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US English and The Anti-Immigration Backlash: What is Behind and Below?

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The recent debates surrounding Propositions 187 and 227 in California have launched many offsprings that parallel the same sentiments in other states, such as Illinois. The purpose of Proposition 187 is to discourage immigration by barring undocumented immigrants from access to government services including public education and public health services, except for emergency care. Proposition 227 requires that “nearly all” public education instruction be conducted in English, and provides children one year of instructional support for the learning of English in “intensive sheltered English immersion” classes. Thus, Proposition 227 is based on the assumption that most children will learn enough English to function effectively in school after one year in the above mentioned classes. Consequently, the anti-immigration backlash has been identified, in the eyes of most progressives, with Propositions 187 and 227. However, the reaction against poor third world immigrants has not stopped with the intent of making the stay of undocumented workers more difficult in the United States (US). Despite the motivations and hopes of legal immigrants that voted in favor of Proposition 187 in California, thinking perhaps that their legal status would make them invulnerable to further attacks, now a second ghost is re-appearing to haunt them. Along with the second coming of the English Only Movement, not surprisingly supported by several conservative politicians such as ex-secretary of Education William Bennett

and former Republican senator Bob Dole, Californians approved Proposition 209. This anti-affirmative action initiative constitutes a direct attack against all minorities in the state of California, including women, African-Americans, Asians, and Latinos who voted in favor of Propositions 187 in the past.

English Only, or as their supporters now want it to be known, US English, had appeared already during the 1980s with the agenda of “helping” the immigrants from non-English speaking countries to accelerate their English language proficiency. English Only aficionados argue that such a goal would be achieved if immigrants are forced to become immersed in English without the hazards of getting involved in Bilingual Education programs, ballots in foreign languages, or any other public service that would use other languages simultaneously with English. Conveniently, taxpayers would save a lot of money by not implementing any public service that would not be conducted in English. Although favored by the electorate throughout several states of the Union, after English Only won in Arizona by a close margin it was declared unconstitutional and prevented from becoming state law anywhere in the nation. Now that US English is making a resurgence, it is necessary to review the findings of researchers who are critical of the funding, goals, and ideas of the English Only movement.

Who is Really Behind English Only?

According to *USA Today* (April 6, 1995: 12-A), the English Only Movement is based on:

a disgraceful tradition: New York once barred one million Yiddish speaking *citizens* from voting. California disfranchised Chinese. Nebraska, in an anti-Kaiser frenzy, expelled German and any other foreign language from its elementary schools.

And it's unnecessary. The vast majority of immigrants are assimilating quite nicely. More than 95% of first-generation Mexican-Americans are proficient in English; by the second generation, most have totally lost their parents' native tongue. Tens of thousand of immigrants are on waiting lists for over-enrolled adult English classes. The urge to succeed drives most immigrants to learn English quickly. Laws that make the language “official” only deny our history and surrender to our fears.

In *Language Loyalties: A Source Book on the Official English Controversy*, James Crawford shows (1992: 171-177) that the funding of the US English Movement comes from groups that have vested interests in anti-Latin American, anti-African, anti-Asian, and anti-Catholic immigration into the US. The white supremacist nature of US English supporters caused a split in its steering committee—Linda Chávez resigned in the midst of a media scandal—as well as the loss of celebrity sponsors

such as Arnold Schwarzenegger and Walter Cronkite. Furthermore, Crawford (1992: 176-177) argues:

One thing is clear. Rather than promote English proficiency, 99 percent of the organization's efforts go toward restricting the use of other languages. Certainly, there is nothing in Official English legislation to help anyone learn English. On the other hand, there is much to penalize those who have yet to do so.

The potential for mischief is wide-ranging. Would states be allowed to provide drivers' exams, assist voters, publish tourist information, or enforce contracts in languages other than English? Could courts supply translators in eviction, bankruptcy, divorce, or adoption proceedings? Would schools be permitted to use bilingual education to foster fluency in foreign languages? Could Indian or Hispanic legislators communicate with constituents in their native tongues? Probably not, under the more draconian Official English measures. Arizona's Proposition 106, for example, would largely forbid public employees to use other languages on the job. In any case, such questions would be litigated for years to come . . .

