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Paige V. Lindley

St. Catherine University, pvlindley@stkate.edu

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THE MANY BIRDS OF PASSAGE: A CULTURAL SELF STUDY OF IMMIGRATION THEN AND NOW

by

Paige Victoria Lindley

A Senior Project in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Honors Program

ST. CATHERINE UNIVERSITY

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The Many Birds of Passage:

A Cultural Self Study on Immigration Then and Now

Setting: *All characters are all dressed in black, each with one different accent piece to represent their character. They will sit or stand depending upon the emotion of their monologue. The stage itself may have a table, depending on the stage and props available, they are merely scattered in different places throughout the stage or sitting on the stairs leading up to the stage itself. The play begins with a brief introduction to explain the nature of the monologues.*

Introduction: The following is a documentary-drama based upon real stories and true accounts. It is taken from testimonies I heard personally during time spent in Mexico, immigrants with whom I have spoken, as well as literature I have read throughout the process of my research. It represents a variety of emotions and feelings expressed by people from various generations who all bring different experiences. It is not at all an attempt to represent each immigrant's experience. My desire is to represent the stories that I have read and heard by delivering them with the power and impact with which they were given to me. I would therefore like to warn you that because of my desire to stay true to the experiences, some of the content may cause strong emotions. In order to stay true to culture, I chose this method of presentation as myths and stories are believed to hold great transformative power. This power can create a greater environment of understanding, knowledge, and truth. In this spirit, may there be an openness to the cultural experience about to be had.

Part 1: Decisions (Male-Alex Arias)

(A dejected adolescent boy sits on the stairs. He appears to be kicking his foot in the sand and dirt. His voice is lost, full of fear and confusion. It is clear that he is battling with making very

difficult decisions. He is even very angry at times and is overall frustrated with the situation in which he finds himself.)

Alone; my reality; my home; a place that people run from; through obligation; fear; hope.

Mostly desperation; a lot of desperation.

Long gone are the celebrations de los *Santos*, the altars for the Virgin de Guadalupe. Long gone are the clothes pins to hang damp clothing on the line and the intoxicating perfume of fresh *tamales en la casa de mi tía*. *Mole?* Oh man, my ancestors sure knew how to cook: the secret recipe, that combo of 30 plus ingredients. The memory exists but I can no longer taste the incomparable flavor. *Mi cultura tratando de sobrevivir*. Is my culture even alive? I look around and I see a dried up deserted desert where *mi pueblo, mi Corazon*, once thrived.

I go on living in this place. The scent of decay plagues me. Bodies of my people, sacrifices for the ignorant pot and coke heads, using, to escape the pain, to have a fun unremembered night, without even so much as a thought to the pain suffered by *mi gente*. I hear the sweat dripping and landing on the dry cracked earth as it rolls off the backs of *mis mojados*. The bullets whiz by my ears as they pierce the chests of the innocent, or los *narcotraficantes*. Having to make the impossible decision of killing others, or suffering and dying because of the lack of opportunities and jobs available to survive in their own country. I smell the dust as the cement walls of my mothers' *tienda de tortillas* are broken down by the newer and the better. The cheaper option. All to be replaced by that one of a kind, oh so cultural and unique, McDonalds. In my heart and mind, there is a constant weight and debate: the need to leave to try and seek something greater, but the want to stay.

Where does the power and control lie? *Estos pendejos. Nuestras manos están amarradas.* Our hands are tied. Our presence in that country has been based upon convenience. Let us not forget the whole Mexican American war which began in 1846 and didn't end until the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed in 1848. What was lost in this war? Dignity, lives, and more than half of Mexico's territory. Then they were stuck with what to do with the people left behind as the border crossed them. These 'new' Mexican Americans. Yeah, half of that country used to be Mexico. Know your history. Texas, New Mexico, California, Arizona, Nevada, and even parts of Colorado these were all territory gained by the United States in this war. Different jobs, changing technology, the need for cheap labor, acceptance only when in need and then afterwards, thrown back to where we came from. The entirety of my family is no longer here. They are all gone. Those left behind are the elderly and the young too weak to make the journey, and those in the middle. Fighting and battling with the inevitable question to stay or to go.

What allure does this American Dream have? How will my slipping hold grasp onto *la esperanza*, the hope, that my country will change, will be better? Can I leave it all behind, what my parents did to me? *Olvida.* Forget those who have left, blacking out with the help of this drink. Or leave behind my country in terror and despair. We are people born into two forms of hell. The ultimate decision of being a slave. But to which hell? The under the table economy or twelve hour work days, six days a week. Let's not forget at the great rate of 52 pesos, a minimum wage of about 4.00 whole whopping dollars a day.

I will leave it to you. *Por favor.* What would you do?

Part 1B: Decisions (Female- Marg Nelson)

(A young woman is writing in a journal. She looks up contemplating, she continues writing. When she speaks her voice is soft and sweet. The love for her family and homeland fills her voice. Her fear of the unknown and her determined nature shine through in her voice during the various aspects of the monologue.)

