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ABSTRACT

This collection of writings, photographs, and drawings is intended for new readers of English as a second language. The writings are produced by English literacy students or are excerpted from published works by immigrant and American authors and include personal narratives and essays on home countries, work, education, and language. An introduction gives suggestions for pre-reading, reading, and post-reading activities and strategies. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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Looking Forward, Looking Back

Writings from Many Worlds

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Compiled by the Family Literacy Project of UMass/Boston
1989

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Dear Reader,

This collection of writings, photographs, and drawings is for new readers of English as a second language. It was put together for your enjoyment and learning. There are selections for readers at all levels and they are about a variety of themes, such as work, family, and education. Many of the pieces were written by ESL students, while others are excerpts from published works by immigrant and American authors. All of them are about real-life situations that may be in your experience.

The people who compiled this book are ESL teachers who have found these readings and pictures to be very popular and useful for our students. We want to share them with you.

There are many ways to "read" this book. Some people will understand only the pictures and others will understand entire texts, but most people are somewhere in the middle. Here are some suggestions to help you understand the readings.

Before you read:

- Look at and think about the pictures
- Think about what the title means and who the author is
- Imagine what the story will be about

As you read:

- Read for general understanding; don't worry about every word
- Read with other people and figure things out together
- Relate the story to your own experiences
- Have fun; if it's a terrible struggle, choose an easier piece

After you read:

- React to the story. What did it make you think about?
- Discuss your reactions with other people

We hope you enjoy these stories and share them with your friends and families. Maybe you will be inspired to write some of your own.

Andrea Nash
Ann Cason
Rosario Gomez-Sanford
Loren McGrail
Madeline Rhum
Elsa Auerbach

About My Country

An Election in Haiti

On Sunday, March 29, there was an election in Haiti. The Haitian people voted 'yes' or 'no' for a new constitution. The new constitution makes new rules for the government. Under Duvalier, the government was a dictatorship. Under the new constitution, the government will be a democracy. Most of the people in Haiti voted 'yes' for the new constitution. They hope the government in Haiti will change. They hope the government in Haiti will help people make a better life.



The Market, Port-au-Prince

Photo by Danny Lyon

Dominican Republic

D.R. is an island that at the beginning was governed by the Haitian people, and then there was a war which separated the island into two countries: Dominican Republic and Haiti.

Since that moment D.R. was and is now a free country. D.R. is very beautiful and is very rich in petroleum, metal mines. It has a lot of factories and engineers.

As we know, in all countries there exists the distinction between the rich class and poor class. In this country the rich class is very well distinguished from the poor class. In D.R. we can see how exploited the poor class is by the rich class.

Before there was a government that was elected by the people who in that time was the President Juan Bosch. This man was loved by all the country. When he was working as President all the food was cheap and the dollars in D.R. didn't have too much value. But somebody said that the U.S.A. government overthrew Juan Bosch and following up to power was Balaguer, who still now is president of this country and every day also this beautiful and loved country is going down more and more.

According to my friend, Write Ana Henriquez

Yesterday I spoke with William who is my partner in English class. We talked for a little while about the situation in this country, El Salvador. For the last ten years, so many people have been killed in that country. Twelve years ago or ten years ago so many crimes happened and they formed a band they call the guerrillas, and every day, day by day the guerrillas get more powerful. People from every where in the country get in to the guerrillas.

And the reason they are fighting: they asking for freedom. The army and the military thinks the civilian are not human. In El Salvador there are two presidents of human rights: one for the government, and one for the guerrillas. The president of human rights for the guerrillas got killed by the government last month. His name was Helbert Anaya. This is one of the big reason the people take the weapons and fight for their freedom. I hope the situation in this country changes very soon. If this happens I will visit El Salvador myself.

Maria

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TORTAS *Ranchito*



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My parents was born in P.R.
my mother's worked in the house wife
I have six sisters and two brothers
in the farm lived all together
my father worked in the formen
I am a little girl I remember some-
thing about my farm everything
was old fashioned. I remember
buying my bed. My father made
the living room. He used the
wood and made chairs, tables
and I don't like us being
poor there was no water or
light. no T.V. or no radio
my parents didn't know how
to read or write because
his father didn't go to school.

Hilda Ramos



© 1980 CARMEN LOMAS GARZA

I never judge somebody "you act like this," but you check people out, you say "this one feels very Puerto Rican, these others, they don't want their own kids, their own children to learn Spanish" and you see the difference and you say "but they are all Puerto Ricans, they came here, how come they are acting different now?" Now I understand that it all depends on the particular case and sometimes it is not up to them what they want to do, it's just the prejudice and all the pressures they go through because they are a minority here, their language is different, their culture is different and they go through a lot of changes and finally they become somebody different.

In Puerto Rico people considered me Nuyorican because I had lived in the States. I had never lived in New York. I lived in Georgia, but when I went to Puerto Rico and I knew English, people would say, "You are Nuyorican, right?" and I would say, "Well, I never lived in New York, but I lived in the States." So in Puerto Rico I was considered Nuyorican and I came over here and I was considered from the island. I wasn't accepted over there and I wasn't accepted over here. That's what really bothered me a lot afterwards.



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WHY A LOT OF VIETNAMESE PEOPLE ESCAPE THEIR COUNTRY

After the war stopped on April 30, 1975, the North Vietnamese Communists won. The Communists come to South Vietnam. They took a lot of people to the jail, and took everybody and I worked for them, but they didn't pay salary to us, and there was no freedom and no peace. After the time many people feel tense there and they escape to different country. As soon as my family and I decide to escape to Malaysia by boat, we paid for the boat about \$4,000 ~~thousand dollars~~. and we stayed there in Malaysia about 8 months. After that we came to the United States by airplane, and we are living in Boston since 1984 to the present. But I always miss my beloved people so much, because they still live in my country and I hope to meet them a little time again. We feel very happy here. Because there is more freedom and we like it very much.

Long Tran



Photo by James Higgins

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ERITREA

My name is Amanuel Gebemeskel. I am from East Africa: a place called Eritrea. Eritrea is bounded in the north by the Sudan, south by Ethiopia, and east by the Red Sea.

The population of the country is four million. The climate is eight months of sunshine while for four months there is rain and it is cold. The people are dependent on agriculture. It's really a rich country and it's in a good strategic position because of the Red Sea. That's why it was colonized by Turkey, Egypt, and also by Italy and England.

It was a colony of Turkey for 100 years. It was colonized in the 17th century. It was colonized about 100 years by the Egyptians. After the Egyptians, Italy also colonized Eritrea for 50 years. After that the English colonized it for 10 years. Then Eritrea was administered by its own people for ten years by the decision of the United Nations. In 1952, Ethiopia colonized the Eritrean people by force up to the present. But the Eritrean people are struggling for freedom from Ethiopia.

That's why in my country there is no peace even for a minute, day or night. We are fighting Ethiopia until we win our freedom's flag. For 34 years we have been fighting for peace.

Amanuel Gebemeskel



Photo by J. Scott Applewhite

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About My Country

The Roles That I Play In My Family

I play the part as-mother.
I play the part as-a doctor.
I play the part as-wife.
I play the part as-housewife.
I play the part as-dressmaker.
I play the part as-dumb.
I play the part sometime as a troublemaker.
I play the part as-selfish to my husband.
I play the part as-grandmother.
I play the part as-fighter.
I play the part as-giving.
I play the part as-peacemaker.
I play the part as-helping the others in my family.
I play the part as-good mother.
I play the part as-a babysitter.
I play the part as-hairdresser.
I play the part as-plumber.

