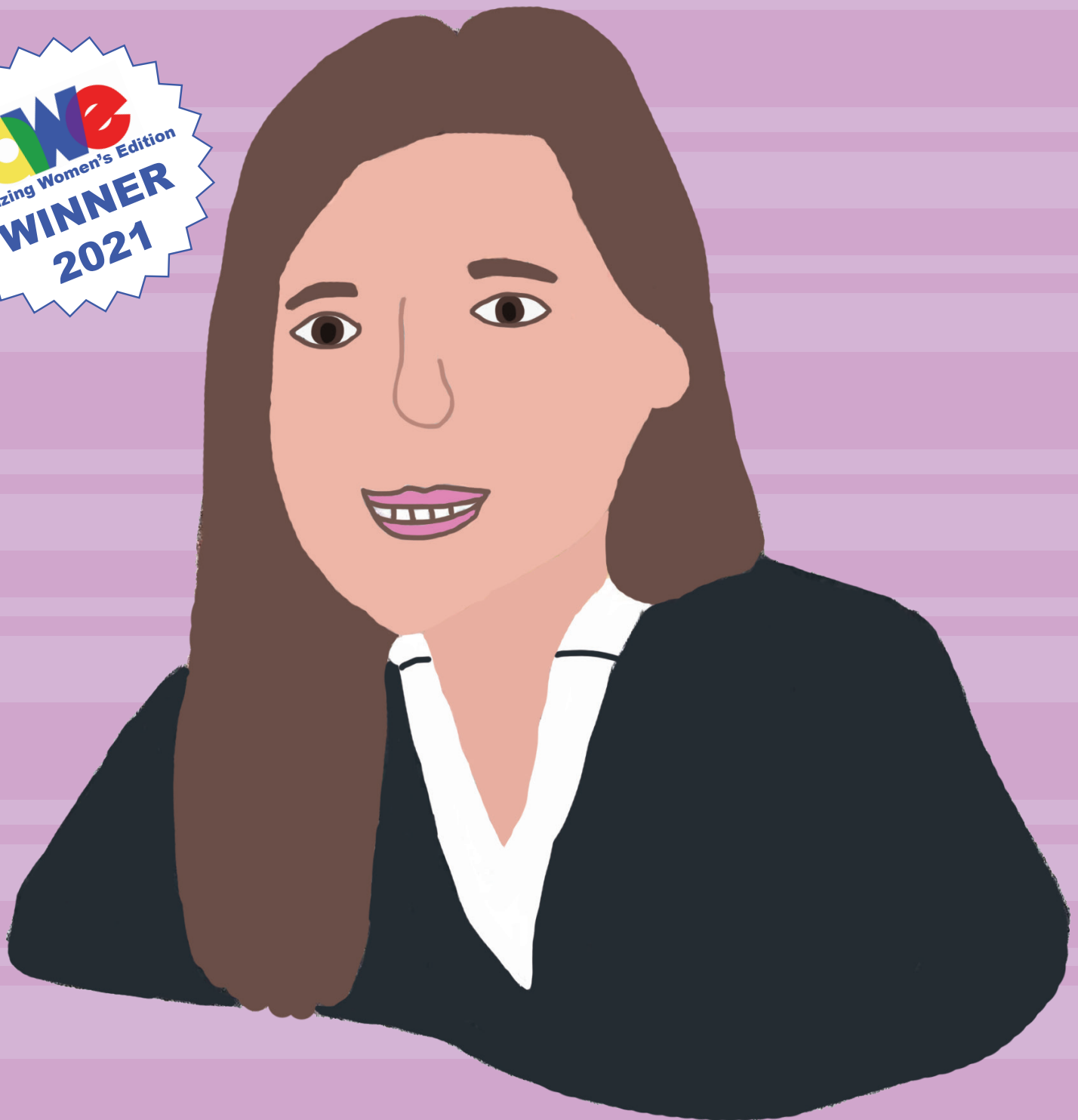


**National Youth Foundation** *Presents:*

# MANA YEGANI: AN UNSUNG HERO



Written by Katarina Mumme, Natalia Mumme, Mia Bodnar and Ella Bodnar

2021

## Amazing Women's Edition Sponsors





## OUR MISSION

The National Youth Foundation is dedicated to enriching the lives of children through creative educational programming. Our mission is to promote diversity, inclusion, and gender equality, while helping young students develop their literary skills through academic and team-building projects.

