်ပၢၤဘၣ်. အယိတၢ်ကီၢ်တၢ်ခဲလၢ
ၤကျိၣ်သ့ၣ်တဖၣ်န့ၣ်အိၣ်အိၣ်မိၣ်လီၤ. ယတုၤဘၣ်လၢယသကၢ်သ့ၣ်တဖၣ်ကွၢ်ဆဲးကွၢ်တလီၤယၤစ့ၢ်ကီးလီၤ. ဒီးယ
သးဆဲးစ့ၢ်ကီးလီၤ. မ့ၢ်အဂ့ၤဒ်လဲၣ်, ဒ်နမ့ၢ်ပုၤကညီတကၢအသိး, နအိၣ်ဒီးနသ့ၣ်နသး, ဒီးနတၢ်တူၣ်ဘၣ်စ့ၢ်ကီး
လီၤ. တဘျီတခိၣ်ယတုၤဘၣ်လၢယသကၢ်သ့ၣ်တဖၣ်မၤလံာ်ဘၣ်ချ့, ဒီးဘၣ်မနုၤယိသးယမၤလိာ်လံာ်ဘၣ်ကနီၣ်
လဲၣ်န့ၣ်လီၤ.

ယသးခုဒိၣ်မးလၢပဟဲအိၣ်ဘၣ်လၢကီၢ်အဲရကၢလၢအမ့ၢ်ထံဒိၣ်ကီၢ်
လဲၣ်န့ၣ်သက့န့ၢ်, ပတသးပုၤနီၣ်ဒဲဒဲပလုာ်လၢထူသန့ဘၣ်ပန့ၢ်ဘၣ်စ့ၢ်ကီးတၢ်ခွဲးတၢ်ယၢ်
လၢတန့ၣ်ဘၣ်တဘျီဒ်သိးပကလဲၤဟံၣ်ဖျါထီၣ်ပလုာ်လၢထူသန့, တၢ်ဆဲးတၢ်လၢ, ဒ်သိးကလုာ်ဂၤသ့ၣ်ကထံၣ်ဘၣ်
ဒီးသ့ၣ်ညါလၢပမ့ၢ်ပုၤကညီဒီးဖဲပမၤန့ၣ်ထီၣ်သီတဘျီဒီးတဘျီပ
ထံၣ်ဘၣ်လၢကလုာ်ဂၤသ့ၣ်တဖၣ်ဟဲစ့ၢ်ကီးဒီးဟဲမၤလၢကဝီၤသ့ၣ်ညါအါထီၣ်က့ၤပလုာ်
လၢထူသန့အကျိၣ်, တၢ်ကူတၢ်ကၢဒီးကျိၣ်သ့ၣ်တဖၣ်မ့ၢ်ဂ့ၤန့ၣ်လီၤ.

ယဖိသ့ၣ်တဖၣ်န့ၣ်ပၢၤညီန့ၣ်ပုၤကညီတစဲးတစဲးဘၣ်ဆၣ်တနၢ်ပၢၤဝဲခဲလၢာ်ဘၣ်. လီၤလီၤဆီဆီယဖိခွါဒိၣ်န့ၣ်အိၣ်ဝဲ
ဒဲတတီၤလံာ်ဒီးဟဲက့ၤစိၣ်လံာ်ဒီးမၤယရဲၤပုၤအီၤလၢကီၢ်လၢကျိၣ်မ့ၢ်ဘၣ်မၤဒ်လဲၣ်.

ယရၢၢ်ကျဲးစးတဲၤပုၤအီၤလၢကီၢ်လၢကျိၣ်ဘၣ်ဆၣ်အဲတနၢ်ပၢၤယကတီၤ
တၢ်ဘၣ်. အဲတဲခိၣ်ခံက့ၤယလၢမိၣ်နရဲၤပုၤယလံာ်တခါအံၤယတနၢ်ပၢၤနကတီၤတၢ်
ဘၣ်. ကဘၣ်မ့ၢ်ဝဲသရၣ်မုၢ်လၢကွၢ်ရဲၤပုၤယလီၤ.

ပၢၤယၣ်က့ၤပတၢ်ဆဲးတၢ်လၢန့ၣ်မ့ၢ်တၢ်လၢအရူဒိၣ်ဒဲဒဲဘၣ်မနုၤယိလဲၣ်
လၢပမိၣ်မၤအစိၣ်ပမိၣ်ပမိၣ်မ့ၢ်ဒဲဒဲပုၤကညီဒီးပဘၣ်အဲၣ်ပၢၤယၣ်က့ၤပကျိၣ်ပထူးပထံးဒီးပတၢ်ဆဲးတၢ်လၢဒီးဒ်သိးပ
ဖိသ့ၣ်တဖၣ်စ့ၢ်ကီးဒ်သိးကသ့ၣ်ညါလီၤအသးဒ်အမ့ၢ်ပုၤကညီအယိန့ၣ်ပဘၣ်အဲၣ်ပၢၤယၣ်ဟံးယၣ်က့ၤအီၤန့ၣ်
လီၤ.



PINJUN

Mandarin

I immigrated to the United States from China because my child was studying here. His mother came first in 2016, and later, in 2017, she applied for my child to join her. A child needs his father's love and care, so I wanted to immigrate as well.

Sometimes, when I am out interacting with others, it can be very awkward. When I can't understand, it makes me frustrated. When I first arrived, I didn't understand English, and my child's English wasn't very good either.

However, over the past two years, my child has grown rapidly and adapted very well to English. Sometimes, when we go shopping, my child acts as my interpreter.

I work at the baseball stadium, mainly making fried and grilled food. The food we sell at our stall is very popular, so we always have many customers. Occasionally, customers come and ask what ingredients are used in a dish, what toppings are on it, or what's wrapped inside, or they have specific requirements for their orders. In these cases, communication becomes challenging because I can't properly communicate with them.

Sometimes, when my company sends messages entirely in English, I use my phone to translate them into Chinese. However, translation tools have their limitations. Sometimes, the translation does not fully match the actual meaning being conveyed. When I need to give out a response at that moment, what else can I do?

Some people speak Chinese [where I work]. Some [people] do not speak Chinese at all. Since I don't understand what they said exactly in their spoken language, I can only rely on intuition and physical gestures. When it comes to doing the job, I feel that we actually work together quite well. We have established an implicit understanding between us.