Story By: Arlene J. Sharp
The Lighthouse GED class
12-17-81



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WHAT MOTHERS DO NOW

A mother is a very special person. She is four people, sometimes six people in one. First she is a woman. Then she often has a job outside the home, but mostly as a secretary. After work, she comes home to a dirty house. Then she becomes a cook and a homemaker. As a mother, she listens to all the problems of the day and checks over the children's homework. By this time she is so tired that she wants to crawl into bed. But sometimes she is also a student herself, and must do homework of her own.

I am a student, mother, and homemaker. I love being a mother, but I find it very conflicting. I feel like I always have to choose between my children and home, and my interests. I hate having a dirty house - I like everything in its place. But, I can't stand being in the house all day. I have to get out and leave. I feel guilty when my children need to talk to me about something on their mind, and I don't have time to listen. But I am learning how to communicate better with my children, and I feel that I have learned something, and I also realize that I am a human being too.

I try to remember, in fact all mothers should remember, "I can't be all things to all people all the time."

Catherine Thompson, GED student

How My Mother Feels

My mother always used to tell me, "When you're sixteen, you have to get out of school. I need the money, you know."

But those were the times when we really needed the money. Now we are going fine and we don't need the money that much.

Now I hear from her mouth, "If you are good for school, I'll pay as much money as I can for your education. Education is what I needed when I was a girl. I got out of school just to help my mother. If I had a good education, I wouldn't have to get tired at work like I do. So have a good education. You'll thank me someday."

From Come With Us
Toronto Public Schools
Women's Educational Press, 1978



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WAYS I HELP MY KIDS

WAYS MY KIDS HELP ME

Write your ideas about the ways you and your kids help each other.
Use the information on the blackboard to help you.

I help my kids.

I teach them good things.

I play with them. I protect them. I correct them.

My kids bring me things.

My kids will teach me English.

My kids make me happy.

Maybe they will take care of me.

Gebre Goso

I help my kids by staying together with them. By talking to them. I help them by confronting them and telling them what's wrong or right. Just as they do me.

I help them when they need a favor or money just as they do me.

It's just like you scratch my back I scratch your back with my family.

Maria Bento



Photo by Janice Rogovin

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Lets talk about what you can do to help your children.
Then write about a time one of your children or grandchildren
had a problem and what you did to help.

I have a problem about my son Albert in the school because many friends are smoking. My son was in a group smoking when he cuts classes. They will call their parents if the principal catches him when he is outside when doesn't supposed to, he gets suspended. If after the conference the principal determines: that there are grounds for an expulsion hearing. The principal may recommend explusion to the superintendent. The parents should go to all of the meeting that the parent-teacher organization at school one afternoon each month. Because you help your son's or daughter's progress in class. If you help the teacher, the teacher help your children.

Hilda Ramos

Mr and Mrs DiCarlo are sad because their son Joe is forgetting his language, his culture and his country.

What do you think about this problem?
Do you feel like Mr and Mrs DiCarlo?
Do you feel like Joe?

Write some of your thoughts about language, culture and country.

I would be very upset if my childrens forgets about their culture and their country. I love America because it a nice country full of opportunities, freedom, etc. I came here so my childrens would have a better Education, jobs and everything else they wish to gain in their lives. Cape Verde is a beautiful country, always hot. We don't have any snow. It's a country that I always treasure its memory. I had such a wonderful childhood and friends that I see once in a while that are here. We share those memories everytime we get together,

Maria Bento



Photo by Susan Trowbridge

Sometime I feel sad when I miss my country and my parents. They died, but I remember when I was little girl, my family and me to had good adaption. Now is different because my sister, brother and stepfather to live in Puerto Rico.

Always when I speak with they, I feel good. but I don't feel alone because I have my beautiful daughter sometime she sing and dancing for me. she doesn't stay alone, sometime I think she has a pray to loss me because when I'm sick, she ask me, Do you have pain Mami? How do you feel? Do you want pastilla? Everyday at time to go to sleep, I said I love you to much, you are my good daughter and resanios together. I want she feel sure of me. To be mother is duro and beautiful.



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"Day Care"

I have a big problem because my daughter doesn't like her Day Care. She is 3 years old.

Why doesn't she like it?

I think there are children in the classroom. She also doesn't like the food and the milk is too cold. My daughter likes warm milk. There are different teachers. My daughter doesn't like all the teachers. Now I wait because people say give it time maybe one month and she like it. I hope so because I'm very sad when I see my daughter cry but I can't stay in my house because the life in the U.S. is too expensive and I must study English to get better work.

Hilda Morales

I was born in La Unión, El Salvador
I was born September 7, 1962
I went to school in La Unión I liked
school. I worked with my father
in a store. I left my country on
February 27 1984. I had a lot of
problems in my country the war.
I took an airplane to Mexico.
then my sister, my cousin and
we took a bus to Houston, Texas
We stayed for 3 days. We took
an airplane to Boston. We come
to Boston because we have friends
and cousins here.

my father and my sister
I'm afraid

Neftal Cabrera



Photo by James Higgins

The person I want to talk about is my uncle Yong-Wong. He lived in a small village and spent his life as an elementary school teacher. He did not make much money and had to take care of three sons and two daughters. But he did his best on his job and for his sons and daughters. Moreover, he had many nephews and has loved all the nephews. Especially he has loved me very much. Whenever I was discouraged, he gave much advice to me and led me in good directions.

BY: Kang Ju

FROM: Korea

About My Work

Photo by Jim Goldberg



This is the most terrible picture ever taken
I look swollen. my heart wasn't happy.

