

LatinX VOICES



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Latinx Voices Journal
Volume 1 Fall 2024
Saddleback College
Ethnic Studies Department

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Message from the Journal Committee

In the humble beginnings of the journal, one of our main goals was to create a safe space for the Latinx/Chicanx students to socialize, build community, and see themselves on campus once again in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the efforts of determined students, we began this project as a class assignment in our ethnic studies course, Introduction to Chicana/Latina Studies, and it evolved to a campus and community-wide research project. In our course, we learn about the history and culture of the *Latinx* community, which is the term we decided to use in the journal to define any person of Latin American descent. Thanks to the immense hard work of many, we have brought together many stories to share and illustrate hope for a better and more just society.

The *Latinx Voices Journal* is our way of sharing the lived experiences of the Latinx community and recovering stories of struggle and how they have built a community, formed an identity, and expressed love for themselves and loved ones. The journal contains essays that touch on topics of breaking patriarchal cycles of violence, patterns of migration, the experience of resilient women, and how the Latinx community has built a sense of belonging and identity.

In the stories we share, the reader learns about the intimate battles the Latinx community faced when realizing there were limits and restrictions to the American dream. While, at times, it is an unpleasant look at our history, through the stories shared in the journal, it offers an opportunity to learn about Latinx resilience. The stories share how the Latinx community is a resilient community that continues to advocate for their story to be known of overcoming racial discrimination and inequalities in housing, employment, health, criminal justice system, and education to achieve their desire to prosper.

The stories shared in this journal uncover, reveal, and uplift the voices of the Latinx community. Each story shares a history that is no longer silent, hidden, and forgotten to try and keep the American reputation clean from the real horror of the past and present against the Latinx community. Instead, each story is a celebration and a moment to cherish Latinx history and culture. Through the stories in the *Latinx Voices Journal*, we hope the reader will feel a sense of pride in their identity, community, empowerment, and a shared story that will resonate with many.

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Latinx Voices Journal
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First Time



Author and Photographer's pseudonym: milkteaseccy

This is the first time I've felt my body. It is nearly midnight because it is always nearly midnight for me, where I take a bite out of my skin just to see what it looks like bleeding, where I bare my teeth to the ceiling of my darkened room. My left thigh muscle twitches and I flex my foot against the mattress. It is one of those old mattresses that forget even to squeak when there's movement; I brush a feverish hand through my hair. It is this time where I feel mostly myself, where I glimpse a fraction of myself through the shuttered blinds and the moonlight fluttering between them. Mostly, I feel like a reflection of myself in the mirror, as if my body were my own but separate; I move when it moves, it holds me captive in a suit of rotting flesh. My hair smells of honey sometimes, and now I feel rotten to the core. I touch my body: fingertips to forearm, shoulder to cheek, chin to chest, I breathe and breathe. The butterflies will get to me, all honey-breath and skin like paste. a coffin like a closed wound, the grinding of teeth shut closed.

Vines wrap around the side of the building we pass on our way to school. It is the house I want to live in when I grow old: watching nature take back what it owns. There are dogs that play in the park right outside, and we marvel at their fresh glamor coats. They are everything we can never be, and you love the idea of a tragedy, so I tell you a story from my childhood. It goes something like hills and great big parks, places with lakes that go so blue they become the sky. There is sand, somewhere, too. Between my toes, in my bathing suit, the waves flushing me out to shore. "There was once a child," except, there still is one, under layers of carefully formed dress. Vines wrap around the side of the building, and here they are: wrapping around me too. Their thorns are inch thick, my arms all blood wounds, their leaves shading me from the matchstick sun.

He takes a knife and stabs himself with it. He is listening to his favorite song in his earbuds, nodding his head along to the rhythm of ruthless guitars blasting in his ears. He grazes the wound with his pinky and holds the bloody finger up to the light. There must be something beautiful, he thinks, in pain; why else would he enjoy his open wound? He still hasn't decided where his joy comes from: being the stabber or being stabbed. He thinks to himself that the glamor of it all may lie in the survival of this ordeal: there is, after all, something inherently romantic about survival. He bites his lips a plump red; the afterglow of terror lights his face.

Calli

Itzel Mercado

Calli
encapsulating
memories. A treasure
for one hundred years.
Inheritance from you to us.

Homes that one lifetime ago were filled with sorrow, laughter, and love. Mamas, scolding their children, our parents. Of fathers who immigrated and aged trying to provide. Home to my yolotl. What is left as a legacy from you to me. Granddaughter to a face that once spoke a dialect. The fields that grand father cosechaba. Our conversations about haunted cornfields and buried tesoro. Abuelita's spicy mole. I can still listen to my Mama Anita's sweet laugh. The pink roses and dulce guayava Abuelito Jesus grew. Sitting in Papa Ponce's store on warm rainy summers. Through these acts of love I knew we were your beloved Grandchildren. In memory, to coltin.

Your nieta,
Itzel



Papa Ponce

About Our Contributor

Itzel Mercado is completing her Real Estate Certificate to build a career in real estate and establish a business with her artwork. Itzel's oral history is a caring homage to those who came before us, shaped us, and had an impact on our existence.

Journey To The United States

Alondra Moreno

Abstract:

This essay is about my father Eugenio. My father migrated to the United States from Mexico in 1981 hoping to raise money for his education back in Mexico. He crossed the border 2 different times before getting citizenship in the United States. Eugenio got married in 1990 and is father to 4 girls. Eugenio's life wasn't easy when first arriving in the United States. Not until he adapted to his new life. After years of living in the U.S., my father was able to live a rich life that ended when the 2008 recession hit. This took a toll on my father's life and only after working hard, he was able to recover.

Introduction

Eugenio Moreno was born on March 11, 1964, in Guanajuato, Mexico. He was raised in a small town called Silao. Throughout his childhood, he worked on his family's ranch. Unlike many other kids who lived near him, he had the opportunity to go to school. Still, after school, he had to work the rest of the day. His family ranch had cattle, horses, chickens, pigs, and sheep. He was in charge of taking care of them. By the time he was 17, he had graduated la preparatoria, which is what high school is called in Mexico. After finishing high school he got a job as a teacher in his small town to teach elementary school kids. The kids at this school were from low-income communities, which meant Eugenio was not getting paid very well. He then got accepted to La Universidad de Leon, where he hoped to get his credentials to become a teacher at a better school. At this time his family was not financially supportive of him meaning he had to find another way to get money. His older brother Antonio had recently moved to California. He told Eugenio that he was working in the avocado fields and getting paid very well. To make more money Eugenio decided to immigrate to the United States leaving everything behind. Eugenio's story involves adapting to the United States, employment, family, and challenges he faced while living in the U.S. His story can be inspiring to other

immigrants because it shows the ups and downs of the journey. Eugenio fought hard and made difficult choices to have the life he has now.

Adapting to the United States

In 1981 at the age of 17, Eugenio crossed the border through the desert of Tijuana. He said, "Fue una experiencia que nunca se me va a olvidar. Tenía que tener cuidado con todo lo que hacía porque no más un error y la migra nos podía encontrar". He talked about the fear he had before he arrived at a McDonald's in San Onofre, California where his brother Antonio picked him up to take him to San Clemente, California. Eugenio lived with around 10 other men in a small apartment. Eugenio remembers, "El apartamento era muy pequeño para diez hombres pero era lo único que podíamos pagar. Yo me tenía que dormir en el piso del baño ya que era el único espacio donde había lugar". Life in the U.S. was hard for Eugenio because he didn't know any English. Eugenio was smart enough to buy books that taught him how to speak English. He mentioned, "todos los días por aproximadamente una hora, duraba estudiando los libros". Eugenio quickly learned simple words in English, which would make life in the U.S. much easier for him.

