

BY DR. STEVEN

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THE FUTURE: 2,000 MILES AWAY



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Introduction

The story you are about to read is true. The details were captured from a four hour debriefing session Alex —, Juan Martinez and I had the second day we got to spent together in Rockwall, Texas. I am sure if you speak Spanish and have the opportunity to talk at length with Alex you will get a fuller picture of all he faced and what he felt as he made his 2,000 mile journey. My goal was to document the highlights of that journey so many more would have a small window into his experience immigrating to the US from Nicaragua.

The Future: 2,000 Miles Away

Alex's story is about the sacrifice and courage it would take to recapture the opportunities many people had tried to make sure he didn't miss out on because he was an orphan. They had given so he would have A Future...

Brazos De Amor is a children's home in Jinotepe, Nicaragua where donors have given support since 2000 to provide orphaned and at-risk children A Home,,, A Family... A Future...

Alex got A Home... A Family... A Future when he was four years old. Being among the first group of children at Brazos he became a brother of Juan, Eduardo, Carolina, Israel, Jaime, Dalila, Cesar, Frank, Pilar, Marling, Marcos, Maycol, and Javier. Alex became the youngest of fourteenth Brazos brothers, his new family.

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The girls and boys were separated in to homes where Nicaraguan house parents cared for them in a family style setting. They learned how to function as family members by fixing meal together, cleaning their rooms, washing their clothes, helping each other study, going to church, playing soccer and sleeping in the same room together. This was where Alex grew up. He was part of Brazos for 16 years.

There were changes in the staff over that long period of time and that just meant the brothers (or sisters) took on more responsibility for each other. In the beginning the oldest, at age 11, was Juan. As a street kids he had never attended school before Brazos. But he had always watched out for his younger

brother, Eduardo and now he became the leader of the other boys in his new home. Soccer turned them into a team and growing up at Brazos made them A Family...

To read about Juan's life go to [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and buy the book Love Forward by Robert Benson, the founder of Arms of Love International. Five stories will help you understand what motivated Robert to make a difference in the world. Two are of children who grew up in Nicaragua and two from Arms of Love Philippines. The fifth is Robert's own personal story of being abandon on the streets of San Jose, California at age two.

On the streets you are alone. Becoming A Family... means each kid has to make major adjustments.

The Future: 2,000 Miles Away

Being the youngest Alex had less baggage to let go of and now he had brothers he would watch to learn how they were dealing with trusting each other.

Juan was 11 when he started the first grade of school, Alex began with his age group. Today both of them have attended university. Juan has his degree and Alex was almost finished with his courses in accounting when his future started to evaporate right before his eyes.

Alex had a job in Nicaragua working as an accountant for DICEGSA (An American company established in Nicaragua, receiving and distributing products from the U.S.A.) while he finished up his classes at UISPAN- Hispanoamerican University.

So he had a good job, would finish college with a solid career path ahead of him and he and his wife had started their family

with a child of their own. The Future... looked bright!

The problem was Nicaragua as a country was facing a very dark time, civil unrest came first and shut down the entire country. Highways had been barricaded. Nothing moved for weeks, All necessities of life were scares. Banking stopped. The threat of violence and death was everywhere and very real. One of Alex's Brazos brothers was killed in the street violence.

Then covid showed up!

With the university closed > no classes > Alex couldn't complete his degree. Then the government seized the American company's assets > everyone was fired > no job > no income > no career.

Arms of Love/Brazos De Amor had offered Alex A Home... A Family... A Future...

Now Alex had to face the reality of NO Future... Did that mean he couldn't care for his Family... would they lose their Home... It seemed everything changed overnight?

Facing situations like this break people. Desperation brings depression and hopelessness.

Alex found determination!

He would do what ever it took to reconnect with Juan, his brother now living in the US in the state of Colorado.

Alex's wife, Maria Magdalena Sanchez, supported him turning his determination into a plan of action. As a Nicaraguan who held a US passport she knew the Future... would require relocating to the US. But being pregnant with their second child meant Alex would have to go ahead of her if they were going to recapture the dreams they shared of raising their Family... in a safe, free and healthy place.

One night while Alex was struggling with all these things he had a dream of being in a Big Bright City full of hope and A Future... He knew he had to risk making the journey to recapture his Future... for his Family...

