

SUMMER  
2012

# Families

## WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

STORY FOR ALL AGES

### Separated by a Border

**By Dea Brayden.** In an aid station for deportees in Nogales, just inside the Mexican border, I met Flor. She was eager and proud to practice her English. Now twelve, she had spent the past eleven years in Phoenix, Arizona with her parents. Her dad was a chef at a French restaurant. Her mom worked as a seamstress and in a local restaurant. Her four-year-old brother, Antony, was born in the U.S.

Several months ago, a call from relatives in Oaxaca brought sad news. Flor's paternal grandmother had been diagnosed with cancer and her maternal grandfather was dying. The family took a big risk—they headed to Mexico, so Flor could meet her grandfather for the first and likely the last time. Flor smiles but looks away as she describes how her grandfather could hear her at his side, feel her holding his hand, but never opened his eyes.

The medicine there, Flor explains, was not good enough to help her grandfather or her grandmother. As the family prepared to come back to their home, jobs, and schools in Arizona, they pleaded with their grandmother to come, too, but fear of the journey and its outcome kept her in Oaxaca.

At the border, the family paid someone to take them across in a truck. The driver



**Flor's courage and determination are an inspiration**

dropped them off in the U.S., and the family of four began their walk to Phoenix. The first day, they passed three dead bodies, now etched in detail in Flor's memory. One evening, as they rested under a tree near Ajo, Arizona, the border patrol seized them all.

Flor, her mother, and Antony were separated from her father, and Flor hasn't seen him since that night. She learned he was taken to a jail, and then to a different jail. As the family's sole English speaker, Flor is

now in charge of negotiating the system. She was given a phone number to call, with the assurance that this number held the key to reuniting their family. She called. No one had heard of her father.

Flor's courage and determination are an inspiration, and the love that binds this family together is strong. My profound hope for Flor is that, very soon, her family will be united. ♥

*Editor's note:* Dea Brayden, Special Assistant to UUA President Peter Morales, met Flor during a witness trip to the U.S./Mexico borderlands in 2011. Today, the whereabouts of Flor and her brother and parents are unknown. Photo by permission of the Kino Border Initiative, which provides shelter and food in Nogales, Sonora, just inside the Mexican border, for families deported from the U.S.

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Standing  
with Families,  
on the  
Side of Love



The Family pages  
are adapted from  
Tapestry of Faith  
lifespan faith  
development  
programs.

[www.uua.org/  
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**IT'S AN OLD AMERICAN STORY**— immigrant parents working hard to give their children safety, health, and opportunities impossible in their home countries. Yet today, immigrants who come without the proper papers cannot be sure they will create a better life for the next generation. Thousands of families have been split apart when a parent is detained or deported. Our faith calls us to stand with families, on the side of love, and do what we can to help immigrant families stay together.



## It's the Law

Since a 1996 law made deportation mandatory for every U.S. immigrant who lacks the proper papers, the struggle for fair immigration rules has not stopped. A 2009 bill, HR 182, would have allowed a judge to consider what's best for a U.S. citizen child before deporting the child's parent. But HR 182 did not become a law. Find out about proposed laws and policies to keep immigrant families intact, and take action to support them.

**Write.** The National Domestic Worker Alliance runs a kids' letter-writing campaign, "A Wish for All Families: An End to Deportations and Family Separation." ♥  
[www.webeltogether.org](http://www.webeltogether.org)

**Sing.** In New York, Grammy-winning Dan Zanes and Friends cut the CD *The Welcome Table* to raise awareness and funds for the interfaith New Sanctuary Movement, which supports immigrant families and advocates for laws and policies to help them. ♥  
[www.newsanctuarynyc.org](http://www.newsanctuarynyc.org)

**Share.** In Colorado, supporters brought "broken heart" valentines to cheer immigrant parents being held in detention centers, away from their children. In Rhode Island, demonstrators held broken heart posters to urge Governor Lincoln Chafee to honor a campaign promise to protect all residents regardless of immigration status. ♥

**Stand.** SIEU Local 26, a labor union in Minneapolis, held a vigil to protest that "over 1,950 immigrant families in the Twin Cities have had their primary breadwinner fired in the last 18 months, as a result of actions by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)." ♥

## Awesome You, Awesome Me

This game is fun with a group you're afraid has nothing in common—because you'll find you do. The leader gives directions for others to find a partner.

Find a partner who...

... has the same favorite color as you. Tell each other why it's your favorite color.

... has a different favorite color. Tell each other what you like about your own favorite color.

... has different colored eyes than you. Tell that person one thing you love to do.



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**Did your ancestors come hundreds of years ago, or more recently?**

## We All Got Here Somehow

What is your family history of migration?

Why did they come? Were their reasons different from why many migrate today? What was their experience like? What risks did they take?



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If they became legal citizens, what was required of them?

