



# Questioning venerable assumptions, rethinking our practices

2018 Quality Teaching for English Learners Summer Institute  
Aída Walqui, Ph.D., Director, Teacher Professional Development Program, WestEd



El Presidio, July 16, 2018



# Welcome everybody!

- Building the Base ELA, Secondary: Mary Schmida
- Building the Base, Elementary: Elsa Billings
- Beginning ESL, Secondary: Lee Hartman
- Building the Base, Spanish: Pía Castilleja
- Leadership in the education of English Learners: Leslie  
Hamburger and Aída Walqui

# Three main reasons for our gathering together

1. To deepen our expertise as it applies to offering English Learners –and all other students- quality opportunities to learn
2. To build a community of professionals as we meet and interact with colleagues who share the same commitment and vision for the role of public education
3. To enjoy each other's company and the beautiful city of San Francisco

# Getting to the title of this presentation

## *Questioning venerable assumptions, rethinking our practices*

- We live in disruptive, consequential times in which our expertise, commitment, vigilance, and action is more important than it ever has been.
- While there are some issues that will take time to change, there is a lot we can change almost immediately.

**The opening of *Tale of Two Cities*  
captures the essence of the  
moment we are living...**

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us...”

# This manufactured post-truth era

Is having a devastating impact on:

- Our students and their families
- The fabric of our society
- Our status and reputation in the world



# *Cleaning Toilets, Following Rules: A Migrant Child's Days in Detention*

A portrait of life in the shelters for the children detained after crossing the U.S.-Mexico border.



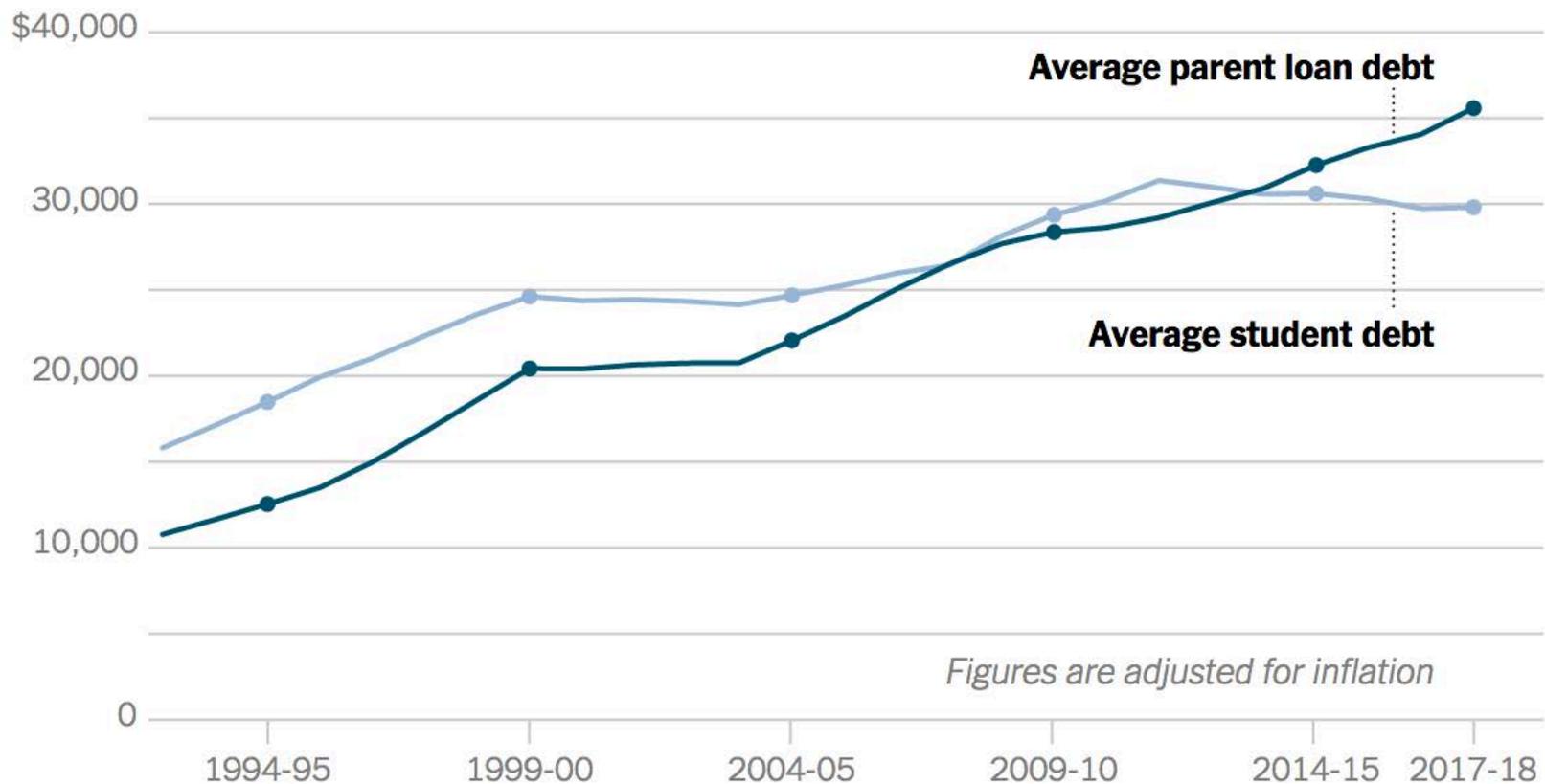


Ms. Pablo wearing an ankle monitor, with her daughter, Darly. Victor J. Blue for The New York Times

# Student debt

## A Shifting Burden

The average student's debt load is leveling off, a new analysis of federal loan data shows. That's not true for many parents.

