

## Staff Editorial

### Language barrier

Learn to speak English.

That is what many immigrants hear after entering the United States.

But learning to speak English is becoming a difficult task for most immigrants due to poorly organized English programs.

According to the Feb. 27 issue of *The New York Times*, many immigrants are waiting months or years to get into government-financed English classes, which are overcrowded and lack textbooks.

These classes are federally funded at varying rates by state, which causes uneven waiting times. In Colorado, for example, the waiting time is a few months, but in Massachusetts, the waiting time can be as long as two years due to the 16,000-person waiting list.

The United States government is without a doubt helping some immigrants assimilate into American life by offering free English classes. But more immigrants should be allowed to take the classes because America is a gateway of opportunity for legal immigrants.

Those opportunities are growing.

Bank of America is now offering credit cards to immigrants without Social Security numbers or credit histories.

Although some worry about low-wage immigrants taking American jobs, skilled immigrants also play an important role in the economy.

According to the Feb. 2 issue of *BusinessWeek* online, immigrant-founded companies include Yahoo, Google and eBay.

In Houston, a telecommunications firm started by a Pakistani immigrant topped last year's Houston Small Business 100 list.

The Department of Homeland Security even has a section on their Web site for new immigrants, and offers an online, downloadable manual with practical information to help immigrants settle into everyday life in the United States.

According to the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration Handbook at [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov), about 1.1 million became permanent United States residents in 2005.

With such an increasing immigrant population, and economic forces that are steadily increasing the importance of immigrant workers, the structure of government-funded English classes must be changed.

The government should move teachers from less immigrant-impacted states into states that are overcrowded with immigrants. For example, the teachers who are not being used in Colorado could be moved to Massachusetts. Of course, the government would have to offer those teachers incentives.

The government could also charge a small fee for the English classes. Most immigrants seeking English classes need to speak the language in order to communicate better with an employer or to seek better employment. Hence, most immigrants wanting to learn the language are employed and can therefore afford a reasonable fee.

The government-funded system of free English classes is helpful to those who are not stuck on a waiting list. However, with a few changes, the system could be more effective.



### Heroes need cred check to become worthy



**KONNIE SEWELL**  
COPY EDITOR

When I was younger, I saw a talk show on TV featuring young girls and the influence popular culture had on them.

The girls were each asked who their hero was. Madonna, Cindy Crawford and Keanu Reeves were their answers.

I must have been about 10 years old when I saw this. I remember looking at my mom and saying, "That's pretty dumb. My hero's George Washington."

Because really, it is pretty dumb to have a singer, a model or a movie star as your hero.

I've tried to reconcile this with the fact that the girls were so young, right around my age. But then, that's the entire point: My hero at the time was the father of our country. Either me or the girls was wrong, and I decided the girls on TV were wrong.

I recently saw another show on

TV dealing with the same topic in today's society. These girls' replies were similar: Britney Spears, Jennifer Lopez and Hilary Duff.

And this is why moms have the hardest jobs: Their kids are going look up to people who aren't really doing anything heroic. How in the world do you teach your children about the best qualities in humans when they're mainly exposed to people like this?

I won't deny that I adore certain singers or actors, and I probably make more of certain people than I should, but my actual respect is hard-earned.

What is it, exactly, these girls admire in Madonna, Spears and Lopez?

I have nothing against them personally. I just don't understand why little girls would look up to them.

I mean, at least Barbie was a doctor and Belle from Disney's "Beauty and the Beast" was a bookworm. The girls on TV didn't even mention members of their family, when I was quick (and still am) to name-drop my grandfather as another one of my heroes.

Even when I was little, I saw through something those girls are blinded by. Singers, actors and athletes are commonly name checked as heroes, but they're not doing anything except getting paid for a

hobby.

I can see no reason why professional athletes should be paid millions upon millions of dollars for doing what schoolchildren do every afternoon, nor any reason why actors should be as glamorized and celebrated as they are when their whole "career" is based on pretending.

The Founding Fathers are my heroes. Who knows what would have happened if we'd lost the Revolution ... history would be completely different. It's true they all had their personal reasons for entering the war, and some were more aristocratic than others, but some of the greatest minds ever to illuminate the earth illuminated the earth together, at the same time and place.

I have modern heroes, too. Josh Bernstein is the host of the History Channel's "Digging for the Truth," a series that dives into the past each week and comes up with new insights into people and places such as Petra, the Mayans, the Egyptians and Atlantis.

What could easily have become a show about Bernstein's many travels and adventures ("Hey, look at where I am now! Isn't it awesome? The food's good, too") is instead an intelligent investigation into the past.

