2017
STUDENT REFLECTIONS
The Distance Between Us
First Year Experience
Truman Lecture Series
Preface

From Yessica Ramirez, Senior majoring in Communications at Avila University, Daughter of immigrants

My first and foremost priority is to say thank you to Avila University for allowing me to speak about my personal experiences as a daughter of undocumented immigrants in First Year Seminar (FS 101). Opportunities like this have permitted me to be the voice for not only my parents, but other undocumented immigrants, who were once unacknowledged in today’s world.

I cannot thank Avila University enough for selecting the topic of immigration for their First Year Experience. In the First Year program, first year students read the book *The Distance Between Us* by Reyna Grande; which as a First Year Mentor, we were required to read as well. As I was reading Grande’s book, I related with her experiences. Grande, my parents and myself have endured similar yet different struggles. Grande’s parents and my parents had to give something up for a better future, while Grande and I had to learn and accept the reason why they gave it up. It feels great to be able to look up to someone that many students, including myself, can relate to.

Being able to speak to the student body about my own personal experiences with immigration allowed me to meet others at Avila similar to me, and most importantly, allowed me to educate the uneducated.

As a daughter of immigrants, this experience has taught me to never take things for granted. My parents suffered to live in a country that is not their own for my own well-being. My hope for the future on immigration would be to educate as many as possible. We are humans, and should not be treated any differently because of a document stating if one is “illegal” or not.
Introduction

“I had always hoped that this land might become a safe and agreeable asylum to the virtuous and persecuted part of mankind, to whatever nation they might belong.”
- George Washington

At the time the 2017 Common Reading Program was chosen we did not know the topic of immigration would come to the forefront of our 2016 presidential election and that after the election it would be a primary battle in our county and world. Avila was blessed to focus on the topic of immigration in our First Year Experience Program. We were blessed as it is a topic of precedence and were able to allow time and energy to dedicate to this topic in an open and educational environment. The goal was to humanize immigration and discover pathways for working through immigration issues in a peaceful and nonviolent manner. It is our hope that students might be change agents in the world which is the mission of Avila University.

Each year, Avila selects a common reading for our first year students. Students have the summer to read the selected book and respond with an essay prior to the start of fall class. Additionally, the University dedicates the Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture to the selected book. To compliment these experiences, all first year students enroll in a fall semester class, First Year Seminar, which provides an opportunity to further expand on the global topics within the book. This publication serves as the culmination of these experiences shared among our first year students (Appendix A).

The book selected for 2017 was *The Distance Between Us* by Reyna Grande. This memoir outlines the hardships and the heartaches of Grande’s immigration story from child to adult. Grande was two years old when her father left Mexico and crossed the border into the United States, hoping to earn enough money to build a home in Mexico when he returned. Eight years passed before her father returned to take Rayna and her siblings across the border. Once in the United States Grande sorts through many challenges as she navigates into adulthood.

Avila welcomed Reyna Grande to campus on October 18, 2017 as our Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecturer (Appendix B). She spoke to an audience of nearly 500 and shared the importance of learning about others’ journeys in order to create community and overcome the distance between us. Noting that although each immigration journey is unique, the immigration story behind the journey is the same: to find a better life and to survive. With photos of her childhood and adulthood as well as artwork and images related to immigration running on the screen behind Grande as she spoke, she made a connection between writing and healing and shared that her writing has allowed her to move forward. She explained that although we cannot change the past, we have control over the future. She shared that her legacy is to change hearts and minds one reader at a time and asked the audience, “What is your legacy?”

The University also hosted an outstanding panel prior to the lecture comprised of Kathleen E. Irish, JD, Attorney at Law; Dr. Sofia Kahn, physician and advocate for KC for Refugees; Maura Orpin, Executive Director of Don Bosco Centers and Miguel Salazar, Chair of the Catholic Immigration and Refugee Task Force. Each panelist shared personal experiences associated with their involvement serving immigrants and refugees. Panelists described the convoluted process of immigration. Dr. Kahn shared that “it is thirty times more difficult to immigrate than to gain acceptance into Harvard University.” The panelists showed passion when compelling the audience to not forget that immigrants are human beings and these humans are in trouble. They urged the audience to be accountable for one another and to help those suffering.

With the Culminating Project in first year seminar, students can write a traditional essay or create a unique personal project such as the creation of a poem, song, piece of artwork, etc. The project helped students explore the complex issues surrounding immigrants, migrants and refugees. Students were also asked to explore their role and responsibility in resolving immigration issues through a peaceful and nonviolent means. This publication is a compilation of several projects submitted and an opportunity for first year student to do what Grande asked us to do… to link immigration to individual people; to humanize this subject matter that is at the forefront of nations all over our world.

Paige Illum, Ph.D., CSJA
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Avila Community Values

- Excellence in teaching and learning
- The worth, dignity, and potential of each human being
- Diversity and its expression
- The development of the whole person
- Right relationships, with God, self, others, and creation
- Service with the dear neighbor
Acknowledgments

This publication is in honor of all who seek to find a better life. We are all human beings, we have worth and the right to pursue safety, security and happiness.

A special acknowledgment and many thanks to Reyna Grande, author of The Distance Between Us, and the 2017 Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecturer. Thank you for sharing your journey and your story. You spoke about your legacy which is the desire to change the hearts and minds of readers. You absolutely have challenged us to educate ourselves on the topics of immigration and through this education, hearts and minds have changed.

A heart-felt thanks to Bill and Jean '76 Buchanan and the Buchanan Initiative for Peace and Nonviolence. Your generous spirit and support helped the issues of immigration permeate through the curriculum of first year seminar and helped to inspire our first year students to find ways they can approach difficult issues though a peaceful and nonviolent manner.

The Truman Lecture would not have been possible without the support of our presenting sponsors Joe and Sue Fahey, Kevin and Connie Fahey and the J.M. Fahey Construction Company. Your support of this event, as well as many others in our Avila community, is greatly appreciated and valued.

Thank you to our outstanding Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture Panel comprised of Kathleen E. Irish, J.D.; Sofia Kahn, M.D.; Maura Orpin and Miguel Salazar. Your service to others and passion for the many issues surrounding immigrants and refugees is inspiring and pushes all of us to find peace in a positive resolution.

Thank you to the Avila University Common Reading Program Committee led by Dr. Paige Illum. Members were Dr. Sue Ellen McCalley, Dr. Valerie Mendoza and Dr. Abigail Lambke. The time you devoted to this project and dedication to the process of selecting a book is noticed and appreciated!

The dedication of The Truman Lecture Series Committee impacts students, faculty, staff and community members by bringing talented speakers to our campus. Through the hard work of Aaron Bennett, Dr. Charlene Gould, Angela Heer, Dr. Paige Illum, Darren Roubinek, Alexandra Pilley and the insightful leadership of Dr. Sue Ellen McCalley, our students were exposed to a unique and thought provoking experience. Thank you!

Many thanks to Angela Heer, Vice President of Advancement & External Relations; Darren Roubinek, Senior Director of Marketing & Communications; and Aaron Bennett, Events Coordinator, for their countless hours of dedicated work to make this entire experience a success. And also to Maureen Reardon and Bob Berry who designed this reflection book with wonderfully creative and on-target project management skills.

The members of the Office of Marketing and Communication, the Advancement Office, the Theatre Department and Information Technology Services helped implement a flawless series of events and festivities surrounding the Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture. Thank you for your excellent attention to detail and expertise in your respective areas.

Through the tireless efforts of our First Year Seminar Instructors our students were able to gain important worldview lessons through the First Year Seminar curriculum. A great deal was asked of all of these individuals who were always cooperative and dedicated. You all did make a difference! Thank you to Dave Armstrong, Regan Baker, Jason Baldwin, Crystal Bruntz, Bailey Carr, Sara Eckinger, Darby Gough, Ashlyn Hull, Dr. Paige Illum, Loretta Jones, Dorie Kurtz, Paige Libbert, Kristi Littleton, Anna McDonald, Elizabeth McKinley, Dr. Valerie Mendoza, Dr. Amy Milakovic, Alicia Murillo, Janine Urness and Mary Kay Whitacre.

We also thank those who helped educate our first year students in unique and meaningful ways through the First Year Seminar curriculum including Jeannette Londadjim, Avila University Activist-in-Residence Sponsored by the Buchanan Initiative for Peace and Nonviolence; Dr. Nilufer Guler, Avila University Assistant Professor of Education; Yessica Ramirez, Avila University student; Arica Mauer, Coordinator of the Buchanan Initiative for Peace and Nonviolence; and Renata, Evelyn and Antonio who shared their lives in the documentary Indivisible by Hilary Linder and Laura Franco.

Lastly, thank you to all of the Avila University first year students. Thank you for your commitment to understanding the perspective of others and finding ways to reach a peaceful resolution to issues related to immigration. We challenge you to live the mission of Avila University as you learn more about how you can contribute to our global community.

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As a Catholic school founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, Avila University is dedicated to preparing students to “make meaningful contributions to the global community.” This mission can be seen in effect by examining the first-year seminar course all incoming freshman are required to take. Through an entire semester of classes focused around immigration and the problems that relate to it, students are fully immersed in each of the six major values identified by Avila (Mission and Values, 2017).

The importance placed on “excellence in teaching and learning,” our first value, may come as no surprise, seeing that Avila is an institution of higher education. Even before classes began, students such as myself were already being introduced to the world of immigration through Reyna Grande’s memoir, The Distance Between Us. Reading about the experiences Grande had growing up in a part of Mexico plagued by poverty gave me new appreciation for things I, along with many others, normally take for granted. Above anything, I feel that reading the book humanized immigration for me; immigrants are not numbers that need to be dealt with, they are people who require rescue from situations that put their basic human rights in danger.

In a school that encourages “diversity and its expression,” there was no better topic than immigration to showcase the wide variety of backgrounds our students hold. Yessica Ramirez, for example, shared what it was like growing up with two undocumented parents. For Ramirez, there was a constant fear that each day could be the last she would be able to spend with her mom and dad in the United States. Before taking this course, I had not considered the toll being in the country illegally could have on a family. Especially on the kids it would be difficult, knowing what could happen to their parents, but perhaps not fully understanding why. No child should have to be concerned about their family being taken away; unfortunately, it happens all too frequently, even to those in our own community.

Although Avila’s third value on the “worth, dignity, and potential of each human being” is broad, a specific example of where this came into play over the semester was when Sr. Jeanette spoke of the objectification of refugees. Although it may happen unintentionally, there is a significant problem in the United States of viewing refugees as things rather than people. To solve this, it is the responsibility of all people, including the students and faculty at Avila, to make a conscious effort not to fall into the same ignorant behaviors. The worth of refugees must not be undermined, their dignity should never be taken away, and their potential must not go unutilized. As Sr. Jeanette said, most refugees wish to help those who have helped them, and it is in their rights and to our benefit that they be allowed to do so.

At Avila, the “development of the whole person” is stressed. By being involved in first-year seminar, I have been able to develop stances on political, social, and global issues that held no importance in my life prior to the course. My thoughts on immigration, migration, refugees, and everything in between have been altered by the experience. It has opened my eyes to the truth of immigration policy; there are many faults in how our government functions, but no simple fixes exist. The system is flawed and reform needs to occur, but it will take time for any real changes to happen.

Both the value of “right relationships with God, self, others, and creation” and the value of “service with the dear neighbor” are reasons why Avila could become a powerful tool to change hearts about immigration. Immigrants who are trying to come to the United States should not be seen as problems; they are real people with serious problems who have nowhere else to turn. They are our dear neighbors, and we should do everything in our power to help. By educating any who will listen on the truth of immigration and the all that it can do for our economy, our global relationships, and our nation as a whole, Avila’s mission can impact millions.
Paige Rackers

Immigration is a much talked about topic in America. In Reyna Grande’s incredible book, *The Distance Between Us*, she gives a very detailed description of what it means to persevere despite the odds. Her book, along with the First-Year Seminar class, displays many characteristics of Avila University’s values. These values are great examples of how we should live our lives. We should always see the good in people and get rid of prejudices that can hurt others. Reyna Grande is determined and courageous; her actions show what it means to help your neighbor and change the hearts of so many by overcoming stereotypes.

