

Library

Moraine Valley Community College

Democracy Commitment

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Latino Americans

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One Book One College 2015-2016

One Book Text: José Angel N.'s *Illegal: Reflections of an Undocumented Immigrant*

(available in the Library or MVCC Bookstore)

José Ángel N. courageously shares his world even though he cannot share his full name. His story takes us through wretched tunnels on the Mexico/U.S. border, to the back rooms of restaurants, to basic reading and math courses at Moraine Valley, and to corporate America. But mostly, his story takes us on an up close and personal exploration of the emotional turmoil and contradictions involved with living as an undocumented immigrant in the United States. Through hard work, José Ángel N. found his American dream but is not able to fully embrace its benefits.

As a former Moraine Valley student, José Ángel N.'s story hits close to home for us. He is an example of the power of education, but also an example the difficulties presented by the economics and government policies of both Mexico and the United States. As a trained philosopher, he is willing to take a deep dive in the hidden meanings of a world that physically exists in America but conceptually exists in a nether world that is not Mexican or American.

[Listen to José Angel N.'s "The Jaguar's Path," a selection from the book *Illegal*.](#)

Program Themes

Undocumented Immigration in the U.S.

José Ángel N.'s story presents us with the complexities of undocumented immigration in the U.S. This book presents an opportunity to discuss the realities around this hot-button topic. What are the causes and implications of undocumented

immigration in the U.S.? Why do people leave their home countries? How do those on both sides of this debate view the issue and, more importantly, how do we seek solutions?

Immigration, Acculturation, and Belonging

The United States is a country of immigrants. Immigration has been viewed as the source of our cultural richness, but historically, the immigrant experience has not been an easy road. How do new groups find their place in U.S. society? How do sociologists and historians view the immigrant experience? How does the U.S. immigrant experience vary from experiences in other countries?

Race, Class, and the Immigrant Experience

The experience of immigrants to the U.S. is deeply connected to race, country of origin, and socio-economic status. José Ángel N. fearlessly addresses some of the stereotypes held against Mexican immigrants. He does this in a personal and honest way. Immigrant stereotypes have been an issue whether the focus was on Japanese-Americans in World War II, Irish Immigrants at the end of the 19th Century, or Chinese immigrants working on railroad lines in the West. Discussing immigration weaves together complex issues relating to race and class.

Academic Advising and Career Selection

José Ángel N. discusses his wandering path through higher education. He expresses his joys and frustrations at navigating this system. Clearly, higher education enriched his life, but he also expresses frustrations at several places along his journey. What resources help guide us on our college journey? Who has the responsibility for guiding us on this journey?

Civic Engagement and Participating in Community Life

In the book, José Ángel N. reveals that he feels disconnected from the larger society around him. He expresses frustration in not having a voice in elections and being able to participate in his community. Civic engagement is something that many Americans take for granted. Election turnouts and public attendance at local government meetings are often low. How do we instill the value of civic engagement in our students? How can students become more engaged so that their voices can be heard?

Political Polarization in the United States

Immigration is one of many topics that deeply divides our country. We live in a time where the sides of the political spectrum seem to be moving apart. The ideological divides fall along not only political lines but also cultural and economic lines. How serious are these divides? Are they better or worse than in the past? How can we set up situations that bridge these divides?

The Value of Philosophy and the Humanities

In the book, José Ángel N. can be excited about studying philosophy in one breath and then frustrated about the career directions it offers in the next breath. What skills do degrees in humanities such as philosophy provide? In what directions can the rigorous thought learned through philosophy and humanities be applied?

Secondary Book Choices

American Born Chinese by Gene Luen Yang (graphic novel)

Library Journal review: A National Book Award finalist and ALA's Printz Award winner, this fable stars the mythological Monkey King, realistic youngster Jin Wang of Taiwanese parentage, and TV sitcom teen Danny. All three are dogged by an unwanted identity and humiliated by others' prejudice. The Monkey King trains to be a god but is unceremoniously bounced out of heaven and urged by "he who is" (the great god) to be what he is: a monkey. Jin tries to be accepted and romance a fellow student but gets picked on by classmates. Danny does well with friends until Chinese cousin Chin-Kee, a biting funny bundle of racist stereotypes, makes his annual visit and behaves so offensively that Danny must change

schools. Finally, the three stories suddenly merge, to center on Jin coming to terms with his minority experience and moving beyond his own fear and hostility. Coalescence comes almost too quickly, but the trivision approach and treatment are unique and moving. The art is simple, colorful, and both attractive and effective.

Enrique's Journey: The True Story of a Boy Determined to Reunite with His Mother Delacorte by Nazario, Sonia

Kirkus Reviews summary: 2003 Pulitzer Prize-winning author Nazario's critically acclaimed book *Enrique's Journey*, a heart-wrenching account of one young man's journey to migrate illegally from Honduras to the United States to find the mother who left when he was 5, has been newly adapted for young people. Nazario's vividly descriptive narrative recreates the trek that teenage Enrique made from Honduras through Mexico on the tops of freight trains. This adaptation does not gloss over or omit the harrowing dangers--beatings, rape, maiming and murder--faced by migrants coming north from Central America. The material is updated to present current statistics about immigration, legal and illegal, and also addresses recent changes in the economic and political climates of the U.S., Mexico and Honduras, including the increased danger of gang violence related to drug trafficking in Mexico. The book will likely inspire reflection, discussion and debate about illegal immigration among its intended audience. But the facts and figures never overwhelm the human story. The epilogue allows readers who are moved by Enrique to follow the family's tragedies and triumphs since the book's original publication; the journey does not end upon reaching the United States. Provides a human face, both beautiful and scarred, for the undocumented--a must-read.

About the One Book Program

For thousands of years, humans have used stories to communicate knowledge about the world. Stories provide contexts for our understanding of facts, emotions, discoveries, history, relationships, and all kinds of human interaction.

For this reason, the Moraine Valley Library and the Moraine Valley Bookstore invite all members of the community to come together to discuss a selected story in the One Book, One College program. Join us as we share knowledge across disciplines, exchange new ideas on useful topics, and enrich our curriculum in new ways.

For more information, contact us at (708) 974-5709 or swanson@morainevalley.edu.

Previous One Book, One College Selections:

- Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (2004)
- Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2005-2006)
- George Orwell's *1984* (2006-2007)
- *The Autobiography of Malcolm X as Told to Alex Haley* (2007-2008)
- Elizabeth Royte's *Garbage Land* (2008-2009)
- Studs Terkel's *Working* (2009-2010)
- Rebecca Skloot's *The Immoral Life of Henrietta Lacks* (2010-2011)
- Roxanna Saberi's *Between Two Worlds* (2011-2012)
- Tony Horwitz's *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (2012-2013)
- Max Brooks' *World War Z: The Oral History of the Zombie War* (2013-2014)