

SENATE, TRUMP STILL IN CONFLICT
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SPECIAL REPORT



Sarai says goodbye to her grandmother, Isolina Sarceño Corado, in Jerez, Guatemala, before flying back to the United States.

Utah No. 5 for tech, science pipeline

NEW REPORT LAUDS THE STATE, BUT LOCAL EXPERTS CAUTIOUS

BY ART RAYMOND
DESERET NEWS

SALT LAKE CITY — The Utah tech community's reign of accolades continues with the release last week of a new Milken Institute report ranking the state No. 5 in the country for the power of its science and technology pipeline.

Local industry experts welcomed the latest news but highlighted challenges that, unmet, could lead to derailment of Utah's booming tech success.

Milken's biennial 2018 State Technology and Science Index lauded Utah for its improvements. It was the only new state in the top 5, moving up from the eighth spot, and trailed only Massachusetts, Colorado, Maryland and California.

Among highlights noted in the report are Utah's nation-leading 4.3 percent tech job growth rate, the state's 46-rank jump in business starts, the University of Utah's ranking as the top school in the country for technology commercialization, and the Utah Pathways program that leverages public-private partnerships to address tech industry workforce needs.

Kevin Klowden, executive director of the Milken Institute Center for Regional Economics, said states that earned top rankings in the report show a propensity for policy actions that help nurture and grow their respective tech sectors.

"The success stories of states profiled in this year's index reflect sustained efforts to not only build but to maintain their ecosystem," Klowden said in a statement. "Making the changes that are necessary to perform well on the State Technology and Science Index can contribute to

REPORT A11

A family divided

After nearly 14 years in Utah, a mother of four is deported to Guatemala

STORY BY GILLIAN FRIEDMAN, PHOTOS BY LAURA SEITZ
DESERET NEWS

The journey to Jerez begins in Guatemala City, a clogged and grimy metropolis of glass and metal and choking exhaust. Among the honking buses and motorcycles zooming in and out of traffic, tanks and soldiers patrol the streets. The effect is slightly dystopian.

Our guide, a bookish lawyer raised in Britain but proudly Guatemalan, says

DIVIDED A6



Patrick and Sarai spent nine months living with their mother, Maria Santiago, in Jerez, Guatemala.

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MOSTLY CLOUDY, LATE SNOW POSSIBLE
HIGH: 42 LOW: 30





Maria Santiago hugs her two oldest children Sarai, 10, and Patrick, 12, as they prepare to board a flight to the United States from Guatemala City on Oct. 17.



Maria Santiago holds a note from her daughter Sarai in Jerez, Guatemala, on Oct. 15. Maria, a married mother of four and the manager of a McDonald's in Salt Lake City, was deported after living in Utah for 14 years.



Father Nelson Melendez prays in Spanish for Maria Santiago during a church service in Jerez on Oct. 14: "Bless you, Maria, and your children, Patrick and Sarai. May God give you the strength to separate yourself from your children, and may he watch over them during their journey."

DIVIDED

FROM A1

the tanks are here on the orders of the president; a way to reassure the people the city is safe. He says this with a wry laugh, obvious to the irony. He is a man numb to the absurdities that come with living in a country ravaged by a decade-long drug war.

His name is Pedro Solares, and we have hired him to take us to the countryside, to Jerez. He has warned us the voyage is dangerous. He tells Laura, the Deseret News photographer here with me on assignment, to hide her camera. He looks at my red hair and grins. "Maybe you should wear a hat."

Outside of the city, the highway winds through the long, flat valleys of Eastern Guatemala. It's a dry and unforgiving landscape of stunted hillsides covered in scraggly brush, a region once ruled by cattle ranchers and coffee barons, but now largely lawless. Guatemala is part of the Northern Triangle, a place where 90 percent of the world's cocaine flows north to the United States. I have been told police corruption here is rampant, organized gangs are dominant, and that in an effort to improve safety, the government is "dismantling most of its security apparatus." I ask Pedro what this means.

"It means that there are no police out here," he says.