I was born June 21st, 1863 on the island of Finnøy, near Stavanger. It is now 1886, and I am 23 years old. The fourth born to my parents Soffie and Svend Bjøravåg, being one of eleven children, our home was always riddled with some kind of noise; always enveloped by chaos. The prospect of leaving it has me worried for the loneliness I will feel. Life has never been easy for me here, nor for my family. I must say, and with quite a lot of conviction, my parents have always strived to do their best. My mother a cook, and my father a craftsman, along with our meek little farm has been enough for us to get by. But from a young age, my brothers and sisters and I have had to work to help put food on the table: the lads off to work at sea, and my sisters and I as servants on various neighboring farms.

The date of my departure draws closer and closer every moment. I now have very little time left in my homeland, and I fear I will never be able to return. It is now the first of May which leaves 25 more sunrises and sunsets until I must say goodbye.

As the day approaches I find myself trying to soak in my dear sweet Norway. The endless hills and the rocky jagged slopes. I watch mother cutting in our small fields. Her focus and determination amaze me still; always with a smile upon her face, even as the wrinkles grow more profound with age and tire. She has always tried so hard to hide her weariness. I see father with his hammer and saw, working on project after another. I watch as his eyes glaze over, dreaming as he often does of faraway lands, of unknown plains, of un-had adventures

awaiting his still young and lively soul. I study our sweet family protector, Watchdog, oh that shaggy dog. How he paces frantically, running after the bunny rabbits and voles, practically sucking up the ground through his nose as he lives to search and destroy. I see all of my brothers and sisters hard at work, except for the three of you who have already left for America. I see you as well, and try to imagine exactly what my life will be like there with you. Far away in the land called Illinois. I am afraid. But after much contemplation, and even promises to mother that I would not leave, alas I have decided that I must. Everything is in the hands of the Lord. I must trust his guidance as I feel that he desires this for me, that he is guiding me along on this path. I pray to him for trust and for patience to see and carry out the plan that he has for me and my family.

We have heard so much of this Land of Opportunity. I have always been a hard worker and I am not afraid of the endless work I am sure I will have in my life in America. As soon as Tobias left, I knew I too would leave, even though I had been vacillating and undecided for quite some time. The Homestead Act passed in 1862 certainly has been a reason for many who have left. Land, almost for free! And more freedoms than any of us ever imagined. Everything is changing around here. Norway promises us that the strife will go away. But we know that people are only having more children, and we only have so much to give to everyone in this ever growing country. It is hard for us farmers to adapt to the new demands of the changing of time and technology. We have heard of the better wages over there. I want to be strong, to go and be able to give back to the Fatherland, and the family to whom I owe so much.

Contemplating the eminent goodbye which awaits us is absolutely heartbreaking. I close my eyes and I picture mother and sister Marta as they stand on the shore. Father and Anna too,

tears streaming down my face. I will try to remain calm and composed, to stifle the sobs until I can no longer see any of you. Walking along, waving, as if the shore line will continue to grow and extend as they walk along my side during my journey to this new land. But alas, it will end, and they will come to the edge and the division between us will grow in distance. I do not know if I will see any of you ever again. This thought is something absolutely unbearable and thus I will try to put it out of my mind. And although I am writing this in my diary, I will write you all as often as I can. It appears that these pages are now going to be my companions, ears to listen to my thoughts, my experiences, and sorrows. Time will pass: days, weeks, months, years.

Momma and Poppa, your sweet faces, the comfort of your hugs. The fields and hills. Our family around the wooden table. Sharing thoughts and laughter, love and tears. These memories will stay with me always. I will hold your spirits with mine. You will not disappear nor will our separation be in vain. I will carry you all with me every day and every moment. For God and all of you will be my strength to carry on, to do what must be done.

Part 2: The Journey (Female-Paige)

(A middle aged woman with a flower in her hair. As she speaks she pauses to collect herself. She speaks slowly and clearly. Her experience is difficult to tell, and she is passionate about the injustices she and her family have faced.)

The first thing that I remember is that it was hot. Unimaginably hot. Three days and almost all our money later, getting from Chiapas to the border seemed hard enough. I didn't realize that what was in front of me was going to be harder than what was behind.

It was all "planned". My *tío* already in L.A. had set things up with a coyote he believed to be an honest man. *Mi hermana, mi primo, y yo* felt that there was no choice but to go. The plan was

always that I would eventually join my husband in the U.S. so that we could build a better future for ourselves and for our children, one that was never obtainable for us in *nuestro pueblito*. But it wasn't going to be easy.

The next thing I remember is the face of *mi primo*. Just by looking into his eyes, I could tell that his will to carry on had long since vanished. Dehydration and starvation have effects on the mind, body, and spirit that no human being should have to endure. After the first 24 hours of traveling through the desert, our water was gone. He had made sure that my sister and I always had the first sips and reserved less for himself. I will never forget the way his body shook.

But the memory that haunts me daily, is the pain of being stripped of all that I am as a woman, and as a human being. I hold the power to create and grow life within me. This sacred beauty was ripped from me, in a seemingly insignificant five minutes and thirteen seconds. There is not one detail of those five minutes and thirteen seconds that I do not remember. The smug look that could never possibly be wiped off his *machista face*, that screamed at me, I am man and I own you. The rocks carving into my burnt back as if to leave me marked forever. I watched as he placed his trophy, my underwear, ever so proudly, on a branch in the tree next to me, alongside that of my sister's. His laughter ringing in my ears, and his disgusting taste still lingering in my mouth.