Sophia Hanson, *Executive Director*

NationalYouthFoundation.org



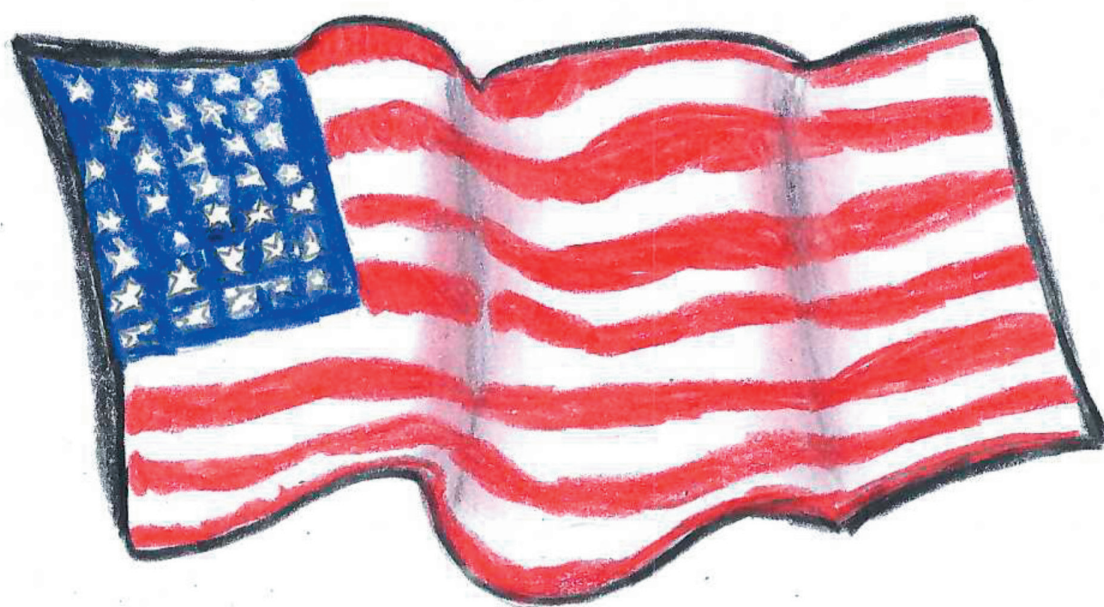
## DEDICATION

We dedicate this book first and foremost to Mana Yegani and her daughter, Ella. Mana, you inspire us to speak up for the voiceless and never give up hope.

We also dedicate this book to all the children separated from their parents at the U.S. border, and we pray that you find your way safely into your parent's arms.

We want to thank our girl scout troop leader who helped us achieve our dream to write and illustrate our own book.

Lastly, we dedicate this book to Mia and her art teacher.  
Your talent makes this book shine!



## INTRODUCTION

Have you ever felt the need to speak out for something that you believed in? If so, you would be following the footsteps of an extraordinary woman named Mana Yegani.

Mana is an accomplished immigration lawyer in Houston, Texas who helps immigrants get the legal protection they deserve. By giving a voice to the voiceless and speaking out, Mana Yegani has been named an unsung hero.