“Difficult roads often lead to beautiful destinations.” I believe that this quote depicts Reyna Grande’s life perfectly. Within her childhood alone, she faced many extremely difficult challenges. Despite the feelings of loneliness, sadness, and anger, she accomplished an incredible amount. She is strong willed, hard-headed, and incredibly brave. Grande fought for what she wanted despite the abuse from her father, abandonment from her mother, and the struggles from being an illegal immigrant. Her difficult past lead her to an amazing future. Although she encountered many potholes on her journey, she did not let them stand in her way. Grande’s story has helped me to realize that difficult times do not last forever, that there is gold at the end of the rainbow; it just may take a while to get there. Life is often crazy, unfair, and can seem completely out of control, but how you react to what is going on around you is in your control. Your attitude towards a challenge can make or break you. Like Grande, I am going to continue to face each challenge head on. My determination and drive for success is going to continue while I am at Avila University and well into the rest of my life.

Excellence in teaching and learning, the worth and dignity of each human being, diversity and its expression, the development of the whole person; right relationships, with God, self, and others; and service with the dear neighbor are what Avila University values most. These values are not merely spoken, but routinely expressed through actions by individuals on and off campus.

One example of how these values are displayed is during the First-Year Seminar class that all college freshmen are required to attend. Each year this class discusses a new topic that incorporates Avila’s values. This year we discussed immigration and how it affects people around us. You may be wondering how does this correlate with Avila’s values. In order to help serve your neighbor or friend you must know how to help them. There are illegal immigrants here in the United States. That is a fact. It is also a fact that many who are undocumented are trying to become citizens, but the process is extremely hard, long, and time consuming. So in order to help those who are illegal we need to become educated on the immigration process. This starts by understanding immigration laws and by hearing stories from people who have struggled to attain their citizenship. Other values of Avila’s are expressed within immigration such as diversity and worth of an individual. Not only does immigration allow for diversity of race or ethnic groups, but for a diversity of opinions and points of view. People are so much more than just their race. At Avila we value the dignity of each person, their thoughts, their goals, their dreams, and their desires.

By living life with values such as these, it makes it easier to see the good in people. Having empathy and understanding are characteristics that can help to improve the lives of many people. That, in short, is why I personally believe people can change. No one is perfect; everyone makes mistakes. No one has the right to judge anybody else for the choices they have made unless you have walked a mile in their shoes. The best way I have found not to criticize is to ask questions. I find myself repeatedly asking, “Why?,” “How come?”, or “What makes you feel that way?” Asking questions does not only allow you to see the other person’s point of view, but also allows a mutual respect and trust to build between the two of you.

This is a great example of how to help change the hearts of people who may not fully understand the immigration system. Asking questions is only one aspect of how to help someone understand the immigration process. Your attitude can encourage them to be more cooperating and open to your ideas and points of view as well. If you are rude or aggressive, they might get defensive and feel as if you are attacking their beliefs and, therefore, grow more stubborn and not open to change. This is not what you want. Stay patient, calm, and realize that not everyone is going to agree with you.

As a society, we are known for making rash judgments and having prejudices. Because of these stereotypes that we cast on individuals solely because they are different from us, barriers are created that initially were never there. By doing this, we are only making it harder on ourselves and slowly diminishing our ability to see the good in all people. Stereotyping individuals such as illegal immigrants does not help anyone become more successful or give anyone an advantage. Saying that because someone is undocumented they must be lazy and cannot contribute to our society in anyway just makes you sound uneducated. Other stereotypes such as all illegal immigrants are criminals and carry diseases over when they cross the border are clouding the rational judgment of many individuals. Instead of saying “Wait, where is your proof?” or “How do you know that?”, people just blindly believe what they hear on TV or read in newspapers.

Sadly, more and more people see only the stereotypes surrounded by illegal immigrants. These are the people that you and I need to communicate with. We need to be open to their interpretations and still politely explain ours. This goes for any stereotypes for any race, gender, ethnicity, or religious group. We were not made to all be the same, to like the same subjects, to agree on the same ideas, or to have the same opinions. But we were created to treat each other how we would want to be treated. Stereotypes affect the way we think and the way we act.

In conclusion, Reyna faced an extremely difficult childhood, where she felt abandoned by both of her parents. She showed true courage and determination by stepping out of her way to help others. Avila’s values tell us to help everybody we can, not just those that are convenient. Life is about helping others and treating others how you would want to be treated. Never forget to find the good in each person. Everyone is capable of change, sometimes it just takes time. However, stereotypes can hinder a person’s ability to change. Immigration is a controversial topic, but it is one that needs to be talked about and fixed.
Flower on the Precipice

Perched on a precipice is a flower,
And the chasm below grows by the hour.
This single tiny morning glory,
Sits above the ground more than a hundred story.
Even so, she doesn’t waver,
Indeed, this flower is something braver.
For it resolved to root itself there,
To stand high in the crisp new air.
With obvious disdain for the danger ahead,
Because she knows she won’t fall, but float down instead.

In my poem, the Morning Glory represents a person, specifically the story of Mrs. Grande was in my thoughts while writing this. She is perched on the precipice of change, as a chasm of disappointment, hatred, pain grows below her. People are fragile like flowers, all people, and this flower is alone dangling over this seemingly unstoppable danger, this insurmountable obstacle. Even so, she stays there high in the sky with her head in the clouds, where the sun and the light can shine down on her, not allowing the darkness, the uncertainty, and inevitability of the chasm to stop her from being alive.

That is what bravery is. I think to overcome the obstacles in your way, to continue on even in the harshest of places, and circumstances, and to have your life be something truly beautiful, even if only for a short while, like how rarely morning glories bloom. This person can be brave, unashamed of herself because she knows that having risen so high, if she does fall to the chasm it will be a graceful thing, a beautiful thing, a fitting end to a life well lived, something even that will bring color to the black of the pit, if only for a while. This year has reinforced what I always knew, people are people. We are all the same, but at the same time wonderfully different; by getting to know as many people as I can, I can become better myself.

If all people knew this truth, sought to create this understanding, perhaps we could all stand strong in the sun in the crisp new air of a brand new age. So going on from here, I intend to share this lesson wherever and whenever I can. After all, if I were in such an unfortunate circumstance as many people find themselves in, I would want someone to speak for me.
Chloe Casey

We All Bleed Red

For a world with so many opportunities to be connected,
We have never been more divided.
Pointing fingers and calling names,
All in the name of hate, for what?
Our pride, some sick satisfaction?
Left, right, pro, anti,
Everything has to have a title anymore.
Your words mean nothing if your actions contradict.
I see humans, but no humanity.
It doesn't matter that we speak in different tongues, have different skins tones,
Or worship different gods, we all bleed the same.
And that seems to be happening a lot, bleeding that is.
Violence in the name of hate. That seems to be something we all know too well.
Since when did hate become the universal language instead of love?
We are pushing people out, and preventing others from coming in.
I always wondered why someone didn't do something about that,
Then I realized, I am someone.
I cannot do everything, but I can do something.
I may only be one, but I am one.
It starts out small, a smile to a stranger, or a simple compliment.
No act of kindness is ever wasted, so why not share it in abundance?
I cannot sit down any longer believing that silence is the loudest scream
When silence gets you pushed aside.
I will not let innocent people that need help go on alone.
I will always defend human rights because I can no longer stay silent when I see injustice.
I can no longer pretend that it isn’t happening.
If you are more fortunate than others, build a longer table, not a higher wall.
Because immigration rights are civil rights.
Quit pretending that your racism is patriotism.
Immigration isn’t a damnation but a celebration.
Under the shelter of other people, people survive.
Family is not about blood.
It is about who stands by your side and keeps you moving forward.
These people become the bridges between two countries,
Opening up doors of opportunity.

The beauty of the world comes from the diversity of its people,
Not the segregation of those who are different.
Isaac Newton once said that we build too many walls and not enough bridges.
And I couldn't agree more.
The only thing stopping us is our unwillingness to evolve.
Love will always trump hate.
Because good always powers over evil.
There is no reason to fear change, we must embrace it.
It's time to accept who we all are. It's time to come together.
Because after everything, we all bleed red.

For the culminating project I decided to write a poem about immigration and some of the prejudices that people face when they try to come to America. The poem was always my first choice for the project since writing is something that has always spoken to me. However, while I was writing this poem it turned into something more. It has now become a much larger, personal project for myself that I have been working on for many weeks but have chosen to remain secretive about until it is complete. The experience of this class and working on this project has changed my views on immigration because it was something that I thought did not need to be changed. I did not know the struggles and hardships that were associated with it. My project greatly reflects the prejudices and stereotypes that immigrants face such as, the belief that they are taking our jobs, that they are lazy, alcoholics, drug addicts, the list goes on and on yet none of these stereotypes are true.

I believe the richness of diversity can be taught to others by teaching everyone that we are all created equal and by learning each other's cultures we can expand our thinking. By learning about immigration and the hardships that immigrants face I believe that hearts can be changed much like mine was. The best way to change hearts is to inform them with the issues associated with it and to hear an immigrant's experiences first hand.
Ellie Matthews

My painting is symbolic. The landscape and background are painted to seem distant and fuzzy, but the people and the flag are more clear. This is to show that it is the people and what they stand for that makes American soil so special. The famous saying “America is built on the backs of immigrants” is depicted as the American flag standing in a stack of stones. The stones are made to look like flags of various countries. This is to show that many different countries have contributed to America and are helping to hold our nation up. Without them, the flag would fall. In the same way, if immigrants stopped immigrating to America, our country would not survive. It is a failure of America to have such a broken immigration system when immigration is one of the main reasons our country is so special.

The figures clustered around the American flag are in black capes with their faces blotted out. At first glance, it is hard to tell if the figures are stealing the stones or putting more stones at its base. These cloaked figures represent illegal immigrants, migrants, and refugees. This scene is meant to symbolize the confusion in the minds of some Americans that surround the immigrants and what their intentions are. Often, Americans speak about these cloaked figures as if they were stealing the stones under the flag and the Americans are afraid the flag will fall. But if one looks closely, it is clear that the cloaked figures are actually contributing their stones to the base of the flag. All the figures are also facing towards the flag.

The black cloaks and blank faces are to symbolize the dehumanization and stigma shown to these people. They look like thieves. They look untrustworthy. People do not understand that these immigrants carry a past. The immigrants carry their own special story that needs to be heard, not hidden. And that is why you can see a trail behind each of the figures, showing the path they have taken and how far they have come. Each trail symbolizes the life the immigrant left behind. Some immigrants cross great distances and make great sacrifices to have a better life in America. Some immigrants are escaping their homeland that has been destroyed by war. Some immigrants are trying to escape the endless cycle of poverty that plagues their family and to build a better life. It is usually some form of persecution or suffering that causes the immigrants to decide to cross the border. In the bottom left corner of the painting, you can see an American aggressively clutching the black cloak of a figure. The black figure is holding a Mexican stone to add to the pile under the flag. But the American is telling the figure to go back where he came from by pointing towards a big gray wall. It seems illogical that the American would focus on the Mexican immigrant who wears the same black cloak and is an illegal immigrant just like the other cloaked figures from other countries. One might ask oneself why the American would be so aggressive with the Mexican and not turn around and see there are illegal immigrants from all over the world, not just Mexico. The American is quite attentive and aggravated at the presence of the Mexican, but does not look back to see that there is already a Mexican stone underneath the American flag. The Mexicans have been contributing to America just like the other countries.