Employment

Eugenio's main goal was to earn money for his education. He started working with his brother in the avocado fields, only temporarily. While working in the fields The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 was signed by President Ronald Reagan. Eugenio talks about not being aware of how it worked and got his employer to help him apply. Eugenio said, "Nomás tuve que pagar como \$300 y mi patrón me hizo todo el papeleo". Eugenio will be forever thankful for working in the field because it allowed him to get residency in the United States during the time the act was passed. With a desire to start different jobs, he started working as a cook at Mr.Pete's Burgers in Downtown San Clemente.



Eugenio when he arrived in the United States.

When he was not working there he would go to Capistrano Beach on the side of the streets and stand with the “pichoneros” waiting for jobs. The way Eugenio describes a “pichonero” is “es una persona que pide trabajo en la calle”. He would stand in the street and most times, employers knew that those men were looking for jobs. The most popular job would be landscaping. He would be a landscaper when he had no other job to make money. Eugenio only planned on staying in the United States for a short while and soon return to Mexico to finish University.

Returning to Home

Eugenio returned to Mexico in 1989 in hopes of finishing school, until his life took a turn. He met Cecilia. Since Eugenio knew a bit of mechanics, he would go around different towns to fix people’s cars and became good friends with Agustin. Agustin had a younger sister whose name was Cecilia. Eugenio would occasionally see her around until Agustin presented him to her. Eugenio decided to ask Cecilia to dance at a party in her town they called Romita. At this event, Eugenio would ask Cecilia if she was interested in getting ice cream together or going out. After a few months of seeing each other, Eugenio proposed to Cecilia and she said yes. They got married on April 19, 1990, and Eugenio continued at University until they found out Cecilia was pregnant.

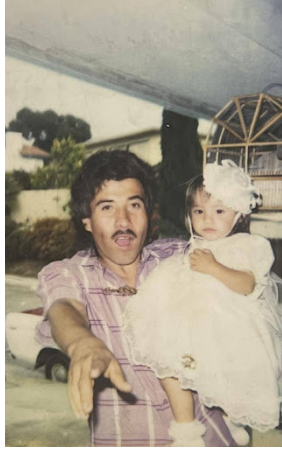
Family

After finding out Cecilia was pregnant, Eugenio put his educational dreams aside. He knew what he had to do for his family. He

told Cecilia that he would go to the United States to make enough money for a home for them. This would be ready for when she and her baby could move to the United States. While Eugenio was in the United States, Cecilia stayed with her in-laws. Eugenio returned when their baby was due to be born. It was a baby girl they named Maria. Eugenio went back to the United States when he had enough money to bring Cecilia and Maria with him. Life in the United States with a wife and a baby was hard for Eugenio. He had to care for 3 people.

His buddy Antonio got married and together they decided to rent an apartment with their wives. At some point Eugenio decided to buy used cars, fix them, and sell them, earning a good amount of money. Eugenio was able to move Cecilia and Maria to a new apartment in La Ronda, San Clemente. In 1992 Cecilia was expecting another baby, gladly in a financially stable place. Eugenio and Cecilia welcomed their second baby girl on October 30, 1992. By this time Eugenio had made a lot of new friends. Since he was living well, he would occasionally throw parties at Eugenio’s apartment where all the neighbors and kids would come to them. On June 30, 1996, Eugenio had his third baby girl.

In that same year, Eugenio got a new job at a mechanic shop from where he would be earning twice as much money as before. He found he enjoyed being a mechanic and decided to start adult classes that would help him get his GED. After getting his GED he took mechanic classes and got his certificate. Years passed and in 2005 he bought a house in



Eugenio and his first daughter Maria.

San Juan Capistrano where he welcomed his daughters.

Challenges in the United States

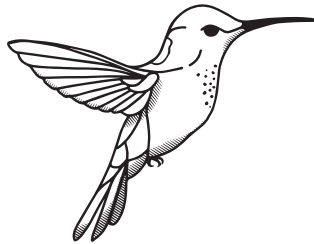
Everything was going great for Eugenio until the 2008 recession hit. When the recession hit, rent prices went up extremely high. Eugenio recalls, “la renta subió exageradamente, yo pagaba \$1,500 de renta y cuando llegó la recesión subió a casi \$4,000”. Rent went up an excessive amount while Eugenio tried his best to pay for rent. Eugenio comments, “a las niñas no les podíamos comprar nueva ropa ni juguetes porque todo el dinero se iba para la renta”. It got to the point where Eugenio could not deal with rent, so he had to let go

of the house. For a while, he was not sure of what he was going to do. They had given him 2 weeks to find a new home. Luckily, his brother owned a home in Capistrano Beach that he was able to let him stay in while he got himself back on his feet.

Now Eugenio lives in Capistrano Beach and continues to be a mechanic. Cecilia and Eugenio are about to celebrate their 33 years of marriage. Even though Eugenio went through many challenges, he made sure he never gave up and always worked hard for his family. Even though Eugenio’s original plan for education did not go as he wanted, he says it does not matter because he got his number one dream of having a family.

About Our Contributor

Alondra Moreno is a Psychology major and will continue to a four-year university for her Master’s degree. Alondra’s oral history tells the story of her father’s early experiences when he was a young man and moved to the United States.



Staff Feature: Silvia Torres Mendoza

Success Coach



This interview is about Silvia Torres Mendoza, a Success Coach at Saddleback College that Galia Montoya, Latinx Voices Staff student researcher, had with her on campus. In the interview, Silvia shares how she likes to help students navigate through academic challenges and personal obstacles. She discusses how her struggles have motivated her to support students achieve their academic and personal goals and guide students to realize and celebrate their capabilities and accomplishments. Silvia also shares how her Latinx roots helped her ground herself in the present, motivated by her family, wisdom of past experiences, and self-love. By becoming the figure of representation she wanted to see growing up, she is not just a leader and important role model to many, but a force to be reckoned with — trailblazing a path for the future Latinx/Chicanx students pursuing academic excellence and personal growth with joy, some humor, and integrity.

How do you identify yourself?

I identify as a Chicana/Latina of Mexican descent.

What makes you proud to be Latinx/Hispanic?

Just regionally where we are at, and being so close to my parent's home country, it's a unique cultural blend in that you're able to have an immersion of both life experiences. So, what makes me proud is to connect not just with the physical space I live in, but also with the history of California. My parents are both from Mexico, and I think it's a disservice if I don't live my life in awareness of how close we live to a country that was in my ancestor's time — ours.

For me, it is important to centralize myself in the journey the family had to take to have the opportunities that I've been able to have, and ultimately be able to give to my children. That kind of sense of community and perseverance comes through a history of struggle, a struggle that is beautiful and powerful to uplift one another in the most difficult times. The Latinx community has a beautiful way of encompassing struggles and strategies into something very powerful and moving.

How has your experience and history shaped how you advocate and educate Latinx students on campus?

I think one of the biggest things is to make connections to the resources and opportunities that exist. I identify as a first-generation, mixed-status family member, I was the first one to just do all the things — from high school to my doctoral degree. Navigating those experiences and saying, "It seems scary because you don't know someone who's done it." I have now perpetually allowed myself to be the example of, "If I can do it, you can do it too."

