

Who tells your story?

I was born in Mexico, a place called El Tepetate Loreto, Zacatecas. Mexico is everything to me. It is my childhood and adolescence. I have many memories of Mexico... beautiful and dear Mexico, I will never forget you.

A typical day for me was to wake up early go eat some gorditas emiganadas then later I would go for el pollo. In the afternoon I would go to the main square and feel the breeze of the fresh air. Another typical day in Mexico for me was when I would go with Don Cuco to go eat some tortas. They were the best tortas. We would then go to Loreto and you would buy your torta to-go and buy the groceries. When you were done you would take your torta, and you would eat it on your way home on the bus because you would not have enough time to eat it there in Loreto.

In Mexico I remember hearing the singing of the rooster. I remember the rain. When it rains, that smell is unforgettable. I enjoyed everything; the corn, the camotero passing by and saying "el camote camote." Passing by the panaderia, smelling the fresh bread when they were baking it. When you would go to the park you would see the cups of fruit and the ice cream in the hot weather.

I have 8 brothers, and I am the only girl. It was a hard childhood because it was full of responsibilities. My responsibilities were to help my mom, and take care of my brothers.

It was a difficult life because I was the only daughter. I would always be washing the dishes

and in the mountains working or in the parcel helping the animals or milking the cows. It was a hard life.

Back then my brothers and I were always together. One of my brothers died. He was buried in Mexico. I will never forget him. I was the oldest. Everyone had to listen to me because if not I would get mad. They would go to the parcel to do different things in the mountains. The little one would go to catechism classes and they would go to Mass. My favorite memory with my brothers is when we would take pictures. They would always put us oldest to youngest in every photo. They would set us up like stairs. I always remember that. Now it's a bit different because now we are old and everyone focuses on their own children and their work. It's not like how it used to be. I had lots of brothers in my family, and we were poor. We were united, but now there is no one left to be united with.



School was really hard for me because when my older brother went to school, I entered with him in the same grade even though he was older than me and in a different grade. I was attached to him and I did not want to leave him. The teacher would see me cry and beg her to let me in with my brother so she accepted me. I entered a year early, which was a challenge for me because I was always behind. My brother was really smart, but I never wanted to leave my brother. He would always pass, he was really smart. They would tell me that they were going to fail me, and I would do everything possible to move on with him. The saddest thing that happened, and I still remember, was that the last year we were not able to go on together. He had passed away.



We were poor because we had lots of family members. My dad immigrated to the United States to work and send us money, but it wasn't enough because there were a lot of us. It was difficult. When we were little there was no food. I remember one time my mom was crying because she had to go to another ranch to ask my grandma for food. My brother passed away due to his development. He did not develop well. My mom would give him coffee instead of milk when he was a kid because we couldn't afford milk, and that

affected him over time and he passed away. To this day, I still remember. It still hurts me. I finished 6th grade, but he went to the cemetery. That was the saddest thing. I will never forget that.

I only went to school until 6th grade. After that I had to help my mom. After helping my mom I would go to the stream to wash the clothes. Scrub them with a stone and soap. My mom would tell me to hang the clothes, and I would wash the clothes. I was little. I would always try and help her the best I could. I am the only girl, and my parents gave me a lot of responsibilities. My life was happy, but full of responsibilities. Those responsibilities were giving food to my brothers, milking the cows, and washing the dishes. I had to clean everything that needed to be cleaned because in Mexico there was no one to do it for you. Life in the ranch was really hard and really poor. There was no money, no nothing.

I had lots of challenges in Mexico. I was a Catechist teacher in Mexico. My challenge was to tell stories to little kids so they would remember, so they would have memories. I was a dancer and when I was a dancer one of my brothers wanted to be el viejo de la danza and I would tell him "Yes brother." He was shy but he went for it. He was el viejo de la danza. He was always going with us everywhere. Beautiful memories. They would hire us to go dance at the ranchos. That was my passion. I liked it a lot. There would be people that would go see us and would say, "Olga, you are a good dancer." Those are some good memories that happened in my ranchito.

In Mexico I had a lot of challenges because I would like to always do what I like and to always do it well. A challenge was when we were

catechists we had a priest that was very active. He would tell us to entertain the people to do different things. We would do bailables and jaripeos. In that time we would do a lot of things and I think those people who would do those activities still remember. Those were the challenges to entertain the people and bond with the priest and the kids.



My father was in the United States. My mom was with us in Mexico. My relationship with my parents has been alright. It was not as perfect, but we are working as all families do. I got along with both my parents. When we came to the United States, both were there with us.

I had to prepare myself and prepare my stuff that I was going to leave behind. I never got them back because I never went back after 8 years. I moved to the United States because we were poor and there were a lot of family members, and well, in Mexico there is nothing. It was difficult leaving Mexico because you leave all your memories, then

you come to face challenges that you don't know and you don't even know anyone.

I really did not imagine the United States. I looked to have a better life. They would say that there were a lot of jobs. They would say that there was a lot of money. I looked forward to not being poor because there was a lot of poverty in Mexico. I would say that I was going to work to have money and help out my parents. You could sweep the dollar bill up with a broom, but it was a lie. You had to work really hard to have something.



I still remember when I came illegally. It was hard because my mom came pregnant at 6 months. We had the littlest one, 6 years old. He would get tired, so we had to carry him. Those siblings don't even remember, but it was a really hard

experience. We came to the border in the car, but we crossed the border walking.