One can see that the right edge of the painting is painted a stark gray, resembling a wall. The wall does not fit in this painting at all. It looks ugly and unsightly. It lacks detail and is only shadows because it does not truly exist yet. But it remains in the picture because this wall still exists in some American hearts and minds. It comes out in the actions of some Americans so persistently that there might as well be a wall between the United States and Mexico right now. Ignorance, fear, and hostility always create a dangerous and toxic combination. Every act of anger has a seed of fear. This wall between the United States and Mexico should not be built. What needs to be built is a better immigration system. The cloaks must be removed. Faces need to be seen. Stories need to be heard. Sacrifices need to be recognized. And trust needs to be rebuilt. None of this will occur by walling off the illegal Mexican immigrants. If a wall remains, even inside the hearts of Americans, the problem will remain. The sky in the painting is painted somewhat gray because there is an approaching storm. This storm symbolizes future struggles the broken immigration system will cause if it is not fixed. If the storm is bad enough, immigrants might not continue to build up the flag. This spells disaster for the flag and everything the flag stands for. It will take time, sacrifice, and unity to bring people together to fix the system. But if it remains the way it is, both America and the illegal immigrants will have more hardship now and in the future.
Rachel Nemes

For the majority of my life, I have used art as a way to express my emotion and view towards different topics. As soon as this project was assigned, I knew that I would use this opportunity to do the same thing. For my project, I used the combined mediums of charcoal, colored pencil, and gel pen to create an image that is very dear to my heart. It started with a sketch of just a simple woman’s face, but then she quickly developed a personality and a story.

In my drawing, the woman is a portrayal of an aspiring refugee from lands far away, who has yet to escape the war surrounding her. The woman is in the foreground of the image with blurred flames drawn behind her. The flames signify the past she is trying to leave behind, not only the war she has faced, but the persecution and hate as well. But this is not all, you can see flames somewhere else in the piece too reflected in her eyes. I meant for this to show the viewer that the flames are not just behind her (in her past), but also ahead of her, in what she has yet to face. In becoming a refugee, her safety is still unsure, and there are still opportunities for persecution and hate to rise in her life.

As human beings, it should be expected of us to look out for one another despite the cost, or the difference of religion, but now-a-days people are so wary of protecting themselves, that they would rather not protect anyone else. The problem with this is that not everyone can protect themselves. It is our duty to take in those without safe havens, to care for those without caregivers, and to love those who do not know love. The woman in my drawing is more than a woman. She represents an entire people who are waiting for us to remember what humanity is.
In the early 1990's, my family received refugee status as a civil war began to spread in the Balkans. This made my family move to a few different countries before I was born and arrived in the United States. The ride into the United States was honestly somewhat of an easy one, my family was given green cards and could work and assimilate into the American lifestyle (though many Bosnians chose to stick to their roots). My family was given the opportunity to receive citizenship after a normal period of working and not committing any crimes worthy of deportation.

After I grew up and could comprehend all the problems in the world and formulate my own opinions over them, I began looking into immigration and refugees. Knowing where I came from, I had an advantage over others who have never experienced that at all. Since my entire family's migration to the United States was not much of a hard trip, I did not have many negative opinions on the topic. Of course I knew there were many people struggling to get into the United States, but people would have to understand the government's point of view in that an open doors policy could dramatically devastate the economy and country. I am very thankful for the opportunity to grow up in a nation that is rid of domestic wars.

Having so many views and opinions going on in the world and in my own family has allowed me to have a great understanding of immigration and what it can do to an individual and a family. I support immigration and refugees fully, but it is hard to bring support at certain times when no one wants to take the time to understand multiple views of a certain subject and what impact having open doors could really do to the nation.

Immigrants and refugees alike experience many prejudices and stereotypes. My family comes from Bosnia & Herzegovina which is a nation in the Balkan region of Europe. It is predominantly Muslim, but is a cultural hub with many religions as well. Many of us are not affected by stereotypical Muslim sayings and we do not fit the "how a Muslim looks" type of look, but that is who we are. We still face stereotypes if we are known to be Muslim. That is why the Bosnian War happened; we were almost wiped off the face of the Earth just for our religion. We are all the same people culturally in the Balkans and our language is the same as well; the only difference is our religious views. Even today in America we are subject to stereotypical names if the person on the other end feels it is necessary (even though it rarely happens). I feel tied to Muslims that try to migrate to the United States that get racial slurs thrown at them just by how they look. The only difference between them and myself is our skin color. If I had the same skin color, I feel that my entire life up to now would not have been the same. I would not have "blended in" with the Caucasian population of America, and instead could have been stereotyped very easily.

This brings me to my final topic which is over current immigration problems in America. Currently in the world there are many wars happening in Africa and as well as the Middle East. These multiple wars create a lot of displaced people looking for refuge. When people think of freedom they look to the United States. The problem is, the United States cannot take all those people at once, it just is not safe for the people in the country and it can take a toll on the economy for the time being. There are very strict processes that are always being followed and bans being put on certain nations. These bans should in my opinion not be there, but instead, when people apply for refugee status through the United Nations and such, they should be background checked fully to make sure they are no threat to the people of another nation. As we have seen, this does not stop people from doing awful things, but it slows it down and allows nations to catch criminals who otherwise would have gotten through the cracks. The immigration system is very delicate in the United States and needs to be revised a good amount. This does take time which no one has at this point with everything going on in today's world.
The topic that has been addressed in first year seminar this year is that of immigration. Immigration has always been a debatable topic. The topic is so controversial among people in the United States because it not only affects those that are inside the borders of the United States but those that are attempting to enter the “free world” and live the “American Dream” as well. The election of president Donald Trump further increased the debate about immigration with his main topic of building a wall on the Mexico-United States border to keep immigrants out of the U.S. This not only sparked debate but controversy, because of the way President Trump has brought up the topic. Some of the ways we have addressed immigration in freshman seminar is by using videos, articles, and even bringing in Reyna Grande, the author of our summer reading book The Distance Between Us during our Truman Lecture.

Being the son of immigrants, the talk of immigration has always been at an ear’s length away, whether it is being discussed by family members, peers, or on the television by news anchors or political figures. Personally, having the privilege of being born in the United States and being a United States citizen, I have never worried about immigration because I always thought, if it is not affecting me personally, why should I worry about it? Little did I know how egocentric I was despite my family history and ethnicity. The experience of immigration, migration, and refugees has not only opened my eyes and made me realize how selfish I was, but how I lacked empathy to those that want that privilege I have, to be a United States’ citizen. Being a United States’ citizen offers many opportunities that those immigrating from a third world country and refugees wish they had back in their home countries. Some of these opportunities include: the freedom to express one’s self as they would like, the opportunity to gain a better education or further their education, to feel safe in their everyday life and not have to worry if they will get to see their mother, father, brother, or sister later in the day, and provide a better life for their children than what they had growing up.

There are many stereotypes and prejudices immigrants and refugees experience such as, “Immigrants only come here to take our jobs,” “They cost our country money,” and “By letting them in, we are welcoming terrorism.” This type of thinking sets a negative mindset about all immigrants and refugees that is incorrect. Many of the immigrants that are in the United States occupy jobs that the population does not like or are not skilled for. For examples, many of the Hispanic based immigrants occupy jobs that include those in agriculture, construction, and home services. Depending on the type of service, these jobs are some of the lowest paid jobs and most labor intensive jobs. Refugees are people that flee away from their home country because of conflict that is occurring, such as persecution. Many of the current refugees are those fleeing countries that ISIS has taken control in. Despite the fact that half the refugees are children, many people would rather deny entry to the them because they think terrorists are posing as refugees in order to get into the United States and cause terror.

In my opinion, if people were more educated on issues related to immigration, there would be a change of hearts and maybe even a change in policies. When some people hear the word “immigrant” they automatically assume negative thoughts. They picture a “Mexican jumping the border” and think that these “immigrants” are only here to receive benefits, take jobs, and use the system. However, those that do enter the country illegally enter it that way because the process to enter legally can take up to several years or they may not even be granted access to enter. The United States has a very strict process on who is allowed in. According to the article, “Why Don’t They Just Get in Line and Come Legally?” that we read at for Freshman Seminar, there are really only three ways for someone to legally enter the United States. These three ways are, “employment, family reunification, or humanitarian protection.” These three ways, however, also have very specific guidelines for how someone can enter based off of one of those three reasons. For example, for someone to enter the United States by employment, that person must have the employer sponsor them, the person must have adequate requirements, such as job skills and education level, and that the employer is not able to find a United States worker able to take the job first. For someone to enter by family reunification, the person must be a spouse, parent, child, or sibling and the family member that is trying to bring the other family member into the United States has to prove that they have an income above the poverty line and that they will support that family member. Last but not least, for someone to enter under humanitarian protection, they have to go through many screenings, and have to demonstrate that they fear persecution because of their “race, religion, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, or national origin.” However, despite qualifying under one of these reasons to enter legally, one may still not be able to enter for years or even decades because of the high number of people trying to qualify and the United States only allowing a certain number of slots for people to enter in such ways each year.

Recently, the Trump administration has decided to end Temporary Protected Status (or TPS) for people that are in the United States from Nicaragua and extended it until July 2018 for residents from Honduras. TPS offers temporary protection for residents from countries that are qualified under it because the home countries of these people are not able to handle the return of all the people at once. For a country to qualify under TPS, it must have ongoing armed conflict, an environmental disaster, or other extraordinary or temporary conditions. However, this means that those here from Nicaragua will be considered illegal and can face deportation once the TPS ends in January and those from Honduras are waiting on what will be decided come July. This adds another side to the immigration debate because people are being forced back to countries they may not have been to since they were children or at all, along with these people that were once protected becoming illegal. Personally having parents from Honduras and having their protection ending and facing deportation worries me, and creates uncertainty for my siblings, my parents, and my future. Though the Trump administration may think what they are doing is right, they are potentially splitting up families and causing people to set up life in an unknown country with no family, job, food, and even housing.

Overall, immigration is such a complicated issue that has no simple solution. There will be those that agree with how it is being handled and those that will not. However, despite your beliefs we can all agree that there should be something done about how it is being handled.
Murielle Mercier


Part I - Wistful

May I partake in what is called the American dream? Is that only a myth? Are things not what they seem? May I enter into this country full of promises and opportunity? A haven, civil rights, and a community of unity. Oh I would love to experience such things To see the meaning of what those things bring To see smiles on my brothers’ and sisters’ faces To smile as my family and I see new places.

Part II - Disdained

“‘They’re taking all our jobs!’ Yet we can hardly reach the knobs To the doors of the jobs that interest you We cannot do all that you do Those professions are out of reach to us We ride upon the “struggle bus” We do not benefit, as we are paperless And if not paperless, a lack of education Yes. We have yet to further our learning Because we must first build our earnings We are just trying to make a life Must you be so indifferent to our strife?

Part III - Deserving

We build the buildings you work in And clean the floors you walk on We take care of your kids when You’ve left and work must begin We till the fields you grow from From day break till night come We share with you our dishes And come with well wishes We take the jobs you scoff at At minimum wage at that Yet as we stand before you You don’t seem to have a clue Of how we also give to you This two-way street is nothing new We do not reside here without pay We work to be deserving of our stay.
My inspiration for this project came from a variety of things. I had ideas in my head about what I wanted to do and images of what it would look like. I started to research images about how the world perceives immigration. I only looked at images, because I wanted a visual representation. There were images that showed a lot of emotion, some about coming together as a world, and other various things.

I then became curious about how America views immigration in a single image and started looking at those images. They were a lot different. I do not know how I did not see it coming, but about half of the pictures I saw involved Trump in one way or another. It came to my attention Americans are not putting people's faces to immigration, we are replacing them with Trump's face.

After looking and comparing imagery, I realized Americans do not want to talk much about immigration because it is such a “hot button” topic. This leads to misinformation and people picking and choosing what they want to believe. Therefore, every person has a different interpretation of immigration.

This brings me to my artwork. The question mark is for all the questions about immigration: how many people is it affecting? What is it? Why is it so hard to talk about? Why is it such a big problem? Where are they from and where are they going? Who are they?

I have the Earth because obviously that is where this is taking place. The entire world is being affected by the immigration movements that have been happening for a long time. This is not a new issue that has just arisen. The United States are in a lighter green to highlight the place that is affecting us, where we live. Other countries represented by their flags are: India, China, Japan, Canada, Mexico, Vietnam, Cuba, Ireland, and Germany. I randomly chose a handful of countries for a variety to show that more just than Mexicans are immigrating to the United States.

