

Sonia Nazario

Author, Journalist, Humanitarian

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Topics

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- Immigration
- Women's Empowerment

About Sonia Nazario

Sonia Nazario is an award-winning journalist whose stories have tackled some of this country's most intractable problems -- hunger, drug addiction, immigration -- and have won some of the most prestigious journalism and book awards.

She is best known for "Enrique's Journey," her story of a Honduran boy's struggle to find his mother in the U.S. Published as a series in the Los Angeles Times, "Enrique's Journey" won the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing in 2003. It was turned into a book by Random House and became a national bestseller.

Her recent humanitarian efforts to get lawyers for unaccompanied migrant children led to her selection as the 2015 Don and Arvonne Fraser Human Rights Award recipient by the Advocates for Human Rights. She also was named a 2015 Champion of Children by First Focus and a 2015 Golden Door award winner by HIAS Pennsylvania. In 2016, the American Immigration Council gave her the American Heritage Award. Also in 2016, the Houston Peace & Justice Center honored her with their National Peacemaker Award.

Nazario, who grew up in Kansas and in Argentina, has written extensively from Latin America and about Latinos in the United States. She has been named among the most influential Latinos by Hispanic Business Magazine and a "trendsetter" by Hispanic Magazine. In 2012 Columbia Journalism Review named Nazario among "40 women who changed the media business in the past 40." In 2020, Parade Magazine named Nazario one of "50+ Most Influential Latin-American Women in History."

She is a graduate of Williams College and has a master's degree in Latin American studies from the University of California, Berkeley. She has honorary doctorates from Mount St. Mary's College and Whittier College. She began her career at the Wall Street Journal, and later joined the Los Angeles Times. She is now at work on her second book.

Select Keynotes

- **Beyond Enrique's Journey: Solving Illegal Immigration [For Real]**

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.

- **Enrique's Journey: Traumas Immigrant Children Bring to the Classroom**

One in four children in public schools across the United States are now immigrants or the child of an immigrant. Nearly all immigrant children



have been separated from a parent in the process of coming to the U.S.

Nazario's presentation will discuss the tremendous traumas many of these children have faced even before they land in American classrooms--the conditions that pushed them out of their home countries, the modern-day odyssey many of these children go on to reach the United States, and the increasing difficulties they encounter once they settle into the United States and face enormous conflicts with parents who have become strangers to them.

Nazario will show how critical it is to understand and address these traumas if immigrant children are to learn through the story of one boy, Enrique, whose mother leaves him in Honduras when he is just five years old to go work in the U.S. After not seeing his mother for 11 years, Enrique braves unimaginable hardship and peril to set off on his own to find her. He makes a harrowing journey clinging to the tops of freight trains through Mexico. He faces bandits, gangsters, corrupt cops, and *El Tren de la Muerte*--The Train of Death--in his drive to reach her. Enrique's Journey is a timeless story of families torn apart and hearing to be together again, of determination, and it is a story of what so many students have gone through. To report Enrique's Journey, Nazario retraced Enrique's steps and spent months clinging to the tops of freight trains to recount his story.

She will talk about Enrique's experience, her experience, and what can be done to help immigrant children learn.

• **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.

Select Book Titles

- **2013:** Enrique's Journey

Select Articles

- [What Part of Illegal Don't you Understand?](#)

In the New York Times, Sonia discusses the experiences she and her family had in running from danger for a century, and how it brought her to write about refugees and immigrants.

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- [Pay or Die](#)

MS-13 and 18th Street gangsters want to run Honduras. Cutting off American aid isn't going to stop them. Corruption allows the gangs to impose a reign of terror which fuels poverty.

- ['Someone Is Always Trying to Kill You'](#)

The United States cannot erect a wall and expect women to resign themselves to being slaughtered. "Just because you are a woman, you feel hatred. Like someone is always trying to kill you."

- [Using Literature to Shatter Our Entrenched Views, Part I](#)

Children ride on top of freight trains—called La Bestia, The Beast—up the length of Mexico. Waiting for these innocent children are bandits, corrupt police officers, gangsters, rapists, and more. They're beaten, robbed, raped, and sometimes killed. They lose legs, arms, and fingers riding La Bestia.

- [Using Literature to Shatter Our Entrenched Views, Part II](#)

I've always focused on those not getting enough ink – women, children, the poor, Latinos. The journey of these children, of Enrique, had to be told.

- [These Are Children, Not Bad Hombres](#)

Published February 25, 2017 in the New York Times

- [How the Most Dangerous Place on Earth Got a Little Bit Safer](#)

Published August 11, 2016 in the New York Times

- [Refugees at Our Door](#)

Published October 11, 2015 in the New York Times

- [Children of the Drug Wars](#)

Published July 11, 2014 in the New York Times

- [Heartache of an Immigrant Family](#)

Published October 15, 2013 in the New York Times

- [Sonia Nazario's Chutzpah Gives voice to Latin America's Voiceless Migrants](#)

Article about Sonia in Tablet Magazine, 8/28/15

Select Client Feedback

We are thrilled to have secured Sonia Nazario for the keynote speaker at our annual fundraiser. Her message and delivery are powerful, commanding attention from our audience members. We know our donors will be listening to Sonia's compelling stories and taking in the important information she presents.

– **Audrey Schroder** *SGA Youth & Family Services*