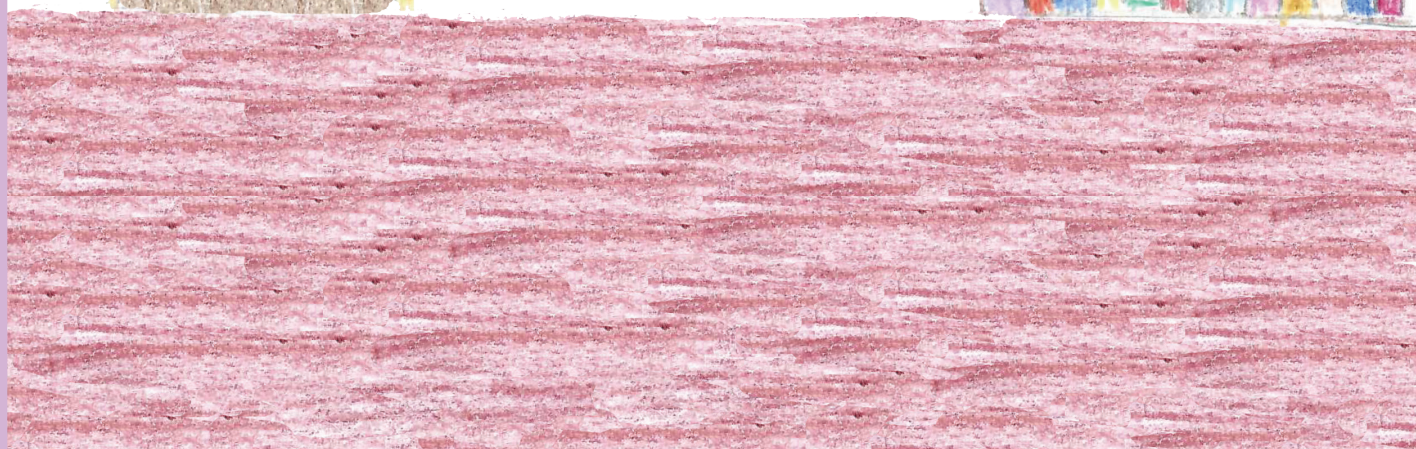
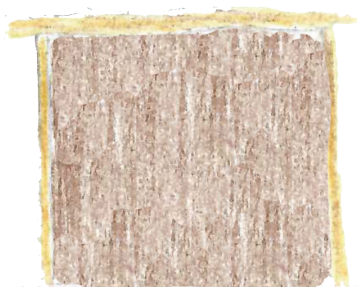
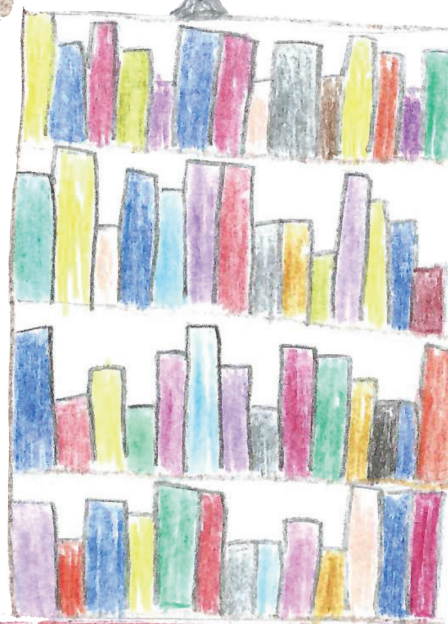
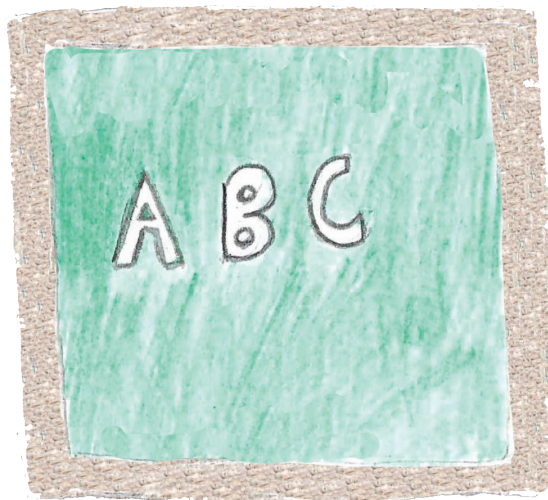
## Young Mana

Mana Yegani was born on July 18 in the city of Tehran, Iran on an apple and peach orchard. Mana's mother had a dream to take over the family's fruit orchard that has been passed on from generation to generation. However, that was not the path for young Mana. When Mana was three years old, she moved to North Carolina because her mother received a student visa and decided to study agronomy in the United States.



When Mana started kindergarten, she did not know any English. In fact, she could not even ask for permission to use the restroom. Mana was often sad and felt alone because it was difficult for her to make friends. Finally, by second grade she spoke English more fluently. Even though she did not always understand everything her teacher said, she still loved to learn. In high school, Mana decided she wanted to become a doctor because she loved the way they were able to cure sick or injured people. Mana knew she wanted to dedicate her life to helping others.







