



From North to South

Written by René Colato Laínez

Illustrated by Joe Cepeda

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Young José excitedly hurries Papá to begin their trip from San Diego to Tijuana, Mexico where they will visit Mamá for the first time and bring her clothes and items she needs from home. Two weeks prior Mamá was deported when she could not produce her immigration papers while working in a factory. José and Papá head across the border to spend the day with Mamá at Centro Madre Assunta where she is staying. They meet her friends, some of

whom are working to earn the money they need to travel north and others who are children separated from their parents. Mamá takes everyone to the garden where they plant seeds and José has the idea of planting seeds in cans that the children can give to their parents. After decorating the cans, the children plant their seeds. Throughout the day José shares with Mamá how much he misses her and wants her to come home. Mamá assures him her lawyer is getting the papers together. The story ends with Mamá telling José a story before he and Papá depart and José dreaming of Mamá coming home again.

This tender bilingual story reveals the pain and heartache many undocumented immigrants and their children experience when they are forced to journey back to their homeland. While these situations are complex, *From North to South* sensitively and effectively conveys how they affect children and families. The story ends with José waiting and hoping for Mamá's return, leaving readers to wonder what the future holds for José and his family and highlighting the waiting and hope experienced by many families in similar situations.

Author René Colato Laínez was born in El Salvador and came to the United States in 1985 with his father to escape a civil war. In an introductory note, Laínez explains that as an elementary school teacher, he has had students who were born in the U.S. but whose parents were not and were forced to leave. Through his students he knows firsthand how traumatic separations can be. El Centro Madre Assunta, where José's mother lives in the story, is a place in Tijuana that houses women and children who have been deported. Laínez donates a portion of the royalties from the book to El Centro Madre Assunta.

Cepeda's bright illustrations pick up on authentic Mexican culture and emphasize the love and hope the family has in the midst of a difficult situation. The faces of the characters are expressive, highlighting the emotions of the situation. The endpapers show a map of southern California and northern Mexico so readers can see where San Diego and Tijuana are located.

This book would work well in a text set that examines issues related to immigration. Other books in this text set might include: *Friends from the Other Side /Amigos del otro lado* (Gloria Anzaldúa, 1997), *My Diary From Here to There/Mi diario de aquí hasta allá* (Amada Irma Pérez, 2009), and *My Shoes and I* (René Colato Laínez, 2010).

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