



# BULLS & SAINTS

## DELVE DEEPER READING LIST



**This list of fiction and nonfiction books, compiled by Jillian Ferrara Sturtevant, MLIS, of San Diego Public Library, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the POV documentary Bulls & Saints.**

After 20 years of living in the United States, an undocumented family decides to return home. Little do they know it will be the most difficult journey of their lives and reawaken an intense desire for a place to belong. Set between the rodeo arenas of North Carolina and the spellbinding Mexican town they yearn for, Bulls and Saints is a love story about reverse migration, rebellion, and redemption.

## **Contributors**

### **Jillian Ferrara Sturtevant, MLIS**

Jillian is a Library Assistant III with the Art, Music & Recreation section of San Diego Public Library

### **DELVE DEEPER PRODUCERS:**

Jordan Thomas, POV | Education Assistant

Courtney B. Cook, POV | Education Manager

# ADULT NON-FICTION

**Alfanador-Pujol, Angélica Jimena. *The Relación de Michoacán (1539-1541) and the Politics of Representation in Colonial Mexico*. University of Texas Press, 2015.**

The *Relación de Michoacán* (1539-1541) is one of the earliest surviving illustrated manuscripts from colonial Mexico. Commissioned by the Spanish viceroy Antonio de Mendoza, the *Relación* was produced by a Franciscan friar together with indigenous noble informants and anonymous native artists who created its forty-four illustrations. To this day, the *Relación* remains the primary source for studying the pre-Columbian practices and history of the people known as Tarascans or P'urhépecha. However, much remains to be said about how the *Relación's* colonial setting shaped its final form.

**Bui, Thi. *The Best We Could Do: An Illustrated Memoir*. Abrams ComicArts, 2017.**

This beautifully illustrated and emotional story is an evocative memoir about the search for a better future and a longing for the past. Exploring the anguish of immigration and the lasting effects that displacement has on a child and her family, Bui documents the story of her family's daring escape after the fall of South Vietnam in the 1970s, and the difficulties they faced building new lives for themselves.

At the heart of Bui's story is a universal struggle: While adjusting to life as a first-time mother, she ultimately discovers what it means to be a parent—the endless sacrifices, the unnoticed gestures, and the depths of unspoken love. Despite how impossible it seems to take on the simultaneous roles of both parent and child, Bui pushes through. With haunting, poetic writing and breathtaking art, she examines the strength of family, the importance of identity, and the meaning of home.

**DeParle, Jason. *A Good Provider is the One Who Leaves: One Family and Migration in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Viking, 2019.**

When Jason DeParle moved into the Manila slums with Tita Comodas and her family three decades ago, he never imagined his reporting on them would span three generations and turn into the defining chronicle of a new age—the age of global migration. In a monumental book that gives new meaning to “immersion journalism,” DeParle paints an intimate portrait of an unforgettable family as they endure years of sacrifice and separation, willing themselves out of shantytown poverty into a new global middle class. At the heart of the story is Tita's daughter, Rosalie. Beating the odds, she struggles through nursing school and works her way across the Middle East until a Texas hospital fulfills her dreams with a job offer in the States.

**Hernandez Castillo, Marcelo. *Children of the Land*. Harper Perennial, 2020.**

When Marcelo Hernandez Castillo was five years old and his family was preparing to cross the border between Mexico and the United States, he suffered temporary, stress-induced blindness. Castillo regained his vision, but quickly understood that he had to move into a threshold of invisibility before settling in California with his parents and siblings. Thus began a new life of hiding in plain sight and of paying extraordinarily careful attention at all times for fear of being truly seen. Before Castillo was one of the most celebrated poets of a generation, he was a boy who perfected his English in the hopes that he might never seem extraordinary.

With beauty, grace, and honesty, Castillo recounts his and his family's encounters with a system that treats them as criminals for seeking safe, ordinary lives. He writes of the Sunday afternoon when he opened the door to an ICE officer who had one hand on his holster, of the hours he spent making a fake social security card so that he could work to support his family, of his father's deportation and the decade that he spent waiting to return to his wife and children only to be denied reentry, and of his mother's heartbreaking decision to leave her children and grandchildren so that she could be reunited with her estranged husband and retire from a life of hard labor.

*Children of the Land* distills the trauma of displacement, illuminates the human lives behind the headlines and serves as a stunning meditation on what it means to be a man and a citizen.