He watches the road. The threat is not drug trafficking organizations, he says. Possible, but unlikely. They have no interest in a little silver

Kia rented from the airport. The danger is bandits who hide out among the palm fronds and Caribbean pines, who know the police have largely abandoned the countryside. Pedro explains this all in a soft, measured tone, almost professorial, and it soothes my jumbled nerves.

Pedro has agreed to help us find a woman named Maria Santiago, who has become something of a cause célèbre in Salt Lake City. Married, mother of four, 41, the manager of a McDonald's in Salt Lake City, Maria got a final deportation notice in 2017 after living in Utah for nearly 14 years. Maria had worked on a stolen social security card, one of thousands like her in Utah. They were in Utah illegally, but they didn't fear deportation, not under President Bush, not under President Obama. Stay out of trouble, you didn't have to worry about La Migra. Criminals were deported, not moms.

That changed under President Donald Trump. Anyone in this country here illegally would have to be deported, he announced. No exceptions. This time when the deportation notice came, her attorney told her the government meant business.

Protests were organized in her behalf. Letters were written to the judge. She appeared on the nightly news. It was all for naught. On Christmas Day 2017 she was sent back to Guatemala, her four children in tow. Her husband, a construction worker also here without documentation but not yet in legal jeopardy, would stay behind to send money to the family. There is no work for him in Jerez.

The immigration debate that rages on cable news focuses on the proposed wall along the border with Mexico, or the caravan of Central Americans making their way to the U.S. Maria is the face of those debates, someone actually affected by policies made in Washington — and by the choices she's made trying to raise a family in the face of those policies.

We have flown here to meet Maria, to see firsthand the effects of an immigration system considered broken by both political parties. We have come to understand why people come north, and what happens when they're sent back home.

As we continue east, the landscape becomes more tropical, and the road begins winding up a series of switchbacks, the final leg on our journey to Jerez. I crack open the window, taking in the moist air of the rainforest, letting it fill my lungs. The beauty here is breathtaking, and it's easy to forget the danger at hand.

I remember something Pedro told us as we left Guatemala City. "Keep your window rolled up. I cannot ensure your safety on this road."

The American Dream

The Guatemala Maria knew as a child was not the Guatemala tourists see, a country of volcanic peaks and towering cathedrals, cobblestone streets and Mayan temples. It was a country at war with itself. Between 1960 and 1996, as many as 200,000 civilians were killed in civil war. When the war ended, a fragile democracy tried to assert itself against former state intelligence and military forces now

unemployed and demoralized.

In those years, Guatemala was racked by instability and violence. Maria's own story was tinged by abandonment. She never knew her parents or attended school. Her childhood memories: an orphanage, a foster home, sexual abuse, hunger, sleeping on a cardboard slat on the streets of Guatemala City.

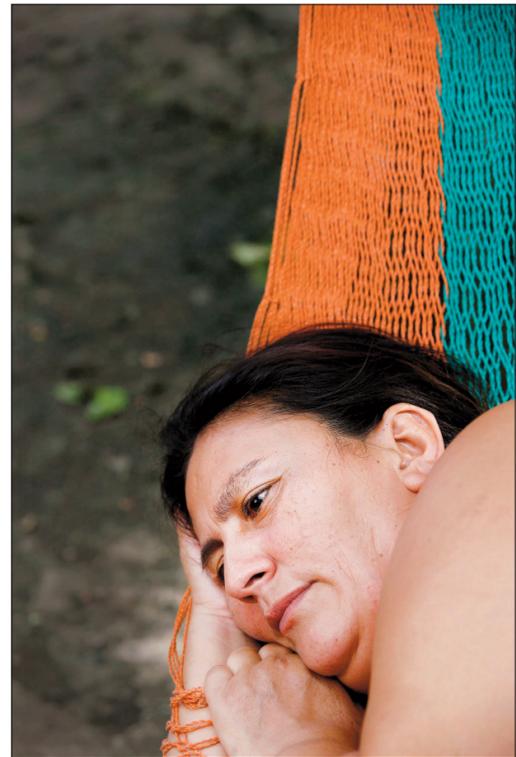
By the early 2000s, when Maria was in her early 20s, Mexican drug cartels were warring for control of Guatemala with local gangs, or maras. The MS-13 and M-18, from neighboring El Salvador and Honduras, were seeping into the country. Ironically, both gangs formed in Los Angeles, but thanks to large-scale deportations, their presence in Central America had ballooned. Maria only had a vague knowledge of the machinery of chaos and violence playing out around her. It was like background music, something to tune out while trying to build a life.

