

Sunday, October 26, 2004 – Front Page

‘Hispanic’ Language Ban Leads To Rancor

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Note: I discovered a previously unknown local connection to a national story -- the man from this story was from the Rio Grande Valley.

LINCOLN, Neb. — Hispanic and civil rights organizations are rising to the defense of Eloy Amador, who was ordered by Sarpy County District Judge Ronald E. Reagan to not speak ‘Hispanic’ to his 5-year-old daughter Destinie.

Amador, a 30-year-old man born in McAllen, raised in Rio Grande City but now living near Omaha, Neb., is involved in a legal battle with the child’s mother Michaela Krayneski over visitation rights.

Visitations were already agreed upon, but when the young girl told her mother that her father spoke a different language and that he took her to a Mexican restaurant, Krayneski went to court, Amador said in an earlier statement to the press.

According to a transcript of the proceedings, Judge Reagan told Amador that, "The principal form of communication ... is going to be English" and not "the Hispanic language."

"I expect this ruling to be overturned. It is a violation of his rights for the courts to assume speaking Spanish is harmful and it is a further violation of his rights to not speak Spanish to his daughter," said Nina Perales, General Counsel for the San Antonio Regional Office of the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund.

Perales compared the Amador case to another one in Amarillo where a judge ordered a mother to speak only English to her daughter, saying to the mother, "You’re raising her to be no better than a maid."

"The cause of the ruling is racism," Perales added. "It’s prejudice. He’s prejudiced against the Spanish language and Latino people. If (Amador) spoke French instead of Spanish there would be no problem."

Amador reported that a number of groups such as MALDEF, League of United Latin American Citizens and the American Civil Liberties Union have offered their assistance.

Maria Valdez, General Counsel for MALDEF’s Chicago Regional Office, reported that her office might be among those to handle the case.

"You have a judge who is intruded on the right on the parenting of a child without any real justification," said Valdez. "What’s next? Telling parents they can’t send their kids to Catholic school?"

Due to heavy media attention, Reagan recused himself from the case on Oct. 17, citing that any further actions he took could be attributed to that attention. A new judge has yet to be assigned to the case.

"The new judge will see very clearly that the first judge's ruling was a mistake," said Valdez. "Obviously, learning a second language is a good thing. High schools offer Spanish, French, and German for this very reason."

Amador said he hopes Judge Reagan's verbal order will be overturned, citing bias as motivation for its determination.

"He claims he made the decision based on what the mother and lawyer said but he never asked me for my opinion," said Amador. "It was disrespectful ... racist."

In the meantime, Amador reported that he has gone two months without seeing his daughter and was told by his attorney that no attempt will be made for her to see him until a final ruling had been made.

"Me and my daughter get along great," said Amador. "It's just that me and the mother have a rocky relationship."

In a previous statement to the press, Amador said he met K/rayneski through a mutual friend before he landed in prison on drug possession charges, for which he served a 5-year sentence.

Amador was released from prison seven months ago. He had not met his daughter, who was born while he was incarcerated, until a few months ago.

Neither Krayneski, nor her attorney Kelly Westland returned telephones calls from the Valley Morning Star.

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