

Iris

Iris describes her heart-breaking reunion with her son, whom she had not seen in five years. "That was striking for me to see my son again after five years because I swear that I was practicing how to hug him, to hug a child, because he was a child. God, then, suddenly a big teenager came out of the car, taller than me with a serious demeanor." Iris is from Chiapas, Mexico. She was forty-four years old at the time of this interview.

I: He just passed through, gave them the papers and "What are you going to do?" "Nothing, just shopping," but even with an attitude. "Pass!" They let him pass, that is, he did not show any emotion and they let him pass.

And then it was the other boy's turn, and he did not resist and he got too nervous and they caught him and they grabbed him and they locked him up in jail. And that's where my agony started because my son was already on this side of the border waiting for the people without the other boy. He knew nothing. He did not know what to do. He did not know anything because the one he knew was my friend's brother.

No man, when at dawn my friend calls me and says, "I have good news and bad news, but I hope you will take it easy. Look, I just found out, please don't take it badly. I'll see what I can do. My brother just called me from the jail and told me he was arrested in the afternoon. Your son made it to this side of the border on his own and he did not know what happened to him."

Can you imagine what I felt? I said "What?" And at that moment you know what came to my head was that my son was ten years old, as when I had left him. "But it's a child, my God, no, no. I'm going now. I'm going to look for him across the border." And he said, "no, no, it's not worth doing, you're not going to resolve anything. You're not going to be able to do anything because remember that you do not have papers. Someone has to go and it is going to be me. I'm going to go look for him. Do not worry about my brother. He'll come out of detention sooner or later and he will be sent back. Now the one that worries me is your son."

In a way, I am grateful to him because of this good deed, not everybody would have done what he did. He says "I'm getting ready to go out and see." I do not know what he did. I think he went to look for information and around three o'clock in the morning my son called me and told me that he was already on this side, that he was with the people, that he did not know when he would come here, that they had only given him a chance to call and say that he was well, still that helped me to calm down.

But saying I was calmer is only half true because I still believed that my son was a child. Because when you leave your children and you come. In your mind you keep the memory of the child you saw behind that door crying and you do not know how he has grown, and then my

mother was not thoughtful to send me a photograph, right? I received news from my son because my sister took the time to let me know.

But my friend said to me, "Do not worry, I already talked to the people who will take him to you. They will take him to your house. It will go well, but if you think it is better I will take him myself." And I said "no, no, it is alright." But let me tell you, I did not receive news about him, not a call. I was extremely desperate. I was a Magdalene, I swear. I cried in Starrett [her workplace] in the hallways. I locked myself in the bathroom and I was in a horrible depression because I was worried. I did not have news of my son. I thought he had been kidnapped. I called these people, but they would not answer me. I would call the person. He would not respond. I did not know what was going on.

I thought that they had kidnapped my son and I was going crazy. The owner of the company saw me crying, came to me and asked me what was wrong. I explained, and he said to me, "if your son does not show up in twenty-four hours, I'm going to call the authorities. I have friends who can help you, but your son will appear, do not worry."

Really when he told me that, I felt much calmer. He said "I can move many things and yes, maybe at the end he is sent back, but at least he will be saved. Do not worry, but your son will appear." "Calm down," he told me.

And no, thank God he did not have to go through that situation because after three days, my son already told me—no, I already spoke to a person and she said "your son is fine." I do not remember which highway, if it was on ninety-five. I do not remember, close to Florence. I do not remember. She said "wait there because I'm going to leave your son there, arrive on time." Look, at that moment I got into the car and left.

But Marina, I almost fell back when my son got out of that car. That was striking for me to see my son again after five years because I swear that I was practicing how to hug him, to hug a child, because he was a child. God, then, suddenly a big teenager came out of the car, taller than me with a serious demeanor and I was silent, and I walked to him and hugged him and I said: "You are very tall." And, do you know what he said to me? "I did not want to come."

ML: Of course.

I: "Why did you bring me here?" he said. The first thing he said to me was "I already had my world and you took it from me when you left, and I adapted to that world where I no longer had mom or dad and my world was my grandmother, and again you take it from me, why? I did not want to come here."

Iris, Interview by Marina López, March 16, 2017

