



NABE 2020 Bilingual Student Essay Competition

High School 1st Place

Damaris Castillo

Principal: Tripp Crayton

Teacher: Cynthia Bredenber

Jordan-Matthews High School,

Siler City, North Carolina

Our World

Being bilingual: it's something I never really thought much about, because I don't remember a life in which I wasn't able to speak both English and Spanish. It's always just been there, I can't remember when my sentences began to start in Spanish and end in English. But in reality, I live in two completely different worlds. In a world where half of my day at school, I'm writing and speaking in one language and then going home to speak a different one. In a world where going out with my best friend and her family means I don't have to give the waitress everyone's order, but going out with my mom means I speak for the both of us. When I think of English, I think of my best friends, they're the sisters that I never had. When I think about English, I think about the boy I've had a crush on since freshman year of high school. If it weren't for the beautiful language of English, these people wouldn't have been able to impact my life in the way that they have. This language, this school, these friendships, are a blessing.

Spanish. Oh how I love my language, my people. Spanish was my first language, and for a little while it was my only language. When I think of Spanish I think of my family, my mother who has given me her all and more. When I think of Spanish I think of my culture. The people who shaped me, made me who I am, and who gave me the opportunity to be writing this essay right now. When I think of Spanish I think of entering my house and smelling fresh *pupusas* off of the *comal*, I think of *las alabanzas* that I sing at church, I think of my dad *predicando* to the parishoners. Spanish is my life, Spanish is me.

When I think of English and Spanish, I see my future. And in my future, I see myself as a bridge between these two worlds, as I have been. I see the gap between my English world and my Spanish world lessening because of people like me who understand and appreciate both. I am incredibly blessed and honored to be able to speak both of

these amazing languages, and my only desire is for more people to have one. A desire to learn, grow, and help others with their abilities. I guess I don't really live in two worlds after all. It's one world, a beautiful world. It's my world, and I am madly enamored with it.