



Video Story Transcript

Adventure: Undocumented Flight from Guatemala

By: Storyteller Nestor Gomez
www.nestorgomezstoryteller.com

Link to YouTube Video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KA5JqVtLqZw>

Note : The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

My name is Nestor Gomez. I'm going to tell you a story about my, my journey from Guatemala to the United States.

After many days of silently traveling by bus across Mexico, we arrived at Guadalajara which is basically half way through Mexico. From there, we were going to take a train that was going to take us all the way to the border of the United States. Now many people make this travel by train but many people don't have the necessary money or funds to travel as passengers on the train. They are forced to take freight trains. And they are forced to go on top of these freight trains and sleep on top of the freight trains as they travel across Mexico. Many people fall from the trains. Many people lose their lives or their limbs. Not only that but they also run the risk of being assaulted, being robbed or being killed by guns as they travel on top of these freight train. As if this wasn't enough, the Mexican immigration authorities stopped these trains and take people to jail for traveling undocumented. However, we were lucky enough that our mother has saved enough money to send money with our father so we didn't have to travel on these freight trains. We actually were able to travel with passengers on a regular train.

But half away, half the way through our travel on the train, the train suddenly make a stop and the Mexican immigration authorities boarded that train. They started to question everybody. And our father told us to remain quiet just like he had instructed us. When the Mexican authorities started to question us, we remained silent and our father tried to tell them that we were just shy but they didn't believe him. They handcuffed him and took him off the train. We just sat there looking at one another afraid that we had been caught, that we were going to be sent back to Guatemala. But after a few minutes, which to us seemed like hours, our father

came back into the train and told us that they were going to let us go but they had taken most of his money. When we arrived at Tijuana, which is on the border with the USA, our father contacted a coyote, who is a person to help undocumented immigrants across the border. Now this coyote agreed to take us across the border, across the border to the United States to a safe house, where my mother was going to save more money. So, my father gave the coyote the rest of our money.

Now, there were several ways in which we could cross the border. We could go across the desert but that was a dangerous trip for me and my siblings because we were just little kids. We could also cross across the sewer lines but this was a nasty undertaking. It was dangerous and it was full of disease. We could also go across the river but once again we were little kids and that was dangerous. So, our father and the coyote decided that the best way for us to cross the border, was to run across the border, across the hills of Tijuana. So that's what we did.

We started to cross the border, on an afternoon with a lot of other people that were crossing the border. And at first it was a huge group of people, but as the night, as the day went on, our group got smaller and smaller. Soon our group consisted only of the coyote who was running in front of us, my father who was carrying my youngest brother in one arm, and behind him, me my sister, and my middle brother were running holding hands. Now, now I live in Chicago for many years and I have seen many people participating in 5K's and 10K's but it took me many years for me to be able to take part in one of those races. Because every time that I see people running, it still reminds me of the fear I felt as we run across the border. I was afraid that we're going to get caught. I was afraid that we were going to get separated from our father. I was afraid of many things.

As we kept running across the hills of Tijuana, it started to get darker and darker. Suddenly, I saw some lights out in the distance. At first, I thought that it was going to get rain, it was going to start raining because it sounded like thunder to me. But then the coyote explained that those lights and the sound that we heard were not, wasn't thunder but those were helicopters. And I got really excited because I had never seen any copters ever in my life before. So, I started to look out the horizon, trying to see just helicopters coming. But the coyote pulled me to the ground and hid me on some bushes. Telling me that this wasn't time for sightseeing. This was time to hide. Now we have been praying for a moment to rest. However, the moment we got to rest was as we were hiding on the brushes, hiding from the helicopter. It wasn't a pleasant time. We were afraid again that we're going to get caught. After a few minutes of the helicopters flying on top of us and trying to illuminate us, they flew away. We stay under the bushes for a few minutes. Until the coyote told us that it was safe to keep running.

We started to run, again. I don't remember how long we ran. I just remember that we ran for a long time. When we made it to a place where there was a car waiting on the bushes to take us to the safe house. We were placed into this car and there were more people in the car and we were all told to hide. The car drove away and for many hours we just hide. Until we were taken to a safe house where they put us into a tiny little room and they told us to be quiet. Now, the coyote at the safe house, called my mother to let her know that we had arrived and immediately decided to ask her for money. Well, my mother didn't know it was that the coyotes were going to charge my mother an extra \$100 for every day that they kept us in the safe house. So, my mother had saved enough money but she didn't know that she had to pay extra money for safekeeping. So, she didn't have money to send for our release right away. So, we spent a couple of days maybe weeks in this safe house, just hiding there. Every day that we stayed there, the coyotes told us to be quiet. However, they were not quiet when they called my mother asking for money.

I remember on one occasion, the coyote told my mother that if she didn't send the money right away, they were going to send us back where we belong. Now, this is really sad because this is the first time that I ever heard somebody telling me that that I should go back or that they're going to send me back to where I belong. I mean, it's really sad because the people that first told me something like these, were people, Latin American people maybe descendants, second generation of Latin Americans. My mother was able to save some money

and she was able to borrow money from family and friends here in Chicago, and she send for us. The coyote released us. Taking us to the airport, where they had a contact that put us on a plane.

When we came to Chicago, when we arrived to Chicago onto the plane, we were taken out the of the plane, again by some contact that they have. And they help us get out of the airport. We got to the train station, as soon as we could. And we took a train from the train station that took us to our modest apartment. We head to our mother's apartment, and we knock on her door. And when my mother opened her door, we were finally able to break our silence, as we cheer, and laugh, and cry, hugging our mother.

After that, after the moment we got united with them, with our mother again, she decided that to celebrate she was going to take us to a special place to have breakfast. So, she took us to McDonald's. And I know a lot of people think that's funny because McDonald's is just a fast food restaurant. But for us, McDonald's was a special place that was reserved for special occasions like somebody's birthday or somebody's graduation because we were poor people in a third world country. But maybe because of the fact that we were on a strange land or maybe because of the fact that my mother was speaking another language and people were speaking a different language, it didn't feel a home, it felt strange.

After our breakfast we went on a sightseeing tour of the city. Our mother took us to see the Sears Tower. It would always be the Sears Tower to me. She took us to the zoo and she took us to the lakefront. At the lakefront, we met with a friend of our mother who had been living here in Chicago for many years, and when he learned that we were here for our first day, he decided to take us to celebrate to a special place. No, he didn't take us to McDonald's. He took us to a Latin American restaurant. And he say that he was going to order the most expensive meal on the menu. When we arrivd at the restaurant we were surprised to see that the most expensive meal on the menu were black beans. And we laugh when we actually tasted the beans because to us, they tasted like beans that have been cured with baking soda. After our meal, we say goodbye to my mother's friends and we continue our sightseeing tour. Our mother decided that it would be a good idea for us to walk all the way from the lakefront to her apartment. It took us several hours to walk back to her apartment. By the time we got there, we were hungry, we were tired. We went into the apartment and our mother told us to sit in the living room, while she prepared dinner. A few minutes later she called us into the dining room. And at the moment, as I sat around the table and our mother started to say grace, I pretended to do the same thing. And I look around the table as everybody was praying and, at that moment, as I found myself surrounded by family about to eat, about to eat. Black beans from my mother kitchen, at that moment, I finally found a home.