

Who tells your story?

I was at the border for fifteen days trying to come to the U.S. I tried for some days because I didn't want to get caught because it also depends on what immigration was like. It wasn't as hard back then as it is now. We would try again, again and again until I finally tried on the third day and I made it.

I grew up in Loreto, Zacatecas. It was very poor and miserable but I was happy. Especially when it would be raining and I would go to the street and I would run into puddles. I would love it so much that my mom would get mad at me because my shoes would always get dirty with the mud.

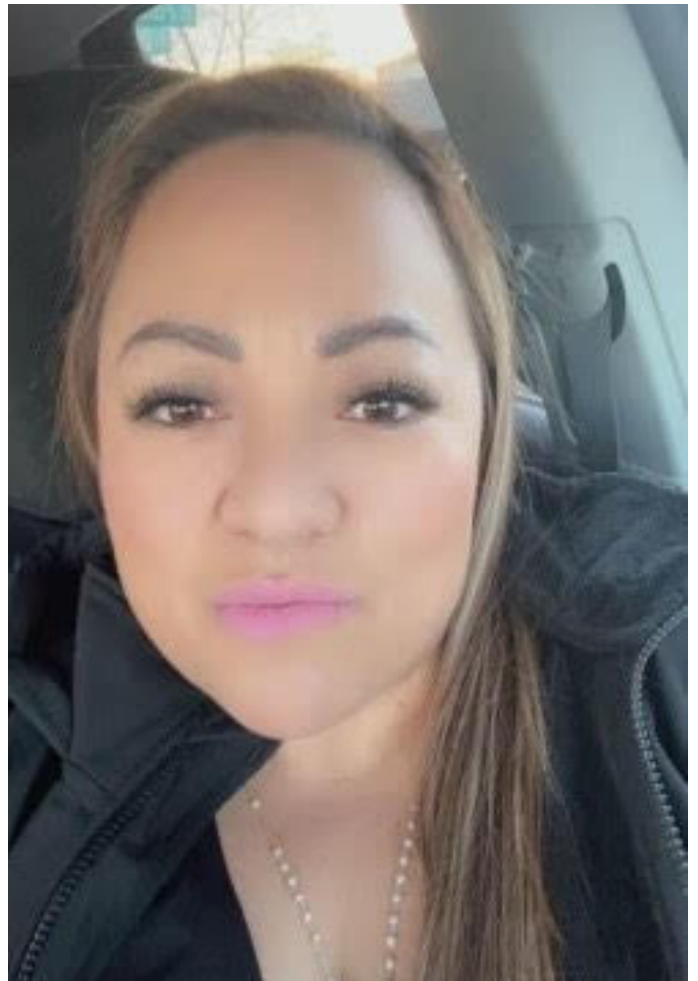
I wasn't always able to go to school. My shoes would be ripped so bad I would feel splinters on my feet. I would run to the campo. It had a lot of weeds, a lot of bugs and mud, dirty plants with a lot of thorn trees. I would stand or sit on the thorn plants for hours. I went to the campo with some girls from my school. Their names were Teresa and Ema.

Life was very good, but at the same time it was sad because we were very poor at that time. We were too poor to get good food, so I only ate beans and tortillas. It was the only thing we could afford and I was really hungry. When I got the chance I would go to school, but if I couldn't go to school, my mother would make me clean around the house and take care of my youngest siblings.

I wish I could go back to when I was fourteen because then I wouldn't have gotten married. It was a mistake. I never regretted coming to America. I only regret coming to America without a document because it was hard even when I was with my daughters. One was sick, and one was only three years old. Yes, I won't lie, it was hard, but it was all worth it.

I crossed with my daughters Deisy and Melissa, my sister Muñe and my brother-in-law Jose. I was 18 years old. Deisy was three years old and Melissa was 8 months. My sister was 19 and my brother in

law was 26. Later, my parents came to the U.S and now I can go see them and spend time with them. The reason I came to America was to get a better life for me and my kids. I didn't want them to live a hard life. It was hard growing up because I thought getting married would help me with all my problems but that wasn't the case. It was the complete opposite. It was an experience I would never forget.



