2008

A balance of power: Project will spread information on alternative energy sources

Antona Beckman
University of Nebraska Public Policy Center

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/publicpolicypublications

Part of the Public Policy Commons

http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/publicpolicypublications/92

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Public Policy Center, University of Nebraska at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Publications of the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.
Reflection and gratitude from a new U.S. citizen

I remember crossing the border between Texas and Mexico in 1982 in a lime green Volkswagen Beetle, chasing the American dream, which at my young age could be synthesized as smoking Marlboro cigarettes, drinking Coca-Cola and watching "Charlie's Angels" and the Dallas Cowboys on TV. I did not know that one day I would realize the dream, nor did I know that the reality would be much different from what I had envisioned back then.

By LUIS PEON-CASANOVA
Advertising faculty member

The years that followed my arrival were filled with grand adventures, such as graduating from the University of Texas, and grand experiences, such as landing awesome jobs and finding a great wife in Nebraska, who taught me the value of awesome jobs and finding a great wife in Nebraska, who taught me the value of pride.

In light of the recent terrorist attacks on the U.S. and the debate surrounding the value of immigration, I feel a responsibility to communicate my experience and the experiences of those who are struggling to realize their own American dream. That's why, after all these years, I decided to become a U.S. citizen. To you I promise that I will bear such responsibility and my new citizenship with care and pride.

Today I realize that I haven't smoked Marlboros since 1989, and I don't drink pop, either. The original (and still hot) Charlie's Angels are in their 50s, and the Dallas Cowboys still capture my imagination on any given Sunday during the fall. Through thick and thin, I have always been a fan.

But I'm a bigger fan of other institutions such as our college. We've proven to make it what it is, and you can't imagine how much I have enjoyed every minute of the past five years. I have learned so much, and I continue to be challenged to excel every day, just to keep up with you.

As we waited for what seemed like hours last Friday to start the ceremony in the Federal Building, I actually imagined we were all immigrants in a boat arriving at Ellis Island, separated only by time and circumstance. It was a strange but intriguing thought. Most of your families got here before I did, but as I looked faces of us, the newcomers, and you, the Americans, I saw a common bond that transcended time and space. I felt a connection, a sense of belonging like I had never felt before. I hope you did, too, for I imagine it's hard to relate to the actual journey if you are not on it.

After we, the newcomers from Africa, Asia, Europe, North, Central and South America, the Middle East and elsewhere, pledged allegiance to our new country and received our certificates of citizenship from the judge, some of us immediately registered to vote outside of the courtroom.

Bruce Thorson, who documented the event with his camera, asked me, "What were your first American thoughts?"

"Mexican food," I replied, as we headed out to join friends and family at La Mexicana restaurant. How appropriate.

I just wanted to express a heartfelt thank you to all who came to my naturalization ceremony last Friday. I will be forever grateful to see your kind words. People may have seen those two wind turbines north of Lincoln, but what do they mean, and whom do they serve? And what other alternative energy sources are available? Would it be possible and efficient to use solar power? And what exactly are the benefits of ethanol?

In an effort to inform Nebraskans about such alternative energy options, the College of Journalism and Mass Communications, along with the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center, received a grant of $12,000 to help Nebraskans learn about and be more familiar with the energy options that exist.

The project, titled Energy and the Future, started in the fall semester of 2007 with researchers from both the journalism college and the policy center. Project plans call for developing a one-hour informational video, a web-based marketing renewable energy and written materials for public distribution.

"It will be fun to watch," Renaud said. "We're excited about it. It's the first time advertising and broadcasting students are working together like this."

He explained that the broadcasting students will work alongside advertising students, learning more about marketing the information they will provide. On the other side, advertising students will learn more about what it takes to capture and edit video.

Abdel-Monem and Struthers both expressed their enthusiasm about the final products. They said Nebraskans will become more knowledgeable about their options, and an important goal will be to increase the attention it deserves. Although the information may not change the behavior of every Nebraskan, it will give people an opportunity to make an informed decision about alternative energy.

According to the policy center, materials are to be finalized and produced in the summer of 2008, before presidential elections in the fall. A key part of this grant is to provide each candidate's views on the issue of alternative energy. Abdel-Monem said the information that surfaces from this issue will help the public make an educated vote choice.