

Who tells your story?

My name is Fabiola Zubia. I am from Chihuahua, Mexico. I lived in a small neighborhood that was called La Colonia Industrial by downtown, close to Chihuahua. It was close to the train tracks, and we could always hear the train when it would pass by. Everyone in the neighborhood knew each other, and all of us kids would always talk because we were all around the same age. We would play bote volado and los encantados, and at night we would tell each other scary stories. In my neighborhood the story was that at 11:45, we would hear horse hooves, and we wouldn't get scared because we got used to it, so every time someone would hear it the rest of us would stay quiet so that we could hear it.

If you would go where I lived you would smell tacos because they would make tacos de tripa all the time. You would hear the neighbors' music because they loved to listen to their music loudly. You could see the neighbors sitting on their porches watering their lawns and sweeping their sidewalks. You would hear the trains because they were always so close to where we all were, and you could just smell all of the good, delicious food because they would make and sell papas fritas at the corner of the street. Every time you would go to the bus station they would be out there making them.

My favorite places were downtown because there were a lot of shops to buy clothes. There were restaurants that would sell banderillas (skewers), but they would make fresh ones. They had really good lemonade, and tacos al pastor. All of the people would be walking around, and they would

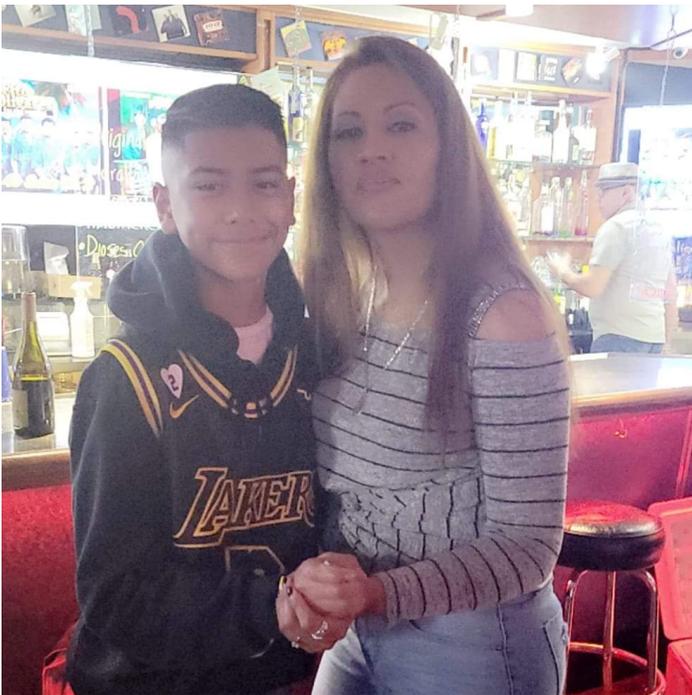
decorate everything really pretty, and that street would end at the Cathedral. That street was my favorite street to walk by.



We were six kids in total. With my mom and dad there were eight in the family. I had four brothers and one sister. We lived in a very small house. We would have to share rooms, and we had a bathroom that was very small for all of us to use. Sometimes we didn't even have warm water, so we would have to warm up the water to be able to take showers. My brothers would have to make their beds in the living room so that they could sleep. We were really poor, but my mom and dad tried to give us what they could. But we were very happy with just eating beans and tortillas. We

were happy because we could be outside playing, and we were just a really happy and close family.

I remember my mom would make us pray the rosary in the afternoons. My friends were really happy and they really liked to play. We would knock on each other's doors and ask if we wanted to play, and we were all just very good friends. We liked to play together a lot, and we always had fun playing games like vibora de la mar. My childhood over there was really beautiful. This is how we will play one of the games. In bote volando there was a can with rocks and we would put tape on it so they wouldn't fall out, then we would throw it. So someone would have to throw it, then the rest of us would hide.