I made it. I am alive. We all made it across the border. But at what cost and what was taken along the way? Explain to me, why would I choose this for myself, my sister, any of us?

Part 2B: The Journey (Male- Ben Jackson)

(A middle aged man sits up abruptly (slowly enough to not frighten the audience). Panting and shaken. When he speaks his voice is calm and reflective, yet his pain and suffering can be heard

in his tone. He is haunted and tormented by his losses and what caused them to occur. But he is also grateful for being alive and being in America.)

I awaken abruptly, surging into a seated position in a great sweat. My body is entirely soaked.

The reoccurring dream is so persistent that I now feel I cannot have a night of rest without escaping from what happened; from what we have endured.

Images of you, the swelling and swollen sea, consume my sleeping slumber. The transitions you made each day. In the morning light you seemed to twinkle at every inch of your surface, reflecting brightly into each stare of its onlookers. A scattering of jewels, glistening into the unknown, into a distance without end. The snow caps seen at the tips of each undulation. The unfathomable depth underneath, seemingly harmless. The sun grew tired and began its descent onto your horizon as if to disappear into your ever blackening waters. The clear blue began to become tainted amber and tangerine, a deep blood red and a magnificent purple most indescribable. As the skies light was stifled by darkness, the pristinely white rocks and perfectly round moon cast a silvery light onto your constantly present ripples and movement. Days and weeks passed as we swayed atop of your unexplainable wonder. How you laughed at us as you decided when to toss us about and when to let us float and glide gently brushing your surface. You grew awfully angry at times, joining in with the great above to send down upon us bolts of lightning and pellet us with rain drops the size of grapes. I had gazed at you from shorelines since a child, but I never understood your true power and beauty until I depended upon you entirely. Living as you pushed and pulled us along to our destination of America. For 8 weeks my wife and I and our second born child faced the perilous journey of traveling across you, to reach a new land, to seek new beginnings, to escape yet another piece of our

past. After the miscarriage, my marriage was never the same. Young and in love, married and living happily, the pregnancy had come as a more than welcome knock at our doorstep. My wife carried our child for a little over seven months until complications took our baby away from us. This was not the worst part of it, for I stood by my wife's side as she cried tears of sadness and pain while giving birth to an un-breathing, unmoving beautiful baby boy. The thought of his stillness at times still makes me stop in disbelief. Not long after, we heard about the chance to go to America and knew that we needed money to be able to go. We worked hard in order to be able to leave our homeland. Meanwhile, my wife became pregnant again. After a full term pregnancy, she gave birth to our pride and joy, Lena. We sold almost everything that we had, the farm, our stock, and various tools. Truly we were fortunate enough to have things to sell. We were to be responsible for bringing our own food, our own bed clothes, as well as various things we might need once we arrived such as a spinning wheel and iron griddle. There was preparation to be done. We were one of 9 other families upon the vessel, the sloop, called the Restauration. We departed our sweet home of Norway on July 4th 1825, and I feel as though I cannot erase even a minute of the journey. After constant nausea, suffering, and more, we would finally make it to this land called America. We left to seek something to start anew: to have our own freedoms, and build our own things with our very own hands. But we lost something priceless along the way.

As you tested us, the strength of our stomachs, our will to survive, and our will to reach this new place, someone was taken. In my dreams I see the face of my precious Lena. She couldn't be as strong as us. She was more susceptible to the ferocious winds and the relentless waves. She needed a calmer shelter, a more nurturing environment. We had taken the risk, and now I

can't help but feel regret and guilt. I hear the coughing and pass my fingers softly on top of her feverish skin. I feel that same incessant sensation of wanting to do something to take it all away, but being completely powerless. Like her brother she became breathless.

We layed her to rest at a moment in which you couldn't have looked more beautiful. The tears streaming down my face dripped and caused small trembles in the giant glass window we stared down into. I held my wife's hand tightly as she placed our child into your cool abyss. The white embroidered dress now weightlessly lifting slightly as she sank deeper and deeper. I think of you now, how you allowed so many of us to pass to a new world and others you accepted to sleep in your open waters. I don't understand why you were so angry, why you had to take her away. I want to scream and hate you forever. I am caught in a net of confusion. Feelings of gratefulness for surviving, but dark consuming grief for loosing something so precious along the way. Although I feel some guilt and regret, we did what had to be done. I must find acceptance. Today is a new day. My life and the lives of my loved ones are held by someone greater than myself. I surrender to all that which is beyond my control. The strength of your waters untameable and unpredictable. One day when I too become breathless, I want to be layed to rest with you and my daughter. I will join Lena, and those who have gone before me, in the coolness of your waters, swaying until I rest peacefully at your bottom.