## Finding Her Path

Mana went to North Carolina State University and studied Biological Sciences to prepare to become a doctor. However, when it was time to apply to medical school, she had a change of heart. She had several friends struggling through medical school and residency, and saw how long and hard it was to become a doctor. She decided it was not the right job for her. One of her best friends encouraged Mana to apply to law school, and she was accepted to Louisiana State University Law Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana with a full scholarship. A new path was made for Mana.



After law school, Mana became interested in immigration law because she liked to meet people from different parts of the world. She liked to learn about different cultures, and she enjoyed helping people make their American dream come true. Mana knew from her own personal experiences that living in America is a privilege, and her parents gave her the opportunity to achieve her own American dream. Therefore, Mana developed a passion for immigration law.

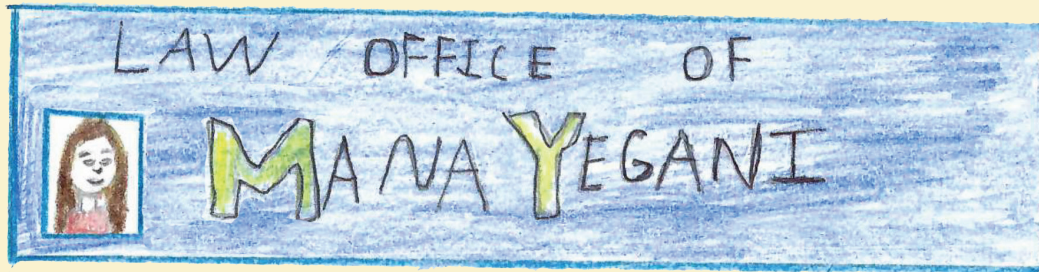






## A New Beginning

Mana started her career as a lawyer for an oil and gas company. However, her time spent doing charity during law school had already inspired Mana to fight for the underserved. In 2012, she opened her own business: The Law Offices of Mana Yegani, Houston Immigration Attorney. With the help of her mentor and future husband, Jed Silverman, a criminal defense lawyer, Mana set out to make it on her own. Running a business was hard work, but Mana was determined to achieve her dream.



Over the years Mana has helped so many immigrant families. Mana tells them to never give up hope. Can you imagine fighting for your dream for thirty years? One woman was in court proceedings over three decades starting at the age of nine. With Mana's help, at age thirty-seven she was finally granted permanent residence.

A transgender woman who was threatened to death in Pakistan fled to the United States for safety. Mana helped win her case to stay. She not only fights for justice, she also saves people's lives!







In January 2017, President Trump banned visitors from seven countries. Next thing you know, hundreds of people were stuck at airports across the country. Mana was one of the first responders and spent four days at the Houston airport giving legal help to as many people as she could. For her selfless efforts she received the Unsung Hero Award. This award is given to local people who go above and beyond to help their communities. Mana was definitely one of them!



Mana continued to act as both a local and a national hero for immigrants. During the Trump administration, thousands of parents were separated from their children at immigration detention centers, including a three-year-old boy named Sammy Reyes. He was asleep on the floor when his father was taken away to fill out paperwork. When his father came back, Sammy was gone and he would not see his family again for over 3 months. Sammy had been taken across the country and placed in foster care. When Sammy was finally reunited with his parents at the airport, he did not recognize his own mother. She was heart-broken. In the years that followed, Mana continued to fight for this family and finally earned them the right to stay in the United States. The story became famous when it aired on the show 60 Minutes. Mana is truly a hero!