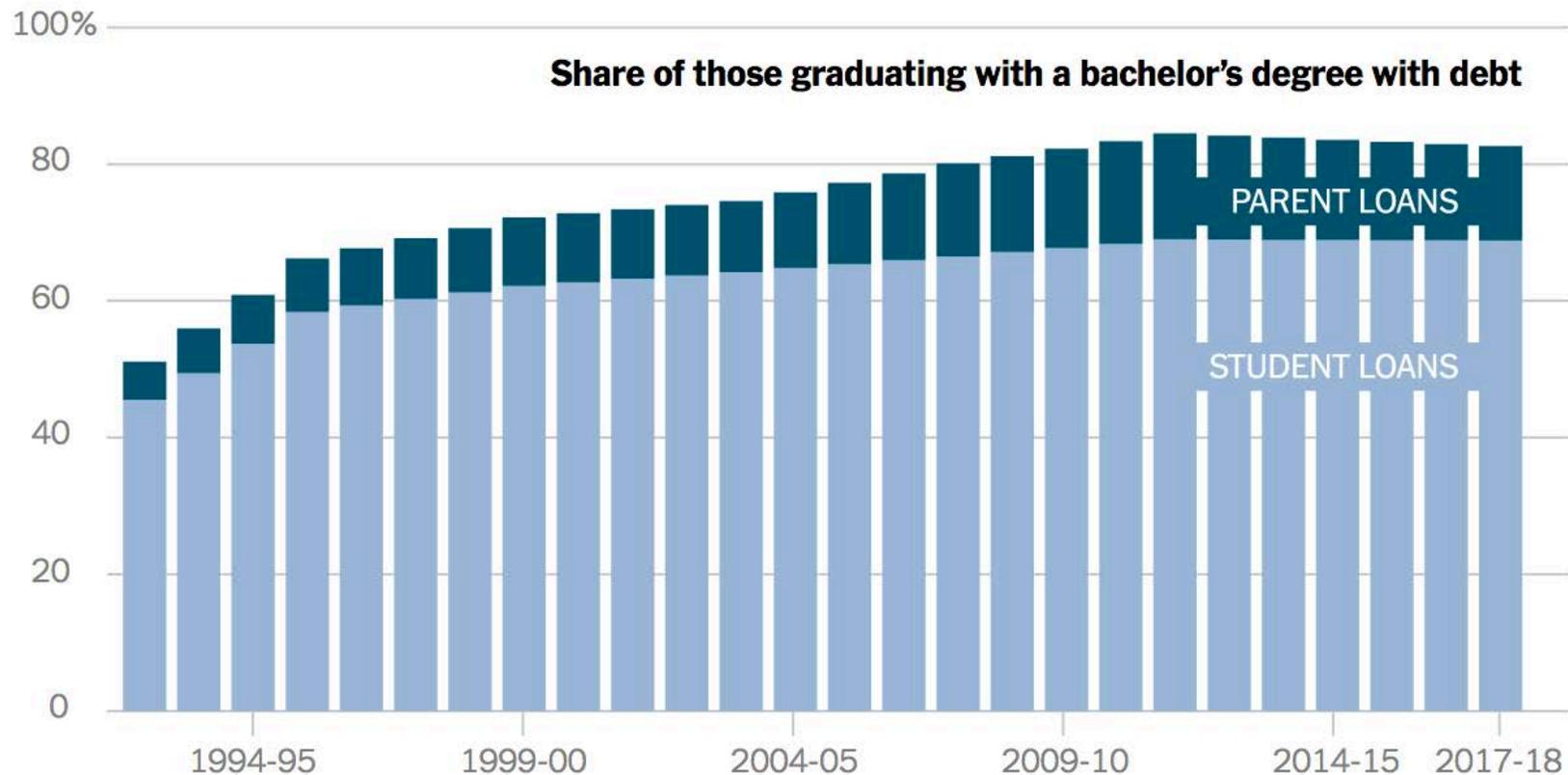


Source: Mark Kantrowitz (SavingForCollege.com)

# Student debt

## Spreading the Financial Pain

The overall percentage of parents borrowing alongside their children has dropped slightly, but those who are borrowing are taking on significantly more debt.



Source: Mark Kantrowitz (SavingForCollege.com)

# We hear time and time again that the unemployment rate is low

The indicator does not capture:

- Part time jobs with low pay and no benefits
- People who gave up looking for work
- And in the near future workers who enjoyed good pay and benefits will be losing their jobs to robotization



Ford testing a self-driving car at Mcity. Mark Peterson/Redux, for The New York Times

# The Autonomous-Car Workout

BY GRETCHEN REYNOLDS



Dashboard resistance straps would allow mid-ride rowing.



