Student Exemplar

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A Powerful Stream

Sonia Nazario’s piece, *Enrique’s Journey*, thoroughly depicts the hardships that come with modern day immigration and the issues that can stem from a single decision. In her book, Nazario writes that immigration “is a powerful stream...that can only be addressed at its source” (Nazario xxv). She uses the metaphor of a stream or river to illustrate the gradual escalation of complications that can arise from immigration and the choice of pursuing a greater future in the United States. Just like a river, a majority of the force behind immigration currently has developed through several minor justifiable situations that create a widespread consequence. Immigration is a vicious cycle stemmed from a lack of love and economic stability within Latino culture and therefore, Nazario speaks volumes as she analyzes why immigration is a topic that needs to dealt with at its source.

Despite the fact that there are multiple “sources” that motivate others to migrate to the US, one cannot deny the substantial amount of migrations made with the love of family as a key motivator. *Enrique’s Journey* sheds light on the influx of single Latino mothers crossing the border in order to find work to support the family the left behind. Nazario seems to synthesize the effects of this kind of immigration when she says “separations almost always end badly” (Nazario xxv). What most commonly occurs is that once a child is abandoned they look to “find love and esteem elsewhere, by getting pregnant, marrying early, or joining gangs” (Nazario 191). As this type of resentment builds within the loved ones left behind, they begin to develop the viewpoint that reuniting with those who left them is the only way they could possibly get better. In Enrique’s case, he firmly believed “only his mother can help him” out of his drug issues and violent outbursts and to find his mother would be “deliverance itself” (Nazario 42, 7).

However, when one makes a migration there are several consequences that often lead to a downward spiral of the migrant and the loved ones they left behind. This is where the vicious cycle of immigration gains its momentum. This is best exemplified when Lourdes left Enrique, then Enrique left his own family behind and then Enrique’s girlfriend, Maria Isabel, willingly offers to leave her own child behind in order to migrate. This proves the insensitivity one can develop towards leaving their own family after they have been abandoned countless times before. For example, despite the hours Maria Isabel spends crying over Enrique leaving her, without a second thought she says “if I have to opportunity [to migrate to the United States], I’ll go...I’ll even leave my baby behind” (Nazario 196).

Nazario’s work puts a direct emphasis on the many motivations migrants have and hints that elimination of these motivations could be the solution to decreasing the amount of illegal migrations made each year. It is made evident that immigration would indeed best be addressed at its source, by making conditions better in a potential migrants’ homeland in order to stop their motivations to leave entirely. Organizations such as Heifer International and the Grameen Foundation work to help improve the quality of life within foreign countries by supplying direct aid to people in need. For example, Heifer International provides educational training to the impoverished in other nations to show them how to make better lives for themselves and handle their finances wisely. A key feature all these organization share is their focus on improving the quality of life for others within their own countries and showing them that migration is not the only option and that they can flourish within their own nation.

Sonia Nazario eloquently writes of the cruel, endless cycle of immigration and gives substantial evidence to prove immigration would best be addressed at its source. The momentum behind immigrants is almost too strong to effectively stop once they have committed to crossing the border; as Nazario puts it, “no number of border guards will deter children like Enrique, who are willing to endure so much to reach the United States” (Nazario xxv). In order to address the “stream” of immigration, we must indeed look to its source; the poor living conditions within the nations these migrants come from. Organizations such as Heifer International and the Grameen Foundation do just that, by offering support to improve home life for the many suffering in impoverished nations. In order to decrease immigration rates, we must give them a better incentive to stay and prosper within their own country by showing them their possibilities to prosper.

Nazario, Sonia. *Enrique's Journey*. New York: Random House, 2006. Print.