

every day. I see the children in the schoolyard play at killing. Te voy a matar, they say to one another, soy pistolero, soy narco. So I think about the mentality my boys would be exposed to. I don't want my sons to grow up like this.

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Things here can go very quickly from bad to worse. A kid's mentality can change very fast. They see that delinquency is easy, that they don't have to study to get money, to have success, and so they engage in drug work, they align themselves with the narcos even from a very young age.

Mexico could be a great country, a rich country, a country of opportunity. There are leaders in this country, but they are not given an education, they are not valued, they are ending up in the mafia. So you see, this sets up a cycle: How can a government care

for its people if it is run by the mafia? And how can the mafia manage society if their leaders don't even have education? You know those forty-three students who went missing? They were studying at a rural college to become teachers. They disappeared more than a year ago and still no one knows what happened to them. Probably they were killed by narcos, by the cartel. They were accused of causing trouble because they were politically active, because they were protesting for better transportation, for more support from the local and state government. But the government is in the hands of the

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Eventually I became the main cook. Everyone I worked with said I was the best cook they'd ever seen, that I could do the work of two men. The policemen would see me cooking in the back and yell to me. What's up, José, how's it going? One time I came into the restaurant on my day off to pick up my paycheck. I was with my boys and when we walked in, there was a table full of police officers having lunch. They stood up to shake my hand. José, they said, it's good to see you, are these your boys? They even shook my boys' hands. My boys, they couldn't believe it. After we left, Diego said to me, how do those cops know you, dad? We're friendly to one another, I told him, that's all. We treat each other with respect.

The other day I was on the phone with Diego, he was telling me that he wanted to change classes, complaining that he thought his teacher was racist against him because he's Mexican. I told him, you must learn to do what your teacher says. If you think she is racist, talk with your family, meet with your teacher. You cannot give up just because you think someone is against you, because it is difficult to face them. I try to teach my boys that they must not be consumed by battle, they must not give in to vice, they must work hard to become someone in life.

1. What are some reasons this writer says he wouldn't want his children to grow up in Mexico?