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# Spare Parts: Four Undocumented Teenagers, One Ugly Robot, And The Battle For The American Dream



## **Synopsis**

Four undocumented Mexican-American students, two great teachers, one robot-building contest... and a major motion picture. In 2004, four Latino teenagers arrived at the Marine Advanced Technology Education Robotics Competition at the University of California, Santa Barbara. They were born in Mexico but raised in Phoenix, Arizona, where they attended an underfunded public high school. No one had ever suggested to Oscar, Cristian, Luis, or Lorenzo that they might amount to much - but two inspiring science teachers had convinced these impoverished, undocumented kids from the desert who had never even seen the ocean that they should try to build an underwater robot. And build a robot they did. Their robot wasn't pretty, especially compared to those of the competition. They were going up against some of the best collegiate engineers in the country, including a team from MIT backed by a \$10,000 grant from ExxonMobil. The Phoenix teenagers had scraped together less than \$1,000 and built their robot out of scavenged parts. This was never a level competition - and yet, against all odds... they won! But this is just the beginning for these four, whose story - which became a key inspiration to the DREAMers movement - will go on to include first-generation college graduations, deportation, bean-picking in Mexico, and service in Afghanistan. Joshua Davis' Spare Parts is a story about overcoming insurmountable odds and four young men who proved they were among the most patriotic and talented Americans in this country - even as the country tried to kick them out.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I heard about this story from Science Friday on my public radio station. A movie has just been released based on this book, and Ira Flatow interviewed several of the boys who were involved. I quickly ordered the book, read it, and ordered another copy. I gave one to a Hispanic high schooler who needs to get fired up, and the other to a nonprofit that works with kids who have dropped out of school. What the book teaches us is this: The way to re-engage marginal students is not to offer them remedial classes, but to stimulate them with a challenge that doesn't rely upon classroom skills. As soon as they decide that a mental challenge is interesting and important, they will discover all sorts of intellectual skills as they try to solve the puzzle. This is a must read.

The DVD movie of the same name is an entertaining feel good story. However, this book reveals all the details and the true reality of these young men's lives. After reading this, it's plain to me that we need a more realistic plan for handling immigrants who came to this country illegally. The largely conservative voices on this matter would paint all illegal immigrants with a broad brush as criminals and undesirable. When some of those same illegal immigrants prove to be talented engineers who could contribute much to the U.S., yet they still have no path to becoming productive U.S. citizens, something is seriously wrong with our laws. Joshua Davis has written both a great story and an eye-opening view into our immigration laws. For those who think that illegal immigration is a black and white matter, I think this book will show you the shades of gray. I highly recommend this inspiring, thoughtfully told story of going against the odds. I hope it inspires people to be kinder to each other and reach out a hand to help a fellow human being.

I think people should order this book. To me, it's honestly the best book to motivate people to never give up. These four boys had serious blockades in their pathways but they had found ways around it. People in America go through these trials every day and can connect to what these boys are feeling. Some people might be stressed out and give up, but these boys never did- they all thought positive and each had a role with the effort put into building the robot. I've been inspired by them to never give up and keep going for the dreams you have because dreams can happen if you put work into it. Genave Salas First off, we would like to thank you, Joshua Davis, for the generous donations of your outstanding books from both our fellow Humanitarians at Social Justice Humanitas Academy and us. We enjoyed having the opportunity to read this amazing story as it was relatable since most of the students at our school come from similar backgrounds. It was really inspiring to have read a story where kids like us had the chance to accomplish such a feat. Reading that minority students who have endure several hardships were able to beat MIT, it gave us a new mentality of being able

to do similar things. It really touched our hearts and would recommend this book to anyone who wishes to feel the same way. Love Michelle Carrera, Melissa Cervantes, and Darline Castaneda

review: A huge thank you to Mr. Davis for allowing his audience to read through the various perspective of what it means to be a Latino immigrant in the United States. Spare Parts is incredibly eye opening and provides a detailed personal account of four amazing teenage boys who have come out on top. This book resonated the most for its brilliant inclusion of the lives of the robotics team after their inspiring win in a prestige competition. Davis writes not just another cliché with a fairy tale ending, but the harsh reality that not everything is fixed with one simple solution. The clashing perspectives about immigrants are seen throughout the book, and allowing the audience to form their own opinion about boys like Oscar or Lorenzo. Bianca, Erandi, and Rachel