We have to become the examples. So, if I know someone in the field who looks like you or is similar to your background, I will make it my priority to make those connections. Because I know things can feel far-fetched when you can't see yourself in those positions.

For me, it's like, "How do I bring awareness to other folks that there are other incoming students that are in the same position as they used to be in?"

My priority is normalizing and translating the jargon that comes with policies and processes that have existed in the past to keep people out and let them know they have someone who will advocate for them when they need it the most.

What kind of advice would you give your younger self?

One of the things that would have been useful for me was to just accept the help. Something that has been indoctrinated into my family is that mindset of “we will struggle,” but we will do it eternally as a family, and not reach out to other people that could have made our life easier — because there’s a sense of pride, in my family, that you can get it done yourself. I think that this type of mentality is a burden for underrepresented groups: you want to prove that you can do it, but you don’t have to do it at the risk of not asking for help.



From Mexico to San Diego

Titus Gonzalez

Abstract:

In this oral history assignment, I wanted to interview my mother. I chose her because she has a story and perspective that should be remembered. It is important to learn the depth of your family's experiences. My mother, Cynthia Gonzalez, tells the story of her moving away from her family in Mexico City when she was only six years old. This story will resonate with anyone who moved and had to adapt to another culture. The sections of the essay tell the story of Cynthia's life in Mexico, the movement, the assimilation, and her life now.

Introduction

The story will be about my mom who is 48 years old born in Mexico City. She moved to California with her mother and siblings when she was 6. She only spoke Spanish making learning English difficult for her causing her to fall vastly behind on learning. She quickly learned after she tried hard and by high school she was at the top of her class. I wanted to hear about the timeline and what it was like being born in Mexico as well having to move to a new country where she would have to learn their ways.

Beautiful Life in Mexico

Although her name is Cynthia Gonzalez, her maiden name is Quinard and she was born on August 4, 1975. Growing up she explains that her family was in the upper middle class. Her house was always clean and orderly with the assistance from maids and cooks. In her fathers name, he not only had the house they were living in but also the apartments across the street as well. Cynthia explains her life, "I grew up without feeling the need for anything. My grandmother and great aunt lived across the street and they loved me unconditionally. They would spend a lot of time with me and give me special treats, like abuelita's chocolates." She has a very loving family support system in her first six years in Mexico. She also had other aunts, uncles, and cousins living nearby. Cousins living across the street. Being that Mexico is a third-world country she recounts, "I

always noticed the poor and had a heart for them. I remember asking my parents if we could pick somebody up but they wouldn't allow it." Today and then she always has been a selfless person with a big heart for others. Eventually, she made the move to San Diego at six years old.

When asked, Cynthia explains, "My dad wanted to get rid of us. I don't even want to say it but it's the truth. He said it was so we could be with an American family but only my grandmother and a cousin lived there so it wasn't a big family." She found out later in her life that he had found another wife. He purchased a small condo and for only the first year he would send money to pay for it. She moved in with her younger brother and her two older sisters, one of which has Down syndrome. The oldest brother stayed behind to finish his final year of eighth grade. The move took about five days; they moved in a big white Ford van that had a bed, a refrigerator, and had a poodle named Jolie.

Moving and the Negative Effects

Crossing the border was not an issue as Cynthia's mom was born in Joliet Illinois. She went from well off to a small condo shared between five people. When asked about the cultural differences between Mexico and the US she states, "The culture in Mexico, at least with my family, was very warm, appreciative, but the atmosphere here with my grandmother was that we were irritations." These are rough changes for a six-year-old to endure. Within a year Cynthia developed asthma she explains, "I later realized that the asthma was tied to my unprocessed grief. I had to say goodbye to the family, culture, and language. I had to say goodbye to a lot.

I also lost my dad when I moved." The emotional changes managed to express themselves in the physical. Moreover, she recalls having nightmares of feeling out of control. The nightmares were recurring and were of her and the rest of her family driving up and slipping over a hill at the top of the cliff. She believes that these represented the death of her family as she knew it.

Assimilate

Trying to adapt and blend into American society was difficult. She had no prior English lessons so school was an issue. She remembers that “the hardest part was that the teacher named Ms. Kimmy was very insensitive. She knew that I couldn’t read. She called on everyone and even knowing I couldn’t she still called on me and everybody would laugh. one word I remember in particular was three which I would pronounce as tree. They also would divide the kids off on their reading ability and of course, I had the lowest level which was purple. I remember this kid David would

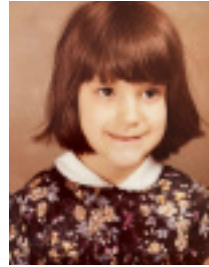


Pictures from the day of the move

make fun of me for having the lowest level. It gave me a feeling that I wasn’t good enough and that something was wrong with me.” A child’s insults are arguably the most hurtful because they do not filter what they are saying; they’re speaking exactly as they view things.

Cynthia recalls being at an overnight party and a friend’s cousin there heard her talk and asked why she talked differently. “I know she was young and didn’t know better.” These situations made her feel different and alienated. It sometimes is the little insignificant comments that linger and hurt the most. Due to this Cynthia began acting out because of her misplaced emotions, telling this story “I was a trouble maker I think it was my way of acting out towards the anger I was feeling about what was happening. One day my friend and I stuffed a bunch of paper towels in the toilets and clogged them up. I got in-house

suspension for a week unfortunately it was when it was the fun field trip week.” However, within a few years, she was able to learn the language and was further assimilated. She explains, “I remember reading Doctor Seuss’ ‘I Don’t Like Green Eggs’. I was basically teaching myself. I figured out how to read proficiently by the fifth grade and by sixth grade I was in honors. I wouldn’t miss a day of school I had perfect attendance and straight As. I pushed myself a lot to prove to myself and others that I was good enough due to not feeling accepted.” Her mother was told that she was not allowed to speak Spanish in the home so she could learn quickly. For Cynthia language did not come easy because she had ear infections when she was younger that impacted her ability to hear pitch. Trying to assimilate



into American culture was difficult and she felt like an outcast among other kids.

Cynthia’s Living Situation

Still, better than many, however, she moved from a huge house to a small condo in a different country. Cynthia explained, “In Mexico the house was immaculate and my mom didn’t have to work, but now she was working and going to school and the house was a mess. I had to become an adult too young, I tried to keep the house nice and comfortable. My mom was struggling with depression; when she would come home she would just watch TV because she was so tired.” Eventually, the condo went bankrupt and they were scared of becoming homeless. They had to find a new place to live around every three years. Each time they had to adjust to a new environment and school. Cynthia lived in an unsupervised manner and did not have much support. Around the fifth grade, she found comfort in playing the violin. She states, “I would practice five hours a day in the summer I



was driven or perfectionistic.” playing the violin additionally helped her focus on her school work and her grades improved.

Life Now and How Her Heritage Affects Her

Cynthia currently resides in Mission Viejo and works as a hospital chaplain. She loves and thinks fondly of the Mexican Culture and the experience her early childhood despite being far from it. She explains, “I think that my heritage and my experiences have increased my sensitivity to those that are marginalized or minorities and helped me to become more inclusive and open. I joined a church that was made up of individuals mainly from Korea in my early twenties and a church of people that moved here from Kenya in my thirties. My experience helped me become comfortable



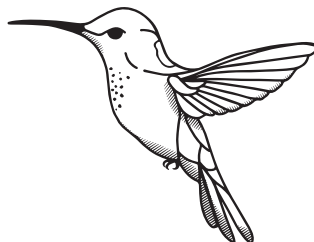
With her father and his new wife in 2020

with many cultures and sensitivity to what they might be experiencing. I hold the value of family high because it was done that way in Mexico. Overall I have more acceptance towards others, but it was through the pain and not being accepted that helped me learn compassion for others and myself.” At this stage in her life, Cynthia feels comfortable and content living the way she does. She is still very connected to her ex-husband’s family and they have a strong Mexican culture. She believes that being Mexican is what gave her the traits of being warm and hospitable.