I'm already over fifty years old. My hope is to have a stable job and to create a good living environment and education for the next generation. Of course, we also need to make changes ourselves. Otherwise it will be difficult for us to survive and live here for the rest of our lives. Without basic English skills, we will face even greater obstacles in the future. So I plan to take more English courses and practice more to adapt to this society.

品军

普通话

我是从中国移民到美国的，因为当时孩子在这边上学，他妈妈陪他一起过来。2016 年，他妈妈先到美国，后来申请我的小孩，2017 年他才过来。孩子需要父爱，因此我也想移民。

有时，在外面交流的时候，就显得很尴尬，当我听不懂的时候，心里就有点难受.....我刚来的时候不懂英文，我的孩子英文也不是很好。但这两年孩子成长得很快，在英文方面适应能力特别强。有时我们去买东西，他就是我的翻译。

我在棒球場工作，主要是煎烤食物。我们摊位卖的东西都很受欢迎，所以一直有很多顾客。比如客人来了，会问这个东西是用什么做的、上面放了什么、里面包了什么，或客人可能会有特定要求。在这方面，由于语言不通，我确实无法很好地沟通。

比如，公司发来的信息全是英文，我自己无法直接处理，就用手机翻译成中文，再进行处理或回复。这样的翻译工具存在缺陷，有时翻译出来的意思与实际表达的不完全一样。由于在某些时刻的确需要作出应答，别无他法，我只能这样与对方进行沟通和交流。

[我工作的地方]有些人会讲中文，有些[人]则完全不会讲中文，他们靠手势交流。有时候，他们做出一个动作，我就能领会大致的意思。因为听不懂具体的语言，我们只能靠感觉和手势去理解。我们工作起来也配合得不错。彼此之间建立了默契。

我毕竟已经五十多岁了，我的想法是有固定的工作，为下一代创造一个良好的居住环境和教育。当然我们自身也要有所改变，因为下半辈子也要在这里生活，若没有一定的英文基础，日后还是有很多障碍。所以打算以后多学一些英文方面的课程和加强训练，来适应这个社会。



RAVANN, RAVY, & SIMOEUN

Khmer

Ravann (daughter): I live with two of my kids, husband, and both of my parents. We live together in one household.

I think living in the U.S. can have lots of advantages, like the freedom of expression and being my own person. However, it can still be hard to get used to the culture, and learning the language. For me, it is hard to speak and to interact, even going to the market. Everything is hard. This is coming from me who knows a little bit of English. So for [my parents], everything is challenging.

Four years ago, when [they] first arrived in the U.S., I wanted them to come to CERI and join their groups. They worried a lot about communicating with others. Now, every week, when it's their group, they can't wait. Because they have a community where they speak the same language and have the same culture. It gives them a sense of belonging.

Simoeun (dad): [The language barrier] affects me a lot because my grandkids speak English and when they talk to me, I cannot understand.

Ravy (mom): Even my neighbors, they all speak English so it is hard to interact with them. Everything is hard [dealing with language barriers].

I feel relief every time my daughter takes me to CERI and I'm with community. Before, I found it very difficult to go to places or leave my house, but now I am able to come to CERI to be with the community. I found CERI and now I feel like I belong.

Ravann: Whenever I go to the supermarket and I see another Cambodian, I get all excited and happy. Even if they don't recognize me or know me before, I still want to say hi and interact with them.

Sometimes, when this happens, my mom would jokingly ask me if I know this person and I say, "no, but I hear them speak Khmer."

វ៉ារ៉ាន់ វ៉ាវី និង ស៊ីមេរីន

ជនជាតិខ្មែរ

វ៉ារ៉ាន់: ខ្ញុំរស់នៅជាមួយកូន 2 នាក់ ប្តីរបស់ខ្ញុំ និងឪពុកម្តាយរបស់ខ្ញុំ ។ យើងរស់នៅជាមួយគ្នានៅក្នុងផ្ទះមួយ។

ខ្ញុំគិតថាការរស់នៅសហរដ្ឋអាមេរិកអាចមានអត្ថប្រយោជន៍ជាច្រើន ដូចជា សេរីភាពក្នុងការនិយាយ និងការជាជនឯករាជ្យ។ ប៉ុន្តែវាក៏ពិបាកផងដែរ ក្នុងការឲ្យសំឡេងនិងវប្បធម៌ និងរៀនភាសា។ សម្រាប់ខ្ញុំ វាពិបាកក្នុងការនិយាយ និងទាក់ទងគ្នា សូម្បីតែទៅផ្សារ។ អ្វីគ្រប់យ៉ាងគឺពិបាក។ នេះមកពីខ្ញុំចេះភាសាអង់គ្លេសតិចតួចផង។ ដូច្នេះសម្រាប់ពួកគាត់ អ្វីគ្រប់យ៉ាងគឺលំបាក។

ប្រហែល ៥ ឆ្នាំមុន ពេលពួកគាត់មកដល់សហរដ្ឋអាមេរិកថ្មីៗ ខ្ញុំចង់ឲ្យ [ឪពុកម្តាយរបស់ខ្ញុំ]មក CERI ហើយចូលរួមជាមួយក្រុមរបស់គេ។ តែពួកគេក៏មានអារម្មណ៍ខ្លាច និងមិនចង់ចូលរួមទេ ព្រោះបញ្ហាភាសា។ ពួកគេបារម្ភច្រើនចំពោះការទំនាក់ទំនងជាមួយអ្នកដទៃ។ ប៉ុន្តែឥឡូវនេះ រៀងរាល់សប្តាហ៍ ពេលដល់ពេលក្រុមរបស់ពួកគាត់ ពួកគាត់សប្បាយចិត្ត ហើយសឹងមិនអាចរង់ចាំបាន។ ព្រោះពួកគេមានសហគមន៍មួយដែលនិយាយភាសាដូចគ្នា និងមានវប្បធម៌ដូចគ្នា។ វាធ្វើឲ្យពួកគាត់នូវអារម្មណ៍ថាជាសមាជិកម្នាក់។

ស៊ីមេរីន: [ឧបសគ្គភាសា]ប៉ះពាល់ខ្ញុំខ្លាំងណាស់ ព្រោះចៅរបស់ខ្ញុំ និយាយអង់គ្លេស ហើយពេលណាពួកគេនិយាយជាមួយខ្ញុំ ខ្ញុំមិនអាចយល់ទេ។