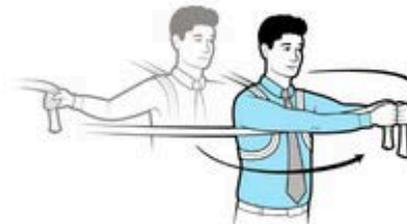
Ceiling straps would enable a classic pull-down exercise.



A harness could allow squats on a balance ball.



Interiors could include exercise bikes with harness clips.



This upper-body chest fly would require straps anchored to the windows and doors.

# And all of that comes at a cost

- Massive loss of good paying jobs with benefits
- Fewer and fewer have exponentially more with no social consciousness
- The manufactured blaming game

Several proposals have been made for a Universal Basic Income, UBI

The New York Times

# Book Review

JULY 15, 2018

8 MICHIKO KAKUTANI tells us what she's been reading lately

21 YIYUN LI on Deborah Levy's memoir of the writing life

PLUS James Wolcott on Robert Gottlieb, Tolkien speaks Elvish, and Alexander Chee



## Barely Afloat in America

By Robert B. Reich

IF CLIMATE CHANGE, nuclear standoffs, Russian trolls, terrorist threats and Donald Trump in the White House don't cause you feelings of impending doom, you might think about artificial intelligence. I'm not just referring to big-brained robots taking over civilization from us smaller-brained humans, but the more imminent possibility they'll take over our jobs.

It's already happening. Robots and related forms of artificial intelligence are

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

### GIVE PEOPLE MONEY

How a Universal Basic Income Would End Poverty, Revolutionize Work, and Remake the World

By Annie Lowrey  
263 pp. Crown. \$26.

### THE WAR ON NORMAL PEOPLE

The Truth About America's Disappearing Jobs and Why Universal Basic Income Is Our Future

By Andrew Yang  
284 pp. Hachette Books. \$28.

By Emily Cooke

OVER THE MONTHS that I was pregnant, my overriding fear was that I would not be able to afford a child. How much do diapers cost? I asked a friend with a 1-year-old, as if the answer wasn't online. She couldn't answer; diapers were just one of countless minor recurring expenses. The cost of child care, however, she could tell me. If it didn't cost an arm and a leg, it did seem that every month she cut off a finger and a toe and Venmo'd them to her nanny — a payment that despite its size

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

### SQUEEZED

Why Our Families Can't Afford America

By Alissa Quart  
320 pp. Ecco/HarperCollins Publishers.  
\$27.99.





## ***North Korea Criticizes ‘Gangster-Like’ U.S. Attitude After Talks With Mike Pompeo***



Secretary of State Mike Pompeo with the North Korean official Kim Yong-chol on Saturday in Pyongyang. Pool photo by Andrew Harnik

Internationally, neighbors and allies are shocked by the interference and bullying... And then the fake reporting of what happened

Mr. Pompeo met for almost three hours on Friday afternoon with Kim Yong-chol, a former intelligence chief and a leading negotiator in the nuclear talks, followed by a nearly two-hour dinner on Friday night.

In remarks made before the meeting, Mr. Kim said, “The more we meet, the deeper our friendship will be, I hope.” Mr. Kim called it a “really meaningful meeting,” and Mr. Pompeo said he counted on it “being very productive.”

# *Trump Visit to U.K. Inspires Yearning for a 'Love Actually' Moment*



Prime Minister Theresa May welcomed President Trump to Chequers, her official country residence, on Friday. His inflammatory interview was published Thursday evening. Doug Mills/The New York Times



The demonstrators spoke out on a wide range of issues, including gun control in the United States, but also immigration policy, women's rights and nuclear policy. Andy Rain/EPA, via Shutterstock