Before, Cynthia felt like she didn’t fully belong in either place. She explains, “Even though my experience wasn’t easy coming to America, I had it easier because I looked white. I was not subject to some of the bullying that others have experienced. When I travel to Mexico I don’t feel like I belong because of the way that I look, and my American accent sounds.” All throughout her childhood, she never lost her faith. She recounts how in Mexico the culture was firmly Catholic and she still carries that faith today. She has come to find comfort in both cultures at this stage in her life. Cynthia’s move can be divided into these major sections, life before the move, how the move affected her, and her assimilation process. Cynthia is an incredibly strong and resilient woman that endured so much change in her childhood. Still, she is the most positive person I know. Cynthia’s story and everyone else’s should be remembered for those to find connections in the stories..

About Our Contributor

Titus Gonzalez is completing his Associate’s degree to transfer to a four-year university. Titus is proud to share his mother’s unique integration story into American culture.



Anthropology/Ethnic Studies Conference

Saddleback College Fall 2023 & Spring 2024



Mama, I Have a Shoulder to Lean On

Annette Cifuentes

Abstract:

This story follows the life of Fatima Guzman, as interviewed by her own daughter, the author. The interactions and complexity of Fatima's immigration to the United States are uncovered throughout the interview. Despite the discrimination and sexism Fatima faced in the US and in her own Hispanic culture, she was able to rise up in order to support the drive that kept her moving forward: her family. The most important figures in her developing childhood and adulthood are highlighted, and help us understand the many evolving perspectives and experiences Fatima had throughout her multifaceted lifetime.

Introduction

Fatima Guzman is an only girl out of five brothers. Besides this reality, Fatima is also the second oldest in a Mexican household. The upbringing of being a woman out of five brothers comes with a lot of responsibility, as the woman is expected to complete manual household tasks and childcare — from changing diapers, to cooking and feeding them, to then taking them to school and buying them clothes or school supplies. Fatima Guzman is also my mother, and she will be telling me her side of how it was growing up with immigrant parents, younger brothers, and growing up to find herself.

Now that forty year-old Fatima has experienced a lot growing up in her childhood to where she is present day, I wanted to share her story of how she came to be the woman she is now. Her story will begin with what it was like taking care of her younger brothers at a young age, cooking and cleaning up after herself. She had to take them to school/buy clothes, educate herself and her parents, and balance her lifestyle as she was raised to prioritize her family early in her development. A reason why I chose Fatima is because she has shown such a strong character all my life, but like with strong individuals we may all have in our lives, she rarely talks or shares about the struggles she's had growing up. In some cases, she does talk about her

experiences, but only in a soft and light-handed manner so no one truly sees how she — or others like herself — really feel. I would like to fully see her for the person she is on the inside: her uncovered point of view, her thoughts, and her soul. I will do so by recognizing how the people she loved the most built her character, and shine through the very lasting impact they had on her through my writing.

Jose Guzman & His Impact

Born April 30th 1983, Fatima is the daughter of immigrant parents who came to the United States in 1980, with their first son



(her oldest brother) Jose Guzman. Jose Guzman, my uncle and her older brother, traveled a lot, jumped from house to house, stayed over at many aunts and uncles places. This wasn't because he didn't like being at home, but rather because he was working at an early age completing farm work for different family members.

Jose also went to a completely different school, just to help his uncle milk cows early in the morning, and sell cheese at the market and then go school that very morning. Although this dedicated paper is about my mom's story, I want to recognize Jose's life in order to explain the profound impact their loving bond and paralleled experiences had on my mother.



Carlos & Rene Guzman

Carlos Guzman was born on June 15th, 1984 — the third child of the Guzman family. Fatima started taking care of her brother Carlos when she was at the age of 7. But by April 17, 1987, the fourth child of the family was also born, Rene Guzman. Fatima, at only age seven, was already taking care of a five year old and a two year old. Now I know to the readers it seems impossible for a seven year old to be capable of taking care of children, when they are merely a child themselves. However, I am here to tell you from an author's perspective, I myself have done this as well. For context, there is a visible domino effect with families, whether it be in values or passed down experiences, so it was destined to fall on me to take care of my siblings when I myself was just a child.

Back to my mom, her parents worked late at night, so it became a pattern of at least one of them staying in the morning and the other at night. Once my mom would finish school she would head straight home to take care of her siblings, while the one parent worked graveyard and the other rested to wait for their morning shift. "It was hard, very hard. I rarely ever turned in my assignments on time," (Fatima Oral Recording). However, she had very understanding and kind teachers growing up. Although it was a very low budget elementary school, every teacher was understanding of each student's situations. After Carlos and Rene were born two more brothers came along, and the extent of her growing family's size.

Oseas Guzman, Fatima's mom had taught her to cook and clean early on so it would benefit the family when Oseas was

no longer there or at least when Fatima had found someone to take care of and love when she got older. "I was eight or nine when I started learning to cook, it came with the basics, eggs with ham or sausage, pancakes, you know typical breakfast food" from what my mom said those times were a lot easier because her brothers were still toddlers so they weren't picky with eating the same food as long as there was minimal changes such as you know pancakes with banana or blueberries or chocolate chips. When my mom turned 12 she was already up by six in the morning making sandwiches for my uncles for school. "By the time I got to my mid teens that's where I had to learn the hard stuff well at least that's what I thought at the time, pasta, steak, grilled veggies, rice, chilaquiles, and so much more recipes my brain couldn't process them all. To this day there are some recipes I don't make I just take from my mom when she makes them" that end part made me laugh cause it's true, she would call my grandma to ask what she made to eat.

My mom didn't get her drivers license till she was 18 however before that she was already driving. She drove herself and her brothers to and from school. At times she would drop them off at home and go back to school to wait for any of her siblings who were doing sports, so two of her brothers, Rene and Milo, were in soccer at times she would wait till sundown when they finished practice or at times she would be home cooking and then would go pick them up and they could all eat together. Around that time my mom was pregnant with me and well it was very hard for her. She didn't have a job but it wasn't till when she found

out she had to get one to support me. Her parents were disappointed but what parent isn't when their child is already bearing a child. In the end they supported and well not only buying clothes for me but for her brothers when they wanted new shoes for school or soccer or follow the latest trend. My mom did what she could when she had the money but when she didn't they understood. When my mom was pregnant she said "Your uncles would take advantage, they would go up to my dad and say "Fatima wants Chuck E. Cheese or Pizza Hut cause of her cravings" sometimes it worked other times they know that it's them who want it" I really liked that part in a way I wish I was able to see how everyone interacted back then, in a way it made me feel left out.

