

IOM - IOM

Historias
de **sobrevivencia**



IOM - OIM

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The testimonies included in this book correspond to the research developed by the International Organization for Migration, Regional Unit against Trafficking in Persons for Central America and Mexico, in 2008 entitled "The experiences of women victims of trafficking in persons in Central America and the Dominican Republic and the performance of institutions" at the request of the Council of Women Ministers of Central America (COMMCA) with the support of the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AECID).

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General coordination: Ana Hidalgo

Editing: Ana Beatriz Fernández

Illustrations: Xiomara Blanco Layout and

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Presentación:

For some, it was the first time they had spoken about their experience. For others it meant extracting painful memories from memory. In all cases it was a painful exercise, charged with mixed emotions of anger and suffering.

For this reason, we can only thank the women who voluntarily agreed to share their life stories with us and who opened their hearts so that we could generously learn from their pain.

The stories of survival that are recreated in this book were shared by women from different countries in Central America and the Dominican Republic as part of the research process developed by the IOM, at the request of the Council of Women's Ministers of Central America (COMMCA) with the support of the Spanish Agency for Development Cooperation (AECID), in 2008 entitled "The experience of women victims of trafficking in Central America and the Dominican Republic and the performance of institutions".

With this publication we wish to pay tribute to the bravery, determination and courage of these women that has allowed them to survive the experience of modern slavery with dignity and at the same time be a source of hope for other women.

We are grateful to the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration of the U.S. Department of State (PRM) for their support for this publication.



Robert Paiva
Regional Representative
Regional Office for Central America and Mexico
International Organization for Migration (IOM)



We used to go to the pastor's church quite a lot and we had him confidence here in the family. The pastor always took girls to the United States or to Mexico to work there. So, I hooked up with some friends to go there and he took us there to make the trip safer. He told us not to worry, he even came to talk to me.

family, because he was going to take care of us, we were going recommended by him. He promised me that he was going to work and then I could go to high school and learn English, that we were going to a Christian family who would take care of us and get us jobs; he even showed us pictures of the family. He left phone numbers here in the house, which, as it turned out, were false.

My family gave her 5,000 (local currency) to take me and when I was already there, I was going to give her more, because I was supposed to pay the rest with my work. That time we were 9 girls, we all knew each other because we are from here. We went "engavillada" to go to work, because everyone wants to improve, and we all thought, including our families, that we were going to improve. The other thing is that we had confidence in the pastor because some of the girls he had taken with him had returned or were there and said they had worked and were able to work.

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¹Deceived.



"No one here imagined what the pastor was doing.

For us he was a great person, he opened the church here.

Who would distrust him?"

It could be that they had better luck or that they did not say what they were doing out of pity. No one here could imagine what the pastor was doing. For us he was a great person, he opened the church here. Who would distrust him?

I was born and raised here, I wanted to go out and see other things, to work, but not like what happened to me, not like that. My family is good, I have four siblings and we have never lacked anything, but that's how you are, you want to have what you haven't lost... but you don't appreciate that until you find yourself in those situations. We were nine girls and they took us to another country. We all had papers, I won't tell you if any of us were carrying fakes, but we were all legal. We spent two days there in a hotel and then traveled to the border, where we were met by two men and a woman. We continued with the pastor and stayed there for another two days. The ugly part was when they told us that they were taking us to the United States by truck, that was horrible. We were a bunch of us in that truck with two little windows, nothing else, and we couldn't see anything. They gave us water and food when they stopped, and we took advantage of those moments to fill our boats. That is what is most distressing, the confinement. My surprise is when they take us off, I calculate that we have been in the truck for about four days, and the pastor is no longer there. They tell us that it is Texas and that we are going to work there.

That's when I started to get scared.



Then they took us to a hotel again and we couldn't leave, they said it was while we were in a hotel.

they got us jobs. There were other girls there who were just like us. We talked a lot, some were Mexican and others from Guatemala, from what I remember. Those days were horrible because we didn't know what was going to happen. Before starting the trip I was afraid, but I felt safe because of what the pastor had told us, but afterwards I was really afraid, because the other girls did not know what was going to happen and what they were going to do to us.

The worst part was the confinement and that they told us that we could not go out because it was dangerous because of the migra².

They came one day and told us that they had found us a job, but that it was in a bar and that we had to do several things. I said no, that I didn't like that, then they told me that if I didn't want to they were going to throw me out on the street because they no longer had money to support me, that they couldn't send me back because it was another expense and that I had to pay them because I had already gone all the way to Texas. I became desperate.

Then they took us to a room and lowered us down like a warehouse, where we were to sleep and from which we could not leave because they would do things to us. At the end they forced us to do sexual things, to dance naked, to attend to the men. We were always watched. Sometimes all the girls would get together and we would start crying, as long as they didn't listen to us because they would get upset, threatening us that they were going to rape us.

10 Migration.

During the time I was there we stayed in the same place and I was only friends with the other girls in the bar. We would talk about what we were going to do next or what we could do to escape. We always thought about that, but only some of us, because others were under consent or maybe they were used to that kind of life. It's horrible. I was looking, I was looking for a way to escape, because nobody can live in that situation where you can't even look the other way or cough because you are being watched. You can't live like that.

After all that I told them, they threatened that they knew my family here and that they could do something to them if I wanted to escape. I never saw the documents³ again, and one thought about it because they said, "Where are you going to go without papers? They threatened us with the police and with the migra, that they were going to keep us as their wives and that we should forget about our family. They told us that if we worked there for two years, they would let us go out and do whatever we wanted, but first we had to pass this "test". When they punished one of us, they locked her in a room, they didn't feed us and sometimes we were hungry for up to two days.

I felt alone, I felt that at any moment I wanted to escape they could kill me. Luckily, one of the girls managed to get out of that place, she was picked up by her parents who lived in another state. I managed to make a call and told her to remember me, so she was the one who helped me. She passed the word to immigration and they came to bring us. The police came to the room and I don't know what happened to them.

Passport.

They told the people because it was in English, but the people from the salon told us that they were coming to bring us back and they took us out. There were five of us from here in town and the owners were taken away in another car. I didn't find out later but I think they were imprisoned for having us in that place.



We told them what had happened to us and they told us not to worry, that they were going to return us to our homes.

I was happy, I felt good to be taken care of. They passed me to a psychologist the first day and I was in a center with other women who were going through the same situation as me. The immigration police treated me well too, I would be a liar if I said I was treated well.

they treated us badly. In this care center they kept us for about ten days while they were arranging the papers to bring us back.

They brought me back here, my family came to bring me that day and we came the next day. For that part I had a lot of support from my family.

People were very surprised because they did not expect that. In the end, the pastor was imprisoned here.

I still haven't recovered, it hurts me a lot. It is hard to accept that it happened to you, because you always hear, see the news and think that it happens to other people and that it will never happen to me. I am still very afraid for myself, for my family when that man gets out of jail, I don't know, I am afraid.

For now, I am giving myself time to recover, rest and forget what

happened. I have received a lot of support from my family, I have gone to the hospital for check-ups and I have come out well. In the future, I want to continue studying and improve my life, be well with my family and myself.



One day, my cousin came home and told me that her family was going to support. We are related on my grandfather's side, her grandmother is my grandfather's sister. She came there to talk to my father, who gave permission for me to come with her. They told my father that I was going to study. I was in the kitchen and I was listening to everything, because I didn't want to

but since I was going to have the opportunity to study, I let my sister convince me, because: there, in

What was the village going to do? And being in another place, one gets over it.

She told my dad that I was not going to lack anything and that she was going to put me in school at night to study. My dream was to continue studying, so I said yes. The day my cousin arrived, I remember well, it was very hot.

She arrived in the morning, was attended to, was given coffee and bread and we had lunch. After lunch she told me that she had come because she needed me to work for her and that she was going to put me to study. Then I asked her to talk to my dad because he was the boss, and I talked to my mom and my sister. That day in the afternoon they took me to the city. I was sad, because half that I wanted to leave, half that it was the first time I left the house and I was afraid. My parents told me to behave well, to obey and all that.

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"My dream was to continue studying,

That's why I said yes.

I worked at their house, getting up at four in the morning to make breakfast and school snacks for the children. I stayed at home all day washing, ironing, cooking and taking care of the children. After about six months, they put me to work cleaning in a grocery store, but they didn't pay me anything. When I asked for the money, she told me to be thankful "that you are not on the street and that here at least you have food".

Where I slept was like a cellar, small, dark and even the lock was bad, I couldn't lock it properly. Then they wouldn't let me go out, they locked the gate because of the thieves, but I couldn't go out anywhere, not even to the grocery store; they ran errands and since I didn't know them, you know. I didn't have a day off either, that didn't exist. Every day I worked at whatever they sent me to do; on Sundays when I was at home, I had to work twice as hard because since they were there all day long, I had to be constantly cleaning and cooking.

