

# Clemete Rodriguez: Crossing Over, Texas

Bryan, Texas

Introduction:

Students at Mineola High School in Texas, developed content-rich websites that explored "journey stories" in their community. Participating students interviewed family, friends, and other local residents as part of their official Youth Access Grant local history projects, supported by Museum on Main Street in 2013-14.

In this example, a student spoke with a Mineola resident who had immigrated from Mexico.

Story Narrative:

Speaker 1 ([00:00](#)): How did you come to United States?

Speaker 2 ([00:08](#)): He walked the desert.

Speaker 1 ([00:08](#)): Walked desert.

Speaker 3 ([00:10](#)): Five days.

Speaker 2 ([00:11](#)): Five days, walking.

Speaker 1 ([00:13](#)): Wow. Okay.

Speaker 2 ([00:31](#)): Mainly where we lived in Mexico, around the age of 16 or 17, most men leave to United States. They come here to United States for financial reasons, and they stay here for maybe one or two years, and then they go back and they do something with that money. They build a house, they buy maybe a car or something like that, and then they come back.

Speaker 1 ([01:02](#)): What was it like growing up?

Speaker 2 ([01:19](#)): Basically, what he said is he worked outside taking care of cows, sheep, goats, basically outside. One thing that he wants to add is it was very difficult when he brought his family here. One, because I mean, there was five of us.

([01:43](#)): Oh four. My mom or his wife had a three-month-old baby. She had to walk and crossed the border with her in her arms, and once we or the family crossed over, he had a job that paid him a \$150 a week. The only thing he could afford was a home, basically the same, no windows, no air conditioning. It was very, very hot during the summer, over a hundred degrees. His

children were basically dehydrated, sick, and he had no money to take them to the hospital. So basically he was barely feeding them, so it was very difficult at the beginning.

Speaker 1 (02:43): What were your financial resources like?

Speaker 2 (02:53): He worked in a plantation.

Speaker 1 (02:58): Did you immediately find housing or find housing to rent or buy?

Speaker 2 (03:10): Like a year later. He's begin to buy a house a year later.

Speaker 1 (03:19): Okay, and what was the neighborhood like?

Speaker 2 (03:37): It was calm, quiet. It was good.

Speaker 1 (03:40): How did you get along with neighbors in your community?

Speaker 2 (03:51): It was good. He was good with the neighbors and neighbors were good with him.

Speaker 1 (03:56): Okay. Now, how long did you stay in your first home?

Speaker 3 (04:10): 12 years.

Speaker 2 (04:10): 12 years.

Speaker 1 (04:14): Did you find a job immediately or was there one here waiting for you?

Speaker 2 (04:24): Immediately, he found a job.

Speaker 1 (04:28): Okay. Did he have to go out and look for it or did he receive it waiting for him to get here?

Speaker 2 (04:34): He had to go look for it.

Speaker 1 (04:36): Okay. Did anyone help you find your job?

Speaker 3 (04:40): No.

Speaker 2 (04:40): No.

Speaker 1 (04:42): Okay. Did you like your first job?

Speaker 2 (04:52): He said yeah, it was his first one.

Speaker 1 ([04:56](#)): What were the working conditions like?

Speaker 2 ([05:07](#)): Basically, it's just planting trees and watering them, taking care of them. But then he fell into the fast-food restaurants and stuff like that, and he regrets that because when he came here, he began to eat all those food and he became pretty, I guess you could say obese and he had back problems and he was in danger of even dying. So that's when he changed his way of living and the way he ate, and so now he's actually healthier than he was when he was 20 years old.

**Museum on Main Street, Smithsonian Institution**