**Vargas, Jose Antonio. *Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen*. Dey Street Books, 2018.**

This is not a book about the politics of immigration. This book—at its core—is not about immigration at all. This book is about homelessness, not in a traditional sense, but in the unsettled, unmoored psychological state that undocumented immigrants like myself find ourselves in. This book is about lying and being forced to lie to get by; about passing as an American and as a contributing citizen; about families, keeping them together, and having to make new ones when you can't. This book is about constantly hiding from the government and, in the process, hiding from ourselves. This book is about what it means to not have a home.

After 25 years of living illegally in a country that does not consider me one of its own, this book is the closest thing I have to freedom.”

--Jose Antonio Vargas, from *Dear America*

# ADULT FICTION

**Clemmons, Zinzi. *What We Lose: A Novel*. Viking, 2017.**

Raised in Pennsylvania, Thandi views the world of her mother's childhood in Johannesburg as both impossibly distant and ever present. She is an outsider wherever she goes, caught between being black and white, American and not. She tries to connect these dislocated pieces of her life, and as her mother succumbs to cancer, Thandi searches for an anchor—someone, or something, to love.

In arresting and unsettling prose, we watch Thandi's life unfold, from losing her mother and learning to live without the person who has most profoundly shaped her existence, to her own encounters with romance and unexpected motherhood. Through exquisite and emotional vignettes, Clemmons creates a stunning portrayal of what it means to choose to live, after loss. An elegiac distillation, at once intellectual and visceral, of a young woman's understanding of absence and identity that spans continents and decades, *What We Lose* heralds the arrival of a virtuosic new voice in fiction.

**Engel, Patricia. *Infinite Country: A Novel*. Avid Reader Press, 2021.**

Talia is being held at a correctional facility for adolescent girls in the forested mountains of Colombia after committing an impulsive act of violence that may or may not have been warranted. She urgently needs to get out and get back home to Bogotá, where her father and a plane ticket to the United States are waiting for her. If she misses her flight, she might also miss her chance to finally be reunited with her family.

How this family came to occupy two different countries, two different worlds, comes into focus like twists of a kaleidoscope. We see Talia's parents, Mauro and Elena, fall in love in a market stall as teenagers against a backdrop of civil war and social unrest. We see them leave Bogotá with their firstborn, Karina, in pursuit of safety and opportunity in the United States on a temporary visa, and we see the births of two more children, Nando and Talia, on American soil. We witness the decisions and indecisions that lead to Mauro's deportation and the family's splintering—the costs they've all been living with ever since.

**Escandón, María Amparo. *González and Daughter Trucking Co.: A Road Novel with Literary License*. Three Rivers Press, 2005.**

Serving a sentence in a prison in Mexico, Libertad González finds a clever way to pass the time with the weekly Library Club, reading to her fellow inmates from whatever books she can find in the prison's meager supply. The story that emerges, though, has nothing to do with the words printed on the pages. She tells of a former literature professor and fugitive of the Mexican government who reinvents himself as a trucker in the United States. There he falls in love with a wild woman with whom he shares his truck and life—that is until Joaquín González unexpectedly finds himself alone on the road with a baby girl and González & Daughter Trucking Co. is born. Joaquín and his daughter make the cab of an

18-wheeler their home, sharing everything—adventures, books, truck-stop chow, and memories of the girl’s mother—until one day the girl grows into a woman, and a chance encounter with one man causes her to rebel against another.

**Hamid, Mohsin. *Exit West*. Riverhead Books, 2017.**

In a country teetering on the brink of civil war, two young people meet—sensual, fiercely independent Nadia and gentle, restrained Saeed. They embark on a furtive love affair, and are soon cloistered in a premature intimacy by the unrest roiling their city. When it explodes, turning familiar streets into a patchwork of check points and bomb blasts, they begin to hear whispers about doors—doors that can whisk people far away, if perilously and for a price. As the violence escalates, Nadia and Saeed decide that they no longer have a choice. Leaving their homeland and their old lives behind, they find a door and step through. . .

*Exit West* follows these remarkable characters as they emerge into an alien and uncertain future, struggling to hold on to each other, to their past, to the very sense of who they are. Profoundly intimate and powerfully inventive, it tells an unforgettable story of love, loyalty, and courage that is both completely of our time and for all time.