Was there ever a time the family's journey separated parents from children, or siblings from one another?

Look around your home for a photo or keepsake that tells a story about your family's migration. If you cannot find an artifact, you can likely find a story. Ask someone in your family who is older than you! ♥

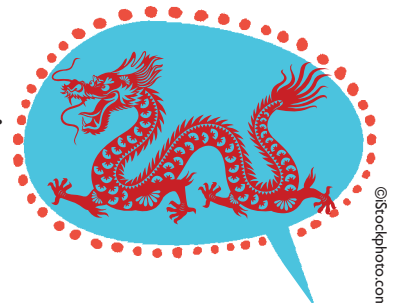
**46,000** parents of U.S. citizen children were deported in the first half of 2011

**5,000** children are in foster care today because their parents were detained or deported

## Dragon Families Stick Together

Form two teams, the Red Dragon Family and the Green Dragon Family.

- Have each team make a line by holding onto the waist of the person in front of them. The lead person is the dragon's head; the last person, its tail.
- Keep your dragon family together as you try to catch the other dragon's tail. The gait, voice, and personality of the dragons are up to the members of the families, but do not let the body break apart!
- If the members of your dragon family are kind, caring, and respectful, you will be able to stick together so you can play the game. ♥



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... wearing a color you are. Tell that person one thing that you are very good at.

... has a different favorite food and describe why you love to eat it.

... has the same favorite food. Describe why you love to eat it.

... has not been your partner yet. Tell each other about an active game you love to play.

Take turns as leader. Let each leader make up a way to match partners!

Did you find any interesting differences?

What would this group be like if we all liked and disliked the exact same things?

What would the world be like?

## Two Families, One Story

**Fanta Fofana, 16, takes two trains to her school, two boroughs away. Many New York City kids do that, but few must learn a new commute each time their family is moved from one city shelter to another.**

**Fewer still bring elite skills to their school's high-ranking math team and put in extra hours for the science grades they'll need to pursue a medical career—while living in housing that prohibits extra furniture, such as a desk.**



In 2007, the INS took Fanta's father from their apartment and he was soon deported to Senegal. While Fanta and her five younger siblings are U.S.-born, their

mother, Fatoumata, is not yet a citizen. Her court date for asylum status comes in August, 2013.

Along with Senegalese American relatives, and friends from their mosque, Fanta's family has another "family" on their side—the New Sanctuary Task Force of Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist (CCNY). Seeking to stand with immigrants, CCNY connected with the immigrant defense network Families for Freedom, which paired the task force with the Fofana family. CCNY members offer a nurturing relationship, with passionate commitment. Members meet regularly with Fatoumata and plan how they will interface with health, legal, and city services; support mother and children in their schooling; and secure funds and opportunities for the family to build stable, successful lives.

The CCNY team helps the Fofana family as an extended family will help relatives in crisis. One member obtained a laptop for the children to do their schoolwork. Others arrange karate lessons, even sleep-away camp. They provide fun trips to movies and the circus, and attend school graduations.

"Mostly the things they do for us are to help my sisters and me do well in school," says Fanta. "Education, education, education is important for them, and for my family too. My sisters and little brothers and I will be the first in our family to go to college."

Holiday parties and worship, as well as immigration justice rallies, have brought the Fofana family together with the CCNY congregation. "It's interesting," says Fanta. "They welcome different people, and it's not too different from our mosque. Except they have a choir, and a piano, and they try to get us to sing. We'll sing at home, but not in public."

She adds, "Their help reassures us that people out there actually care for us. We try to think of the positive all the time, and they help us think positively about our situation." ♥

Photos by Leonore Teifer

Building beloved community means taking care of ALL our families, respecting the inherit worth and dignity of ALL people, being awake and aware of oppression taking place right in our own community and doing something about it.

—Janice Marie Johnson, CCNY New Sanctuary Task Force and UUA Multicultural Growth Director



Fanta Fofana, fourth from right, holds a cousin, Ali, on her lap at a party the CCNY congregation hosted to celebrate the birthdays of her brothers Abdou, far left, and Muhamed, far right.

### FAMILIES:

#### WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

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### FIND OUT MORE

■ In *From North to South (Del Norte al Sur)* by René Colato Laínez, illustrated by Joe Cepeda, a boy visits his mother who has been deported to Mexico. Other books: *Super Cilantro Girl (La Superniña del Cilantro)* by Juan Felipe Herrera, illustrated by Honorio Robleda Tapia and *Kids Like Me: Voices of the Immigrant Experience* by Judith M. Blohm and Terri Lapinsky.

■ The Standing on the Side of Love campaign of the UUA works to reform immigration laws and help families disrupted by detention and deportation. [www.standingonthesideoflove.org](http://www.standingonthesideoflove.org)

[www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith](http://www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith)