



WOW REVIEW

READING ACROSS CULTURES
VOLUME VI, ISSUE 4

Summer 2014
Global Diasporas

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WOW Review: Volume VI, Issue 4
Summer 2014
Global Diasporas

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Introduction and Editor's Note

Global Diaspora

With the recent passing of author Walter Dean Myers, a champion of African American children's literature, and the current conversation on diversity in children's books, perhaps more than ever children's books have become a symbol for the shifting colors and cultures of the United States. Before his passing, Myers (2014) challenged the children's book industry to represent an accurate portrayal, both proportionally and culturally, of that population. Indeed, during a time of increasing globalization that challenges notions of borders and boundaries, teachers and parents are looking for titles that engage with the varying histories of U.S. cultures, including the movement and displacement of people across spaces, cities, and countries.

In this issue of WOW Review, we present a sample of books for children and adolescents that address some of the experiences of groups living in diaspora. Our focus is on children's books that present both international and intra-national Diasporas, so, in some cases, books reflect on immigration while others on migration. Some stories are based on the authors' experiences while others are fiction. *This is the Rope: A Story from the Great Migration* by Jacqueline Woodson introduces the reader to Woodson's own family experiences as African Americans who migrated intra-nationally, from South Carolina to New York City, as part of the Great Migration (between 1915 and 1970). Also autobiographical is *The Four Immigrants Manga: A Japanese Experience in San Francisco, 1904-1924*. Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama uses his experiences and those of three other Japanese friends to represent different perspectives on Japanese immigration to San Francisco. The characters share a strong Homeland orientation which sustains them as they face different challenges.

The Secret Side of Empty draws on author Maria E. Andreu's experiences as an Argentinian who came to the United States undocumented. Given the current context of the U.S. Southwest, where thousands of Latin American children are crossing the border unaccompanied and undocumented, this story provides an opportunity to reflect on a controversial issue that has reached the level of a humanitarian crisis, while focusing on a different group and country of origin. Offering insights into the Puerto Rican diaspora to New York during the Great Depression, Nicholasa Mohr's *All for the Better: A Story of El Barrio* narrates the biography of Evelina López Antonetty, an activist who showed resilience and fought for her community stateside. The book highlights both the difficulties and resourcefulness of diasporic communities as they contribute to their new environments.

The last two books are fictionalized accounts of two different ethnic groups. *Going Home* presents a facet of the lives of Mexican migrant workers in the United States when they have the opportunity to return home. The children in the story gain insights into their parents' strong homeland orientation. Finally, presenting a more international perspective is Maria Martirosova's *A Photograph as a Memento* about the Armenian diaspora in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, one of the former republics of the Soviet Union. The main character also immigrates to the U.S., adding another layer to her already complex diasporic experience.

Collectively, these stories speak of the challenges that often come when people, forced by historical and economic factors, leave their home countries. Some of the challenges involve dealing with stereotypical perceptions and treatment of immigrants in the host country, learning a new language, and adapting to new cultures. Several stories highlight the negotiation and development of hybrid identities in the diaspora, the resilience of newcomers, and the newness they bring with them to the host country. We hope this short collection will point readers, parents, and educators to stories which help further an understanding of history, race, culture, and nation within a U.S. context. This collection has the potential to contribute to the development of critical and reflective capacities to engage with other human beings in a complex world, what Suzanne Choo (2013) refers to as hospitably embracing the other.

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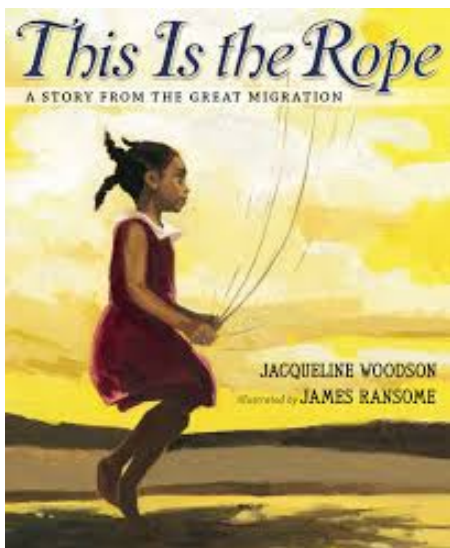
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This is the Rope: A Story from the Great Migration

Written by Jacqueline Woodson

Illustrated by James Ransome

Penguin, 2013, 32 pp.

