

## **Isabel Frammer, Language Access Consultants, LLC Initiatives and Achievements – Highlights\***

### **Profession:**

National expert engaged in policy development, training law enforcement, interpreters and the judiciary, and program design

Oregon and Tennessee Court Certified Spanish/English Interpreter, utilizing my natural abilities, cultural heritage, and extensive training and experience

### **A) Ohio Certification**

In 1996, as I started in the judiciary interpreting profession, I contacted the Ohio Supreme Court for some guidance. What I discovered was a state that had not dealt with the issue. Back then, Ohio had a small LEP population so courts in our state had little or no interaction with LEP's. After a couple of years of educating myself on the proper role and ethics of the judiciary interpreter and discussing the subject with my local judges and our Supreme Court, I started on my one woman crusade to educate the judiciary, including defense and prosecution attorneys, law enforcement, interpreters, and the public in general on the importance of having qualified and eventually certified interpreters. Fortunately, I had a willing ear in Chief Justice Moyer. I served on his Interpreter Services Subcommittee of the Racial Fairness Implementation Task Force and currently serve on the Supreme Court of Ohio's Advisory Committee on Interpreter Services and chair its subcommittee on Rules and Policies. Through these efforts, we have produced a handbook and bench card for judges on how to properly work with interpreters as well as a video for all those that work in the judicial system. And finally during 2009 we will have Ohio's roll out of Rules of Superintendence, ethics and certification of judiciary interpreters.

### **B) Expert Witness**

Since I am a "passionate perfectionist," after discovering I did everything wrong on my first court interpreting assignment (although not proud of it, thank God it was a minor misdemeanor) I decided if this was to be my "profession" then I needed to learn everything there was to know about our ethics, the proper role of the judiciary interpreter and our legal system (I drove my attorney husband crazy picking his brain). I joined professional associations, attended continuing education and had many, many discussions with judges, two of which became

my mentors. Through this process I became one of less than a hand full of judiciary interpreters willing to consult on appellate cases, and then if necessary, testify as an expert witness. Through review of taped hearings and party interviews, I am able to assess if there has been proper protocols followed, translation and interpreter errors, and whether these actions have impacted justice in a particular case. Although I cannot (and do not) practice law, courts recognize me as an expert witness and have allowed me to testify as to legal issues concerning interpreter matters. My consults have varied from a murder involving a juvenile, to several alleged murder cases involving a self defense defense, to a young Guatemalan girl accused of killing her premature baby. I have worked with the Mexican government on a Vienna Convention question and ineffective Miranda and helped prepare an appellate attorney with a presentation to the Indiana Supreme Court. With the exception of the Indiana case, all resulted in reduced charges, reversals, or dismissed cases and perhaps most importantly, justice was done.

### **C) Summit/Lorain Project, Model Policy for Law Enforcement Working with Interpreters**

One of my most important initiatives and achievements I'm most proud of is The Summit/Lorain Project. After years of judiciary interpreting assignments, consults, and trainings, one area of concern presented itself over and over, the improper use of interpreters in the law enforcement area. I came to realize that as the first point of contact with a LEP individual, if law enforcement "got it wrong" then the whole case was in jeopardy. Equal access to our justice system is dependent on law enforcement's recognition of this nexus. With this recognition in mind I approached Sheriff Drew Alexander, Summit County, Ohio and Chief Celistino Rivera, City of Lorain, Ohio to become my Co-Chairs on the Project. We recruited some of the best interpreter experts in the country, U.S. DOJ personnel, prosecutors, attorneys, and law enforcement to join the committee. After surveying many law enforcement agencies around the country, we confirmed that there was no uniform policy established (even by the largest of law enforcement departments) on the proper use of interpreters by law enforcement. We spent hours and hours with cops determining all the scenarios they encounter and developing the best use of interpreters to match the situation. The end result, in 2004, was our model policy, The Summit/Lorain Project. We have freely disseminated the document to Homeland Security, to DOJ, to Senators and Representatives, numerous national advocates, to local law enforcement around the country and I'm happy to say that for the first time many law enforcement agencies are now better protecting their officers, the public, and the justice system through the use of this booklet.

## **D) “I Speak Booklet”**

One offshoot of The Summit/Lorain Project was the “I Speak Booklet.” It is interesting that sometimes, a passing idea can become a big solution. The Summit County Sheriff’s Office proposed creating a booklet with language Identification (“I speak Farsi,” etc.) and descriptive graphics, for use by on-the-scene police officers. After researching the area and discovering there had been some work done in this area, we decided that a more comprehensive booklet would be of great benefit to all Law Enforcement around the country. By partnering with Ohio Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) for funding to publish the booklet, I sent out a request for translations from NAJIT and ATA members, giving all that could an opportunity to be part of this project. The end result was a comprehensive pocket booklet for use by law enforcement officers on the scene in the identification of a person’s language. Today, the OJP has taken over the printing and this very handy tool has been disseminated across the country and around the world. It was also used during Hurricane Katrina.

