

Sonia Nazario – Speech Topics

Sonia travels the country giving speeches at universities, high schools, libraries, law offices and corporate offices. She tries to book her talks in the spring and fall, and leaves the winter and summer for research and writing. These are descriptions of her most popular talks.

Enrique's Journey & America's Immigration Dilemma

Using award-winning photographs, Sonia Nazario takes you inside the world of millions of immigrant women who have come to the US as single mothers, and the children they have left behind in their home countries in Central America and Mexico. She discusses the modern-day odyssey many child migrants—some as young as seven, all of them traveling alone—make many years later riding on top of freight trains through Mexico on their quest to reunify with their mothers in the US. Nazario, who spent three months riding on top of these trains to tell the story of one child migrant named Enrique, shares her story in the context of determination.

She discusses the role of determination in her own life—in overcoming the death of her father at age 13, living through parts of the Dirty War in Argentina, and overcoming major travails in college to ultimately become the youngest person hired at The Wall Street Journal and one of a handful of Latinos to win the Pulitzer Prize—as well as in the lives of the migrants she wrote about. Unlike many who speak on this topic, Nazario sees immigration as an issue with many shades of gray, with winners and losers. She discusses how traditional approaches to the issue of immigration—proposed by both the left and right—haven't worked, and offers novel solutions to one of America's thorniest issues.

From Trauma to Resiliency: Struggles & Strengths in Students' Journey to College

Latino students now make up 43% of California's community college students and many of these individuals undertake astonishing journeys to and through our institutions. What can we learn from the experiences of immigrant and first generation Latino students in particular? How can this learning inform our understanding of and support for all community college students? Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Sonia Nazario, author of *Enrique's Journey*, will discuss the obstacles and long odds many immigrant and first-generation Latino students face before even stepping onto a community college campus. These students bring tremendous assets—and significant challenges—to California's Community College system. Their experiences and needs have fueled a great debate about how to serve them best. Are equity deans, guided pathways, or programs like the Puente Project working to improve the success of these learners? What do students who toil in one or two jobs, who take three buses to get to class, really need to thrive, and how can educators—you—build a system that works for them? How can California become the leader in supporting these students and making their experiences in college meaningful—and showing others the way forward? Nazario will explore these questions in her discussion of the challenge and opportunity of helping students move from trauma to resilience.

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Unequal Justice: Immigrant Children & US Courts

Last year, more than 68,000 children entered the United States illegally and alone from Mexico and Central America, a ten-fold increase from three years before. These children were caught by US Border Patrol and ordered to go to immigration court to see if they would be allowed to stay in the US legally or would be deported. Like all immigrants who come to the US unlawfully, children are not entitled to a public defender. So two-thirds of them – children as young as two years old – go to court alone. They are expected to argue their case for asylum or other relief to stay in the US with no legal advocate by their side. Many of these children have legitimate fears of being harmed if they are deported to their home countries.

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author Sonia Nazario will discuss:

- What is this nation's responsibility to provide legal help to the children? Do children who have broken the law coming to the US illegally deserve government legal help?
- The increasing violence and other factors pushing a surging number of these children to leave their home countries – Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico – and travel to the US alone, often gripping on the tops of freight trains to make this modern-day odyssey to reach the US. They face bandits, gangsters, corrupt cops, and the added dangers of getting on and off moving freight trains. Many lose their lives in their quest.

Nazario discusses these issues in a personal way, having spent three months riding on top of freight trains through Mexico to report her national bestselling book, *Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother*. Some are coming to reunite with family members, but many are fleeing harm in their home countries. She shows how after so many traumas in their home countries and on their journeys north, immigrant children face another blow: the American judicial system.

Nazario provides a provocative look at whether our nation's immigration courts deal fairly with perhaps one of the most vulnerable populations amongst us: children who come to the US illegally and alone.

In Praise of Ganas (Persistence)

Yes, passion and risk taking can get you far. But to Pulitzer Prize-winning author and journalist Sonia Nazario, persistence has been the key to her success. This presentation is an ideal convocation or commencement speech in praise of *ganas*—Spanish for persistence.

The Power of Storytelling

Sonia Nazario uses her own work to discuss how stories can help change our perspective on big social issues, motivate people to act, and bring real change. She sometimes tailors this talk to educators or health professionals who want to learn to use story telling with students or patients.

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Making Ethical Choices

As a journalist, Sonia Nazario often feels like a “fly on the wall,” watching difficult situations play out without being able to take action herself. Because of this, the stories she has written over the years have frequently been featured as case studies in half a dozen textbooks on journalism and ethics. This presentation is an exploration of the ethical dilemmas a journalist [and other professionals] face, in which Nazario shares her experiences making ethical choices. She accompanies her speech with a PowerPoint of photographs.

The Trauma of the Journey

With educators, Sonia Nazario often talks about the traumas these children have faced in their home countries, on their journeys north, and once they arrive and live in the U.S., and what specific things educators must do to help these children [immigrant children or the children of immigrants will soon be 30% of the K-12 school population] get past these traumas so they can focus on their learning and progress. This talk is the most desired by bilingual educators.