

Stay in School

Facilitator: And who would like go first?

Moussa: I will go first. My name is Moussa. I'm from the great country of Senegal. It's in the continent of...

Martin: ..Africa. My name is Martin, and I am Jamaican.

Lu: My name is Lu. I come from...

Omar: ..China!

Lu: I'm from the Dominican Republic.

Omar: Oh.

Lu: My parents moved there before coming to the U.S. I speak Spanish, too.

Omar: Cool. My name is Omar, and I'm from India.

Yelena: I am Yelena. I am from Russia.

Facilitator: And you are?

Diego: I am Diego. Diego Villa.

Martin: Welcome, Diego. And where are you from, Diego?

Diego: I'm from my English class.

Martin: No, man. No... What country are you from?

Diego: Oh. I'm from Mexico.

Facilitator: Okay, everybody, this week we are going to tell our stories. How you came here, why you came here, anything you want to tell us. Diego, would you like to go first?

Diego: Me?

Facilitator: Yes!



Diego: First?

Martin: Come on, Diego.

All: (*chanting*) Diego, Diego...

Diego: Okay, okay. Okay. Well, I first came to New York a few months ago...

Juan: Diego, come on. Look.

Carmen: Welcome to New York City!

Juan: The future World Cup champion... my nephew... Diego Villa!

Carmen: Well? Are you going to let the soccer champion in? Welcome, Diego. This is your home now. We want you to be happy here.

Diego: Thank you. Hey, Lupe. Do you want to play?

Diego: So, that was when I first arrived. My aunt and uncle were great. I thought school in New York would be like school back at home, in Mexico. But, it wasn't.

English Teacher: Your homework for tomorrow is to read pages 27 through 50. There will be a quiz. Any questions?

Diego: I was lost in class. I couldn't understand the teacher.

Omar: I couldn't understand the teachers either.

Diego: And, I had problems at home.

Lu: Problems at home? Oh, yeah?

Diego: Well, yeah. One day, I came home and...

Carmen: The landlord called again. He wants to know when we're going to pay. The rent is a full month late.

Juan: So? What do we tell him?

Carmen: Well? What can we tell him? We tell him that we need another week to get the money.

Juan: He raised the rent, but my salary did not go up.

Carmen: We have to pay. We don't have a choice.

Juan: I will try to do more overtime.

Carmen: But honey, you already work so much. Maybe I can borrow from my sister.

Guadalupe: Diego! How was your game? Did you win?

Carmen: Diego! Lupe! Lunch is ready.

Juan: So, did you win?

Diego: Yes.

Juan: That's my soccer star! Let's eat.

Diego: I'm not so hungry, Uncle Juan.

Juan: Come on! Eat, eat!

Diego: My family needed money. So I decided to drop out and get a job.

Yelena: Drop out?

Diego: You know, quit school? But, I didn't tell my aunt and uncle.

Martin: You didn't tell them?

Diego: They thought I was going to school every day... But

really, I got a job.

Diego: Do you like this job?

Coworker: This job? It pays the bills. Well... this job and my other job. Why aren't you in school?

Diego: School will take forever. My family needs the money now.

Coworker: You need money? Learn English. Get your diploma. Then, you'll make real money.

Diego: *(to classmates)* I hated that job! But at least I was making money.

Moussa: So what happened? What about your aunt and uncle?

Omar: Yeah. Did they find out the truth?

**Answering
Machine:**

One message: Hello, Mr. Díaz. This is Diego's English teacher. I am calling to tell you that Diego is not doing well in school. He isn't doing his homework. He's failing his tests, and he has missed class for a whole week. Please call me as soon as you can.

(Juan replays the message.)

**Answering
Machine:**

One old message: Hello, Mr. Díaz. This is Diego's English teacher. I am calling to tell you that Diego is not doing well in school.

Juan: Not doing well in school?

**Answering
Machine:**

He isn't doing his homework.

Juan: Not doing his homework?



**Answering
Machine:**

He's failing his tests.

Juan:

Failing his tests?

**Answering
Machine:**

And he has missed class for a whole week.

Juan:

Missed class for a whole week. Missed class for a whole week?!

**Answering
Machine:**

Please call me as soon as you can to set up an appointment. If you need an interpreter, please let me know. My office number is... (*Juan replays the message*)... My office number is 718-555-5252.

Guadalupe:

Papi's home! Hi, Papi.

Juan:

Hi. How was school?

Guadalupe:

Good.

Carmen:

Lupita, please take off your jacket and start your homework. I'll come into the room in one minute. (*to Juan*) Hi. What's going on?

Juan:

There was a message from Diego's English teacher. She said he's failing. And he has not been in class for a whole week.

