



## I. REFORMA's Position on Language Rights

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### Language Rights in the 21st Century

REFORMA unequivocally opposes all initiatives and legislation that restrict the language rights of the Spanish speaking and of all other non-English speaking peoples in the U.S.

REFORMA opposes all variations of English only initiatives: English as the official language legislation, the Unz initiative, English for the Children, An Act Relative to the Teaching of English in Public Schools, etc.

REFORMA joins other organizations such as the National Association for Bilingual Education, the Linguistic Society of America and the American Library Association in their efforts to defend and promote the language rights of non-English speaking peoples in the U.S.

REFORMA embraces a commitment to inform the general public of the misinformation and misleading arguments inherent in English only education initiatives, which purport that bilingual education hurts children and that it impedes the learning process, and, conversely, purport that success in learning is attributed solely to children speaking only English.

REFORMA accepts the responsibility to alert the general public to the inherent dangers that may result from English only initiatives, including condescension to, racial profiling and victimization of the Spanish speaking and other non-English speaking peoples, and the eventual disconnecting of non-English speaking peoples from their native language and their respective cultures which weakens individuals, families, communities, and American society, in general.

REFORMA appreciates and defends the linguistic diversity and pluralism that strengthens American society and acknowledges the significant contribution in this regard by the growing Spanish speaking population which is now the largest minority in the U.S.

REFORMA acknowledges the value of bilingual literacy and supports the tenets of bilingual education in the curriculum of children whose native language is other than English and of children whose parents choose to immerse their children in bilingual instruction.

REFORMA acknowledges the importance of multilingualism in the development of a global information society.

REFORMA supports efforts of human service providers as they serve non-English speaking communities in their native language(s) or dialect(s) and as they disseminate information about their respective services in the language(s) or dialect(s) reflective of their constituents.

REFORMA legitimizes and authenticates the importance of the Spanish language in the lives of Latinos in the U.S. as an integral part of Latino culture; and also affirms the importance of other languages in the lives of non-English speaking Americans.

REFORMA recognizes the importance of the English language in American society; and promotes the development of library collections to include English as a Second Language (ESL) materials and programs in support of libraries as gateways for immigrant communities. REFORMA therefore, strongly opposes all English-as-the-official-language legislation.

### Language & Libraries

REFORMA was founded to promote library and information services to Latinos and the Spanish speaking; and to that end, advocates for the development of Spanish language and Latino oriented services, collections and programming in public, school and academic libraries.

REFORMA recognizes that libraries are instruments for positive change and improvement in the lives of individuals, families and communities, and that libraries are beacons and gateways to immigrant populations as new Americans. To that end, REFORMA encourages the provision of library services, collections and programming in the language (s) reflective of the communities served.

REFORMA acknowledges the importance of bilingual literacy and has established awards that contribute to that end. The Pura Belpré Award recognizes the creativity of Latino writers and illustrators in works that best authenticate the Latino experience for youth. The Raúl and Estela Mora Award annually designates the school or library that coordinates the most exemplary "Día de Los Niños, Día de Los Libros [Day of the Children, Day of the Books]" program honoring children and promoting bilingual literacy.

REFORMA encourages libraries to recruit and hire bilingual/bicultural staff to help in the efforts to improve services to Latinos and the Spanish speaking by providing library services in both English and Spanish. REFORMA equally supports the efforts to recruit and hire bilingual/bicultural staff in all other languages that are reflective of their respective communities.

*The preceding is REFORMA's current position on language rights and affirms REFORMA's 1985 Resolution opposing a constitutional amendment proclaiming English as the official language.*

## **II. History of the 1985 REFORMA Resolution**

[Note: The actual 1985 REFORMA resolution is no longer available; however, relevant text of the resolution was later incorporated into a REFORMA Position Paper, "REFORMA Opposes Constitutional Amendment" (April 10, 1989), that was prepared at the request of then REFORMA President Ingrid Betancourt for ALA Legislative Day in Washington D.C.]

