

**Panel:**

**“CONTRIBUTION OF MIGRANTS TO DEVELOPING COUNTRY OF  
ORIGIN AND DESTINATION”**

**ANECDOTES OF A MIGRANT**

**Ary Kahan**  
Entrepreneur

First of all, thank you for inviting me to come and talk about a subject that is very familiar and very dear to me.

In several other places there are events on migrants. The word migrant or immigrant is sometimes not perfectly understood. I think it is a phenomenon that happens around the world, for various reasons. Due to climate change, changes in earth movement, ideological changes, for goodness knows how many things. I think man has always been a migrant or immigrant, just as Adam and Eve also became migrants because they were expelled from paradise all because they “misbehaved”. But one does not necessarily need to misbehave to be expelled from a land where one lives.

I belong to a very ancient people, the Jewish people. My parents had to emigrate from Europe in 1923 - 24, simply because in Russia and in many European countries they were persecuted. And they were persecuted because of the people to which they belonged. That was when my grandmother had to emigrate with three children because the Bolsheviks would not let my grandfather leave, because he was a useful. He knew how to handle steam engines and therefore they did not want him to leave.

My grandparents had to divorce and my grandmother had to travel with my uncles, and my grandfather devised an escape and emigrated. They were travelling to the United States, but had to go ashore in Cuba, and then in Veracruz, because there

was no way to enter the United States even then because of the famous immigration law.

They arrived in Veracruz and, my dad used to say that the smell of the fruit, mango, melon and watermelon, was the most beautiful memory he had of reaching the mainland.

They travelled to Puebla, settled there, and the story goes that my grandfather offered to fix an engine. He did it and earned his first 200 pesos. Thus, without knowing the language, empty handed, but with a fighting spirit, my family came to Mexico, as many other immigrants have come from all over the world.

Mexico, blessed country, to have received them with open arms! If not, to be honest, I would not have been born and would not be here today with you, giving a testimony of gratitude to this place in the world. Believe me; I do so with great respect and affection.

I can say with great joy that sometimes we do not understand what money is, and in these times of crisis, even more so. We are unhappy, do not participate, we have no money in our pockets, we have lost a lot, but let me tell you something. I have not always been successful, I have had many failures and success is paved with failures. Have you ever seen a hearse followed by a safe? No one has, right? Then, what are you worried about? True, however, is that often a hearse is followed by people, friends, good people, as a result of the things we do in life.

Finally, an immigrant is known for what he did to succeed and how involved he is in the life of the country. What happens is that the migrant has had a hard life. He must live a life of thrift, deprived of many things, he has to save for later, start that small fortune and begin to multiply it.

The migrants in this country have had opportunities in every way. Their children have become professionals, have done wonderful things and have come to collaborate with the country.

The question we must finally ask ourselves, whether migrants or not, in the end, we are all the inhabitants and citizens of this country, but what does citizen mean,

someone who goes and votes? No. A citizen is one who works with the country and who commits to doing good things for his country. We can have good or bad, better or worse governments, but it is civil society, where I have been working in "*Society in Motion*", that has to work for Mexico.

But, we should not limit ourselves in any forum; let us not leave it to others to solve our problems. Let us become leaders, the first ones at home, in our families, our streets, our neighborhoods, in our country.

So, I do not know if my time is over, it probably is, but you have made me pour from my very being what I most love, you my brothers from Mexico. God bless you.