ISBN: 9780399239861

This picture book is a warm and thoughtful remembering of the collective experiences of millions of African Americans who migrated intra-nationally in search of equity and opportunity between 1915 and 1970. Informed and inspired by the story of Woodson's mother's move from South Carolina to New York City, *This is the Rope* celebrates those inheritances that forge and

preserve diasporic identity across generations.

The family's story is told through the voice of the youngest generation. Beatrice uses a rope, "Found beneath an old tree / a long time ago / *back home* in South Carolina," to frame her reminiscences about family experiences as they put down new roots in New York City. The rope links the family to memories of *back home*, secures the items the family chooses to bring with them in their journeys away from home, and facilitates connections between the family and their new home. For example, while the rope was integral in the grandparent's move away from their family in the South, it later held the banner under which that extended family reunited in the North. The rope is often used for individual play, serving as a skipping rope for Beatrice, her mother, and grandmother, but also is part of everyday moments within family life: the rope is hung as a line for drying her grandmother's flowers and her mother's diapers and pulled tight when her father teaches her how to tie a sailor's knot. At the close of the story, Beatrice trades the well-worn rope for a new rope from her grandmother, skipping to her new rhyme "*B, my name is Beatrice, I come from Brooklyn.*" Her grandmother, gazing proudly at her granddaughter while she holds onto her old rope, is transported to a "long-ago memory" of skipping rope back home underneath the old, pine tree in South Carolina.

The migration stream represented in this picture book is the convergence of African Americans from coastal, Southeastern states (the Carolinas, Georgia) into Northeastern metropolises such as Boston, New York, Philadelphia between 1915 and 1970 (White, Crowder, Tolney, & Adelman, 2003; Tolnay, 2005). Woodson's and Ransome's comparative depictions of rural South Carolina against the bustle and brownstones of Brooklyn drives home Woodson's earlier description of New York as "this new country." Beyond the changes in physical landscape, *This is the Rope* beautifully captures the emphasis on intergenerational hope that is so often thematically central within experiences of migration. The book shows the upward mobility and social opportunity made possible by the grandparent's choice to leave the "unjust conditions of the South for a better life in the North" (Woodson, dedication). Readers looking for titles with a similar focus on the Great Migration might consider: *The Great Migration: An American Story* (Jacob Lawrence, 1995), *The Great Migration: Journey to the North* (Eloise Greenfield,

2010), and *My Hands Sing the Blues: Romare Bearden's Childhood Journey* (Jeanne Walker Harvey, 2011).

In her author's note, Woodson introduces the reader to her own family's experience within the Great Migration, fondly remembering the visits, accents, and memories that shaped her identification with the South as a familial homeland. James Ransome, who illustrated *This is the Rope*, was born and raised in rural North Carolina, before moving to New Jersey as a teenager and later to Brooklyn, NY. While Woodson is explicit in categorizing the text as fictional, the parallels between the author's and illustrator's personal histories and the story of Beatrice's family implicate a strong sense of cultural authenticity borne from firsthand experience. As the daughter of a mother who left her childhood home in Georgia to join her sister in Boston during the early 1970s, reading this book reminded me of my mom's stories of back home and triggered a strong, personal sense of shared identity: the idea that, beyond my family, there are millions of children and grandchildren of the Great Migration whose histories, though diverse and fragmented, participate in a collectivity defined by a perduring Hope for dignity, opportunity, and racial equity.

