

FRANCISCO JIMÉNEZ

I'm Francisco Jiménez. I teach at Santa Clara University and I write about personal experiences that I had when I was a child growing up in a family of Mexican migrant workers.

I've written four books. The first one is titled *The Circuit* where I describe the first nine years of my family living in California; moving from place to place following seasonal crops. I started school when I was six years old and I did not know a word of English. I also began to work along-side my parents in order to help them support the family. In order to not fall too far behind I use to carry a little notepad in my shirt pocket where I would add a different English word and its definition so that I could build up my vocabulary.

One of the places we lived in, it burned and so I lost my little notepad. And I was very, very upset and I was crying and of course my mother, being the wise woman that she is, asked me, well do you remember what you had written in that little notepad. And I said, well yes. She says well not everything is lost. That knowledge would go with me no matter how many times we moved and we moved very often.

And so in this very unstable life that we were living I was looking for some sense of permanence, a place to call my own. And I found part of it in learning, in education.

Before I began writing *The Circuit* I did some research. I looked through family documents. I was able to find some old photographs from that period. I also went to the different places where we use to live. After I did the research, I then decided to select those memorable experiences that made a difference in my life and to create a story around each experience. And that's so important for me because once we tell our stories and listen to each other's stories then we will begin to destroy any walls that separate us from one another. We begin to see ourselves reflected in each other's eyes.