



By John Michael Ancillotti
Class of 2023

Deserving to be Here

The memoir, *Dear America*, by Jose Antonio Vargas, reveals how an undocumented citizen like himself survives in America. In this book, Vargas shows how he built up a community and the progression of his life in America. An important part of surviving in the world, for anyone, is having a community of reliable friends and family to help with difficulties in life. These difficulties are more challenging for those who have to hide from the government in order to continue living in the country they call their home. Citizens born in America often take for granted how lucky we are to simply have been born here. Bill O'Reilly told Vargas he doesn't deserve to be here, making me wonder what I've done to deserve being here. Vargas came to America when he was twelve years old without knowing he was coming here illegally. After finding out he was "illegal," he dedicated himself to studying American culture. He spent much of his time watching shows such as *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* and *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. He watched movies such as *Working Girl* and listened to musicians such as Garth Brooks. He seems to be more American than me. He also participated in as many school programs as he could. Vargas put so much effort into passing as an American and studying American culture, something I didn't need to do simply because I was born here. The line from the book "what

have you done to earn your box” (Vargas 71) is the most impactful to me. Filling out a form for a job, Vargas’ only option is to lie and check the box that says he is “A citizen or national of the United States.” I would truthfully be able to check that box even though I have done nothing to deserve being here. This book has inspired me to change that. Now I want to contribute more to society and dedicate myself to participating in more events and programs, have more of a presence in the world, and expand my community of friends.

Being an American means being part of society and contributing your work and your friendship to the community. *Dear America* is a great how-to on being an American citizen. Jose Antonio Vargas is undocumented, but he is an American citizen.

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