



Francisco Jiménez

Authors Up-close Movie Transcript

Francisco Jiménez, interviewed in his studio in Santa Clara, California on May 25, 2002.

This is a transcript of the movie available on TeachingBooks.net. It is offered here to give you a quick assessment of the program topics, as well as to enable people with auditory disabilities access to the words.

Because this is a transcript of an edited movie, it should not be used as an assessment of Mr. Jiménez's writing. Many of the sentences found here were edited, and all editing decisions are the sole responsibility of TeachingBooks.net.

I come from a Mexican background. I grew up in a family of migrant workers. I'm writing these stories because I think it's important for me to document the lives of many families from the past and present. My hope is that my writing then gives voice to a large sector of our society that for many, many years has been largely ignored.

Breaking Through and *The Circuit* are autobiographical. Everything that I write is based on the things I experienced as a child and as a young adult. I feel that it's important to document this experience because it is part of the American experience of coming to this country, looking for a better way of life, seeking sometimes what we call the American dream.

Writing the Story

I wrote the books in English. I would think in Spanish, and the emotions, the dialogues, the voices that I would hear from my parents were all in Spanish. So I had to translate all of that into English.

I interviewed my parents, and my brother, and some family members. I also visited the little towns and places where we had lived in migrant labor camps in the San Joaquin Valley in California.

The other thing that I did was that I listened to music. When we drove our little *carcachita*, our little old jalopy looking for work, we had a radio. And so my dad used to play the radio and listen to Mexican music. I love Mexican *corridos*, Mexican ballads. So one thing I did was listen to that music that I listened to when I was a child, and all the emotions came. And I could see my father getting teary-eyed with some of those songs.

My older brother said, "You know, there's a lot of personal stuff in there, are you sure you want to publish it?" And I said, "Well, you know, I don't think about that these stories as only our family's stories. They're the stories of many families." And he saw that was the right thing to do.

Stability

There's no doubt in my mind that if I hadn't had certain teachers, I am absolutely sure that I wouldn't have made it. I wouldn't have been able to break through the circuit, basically. So for that reason I wrote the book *Breaking Through* as a tribute to my teachers.

From very early on, I was motivated and wanted to go to school. Whatever I learned in school, it was mine to have and to hold. And it didn't matter how many times we moved — that knowledge, that learning — would go with me. Learning, education became the stability I was looking for.

Seeing Our Reflections

It's important for us to appreciate and to value all the different cultures that make up our society. I think of what we study in school or the curriculum is like a mirror. If we look in the mirror and we don't see ourselves, then we become invisible. What does that do for our own self-concept and our sense of time and place?

My hope is that my books, in some way, contribute to the curriculum so that children and young adults, who traditionally have not been able to see themselves reflected in that mirror, can see themselves now reflected.

Books by Francisco Jiménez

- SENDEROS FRONTERIZOS, Houghton Mifflin, 2002
- CAJAS DE CARTÓN: RELATOS DE LA VIDA PEREGRINA DE UN NIÑO CAMPASINO, Houghton Mifflin, 2002
- BREAKING THROUGH, Houghton Mifflin, 2001
- CHRISTMAS GIFT, THE / EL REGALO DE NAVIDAD (illustrated by Claire B. Cotts), Houghton Mifflin, 2000
- LA MARIPOSA (in both English and Spanish versions; illustrated by Simón Silva), Houghton Mifflin, 1998
- CIRCUIT, THE: STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF A MIGRANT CHILD, The University of New Mexico Press, 1997
- POVERTY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES (Editor), Bilingual Review/Press, 1987
- HISPANICS IN THE UNITED STATES: AN ANTHOLOGY OF CREATIVE LITERATURE, VOL. 2 (co-edited with Gary D. Keller), Bilingual Review/Press, 1982
- MOSAICO DE LA VIDA: PROSA CHICANA, CUBANA Y PUERTORRIQUEÑA. Harcourt Inc., 1981
- HISPANICS IN THE UNITED STATES: AN ANTHOLOGY OF CREATIVE LITERATURE (co-edited with Gary D. Keller), Bilingual Review/Press, 1980
- IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS OF CHICANO LITERATURE, THE (Editor), Bilingual Review/Press, 1979
- INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL FOR SPANISH HERE AND NOW (co-written with Gary Keller and Nancy Sebastiani), Harcourt Inc., 1978
- SPANISH HERE AND NOW (Co-written with Gary Keller and Nancy Sebastiani), Harcourt Inc., 1978
- ¡VIVA LA LENGUA! (Co-written with Gary Keller), Harcourt Inc., 1975

Selected Published Articles by Francisco Jiménez:

- "The Boston Globe-Horn Book Award Acceptance Speech." *The Horn Book Magazine*, January/February 1999
- "Children's Literature: Bridges of Cultural Understanding." *Inside Borders*, September, 1998
- "Spotlight on Autobiographical Reflections." *Staff Development Guide for Middle School Teachers* (edited by James Flood), Macmillan/McGraw Hill, 1997

- "El Volador: The Tree of Life." *Dragonfly* April, 1996
- "Forward," *Voices From the Fields* (written by Beth Atkin), Little, Brown and Company, 1993
- "The American Culture Curriculum Must Be Redefined," *El Observador*, August 16, 1989
- "American Culture is Ethnic." *San Jose Mercury News*. February 16, 1989

Selected Short Stories by Francisco Jiménez, noting first publications of many of his stories:

- "To Have and to Hold." *Glencoe Literature Library* (edited by Patricia Beatty), Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 2001
- "A Break Through." *The Santa Clara Review*, Spring/Summer 2001
- "Cotton Sack: A Short Story." *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, October 19, 1997
- "Learning the Game." *RiverSedge*, Fall, 1995
- "Moving Still." *California History*, Fall, 1995
- "The Migrants." *Multicultural Reading Series* (edited by Vivienne Hidges), Education Design, Inc., 1992
- "El regalo de Alma." *Journal of the Association of Mexican American Educators*, 1988–89
- "Cajas de cartón." *The Bilingual Review*, January–August, 1977
- "Something to Share." *Stand Tall*, (edited by Judith Adams), Macmillan Publishing Company, 1975
- "Arado sin buey." *The Bilingual Review*, September–December, 1974
- "The Story Behind the Story." *Purpose in Literature*
- "The Circuit." *Arizona Quarterly*, Autumn, 1973. (Received the 22nd Arizona Quarterly Annual Award in 1973 for Best Short Story.)
- "La mudanza." *Mensaje: Revista de Cultura y Arte*, July, 1973
- "Christmas Gift." English translation of "Un aguinaldo," *El Grito*, 1972
- "Un aguinaldo." *El Grito*, 1972
- "Cold Death." English translation of "Muerte fría." *El Grito*, 1972
- "Muerte fría." *El Grito: Journal of Contemporary Mexican-American Thought*, Quinto Sol Publications, 1972

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