

My Mom Is a Brave Woman

Maria D. Martinez Cruz

BEFORE YOU READ: What is a brave decision your parent made? Or that you have made?

A Hard Decision

One day, Mom sat down in a chair and told us that we were going to the United States to live with our dad. Mom made the decision because she knew that my sister and I were in danger. I was 11 years old. My sisters were nine years old and five years old.

Gangs, Thirst, *La Migra*

We took the bus to San Luis, Sonora. That is where we met the *coyote*. He would take us

On the sixth day, we were out of water.

through the desert to the U.S. On the first day, we started walking through the desert. We walked at night. Everything was okay until the third day when gangsters assaulted us. The gangsters took all the money and everything that was valuable.

The next day was worse. We encountered a gang called “Los Burerros.” They are a gang that

kidnaps people. Thank God we were able to hide and escape from them. Unfortunately, this gang caught another group of people. As we were running away from them, we could hear shooting and people screaming.

On the fifth day, when my sister wanted to pee, I took her behind some bushes. When we came back, everyone had disappeared. We were very scared because we didn’t see our mom and sister or the *coyote*. After a couple minutes, the *coyote* grabbed us and pulled us behind one of the bushes. He told us to stay quiet since *la migra* was around. I didn’t know at the time what *la migra* was.

On the sixth day, we were out of water. We were very thirsty. After a couple of hours, we found a cow’s stable. Mom took water from the cow’s trough and gave it to us. She didn’t say anything at the time, but I still remember the smell and the taste of the water. The next



The author’s mom.



Migrants cross the desert on foot to reach the United States. Photo from: <https://pages.vassar.edu/realarchaeology/author/chkremer/>.

* Two versions of this article are available: intermediate (pp. 4-5) and advanced beginner (p. 6).



The author.

morning, mom looked bad. She was crying and sat under one of the trees. She told me we were almost there. She removed her shoes and her feet had a lot of blisters. They were bleeding.

Stacked Like Wood in a Truck

The last day, we were waiting for a truck to take us to the place where we were going to stay until we could see our dad. When the truck arrived, they piled us on top of each other as if they were stacking wood or pallets. My sisters and I were at

the top. They took us to a farm near Houston. The people in charge of the farm gave us water and food. That was my first time trying a cheeseburger and fries. One of the ladies took us on a walk through the farm to meet all the animals. We stayed there until they reunited us with our dad.

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Reward

I still ask myself what would have happened if we had stayed in Mexico. It was a hard journey to come to the United States, but now we have new opportunities, and we have learned another language and culture. Every effort and achievement has its own reward, and I can say that Mom already has hers. My mom is a brave woman.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. The author says her mother is a brave woman. What evidence does she share in the text to back up her claim?
2. Read another story about crossing the desert (p. 7/pp. 8-9), this one from the perspective of a mother. How are the perspectives of the writers similar? How are they different?

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Border Angels in the Desert

Organizations like Border Angels <https://www.borderangels.org/> and No More Deaths <https://nomoredeaths.org/en/> leave water and food along migrant routes in the desert. Some of their volunteers have been charged with “harboring migrants,” a felony.