It was a really difficult crossing. I am scared. I would think "What will happen to me?" They would tell you to walk faster and other things. I was thinking, "What if I don't pass and my family goes and I don't?" It was very traumatizing and difficult. You feel powerless. You want to say things but you don't understand the language, or they take what you say as a bad thing. You feel a lot of hopelessness.

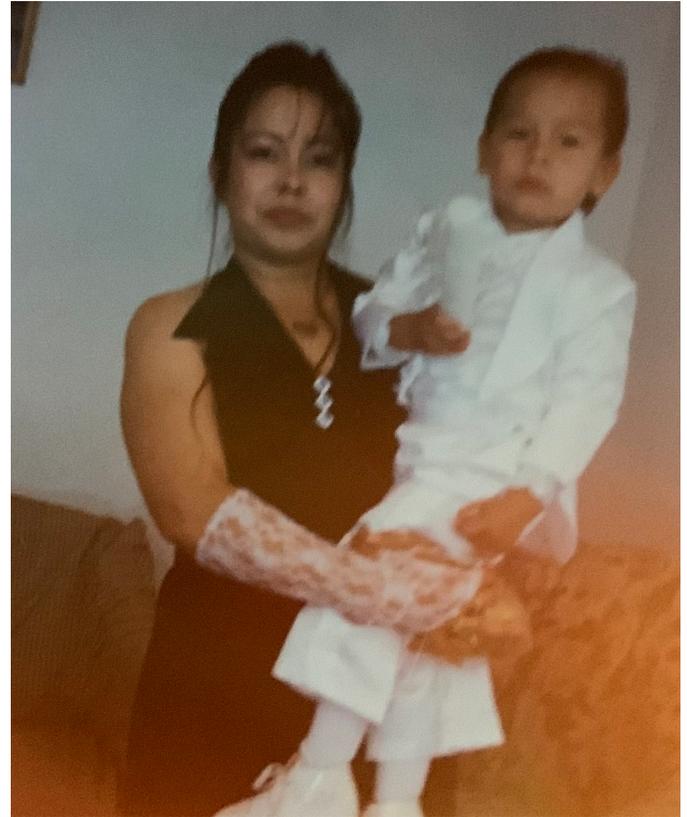
In the United States I felt a bit sad because I could not go out. I didn't have a car. I did not know anyone. I wasn't able to go to the baile. I would not go anywhere, and well, I felt sad.

My first job was in a laundry for clothes. That was my first job. The most difficult part was to have to understand English. The job I would start learning day by day, but the language was a hard problem. I remember that it was a good job.

We liked Colorado. The whole family stayed here and everyone had somewhere to live. We never tried to move to Las Vegas or Chicago or other places to live. We liked living here.

My first child was born here at Denver Health. His name is Alfredo. He was a very patient baby and he would not cry. My relationship with my first son was the best. We called him el nene because he was the first grandson. My relationship with my kids is very different with each kid. Each one is different but good. My feelings towards my youngest son, like with my oldest son, he is my motivation every day in my life because when the little one asks you for help to tie his

shoe or the littlest things it motivates you to continue living for them. Having a kid is the best. The prettiest thing that someone can have is the gift of life. It's the best you can have.



I miss everything about Mexico, especially the good food. There are different types of foods, and lots of nationalities in Denver, but what I miss is the food, trips, and the calmness, but now there is no calmness. I left my adolescence and my memories. That's what I left behind.

I don't regret coming to the United States because I have lived different things, but my experience was really hard. I think I made my future better because in Mexico there was no work. There are lots of jobs in the United States, thanks to God. I looked forward to leaving poorness behind and seguir echando le ganas, to have something in life, to be someone. Because of the effort that I put in jobs and giving my kids an education and what I

couldn't get, they are able to get their goals. Hopefully they are able to accomplish what I wasn't able to do, for them not to live a poor life. I hope they know how to value stuff and to be someone in life; to have dreams and be able to accomplish their dreams, but who knows. Probably Diana will be able to. She is the one who talks to me the most, the one who follows me. Who has hopes in herself. She is positive, saying "I can do it, Mom, and I am going to do it." The other ones have that rhythm of staying in a zone of comfort and they don't even want to move.



It is different in Mexico. Mexico has their traditions. In Denver it is different. I have learned to value what you have, what God has given us, to thank God for what he gives us and what he shows us. I have learned to give thanks for being in this country because here I have valued myself as a person and I have met lots of people that have helped me in my life. I can't say names, but there are a lot. I am old, but I remember some of those people. One of those is my partner because he helps me and supports me when I am sick. He asks what is wrong. When I get home he asks me if I want to eat. It is a big support and big help for me because back when I was a single mother, I

had a lot of responsibilities on my shoulders, and he is a person that supported me. Have I accomplished my goals? Yes and no. I accomplished getting out of poverty. Here it feels like I have a little bit more, but not enough. But it is better than Mexico.

I am most proud of my kids because each one is different and I had different relationships with them. They still are my little ones because they make me laugh, they make me mad. They motivate me to keep on living. I still have my little one, and I feel like he gives that motivation to seguir echando le ganas because he is small. He needs me. My happy moments are sometimes when I am in the kitchen or in the bathroom. He screams out "mom do you love me." Well that makes me proud of him so little. He asks me questions that wake me up to my reality that I have to try my best for my kids and my partner because he gets home tired of his work and wants something to eat, and it makes you think that there is someone still missing you.



I like Mexico, and I still like Mexico because it is my country where I was born. El Tepetate El Duro is my city. Now Every time I go to El Tepetate el duro, I remember where I came from and enjoy it to the max.

story told by: Diana Lomeli