At the bottom, the silhouettes of a family looking into the distance symbolizes the gap of separation between. Maybe they do not know when they will see each other again or where their next move or home is. In summary, I wanted to make a project with a representation of immigration through the world’s eyes.
At many Colleges and Universities there is a certain class that all freshman or first year college students must take. So naturally, coming into Avila I thought this class was going to be a welcome to college; this is what you are to expect while you attend here. However, this was not the case. This class was the exact opposite of what I was expecting. In my high school, immigration was a big topic, and the way it was discussed was not the best for the situation. Discussing it here, I was able to get a better idea of immigration. We did not only focus on one area, but we touched on many ideas that relate to immigration.

According to the English Oxford Living Dictionaries, immigration is defined as “the action of coming to live permanently in a foreign country.” Migration is defined as “movement of people to a new area or country to find work or better living conditions.” Refugee is defined as “a person who has been forced to leave his/her country to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.” Prior to starting this class, I believed that I knew what these terms really meant. However, this was not the case. I realized that I had an idea of these terms, but what I believed was nowhere near the real definitions. I would say I had a better and closer idea of the terms immigration and migration rather than refugee. When using the term migration, I never thought about it as the movement of people from one area to another. After being in this class I look at these words differently. At the beginning of this class, these words were just words, now I know this is not the case. These words have deeper meanings, standing for things that certain groups have had to go through and even stand for those people.

There are many stereotypes and prejudices about immigration and refugees today, some of which include: they are going to bring crime and terror and they are going to take “our” jobs. There are many other stereotypes and prejudices, but these two are the ones that I hear people talking about most often. Like the many other stereotypes, these are both nowhere close to being true. In many instances people assume that immigrants and refugees are going to come over and take our jobs. They forget that the immigrants and refugees coming over are being paid, many times, lower wages and the work that they are doing is undesirable work. Personally, I find it ironic. These people complain about immigrants and refugees coming over and they are afraid they are going to take “our” jobs, but you do not see these people who are afraid wanting to work these jobs. You can compare it to when a little kid has a toy. Let’s say Sara has a toy, and Sara has her friend Kara over. Sara is not playing with her toy, but as soon as Kara picks up the toy, Sara becomes upset. Except in this example the toy is the jobs and Kara stands for the immigrants or refugees and Sara is the people afraid of their jobs being taken. Another big stereotype that is talked about a lot is that immigrants and refugees are going to bring crime and terror here. Often, when immigrants and refugees come to the United States it is because they are trying to get away from the crime in their hometowns and home countries. Immigrants and refugees are leaving their homes to start a new life and give their family and themselves a better life than they could have at home. If their home conditions were better and gave them as many opportunities as they have here in the United States, many immigrants and refugees would want to stay at home rather than leave. Hearing these stereotypes, many people become afraid of the immigrants and refugees coming over. We should not be afraid of them, instead we should try to help them.

Through education and issues related to immigration I do believe that hearts can be changed. To start, one must understand that our country, the Unites States, gives immigrants and refugees a better life. We should have pride that people from different countries want to come over because they see the opportunities they are able to have here and the better their lives can be because of it. Many of the people that have cold hearts are ones who are not educated or only hear of the “bad” things that they believe immigrants or refugees do. If you go looking for one specific thing, your mind is going to be shut off to seeing other things you find. Obviously if you look hard enough for something you will be able to find it, but maybe not in the way you would have liked. Personally, to go about changing hearts, you must first change yours. You cannot preach about something you do not believe in yourself. Next, you could help educate those around you and even start supporting immigrants and refugees in events that they have or funds they have.

Ending this class, I would say I came out with different ideas in my mind. I now know way more about immigration than I did prior to this class starting. The work we did in class can also be taken and used for everyday life. The cause and effect tree that we worked on in class can be applied to problems we face in our own lives and potentially help us to figure out the root of the problem to change it. Immigration and refugee problems cannot stop with one person, but one person can start to help them receive and live better and safer lives.
Immigration has always been a heated and controversial topic of discussion. Many would argue that speaking about immigration is thought of as taboo; especially in modern society. However, since the last election the media began to cover and speak about immigration more often.

Although I considered myself well informed on immigration before we began to discuss it in First Year Seminar after reading Grande’s book, I still managed to learn more about it. Being able to talk about such a controversial topic with those who either oppose immigration or are indifferent about it was something interesting. It was interesting in the sense that it allowed me to hear those that have a different opinion than mine and it also allowed for them to inform themselves and rethink whether to support it or not after learning more in depth about the situation. Personally, I have always supported immigration, migration, and bringing refugees to America because I feel as if 99% of those that come to the United States are seeking nothing but to better themselves. They do not come here to take people’s jobs or commit crimes. They come here because this place is thought of by many as the land of opportunity where anyone can succeed if they are willing to work hard.

We immigrants face hardship and prejudice when arriving in America. Many choose to simply ignore it, but honestly, we must acknowledge that it happens so that something is done about it. People often make stereotypes of immigrants. For example, some think that immigrants or specifically illegal immigrants do nothing but to bring crime and terror to this country. In the last political campaign our current president himself stated that those that came here illegally from South American countries were “rapists” and “violent criminals and murderers.” Another stereotype that is often made about immigrants is that they take advantage of the government or that the government gives them free handouts. The reality of the situation is that the only people that are entitled to help from the government have to be United States citizens. Not permanent residents. Not illegal aliens. Yet many people tend to use this as an excuse as to why they do not support immigration. One last stereotype that immigrants face that I would like to state is that they are “dumb” or “uneducated.” I am an immigrant myself, and I am currently enrolled in college. When I hear comments like this being made, it infuriates me and makes me sad because of how ignorant some people can be when talking about immigration.

Some of the current issues with immigration within the United States are that there really is no path for immigrants to become citizens; most of the time you cannot come to the United States without having a close relative such as a father or mother already residing here. That it is very expensive and can take years for those that want to move and live in the United States. These factors have led to America having a population of roughly 11 million illegal immigrants. Many people are not aware of these issues and tend to say or ask, “why don’t they just come here legally?” If only it were that easy, illegal immigration would not exist. At first you feel alone because you do not speak the language. Sometimes you even feel unwanted when you hear people talk about how big of a burden immigrants are to society even though we are the opposite. It truly hurts, because we come here to have a better future; not to hurt those that were born here. At the end of the day though, being an immigrant child to me is something great. I am now part of two cultures. Two worlds. I have seen how some people struggle in their home countries and I have also seen how many immigrants have succeeded here in America. I use that as motivation for my future. It makes me want to be a person that will make a difference. I truly feel as if someday I will.

Being able to openly speak and listen to other people on how they felt about immigration was something that impacted me. It impacted me because it made me aware of how uniformed on the topic some people were. It allowed me to see that you cannot make a difference unless you speak out. As an immigrant myself, I think that if I were to start informing more people on the situation it could possibly make a difference. I know that it would not happen right away, but it would possibly plant a seed in a person and they might even advocate for immigrants.

With my story being very similar to that of Grande’s, this semester was very special to me. I not only learned a lot more about immigration, but I also connected with someone that went through similar experiences as me. Moving to a new country and adapting to a whole new culture is not easy. At first you feel alone because you do not speak the language. Sometimes you even feel unwanted when you hear people talk about how big of a burden immigrants are to society even though we are the opposite. It truly hurts, because we come here to have a better future; not to hurt those that were born here. At the end of the day though, being an immigrant child to me is something great. I am now part of two cultures. Two worlds. I have seen how some people struggle in their home countries and I have also seen how many immigrants have succeeded here in America. I use that as motivation for my future. It makes me want to be a person that will make a difference. I truly feel as if someday I will.
**Taylor Williams**

**Why?**

Why?
in a world, when they separate families, when was it okay?
in a place where because of who we are, things go differently?
in the state of mind, where we have to question whether a person can have the basic needs of life?
Why?
Is this really okay?
Are we...
Really okay with this?
The fact that people based on rules and not character that people have to live on whether a bill is passed or not?
When was it okay?

You say just stand in line
why?
when there is no line
You say everything will work out
but why?
When you know sometime it won’t
You say you have love for everyone
Again Why?
When the very people you watch on the news suffer because of something humans created and they didn’t ask for it, but you do nothing.
Why?
Why are you so comfortable with this being an issue with many failed, heartbreaking solutions?
Because it not happening to you?
Because it doesn’t affect you?
Trust me, someone will remember when it’s you and not them.
And then you’ll ask…. Why?

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**M**y project is a poem based on immigration and what immigrants have to go through right now in the world. I named the poem ‘Why’, because it was a way to try to get the audience to personally answer the questions and statements in the poem and for them to think about why are we okay with letting human beings, people just like you and me, go through this.

Also in the poem, I try to touch on all the issues for immigration, from personal issues to politics, just to make aware that these are some of the problems with immigration. And I ended the poem in a way to make the audience question themselves on the fact that “you say this but you do that” kind of thing to make them aware of our own actions and how it affects others.

This project has helped me explore the issues on immigration by making me more aware of what the immigrants have to actually go through. It has inspired me to want to help and to get more involved.

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**Major: Music**

**Hometown: Lee’s Summit, Mo.**
Landon Toler

This project is a 3D rendering done in Autodesk 3ds Max. The image consists of a representation of a border wall with different details representing different things. On the left side, the wall is facing Mexico. On the right side, the wall is facing the United States. Each side has damage and paint chipping, representing the slow but prominent progress being made to remove the barriers between our two cultures. On the left side, the wall has graffiti including messages from families to their loved ones across the border, messages like “stay strong” and pictures of broken hearts. Each of these represent the feelings that many immigrant families have towards the United States and the border. From what I have seen, it is not so much as anger, but sadness from separation and loss, and disappointment in the way the immigrant has become. There are also little candles on this side. The candles are the only light on this half of the scene, giving it a serene, almost sad feeling. The light also represents my enlightenment to the feelings and problems of the people on this side of the wall. On the other hand, the right side of the wall is illuminated by dull, industrial looking lights hanging from the top of the wall. I see these as representing the old, dull opinions expressed by many people on this side of the wall. The light is red and dim showing, little human emotion, similar to those statements and pictures on this side.

The area surrounding the wall also represents the feelings on both sides. The left side, in representing Mexico, the ground is plain dirt, not much green life. However, the right side, is lush grass with a road. The right side represents how many immigrants see America, not quite as a lush new world, but as a place that would better promote success and survival. This can also be seen in the reverse. Many Americas’s hold a blind patriotism towards their own country, seeing it as a much better place with bright green grass, than the dangerous or less beautiful land to their south.

This lecture series has opened my eyes to how many of the opinions on my side of the wall are without good reason and sometimes immoral. The people on the other side of that border are human and have struggles many of us cannot comprehend. My art piece represents both sides of this debate.
Today in the United States, there are about 37 million immigrants from all around the world. They come to the United States in search of better jobs that will allow them to be able to take care of their family. Many citizens of America believe that they should not be allowed to immigrate into America because they take up their land and take away jobs from citizens. Although they do take away some jobs, they are only doing it to be able to take care of their families and to keep their heads above water. In many countries that are not economically advanced, jobs are not really available and the few that are, do not pay enough to take care of a whole family. In those situations, people are left with no choice but to immigrate to a new country where they could get a job to make money just to send back home to their families. That means that a lot of immigrants are forced into immigration and do not really want to do it, but they are left with no other options. This makes me believe that discrimination against immigrants who had no choice but to leave their home countries is unfair.

I believe that immigrants would not immigrate if they were able to make a good living in their home countries. Most immigrants only come for work so they do not have to live through poverty and can provide for their families. This means that all they want to do is come and get a job and earn honest money for their family. They also have to leave their family behind in the countries they come from which has to be a terrible thing that only has to be done when there are no other options available. I believe that immigrants should have to become citizens and learn the rules of America, but should not be criticized in their process of doing so. I also believe that immigrants should not be pressed for deportation unless they are breaking the law or have intentions of breaking the law. I actually think that immigrants that come looking to make an honest living should be helped with finding a job and obtaining their citizenship.

