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Prompt 1 : Using specific examples from *Enrique's Journey*, write an essay that examines how Sonia Nazario reveals to readers certain universal truths about the human condition through Enrique's and Lourdes' stories.

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“Benevolent or Malevolent: Two Sides of the Same Coin”

There are certain impulses that a human has that are considered inevitable and are considered universal truths of the human condition. There are people who do good under all circumstances and others who find amusement in exploiting others. People harm out of greed, and people help when they feel compassion for the oppressed. Although some people can balance these impulses, most devote their lives to just one. In Sonia Nazario's novel, *Enrique's Journey*, she reveals to her readers how in Enrique's and Lourdes' journeys and stories, certain universal truths are made evident as impulses are present and acted upon for the better or worse of others.

The impulse to be altruistic can arise from religious beliefs or just from one's morality and judgment. Through Enrique's stories, the author demonstrates how there are people in the world who want to do good and they devote their lives to doing just that. Father Leo is the type who puts everyone before himself because he believes that is what God would want his followers to do. Despite many protests from the locals of the community, Father Leo never stopped, “he saw that these [migrants] are the most vulnerable, the most disliked by the local population. So he gave himself to them” (172). He always put the migrants first, the ones who needed him the most. When both the mayor and a migrant were waiting to see Father Leo, he told his secretary, “No. Let the mayor wait. Let the person who is most in need see me first” (171). The human

impulse that he had in him to be altruistic led him to do many good deeds, such as giving up his two-bedroom apartment so that female migrants could have a place to sleep. Another person in the novel that exemplified this phenomenon was Olga Sanchez Martinez who also helped migrants, those who got badly injured on their journeys. She, after making a promise to God, devoted her time in healing every injured migrant no matter how serious their injuries and gave them the hope they needed to continue with their life. Olga confidently told others, “No one tells me something can’t be done. Everything can be cured. Nothing is impossible” (90). There are not many people in this universe who are like Father Leo and Olga, who devote their lives, whether or not they are doing it for God, to take care of the necessities of others before their own. Whether an occasional impulse or a life devoted to altruism, it is a universal truth that many humans have an urge to do good and to help others.

Just like people can have an urge to be benevolent, people also have the inevitable urge to be malevolent. In both Enrique’s and Lourdes’ travels, they have come across people whose intentions were never good, and other people who just did not want to help the migrants. Along the way, many migrants are robbed, beaten, raped, and killed by agents, banditos, smugglers, and gangs. Lourdes paid a smuggler to take her to the United States and to her dismay, she was left on a corner somewhere in the United States, and she was even lucky that he took her that far. Many just take the money upfront and then never show up on the day that the journey was planned to begin. Chiapas is known as the “beast” because of it being well-known to be infested with bandits, gangs, and people who want to hurt migrants. During Enrique’s journey through Chiapas, Enrique knew that “bandits will be out to rob him, police will try to shake him down, and street gangs might kill him,” it was hard to pass through Chiapas without encountering someone who was trying to harm a migrant (61). Through the journeys of Enrique and Lourdes,

the author shows that there are impulses to harm others. These acts are done by people, such as the bandits, smugglers, and gangs, who prey on others for food, money, and hurt for fun.

Although people are considerably different in the ways they act and live their lives, everyone takes part in the reasoning as to why we have certain universal truths. There are people who feel the need to exploit others to make themselves feel more powerful, such as by hooking young people on drugs, stealing from the poor or beating people up. In *Enrique's Journey*, the banditos, gangs, and agents all had one truth in common; they preyed on migrants and exploited them in every way possible. There are also people who devote their lives to being altruistic, putting the needs of others before their own. Sonia Nazario demonstrates this by writing about the acts of Olga and Father Leo, who both helped migrants in every way possible, in Enrique's story. The truth is that in every choice a person makes, it can involve the human impulse to be altruistic or the impulse to be malevolent; it is truly an inevitable truth.

Work Cited: Nazario, Sonia. Enrique's Journey. Random House, Inc. New York: 2006