

21ST ANNUAL GOVERNOR'S LECTURE  
IN THE HUMANITIES

9.27.16

7:30 P.M.

LIED CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS  
FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



HUMANITIES NEBRASKA

FEATURING  
PULITZER PRIZE WINNER  
SONIA NAZARIO

ENRIQUE'S  
JOURNEY  
AND  
AMERICA'S IMMIGRATION  
DILEMMA

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### TOPIC 1: IMMIGRATION

Sonia Nazario wrote “Enrique’s Journey” to create more awareness about the issues that make immigration a very complex challenge. In the process, she compares and contrasts Enrique’s tale with interviews and stories of other immigrants and the many institutions they encounter on their journeys.

By the end of the book, Nazario has shown

a spotlight on the immigration. She talks about how immigration affects families, communities, the economy, and various institutions like public schools.

Each of the people featured in the book have a great deal at stake. The communities they live in also are greatly affected by these immigration issues.

1. The Pew Hispanic Center estimated that in 2012 there were more than 11 million unauthorized immigrants in the United States. Are you aware of immigrants in your community?
2. How and when did your own family come to the United States? How was your family’s journey similar to Enrique’s? How was it different?
3. During Enrique’s travels, acts of kindness come from both likely and unlikely places. Which particularly stood out to you?
4. What do some immigration observers mean when they say the United States has a “schizophrenic immigration policy”?
5. Why might immigrants feel as if their identity is threatened when they move to a new place? Why might residents feel as if their identity is threatened when immigrants move into their community?
6. What motivates Enrique to stay in the United States? What things make him wish to return to Honduras?
7. Immigrants often come to the United States with hope for a better life. What do you think defines a “better life”? What chance do Enrique’s children have for one?

## TOPIC 2: FAMILY

Lourdes was attempting to be a responsible mother by traveling to the U.S. for work, but the kids suffer from the separation. Their idea of what it means to be a family becomes jaded. Everyone feels a sense of loss.

To fill the void, each person tries to create a substitute family structure, often a very unhealthy one. Enrique feels abandoned again when his father starts another family.

Meanwhile, Lourdes creates a new family of her own in the U.S. Enrique's solution is to start his own family with his girlfriend. When he asks Maria Isabel to join him on his journey, he risks repeating the cycle of abandonment with his own daughter.

When Enrique and Lourdes are finally reunited, they find it difficult to act as son and mother because of so much resentment.

1. Does it surprise you to learn that so many women and children take this dangerous odyssey to the United States? Do their motivations make sense to you?
2. How do Enrique and Belky's lives diverge after their mother leaves?
3. What does Enrique expect from his mother once he has found her? How does the reunion between Enrique and Lourdes compare to their expectations? To your own expectations?
4. What facets of Enrique's life influence his resentment toward Lourdes after he arrives in North Carolina? How do his experiences affect his growth into young adulthood?

## TOPIC 3: POVERTY

To spare her children from the same life of poverty she had lived, Lourdes sees no other option than to abandon them an attempt to find a better life in the U.S. Enrique makes a similar choice himself, leaving his daughter.

However, one of the book's interesting counterpoints is the reminder that the U.S.

contains its own threat of poverty. Lourdes works a series of menial jobs that disappear frequently, and Enrique struggles to find gainful employment. As noted in the afterword, the desire to escape poverty forces families to make very difficult decisions that are ultimately not in their best interest.

1. Is poverty a legitimate reason to risk illegal immigration? What would you do if you found yourself in the same situation Lourdes was in?
2. How do Lourdes' and Enrique's perception of the riches to be found in the U.S. compare to the reality? How does their satisfaction with the U.S. compare to yours?
3. Due to a lack of education, Lourdes must work low-paying jobs, which means she must rely on government agencies to make ends meet. What impact does this have on the effectiveness of the government programs? What other solutions are available to immigrants?



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