



ANABAPTIST BORDER MINISTRIES

SAN JUAN, TEXAS

October-November-December 2025

Roberto's Story -Ariel Monterrosa

I met Roberto, * a Colombian, in Senda 1. He was there with his son, mother, and sister. One day after having known him for some time, he told me his life story.

When his mom was expecting him, she tried to abort him, but the abortion didn't work. When Roberto was born, his dad left his mom.

As Roberto grew up, he became involved with a gang. He was basically raised with them, living more on the streets than at home. The gang life was an atmosphere of drugs, beer, cigars, and robberies.

At sixteen, Roberto was arrested for robbery and landed in a minor's jail. He had never been afraid of anything. But being in prison and seeing so many youth there did something to him. He decided to try to escape. One day he was sent to clean the bathroom, and he saw his chance to escape. He managed to get away, and he ran and ran for a long way.

He went through several villages, walking until his shoes were in tatters and he was nearly starving with hunger.

He came to a food stand, and he just stood there staring at the food. He was so hungry, but he was ashamed to ask for food. He had never begged for anything before, preferring to steal rather than beg.

A man, noticing Roberto standing there, came over and asked him, "What's wrong? Why are you like this?"



Roberto told the man that he had escaped from jail and was trying to find his way home. The man had compassion on Roberto and bought him some food then took him home.

Even though he had been pretty much living on the streets, Roberto's mom always received him gladly when he came home. She also prayed a lot for his protection because the barrios where they lived were dangerous places. There was a lot of fighting among different gangs. Roberto's mom pleaded with him to leave his friends because it was too dangerous. She would even come to look for him to see where he was gathered with the gang. He would run her off, swearing at her and sometimes kicking her.

When Roberto arrived home after escaping jail, he told his mom what had happened to him. Then he showered, changed his clothes, ate something, and returned to the streets. He was back to guarding his territory with his pistol, back to the same things he had been involved in before. For him, his closest family were his thirteen gang friends.

But, little by little, he watched as most of his gang friends ended up dying until there were only three left. There were many times where

he came close to being killed too, but he was always spared. He came to understand that God was giving him another opportunity to change his life. He also realized that the life he was living was not going to have a good end, and he was afraid that if he kept on like this he was going to die. He decided to put a stop to this violent lifestyle and started working an honorable job.

He saw that the next generation of children was growing up and doing the same things he had done, and he didn't want that for them. After his work he would go to where the young people were gathered and try to advise them that this was not a life they wanted to live; it was a dangerous life. They rejected him and refused to listen to him.

Sometime during this time Roberto shackled up with a woman and his son Carlos* was born.

*True peace and happiness
come from God, not our
circumstances.*

When Roberto saw that the youth he had tried to warn didn't listen, and sometimes even wanted to beat up on him, he decided that he could not raise his son in that environment. He made the decision to move to Ecuador along with his mom, his sister and his son. Carlos's mother did not want to go, so she stayed behind in Colombia, leaving Roberto to raise their son alone.

In Ecuador, Roberto worked at selling household appliances. Things went well in his work, but with time there was a lot of delinquency going on and they decided to migrate north to the United States. They had lived in Ecuador for fifteen years.

Roberto and I became good friends in Senda 1. We started having Bible studies together and we had many good conversations.

While he was at the Senda, Roberto received the news that the last two of his gang friends from Colombia had been killed. I remember the day he told me his friends had died. He was sad and cried.

He again felt that God was giving him another opportunity. One night he was feeling alone, discouraged from being in the Senda so long, anguished and desperate. That night he cried out to God and surrendered his heart to Jesus. He understood then that true happiness comes from God and not from getting into the United States.

When the CBP1 app was closed down in January, Roberto and his family were still in Senda 1. Even if they would have had somewhere to go, they wouldn't have had the money to go. Finally, Roberto's sister in Colombia sent them money, and they moved to Mexico City. They then started slowly working their way back to either Ecuador or Colombia.

Roberto's story has not finished yet and only God knows what the future holds for him. Pray for him that he could continue to seek God's will for his life and that he would not forget about God. May God bless you for praying!

**All immigrant names have been changed in these first two stories.*

The Pain and Joy of a Goodbye -Skyy Perrymond

Maria* and Sofia* were two girls from Honduras, who we met, along with their father Tobias, and their siblings, Hugo, Juanita, and Mireya. They stayed in Senda 2. Meeting them for the first time, the girls were shy, and I could tell they had been through a lot with the little they shared. They were in the camp, hoping to cross over to the States to be with their mother.



The first time, talking to the girls was a challenge because they didn't open up easily with just anyone, but the second time was a little better as they grew more comfortable with the other girls and me.