If U.S. English sincerely wanted to foster ethnic harmony, it would stop chastising immigrants, open its multi-million-dollar campaign chest, and join with advocates for Asians and Hispanics to remedy the scarcity of seats in adult English classes. Instead, it exploits strong feelings about languages to build a new nativist movement.

Minorities supporting Propositions 187 and 227 or US English, may see their actions come back to haunt them. As Howard Jordan (1995: 35-38) argues in his article, public policy targeted at undocumented immigrants also often ends up harming Puerto Ricans and African Americans. For example, "between 1980 and 1988, 53% of immigrants to the United States were of African descent. Thus, the shortsightedness of some African-American leaders has resulted in their attacking people who form part of their natural political constituency" (Jordan 1995:36). Furthermore, "the growing anti-immigration hysteria promotes a climate of discrimination which directly affects Puerto Ricans, who are viewed by many as 'foreigners'" (Jordan 1995:38). Finally, as Rick López (1995: 11-12) makes clear:

English-Only makes little economic sense, promoting monolingualism when multilingualism is becoming an economic imperative . . .

NAFTA and GATT largely reflect the fact that world economics, the U.S. included, are increasingly export-driven. In the U.S., exports create more jobs, and higher-paying jobs, than any other sector of the economy. It is no accident that the fastest growing economies over the past few decades—for example, Japan, Germany, and Taiwan—have had their economic growth fueled by rapidly growing exports.

The above review shows the true nature of the leadership of the English Only Movement. Their agenda is one of elitism, racism, and anti-dark skinned immigration. Nevertheless, it is still necessary to give an explanation of why such a movement has a constituency in the US.

Proposition 187 in California passed with 59 percent of the vote, including the support of 40 to 50 percent of black and Asian voters and 20 to 25 percent of Latino voters (Schuyler 1996: 27). Exit polls conducted in Texas and California in 1988, based on voter interviews in favor or against English Only propositions, showed that supporters of such measures belonged to every educational or income group (Schmid 1992: 203-209). However, voters clearly differed in one dimension: ethnicity. Latinos were much less likely (around 24 percent) to vote in favor of English Only propositions than non-Latinos (around 64 percent) in Texas and California (Schmid 1992: 203-209). Although “racism” might be used to explain the resulting positive voting behavior of a large segment of the voters across several states, the task remains to explain what motivates such behavior, since a significant portion of the support of English Only propositions comes from African-Americans, Latinos, and Asian-Americans, precisely the constituency most affected by racist attitudes and laws. In the next section, several theories are reviewed to explain what motivates the social base that supports English Only and other anti-immigration laws.

The Social Constituency of Anti-Immigration Movements: Theoretical Approaches

Social Status and Conservative Movements Theories

Alternative interpretations of support for English Only—that could be extended to support for Proposition 187—have been based on the role that status and politics play in conservative social movements. Carol Schmid (1992: 203) summarizes the theories of Lipset and Raab (1978), Bell (1964), and Gusfield (1963), respectively:

According to the notion of status preservation, declining groups seek to maintain their eroding position by identifying with extremist causes. A second approach also emphasizes status politics, arguing that supporters of Senator Joseph McCarthy, for example, were either falling in status (small-town, old Protestants) or rising in status (immigrant groups anxious to demonstrate their “Americanism”). A final theory postulates that status symbolism, rather than an angry response to changes in status, is of primary importance in swelling the ranks of conservative movements. According to this view, the American temperance movement reflected identification with a threatened lifestyle, a symbolic clash between two cultures—dry, Protestant middle classes versus wet, immigrant, primarily Catholic workers.

In her analysis of voters in favor or against English Only measures in Texas and California in 1988, Schmid (1992: 204) observes however that status loss-gain or status symbolism theories fail in the case of the English Only Movement. The reason—she argues—is the absence of a clearly defined group that is losing status or that needs status symbolism. Exit polls conducted in Texas and California show that white non-Latinos (“Anglos”

in Schmid's analysis) tend to vote in favor of English Only across income or age groups. The only significant group differences are: (1) Latinos ("Hispanics" in her analysis) vote significantly less than white non-Latinos; and (2) women tend to vote less for English Only compared to men, although the differences are not as large as in the Latino *versus* white non-Latino case. We will discuss these observations after presenting the following perspective.

