

## For a chance at a better life, it helps to make your bad story worse

by [Suketu Mehta](#) August 1, 2011

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The writer met Caroline one Friday evening in the cafeteria of the upscale Manhattan supermarket where she worked. She was a twenty-something African immigrant without papers who was living three lives: as Cecile Diop, a woman with papers who had been in the country for ten years; as Caroline the African rape and torture victim; and as herself, a middle-class young woman who wanted to make a life in America. (Names and other identifying details have been changed throughout.) Diop, a fellow expat from central Africa, had lent Caroline her Social Security number so that she could get the job. Caroline was expecting her first paycheck, which she would give to Cecile to cash. “Some of them take half,” Caroline said, about such arrangements between immigrants.

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Caroline had come to the U.S. the previous summer for a family wedding. When her parents left, she stayed, even after her tourist visa expired. Now she was working on a story—a four-page document that she would give to the lawyer she had hired, and to immigration officials—saying that she was beaten and raped more than once by government soldiers in her country. “I have never been raped,” she admitted. It’s not enough for asylum applicants to say that they were threatened, or even beaten. They have to furnish horror stories. Inevitably, these atrocity stories are inflated, as new applicants for asylum get more inventive about what was done to them. Caroline’s parents are supporters of a controversial opposition leader, and government soldiers ransacked their house twice. Although they didn’t rape her or her sisters, they beat her brother.

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To buttress her asylum claims, Caroline has to obtain a letter from a hospital stating that she had been treated for torture. Describes her therapy sessions. Caroline was getting help in crafting her narrative from a Rwandan man the writer calls Laurent, who was a sort of asylum-story shaper among Central Africans. The writer

accompanied Caroline to the immigration office where she made her case for asylum. Describes her interview with the immigration official, Novick. He wanted specifics about her rape and mistreatment back home. Last year, about fifty thousand people applied for asylum here. Less than five per cent came from central Africa. In all, 21,113 applicants were given asylum. The majority of asylum seekers in America, immigration experts say, really would be at serious risk if they were returned to their countries. Caroline does indeed have a “well-founded fear of persecution” if she returns, but she felt that she had to augment the story with a rape because the immigration system can better comprehend such a story. A couple of weeks later, Caroline returned to the asylum office and was told that her application had been approved.

## VAJE

### a) BRANJE

Glasno preberemo besedilo. Pozorni smo na izgovorjavo. Ob težjih besedah ali napačni izgovorjavi si učenec izgovorjavo zapiše. Gremo od stavka do stavka in jih prevajamo. Sproti vstavljamo manjkajoče besede.

Če učenec pozabi izgovorjavo besed, si lahko doma pomaga s slovarjem na spodnji povezavi, kjer ima možnost poslušanja.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/learner-english/>

### b) NEZNANE BESEDE

Neznane besede ali druge koristne besedne zveze, frazne glagole ipd. učenec sproti podčrtuje in zapisuje prevode. Prevode mu pove prostovoljec, da lahko hitreje napredujeta skozi besedilo. Ob besede zapiše tudi, katera besedna vrsta je ta neznana beseda in poišče še kakšno besedo iz iste besedne družine. **Besede, zveze in fraze učenec po učenju prepíše v zvezek, jim dopíše slovenski prevod in angleško razlago ter jih uporabi v svojih povedih.**

### c) POIŠČI

Preleti besedilo in povej:

- Kateri časi so uporabljeni v besedilu? Kako jih prepoznaš? Zakaj so uporabljeni ti časi?
- Obkroži vezniške besede ali besedne zveze (linking words)? Bi jih lahko zamenjal z drugimi vezniškimi besedami, ne da bi se spremenil pomen povedi?
- Poišči 5 pridevnikov in iz njih poskusi tvoriti prislove.
- Najdeš v besedilu kakšen prislov?

#### **d) KLJUČNE BESEDE IN OBNOVA**

Učenec napiše ključno besedo na črto pred vsakim odstavkom, nato pa s pomočjo teh iztočnic ustno obnovi besedilo.

#### **e) ODGOVORI IN VPRAŠANJA**

Učenec napiše 15 vprašanj in odgovorov na temo besedila.

#### **f) MNENJE O BESEDILU**

Učenec napiše, kaj se je novega naučil, kaj mu je bilo v besedilu najbolj zanimivo, zakaj ipd.

#### **g) TVORI SVOJE BESEDILO**

- Učenec napiše 10 ali več povedi, v katerih pove, ali se je že srečal z imigrantom in kakšna je bila njegova zgodba.
- Kako bi se obnašal, če bi moral tudi sam zapustiti svojo državo in postati imigrant v drugi, tuji državi?