វ៉ាវី: សូម្បីតែអ្នកជិតខាងរបស់ខ្ញុំ ក៏និយាយអង់គ្លេសទាំងអស់ដែរ ដូច្នេះវាពិបាក សម្រាប់ខ្ញុំក្នុងការទាក់ទងជាមួយពួកគេ។ អ្វីគ្រប់យ៉ាងគឺពិបាក [ការប្រល័យមជាមួយបញ្ហាភាសាខុសគ្នា]។

រៀងរាល់ពេលកូនស្រីខ្ញុំនាំខ្ញុំទៅ CERI ខ្ញុំមានអារម្មណ៍ស្រួលចិត្តណាស់ ហើយខ្ញុំនៅជាមួយសហគមន៍។ ពេលខ្ញុំបានរកឃើញ CERI និងសហគមន៍ខ្មែរ វាបានធ្វើឲ្យខ្ញុំមានទំនុកចិត្តខ្លាំងជាងមុន។ មុនពេលខ្ញុំគាត់កន្លែងនេះ វាពិតជាពិបាកក្នុងការទៅ កន្លែងផ្សេងៗ ឬចេញពីផ្ទះរបស់ខ្ញុំ ប៉ុន្តែឥឡូវ ខ្ញុំអាចទៅ CERI ដើម្បីនៅជាមួយសហគមន៍បានហើយ។ ខ្ញុំបានរកឃើញ CERI ហើយឥឡូវនេះ ខ្ញុំមានអារម្មណ៍ថាខ្ញុំជាផ្នែកមួយនៃទីនេះហើយ។

រៀងរាល់ពេលខ្ញុំទៅផ្សារ ហើយឃើញជនជាតិខ្មែរផ្សេងទៀត ខ្ញុំមានអារម្មណ៍រំភើប និងរីករាយ។ ទោះបីជាពួកគេមិនស្គាល់ខ្ញុំសោះក៏ដោយ ខ្ញុំក៏ចង់និយាយសួរសុខទុក្ខ និងទំនាក់ទំនងជាមួយពួកគេ។

វ៉ារ៉ាន់: រៀងរាល់ពេលខ្ញុំទៅផ្សារ ហើយឃើញជនជាតិខ្មែរផ្សេងទៀត ខ្ញុំមានអារម្មណ៍រំភើប និងរីករាយ។ ទោះបីជាពួកគេមិនស្គាល់ខ្ញុំសោះក៏ដោយ ខ្ញុំក៏ចង់និយាយសួរសុខទុក្ខ និងទំនាក់ទំនងជាមួយពួកគេ។

ពេលខ្លះពេលវាកើតឡើង ម៉ាក់ខ្ញុំនឹងសួរខ្ញុំថា កូនស្គាល់គេឬហើយខ្ញុំនិយាយថា “ទេ ប៉ុន្តែខ្ញុំបានឮគេនិយាយខ្មែរ។”



SAVETH

Khmer

For me, it makes me very happy if someone speaks Khmer to me. If they speak English, I don't understand what they mean and it makes it very difficult, difficult in the chest. We want to speak about our true feelings, but we can't because they don't fully understand. We want to express everything, but we can't do it all. Interpreters don't have time, and it could be too long for them to translate everything.

[It is important] to find someone who knows the language for help. I'm very happy where I live right now. Upstairs and downstairs, [the tenants] are all Khmer. I have a difficult time [trying] to learn and memorize [English], and it is very hard.

When speaking about my sad past, it's hard to control my tears and I get choked up. That is why I like to talk about current happy events. Everytime, I meet new Khmer people. I tell them about Center for Empowering Refugees and Immigrants (CERI). At CERI, there are Khmer staff. They are fluent in English and Khmer. Go there! It will be a lot of fun. There is also food that is shared with everyone. Coming here is like a big family, one home. [Also, CERI has a type of love language through food.]

In the past, we struggled with lack of food during Pol Pot times. But now, we buy groceries and make food to share. This is more fun than eating alone. When my health is good, I like to cook. I don't like to eat by myself. I like to share with others. The elders are the same. When they cook, they like to cook big dishes to share with everyone. We don't care about nationalities. Anyone who is part of this place, we welcome them to eat together. During an event, anyone who can cook will bring big pots and dishes to share and eat together.

Before, my life was very difficult. But since I know this place (CERI), I feel more happy, coming here and meeting all the elders. My life is alive again. Everyday I am happy because of CERI.

សារវ៉ែត

ជនជាតិខ្មែរ

សម្រាប់មីង វាធ្វើឲ្យមីងសប្បាយចិត្តណាស់ បើមានអ្នកណានិយាយខ្មែរជាមួយមីង។
បើគេនិយាយភាសាអង់គ្លេស មីងមិនយល់ថាគេមានន័យម៉េចទេ
ហើយវាធ្វើឲ្យមានការពិបាកខ្លាំងណាស់ គឺពិបាកក្នុងទ្រូង។ យើងចង់និយាយពីអារម្មណ៍ពិតរបស់យើង
ប៉ុន្តែយើងមិនអាចធ្វើបាន ព្រោះគេមិនយល់ទាំងស្រុង។ យើងចង់បង្ហាញអ្វីគ្រប់យ៉ាង
ប៉ុន្តែយើងមិនអាចធ្វើវាបានទាំងអស់ទេ។ អ្នកបកប្រែមិនមានពេលទេ
ហើយវាអាចវែងពេកសម្រាប់ពួកគេក្នុងការបកប្រែអ្វីគ្រប់យ៉ាង។

[វាពិតជាសំខាន់ណាស់]ក្នុងការស្វែងរកអ្នកដែលចេះភាសាខ្មែរជួយ។ មីងមានអារម្មណ៍រីករាយណាស់
ជាមួយកន្លែងដែលមីងរស់នៅសព្វថ្ងៃ។ អ្នករស់នៅជាន់លើ និងខាងក្រោមសុទ្ធតែជាខ្មែរ។
មីងមានការពិបាកក្នុងការព្យាយាមរៀន និងទន្ទេញភាសាអង់គ្លេស ហើយវាពិតជាពិបាកណាស់។