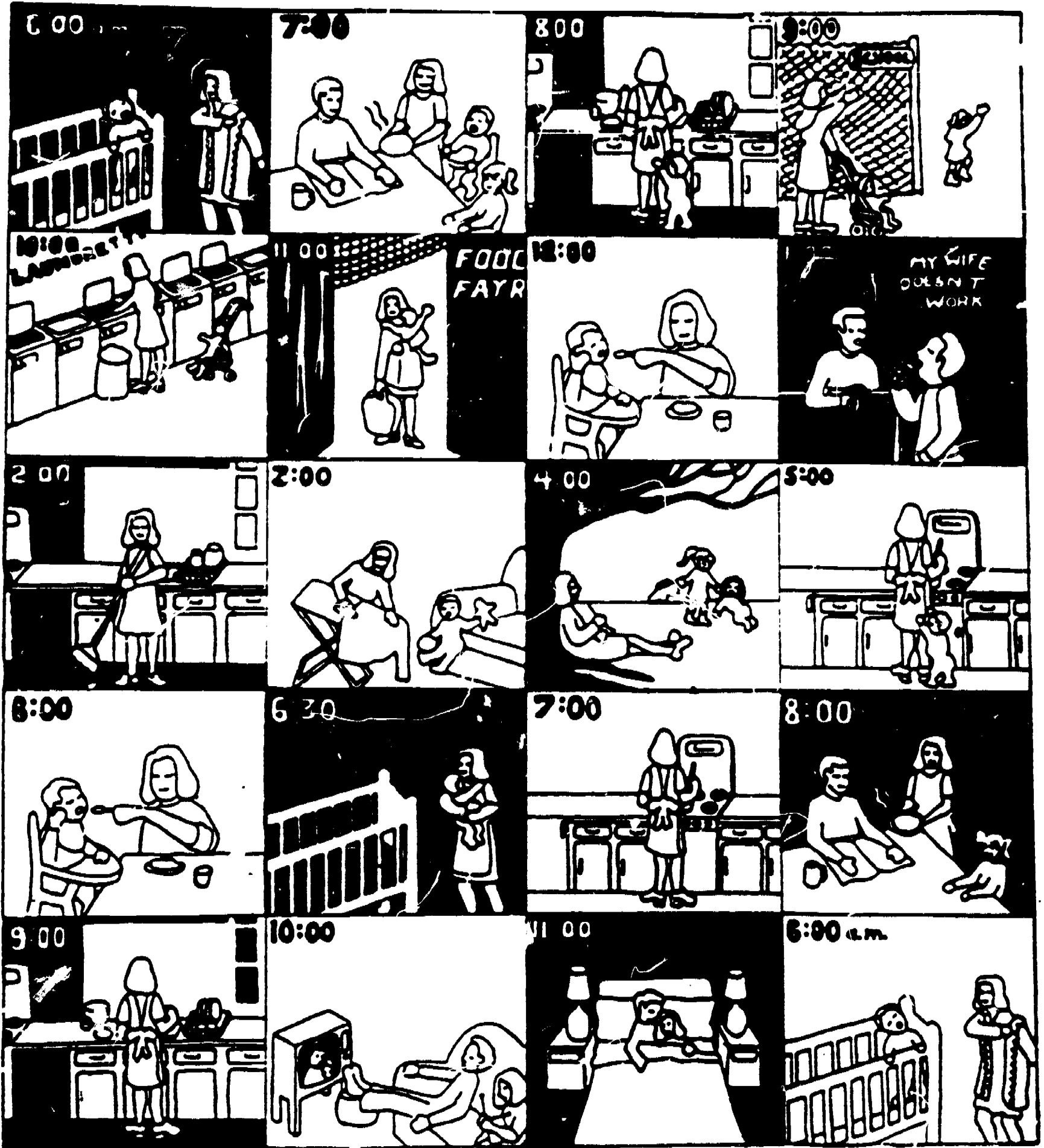
I wasn't lucky to be born a lady in the U.S.A.
In Guatemala I was my own boss, I was middle class, I was
a nurse
At the beginning, I was sad to be housekeeper, now I am
used to it.

When your illness has no cure why worry?

Clara M. Senato

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MY WIFE DOESN'T WORK

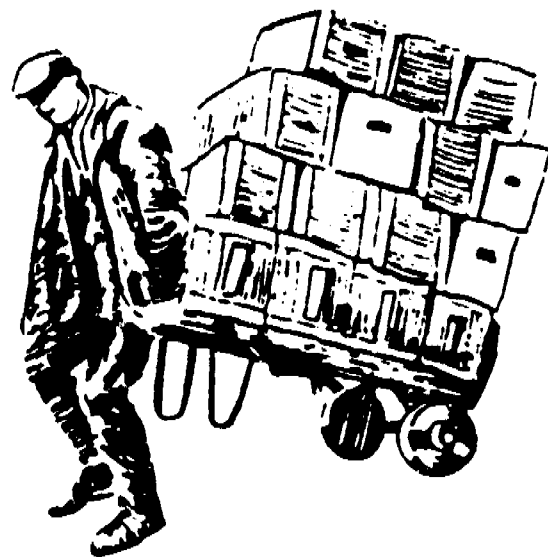


From I Want to Write it Down
 Peckham Publishing Project
 The Bookplace
 13 Peckham High Street
 London SE15

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Work In The 30's

by Marguerite



I like the way times have changed from years ago. When my father started to work the pay was very low. He made about fifty cents a day.

Factory workers years ago had to work long hours. In some cases they worked during their lunchtime. At that time the bosses were not very nice to the workers. They took money from their pay when the workers made mistakes. Some weeks they ended up working for nothing.

When unions came, it made things better for the workers.



By Marguerite Godbout
in Writer's Voice Issue #15
East End Literacy Press
Toronto, Canada

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My mother sends money she earns working in the tomato fields to Hong Kong. The relatives there can send it on to the remaining aunts and their children and, after a good harvest, to the children and grandchildren of my grandfather's two minor wives. "Every woman in the tomato row is sending money home," my mother says, "to Chinese villages and Mexican villages and Filipino villages and, now, Vietnamese villages, where they speak Chinese too. The women come to work whether sick or well. 'I can't die,' they say, 'I'm supporting fifty,' or 'I'm supporting a hundred.' "

What I'll inherit someday is a green address book full of names. I'll send the relatives money, and they'll write me stories about their hunger.

From The Woman Warrior
By Maxine Hong Kingston
Vintage Books, 1977



I have worked too much. Human beings don't work like this in China. Time goes slower there. Here we have to hurry, feed the hungry children before we're too old to work. I feel like a mother cat hunting for its kittens. She has to find them fast because in a few hours she will forget how to count or that she had any kittens at all. I can't sleep in this country because it doesn't shut down for the night. Factories, canneries, restaurants—always somebody somewhere working through the night. It never gets done all at once here. Time was different in China. One year lasted as long as my total time here; one evening so long, you could visit your women friends, drink tea, and play cards at each house, and it would still be twilight. It even got boring, nothing to do but fan ourselves. Here midnight comes and the floor's not swept, the ironing's not ready, the money's not made. I would still be young if we lived in China."

From The Woman Warrior
By Maxine Hong Kingston
Vintage Books, 1977

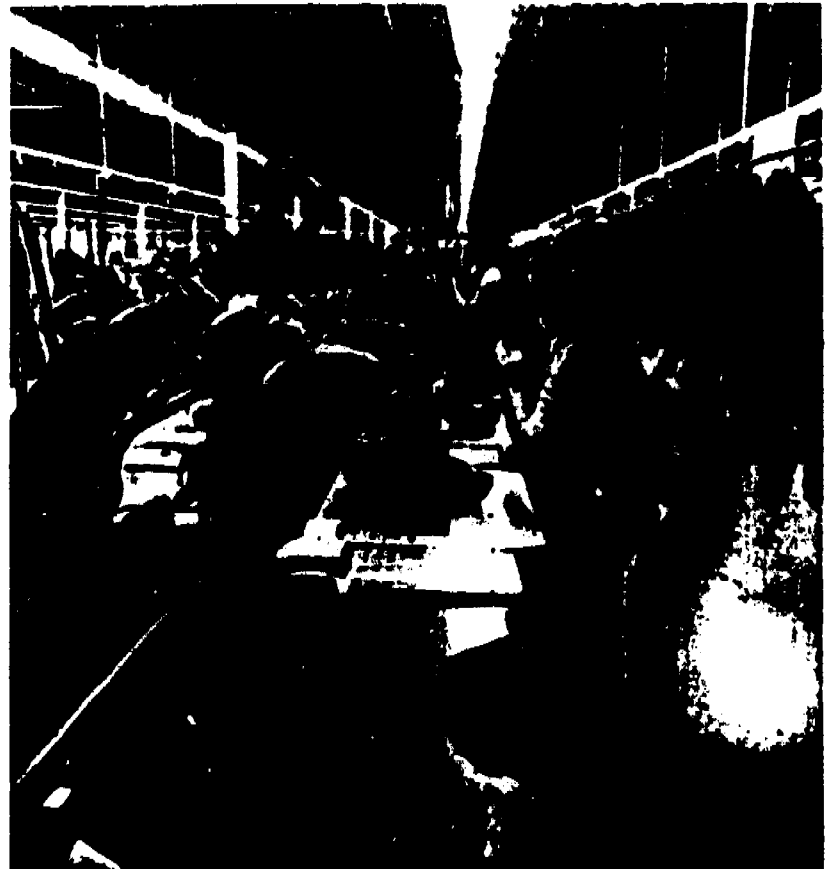


You work, you eat, you care for your children, and then you must start again to work. Part of you changes and dries up. You are not whole anymore. It is as if you are here to do what you can to be allowed to exist.