At the beginning they gave me money to call my parents and they went with me to the community phone. But I was only able to communicate twice because after that they wouldn't let me call them. They had me under control. I couldn't stand being like that without money, because they didn't pay me, and later, that school thing was just a lot of bullshit⁴, they didn't give me a job and on top of that they gave me that other job without paying me. What made me sad was that I could not leave the house and I could not call

my parents. The few times I called them, I didn't want to worry them because I knew that they would be worried.

Lies.

I told them it was okay because I didn't want to go back to the village like that, they were not going to let me go out again. My body always ached because it was hard work. I was used to getting up early, but not for other things like moving big things, washing that pile of clothes, pulling water. I got burned because I wasn't used to the stove. Anyone would be sad in this situation. What made me more upset was being away from my family, the confinement, not being able to go out anywhere. Don't believe it, that kills anyone more than the beatings, because it is more mental, it is more the suffering, the emotional, that you are not at home and that you are like a prisoner, without being able to tell anyone or your family. Anyone gets sad.

I didn't seek help because I didn't know anyone, I had no friends and I was afraid that if I said anything, they would tell my cousin and she would punish me. One day a friend from school came home from school to work in the city in the maquilas. My mother asked her to bring me some things because they hadn't been able to communicate for days. So my friend came home on Sunday morning and I was very happy to see her.

I told my friend the things that had happened to me and how I was doing. We were talking at the gate because it was locked because they were at the beach and I was left looking after the house. I told her that I had been in that situation for seven months and she told me that next week I could go with her and we agreed on a day when she was free so we could make the move. The following week she arrived and I, with my chiringos5 , went to the house with her.

16 Belongings.

I jumped over the gate, tore my dress, got some scratches because the fence had glass in it and went with her to her house.

When I returned to the village, the lady had already gone to look for me, but I had called dad so he wouldn't get scared, I told him I was at my friend's and told him the situation. They understood and told my cousin that this was not the deal and she went back angry, but I never went back to that house. I have decided that maybe one in the house only eats beans and tortillas, but she eats them in peace, she knows it is her house and no one is getting in her face.

Now I feel good because I am still young and I can get ahead as my family tells me. Now I work in a house, but I am studying on Sundays. If you were to tell me what I want, I think it's what everyone wants: a house, to be with my family, to be able to decide about my things, to be able to buy the things I want. But I also want to be in good health and to be able to be somebody in life. I want to be somebody in life.





About three years ago, here in the colony there was always a woman when my mother was not there (at that time my mother worked outside). The lady, a beautiful woman, would look for us young girls to go to work in a gazebo⁶ -that's what she said- and that we would earn money⁷ for Easter time, when there was more work, she said.

her. I told my mother, but she told me that first she had to talk to the lady to give me permission, because I was cipota⁸; and that's what we agreed on.

A week later the lady came, on a Wednesday, I remember well. She told me that she was going around, that I should go with her at once, that I should just put my things in a suitcase for a few days, that we were going to come back. The truth is that my desire was to get ahead, to help the family because I am the oldest of my siblings and we are poor, I thought that by working I could help the children and my mother who works in houses. So I was excited

for the pastillo⁹ I was going to win, I said yes and went with her.

We arrived in town and up to that point everything was normal. She took me to eat, but I became suspicious because we got to a place like a cantina and she told me to wait for her outside. After a while, she came back and took me inside. She told me that she was going to leave me there while she went to a cousin and that I should wait for her there. I didn't like the place because as I said,

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Sale of meals. Money. Girl. Money.

*"I felt my life in danger all the time since I
walked into that place."*



It was a cantina and I felt strange there. I had accepted the lady's offer because she offered me a job and I said: "with the money I earn I can buy my little things and my mother doesn't have to worry". But you can't imagine what you're going to do.

They put me in a room to wait for the woman. Then the owner of the canteen arrived and they sent me to a lady who brought make-up and a dress. I allowed myself to be made up, but I didn't want to wear the dress because it was very low-cut and brightly colored; the lady told me that I had to wear it because that night I had to start working. My surprise is that I asked her if the other lady was going to come for me, because I was going to work in a gazebo, but the lady told me that she was going to start working in that canteen that day and that it was a brothel.

The lady had sold me for 2,000 (local currency). Look, at that moment, I was crying, screaming for my mother, asking why I hadn't told her. The lady told me that I better shut up because there were punishments for the cipotas who misbehaved. I kept crying. Then another guy came to tell me that I had to work that night and not to ruin my lipstick, because I would have to pay for it later anyway. I didn't listen to him and kept crying. Then he hit me, he hit me on my back, on my buttocks and on my head. That day they didn't force me to do anything, because I spent the whole night crying. The other days they had me selling beers in the bar, but after four days it was my turn, they forced me because I was a virgin. It was one of the customers who said I had paid well. I don't like to talk about it, it brings back memories I'd

like to forget.

They never told us how much money our jobs generated, but they did look at how much we spent. You always went into debt for dresses, for makeup, for food and for being there, as if you were in a hotel. And how to claim something? They wouldn't let us leave because they had paid for us and we had to cancel the debt, but for me it took forever.

The things I went through, I don't wish them on anyone. They threatened me that they were going to kill me or that they were going to leave me there with the clients so that they could do whatever they wanted to me, as punishment. Sometimes they gave us drugs, coke¹⁰, to make us feel numb and make it easier, I don't know, but they did give us drugs and they also charged us for that. I felt my life in danger all the time since I entered that place. From the threats, the fear I always had was that they were going to do something to me, I was afraid for my life, but sometimes that doesn't matter because, I'm going to confess, several times I wanted to kill myself when I saw the situation I was in and how I had gone there.

What screwed me the most was emotional, you understand, because I had other ideas about what I was going to do. I was going to work, it was going to be my first job and from there, well, I fell into that, like a bad woman. It is not easy and worse for me as a girl who had only had boyfriends, but nothing serious. There were about two times I wanted to kill myself because I was so disappointed: once I cut myself with a Gillette¹¹, but I didn't do much, I didn't know how to do it, I was afraid. The

Cocaine. Razor blade.

Another one I tried it in my veins too, but they took me to a clinic they have and they cured me. That was the hardest thing of all, the disappointment, like depression, that one feels that one is worthless, as they say in the street, that life is worthless. Once I tried to escape because they were careless and left a window open; it was about eleven o'clock at night,



I remember. I jumped out of the window and started running. I ran away and ran like crazy, I don't know how far I ran. I wasn't wearing shoes or anything, I was barefoot, I got to the road and I was happy when I heard the sound of a car. I started waving at them, but it was them (the traffickers) coming to get me. They beat me and forced me to return. These are things I don't even want to remember.

At that time I just wanted to die. But one day I was lucky. Every time there were police searches they took me from where I was to another place. In one town they rescued me; my mother even came along, mind you! She had become friends with one of the policemen. From going so much, they leaked that they had me there, as everything is known among policemen. They took a patrol car for the operations, but soon the owner of the brothel arrived, he was gay and maybe that's why he saw my mother and said to me: "Look, I'm going to let you go because I feel sorry for you and I feel sorry for your mother who is asking for you".

I couldn't believe it, it seemed like I was dreaming and then I saw

my mother. I was crying, just as scared and sad for the others who stayed there, but I was happy because I saw my mom. Imagine, a year and a half! She

He hugged me, we cried and the guards told me how my mother had been looking for me. We came back in the back of the paila¹² because we couldn't fit and I was talking to my mother, and asking for forgiveness, she understands me, because I shouldn't have left without permission and maybe that's why what happened happened to me happened, but I was happy because I was coming home.

I went back to my neighborhood, to my home, but one cannot go back to being the same. I feel marked and sometimes people don't talk about you, but you imagine they do. There are always people who talk, who understand, but I don't care about that anymore. Before I couldn't say that I was happy at home, but at least nobody forced me to do things I didn't want to do. Now I am with my partner and my mother, so I am fine because I have a job and health, which is the most important thing.

I feel better, but there have been consequences for my past. My partner sometimes throws in my face that I am a prosti¹³, that he is jealous because of that. I have been a victim of domestic violence, but I have put up with it for my children. Once the police came to take him away because he almost killed me, but I am still with him.

One always wants to live better, mainly for one's children, but here I go. I want to finish studying, give my children a better life, support my mother, well, so many things that one dreams of, I want to be better than I am now. My advice to women is that they should not let themselves be fooled, that they should be trained about this so that they don't fall easily with just anyone, that they don't trick you¹⁴ out of necessity, for a job.

Drawer in the back of a car.

Prostitute. ¹⁴Deceive.