អ្នកបកប្រែមិនមានពេលទេ ហើយវាអាចវែងពេកសម្រាប់ពួកគេក្នុងការបកប្រែអ្វីគ្រប់យ៉ាង។
រាល់ពេលដែលខ្ញុំជួបអ្នកទើបតែមកពីខ្មែរ ខ្ញុំប្រាប់ពួកគេអំពី CERI ។ នៅ CERI មានបុគ្គលិកខ្មែរ។
ពួកគេចេះភាសាអង់គ្លេស និងភាសាខ្មែរយ៉ាងស្ទាត់ជំនាញ។ ទៅទីនោះ! មានអ្វីសប្បាយៗ។
មានអាហារចែកជូនអ្នកគ្រប់គ្នាផងដែរ។ មកទីនេះប្រៀបដូចជាគ្រួសារធំមួយ ផ្ទះតែមួយ។ [ហើយនៅ
CERI មានប្រភេទនៃភាសាក្តីស្រលាញ់តាមរយៈអាហារ។]

កាលពីមុន យើងមានការពិបាកជាមួយការខ្វះខាតស្បៀងអាហារ ក្នុងសម័យប៉ុលពត។ ប៉ុន្តែឥឡូវនេះ
យើងទិញគ្រឿងម្ហូប ហើយធ្វើម្ហូបដើម្បីចែករំលែក។ វាសប្បាយជាងការញ៉ាំម្ហូក់ឯង។
ពេលសុខភាពខ្ញុំល្អ ខ្ញុំចូលចិត្តធ្វើម្ហូប។ ខ្ញុំមិនចូលចិត្តញ៉ាំតែម្ហូក់ឯងទេ។
ខ្ញុំចូលចិត្តចែករំលែកជាមួយអ្នកដទៃ។ ចាស់ៗ ក៏ដូចគ្នាដែរ។ នៅពេលពូគាត់ធ្វើម្ហូប
ពួកគាត់ចូលចិត្តធ្វើម្ហូបច្រើនដើម្បីយកមកចែកគ្នា។ យើងមិនខ្វល់ពីជាតិសាសន៍នោះទេ។
អ្នកណាដែលជាផ្នែកនៃកន្លែងនេះ យើងស្វាគមន៍ពួកគេមកញ៉ាំអាហារជាមួយគ្នា។
នៅពេលមានពិធីអ្វីមួយ អ្នកដែលចេះធ្វើម្ហូបនឹងយកមកឆ្ងាំងផង និងបានដើម្បីចែករំលែក
និងញ៉ាំជាមួយគ្នា។

កាលពីមុនជីវិតរបស់មីងលំបាកខ្លាំងណាស់។ ប៉ុន្តែចាប់តាំងពីមីងបាន ស្គាល់កន្លែងនេះ (CERI)មក
មីងមានអារម្មណ៍សប្បាយរីករាយជាងមុន ដោយបានមកទីនេះ ហើយបានជួបចាស់ៗ។
ជីវិតខ្ញុំរស់រានឡើងវិញ។ ជារៀងរាល់ថ្ងៃខ្ញុំសប្បាយចិត្តដោយសារតែ CERI ។



SOPHAL

Khmer, English

I came from Cambodia. For the Cambodian population, my generation, my mom's generation, we survived the war and genocide.

[When] my mom told us, time to escape from Cambodia, we have to go. I said, "go where?" She said, "United States." I had never heard of the United States. Never seen the map of the United States. I said, "Where is the United States?" I didn't speak a word of English. We did not have

a globe. During the wartime, everything got destroyed. All I know is that we have to cross the Pacific Ocean. All I know is that it's a long way.

When I first came here and took my son to the children's hospital, the lady who spoke Khmer and did medical interpretation for me... it was so important at the time. I didn't speak any English. For her to translate the information that I gave to her accurately and she relay[ed] it to the doctor, it was so intriguing. I kept thinking in my head, this is a job I want to do later on in my life when I speak English fluently. It was so good that she talked on behalf of me and my son got his vaccinations done. I was so grateful. I was always dreaming, I wanted to do her job.

I'm an outreach worker [at Center for Empowering Refugees and Immigrants (CERI)]. The word healing is so powerful. Coming to CERI myself, that's part of my healing too. It's not just the community. It's mine included. I said to the group members, you know, coming here and chit chatting with you, sharing our past, sharing our trauma, sharing our loss. And the love, and having our kids. We also share that, if it had not been for us, our children, we laid out the carpet for them to walk on.

We always greet them in their language. It makes them feel like they're at home. When we finish our groups, we hold hands in a circle and sing Cambodian songs. That makes them feel like this is their second home. Then we can eat lunch together. That's the culture at CERI.

សុផល

ភាសាខ្មែរ ភាសាអង់គ្លេស

ខ្ញុំមកពីប្រទេសកម្ពុជា។ សម្រាប់ប្រជាជនកម្ពុជា ជំនាន់ខ្ញុំ ជំនាន់ម្តាយខ្ញុំ យើងបានរួចផុតពីសង្គ្រាម និងការប្រល័យពូជសាសន៍។

[ពេល] ម៉ាក់ខ្ញុំប្រាប់យើងថា ដល់ពេលរត់ចេញពីស្រុកខ្មែរ យើងត្រូវតែទៅ។ ខ្ញុំបាននិយាយថា "ទៅណា?" គាត់បាននិយាយថា "សហរដ្ឋអាមេរិក" ។ ខ្ញុំមិនដែលឮពីសហរដ្ឋអាមេរិកទេ។ មិនដែលឃើញផែនទីរបស់សហរដ្ឋអាមេរិកទេ។ ខ្ញុំបាននិយាយថា "តើសហរដ្ឋអាមេរិកនៅឯណា?" ខ្ញុំមិនចេះនិយាយភាសាអង់គ្លេសមួយម៉ាត់ផង។ យើងមិនមានភូគោលពិភពលោកមើលទេ។ នៅក្នុងសម័យសង្គ្រាម អ្វីៗគ្រប់យ៉ាងត្រូវបានបំផ្លាញ។ អ្វីដែលខ្ញុំដឹង គឺយើងត្រូវឆ្លងកាត់មហាសមុទ្រ ប៉ាស៊ីហ្វិក។ អ្វីដែលខ្ញុំដឹងគឺវាឆ្ងាយណាស់។

