

### Final Piece

I'm an American Latino , and I am very proud to be one. Im proud and honored to be my parents child because the hardships they went through was always for our future , us the kids and us as a family. They weren't born here , in fact all my aunts and uncles and grandparents are all foreigners , they all settled down in a whole new country, a whole different world. Had to start off from scratch again , I can't imagine every little thing they had possibly went through . I know it's not easy to leave everything you know and start off fresh somewhere new and not knowing the culture or even the language, it's logical .... it sounds hard but listening to my dad talking about leaving Guatemala ,leaving everything he knew and coming to America with his two siblings at the age of 26, and how California was where they lived when they first got here. And how the neighborhood they lived in was all hispanics from different countries , and my father didn't like that. Not that he doesn't like his own people , but the fact that it didn't feel different from home , he felt he came back to the same thing he left back home. He loves telling us his transition from California to New York, that that was the best decision he ever made. The only down fall in the beginning was his siblings , my uncle and aunt didn't go with him so my dad had to start off fresh in New York on his own.Eventually more family came and settled in New York , Los Angeles , some in Las Vegas , a couple inc London some in Connecticut , New Jersey , just all over the place . But they all wanted the same thing , a better life. Yes it's known and it's been usually said that "I came to America to have a better life" , some people just say it to say it but in

reality they are doing the same thing they were doing back in their country , so what's the difference? Just barely living in a different state, that is more expensive than where u came from. But my family worked hard , each and every single one of them , it wasn't easy as they all tell us children but they happily say that they finally got the life they always wanted. Most of them that live in the United States speak english , can write it , and read it . And let me tell you something English isn't an easy language, of course to us Americans it is easy because that's our first language or the only language we know, but learning any language from scratch is difficult .

If you step out for a moment and try to be in a foreigners shoes , the grammar , the pronunciations and meaning of words are actually tricky , It's a reflex for us English speakers , we do and say things with such ease in English because we know the basic grammatical rules and pronunciation. In texting , you see it a lot, and it's elementary errors but still they're errors. It's just like learning French , Chinese , Greek , and Spanish etc. It's a whole new language whole new rules and the slangs , every language has slangs , and it throws people off when they're learning a language. In English the common mistakes I see is with the word there. There is pronounced the same as they're and their but they all have different meanings , or no and know. I for one would have to think for a moment on how to explain this to a foreigner , it's not as easy as we think but since it's automatic for us English speakers we don't realize how hard our language is.

My dad is one of few in my family that moved to America and speaks very well , high vocabulary , reads and writes well. He doesn't have a thick heavy Spanish accent anymore. What helped him was the love of reading and listened to english music , movies in english , everything was in english . He always brings it up , " I came to this country with nothing , not a word of

English , no money now I have a great job I love , speak English like an American and have you guys. My dreams became into a reality but wasn't easy, but life isn't easy." Some way somehow I always got that little lecture , and the phrase everybody in my family said and continues reminding us young generation is "being bilingual makes you one step ahead of everybody ". I heard that growing up and I still hear it till this day. But that phrase and my dads little lectures helped me , it was like motivation in a way , and it made me feel special , unique and appreciate what I have. It shaped me into the person I am now . The bilingual phrase has been said to me literally by every elder in my family , teachers , family friends. When they found out I speak fluent Spanish and English , they were always impressed and their energy and facial expression always changed , like as if they were proud in a way , shocked even and a sense of respect . It's like the way they view me was different from a regular American kid, I never really understood why but I always realized that they all had a similar or the exact reaction when they found out I was bilingual. and when I say they I mean teachers , professors , strangers on the street that ask for directions , work , family friends , anybody. I didn't grasp the full concept on why and how being bilingual was a benefit and not just another cool fact about me, and I realized it was beneficial and very important through out the years as I got older; of course I haven't lived longer than two decades yet , Im only 18 but I have experienced things in my life that shaped me in the person I am today and want to be and will become .

