Ada: (Music plays) *¡Hola hola!* You are listening to Se Ve Se Escucha, Seen and Heard, a language justice podcast for interpreters, popular educators, parents, kids, and everyone else who interprets. I'm Ada…

Andrea: And I'm Andrea. We're here at the studios of 103.3 Asheville FM in Asheville North Carolina, with our *compas* Manuel and Leonel and today we went to welcome two of our CPC *compas*, Juan Díaz and Erica Johnson.

Ada: ¡Hola hola! ¡Bienvenidos!

Juan: *¿Qué tal?*

Erica: Hey!

Andrea: Welcome!

Ada: Um, so you may have heard us talk a little bit about how we were trained as language justice interpreters at the Highlander Center in Eastern Tennessee, um, and we also came up as organizers at Highlander and that means that we came up as popular educators.

Andrea: Um, and we're so excited to talk about this today because we really think that these practices and traditions of popular education and language justice were born very much in the US South, in the global South, and we have some beautiful stories to share.

Ada: CPC, the Center for Participatory Change, was founded on principles of popular education, and today we have a language justice program—or we call it the Language Justice Circle—we have a Racial Equity Circle, and we have a Popular Education Circle, so Juan and Erica are with the popular education circle. So we wanna start out hearing from you all: what does popular education mean to you?

Erica: Alright, so… popular education, to me, is a way of learning and exchanging information and building collective knowledge that starts with the experiences of the people that are in the room together, and moves through a spiral of phases to get to social action for positive social change, um… so that's—that's what I'll begin with, and we'll add on to it as time goes on through this podcast.

Ada: Grat. Um, so before we get into, like, the popular education circle and you all's programs Seeds of Hope, will you tell us a little bit about yourselves?

Erica: Sure. I'm Erica, I'm a white queer nonbinary person living in Asheville, I've been here about 4 years, and I was introduced to popular education actually as a teenager and I've been kind of exploring that topic, um, into my 20s and now I'm working with Seeds of Hope here.

Juan: (In Spanish, with overlapping English interpretation) Well, I have lived in the United States for approximately 2 1/2 years. I am Mexican, I'm a musician, I have had many experiences with education. I wouldn't say with popular education, but with different areas of knowledge, as well as with different ways of learning and teaching.

Ada: I think that's—when I've been in like pop ed spaces and people are trying to explain pop ed the one that always I feel like lands in my heart is like, we all have something to teach and we all have something to learn. Like, that's how I like to introduce it, and I feel like that's more—like, it clicks—it clicks for folks. Um, so, now tell us about the Popular Education Circle and about Seeds of Hope.

Erica: So the popular education circle is one program that's a part of the Center for Participatory Change, and it's manifested in a lot of different ways over time but, um, the idea is that we're building capacity of popular educators in Western North Carolina. Currently, it's manifesting as a group called Seeds of Hope. So, there's about 15 people, some English speakers, some Spanish speakers, some bilingual folks… that, um, get together, learn about popular education, practice our skills and apply that to youth spaces that are organized in collaboration with other organizers and activists in our area so that, um, when adults are having meetings or organizing, um, kids are engaged on similar topics in ways that are kind of developmentally appropriate and allow them to be a part of the movement as well.

Ada: And, Golden, your kids participate in Seeds of Hope, so I wanted to ask you what Seeds of Hope has meant for—for you as a parent.

Andrea: Yeah, I mean, for me it's been, um, such a blessing for Seeds of Hope to kind of come about, because for so many years, eh, my kids were kind of, uh, growing up within meetings every day, every night, every weekend, um, and one, as a parent, you know, there's some guilt around that, like is—is that quality time for my kids? Um, what, will they look back at their childhood and will they remember, like, "Hey, my mom dragged me to a lot of meetings?" (Ada: aha-aha) And then, on a moment level, feeling some worry that this next generation of organizers, and cultural workers, and healers who could be our children… that maybe we were turning them off to movement work because their experience around movement was so many times like "I—my—yeah, my mom drops me off somewhere, I don't know what my mom's doing." And so, to be able to show up as a family to a space where we can each engage in our own ways and then on the ride home we talked about, "What were you working on? What are you working on?" it feels now more like those movement spaces are for my whole family and I feel less divided, and I feel—um—I feel really grateful for it. And so, like you mentioned, the Seeds of Hope as part of the Popular Education Circle is a group. It creates bilingual spaces, so some of the participants are bilingual, some are monolingual English speakers, some are monolingual Spanish speakers. Can you share with us, like, what is going really well about that, what are you proud about, what is—like, what's shining for you on creating this bilingual space in this popular education work that's really rooted in a practice of language justice?