ពេលខ្ញុំមកដល់ទីនេះដំបូង ហើយបានយកកូនប្រុសខ្ញុំទៅមន្ទីរពេទ្យកុមារ មានស្រ្តីម្នាក់ដែលនិយាយ ភាសាខ្មែរ និងធ្វើការបកប្រែពេទ្យឱ្យខ្ញុំ... វាពិតជាសំខាន់ណាស់នៅពេលនោះ។ ខ្ញុំមិនអាចនិយាយភាសាអង់គ្លេសបានទេ។ សម្រាប់គាត់ក្នុងការបកប្រែព័ត៌មានដែលខ្ញុំបានផ្តល់ឱ្យ គាត់យ៉ាងត្រឹមត្រូវ ហើយគាត់បកប្រែវាទៅពេទ្យ វាពិតជាគួរឱ្យចាប់អារម្មណ៍ខ្លាំងណាស់។ ខ្ញុំគិតនៅក្នុងចិត្តថា នេះគឺជាការងារដែលខ្ញុំចង់ធ្វើនៅថ្ងៃក្រោយក្នុងជីវិតរបស់ខ្ញុំ នៅពេលដែលខ្ញុំ និយាយភាសាអង់គ្លេសបានស្ទាត់ជំនាញ។ វាពិតជាល្អណាស់ដែលនាងបាននិយាយជំនួសខ្ញុំ ហើយកូនប្រុសរបស់ខ្ញុំបានទទួលថ្នាំបង្ការរបស់គាត់។ ខ្ញុំពិតជាមានអរគុណគាត់ខ្លាំងណាស់។ ខ្ញុំតែងតែស្រមៃថា ខ្ញុំចង់ធ្វើការងារដូចគាត់។

ខ្ញុំជាបុគ្គលិកផ្សព្វផ្សាយ [នៅ CER]។ ពាក្យថាព្យាបាលមានថាមពលខ្លាំងណាស់។ ការមក CER សំរាប់ខ្លួនខ្ញុំផ្ទាល់ នោះក៏ជាផ្នែកនៃ ការព្យាបាលរបស់ខ្ញុំផងដែរ។ វាមិនត្រឹមតែសំរាប់សហគមន៍នោះទេ។ វាសំរាប់ខ្ញុំផងដែរ។ ខ្ញុំបាននិយាយទៅកាន់សមាជិកក្រុមថា អ្នកដឹងទេ មកទីនេះ ហើយជជែកលេងជាមួយអ្នក ចែករំលែកអតីតកាលរបស់យើង ចែករំលែកបូសផ្លូវចិត្តរបស់យើង ចែករំលែកការបាត់បង់របស់យើង។ និងសេចក្តីស្រឡាញ់ និងមានកូនៗរបស់យើងទៀត។ ហើយយើងក៏បាននិយាយដែរថា ថាបើមិនមានយើង កូនយើង គឺយើងជាអ្នកក្រាលកម្រាលដើម្បីឱ្យពួកគេដើរលើ។

យើងតែងតែស្វាគមន៍ពួកគេជាភាសារបស់ពួកគេ។ វាធ្វើឱ្យពួកគេមានអារម្មណ៍ថាពួកគេនៅផ្ទះ។ នៅពេលយើងបញ្ចប់ក្រុម យើងចាប់ផ្តើមជាមួយ ហើយច្រៀងចម្រៀងខ្មែរមួយគ្នា។ នេះជាអ្វីដែលធ្វើឱ្យពួកគេមានអារម្មណ៍ថា នេះគឺជាផ្ទះទីពីរបស់ពួកគេ។ បន្ទាប់មកយើងអាចញ្ជាអាហារថ្ងៃត្រង់ជាមួយគ្នា។ នោះជាប្រពៃណីនៅ CER ។



TEKLEMARIAM

Tigrinya

I'm from Asmara, Eritrea. When I first came and joined the adult school, they asked me what kind of job I used to have and I told them that I had been working in construction. They said they would teach me for three months and they would get me a job after. Before the three months, I moved to another place.

When I moved to a new place, the school there didn't have the same program. With the asylum case and my age, it was better to retire. If I knew the language, I would stop taking government benefits, and I would prefer to work. They wouldn't say you are not able to work because you are too old if I spoke the language. They both go together, the age and language.

Not being able to speak the language is very hard! If you go somewhere and you are not able to speak the language, how can you communicate with people out there? A lot of people think I speak English and they come and talk to me, and I act like I'm deaf and they walk away.

Our language makes us feel alive and reminds us who we are.

The [Eritrean senior exercise group] started with Ogbai and some other people. They came up with this idea because we were locked up in our houses, we were not doing anything. So, they found this place and this place gives us a sense of community and freedom.

Instead of staying at home, the men and women can come here and hang out and socialize. When we started this, the plan was no affiliation with politics, religion, and gender issues. The aim was just hang out and socialize. This is a safe space for us.

What makes it great is because you don't have a job, you only stay home. The fact that we come here for exercise helps us physically and the way they teach us also helps us to meditate. If you are alone, you only think about depressing stuff. Here, you feel refreshed.

I don't know what people want to know about me, but all I know is people love me and I love people.

ተክለማርያም

ተግርኛ

አብ ኤርትራ አስመራ ዝበሃል ከተማ'የ ዝቐመጥ ነይረ፡ መጀመርያ ምጽእ ምስ በልካ'ንዲኻ ቲ'ጉዳይ ትሓቶ፡ እንታይ'ዩ ሞያኻ ተባሂለ ሕጂ አብ ኣዳልት ቤተምህርቲ ምስ ኣተኹ፡ ኣነ ናይ ህንጻ ሰራሕተኛ'የ ኔረ ኢለኹም፡ ብጣዕሚ ተሓጉሶም፡ 3 ወርሒ ክንምህረካ ኢና ብድሕሪኡ ከኣ ስራሕ ክንረኽበልካ ኢና ኢሎምኒ፡ እቲ 3 ወርሒ ከይኣኸለ ከኣ እቲ ትምህርቲ ገዲፊኹ፡ ቀይረ ካብኡ።

ገዛ ናብ ርሑቕ ቀይርና፡ ኣብቲ ዝቐየርክም ቤተትምህርቲ ከኣ ከሙኡ ኣይነበረን። ምስቲ ዑቕባ ዝሓተትካኹን ምስቲ ዕድመን ከኣ ጥሮታ ክትወጽእ ተ'ዘይኮይኑ ስራሕ የለን። ቋንቋ እንተዝኸእል ኔረ እተን ዝህቡኒ ዘለዉ ኣይደልን ኢለ ምሰራሕኩ፡ ንምንታይ ሰራሕካ ዝብለኒ ኣይምረኽብኩን ስራሕ'የም ዝፈትዉ'ዘም ዓዲ። ክልቲኤን ብሓደ'የ ዝኸዳ።