Another thing that people never take into consideration when judging immigrants is all the things they have done for America. Many things that Americans use and enjoy were made by immigrants, things such as foods, Google, shopping malls, football and even the White House. All of those are things that Americans enjoy or use on the daily basis. They all were either created by or came from origins of other countries and immigrants. Immigrants and other countries have contributed to vast amounts of things that are valued in the United States, but do not receive any acknowledgment or appreciation from many of those same Americans who show value for those things.

Grande is an immigrant from Iguala, Guerrero. Her father left to come to America when she was a young girl in order to get a job and take care of his family that lived back in Mexico. This split-up her family and left her having to live through most of her childhood without her father. Grande and her remaining family in Mexico had to begin to work many jobs, even at young ages, just to have a meal to eat each day. Later on in her childhood, her mother also left to go to America because her father could not make enough money on his own to take care of the things they needed to get done back in Mexico. Eventually her father made enough to be able to bring her and her siblings back to the United States, but it had to be done illegally. In America, she went to school and was held with high expectations by her father to do well in school. If she did not, the punishment was to be sent back to Mexico. She eventually graduated from college and became a productive citizen of the U.S. and also became an award winning author.

I used Grande as an example because she herself had to personally experience the importance that immigration can be for people from other countries. Her father came to America just because he wanted to take care of his wife and children, because he could not do it in Mexico. He came to the United States with no bad intentions. He even brought his family who became productive citizens. Grande even won awards for her writings in America. This shows that immigrants come to America with actual goals to do good. They can even become nationally recognized award winners and people that Americans might actually admire.

With all the bad things that are said about immigrants, all immigrants are not bad. Immigrants should be people that we want to help and support if they have good intentions. They should be treated normally and have the same rights just like Americans would expect to have if they went to another country. Immigrants should be valued and welcomed rather than looked down upon and denied. A lot of them only want to better themselves and be able to provide for their families, just like Americans want to do. Immigrants have a major impact on the everyday life of Americans and should be recognized for all the good things they do, instead of pushed away. I have no problem with immigration and believe that some rules set against immigrants are unfair and should be taken away.
First year student Reilly Johnson presents her first year seminar culminating project to other first year students at the Open-Mic event.

A group of first year students were selected by their instructors to present their culminating projects at the Open-Mic event.

Students learned about immigration and refugee experiences from individuals with first-hand experiences. Pictured l to r: Yessica Ramirez, Avila University student, Dr. Nilufer Guler, Avila University Assistant Professor of Education and Sr. Jeannette Londadjim, Avila University Activist-in-Residence Sponsored by the Buchanan Initiative for Peace and Nonviolence.
Students discuss the documentary *Indivisible* during New Student Orientation.

Students work on a poster presentation pulling together information from the common reading book, *The Distance Between Us*, the documentary *Indivisible* and class discussions.

Reyna Grande, author, *The Distance Between Us* and featured speaker pictured with Ron Slepitza, Ph.D., CSJA, President, Avila University shared her experiences relating to immigrating from Mexico to the United States.
The Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture and Panel would not have been possible without the passion of many who contributed to the experience. Pictured l to r: Ron Slepitza, Ph.D., CSJA, President, Avila University; Reyna Grande, author, *The Distance Between Us* and 2017 Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecturer; Panelist Kathleen Irish, J.D., practicing immigration attorney; Panelist Miguel Salazar, Director of Hispanic Ministry of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph; Sofia Khan, M.D., local physician and community activist and Maura “Mo” Orphin, Executive Director of The Don Bosco Centers in Kansas City.

Sofia Kahn, M.D. is a local physician and a community activist. She is president of KC for Refugees and spoke passionately about the need to help suffering humans.

Moderator Sue Ellen McCalley, Ph.D., looks to the panel as they share insights regarding immigrants and refugees.

The Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture and Panel would not have been possible without the passion of many who contributed to the experience. Pictured l to r: Ron Slepitza, Ph.D., CSJA, President, Avila University; Reyna Grande, author, *The Distance Between Us* and 2017 Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecturer; Panelist Kathleen Irish, J.D., practicing immigration attorney; Panelist Miguel Salazar, Director of Hispanic Ministry of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph; Sofia Khan, M.D., local physician and community activist and Maura “Mo” Orphin, Executive Director of The Don Bosco Centers in Kansas City.
Avila first year students Sonitha Eng and Estefany Borja Bonilla enjoy the reception after the panel and before Grande provided the Truman Lecture.

Bill and Jeanne ’76 Buchanan greet Sr. Jeannette Londadjim, Avila University Activist-in-Residence. The Buchanan’s established The Buchanan Initiative for Peace and Nonviolence at Avila University allowing multiple educational opportunities for first year students as well as bringing Sr. Jeannette to Avila as our Activist-in-Residence.
Reyna Grande, author, *The Distance Between Us* and 2017 Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecturer responds to questions from an audience of nearly 500.

Reyna Grande and Sr. Jeannette Londadjim, Avila University Activist-In-Residence meet at the reception.

Reyna Grande graciously signing books for students, faculty, staff and community members.
Avila officials were excited to welcome and greet the panelists. Pictured l to r: Miguel Salazar, Director of Hispanic Ministry of the Diocese of Kansas City- St. Joseph; Ron Slepitza, Ph.D., CSJA, President, Avila University; Sofia Khan, M.D., local physician and community activist; Maura “Mo” Orphin, Executive Director of The Don Bosco Centers in Kansas City; Paige Illum, Ph.D., CSJA, Director of Student Engagement and Success and Chair of the Common Reading Program Committee, Avila University; Kathleen Irish, J.D., practicing immigration attorney, and Moderator and Chair of the Harry S. Truman Lecture Committee Sue Ellen McCalley, Ph.D., Professor of Education and Psychology, Avila University.

The evening before the Lecture, Reyna Grande shared dinner with a host of Avila individuals. Pictured l to r: Sr. Marie Joan Harris, Ph.D., Provost Emerita; Eli Peach, Avila student; Hanna Ly, Avila student; Estefany Borja Bonilla, Avila student; Yessica Ramirez, Avila student; Reyna Grande, Distinguished Lecturer; Lexus Hill, Avila student; Gretta Layson, Avila student; Paige Illum, Ph.D., Director of Student Engagement and Success; Hannah Shin, Avila student and Amanda Bass, Avila student.
Avila Student Greta Layson shares conversation with Reyna Grande and other students during dinner.

Panelist Kathleen Irish, J.D., shares her experiences serving the community as an immigration attorney. She shared that she helps “keep families together.”

Panelist Miguel Salazar, Director of Hispanic Ministry of the Diocese of Kansas City- St. Joseph shares conversation at the reception with Dave Armstrong, CSJA and University Director of Mission and Ministry, Avila University.
What’s it All Four (4)

We judge - we taunt
Instead of giving it some thought
We say racial comments and discriminate
Instead of speaking of a unified nation in everyplace
We tear families apart
Instead of bring them together from the start
We restrict - we ban
Instead of giving our brothers a helping hand
When all’s said and done
We need to stand as one
Because Humanity Separated
There is none.
Don’t Worry I know I can’t change hearts
But I know where I stand
For a unified nation
Not a self-absorbed nation
C’mon people
Turn the tables around
I know you all aren’t fools
If it was you
Wouldn’t you fight too?

My project is a poem displaying the prejudicial treatment of various immigrants around the world. In today’s society, we have a negative view towards immigrants. Some often refer to them as illegal, alienated, undocumented, and useless. As a result of these negative stereotypes and prejudices comes racism and lack of teamwork and unity. Unfortunately, a lot of the viewpoints people have are wrong and they fail to realize a few things. Immigrants are great for the economy. They do various jobs Americans often do not want to do and without them society would suffer a great deal. In addition, they bring valuable skills and resources to help our economy grow. Also, they bring diversity within school systems. It is equally important to know about the wide variety of American cultures, but it is also imperative to learn about cultures outside of the United States to broaden your mind. If we broaden our minds and open our hearts to see the struggles they have from their country, we will understand why a lot of them come over from their country and have a different perspective. My perspective was changed significantly because I lacked a true understanding of what burdens are upon the immigrants throughout the world, and because of this I am now more aware and hope to bring this awareness to others.
The poem is about how we as Americans can be very hypocritical when it comes to immigrants. We say that people can do all these things, be anything they want to be, but only if it does not go against our beliefs. We say there is equal opportunity for everyone, but not when it comes to lower class families and immigrants. We say that we accept people from all walks of life, but we deny people because of where they come from. People do not, or will not understand that it’s not as simple as getting in line and waiting your turn. Some people have no other choice than to leave their homes. People refuse to see past their own struggles and assume that it is as easy as getting in line.
I chose to draw the sides of stereotypical immigrant issues. Thanks to the first-year seminar, I now understand the basic problems for immigrants coming into the United States. The symbols I have drawn made me realize the importance of the main stereotypes people use without understanding the deeper meaning. The fear that the United States citizens have does not compare to the fear of immigrants; we should not be afraid of them, they should be afraid of us.

Each symbol has a different meaning to me, but it adds up to the same point I am trying to show through my artwork. The first symbol is a burned out “welcome fire” that the Statue of Liberty held. The fire’s purpose was to welcome immigrants into the United States, but that no longer exists. Instead, it is fueled with the expression of immigrants coming into the states with money, documents, fear, and lost hope. Then there is an oversized bomb that sits next to a scared, lonely child. This represents that even the United States citizens do not care to help the kids that are dying, as demonstrated by the baby that died on the shore of the ocean when families were crossing over via boats into Turkey. The trail of footprints symbolizes families who are trying to escape their dangerous homes and have lost several important items on the way to United States. Not only are they losing each other and important items, but also their hope, because as soon as they reach the border, they are forced to show a piece of paper showing they are legal. This brings me to the dandelion with pieces of paper flying away from the dandelion itself; it is symbolizing that the legal documents do not even matter because the United States just takes it and lets it fly away freely, just like a dandelion does when you blow into it.

Meanwhile, citizens of the United States protest to let immigrants in, but at the same time they complain and argue that the immigrants are stealing their jobs or houses, which is not the case. Everyone needs a job or house to survive, so immigrants are just moving faster and are more motivated than citizens, which is why I drew a protest poster saying the typical chants, but underneath there is a deeper meaning. The words that surround the whole poster on both sides symbolize the words that are associated with arguments from both sides. Finally, most of all, the reason why the immigrant’s side is darker than the United States’ side is because there is the typical stereotype that United States is the dreamland and where immigrants are living is hell.

We make it difficult for immigrants to get into the United States, then when they are in the states, we treat them like garbage, like they do not have feelings or morals, and we give them the most difficult time to gain citizenship. Give these people a chance, and delete all stereotypes people have created, even the ones I have drawn on my poster. I created this poster to show the typical stereotypes I have heard repeated and how I visualize them in my mind. It made me realize that this is a big issue and immigrants should not be rejected because of who they are or what someone else has done in their country. If you think about it, we are all are immigrants, because we have a little bit of everyone’s blood in us since we all have ancestors. Everyone should have a chance to make a better life for themselves.

Jaysha Pittman

Major: Nursing
Hometown: Kansas City, Mo.
Immigration in America is an immensely heated topic and I believe it will always be. Most of the time when people are asked about immigration they have a mouth full to say. Reading The Distance Between Us by Reyna Grande really opened my eyes to the issue of immigration. It could be looked at from so many different angles and perspectives. For me when Reyna Grande spoke at the lecture she touched on topics that in many ways could relate to me. If we did not look at race, ethnicity or color and just looked at the immigrants who just want better lives, I wonder how different things would be. Having empathy, putting yourself in their shoes, is vital.