# What does this have to do with our role as educators?

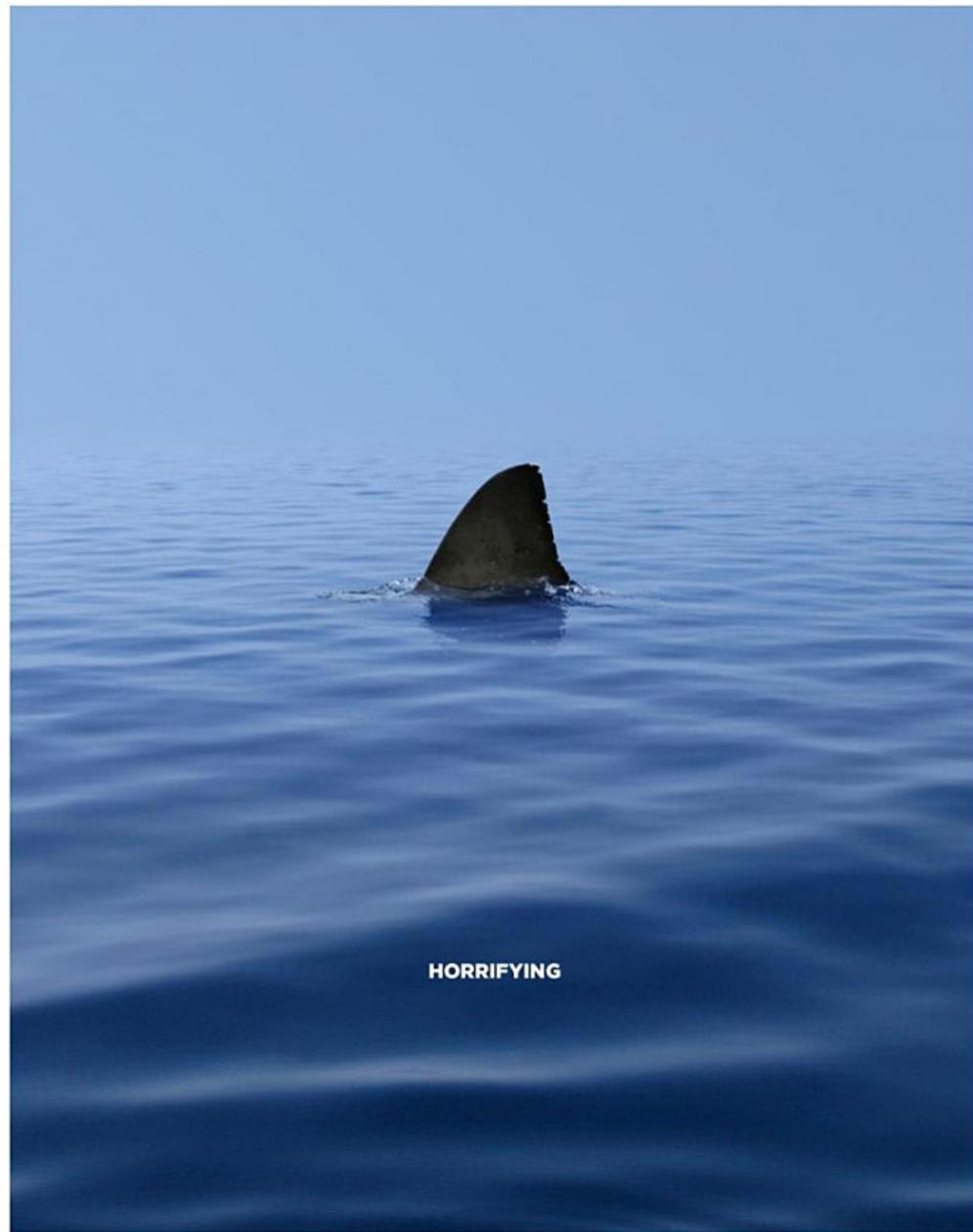
Disinformation and manipulation are only possible if:

- We are not critical thinkers and readers
- We are not effective communicators and debaters
- We choose to be bystanders rather than upstanders

**We** can be upstanders in multiple ways... so can our students **if we prepare them well**

**For example, when students read, they should not just focus on what the text says but they should ask themselves who initiated the message, what they know about the person or group,**

**They then can decide how to interpret understandings and engage in actions in accordance to their beliefs and goals...**