**Sylvester, Natalia. *Everyone Knows You Go Home*. Little A, 2018.**

The first time Isabel meets her father-in-law, Omar, he’s already dead—an apparition appearing uninvited on her wedding day. Her husband, Martin, still unforgiving for having been abandoned by his father years ago, confesses that he never knew the old man had died. So Omar asks Isabel for the impossible: persuade Omar’s family—especially his wife, Elda—to let him redeem himself.

Isabel and Martin settle into married life in a Texas border town, and Omar returns each year on the celebratory Day of the Dead. Every year Isabel listens, but to the aggrieved Martin and Elda, Omar’s spirit remains invisible. Through his visits, Isabel gains insight into not just the truth about his disappearance and her husband’s childhood but also the ways grief can eat away at love. When Martin’s teenage nephew crosses the Mexican border and takes refuge in Isabel and Martin’s home, questions about past and future homes, borders, and belonging arise that may finally lead to forgiveness—and alter all their lives forever.

**Urrea, Luis Alberto. *The House of Broken Angels*. Little, Brown and Company, 2018.**

In his final days, beloved and ailing patriarch Miguel Angel de La Cruz, affectionately called Big Angel, has summoned his entire clan for one last legendary birthday party. But as the party approaches, his mother, nearly one hundred, dies, transforming the weekend into a farewell doubleheader. Among the guests is Big Angel’s half brother, known as Little Angel, who must reckon with the truth that although he shares a father with his siblings, he has not, as a half gringo, shared a life.

Across two bittersweet days in their San Diego neighborhood, the revelers mingle among the palm trees and cacti, celebrating the lives of Big Angel and his mother, and recounting the many inspiring

tales that have passed into family lore, the acts both ordinary and heroic that brought these citizens to a fraught and sublime country and allowed them to flourish in the land they have come to call home.

## YOUNG ADULT NON-FICTION

**Bausum, Ann. *Denied, Detained, Deported: Stories from the Dark Side of American Immigration*. National Geographic Partners, LLC, 2019.**

Award-winning author Ann Bausum makes the history of immigration in America come alive for young people. The story of America has always been shaped by people from all corners of the Earth who came in search of a better life. Immigration remains one of the critical topics in 21<sup>st</sup> century America, and how our children learn the lessons of the past will shape all our futures.

Ann Bausum's compelling book presents a revealing series of snapshots from the dark side of immigration history including:

**Immigrants Denied:** The *St. Louis*, a ship filled with Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany sought refuge in American ports and was turned away, condemning many of its passengers to ultimately perish in the Holocaust.

**Immigrants Detained:** Japanese-Americans were rounded up during World War II and placed in detention centers—regardless of their patriotism—for security reasons.

**Immigrants Deported:** Emma Goldman was branded a dangerous extremist and sent back to Russia in 1919, after living 30 years in the United States.

**Guerrero, Diane and Erica Moroz. *My Family Divided: One Girl's Journey of Home, Loss, and Hope*. Henry Holt and Co., 2018.**

Before landing a spot on the megahit Netflix show *Orange is the New Black*; before wow-ing audiences as Lina on *Jane the Virgin*; and before her incredible activism and work on immigration reform, Diane Guerrero was a young girl living in Boston. One day, while Guerrero was at school, her undocumented immigrant parents were taken from their home, detained, and deported. Guerrero's life, which had been full of the support of a loving family, was turned upside down.

Reflective of the experiences of millions of undocumented immigrant families in the United States, Guerrero's story in *My Family Divided*, written with Erica Moroz, is at once heartbreaking and hopeful.

**Nazario, Sonia. *Enrique's Journey: The True Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother*. Ember, 2014.**

*Enrique's Journey* recounts the unforgettable quest of a Honduran boy looking for his mother, eleven years after she is forced to leave her starving family to find work in the United States. Braving unimaginable peril, often clinging to the sides and tops of freight trains, Enrique travels through hostile worlds full of thugs, bandits, and corrupt cops. But he pushes forward, relying on his wit, courage, hope, and the kindness of strangers.



# YOUNG ADULT FICTION

**Henríquez, Cristina. *The Book of Unknown Americans*. Vintage, 2015.**

When fifteen-year-old Maribel Rivera sustains a terrible injury, the Riveras leave behind a comfortable life in Mexico and risk everything to come to the United States so that Maribel can have the care she needs. Once they arrive, it's not long before Maribel attracts the attention of Mayor Toro, the son of one of their new neighbors, who sees a kindred spirit in this beautiful, damaged outsider. Their love story sets in motion events that will have profound repercussions for everyone involved. Here Henríquez seamlessly interweaves the story of these star-crossed lovers, and of the Rivera and Toro families, with the testimonials of men and women who have come to the United States from all over Latin America.