This is the Rope is the most recent collaboration by author Jacqueline Woodson and illustrator James Ransome, who also worked together on *Visiting Day* (Woodson, 2002). The author of over two dozen books, Woodson is recognized and celebrated for her work depicting African-American characters and communities. A finalist for the 2014 Hans Christian Andersen Award, Woodson is a Newbery Honor and Caldecott Honor winner who has received both the Coretta Scott King Award as well as the Margaret Edwards Award. Ransome has illustrated over fifty books, many of which bring to the page histories and figures from across the African American experience, and is the recipient of the Coretta Scott King Award for Illustration, the IBBY Honor Award, and the NAACP Image Award for Illustration.

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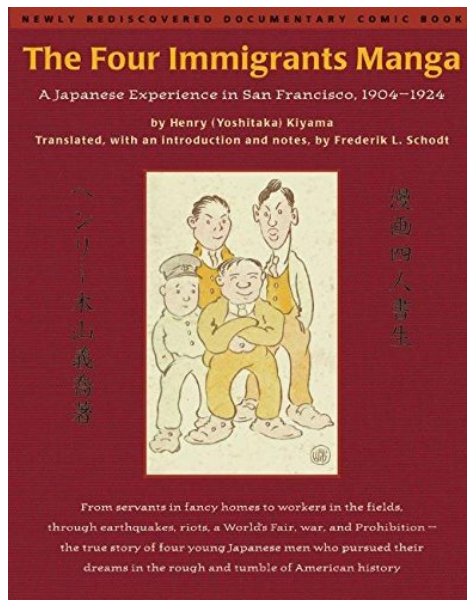
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The Four Immigrants Manga: A Japanese Experience in San Francisco, 1904-1924

Written and illustrated by Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama

Translated by Frederik L. Schodt

Berkeley, California: Stone Bridge Press, 1999, 152 pp.

ISBN: 1880656337

"Cartoons are not jokes; they are observations about life, which isn't serious." (Wakasugi, 1931, p. 31 cited in Kiyama, 1999)

After centuries of relative isolation from the West, Japanese people began to emigrate in great numbers during the 1800s. They worked and studied overseas, including North America, South America, and the Asia-Pacific region, in order to seek a better life and opportunities as well as to help modernize their home country. In the early 1900s, about 400,000 Japanese immigrated to Hawaii and California (Library of Congress, n.d.). Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama, a talented artist who mastered Western art techniques, was one of the first-generation Japanese immigrants to arrive in San Francisco. In *The Four Immigrants Manga: A Japanese Experience in San Francisco, 1904-1924*, he uses gentle humor and satirical irony to address his immigration experience, including the themes of marginalization, alienation, confusion, and dilemma.

The Four Immigrants Manga begins with four Japanese youths—Henry, Charlie, Frank, and Fred—sailing to San Francisco to pursue their individual dreams. Henry hopes to study Western art to bring to Japan, Charlie wants to study the domestic systems of American society, Frank wishes to become an export-import businessman, and Fred dreams to become a “potato king,” a successful California farmer. Henry is modeled after the author himself, whereas the other three characters are based on real people the author knew. Each has a different vision, yet on one level they all hold a nationalistic purpose for their immigration. They desire to become accomplished men so they can bring political, cultural, and social changes to their home country, Japan.

They expect a wonderful life in the United States, but the reality proves different. They struggle with foreign culture, customs, and language and face occupational downgrading and racism. They toil in domestic work as houseboys in European-American households and as field workers for wealthy white landowners. Although they live a hard life stuck between two spaces—a home country and a host country—they maintain “homeland orientation” (Brubaker, 2005, p. 5), keeping a collective memory about Japan and staying committed to Japan’s prosperity. In addition, they demonstrate “boundary-maintenance” as they try to maintain cultural identities through close social relationships with other

Japanese immigrants and experience the “unintended consequences of social exclusion” such as racism (p. 6). Along with the youths’ daily lives, the story also conveys their experiences with and adjustments to historical events and problems, such as the 1902 San Francisco great earthquake, the Panama–Pacific International Exposition of 1915, World War I, the 1918 influenza epidemic, and Prohibition in 1918.