So in the end Fatima Guzman had a hard childhood, a small lasting one in fact. There are moments where she wishes she could turn back and do things differently but she said "Regardless the outcome was still going to be the same taking care of them, feeding them, being there for them. It was all going to be the same. So as much as I would like to think things would have



gone differently they weren't, but that's okay because you should be happy you lived through it once especially when it was a situation like mine". It really opened up my eyes as well. No matter the mistakes or what the past you had was the outcome was going to be the same whether it was going to happen a lot later in life or a lot earlier. I am happy I got to interview my mom. There were parts of the story I didn't even know that I would like to gate keep and just remember it every once in a while.

About Our Contributor

Annette Cifuentes is a Chemistry major looking forward to a career in Criminal Investigation. Annette's oral history helped her better understand her mother's strength and perseverance by learning about her early life and the factors that influenced her to mature at a young age.

Staff Feature: Gina Shaffer



Professor of English Composition Instructor/Faculty Advisor for The Wall, a literary journal at Saddleback College.

How do you identify?

Cuban American

What makes you proud to be Latinx/Chicanx/Hispanic?

Cuban culture is what makes me proud. There is so much creativity and happiness. It is a country full of Cuban ingenuity making it beautiful in itself.

Who is your Latinx/Chicanx/Hispanic role model?

My mom and cousin are my two biggest role models. My mother inspires me through poetry. My cousin is politically involved with prisoners.

What is your biggest passion?

Teaching & writing are my two biggest passions.

Hija Mayor

Emily Hernandez-Torres

Abstract:

Cucitas life was a life lesson for me. She tells a story about her life starting from where she came from, life growing up, and being a mother while migrating. Cucitas's story can impact many other women who experienced a similar story to hers—moving to a different country as the eldest of her siblings and the person who sustained her family for many years. Cucita discusses a brief process of her life, from her origin, migration, and the difficulties of being a young mother. This story has impacted her values, goals, and decisions.

Introduction

Cucitas's interview was heartening, as she was open and comfortable with the questions that were asked of her. As Cucita was sharing her story, I felt as if she was holding these thoughts for a long time. She was willing to share her story without feeling embarrassed or judged. To add on, I have decided to interview Cucita because her story is important and because it has reflected on who she is today and it ties up to the impact on her children. Overall, it's important to understand her perspective of life, and why things occurred in her life story. We often credit many men in society for being the toughest in the household. Still, Cucitas' experience empowered her to stand up for masculinity and do the opposite of what she was told to do. What I learned from this interview is understanding her values, and the factors that have shaped her journey and most importantly understanding why those conflicts occur in her life. As I was speaking with her the main topics that interested me were her childhood, establishing & migrating to the United States as a woman, and early motherhood.

Girlhood

Cucita is a mother, daughter, grandma, friend, and most importantly Mexicana. She grew up in Morelos, Cuernavaca, and was born in 1984 in a small town named Emiliano Zapata. She's the first female born out of

her eight siblings. Cucita lived an innocent childhood, her siblings didn't have access to technology but they would rather entertain themselves with dirt and sticks. Cucita lived many beautiful traditions in her origin, which are, El Teatro del Pueblo, where everyone gets together to create entertainment and present their passions and arts to their town. Her favorite tradition is, El Dia del la Candelaria, which is celebrated every year in her town in February.

The municipality of Emiliano Zapata organizes a Carnival for the community, they host bull riding, carnival rides, food stands, and most importantly El Brinco del Chinelo. El Brinco de Chinelo is also another popular tradition that is celebrated in her pueblo that takes place in Morelos. Other towns also contribute to it, celebrating it with drum sets, clarinets, trumpets, and tubas. Their music is a representation of the Spanish as the invaders and conquerors, who are defeated and mocked through the dance. Cucita grew up having both parents, Mama Martha and Papa Moy. Papa Moy worked in harvesting corn and green beans, Mama Martha dedicated her early



motherhood years as a stay-at-home mom to care for her eight children. Cucita had the opportunity to have a basic education throughout Middle School. Her childhood was full of happiness and innocence. Cucita quoted, "Mi padre nos quería mucho y nos cuidaba muy bien, había veces que mi madre terminaba de echar agua al piso y para que nosotros no nos enfermáramos, él nos cargaba a la cama para evitar el piso mojado". Cucita was blessed with basic income and gratefully Papa Moy was able



Cucita's parents, Mamá Martha & Papa Moy.



Cucita, living in México as a child.

to provide food, shelter, and necessities to live. She experienced many difficulties when establishing herself in the United States, as a Catholic she placed her faith in God when raising her three children alone. When growing up, she didn't have the opportunity to live the life that every child would have wanted, in many cases her family did not have enough money to spend on entertainment but rather on their necessities. A difficulty that Cucita faced while growing up was not having enough money, and not having that affected her education. Cucita's parents lived very poor and no longer were able to pay for her education and the rest of her seven siblings.

Cucita quotes, "La mayoría del tiempo no comíamos bien, comíamos puro frijol, y a veces no había leche entonces mi madre no daba agua de arroz o puro café con azúcar. Y normalmente mi padre nos traía verduras de lo que sembraba, pero vivíamos al día. Todo eso fue por falta de dinero". Cucita has faced many obstacles while growing up as a child, and the lesson learned that she now carries along with her today is, to value what you have and what is given to you but even though, Cucita has learned to think about her decisions before taking action. She argues that if her parents had not conformed to what they had and slightly made more effort to do more for the best of their children, she believes that she would have finished her secondary education. Cucita quotes, "Esa es una lección que se

queda contigo toda la vida, mi padre estuvo aquí en los Estados Unidos en el año 1985. Paya Moy nunca quiso traer a mi madre y a mis hermanos a los Estados Unidos para sobresalir y para que sus hijos tuvieran educación. Mi padre prefiero regresar a su origen y no quiso superarse y vivir en la ignorancia. Yo siempre me pregunto, "Qué hubiera pasado si mis padres tuvieran el dinero para darme educación o igual, si hubiera un poco más esfuerzo de ellos, yo pudiera terminar mis estudios". Lastly, Cucita had a beautiful childhood but unfortunately, she lived through poverty and her biggest hardship was not being able to finish her education like she dreamed of accomplishing.

Footprints of Change

Cucita first came to the United States in 2001 when she was 17 years old. She decided to migrate to the United States because she saw no progress in México, her city was not safe, and there were no job opportunities. Cucita was first established in San Juan Capistrano and currently still does after 17 years. When Cucita migrated, the most dangerous thing she had done was placing her life in the hands of a coyote, she had no idea what was coming for her, or what to expect but to trust God and his guidance. After her arrival to the United States, she expected it to be like they once told her, Cucita quotes, "Me decían que aquí en los



Cucita's first time in the United States in 2001, a 17-year-old girl.

Estado Unidos todo eras más fácil, que nos iban a respetar como personas y nuestros derechos. Y que había más seguridad que en nuestro país". She eventually had to learn how to understand English and get comfortable with technology within years of being here, but before anything, Cucita faced obstacles and discrimination. She wasn't accepted in many jobs because of

her language and no citizen documentation, even if she was committed to doing the job that was offered. She often found it difficult to get around the city, which affected her, and she couldn't get the opportunity to work in a better sustainable job and work more hours to gain more money because of her language. Cucita had her three children here in the United States, her first child was born in 2003 and then left for México months later. In 2005 she migrated with her second child and second husband back to the United States. Lastly, Cucita left again for México in 2007 with her third child days after he was born, and finally migrated back with her 3 children, 7 months later to the United States.