She got a job at a clothing factory and rented her first apartment. Then when she was 27, she saw something that would change the course of her life. Members of MS-13 attacked a woman selling food at a market across the street, hacking her to death with machetes. When Maria told the police she had witnessed the incident, word got back to the gang, and she began receiving death threats.

In 2004, afraid for her life, Maria hired a smuggler, who ushered her onto a bus that took her across the border into Mexico. Once she had swum across the Rio Grande River and crossed into Brownsville, Texas, she



Maria Santiago watches as Sarai and her sister Nathalie argue over who gets to keep a T-shirt while packing Sarai's suitcase in Jerez, Guatemala, on Oct. 16.



Maria Santiago lays in a hammock at her in-laws' home in Jerez, Guatemala, on Oct. 15. Santiago and her four children moved in with Maria's in-laws when they arrived in Guatemala.



Maria Santiago and her mother-in-law, Sarceño Isolina Corado, walk home after visiting Maria's grandmother in Jerez, Guatemala, on Oct. 16.

claimed asylum at the Fort Brown Detention Center, according to documents obtained by the Deseret News.

Maria eventually ended up in Utah with the help of a boyfriend from Guatemala who had found work there. He helped her find a lawyer who promised to contact her when her asylum hearing was scheduled. But through a series of misunderstandings, Maria says she never heard about her court date and a judge ordered her to be deported in absentia.

Assuming all was well, she married her boyfriend, found a job as a maid in a hotel, and took night classes to learn English. But after the birth of their first child, Patrick, her husband became abusive and developed a crippling drug addiction to crack cocaine. The last time she saw him was the day their second child, a girl they named Sarai, was born. He came to the hospital to put his name on the birth certificate — then disappeared.

Now on her own, Maria didn't have time to take English classes. To support herself and her two kids, she had to pick up a second job, this one as a cook at Burger King, which required a stolen social security number. It seemed like little more than a formality, and Maria says her employers asked few questions. When Sarai was 2, Maria met a man at a dance club in Salt Lake City. They fell in love, and married in 2010.

With her husband's steady work in construction and Maria's promotion to a higher-paying job as a manager at a McDonald's, the family was able to move from their cramped apart-

ment in West Valley City to their own rental house in Salt Lake City. Maria loved the warm, burnt-orange colored paint on the outside and the big backyard where her kids played after they got home from school. She began dreaming of college for Patrick and Sarai.

In 2012, Maria gave birth to a son, Anthony. And in 2014, she was pregnant again.

Then on a fateful April day, when she was sixth months pregnant, she opened her mailbox to find an innocent-looking envelope with the blue seal of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

'I want to die'

On either side of the road leading into Jerez, fields of corn fan out as far as I can see.

According to the creation myth of the Mayas — the indigenous people of Guatemala — human flesh was first created by mixing corn with water. The myth underlines the importance of corn to Guatemala's people, who rely on it as their primary source of sustenance.

But there are no men in the corn fields today. To find them, one must continue on — past a woman selling rambutans (a bright red Guatemalan fruit with fuzzy hair-like skin) and a pack of stray dogs — to the center of Jerez and the village's unadorned adobe homes.

As we pass, a man peers into our car window, a machete slung over his right shoulder. Laura and I are startled by the weapon, but Pedro reassures us that there's nothing to fear — this man is lucky enough to have found a bit of work in the cornfields, where he'll use

his blade to chop the corn stalks.

The majority of the men in this town aren't so fortunate. They lounge on their front stoops, restless. An early frost this year killed off most of the crop. Without corn, the men will have no source of income from working in the fields, Pedro tells us, and there will be little food on the table.

Juan, or "Papa Juan," Maria's father-in-law, couldn't have anticipated the frost when he agreed to take in the family after the deportation, he tells me through Pedro, who is translating.