ቋንቋ ዘይምኽኣሲ ኣዝዩ አጸጋሚ'ዩ። ሕጂ ዝደለካኖ ነገር ኬድካ፡ በቲ ቋንቋ እንተዘይተዛራብካኖ ነቲ ሰብ'ሲ ብምንታይ ኢኻ ክትዘረቦ? እዉ ንዓይ ከም ኪኢለ ጌሮም'የም ዝርእዩኒ፡ ብዙዛ ግዜ'ዩ ከሙኡ ዘጋጠመኒ፡ ይኸእል'ዩ ኢሎም ዝኸነ ክሓቱኒ ከለዉ፡ ኣነ ድማ እቲ ቋንቋ ስለዘይምልሶ እንሓንሳብ ጸማም'የ ይብሎም።

ቋንቋና ክንዛረብ ከለና'ዶ? እዉ ጽቡቕ ኮይኑ ይስመዓና።

እዉ። ምንቅስቃስ ኣካላት ክንገብር ጽቡቕ'ዩ ዝስመዓና። ከምቲ ዓንተዎይ ዝጠቐስክም ኣነ ካብቶም ምስቶም ቀዳሞት ዝጀመሩ፡ ጀማራይ'የ ኔረ ኣነ። ሕጂ ነጊሮምና'የም፡ ከምዚ ዓንተዎይ ዑቕባይ ዝብሎ ዝነበረ፡ ወለድና ኣብ ገዛ ዓጺናኹም ንኸይድ ዝነበርናስ ገለ መውዓሊ ዘይንገብረሎም ዝብሎ ምሁራት ከም ዑቕባይ ኔሮም'የም፡ ብሓቂ ንፈልጦም ኢና ኸኣ። ሕጂ ንሱ ብመንፍጻቱ ንሳቶም ብኣትሓሳስብኦም በዓል ፍሊጶስ ዝበሃሉ ነዚ ነገር'ዚ ዝገበርዎ ማለት'ዩ። ቦታ ድለዩ ተባሂሉ፡ ቦታ ሓቲቶም እዚኣ ተረኺባ፡ ኣብ ታሕቲ ኔርና ማለት'ዩ።

እዚ ምስ ኮነ ሽዑ እምበኣር፡ ልክዕ ጽቡቕ ሓሳብ'ዩ ካብ ገዛ ተዓጽኖም ዝውዕሉ ሰብኣኖም ሰበይቶም ከዛናግዑ ይኸእሉ'የም ዝብል ሓሳብ መጹኡ።

እቲ ጽቡቕ ዘግብሮ በይንኻ ገዛ ክትውዕል ኣይትኸእልን ኢኻ፡ ስራሕ የብልካን ኣብዚ ክትውዕል ከለኻ ከኣ፡ እቲ ምንቅስቃስ ኣካላት ትገብሮ ጥዕና ይህበካ'ዩ፡ ወለ እቲ ትምህርቲ ዝወሃበካ ሓንጎልካ ዘሕድስ'ዩ። ብኡ ደስ ይብለኒ ኣነ።

ምናልባት ሰብ ብዛዕባይ እንታይ ክፈልጥ ይደሊ'ም ክፈልጥ ኣይክእልን'ዩ፡ ወልሓንቲ፡ ንዓይ ሰብ ይፈትወኒ'ዩ ኣነ ኸኣ ሰብ ይፈቱ'ዩ።



TITA AGIE & MICHELLE

Tagalog, English

Michelle: My mom moved here to San Francisco in 1995. I would oftentimes have to translate different forms for her or translate when we would have parent-teacher conferences. Even though she has the capacity to speak English, there's still a language barrier when it comes to thinking to your fullest capacity.

I felt like I had to grow up fast. I just wanted to be a kid, hang around kids who didn't also have that kind of responsibility. It puts a lot of strain on relationships. I've given myself a lot of grace now that I've been able to study the reasons why people like Filipinos move here to the U.S. I've taken a lot of Filipino studies and ethnic studies courses. As an adult now, I've seen knowing two languages more as a skill and benefit, rather than a hindrance.

Tita Agie: In the Philippines, the neighbors know each other, but here in the U.S. the neighbors hardly know each other. When I came here, I understood English but had difficulty expressing myself until much later when I became more confident to talk in English. You have to learn how to rely only on yourself.

My daughter Michelle invited me to a Mother's Day celebration last year at the Filipino Community Center, and then it turned out eventually we were doing Zumba twice a week there. I started making new friends. Together, we established a new organization which aims to help new incoming migrants.

Some people become very stressed and their mental health is affected. I personally experienced this. My life changed because now I have new friends from Zumba and I'm able to exercise regularly.

Michelle: Having a community that speaks the same language offers the chance to learn from each other, and to build, in Tagalog it's called kapit bisig which means arm in arm, hand in hand. It allows communities to build unity and a stronger feeling of confidence in where you came from, confidence in being able to use your voice, to speak freely without having to cater to an English dominated space. Language access offers a tighter community with the people you find yourself most comfortable around.

TITA AGIE & MICHELLE

Tagalog, Ingles

Michelle: Lumipat dito sa San Francisco ang aking nanay noong 1995. Madalas kinakailangan kong mag salin ng iba't-ibang mga form o magsalin kapag may kumperensya ng magulang at guro o parent-teacher conference. Kahit na may kakayahang magsalita ng Ingles, may hadlang parin sa wika pagdating sa pagiisip sa pinka buong kapasidad.

Ang pakiramdam ko ay kinailanan kong tumanda ng mabilis. Gusto ko lang maging bata, makasalamuha ang mga ibang bata na walang ganoon na responsibilidad. Ito ay nagdudulot ng tensyon sa mga relasyon. Nabigyan ko ang aking sarili ng madaming pagunawa ngayong napagalaran ko na ang mga dahilan kung bakit ang mga tao tulad ng mga Pilipino ay lumilipat dito sa U.S. Madami na akong nakuhang kurso sa Filipino studies at ethnic studies. Ngayong nasa hustong gulang na ako, nakita ko na ang pagiging marunong sa dalwang wika ay isang kasanayan at benepisyo at hindi balakid.

Tita Agie: Sa Pilipinas, magkakakilala ang mga magkakapitbahay, pero dito sa U.S. hindi halos mag kakilala ang mga magkakabitbahay.