Part 3: Arrived and Safe? (Male- Ben Main) *(Young to middle aged man. He is scornful of the injustices he has faced. He believes in the power of the people in the United States. He believes in the importance of people understanding the immigrant experience. His voice is angry and powerful. Almost commanding the audience to listen and to wake up).*

Chicago. What a city. Do you know just how hard it is to get a visa to visit this country let alone to work? My first attempt to obtain a visa was rejected in a matter of 3 minutes. I wanted to come and visit my girlfriend and meet her family, to spend the holidays somewhere new, to have new experiences, to see another country, another world. After all Cuernavaca, Mexico and Minneapolis, Minnesota are two pretty different worlds, especially in winter. After about four months of going through all the steps and preparing for my interview, I had finally made it.

They called my name and I shook myself out of a tired daze as I stood up after waiting almost four hours in the sun. I sat down and looked at the woman across from me. She asked me three simple questions. Why do you want to go, where do you want to go, and how much money do you make a month? After answering as thoroughly and politely as she would allow, I felt the sinking as my heart dropped to my stomach. "I'm sorry, but your visa has been rejected". Then I replied, wait, I have invitation letters from my girlfriend and her family addressed to you, the United States Embassy, to read. "That won't be necessary," she said. I understand that I may be poor and young. But does that mean that I lack the right to human dignity? I guess I just love giving away more than 140 dollars just to be sat down for a few minutes and not even be respected enough to see the documents suggested I bring to prove my case.

By some miracle, my second attempt, this time several years later, for a work visa went through. I had lots of ideas of what it was going to be like here on el otro lado. Everyone had told me all about the American Dream, more opportunities, the 'greener side' of life. I met up with some family who was already here in Chicago, unos primos. Shit, I was in for a treat.

¿Hablas inglés? ¿Tienes papeles? The fact that I spoke English and came here legally didn't make a damn difference. People look at me on the bus as if I am a criminal waiting to jump

them and pistol-whip them. Please forgive me for smelling like sweat and an Asian restaurant. I had to work washing dishes for 10 hours with one five minute break. I can guarantee no college educated whitey will do what I do: building rich people's homes, working in the back of kitchens, getting by on less than minimum wage but making more than in Mexico in the first place. Just to afford rent and food I have to live with mis primos and primas, crammed with no privacy into a tiny apartment that puts a roof over our heads. Before I came I promised my family I would send them half of my paychecks in order to help those I was leaving behind. I am happy to do this, but I can't help wonder about saving for my children's future; even continuing education myself. Have it easy? Evading taxes? Is that what you really think? I have a social security number so that I can have my job and I am paying into a system every paycheck that I may never see a penny from.

Workers rights are supposed to be given with my work visa. DREAM ON. Lunch breaks? Days off? My appendix just about burst last month and my boss didn't pay for any of the medical bills or time off. A Christian organization helped me out otherwise I don't even know how I would have been able to pay for all that.

When I was born my mother was proud to give me the name of Adan, Adam in English, because of our religion. For some reason it's too difficult for my boss to remember. The fact of the matter is he doesn't really care and so just decides to call me whatever pops into his mind.

Something Mexican like Jesús or Pedro. How do I feel? Well according to my boss I am a slave horse to be ordered around however he fancies. Complain? Hell no, he's just waiting for me to mess up or fess up so he can call immigration. It's not as if they don't have more people trying to escape poverty lined up waiting to take my job anyways.

The melting pot of diversity: *los Estados Unidos*. People from all around the world, everyone with a different background, different ancestors, different story. I may be speaking about myself, but I do not represent all of my people from where I come from. You can't stereotype my face, my clothes, my accent, my age, my education, my experience, nothing. I am but one story. There are many to be heard. More people than my own have been discriminated here in this country. In fact, unless you're Native American, your people once immigrated here too. And if you know your history you might know that it wasn't easy. No one deserves to be treated without human dignity. Please, open your eyes. Know your past, where you have come from. You citizens have this constitution, and all these supposed rights given to citizens and non-citizens alike. Americans say 'We the people', right? You all have the power to learn, to be informed, to control your own destiny. Until people in this country wake up and feel as indignant and hurt as those of us facing injustices there will be no change. And until people show those sitting comfortably in power how they feel and what they won't stand for, I will not be the last person to face these degrading and undesirable situations. I may not officially be a citizen of this country, but does that mean that as a human being I don't deserve basic human rights?

Part 3B: Arrived and Safe? (Female- Katie) *(A middle aged woman. She is writing a letter, contemplating what she is writing. Smiling thinking of memories. Pausing for harder moments. She is speaking to her family and is happy to be sending them news as well as to hear back from her loved ones. She speaks of the difficulties and challenges of being a foreigner but overall happiness with her decision to immigrate.)*

My dear loved ones,

It is that time of year again. The bitter cold is almost upon us. The brilliant rust, gold and scarlet leaves have shed their life, fallen and gone to the hardening ground. We have been preparing. For the winters here are truly like nothing I had experienced in the fatherland. It's been several years now but sometimes it feels like just yesterday I stepped off of the boat. It still amazes me how much in these few short years my life has improved. I know that I am writing to you very late, but I knew that brother Anton has been writing to you all. For this, I am most terribly sorry and embarrassed, but I did not wish to write you in my deepest sorrows. Upon arrival, it was much more difficult than I had dreamed of. Now, I will not go into great detail, for I would rather speak of my fortunes to put your worries at ease. But, what I can say is that I felt so lost. Thank the Lord I had brother Anton to travel with me and help with all the arrangements. The trip itself as you may have heard wasn't entirely pleasant. Preparing was simple. Arriving was easy; they just asked me my name. The passage was fairly short and quite inexpensive, but it was unpleasant enough not to be desiring to do it again. Perhaps the most disagreeable part for me has been being exactly who I am, a foreigner in a foreign country. As Jason Bergman said, "When you emigrate to a different country, where you don't know the language, you will be discriminated, so remember to be satisfied with whatever you can get and don't count on miracles." He was right in a sense. Not speaking English, coming to this strange land, the cold and loneliness I felt for so long was not just due to the weather.

