

# RUNNING FROM DANGER, LOOKING FOR HOPE

More than 800,000 immigrants have arrived at the southern border of the United States in the past year. Will they be allowed to stay? This is the story of Freddy,\* 18, who left Honduras for a new life in America. BY TOD OLSON

*\* Freddy's name has been changed to protect his identity.*

**I**n June 2018, 16-year-old Freddy stuffed a few pieces of clothing in a backpack and filled a bottle with water. He said goodbye to his mother and his two sisters, not knowing if he would ever see them again. Then he left his home in Sonaguera, Honduras. He was heading to Texas—2,000 miles north—to find his father.

Freddy was 5 when his father left home, and he wondered why he had to grow up without a dad. But now he understood—there were few jobs available in Sonaguera, but his father was able to

work in the U.S. He sent Freddy's family money so they could eat.

Still, Freddy rarely felt safe. Gang members, whom he'd heard would kill people for money, threatened him on the way to school. "There's so much crime and **poverty** in Honduras," he says. "I thought, 'What will happen to me when I grow up?'"



**PAUSE AND THINK:** Why did Freddy's dad leave Honduras for Texas?

## VOCABULARY

**poverty:** the state of being very poor

**immigrants:** people who come to a country to live there for good

**fleeing:** running away from

**asylum:** protection given by the government to a person who has escaped danger in another country

**destiny:** what ends up happening in the future

## Lives at Risk

As Freddy traveled north, he was not alone. More than 800,000 **immigrants** have arrived at the southern border of the U.S. in the past year. Many are teenagers, and in some months, more than 10,000 kids cross the border on their own.

Like Freddy, many of these immigrants are **fleeing** violence and poverty. Most come from the Central American countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, which are three of the most dangerous countries in the world. Violent

VIDEO 1

VIDEO 2

GO TO  
WEB VIEW



### LEAVING HOME

Freddy is from Honduras, a country in Central America. It is one of the poorest and most dangerous countries in the world.



**CRIME SCENE** Police respond to a murder in Honduras.

gangs in these countries control the flow of drugs to the U.S. Often they force teenage boys to join them.

At the U.S. border, the new immigrants hope they will be allowed to stay. Every year, the U.S. grants **asylum** to some immigrants because their lives are at risk in their home countries. These people have to prove in court that they would be in danger if they were sent back.

**PAUSE AND THINK:** What does it mean to seek asylum?

## Finding Strength

Freddy was hopeful when he arrived at the U.S. border. He had made the journey in 15 days by traveling in taxis and buses—and on foot. Often, he slept outside in the grass. “At times, I couldn’t stand it anymore,” he says. “But if I gave up, I felt like I was going to lose my life.”

At the border, U.S. officials are struggling to manage the large number of new immigrants. They are kept in detention centers, which are often overcrowded and uncomfortable.

Freddy spent three months in these centers. One of them was so cold the migrants called it *la hielera*, or “the cooler.” Freddy slept on the floor with only a thin foil blanket. He was finally transferred to a different center with better

conditions, but he still felt confused and lonely. “You’re locked up,” he explains. “All you want is to go out and breathe fresh air.”

**PAUSE AND THINK:** What are U.S. officials struggling with at the border?

## A New Life

In October, Freddy was finally released. At an airport near Dallas, he saw his father for the first time in 12 years. “He got to see me all grown up,” Freddy recalls. “I was overjoyed.”

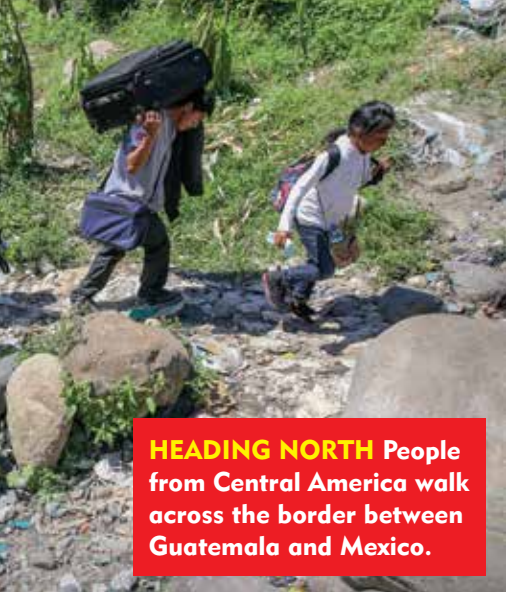
Freddy now lives with his dad in Texas and goes to a nearby high school. Life isn’t easy, though. Freddy has yet to make any friends, and nightmares about being locked up make sleeping difficult. But at least he feels safe when he walks down the street.

A lawyer is helping Freddy seek asylum. His case could take two years or more. He’s trying to remain hopeful, but only about one in five asylum seekers from Honduras are allowed to stay.

After everything he’s been through, Freddy says it would be difficult to return to Honduras. He just wants to work so he can help his family. “But I’m not scared,” he says. “Whatever my **destiny** is, I’ll accept it.” •

**PAUSE AND THINK:** What is Freddy’s life like now?





**HEADING NORTH** People from Central America walk across the border between Guatemala and Mexico.



**DETENTION CENTER** Freddy spent time in this detention center in Tornillo, Texas.



# 5 Questions About Freddy's Journey



**WHAT TO DO:** Answer the questions below. Use full sentences.



1. Who is Freddy?

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2. What country did Freddy used to live in?

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3. Why did Freddy leave his home country?

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4. How did Freddy travel to the U.S.?

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5. Where did Freddy spend his first three months after crossing the U.S. border?

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