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Race, Class, and Gender

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Immigrants in Media: *Lingua Franca* and *Yellow Rose*

Depictions of immigrants in media have long been categorized as inhumane and stereotypical. The implications of this can be especially dangerous, as media holds great power in its ability to influence people's opinions and educate them on topics they do not know much about. However, when viewers are misinformed about immigrants, then they will continue to display xenophobic thinking. Anti-immigrant rhetoric has also become more widespread and visible because of factors such as the current political climate (Hoewe 2018; Parrott, Hoewe, Fan, and Huffman 2019). Public discourse on immigration shifted post-9/11 and during Trump's presidency, reflected by anti-immigrant sentiment and the desire for stronger immigration enforcement. Although there has been a surge in migration in the 2010s (Hoewe 2018; Parrott et al 2019), politicians and media continue to vilify immigrants. However, two films that push back against this ideology and represent inclusivity of the immigrant community include *Lingua Franca* and *Yellow Rose*, which are both directed by Filipina women. Both films depict the realities that immigrants face and the harmful effects of criminalizing immigrants. In addition to this, *Lingua Franca* thoughtfully details intersectional identities and the trans experience. However, one way in which *Yellow Rose* reinforces negative tropes is through its use of the white savior narrative. Although American media as a whole continues to misrepresent immigrants and portray them as criminals, *Lingua Franca* and *Yellow Rose* signify strides toward recognizing the complexity and humanity of immigrants.

Immigration Today and the Pervasiveness of Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric

Over the years, there have been large numbers of migrants globally, in part because of the displacement of people as a result of wars in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan (Hoewe 2018; Parrott et al 2019). Although there is no universal or nationwide definition for migrant, the International Organization for Migration (2020) describes a migrant as “a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.” This is distinct from refugees, who face persecution or conflict and thus, seek protection outside of their country of origin (United Nations 2020). Demonstrative of political and civil upheaval during the 21st century, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2020) cites that there were 79.5 million refugees in 2019, the highest number on record. Further illustrating patterns in migration, Donato and Massey (2016) chronicle the outflow of migrants from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan to Europe during summer 2015 as being affected by the two interrelated factors of civil violence and environmental change. They explain that civil violence stems from “crime, political terrorism, narco-terrorism, guerilla insurgencies, revolutions, and state-sponsored repression” (Donato and Massey 2016:17). The threat of civil violence has played out in the world’s poorer nations, leading to a subsequent surge in migration (Donato and Massey 2016).

Although anti-immigrant rhetoric and the racism behind that has existed throughout American history, it has intensified since 9/11 through news stories on immigrants and more recently during the presidency of Donald Trump, specifically because of the language he uses to describe immigrants. Race is a social construct because who is categorized as other has changed

throughout history, often based on political motives (Menjívar 2016). Exemplifying the connection between anti-immigrant sentiment and racism, Woods and Arthur (2014) express that negative framing of immigrants in news stories is based on national origin, news source, and September 11. They found that “[i]mmigrants from non-European countries [are] also significantly more likely to be associated with negative frames than European or Canadian immigrants” (422). Immigrants of color receive more backlash in the news than white immigrants. Politicians also affect conversations on immigration, as there has been a shift in focus on securing the Mexico-U.S. border post 9/11 and also a conflation of undocumented immigration with terrorism (Menjívar 2016; Hoewe 2018; Rumbaut and Ewing 2019). Although xenophobic language in the United States is not a modern phenomenon, Hoewe (2018) articulates that “negative connotations surrounding ... immigrants or refugees ... were enflamed shortly after the inauguration of U.S. President Donald Trump” (479). The high profile-nature of the role of president cast a spotlight on what Trump has said about immigrants, both in the past and present. Since Trump launched his presidential campaign in 2015, he has especially targeted immigrants from Mexico (Parrott et al 2019). For example, in his campaign announcement, Trump (2015, cited by Scott 2019) stated, ““When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best ... They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.”” This enormous miscategorization and blatant racism in the country’s leader negatively fueled people who previously held either overt or covert racist views.

