

# Catching up reveals one victory, one broken dream

In the interest of catching up with the lives of a few people whose stories you read about here, I offer these updates. It's a mixed bag.

Janette Nuñez of Greece is a stronger woman now for successfully fighting her employer's ban of Spanish in the workplace.

She's the Highland Hospital housekeeping supervisor who was ducking into closets to give her Spanish-speaking workers assignments and sitting in isolated corners of the cafeteria with her husband so no one would hear them speak their native tongue.

That's because her managers told the housekeeping staff not to speak Spanish after other employees complained in anonymous letters to hospital administrators.

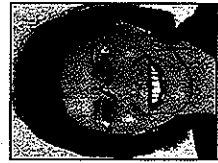
She and other workers took

their case to the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which last summer filed a discrimination lawsuit against the hospital.

This week, the commission reached a settlement with the hospital that awards Nuñez and several other Hispanic employees \$200,000 in damages and attorney fees. The hospital, which admitted no wrongdoing, will clear the records of employees who were disciplined for speaking Spanish. It agreed not to impose any English-only or no-Spanish rules for three years. It will also establish and distribute a nonharassment/nondiscrimination policy within 30 days and train employees in that policy.

Nuñez has worked at the hospital since 1999, and says she hopes to help in that training.

"I'm proud that they (High-



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land) took the step and I want them to know I will be a player on the team to make it a better place to work."

Which is not to say that she doesn't still feel afraid sometimes speaking Spanish to her employees. "I went through so much tension," says Nuñez, who was represented by Dolin, Thomas & Solomon LLP. "But it feels good when you know that what you did is not wrong."

In a recent column on the debate about illegal immigrants, I

reported about the travails of Digno Caminero and his family. Caminero had come to this country with an American wife in 1994, but the relationship ended before his citizenship was finalized.

Over the years, the Dominican Republic native worked while applying and appealing for citizenship. He made a life for himself and his family in Rochester. His family says they were the reason he stayed when a federal judge ordered Caminero to leave the country in 2003.

When I wrote about him in March, Caminero, 45, was sitting at the Federal Detention Center in Batavia. He'd just been arrested on a federal warrant of removal that was issued when he didn't leave.

He has since been deported. The Rev. Lawrence Tracy, who

knew Caminero through the man's volunteer work at St. Michael's Church in the city, says the man was returned to the Dominican Republic on April 18. He's now living with an uncle in Santo Domingo.

He's not likely to see his children anytime soon; it would cost thousands of dollars that the family doesn't have.

"It's just a sad situation," says Tracy. "He's depressed, as is his family."

Members of his Roman Catholic church, where Caminero was president of the fundraising committee, organized church events and scheduled the altar servers, are holding a fundraiser June 17 for the family he left behind.

Theirs is a heartbreaking story of broken ties and broken dreams. The American dream. □