The Future: 2,000 Miles Away

The US boarder is 2,000 miles away from the capital city of Managua, Nicaragua. They prayed God would guide Alex and keep him safe. It was Thursday morning, February 25th, when he bought his bus ticket and began heading north toward Honduras, then Guatemala. This was going to be the first time for Alex to leave Nicaraguan soil.

Four Borders To Cross

Honduras was the first country Alex needed to cross on his journey north. He paid for his bus ticket that would take him through Honduras and Guatemala to the Guatemala/Mexican boarder. He had \$400.00 on him (Mexican Pesos = 8,036.50) to cover his other expenses.

The first leg of Alex's adventure toward his future was easy. Sitting back while the driver took him and the other passengers to their expected destination.

Being a friendly guy, able to strike up conversations easy, Alex introduced himself to his fellow travelers and found some had the same goal of crossing the boarder into the US.

They shared their stories as the bus drove through Honduras. The border between Honduras and Guatemala came next.

The border check up went quickly and the group continued getting to know one another. As they approached the Mexican border five young men decided to continue to travel together making their way through Mexico which they had heard would be the harder leg of their trip.

Alex's traveling companions where Anthony Montano, Jimmy Ramirez, Erick Carraza and Damian Medina (hired to guide them through Mexico)

Things felt different as the bus got closer to crossing from Guatemala into Mexico. The Mexican border guards required

ID papers and Stamped Passports. Bribing the guards worked to. The risk of violence increased almost immediately. And traveling through Mexico would be very expensive. Drivers wanted 5x what Alex's first bus ticket cost for much shorter trips. The gangs would stop you and demand money or police would stop you and demand a bribe. The threats were all real; beatings, deportation, muggings and murder.

The groups guide arranged for a taxi to take the group further into Mexico to connect up with the train system. But once on their way they realized the driver was setting them up and dropped them off up in the mountains where a gang confronted them and took their money. The team of five had to walk back to town past decomposing bodies and skeletons. Welcome to Mexico!

Five became four when the "Guide" took off. Another one left the group a few hours later leaving three. Afraid of being jailed and deported one more lost heart and left just Alex and

Anthony together.

Alex remembers how discouraged he was when he saw a drop of blood painted on the wall of a house with the statement “Jesus in the Life”. When Alex approached the lady at the house she told him “No immigrates”. Then as he was walking away she said, “We will take the you in. Hurry get inside now.”

The Future: 2,000 Miles Away

Feeling a bit safer Alex was able to fall asleep. On waking up he realized “I’ve been relying on the wrong people.” He prayed God would give him a sign and guide him forward.

A stranger at a checkpoint opened up his backpack and Alex saw a Bible on top. Alex took it as the sign he had prayed for “God is with me.” Next a taxi driver, who gave them a ride for a fair price, told Alex and Anthony it was their lucky day, to which Alex replied, “No, I am Blessed!” Revived and inspired the two man traveling team keep going.

They where out of money but Alex was able to fined an ATM to pull \$300 more to fund his trip.

The two of them grabbed a taxi to take them to the train station. This driver drove them in circles running up the charges. When they got out they found they could have walked

from their original location to the train station only a few blocks away. From now on they would pray about every decision before they made it. Only God could be trusted in Mexico.

Anthony called his dad asking him to send some money. His father told Anthony he would send \$1,500 to Anthony's uncle. When Anthony met up with his uncle he was only given \$300 and his uncle kept \$1,200 for himself. Even family members can't be trusted in Mexico.

The trains are under the control of the police so you have to have a stamped passport to buy a ticket. Anthony didn't have a passport so he borrowed his uncle's stamped passport to get his ticket. Alex was able to buy a ticket even though his passport wasn't stamped because the guard got distracted when he asked for Alex's passport and waved him through.

Over a thousand people where at the station waiting for the

next train. A woman saw Alex and Anthony needed warmer clothes and gave them a jacket for free and they gave her money for a sweater. A kindness in Mexico.

A large gang of 40 or more were about to mug anyone waiting for the train when a police truck with a mounted automatic weapon drove up and scared the gang off. Another kindness in Mexico.

It was cold waiting outside through the night. Alex had a cigaret lighter he used to warm his fingers and was glad for the little comfort it gave him.

There are two ways to ride the train, with a ticket and without one. The second method requires you to jump on to a moving train and find an open boxcar or hang on to a ladder on the outside of the boxcar. The speed of the train increases the risk.

Without tickets the next train ride meant taking the risk of

jumping on a moving train. A group of eleven young men would attempt to jump the next train. Only one was able to do it. The train was moving too fast.