Bit by bit, I have seen as the miracles have entered into my life. Hard work is something different here. I have to do things I never had to do before. Rural life does not look the same. As you probably have heard, I am married, to a kind man named Olaf, who I feel you would all be quite fond of. I am also with child, a boy I sense. I think to call him Gunder, or here in America,

Grant. You probably think it strange, but here as I have heard from others, it is quite popular. You must understand that normally if we call them by Norwegian names, they get twisted and changed to English once they are grown anyway. Although there are difficulties, there are still many people who try to build a mini Norway here in Minnesota. There is a Norwegian literacy society and other clubs that I like to attend. It's fun to hear Norwegian speakers and singers and read our Norwegian newspapers. In those moments I close my eyes and imagine myself in dear sweet Norway. How I long for cold bread, cheese and the like. These silly Americans like everything to be warm! Mmm, I can smell your delicious boiled cod mother, with fine potatoes and milk on the side. This climate makes everything taste different. I find myself restless at times and the wilderness brings much solitude. But I will not complain. With food always available on my table, I often worry and think about you all. With the jobs changing, less necessities being available in Norway, I know I did the best thing. Attached I hope you find some money I have placed aside for you all. It is not much, but it is something and I will keep sending more. The 4th of July is coming up here, and everyone is getting ready to celebrate. It's like the 17th of May in Norway and my longing for home grows even more within me. If you all are ever seeking something different, you know you have a place here in this world far away with me. When I bit the apple of curiosity called America, I was pulled in to its allure and promise. I am writing you all to send you my love, support, and news. I work hard and I know I can do it. Oh how I long for this baby to hold in my arms: to have a real family once again. Write soon, as I look forward to hearing back from you all and hear news from all of your lives.

Your devoted daughter and sister,

Barbro

July 10th, 1901

(Kisses the letter while squeezing her eyes shut and she seals it.)

Part 4a: In my Home (Female- Samita) *(An elderly woman, wrapped in a shawl. She is excited and speaking to her family and her grandchildren. She is full of smiles and great facial expressions, being extra expressive as she is telling the story to the children. She speaks with love for her country, and hopes for its future.)*

Familia mia. Precious family, all you little ones, come, come! Gather round. *Acérquense.* Would you like to hear a story? Okay. Sit down and settle in, and I will tell you a tale of adventure; with perhaps even a fairy tale ending. Once upon a time, there was a young woman. Her name was Amelia. She was walking in her town one day when she lost track of time and began to day dream. She walked for hours and hours aimlessly. When she finally awoke from her daze, she was completely lost. She found herself in a strange unsafe place. The peculiar thing was all of the buildings were the same. But it was somehow changed, different. The people were no longer out on the streets. The laughter was quieted. She continued walking and she finally found her street, her home. Everything seemed to be captured under a gloomy haze. A darkness had descended upon her home causing it to be almost unrecognizable. Everyone in the town was the same, even though one by one her neighbors were leaving. She did not understand why until one day a bird flew down and landed on her shoulder. It told her little secrets. The blue beautiful bird told her of another place of which she could escape to; it chirped and told her of a place just across a border; a place where people were fleeing to. In order to escape the evils that were infecting their home. Happiness was not the same; people were now trying to merely survive. Amelia didn't like the sound of this idea. She wanted to stay,

and try to solve whatever was happening in her home. But the danger was too great. There were too many people who had already left. So she made a difficult decision; One of bravery and courage. I will journey to this new land, but I will tell others of my home and I will come back. I will go and work, to prepare myself to fight battles when I return. So, that is just what Amelia did. She went to this foreign land. During her time in this foreign land she worked hard, very hard. She cleaned people's homes and she took care of two little children. She lived in that land, working hard, saving money in piggy bank after piggy bank. While she was there she planned and plotted every day. She knew people had to know about her home, about the people there, and the struggles they were living. She spread the word; she raised awareness and shared her story and that of others. When she finally had saved enough money she returned. She was now prepared to build a safe haven for her family and friends. Amelia was one of the lucky ones. She returned home, but some also decided to stay. Now, the ending is still yet to be written, but I do know one thing about our dear sweet Amelia. These are just a few of the things that she missed when she was gone and couldn't wait to get home to. *Las fiestas*; all of the family and neighborhood invited and the party going until 4 a.m. *La musica llena de vida. Los corridos*, Espinoza Paz, Banda, Chávela Vargas. The importance of religion: crosses everywhere, rosaries hanging in the taxi cabs, the altars to the *Virgen de Guadalupe*. Colorful houses and flowers, bright loud vibrant people. The beautiful countryside; long extensive beaches and the rolling ocean; tropical trees and dry deserts. Food on every corner. *Pan dulce, orchata, jugo fresco*. So many things. She went and she came back to be able to provide for her loved ones. Some stayed, but they never forgot their homes or their roots. Now, *ustedes*, my family and grandchildren I have something to say to you all: if you must leave your

home, for whatever reason, at any point in your life, never forget where you come from. Never stop being proud of who you are, your roots, and those who love you and will always love you. Each in their own and special way; your family. No matter what horrible things may or may not happen. Remember that.