(Julieta, office cleaner)

I used to sit there seeing those little round pieces coming up and down in front of me. I'd think I was the only person in the whole world. There was a whole row of people sitting on either side of me and across from me. But they were all locked inside themselves. We didn't look at each other or talk or smile.

(Sandra, assembler in small appliance plant)



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From Getting There: Producing Photostories with Immigrant Women

By Deborah Barndt, Ferne Cristall, and Dian Marino
Between The Lines, Toronto, Canada, 1982

Ana's Dream

In my country, I was a teacher. I loved my work. I prepared lessons. We read books and discussed them in class. I went to college to learn how to teach. But in the U.S., I work as a factory worker. My college degree can't help me, because my English is not very good. Now I try to study more English. My dream is to be a teacher again in this country.

From Working
By Lenore Balliro, Labor Education Center
Southeastern Massachusetts University
Dartmouth, Massachusetts



Photo by Earl Dotter

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September 21, 1987

Dear Frances,

How are you doing? I'm writing now to ask your advice. You know I was working in the Comfat Pillow Factory in Somerville. I had some problems one day while I was working. The boss said I was talking too much when I was at work. It isn't true, but anyway he fired me last week. Now I need to find another job.

Yesterday when I was walking downtown I saw a "HELP WANTED" sign in a restaurant. I thought it looked good, But last night I was talking to some friends and my friend Alicia said that I can't get another job because of the new immigration law. My friend Allen said I should go to the Immigration Office and get amnesty. I am scared and confused. Do you have any suggestions? Is it easy to find work in New York City? Please write soon!

Your friend in Boston,

Jean-Paul



Photo by Tony Loreti

READING: Hien's story

When I put my first step on the soil of this country, like thousands of Indochinese refugees who came here, I believed my life would be better. I thought the peace, freedom of this country would help me to forget all the bad memories of experiences in my country. The first time when I came to work, I strongly believed that, but right now I know a lot of problems exist for the people who work with no English.

From my earliest experiences at work I learned that I was nobody without English. I stood in line at a sandwich shop more than one month making the same order every day at lunch: hamburger. That was the only word I could speak correctly. I wanted to order something else but a lot of people were in line and if the cook couldn't understand what I said, he would ask me again and the people in line would get angry with me.

At work, I kept silence. When my fellow workers talked, I didn't share my feelings with them, not even a smile. At break time, I chose a separate place for myself. When my manager asked me, "Why don't you talk with people?" he got my answer, "How can I?" In the eyes of my fellow workers, I became a strange person.

But I was luckier than other workers who can't speak English. At least my fellow workers respected my silence. My friend told me a story about his job. He worked for a house repair team. This team had two groups of workers, wood workers and helpers. The rule in the helper group was that if someone came first, they got the work first and later people did another job. When the winter came, nobody wanted to work outside. My friend came early, but another who was late took his tools and told him to go to work outside. My friend was angry because his fellow worker didn't have the right to do that. That was unfair but he couldn't complain to his boss because he couldn't speak English. The same thing happened a few times and he fought with his fellow worker and he got fired. I know a lot of fighting between Indochinese workers and their fellow workers happens because of the barrier of English.

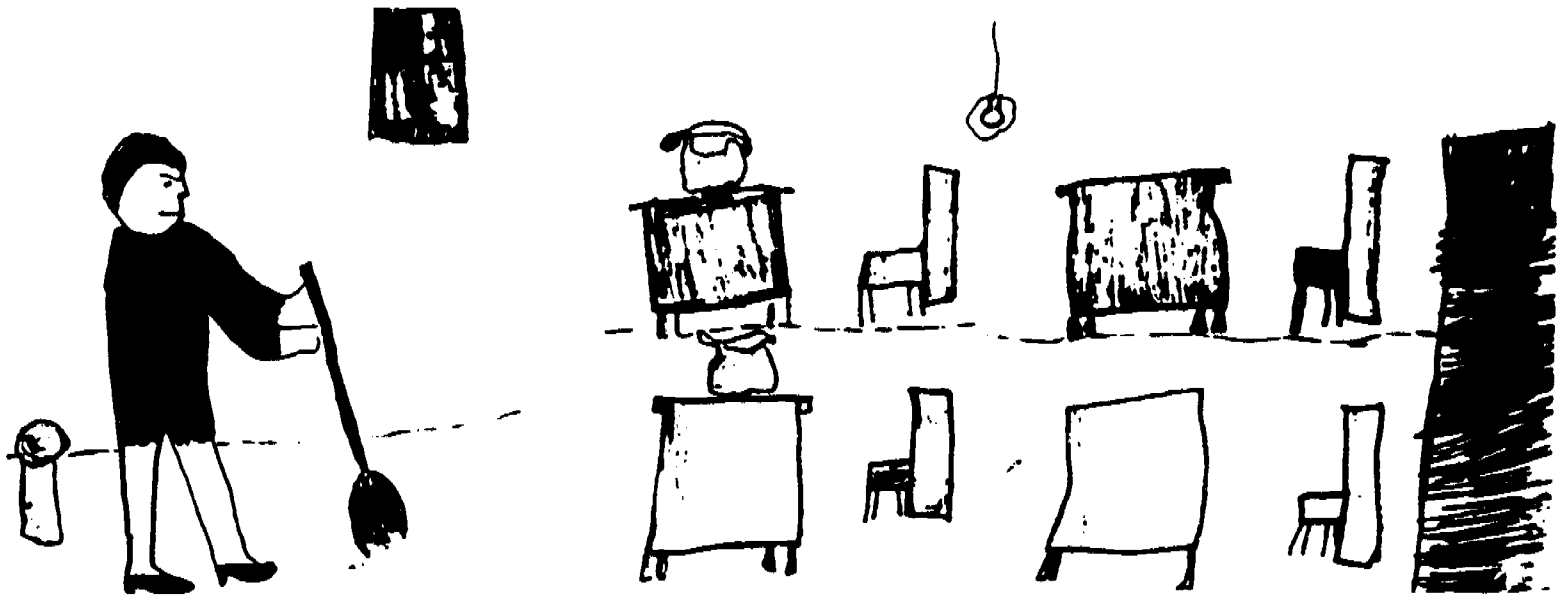
When you work and don't understand English, you don't know the value of your work and your rights. Another friend works in a seafood company. He began with the starting salary. After six months, he asked for a raise and his boss answered him, "We can't give you a raise because you can't speak English." What was wrong with him because he couldn't speak English? Could he not finish his job well? I know he is a good worker who works a lot of overtime.

