

## Author Lauren Markham Visits Campus April 26 for Speech, Workshops

April 26, 2019

Lauren Markham, author of the book *The Far Away Brothers*, which was a 2018 summer-reading selection at Mercersburg Academy, spoke at a school meeting April 26 in the Irvine Memorial Chapel.

Markham hosted a workshop prior to her address on the topic of immigration at the southern U.S. border, and also interacted with students at a brown-bag lunch following the school meeting.

Markham's book is a true story of identical twins who, at age 17, traded El Salvador's gang violence for the trials of life as undocumented immigrants in Oakland, Calif. An accomplished journalist, educator, and advocate for immigrants and refugees, Markham is an authority on international refugee issues and Central American and child migration in the United States, as well as environmental issues and urban education and education policy. She is based in Berkeley, Calif.

Having spent more than a decade working with refugees and immigrants in nonprofits and schools, Markham began reporting on unaccompanied minors from Central America in 2013. She continued reporting on this issue while supporting access to legal counsel, social services support, and mental healthcare for an influx of hundreds of unaccompanied minors—many of whom were fleeing brutal violence—at the Oakland school where she worked. She began *The Far Away Brothers* to examine the root causes of this mass youth migration; to understand why all of these children were suddenly, alone and under extremely dangerous conditions, making their way from Central America to the United States.

“We have to listen closely and carefully and with a sense of compassion to other people's stories—stories that are different from our own, and that provide wide and new perspectives,” Markham told the assembled students and faculty. “We also have to listen critically to the stories that we're being told by others; particularly by those in authority, which includes teachers, and it certainly includes news sources. I'm a journalist, and I believe wholeheartedly in journalism, but I also believe wholeheartedly in being a critical media consumer.”

Markham's work has appeared or is forthcoming in outlets such as *The Guardian*, *Harper's*, *Orion*, *Guernica*, *VICE*, *Pacific Standard*, *The New Yorker.com*, and *VQR*, where she is a contributing editor.

She is a graduate of the Vermont College of Fine Arts' MFA in writing program and has been awarded fellowships from the Mesa Refuge, the UC Berkeley 11th Hour Food & Farming Journalism Fellowship, the French American Foundation, the Rotary Foundation, and the Middlebury Fellowship in Environmental Journalism.

Authors of all three books offered as Mercersburg's summer-reading selections have spoken this year on campus: Markham, Erika L. Sánchez (*I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*), and Gregory Boyle (*Tattoos On the Heart*).

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