Erica: You know, one thing that comes up when we're with kids sometimes is that we've got bilingual kids with monolinguals parents, um, and that's an interesting thing for us to navigate, and sometimes it is something that goes really well and other times is really challenging because… we've got popular educators in the room kind of holding the space and facilitating the space, um, who would like to feel empowered speaking the language that they feel most comfortable with, and then we've got, oftentimes, bilingual

kids who, um, when they're in the presence of English speaking monolingual peers are likely to try and speak English the whole time, and so another challenge that we're coming up against is, uh… I think finding ways to keep kids, like, excited about and proud of Spanish speaking in spaces when English is an option. And I—I've seen that in schools where I've worked as well, um, so we try to, um, find ways to kind of partner with organizations that are coming up against some of that same struggles such as Nuestro Centro, who has a summer camp called Raíces, and we saw in that in that summer camp last year that kids kind of would veer to speak in English when given the opportunity, and so it's—we're always trying to recenter Spanish and make sure that that's prioritized in our space.

Andrea: (Music plays) So, we're super excited to be at Raíces today. Raíces is one of our favorite intergenerational popular education spaces.

Kenny: *Mi nombre es Kenny y tengo cinco años.*

Ada: *Y, ¿qué idiomas hablas, Kenny?*

Kenny: *Hmmmm… Uhm… No sé.*

Ada: *¿Hablas español?*

Kenny: *Sí.*

Ada: *¿Hablas inglés?*

Kenny: *Sí.*

Ada: *Ya. Muy bien.*

Cristina: *Mi nombre es Cristina y tengo 6 años.*

Ada: *¿Y qué idiomas hablas, Cristina?*

Cristina: *Inglés*.

Ada: *¿Y? ¿Qué otro idioma?*

Cristina: *Inglés*.

Ada: *Ahá*. *Solo inglés okay.*

Yatziri *Me llamo Yatziri y yo tengo… hm…*

Ada: *¿Cuántos pareces? De… ¿cinco? Ahá. (Laughs)*

Karina: *Mi nombre es Karina y yo tengo 6 años y, am… mi, am… mi, am… es… español y en inglés.*

Neftalí: *Mi nombre es Neftalí mi nombre—me gusta jugar béisbol.*

Andrea: *Muy bien, y ¿cuántos años tienes?*

Neftalí: *Tres.*

Ivonne: My name is Ivonne and I'm 7 years old. Um… Raíces is where you can learn how to speak Spanish.

Christian: My name is Christian, I'm 10 years old. Raíces is… somewhere where, um, you—first of all, talk Spanish and, um, you communicate better, and, um, you—you realize that, um, like, everyday I tell my mom to make me sleep early so that I can come here (Ada and Andrea laugh) like, it's very fun to come here. Uh…

Eduardo: Um… my name is Eduardo, I'm 10 years old, and… since I've been here the longest, I've been here for either 5 or 4 years, because I started in kindergarten. It's basically where—there's 2 groups there's one of dancing like different folk dances and the second is your culture, so we basically talk in Spanish and also learn about, like, the cultures of—uh—of different parts of Mexico.

Andrea: *Muchas gracias. ¿Algo que alguien más quiere agregar?*

Leslie: I'm Leslie and I'm 13 years old. To me, Raíces is like a camp that we teach little kids about racism and what's going on with the world, like, in Mexico, of how all—there's a lot of families over there, of, like, how their lives are. And we do activities here as well.

Andrea: What is interpretation? What does interpretation mean? Anybody have an answer?

Elizabeth: Um, my name is Elizabeth and I am 11 years old, and I think interpretation is when someone is translating or trying to explain something to someone that doesn't quite understand it.

Mariana: Hello, my name is Mariana and I'm 14 years old. To me, interpretation is in a verbal way, where you speak it, and it helps also because we get to communicate better.

Andrea: Great, y'all're so brilliant. Perfect, okay. Um, have any of y'all ever interpreted? And, if so, who have you interpreted for, and what is it like? And if you could tell us your name.

Vanessa: My name is Vanessa, I am 11 years old, and I have interpreted for someone. When I was in 2nd grade, there was this one girl that didn't speak English at all, so I had to explain to her what was going on, because she—she kind of felt a little lost, and I felt good showing her, cause I didn't want her to be lost.

Yaretzi: Um, my name's Yaretzi and I am 11 years old. I interpreted for someone just the other day, uhm, they went to go check out a school and they were giving us a tour of the school and so I had to say everything that they were saying and I had to repeat it into Spanish.

Andrea: Hm, and how did you feel doing that?

Yaretzi: Um, a little nervous, because if you mess up then, like, they won't know what's going on, and, uhm… it's a little stressful, but I also, uhm, I think it's also good for me to interpret for other people because it lets me practice both my English and my Spanish.

Andrea: Great.

Ada: What is it like growing up speaking English and Spanish in North Carolina?

Emily: Uhm, my name's Emily and I'm 10 years old, and… for me, it's kinda like—like, my mom and my family always tells me that, like, I should speak more Spanish, cause if I'm older I'll—uh, I don't wanna forget that language, so like, I—I try—I forget sometimes and—but some—I like to speak English at school cause most people understand me in English, and then I speak English and Spanish at home.