The first time when I came to work, I brought the hope of a better life in my work. But right now, I know where is the place that this country gives for people who work with no English. I really don't like this position but I have no choice.

From ESL for Action: Problem Posing at Work
By Elsa Auerbach and Nina Wallerstein
Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Inc., 1987



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Women Are Humans Too

In Portugal only the men are supposed to work and the women are supposed to stay home and take care of the house. But here in Canada mostly all of the women and men have to work to support their family. My father works for the Consumers' Gas Company. He fixes sidewalks and gets around \$200 a week.

My mother works and gets a little more than \$100 a week. She works at an office building and she cleans offices. But she doesn't get as much as the men who work with her do. I think something should be done about it because women are humans too.

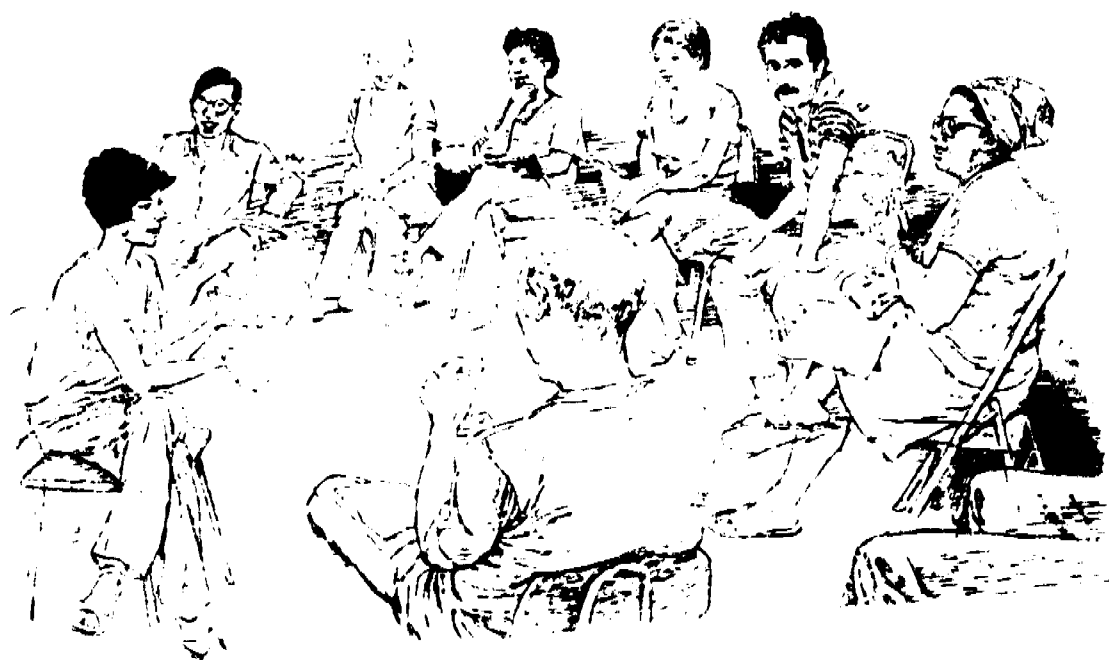
From Come With Us
Toronto Public Schools
Women's Educational Press, 1978

My mother works at a factory where they make plastic toys. She'd rather own her own business because at the factory she sometimes gets burned with hot plastic, and once she asked the boss if she could go home 'cause she got burned on her arm and he said, "No. Work for a bit longer." That's cruel.

From Come With Us
Toronto Public Schools
Women's Educational Press, 1978

About Learning

My name is Lin.
I go to school. I
study English. Then I
go to work. I don't
have time to do homework
because I need to
sleep.



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During the first silent year I spoke to no one at school, did not ask before going to the lavatory, and flunked kindergarten. My sister also said nothing for three years, silent in the playground and silent at lunch. There were other quiet Chinese girls not of our family, but most of them got over it sooner than we did. I enjoyed the silence. At first it did not occur to me I was supposed to talk or to pass kindergarten. I talked at home and to one or two of the Chinese kids in class. I made motions and even made some jokes. I drank out of a toy saucer when the water spilled out of the cup, and everybody laughed, pointing at me, so I did it some more. I didn't know that Americans don't drink out of saucers.

From The Woman Warrior
By Maxine Hong Kingston
Vintage Books, 1977

Most campesinos, even the ones who've never been to school themselves, think that education is very important. There are parents who'll do everything to send their children to school. They say, "Education is the only inheritance I can leave my children. I'm too poor to leave them anything else, so I must leave them an education."

But sometimes they just can't afford to send their children to school. Fathers often need their sons to help them in the fields; mothers need their daughters to help around the house. And even though elementary school is free, we still have to pay for uniforms, books, and materials. If the school is far away, we have to pay for bus fare, too.

High school is even more expensive. Many of the high schools charge a monthly fee. In my town they charge \$7.50 a month, which is a lot for poor people. The books and uniforms are more expensive, too. So most children, if they go to school at all, don't make it past the sixth grade.

I tried to give my daughter Lidia a good education. She was the smartest of all my children, and I wanted to send her to high school. I told her, "You know, Lidia, how poor we are. I'm going to make great sacrifices to send you to high school. You pick the career you want, and I'll do everything I can to support you. I'm getting old, and when I can't work any more, you'll support me. So study hard and make something of your life. Your sisters all have families already. You're the only one left who can get a good education."