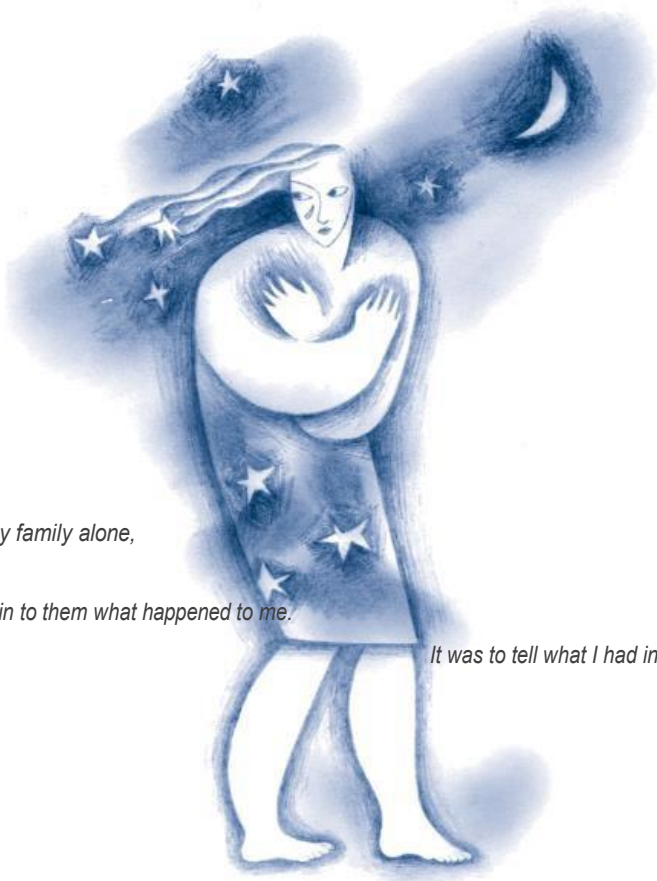
I was working in a factory, I was 20 years old at the time. In a disco I met a guy who asked me what I was doing in a factory, he told me that I was very pretty, that I had a nice body and how I was living on 900 colones per month; that he could give me a better life, that he could invite me to go to Toronto, to Canada, to

to work there. He asked me if I could paint houses, if I could paint a house like a man. And I told him that if it paid well and if it would get me out of poverty, I would go. So, I went to Canada.

They locked me in there. I was carrying my bag and when the gentleman left, I went to look for it and it was gone. I went out and the man was gone. After a few days, I cried and cried, and I told the guy at the store that I didn't understand why that guy had done that to me, that he had cheated me. And he told me "but you will see that you will do very well, you will not regret it". He told me that I had to pay him some money¹⁵, which he had paid to my friend for leaving me there, and that I also had to pay for his plane ticket.

I wondered how many men I had to be with to pay him and how I was going to get out without a passport. I said:

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"I had to face my family alone,

explain to them what happened to me.

It was to tell what I had inside me.

"Well, no way, I am a pinched woman¹⁶ "...although, not so much because I was deceived, but at least there I got a little bit out of jail¹⁷. And I told him: "I am going to pay for all the things you paid for me, but I need you to help me find my passport". He told me no, that his friend who had come from my country had it. I cried all night.

The next day I became super friends with a Nicaraguan girl there in the store. That girl slept with me and listened to me. She had a son, I have a son, and more than anything she cried for him, she had pictures that I showed her and I'm sure she was shocked. And one day she told me: "I'm going to help her, but God help us if the old man finds out, because he will kill me and send my sisters to kill me". She had a sister there, but they were not in captivity.

She put me in touch with my country's embassy.

It seems that she went and asked for help, but they didn't want to believe her at first because she is Nicaraguan. The big guy from the embassy said he was going to go and see if it was true. He asked her my name and came to the premises to see me. He came to the room and explained to me that he was Costa Rican, that he wanted to help me, that if I had papers, how could I prove that I was me. I told him: "this is my mom, my dad, we are from Perez Zeledon, this is my ID, I have a son, these are my sisters". So, he went out to talk to the man and I stayed in the room but I was scared to death. After a while he came with the man to the room and told me: "take your things and leave".

26¹⁶ To be in a state of alertness.

Idem.

My return was like deportation. I had no money to pay for the ticket, so what they did was to send me to immigration and they deported me without papers. My family did not know what day I would arrive. I called home to tell them that I was fine and that I would be arriving in my country at any moment.

When I arrived at the airport nobody was waiting for me because they didn't know I was arriving. The guy who was bringing me there turned back, but he gave me money to pay for the bus. I took the bus alone and came home. After a nine-hour flight and a three-hour bus ride home, I had to face my family alone, explain to them what had happened to me. I had to tell them what was inside me.

We live in a house in the country but on the road, and when I arrived at the house, the one who saw me was a brother of mine, and he was screaming, but screaming. He was saying: "Mommy, Mommy, that's Sandra coming! He ran and hugged me and told me that they thought I was dead, because they said that it was not like me to get lost like that, so many months and without warning.

I told my best friends what happened to me. I told them: "you know, I tell them so that they will peel their eyes¹⁸, but if I didn't know that you were at risk, I wouldn't tell anyone because it's very ugly. I feel ashamed, I feel silly, and I tell them because I feel it is my duty. It was horrible to be in a room like a prisoner, as if I had done something wrong. I tell them to take care of themselves, not to

Be attentive.

to leave like I did, with illusions. I tell them not to believe the people who say they pay you for everything and then fix it, because things are not that easy.





There was an employment agency in my country that offered jobs abroad. I was going to work as an employee

domestic. My job application was accepted but they didn't explain where I was going; then in the contract it said I was going to work in that country. The agency recruited me and paid for my trip, which ended up being quite long. I signed

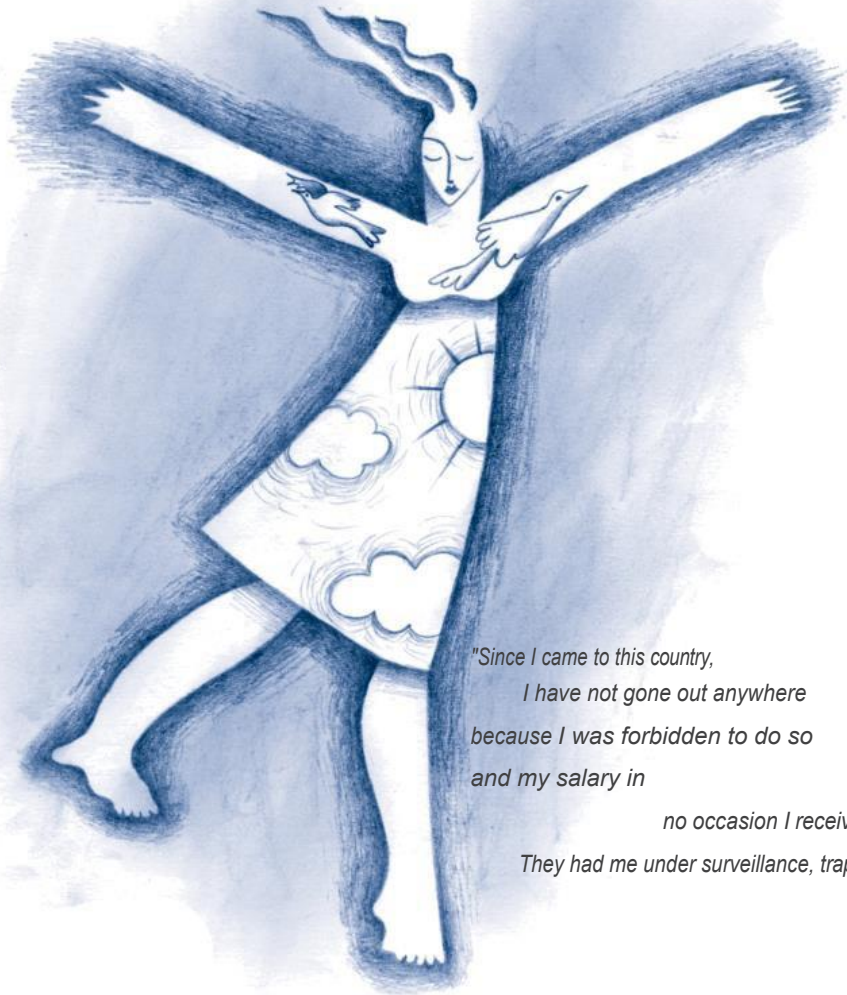
I got the employment contract and immediately a worker from an employment agency took me to the airport in the capital. There was also a young woman who was hired, but she stayed in another city. (Jani describes at this point the journey from her country of origin, the transit through others, and the arrival in the country of destination).

In the house of the man who hired me, my situation had nothing to do with what I was promised. The contract I signed said that I was to work in a country, but I was not told that I would be taken to another continent. I was told that I was going to earn a salary of one hundred and fifty dollars.

monthly, for domestic services, but they did not tell me where I would receive the payment. In the end, they did not pay me because they said they were sending it directly to my family, but that was a lie. The only thing I received was two hundred (currency of the country) on October 30 and November 30, and it was not payment for work but as a gift for the New Year in the religion to

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which I belong.