Itzel: My name is Itzel and I'm 8 years old, and, like… I always feel like in Spanish it's alway—at home it's always Spanish, and at school it's always English, so… And, like, whenever I started going to Raíces I thought that we were like, supposed to communicate in English, but then they said that we only have to communicate in Spanish.

Ada: Hm-hmm.

Yoltzin: My name is Yoltzin and I'm 10 years old, and, um… When I was 1, I went to Mexico for 2 years, so when I came here I had no idea how to speak English, so I know what, um… other people feel and how they—like, I understand because I don't know how—they don't—they don't understand English, 'cause I didn't understand English and I—and I got, um, made fun of because of that, and, uh, like, age 6 I learned it and… yeah, it was hard but now, like what Emily said that… Oh yeah sometimes I—they say that speak more Spanish because you can forget it and that HAS happened to me.

Ada: Yeah.

Daniela: My name's Daniela and I'm 11 years old and, um… it's kind of hard living somewhere… eh, well, here in North Carolina, being bilingual because, um… sometimes at school I talk English but at home I have to talk Spanish and I forget some of the stuff (laughs) and, um, it's hard sometimes. I was—when I was smaller I had to go to ESL because I didn't understand, but… it's hard learning another language. But now that I'm bilingual, um, it has helped me a lot, helping my parents and other people.

Ada: And Daniela, do you remember what it was like to, uh, not understand English?

Daniela: Yeah, when I came here to the school, Emma, I'd see all the kids understanding and it was hard for me. And it's even still hard for me the grammar they talk, and math most of the time, uhm, I don't understand some of the words and my mom and me, when we get back home, we, uhm, go in the dictionary and look for a lot of words and it's been really hard.

Yoltzin: Um, sometimes it's really hard because some people feel like if you're at school you have to talk English and if you talk Spanish they tell you, like, "oh this is, like, America," you know? And it's kinda hard because at home is only way you could practice it but at school we should have the opportunity more, and some people don't accept it.

Andrea: Well, thank you all so much for visiting us, um, and we can't wait to share this with you once the program is ready and on the air. *Muchas gracias, compas*. (Music plays)

Erica: In terms of activities that we've done that are specifically around language justice, uhm, I think starting with babies sometimes we're taking, like, common songs in English or Spanish and making up our own lyrics 'cause a part of popular education is being able to speak from your experience so for little-little babies, 3 month old that can't really speak to their experience, we're building experiences that we hope are going to, like, stick with them, and… be beautiful stories that they can share later on, um, so I think it starts with that and then… with older kids, we have had them, like, practice being interpreters with each other before or make up their own languages to share with each other, uhm, we have had them present before like a—a song with simultaneous interpretation and consecutive interpretation… Those are something that come to mind right away.

Ada: I remember that, uhm… once we were doing vocab tree at the practice sessions and so vocab tree is kind of like before you go to an interpreting gig and you know that the topic is going to be popular education, and so you would start writing a glossary. So, what are words that are probably gonna appear? "Participatory action research," "Paulo Freire," "actors—games for actors and nonactors," you know, and so you start writing these words and the—the kids were in another space, Seeds of Hope was in another space and they were doing the same kind of thing like what words come up, and then, like, what words—would—you know, are attached to those words? So it's like a branch and then, like, little branches or leaves that come—come from there, and then what's the equivalent and so that they were like translating the words and so they came up with their vocab trees and it was super cute. And revolutionary! It's like, cute and revolutionary! (All: yeah, yeah) Um, so as popular educators in this space I want to know: what do we love about popular education?

Erica: What I love about a—popular education is that everybody that comes into the room is going to be valued, um, and is going to be trusted. I think it's really important to build spaces where people know that they're going to be heard, um, and valued in that way, and I like that it's also a place where we're challenging each other, and so… in addition to coming and sharing stories we're then adding more information so that we can build an analysis about those patterns that we're seeing coming up in those stories that we're sharing together, uhm and then we're gonna build a community that's strong enough overtime to come up with an action plan and implement something here that's going to better our home, uhm… and we're going to continue building on it.

Juan: (In Spanish, with overlapping English interpretation) For me—it could be the capacity to question what has been written. Many of the things that we learn, or what we learned, at the time were unquestionable there are many things that we had to repeat over and over again, even when they went against our own principles and ideas.

Ada: So I wanna thank both of you for being here today, for joining us, for telling us about your work, about your Circle, about Seeds of Hope… Uhm, yeah*, y con eso nos despedimos*.

Erica: Thanks so much for having us!

Juan: *¡Gracias!*

Ada: Thanks to the studios of 103.3 Asheville FM WSFMLP in Asheville,, North Carolina. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram at seveseescucha, or on Twitter at svsepodcast. Email us at svsepodcast@gmail.com.

Andrea: On behalf of Manuel de la Luz of Mente Visual Films, Leonel Gutiérrez of GBD Productions and Andrea Golden and Ada Volkmer of the Center for Participatory Change, thanks for listening.

Ada: This episode produced by Mente Visual Films and GBD Productions. Music by Combo Chimbita. (Music plays)