

Language Matters

If Oakland, California, can't find answers to the language dilemma, then who can?

by Leo Sorenson

The Ebonics issue — like everything else in Oakland — is all about race, federal dollars and political power.

Elitists on the Oakland school board have decided that the bilingual billions spent to teach Mexican children to speak Spanish should be shared with blacks. The Rev. Jesse Jackson saw this immediately upon his arrival in Oakland: We must share resources — the bilingual money, he said.

Black vs brown: the Hispanic politicians want all the bilingual billions for themselves. They want the United States to be like the Canadian province of Quebec, officially bilingual.

You may have noticed that Asian immigrants don't want bilingual dollars. They want their children to learn English so they can go to U.C. Berkeley. Try to force an Asian child into a bilingual class.

Personally, I am multi-lingual,

Leo Sorenson lives in Oakland, California, where he is a member of the New Oakland Committee. His comment appeared in the Oakland Tribune January 16, 1997. Reprinted by permission.

and believe it would be wonderful if everyone were at least bilingual; but I believe we must have one common language, English, in which to conduct our government business and in which to vote, ballots in English only.

I am co-founder of English Language Advocates and E Pluri-bus Unum, national foundations dealing with language and unity. It is clear that a common language is the single most unifying force in any nation.

As a political observer and activist, it has been apparent to me for more than 10 years that blacks have wanted to share the bilingual billions. Their answer is Ebonics.

Over \$4 billion is spent in California, and over \$10 billion is squandered each year in the U.S. to teach Mexican children in Spanish. This is done against the over-whelming will of Mexican immigrant parents who see bilingual education as government-sponsored child abuse designed to keep them in linguistic ghettos.

Is it any wonder the blacks want some of that money?

While the Ebonics idiocy goes on, parents of all races are scrambling to get their children out of the Oakland public school system. "Please, give us choice and vouchers," they say.

As a member of a tiny 5

percent minority — white male over 50 — I will be affected by this tragedy. It will affect my life, my children's lives and the lives of my grandchildren because the widespread use of race politics will profoundly alter the future of

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Oakland, of California, of the U.S. and, in fact, the entire world unless we in Oakland come to our senses.

The Oakland school board would be well-advised to join the New Oakland Committee as part of our panel established to "ERACISM" in Oakland. If we in Oakland — labeled "The Most Integrated City in the United States" — cannot find an answer to all of us minorities living together in racial harmony, then who do you expect to give us the answer, the government?

With love and respect toward all.

TSC