

Artest, Napolitano speak at Eastmont; advocate mental health awareness



RAISING AWARENESS: (Clockwise from above) Basketball player Ron Artest and Rep. Grace F. Napolitano at the opening ceremony; Dr. Luis Garcia and Napolitano advocating the Mental Health in Schools act; Napolitano and Artest at a press conference shortly afterwards. The event was covered by various media, including ESPN and the L.A. Times' Bill Plaschke.



THE GIST

Ron Artest, small forward for the Los Angeles Lakers and a recently crowned NBA Champion, spoke at Eastmont Intermediate on Sept. 9. Along with Rep. Grace F. Napolitano, he advocated mental health awareness and encouraged those with problems to "ignore the stigma and seek help." Artest also supported passing the Mental Health in Schools Act (H.R. 2531), which was authored by Napolitano. If passed, around \$200 million will be mobilized towards mental health services in public schools.

Mental Health in Schools Act

- H.R. 2351 is under review by Congress
- sponsored by Rep. Grace F. Napolitano
- if passed, will amend the Public Health Service Act to provide school-based mental health programs

how to seek help

if you are depressed or suspect you have a mental disorder, you should:

- talk to your counselor or school psychologist
- ignore the stigma surrounding mental health issues. Seeking help is more important.
- outside of school, you can contact programs such as the National Youth Network or calling a depression hotline.

how to recognize signs of depression:

- loss of energy or enthusiasm
- lack of interest, apathy
- any suicidal or self-destructive thoughts
- sleeping problems (insomnia, etc)
- eating too much or too little
- trouble concentrating or focusing on tasks

If you notice these signs in yourself or anyone you know, please seek immediate counseling.

WHEN I WAS SEVENTEEN...

I was 'ballin' it up'. I played basketball for four years during high school. At the same time I was bagging groceries at Albertsons.

Mario Rizzo
Biology Teacher



2003

the essayist

By Jesse Han
Columnist

Finding my inner lingo

"The Dani of New Guinea use a language that has only two words to describe color, one for 'warm' or 'bright' and the other for 'cold' or 'dark.'"

I read this while browsing the Internet from my laptop a few weeks ago. It was a warm August evening, the sky still aglow from the fading sunset, the clouds bathed in muted scarlet and gold. I wondered to myself how it must feel as a Dani speaker, to describe a sunset – how does one evoke such vibrance?

The Dani, as it turns out, compensate by borrowing images from elsewhere in their language, infusing visuals with metaphors – the same sunset might bear comparison to blood or sand or a sea of fire. One could translate from Dani to English and vice versa, but there is inevitably something – perhaps cadence, or poetry, or imagery – lost in translation.

This is why, I think, different languages help shape the diverse cultures of their speakers: with each language comes a unique heritage of common experience. Gloria Anzaldua, in "How To Tame A Wild Tongue," speaks of growing up speaking slang Spanish, *calo*, formal Spanish, and Tex-Mex, asserting her identity as a *Chicana* writer from a unique "border" culture.

She wrote that "ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity – I am my language." Interesting. What of myself, then, and my cultural identity? Which dialects do I speak – what are the languages of my life?

I grew up, as many second-generation Chinese-Americans do, with a fluent command of spoken Chinese (Mandarin), though I slowly forgot it, for lack of practice. By the time I entered middle school I could barely form a sentence in Mandarin, though I could still understand it when spoken.

I communicate with my parents using what author Amy Tan (*Joy Luck Club*; *Mother Tongue*) might have called "simple" or "broken" English – dropping connecting verbs, using odd grammatical structures, and, as in Mandarin, allowing meaning to rest more on tone and emphasis than words alone.

"Jesse," my mother might say, "you hear? Chinese radio say Susan Boyle have *very* bad nervous breakdown! *Tsch ku*, fame go to her head." All through my life, I've heard this type of English and I've stopped noting the grammar anymore. I slip into this type of English automatically, and respond (with equally bad grammar) in return: "Yeah, so bad. Celebrities, go *cra-zy* all time time, look at Lindsay Lohan."

This is the language of Monterey Park, of first-generation immigrants. It is a bridge that spans the language gap between my parents, educated in China, and I, their American son.

Then there is formal, written English, of the sort that my parents ask me to translate for them; of the style that I write with right now. It is neither academic nor esoteric but formal enough to be universal. This is the English of the written – not typed – word; syntax and semantics of the kind that holds the key to an English-speaking cultural heritage: poetry, prose, and the like. This is the language in which I write, so that I may communicate through the written word regardless of borders or dialect or accents, much in the way all the disparate dialects of Chinese use a single writing system.

For all its universality, though, my formal English is very much American in its vocabulary and idiosyncrasies – I speak and write through an American education, and thus I can lay claim to an American linguistic identity.

I speak the language of the Internet, which is to say I understand the culture of my generation – but such fluency is to lay claim to a whole set of common experiences, from viral videos to "Facebooking." It is the ability to navigate the vast ocean of user-generated content; the level-headedness to see past the masses of uninformed opinions; the familiarity with turning nouns into verbs ("friend" him, "Google" that). Most of all, though, this is the how I can form a common bond with my peers – in forums, on YouTube, on Facebook, regardless of distance or borders.

Then there is the informal English of everyday conversation, where I slur my consonants and contract my "did yous" to "d'joo." I feel most comfortable identifying with this language because it is how I think and dream – not in complete sentences nor "broken" English nor the abbreviations of the Internet, but in fragments and false starts, as if I were conversing with myself.

I don't believe that a cultural identity can be based solely on one language out of those that I use; rather, they come to define me only so long as I continue to use them, and in doing so I choose the elements of my identity.

And it is here that the beauty of *choice* stands out: I can choose the identity I create. I try to listen so that I may understand the cultures that shape me – but also to see where to expand my perspectives, to broaden my cultural horizons.

These are the languages that I have grown up with, and which I choose to continue speaking – and so I can now say, with pride, that I am an English-speaking Chinese-American who is really much more American than Chinese, that I am a citizen the Internet and user-generated culture. I speak, and thus create myself; I am my language.