## **E) CCIO, NAJIT, and ATA**

When I first embarked on my career of judiciary interpreting, I discovered that without an employer, the typical independent contractor interpreter was pretty much on their own. Learning the “how to’s” of the profession, its ethics, even figuring out the proper word to use in a given situation, was extremely difficult. So in 2000, I co-founded and became the first President of Community and Court Interpreters of the Ohio Valley (CCIO). In my position as President until 2005 and as an Advisor to the Board after, I guided the association in its early years to become a true asset for the interpreter in our geographic region. Through networking and seminars, CCIO has helped improve the level of interpreters and the quality of interpretation throughout our region. I also learned early on that if I wanted to make a difference, becoming active in our national associations was a must. I chaired NAJIT’s Publications and Position Papers Sub-committee, chaired NAJIT’s Advocacy Committee. In 2003 I was elected to the Board and then in 2007 became the Chairman of NAJIT. I also served on the ATA Public Relations Committee as liaison between NAJIT and ATA, helping to forge bonds between the interpreter and translator communities. I know this work has improved me as an interpreter and I hope my contributions have helped to improve the quality of the judiciary interpreter in our country.

## **F) CLE, Law Enforcement, and Interpreter Presentations**

This area of my work is in some ways a natural for me. I have always had a passion for the law. Since I am a bilingual who loves the law, becoming a

judiciary interpreter was a good fit. Teaching judges and attorneys, however, can be somewhat intimidating and I must admit, when I first started teaching continuing legal education I was nervous. Of course, what I found out was they do not teach “this stuff” in law school or in judges’ orientation and that the vast majority of judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys want all the information they can get because they too respect and love the law. Some twelve years later I have taught across the country on various topics concerning interpreters and the legal system. Although law schools still are not teaching the proper use of interpreters in the legal system, more and more local bar associations are presenting CLE opportunities and many court systems are incorporating the proper use, role, and ethics of the interpreter into orientation for new judges. I also train interpreters, sometimes for a court system, sometimes for state sponsored certification classes, sometimes for interpreter associations. Recently I co-created and am the lead instructor of a 21 hour interpreter training called “The Language of Justice.” And lastly, I teach law enforcement how to properly work with interpreters along with “survival Spanish” for the Cop on the street.

## **G) Government Entities Work**

On the State level, I have worked with the Supreme Court of Ohio on various committees for the past 12 years on the design and implementation of Ohio’s Certification of Judiciary Interpreters Program. I have also worked with Ohio Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) on various projects including the providing of concept, recruitment and quality control of the “I Speak” booklet for law enforcement, and the development and teaching of a statewide training for law enforcement, “Working with Interpreters and Basic Survival Spanish.” On the federal level, I provided concept, recruitment and an action plan to the National Virtual Translation Center (NVTC) for a national data base of professional interpreters for use during a national emergency. I also provided consulting services to the U.S. DOJ, Civil Rights Division, on the production of a Title VI LEP video and was a content reviewer on their Tips n Tools LEP document and other documents.

## **H) Body of Publications**

Just as I prefer interpreting (oral) work over translating (written) work, I prefer imparting information through speaking, not writing. O.K., I hate writing! The fact of the matter is, however, that one can reach many more people through publishing articles than through a speaking engagement to 50 or 100 people. As I became more successful in my profession, I started receiving requests to write articles on particular legal interpreting issues and as I am sure you might guess, the more I wrote the more requests I received. The following is a list of some of my more notable writings:

Interpreting the Interpreter: What Every LAV Attorney and Advocate Needs To Know About Legal Interpretation Office on Violence Against Women, News letter: The LAPTOP Update Winter 2006

Interpreters as Officers of the Court: Scope and Limitations of Practice Proteus, the News Letter of The National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators Vol XIV, Nos. 2 Summer 2005 Seattle, Washington.

Getting it Right by Doing it Right: Mile Markers Along the Road Across the Linguistic Divide Handout provided by Isabel Framer for the Federal Interagency LEP Working Group, Washington, and D.C. July 2003

Suggested Guide for Interpreted Proceedings  
The Advocate: KY DPA's Journal of Criminal Justice Education and Research, Volume 23, No. 3 May 2001.

Through the Eyes of an Interpreter  
The Advocate: KY DPA's Journal of Criminal Justice Education and Research, Volume 23, No. 3 May 2001.

Interpreters and Their Impact on the Criminal Justice System: The Alejandro Ramirez Case Proteus, The News Letter of The National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators Vol IX, Nos.1 and 2 Winter-Spring 2000

Interpreters and Their Impact on the Criminal Justice System: Working with Interpreters, an on going curriculum for judges and law enforcement.

Co-author of the "Court and Language Nexus" a 34-hour interpreter training course.

Lead Author of the "The Language of Justice" a 21-hour interpreter training course funded by the DC Bar Association in Collaboration with Ayuda Inc., a legal service provider.

Co-author of various NAJIT Position Papers and Advocacy letters.

Co-author of "The Summit/Lorain Project," Model Policy for Law Enforcement Working with Interpreters.

## **I) Wrap Up**

I do less courtroom interpreting these days but I still love being in the courtroom with the judge, attorneys, defendant, bailiff, court reporter...I guess you could say I just love the law. As I moved into more and more consulting and training work my husband said to me that I really needed to quit treating my business as a

hobby. He was right of course. I am still, however, driven by my passion for the law and helping make sure justice is served. The business side just follows along. One of my continuing goals is to help complete certification in Ohio (we are almost there), but my most important goals are to establish national standards and policy for interpreters for emergency preparedness and response and to help our Government establish a single hub that all federal and state government agencies can tap into that provides certified, professionally qualified and trained interpreters. My passion continues to drive me, so my work and goals are not yet complete.

\* For a complete listing of Isabel's publications, work experience and expertise, please visit her website at [www.languageaccess.us](http://www.languageaccess.us).