During the Truman Lecture, hearing all the panelist speak about how helping immigrants and refugees brought happiness and positivity into their lives was truly inspiring. The facts the panelist gave were astounding. Dr. Khan stated that it is “30% harder to get into the United States from Syria than it is to get into Harvard”. That was mind boggling to me. Harvard is one of the most prestigious universities in the world and they only accept 5% of applicants a year, this means the United States accepts less than 3% of refugees. Dr. Khan also explained the process for getting into the country. The application has many stages of screening, and if one red flag appears, you are denied instantly. The red flag could be something very insignificant. It is not as easy as Americans think it is to get into the United States, that is why there is a high volume of illegal immigrants. Currently through KC for Refugees, the Kansas City area has 34 refugee families. I had no clue about the Syrian refugees living here in Kansas City. Dr. Khan explained during the panel how she got started being a community activist for refugees. She said she got a call from an organization asking for help to bring a Syrian family to America. Being a full-time physician and full-time mom, she did not know how she was going to have the time to do it or the money to help, but she could not say no to this family in need; her heart just would not let her. She is currently working on partnering with a nearby hospital so that jobs will be reserved for the refugees (such as washing the dishes, janitorial jobs and etc.). Another myth about immigrants coming to the United States is that they will take all our jobs. In fact, there are a lot of jobs that Americans just will not do such as janitorial work.

The famous line that Americans always ask is “why don’t they just get in line and do it the right way?” In truth, panelist attorney Kathleen Irish explained there is no line. There are only three ways to get into the country: marriage, employment and through a family member who is already here. The application to get into the United States could take years; it is almost never immediate. Attorney Irish also talked about another important topic, reform of immigration laws. She explained that it would take years to reform immigration law, because there are so many holes and gaps. She said all she can see for the future is more border security and fewer immigrants. Americans cannot seem to agree on immigration laws.

The third panelist Maura “Mo” Orpin who works for the Don Bosco Centers in Kansas City explained how the refugees had to go to school to learn a new skill so they can get into the work field. She also explained how amazing it was to see people from different ethnicities in one class learning English. I learned that refugees have to pay back the money to the government that it cost to bring them here. It can get very expensive; plane tickets range from $1,000 to $1,300. It also depends on the size of the family. As soon as they get to America and get settled the bills start rolling in. Orpin also spoke to the fact that the refugees are very hardworking people. Children of the refugees are usually in the top 10% of their class. They are excited to be in America, away from everything that was going on in their native land. Orpin said it brings so much joy to work with the refugees. They truly bring joy to her life and motivate her to work harder. When she said this, it made me realize Americans do take a lot for granted.

Throughout this semester of first year seminar I can honestly say I learned a lot about immigration: the different misconceptions and also what is fact and what is fiction. I never really had a stance on immigration because the topic is so huge and there are many different factors. Reading the book by Reyna Grande and hearing her speak at the lecture about her experiences as an immigrant child, I related to her deeply. I now feel immigrants should be welcomed into the country to provide a better life for their family.
It's easy
To turn a blind eye
It's easy
To think everything is fine
It's easy
To ignore these issues
It's easy
When we are never in their shoes

It's hard
To leave family and friends
It's hard
To be on the outside looking in
It's hard
To not feel like you belong
It's hard
When you're told coming here is wrong

It's easy
To not have to worry
It's easy
When nothing in life is blurry
It's easy
To think you know wrong from right
It's easy
Until you're fighting their fight

It's hard
To stand up for those who can’t
It's hard
When they aren’t given a chance
It's hard
To try to help immigrants
It's hard
When there is so much ignorance

It's hard
To be treated like a thing not a person
It's hard
When people’s views continue to worsen
It's hard
To lack much needed diversity
It's hard
Because they face so much adversity

It's hard
To hear of living conditions elsewhere
It's hard
Because it is so completely unfair
It's hard
When the system is so broken
It's hard
To fear their future is already fore-spoken

It's hard
To face this reality
It's hard
To hear of those who had it worse than me
It's hard
When your heart changes
It's harder
When everyone else remains the same

It will be hard
But we can help those in need
It will be hard
But we can do our best to set all people up to succeed

This poem allowed me to look at everything we have talked about in class from a lot of different viewpoints in order to try to summarize such a multi-faceted issue as immigration in very few words. I tried to conjure up emotions of people like my peers and I, who may have had our eyes opened to issues that we did not previously think of as relevant for us. The “it’s hard” feelings of loneliness and of not belonging were emotions that were very hard for Reyna Grande, as well as likely many other immigrants, to deal with. I touched on some unfairness and brokenness in the system, like the lawyer was discussing in the panel at the Truman Lecture. When I discuss people’s views of immigrants worsening, I am thinking of the current state of immigration right now in the U.S. Not only immigrants, but all those who are viewed as “un-American” or “less American” or just sub-par, including African Americans, the Hispanic population, even women to an extent. With so much hate being exposed in America, and a culture of nonacceptance prevailing, so many people are showing less and less tolerance. Many have asked for stricter immigration laws for years, but there was some financial reasoning for that, but now it seems like people want less immigration for purely social reasons, specifically racism.

However, I absolutely believe that hearts can be changed, probably most effectively by firsthand accounts, like Reyna Grande’s. When those hearts are changed, people are compelled to make a difference, just as everyone at the Truman Lecture was. As the doctor said during the panel, she could not fathom how people could be Christians yet not love their neighbor and want to help anyone in need. That is how she felt because her heart was clearly changed or opened at some point, yet so many others’ around her were not. As I say in the poem, it really is easy to feel insignificant. Immigration does not affect me so I could not possibly make a difference. But, a difference can still be made without doing anything extreme like becoming president, just like all those at the panel make a difference every day. The four people at the panel all just wanted immigrants to be safe and to be given the best opportunities that they possibly can, thus doing their best to help people succeed.
My illustration explains my view of and responsibility in this complex issue of immigration and refugees. I think it is important for people to actually see and think about what this issue is doing to our country and its relationship with the other countries around the world. I think my picture is something that people should try and fight for and understand. Our country was made from immigrants. The fact that we are “shunning” them or deporting people from this country who only wanted to add to our culture or live a better life, is pretty hypocritical. Thus, I included all these images into one picture.

My picture starts off with me in the middle because I feel I am in the middle of this “chaos”. I think everyone as an individual is in the middle of this issue in their own way even if they are not affected by it. I think some people do not even think about this issue at all until recently with the elections and other political ideas that have been arising. I think everyone should try and get in the middle of the issue and help out as much as they can because we should always try and help our species.

Behind me are all the refugees that need help, but everyone is “shunning” them. I put them behind me because we are all human and should look out for our species, so by putting those in need behind us, we are essentially “protecting” them or “shielding” them from whatever is causing them harm or despair. I think if someone who is not affected by the issues is standing up for them; this will serve as huge sign to the government and other people who don’t really think about it or try and help.

To the left of me is DACA, and its temporary suspension. I included that in my picture because it helped me understand this complex issue a little more. I have never really heard of DACA until now and I learned a viewpoint on it from Reyna Grande when we met at the group dinner. I remember her explaining how frustrated she was at President Obama because he did not give her community a “permanent” solution. He knew the next president could take it away and he did not push them to make it permanent. That made me understand this complex issue a little deeper because I would have never looked at it that way.

Next, above DACA, there is a sign that someone used to protest against the United States letting in more refugees. It states, “No More Refugees or Unsecured Borders”. I picked that sign to include in my picture because it is interesting how people are always talking about not letting anymore refugees in. Now the idea of building a wall is getting more “popular” along with securing our borders. It is kind of crazy how people are so ignorant to the fact that they are not coming here to “steal” our jobs or tax money, they are trying to better their lives. The majority of people forget they were not intending on staying here forever, just long enough to save money so they can be up on their feet in their home country.

Next to this, I added in President Trump saying, “No More!” I included him because he has stirred up immigration and border control. I think when most people think about immigration the first person who comes to their mind is President Trump. Immigration has always been an issue, but now it is more widely discussed since the election.

Next to him I added “Aliens” because I do not like when people use this term to describe illegal immigrants. They refer to them as “illegal aliens” like they are from another planet. It plays into people forgetting or ignoring the fact that refugees or immigrants are still people and not just “aliens” going around and stealing everyone’s jobs. They are trying to seek shelter and live a better life than what they were in their home country.

The very last image on my picture is of a burning building being bombed and someone screaming for help. I think it is important to know that one of our responsibilities is to look out for our “neighbors.” There are a lot of countries struggling with war and a lot of innocent people dying because they cannot escape.

My illustration included all these different pictures because this how I see my role. I think my part consists of trying to help stop it from getting worse, trying to get to understand other people’s stories, and to not use stereotypical words and actions.

Lexus Gill

Major: Accounting
Hometown: Kansas City, Mo.
Joey Stark

The Truman Lecture this year was on the topic of immigration. We had many speakers who talked about the experiences that they have had, and it was topped off with a speech by the author of our summer reading, Reyna Grande. Some of the issues mentioned were the lack of acceptance of immigrants from our native citizens, the way immigrants, especially illegal immigrants, are portrayed by media, political issues, and actions towards immigration.

The most appalling part of this situation to me is how disgusting-ly impressionable our society is. As someone with family that has been personally attacked by Trump through his immigration views, I have no expectations for Donald Trump to do the right, or even common sense action. However, it disgusts me to see the actions of his followers. When people have such strong opinions, that are as blind as they are unreasonable, it gets to me. I cannot wrap my head around the fact that people in a country, with a self-proclaimed amazing educational system, can be so horrible at critical thinking. Two of the comments mentioned facetiously during the speeches by the four guest panelists that hit me the hardest were, one, “Why don’t they just come here legally?” And two, “They are taking our jobs.” When immigrants are coming over and creating businesses, jobs are getting created, not taken. As far as the first comment I mentioned, the legal process of coming to the States is both expensive, and grossly time consuming. Sometimes, time is an option. However, sometimes, people do not have years to spend escaping the country that they are currently in.

A comment that was interesting to me was that Trump has not made new laws. He is only enforcing the current laws. I do not expect any mercy from Trump towards immigrants, but I had assumed that our current laws were more humane. The fact that Donald Trump has made immigration such an issue based on the current laws is unreal (Irish, Truman Panel; 2017). The immigration laws in this country are the most complicated laws we have, according to Kathleen Irish, the lawyer who specializes in immigration. I do not doubt this. I cannot sit here and pretend to have all, or even any, of the answers, but I can say that there are several issues, for example the fact that our president wants to build a wall on the border between The United States and Mexico, and that acceptance of the current laws are only making the gap between natural citizens and immigrants larger. It does not take a degree to see that the oppression of minorities is an issue. It does not take a degree to see that changes need to be made. However, it apparently takes a law degree, and more, to make a change, or have an idea on how to do it.

One of the most talked about topics both in the classroom, and outside of it, is the wall the president wants to build. As a man who is focused so heavily on economics, it is hard to imagine that he sees this as beneficial, even after he has said multiple times that he does. It is hard to see how it makes economic sense to use the government’s money to build a wall to keep immigrants out of the country. Granted, Trump is making changes on his views on the wall. The wall is a horrible symbol of our country’s acceptance of people outside our borders. The remarks on the wall alone have caused quite a bit of separation in our country.

Sometimes it is important to take a step backwards and look at the full picture. Maybe people who live in The United States of America are not inherently better than everyone else. Maybe unemployment is not only an issue with white males. Maybe an immigrant has even more issues finding work than natural born citizens. Coming to the United States is not an easy trip. Coming to The States is not even an easy destination. Every issue we have with unemployment and finances, they have. The main point of the many speeches we heard during the Truman Lecture, in my eyes, was to see immigrants as people, not illegals. We should maybe open our eyes to the reality of what they could be going through.