I've always been a person that loves giving a helping hand , my mom reads and writes and understands English for the most part but she has a huge struggle in speaking it. So ever since I can remember I was always her translator . Which I didn't mind because I was and still am helping my mom . It would be for the littlest things too , like parent teacher conference for my

brother and I , going food shopping and asking about sales and where a certain item was and talking to the cashier. Talking on the phone for her is the most annoying, it's always when I'm busy doing something and she comes and asks me , "Can you call blah blah blah and ask them about blah blah blah " . Yeah it gets on my nerves sometimes , but at the end of the day I still help her because I love her. I guess since she is the only one I speak to in Spanish at home she is the reason why we speak Spanish at home in the first place. She passed on the culture , and language in the house. Because if it wasn't for her my brother and I wouldn't speak Spanish at home at all because we speak English to my dad and vice versa. So because of my mom we were forced to learn Spanish at a young age and now when we go back to my parents country , it's a breeze to communicate with the family over there. And for that I'm grateful. Being bilingual also avoids limitations . Think about it , there's billions and billions of people on this earth , different cultures , different backgrounds and different languages not everybody knows the American culture or even speak english. In United States , english is the dominate language and the second spoken language in America is Spanish . So thats a whole bunch of people I can communicate with and help if they don't know english . I had a bunch of times where I had people ask for directions or in class , they had trouble speaking or understanding english, I would help them. At a job , it's preferred to be bilingual , its a bonus , because that means you can interact and communicate with more people. Being bilingual also helps to keep the sense of culture, meaning speaking Spanish is like the key to the Spanish culture . The jokes , the songs , the Spanish tales , the words , the phrases , the food , the style , the lifestyle , the perception of a latino. Growing up in middle school I didn't speak Spanish at all in school , I was kind of embarrassed in a way , I don't know how because I embrace every thing about me now. But I guess it was a level of

insecurity and not knowing who I was , because I was lost , I didn't know what made me ...me. I didn't know my identity and I guess my Spanish culture wasn't as "known" or "popular" in my middle school that I didn't even bring it up just to fit in.

Understanding concepts , understanding academics , and understanding how the world works is what Literacy does for an individual . I've been fortunate to get out of my little world, to get out of my comfort zone , to leave my everyday life for a while and travel. To see other countries , to see a whole different life, my parents country is completely different from here ;never mind the language , that's the last thing you pay attention to. It's a whole different world, being bilingual kind of gives you that access to explore more , to understand more, because literacy isn't just reading and writing , it's also comprehension , speaking and listening . And how do you understand something if you can't read it or write it, if you can't understand a language then you are just hearing but not listening. A language always has a culture behind it , a story to tell .

Languages are beautiful to hear , but it's hard to learn one. And I can say that with experience with learning Spanish , I was juggling english and Spanish since I started to speak. I take it to consideration that learning a language is difficult , you don't learn over night , so I understand my fellow foreigners. Language is definitely an example of literacy , language uses all the elements of literacy. I've learned over time that that phrase " being bilingual makes you one step ahead of everybody " means more opportunities , more doors opening , in the work field and socially , it's being one step ahead in life. And being bilingual allowed me to be deeper in my Spanish roots , and really appreciate what I have. Those lectures I got from my dad weren't just a 5 minute boring talk with dad about back in his days but it was a motivational push to help me

understand life a little bit better , to understand that life is difficult and gets more difficult as I get older but that's the fun in it because that's when your character , your personality , the way you view life plays in. That's when you really see what you can do and what you do , that's what makes you ... you , your decisions , your actions , your perspective . And being bilingual help me understand my Spanish culture and it's perspective on life and how my cousins that live in my parents country only get to see and know their life , they aren't as fortunate to travel different places and see how other people live , and how life is different in other places around the world. Speaking to them , being able to communicate with my cousins , aunts and uncles in Spanish help me understand them as an individual and as a hispanic . Knowing a language is literacy and literacy is understanding and being bilingual helps me understand life and benefits me everyday, by communicating with different people from different backgrounds to even being more openminded to things in life and understanding different subcultures and cultures; so my literacy journey continues .