In addition to associating immigrants with violent crime, Trump has also displayed hostility toward immigrants through signing Executive Order 13769 and calling for the construction of a multi-billion-dollar wall between the U.S. and Mexico. Embedded in the expansion of the Mexico-U.S. barrier are what is often referred to as the Prevention Through

Deterrence policies. However, this has very real consequences and has led to hundreds of deaths each year because as immigrants from Mexico attempt to cross through the Sonoran Desert, they face dangerous terrain and extremely high heat (Clusiau and Schwarz 2020). Therefore, Prevention Through Deterrence does not stop immigrants from coming to the U.S., but rather, compromises their health and safety. Trump has also tried to prohibit certain immigrant groups from coming to the U.S. through Executive Order 13769, which he signed in the first week of his presidency (Hoewe 2018; Parrott et al 2019). Executive Order 13769 “restrict[ed] travel to the United States from seven Muslim-majority countries,” including Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen (Hoewe 2018:479). This Executive Order which is titled, Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States, has not only reinforced the negative stereotype of immigrants and refugees as terrorists, but also harmed Syrian refugees in particular. Clarifying the effects of Executive Order 13769 on refugees, Chishti, Pierce, and Plata (2018) explain that it “paused all refugee resettlement for 120 days and indefinitely halted admission of Syrian refugees.” Both the wall and this Executive Order have had severe implications for immigrants and groups of people seeking to better their lives through migration.

Despite the ways in which immigrants have been targeted by politicians throughout American history, they have lifted up middle-class families and the economy through their labor and taxes. The coronavirus pandemic has made it especially clear that essential workers, like those in the food/agriculture and transportation/delivery industries, are not given proper protections, despite carrying out vital jobs which the American people need to help keep the economy and society running smoothly (McNicholas and Poydock 2020). Americans typically reserve essential labor for minority and immigrant groups (Otto 2016), like the example of immigrants who travel across the country as natural disasters occur in search of construction

work (Clusiau and Schwarz 2020). Americans who do not want to carry out essential labor themselves depend on the labor of immigrants, while simultaneously fearing that immigrants are going to “take” their jobs (Hoban 2017). Immigrant labor, like gardening, house cleaning, and childcare, has benefited middle-class families through providing the middle-class “a higher standard of living than they otherwise could afford” (Otto 2016:193). Further exemplifying how immigrants bolster the economy, Mueller (2019) discloses, “Immigrants paid \$405.4 billion in taxes in 2017, including an estimated \$27.2 billion in taxes paid by undocumented immigrants.” Although immigrant taxes fund schools, Social Security, and Medicaid, immigrants are denied access to programs such as Social Security and Medicaid (Mueller 2019). Only permanent residents and U.S. citizens are allowed to receive benefits from such programs. Americans continue to gain from immigrant labor, while also exhibiting xenophobia and racism through their viewpoints on immigrants.

Media’s Power in Shaping Viewpoints on Immigration

Further highlighting the role of the media in shaping viewpoints on immigration, the misuse of terms like immigrant and refugee increase what is already a general lack of knowledge about immigrants (Hoewe 2018; Parrott et al 2019). Many white Americans do not interact with immigrants in their everyday lives, meaning that the media is the only source providing information to them about the plight of immigrants (Parrott et al 2019). Therefore, when there is a conflation of the terms, immigrant and refugee, it is less likely that Americans will “understand the situations experienced by individuals fleeing conflict” (Hoewe 2018:488). This includes misinterpretations about the wide variety of people who migrate and their cultures, as well as the

immigration and citizenship process. One component of racism is fear of the unknown, therefore more direct contact with immigrant groups would likely bolster the American public's awareness of immigrants and better inform them on their experiences. However, given the stratified system of the U.S., it is likely that there will continue to be few interactions between immigrants and white Americans. Especially in this case, mass media holds a significant amount of power when it comes to forming "people's emotions and attitudes" about immigrants (Parrott et al 2019:678). Although white Hollywood often pushes films that propagate stereotypes about minority groups, people involved in the television and film industry, from writers to directors to actors, are able to exhibit their influence through working on projects which promote a multitude of experiences (Vargas 2020).

