

The novel Enrique's Journey, written by Sonia Nazario, is truly an eye-opening story about a young boy named Enrique who fights his way on the tops of trains from his home in Honduras to the United States in order to be with his mother. Enrique's story reveals a lot about the struggles immigrants face in their journey to the United States, many of which we, as Americans, are completely unaware. Along with revealing the personal side of illegal immigration, the novel also gave a greater meaning to two of the Gustavus Core Values: Community and Justice.

In many ways, the novel Enrique's Journey is very much a social commentary on the varying understandings of justice as perceived by different cultures and communities. For instance, the United States' idea of justice is very clear. We have a strong, sturdy and clear set of laws with which our government runs our country. The officers who enforce the law are understood to uphold the laws with fairness and equality. However, as shown through Enrique's Journey, the judicial systems in many of the Central American countries through which Enrique traveled are not as reliable as ours. Some of the governments have law officials who are supportive and helpful towards the immigrants, such as the Grupo Beta Sur officers in Chiapas. One of the Grupo Beta Sur officers, Julio Cesar Cancino Galvez, "...recalls how a group of about thirty migrants at the Tapachula train station asked him why the authorities weren't clamping down on the gangsters. Cancino told them they needed witnesses. He urged the migrants to step forward and report abuses," (Nazario 84). However, throughout Enrique's journey north, he and the other migrants encountered many more unlawful police than lawful police. At train stops throughout the journey, police would catch the migrants, rob them, beat them, and often times threaten to deport them if they could not pay a large amount of money, thus blackmailing the migrants for their own personal gain. Train conductors often witness these encounters. One conductor says, "...the officers, fifteen at a time, stop the trains. They grab fleeing migrants by their shirts. The conductor has heard them say, 'If you move, I'll kill you. I'll break you in two.' Then, 'Give us what you've got, or we send you back,' ..." (87). The corrupt justice systems, such as these, differ largely from

the United States' system of justice. Through these encounters experienced by Enrique, the readers gain a better understanding of how justice is not viewed the same in all countries and cultures.

Justice can also be defined as the act of doing what is "just", "fair" or "right" according to one's moral beliefs. In this sense of the word, Enrique's journey opens the reader's eyes to what children such as Enrique hold as their own moral beliefs, in order for the reader to better understand the reasoning behind the willingness of these children to face death in order to reach America. Though Enrique's travels atop trains are in no way legal according to the law, nor is his journey into the United States, Enrique is doing what is right according to his moral beliefs. For most Central American people, more so than Americans, family is the most important aspect of life. Families are strong and reliant on each other. For Enrique, not only is the aspect of family extremely important, but the desire to be with his mother is stronger than any other desire he has ever had. It is important to Enrique to find his mother no matter what the cost, and he does just that. All in all, the novel Enrique's Journey brings to light the debate of what "justice" truly is, and reveals that in reality there is no universal idea of justice. Instead, what is believed to be just and fair is all a matter of perception according to the personal beliefs of the individual and the culture.

Another core value at Gustavus Adolphus College is "Community." This value is a strong theme in the novel Enrique's Journey. The strength of community in Central America is shown strongly through Enrique's various travels. In the United States, at least from my perspective, a sense of community is strong to a certain degree, but after reading Enrique's Journey, I believe that our sense of community is nowhere near as strong as those in Central American countries, such as Honduras. In Honduras, when Enrique's mother leaves for America, the rest of Enrique's extended family steps in to raise him and his sister Belky. As Enrique travels on top of trains through the northern countries of Central America, he bonds with the other migrants, and they watch out for each other as much as possible. Back home, in

Honduras, when Enrique's girlfriend, María Isabel, gives birth to their daughter Jasmín, she is helped by not only her family, but others in the community, in raising Jasmín. María Isabel lives with her aunt and takes care of the children at home while her aunt works. When she receives money from Enrique, she uses it to help pay for her aunt's household expenses, to support her daughter, and also to support her mother. The strong sense of community and family felt in Honduras not only follows Enrique on the trains, but also follows Lourdes, Enrique's mother, all the way to America. In America, Lourdes lives with other illegal immigrants, crammed into a small apartment or trailer. However, the other immigrants she lives with become like a family to her, and all are dependent on each other. They eat meals together and depend on each other for financial help. This supportive community of Central American countries is felt in every aspect of Enrique's journey, and has shown me how important it is to have a strong and loving community support system.

The novel Enrique's Journey is an intriguing and captivating story that truly revealed to me the personal hardships immigrants such as Enrique are willing to endure in order to reach the United States. It is nearly impossible for me to understand the heartbreak that Enrique endured before finding his mother, and this novel was a true eye-opener to the struggles so many children are willing to face in order to reunite with their parents. Enrique's Journey also taught me key lessons about the diverse ideas of justice and the importance of community, which are two of Gustavus' core values. Overall, Enrique's Journey was an enriching novel that helped me gain a better understanding of the concept of illegal immigration, through the eyes of a young Honduran boy on a desperate journey to find his mother.