The Split Labor Market Theory

Global economic competition has increased sharply during the last thirty years. In 1962, American Fortune 500 corporations doubled those of Europe and outnumbered five times those of Asia. By 1992, the number of Fortune 500 corporations of the Americas, Europe, and Asia had become very close, approximately 150 from each sub-continent (Bradshaw and Wallace 1996: 181). Vernon (1990: 19) summarizes the decline of the American competitive advantage:

Although the United States continued to hold a dominant place in world trade and investment, its relative position was substantially reduced. U.S. output had accounted for about 38 percent of world output in 1950, but it was down to about 27 percent in 1990. U.S. merchandise exports, which had amounted to about 20 percent of world exports in the early 1950s, had slipped to about 10 percent by 1990. In 1950 the foreign direct investments of U.S.-based firms were greater than the foreign direct investments of firms based in all other countries combined; by 1990, however, firms based in Europe and Japan had built up their overseas investments to totals that nearly tripled the U.S. totals.

Such a level of economic competition has propelled the formation of trade agreements among countries around the world: the National Free-Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the USA, Mexico, and Canada; the Maastricht Treaty that created the European Union (EU); and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

Although the primary motivations for US interests in the NAFTA pact are the competition from Europe and Asia, access to cheap labor in Mexico, and an emerging middle-class consumer market in Mexico; the calculated immediate effect has been the loss of approximately 100,000 American jobs (Myerson 1995: 1). Even if this is a temporary effect of the Mexican economic recession, the immediate reaction in the US has been of opposition against NAFTA, especially among manufacturing workers.

Thus, the anti-immigration backlash in the US has to be analyzed in the perspective of the American business decline with respect to Asia and Europe. International competition has made it more difficult for American corporations to obtain the levels of profits that could guarantee traditional standards of living for some segments of the population. Such a situation has been worsened by the relocation of manufacturing plants to other

countries, particularly in Latin America and Asia, which has increased the likelihood of American workers becoming unemployed or underemployed. Given that potentially the threat of losing one's job could extend from blue collar manufacturing jobs to white collar and professional jobs, the reaction of the American workers against immigrants—seen as another potential threat within an already fragile job environment—would encompass segments of the population across different social classes.

As commented above, an important reason for American corporations to relocate manufacturing plants in other countries is the availability of a cheaper labor force. Similarly, if immigrant workers are perceived by Americans to be able to accept lower wages for the same jobs the latter would perform, then the threat of a lower standard of living is now at home. Given that in the present circumstances American workers can do very little to stop Multinational Corporations from relocating their factories to other countries, their efforts will tend to concentrate in impeding the foreign threat to come into their country. Thus, the real or imaginary threat of a split labor market across foreign and national lines, combined with a split across ethnic lines in the case of Latin American, Asian, or African immigrants is likely to produce ethnic and anti-immigrant conflict among segments of the American population.

Immigrants from areas with a lower standard of living *vis-à-vis* the US are specially threatening for American workers, since their willingness to accept lower wages than American workers to perform a certain job constitutes, in the eyes of Americans, an unfair threat. Therefore, although in principle all immigrant competitors are threatening, those coming from more underdeveloped areas of the world are perceived as a more serious threat against the American way of life. Consequently, given that the underdeveloped areas of the world are more likely to contain non-white, or non-pure-European origin populations, the reaction of American workers against such immigrants or potential immigrants is going to be tarnished by racism. As explained by Edna Bonacich's (1972) split labor market theory of ethnic antagonism, those workers with a higher standard of living are also more resourceful. They have well organized unions, access to political parties, and media influence. Their optimal solution would be to expel all those foreign workers that represent a potential threat to their well-being, as in the case of Australia under the "all white Australia immigration policy" of 1896-1923, a policy oriented to prevent capitalists from importing cheaper labor from India, China, Japan and the Pacific Islands, that resulted in a policy of exclusion of Asian and Polynesian immigrants (Bonacich 1972).