In 1904, at the age of 19, Kiyama sailed to San Francisco, where he lived until 1937. He attended the San Francisco Art Institute to study fine arts and opened his own art studio in Japantown. In 1931, he self-published *The Four Immigrants Manga* in Japanese. In 1999, the book was translated into English and published by Frederik L. Schodt, an award-winning author of multiple books on Japan. Inspired by American comic strips, Kiyama illustrated the book with the flow of the English left-to-right sequence, just like an American comic style. In addition to the comic story, the book provides extensive historical notes about Asians’ immigration history.

This graphical documentary and autobiographical story offers a glimpse into the life of Japanese immigrants in the United States and their interplay with historical events. Readers may notice some stereotypical depictions of other races, such as Chinese and African Americans, that are “by no means ‘politically correct’” (Schodt, 1999, p. 17 cited in Kiyama, 1999). The author includes such images on purpose for historical accuracy. This serves as an example of the prevalence of racism of that era and invites readers to consider issues related to immigrant-related racism during that time and in today’s society. In addition, the story may provide readers opportunities for critical discourse analysis; for example, they may explore interactions and social relations between Japanese immigrants and white employers. It may also open up discussions about the struggles that many immigrants face in a new country, such as misunderstandings caused by cultural and language differences.

The Four Immigrants Manga can be paired with several works of diasporic literature presenting homeland orientation and boundary-maintenance, including *A Jar of Dreams* (Yoshiko Uchida, 1981); *Angel Child, Dragon Child* (Michele Surat & Vo-Dinh Mai, 1983); *Children of the River* (Linda Crew, 1991); *Grandfather’s Journey* (Allen Say, 1993); *Blue Jasmine* (Kashmira Sheth, 2004); *Little Cricket* (Jackie Brown, 2004); *The Not-So-Star-Spangled Life of Sunita Sen*, originally published as *The Sunita Experiment* in 1994, (Mitali Perkins, 2005); and *The Arrival* (Shaun Tan, 2007).

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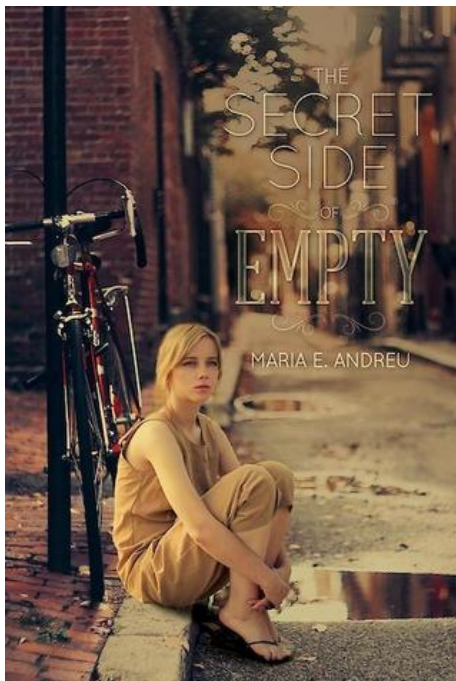
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The Secret Side of Empty

Written by Maria E. Andreu

Philadelphia: RP Teens, 2014, 332 pp.

ISBN: 9780762451920

Monserrat Thalia, known by her friends as M.T. or M, has a secret—one that she has kept from her closest friends since kindergarten. M.T. is an “illegal,” a term she uses to describe her status in the United States and the reason for her unhappiness and lack of a future. She is an undocumented immigrant from Argentina and resides with her parents and little brother, Jose, in the United States. M.T. does her best to pass as an Anglo-American. She is light-skinned with light brown hair and a very successful high school student who earns straight A’s in all of her college prep and AP classes. However, M.T. questions her future because she cannot go to college, as all of

her friends will be doing at the end of the school year. And, the only work she can do without being discovered is the low wage labor that her mother and father do—cleaning, sewing, and kitchen work in restaurants.