*"Since I came to this country,
I have not gone out anywhere
because I was forbidden to do so
and my salary in*

*no occasion I received it.
They had me under surveillance, trapped.*

I worked all day without rest for the masters. They mistreated me, beat me, and my husband spat in my face for not doing my job well. They gave me almost nothing to eat and forbade me to eat fruit or what the family ate. They gave me a tortilla with beans for breakfast, a lunch of rice and a piece of chicken, and at night, what was left over from the day's meal. Since I came to this country, I have not gone out anywhere, because they forbade me to do so, and I never received my salary.

They abused me psychologically and physically. I was abused by the man's wife. On one of many occasions, the lady hit my head against the wall because, according to her, I had not cleaned the bathroom. According to the gentlemen, I was not working well. The gentleman threw bottles of water on my face. He almost hit me in the face with the iron. When I said I wanted to go back to my country, the gentlemen calmed down and stopped hitting me. Apart from that, there was always surveillance from the security personnel. They had me under surveillance, trapped.

Approximately five months after I had been in the house, I was moved to a different work space, since the house has two floors. They took me to the second floor and among my duties I had to clean six rooms, wash clothes for ten people and clean the bathrooms. During the whole time I was in the house, they didn't give me a single day off, nor holidays, they kept me working all the time.

Yesterday I did my work until about one o'clock in the afternoon; at lunch time, taking advantage of the fact that we were alone, since the guards were having lunch, I went to the garage gate, and since it has an electric system, I pressed the button, it opened and I went out to the street. I stopped a cab and told the driver, POLICE. He took me to the police compound.

After this interview, the victim was transferred to a shelter run by an NGO that helps women victims of domestic violence. The police conducted a raid to free two other women who the victim claimed were under the same conditions and filed a lawsuit against the trafficker for not paying for the victim's services during the time she worked for them. The consulates worked to seek alternative support and coordination for the victim's repatriation. The victim is now at liberty in her country of origin.





My dad had a very strong character; when he was in the He used to give me a bad life, he would hit me for anything. I put up with it for a while and then I went to work in a neighborhood. But there was never a lack of things, because a man came on to me¹⁹. I didn't like him, but he chased me. People would make comments and tell my dad that I was talking to the man, that I was his girlfriend. So my dad, without

I found out, without seeing anything, he kicked me and with what he had he beat me. I left that house and went to work in a Chinese cafeteria in the center of town. The man was also there waiting for me when I left. His name was Juan and he is from the same neighborhood where we live.

When I got home tired, my father was waiting for me to hit me. Every day he would hit me and eventually I got bored. My mom always got involved and I always took her to my dad. My dad gave her a bad life because of me, because she defended me. And there was never a lack of bad people. A girl who came to the house a lot was the one who started to tell me to go out.

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¹⁹Courting.

"They had armed men there and if we didn't want to go with some man to have sex, they would beat us and then threaten to kill us with the gun."



On Sundays she would take me to the other side of the street and started to convince me that we should sell fresh produce. I listened to her, we were going to sell fresh produce²⁰, in fact, my mother would prepare it for me and I would sell it. Later, she began to win me over to a man and the man told me: let's finish selling downtown. Yes, I said, I also want to do something different and I got on the trailer.

He did us the favor of taking us so that we would not have to pay the fare, and since I was very ignorant, I trusted what she said, the girl's name was Elena. She was killed later. Well, I got on the trailer when I saw that near a river the man stopped the trailer and gave money to the woman. She stayed in the trailer while I told her: "I'm going to get off. Look how I'm coming, all dirty. I'm going to go wash my feet; because how is that, that I'm going to sell downtown all dirty...". The man got out and she stayed in the trailer. It was at that moment that the man abused me, hit me all over and grabbed me by force.

After I got off the trailer, Elena pulled me up by my hair and I went crying all the way; I didn't speak to the man or to her the whole way. I got off in the center and left for home. I arrived at the house stained with my foul²¹. My mom thought I had something to do with a man and gave me a (beating) and told my dad; then my dad hit me. He was so angry that he grabbed a machete and was going to hit me with it, but I grabbed his hand. I got my clothes ready, climbed out of the window and went to the street.

Refreshments. Refers to having been raped.

It was the first time I went out on the street. In the park in the center of town there was a car and a fat lady with glasses. I asked her if she didn't know where there was more work because I had already left the cafeteria. She said, "Don't be embarrassed because I'm looking for girls to work for me. I have a big restaurant. So they took me to a place where we stayed for a day and at night they took us to another town where we stayed for a day. From there they negotiated us²² to another place. That is where I was, you could say, for three or four years. Every time they moved us, so that we would not realize where we were, they brought us in crouched down²³.

We didn't know where we were.

They had armed men there and if we did not want to go with a man to have sex, they would beat us and then threaten to kill us with a gun. We had no peace of mind because they told us that they were going to kill us at night. And just like that place, it was the place of the traffickers, and although, thank God, they were later imprisoned, the man went free and they say he went to the U.S. She exploited us. She took us to all those places in a closed van. There were 15 of us and none of us knew where we were going.

I thought that if they told us we were going to wait tables, that's what we were going to do. We were ignorant. They ended up forcing us to smoke, to have sex. In that infernal bar, the woman gave us injections and pills so that we wouldn't turn out²⁵ , but I had an abortion.

²² Treated. ²³ Hidden. Expired. Becoming pregnant.

too. They would beat us when we didn't want to do such a thing and the little money they gave us, they would take it from us by force. When we hid rings, chains or gifts from clients, the lady would blow up the eye²⁶, break the mattress and take them out. If we didn't tell her where it was, she would grab us by the hair or threaten us that she was going to put our hands on the griddle where she cooked. That or that our punishment was to have sex with her brother, who was an ugly, dark, and horny man.

One day I decided I was going to run away. I was doing housework and the hose from the water pump pipe came loose. The woman hurt me so badly that I have a scar: she grabbed me with the hook they use to lift the griddle of the stove where they cook those hot plates and hit me. It left me purple and I bled a lot. And I couldn't take it anymore. So I decided to escape.

I went out the back way to the street, but I didn't know which way to go because I didn't even know where I was. When I crossed the street to the bush to hide, there was a cornfield and men working. Mrs. Blanca's sister was coming on a bicycle, because the woman had told her that "one of my lionesses escaped from me". Luckily, a very nice man told me that "one of my lionesses had escaped me".



It was already about ten or eleven in the morning and two or three hours had passed since I had escaped. Then the gentleman said to me: "wait here, stay down and don't show yourself because there are those men who could hurt you. I am going to the store to buy you water and a cookie". Then she told me that she was going to pay for my ticket to another country. Unfortunately they were looking for me and the peasants told them that I was there, hiding.

They grabbed me by the hair and kicked me a lot and kicked me with a pistol, so they carried me all the way. When I arrived at the house, the lady was waiting for me. She started to beat me, punished me by making me go with my brother and kept me under lock and key. She also punished me with some of that "dog tooth" chili that we had to eat when we did something they didn't want; instead of food, she gave us a cup of chili without tasting water all day.

I finally got out of the bad life when I was 18 years old. I was taken out by the nuns who rescued us through a very good man. He was aware of the bad life we were living and reported it in the city where it was published in the press, with a photo of us. He even told us: "have faith, girls, tomorrow at three o'clock the police and the Public Prosecutor's Office will come and they will save you, thank God". Then we saw the police cars on both streets. The lady wanted to escape with the man, but they stopped her. They had us under lock and key when they started to kick in²⁷ the door.



After we were released, they took me to the Public Prosecutor's Office to file a complaint, and although the lady had threatened me saying: "look, you daughter of a bitch, sooner or later I'm going to get out of jail and you'll regret it", I thought: "if not now, then never". And I said that there were other women. The lady was buying from some policemen and the Licenciado noticed and he said: "Wait a minute,

I don't want corrupt police, much less with this lady who has many crimes. So they put her in jail.

We went in a car from the Public Prosecutor's Office to bring the other girls. Some jumped to the other side because they were afraid, thinking it was something bad. We began to tell them not to be afraid, that they were saving us. And so little by little we got them all out. They took us to a city to the Public Prosecutor's Office, where they collected money for our food and clothes. That day they kept us in a hostel because they had no place to stay.

At that time we were 17 minors. They told the nuns if they could keep us here and they said yes. The next day they gave us lunch; we were here for about a year or a year and a half. They put up that electric fence because the lady's children tried to get in. They came that day and shot because their parents were in jail. They put police here, but they still shot and started shouting: "daughters of the big whore, they are leaving".

to regret it. They started throwing stones. The policemen climbed into the trees but were unable to harm us.

I was still having problems. I got sick with an intestinal infection from all the pills the lady gave me. I was hospitalized twice and the doctor told me I had a blood ulcer in my stomach from so much medicine, from being hungry and from so much chili.