While negative media portrayals of immigrants contribute to a lack of understanding about immigrants and lead to harsher enforcement practices, human interest stories produce positive responses and more of a likelihood to exhibit support and action for immigrants. When people see negative media portrayals, like those which show problems that immigrants supposedly bring, then as part of their emotional response, people feel threatened and see stricter policy as being the necessary solution (Menjívar 2016; Parrott et al 2019; Farris and Silber Mohamed 2018). Illustrating the persuasive nature of media, many of the messages about immigration are "politically-framed" (Parrott et al 2019:690). However, on the flip side of this, a human interest frame leads to more attention on immigration reform (Parrott et al 2019; Figenschou and Thorbjørnsrud 2015). As people feel less threatened, they develop positive attitudes toward immigrants and policies that assist immigrants in the citizenship and resettlement process (Parrott et al 2019). This is largely because "the human interest frame focuses on goals and characteristics ... that are universal to the human race" (Parrott et al

2019:692). Instead of dehumanizing immigrants, themes such as love and family emphasize the commonalities between immigrants and the white U.S. citizens who so often vilify them. Adding on to the importance of positive and nuanced representations of immigrants in media, Define American (2020) found that the inclusion of immigrant characters on TV leads to steps like grassroots action on behalf of immigrants and also social media support for immigrants. The media recognizing the vast array of immigrant stories is crucial when it comes to transmitting information to the American public.

The Media's Portrayal of Immigrants

There is an association between undocumented immigration and crime in the United States (Rumbaut and Ewing 2019; Menjívar 2016) and an overrepresentation of undocumented immigrants on TV (Define American 2020). When Americans refer to immigrants doing things “the right way,” this means coming to the U.S. legally (Rumbaut and Ewing 2019). However, this wording brings to mind one’s ethics and paints undocumented immigrants as immoral, despite the fact that the system itself is flawed. Rumbaut and Ewing (2019) point to the complexities of the immigration system, including the length of time and amount of money it takes to become a naturalized citizen. Although this is a key part of the immigrant experience, it is not the same for everyone, and it should not be the only part of their stories told. According to Define American, (2020) 63% of immigrants on TV are undocumented, while in reality, 37% of immigrants are undocumented (Define American). Inaccurate representations or overrepresentation of one narrative can lead to one-sided thinking about immigrants.

The media and politicians both play a role in reinforcing the message that immigration is tied to criminality, which to some extent, informs immigrants' views about themselves. Menjívar (2016) explains, "[A]t the level of formal institutions as well as at the level of public discourse and everyday practices, immigrants receive messages that they are devalued and unworthy" (598-599). Even though immigrants perform essential labor and defy the stereotype related to immigrant crime, American media continues to inaccurately criminalize immigrants. Define American (2020) and Rumbaut and Ewing (2019) emphasize that crime rates have declined as immigration has increased. Also, immigrants have lower incarceration rates than native-born Americans (Define American 2020; Rumbaut and Ewing 2019). The unfair linkage between immigration and crime has negative implications when it comes to the dominant group's understanding of immigrants, as well as the impact it has on immigrants' mentality about themselves.

The media depicts immigrants as criminals, while also criminalizing spaces occupied by immigrants and especially Latino immigrants, as in the case of the Mexico-U.S. border. Figenschou and Thorbjørnsrud (2015) convey that immigrants in media are "presented as anonymous objects linked to crime, threat, and danger" (784). Such portrayals of immigrants lead viewers to see immigrants as a potential source of danger to their neighborhoods and the nation (Menjívar 2016). It also dehumanizes immigrants and contributes to the notion of the immigrant other. Further reducing immigrants and specifically Latino immigrants, the border is viewed as a space where illegal activity occurs (Menjívar 2016). In the media, the border is often shown alongside "helicopters, drones, and high-speed chases" (Menjívar 2016:604). Therefore, not only are immigrants criminalized, but so too is the contested space of the Mexico-U.S. border.

While stereotypical representations of immigrants in film and television are common, so too is the underrepresentation of transgender immigrants, women immigrants, immigrants with disabilities, and black immigrants. As part of their television research on immigration representation, Define American (2020) found that “[s]pecific at-risk immigrant communities were largely invisible.” Overall, immigrants who face compounding marginalization and discrimination are not given screen time or the space to show the full extent of their stories. For example, when it comes to transgender characters, it is common for media to only depict the transition process, instead of the entirety of these characters’ lives. Although women and girl immigrants outnumber male immigrants (American Immigration Council 2020), men are given priority in media. The underrepresentation of these groups, including immigrants with disabilities and black immigrants, is reflective of wider media trends wherein slim, white, able-bodied persons are given more air time.

