

RUNNING FROM DANGER, LOOKING FOR HOPE

More than 800,000 immigrants have arrived at the southern border of the United States in the past year. Will they be allowed to stay? This is the story of Freddy,* 18, who left Honduras for a new life in America. BY TOD OLSON

** Freddy's name has been changed to protect his identity.*

In June 2018, Freddy put some clothing in a backpack. He filled a bottle with water. He said goodbye to his mom and his two sisters. He didn't know if he would see them again. Then he left his home in Sonaguera, Honduras. He was 16 years old. He wanted to find his dad. His dad was in Texas.

When Freddy was 5, his dad left home. There were not many jobs in Sonaguera. But in the U.S., his dad could work. He sent money to Freddy's family. They used it to buy food.

VOCABULARY

poverty: the state of being very poor

immigrants: people who come to a country to live there for good

fleeing: running away from

asylum: protection given by the government to a person who has escaped danger in another country

destiny: what ends up happening in the future

But Freddy did not feel safe. When he walked to school, gang members threatened him. "There's so much crime and **poverty** in Honduras," he says. He wondered what would happen to him when he grew up.



PAUSE AND THINK: Why did Freddy's dad leave Honduras for Texas?

Lives at Risk

So Freddy went north. He was not alone. More than 800,000 **immigrants** have arrived at the southern border of the U.S. in the past year. Many of them are teenagers. Many come alone.

Like Freddy, many immigrants are **fleeing** violence and poverty. Most come from Guatemala, El Salvador, or Honduras. These countries are in Central America. They are three of the most dangerous countries in the world. Gangs in these countries control the flow of drugs to the U.S. They often use

VIDEO 1

VIDEO 2

GO TO
WEB VIEW



LEAVING HOME

Freddy is from Honduras, a country in Central America. It is one of the poorest and most dangerous countries in the world.



CRIME SCENE Police respond to a murder in Honduras.

violence to make teen boys join them.

At the border, the immigrants hope they will be allowed to stay. The U.S. welcomes some immigrants because their lives are at risk. These people have to prove in court that they are in danger in their home countries. This is called seeking **asylum**.

PAUSE AND THINK: What does it mean to seek asylum?

Finding Strength

Freddy made the journey to the border in 15 days. He took taxis. He took buses. Sometimes he walked. Often, he slept outdoors. “At times, I couldn’t stand it anymore,” he says. “But if I gave up, I felt like I was going to lose my life.”

At the border, U.S. officials put the new immigrants in detention centers. These places are often too crowded. They are not comfortable.

Freddy spent three months in these centers. One of them was very cold. The migrants called it *la hielera*, or “the cooler.” Freddy slept on the floor with a thin foil blanket. Then he moved to a new center. Conditions were better.

But he still felt confused and lonely. “You’re locked up,” he says. “All you want is to go out and breathe fresh air.”

PAUSE AND THINK: What are U.S. officials struggling with at the border?

A New Life

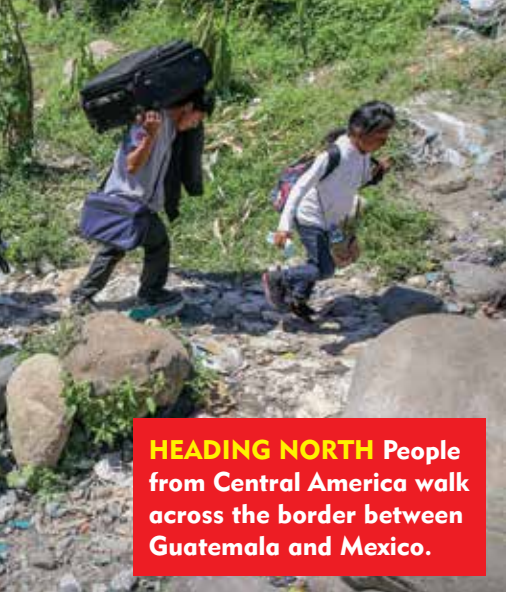
In October, Freddy was released. He saw his father for the first time in 12 years. “I was overjoyed,” Freddy says.

Freddy now lives with his dad in Texas. He goes to high school. Life isn’t easy. He hasn’t made friends. He has trouble sleeping. He has nightmares about being locked up. But he feels safe when he walks down the street.

A lawyer is helping Freddy seek asylum. His case could take years. He’s trying to be hopeful. But asylum seekers from Honduras rarely get to stay. Only about one in five does.

Freddy says it would be hard to go back to Honduras. He wants to work in the U.S. He wants to send money to his family. “But I’m not scared,” he says. “Whatever my **destiny** is, I’ll accept it.” •

PAUSE AND THINK: What is Freddy’s life like now?



HEADING NORTH People from Central America walk across the border between Guatemala and Mexico.



DETENTION CENTER Freddy spent time in this detention center in Tornillo, Texas.



5 Questions About Freddy's Journey



WHAT TO DO: Answer the questions below. Use full sentences.



1. Who is Freddy?



2. What country did Freddy used to live in?



3. Why did Freddy leave his home country?



4. How did Freddy travel to the U.S.?



5. Where did Freddy spend his first three months after crossing the U.S. border?