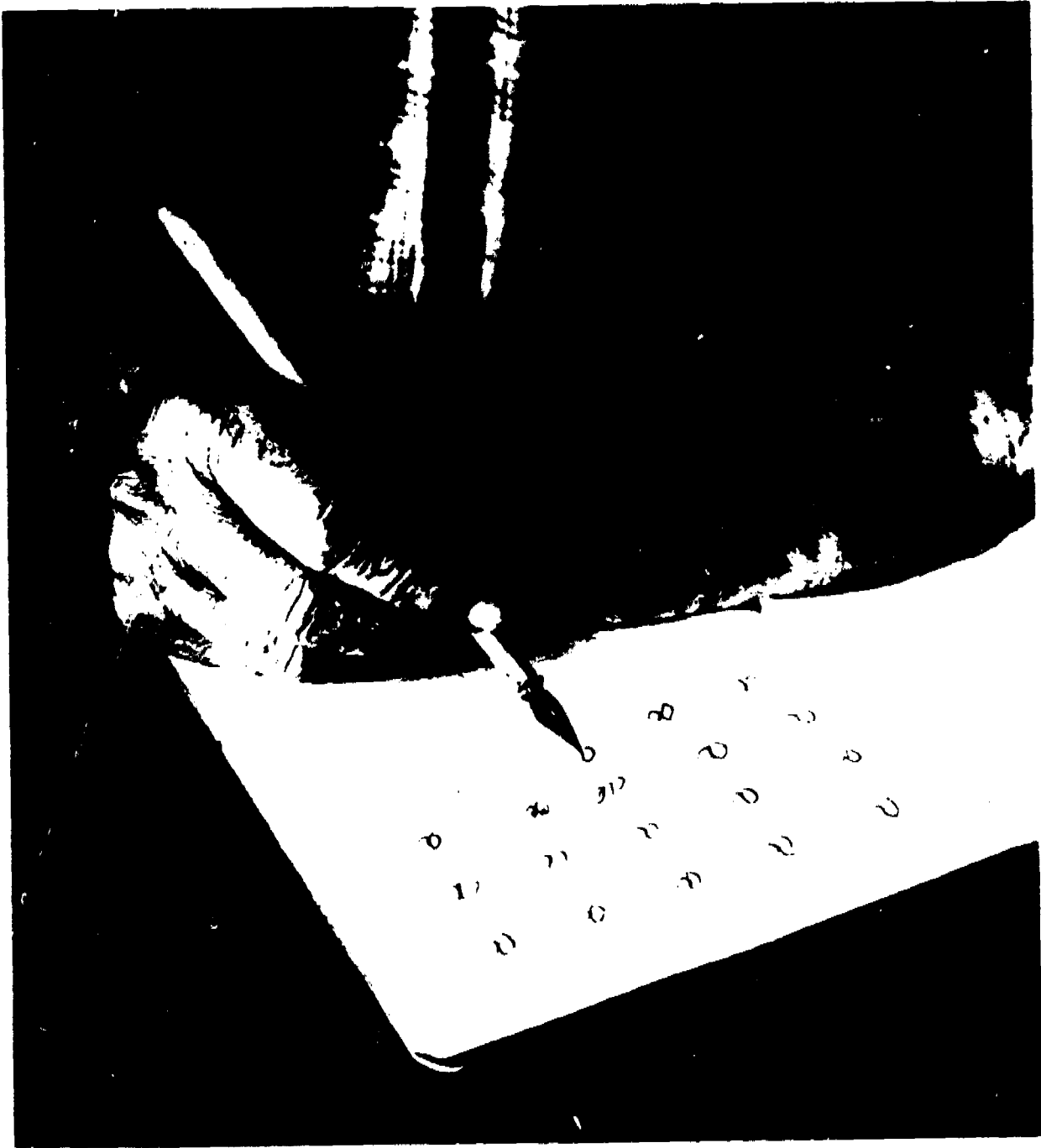
I made tremendous sacrifices to send Lidia to school, but then she went and got pregnant. She didn't tell me she was pregnant. One of my sons found out because the fellow that did it was bragging about it. Even when I confronted her she still wouldn't confess. She kept saying "No, no, it's a lie," but I felt her stomach and noticed her breasts getting bigger.

I was so furious to see her go and ruin her life that I beat her. But it was a stupid thing to do because she was pregnant. The child was born premature and I always think it was because of the beating I gave Lidia. I don't know if that's really what happened, but every time I see my granddaughter—she's still so tiny for her age—I feel guilty for what I did.

But I had such high hopes for Lidia. I really wanted her to make something of her life. But here in Honduras, once a girl gets pregnant she can't go to school any more. She has to quit as soon as her stomach starts to show, because they don't want the other girls to follow her bad example.

From Don't Be Afraid Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks
From the Heart

Translated and Edited by Medea Benjamin
The Institute for Food and Development Policy
San Francisco, CA



Italy, David Seymour, Magnum, UNESCO

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Morris Banks

We worked on the farm.

We tended the turkeys.

We fed the hogs and cows.

My father was alone after my mother died.

I missed a lot of school days to work.

I was the big boy and sat in the back.

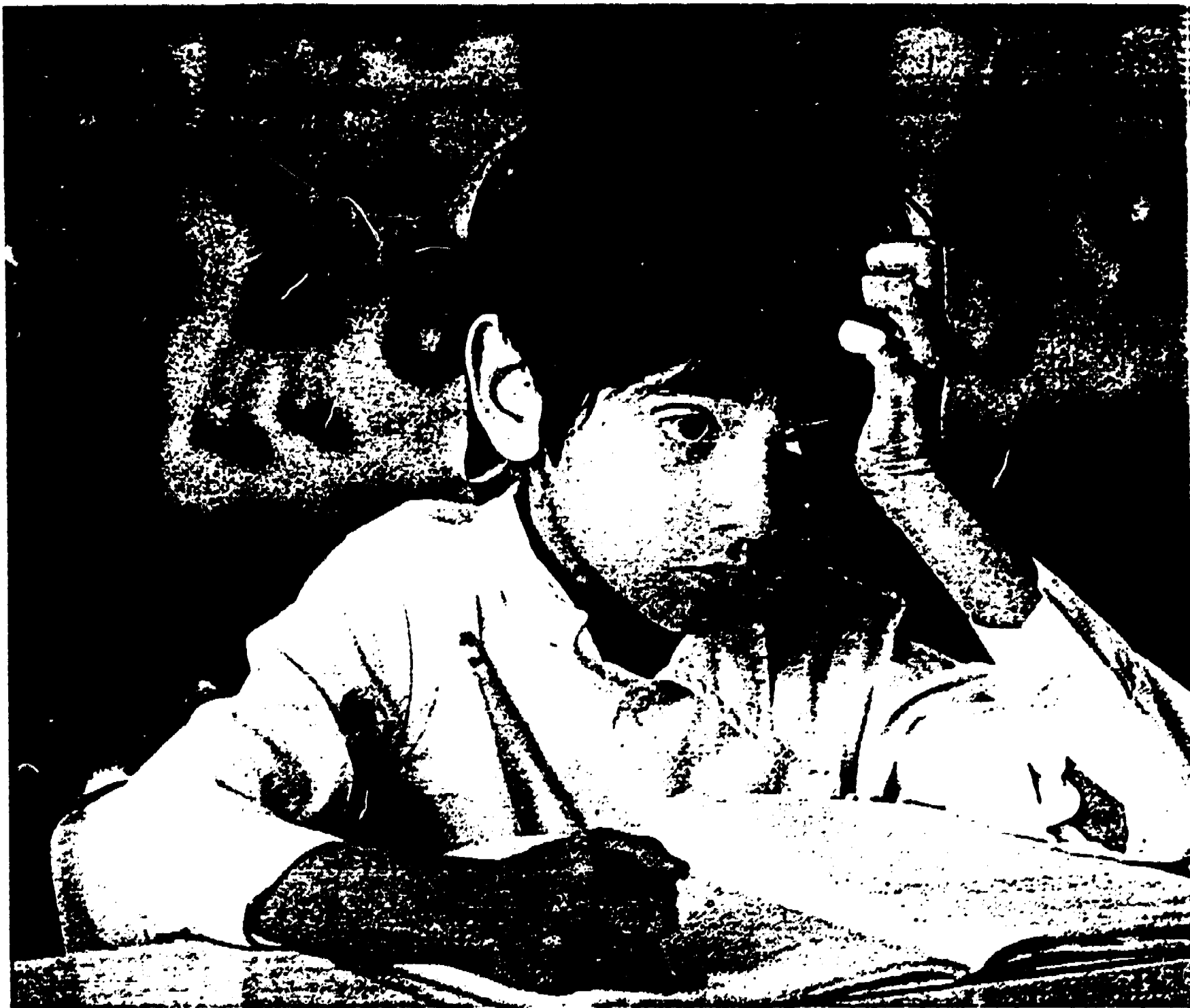
My friends were learning but I was getting far behind.

It causes you to lose interest.

I dropped out for working reasons.

