

## *Native language media are vital to immigrants*

St. Paul Pioneer Press (Minnesota)

June 18, 2007 Monday

Copyright 2007 St. Paul Pioneer Press All Rights Reserved

**Section:** MINNESOTA-TWIN CITIES; Ruben Rosario; Local; Columnists

**Length:** 716 words

**Byline:** RUBÉN ROSARIO

### **Body**

---

SAN JOSE, Calif. - The finely brushed hair and polished skin. A gray suit hinting at the slimmer - but still impressive - physique flexing inside.

And those green, expensive-looking cowboy boots gleaming from the brightness of the overhead spotlights inside the California Theatre.

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is the undisputed fittest and coolest-looking governor. But he kicked off the 25th annual convention of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists last week by putting those boots in his mouth. By now, most folks know what he said.

"You have to turn off the Spanish television set," the governor said. "I know this sounds odd, it's not the politically correct thing to say, and I'm getting myself into trouble. But I know that when I came to this country, I did not or very rarely spoke German anymore."

I was in the audience that evening. Up to that point, the Gubernator was sounding, well, gubernatorial in front of hundreds of Latino journalists from across the nation.

A Republican, he has drawn criticism from his more conservative party members for his support of immigration reform, although he said he would not sign the current bill in debate as currently drawn up. He believes in universal health care coverage for Californians, including children of undocumented immigrants.

He sees the dangers posed by global warming, and drew chuckles in acknowledging that he drives and owns five Hummers, though some are "green."

Office holders, he said, should be "public servants rather than party servants."

His TV comments came in response to a question as to why one third of immigrant children in California fail a mandatory but controversial state high school English exam that affects graduation.

Given that many in the crowd included Spanish language media representatives, the comment raised eyebrows, passions and blood pressures.

Some denounced him. Others, like myself, factored Schwarzenegger's track record of occasionally blurting out half-baked pabulum before the brain is fully able to digest and filter it through. So I gave him some slack.

"He's compassionate about immigration, but he's no-nonsense about it," said Gustavo Arellano, a staff writer at the Orange County Weekly. "You can't peg him."

## Native language media are vital to immigrants

Well, let me try. Schwarzenegger believes folks who come here, or to any country for that matter, are at an employment, education and economic disadvantage if they don't learn the language.

Absolutely no argument here. He believes the best way to learn the language is to completely and totally immerse oneself in the language one is learning, as he says he did when he came here. I agree, since that's what happened to me when I came from Puerto Rico at the age of 5.

But he thinks that turning off Spanish TV is a good way to help achieve that English speaking goal. The two, however, are not mutually incompatible. On this, Schwarzenegger is ignorant or forgetful of history, both that of his own people as well as linguistic assimilation.

Native language newspapers, TV and radio programs are critical in helping newcomers navigate through a new society and culture. There were, for example, German newspapers and German-only schools in Minnesota in the late 1800s.

But a vast body of evidence and numerous studies point to the fact that children of immigrants begin embracing English - through school and acculturation - even as first generation arrivals. By the second generation, English already has become the dominant language, so much so that many can't even speak their parents' native language.

Also, the fact that there are long waiting lists across the country to enroll in adult English classes should dispel the perception that most immigrants don't want to learn the language.

Actually, Schwarzenegger should support turning on Spanish TV, or Japanese TV or German or Chinese TV - not junk, of course, but quality programs. What we need more of in this country are young Americans who can speak at least two languages, in order to better compete on the global market or stage with foreign peers who already speak two if not three or more languages.

That's what you really wanted and meant to say, Arnold, right? Hasta la vista, baby.

The Latino Reporter contributed to this story.

Rubén Rosario can be reached at 651-228-5454 or rrosario@pioneer [press.com](http://press.com).

## Classification

---

Language: ENGLISH

**Publication-Type**: Newspaper

**Subject**: GOVERNORS (90%); IMMIGRATION (89%); JOURNALISM (89%); FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION (89%); US REPUBLICAN PARTY (77%); POLITICAL PARTIES (74%); CONSERVATISM (74%); IMMIGRATION OF MINORS (71%); CONFERENCES & CONVENTIONS (71%); ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS (71%); POLITICAL CORRECTNESS (69%); HIGH SCHOOLS (67%); HEALTH CARE REFORM (66%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (66%); IMMIGRATION LAW (66%); GLOBAL WARMING (50%)

**Industry**: HIGH SCHOOLS (67%); HEALTH CARE REFORM (66%); GLOBAL WARMING (50%)

**Person**: ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER (78%)

Native language media are vital to immigrants

**Geographic:** SAN JOSE, CA, USA (79%); LOS ANGELES, CA, USA (78%); CALIFORNIA, USA (94%)

**Load-Date:** June 19, 2007

---

End of Document