A typical day for me was waking up early. My mom would turn on the radio and put on a station for us that was called Caminito a la Escuela, and she would just wake us up with that radio. She would put the music on loud so that all of us would wake up, and she would make us breakfast. It was usually eggs or a smoothie, and we would walk to

school. We had to get to school early; if not, they would close the doors and not let us into the building. Then we would leave school at 2-2:30. We would go home, do our homework, then we would go outside to play. All of us kids in the neighborhood would go out to play all afternoon. Then at 9:00 we would go home so that we could take showers then go to sleep. My mom would talk to the neighbors and they would just be out there cleaning the yard. I like that there is a lot of liberty there. We could just walk around. The dogs and cats were out in the streets and we didn't care because they were friendly. I liked that the neighbors would go outside and just talk to the other neighbors around because we all knew each other. That's what I liked, that all of us in that neighborhood knew each other. We were all friends.

We went to the United States because of the Mexican government. The government there doesn't help out the people, especially the poor people who don't have a lot of money or an education. Mexico doesn't have a lot of jobs, so that's why I had to leave Mexico and come to the US to have a better life. What I'm saying is that it's the government's fault that we're over here. I didn't prepare anything when I left for the United States. I just said goodbye to my dad because my dad stayed there, and my mom was already here in the States. I said bye to all of my friends that I made over the years and my neighbors. I prepared papers to bring to the States and what I needed, but that's it.

My dad was sad, but he knew that it was what was best for me because my mom and siblings were already over here. So he said it was better for me to come. He wanted us to stay with him there, but

he knew it was a better life for us here in the States because he couldn't find a job.

I came with my aunt. She went to Juarez with her kids, and I came with her. She had a van, and we asked for permission in Juarez to be able to cross over. I came with her and her kids. It wasn't hard. My mom already had a job for me. There are a lot of jobs here, and everyone needs a lot of help. It just wasn't hard to find a job.

I felt frustrated because I didn't understand anything at all. I was just used to hearing Spanish all the time. It was really hard for me to understand and learn English. To me everything seemed so different. It was just so frustrating, so I decided to learn English. I went to English classes. I like that America has a lot of opportunities for immigrants. They have a lot of resources for families that struggle and there are a lot of jobs here. Also, if you don't have a job or low income, there's resources for you to be able to get food, pay rent, etc. I just like the programs that they have here to help people with necessities. They also have control over kids here. There are good rules set for them. I don't like that we aren't really free. For example, in Mexico we know everyone, we talk to everyone, and there are kids just playing on the streets. What I'm saying is that the people here are always indoors, and not even dogs can be out in the streets, which is super different to what I was used to. At a party when you have music, right away, people start to complain. I just don't feel the liberty that I had in Mexico here. What I have learned is that it is really important to study and have an education. When I was young, I thought that it wasn't important to study, but then I figured out that it's really, really important to have an education and prepare yourself

professionally. I say that's what is really important in this life.

When I had my first child I was only 23, and it was a girl. Her name is Monica. When she was born, I felt a lot of love for her and was just really, really happy. I had never felt that love that a mom has for her children. I wanted to protect her from everything, that nothing touched her, nothing made her cry, that nothing made her feel sad. But it's a really beautiful experience having children and feeling the love you have for them. It's a feeling that you won't ever have for anyone else.



Time passes by really fast here because I'm always working and getting out of work late. I have to have two jobs to be able to pay rent and maintain myself. I thought that life here would be a lot more comfortable. I thought that life here was a lot easier, but now it's a lot of work and one has to study. For example, I'm studying how to speak English. People that are immigrants here have a lot of barriers to being able to keep moving forward or have a house. So my expectations have

not been fulfilled because of my legal status. My thought was that I would have a good legal status, but no. The only thing I'm afraid of is getting separated from my kids and not seeing them for a long time, and having to see them sad. So yes, I am scared because I am undocumented.

I have four children; Monica, Fabiola, Pamela, and Ivan. My kids make me smile and make me happy. I watch them grow and they're healthy. Seeing them happy and studying, that's what's most important to me, that they have an education. So day to day, my kids make me happy. I'm grateful when I'm with them and that they're healthy and can give me hugs and kisses.

story told by: Ivan Zubia