Pagpunta ko dito, nkakaintindi ako ng Ingels pero nahirapan akong ipahiwatig ang aking sarili. Matagal pa bago ako nagkaroon ng tiwala sa sarili na magsalita ng Ingles. Kailangang mong matuto na umasa lamang sa sarili.

Inimbitahan ako ng aking anak na si Michelle sa pagdiriwang ng Mother's Day noong nakaraang taon sa Filipino Community Center at naging Zumba ito na ginagawa namin ng dalawang beses sa isang linggo doon. Nagsimula akong magkaroon ng mga bagong kaibigan. Sama-sama naming binuo ng bagong organisasyon na naglalayong makatulong sa mga bagong dating na migrante.

Ang ibang tao ay nagiging sobrang stressed at ang kanilng kalusugan ng isip ay apektado. Personal ko itong naranasan. Nagbago ang aking buhay dahil ngayon ay may mga bago akong kaibigan galing sa Zumba at regular akong nag-eehersisyo.

Michelle: Ang pagkakaroon ng komunidad na nagsasalita ng parehong wika ay nagbibigay ng pagkakataon na matuto sa isa't isa, at magbuo ng komunidad, sa Tagalog ito ay tinatawag na kapit bisig na ang ibig sabihin ay magkakonekta ang braso at magkahawak ang kamay. Nagbibigay daan ito para magkaisa ang komunidad at mas malakas na pakiramdam ng tiwala kung saan ka nang galing, tiwala na kaya mong gamitin ang iyong boses, na malayang magsalita na hindi kailanang makibagay sa espasyo kung saan nangingibabaw ang Ingles. Ang pag-access sa wika o language access ay nagbibigay daan para sa mas malapit na komunidad na kasama ang mga taong pinaka kumportable kang makasama.



TORM

Khmu, Lao, English

I live in Richmond, CA and arrived here in 1975. I came from Laos as a refugee because of the so-called Vietnam War. When the Lao, Cambodian and Vietnamese governments collapsed, I fled to Thailand. I believe I was the first Laotian family to settle in Richmond, California in 1975 on December 1. I also sponsored 24 families, Khmu, Mien, Hmong, Lao families to Richmond and trained people to sponsor others.

The language may not be [most] important, but the information and knowledge is. Let's say someone is appealing the food stamps process. If I just read and translate everything there on the paper, they will not understand. I have to read the paper and explain to them in our terms, in our way. Sometimes I have to go back to our ways in Laos. "You remember in the village council, you have to appeal to the village council to reconsider their case. This is the same thing, you have to fill in this form."

The same thing as when I worked with Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) to organize the Laotians who do not speak much English. What's crucial is information and knowledge about policy, about political processes, about how to move legislation. But, if you don't have language, it's so intimidating. It's so frightening to go speak to the City Council or a Senate or Assembly member. Even to speak to people at the store [people] are scared. It is frightening.

But, when you sit down with people and speak their own language, and explain to them the information and knowledge they need to know before they go up, and how to prepare from their heart, they can understand how a policy would help our community and put that into their heart. Then, they can be a powerful speaker. They can give powerful testimony. Even in Khmu.

I've been organizing my whole life. I always come back to that: information and knowledge. People need to have that to speak, act, knock on doors, make phone calls, anything. They have to get that in their heart.

To do organizing work, it is joyful, it is empowerment.

ຕອ່ມ

ກົມມຸ, ລາວ, ອັງກິດ

ຂ້ອຍຢູ່ເມືອງ Richmond, CA ແລະໄດ້ມາຮອດທີ່ນີ້ໃນປີ 1975. ຂ້ອຍມາຈາກປະເທດລາວ ເປັນຊາວອົບພະຍົບ ຍ້ອນໄພສົງຄາມທີ່ເຄີຍເອີ້ນກັນວ່າ ສົງຄາມຫວຽດນາມ. ໃນຊ່ວງເວລາທີ່ລັດຖະບານ ລາວ, ກຳປູເຈຍ ແລະຫວຽດນາມ ຖືກ ໂຄ່ນລົ້ມ, ຂ້ອຍໄດ້ຫຼຸບໜີໄປປະເທດໄທ. ຂ້ອຍເຊື່ອວ່າຂ້ອຍແມ່ນຄອບຄົວລາວຜູ້ທຳອິດທີ່ໄດ້ມາຕັ້ງຖິ່ນຖານຢູ່ເມືອງ Richmond, CA ໃນປີ 1975 ທັນວາ, ວັນທີ 1. ແລ້ວຂອບກໍຍັງໄດ້ຮັບອຸປະຖຳເອົາຄອບຄົວຄົນກົມມຸ, ມງຸ້ນ, ມົ້ງ ແລະ ລາວອີກຈຳນວນ 24 ຄອບຄົວມາຢູ່ເມືອງ Richmond ແລະໄດ້ສອນວິທີໃຫ້ຜູ້ອື່ນໆ ໄດ້ອຸປະຖຳເອົາຄອບຄົວອື່ນໆ ມາ ອີກຕື່ມ.

ພາສາຢາງດຽວອາດຈະບໍ່ສຳຄັນແຕ່ຂໍ້ມູນແລະຄວາມຮູ້ນັ້ນສຳຄັນ. ຕົວຢ່າງມີຄົນຍືນຄຳອຸທອນ ການດຳເນີນການ ກຽວກັບສະແຕມອາຫານ (food stamps). ຖ້າຫາກຂອບອ່ານແລ້ວແປຕາມທຸກໂຕທີ່ຢູ່ໃນເຈ້ຍ, ຄົນຈະບໍ່ເຂົ້າໃຈ. ຂອບຕ້ອງໄດ້ອ່ານເຈ້ຍແລະອະທິບາຍຄວາມໝາຍເປັນພາສາຂອງພວກເຮົາ, ແບບວິທີການຂອງເຮົາ. ບາງເທື່ອຂ້ອຍຕ້ອງໄດ້ກັບຄືນໄປໃຊ້ວິທີການທີ່ພວກເຮົາເຄີຍໃຊ້ຢູ່ປະເທດລາວ. “ທ່ານຈື່ບໍ່ຍາມທ່ານຂໍຮ້ອງໃຫ້ຄະນະບ້ານພິຈາລະນາຄະດີການຂອງທ່ານ. ອັນນີ້ກໍເຊັ່ນດຽວກັນທ່ານຕ້ອງໄດ້ຂຽນລົງໃນຟອມ”.