After I was cured, I went to a garment factory. First we worked from 6 to 6, then from 6 to 9 at night and then until 12 at night. One night when I left work there were two men waiting for me. The men were in a little tree with machetes and black shirts. I kept walking, I was walking lightly, I was on this block and they were on the other block. They went ahead of me, two blocks from the house I was almost there. But, of course, on that corner, when I got to that intersection, there was a man with a small knife²⁸ who grabbed me. They were in black shirts, with their heads and faces covered, and the other one with a machete. They beat me and grabbed me by the hair, dragging me to the corner of the house. I grabbed the balcony and they told me: "let go of there, motherfucker, because I'll turn your arm around". I let go but they dragged me over the stones and took me to a house alone, above the field. They tied me up and beat me all over and I tried to untie myself. They threatened me that if I made a complaint later it would not be just two men, but more than 50 because their gang was big. What's more, they told me they knew my parents very well, they even told me my father's name.

They left me tied up and as best I could I untied myself. When I got home I said: "the men told me that if I moved²⁹ my mouth they were going to kill my father and kidnap my sister". So, out of fear, I told my dad not to go and report them, because my dad was going to report them. At that moment I told him the truth, crying, with everything that had happened to me, "I want to kill myself". My father told me: "no mi'ja, it was my fault" and asked me for forgiveness. In spite of what he had done to me, I forgave him. Thank God now he gets angry but he doesn't treat me like that anymore, he doesn't treat my siblings the way he treated me. He changed because he saw that with his temper he made me desperate, and that because of the blows I left.

I did not sleep at all because of the pain, I closed my eyes and looked at the men with machetes who were beating me while my mother cried: "no mi'ja, if you are here with us"; and I told her: "mother, I want to die, why do I want this damn life". She took care of me, but then I went back to the maquila to work. I didn't go out for breakfast or lunch, I just cried and people looked at me. From there I was advised to take one of those pills, Diazepam. My friend asked me to take just one and then it wasn't just one, I took 10, 15, up to 20.

They called the nuns who brought me home, kept me here for another time and took me to another town. They put me in treatment with a psychologist. Later, my husband, whom I married on the advice of the nuns, convinced me - because I told him I was afraid of men,

²⁹Spoke.

that he wanted me, that he wanted to formalize with me, that he didn't care about my past. In the end I got together with him, but it was difficult because of what had happened to me. I tell sister30: "it's not that easy for me to get over it". Although I have been with my husband for 7 years now, I still feel fear, I feel afraid. I cry in silence.

My dream was to leave home married. But not like this, as it happened to me. My husband drinks a lot and I suffer when he drinks. And I say, because I love him I put up with it, for my children, but there are times when I despair. I suffered so much and I continue to suffer more. There are times when I want to kill myself, I think I am worthless, but Sister Angelica says to come to therapy because they can help me. But I am always afraid, even though nothing has happened to me for years.

I would tell other women to realize what kind of people they are talking to. Well, look, they tricked me. They said they were taking me to a restaurant and you know how it turned out. I would tell them to be careful, because if they don't, they can go through the same thing we went through. Thank God and the nuns who got us out of there. If it had not been for them, we would not be free. Thanks to them we are free and the lady is back in jail.



It all started with a friend who told me that she was pregnant by a boy who lives in another country. She told me to go with her to the capital because the boy's father was there. That day we went to drink liquor in my city and then we went to the capital, to the father's place. We called him and he told us to go to his house. When we arrived, we

We went to drink and they poured something in our liquor. They put me to sleep and not my friend. She went well, because she had a stamp in her passport, and I didn't because I was 17 years old. I didn't wake up until we were already at the border of one country with another.

Since I wasn't carrying anything, they made me act like I was from there and I passed the border without any problems. When we got there, they left us stranded in the street. We walked in the street, under a bridge in one part of the city.

Afterwards we were calling her son's *apá boy*, so that he would bring us over. He wouldn't listen to us because he had a gay partner and didn't want my friend to look at him. We told him that we were going to turn ourselves in so they would send us back, so they promised us a job in a *chicharronería*³¹. We stayed there for three days, but then they transferred us to a night club. The women came down, some in dental floss, others in very exotic clothes.

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³¹Sale of fried pork with its skin.



*"I realized that my acquaintance
I was sold and
the club owners told me that I was
already their property."*

They told the owner that the police were going to arrive that same day to carry out an inspection, so they moved us to a discotheque, and so I spent three months in the night club, doing drugs, with men. If you didn't let them, they beat you, mistreated you. I realized that the father of my friend's son had sold me and the owners of the club told me that I was already their property.

We were always being watched. There were cameras, escorts and a cook who was supposedly good, but she was very bad and spied on us. When we didn't want to do something, we were mistreated by the clients and the owners of the disco. Once I was going to throw myself from the second floor of the club, I was crazy and drugged. In the end, I couldn't because I was scared and anyway, they were already seeing that I was going to throw myself off.

One night they had given me one, but a beating. They had put us in a private room with two men, but only to drug us, no sex. We were in there and we were overcome with ecstasy. We were overcome with desperation, a drug effect. It was already four in the morning so we went to bed, but after a while, my friend woke me up. The owner had already left and she was telling me that she didn't want to be there, that we should leave. We grabbed the suitcases from the second floor, jumped down and I fell on my buttocks and the other one bent her foot. When we ran out, we saw the cook, who was shouting that we had jumped. A man came out running after us, almost grabbed me and the other one let herself be grabbed because she couldn't do it with her bad foot.

I took a cab, but without suitcases because I left them lying around, and I told him that I had to get out of the cab. to take on excursions to my country. He had stolen a lot from me

I had put them here (in my vagina) with cocaine. When I got to where the tours leave, I looked for a bathroom at a Chinese guy's place, but he told me there wasn't one. So, I undressed in front of him and took my things off, but I didn't even know what I was doing because of the drugs. I called my family, at first I didn't remember the number, but then it came out. My brother told me not to move, that they were after me. An agent from INTERPOL, where my brother had contacts, picked me up from there.

They took me to the hospital, but they couldn't treat me because I was disoriented from the effect of the drug. Then they took me to the chicharronería where I had worked to ask how my trafficker had managed to get me out. The lady there was nice and told them how everything had happened. He was no longer there, he had disappeared, he had gone to another country with that girl, my supposed friend.

The next day, my brother arrived to bring me back after a lot of paperwork. A lot of paperwork was given to my brother because I was a minor and did not have any identifying documents to get me across the border. With the help of INTERPOL, I made it across the border and returned to my country with my brother.

I am very different now. I used to get along with everyone, but now it's not the same. I feel like no one puts up with my temper because I sometimes have a lousy temper and I don't put up with anyone either. It changed me to be there. I have had psychological care to recover, but it is difficult. Anyway, I thank the

I have been treated well and I need your help.



I was deceived. That woman, my ex-sister-in-law, came along, offering to help me. At that time my mother sold her house because she wanted a bigger house. A friend of mine told me that she was selling me a little house in a village, that she would give it to me favorably. Then, she offered me to go to the U.S. to pay for her house.

debt. I said yes, but then my ex-sister-in-law appeared and said, "I'll buy you the plane ticket, I'll get your passport and you'll go to work in Europe, in Spain". She made everything easy and nice for me. I was going to work as a domestic worker earning 1,200.00 Euros per month, with which I could easily

I decided to send her to pay for my house and to send for my family, so that they could eat and pay for the expenses of the house. I decided to go with her and she made the arrangements for me to leave.

I did not receive any money up front, the plan was to work to pay for her trip and then to earn money. I went from my country to Spain, all expenses paid by her. The two of us left alone and on the way everything went great. When we arrived in Europe, on the third day I asked her if I was not going to work where she had told me. She started to offend me. "You damned bitch, you came here to prostitute yourself, you come here to work for me!". I tell her: "But that wasn't the deal!

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You can't do this to me! He told me I had to do what he told me to do.



"Everything made it nice and easy for me."

She took off all the clothes I was wearing and started to dress me differently. My hair was long, she cut it and painted it in different colors. Then she bought me a cell phone and explained to me how she was going to work, that even if I didn't like it I had to learn, that she was going to teach me. I told him: "You better take me back to my country. Even if it's just rice and beans, I'm calm. No way. He bought me a cell phone that same day and put ads in the newspapers. "Caribbean girl does Greek, French and everything. An hour 100 and half an hour 50 (euros)".

She had barely finished showing me the ads when the cell phone was already ringing. She would answer because I didn't know how to answer the phones. She would say to the customers: "hello good evening. They are two girls, a Caribbean girl and a blonde. They do everything, Greek, French, and Cuban". I was the Caribbean girl, 25 years old, and the other one, already mature, was 32 years old. When I heard the doorbell ring, there was the first one to answer it. I said I didn't want to, but she threatened me, telling me: "you'll see what will happen if you don't do it". I had to do it because she beat me, mistreated me, didn't feed me. She would not let me send money to my family.

She would give me liquor to get me drunk and make me do what she told me to do. The clients beat me, mistreated me; they wouldn't let me go outside to tell someone to help me. At night, she sent me to a club to prostitute myself, the owner made me work from 9 at night to 7 in the morning. She told me that I had to get 40 men a day, that was the goal. I had to

give everything to her. She would check everything so that at

I had no money left. I would earn money and say to myself, "I'm going to run away," but she would always take it from me and keep me locked up.

