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The (Im)Possibility of Innocence: Undocumented Immigration in Children's Literature

Undocumented immigration, unaccompanied minors crossing borders, and immigrant family separations have all been the ongoing headlines and the subject of political debate for years, but how are these events depicted in children's literature? Though my larger dissertation focuses on undocumented immigrant narratives including memoirs, novels, poetry, media, art, as well as children's books, this presentation focuses on the children's books *Two White Rabbits* by Jairo Buitrago and Rafael Yockteng, and *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote: A Migrant's Tale* by Duncan Tonatiuh with a selection from Alberto Ledesma's *Diary of A Reluctant Dreamer: Undocumented Vignettes from a Pre-American Life*. These works all depict different aspects of the undocumented journey, while challenging the genre of the child's book itself with conflicting images and text that show the simultaneous innocence of children within a politically dangerous environment. Overall, this presentation seeks to explore the idea of innocence of children of color when placed in precarious political situations. Furthermore, it explores the ongoing legacy of children's literature as the genre for political critique.