

I'm not from the United States, and even though some try to be hospitable I do not feel completely welcomed in this country. I walk around campus and see how people are uninformed about the richness of my culture. I am fine with people making jokes and stereotypes because as a Latino I encounter that every day; but seeing people existing while being so ignorant about the cultures from the countries of their same continent worries me greatly. They do not understand us and just classify us as "Mexicans" while ignoring what we can bring to the table. All of our mannerisms, our music, our experiences. We are seen here as just people that come to the States to "steal jobs". But they do not comprehend why we had to leave our countries; about the hardships we have to face. That is the reason I strongly believe that the inclusion of Hispanic literature in the English 224 syllabus is done correctly but could be further improved. By incorporating works from other Latino authors into our studies, we can begin to close the gap in understanding and appreciation. Said incorporation would enhance our academic experience and create a more inclusive environment where all cultures are valued and celebrated. That's why I believe "Drown" by Junot Diaz should be added to our syllabus.

"Drown" by Junot Diaz, demonstrates the perspective of what it is truly like to be an immigrant, and how difficult some experiences are; being an intrinsic reading that students could connect with. Immigrants confront many challenges daily as they try to adapt to the American life they greatly desire. Nonetheless, these struggles usually go hand in hand with the constant ignorance and "accidental" racism within the confines of our campus. "You'll never believe what it's like over there. How hard it is, how you break your back, the way these people treat you. You'll never believe how many things you have to pay for and how little you get. You'll never believe the fucking weather, how it's always cold. You'll never believe how much you miss home." This

quote from “Negocios” is an exemplary encapsulation of how immigrants live in the U.S. We face the harsh reality of a rigid capitalistic economy and the injustices that come along with it. How if someone does not want to pay completely for the job we still have to be grateful for it.

It's clear that a great portion of our campus population hails from privileged backgrounds, but for immigrants, this is not the case. We face poverty, battle addiction, and often confront language barriers. "Drown" sheds light on these issues, but it also reflects on more positive aspects like the beauty and resilience of our culture. It gives the reader a perspective that shows nostalgic instances and beautiful memories of our countries that shape our identity. This case is perfectly exemplified by a quote in Ysrael "I kept telling myself, Man, one of these days I'm going to go back. I'd been saying it for a year. I wanted to see the sun come up over Santo Domingo, wanted to see the old guys play chess in the park, wanted to see the prostitutes walk the streets at night." This clearly illustrates how we yearn for familiarity and a similar warmth that could only be brought by our countries, regardless of the problems confronted daily.

Other important subjects are brought up in these readings, like the absence of fatherly presences and sexual identity. The main protagonist faces many difficulties on these two issues, on top of everything else that goes on. This would also allow students to identify with them because they might relate to the issues shown. "And when my father wasn't around, which was most of the time, I'd spend hours in the bathroom with the door locked, trying to figure out who I was." Yunior is facing a hard identity crisis while struggling with the absence of his father and the complexities of his own sexual identity. Many people have experienced similar things to him. By empathizing with his journey, students may find comfort in knowing they are not alone.

All in all, my experience as a Latino immigrant navigating the complexities of American life has been challenging. Ranging from the absence of cultural understanding to the struggle for acceptance. Through "Drown" by Junot Diaz, we glimpse the realities of immigrant existence, from the harsh economic disparities to the nostalgia for home. The inclusion of Hispanic literature in academic syllabi offers a crucial opportunity to bridge the gap in understanding and appreciation for diverse cultural experiences. It would show students who haven't faced these hardships a small preview of what life can be like if they wish to move abroad and how they should behave with people who are new to the country.