She had divorced Pancho in México and left him. He was a drug addict, abusive and controlling, he took everything from her, including her children's home, and her belongings. She decided to take the bus for three days and travel from México City to Baja California. She lived through fear and worries for her 3 babies. Cucita quoted, "Tenía mucho miedo, ser mujer y viajar sola con niños era mucho peligro. Había veces que el autobús hacía paradas para que los pasajeros pasarán al baño. Pero con el medio y tentación de que me robaran mis hijos, yo ni al baño pasaba". When Cucita arrived at the Station she reunited with her only family member, Gabriela. She helped Cucita with her children by crossing the border with them on foot, but Cucita stayed behind. Keep in mind that Cucita left her 8-month-old baby, 3-year-old, and 5-year-old with her Aunt Gabriela. Cucita waited inside a shed house along with more immigrants, waiting to cross over. She waited two weeks until she was able to cross with the coyote.

Once Cucita decided to cross, she'd imagine that she had to run or walk for hours, but it was never like that. Cucita was dropped off close to the border along with other immigrants, she walked to the entrance. She was asked to remember the personal information from a borrowed passport and cross the border on foot, the coyotes transformed Cucita to look similar to the original owner of the passport. She spoke face-to-face with an officer. Cucita quotes, "Estaba tan nerviosa pero me aguante, y sin hablar el idioma de inglés yo pude pasar. Le dije al oficial que iba a pasarme a las pulgas. Pero igual pase por tener documentos" Meanwhile Cucita was

in this process, Aunt Gabriela looked after her three children. Cucita then was picked up by another coyote at a nearby gas station and was driven up North to Merced, where her 3 children were taken. She stayed there for a few months when she decided to move down to Dana Point. Cucita didn't feel that she had ruined her life by moving away from her family, but rather she felt as if she had no choice but to face the challenges to help her family. Overall, Cucita faced barriers in establishing and migrating to the United States as a daughter, and a single mother.

Amor de Madre

Once Cucita arrived in the United States in 2001, she worked in housekeeping to sustain herself and her family in México. After 3 years of being here, and having her first child in 2003, Cucita remarried and decided to have her second child in 2005. She decided to return to her origin after 20 days of her release from the hospital. Cucita migrated three times back and forth. Eventually, in the year of 2007, she came back to the United States, Cucita divorced from her second marriage and migrated back to the United States with her 3 children.

When she came back to the United States, she went through obstacles as a single mother of three. Through the first months of her arrival, Cucita rented a room and lived alone with her children and her



In 2004, with her first child. The picture was taken in San Clemente Pier. Along with her second husband.

aunt Gabriela. She struggled financially and included, child care, balancing food, necessities, and rent. Eventually, she applied for WIC and got approved to provide food for her children, she lived day by day.

Cucita was able to sustain her family because she looked for resources within the government, this included receiving donations, food stamps, clothing, food banks, and holiday donations. Most of the time she was able to afford clothing for her children because she lived upon the clearance section, garage sales, and school/church donations. Becoming a twenty-three-year-old young mother and single has affected Cucita by not knowing how to raise her children, and trying to



Cucitas children, ages 5, 3, and 8 months

sustain everything at once. She has made many sacrifices for her children and that would include excluding her happiness and her desires that she didn't have as a young teenager. Cucita quotes, "Me olvidé de mis estudios y de mi persona. No me enfoque en un futuro para mí, si no preferi dedicarle mi tiempo a mis hijos y darles la felicidad. Me olvidé de mi bienestar y mis sueños completamente". Hearing this come from

Cucita has placed me in a position where I now understand her fear, her sacrifice, and overall value her as a woman and a mother. She has done so much for her children and her family.

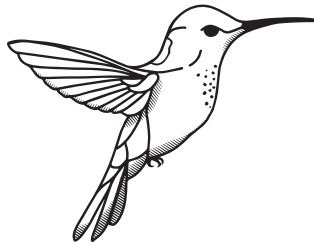
Cucita placed our happiness on top of anything that she'd ever wanted, her story is extremely heart-touching as a woman because in most cases women are underappreciated and undervalued for making the same or more sacrifices than men or any other person. Especially because she lived in an era where masculinity was being placed and her role as a woman was unvalued.

Overall, being a young- single mother of 3 children impacted her as a woman today, and she has learned how to balance her life within years of sacrifice. To wrap up her story, Cucitas experienced many obstacles as she arrived in the United States, she lived through poverty, no education, abandonment by her first and second marriage, and the process of migrating back to California because she wanted a change in raising her children.

Cucita establishment & migration and motherhood were heartbreaking to me as a woman and I'm extremely proud of her. She is my mother and my hero. Cucitas's interview gave her a flashback of her experience, it was a devastating experience for her. As she spoke, it placed her in a position where she remembered everything so well as if it was just yesterday. Overall, Cucita has told her story of her childhood, the migrating & establishment process, and her experience of single motherhood.

About Our Contributor

Emily Hernandez-Torres is studying Health Science to pursue Dental Hygiene at Cypress College. Emily's oral history expresses admiration and pride for the independence and bravery of her subject to sacrifice for her children to be educated and economically stable.



Marching With Chavez

Evelyn Barrera

Abstract:

Eva Barrera was born in Morelos but was raised in Guerrero. A woman who loves her kids decided to risk her life to better theirs. At the age of 22 she made the decision to cross the border alone with no plan or family waiting for her. She faced challenges that made her resilient. She talks about how she was homeless, living undocumented in the USA, and being part of the union Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta started to help workers fight for better benefits.

Before Crossing the Border

INTERVIEWER: How was your life in Mexico?

EVA: Life in Mexico was difficult. I had to work two jobs to support my family. I worked picking and ironing and washing clothes in the next town which was Iguala, Guerrero.



INTERVIEWER: How many kids did you have at that time?

EVA: Two kids before crossing.

INTERVIEWER: When did it occur to you that you wanted to cross the border?

EVA: When I knew I wouldn't be able to give my kids the education I would like them to have and couldn't afford things for them.

INTERVIEWER: What did your family say about this decision you made?

EVA: I only told my dad because he would be the one helping me take care of my kids while I worked. At first, he said no because he was afraid something would happen, but after a while, he said yes. The way I asked him was if I put the deed of the house, and our land to get money to pay the "coyote"

and the rest would be for him to take care of my kids. I told him I would be there for six months and then come back after I paid everything and had extra money saved.

INTERVIEWER: Were you only in the United States for six months?

EVA: No, it took me about a year to pay all my debt. Once I did, I started the process of getting my citizenship. Now I have 42 years of living in the U.S., but I go to Mexico almost half a year because there is a law that if someone lives and is paying for any bills for two years they can take the land or house.

INTERVIEWER: Were you the first one to cross the border?

EVA: No, I had family already in the U.S., but I didn't want their help because in the past they had made bad comments about other people. How my cousin's kids help the family and that's why they have everything. I wanted to do it alone because I didn't want anyone saying that what I have is because of them.

INTERVIEWER: What was your plan when you arrived in the USA?

EVA: I asked a friend if her kids could help me when I arrived and they said yes.

Settling in the US

INTERVIEWER: Tell us about your crossing into the U.S.?

EVA: I was 22 years old. The coyote charged \$350.00 and the trip took one week. I arrived in Santa Barbara County, where I stayed for a couple of years.

INTERVIEWER: How many times did you have to cross the border throughout your time in the U.S.?

EVA: I had crossed three times.

INTERVIEWER: What challenges did you have when you arrived?