When it comes down to it, everyone has different views on immigration, but many of these views could be changed with seeing people from other countries as people, rather than immigrants. With a change in the portrayal of immigrants, maybe Trump’s words would not hold so much weight. Just maybe, we could live life focusing on finding employment, not who is the reason we do not have employment. With a little critical thinking, and a little heart, maybe immigration would not be such a heated topic. There is not necessarily a correct way to make immigration laws, but we have seen time and time again, that there is a wrong way. However, change starts with us. With the people supporting immigration, it is hard for the government to be against it. If we can all get over our biases, then the government’s failures to work effectively, will have less effect on the day to day life of many immigrants.
Michael Mathis

Black Rose

Pretty face slim waist and her edges laid
You see this girl and you think she made
But what you don’t know
Is that she cries at night
Thinking about all the strife that plagues her life.
At the age of 10
Is where it all begin
Had a dream of once soaring high
The teachers in her school says she’ll never fly
Her mother never asked “What’s Up” because she scared of heights
Isn’t this an awful plight.
Now fast forward 10 years later
Literal communities that actually hate her
Statements of anger and violently berating her
Just because they believe all her people bring danger
We see it every - day we aren’t strangers
To the violence, the hatred, the anger
It’s our duty to not be the savior
But be the one that helps the endangered
It’s simple really
You’re about to see it clearly
Keep the good in — the bad out
I call that Reverse penitentiary
Once we all see we are all human
Then we can help just like Harry Truman
Truman Lecture was only the beginning
Now It’s Our time this is our mission
Don’t sit down, choose a position
Got the keys it’s in the ignition
Black, white, guilty, or innocent
This country was founded by immigrants.

I selected to do a free verse poem with a rhythmic rap pattern as a creative project that exhibits the philosophies we have learned over the semester. The title Black Rose stems from an adage that was created during the Vietnam War that branded sexually transmitted diseases that soldiers contracted from resident prostitutes. Fundamentally, America views immigration as an either-or situation: pleasure vs pain, profit vs. lost jobs, and benefit vs. annoyance. Many people understand undocumented immigrants as this villain of the United States when in fact they are the very mainstay of this country servicing to produce substances citizens use every day. It can also reverberate as a term of endearment. They have that unnatural gorgeousness that may pique the curiosity of people, but they will never wholly have recognized the exquisiteness of the image.

The first part of the poem is essentially a story I have observed numerous times growing up in Florida. Whether the young women were from Mexico, the Middle East or someplace else, they almost always caught the attention and the jealousy of many boys and girls. Individuals such as our unidentified heroine carried lots of baggage that they did not let many people know about. Many were the parental figures in the household for their younger siblings, yet they went to school and conducted themselves as normal teenagers. As soon as they laid their head on the pillow tears would stream down their faces due to stress, anger, and all types of emotions. The line “Her mother never asked, “What’s Up” because she scared of heights,” indicates that our female immigrant could not go to her mother because she was not there; whether physically, mentally, or emotionally there was a disconnect somewhere between her and her mother. This fight over immigration is not just going to go away. This topic shows that as Generation Z, it is our obligation to figure out the puzzle pieces. It falls on our shoulders as the new leaders to develop new procedures that aid these individuals, while still defending the United States native born citizens. A multifaceted condition yes, since we may not know the aim of everyone that desires to come in. Nevertheless, this country was established by immigrants and to be honest, it was founded by deviants and conspirators to the crown. To deny those who want to exercise religious freedom, or create prosperity for their family, and even asylum while their country is in disorder is something we must not do. As the great melting pot, we need to come together liberal and conservative, color and non-color, donkey and elephant and figure out an exceptional and intellectual proposal that may not be perfect, but helps everyone in the long run.

Major: Psychology
Hometown: Jacksonville, Fl.
T

ich these recent experiences that I have had in First-Year Seminar have rea
dy impacted my thinking regarding topics related to immigra
tion, migration and refugees. These experiences helped me see that    
immigration has really helped shaped the United States as a nation almost from when the very first settlers who came over 400 years ago. Immigration has also contributed to many of the economic, social, and political processes that help shape the United States. This experience really changed the way I think about refugees and migration to the United States. I now think about how wars in other countries really affect their citizens who just want to live their lives and not be bothered. Instead, they have to move and try to find somewhere safe to live. No family can just pack everything up and move to another place just to have the war which they do not want any part of to follow them. Even just finding a way to make money in their new place without some type of help can be very challenging, definitely for families with kids. Plus, migration can have a positive impact on the economy in which the people in need of help migrate to. We can use the United States as an example, because we have around 3.3 million refugees that have been admitted since 1975. Let me note that millions apply to seek exile in the United States and the number who get accepted would range from 50,000 to 110,000 a year. When the refugees arrive they almost always keep to themselves and take the jobs that none of the other United States citizens want.

Some common stereotypes and prejudices of immigrants would be that they bring crime and terror to our new country. We depict mainly the Latin Americans as "rapists" and "violent criminals and murderers", whereas immigrants from the Middle East are called "terrorists". People start to make up these self-biased stereotypes based off only what they hear from friends and family members or from different news sources. People do not even think about the current situation that these people are going through in their lives and also the horrific memories they are having to deal with. They also do not even try to attempt to get know the person or at least try to imagine what that person could be like, because of their clouded judgment. Stereotypes really do impact our thinking. We all carry biases which we learn from socialization in our communities. This is crucial, because our biases influence what we see, what we believe and how we see the world.

I feel that anyone’s heart can be changed through proper education on issues related to immigration. People need to keep an open mind and be willing to take in the information they are being taught. By keeping a closed mind because that is the way they have been raised, or they have already made up their mind that they are not going to change the way they think and believe about immigrants shows ignorance at its purest.

If I oversaw the changing of peoples’ hearts about immigration, I would start by giving them reasons for why these people are migrating to the United States. One of these reasons would be that a good majority just want to have a good life by looking for jobs and a better way to take care of their families. They just cannot live in their home country because of wars that are happening all around them. I would then proceed to educate them about when immigrants or refugees do get in to the United States, whether it is illegally or by getting a visa, they still benefit the economy. They frequently take the jobs that no one else would usually want to work such as cleaning jobs and different types of physical labor. When immigrants take these jobs it improves job employment in the United States. This also means that there is more money going back in to the economy. I would end this bias by educating people to not judge someone you do not know just because of the different type of stereotypes you heard or the reason you think they have come to the United States. If you do that, you will never get know them as a person. You will never know they have their reasons for wanting to immigrate to the United States. You will never realize that the great majority of them are not criminals, murderers, or terrorists. Immigrants are mostly families who just want to have a better life for themselves and to really know that they have a future for the generation to come.

This experience will impact my future because it really gives me insight in to how lucky I am and to be grateful just because of where I was born. It makes me want to help the immigrants that need it. I now have some respectful knowledge of what they go through just to have a life that many others including myself take for granted sometimes. If I can help make it easier for them, I want to be able to. Living as a black or minority in the United States we face our challenges, but I will say it is not as bad as some of the immigrants have it. Imagine being in a country and you do not even know their language and people treat you differently. All my experiences really helped me to have a better understanding of why the United States has so many people from other countries who are wanting to immigrate to our country. Immigrants and refugees are just regular people who just want to have a good sustainable job, to take care of their families. They come for a better life knowing they do not have to worry about certain things they had to worry back in their home countries.
This semester has definitely affected my thinking on immigration, I used to just be indifferent to what was going on in terms of immigration in America, I never really formed my own opinion on such a topic or for that matter, thought it was an issue or debate that I would have a voice in. Fortunately, this semester has been incredibly educational to me especially after reading *The Distance Between Us* by Reyna Grande. Her book helped give me a perspective on what it is like to not have a father present through some of a person’s life, but also taught me what it was like crossing the border, and living in poverty, and becoming an immigrant. Showing Grande’s experiences first hand was a real eye-opener helping me to understand fully what it was like to be an immigrant from Grande’s point of view.

Stereotypes can be vividly unrealistic. Immigrants do not steal jobs from Americans, they earn them, and if they have illegally immigrated to the United States, this makes it even more true. For the fact that since those who have immigrated illegally are not guaranteed benefits of any kind from the government, any welfare, or social security, or even retirement, they have to earn every dollar they own through hard, back-breaking work. The fact remains that those who are illegal are put under horrendous conditions since they technically are not even eligible for workers’ rights or the basic right to not work around toxic substances unprotected. These basic human rights issues, regardless of the legal status of people living within the United States is unacceptable.

One of the immigration problems that we still face today is the fact that essentially it takes approximately twenty-five years to get a visa to the United States. This makes it incredibly hard for those in Mexico who live in a bad economy to get a visa to the United States. They must undergo rigorous testing and applications as well as being able to afford to move and get there after being waitlisted for a visa for at least a few years. There are a finite number of visas to the United States. The fact that it is essentially a lottery in order to get one, there is no wonder why people in Mexico illegally cross the border every year trying to find a better life for themselves and their families in search of economic opportunities. My opinions on this issue is that it is an inexcusable amount of time to wait for a visa. I believe the visa system should be totally gutted and revamped given the time constraints on trying to get a visa to live in the United States. The United States really is not doing anything about the length of time that it takes to get a visa or trying to change it. If anything, our current President is trying to stop immigration almost altogether and trying to make the process even longer, especially for those who do not have time to wait.

I think Sister Jeanette’s realization that refugees are often objectified was incredibly important. The fact that people do want to give aid to others, but do not want to necessarily live in solidarity with them is essentially a shame. Compassion and empathy toward others should be top priority when living in solidarity with others. This is showing our own humanity to them and accepting their humanity, realizing they are a part of our world, not just to be seen and labeled as victims, but as people who should be treated with dignity and respect and given basic human rights: respect, dignity, and solidarity; regardless of where they come from. People need to be able to find hope, which is necessary for us to keep going, when they finally find themselves within the borders of the United States.

I do feel that hearts can be changed. The fact that we need education programs like the one that Avila has presented to us is a testament to the fact that opinions and hearts can be changed through education. It is incredibly important to correctly educate others on these vital issues that are becoming more and more prevalent in our world today. I will carry the lessons I have learned this semester and try to educate others through social media and discussions about immigration. I feel I can also do my best work by helping others through volunteering. I would get an even better view of these issues through mission trips I might take in the future, and to keep talking about these issues. I can help by making sure that I keep talking about them on an almost daily basis, trying to help others understand the importance of immigration in our country and to try to have this discussion with people throughout my life.
We are all Humans
Sharing the Whole World
Together. So Why not be Accepting
of Everyone for Who they Are?
#OPENYOURMIND
Dewayne Bright

Major: International Business
Hometown: Kansas City, Mo.
Estefany Borja Bonilla

Major: Nursing
Hometown: Kansas City, Mo.
Personal Reflections

Sue Ellen McCalley, Ph.D.
Chair, Truman Lecture Series
Professor of Education and Psychology

The Truman Lecture provides our students with an opportunity to meet inspiring individuals who have had a significant impact on the lives of people around the world. This wonderful program allows them to experience the Avila mission personally. It encourages them to explore their own potential to help the dear neighbor.

Paige Illum, Ph.D., CSJA
Director of Student Engagement and Success
Adjunct Faculty

Our goal is to provide the students with a meaningful academic experience while living our University mission and the mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph to help our dear neighbors. Avila’s mission shares that we will “prepare students for responsible lifelong contributions to the global community.” This experience is the initial step in accomplishing this commitment to our students and honoring our relationship with the Sisters of St. Joseph.

