

Who tells your story?

I was born in *Aguascalientes*, but my parents took me and my siblings to *Juarez*. In *Juarez*, it was very beautiful. It had a lot of beautiful places, but it has changed. I've begun to see some gang violence. But I think that's how it is, the world changes. It was a very popular town. A lot of people would come from everywhere. It wasn't very big, it was small. My favorite part was when we went to the "*Valle de Juarez*." This place was called like this because it is next to the border of Mexico and the U.S. The river makes this place super green and full of trees. It was a place where people would bring *sandia's y chile*. It was very green, and it had a beautiful river.

I liked going to school, I loved studying, and I always got good grades. When I was in 6th grade, I joined a club. They would take me to go against other schools in math and Spanish, and we would always win. We went to the festivals in school, like Mother's Day, and dances and all that. My favorite teacher was Ms. Navarro, who was our home room teacher. She was my favorite teacher because if you didn't understand something, she would try and teach you every little detail about it, until she felt like you were ready. When we graduated from university she took us out to eat in this beautiful restaurant. Another one of my favorite teachers was the art teacher. I liked her because she would teach us cool stuff.

I have 4 siblings, three boys and one girl. I used to fight all the time with my older brother. Sometimes I would beat him, but most of the time he beat me. He would always start it. He would bully me, make fun of me, and was always annoying. I didn't like it. We wouldn't talk to each other for days. When I saw him, I would just walk away.

I've had this friend since Mexico, and we still talk to this day. We were together during college, and she also immigrated to the U.S. I haven't seen her in a while, but we still talk on the phone. Since we were not with anyone or even married, my friend and I went to *bailes* since we were already adults. In college we would go to this place called *discotekas*, where we would dance all night.

I met my husband when my sister's class had a party for winter break. I didn't even want to go, but she begged me to come so I did. They all got together in a house and they had a dance, and my sister introduced me to a boy in her class since they were good friends. When I saw him, he caught my eye because he was gentle, attentive, and very educated. It was love at first sight. **When we looked at each other for the first time, we felt something.** He asked me out to a dance, and so we danced, and then he invited me to the theaters, and we just went off after that.

The first person I met from his family was his mom. I had just come back from vacation, and we didn't have cell phones at the time, so I couldn't just call him and say "I'm back from vacation, come pick me up." So I went to his house since I knew where he lived already, and I grabbed my car, called my sister, and we went to his house. On the porch was his mom, so I went out and asked if her son



was here, and she said that she'll go get him, and he came out. She was the first one I met in his family. I was nervous, but his mom was a good person. She was very nice and would treat me kindly. She never gave me a bad look.

After a little more than a year, he proposed to me. I knew I wanted to marry him because my feelings for him were off the charts. I'd had boyfriends before, but my feelings for him were different than other boys. I've never fallen in love, nor felt what I felt with him, with any other boy. Our wedding day was at his house. It was in his living room, and my bridesmaids were getting everything ready. They bought me cake, my *mama* and *papa*, made mole and rice, and it was beautiful. **My family and his family were together, and we danced till the sun came up.**



When we were boyfriend and girlfriend and after we got married, we started talking about having children. We wanted to have one boy and one girl, but in the end we had one boy and two girls. I love all of them the same, even though they are all very different. One girl is very calm. I don't have to tell her much and she listens to me. The other girls

are crazy, and I always have to tell her to do this and that. The boy, he's a bit more difficult because he was very crazy, and I always had to keep an eye out for him so he wouldn't cause any trouble. But I love all my children the same. I try to talk to each of them with the same tone, and teach them all with basic rules. And if one wanted a toy, I would have to give the others a toy too.

What made me want to cross the border was the violence in Juarez. In front of our house, there were people who would sell drugs and take drugs, and we would have a lot of problems with them. They used *pistolas*, pistols over there, and that made me very scared because my daughters were growing up there. They were going to go to 2nd grade, but school was very far, and we didn't have a car so they had to walk, and those people being around made me very scared. I said "I won't let my daughters be alone while they are small."

All I wanted was for my daughters to have a better life than back in Mexico, and for my daughters to go to school. We already had passports, so we took our visas, and we traveled in my husband's car. It just felt like we were going on a vacation. All I remember was us being happy. We really liked Denver, and we were very happy, even though we left a lot behind. But in our mind, we were going to have a better life. It wasn't that difficult. At that time, America was exactly as I perceived. It was green, and had beautiful mountains, and it had beautiful rivers.

It was very difficult finding a job. We came here in the middle of November, and we were looking for a job for three months. We finally found a job in a tortilla restaurant. For me it was super hard trying to speak a new language. I can't really even speak it to this day. I understand a little. I can defend myself. If I go to the store I know how to buy and all that. And I can communicate with words that are simple, but for my husband it was very fast. In one year he was able to learn it all, but for me it has been a struggle.

We didn't struggle much financially. Since we brought a lot of stuff, and my husband brought his car, we were able to move in with my sister since she was already in America. She helped us a lot for two months. She paid rent, she gave us food, and

when we started working we would help her with rent and food.

When I came to America I missed my dad. I missed my brothers too, of course, but my dad... I missed him because he was a great dad. He would always treat us well. He was affectionate. But at least he would come visit us once in a while, like for vacation.

The most difficult part for me in America was being able to speak the language, because I worked wherever they put me. I always thought of my children. If I ever felt like giving up, I would always say, "They have to be healthy. They have to be safe." I always put my faith in Jesus and *our lady de guadalupe*, in my bad times and in the good.

Here, you have to work way harder, and since we came from Mexico we had to do the toughest of jobs. What you studied in Mexico does not work in America. You have to restart. You have to study something else. But not one moment did I regret or feel guilty about coming, because I had a chance to go back, and when I went back I didn't like it.

I like both Mexico and America. Mexico makes me happy. I love going to *Juarez, Guadelajara*, but all the cool places I've seen in America make me like America even more. When I went back to Mexico, I always said that I didn't like *Juarez*. I didn't like it because the grass was dry and the weather was terrible, but in Colorado the weather is perfect. What I wish someone told me before going to America was to study your English, because it helps you a lot, in work and school.

If I were to give advice to immigrants migrating to a new country in these times, I would tell them to be calm and take care of themselves. Obviously, us immigrants come from very, very poor places, so when you're migrating you have a lot of difficulties, like crossing the river with your kids. It's very difficult, but try to calm down. I know it's difficult. You might be poor, or you could be escaping from people who are trying to kill you, so I can't say don't go, but try to take care of yourself as much as you can, because traveling is very difficult. I wish people knew this. **I wish people knew that immigrants are here for a better life, not to make the world a worse place.**



I feel satisfied with what I've accomplished. My family is healthy. We all have good jobs. We have a lot of food, and we're okay. My children have grown and accomplished so much. They all have their own houses. They now have what I wanted them to have, and they're ok. Thinking about my life, I am most proud of my children. I'm so proud of them. They always tried their hardest, and they never gave up. They've grown up now, and they're in a very good spot, which makes me glad. I feel like my younger self would be happy. I am where I want to be.

story told by: Bryan