**From Making Sense: A Resource Guide for a Collaborative
Learning to Read Process**

**By Wendy Luttrell
North Carolina State University
Raleigh, North Carolina**



BILL PIERCE

THE BAFFLEMENT OF A NEW LANGUAGE

My First Day at School in Canada

I came to school with my father and mother and sisters and my aunt. I thought the school could be bigger. The schools were bigger in Lebanon, like apartments. When I saw my teacher, the secretary said my teacher's name, but I didn't understand what the teacher said to me.

The first morning the teacher explained to me what we were going to do. She explained it to me in English and French. I understood her French.

I thought, "I am not going to learn English," when everyone was talking English. I felt sad. I wanted to learn English to speak with my friends. I like to have friends. The teacher took me to the girl who was my first friend. Nadine was my first friend.

One girl said to me, "What's your name?" I thought she said, "Wash your name," and I didn't know what "wash your name" was. Then I thought and thought. And then I think she said, "What's your name?" and I answered. And then I went to recess. Two kids held my hands and showed me where the washroom was and they said, "Washroom," but I didn't understand. When I went in, I understood "washroom."

I was so happy at noon because I had an English teacher. I felt the English was going to be easy for me.

From Come With Us
Toronto Public Schools
Women's Educational Press, 1978



Yolanda Medina

I went from kindergarten to third grade here.
Kindergarten and first grades were at one school,
and then from second to third, I went to Miller.
Then I went to P.R.
Then I can back here and I went to Miller
and finished sixth grade.
Then I went back to P.R. for seventh,
but finished seventh grade in Ohio.
Then I can back to Penn Treaty for eight and ninth.

I remember, I had trouble coming back to school,
in sixth grade (in Philadelphia).
I used to know the answers, but in Spanish,
I couldn't say it in English.
So that's what got me confused.
And then, in P.R., I'd know the answers in English,
But couldn't say it in Spanish.

The teachers didn't know what was going on,
because I didn't tell them.

They used to call me "Turista" in P.R., my teachers,
Because I used to come and go, come and go.
They said that over there I was going to learn in Spanish,
and over here, in English,
And they think it's better over there than over here.
They used to get mad at my father.

I'd always say, "I'm not going to pass."
But I'd always pass.
I'd get nervous and confused and scared.

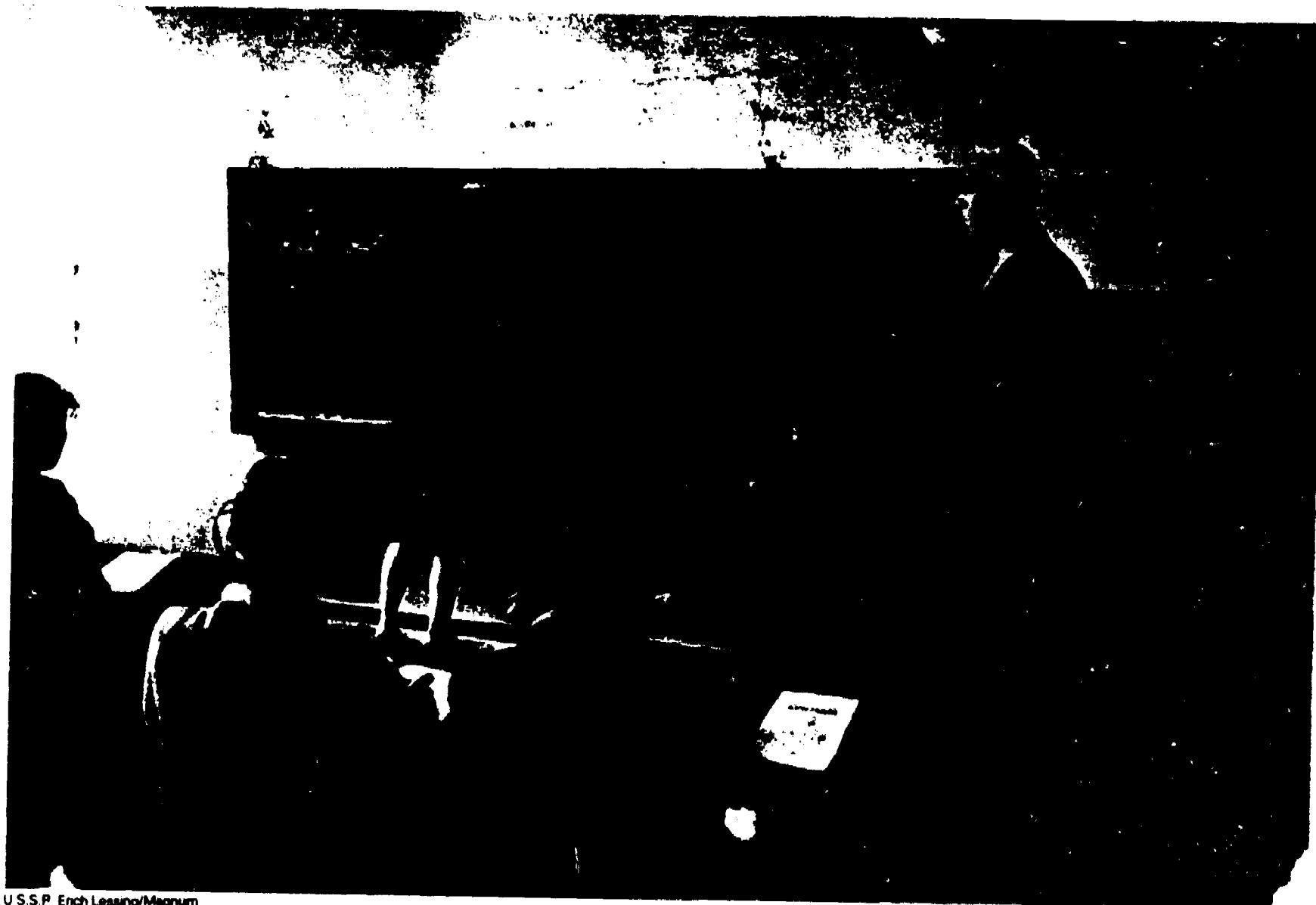
When I went to Ohio, I didn't know anybody there,
I'd go to the room and do my work.

My first school experience

When I was 5 years old, I liked to watch the children going to school. I remember one day I asked my mother, "Why don't I go to school?" and she answered me that I was still a child.

My house was near the school. So one day, I went to school by myself. When I met a teacher I asked her the same question: "Why can't I come to school?" and she answered, "Because we don't have enough desks." After that, I went back to my house, and the following day, I took a small, old chair from my house and I went to school. When I entered the classroom (it was the fourth grade) all the children watched me and started to laugh at me. I started to cry and cry immediately.....

The teacher asked me, "What are you doing here?" But I couldn't say anything because I was crying so much and I decided to go back home and forget about school.



U.S.P. Erich Lessing/Magnum

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My experience in school

When I went to school for the first few years I remember when the teacher sent me to the board. I felt nervous and if I made a mistake the other students sometimes laughed at me. Many times I fought the school. Many times I felt alone because I was shy but I don't care nothing. I wanted to learn and I did.

When I was a teenager, I went to school. I liked everything because my group shared very well.

It's funny. I remember one teacher because she didn't like our group. She said, "this group is intelligent but you don't like to take class with me. You sit outside under a tree. She was sad but I feel love for all teachers. They are good with us.