I'll never forget the episode based on "The Da Vinci Code." It's too bad for a while there everyone had a Dan Brown-themed episode, but Bernstein looked at the actual facts and came up with his own conclusion. Everyone else who "investigated" the novel went to the same cathedrals, spoke to the same people, and came up with the same answer: We didn't really find out anything. Oh well! But Bernstein had a different idea.

In the novel, the Merovingian line of Frankish kings are descended from Christ. So Bernstein was able to procure a tooth from one of the oldest Merovingian queens. He compared it to modern-day DNA of people who live in the area where Jesus and Mary Magdalene supposedly lived. The two didn't match.

Is this a definitive answer to all the ideas Dan Brown proposes? Certainly not, but it's the most intelligent delve into the history behind the novel I've ever seen, and Bernstein is to be commended. It's sad how hard it is for me to trust most of the news network personalities out there today, but Bernstein is someone on TV I actually trust.

Mothers, I don't know what the future holds for your children, but here's hoping they can find qualities they admire in people other than the sparkling yet vacant.

### Truth is, staffer can't get away from pets



**ADRIAN MCCANDLESS**  
PHOTO EDITOR

attract unwanted pets.

For starters, after my great-grandmother passed away there were two options for her cat Trouble: Come live with me or go to an animal shelter.

So I took him in. Then Rebel came along.

His first family loved him, the only problem was they moved to a nice house in a gated community and could no longer keep him. I love Rebel to death, but he is a lot of work. Being bounced from home to home really messed with his head. We decided he needed to stay inside after many phone calls from neighbors telling us Rebel came to visit them. After a few weeks in the house, Rebel scratched on the front and back door.

My husband and I decided to get an electric fence. Surely that would contain our rambunctious dog. Sad-

ly, we were wrong. Rebel jumped effortlessly over our 5-foot fence. We got the bright idea to get a kennel and keep him in the house.

Wrong, again. Rebel somehow managed to get out of the kennel without opening the door. I swear that dog is Houdini reincarnated.

However, with time and patience, Rebel finally got it through his thick head that he was going to stay with us no matter what.

Shortly after that, my sister decided she could no longer keep our cocker spaniel Chelsea, whom we have had since second grade. So she was shipped to stay at my special little "pet shack."

Maybe I have a sign on my forehead that reads: "SHE'S A SUCKER AND CAN'T TURN AN ANIMAL DOWN!"

A little black cat approached me at my front door the other night and immediately started nudging my leg as if to say, "Hey, you look like you'll feed me." Now, the little black cat hangs out at my house every waking moment and drives my dogs insane.

A week after the mysterious cat checked in at Adrian's Pet Motel, three more stray dogs showed up looking for a one-night stay. I just couldn't turn them away. They literally had puppy-dog eyes.

The gate to the backyard opened

as if there was a big, neon sign flashing "Vacancy."

There was a gigantic, mangy, older dog that was the "father figure" to the pit bull and the black lab puppies. The puppies followed him around the yard as he checked it out to determine if the "hotel" was a safe place. After 30 minutes of investigation, the older one laid down. It was evident he'd been out on his own for a while, unlike the puppies, which looked healthy and well cared for.

But the "father figure" was scrawny and had a defeated look on his sunken face. He intrigued me the most. Looking into his dark brown eyes, I could tell he was friendly, even though his outer appearance was gruff. I was still uneasy because being on the streets for a while can turn on the "flight or fight" mode in any family dog.

My husband discovered he had Ohio tags. This made me curious. Did he wander down here all the way from Ohio? Did his family lose him on a family vacation? Did they move and no longer want this docile creature?

At that very moment I wished dogs could talk, in particular this dog. I could just see it in his eyes that he had a story to tell.

The next day I called Animal Control. My heart told me to keep

the older dog because it was obvious he was not just lost. My mind, however, won the battle and I had to let Animal Control take him in.

When the man came into my yard, "Ohio" seemed like he knew the drill. He started barking and running around the half acre of land that makes up my backyard. After ten minutes of endless chasing, he came and stood by my left leg as if to say, "Let me stay here. I am tired of not having a home. I am tired of running."

I knew I couldn't keep him and I felt as if I betrayed him by helping the man capture him. As I watched the Animal Control truck drive away, my heart sank. It killed me not knowing what the future held for this gentle creature.

Normally, when people adopt a pet from the Humane Society, the scraggly older pets are overlooked time and time again.

The moral of this story is simple.

There are so many unwanted pets in this world, so spay and neuter your pets. And for God's sake, don't get a pet in the spur of the moment. As a pet owner, it is a responsibility to have the time to take care of the pet.

Not to mention the fact that my "Pet Inn" is closed.