M.T.’s family came to the U.S. when she was too young to recall the family’s move from Argentina and so her culture, language, and expectations have been Americanized. When she and her abusive father argue, her Americanization becomes a point of contention. What would happen to her if she and her family were deported to a country she doesn’t know? The semi-autobiographical story is Maria Andreu’s debut novel. Andreu was born in Spain and lived in Argentina for two years. At the age of eight, she and her family emigrated to the U.S. without documentation.

Andreu is deeply connected to many of the problems and feelings that M.T. experiences. However, Andreu tells us in the Author’s Notes that M.T. takes on a life of her own as a character in this novel. M.T. not only has to negotiate her legal status but also her abusive father and considerations of suicide when she sees no future options. The conflicts that arise with her father and her immigration status are complex. Her father’s unfulfilled dreams for prosperity and the opportunity for a better life for his family have turned him into something of a monster. Ironically, it was the birth of M.T. that drove her father to pursue a new financial realty in the United States so that he could be a better provider for his family, especially M.T.. His depression about the slipping away of his dream, his inability to be anything more than a “secret,” and his building resentment of M.T. and her identification with all that is American, has created a diasporic nightmare.

Dispersion is one aspect of being a member of a diaspora. Although they do not participate as members of an Argentina community, they do represent a group living outside its

'homeland' (Brubaker, 2005). The novel does foreground a split between the parents and M.T. and her little brother. Both parents grew up in Argentina and maintain cultural memories of their homeland. On the other hand, M.T. and her little brother do not have these memories. Their identity is embedded in American culture, creating a problematic division between M.T. and her parents, particularly her father. Although the father resists cultural assimilation, this appears to be due to the loss of confidence in his ability to provide adequately for his family and the humiliation he feels in living a 'secret' life. The children, on the other hand, want nothing more than to move on with their lives in the only country they know—the United States. The family, then, is torn. The parents fit Brubaker's criteria for belonging to a diaspora. Their cultural memory is still intact. M.T. is an immigrant without a cultural memory of the country where she was born. And, her little brother, born in the United States, is legally an American. This division within the family creates another interesting dilemma in the story, which is never resolved because of its complexity.

How does one assimilate into the country, especially as an "illegal," and maintain the cultural roots of his/her homeland? In *The Secret Side of Empty*, Andreu explores how immigration has created different conflicts for each member of the family. M.T. is certain that she never wants to go to Argentina; she has nothing in common with the culture, language, and family that she left behind as a very young girl. Her little brother was born in the United States and so the deportation of any or all of his family members would leave him with an even more uncertain future. The mother misses her family in Argentina and sobs when she tells them that she will not be returning "home." The father is conflicted because if he is deported, not only will this present problems for his family, but he will be reminded of his failure knowing that he will not have an opportunity to be visit the United States legally.

The novel is a remarkable story that leaves the reader wondering how s/he would negotiate a secret life as an undocumented immigrant. And, then there will be readers who live this scenario and know all too well what would happen if their secret is revealed. Andreu knows M.T.'s story and, as previously mentioned, was an "illegal" from Argentina when she was a young girl. In 1986, the Immigration Control and Reform Act put her on "a path to eventual citizenship" and changed her life "in every way imaginable" (Andreu, 2014, p. 331). It would be interesting to find out the extent to which The Dream Act, signed into law on August 13, 2012, influenced Andreu's decision to write *The Secret Side of Empty*, a novel that has the potential to empower young readers to see options rather than closed doors.

This novel could be paired with *Ask Me No Questions* (Marina Budhos, 2007), the story of an undocumented Bangladeshi family who face difficult challenges in the U.S. after the tragedy of 9/11. Another possibility is Gloria Anzaldúa's *Friends from the Other Side* (1993), a bilingual picture book about a Mexican-American girl who befriends a Mexican boy and his mother after they cross the Rio Grande River. Julia Alvarez's *Return to Sender* (2009) addresses issues related to undocumented immigrants, posing challenging situations for the characters who rethink their own initial perspectives and reconsider the realities of immigration.