**Pan, Emily X.R. *The Astonishing Color of After*. Little, Brown and Company, 2018.**

Leigh Chen Sanders is absolutely certain about one thing: When her mother died by suicide, she turned into a bird.

Leigh, who is half Asian and half white, travels to Taiwan to meet her maternal grandparents for the first time. There, she is determined to find her mother, the bird. In her search, she winds up chasing after ghosts, uncovering family secrets, and forging a new relationship with her grandparents. And as she grieves, she must try to reconcile the fact that on the same day she kissed her best friend and longtime secret crush, Axel, her mother was taking her own life.

Alternating between real and magic, past and present, friendship and romance, hope and despair, *The Astonishing Color of After* is a stunning and heartbreaking novel about finding oneself through family history, art, grief, and love.

**Zoboi, Ibi. *American Street*. Balzer + Bray, 2017.**

On the corner of American Street and Joy Road, Fabiola Toussaint thought she would finally find *une belle vie*—a good life.

But after they leave Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Fabiola's mother is detained by U.S. immigration, leaving Fabiola to navigate her loud American cousins, Chantal, Donna, and Princess; the grittiness of Detroit's west side; a new school; and a surprising romance, all on her own.

Just as she finds her footing in this strange new world, a dangerous proposition presents itself, and Fabiola soon realizes that freedom comes at a cost. Trapped at the crossroads of an impossible choice, will she pay the price for the American dream?

# BOOKS FOR YOUNGER LEARNERS AND CHILDREN

**Ancona, George. *Charro: the Mexican Cowboy*. Harcourt Brace, 1999.**

*Charro* is the Mexican term for *horseman*, but for Mexicans a charro is much more than a cowboy. He is a skilled rider of horses, bulls and bucking broncos, true—but he is also an artist with a lariat, a model of gentlemanly dress and behavior, and a living symbol of Mexico’s patriotic past.

Award-winning author George Ancona captures the annual festivities of *el día del charro*, when Mexicans come together to celebrate the art of horsemanship. In the rodeo-like sport called *la charrería*, male charros and female charras, children and adults, show off their skill and daring. But more than that, they are showing off their pride in their country—because to be a charro is to be a Mexican.

**Medina, Meg and Angela Dominguez. *Mango, Abuela, and Me*. Findaway World, LLC, 2020.**

Mia’s abuela has left her sunny house with parrots and palm trees to live with Mia and her parents in the city. The night she arrives, Mia tries to share her favorite book with Abuela before they go to sleep and discovers that Abuela can’t read the words inside. So while they cook, Mia helps Abuela learn English (“Dough. Masa”), and Mia learns some Spanish too, but it’s still hard for Abuela to learn the words she needs to tell Mia all her stories. Then Mia sees a parrot in the pet-shop window and has the perfecto idea for how to help them all communicate a little better.

**Say, Allen. *Grandfather’s Journey*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993.**

A heart-wrenching story of a grandfather and grandson, both of whom love two lands: Japan and America. The story opens with the author’s grandfather immigrating from Japan, exploring America, and eventually returning to his homeland. Whenever he is in one country, he longs for the other. This longing carries over through his daughter to his grandson, the narrator, who also travels to America and, once there, misses Japan. A touching story of immigration that affected three generations of one family, written and illustrated with beautiful watercolor paintings by Allen Say, winner of the 1994 Caldecott Medal.

**Yang, Kelly. *Front Desk*. Arthur A. Levine Books, 2018.**

Mia Tang has a lot of secrets. Number 1: She lives in a motel, not a big house. Every day, while her immigrant parents clean the rooms, ten-year-old Mia manages the front desk of the Calivista Motel and

tends to its guests. Number 2: Her parents hide immigrants. And if the mean motel owner, Mr. Yao, finds out they've been letting them stay in the empty rooms for free, the Tangs will be doomed. Number 3: She wants to be a writer. But how can she when her mom thinks she should stick to math because English is not her first language? It will take all of Mia's courage, kindness, and hard work to get through this year. Will she be able to hold on to her job, help the immigrants and guests, escape Mr. Yao, and go for her dreams.