Carmen:

Diego? Our Diego? I don't understand. He goes to school every morning.

Juan:

What am I going to tell his mother? She trusted me to take care of him. That boy... When Diego gets home tonight...

Carmen:

Juan, calm down. Diego is a good boy. He's smart. When he gets home, we'll ask him and we'll hear what he has to say. Okay?

Juan:

Okay.

Lu:

Did your uncle really listen to you?



Yelena: Or did he just...

Diego: What's wrong?

Carmen: Diego...

Juan: Diego, Carmen and I got a call from your teacher.

Diego: My teacher?

Juan: What is going on, Diego?

Diego: Uncle Juan... School... Please, I don't want to talk about school.

Carmen: You don't want to talk about school? You haven't been in class! What's the matter with you?

Juan: Please, Diego. Tell us what is going on.

Diego: I don't know what's going on! That's the problem! In Mexico, it was different. Here, in English, everything is *blah, blah, blah*. I don't understand my teachers. I can't read the books. With my English, I'll be in school forever.

Carmen: It's hard to learn English. It's hard to be in a new country. It was the same for us.

Diego: I just want to help the family. I got a job!

Juan: A job?

Diego: I could help you pay the rent.

Juan: That's not why you are here in New York. You are here to go to school. That is your job!

Diego: I want to make my mother proud.

Carmen: But your mother is proud of you.

Juan: We are all proud of you. But school is very important.

Diego: But school is so hard.

Juan: Get an education. You will have more choices. You can get the job you want. You can go to college.

Diego: College?

Juan: Yes, college. Why not?

Diego: I don't know. I, I don't know.

(later, after Diego's walk)

Diego: Uncle Juan, I've decided I want to stay in school.

Juan: Okay, Diego. We will do this together. I am not sure how, but... We will do this together.

Martin: Wow, Diego... So, what happened next?

Diego: Well, my family got busy. We had to ask questions... Find out who to talk to... Figure things out.

Juan: *(on the phone)* Hello? This is Juan Díaz. You left me a message about my nephew, Diego Villa. I'd like to make an appointment to see you.

Carmen: *(on the phone)* Hi, it's Carmen. What high school does your daughter go to? ... Not the one in the neighborhood? How did you find it?

Juan: Yes? Hello? 311? My nephew is new to New York. He is having trouble in high school. He needs help in English.

Carmen: No one answers! The phone keeps ringing and ringing.

Guadalupe: Don't give up, Mommy!

Diego: (to classmates) They didn't give up. My aunt and uncle called everyone. It wasn't easy. My uncle took two days off of work.

Juan: You mean, he can take extra English classes after school, too?

Diego: Extra classes?!

Juan: Good. Very good.

English Teacher: And, you have the right to be in school until you're 21.

Diego: 21?

English Teacher: I would like you and your uncle to talk to Mr. Shamma, our guidance counselor.

Mr. Shamma: (handing Juan and Diego booklets) Here... These are in Spanish. You know, every young person in New York City has a right to a free education. Classes are free and extra help is free.

Juan: For everyone?

Mr. Shamma: For everyone! With papers, without papers.

Juan: Thank you. Tell me... What does Diego need to do to graduate?

Mr. Shamma: Well, there are classes he has to take. But, Diego is a very smart guy. It will only take three or four more years.

Diego: Four more years? I'm not sure. What if it doesn't work? What if I can't do it? Maybe I don't belong in school?

Mr. Shamma: Yes, you do. If it doesn't work here, we'll find another school. There are big schools, small schools, international schools, schools that have classes at night. You have a lot of choices. But, let's try here first.

Juan: That's good.

Mr. Shamma: You know, Diego, there's a group that meets once a week... students, like you. They get together just to talk. They're meeting today, right after school. I think you might like it.

Diego: So, that's how I got here with you guys.

Martin: Oh man, Diego. What a story. It's like a movie.

Omar: So, you decided to stay in school, but will you stay in this school?

Moussa: Diego, you can't leave! You're my only Mexican friend!

Yelena: So, Diego?

Diego: I'm staying here, with you!

**Answering
Machine:**

One message: Hello, Mr. Díaz. This is Diego's English teacher.

Juan: English teacher?

**Answering
Machine:**

I just wanted to call and let you know that Diego is doing very well in class.

Juan: Very well!

**Answering
Machine:**

He is passing all his tests.

Juan: He's passing all his tests?



**Answering
Machine:**

And, after he finishes high school, he wants to go to college! (*Juan replays message.*) And, after he finishes high school, he wants to go to college!

Juan:

Yes, yes, yes! Goal!

We Speak NYC, formerly We Are New York, is a production of the
City of New York.