The third time we went to visit Senda 2, only four out of the seven girls who were a part of CCI came along. It was a rainy day so we stayed in the store area for the majority of the stay. This day just blessed me so much. We laughed with the girls and joked about random things. It felt so good to hear them laugh, when three weeks before they had been so shy. They were talented in arranging hair and were demonstrating for us. It was so much fun to see them so comfortable with us and free to be themselves.

A little before we left, one of the girls from our group mentioned how we should have taken a picture. So we stopped the van to take a photo on that very special, fun day. Maria said to Frances, "Why do you want a picture? Is this the last time you're going to see us?"

Frances said, "No, but we want a picture with you girls, to remember this day."

The week after that, we found out through Tobias that it really was the last day we would see them. Maria, Sofia, and Hugo had gone to the border and turned themselves in as minors to immigration, hoping they could cross legally and join their mom. Tobias was taking it very hard, so the men prayed for him and comforted him as he was now without his three youngest children.

Tobias had shared a message that the girls wanted him to pass on to us: "Thank you for being our friends and showing your support in our lives." It was a bittersweet feeling for me. Although I was very sad that they left, because I wanted to get to know them more and to make many more memories with them, the thought of them realizing their hope of seeing and being with their mom made me so happy for them!

After another one of our visits to the camps, we went to a taco shop in Reynosa. There, to our surprise, we saw Mireya and Tobias working! They weren't in Senda 2 anymore but were renting a house in Reynosa. They both looked happy and more at peace with things. Even though it's painful to say goodbye and have people move on in life, you can have joy in remembering the special moments you shared together!

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

(Philippians 1:3).



Mireya, Maria, Tobias, Hugo, Juanita.

In the morning
sow thy seed,
and in the
evening
withhold not
thine hand: for
thou knowest
not whether shall
prosper, either
this or that, or
whether they
both shall be
alike good.
Ecclesiastes 11:6

Work Project-Marlin Schrock

May 28 started fairly early as we had a fourteen-hour trip in front of us. Our group consisted of ten people: Marlin and Rachel Schrock, Tanner Schrock, Tyrell Schrock, Eric Salazar, Jaydon Yoder, Kendra and Krista Byler, Rosie Slatten, and Meagan Shrock, all from Fairview, Missouri. We were headed to San Roberto, Texas, for a work project at the ABM headquarters. We arrived without incident around eight p.m. which gave us time to briefly get acquainted with the staff and also a group that was there from Allen County, Indiana.

The next day we had breakfast by 5:45 a.m. We wanted to get an early start (hopefully we would beat the heat).

The goal for the men and boys was to build eight new porches, and the agenda for the ladies was to spring clean and to paint. Thankfully, many hands make the workload lighter. The girls took turns cleaning and painting. The painting being the preferred job so they could be out in the fresh Texas air.

The boys' job started with having to tear off the old porches and then forming for concrete on the new ones. Concrete came Thursday morning. We were ready with wheelbarrows to transport a lot of the concrete, due to not being able to drive to all the different pads. We poured twenty-nine yards.



Pouring concrete

Anita Sommers spent most of her time in the kitchen preparing food for the hungry bunch. It was amazing sometimes the volume of food that could simply disappear! Of course, with food came stacks of dirty dishes.

Marc Sommers coordinated the work and did a great job.

In the evening, after showers and food, there was once again an excess of energy to be burned, so the volleyball net and spike ball were put to use.

Saturday we crossed the border and went to a refugee camp. We spent a few hours there playing with the children and then had a short service along with the youth singing some songs.

We went to a small taco shop for lunch and had some delicious tacos. Most of the food was probably a little spicier than food from the USA, but it was very good.



When we came to the border crossing, the line didn't seem that long, maybe half a mile, but we soon discovered it moved oh-so-slow! It took two and a half hours to get through, and then due to moving so slowly, the air conditioner quit working and the vehicle engine got hot. We got water bottles and got it cooled back down, thankfully.

As we drove back to the base, we were amazed at all the farming that is in the area at the border. Lots of vegetables!



Singing in Senda 1

Sunday morning, we had a service in the dining area. We had close to sixty people total. Afterward the youth did some singing including a sixteen-part round song. Many memories were made.

After supper that evening, we sat outside and again sang and then Dan and Leroy from Indiana gave their life stories. It's amazing and wonderful to know we serve the same God that our Anabaptist forefathers did hundreds of years ago! And He is still saving souls today. Praise the Lord!

Monday morning, the young men began putting metal on the porches. That seemed to be the icing on the cake. Once the metal goes on, you start to see the finished product.

