

# With Literacy and Justice for All

--by Jill A. Oglesby, Director, Valencia County Literacy Council  
280 La Entrada, Los Lunas, NM 87031 (505) 925-8926



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## Treasure

I recently asked some English-language students of the Valencia County Literacy Council (VCLC) to write about what they'd like the world to know about them. Their letters are on this page.

So, what would I like the world to know about me? I'd like the world to know that I tutor English, and it's fun. English as a Second Language (ESL) students are very respectful, and they like to laugh.

They don't just have difficulties with English. They have a treasure store of knowledge from their first language, a wealth of life experience (I tutor adults), and immense cultural capital that they bring with them.

In the last year, however, I have felt fundamentally, profoundly hurt to hear ugly

and misleading comments about them coming from some of the nation's government leaders. And, even a student I taught from Asia was accosted in a racist manner in our local Los Lunas WalMart by another customer.

I am also an immigrant. What does it matter if we came around 150 years ago? That's no time at all in the time frame of our terrific tutor from Isleta Pueblo, or another wonderful tutor we've had from the Navajo Nation. From their communities' perspectives, I'm the "illegal" newcomer (although they're very gracious to me nevertheless).

I would like the world to know that as VCLC Director, I support our students 100%. I benefit and our community benefits tremendously from their presence. They work hard, are considerate to others, and keep the focus on their families.

Stepping out of my role as literacy director, I am also a taxpayer. I would like public dollars to be spent on education, cancer research, roads and bridges, paying down the deficit, and all of our other many needs rather than a border wall.

And as an issue of public safety, I'd like police officers to be able to focus on real crime in our community, particularly violent crime, instead of on unnecessary deportations that break up New Mexico families. Statistically, the vast majority of crime is committed by native-born individuals anyway.

I also asked our students to write about their hopes for the future. I believe New Mexico holds a unique place in the United States. Life is so deep here.

I hope that here in central New Mexico, we realize that we have something to give to the rest of the country. Perhaps right now, that is fundamentally our love of family, faith, our ability to see multiple layers of history at once—and a note of sanity.

## VCLC Student Letters to the Editor

We want the world to know that we are worried about all the laws that have been passed that take away opportunities for many people in this country to legalize their immigration status. We want people to know that immigrants are not delinquents or criminals and are contributing to this country, paying taxes.

We are whole families, and the pain would be great if parents had to separate from their children. And if we left our country of origin, it was to have a better future. We are working people and honest, and we struggle day by day to help our families get ahead. How is it possible that those who do damage to the country are legal in spite of all the damage they do to America, and others who do no damage at all are not given the opportunity to legalize their status here? In this country, this is very unjust.

--Maria

From my point of view, the raids that they are doing about migration are not good and are separating families and taking many innocent people away who are working to support their children to be able to give them the chance to study and help them get ahead.

Another thing is when police ask for immigration documents only because of a person's Hispanic appearance....The police need to devote themselves to stopping real criminals, not those who are not stealing and killing innocent people.

We do not come to steal as many people say or to take away people's work. I think that we all have a right to work for the good of all in this country. And I hope politicians do their job well and no longer support laws against immigrants but make laws for the good of all in this country so that we can all keep pushing forward and all can progress here.

--Roger

I would like for people not to judge us for our migratory status or for being Mexican. We came to work to give a better life to our families. We are humble people and good workers. We feel afraid like rabbits at the end of the day.

We are here with trust for a better tomorrow. It is sad for people to go outside their homes and not know if they will return. While we prepare for a better future, we can see good people falling. We are waiting for a better tomorrow.

--Carmen

We would like the world to know that we belong to a community which is passing through a situation of discrimination and insecurity, but also that we are honest workers that only want the best for our families.

We know that we are in a country that is not ours, the "U.S.A.," but if we left our place of origin, it was to look for better opportunities, "a better life." We would like people to take into account our dreams and hopes to have a better situation, to leave for work without fear, and for our children to study for a better future.

--Anonymous

We want everyone to know that we are working families and responsible. We want all the people in government to know that we struggle day to day and that we respect and value America. We want to be permitted to live in peace with our families. We don't do harm to anyone. We only want to work to have a better life and also contribute to this country. At the same time, I'm very worried about my Latino community because all suffer the racism that we are now living. People want to be given the opportunity and to be permitted to regularize their documents and don't want to be separated from their children. That would be so painful for everyone. I have the hope that the law will be changed for the betterment of our community so that all can live as happy and united families.

--Ellen

I would like the world to know that there is a lot of insecurity and uncertainty among the people in my community. There are even people who stopped attending their English classes because they are afraid ICE will arrive and take them.

I listen to comments from people who are even afraid to go to work because they do not know if they will return home at the end of the work day. It is very sad finding out that people are selling their houses and cars to return to their home country.

My hopes for the future are that there will be some change in our country. This will benefit all the people who are in the shadows but who are very hardworking and who respect the laws and regulations of this country so that they can work with freedom and with the certainty that no one will separate them from their families.

This is a country with freedom, and so many people come to this country with dreams for a better life. Hopefully it will be again the country that we long for and in which we have lived for so many years.

--Mrs. P.

Personally, I arrived to this country with many dreams to realize. They were both personal and family dreams, dreams that I want, desire, and hope for my children's future, which is who I struggle and work for day after day in this world. I feel frustrated that we can't achieve our dreams in the situation we are living in because of discrimination on the part of our government, president, and society. These dreams are cut short, and obstacles are put in front of us, when all we do is work and struggle. I would like the opportunity to dream and hope.

--Angie

I would like to speak to the deepest part of the hearts of our representatives and let them know that just like they who get up day by day with plans, with eagerness to struggle for a better world, a family, a good life, and stability in their work, so do we.

The majority of us arrive here with a bag full of illusions and dreams. In my personal case, I arrived with my young children and taught them to love and respect this country which they already feel is theirs.

We only ask for an opportunity to no longer live in fear and to work and contribute to this country under its laws.

--Roseve

I would like for all of us to be united with all races the same so that families will not be separated. Because with what values will children grow up if we separate because of this new government creating new laws to separate families?

I want everyone to put their thoughts on God for the power to change all this because we are thinking so much about these things that are happening. Only God can change this.

I hope that all this will change so there are no obstacles so that we can be free for new opportunities to be able to work without fear of being stopped by police...

--Petra