



Signing in Puerto Rican: A Hearing Son and His Deaf Family

Andrés Torres

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The only child of deaf Puerto Rican immigrants, Andrés Torres grew up in New York City in a large, extended family that included several deaf aunts and uncles. In *Signing in Puerto Rican: A Hearing Son and His Deaf Family*, he opens a window into the little known culture of Deaf Latinos chasing the immigrant American dream. Like many children of deaf adults (codas), Torres loved his parents deeply but also longed to be free from being their interpreter to the hearing world. Torres's story is unique in that his family communicated in three languages. The gatherings of his family reverberated with "deaf talk," in sign, Spanish, and English. What might have struck outsiders as a strange chaos of gestures and mixed spoken languages was just normal for his family.

Torres describes his early life as one of conflicting influences in his search for identity. His parents' deep involvement in the Puerto Rican Society for the Catholic Deaf led him to study for the priesthood. He later left the seminary as his own ambitions took hold. Torres became very active in the Puerto Rico independence party against the backdrop of the Civil Rights movement and protest against the Vietnam War. Throughout these defining events, Torres's journey never took him too far from his Deaf Puerto Rican family roots and the passion of arms, hands, and fingers filling the air with simultaneous translation and understanding.

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