As an organization, REFORMA has a long history of advocacy to ensure equal access to information for all people in the U.S., regardless of language. REFORMA members were included in the work of the Cultural Minorities Task Force of the National Commission on Library and Information Services. One of the recommendations of the Task Force was the removal of barriers to access of information in the native tongues of some cultural minorities.

At the 1985 ALA Mid-Winter Meeting in Washington D.C., REFORMA President Sal Güereña, representing REFORMA at the meeting of the ALA Council's Minority Concerns Committee, proposed that this group sponsor a resolution before ALA Council, wherein ALA would adopt a policy opposing any legislation designating English as the official language. It was proposed that a second part of the resolution would direct the ALA Washington Office to monitor such legislation and testify against it at Congressional hearings. The outcome of this caucus was a late-night REFORMA ad hoc committee to draft a document for the Minority Concerns Committee to introduce to ALA Council. The substance of the resolution was two-pronged: (1) that ALA officially oppose English-only legislation, and (2) that ALA charge its Washington Office to monitor legislation on Capitol Hill and to testify against federal legislation whenever bills related to language "restrictionism" were being deliberated by Congress. In its report to Council during that Midwinter meeting, the Council Committee on Minority Concerns introduced the resolution in the form of an action item for Council.

ALA Council Document 31 (CD #31 January 25, 1985) records Council actions taken, including Minority Concerns Committee Report (CD#25), Action Item #3 as follows: "Opposing the proposed "English Language Amendment" and recommending monitoring by the Washington Office with a report to the Council at the 1985 Annual Conference. After discussion, VOTED, that the ALA Council approve Action Item #3 as recommended by the Minority Concerns Committee." On January 9, 1985 The Council went on record opposing any amendments to the U.S. Constitution to establish English as the official language. The ALA Policy Manual includes statements of policies adopted by the ALA Council. The most direct policy related to this issue is the following:

### **53.3.1 Linguistic Pluralism**

***The American Library Association opposes all language laws, legislation, and regulations which restrict the rights of citizens who speak and read languages other than English, and those language laws, legislation, and regulations which abridge pluralism and diversity in library collections and services. The Association works with state associations and other agencies in devising ways to counteract restrictions arising from existing language laws and regulations, and encourages and supports the provision of library resources and services in the languages in common use in each community in the United States.***

## **III. Overview of REFORMA 2002**

REFORMA, the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking, is committed to the improvement of the full spectrum of library and information services for the millions of Spanish-speaking and Latino people in the United States.

Established in 1971 as an affiliate of the American Library Association (ALA), REFORMA continues to remain committed to: actively promoting the development of library collections to include Spanish-language and Latino oriented materials; recruiting more bilingual and bicultural library professionals and support staff; advocating for library services and programs that meet the needs of the Latino community; maintaining a national information and support network among individuals who share our goals; educating the U.S. Latino population in regards to the availability and types of library services; and lobbying to preserve existing library resource centers serving the interests of Latinos.

A Board of Directors governs the Association, which includes the officers, committee chairs, and the Presidents of chapters. Nationally there are twenty-one REFORMA chapters, including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. These Chapters function autonomously and form partnerships locally, working through their library systems, state library associations, and other organizations to achieve Chapter objectives.

One of REFORMA's most noteworthy activities is the annual scholarship drive. The Association awards a number of scholarships to library and information studies graduate school students that express interest in working with Latinos. Other activities that benefit the members include: 1) annual presentation of programs and workshops that focus on serving Latinos; 2) the publication of a quarterly newsletter which keeps members abreast of the latest developments in the association and in library services to Latinos; 3) a Web Site highlighting the mutual concerns, goals, awards, and activities of our national network of librarians, library workers, library trustees, community and graduate school students, at .

REFORMA is an inclusive organization comprised of both Latinos and non-Latinos who share a commitment to the mission of promoting and implementing library and information services to Latinos and the Spanish-speaking. **All interested persons and entities are warmly invited to join us in our efforts.**

Go to the [Librarian's Toolkit for Action on Language Rights and Linguistic Pluralism](#) page.

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