When I have to go, I miss my school and partners too.

Now in this country, there are some classmates. Sometimes they visit me. I feel good.

My best experience in school was when I had an opportunity to be in a theater for a school play. And the worst experience was when I fell down from a tree in the school yard.

About Languages

Lucia's Story

My name is Lucia. I am from El Salvador. I came to Boston in 1981. I have one son. My son is eleven years old. He is Norteamericano. He speaks English. He speaks Spanish but he doesn't like to speak Spanish. He doesn't read or write Spanish. He doesn't listen to Spanish music. Sometimes he is impatient because I don't speak English. Sometimes I think he is embarrassed because we come from another country.

My father came to this country alone. He saved his money to bring us here. He worked two jobs. He came home late and he left early. Every day.

My father said when he came to this country he ate ham and eggs for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Those were the only words he knew. He doesn't eat ham and eggs anymore.

My mama said when she came to this country she only knew three words: "No speak English."



4-29-87

At home

My son and my daughters speak English sometimes in the home.

I do not understand sometimes.

They speak Spanish to me.

I help my son with the home work.

When he brings from school for example his Mathematics.

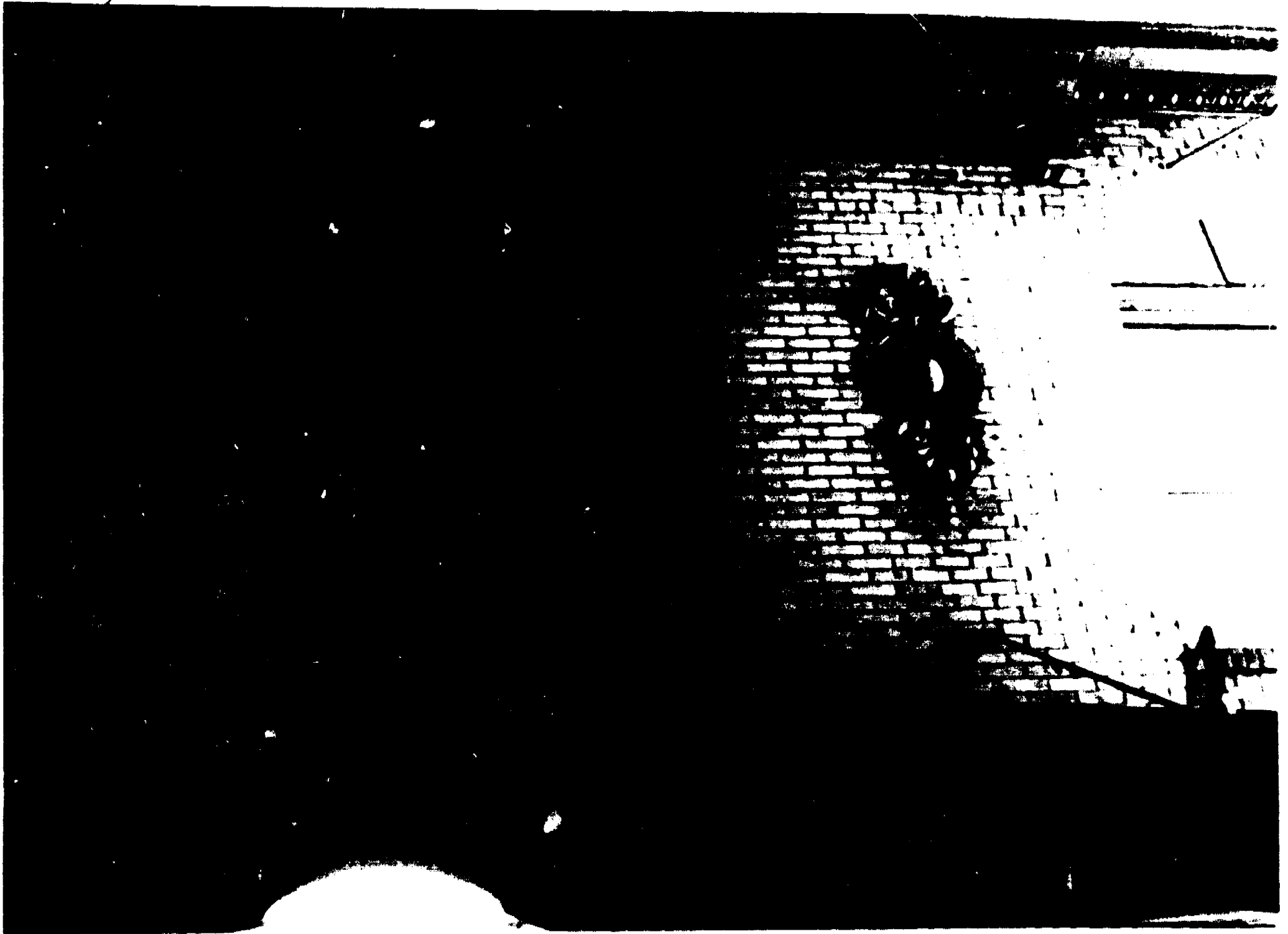
He also helps me with my English Homework.

Sometimes the people speak Spanish when I go to the clinic. For some appointments I speak English. The people understand me.

When I speak English and the people do not understand me. This is not very good for me I feel sad.

Piedad

My husband speaks to me in English. And I understand everything he says to me but I don't speak to him in English because I don't want him to see my mistakes because I am embarrassed in front of him. He speaks to me in English and I speak to him in Spanish. Only I speak in English to my daughter and the people in the street or when I go to the hospital or my daughter's school because her teacher speaks English.



I don't feel good when the people in the street speak to me in English because I understand - everything. but I can't speak good English. My son and my daughter speak only English but they speak to me in Spanish. When I speak on the telephone with my doctor or my social worker I speak English. but not good English but they understand me. Maybe in future I can speak English with everybody.

Carmen Medina



When I first came to the United States, I lived in California. I didn't speak English, and I didn't open my mouth for a week. I worked as a housekeeper and when the family left the house I never answered the telephone and when the doorbell rang I hid in the kitchen. The thought of speaking this crazy language made my knees shake.

Now I have lived here 3 years. Talking on the telephone is a breeze. Most people are pretty easy to talk to, but sometimes I still get frustrated when I can't express how I feel.

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JAMES
PETER D'ANGELO
CHUCK DELMORER
11

DAVID GOTTLIB
WALTER ZACKERSON

"We left the ranch to go to school. We left that desert and went to Feibro. The classes were all in English. Later I came to Cuchillo and they taught me in Spanish, see? We learned Spanish from our uncles, from our dad. And we all know Spanish.

That was nice because now a lot of people, children don't know Spanish. Why don't they teach them in both languages? They only teach them in English, and little by little they lose their own language. One of my great-grandchildren knows Spanish real well, but the other one won't even try. He doesn't even want to speak Spanish. They tell him, "Speak Spanish to your great-grandma because she doesn't know English." "I can't," he says.

My grandparents didn't even know how to read or write. But my grandmothers knew how to cure many illnesses. My grandmother, my mother's mother was a curandera. We never saw a doctor but they would treat us, and we would get better. From them we all learned a little about medicine.

Juanita Sedillo

From Las Mujeres: Conversations from a Hispanic Community
By Nan Elsasser, Kyle MacKenzie and Yvonne Tixier y Vigil
The Feminist Press, New York, 1980