

THE POLITICS OF LINGUISTIC IDENTITY: 3 VIEWS

(I)

I wanna master deh language ah opportunity
wid deh most prestige
& speak deh language ah power 'n technology

Show me how ta talk like movie stars do
powerfully in wayz dat influenz
whad millions ah udders do.

My language iz small 'n insubstantial -
Yahs Is Powerful, Modern, 'n Big.

If I master Yah Expressions . . .
will yah actually listen ta me?

(II)

Each year the world is shrinking
as more foreign ideaz appear.
If we value our culture,
shouldn't we preserve it
& not let it disappear?

At first glance, foreign words seem harmless -
but each is a Trojan Horse:

Every word is tied to a larger world view
shaping what we value and do.

So before venturing into any verbal exchange
be sure to wear "linguistic armor"
otherwise who's ta blame
when your mother tongue iz vanquished & slain?

(III)

In the world of business,

English is a useful tool -
At home, however, things are different -
our native tongue is kool.

Our heritage equals any -
why fear being foreignized?
We can absorb new expressions
without losing our integrity or pride.

Linguistic xenophobia is a sign of the weak -
our language is strong enough
to absorb any foreign stream
without losing our being.

Melissa: O.K. We have three views. Which does the author believe in?

Tim: None.

Melissa: How can that be?

Tim: The whole notion of 'view' concerns what's supposed to be.
Only if you have no view can you see what is.

Melissa: Gawd dang! If dat ain't bull sheet, I'm am a real cow girl.

Liao: (laughing) Gitty up, gal!

- T Newfields

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