Ron Slepitza, Ph.D., CSJA
Avila University President

The power of the Truman Lecture Series and Avila’s Common Reading Program is to inform and educate our students of global issues that need to be addressed. The revelation is they can begin to change the world, right now.
Appendix A: Avila First Year Students

David Achugo
Olyvia Anothayanontha
Megan Anthony
Tristan Askan
Alicia Aulbur
Alida Bader
Amber Barber
Mallory Bashor
Amanda Bass
Ronald Beasley
Jacob Bennett
Destiny Benson
Sabian Bluitt
Damonique Bonds
Estefany Borja Bonilla
Hannah Bouquet
Drake Brady
Dewayne Bright
Ellis Brossie
Natalie Brown
Shelby Brown
Alexis Burgard
Kyle Callahan
Kiara Calton
Drevon Carter
Chloe Casey
Brittany Castillo
Robert Christian
Trace Clinkenbeard
Alyssa Collins
Cameron Collins
Autumn Crandall
Jamir Crawford
David Crowhurst
Caden Darby
Alexis Delgado
Aubrianna Dickerson
Cassandra Diebold
Samantha Earley
Brelande Edmond
Sonitha Eng
William Erwin
Danielle Fisher
Jordan Forsythe
Ethan Francis
Nikolas Furlow
Nelson Galeas Sagastume
Jacob Gaynor
Sydney Gearhart
Nakelle Geier

Lexus Gill
Mikaela Grim
Sergio Guerreiro Soyer Peres
Guadalupe Guevara
Sarah Hall
Caitlin Hammell
Travis Hampton
Brandon Harper
Kylan Harper
Jason Harris
Damian Hawes
Trey Heinrich
Alexander Herndon
Alan Hibbler
Alexa Hiler
Ta’Nashia Hill
Lauren Holmes
Avalon Howard
Tristen Hulsey
Sean Hunt
Erin Jackson
Kelejawaro Jenkins
Braylan Johnson
Reilly Johnson
Carletta Jones
Erin Jones
Ronnycea Jones
Sarai Jorgenson
Riley Justus
Reginald Kirklen
Madeline Kleinsasser
Cole Kline
Mallory Kremer
Morgan Lamb
Charles Lambert
Margaret Layson
Cameron Leblanc
Wesley LeBlanc
Ethan Lind
Kaitlyn Long
Jonathan Lopez
Madalene Lopez
Exavior Lowe-Bohannon
Mickayla Lundquist
Hanna Ly
Zuri Martinez
James Mather
Michael Mathis
Armoni Matthews
Ellie Matthews
Christopher McDonald
Cierra Mcgee
Madyson McMillan
Niels Meier
Ryan Mercer
Murielle Mercier
Taylor Metzger
Peyton Milstead
Isabelle Mitchell
Britany Mojica
William Montgomery
Katie Mooneyham
Mia Moreno
Matti Morgan
Makenzie Musgrove
Rachel Nemes
Alyssa Northern
Gage Obernuefemann
Mario Oliva
James Ononye
John Owuor
Asyiah Ozburn
Gabriela Parada
Savannah Parris
Thomas Patton
Eli Peach
Alex Pena
Ryan Peters
Jaysha Pittman
Dulany Potter
Brooke Powell
Brianna Pratt
Bridgett Purser
Angel Rabun
Paige Rackers
Larry Rice
James Richards
Brooke Riley
Matthew Roth
Parker Rotterman
Brady Rowe
Katherine Sarmiento
David Saucedo
Samuel Schwartz
Elijah Scruggs
Dalton Secrest
Isabel Seiter
Hannah Shin
Eric Singleton
Alyssa Sipes
Dalton Sprinkle
Joseph Stark
Morgan Stipancich
Dakota Summerfield-Solomon
Jasmin Tahirovic
Hauns Tholin
Jason Thomas
Joshua Thomas-Hernandez
Emma Thompson
Landon Toler
Lexus Tucker
Mariah Turner
Elysia Twenter
Kelly Ulrich
Chance VanEaton
Ashlin Vasquez
Shelby Voss
Hannah Waddell
Kenneth Wallace
Allison Weber
Hunter Weber
Nicholas Webster
Alyssa Weigel
Travis Wheeler
Chloe Whisenhunt
Camin Wilcox
Briah Wilkins
Nick Williams
Taylor Williams
Emily Woods
Elli Wright
Alyssa Yap
Appendix B: Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture Series Program

AVILA UNIVERSITY
presents
HARRY S. TRUMAN
Distinguished Lecture Series

The Distance Between Us

REYNA GRANDE
featuring REYNA GRANDE
Author, The Distance Between Us
October 18, 2017
The Bill and Jean Buchanan Stage
in Goppert Theatre

Presenting Sponsor
J.M. FAHEY
CONSTRUCTION COMPANY
Highway and Heavy Construction Since 1974

Immigration Issues and Peaceable Problem Solving
The Bill and Jean Buchanan Stage • 3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Moderator.................................................................................Sue Ellen McCalley, Ph.D.
Avila Professor of Education and Psychology
Chair, Truman Lecture Series

Panelists..................................................................................Kathleen Irish, J.D.
Sophia Khan, M.D.
Maura Orpin
Miguel Salazar

Reception
Goppert Theatre Lobby • 4:30 – 5:15 p.m.

Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecturer
The Bill and Jean Buchanan Stage • 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.
Reyna Grande

Welcome.................................................................Sue Ellen McCalley, Ph.D.
Avila Professor of Education and Psychology
Chair, Truman Lecture Series

Host ..................................................................................Ron Steiner, Ph.D., CSJA
President, Avila University

Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecturer.................................Reyna Grande

Reception and book signing immediately following until 7:00 p.m.

Special thanks to our presenting sponsor:

J.M. FAHEY
CONSTRUCTION COMPANY
Highway and Heavy Construction Since 1974

Reyna Grande

At a time when the immigration debate is at a boiling point, Reyna Grande is an engaging spokesperson for Mexican-Americans and for American immigrants in general. Reyna is an award-winning author, promoter of Latino literature, and speaker whose words offer an unpremeditated perspective of what millions face on a daily basis. Her work has received an American Book Award, the El Premio Aztlan Literary Award and the International Latino Book Award. Her two novels, Across a Hundred Mountains and Dancing with Butterflies were published to critical acclaim. In her memoir, The Distance Between Us, Reyna writes about her life before and after illegally immigrating from Mexico to the United States. Reyna obtained a B.A. in creative writing and a Masters of Education in Writing and Library Science from the University of California, Santa Cruz and M.F.A. in creative writing from Arizona University.

Panelists

Kathleen Irish, J.D., is an immigration attorney working in Kansas City, Missouri. Exclusively practicing family-based immigration law, Kathleen helps to build new families and keep existing families together. She works with U.S. citizens and permanent resident clients as well as foreign-born family members who are already present in the U.S. She also works with victims of domestic violence and other violent crimes to pursue lawful immigration options available to them.

Sophia Khan, M.D., is a local physician and a community activist. She is the founder of Muslim Youth of North America KC chapter and a refugee activist/ founder and president of KC for Religious Diversity non-faith-based community alliance helping refugee families in the Greater Kansas City area. She received the 2016 Crescent Peace Society Peace-Award and the 2017 Greater Kansas City Interfaith Council SteveJohnson Leadership Service Award.

Miguel "Moe" Orpin is the Executive Director of The Don Bosco Centers in Kansas City. Presently, Don Bosco serves more than 1,400 adult immigrants and refugees daily to help them become self-sufficient and contributing members of the community through language and life skills lessons. Don Bosco operates a Senior Center, a Men’s and Women’s Shelter, a Health Clinic and provides English as a Second Language program.

Miguel Salazar is the Director of Hispanic Ministry of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph in Missouri. His professional experience includes international pastoral ministry, wildlife guiding, Catholic radio in Spanish, Natural Family Planning, and government programs development in the Hispanic community. He is also a certified trainer of the Building Interpersonal Competencies for Minors (BICM) national program with the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis, and speaks to groups on Hispanic ministry, intercultural ministry, and Latino Immigration.

History of Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture Series

Avila University received exclusive rights from former President Harry S. Truman to establish a lecture series in his name in 1970. The permission was granted to S. Olive Louise Dallavis, CSJ, who served as president of Avila University from 1960–1985.

Past Lecturers Include:

William F. Buckley
Joseph Califano
Alphonso Dorg
Bob Harris
Nancy Landon Kassebaum
Clarence M. Kelley
Carolyn Maull McKinstry
St. Helen Prejean, CSJ
Louis Zamperini

We would especially like to recognize and thank the following for their work on this project:

Avila University Theatre Department
Great Western Dining
Alexandra Pilley
S. Marie Joan Harris, Ph.D., CSJ
Jason Harris
Alex Davila

Committee Members

Sue Ellen McCalley, Ph.D. Committee Chair
Avila Professor of Education and Psychology

Charlene Gould, Ph.D.
Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

Angela Herr, CFRE
Vice President for Advancement and External Relations

Paige Elliott, Ph.D.
Director of Student Engagement and Success

Aaron Bennett, M.S.
Events Coordinator, Advancement

S. Marie Joan Harris, Ph.D., CSJ
St. Joseph of Columbia

Be inspired.

Sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Columbia
Students were asked to express their opinions regarding statements related to topics discussed in First Year Seminar both at the beginning of the semester and again at the end of the semester. The idea was to gauge how their opinions changed. Here are some comments from their responses:

“I would say that my opinion changed. I now look at immigration without the negative stigma that society puts on it. Along with my opinion changing, I think I learned a lot. I learned about how difficult it is to come to the U.S. and gain citizenship. I learned how hard the government makes it to stay here and also how much people are still fighting to change the process of becoming a U.S. citizen.”

“I am now familiar with the challenges that families have dealing with immigration. Watching the documentary, *Indivisible*, in class was a real eye opener for me to see how the immigration system works. I also feel like immigrants are negatively judged in the United States.”

“I believe that overall, my perspective has broadened. I am not so close-minded. My views are the same—just overall, more well-rounded.”

“I am now more familiar with the struggles that immigrants my age go through. I am more familiar with how immigration works and common immigration language.”

“The most significant changes for me have been that I am now familiar with DACA, dreamers, etc. I didn’t really know what this was in the beginning. I understand the laws and the challenges that exist for the undocumented youth who are my age. I also know I probably wouldn’t pass the naturalization test!”

“I realized that the naturalization test is very complicated and difficult to pass. It requires knowledge that many educated people would not know, even if they were born in the United States. This test makes it almost impossible to qualify and pass.”

“The most significant change was the new knowledge of the challenges that exist with immigrant families. Before, I was not fully aware of the struggles they went through back in their home countries or the struggles they had while coming to America.”
Common Reading Program

Avila University provides a common reading for all first year students as part of the First Year Experience. Student success research is clear about how this type of program can assist in emphasizing academic importance prior to the start of classes and assist in building community within a first year cohort. All Avila first year students receive information about The Common Reading Program during the summer prior to the start of classes. The topic of the Common Reading Program is always global in nature which connects with Avila’s mission of providing students with opportunities to prepare for contributions to the global community.

2016
While the World Watched
by Carolyn Maul McKinstry
Carolyn was present on September 15, 1963 at the Sixteenth Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, when white racists bombed the church. Carolyn’s four young friends were killed. She was among thousands of students hosed by firemen during the 1963 marches. She survived a second bomb explosion that destroyed a portion of her home in 1964. She wrote her memoir, While the World Watched, in 2011.

2015
The Big Truck That Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster
by Jonathan M. Katz
On January 12, 2010, the deadliest earthquake in the history of the Western Hemisphere struck the nation least prepared to handle it. Jonathan M. Katz chronicles the terror of that day, the devastation visited on ordinary Haitians, and how the world reacted to a nation in need.

2014
They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky: The True Story of Three Lost Boys from Sudan
by Benson Deng, Alephonsion Deng, Benjamin Ajak with Judy A. Bernstein
The memoir of three boys who walked with tens of thousands of other boys across the Sudan as a result of civil war within the country. These boys, many of whom came to the United States as refugees, became known as the Lost Boys.

Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture Series

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Recent Past Lecturers

William F. Buckley: Political Analyst, Author & Columnist
Joseph Califano: Secretary of Health, Education & Welfare
Clarence M. Kelley: Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation
Nancy Landon Kassebaum: Kansas Senator
Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ: Social Justice Activist
Louis Zamperini: WWII Prisoner of War, 1936 American Olympian
Bob Harris: Author, The International Bank of Bob and Jeopardy! Champion
Alephonsion Deng: Author, They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky: The True Story of Three Lost Boys from Sudan
Jonathan M. Katz: Author, The Big Truck That Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster
Carolyn Maull McKinstry: Author, While the World Watched: A Birmingham Bombing Survivor Comes of Age During the Civil Right Movement

2013
The International Bank of Bob
by Bob Harris
An inspiring memoir of an ordinary American who turned his brief brush with opulence into a joyful adventure of investing in the world’s working poor.

2012
Unbroken
by Laura Hilenbrand
A World War II story of survival, resilience and redemption of Louis Zamperini.

2011
The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind
by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer
A remarkable story about human inventiveness and its power to overcome crippling adversity.

2010
Series of Articles Related to Hunger and Poverty


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