I told her that I was hungry, that I was thirsty, but she gave me nothing. In that place I was alone, there was no one else. I had no help from anyone. I got sick while I was there, I had a fever and a cough. She told me that there was a client, that it was three o'clock in the morning and it didn't matter if I got sick, I had to get up and take care of him. I said no, but she grabbed me, slapped my face, pulled my hair, blew my mouth out and I had to work. I wanted to run away, I wanted to get help, but the truth is that in such a big country, I didn't know where a hospital was. My ex-sister-in-law was coming to my country and wanted to take pictures of me to show them to my family. While she was preparing her trip, I met a Cuban in the club who helped me, I don't know if God sent her to me. I asked him to buy me a ticket because God was going to bless him for the rest of my life. It seems that the Lord had pity on me and in the end he bought it for me. I had never asked for help from nobody, but after four months of being in Spain, I asked him for it.

I took advantage of my ex-sister-in-law's departure to escape from the apartment where she had left me. I went to a shelter that was half a block away from the apartment, in a church with nuns. I told them my case and asked for help, but the only thing they could help me with was to dress me, put on my shoes and feed me. I went back to the house to get my things, checked everything and found my passport, which she had forgotten.

From the hostel I asked the Cuban for help. For Christmas he took me to his house and I told them my problem. They gave me shelter, among all the people

I collected the money and they bought my return ticket. My ex-sister-in-law called me on my cell phone from my country and told me that I was arriving in Spain on January 11. Oh my God, I thought, how can I deal with this woman, she is going to find me here. So I talked to these people to expedite my ticket and luckily, I found out that a friend of mine was leaving on January 15 for my country. I stuck³² to her because I didn't know anything about the stopovers, because I had to go through three airports.

I stayed with the Cubans for another week during which they gave me clothes and shoes for the trip. The return home was difficult because I had to tell my family everything so that they would understand me. I was afraid but I had to tell my mom the truth about what I lived and went through, so that they would not believe that I had been in wonderland, because I was deceived. I told my family and they told me to go and file a complaint because she (trafficker) was bothering me. She said I owed her a lot of money, she even came to my house with a knife to tell me to pay her the money I owed her. She still scares me because when she gets out of jail, she might look for me. Thank goodness she got 9 years and 2 months in jail.

I currently work at home. I sell fresh produce, ice and cosmetics. My advice to others is that they should be aware of the type of people they are talking to, that if I have already been a victim, let there be no more, and if they have been hurt by traffickers who do not want them to talk, I believe that we have the right to defend ourselves. Don't keep quiet, because it is a terrible hell.



In August 2005, a man arrived in my village who was looking for girls to work in maquilas; the man was giving out papers saying that they needed employees. A friend of mine told me to go with the man because they were offering us 2,000 (local currency) a month. She wanted to leave because she wanted to leave just like me,

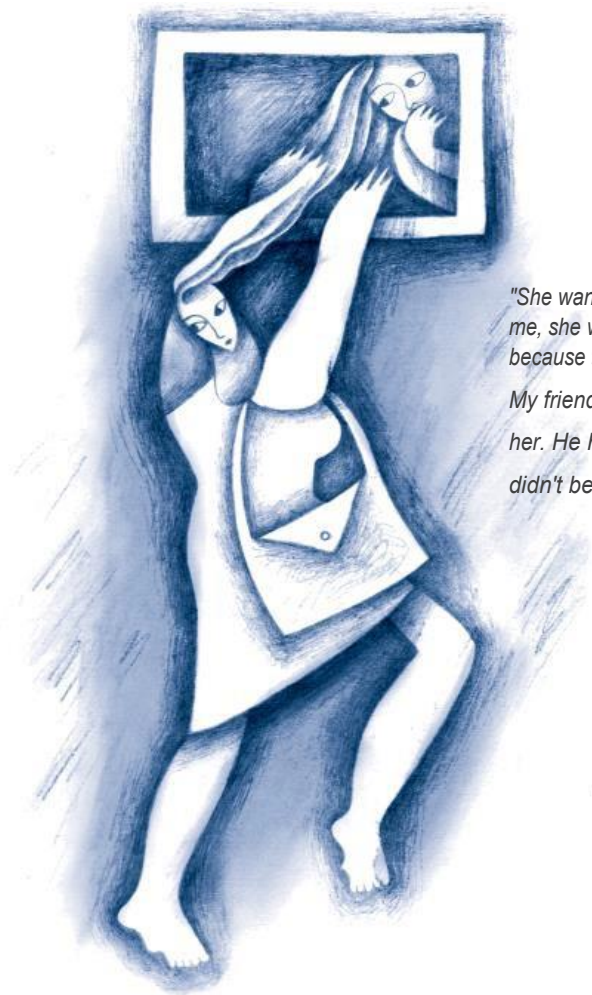
She was having problems at home because my friend's stepfather was bothering her. He harassed her and her mother didn't believe him. I also had problems

with my dad because he didn't want me to study, he only wanted me to work. He always took the money I earned and said it was for the house. Besides, he always wanted to hit me because he said I was easy. Well, I got tired of that; when I saw that my friend was willing to leave, I said: "I'm leaving too". The man told us that we had to be at the bus stop on Saturday morning, I remember, because my mother gave me some bread to eat on the way. Only she knew that I was leaving; I was very sorry to see my mother cry because I was leaving, but no way. I had already said yes.

In total there were three of us girls, me, my friend Susana and another girl called Elena, who was the youngest, she was 16 years old. I was 20 years old and

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Susana



"She wanted to leave because just like me, she was having problems at home because the


My friend's stepfather used to bother her. He harassed her and her mom didn't believe him.

I was a slave there.

19 years old. We thought we were going to take the bus to the capital because the man told us that the maquila was there, but he arrived in a big carrote and told us: "Well, girls, get on, we're leaving". The three of us obediently got on the carrote and he behaved well with us. He bought us food and water and gave us nice clothes to change into. The trip took about eight hours and the man talked and talked on the phone saying that we were going to get there. Finally we arrived at a town and the man said we were arriving (to the capital), but my friend Susana knew the city better and told the man: "but not here that city" and the man said: "here is better".

It was already dark and he took us to a nice house where the three of us slept in the same bed. The next day at dawn, I got up and when I wanted to go to the bathroom, I saw that the room was locked. I said to my friend: "You, look, they locked us in" and we started knocking and they wouldn't open the door. The other girl started to cry, my friend told her to shut up. It got dark and a man came and told us: "well girls, put on those clothes". They were short and very transparent clothes. My friend told the man why we had to wear those clothes and the man told us: "don't act like beasts, you know what you are for". The other duck, the smallest one, started to cry again and the gentleman told her: "shut up, motherfucker, or I'll tie your trunk". That's when we realized that we had been tricked.

The three of us started to cry. Two men came in furious, gave us a good thrashing³³ and shouted bad words at us: "You bitches, bitches,



Shut up or we'll kill you. That was the worst thing I ever experienced, I wouldn't wish it on anyone, not even my worst enemy. The three of us were locked in a room with no food, no bathroom or anything. They gave us a pot to pee and poop in³⁴. It was a nightmare. We didn't even sleep. About a week later they took us tied up to a place where several men arrived. They raped the three of us together, stripped us naked, did everything with us, without us even knowing it.

We could do nothing. That day I wanted to die, I felt dirty, sad, bad.

Several weeks went by and one day they separated us. An old man came and told us: "come on bitches, today I'm going to leave you to work". They took me to a place in a village and the others, who knows. I cried, but the woman in charge told me that if I kept crying they would keep me tied up. Other women there told me: "stop crying, get used to it, you can't get out of here. I was there for about three months. In that bar I met a guy who came to drink. I asked him to help me but he told me he couldn't because the manager might do something to him. One day he told me: "I'll help you if you have sex with me". I did it because I wanted to get out of there, but the wretch went to tell the manager and they gave me a hard time³⁵.

I could not communicate with anyone. A client gave me a cell phone and the manager took it away because another woman told her. I was a slave there. I never received a penny, they forced me to drink and sometimes I drank to forget. One day I slashed my wrists and the manager took me to a private doctor.

They locked me up for a whole week. After I recovered, I went back to misery.

Urination and Beating. ³⁶Drunk.
defecation.

I wanted to take my life but one day some girls³⁷ who were giving AIDS education came in, they wanted to enter the bar but the manager wouldn't let them. They were stubborn and told the manager to let them give us some pamphlets through the window. The manager said it was okay but to do it quickly. There on the flyer was a phone number. I had a client who loved me, I told him my story and asked him to please call and tell them what happened to me, because the pamphlet talked about human rights and where to file complaints. He did, he gave my real name, my mother's name and where I lived. They found my mother and she came to the city to rescue me, and some of my uncles came with her. There was a big mess in the bar but I finally got out.

