

"She se puede": Future possibilities for Spanish in the U.S. in a Kamala Harris presidency

**Dr. Kim Potowski
The University of Illinois at Chicago**

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During the U.S. Democratic National Convention in August 2024, the Latina actress and activist Eva Longoria gave a short speech supporting Kamala Harris' candidacy, which she concluded as follows:

"As Americans, we're all part of one big family. *Somos familia*. As *familia*, we have to have each other's back. We have to support each other's dreams, because Kamala's success is our success. And she supports us to dream big, too. In the Latino community, we have a saying, '*Sí, se puede*', which means 'Yes, we can'. But tonight, I'm here to tell you, 'Yes, **she** can'. So, we're going to say, '***She se puede***'."

Beyond her clever use of what some call "Spanglish" in the phrase "*She se puede*," what do Longoria's words suggest for the possible future of the Spanish language in the U.S.? Although the U.S. is the nation with the fifth largest Spanish-speaking population in the world (after Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, and Spain) the Spanish language here is both a *minority* language and a *minoritized* language stemming from xenophobic and racist ideologies. This already precarious situation for the intergenerational transmission of Spanish – which is frequently lost among the grandchildren of immigrants – is exacerbated by administrations such as Trump's because the status and treatment of a language depends in large part on the status and treatment of its speakers. This analysis weaves together recent language policies, demographic trends, observations of mainstream media, and national surveys to arrive at a picture of what we might hope for linguistically under an administration that prioritizes the health and wellbeing of Latino communities.