Part 4b: In my Home (Female- Paige) *(Spoken by the writer. A personal monologue coming from the perspective of an immigrant because we are a nation of immigrants. Passion fuels the monologue as she describes why this all matters to her, and why it should matter to others.)*

This is my home. I grew up in a Norwegian/Polish family. I have more mixture in my blood than just those two, but those are the greatest and most celebrated by my family. The extent to which my ethnic culture has been experienced to me goes as far as eating Polish sausage and lefsa at Christmas and Thanksgiving. What is my culture? Well, I grew up in a middle class family. I was the second of two children. I grew up in the suburbs, went to wonderful schools. I definitely had it good, things were secure. I was considered a beloved daughter and sister, and one of many grandchildren. But something always was missing for me. I longed to feel as though I belonged to something greater. As I grew older and starting studying at my University, I knew I had to travel; to leave my country in order to experience another. I had been learning and studying Spanish for more than six years the first time I studied abroad. Destination: Chile. What an experience. The way in which I was welcomed into my new home for seven months is something which still warms my heart to this day. Despite the fact that my skin was whiter and I didn't look quite the same as others, no one ever treated me poorly or called me names; quite the opposite actually. Buying candy on the corner I was called *mija*, my daughter, from a woman I didn't even know. The kindness and pure genuineness I felt with the people didn't

cease to amaze me. Little acts of sincerity and acceptance which often go unnoticed but were all too apparent to me.

My experiences abroad have made me truly come to realize the opportunities and privilege that I have. I went there to study. I have been given the gift of higher education, not that I haven't had to work hard, but it has always been available to me. I chose to go to other countries. I was not forced nor did I feel obligated. I was not running from anything or in search of safety. I always knew I would be welcomed back home.

Now, back in this place, I have a new found appreciation for those who come here, to seek some kind of greater purpose. Fighting and striving to achieve something, to seek something better for themselves or others, except under perhaps more dire situations. And I thought to myself, how do we treat these people once they arrive? After they have been here for years, perhaps even generations. And then I thought to myself, how were 'my' people treated when they arrived? What was life like for them?

Immigration laws have changed so dramatically over the years. Some argue that it has been based upon need and desire, when those in power have decided when they want or need more help, and when to kick people out or stop letting people in once the work and goals are completed. During the mass migration of the 19th century, there were many needs of our developing nation and an overcrowded Europe. People saw our nation as a place of refuge for those oppressed. Immigration was necessary to strengthen the economy, our defenses and settlements. One of the first ways our immigration laws were used to define America was when we decided that immigrants from China, Japan, India, the Phillipines, and the rest of Asia were undesirable from the 1870's to 1930's. They became what might be thought of as our first

commodities, not human beings with dignity to be welcomed into our society. Then there was the Literacy Law of 1917, we truly sought to only create a nation of 'pure blood' Americans, a notion completely ridiculous to me seeing as we have entirely been formed as a nation of immigrants, except for those from whom we stole the land from when we arrived. No more of those hyphenated Americans.

Among these overall changes in policy, there has been noted more recently, an increase in the criminalization of immigrants, increased border security measures, as well as ways in which to find and remove these 'aliens'. What word could be much more dehumanizing? There has been an idea of controlling through deterrence. All we have managed to do is push the undocumented foot traffic out of the public eye, increase the smuggling industry, and increase the use of fraudulent visas. Border enforcement is used against the masses, a mass that we seek to dehumanize so we can exclude and violate them with an easier conscious. A belief supporting that people are disposable. We have continued to add and create new policies which violate people's human rights due to the 'good of the people'. Rights overlooked due to a citizen/non-citizen bias. In 1976 there was an exception made in the 4th Amendment protection against unreasonable search and seizures by allowing border patrol to set up forced checkpoints on major highways to stop and quest suspicious looking people. People who look like me aren't getting stopped. Agents claim that U.S. citizens of Mexican descent can be easily distinguished from undocumented Mexican's by their clothes and haircut. Don't even get me started on what happened after 911. We are a people who carry out publicized raids, detainment, secret detention centers, jails, you name it. Add racial discrimination to the list, something we have done to a variety of peoples since the arrival of Europeans.

