

Crossing Two Rivers

Aleida Contreras

Life in Mexico Was Hard

In Mexico, my family was very poor. I shared a bed with three of my sisters. We got water from a well. It was my job to clean garbage from the well. I sat on a small wood swing while someone dropped me slowly down into the well.

It was hard for me to go to school. I had to walk on mountain roads and across a river. Sometimes, the river came up to my stomach. To keep my uniform dry, I carried it in a plastic bag.

I Wanted a Better Life for My Daughter

When I had my daughter, I knew that I did not want her to live this kind of life. I decided to go to the United States. I paid a *coyote* \$4,000 dollars. We packed a little bit of clothes and said goodbye to my family.

When we crossed the Rio Grande, I was very scared. The water came up to my chest. The *coyote* had my daughter on his shoulders. After we crossed the river, the *coyote* told us to go to a hotel.

We waited in the hotel for many days with many people. People brought us food every day. One day, another *coyote* came. He separated me and my daughter. My daughter was so scared. It was terrible to be separated from my daughter. But everything happened like they said. And my daughter and I were together again.

Finally, We Felt Safe

The *coyote* brought us to my brother's house. But my brother did not want to support us. I felt very sad to hear that news. I called my friends in Rhode Island. They told me, "Come here, and we will support you." Finally, we felt safe.

AFTER YOU READ: What are the two rivers Aleida had to cross? Why do you think she chose that title for this essay?

Aleida Contreras has been in the United States for 17 years. She is a student at the Genesis Center in Providence, RI. She works as a nanny, and is the mother of a middle-schooler and college graduate.



The author in Mexico (above) and in the U.S. with her daughter (below).



* Two versions of this article are available: intermediate (pp. 8-9) and advanced beginner (p. 7).