

Who tells your story?

I was born in Mexico, Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. My favorite part of Ciudad Juárez was the people, especially my family, my grandma, and my cousins. Outside of my house there was a river, there were dirt roads, houses and dogs. Juárez smelled like the kinds of food that people would be outside selling. In the afternoons people would go outside with their little tables and food to sell hot dogs and hamburgers. My favorite memories of Juárez were from Christmas time when we would all get together at my *Mama Celia's* house. She has ten kids, so there were a lot of people in that house, like 10-15 people. When me and my brother came home from school we used to go down to the shop and buy candy. After that we would go home and watch Dragon Ball Z together. My favorite things to eat were soup, tamales and menudo on Sundays. Juárez was dangerous because there were a lot of gang members. They would get together in front of my grandma's house.

I found out I was leaving Mexico when I was finishing my first year of high school. I was feeling excited because my dad had already come over to the U.S. for three months. I wasn't scared of going to the U.S. because I was with my parents, but I was sad because I knew I wouldn't be able to go back and visit anybody in Mexico. When we arrived at the border we had a permit to come to the U.S. for vacation, but the people there pulled us aside and separated us and asked us if going to the U.S. was really vacation or if we were coming to live here. When they separated us I was afraid because I was in an unknown place without my mom. We all said that it was just vacation, so we got to enter the U.S., but we knew we were coming to live with my dad.

When I arrived in the U.S. all I wanted was to have a better life and have more opportunities that are not offered in Mexico. The first home I had was living with my distant relatives. It was an old house in east Denver close to my old high school. I remember that the house looked just like the houses in the American movies I used to watch. The lady that lived there was rude because she would ask me to do all the cleaning in the house everyday, and I was just feeling bad living there. I

lived there for about 8 months, then my parents rented an apartment. After being here for a little bit, I wanted to go back to Mexico because I felt alone. I was missing my friends and the stuff I was doing in Mexico that I wasn't doing here in the U.S. I missed the things I was doing with my school, my friends, and doing gymnastics with my team.

The language was not that big of a challenge when coming to the U.S. because the school I attended was really good at having ELA classes and made us feel included as Spanish speaking students, so right away I started to learn the language. School here in the U.S. was hard because all the classes were in English. I still got passing grades, but I would have to use a dictionary to better understand what the lecture was about. The school was really good at teaching us English, so I quickly learned the language.

I met my husband when I was 16, around the end of my sophomore year. My husband's sister was my best friend, so she introduced us. We quickly started talking and getting comfortable with each other. We had our first child when I was 18. I felt excited and happy because it is an exciting thing to happen. It was also weird and scary because I was worried that I wouldn't be able to be a good mom.

My first job was at a Church's Chicken. My mom was a manager at the restaurant, and she got me the job. I worked there for five years until the restaurant was sold to someone who had their own employees, so they offered me a job as shift manager at one of their other restaurants. I worked there for a couple of months until I had my second child. At that point, I decided to just take care of my kids. We had our second child when I was 23. I felt so happy because I was going to have a little boy, and my daughter was very excited when she found out. For two years I didn't have a job so I could take care of my children. Then I went back to school at Emily Griffith, graduated, and then went to the Community College of Denver to get my associates degree. Then I found the job I am currently working at. I now work for Blender Products and also do some work for Groundwork Colorado. In Blender Products I take care of accounts payable and accounts receivable. I also do

Human resources. Both of my jobs were great because I worked with great people who were really nice and have helped me grow.

Today I have a great relationship with my children. We love going out to eat and play *Fútbol*. **Looking back I don't have any regrets because I feel like I did my best with what I had. I'm most proud of being the first of my family going to college and the family I have.** I feel like I haven't achieved what I wanted because I want to buy my own house, and I want to see both of my kids graduate from college and have a family. What I wish people knew about immigrants is that we are kind and loving people who just want to see our family have a better life in a new country.

story told by: Roberto