When I got out, well imagine, I smelled freedom, because I was a prisoner and now I am free. That is why I thank these brave women from the non-governmental organization (NGO), they saved me. Just by finding my mother, what more could I ask for. Now, I feel good because a year has passed since then. My dad felt bad and apologized for what he did to me. He still feels guilty but I forgave him, I was also guilty for leaving. I'm smarter now, I don't let myself be fooled anymore. I am living back home with my parents, but when I come to the capital I come to say hello to the NGO. I am working in a coffee shop in an honest way and I feel that it is a new life, that I am different. I would recommend to other women to look carefully if they offer you the sun and the land, because it really is hell. If everything sounds nice, that's not right, things don't fall to you from the sky. Life is not easy or rosy.



An acquaintance of mine came to tell me that she had a job in a store in another country, where she was also going to work. She told me that I was going to earn enough money to be able to send money to my mother and the children. So I said yes. She came on the 23rd

April and that day we left. When we got there he told me: "look, these are your bosses".

Supposedly they were the owners of the store, but it was not a store but a bar. We went to wait for the bus there in a place and then we went to the bar. I didn't go alone, I went with a girl. I went with a girl.

They gave her the money so that she could pay for the two tickets and buy food for the two of us. Even though I already knew, she didn't talk to me about the job, she didn't tell me anything during the trip.

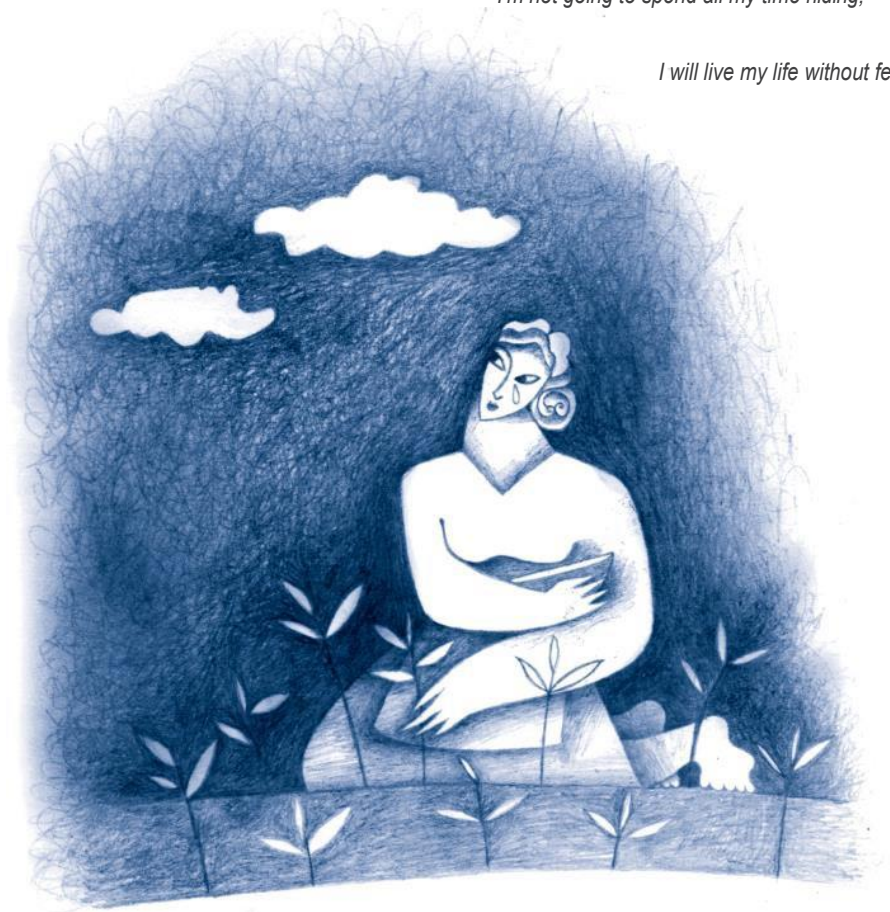
After crossing the border and arriving in town, we got off the bus to walk to the job. I saw the front of the place and told him "this is not a store, you see, it says Bar here". When I wanted to go back, I couldn't. "No," he said, "you're not leaving here, you have to behave yourself so you can leave."

They wouldn't let me leave. The one who came to pick me up here was in front of me saying: "here you have to face work". I realized that she had sold me out,

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"I'm not going to spend all my time hiding,

I will live my life without fear.



She had been given \$300 for me. I knew that because the lady herself told me that it was her property. "For me?", I said, "they didn't give me any money, nor my mother either". "But to the one who brought you to the house, yes," she told me, "we paid \$300 for you."

That's when the mistreatment began. They kept me locked up for a year and two months, fourteen months I was there. I worked with disgust and when I didn't want to work, they got angry and took me to the back to beat me. I endured about six (beatings), yes, six really hard ones. Afterwards, as they saw that I was decreasing my work and they didn't receive much money from me, they took me to the mountains to work.

I started working in a cornfield and a bean field, watering and fertilizing. But I did all the work³⁸. Then they kept me there for a month, very angry because I didn't work, and they sent me back up. I wanted to get out of there, but they told me that if I escaped, they would shoot me with a rifle.

They didn't even give us food, we had to ask the customers for money. If we didn't ask the customers for money to eat, we didn't eat. The owners were always suspicious that we had pisto from the customers. "Where is the money?" Once they searched and searched for the money, and found it under the mattress. Some gentlemen from the business came and beat us until they left us unconscious, purple. When we woke up, they told us: "go take a bath" and they didn't give us any food.

We were used to putting up with it, but the new arrivals were not. There were always a lot of new ones, between 14 and 19 years old. They couldn't stand being in there, without eating. We kept asking the customers for money even though we ran the risk of being beaten again.

So I said: "I will escape, or I won't escape". I didn't have the courage for a long time, but the other girls told me: "you can do it, you have more courage than us and you have room, they leave you alone in the kitchen". So I decided to leave. They all knew a week before that I was going to leave and I asked them not to say anything because otherwise they would be mistreated even more.

These days I was being beaten very badly. The owner's niece made me angry with him; she told him that I had threatened her. It's true, yes, I told her that if I ever left here, all those beatings she gave the others, she was going to pay for them. Well, that old man told me that I was going to pay and that my family was going to die. He grabbed my tail, pulled me back and hit me in the cement. He gave me two full blows, with his outstretched hand he hit me. He bled out my nose, there were streams of blood. He grabbed me between him and another guard, a doorman, and they both hit me. They tried to take the air out of me and then the owner threw me to the cement; I was bleeding.

She sent me to take a bath because my shirt was red, full of blood. Then they left the lady watching me. At one point she went to take out the water and I said: "today is fair, now is the time". I climbed a high wall

where there were bushes of güisquil³⁹ and which was higher than the other wall in the kitchen. I climbed up and walked all the way across the roof. I sat down just to cross to the other room, I looked around and there was no one there.

Then, when I got to the corner of that lot, I said, "I'm leaving. I jumped over another bar and finally reached the third house. There was a very high wall and I jumped over it, falling down into the bush. I didn't feel at what time I fell down and what I fell on, I just fell down and ran away. When I came to check, I was already far away from there. I saw my foot was bleeding, I had hurt it when I fell.

I was running away in all those dangerous places over there, those neighborhoods where every day they pull out dead people. From so much walking I got tired and sat down on a bench. One of the customers saw me and said: "What are you doing here? They are looking for you. "Who's looking for me?" I said, and he told me the two hairy guys and the bearded guy from the bar. I decided to hide in a kiosk where I stayed the night.

The next day, at five o'clock in the morning, I got up and sat down next to the kiosk post. A man arrived and noticed that my foot was bleeding. He came up to me and said, "You have escaped from somewhere". I told him yes, and that I had neither money nor documents, that they had everything and he said, "I am going to give you this 20 (local currency) to buy medicine, to buy some pills for the pain and some ointments for the foot".

Other names Chayote, Cidra, Guatila, Poor man's potato / Cucurbitaceae whose fruit is widely used as a vegetable. Its flavor is a mixture of pumpkin and pear. It is generally consumed cooked and is prepared using the same recipes as zucchini.

So I did not buy medicine, but used it for the ticket. It cost me 15 (local currency) for the bus to the border. Then I had to take another bus and an evangelical woman paid my fare. We were stopped by the immigration police and I said: "they are going to get me off", but no. I told them: "I don't have any documents. I told them, "I don't have any documents," so they asked me where I was going, who was the mayor there, and what party I belonged to. I knew everything and passed their test. I took another bus and the same lady paid for it. After I took another bus, with the help of the driver who did not charge me, I arrived home. My mommy and my daughter came, crying, but very happy. I got there without eating, eating lunch or drinking water. Eight days later, I called the mother of one of my friends from the bar and told her yes, I could help her. After 15 days, she came with the police to my house to question me.