This was a very aspiring and relatable book. It inspired me to take advantage of the opportunities that I have and be grateful for all these opportunities I have as a United States citizen. Considering the book is really relatable I was able to connect it to some events from my personal life experiences as a U.S. citizen with Mexican parents. It was very good to be able to connect with some of these amazing characters that have a lot characteristics that are very powerful and understanding. Catherine Romero Stephanie Isarraraz Jacquelin Gonzalez

Having this story brought into our classroom was such an amazing chance to be able to see that people our age with the same identity as us can come to achieve so many incredible things, rising from almost nothing. Seeing the stories of these 4 boys opened our eyes to the difficulties that Mexican immigrants face and how much fighting and perseverance it takes to survive it all. They defied the statistics and the odds that were against them, by simply succeeding. Even after their success, the reality that entranced them caused them to sink back into reality. It wasn't just rainbows and butterflies but it gave us that refreshing new feeling that we rarely get to see in a book, which made it so much easier to understand because of the similar struggles we were able to relate to. I can't even think of reading anything else in classroom, because of how wonderful and bitter sweet their reality was.

Group : Melissa Martinez, Aaron Velasquez, Samantha Gonzalez , Frida Ruiz

Spare Parts is the type of book that urges one to question the injustice that one can become so numb to. Joshua Davis masterly reveals to his readers that injustice happens right in their back yard and what makes the difference is that if they take the next step and speak up. It is a beautiful nonfiction that leaves one in awe and with a broken heart. Thank you, Joshua Davis, for giving my AP English class free copies of your book. It is very generous and kind of you. I also thank you for being the voice of the voiceless. We are sending you our most sincere wishes for success. Much love, Joseph Contreras, Shaghayegh Lashgari, Maria Jimenez

This book allowed my AP English Language class to read into the lives of individuals that

struggled to become someone greater in America. It is not a fairytale nor does it have a happy ending. This allows the reader to realize that being a hispanic, in a low income community, and having different mindsets as other students, does not come easy to fit in society. These boys' stories are heartbreaking, heartwarming and Joshua Davis analyzes the roots of where these boys came from and the true story of high school kids that beat a really big college. This does not happen on a regular basis and inspires young teens to reach their goals and realize that living in America has never been easy. Nicole Chavira

If only this story had caught on in a more timely fashion. But better late than never, I suppose. Thanks to Joshua Davis the story of these four boys got told and the world now has the opportunity to see a little bit of what children of illegal immigrants deal with, through no fault of their own. The story is told in a somewhat journalistic way. But the characters are sufficiently well-developed so that I felt I knew them a bit. Not only is it a story of the boy's struggles, fears and achievements it's a story of inspiration, potential, ability, opportunity and lack thereof. And it's a story of how working together as a team, each part of the team carrying his/her weight and showcasing their strengths for the achievement of their goal, can lead to success.

This is the story about how high school kids, mostly illegal aliens from South American countries, and living in the barrios of eastern Phoenix come to win over the top colleges in the country in the Marine Advanced Technology Robotics Competition. Their ability to learn through doing, through finding ways to achieve what they want to build with virtually nothing but some PVC pipe and technical parts that they receive from expert in the robotics and other fields who respond to the kids because they are passionate to learn and succeed. Competitors, like MIT are college kids with \$10,000 budgets to build the robot. It is an inspiring and soul-lifting true story that everyone should read who feels like they are disadvantaged because of their race, their living conditions, their poor schooling. It also demonstrates that with a talented and devoted teacher, virtually nothing is impossible.

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