

WE ARE NEW YORK

A NEW TV SHOW

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!

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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 ...

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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?

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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. I couldn't understand the teachers either. 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?

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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.

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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?

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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. Diaz. 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. Diaz. 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.

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- 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?

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- 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 just want to help the family. 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 for 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 don't know.

**

(later)

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

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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.

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Juan: *(on the phone)* Hello? This is Juan Diaz. 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: 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: Twenty-one?

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

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Mr. Shamma: 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.

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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. Diaz. This is Diego's English teacher.

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- 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!

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