On a farm laborer's salary of \$6 a day, it would have been a hardship for Papa Juan to accept five additional mouths to feed even without the frost. He knew that Maria would not contribute additional money — there is not even enough work for men in this town, and women are expected to stay in the home and care for the children.

Papa Juan's house, where Maria and her children now live, is a one-room white cement hut, with an outhouse in the front courtyard closed in by rusted tin walls.

There's no shower and no water heater. They bathe by dumping buckets of cold water on their heads.

The air in Jerez is moist and thick. When the rain comes, heavy droplets hammer their tin roof for hours, and turn the village's dirt roads into thick rivers of mud.

The drinking water gave Maria and her children diarrhea for months. Small bowls of tortillas and beans for dinner, cooked over a

woodfire stove, leave them hungry each night at bedtime.

During the day, Maria's younger son Anthony, 6, goes to kindergarten, and Nathalie, 4, stays home with her. Nathalie helps Maria and her grandmother, Isolina Sarceño Corado, or "Mama Cholina," knead the dough for the tortillas for dinner, a tradition passed down from mother to daughter. Papa Juan, 74, naps in the hammock on the front porch, trying to soothe his back, which aches chronically after a lifetime of hard labor in the fields.

Maria's older children, Patrick, 12, and Sarai, 10, attend the local elementary school down the street. The school serves students in eight grades — pre-kindergarten through sixth grade — but the small blue building only has room for six classrooms. Multiple grades must share the same classroom space.

Most kids in Jerez don't advance beyond sixth grade, Erick Ramos, a teacher at the school tells me. College is out of the question.

The majority of students Patrick's age drop out of school to become farm workers like Papa Juan, and often get involved with local gangs and drug trafficking, he says. Ronald Santiago, who runs the Jerez police substation, tells me the problem is worsening, and there are few resources for police to combat it.

There are 19 police officers for the entire municipality of 60,000 people. There is just one police car. Resources are so scarce police often have to buy their own ammunition.



At left, Patrick is reunited with his father in Salt Lake City on Oct. 20. Far right, Sarai's friends latch onto her as fifth-grade teacher Reggie Jones laughs as he tells the students to return to class during Sarai's surprise visit to the Guadalupe School in Salt Lake City on Oct. 22.



Patrick and his friends talk during recess as older boys watch them from a wall during Patrick's last day of school in Jerez, Guatemala, on Oct. 15.

DIVIDED

FROM A7

Jealousies of Patrick and Sarai's life in the United States have made them a target for bullies. One day at recess, an older boy pinned Patrick down on the soccer field, choking him until he passed out.

At home that night, Patrick told Maria, "I want to die."

This was the first time she thought about sending her two oldest children back to Utah.

A dream deferred

Maria was shocked when she received her deportation notice back in 2014, she tells me. She still had no idea about the removal order that had been issued nearly 10 years previously shortly after arriving in Brownsville.

But U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement did not move to deport her immediately. Maria hired an immigration attorney, and she checked in with ICE officials on a regular basis.

Though she was fearful, her imminent deportation was unlikely. Under the Obama administration, ICE focused primarily on threats to public safety and national security — mothers of U.S. citizens were not considered a priority for removal.

But then in 2016, Trump took office and Maria found herself catapulted to the top of the deportation list.

Rather than focus on hardened criminals who could be difficult and expensive to locate, ICE began targeting what enforcement officials call "low-hanging fruit," individuals who presented a low public safety risk but were easy to locate.

Maria's compliant behavior of regularly checking-in with ICE made her easy to identify and deport.

Her final appeal was denied in December 2017, and she was ordered to leave the country voluntarily or be arrested.

In her last meeting with an immigration officer, Maria was told that as U.S. citizens, her children had a right to stay in the United States. He advised her to consider leaving them behind and reassured her that the American government would see to their welfare. (Her husband's construction job required him to be away for weeks at a time, leaving him unable to watch the children.)

Maria knew what it was like to grow up without a mother. She knew what it was like to suffer abuse and indignity in foster care. She was unwilling to impose the same fate upon her children.

She thought back to her dream of having her own family in the United States. Instead of coming true, it had suddenly, irrevocably come apart.

The decision

In Jerez, Patrick tells me the more time spent in Guatemala the more he could feel his hopes of attending college slipping away. He missed playing the video game "Call of Duty" with his friends. He yearned to go back to Utah, but he couldn't stand the thought of leaving his mother.

Unbeknownst to Patrick, Maria began having doubts of her own.

At first, the thought of parting was unbearable. But Maria says she began to realize that perhaps a mother's duty isn't always to keep her kids by her side — but to give them the

best chance for a brighter future.

Her younger children — Anthony, 6, and Nathalie, 4 — were too small to go. But Patrick is 12 and Sarai is 10. Before her deportation, back in Salt Lake City, Patrick and Sarai's former art teachers, Megan Hallett and Tracy Strauss, offered to take in the children and make them welcome members of their families.

At the time, Maria had refused. But as the months passed in Guatemala she began to reconsider.

When Maria first moved to Jerez, she thought if she just worked hard enough, she would find a way to provide for her children. At first, she made tamales and sold them in the center of the village. But she soon found that she couldn't break even — on a good day, she made 15 quetzales — roughly \$2 — which didn't make up for the cost of the ingredients.

Her inability to generate income made her reliant on whatever Papa Juan could spare, and the money that her husband sent her. But such a tight budget meant she had to skimp on the basic necessities, like milk, to which her children had become accustomed in Utah.

Her children's rapid weight loss began to alarm her — Patrick lost 25 pounds in six months. When Patrick had an asthma attack and wound up in the hospital, it cost her \$100, more than half her monthly budget.

While their immediate hunger worried her, she also feared for their educational futures.

She couldn't imagine Patrick working in the corn fields for \$6 a day, or Sarai selling tamales on the street like her mother.

She feels torn about imposing on public school teachers to look after her own children.

"The truth is I like to work," she tells me. "I do not like handouts."

Should she give up her children for the sake of the vastly superior educational and economic opportunities available in the United States, or keep them with her for their emotional and psychological well-being, as well as her own?



On an overcast October Sunday in Jerez, Maria and her four children file into church pews. The Jerez Catholic Church is the most majestic building in town — whitewashed walls reflecting bright light, even on a day like this, when dark clouds warn of heavy rain.

Pedro hangs back to keep an eye on our car and Laura crouches at the front near the altar, finding the best angle for her photos. Tourists aren't common in this small village and the eyes of the congregation are glued to us.

A hush descends as choir boys in red robes walk through the aisle, followed by a priest shaking a thurible to diffuse the pungent odor of incense through the congregation.

Maria sits between Patrick and Sarai, holding their hands and reaching over to kiss their freshly showered heads.

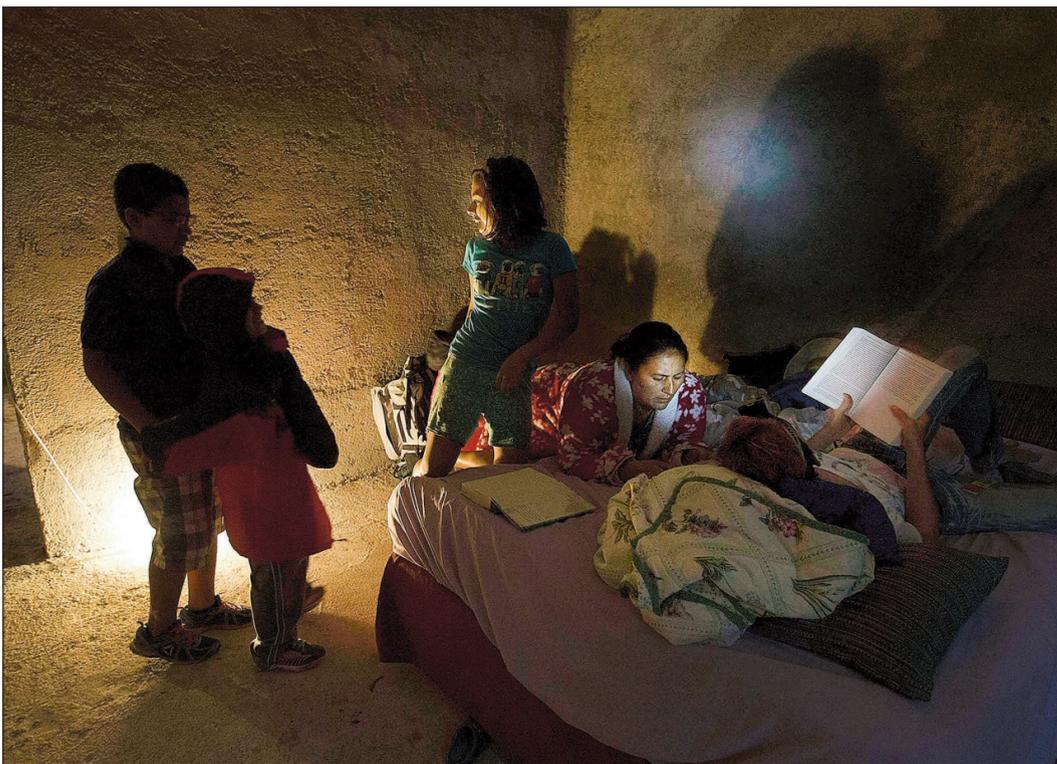
Nathalie, her youngest, tries to crawl into Maria's lap. Papa Juan gestures for Nathalie and Anthony to come sit with him, giving Maria time alone with her older two children.

Indecision wracks Maria. She has told Patrick and Sarai they can go back to America. She has booked their flights, with the help of volunteers with La Red de Solidaridad, an immigrant support group in Utah, who funded Patrick's and Sarai's airline tickets.

But now, with their small, warm bodies tucked close beside her, she wants to take it all back.

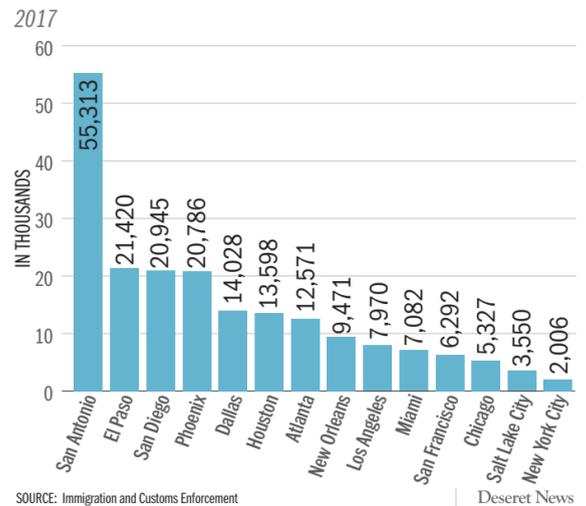


Patrick and Sarai have dinner with Megan Hallett and their host families to commemorate their first month of living back in Salt Lake City at Red Iguana on Nov. 17.



The children play in the light while Maria and Kate Savage read during a rainstorm in Jerez, Guatemala, on Oct. 16. The family uses electricity sparingly to limit expenses and extend its budget.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) removals



SOURCE: Immigration and Customs Enforcement | Deseret News

The priest calls Maria, Patrick and Sarai up to the altar.

“Bless you, Maria, and your children, Patrick and Sarai,” he prays in Spanish, his hand hovering over their heads. “May God give you the strength to separate yourself from your children, and may he watch over them during their journey.”

Suddenly — the crack of thunder, then the sound of hard rain pelting down on the church’s rusted tin roof, as if God heard their plea.

“Amen,” the congregation calls out. “Amen,” says Maria, and she straightens up, as if a heavy weight has been lifted from her shoulders.

In life, it is God who decides the important things, she reminds herself. This is God’s will, she thinks, and he will watch over my children.

Goodbye

It is a Wednesday morning three days later and Maria is wide awake. It’s 1 a.m. She can’t sleep.

Maria gets out of bed and checks Patrick and Sarai’s bags to make sure they haven’t forgotten anything. She slips a family photo album inside Sarai’s backpack. She holds one of Patrick’s T-shirts close to her nose, breathing in his familiar scent.

In the morning, Papa Juan packs the car, while Mama Cholina prepares a special breakfast of eggs and beans, wood smoke filling the kitchen as she grills tortillas.

