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# Lives beyond Borders: Immigrant Women's Life Writing, Nationality, and Social Justice

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## Abstract

In *Journey of Hope* (2007), Rosalina Rosay tells the story of how she entered the U.S. as an undocumented girl from Mexico to join her family in the late 1970s. At roughly the same time, Jane Jeong Trenka arrives in the U.S. at the age of six months as an adoptee from Korea. Her memoir, *The Language of Blood* (2003), details her traumatic experiences growing up in rural Minnesota. Reading these seemingly unrelated texts together, I expose how female immigrants like Rosay and Trenka use life writing to express a doubled self and to give a platform to those who are rarely heard, like undocumented immigrants and poor birth mothers. While most research on immigration focuses on assimilation, these women describe their identity not in terms of assimilation or hybridity but fluidity, which allows for alternative, more complex constructions of 'the self,' often in the collective. This presentation's goal is to establish how immigrant women turn life writing into a rhetoric for human rights and social justice. Immigrant women writers use their works to persuade their audience to become politically and socially active. In challenging stereotypical representations and in offering alternative sources of knowledge on immigration processes, they deconstruct fixed identities and expose oppressive constructions of concepts such as "home" and "nation." My reading of immigrant women's memoirs presents life writing-if re-conceptualized as trickster texts to include non-normative styles-as a potential tool for many, especially non-Western, immigrants and other minority groups to advocate for their humanity and rights.

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