ແບບດຽວກັນກັບຕອນທີ່ຂອບເຮັດວຽກນຳອົງການ APEN ໃນການຈັດຕັ້ງກຸ່ມຄົນລາວທີ່ເວົ້າພາສາອັງກິດບໍ່ໄດ້ຫຼາຍ. ສິ່ງທີ່ສຳຄັນກໍຄືຂໍ້ມູນແລະຄວາມຮູ້ກ່ຽວກັບນະໂຍບາຍ, ກ່ຽວກັບວິທີການໆເມືອງ, ກ່ຽວກັບວິທີການໆອອກກົດໝາຍ. ແຕ່, ຖ້າເຮົາບໍ່ມີຄວາມຊຳນານທາງດ້ານພາສາ, ມັນເປັນຕາໜ້າຢ້ານ. ມັນເປັນການຢ້ານທີ່ຈະໄປເວົ້າກັບຄະນະເມືອງ ຫຼືສະມາຊິກສະພາສູງຫຼືສະພາຕ່ຳ. ແມ່ນກະທັ້ງແຕ່ຈະເວົ້າກັບຄົນຢູ່ໃນຮ້ານຄ້າຕ່າງໆກໍຍັງບໍ່ກ້າ. ມັນເປັນຕາຢ້ານ.

ແຕ່ວ່າ, ເວລາເມື່ອເວລາເຈົ້ານັ່ງຢູ່ນຳຄົນແລະ ປາກພາສາຂອງເຂົາ, ແລະອະທິບາຍຂໍ້ມູນແລະຄວາມຮູ້ ທີ່ເຂົາຢາກຮູ້ ແລະ ຝຶກສອນເຂົາກ່ອນທີ່ຂຶ້ນເວທີ, ແລະຊ່ວຍໃຫ້ເຂົາໃຈ, ເຂົາຈະເຂົ້າໃຈກ່ຽວກັບນະໂຍບາຍວ່າມັນຈະຊ່ວຍ ຊຸມຊົນ ໄດ້ ແລ້ວເຂົາກໍຈະຈື່ໄວ້ໃນໃຈ. ຫຼັງຈາກນັ້ນ, ເຂົາກໍຈະໄດ້ເປັນນັກເວົ້າທີ່ຊົງພະລັງ. ເຂົາສາມາດໃຫ້ການຢັ້ງຢືນຢ່າງຊົງພະລັງ. ແມ່ນແຕ່ພາສາກົມມຸ.

ຂອບເຮັດການຈັດຕັ້ງຕອນຕອນຂ້າພະເຈົ້າ. ທຸກຄັ້ງຂອບຈະກັບຄືນມາຫາຄຳວ່າ: ຂໍ້ມູນແລະຄວາມຮູ້. ຄົນເຂົາ ຕ້ອງການສິ່ງນັ້ນເພື່ອປາກເວົ້າ, ປະຕິບັດ, ໄປເຄາະປະຕູ, ໂທລະສັບຫາຄົນ, ອັນໃດກໍຕາມ. ເຂົາຕ້ອງມີສິ່ງນັ້ນຂຶ້ນຢູ່ໃນໃຈ.

ເຮັດວຽກການຈັດຕັ້ງ, ມັນມີຄວາມສຸກ, ມັນສ້າງຄວາມເຂັ້ມແຂງ.



YANFEN

Cantonese

I am a parent. Because we are a new immigrant family, my child faces many difficulties at school. Sometimes, conflicts arise between kids because they can't communicate with each other due to language barriers. Many teachers also don't understand [the situation] due to language barriers. My child is unable to express that he is not at fault because he can't articulate himself properly. So he sometimes struggles to adapt to the learning environment.

If I find myself in an environment where I don't understand the language, I feel very lost. Especially when facing difficulties, I feel very uncertain and do not know who to ask for help. If there were someone to help me in such a situation, I would feel very happy and much less afraid... I'm most afraid of taking public transit. I can't read the signs or the station names. On public transit, if I'm lucky and see another Chinese person or someone who looks Chinese, I feel less afraid. But if I can't communicate, I really don't know what to do. Especially when going to distant places, if I get off at the wrong stop, I really get scared because I can't find my way home.

Living in Chinatown we feel at ease. First we feel safe, second if we deal with any issue or need help there are organizations who can communicate with us. I feel peace of mind and am willing to live here. My community has nonprofit organizations like Chinese Progressive Association (CPA), where I feel a sense of warmth. After coming to the U.S., I found support at CPA. They understand the challenges that recent immigrant families face and are aware of the difficulties we encounter after arriving in the U.S.

The most important thing for me right now is to work hard and be self-sustainable. When I come home from work, I want my kid to share his joy at school with me. As long as my commute between home and work is safe, and our family stays together, I will feel happy.

艷芬

粵語

我是家長。因為我們是新移民家庭，小朋友在學校遇到很多困難。有時候小朋友之間語言不通而發生矛盾。好多老師也因為語言不通而不理解。我的小朋友又沒辦法清楚表達自己沒做錯，所以他有時候並不是很適應這個學習環境。

若我置身在一個什麼語言都聽不懂的環境時，我會很彷徨。特別遇到困難的時候，我很彷徨，不知道該找誰求助。如果有人幫我，我會覺得很開心，沒那麼害怕.....我最怕搭公車。那些標誌和車站名，我真讀不懂。在公車上面，如果我幸運能在車上遇見另一個唐人，或者有唐人面孔，我就會沒那麼害怕。但當我無法溝通，就不知道該怎麼辦。尤其是當我去遠的地方，搭錯站時真的很害怕，因為沒辦法找到回家的路。

住在華埠我們感到安心。首先，我們感到很安全。其次，當我們遇到問題或需要幫助時，總能找到能夠與我們溝通的機構。我們住得安心，很願意居住在這裡。我的社區裡有一些非營利機構，比如 CPA(華人進步會)，我覺得在那裡能感受到溫暖。我來到美國後，得到了CPA的幫助。他們了解新移民的處境，知道新移民家庭的不容易，也清楚我們在美國會遇到的各種問題。

目前最重要的是，靠自己努力工作。當我下班回家時，孩子能和我分享他在學校的快樂。而我能夠安全地上下班，一家人整齊齊在一起，我就會感到快樂。而我能夠安全地上下班，一家人整齊齊在一起，我就會感到快樂。

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