



Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services

BRYCS Youth Conversations: Jose, a Honduran Teen

In January 2017, Jose shared his resettlement journey and experiences with BRYCS staff on what it's like to be an immigrant teen in the United States.

Family Background and Migration Story

My family and I are originally from Honduras. I was born in a small town of the southwest of Honduras. My parents used to work as farmers and grew the basics such as beans, corn, and coffee. My family is Catholic and has been Catholic for generations. They used to work hard to put me in school and had to send me to school to a big city because there are no schools at the town.

I figured out that my parents didn't have enough to send me to school or college and offer me the opportunities I wanted to have and I was forced to leave the country because the gangs were pressuring me to join. I had to escape because I did not want to participate in that life of crime, of hurting others, I just wanted to go to school. I left my country when I was twelve with two other boys, ages twelve and fourteen, in 2004. We took a bus to the border of Guatemala. I was scared we would be followed by the gangs. We walked through the mountains to pass the border. Then we hitched rides to the border of Mexico. We walked for a week, day and night. We had no food and water and we ended up drinking cow urine. One of my friends died on the journey but me and the other friend had no choice but to continue on our journey. We rode on the roof of trains to get through Mexico, jumping off to beg for food and water when it stopped. The other boy jumped from the train and fell under and was ran over. Then I was alone. Once I got to the border I stayed for two and a half years living in a migrant house and had to beg for food. I managed to cross the border and someone in a car came up to me and said, "I'm here to help you." He took me to a house with fifteen other migrants and then he took us all away in a refrigerated truck full of melons. It was so cold it felt like we were dying. We were taken to a house and I woke up the next morning, the other migrants were gone. The man said they had paid the money and he wanted \$4,000 to release me. I called the family I had in the U.S. but no one answered.

In the end, the man took me to California to work in a furniture firm. I used to work six days a week, from 6AM to 6PM. I worked there for two years and he used to pay me \$120 every two months. Initially I was happy, but only because I didn't understand the money and I didn't have any information. When I realized how much others were paid, I was sad. Eventually a man helped me leave and gave me a place to live and helped me find work. But related to the trafficking situation I was arrested and put in a detention center for eighteen months. The court appointed a lawyer for me who knew what trafficking was. He got me out of detention and referred me to a wonderful organization that has been my life line and helped me navigate the legal system. I don't know where I would be now if they hadn't helped me. Deported? In jail? Dead?

Life in the U.S.

Five years after leaving my country, I had the privilege to build a new life in the U.S. I didn't choose to be a refugee— as a refugee I felt unproductive—the constant danger of not knowing when or where you are going next and knowing that you don't have access to basics such as water, food, shelter, let alone an education. After three years of abuse in my trafficking situation, I started resettling and building a new life. I have received so many opportunities and I'm getting where I wanted to be as a child. I am so happy I have a better life and also getting a better education, which my country never offered me. I am so happy that the U.S. gave me the opportunity to resettle and build a new life. I am part of the community and helping shine a light on and bring justice to more victims and survivors like me. One thing I wish I had known better is English. I couldn't communicate with others. If I had the skills of speaking I wouldn't have gone through what I went through. Also, I wish I had known that there are organizations that help refugees build a new life.



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Advice for Parents

It's not easy to adjust to a new culture. I suggest to look for information. If they are religious attend a church— sometimes churches provide information. They should also enroll in school and learn English.

Advice for Teachers

The teachers have been so nice with me and they make my life in school easier. I would like to have human trafficking taught in classes to teach young people about it and help prevent them from being trafficked or abused.

Advice for the Community

Give refugees the opportunity to engage the community. Don't look at the color of skin, nationality, or where we are coming from, at the end of the day we are humans. Respect our dignity. Help us to identify ourselves, and respect our culture, and try to understand our situation. Working together we could make a better country.

Advice for Immigrant Teens

Join the new community and enroll in school. Join any type of sport. Practice and learn the new culture of the U.S.

Future Goals

I am a passionate youth. I am passionate about equality and justice. My future goal is to work with young children, refugees, and migrants. I want to help them to obtain access to things such as shelter and loans for education. Nowadays there are campaigns against refugees and migrants but working together we can change that. My plan is go to university and obtain my degree. We will celebrate together!