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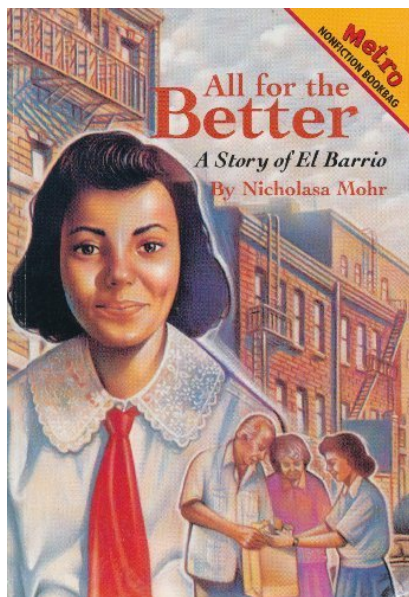
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All for the Better: A Story of El Barrio

Written by Nicholasa Mohr

Steck-Vaughn, 1992, 52 pp.

ISBN 978-0811472203

This novel is based on real-life activist Evelina Lopez Antonetty. As a young girl growing up during the days of the Great Depression in Puerto Rico, Evelina is sent off to live with her aunt and uncle in *El Barrio*, also known as the Spanish Harlem of New York. Evelina's initial struggles in adjusting to her new life are described, such as living far away from her two younger sisters and mother, having to begin school without knowing English and being bullied by other students. However, Evelina quickly learns English, befriends several girls and excels in school. Evelina also decides to help families obtain their

government-assisted groceries by having them fill out the appropriate forms and then going to the distribution center herself with others in order to receive shopping bags full of food for each family. Evelina's plan of collecting the food for the people of her town who need it continue for months, with more and more people accompanying her to the distribution center to collect food. These acts make Evelina known as an exemplary young lady because of her strength, courage and willingness to help others. The story concludes with Evelina finally reuniting with her mother and siblings about a year and a half after her initial move to New York. In the epilogue, we learn that Evelina grows up to be an extremely involved parent in the education of her children who started the United Bronx Parents organization to improve the conditions in schools and the treatment of children in those schools.

The book supports various global understandings, such as immigration, language issues and cultural stereotypes through Brubaker (2005)'s boundary-maintenance characteristic of diaspora. Although this story discusses some of Evelina's struggles during her transition period, the story demonstrates the resourcefulness of a community to come together with the help of a determined and hard-working young girl. The story illustrates the idea of a transnational community—a community of immigrants living in New York can come together and live in a hybrid state. Evelina preserves her distinctive identity as a Puerto Rican female living in a community that is comprised of social relationships and “linked members of the diaspora” into this fused community that is *El Barrio* in Harlem.

The leadership that Evelina takes in helping the families of her community who were suffering during the Great Depression illustrates her ability to push past obstacles in order to help collect and transfer sustenance to starving families. This further highlights how Evelina is able to maintain her distinctive identity even as she moves to a new country and society. Her abilities to push past obstacles are further demonstrated through her capacity to rally parents and establish the United Bronx Parents, which also depicts her ingenuity and contributions to communities in New York. Thus, this story tells the tale of a Puerto Rican female who surpasses cultural stereotypes and contributes greatly to society while

maintaining her dual identity. Throughout the book, the changes, hybridity and fluidity of her identity are shown as she grows up and faces a variety of situations. Evelina stands up to bullies even as a recent immigrant herself, and is also able to find a way to have food delivered to her community members, while encouraging them to accept the help they deserve. The different situations that arise highlight this distinctive transnational community that is held together by strong, active members and social relationships.

The author of this story, Nicholasa Mohr, shares many similarities with the main character, Evelina. Her parents immigrated to New York City from Puerto Rico during World War II, and she grew up in the Bronx. She is one of the most published Puerto Rican authors in the United States.