My sister, my brother-in-law, my two daughters, and I, when we left Loreto, Zacatecas we came to Juarez, Chihuahua. But the whole time I had a lot of trouble because my daughter Melissa was sick non stop. She threw up and spit all her milk out. My daughter Deisy was crying the whole time.

My sister would help but not really. I was at the border for 15 days trying to get over to come to the U.S.

I tried some days because I didn't want to get caught because it also depends on what was immigration like. It wasn't as hard back then as it is now. I would say we will try again, again and again until I finally tried my attempt on the third day I was there. The Mexican cops got us and they told us not to cross because if we did then we would go to jail. I didn't want to go to jail so I came back, but when they left I went back.

They never got me. I never let them get me. They just left me off with a warning. The second time I tried passing there were two rivers. There was like a tube and then there was a lot of dirt, and when everyone got off at the same time I fell into the water and I was drowning, and I grabbed onto a bar looking thing so I wouldn't drown. I was really scared because I didn't know what would happen to me because I drank a bunch of the dirty water.

I had my daughter Deisy with me and that day my sister and brother in law left to go to the river. They were trying to pass but then immigration caught them and they took me because they said if I went in the water that it was going to take me and my daughter with it because it was really hard and I didn't want to put my daughter Deisy's life at risk.

When I came back the Coyote told me to take off my pants, and I was like "I'm not going take my pants off," and he said "I SAID TAKE OFF YOUR PANTS'." I screamed "NO, I WON'T." He told me that he was going to tell somebody, but at that time I didn't care. So then we left. He took me to this house and on the floors were cardboard boxes. He told me "You can sleep here," and I said "No, I'm not going to sleep there."

There was an old lady who asked the man "Are you crazy? She's not sleeping there." So she told me to come here and there were two small beds where only one person could sleep, so I fell asleep with

her daughter and the man fell asleep outside. I remember that there were a lot of cockroaches, and I didn't like it, but I was very tired so I didn't mind any longer. That was the second day. The next day they told me that my sister and brother in law were caught by immigration so we waited until the third day.

The coyote told us "We are going to cross the line" and I told him "Okay, that's fine." He told us to be ready around 12 a.m. because he was gonna pick us up. The coyote took Melissa and he told me that he was going to cross her with papers that he had of his own daughter, and I told him that it was fine. His wife asked me "Why is your daughter always throwing up? Is she sick or something?" because when I was feeding her, she would throw up her milk and didn't want to eat. I said "She's probably sick" and the wife replied "That's what I was thinking."

They took Melissa from the beginning, so I didn't see her for 15 days and she was only eight months. I remember when she would cry every single day nonstop. Since there was no FaceTime at the time we had to call normally so they would catch me up on how Melissa was doing and if she was feeling better, and I really liked that because I was really scared since I didn't know anything.

When the coyote told us to be ready so he could pick us up I remember it was a Friday in the morning around 12. I remember when they came in a white van. There were two other men in the car and they said "Oh my gosh, of course it's gotta be girls." The other one told the guy to be quiet and don't even start. They would tell us a lot of bad things.

We kept going in circles and circles over again until he stopped at a place that was small, but wide at the same time, kind of like a tunnel. He said "When I drop you off here, you guys better start running." I was scared but I had to, so when he dropped us off we started running. I saw my sister running behind me and I grabbed her from the collar shirt and I took her because she was slowing

us down, so we hopped over and when we hopped over I remember my brother-in-law having my daughter Deisy on his back.

He told me he could give my daughter back, but I had my sister at that time while holding her hand. Jose carried Deisy the whole time, and I thanked him because if he didn't, I wouldn't know what to do. Then we passed the tunnel. It was very long. I remember I was so tired from walking and crouching down because of how short it was. We got out when it said "Los Angeles." And when we saw the sign, we knew that we had to be fast because we still weren't safe and had to act quickly, so when the cars weren't looking, we got out and started running.