My presence and time spent abroad with incredibly hospitable and unforgettable people has awakened something within me. I am personally invested in the way in which we treat immigrants, refugees, and those newer to our country. I have a passion for our history as a nation of immigrants. First, half of our country was Mexican land. Then by 1849 at the end of the Mexican-American war all of the Mexicans were given the opportunity to become U.S. citizens, or leave their land behind and go to the new country of Mexico. Mexicans have been brought over throughout time to help us out with so many things. They have helped build railroads, worked in mining and agriculture beginning in the 1880's. There was the Bracero program of 1942 which ended 22 years later in 1964. During this time period 4.6 million Mexicans were brought into the U.S. to be temporary workers. They have been accepted illegally and legally in different ways throughout time. And yet I keep returning to questions of justice and human rights. People are NOT dispensable. We all create and have lives that deserve to be honored and given dignity. There seems to be this innate tendency within my people, to create the "other". I think this stems from fear. But I have never fully understood. I know why it happens but sometimes I just don't understand how. Maybe what I find most disturbing is this attempt that we have always tried to create a definition for a 'true American'. It is all too easy to cast our nation's problems on groups of people based on skin color, ethnicity, or political belief; the worthy and unworthy, the pure and unpure. Until we realize that building bigger borders and criminalizing more people will not stop people trying to enter this country, this problem will not change. Many of our economic trade policies with other countries are causing increases in migration; we need to take responsibility for our actions and relationships with other countries and realize the things we may be supporting and enacting in

their societies. There must be policy reform, and changes in our thinking about what is a benefit.

Until we place the value of money below the value of a human life, there will be very little change. For now, what can each of us do? We can be aware of our history as a nation, and our own immigration history. Try to seek the perspectives and life stories of those with whom you are not familiar. Learn all sides. It is more than just us and them. Until we seek to create understanding in one another and see the beauty and base that is humanity, we will not be able to understand the life choices and struggles of the 'other'.

Part 5: The Inheritance by Judy Grahn (*Each few lines will be divided equally among the actors and actresses. It is to conclude the play and give an overall idea of the message trying to be conveyed by the monologues.*)

How we have each labored to create this civilization, most of us against our will, without our knowledge, thrilled, enthralled, appalled or stalled in this industrial serfdom known as "modern man"; this card game with its temporary flush, founded on the village skills of ancient women and their men, distilled drop by drop from all the liquors of our many lives, that electrifying amber glow, that aura of what our bodies do and know, that history we can tell and show, so trivially classified as "work" and "workers."

Trivially classified, enlisted, tagged- brought from an old Old Country in small sacks, the scientific-magic of our former ages, bagged like wind and sold, breath by breath, solo by solo, riff by riff and measures after measure, as if it were all

free, and not accumulated treasures of complex creatures Such as you, me. The wind. A tree.

The grandfather wind, the mother tree, the message delivered like genes, like green beans, or language given to a child, accumulated patterns to be used and listed to, as recipes or tools and principals, the message passed along a long wind, the whistling of a dancing bird upon a dancing tree: Nothing is free, everything belongs to one another, nothing begins new, everything has a mother, a father and a story.

Annotated Bibliography

Burgard, C., Champagne, J. A., Little Bonanza Productions., & Max Ink Productions.

(2005). *Border*. California: Little Bonanza Productions.

This movie was used to inform the third monologue and discusses the rape trees along the border as well as the difficulties of crossing the border.

Capetillo-Ponce, J. Framing the debate on taxes and undocumented workers: Critical review of texts supporting proenforcement policies and practices. In D.C. Brotherton, & P.

Kretsedemas (Eds.). (2008). *Keeping out the other: A critical introduction to immigration enforcement today* (314-333). West Sussex, NY: Columbia University Press.

This chapter was used to view the costs of deportations, the costs of immigration enforcement, and overarching themes of immigration. It was specifically used in the program to show the fiscal costs of deportations. It was also used in the program to support the fifth monologue by discussing the fact that many immigrants, undocumented and documented, pay for services such as Medicare, Social Security, and personal income taxes. It also shows how public opinion shifts during good economic situations.

Gomez, L. E. (2007). *Manifest destinies: The making of the Mexican American race*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

This was used to discuss the misconception that Mexicans are a new ethnic group to the United States. It addresses how the legacy of American colonization is obscured in shaping the Mexican American experience. It is used in the first and eighth monologue.

Grahn, Judy (1982). *The Queen of Wands*. New York: The Crossing Press.

I was given a poem from this book by Professor Cara Carlson in my committee called, *The Inheritance*, which was shared and read after all eight monologues during the performance of the script. I included it in the performance and script because I interpreted the poem as mirroring themes which I have tried to convey in the script of nothing being free and nothing being new.

Hellman, J. A. (2008). *Mexican migrants: The rock and the hard place*. The United States of America: The New Press.

This book was used to speak of the Mexican immigrant experience in the first, third, fifth, and seventh monologues. It was used to represent different dilemmas faced when deciding to immigrate or not and the journey of crossing the border. It also was used to speak of experiences once in the United States, and deciding whether to stay in the country or return back home.

Hing, B. O. (2004). *Defining America through immigration policy*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

This book was used to discuss the ways in which immigration policy has changed throughout time. The increase in criminalization and stricter border enforcement, as well as the way the policies have been restricted and relaxed throughout time based upon need. It was also used to discuss how our nation is made of immigrants, the importance of changing and

reforming or laws, and various injustices in which our current policies and actions are oppressing others. It is used in the fifth and eighth monologues.

