

## ♦ Culture Brokering Case Study: Al and Marta ♦

Marta, a Dominican American bilingual rehabilitation worker in her thirties, has been working with Al, a 55 year-old male, for one year. He is also bilingual but does not always understand Marta even when they converse in Spanish. Al has epilepsy but has not had a seizure in over a year due to new medication. Al is also paralyzed from his waist down as a result of an accident that occurred 2 years ago. He uses a wheelchair and has assistance from his family for personal activities. Al does not particularly like receiving help from his wife and children for such private activities. Additionally, Al's wife and an older daughter work to maintain the household as he refuses support from services and personal care assistants, even though these services are free.

Prior to his accident, Al worked as a maintenance manager in a manufacturing plant. He enjoyed making sure everything was "spotless" and took pride in his job, even though it was hard work. Al really liked to train new janitors. He would say, "If I can't earn money using my head and hands, then I don't deserve it". Al does not want to accept, or live on, public or medical assistance. Marta has been talking to Al about volunteering to young Latino entrepreneurs that want to start their own cleaning business but he is not interested.

When Al was a child in Puerto Rico, his parents practiced "Santeria," an integration of Catholic saints and African demigods, ascribed with miraculous powers. Al's parents thought that "Santeria" could produce a cure for his "fits". Al questions this belief but wonders if his auto accident was due, in part, to his constant skepticism. As head of his household, Al would always lead his family into church every Sunday prior to his accident.

Unfortunately, he currently cannot engage in religious services because his church is not accessible.

Al also participated in some activities sponsored by the Latino Community Center. He liked to socialize with some of the other "old timers" on Friday night. He did help out with special events and fundraisers occasionally. Al has not gone to the Center in almost two years because he feels embarrassed, and feels that he has nothing left to talk about or contribute anymore.

Marta is frustrated because Al does not want to better himself through available volunteer programs, even though others can benefit from his experience. He has kept most of his appointments but he will not accept any ideas or recommendations. Marta thinks Al is depressed and would like to refer him to a psychiatrist. This opinion angers Al who now thinks Marta is telling everyone that he is "loco" or crazy. As he originally thought, these American systems are no good and wasted his time. Even though this young Dominican girl can speak Spanish doesn't mean she knows what's good for him.