**HORRIFYING**



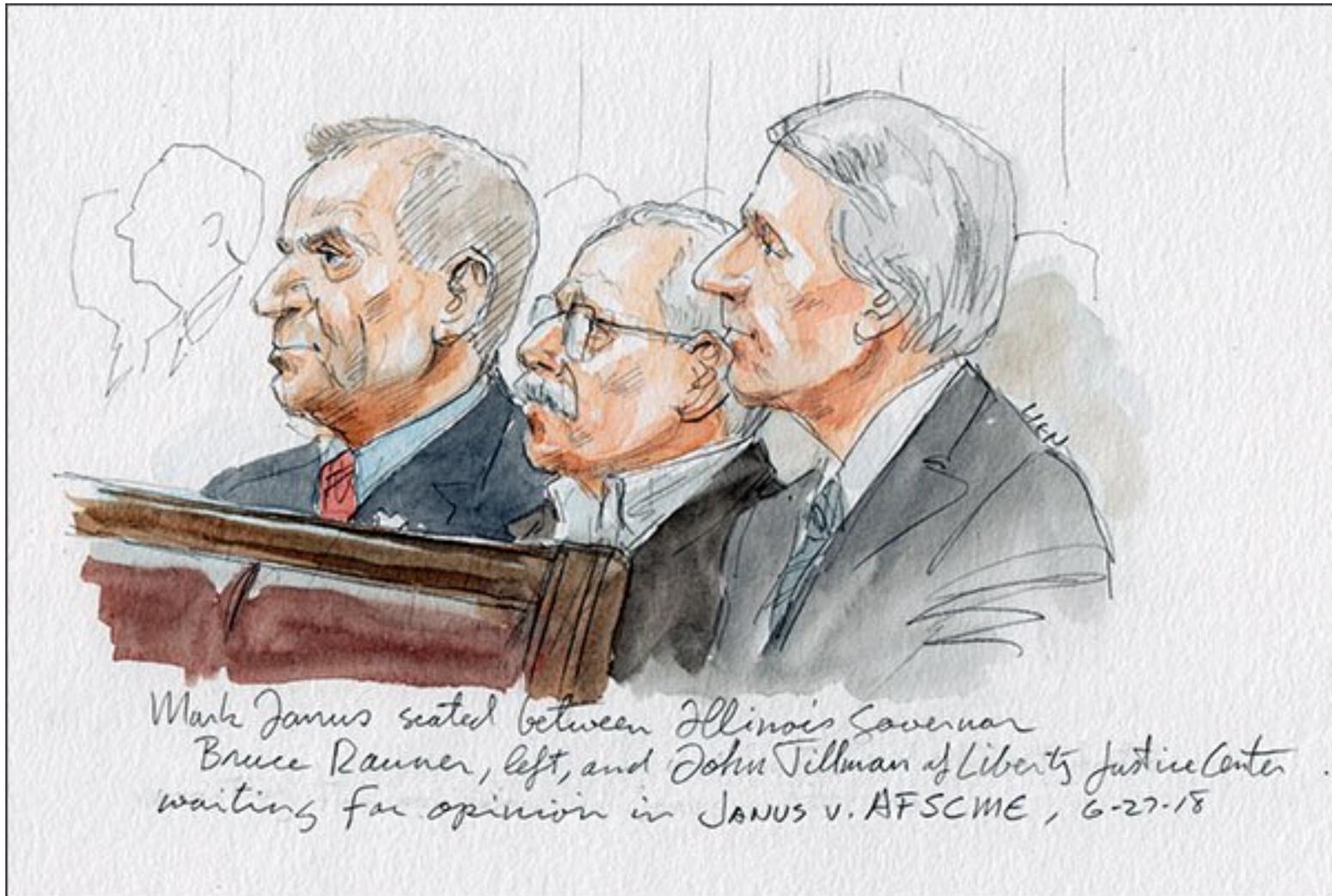
**MORE HORRIFYING**

EXPLOITING THE ECOSYSTEM ALSO THREATENS HUMAN LIVES.



FOR A LIVING PLANET: [WWF.ORG](http://WWF.ORG)

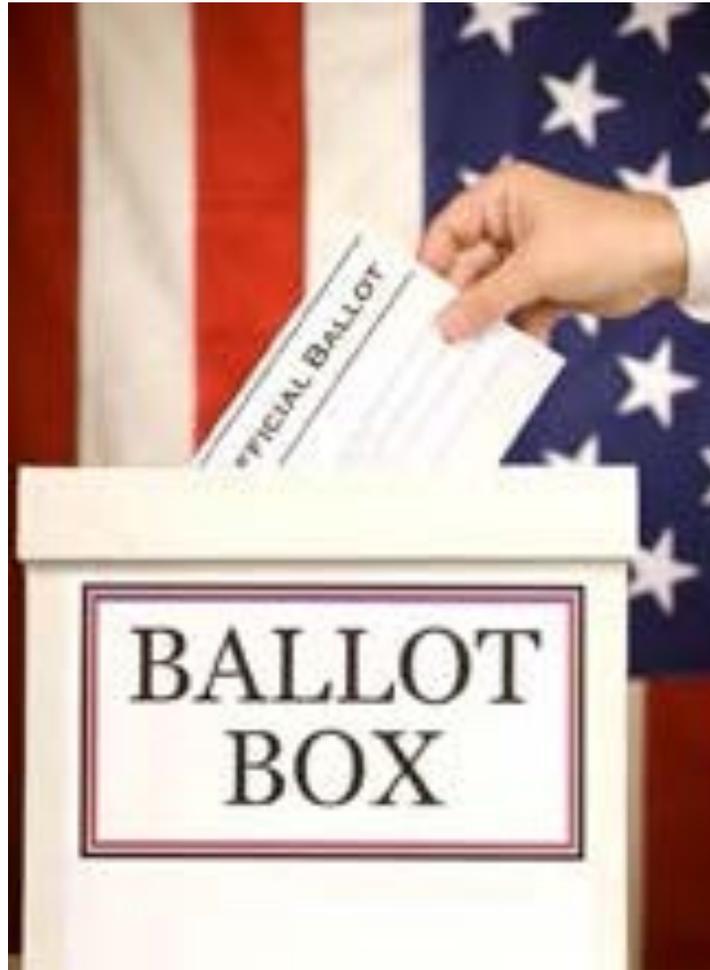
# The Janus decision



Plaintiff Mark Janus, center, sits with Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner, left, and Liberty Justice Center founder and chairman John Tillman inside the U.S. Supreme Court as the decision in *Janus v. AFSCME* is delivered. The Illinois-based Liberty Justice Center has been representing Janus in his years-long challenge to union fees.

# And the Department of Education?

- The secretary requested 30% less for this year's budget
- Increasing privatization of schools and support for charters





A worker at a Ford supplier conducting final checks of a self-driving Fusion test vehicle. Mark Peterson/Redux, for The New York Times

