

# Falling Down the Stairs in House Shoes

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It is a family tradition, no doubt rooted in the dark recesses of cholo vato loco-ism, for my sons and me to wear the cheapest black Rite Aid \$9.95 house shoe slippers imaginable. They are cotton corduroy, black with ridges at the top. On the bottom there is a flat layer of black foamy stuff which puppies find quite delicious. They are to be worn with calf length tube socks. Black socks are for funerals and more formal occasions.

The more comfortable you are with your Macho-lenity, the more apt you are to wear your chanclas outdoors. This includes going to the mall, paying bills, and buying car parts. You cannot wear them while grocery shopping. This is because the only reason you are there is that your lady has forced you to go with her; ergo you are sporting untied Chuck Taylors.

While telling street war stories, there is always some legendary homie who wore house shoes to a prom or to court. One OG even got married in his. The story was amended over the years to include the addendum that he "always gets married in them."

I am not that brave when it comes to footwear. Anytime I am wearing chanclas after 9 AM is because I am home sick. My Pavlovian reaction now is that for any reason "Somnambulistly dressed after 9AM, then I must be sick.

It was several months ago. 8:57 AM. I can remember I was walking out the front door and down the steep bricks steps. The steps were a little wet. I had to move one of the cars because the parking vultures across the street were eyeballing my sister-in-law's Toyota's space. And I mean mug laser beam glances across the street. I suddenly noticed that my chanclas were not below me but rather up in the air in front of me directly in my field of sight. I thought, "This is going to really, really hurt." Shoes should be standing on the bricks, not hovering over them like a military drone.

I fell on my rear and then bumped down at least four steps hitting the ground. I popped right back up and tried to make it look like I planned to do it all along. My eyes were still fixed on the neighbor's living room curtain. I had to see if they saw me fall and, if they did, were they laughing? Lucky for me, they ran away from the window when they heard some nut job screaming in Spanglish.

Got out to the car with one side of my jeans wet and with one of my buns dentist office numb. Moved the car, ran back up the stairs, holding onto the rail this time, while trying to play the whole episode off.

When my wife came home later that night she noticed the limp. She coaxed the story out of me, all the while knowing that she had a bag full of "I-told-you-so's" at the ready to bombard me. That's if she could get to them after laughing for a good half hour. This was almost as funny to her as my unfortunate Chinese haircut of last year. I was exhorted to throw the house shoes away.

We have lived in the same house for 25 years. Since this was an isolated incident, I kept the shoes and attributed the fall to driver error. I took steps to be more cognizant of the way I used the stairs while still fuzzy in my morning fog. I did however engender a great deal of major respect as the homie who sported his chanclas to major occasions. I remembered his masterful story telling about the time he, in his ghetto footwear, was able to elude police in a high speed foot chase, in a crowded mall during the winter with an armful of boxer shorts and ball point pens.

The following week I was walking my wife down to the car, carrying her backpack down the unnerving stairs, wearing you-know-what. She told me to be careful. I told her, "You don't have to tell me to beeeee . . . whoa . . .!" There were my slippers, eye level again. This time I hit the bottom five steps. Now she has a major house shoe story for her homies.

The house shoes are gone. I was gifted with some high tech major grip ones now. Sometimes hipness is what it ain't. Can teach this old dog new tricks.