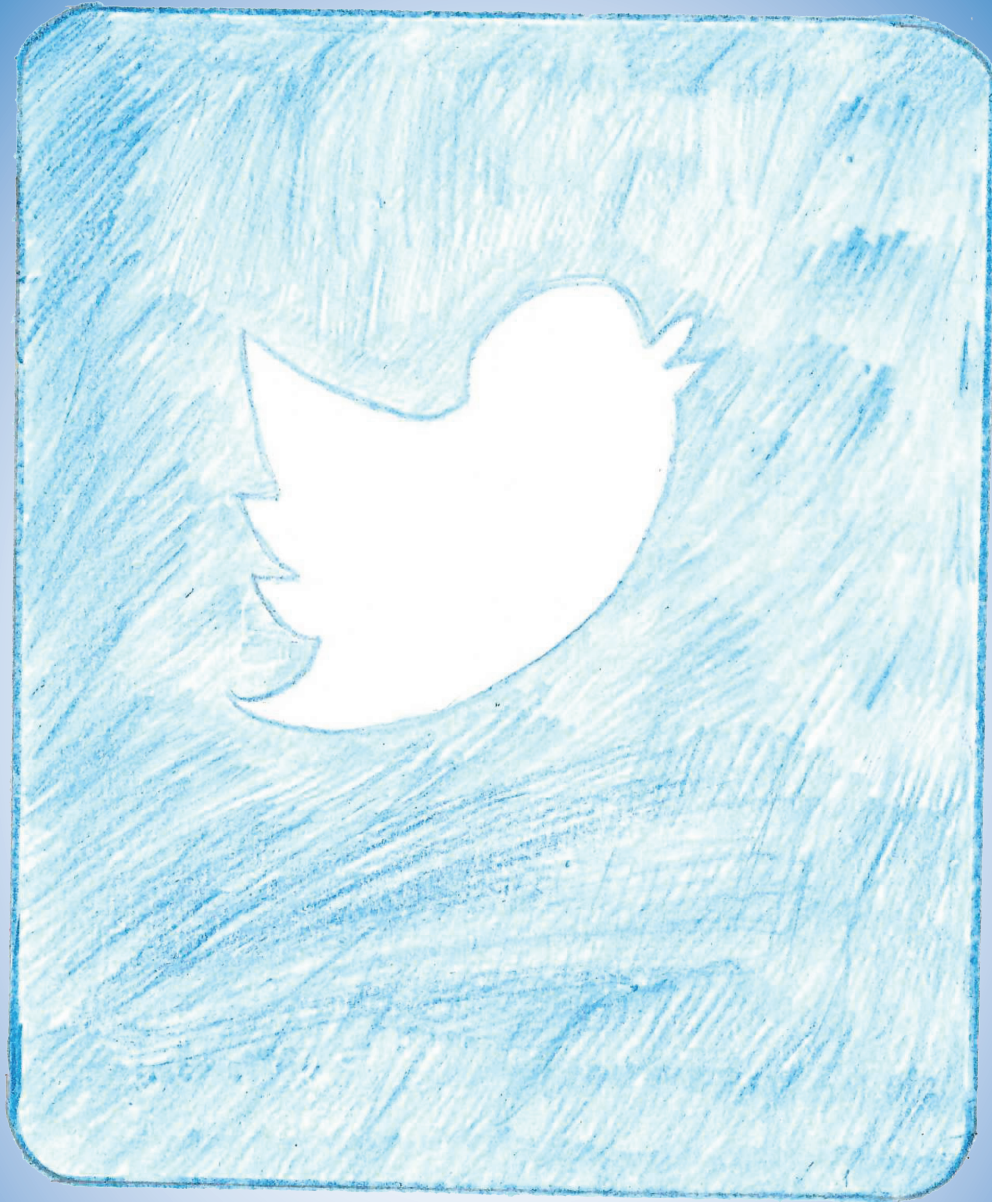




## Enemies

Mana's job is not easy. She has made many enemies along the way. People write angry comments on Twitter and tell her to "go back home." Sometimes people even threatened her life. But this does not stop Mana. In fact, it makes her want to speak out more.





“go back home !!!”

## Speak the Truth

Mana continues to work as Houston's unsung hero. She has many hopes for the future including her wish that the government will pass immigration-friendly laws. She also hopes through her actions she will inspire less hatred in a nation of immigrants. Mana says: "If you speak the truth, your voice will go far."

Mana's voice has echoed around the world, and we hope you all are listening.







## MEET THE JUDGES



ERIN FALLIGANT

Author, *A Smart Girl's Guide to Getting it Together* & *The Legend of the Shark Goddess*



DANIEL JAMES BROWN

is the #1 *New York Times* Bestselling Author of *The Boys in the Boat*.



RUDINE SIMS BISHOP

Professor Emerita, Ohio State University

Author

Winner: 2017 Coretta Scott King/Virginia Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award (American Library Association)