I was the last one to get out. It was Jose, Deisy, my sister, and some other kids. I remember that a bag fell on my sister and it had a lot of water so when she fell, the water hit me completely and I was soaked. We went where they sell tickets at a bus stop to get on the bus. Everyone was looking at us, and I was hoping that we didn't get caught. I didn't want to go back to Mexico. We only took two minutes for the bathroom.

The coyote told me, "When I give you a signal, you start running." When he gave that signal, we all started running as fast as we could. It only took us a couple seconds to get inside the car. We went through the crosses, and when we went there there was a lot of immigration. The coyote told us that we were screwed. I was scared, so I started praying, "Saint Pedro, cover us with your cloak."

It worked because when I was praying, it looked like the cops were coming for us, but instead he turned the other way and didn't get us. I was scared that the coyote would get mad. He asked me, "What did you say?" I responded by saying "Nothing," and he said "Tell me," so I told him I prayed "Saint Pedro covers us with your cloak." After that prayer they just left. We went to the crosses.

It was about 3 or 4 p.m. and when we got there, I went to go get my daughter Melissa. The woman that was taking care of my kid let us shower, eat and sleep, and we were there for eight days waiting for the route to close because there was a route where you would go before crossing the border and the other was at the border. And then the crossing happened. It was around 2 a.m. It was painful. My ribs were in my body. I couldn't even walk because it hurt.

I crossed to America with a car. It was very small. It was crammed. The car could only fit three people. It was the coyote in the driver set and I was in the back with my family. It was after my fourth attempt that I finally crossed.

I always had two jobs, it was never one. Even when they didn't want to take me. The first job they would pay me four dollars an hour and forty cents. The first days it was rough. I would come back with a fever and swollen legs. My daughter Melissa was starting to get even worse. She's special ed.

She got to the point where I didn't go to work for two years because I didn't have anyone to take care of her. She would have seizures and because of that she had to take medication to not have seizures as often. I had to go to court to see if they could give it to me for less money since we were broke. We couldn't afford the medication, and they agreed to give us the medication for less cost. She did get a lot better, so when she felt better I went back to look for a new job.

My daughters Deisy and Melissa went to Cole. It was sad because Melissa would get bullied by other kids since she was special needs, and it would hurt seeing them treat her like she was nothing. She would come home from school crying because they would make fun of her, and Deisy would stand up to the other kids being mean to Melissa. One time they told her that they wanted to play with her, so she got excited and they weren't really going to play with her, but instead they tied her to a pole and they laughed at her and then left her there. Deisy saw her and took her down. As soon as Melissa was

down she cried in Deisy's arms. Besides all of that it was hard because we didn't have enough money to get food and water. We would move house to house living with different people.

I would go pray. After I took my daughters to school I went to a church, and I felt someone's presence, but I didn't want to look because I was crying, and the other girl was right next to me, and she asked me "Are you sick?" and she was like "Not you, but your daughter" and I responded "Yeah," but I didn't look at her. I only saw her sandals and colorful socks, and she told me "When you get the chance, go to the church Crystal Ray, and take your sick daughter there." I looked back to see her face, but when I did she wasn't there anymore.

I'm pretty sure it was our Lady of Guadalupe. I'm sure it was her, because it smelled like roses, but God didn't give me the chance to look at her face. But I know it was her because of the way she talked to me. She was like "No, you will get there. She also said "Yes, you might suffer a little bit, but you will get there." That's what she told me, and when I tried to thank her, she was gone, but I'm absolutely sure it was her.

I'm sure it was her, because the sandals that Our Lady of Guadalupe had when she was pushing the devil's head. Those were the sandals I saw. She told me that I was going to make it, you just gotta give it time. I didn't go, because I never knew where it was, but I will still look for it. I think it was worth all the pain because I would have not gotten the medication for it, and if I didn't come, she would've died. The doctors would help me with the therapy and the medication to try to see if she would get better when I needed it.