## Asian Groups See Bias in Plan to Diversify New York's Elite Schools



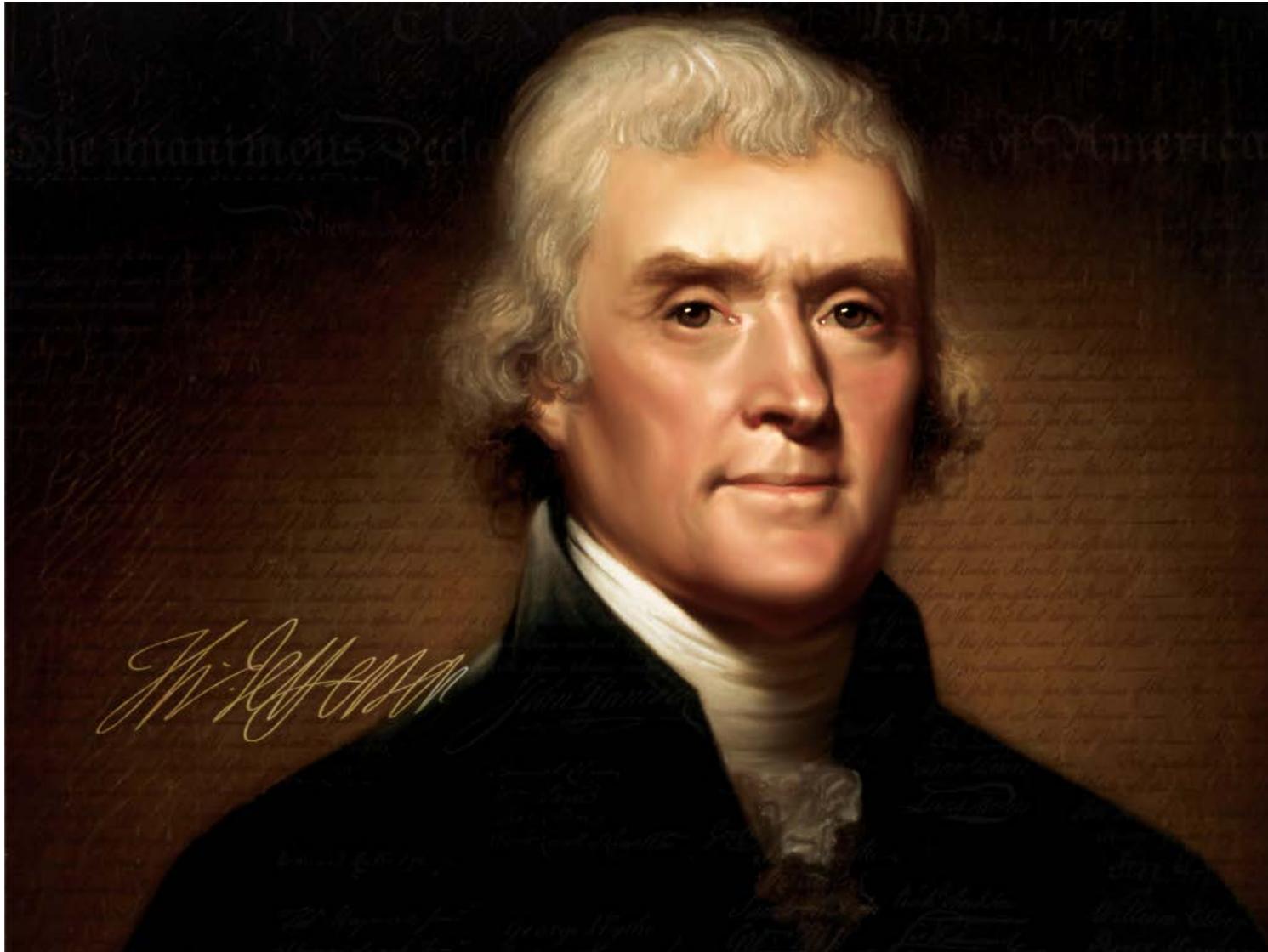
Asian activists rallied in front of City Hall on Tuesday to protest Mayor Bill de Blasio's plan to revamp admissions to the city's specialized high schools, which they say unfairly targets them. Kevin Hagen for The New York Times

By Elizabeth A. Harris and Winnie Hu

June 5, 2018



A new plan to change the way students are admitted to New York's elite public high schools is infuriating members of some Asian communities who feel they will be pushed aside in the drive to admit more than a handful of black and Latino students.



# The role of education

*[The objects of education are] To give to every citizen the information he needs for the transaction of his own business; To enable him to calculate for himself, and to express and preserve his ideas, his contracts and accounts, in writing; To improve by reading, his morals and faculties; To understand his duties to his neighbors and country, and to discharge with competence the functions confided to him by either; To know his rights...And, in general, to observe with intelligence and faithfulness all the social relations under which he shall be placed.*

—Thomas Jefferson, from “Report of the Commissioners for the University of Virginia,” August 4, 1818