EVA: The people that said will help. They told me that if they didn't come back a certain time, to walk towards a direction and wait there. They didn't, so I listened and walked. It was a beach I was left there alone. I was there for one week and I didn't eat for two days. Those days I wanted to go back but I couldn't because I would lose everything I had: my house, my land, and wouldn't



support my kids. After being there for a week a lady noticed me. She asked me what I was doing here and I explained everything to her. She told me that she would help me but couldn't stay with her because of her family. She paid my rent for one month and two weeks' worth of food. During that time I tried looking for a job but didn't know where. I contacted the guy that crossed me and told him "I am really trying to find a job but I can't. I don't want you to think I am not going to pay you or don't want to. I am really trying". The guy helped me find a job in the fields. My job was packaging plants and herbs.

INTERVIEWER: What benefits did you receive working in the fields? How much would you make?

EVA: The deal of getting the benefits was working there for three months then the benefits would begin, but what they would do is they would hire people and just before the three months they would fire us so we wouldn't receive anything. They would call us a few days after saying that there is work now. The pay for the undocumented people would get paid \$2.50 and people with legal documents would get paid \$3.25.

INTERVIEWER: Did it happen to you? What were your thoughts when you would see someone that was fired or you? Would people or you come back to the same field?

EVA: I was upset because one job can't support me and I have extra to send to my kids. I didn't go somewhere else when they asked me back because I needed the money. I mean, what can I do? Also, they don't only do it to undocumented people. One day I was working and a white lady went to open the door of the laundry room. Her job was washing our uniforms. They changed the doorknob and told her that she is too old to work. She was 43 years old. "si se lo hacen a su propia raza que espera de nosotros o raza latino" translates to "if they do it to their own race what should we expect being Latinos". At that moment is

when people begin to talk about the union of Cesar Chavez and that we shouldn't let ourselves [get used] anymore.

Part of the Change

INTERVIEWER: When they began to talk about the union, were you on board?

EVA: Yes, because I was tired of how unfair it was.

INTERVIEWER: When you would have union meetings what would people talk about?

EVA: It would be how unfair people treat the workers and we should not give up until they make the change. They would also mention something about through the union we would be able to get citizenship. They also warn us that there are a lot of risks going into this. For example, our bosses or people that are against this union could call immigration, we can get fired, or "busquedas" (Someone could put a hit on us to kill us).

INTERVIEWER: When people heard the risk they would take on when being part of the union, what were people's reactions? What was your reaction?

EVA: They were scared, I was scared too but like I said I was already involved, and if I wanted to see a change then I needed to be part of it. Only eight people were comfortable enough to go to Sacramento to march. For the people who didn't go or weren't part of the union, they all pitched for the van and paid for our food. We also got paid for our days.

INTERVIEWER: When you were marching, how was the environment? How did you feel? Any hope for the future?

EVA: When we would walk it felt great because I knew it was for something good. As we walked we would scream out chants "viva Chavez!" Is the only chant I remember not remembering the specific word we would say. As we walked along the road, there were fences covering the fields. It was to prevent the workers from seeing

us. We would chant louder. I remember also chanting don't be afraid, join the union for change. There would also be gaps through the road where the workers could see us.

INTERVIEWER: As you were part of the union throughout the time you were there, did you notice change?

EVA: Yes, there was hope for the future. Little by little there was change. We got paid the same as someone with legal documents. Also, about six months or so later I began the process of getting my citizenship. Many people were also in the process for citizenship. Didn't matter if you were part of the union or not.

INTERVIEWER: Tell more about your process to gain citizenship?

EVA: There were two options through the field and mesitia. After talking with the lawyer I decided to do it through the field because if I did it with the other option I wouldn't be able to leave the country for, I think, six months. I wanted to be able to leave because I wanted to see my kids.

INTERVIEWER: When you finally got to leave the country and visit your kid how were you feeling?

EVA: I flew and that was my first time in a plane. I was happy because I no longer needed to go on a bus. It would take me a very long time to get to Mexico. Felt good because I could leave the country when needed. Only one month because that's the amount of time off they allowed me to have.

INTERVIEWER: Once you got your citizenship do you remember the feeling you felt?

EVA: I was happy because now I could be calm and didn't have to hide from immigration. Although I remember when I had my citizenship I saw I.C.E. and told my friend with legal documents to talk to my kid and I'll go around. My friend looked at me and said "pa' que quieres los papeles" which translates to "then why do you want your papers (legal documents)".

INTERVIEWER: How much longer did you continue to be in the union?

EVA: About three years. My youngest was a few months and I took her to one of the



meetings where Cesar Chavez attended. He carried my daughter and we had a picture of her in Cesar's arms but the picture got lost.

INTERVIEWER: After living through those moments and times, do you feel that we have made progress, and changes for what you marched and fought for?

EVA: Yes. Many people who are undocumented can now rent and buy houses with less difficulty. When I first arrived you really didn't hear any Spanish music because if you did people, I am guessing racist people, would call the police with the excuse of a noise complaint. Now you can hear music with different languages at full blast and won't get noise complaints.

Final Thoughts

Through the struggles and sacrifices Eva built a path that, sadly, she had not been given, which was the opportunity for education. Something that she values, and said over and over "la mejor herencia que les pude dar fue la educación." Through Eva's hard work and beliefs, her children were able to build their paths in business administration, social work, and engineering. Now the next generation, Eva's grandkids, are getting education in the medical field, education, and mechanical engineering.

About Our Contributor

Evelyn Barrera is majoring in Education and plans to pursue a Bachelor's degree. She plans to teach preschool and ultimately teach high school. Evelyn shared her grandmother's story because it is meaningful to her and motivates her to know her grandmother's story.

Strength in Struggle

Fernanda Camacho



Abstract:

For my oral history project, I interviewed my mom Noemi Garcia. While interviewing my mom I learned more about my mom's journey in life. I realized that a lot of experiences Latinos face are not uncommon in our community, such as moving from one country to another, facing racism, and many different forms of discrimination or violence. Many Latinos have faced a huge culture shock when arriving in the U.S. In my essay, I will talk about my mom's childhood, neighborhood, violence, education, her journey crossing the border, culture shock, the racism she faced, and how strong she came out of all this.

Childhood

My mom was born in Mexico on September 11, 1989, in Guadalajara Jalisco. She grew up in a colonia municipio, Tonalá, Jalisco, calle Basilio Badillo. It was a neighborhood with very few houses and lots of plants and dirt in the surrounding area. The house belonging to her family was one of the very first houses built on the block. Home to both parents, three brothers, and three sisters, a total of 9 people in her home. It was a two-story house made of red bricks built by my grandfather in 1992 the house was never finished, on the inside, there was no floor in the house. Only two out of five rooms were finished building and conditioned with floor. One was used as a sewing room for my grandparent's business in which they would make backpacks, pencil bags, etc...

The other bedroom was for my mom, her two younger brothers, and her parents. Her other three sisters and brothers slept on a bunk bed in the hallway between the patio and kitchen.

Neighborhood

Basilio Badillo was a calm neighborhood where children would gather to play outside, she would often ride on her bike and play games like cholla, and other typical Mexican games. As she grew up her neighborhood progressively got worse she states "Era una colonia bien hasta que lo dejó de ser" (it was a good neighborhood until it wasn't). This was because certain groups of people who didn't belong in her neighborhood began to move in and change it for the worst. These people moved in and started selling drugs to the kids she grew up with, they began becoming addicted and unhinged, resulting in rising crime rates.

