



# Video Story Transcript

## On the Bus

**By: Storyteller Jon Spelman**  
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**Link to YouTube Video:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHAJu5mvtng>

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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.

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Hi, I'm Jon Spelman. In the mid 1990's, I began to tell an evolving collection of stories called, "I Still Believe: The Lives of Children and Extremities." These are stories collected from North and South America, from Europe, from Asia, and from Africa. Stories about the faith and the strength of young people as they came up against oppression, racial, political, cultural pressure and violence. One of those stories, which was told to me, seems to me, to stand in for all those other stories because it, when it was told to me, had no time, no specific place, no specific political location. The story is called, "On the Bus," and it's from the point of view of a young girl.

I was on a bus at a time when people like me are not allowed to be on a bus or any form of conveyance. In a place where I was not supposed to be, at a time when I was not allowed to be outside. And I was not wearing the kinds of clothes that we were told to wear. Nor did I have any of the papers which would make me officially allowed to be there. But since I looked a lot like many of the people who did those things, I was nervous but not frightened. And then suddenly, in the midst of a block, the bus was stopped by four soldiers. Two got on the front, two got on the back, and immediately began to ask everyone for their papers.

Now I was frightened. And then a man near the front, who had apparently not had any papers, was taken out into the street and shot. And the soldiers got back onto the bus and I was terrified. They were coming closer and closer to me, closing in on both sides. And when they asked for my papers I knew that I would be destroyed.

And then, a man sitting next to me, I had not even looked at him, I certainly did not know him, he suddenly stood up and he started screaming at me, “You stupid, stupid girl! How many times do I have to tell you! What am I supposed to do about this?”

And at that, the four officers all came over and that they looked at us and, and he said to them, “Every time we leave the house. This morning when I left, I told her three times. I said, ‘Bring your papers.’ But does she remember to bring her papers. No, she does not. What is a father to do?”

The soldiers looked at him and they looked at me. They looked at each other and laughed. Then they quickly checked his papers, and the papers of a few more people, got off the bus, and we continued on our way.

I sat there staring at the floor. I dared not reveal in my face what I was feeling for this, this angel who had saved my life. I was still staring at the floor when several stops later, the man got up and started for the exit. But before he went through that door, he turned back to me and he said, “Oh, and today please, when you go home, help your mother with the baby.” And he was gone. **And I was alive.**