

Now the neighborhood was in complete chaos as the screams were heard and lights were coming on everywhere. There was a bus pulling away from a stop bench and Josh ran after it. He ran as hard as he could, hoping to catch it. In the back window he could see the faces of young boys laughing as he chased the bus, the dirt casting dust in his face. And then he ran out of steam as the bus pulled away. But coming from the opposite direction was a car and so he jumped out in front of it waving his hands as he was totally freaked out. The car stopped and he ran to the driver's back side door, opened it, and jumped in. He just wanted out of there and he was in total panic.

There were two young men about seventeen or eighteen who were in complete shock that out of nowhere this man jumped in their car. It happened so fast they couldn't believe it, and they both turned their heads, looking at him incredulously. "Please take me to the Holiday Inn," Josh blurted out gasping for breath. "I will pay you when we get there but just get going." As he said this it occurred to him that the boys were scared for their lives as he was definitely out of place, this gringo in the barrio.

But to his surprise the driver started forward while his friend kept looking at him. He must have been a sight, all dirty and sweaty and wet from the river. But coolly the driver said, "Oye, (hey) gringo, you in drug trouble here?" They were street smart boys and maybe drug runners themselves so in a cosmic way there was a common thread between them. They knew the gringo was in trouble but they didn't want it to be theirs also.

"Gringo, we no take you to Holiday Inn but we will take up street and leave you. You in Rojas barrio gringo. Bad men hurt any gringos in this barrio at night," he said very softly. Josh said nothing. All he knew was that the car was moving and suddenly they were passing the house where the woman had been screaming. There were several people outside and a police car was just pulling up, its lights flashing. "You see gringo, you now are hunted," said the driver as they knew he had probably caused this.

They drove on in silence for a few blocks and Josh was just trying to figure out his next move when the driver stopped, turned to him, and said, "Go over hill there," he said pointing, "And follow railroad tracks toward the lights. You will see Holiday Inn then. But gringo, you will be in the Rojas's barrio and Rojas's men there will kill you if they see you. Vamos (go) now gringo and do not come back here!"

Josh opened the door and got out. And before he could say thanks, the car sped away and to this day he wonders why they helped him, this gringo. Maybe they just wanted to see if tomorrow in the paper they would read about a dead gringo knifed in the barrio. But he was out of that neighborhood and at least had a chance to make it back. He crossed over the hill and found himself in a large railroad yard with rail cars all over on several small lines of tracks. It must be where trains switched out their cars and left others for pick up, he thought. He could see lights on the other side of the large field like a row of lights on the shore from a boat on water. It was a long way to those lights and he hoped the driver was not lying. He had no choice though and went down the other side of the hill and into the darkness of the yard and towards the barrio lights. He was wet, tired, dirty, and scared and a long ways from home.