



Today I have a story that will be on the cover of the New York Times Sunday Review where I tackle perhaps the main thing that fuels migration from Central America: corruption. It drives people to despair. It's what allows all the other bad things to happen. It allows gangs to impose their reign of terror.

If the Trump administration wants to keep families from fleeing to the United States it has to start acting like it cares about what's happening in Honduras. I offer some real solutions that would actually work. We can help Hondurans tackle this issue there, or we can pay a ton more to lock up people running from harm— asylum seekers—at our border. One is humane



Ondina Esperanza Díaz is a Honduran single mother of eight who fights every day to make sure that seven teachers and a principal paid to work at Pablo Portillo Figueroa elementary school actually show up.

She supports her family by making and selling tortillas. A nonprofit funded in part by the U.S. has taught volunteers like Ondina how to detect corruption and demand their rights.

and works, the other is cruel and does not.

Read more about Ondina in [my latest New York Times article.](#)

Our government has held migrants, including children, without enough food, water, and in filth. They have had children take care of other children. We have kicked back people asking us for safety to some of the most dangerous cities in the world on the Mexican side of the border, where migrants become kidnapping targets by cartels.

We have to ask ourselves: Is this who we are? Isn't there a better way?

In Honduras, corruption has spread all the way up to the President, and down into schools and hospitals. [My latest piece in the New York Times](#) shows how bad things are, and what the U.S. can and should do about it. [Please share!](#)



## An Inspiring Reader's Story - Ruby Karina Rodriguez



After reading *Enrique's Journey*, Ruby Karina Rodriguez (left) learned to be grateful for the many toilets her Guatemalan mother (right) cleaned so that Ruby could have a chance at a better life.

Readers tell me my book, *Enrique's Journey*, can be a window or a mirror. A window into a world you know nothing about. Or a mirror where you see your own experiences validated. This April, Ruby Karina Rodriguez, 28, introduced me to an auditorium full of students at Capuchino High School in San Mateo,

CA. She started: "This book changed my life."

At 16, she was in a San Mateo high school, dabbling in crime and gangs. Her English teacher asked her to read the *Grapes of Wrath*. "I'm not going to read that s\*\*\*," she told him.

Then he suggested *Enrique's Journey*. Ruby had a brother named Enrique who had been separated from her mother when her mother migrated to the U.S. from Guatemala. *Enrique's Journey* was inspired by a conversation the author had with a Guatemalan housecleaner. Ruby's mother was a housecleaner from Guatemala.

Her mom had to be convinced to buy it; Ruby hadn't read any of the other books she had bought. Ruby read it, and quietly sat in her English teacher's office, suddenly grateful for the many toilets her mother had cleaned so that Ruby could have a better life.

She told students in her introduction of me that she is now getting a PhD. She is a student teacher at Capuchino High, and hopes to permanently teach in San Mateo, the district where as a 16-year-old she was about to flunk out.

Photographed above are Ruby, me, and Ruby's mom, who works as a housecleaner. This story reminded me of what a dogged English teacher can accomplish! I went back and found the email Ruby had sent me when she first read my book in October 2007.

I am honored that my work had such an impact on Ruby and other students. Over the years, I've had a half dozen students come to my talks, and decide, in that moment, to become a lawyer so they could be a voice for immigrant children in court. They come back, years later, to another talk, and tell me: I became a lawyer. I now represent immigrant children.

## We Raised **\$20,735** for Honduran Women

When I'm reporting, I meet incredible people. I spent time in Honduras earlier this year, reporting for another New York Times opinion piece, 'Someone Is Always Trying to Kill You,' about why so many women are fleeing Central America. It can be deadly to be a woman in places like Honduras. In the piece, I write about several women's groups who help women survive in Choloma, Honduras.



They are not incorporated nonprofits, so there was no easy way for readers to support these groups, though I saw that people were moved to give. So I started a GoFundMe page to raise money for them. I woke up on Mother's Day to a beautiful surprise: the campaign had met and surpassed its \$20,000 goal. I've wired two thirds of the money so far, and now that I have finished the latest piece and have time I will wire the rest next week. I will provide updates on the impact of this funding as best I can. **Thank you to all who donated.**

## Upcoming Events

Each year I travel across the country—from conferences to colleges to high schools and middle schools—to share my thoughts about immigration and how Enrique's story—and those of so many immigrant children—continues to change.

**If your school or group would like to book Sonia, email her at [sonia@sonianazario.com](mailto:sonia@sonianazario.com)**

Oakland, CA  
September 12, 2019  
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies |  
UC Hastings

Charlottesville, VA  
September 18, 2019  
University of Virginia

Morgan Hill, CA  
October 22, 2019  
Santa Clara County Library District

San Jose, CA  
October 23, 2019  
San Jose State University

New Haven, CT  
November 13, 2019  
Southern Connecticut State University

San Diego, CA  
February 25, 2020  
Point Loma Nazarene University

London, UK  
April 20, 2020  
American School in London

AND OTHERS near you... I hope to see you at one of my upcoming events.

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