**Let us now turn to what we  
can do immediately**

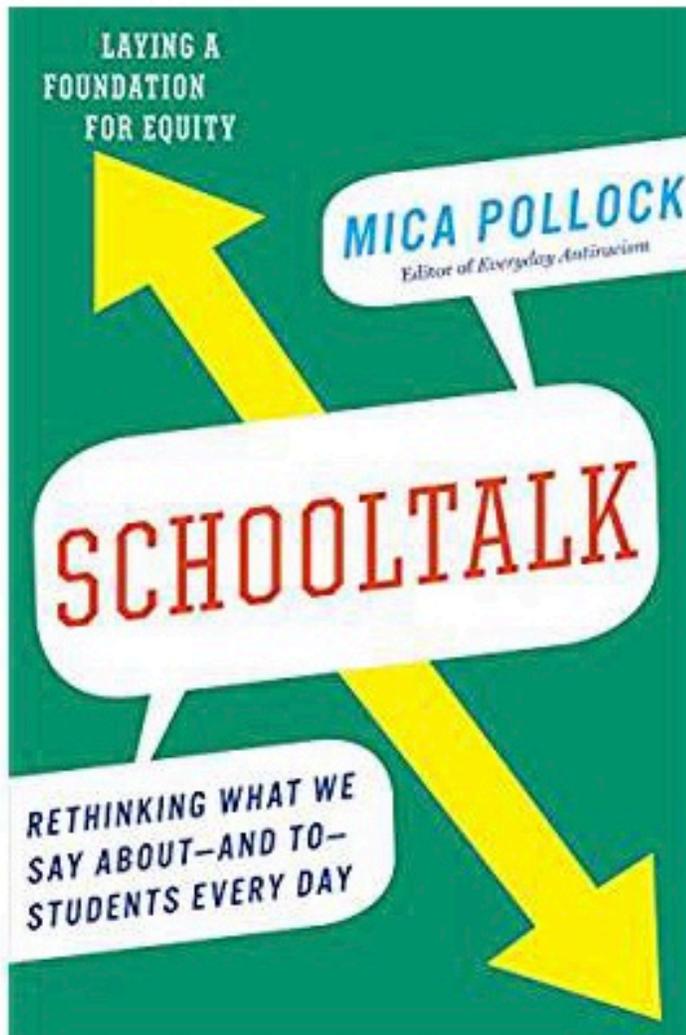
**What kind of citizens?  
Three possible roles for  
educators and their  
students**

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graph LR; A[What kind of citizens? Three possible roles for educators and their students] --- B[Personally responsible citizens (act responsibly in the community)]; A --- C[Participatory citizens (active member of community organizations and/or improvement efforts)]; A --- D[Social-justice oriented citizens (critically assess social, economic, political structures and propose strategies for improving them)];
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**Personally responsible citizens  
(act responsibly in the  
community)**

**Participatory citizens  
(active member of community  
organizations and/or  
improvement efforts)**

**Social-justice oriented citizens  
(critically assess social,  
economic, political structures  
and propose strategies for  
improving them)**



## The way we talk with and about our students...

The labels we use to designate our students do not only trap them in a category but make it increasingly more difficult to offer them quality opportunities to learn. They also act as self-fulfilling prophecies ...

# Manufacturing the term “Long term English Learners”

(Kibler & Valdés, 2016)

The denomination rests on three false assumptions:

- There is a normative period for acquiring/developing English
- Assessment measures in place are accurate representations of English proficiency
- Multilingual language systems can be compared to monolinguals' and performance similar to monolinguals' on L1 tests is a valid measure of English language acquisition (Bley-Vroman, 1983)

# As a result, English as a Second Language courses are “curricularized”

(Valdés 2015)

Design and implementation of language learning programs is approached as if they were ordinary curricular subjects

- Selection
- Sequencing (not a neutral distinction)
- High stakes assessment
- Testing leads to categorization
- And then, impacts next teaching

The result? self-fulfilling prophecies

# The hardening of the categories

- Long term English Learners
- Struggling readers
- Underachiever / underperformer
- ELLs

# When bad things happen to good intentions

We love labels, but we seldom question whether we are using them judiciously or for the right purposes

Reclassification (Umansky & Thompson)

The Seal of Biliteracy (Davin & Heineke, 2017)

Push in / Pull out

Translanguaging...

# Everyone Has an Accent

## OPINION

BY ROBERTO REY AGUDO

The language program director of the department of Spanish and Portuguese at Dartmouth College and a public voices fellow with the OpEd Project.

I HAVE an accent. So do you. I am an immigrant who has spent nearly as much time in the United States as I have in my home country, Spain. I am also the director of Dartmouth's language programs in Spanish and Portuguese. Both facts explain, but only partly, why I feel a special fondness for the FX drama "The Americans," in which Keri Russell and Matthew Rhys play Elizabeth and Philip Jennings, a husband-and-wife team of undercover K.G.B. agents living in suburban Washington. I can't be the only one who nodded approvingly when they were both nominated for Emmys last week.

What interests me as a linguist is that the Jenningses are, as the pilot tells us, "supersecret spies living next door" who "speak better English than we do." Even their neighbor, an F.B.I. agent on the counterintelligence beat, suspects nothing.

Living as I do, deeply immersed in the work of teaching and learning second languages, it was fun to watch a TV series in which the main characters' aptitude for them was so central to the plot. Nonetheless, the premise that you can

est point in a century, the distinction between "native" and "nonnative" has grown vicious, and it is worth reminding ourselves of it again and again: No one speaks without an accent.

When we say that someone speaks with an accent, we generally mean one of two things: a nonnative accent or a so-called nonstandard accent. Both can have consequences for their speakers. In other words, it is worth acknowledging that people discriminate on the basis of accent within their own language group, as well as against those perceived as language outsiders. The privileged status of

Such judgments are purely social — to linguists, the distinctions are arbitrary. However, the notion of the neutral, perfect accent is so pervasive that speakers with stigmatized accents often internalize the prejudice they face. The recent reevaluation of the "Simpsons" character Apu provides an important example of how the media and popular culture use accents to make easy — and uneasy — jokes.

When you are learning a language, a marked accent is usually also accompanied by other features, like limited vocabulary or grammatical mistakes. In

kind of assumption that a Spanish accent — and many, many others — is likely to trigger within the United States.

