

Luz

Before crossing the border, coyotes—the people hired to assist immigrants in their passage to the United States—separated the men from the women. Luz, who was only fourteen years old, dressed as a man in order to remain with the only person in the group she knew, but traveling as the only woman in a group of men made her feel vulnerable and frightened. “When I got in, it was me along with seven other people in the backseat; it was very uncomfortable, very difficult to breathe, and feeling the men all around me on all sides, I was very afraid.” Luz was born in Mexico City. She was twenty-six years old at the time of this interview.

L: I was afraid because when we arrived at the hotel room where they explained everything to us, how it was going to go and what we would do, they told him that he had to go in one group and I had to go in another. I was afraid to go in another group with people I didn't even know and the people, the *coyotes*, looked at me in a way that made me uncomfortable. They wanted to separate the women from the men, but that scared me, so I dressed as a man so they would let me go in his group, because I knew him, so I felt comfortable. Now, independently of what I thought, what I wanted, I was back to being with him, since he was the only person I knew.

And this situation of seeing strangers coming and going, men holding beers, cigarettes in their hands, saying bad words all the time and looking at me in a let's say an idle way made me feel uncomfortable. So all I was just thinking about was being close to someone I knew in order to feel protected.

ML: How did the trip end?

L: Well, the trip took three, four days. We walked. We rested. We walked. I fell a few times. There was a moment in which the cars had to pass by, so they told us, “Ok, when the first car that passes, run to it and get on.” Of course, I was the only woman in the group because I had decided it would be that way. The others were stronger, logically, and ran faster than me, so I fell several times and at the same time I had to keep hiding myself from the *coyotes* so they wouldn't notice that I was a woman. It was a little; it was a moment of great anguish.

When the last car passed I was able to get on. When I got in, it was me along with seven other people in the backseat; it was very uncomfortable, very difficult to breathe, and feeling the men all around me on all sides, I was very afraid.

Luz, Interview by Marina López, June 13, 2013