If the exclusion of cheaper labor from the market is not possible, then higher paid labor will try a caste arrangement. That is, cheaper labor will be excluded from certain types of work. The good jobs, with good wages

and work conditions will belong to the more resourceful group, while the cheaper group of workers will be restricted to lower status jobs with lower wages and inferior working conditions. Bonacich (1972: 482) illustrates this case with South Africa's Apartheid:

Unlike exclusion movements, caste systems retain the underlying reality of a price differential, for if a member of the subordinate group were to occupy the same position as a member of the stronger labor group he would be paid less. Hence, caste systems tend to become rigid and vigilant, developing an elaborate battery of laws, customs and beliefs aimed to prevent undercutting. The victory has three facets. First, the higher paid group tries to ensure its power in relation to business by monopolizing the acquisition of certain essential skills, thereby ensuring the effectiveness of strike action, or by controlling such important resources as purchasing power. Second, it tries to prevent the immediate use of cheaper labor as undercutters and strikebreakers by denying them access to general education thereby making their training as quick replacements more difficult, or by ensuring through such devices as "influx control" that the cheaper group will retain a base in their traditional economies. The latter move ensures a backward-sloping labor supply function [. . .] undesirable to business. Third, it tries to weaken the cheaper group politically, to prevent their pushing for those resources that would make them useful as undercutters. In other words, the solution to the devastating potential of weak, cheap labor is, paradoxically, to weaken them further, until it is no longer in business' immediate interest to use them as replacements.

In this view, the ultimate goal of US English or English Only laws as well as Propositions 187 and 227 and other similar measures, would be the reduction of third world immigrants to the situation of an inferior caste. The attacks against bilingual education are nothing less than obstacles to immigrant access to education. The real intention of the above laws and propositions is to monopolize native worker's access to essential skills, such as education and on-the-job training, as well as political resources, e.g. political voting and influence on legislation. By denying third-world immigrants comparable quality education, access to political organization, and the protection of the health care system, the native workers hope to dissuade the competition from the willingness to compete at all. That is, supporters of anti-immigration groups hope that such an "elaborate battery of laws, customs and beliefs" will stop immigrants from coming, especially those with a lower standard of living. If their expectations are as bad as what they can have in their countries, why come at all? Why risk such high psychological and economic investments, if economically there will not be any progress and if psychologically-even physically-they would have to confront racism and discrimination?

Nevertheless, if those immigrants come after all, the law will make sure they will be kept in their proper place: as an inferior caste. In order to make sure these immigrants will be a future inferior caste, it will become necessary to exclude the next generations from escaping their caste-like future. Thus, the constitutional right of children of illegal immigrants to

be American citizens must be eliminated. As Edna Bonacich points above, the inferior caste has to be weakened until it is no longer useful for employers. That is, which employers are going to employ such unskilled, uneducated, unhealthy, and undisciplined labor force? Surely, that is precisely the idea of English Only laws and Propositions 187 and 227.

Thus, an interpretation of the English Only and Propositions 187 and 227 movements through the split labor theory provides some interesting considerations regarding status theories. First, the hypothetical defense of “status” or the use of “status symbolism” among American workers has an economic base. Most Americans are clearly threatened by international economic competition from Europe and Asia. American corporations are not as almighty powerful as they used to be. Hence, the hegemonical status of Americans *vis-à-vis* other countries of the world has decreased. Second, capital flight and the threat of plant closings have diminished the strength of unions to negotiate across the US, making job security more rare to find. Consequently, the high status of unionized jobs has suffered. Similarly, other professional and white collar workers are also threatened to follow suit if such jobs can be provided by cheaper professionals in the Third World. Finally, native workers try to protect their economic status by electing laws restricting the flow of immigrants—legal or undocumented. Both types of immigrants are threatening, but the latter type is the most dangerous. Undocumented workers are more likely to accept lower salaries and displace native workers. Therefore, by using political means, native workers will try a policy of territorial exclusion, combined with the creation of a caste-like system, where undocumented workers are to be placed in the inferior caste.