But Sarai cannot eat. She pushes the food around her plate, staring up at the family photos on the wall.

Patrick doesn’t say anything. He doesn’t join the family for breakfast. He doesn’t hug his

mother. For hours, he sits cross-legged on his bed, staring blankly at the wall.

Maria, who has up to now been open and welcoming toward us, closes herself off, making sure we are out of earshot before she whispers to her children.

Pedro is visibly uncomfortable. During our interviews with Maria over the past few days, Pedro has struggled to hold back tears, often pausing to wipe his eyes with the back of his hand, his voice wobbling as he relays my questions to her in Spanish.

In his job as an immigration lawyer, he is normally in a position to help families like Maria’s, but as our guide and interpreter, his role is more passive — to observe and to assist. This feeling of powerlessness bothers him. He tells me that he wishes he could offer Maria some sort of employment in his law firm, then says it would be impossible.

When I ask him why not, he sighs and shakes his head: “There are a million Marias in Guatemala.”

Though their flight does not take off until evening, it is raining this morning and they anticipate gridlock traffic once they get to Guatemala City. They have hired a driver to transport them, and Maria and Papa Juan will accompany Patrick and Sarai on the journey. Mama Cholina will stay behind.

Before they leave, Sarai runs to find her grandmother in the kitchen. Sarai clutches her around the waist, buries her face in her apron and cries. Mama Cholina strokes Sarai’s hair, her own eyes welling with tears.

Patrick is overwhelmed, and perhaps to escape it all, he asks to ride separately, in our rental car with Laura and Pedro and me.

A few minutes into the drive, in an urgent

voice, Patrick asks Pedro to pull over. He bends over, falls to his hands and knees, and vomits repeatedly into the grass. I offer to let him sit in the front seat to quiet his stomach, and not long after we exit the winding back roads and re-enter the busy highway.

Finally we arrive at the airport. At baggage check-in, Maria whispers mournfully to herself, “I just wish I could get inside their bags and fly with them.”

But she cannot. They have run out of time.

Maria pulls them tightly to her for a final goodbye, tenderly kissing their heads. “No es un adiós, es un hasta luego,” she says in Spanish. (“It’s not a goodbye, just a see you soon.”)

Patrick and Sarai step gingerly over the threshold into the airport security line — a barrier their mother is unable to cross.

She watches them as they place their backpacks in bins and pass through the metal detector, then disappear out of sight.

Maria waits there, her hands over her heart, tears cascading down her cheeks.

She runs upstairs to the windows, pressing her face and hands against the glass, hoping to catch a glimpse of Patrick and Sarai waiting at their gate.

But they are already gone.

Postscript

It’s a clear October Friday at Liberty Park in Salt Lake City, and Patrick challenges Sarai to a bike race. As he moves into position, he puts both hands on the handlebars, revealing a blue wristband with “GUATEMALA” written on it in big white letters.

He had bought it in the Guatemala City airport in a souvenir shop, right before he

boarded his plane.

“Ready, set, go!” he cries, easily pulling ahead of her as he whips around the park, the wind in his face.

Patrick and Sarai are glad to see each other again. For the first time in their lives, they are not living under the same roof: Patrick is staying with Megan, and Sarai with Tracy. They like Megan and Tracy, but they all barely know one another. It has only been two days since they left Guatemala, and already they ache for their mom.

That next afternoon, Megan and Tracy drive Patrick and Sarai to a modest, burnt-orange-colored house in Salt Lake City.

Patrick and Sarai look at each other, smile with delight, and then scramble up the stairs, knocking loudly and impatiently on the front door.

It had been less than a year, but it felt like an eternity, since they had followed their mother out of this house a year ago on Christmas Day, their suitcases in tow, unsure if they’d ever return.

A man opens the door. He bursts into a giant grin.

“Patrick! Sarai!” he exclaims, lifting them off the ground and into his arms.

“Papa!” Patrick whispers. Then he bursts into tears. He buries his head in his father’s chest, unable to stop sobbing.

“You don’t need to cry anymore,” his father murmurs. “You’re home.”

But with his mother thousands of miles away, this doesn’t feel like home. He doesn’t know where home is anymore.

And maybe he never will.

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