Now the ten figured out they needed to bribe the guards to let them wait at the curve in the tracks where the train slowed down so they could jump aboard there. Alex along with eight others got on the train. Realizing the youngest of their group hadn't made it, Alex jumped off and helped him get aboard. Then was able to get back on himself. Paying it forward... a kindness in Mexico.

The Future: 2,000 Miles Away

A number rode in a boxcar. There were three guys smoking dope together; one all tattooed up, a Mexican and a Honduran. Without warning the tattooed guy pulls a machete and slices open the neck of the Mexican. As he bleeds out, the Honduran jumps up to get off the train. The machete cuts through his backpack but he gets away. Then the tatted guy jumps off the train after him. There were dozens of people who witnessed this murder and attempted murder which was over in less than ten seconds.

Alex and Anthony couldn't get off of the train where they had planned because of the speed the train was going so they stayed on board rather than risk getting hurt jumping off the moving train. When they could get off they had to walk back down the tracks for hours to the place they could make connections toward the boarder.

The further north they got an interesting thing started to happen at the police checkpoints. The group of immigrants would be divided by their country they had left and a bribe would be demanded. The interesting thing was the amount of the bribe was different based on what country you were from. Why? The only reason Alex could give me was the police knew how many times immigrants got mugged along the route so the ones who had come the farthest got a discounted rate.

At the last checkpoint before the Mexico/US boarder instead of police the Mexican Army was now in charge.

Alex had been able to hold on to his watch throughout the 2,000 miles he had come, but now at the border they took his watch and all of his money, at least all the money the soldier's thought he had.

The Mexican Army soldiers keep Alex and Anthony for two hours deciding whether or not to deport them or let them try

crossing the Rio Grande into the US. Alex felt the soldiers got tied and board of looking at them so they were let go.

If you had been on this adventure with Alex you would have experienced the following:

Boat rides	2	(1 hour)
Walking		(50 hours)
Taxi rides	12	
Bus rides	40	
Train rides	2	(16 hours)
Motorcycle rides	1	

One more thing to do: swim the Rio Grande (about 10 meters or 35 feet). Actually where the two of them crossed the water was about five an half feet deep but Anthony afraid because he didn't know how to swim. The two of them finished their journey with Anthony getting a piggyback ride from Alex.

Why travel 2,000 miles and face all those dangers along the way?

The Future: 2,000 Miles Away

As Alex and Anthony walked up the river bank on the US side they were taken into custody by US Immigration. They worried about how they were going to be treated and if they would be deported back to Nicaragua.

They were driven to the detention center

Checked in

No threats or bribes

Given something to eat

Got to take a shower

Given clean clothes

Given new shoes

Given a bed to sleep in overnight

During the interview Alex told the officers about his brother

Juan who lived in Colorado and gave them Juan's phone

number. After speaking with Juan it was decided to have Alex

report to the Denver office for his follow up processing. He was given papers so he could travel in the US and arrangements were made for him to get a ride to the San Antonio airport where Juan would have a ticket waiting for Alex to fly to Dallas where I would pick him up. Juan would fly into Dallas the next day. All of the processing was completed in one day and Alex was on his way to Colorado by way of Dallas, Texas.

At the detention center Anthony and Alex were processed separately. But there is one more thing about Anthony I want you to know. After watching Alex's faith in action, being lived out in real time in difficult situations Anthony decided to become a Christian. Alex got another brother on this trip of 2,000 miles. Alex the orphan reclaimed his A Home... A Family... A Future... and helped Anthony find his Future... too!

Fast forwarding to December 1, 2022

Alex has had his follow-up interviews with US Immigration in the Denver, Colorado offices. He is presently living with Juan

and his wife Candace while Alex is in the process of waiting for the time requirements to be met regarding the immigration process to before receiving his papers with his new legal US status.

His is in touch daily with his wife and family. Once his status is completed they will join him in Colorado where they will be welcomed by all who have befriended Alex.

Dr. Bagley serves on the board of Arms of Love International, operating children's homes in Nicaragua and the Philippines. Today Brazos de Amor has 40 children in its residential care and Arms of Love Philippines cares for another 40 on the island of Bohol. To discover more about these two Arms of Love International locations just do a search in your browser.

DrBagley.com | powerof4.co | divinebusinessappointments.org
armsoflove.org | griefshare.org