Introduction to Analysis of *Lingua Franca* and *Yellow Rose*

In order to further the analysis on the depiction of immigrants in media, I watched and coded the films, *Lingua Franca* and *Yellow Rose*. The production year was a factor in deciding which films to utilize, as I wanted to prioritize recent media content, preferably during the year 2020. Also, both are available to a wide variety of audiences because *Lingua Franca* is on Netflix and *Yellow Rose* is showing in select theaters and will soon be accessible on the streaming service, Vudu. In an attempt to avoid the whitewashing and erasure that occurs in media, I wanted to highlight the voices of immigrant women of color. Although the characters in *Lingua Franca* and *Yellow Rose* are fictional, the films are informed by the directors’ identities.

During the coding process, I evaluated the dialogue, character portrayals, background, setting, and tone in each film. Several overarching themes emerged, including feeling out of place in predominantly white spaces in *Yellow Rose*, the dehumanization of immigrants in detention, and how the trans identity affects one woman's ability to alter documentation items such as her passport and affects her interactions with others. Both films illustrate the constant fear of ICE that causes immigrants immense anxiety.

Trans Identity, Immigrant Experience, and Political Overtones in *Lingua Franca*

Although the research literature shows that transgender immigrant characters are not as prevalent in American media (Define American 2020), *Lingua Franca* is representative of the struggles that a trans immigrant woman faces, like Olivia attempting to alter her passport to reflect her gender identity. The main character, Olivia, was born in Cebu City, Philippines, but now lives in New York. Her passport is indicative of her assigned sex, not her gender identity as a woman or her chosen name. The worker at the U.S. passport agency informs her that she will have to change her name through her country of citizenship, but she is unable to do so because of a law in the Philippines prohibiting transgender people from changing their genders on government-issued identification. Therefore, Olivia is stuck between two worlds; she is classified as a man in the Philippines, but identifies as a woman living in the U.S. When Olivia talks to her friend, Katrina, who is also a trans Filipina immigrant, about this strain, Katrina says that her contact has stopped altering passports because of increased immigration enforcement during the Trump presidency. Olivia responds, ““But this isn’t me anymore. Neither my name nor my gender. To think I wouldn’t have had to alter these if they didn’t go out of their way to

pass that damn bill back home” (Sandoval 2020). Olivia’s predicament is one which many other trans immigrant women face, which is the struggle to accurately define oneself in a society which falsely assumes everyone is cisgender.

Further reflecting Olivia’s status as an immigrant and the obstacles she must overcome in order to stay in the U.S., Sandoval (2020) emphasizes marriage as a path for Olivia to get a green card, first through Matthew and then through Alex. Initially, Olivia has an agreement with Matthew that he will marry her in exchange for money. However, this comes at a great cost to Olivia, as she owes him thousands of dollars. In addition to the money that she is sending back home to her mom in Cebu, she is also saving up for this. However, during this process, Olivia is left feeling anxious, as she tells her friend, ““If only I could get this green card now and stop worrying”” (Sandoval 2020). Her friend, Katrina, reports back that she should marry for love, putting enormous pressure on Olivia. Ultimately, Matthew informs Olivia that he has met a woman who he really likes that he is going to marry. This woman is in a similar situation to Olivia, as her tourist visa is expiring soon. Matthew promises to return all of Olivia’s money, but despite his good intentions, she is right back where she started. As Olivia develops a close relationship with Alex, who is the grandson of the elderly Russian woman Olivia cares for, she reveals her circumstances to him. Despite his immaturity and struggle with alcoholism, he has a desire to offer support to Olivia. This comes to a head when they are on a getaway and he declares, ““I’ll marry you ... Let’s get married”” (Sandoval 2020). The ending of the film is ambiguous, as Olivia does not provide a clear answer. However, even though this is seemingly a solution to Olivia’s wish to stay in the U.S., she is noticeably worried. Perhaps she wonders about Alex’s true intentions or if they will actually go through with the marriage, but she does not seem to be completely satisfied.