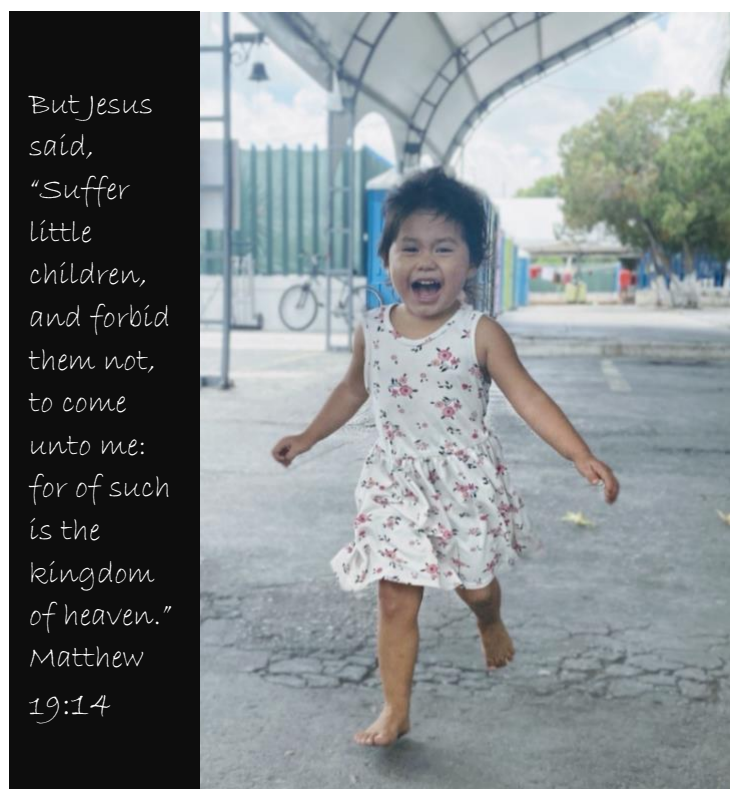
By evening, all the metal had been put on and the touch-up painting was done.

And the Indiana people were preparing to leave in the morning. We felt blessed to be involved in the work and to have made many new friends despite the heat, humidity, and gnats.

We stayed Tuesday and worked on Ariel's house, finishing their bathroom and kitchen.

We left Wednesday morning. After stopping to look at the beach, we headed for Missouri and arrived home around one o'clock in the morning, tired but very fulfilled.

The Joy of Blessing a Soul -Lois Bowman



But Jesus said,
"Suffer little children,
and forbid them not,
to come unto me:
for of such is the kingdom
of heaven."
Matthew 19:14

The lovely Texas morning greeted us with a warm gentle breeze as we CCI students loaded up Betsy, the old mission van. Before we knew it, we were headed down the road to Pumarejo, one of the refugee camps. Excitement filled me, for my dream of touching the souls of these dear children was fast becoming a reality...

The way these dear souls greeted us was a wonder to me. What makes a child run up to a stranger and relate to you as if you would have known each other for years?

This little child has seen lots in her short lifetime. She may be fatherless, with only a few belongings and a little tent she calls home, living in close proximity with complete strangers. There's not much for her to do during the day except play with the other children at the camp. That same child runs up to you, a complete stranger, and sweetly announces "¡Buenos Dias!" with the warmest smile and the tightest squeeze.

My heart is thrilled yet so torn, for I know my time with these children is very short. I'll leave them soon. Why all

this connecting if I will leave them anyway? It's almost more than I can do to leave these dear children behind and not take them home with me. These precious souls are being robbed of their carefree innocence at a very young age. They were created by the same God as I was. They're loved by Him just as much as I am.

Sometimes I wonder which of us receives the greater blessing. There's the little boy who wants to sit beside you. You both have the same picture to color and he wants to plan together what color you'll make everything on the picture. He wants it colored just like yours. Or the little girl you noticed the first day you're at the camp. Your heart goes out to her. You spend time with her, blowing bubbles, giving her piggy-back rides, and trying to understand what she's crying about. And then, a few days later her mom tells you she's so thrilled when she sees you. It's a reminder that without realizing it, you are giving them a glimpse of Jesus' love—whether it's by giving shoulder rides, twirling them around, playing 4-square, jumping rope, coloring with them, blowing bubbles, or writing with chalk on the cement. We pray the touch of Jesus' love would plant a seed in these children's lives!

I thank God for blessing me with the beautiful opportunity of showing a bit of Jesus' love to souls in need while He gives me life!

This is God's work and we do the little we can to bring Him more glory!



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