There are several children's books that could complement the main themes of this book. Specifically, there are notable books that deal with activism, particularly Hispanic communities that come together and fight against injustices in their lives. These books include *The Streets are Free* by Kurusa, *!Si, Se Puede! Yes, We Can! Janitor Strike in L.A.* by Diana Cohn, *Side by Side/Lado a Lado: The Story of Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez/ La Historia de Dolores Huerta y Cesar Chavez* by Monica Brown, *That's Not Fair! / No es Justo!: Emma Tenayuca's Struggle for Justice/La lucha de Emma Tenayuca por la justicia* by Carmen Tafolla, and *Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation* by Duncan Tonatiuh. All of these stories share how individuals, adults and children alike, of Hispanic descent or living in a Hispanic country, work towards fighting against parts of their own lives that are unjust. Similarly as in the story of Evelina, these books are based on true events and people and depict how individuals are able to rise and take action against injustices and for a better future for themselves and others in similar positions. These books strongly parallel the story of Evelina and the way she made a difference in her own community.

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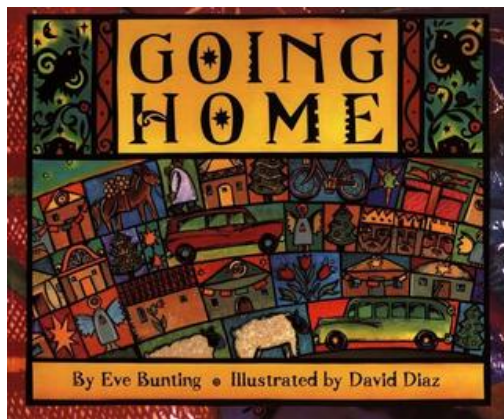
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Going Home

Written by Eve Bunting.
Illustrated by David Diaz
Harper Collins, 1996.
ISBN- 9780060262969

The thrust of this story is Home is where the heart is, which describes the notion of “home” for Jose and Consuelo and their family. This story is layered through the portrayal of where the hearts of Jose and Consuelo lie as they travel with their family to celebrate Christmas in

La Perla, Mexico. Presented against a vibrant rich and colorful background, the story sets a tone of “longing”, a looking forward to an important trip home to celebrate not just Christmas, but a special homecoming after being away. The children, especially Carlos, through whose eyes and perspective the story is told, are unsure about what to make of this journey. Yet, he and his siblings sense their parents’ longing to return to La Perla, even for a short while.

Carlos introduces us to his family of five—Dolores, himself, Nora, and their parents—and subtly sets the context for their life in America and their livelihood as migrant workers. The specifics and challenges of migrant work and the supportive community of families are characterized as they prepare to set out for the journey home to La Perla. As Jose drives through the U.S. border into Mexico, the reader is invited to travel along with the family through small towns and villages. The atmosphere in the car is marked with a quiet, yet pervading mix of excitement and anticipation—excitement marked by passing images full-of-life, brightly colored buildings and houses, flowers hanging from lampposts and streets of shiny stones. The villages bustle with buses passing, dogs chasing the car and towns where the people are engaged in the events of the day. All the while, little sister Nora asks her persistent question “Are we there yet?”

Anticipation builds as the journey stretches on, requiring family stops for at least three nights. Finally! La Perla comes into view with discernable sense of relief as Jose announces their arrival home. The story ends with narrator Carlos coming to realize the significance of “home” for his parents and that they have come to America for their children to make a new life. Carlos also discovers his parents in their laughter and joy as they dance in the street in the evening—at home.

Although this picture book is described as appropriate for children ages 4-8, it holds potential for exploring diversity, multiculturalism, immigration, globalization and inclusion across ages. It engages the listener and reader with the story and the images. Given the ever-changing face and landscape of American society and the underlying efforts to build awareness and understanding of others, this book is essential to cultivating an inclusive perspective. As Mara Sapon- Shevin (2008) comments “Inclusion is about creating a society in which all children and their families feel welcomed and valued” just like “home” in La Perla, Mexico.