In a display of hegemonic masculinity and also transphobia, Alex's friends make several negative comments about trans women in general, as well as Olivia. For example, when Alex and his friends are playing video games, one friend is talking about strippers and says that the stripper would not let him see her vagina. In response, another friend asks, "'Damn, was she a fucking tranny?'" (Sandoval 2020). This derogatory language is an attempt to maintain the white men's status as dominant, while also othering trans women. White men who believe they have been "tricked" into having sexual relations with trans women often display extreme violence and anger. Also, Alex's friend goes through Olivia's room and finds her passport, which has a picture of her before she transitioned and her birth name. In an outrage, the friend shows Alex the passport and shouts, "'It's a fucking tranny ... That faggot's been sleeping here'" (Sandoval 2020). Although Olivia has not told Alex that she is trans, they have been sexually intimate before. Perhaps Olivia has used hormone enhancers or undergone gender reassignment surgery, it is not clear. Alex does not say much, but afterward, he engages in harmful behaviors and instances of outrage. For example, after he shows up to work drunk and gets fired, there is a scene of him aggressively boxing. As part of hegemonic masculinity, Alex is asserting himself as dominant, strong, and powerful (Schippers 2007). Although there are moments when Alex tries to express to Olivia that he sees every part of her and accepts her, he does not defend her to his friends and has a reckoning with himself about her identity.

The political overtones in *Lingua Franca*, including news reports and snippets of Trump talking, exemplify the way in which Olivia's livelihood, as a trans Filipina woman, is at-risk throughout the film. In one report, a news broadcaster announces, "'Donald Trump promised mass deportations, but did not explain how he would do it'" and in another, Trump can be heard saying, "'People will know that you can't just smuggle in, hunker down and wait to be legalized

... It's our right, as a sovereign nation, to choose immigrants that we think are the likeliest to thrive and flourish'" (Sandoval 2020). In this same recording, Trump also mentions subjecting immigrants to ideological tests. Trump's language is dehumanizing in that it asserts that only the most "deserving" and well-educated immigrants should gain entry to the U.S. However, all immigrants are people and should not have to prove themselves. Olivia is extremely aware of the news and political ideology because of her immigrant status. In addition to rhetoric like Trump's harming Olivia, she is fearful for her safety.

The impact of news media and the political climate continue to play out through Olivia's and Alex's interactions, as they have several conversations about Olivia's fear of deportation. For example, when they go to what Alex refers to as a "Filipino area," there is an ICE raid and Olivia declares, "It could have been me. It was Glenda two months ago" (Sandoval 2020). Olivia exists in a constant state of fear that ICE could arrest her at any moment. In another instance, Olivia is watching a news report of an arrest that happened in front of an immigrant woman's children. The woman was violently pushed into an SUV and her daughters were left without their mother, even though all three of the daughters are U.S. citizens. Alex sees this and tells Olivia that this is no way to live. However, Olivia does not have a choice in the matter. She voices, "I feel [ICE] following me, watching my every move. It doesn't matter where I go. They will hunt me down and take me away. And I have to wake up to that every day. And I'm exhausted" (Sandoval 2020). Olivia then begins crying, and it is clear that she never feels secure. She is living in a state of hyper-vigilance.

Although *Lingua Franca* follows the journey of an immigrant Filipina woman, it is also set in a white background, as Olga, the woman Olivia looks after, is a Russian immigrant, and Olivia is in an intimate relationship with Alex. Although Alex himself is from a family of

immigrants, he does not understand the complexity of the immigration and citizenship process, asks Olivia, ““Why don’t you just become legal? I mean... How do you become legal?””

(Sandoval 2020). Olivia tries to explain to Alex the uncertainty in the process, by replying that she might have a year, four months, or a week left. The experiences for immigrants who are perceived as white, like those from Russia, are vastly different than the experiences of people of color. ICE and the immigration system target immigrants of color, and they also face bigotry at the hands of other citizens. This exemplifies the hierarchy system in the U.S., in which whites receive more access to rewards and privileges. It also brings into question the distinction between ethnicity and race. Although Russians can be described as an ethnic group, they do not experience discrimination because of their race. While whites do not necessarily view themselves in terms of their race, for people of color, this is a very salient aspect of their identities. Therefore, although Alex’s family originates from Russia, they do not go through the same institutionalized hardships that Olivia does, like the immense fear of ICE.

