



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*Screeners available upon request*

## **A look at the language immersion movement with *Speaking in Tongues* on KQED's *Truly CA***

Premieres on KQED Public Television 9 on Sunday, September 26 at 6pm

SAN FRANCISCO, September 1, 2010 – News across the country has recently focused on a new education tool: the language immersion program. As young students gain multilingual skills, some argue against the practice, and both sides take their cases to legislative and judicial levels. Go inside the debate and into the classroom with **Speaking in Tongues**, a film by Marcia Jarmel and Ken Schneider, airing as part of KQED's documentary film series **Truly CA** Sunday, September 26 at 6pm on KQED 9.

**Speaking in Tongues** follows four students who come to language immersion programs for very different reasons. Jason, a first generation Mexican American whose parents are not literate in any language, develops professional-level Spanish while mastering English. Durrell is an African American kindergartner whose mother hopes that learning Mandarin will be a way out of economic uncertainty and into possibility. Kelly is a Chinese American recapturing the Cantonese her parents sacrificed to become American. Julian is a Caucasian eighth grader eager to expand his horizons who travels to Beijing to stay with a Mandarin speaking host family. Together, they represent a nexus of challenges facing America today: economic and academic inequities, de facto segregation, record numbers of new immigrants, and the need to communicate across cultures.

While family members both praise and scoff at the children's bilingual education, **Speaking in Tongues** looks at the movement behind the program. Ling-chi Wang, a community activist featured in the film, pioneered efforts to establish multilingual education in the United States, and spearheads an initiative to offer every public school child in San Francisco the opportunity that Jason, Durrell, Kelly, and Julian have. His rallying cry is that the United States is a nation whose linguistic richness is among its greatest assets. Employers need multilingual skills, universities spend millions teaching foreign languages, and our national security apparatus pours millions into teaching "strategic languages." Yet the U.S. Congress routinely considers "English-only" legislation, and 31 states have already passed such laws.

Using a verité story-telling approach, **Speaking in Tongues** follows these four children as they enter the portal of language and open their minds to new ways of thinking and being in the world. In a time of globalization and changing demographics, bilingualism offers them a unique opportunity – but is language immersion a revolution in education, or a temporary experiment?

### **About Truly CA**

Winner of five Northern California Emmy Awards, **Truly CA** is KQED's series of independent documentaries about life in the Golden State. Since 2007, select **Truly CA** films have been presented by KQED to stations throughout California. It airs monthly on Sundays at 6pm on KQED 9. **Truly CA** is a KQED production presented in association with the **Bay Area Video Coalition** and the **San Francisco Film Society**.

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### **About KQED Public Television**

KQED Public Television ([kqed.org](http://kqed.org)), a service of Northern California Public Broadcasting, Inc. (NCPB), is one of the nation's most-watched public television stations. KQED produces local weekly series in high definition, available on Comcast On Demand, including: *QUEST*; *Spark*; *Check, Please! Bay Area* and *This Week in Northern California*; and national series: *Jacques Pépin: More Fast Food My Way* and *Jean-Michel Cousteau: Ocean Adventures*. KQED's digital television channels include 9HD, Life, World, Kids, and V-me, and are available 24/7 on Comcast. Download programs for viewing and video podcasts at [kqed.org](http://kqed.org), featuring unique content on one of the most-visited station sites in public broadcasting.

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