Making English Official

In communities across the United States, people wrestle with which languages to use and who gets to decide. Despite more than sixty-seven million US residents using a language other than English at home, over half of the states in the United States have successfully passed English-only policies. Drawing on archives and interviews, this book tells the origin story of the English-only movement, as well as the stories of contemporary language policy campaigns in four Maryland county governments, giving a rare glimpse into what motivates the people who most directly shape language policy in the United States. It demonstrates that English-only policies grow from more local levels, rather than from nationalist ideologies, where they are downplayed as harmless community initiatives, but result in monolingual approaches to language remaining increasingly pervasive. This title is part of the Flip it Open program and may also be available as Open Access. Check our website, Cambridge Core, for details.

KATHERINE S. FLOWERS is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. She specializes in language policy, writing studies, and the English language.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 13 Nov 2026 at 01:27:46, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009278058

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 13 Nov 2026 at 01:27:46, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009278058

Making English Official

Writing and Resisting Local Language Policies

Katherine S. Flowers

University of Massachusetts Lowell

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 13 Nov 2026 at 01:27:46, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009278058

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009278027

DOI: 10.1017/9781009278058

© Katherine S. Flowers 2024

This work is in copyright. It is subject to statutory exceptions and to the provisions
of relevant licensing agreements; with the exception of the Creative Commons version
the link for which is provided below, no reproduction of any part of this work may
take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

An online version of this work is published at doi.org/10.1017/9781009278058
under a Creative Commons Open Access license CC-BY-NC 4.0 which permits
re-use, distribution and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial purposes
providing appropriate credit to the original work is given. You may not
distribute derivative works without permission. To view a copy of this license, visit
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

All versions of this work may contain content reproduced under license from third
parties. Permission to reproduce this third-party content must be obtained from these
third-parties directly. When citing this work, please include a reference to the
DOI 10.1017/9781009278058

First published 2024

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Flowers, Katherine S., author.
Title: Making English official : writing and resisting local language
policies / Katherine S. Flowers, University of Massachusetts Lowell.
Description: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge
University Press, 2024. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2023028335 | ISBN 9781009278027 (hardback) | ISBN 9781009278058 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Language policy – United States. | English-only movement – United States.
Classification: LCC P119.32.U6 F58 2024 | DDC
306.442/21073–dc23/eng/20231023
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2023028335

ISBN 978-1-009-27802-7 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-009-27803-4 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
remain, accurate or appropriate.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 13 Nov 2026 at 01:27:46, subject to the
Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009278058