White Savior Narrative, Dehumanizing Immigrants, and the Theme of Social Alienation in *Yellow Rose*

Yellow Rose highlights the dehumanizing and inhumane treatment of immigrants throughout the process of being taken to and held at detention centers. Specifically in the film, ICE arrests Rose’s mom in the middle of the night, immigration officers call Rose’s mom and other immigrants by the numbers they have been assigned to, and provide them with orange jumpsuits to wear and Mylar blankets to sleep on. When ICE comes to arrest Rose’s mom, Priscilla, she is still wearing her nightclothes. She asks to change, and they give her two minutes.

Rose comes home late because she was out at a bar, but when she realizes what is happening, she yells out and her mom responds in Tagalog before being forced into a van. While in immigration detention, the immigration officers do not call Priscilla and other immigrants by their names, but rather, they are reduced to numbers. Priscilla also wears an orange jumpsuit in detention, likening her to a criminal. However, Priscilla has not committed any illegal acts, other than staying in the U.S., in order to provide a better life for her daughter. Priscilla and the immigrants in detention all sleep on silver Mylar blankets. Instead of being given proper sleeping and living arrangements, they are forced to sleep on the floor. Worsening Priscilla's time in immigration detention, she is unable to talk to her daughter for days. Neither Rose nor Priscilla know if the other is safe. When Priscilla is finally able to call her daughter, the immigration officer cuts off their conversation abruptly, telling her that her phone time is over. Then, when Rose visits her mom in person and hugs her, the officer yells out, "No contact" and they are separated (Paragas 2020). This illustrates the effects that detention has not only on those being detained, but on their family members as well. Due to the policies that ICE and immigration officers enforce as part of immigration detention, they treat immigrants as less than human.

In *Yellow Rose*, the recurring theme of not belonging, largely because of Rose's status as a Filipina woman and undocumented immigrant, can be seen through her feeling insecure about her appearance and also facing judgement from white members of the country music scene. Highlighting how whiteness is the dominant standard when it comes to beauty and looks, when Rose is looking in the mirror, she tries to change the shape of her eyes with her fingers. Paragas (2020) delivers a pointed message in the fact that this is something Rose even considers. Due to pressure from outside sources to conform to white beauty standards, Rose does not feel confident in how she presents as a Filipina woman. Another example of Rose feeling out of place is when

she is at a country bar and exhibits knowledge about country music artists. The person she is talking to disparagingly remarks, “‘Impressive from someone like you,’” to which Rose replies, “‘[There’s] all kinds of fans’” (Paragas 2020). In addition to Rose feeling negatively about herself at times, she also receives comments like this from people she interacts with in the country music sphere, which is typically a white space. Therefore, she has to negotiate with herself how she is going to react to such instances of racism and discrimination.

Music is a way for Rose to sing about her struggles, particularly losing her mom and trying to provide for herself as a young teenager. After Rose’s mom is taken to immigration detention and deported, Rose must suddenly find a job and pay for her own housing, food, etc. Rose finds her way by working as a housekeeper at a hotel and staying there as part of her job benefits. In the chaos of Rose’s life being turned upside down and her not having any family who will take her in, she no longer attends high school. However, once she finds a steady job, she studies so that she can get her GED. Rose uses country music as a way to reflect on and come to terms with the hardships she has experienced. At the end of the film, during her music debut, Rose sings, “‘We never said the words ‘goodbye’ ... still, no matter how far we’re apart, you’ll always be in my heart ... they can take the roof from over my head, but can’t take my freedom away’” (Paragas 2020). Although Rose misses her mom and acknowledges that it is difficult without her, she does not give up. Paragas (2020) leaves viewers feeling optimistic, as Rose pursues her dream of being a country music singer, despite the institutional barriers in her way. In this delivery, there is a sense of hope and a feeling that human traits such as love will prevail. However, some may argue that this is sugarcoating heavy issues, specifically that of the capitalist and racist immigration system, which prioritizes profits over brown and black bodies.