The former considerations might explain why white non-Latino workers would support English Only laws and Propositions 187 and 227. They also suggest an explanation of why some segments of minority groups—including Latinos, Asian, and African Americans—would support such reforms. These minority groups are the most threatened by immigrant job competition, given that they are disproportionately represented in low-skill occupations—the most looked after jobs by undocumented immigrants. However, minority support for anti-immigration laws cannot include the majority of the minority groups. The difficulty to identify legal and undocumented workers, plus the general threat that all immigrants offer to native white non-Latino workers, make ethnic conflict go beyond undocumented immigrants *versus* native workers. The use of “cheap” screening devices—skin color, physical features, height, foreign language use etc.—to identify undocumented immigrants, make minority groups the victims of ethnic conflict, since those groups share the same ethnic characteristics of targeted undocumented immigrants. Thus, the ambivalent position of minority groups as victims and persecutors may

divide them more radically in terms of their support of anti-immigration legislation. But the most ironic part of the anti-immigration backlash embodied by Propositions 187 and 227 is that these reforms will not work. On the contrary, their consequences will be just the opposite of what they intended to do, as we argue in the following section.

Immigration and Public Policy

The majority of the US public and policy makers believe that the causes of immigration are self-evident. That is, poverty, unemployment, economic stagnation, and overpopulation push people to leave their countries and come to the United States. However, if these were truly the fundamental reasons for immigration to the US, there would be a much larger number of people from the poorest regions and countries of the world. There would be more immigrants from Africa, Bolivia, Paraguay, and most rural areas in developing countries than from Mexico, Taiwan, South Korea, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador. The migrants from the latter countries also, for the most part, tend to come from urban areas in their countries. As immigration experts Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut (1996: 10) point out that:

[t]he available studies coincide on two points: The very poor and the unemployed seldom migrate, either legally or illegally; and unauthorized immigrants tend to have above-average levels of education and occupational skills in comparison with their homeland populations. More important, they are positively self-selected in terms of ambition and willingness to work.

Nevertheless, for a migration flow to start, a previous connection has to exist between the sender and the receiving countries. Such a connection has historically been established by way of conquest, invasion, or foreign investment by a core developed country over less developed areas of the world. Thus, the nineteenth century invasions of Mexico, the former Spanish possessions of Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines by an expanding US set the basis for a colonial or neocolonial relationship between the upcoming superpower and these peripheral regions. Later in the twentieth century, it is the US military interventions in South Korea, Vietnam, and Central America that brings to the United States the first contingents of refugees from these countries who will constitute the foundations for their future immigration networks on US soil (Sassen, 1995). Furthermore, the flows of foreign investment with the associated diffusion of new consumption expectations, the structural imbalancing of peripheral areas, and the electronic transmission of information about life standards in the developed world suffice to encourage emigration. Such a structural imbalancing is evident in the case of El Salvador (Sassen 1995: 274):

Despite El Salvador's longstanding poverty, only in 1981, when U.S. military involvement escalated sharply, did emigration begin on a massive scale. People left out of fear for their lives and because it became impossible to eke out a living with the war raging around them. But it was the linkages created by U.S. investment during the 1970s, and its military presence after 1980, that made emigration to the United States seem like a real possibility, even though for many the United States represented the enemy. Sarah Mahler found that many Salvadorans who emigrated to the United States had first worked as migrant laborers on export-oriented coffee plantations.

This was the reason that the US received 19.5 percent of all emigration from Central America, but 52 percent of emigration from El Salvador, the country with the greatest US involvement in the area (Sassen 1995: 275). Moreover, even within the same country, families and communities of similar socioeconomic condition can produce very different migration histories. As Portes and Rumbaut (1996: 276) explain:

Once an external event such as the presence of labor recruiters or the diffusion of information about economic opportunities abroad triggers the departure of a few pioneering migrants, the migration process may become self-sustaining through the construction of increasingly dense social ties across space.

The return of successful migrants and the information that they bring facilitate the journey of others. To the extent that migration abroad fulfills the goals of individuals and families, the process continues to the point that it becomes normative. When this happens, going abroad ceases to be an exceptional affair and becomes the "proper thing to do," first for adult males and then for entire families. At some moment, networks across international borders acquire sufficient strength to induce migration for motives other than those that initiated the flow. People move to join families, care for children and relatives, or avail themselves of social and educational opportunities created by the ethnic community abroad.

