

Who tells your story?

I was born in Ciudad Juárez, México. It is on the border with El Paso, Texas. My dad is from El Paso, Texas and my mom's from Mexico. We were a happy family over there. My dad and mom would always support us, so we lived a good life in Mexico. Juárez was a big city with a lot of traffic. It was a place to have fun. There are no roads. Before now it was a secure place. Now it's a bad place to live, but when I was young nothing major happened. It was like only fights, no drugs and all that. Where I lived was a deep city, so there were no mountains. There's like one mountain, a big mountain. On top of the mountain, it says to read the Bible. That's the only place you could see the whole town. It's like dirt. It's like the desert, with no roads. You know how there are roads here? Where I lived you can drive anywhere because there are no roads at all. When you go to Juárez from the border you can see plants everywhere. So it's very different over here. In Mexico, they use brick houses and cement, not drywall like here. It's so different. Also, the houses are on the hills.

When I was young my dad was a pitcher for baseball, and I played baseball. My dad loves baseball. Then when I went to middle school I started playing basketball, and then in high school, I played basketball, baseball, and football. When I was in the neighborhood playing with my friends, we used to play games that kids don't play anymore. We played Yo-yos, Trumpos, and Marbles. Then we played baseball and soccer. In middle school, I went to a private school. It was called Federal Number One. I went to a high school called Alta Vista. Then I was supposed to go to the University of Ciudad Juárez, but I didn't pass



the admission test, so that's why I came to the United States. I have never gone back since.

I took a break then I moved to the United States with my uncle. When I came it was so difficult because I didn't speak any English. I didn't know any people right here in Denver. The first place I went was here in Denver because of my uncle. The first year was difficult. People laughed at me because they told me things that I didn't understand. I just laughed because I didn't understand what they said. I started working and began studying English with a dictionary. I began learning it with the people around me. Every job I got I learned from. I started working at the age of

16. All of my friends in the neighborhood were cooks. They worked in the kitchen, so then I worked in the kitchen at the age of 16. That's the only job that I had in Mexico. When I came to America I started cooking because that was the job I had in Mexico. Then I moved here and I decided to come here to make money, then go back to Mexico and study for college. But when I compared being a professional in Mexico and then being a dishwasher here, I got more money being a dishwasher here, so then I never went back to Mexico for college.

When I was young I learned everything, so when I came here to America I had no papers and no social security number. You can't go back and forth because you don't have a passport or a green card to go back to Mexico. If you live alone, you don't see your mom or dad or your family. The good thing is that my mom and dad could come here, because they have passports, but it was difficult because of the loneliness. After all, you need your mom when you're sick or when you miss them, but you can't go back. That's the worst thing, because if you know how to work, you can make money, but you miss everyone and you feel lonely.

I didn't feel much discrimination here from anyone, maybe because I'm big and nobody messed with me. But I've seen a lot of guys being discriminated against because they were Mexican and they don't speak English, and because they don't have papers and all of that.

So the only place I have ever really stayed is here. I moved to Chicago, then I moved to Tennessee, and then I moved to Virginia, but then I came back here. It's nice here compared to everywhere

else, so I chose to live in Denver because my uncle came here first, and then I lived with him for a while. He treats me like a brother. He came here illegally and then he fixed his papers, and then he invited me to come to Denver just for a vacation. But then in a few years, I got married here, and then I had four kids: three girls and one boy. That's why I stayed and never went back to Mexico.

I live in Denver now, and I feel like this is my home. I've lived in Denver for 32 years, and Mexico doesn't feel like my home anymore. Also, I'm scared to go back because everything has changed from the time I was in Mexico. Denver's my home because I feel like it's my home. I don't feel like Mexico's my home, even though it's where I was born. Mexico it's different because of the houses, the people, the traffic, everything is so different, and one river divides Mexico and Texas.

My job right now is working at a body shop. I'm the adjuster, so for every single car with insurance that has any damage, I estimate all the damage on the car, then I take photos and all of that and I send it to the insurance company to pay off the damage.

My favorite sport is basketball, and I've been coaching basketball at Annunciation for seven years. I've been a volleyball coach, and I've been coaching here at Annunciation for approximately 9 years. I got one championship in basketball and four championships in volleyball. Most of my friends are dead, but I'm still in contact with the ones that are still alive. I have my family over in Mexico.

My hopes and dreams are to watch my kids become successful. I also want to see my grandson grow up as much as I can with as much time as God will give me. I will show him how to play basketball, volleyball, and all that, and I'll eat healthy when I get older.



I'm most proud of my kids who have already grown up and have their own life. One is in the Army, and the second one is ready for college. The third daughter is in college right now and my son is in high school.

I'm grateful for them being good kids, and I'm trying to be a good father.

story told by: Ronnie Vigil