It's certainly true that a marked accent can get in the way of making yourself understood. E.S.L. learners and others are well advised to work on their pronunciation. As a teacher, I do try to lead my students toward some version of that flawed ideal, the native accent. One of the ironies in this is that I — along with most of my fellow teachers from the 20 countries (not counting Puerto Rico) where Spanish is an official language — long ago shed the specific regional, class-shaped intonations and vocabulary that are, or once were, our native accents. My point is not that we need to forget the aim of easily comprehensible communication — obviously, that remains the goal. But we do need to set aside the illusion that there is a single true and authentic way to speak.

We need to set aside the illusion that there is a single true and authentic way to speak.

speak a language without any accent at all is a loaded one. You can't actually do this.

Worse, when we fetishize certain accents and disdain others, it can lead to real discrimination in job interviews, performance evaluations and access to housing, to name just a few of the areas where having or not having a certain accent has profound consequences. Too often, at the hospital or the bank, in the office or at a restaurant — even in the classroom — we embrace the idea that there is a right way for our words to sound and that the perfect accent is one that is not just inaudible, but also invisible.

If you look at the question from a sociolinguistic point of view, having no accent is plainly impossible. An accent is simply a way of speaking shaped by a combination of geography, social class, education, ethnicity and first language. I have one; you have one; everybody has one. There is no such thing as perfect, neutral or unaccented English — or Spanish, for that matter, or any other language. To say that someone does not have an accent is as believable as saying that someone does not have any facial features.

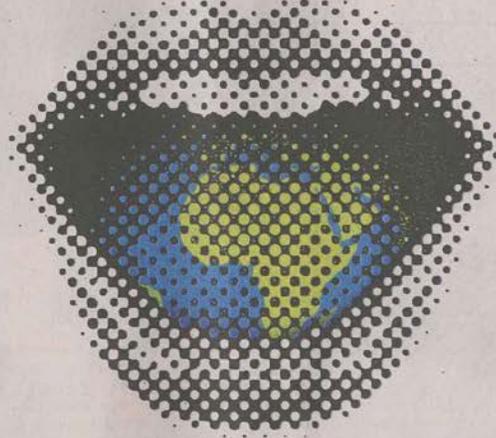
We know this, but even so, at a time when the percentage of foreign-born residents in the United States is at its high-

est, the standard accent is, of course, rooted in education and socioeconomic power.

The standard accent is not necessarily the same as the highest-status accent. It is simply the dominant accent, the one you are most likely to hear in the media, the one that is considered neutral. Nonstandard native accents are also underrepresented in the media, and like nonnative accents, are likely to be stereotyped and mocked. Terms like Southern drawl, Midwestern twang or Valley Girl upspeak underscore the layered status attached to particular ways of speaking.

the classroom, we understand that this is a normal stage in the development of proficiency. My family back in Madrid would have a hard time understanding the Spanish of my English-speaking students in my first-semester classroom.

Later, these same students study abroad in Barcelona or Cuzco or Buenos Aires, and often struggle to make themselves understood. But such is the privilege of English — and this is key — that nobody hearing their American accents presumes that they are less capable, less ambitious or less honest than if their R's had a nicer trill. Yet this is exactly the



JANET HANSEN

ENGLISH is a global language with many native and nonnative varieties. Worldwide, nonnative speakers of English outnumber natives by a ratio of three to one. Even in the United States, which has the largest population of native English speakers, there are, according to one estimate, nearly 50 million speakers of English as a second language. What does it even mean to sound native when so many English speakers are second-language speakers? Unless you are an embedded spy like the Jenningses, it is counterproductive to hold nativelike pronunciation as the bar you have to clear.

Accent by itself is a shallow measure of language proficiency, the linguistic equivalent of judging people by their looks. Instead, we should become aware of our linguistic biases and learn to listen more deeply before forming judgments. How large and how varied is the person's vocabulary? Can she participate in most daily interactions? How much detail can he provide when retelling something? Can she hold her own in an argument?

Language discrimination based on accent is not merely an academic idea. Experiments show that people tend to make negative stereotypical assumptions about speakers with a nonnative accent. The effect extends all the way to bias against native speakers whose name or ethnicity reads as foreign. Studies show that when nonnative speakers respond to advertisements for housing, their conversations with prospective landlords are more likely to be unsuccessful, on average, than those of callers "without accents."

So I hope you like my accent as much as I like yours.

**Lesson 1: Desegregation of schools in the American South**

Genres: Expository, narrative, documentary

**The power of youth in addressing injustice**

discrimination

social protest

heroic acts

upstander

taking conscious risk

bystander

**Lesson 2: Children and social injustice in schools**

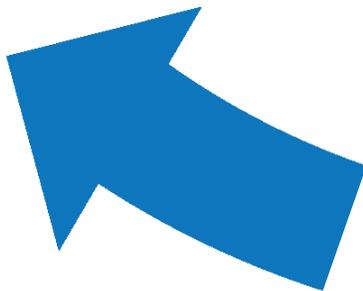
The Scholarship Jacket

Genres: Narrative, informational, Compare and Contrast Argumentative texts

**Lesson 3: Children and social injustice around the world**

Rabbit Proof Fence

Genres: Historical narrative, informational, argumentative



# Complex, deep, enticing work challenges the notion of students bureaucratically called Long Term English Learners

