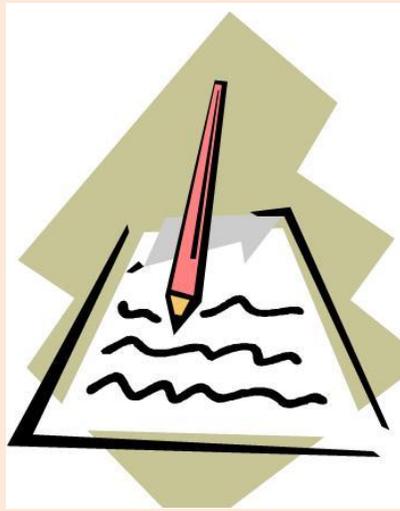


**Stories from Our Lives,
Volume 2**



**Writings by students
from the
Howard Area Community Center**

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The Writers



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Rebecca Adu



A Difficult Decision

When I was about to get married, I felt scared so my mom talked to me about the decision. It's not so easy, but I risked doing it. Both parents talked to me to encourage me about getting married, leaving your family to start a new family.

So I took that advice. It was easy for me because, even though my mom and my dad are not here, all the time I see my husband and my children and I think to myself, I have support. No matter what I'm going through, I have support. I thank God for that every day.



Yolanda Bahena



A Turning Point in My Life

My turning point in my life was when I came to the USA because everything was difficult for me. I missed my family. I felt lonely because I didn't have friends. The food is different. The food in my country is better than in the USA. I didn't speak English.

Now my life is different because I have many friends, and I speak a little English. I feel happy in this country.



Consuelo Balaguera



Meals for Any Occasion

My two favorite meals are well-done meat with rice, or salted potatoes and rice with fried eggs. For breakfast, chocolate with cheese. In my country, Colombia, a typical dish is called *ajiaco*. This is soup with different potatoes: yellow potatoes (called *criolla*), white potatoes



(called *pastusa*), yellow taproot (which we call *arracacha*), chicken, corn, half-and-half, and *guascas*, which is similar to cilantro or coriander. It is served with avocado, rice, and olives. In the U.S.A., I like to eat burritos with meat and avocado inside and pistachio or chocolate ice cream.

The tradition in my country for celebrating Christmas Eve is to prepare a big meal. Some people prepare soup (*ajiaco*), other people prepare tamales, turkey, pork (*lechona*), and drink beer, soda, or water. The dinner is served at 12 a.m. After dinner, we dance until the next day, Christmas Day. This day we make *asado* (BBQ) with red potatoes, corn, sausages (*salchicas*), and drink beer or “*refajo*” (beer mixed with Colombian soda). The meal is accompanied by dessert.



Florie Florestal



My Prayers

My night time routine is: I read my Bible before I sleep and I pray. In my prayers I ask God to help me change my life and forgive me for sinning consciously and sinning unconsciously. I thank God for my family. He keeps them healthy. I pray for my neighborhood and my neighbors too, often. I never forget those people who are in jail, people in the hospital, and people in countries where their life is not safe, especially Somalia, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan. I pray for them.



María García



Capulin Cherry Pudding (Atole de Capulín)

A dish I remember is when my grandmother made capulin cherry pudding (atole de capulín). I really liked it. We went to pick the capulins at the village. To pick them from the trees was very fun because I got to climb the trees. I remember moving the tree branches and going up to pick the best capulins.



Capulin pudding (*atole de capulines*) is very delicious. When my grandmother made it, I helped stir the *atole*. It was hard because you had to stir for one hour! But it was worth it because it was delicious and the smell was sweet.



K. J.



A Turning Point in My Life

When I came to Chicago, I changed my life because of the different language. It was hard to understand this country for the law. I think it takes many years to understand more of this country's laws, because it's difficult for me.

Getting letters in the mail is difficult for me because every day I have many letters. Because I don't understand, maybe sometimes I throw an important letter in the garbage and then have a very big problem.

It's a good turning point to learn English. It's better now for me. Two or three months after I first came here, I started English class. And another thing is that the government helps me all the time. It's a good point for me.



Luisa Jaramillo



A Change in My Life

My turning point in my life is when I came to Chicago and I looked for work. It was difficult for me because I did not know how to get the bus. Also, I did not know English. I did not know how to order a hamburger, and I did not know how to get work. It was difficult. Before, I got lost taking the bus to the hospital, because I did not know how to ask the people for directions to the hospital.



Now I'm more sure of myself. I can take the bus and the train, and I know how to ask questions of other people when I take the bus or the train. Also, I can ask other people where is the bus to go to different places, like South Chicago. When I go to the doctor I know how to tell the nurse what is my name, and I can make my appointment when I am sick.

I am happy because I am learning English.



Jessica Mbongolo



A Meal I Remember

I remember the first year I came here, my brother-in-law had organized a surprise birthday party for me, in Columbus, Ohio.

There were many people at the party. We danced, ate, drank, and then blew out the birthday candles on the cake, and then took pictures and video.



I was very happy for this party. It was the first time that someone organized a surprise party for me. I will never forget it.



María Nieto



Taste Different Food

I remember many years ago, I met a friend at work. She likes cooking and she invited me to her home. She cooked quesadillas of *huitlacoche* (mushrooms that grow on corn), and she said “you can eat.” But I remembered this food from when my grandma made it. I didn’t like it, so I told her, “Sorry, but I don’t like this food.” She said, “But you haven’t eaten my food. You can try it. Each person cooks differently.” And I said, “Okay, I’ll try.”



When I ate it, the taste was very good, and then I think, always we need to taste another food, because sometimes we only see the food and then say, “Oh no, I don’t like it.” I invite other people to try other foods, from the same country or different countries.



Yastina Nyiraguhirwa



The Way I Grew Up

When I was in Uganda, I invited my parents for dinner. We shared with my kids chicken with *sombe* (cassava) chips, and we drank some soda. It’s a special thing in Uganda. It’s something good to share with my family. We started at evening time, or sometimes lunch time. We put music on. We danced with my parents. Then they started blessing me so much.

In my country, since I was growing up, I found there were problems with fighting and there was no peace in my country. That is why I am here. I struggle with my kids in this world. Pray for me to succeed. I thank God that he brought me to be here with my kids. They go to school. They eat and sleep well and don’t fight.