It was beneficial to me since I didn't have enough money to pay the bills or the medication for Melissa. They helped us, and as the people of color would say, "God bless America." It was nice to have money to give to my parents. It was hard because people in America didn't want someone that didn't have papers to work because they thought you would take their jobs. They would treat you less

and treat you like you didn't matter, but I still tried. I have tried to give them enough, but being a single mother has its perks, but I helped as much as I could.

Even with a lot of sacrifices, I could take my family to get a better life and have a place to live, have a job, and have my papers, but I want to thank God for giving me everything. I don't regret coming to America because I left my family there and I won't be able to see them for a while, but from America I don't miss anything. I have my two older daughters, Melissa and Deisy and in 2004 I had my other daughter Alondra. Then in 2009 I had my daughter Estrella and in 2021 I had my son Julian.

It was August. I could never forget that the year Melissa was born was the same year I crossed. When she was about to be a year old when I got to America. When I had Deisy I was fourteen, with Melissa I was 17, with Alondra I was 22, with Estrella I was 27 and with Julian I was 39. It was hard being a single parent, but I had God with me and Our lady of Guadalupe never leaving my side, and till this day they have never left me. Yes they would call me a wet bag just because I didn't have papers. They would call me "wet bag" and more racist things. At that time I didn't know what they were saying so I couldn't defend myself. I learned English because now I can understand what they are saying. They would say "I'm chicana" and I would get asked a lot if I was, and I would say "no" but they would respond with "Oh, I thought you were because you look like one."

It was hard giving birth to Alondra because I was working on the last day she was going to be born. I didn't go to work in four days and I always had my kids five years apart. Deisy and Melissa were the only close ones in age. It was hard because I was a girl myself and no one would show me how to change a diaper or feed a baby and take care of one I had to teach myself. No one ever told me that it was going to hurt, no one told me that it was a big responsibility. I felt a lot better knowing I was ready and I knew what I was doing when I had Melissa.

I would have to say Alondra's and Julian's . Alondra was a breech baby where her head was flipped around, so her leg was facing down. I remember when they wanted to turn her she didn't want to so a doctor was pressing from top to side to side and I remember that blood was flying out. When Estrella was born, the doctors told me that it might be dangerous so they were gonna have more doctors on standby to give me surgery if it didn't go well with Estrella but thank goodness it went well.

For Deisy and Melissa, my sister picked their name because at that time I didn't have a say or vote. I picked Alondra's name because there was a tv show that was called Alondra, and I liked how the name sounded. I didn't pick Estrella's name because her dad went behind my back and picked her name. For Julian's I picked his name.

The only important thing was God letting me get my papers, even when it took me a while. There's always something bad and a good outcome will arrive. I would tell myself that I wouldn't go back to Mexico until I had my papers. At that time I thought it would be a good idea to get married to Estrella's dad Ramon to get an opportunity, but it didn't work out, but everything happens for a reason.

America did meet my expectations because I knew people would talk bad about me. I was used to it though because in Mexico neighbors would be mean to me because I didn't have enough money. I always had two jobs. My first job in the U.S. was at a hotel. The first day I got off work I came home with a fever and my body hurt.

Meeting Estrella's dad wasn't a good idea because who in their right mind would meet somebody and date them while they were in jail. The first couple months he was nice to me and treated me well.

He was good at first until he started drinking. It's like he wasn't the same person that I met. He transformed and wasn't the same person due to alcohol. I was two years single. I didn't love them or anything like that. It was a bad experience, but I

thought getting married would help me, but that wasn't the case. It made my problems even worse. One time Estrella's dad threw Melissa's medication in the toilet and flushed. It was the important ones that stopped the seizures and the rest of them. I was mad that he did that, so I went to the judge and told him what Roman did, and I had to take her to the hospital so she could get the medication she needed. It was hard because I didn't even have \$20 to even get the medication.

I got a good job and it was to be a certified nurse. I got a good home with the money I saved up and now I'm a citizen with papers. I feel like it would be a bit easier being a single mom. I wouldn't go back in time if I was still with Daisy's dad. I wouldn't have my papers and have my other children. God takes bad things always to give you something good.

story told by: Estrella