



By Robert Mannion  
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### **Community**

Community is incredibly important to Jose Antonio Vargas in his book, *Dear America, Notes of an Undocumented Citizen*. Community symbolizes unity, friendship, growth and development in one's character, especially himself. In my opinion, community represents the people that surround you and the impact they have on your life. This book has changed my thought process on a few topics, some of which happen to be the immigration process, and what it means to call a place your home, as well as what the term 'American' actually means.

Community, in short, is a group of people occupying the same place having a certain characteristic in common. These groups can be family, friends, church, school etc... The point to be made is that we are all connected within our own little communities. In this book, Jose creates his own little community wherever he goes, and with whomever he meets. His first found community was at middle school. It was challenging, but as time passed Jose became more familiar with American culture and eventually assimilated. Some would say he became an American. At times, Jose's journey was very difficult, such as staying undetected by the government's radar, assimilating to American culture and society, and figuring out who he is and what his role is in society as Jose Antonio Vargas.

During Jose's high school years, he began to realize his passion for journalism.

At first, he used it as a sign of rebellion and independence from his grandparents, rejecting their strategy for life. Second, writing became a form of existing through people, a way of belonging and contributing to society. Instantly, this passion for writing became the driving force in his life. Throughout his growing years into adulthood, people were drawn to Jose, like a moth to a flame. For example, his teachers, college professors, lawyers and other journalists were always there by his side encouraging him and selflessly wanting to help.

Clearly the immigration process needs to change with meticulous clarity for every nationality. The United States is commonly referred to as the melting pot of immigrants. We stand strong to the promises of freedom and justice for all, along with the pursuit of happiness. Because our country is so diverse, we tolerate multiculturalism well. However, the United States doesn't enforce its laws of immigration. Our government is setting a misleading example for future immigrant generations that their future in America can be as successful as Jose's without becoming legal.

After reading this book, my thoughts have changed after reflecting on what it means to call a place your "home." First, home is where you grow up, not just a point on a map. It's where memories are made. Second, home isn't about how long you've lived in one place, but simply the family that supports you. Jose had many families, a huge support network of encouragement and guidance. In my opinion, Jose truly feels at home here in America because he's made the most positive memories and collected the most keepsakes in his heart, along with experiencing the most growth and development. Sadly, this entire journey started with a lie, but I truly believe all the events that happened in Jose's life were supposed to happen. To conclude this reflection, there are many ways to describe what community is. The most important point of this essay is to say, "we all need each other." I believe it's the friends we meet along the way that help us appreciate our journey. Jose wants the reader to realize that it takes all types of people to

make a community. It isn't something that is stationary, it moves with you wherever you go and we must be bold in our efforts to genuinely care for one another in order to influence a better tomorrow.

*(Robert is a biology major from Cicero, New York.)*