In consequence, measures such as Propositions 187 and 227, conceived to discourage immigration by keeping undocumented immigrants away from government services, are seeking to control immigration by using individual incentives and disincentives without taking into consideration broader social forces. Immigrants from communities with longstanding migrant networks do not migrate to pursue welfare privileges, but jobs. The measures established by Propositions 187 and 227 will not discourage their members from migrating to the US (Portes and Rumbaut 1996: 281). If anything, Propositions 187 and 227 will only make the situation of undocumented immigrants more difficult, will send those migrants deeper into the underground economy, and will benefit their employers, who in turn will be able to exploit their vulnerability more extensively.

If undocumented immigration has to be stopped effectively, policymakers would be better off by first supporting independent unionization of workers, including undocumented immigrant laborers in the US and in developing countries; second, increasing their wage to provide

a more humanitarian standard of living; and third, financing the economic development of the communities that send most migrants—through the work of non-governmental organizations already working in those communities—to avoid those funds going to corrupt officials. These measures would certainly reduce the interest of US employers in using undocumented immigrants as a source of labor and redirect the social networks of migration to investment and entrepreneurship in their countries of origin. Furthermore, to blame immigrants, especially undocumented ones for unemployment or underemployment in the US is misguided. Although some evidence has found that at a local level immigrant workers affect the job prospects of native born workers (Kirchman and Neckerman 1991; Tienda and Stier 1996), overall, aggregate statistical studies reveal an insignificant or slightly positive effect of undocumented immigration on the earnings and employment of native workers (Portes and Rumbaut 1996: 289). In addition, other studies have found that foreign workers have been instrumental in sustaining and reviving declining economic sectors, such as the garment, footwear, furniture, and other low-tech industries during the 1980s (Fernández-Kelly and García 1985; Muller and Espenshade 1985; Sassen 1989; Waldinger 1985; Zhou 1992). Thus, in the case that immigrant workers have displaced some native workers at some local firms, the dynamism of immigrant workers has created new sources of employment that have compensated for the former ones (Portes and Rumbaut 1996: 289).

Thus, Propositions 187 and 227 will not stop undocumented immigration to the US. Their effects, however, will have deleterious consequences for minorities, especially for those of low socioeconomic status. Indeed, the elimination of bilingual education in California is likely to undermine immigrant children's likelihood of acquiring a quality education. In what follows, we analyze why Proposition 227 is very likely to fail and the repercussions of the elimination of bilingual education in California.

The Imminent Failure of Proposition 227

As previously mentioned, Proposition 227 requires that “nearly all” instruction be conducted in English and provides children one year of instructional support for the learning of English in “intensive sheltered English immersion programs.” The question remains: can children make enough progress in one year with this kind of instructional support in order to access the school's English Only curriculum? As education specialists Lily Wong Fillmore (1998) and Kenji Hakuta (1998) conclude, this is a highly unlikely outcome:

How are teachers to teach school's curriculum to children who do not understand the medium of instruction? The usual solution is to reduce the content

ordinarily covered and to simplify the language used to impart the curriculum to the barest essentials. Hence, neither the content nor the language used in such classes are at appropriate levels for the students. The resultant “dumbing down” of the language and content means that students do not get access either to the language or to the curriculum they should be learning in school, whatever their grade level. While a sheltered program with primary language support may approximate equal access for children with substantial but imperfect English language skills, there is no way that it can provide equal or indeed any meaningful access for the non-English proficient student.

Can students base their learning of English on the instructional support provided in such classes? The answer is this: the English they learn in such classes in a year is not enough to allow them to survive, much less to compete, in school without substantial further specialized instructional assistance. Moreover, students in such situations often learn an imperfect pidgin-like variety of English rather than the standard variety of English required for school. These learner varieties of English, if not corrected, can cause lasting problems for students, since they are difficult to overcome.

... All of them eventually learn survival English, but substantial numbers of them, having gotten their start initially in programs like the proposed sheltered English immersion classes, learn forms of English which do not support progress in school.