Similar to *Lingua Franca*, *Yellow Rose* is about a Filipina woman, but is set in the background of country music, which is a western and white-dominated world. Rose has a strong love for Texas, which is evident through her passion for country music and the prominence of the guitar as an object and symbol throughout the film. When ICE takes away Priscilla, Rose's guitar is one of the few items that she takes with her before leaving her home. Her guitar is so important to her that she does not feel as if she can leave without it; it provides her with joy and she wants it to be a source of income for her in the future. However, a low point for Rose comes after Dale, who is an older country music artist, lets her know that their living situation is not permanent. In an act of desperation, Rose sells her guitar in order to have money for food and other necessities. Later, when Rose and Dale make amends, he has a guitar waiting for her. Overall, although Rose is trying to break through an industry which often does not leave room for people of color, she receives both help and discouragement from whites.

Although many of the obstacles that Rose faces are systemic in nature and due to the privilege that whites have as the dominant group, the film also depicts several instances of white characters helping Rose, which many argue is Paragas (2020) using the white savior narrative as a plot device. When Rose turns to her aunt, Gail, who she has not seen since she was little, she overhears her aunt's white husband saying that he does not want Rose to stay there because it could threaten the aunt's status and lead to her getting arrested. As a result of this, Rose goes to a bar, where she interacts with Jolene, the white bar owner. Jolene offers Rose a job at the bar and also a room in the back. However, there are other undocumented immigrants who work at the bar, and ICE raids the bar in the middle of the night. Further emphasizing the white savior trope, a white ICE officer lets Rose go after she looks at him and whispers, "Please" (Paragas 2020). Given ICE's harsh implementation techniques, this is an unrealistic outcome, which leads people

to be thankful to the officer, even though he is working for an inherently racist system. After the ICE raid, Jolene announces, “[It’s] gonna take me a while to recover from this financially, but most of all I hate what happened to Jose” (Paragas 2020). Jolene was benefitting from undocumented labor and was worried about her own finances, while referring to Jose, who worked at the bar, as an afterthought. Jolene then lets Rose know that it is probably best she does not stay at the bar anymore and suggests that she go visit Dale. At first, Rose’s living arrangement with Dale seems to be ideal, but then it starts to get tense, as Dale reveals that he thought it was only temporary. Rose exclaims, “Does it make you feel better about yourself helping out an illegal?” (Paragas 2020). Rose feels the effects of race playing out with her interactions with others, specifically whites. Paragas (2020) has defended *Yellow Rose* in light of criticism it has received for the white savior trope, explaining that these are outcomes which do happen sometimes. However, although there is some truth to that, it also positions whites as heroes, when they are the ones benefiting from racial stratification, at the expense of people of color.

Conclusion

The two films, *Lingua Franca* and *Yellow Rose*, highlight the lives of Filipina women, show similarities and differences in the immigrant experience, and also factor in the political climate and the impact of ICE. As a trans woman, Olivia is the subject of negative labeling, specifically from heterosexual white men, and she has difficulty changing her passport because of discriminatory laws. *Lingua Franca* and *Yellow Rose* detail the constant fear of being taken into immigration detention and/or deported. Immigration officers treat immigrants cruelly

through their sudden arrests and abusive treatment in detention. As both films were done on a smaller scale than big box office movies, the Filipina directors were able to implement their own unique visions, without facing pressure from individual investors, specifically whites, to depict the films in more stereotypical ways. Also, as the films are set in white backdrops, it sheds light on white dominant culture and how people of color are seen as secondary within that. Given the amount of influence media has, it may either lead people to be more knowledgeable about immigrants or reinforce negative viewpoints on immigration. People who see human interest stories about immigrants are more likely to take action on behalf of immigrants and oppose harsh enforcement policies. Having immigrant directors, actors, writers, and producers at the forefront of projects such as *Lingua Franca* and *Yellow Rose* is the necessary direction for media about immigrants. Instead of limited inclusion, this will ensure the role of intersectionality in the telling of immigrant stories.

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