I told them everything I had to tell them. They were in charge of freeing the girls, until they were all at home. I have seen some of them again and they have told me that I still have to be careful, that maybe they are looking for me. I am not going to spend all my time in hiding, I am going to live my life without fear. Now I work and I am rebuilding my life little by little.



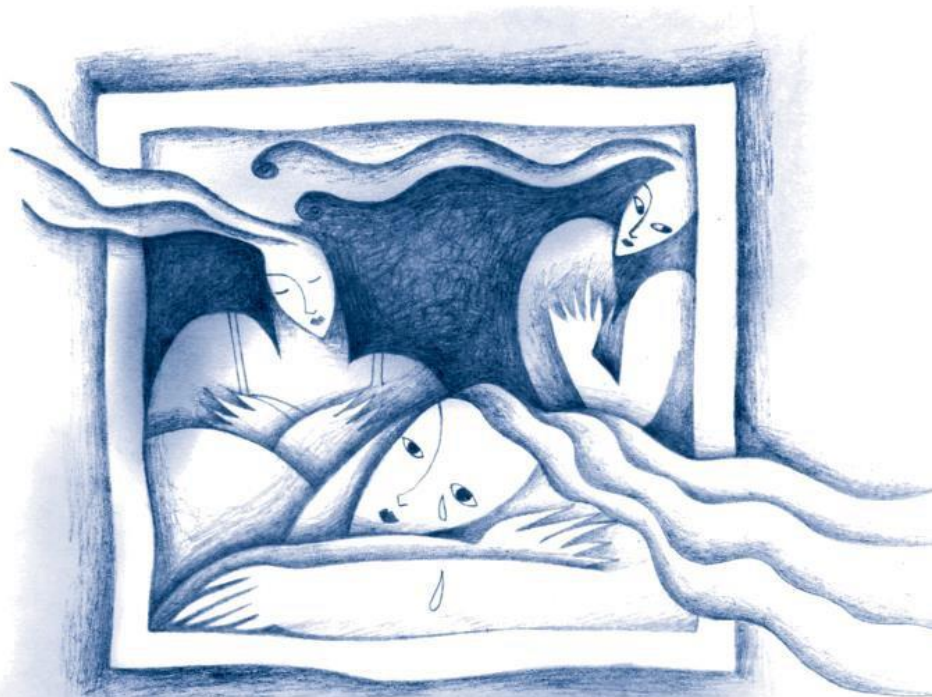
My name is Evija, but all my friends know me as "Martita". We lived in a small apartment, like most of the population. My mother cleaned floors in a large building, where they offered concerts. My father abandoned us when I was a baby. My mother went out with another man; he hurt me, but my mother never believed the things her father said.

My husband tried to make me. I was a very lonely child. I had no friends my age. When I was 14 my only friend was 18. She took me to discos and parties; there was a lot of alcohol.

I ran away from home at 16 to live with a man 22 years older. He ended up being very violent and a drug addict. My only friend started talking to me about a way out. She approached me with the idea of "a life better" out of the country. She told me about going to the United States as a prostitute to earn a lot of money. She also told me about the Arab Emirates, warning me how to hide condoms because if they find them in Arab countries, you go to jail. There, brothels are forbidden, more so than here.

Well, in my country, young people can apply for a passport and travel alone. I hurried, did the paperwork and one day I packed some things. I left my partner and left. My friend had made the contacts so that

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to travel to the United Arab Emirates. They took me by bus to a city four hours away from my town where they were waiting for us, we were 18 and 19 years old. The plan was to take us to another country. Two men were driving and all of a sudden, wham! we got off the bus in the middle of the road, in the middle of nowhere. Abandoned. It was raining and very cold.

We stopped a trailer that took us to the border to take the train back to another town. Luckily, one of the girls had a pair of gold earrings with which we paid for the tickets. I stayed in the apartment of one of my new friends for four days. Then we managed to get back to another place and stayed in a small house. There were 12 of us, 11 women and one gay man, and we slept in the same room. There we waited to find out where we were going.

One day, they said "let's go", but no longer with the Arabs, but to another country far away. I didn't even know it existed or where it was on the map! To go on such a long trip, I needed written permission from my parents, so the network took care of getting my (false) papers. I didn't pay anything, whoever took me to the country did; in return I would work for him.

The network allowed me to travel in the company of another underage girl. We had a very long trip, passing through three countries, more than 24 hours in total. They said they would pick us up at the airport, but we waited and waited, until they threw us out. No one came for us. When we left, the heat was suffocating, I had never felt anything like that, it was as if my throat and nose were being squeezed, I couldn't breathe. I got scared, I

cried and felt very afraid.

Well, there we were, far, far away from home in an unknown country, where I didn't understand anything. But you always meet angels, ours was the cab driver, cool guy. Anybody would have taken advantage of us, but not him. He took us to a hotel where we called the contact of the country we were going to, who explained that they were delayed at the border, but that they would pick us up. They arrived and immediately transferred us to another country to arrange our papers.

They brought us to a very nice hotel. I had never seen anything like this in my life. They put us up there while they got us new documents. They took away our passports and a lady gave us new ones, mine of Greek nationality. Then we went back overland to a nice house, with pebbles and trees. It was a house of a person from my country who lived in another country and here. Ah, he was so square, aggressive. He bought us, you know what for. We had to serve him sexually and the rest of the inhabitants of that house. Everyone was nice to us, except the one who bought us, who mistreated us.

After two months, the guy decided to take us to his business, a nightclub where other girls from my country worked. They were all beautiful, all operated. They gave us clothes and very high heels, my first high shoes, and I didn't like them. I never wore high shoes after that. I was very sad there, afraid. One night a foreigner came and asked me to go with him to his country. I thought about it and told my friend: "What does it matter if they treat us badly there, it's all the same".

So we escaped to that country. It was a three-day trip by car. I turned 17 on the way and they bought me a cake with a single candle to celebrate it. We arrived at our destination, to a hotel where they put us up for a month. They gave us a bodyguard, who took us shopping for clothes and to see the country in a limousine. We were the sensation for being from another country.

I spent weekends in seaside hotels, accompanying important men. Sometimes I felt dirty. I am not, I was only with those I liked, sometimes I only went as an escort to restaurants, to discos. I worked only when I wanted to, don't think it was every day. Only when I wanted and with whom I wanted. A night with me cost \$400.

In the end, the authorities detained me. I had to return to the country where I had originally arrived. Several lawyers initiated proceedings to avoid my deportation, even the former president of the Supreme Court of Justice tried to adopt me, but none of them succeeded.

In that country they gave me assistance and psychological care, but they did not let me leave the shelter until all the paperwork was taken care of. Since there is no consulate and I did not have my documents, it was very difficult to make the deportation arrangements.

Before I left, I was there for more than 6 months in that shelter, waiting to get out. The men in the same shelter mistreated me, they wanted to have sex with me. They would grope me when we passed each other in

the hallway. All the time I was afraid that they were going to do something to me. When I went to take a bath, men were watching me, even the policemen themselves were looking for ways to see me. It was horrible there.

The truth is that I did not want to go back to my country, I had no one to wait for me there, and nothing to work on. I didn't know what I was going to do there. I would have liked to stay in the second country where I was, start studying and dedicate myself to something else. Having entered the country three times illegally prevented me from applying for a residence permit or asylum, so I had to return to my own country.



La trata de personas: Un viejo mal con un nuevo nombre

Human trafficking has existed since time immemorial and is essentially based on the capture of human beings for the purpose of exploitation. There is no difference between the ancient slave trader who captured his victims, mainly women and children, to be auctioned in the markets, and the modern trafficker who uses deception and violence to achieve his nefarious purposes. Trafficking has always been an organized criminal activity.

In the criminal activity of human trafficking, two essential factors are combined: power and money. Traffickers assume the human being as the object of a very lucrative business, so their victims are stripped of their most basic rights as persons and are therefore subjected to the cruelest humiliations in order to subdue their will before and during the exploitation process.

Trafficking in persons, unlike smuggling of migrants, is a crime against persons, which does not necessarily require the crossing of borders but does require the recruitment of human beings against their free will with the use of violence or deception; above all, it is a serious violation of human rights.

This type of modern slavery is constantly changing according to social, economic and political variables and is favored by the opening or liberalization of borders, the increase in tourism, the focus

sexual tourism, inequality, poverty and lack of opportunities. It is the third most lucrative business in the world after drug trafficking and the arms trade. International research confirms that 87% of trafficking victims are trafficked for sexual exploitation and 90% of them are women and girls.

IOM strives to combat human trafficking in the region through prevention, victim assistance and justice in cooperation with other interested regional and national organizations.

Through its Regional Anti-Trafficking Unit, IOM currently implements a regional program, comprised of regional and national projects in Central America and Mexico.

The stories included in this book correspond to the research carried out by the IOM in 2008 entitled "The experiences of women victims of human trafficking in Central America and the Dominican Republic and the actions of the institutions".



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