... [T]he research has shown that proficiency in academic English can not be attained by most children in less than 4 to 5 years under the best of conditions. It should also be noted that academic English requires not only proficiency in speaking and understanding, but also in reading and writing at the levels required for each grade level. Absent this, the child will fail in a mainstream classroom that is taught exclusively or nearly exclusively in English. That is what one can predict, on the basis of the available research, for these children.

On his part, Hakuta (1998) analyzes the studies that academic defenders of Proposition 227 have cited in support of these reforms. His conclusions mark the weaknesses of the English Only testimony and their highly politicized use of empirical evidence—very often bent beyond academic rigor to justify English Only claims—and, when carefully considered, point the other way in favor of bilingual education curricula. For example, regarding the way other countries deal with the education of their immigrant children, Hakuta (1998: 5) concludes the following:

[R]esearch in other countries does not provide a sound theoretical basis for Proposition 227. First, there is no well-established immersion approach common to all countries. Second, these countries have not developed successful means to educate their immigrant children, who tend to drop out of school and fail to learn either content or language. Third, the individual international studies cited in support of structured immersion are misrepresented, and actually show alarming failure rates.

As explained by Donaldo Macédo (1997: 275), English Only programs contradict a fundamental principle of reading, namely, that students learn to read faster and with better comprehension when taught in their native language. Furthermore, he points to the fact that in contrast to the zeal for

a common culture and English Only, these conservative educators remain silent about racism, inequality, subjugation, and exploitation that affect minority children (Macedo 1997: 273). Finally, Macedo (1997: 270) throws a definite blow to the English Only assumption that English education has no problems:

First, if English is the most effective educational language, how can we explain that over 60 million Americans are illiterate or functionally illiterate [. . .]? Second, if education solely in English can guarantee linguistic minorities a better future, as educators like William Bennett promise, why do the majority of Black Americans, whose ancestors have been speaking English for over 200 years, find themselves still relegated to ghettos?

Thus, the resulting failure of the English Only measures encompassed by Proposition 227 will increase the likelihood of school dropout for immigrant children. It will also strengthen the pattern leading these children to permanent poverty and “segmented assimilation” into the underclass (Portes 1995: 251).

Conclusion

Minority voters in favor of Proposition 187 were surprised by yet another proposition in California: the rejection of Affirmative Action (Proposition 209). Such a sequence of outcomes seems to advance more evidence to the hypothesis that American workers feel threatened by skin-colored third-world immigrants and support Propositions 187 and 227 in California and English Only laws in other states. It also shows that minority voters skeptical about supporting an anti-immigration backlash that would come to haunt them, have been right. Analogously, one might hypothesize that, in the case of a caste solution being implemented in the United States to restrict the mobility chances of undocumented immigrants, such movement would eventually extend to the next phase: the inclusion of minority groups into such an inferior caste. That is, we could be heading back to the years before the Civil Rights Movement.

Similarly, the progress that a militarization of the border to solve the problem of undocumented immigration has achieved on one hand, and on the other, the police solution to the problem of crime in the impoverished neighborhoods—extensively populated by minorities—shows how connected the problems of illegal immigrants and minorities are in the United States. It also shows that minority organizations and voters should consider their common interests with third-world immigrants. A political alliance between these two groups would certainly increase the political pressure to avoid more attacks against services for undocumented immigrants, such as education and health, and would solidify a united front ready to fight a

second wave of attacks against the provision of services for impoverished minorities.

Among the services to be eliminated by English Only supporters, bilingual education could be easily proved to be a general good to benefit the whole population. In a world of increased international trade and communications, American workers will need to increase their human capital. The teaching of a second language in bilingual education programs will benefit everyone at an earlier age. Bilingual education is not a policy that exclusively benefits a minority group. Therefore, its elimination goes against the interest of the majority of American workers. It only favors the interest of an elite that can acquire language skills through alternative ways at a much higher cost that they can certainly afford without a problem.

Although destined to the garbage can of History, US English can still do a lot of damage. Its supporters have focused their current efforts on eliminating Bilingual Education. Because of this, it is imperative to inform and be informed, first, about the real reasons behind US English: racism, anti-immigration, and elitism. And second, that programs like Bilingual Education are the lifeline for many immigrants to succeed and become empowered. Bilingual Education must not become a casualty in the path of the elites to regain and maintain power.

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