The book's author, Eve Bunting, is a prolific writer of stories, realistic and historical fiction. David Diaz sets this wonderful story against a vibrant colorful background filled with art and photographs reflective of Mexico—adobe houses, flowers, fruits, people, animals (burro) and holiday artifacts such as tinsels, hand-decorated ornaments. The illustrations are lively in their portrayal of daily life and artifacts of Mexico.

This book can also be shared along with other picture books that explore and celebrate the importance of “home” such as: *When Africa Was Home* (Karen Lynn Williams, 1991); *Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai* (Claire Nivola, 2008). These books can also be supported with picture books that celebrate and honor ‘home’ while at the same time discovering new places as *Klara’s New World* (Jeanette Winter, 1993) and the classic *All Us Come across the Water* (Lucille Clifton, 1973).

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A Photograph as a Memento

Written by Maria Martirosova

CompassGuide, 2012, 80 pp.

ISBN: 978-5-904561-91-8

This well-received Russian book for young readers was a finalist for The Incredible Dream Award (2006) even before it was published. In 2012, it received the Children's Choice of the Book of the Year Award, and in 2013, the White Ravens Award (International Children's Library, Munich). The book tells the story of the Armenian diaspora in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, one of the former republics of the Soviet Union. Traditionally, Baku was an international city where many different ethnic groups lived together for centuries. Armenians in Baku were an important part of the

community. Historically, there were not many friendships between Muslim Azeri and Christian Armenians, but locally many families peacefully lived next to each other.

The main character and the narrator of the book is Margo Manukian, an Armenian girl who grew up in Baku. The first part of the book is the memories of her father's childhood as reflected in old photographs. One of her father's friends was an amateur photographer, and the image of photography as a treasure chest of memories is pivotal for the book. The friends from the various families—Azeri, Armenian, Jewish, and Russian—lived in the same apartment building. They tirelessly played soccer despite the difficulties of life in the Soviet Union after World War II. Many of them lost their fathers in the War.

The second part of the book is set in the late 1980s. The political events of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict during the early years of Perestroika and the break-up of the Soviet Union change the situation drastically. The main conflict is around Nagorny Karabach, which after being a part of Azerbaijan during the Soviet era, became an Armenian territory. Animosity grows, and Armenians flee from Baku. Now Margo is the only Armenian among her Azerbaijani classmates, and is a subject of their hatred. Azeri refugees are also arriving from Armenia. Some of them are in Margo's school. Strangely, they do not hate Margo; on the contrary, they want to talk to her in Armenian, their second language.

Margo's father, a well-known journalist, does not want to go anywhere, and is killed during the unrest in Baku. Margo and her mother are forced to leave their home and move to a Russian town up north. Margo's mother dies from heart disease, and one of her father's old friends adopts Margo. In the process of that adoption, Margo learns that she is actually not Armenian. She was adopted by her Armenian parents—but is Armenian in her heart. Margo and her new father immigrate to the United States. Here,

years later, Margo, now a young photographer, tries to reconcile herself with the past with the help of mementos from home, old photographs of her father and his friends of all ethnic groups.

Maria Martirosova is a writer and an educator. She was born in Baku, and now lives in Russia, in the small town of Klin. She has published several novels for young readers. This book could be paired with William Saroyan's books, such as *My Name Is Aram* (Capuchin Classics, 2009), as further reading about the Armenian diaspora in the United States. A contemporary Armenian writer who writes in Russian, Narine Abgaryan, recently published her young readers' novel *Manunya* (Astrel, 2014) about Armenia in the 1980s.

This powerful, poignant, and at the same time uplifting, story explores the roots of ethnic conflicts and hatred and suggests a way to overcome them.

Olga Bukhina, International Association for the Humanities, New York, NY

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