Hispanic and Asian grew in numbers: US census 2011. (2011, March 26). *Queens Latino*,

Retrieved from <http://www.queenslatino.com/noticias/hispanic-and-asian-grew-in-numbers-us-census-2011/>

This article was used to inform my research as to the importance of immigration reform due to the increasing population of other cultures in the United States and is based upon the 2011 census. It was used to look at statistics of the Hispanic population as well as what this population will look like in the future.

Kretsedemas, P. (2008). What does an undocumented immigrant look like: Local enforcement and the new immigrant profiling. In D.C. Brotherton, & P. Kretsedemas (Eds.). (2008). *Keeping out the other: A critical introduction to immigration enforcement today* (334-364). West Sussex, NY: Columbia University Press.

This chapter was used in the last monologue as well as the program to discuss the ways in which the media uses imagery and other techniques to affect public perception. It was used to address racial profiling as well.

Kretsedemas, P., & Brotherton, D.C. (2008). Immigration reform at a crossroads. In D.C. Brotherton, & P. Kretsedemas (Eds.). (2008). *Keeping out the other: A critical introduction to immigration enforcement today* (365-373). West Sussex, NY: Columbia University Press.

This chapter was used in the final monologue to support arguments about issues of deportations, detention centers, as well as the power of media.

Kretsedemas, P., & Brotherton, D.C. (2008). Open markets, militarized border? Immigration enforcement today. In D.C. Brotherton, & P. Kretsedemas (Eds.). (2008). *Keeping out the other: A critical introduction to immigration enforcement today* (1-25). West Sussex, NY: Columbia University Press.

This chapter was used to discuss the power of media images as well as the various costs of immigration.

Morrison, J., & Zabusky, C. F. (1980). *American mosaic: The immigrant experience in the words of those who lived it*. New York, NY: E.P. Dutton.

From this novel of words of various immigrants, I used a quote from Jason Bergman, a man from Poland. He spoke of the discrimination one faces when they are foreign in a foreign country, and I used this quote in the sixth monologue.

Rosario, M. (2011, December 25). "*rape trees*" found along the us border. Retrieved from <http://usopenborders.com/2011/12/rape-trees-found-along-southern-us-border/>

This article was used in the program, and to inform the third monologue in discussion of the occurrence of rape trees.

Rumbaut, R.G. Pigments of our imagination: On the racialization and racial identities of "Hispanics" and "Latinos". In J.A., Cobas, J., Duany, & J.R. Feagan (Eds.). (2009). *How the United States racializes Latinos: White hegemony and its consequences* (pp. 15-36). Boulder, London: Paradigm Publishers.

This chapter was used in order to demonstrate the way in which race has been created in this country which was discussed in the eighth monologue, and was also used in the program

given out to the audience. It was used to also discuss the creation of “Hispanics” and “Latinos” by grouping diverse different people together into these homogenous categories.

Semningsen, I. (1978). *Norway to America: A history of the migration*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

This novel enriched the majority of the monologues focused on the Norwegian experience as well as the information placed in the program to inform the Norwegian monologues. The Restauration was mentioned, with the longer process of migration in the beginning then changing to becoming cheaper and shorter. It deals with the people who were more vulnerable to death on the journey, the old and the young; and it discussed the necessity of preparation and the need of money the first immigrants had to have in order to immigrate. It encaptures the mass emigration of 1860's due to pressure on resources and the presence of threatened rural communities. It discussed the Homestead Act, the remittances sent home, and the idealized America as well.

Shirk, D. A. (2010). Drug violence in Mexico: data and analysis from 2001–2009. *Trends In Organized Crime*, 13(2/3), 167-174. doi:10.1007/s12117-010-9096-7

This article was used to look at the drug violence in Mexico from 2001-2009, and used in my first monologue to discuss gang violence of the narcotraficantes, and in the program to provide background information to the monologue.

Swain, C.M. (2007). *Debating Immigration*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.

This novel was used to present facts into the program in order to support the monologues discussing the Mexican experience.

Zempel, S., (Ed.). (1991). *In their own words: Letters from Norwegian immigrants*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

This novel was used quite extensively to inform the Norwegian monologues. I took the experiences and words of Berta Serina Kingstad, a Norwegian immigrant, and adapted them in order to represent several different experiences and dynamics of the immigrant experience. From this novel I took aspects such as the strong sense of self, acculturation, and working for what one earns. I adapted her experience of arrival and stayed true to her feelings of being lost and lonely, and often thinking of home. I also adapted a statement by Einer Haugen about Adam and Eve and the apple in order to include it in the sixth monologue.

I have also done substantial research from field work experiences in Mexico, as well as in the United States. I have taken testimonies and stories to help form the monologues of the Mexican experiences. One man I spoke with suffered from dehydration and starvation during his journey, another man was working legally on a work visa and his appendix burst and his employer didn't cover any expenses. I have taken certain elements from their experiences and other Mexican and Mexican Americans with whom I have had conversations and incorporated them in monologues 1, 3, 5, and 7.