

# Spanish national anthem

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At times, our political and cultural landscape can seem like an endless parade of divisive controversy. We cannot agree, so why not disagree—and disagree loudly? The latest war of debate and rhetoric centers around the presence of illegal aliens within our country's borders. Should they stay? Should they go? While the subjects themselves protest in the streets, individuals of all creeds and colors are waging a ping-pong of protests across air waves and across coffee tables. Through these spirited arguments, a symbol of the nation's division has emerged, and—ironically enough—it is one of the core symbols of America itself.

The current battleground in the illegal immigration debate concerns the recent release of a Spanish version of the United States national anthem. Titled “Nuestro Himno” (“Our Anthem”), the controversial translation of “The Star-Spangled Banner” is being produced by Urban Box Office president and British-born Adam Kidron; it is being performed by popular Latin stars such as Wyclef Jean, Pitbull, Olga Tanon, and Carlos Ponce (Associated Press, 2006). Is this translation an attempt at American assimilation, as its defenders claim? I believe that the answer is no. If the song were a true attempt at honoring America, it might be understandable. However, “Nuestro Himno” is nothing more than a political tool whose purpose is more division. Further, it is an indirect assault on one of our nation's most sacred symbols.

The song's producer defends its release by claiming that it is a means for more people to understand and learn the national anthem: “There's no attempt to usurp anything. The intent is to communicate.... and also express to express gratitude and patriotism to the United States....”

However, in the very same interview, Kidron (the producer) reveals a deeper intention: " I wanted to show my thanks to these people (who).... do the jobs I don't want to do" (Associated Press, 2006). This song is being released less as an ode to America and more of an ode to illegal immigrants. If not, then why was the song's release timed to coincide with the immigration protests and Congress' debates about illegal immigration? Why are a large chunk of the profits produced by the song going to immigration groups?

Why did the record label encourage Latin-themed radio stations to concurrently play the song at a certain time, in a show of " solidarity"? Why do many of these radio station employees (whom one would expect to be the strongest supporters) question the motives of the song? " We should be trying to assimilate, not aggravate," says one Latin radio host.

An immigration web magazine writer adds, " If you want to say all those things, by all means, put them on your poster board, but don't put them on the national anthem" (Associated Press, 2006). And what " things" is the latter referring to? It seems that in June the song will be released as a remix, and several lines will be added to the song, including: " These kids have no parents, cause all of these mean laws ... let's not start a war with all these hard workers, they can't help where they were born" (Wides-Munoz, 2006). This remix begs the question, When did " mean laws" become an adjective for " gratitude and patriotism"?

This song is not a celebration or even a mere translation of the national anthem. It is literal rewriting and bastardization of our country's symbolic history into a weapon of political propaganda. Sure, pop, rock, and country versions of the anthem may exist, but all of these versions honor the words

of the song. Yet not one verse of “ Nuestro Himno” stays true to the English-versed national anthem. Following is one excerpt of the translation:

The glow of battle, in step with liberty

My people keep fighting

It's time to break the chains

At night they said: “ It's being defended!”

Oh say! Your starry beauty is still unfolding. (Online extra, 2006)

How many words do we find in this version that are also included in the original?... two.

Could anyone even say (without deep examination) which verse of the national anthem this

“ translation” derives from? Sad to say, the first question which enters my mind upon reading this

verse is who “ My people” are? Is the song remembering the American soldiers who fought for

their country, as Francis Scott Key did? Or is “ My people” simply another coded ode to illegal immigrants?

“ The Star-Spangled Banner” is a celebration of all that America stands for. Its author poured these lyrics out of his soul in a burst of inspiration. Something stirred inside him as he witnessed his flag flying proudly, withstanding a night full of “ bombs” and “ rockets” from enemy forces. The poem (and subsequent song) captured the bravery, loyalty, and independence which that flag came to symbolize. Why did these verses survive over a century—faithfully sung in everything from bars to baseball  
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games? Why did the song officially become our national anthem in 1931? It spoke to the hearts of the American people, and to the soul of America itself.

As the president himself says, “ One of the important things here is that we not lose our national soul” (Associated Press, 2006). If we allow our country’s most sacred symbols to be tarnished by politics, we will lose. The only way to ensure that does not happen with our national anthem is to preserve it and protect it in the form which its creator intended: English. Assimilation means blending in, and America is for all intents and purposes an English-speaking nation. A Spanish national anthem does not assimilate our principles; it rejects them.

We do not change our national animal symbol (the bald eagle) because some might prefer a turkey. We do not alter our national colors because some might be offended by red, white, and blue. And we never, ever compromise our American democracy:

USA Today/Gallup Poll:

69%--the national anthem should only be sung in English

## References

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