Violence and Education

My mom was never able to get a proper education. At the age of 10-16 years old, she began working to help out her mom. She was never able to succeed in school since she was always working. In the morning before school, she would buy the supplies her parents needed to make their merchandise. Once she would get back she would get dressed and go to school. After school, she would quickly change out of her uniform and deliver orders or





sell merchandise. Sometimes she would get back early and have time to play with her friends but most of the time she would get home at 9 pm just in time to sleep. Since her time was consumed by work and helping her mom run her business she was held back from promoting sixth grade twice. She left school at the end of eighth grade, never making it to ninth due to her becoming pregnant with me. After giving birth and experiencing complications and abuse in her relationship she was advised by her older brother to leave Mexico and go to the United States to live with him. He told her she and I could have a better life and she would have the opportunity to help her mom.

Her Journey Crossing the Border

Beginning her journey to the U.S. her older brother paid \$4,500 for her to cross and \$2,500 for me (her daughter). She had to put her full trust in a stranger in hopes that I would cross safely. She handed me over to a coyote at a hotel in Mexicali and I safely dropped her off at an aunt's house in the U.S. My mom crossed through a town called Algodones, a Mexicali border town. When immigration officers did a shift switch the coyotes passed through the first border revision crossing in a truck. She and fifteen others sat on the wet dirt floor in fields of lemon trees hidden in open spaces. They spent hours waiting for another van to pick them up. Waiting in the cold weather she began to shiver, the coyote noticed she was cold and wrapped her up in a blanket. He began to hug and inappropriately touch her. She got scared and told him to stop and pushed him off. He then went and did

the same thing to my mom's aunt who was with her. Eventually, after what felt like an eternity of waiting another van came and picked them up.

While driving at a high speed in the desert with all car lights off the van almost flipped over by how fast they were going. To fit all fifteen people in this van, they had my mom lay on the floor above the heating car mechanics. The longer she was laying on the floor the hotter it got until it began burning her skin, the only thing helping relieve her pain was a gallon of water that would spill drops of water on her whenever there were bumps in the road. As she was crying from the pain people were yelling at her to be quiet they didn't let her sit up until they reached the main road. Once they reached their destination she was picked up by relatives in a home in Anaheim.

Although she had faced hardships such as culture shock, a language barrier, people laughing at her for not speaking English, racism, and other issues along the way she has remained strong and continues her journey earning more money than before and providing for herself and her family with the luxuries she never would have imagined. She had done this through branching out independently cleaning houses, departing from companies or family members she had worked for in the past.

Culture Shock and Racism She Faced

I believe my mom's journey is truly inspiring. Her journey moving from Mexico to the U.S. has shown great results in her life. While in the U.S. she has prospered in ways that she probably never would have in Mexico. Every year for Christmas she can purchase toys in

Mexico and give them away to the children of her neighborhood. She financially helps her dad and sisters by buying them shoes, clothes, food, and other essentials. She was able to settle in a whole new country and support her family in Mexico while also supporting her family in the U.S.

Additionally, when analyzing my mom's life story one of the things that has stuck out the most is the Racism she has faced. Although her struggles upon arrival have not been like the physical aggression instances that others experience, she has experienced Racism in her work environment and verbally. Throughout her life living in the U.S. cleaning houses, she has encountered people who refused to pay her after long days of hard labor or people would laugh in her face and just pay her whatever they felt fit. These abuses came from the same type of person who would make jokes about her or her vocabulary. Countless times she has faced people laughing in her face because she was unable to speak English. These



instances of racism have led my mom to learn and be very proud of speaking English as fluently as she can.

Upon analyzing my mom's experience as a Latina moving to the United States from Mexico, I have learned so much about how courageous my mom has been and how much she has prevailed in my life. Writing this oral history has truly allowed me to view my mom's life from a new point of view.

About Our Contributor

Fernanda Camacho is majoring in Anthropology. Her goal is to transfer to a UC and apply to law school. In her essay, she wrote about her mother's journey because she has always been an inspiration for her and wanted to learn more about her journey, life experiences and everything she has overcome.

Staff Feature: Amani Husain



Ethnic Studies Instructor

How do you identify?

Middle Eastern & Chicana

What makes you proud to be Latinx/Chicanx/Hispanic?

Everything makes me proud to be Chicana. The culture is my favorite. There is beauty in everything. There is a way we all identify with each other and stick together through tough times. No matter where we go, we are united through culture.

Who is your Latinx/Chicanx/Hispanic role model?

Selena Quintanilla & Gloria Anzaldua are my two biggest role models. Selena was an amazing artist from Texas who truly represented Chicanas and was big in the music industry. Gloria was also from Texas. She was an amazing writer and whose work I loved very much. They are both truly inspiring women to look up to.

What is your biggest passion?

Teaching is my biggest passion. I hope to inspire one day and make a difference in teaching. I never planned to be a teacher. Now it is my biggest passion.

Land Across the Border

Isa Ríos

Abstract:

After deciding to interview my mother, Maria Isabel Guerrero, I learned about her migration from Mexico to the United States of America. She compared living in Mexico to living in the United States of America and she contrasted their education system to opportunities in different countries. The interview was about her migration experience and how separate areas in the United States treated her based on race. Especially since she went from living in a border town to moving to a city more inland, she shared the battles she faced, the reasons she came to the U.S., and more.

Introduction

Maria Isabel Guerrero who is 57 years old, grew up in Mexicali, Mexico until she was 20. Throughout her interview, she mentioned that she had never planned on moving to the United States of America. However, this



changed after she married a U.S. citizen. She decided to fill out a resident alien application. This application would make her a permanent resident of the country where she lived but did not include citizenship. Throughout the interview, she explained why she considered moving from Mexicali, Mexico to Calexico, U.S.A. She had moved back to Mexico once after moving to the U.S. for a short period, but ended up going back to the U.S. Ever since then she has stayed in the U.S. Even though she's lived in the U.S. for many years, she always visits Mexicali to see her parents and the rest of her family.

Migration to the U.S.A.:

After she married her husband, a U.S. citizen, she decided to move in with him to Calexico, California. Maria explains this process as having to apply to immigration offices to get an appointment and see if one is qualified to move to the U.S. Finally after submitting everything that is asked for in the application and completing the interview, the immigration officer will decide if it is approved. She mentioned in the interview, "They ask you questions on whatever you wrote on the application and surprise you with questions that are not on the application". In her case, she was married to a U.S. citizen and they asked specific U.S. questions. Maria had planned to stay in the United States up until she had her immigration card stolen.

This was during the time she was getting a divorce. This meant she was unsure if she could get a job or live in the U.S. Fortunately she applied to immigration offices to become a U.S. citizen. Maria mentions part of the process was having to learn English since they gave her a test in English. This test asked about the U.S. Constitution, in which she had to submit bills and was required to live in the U.S. for 5 years. She says, "Nowadays, you don't have to know how to write in English to apply. If they approve you, the next step is to go to court and swear to a judge to become a citizen. After she became a citizen, she had to move in with her mother-in-law until she and her husband were financially stable enough to get their apartment.

Struggles in Education

Maria was always adamant that her kids go to school. This is something she's always felt sure about. She always considered education very important. While living in Mexico, Maria had taken some English classes as she was interested in learning. When she moved to the U.S., she did not know English well enough. She decided to try to change this by going to college to learn more and set an example for her children. She graduated from Imperial Valley College in 1996 with honors and got

her associate's degree. She always wanted all of her kids to go to college since many of her known relatives never went to college. However, "The share of U.S. Hispanics with college experience has increased since 2010" (Lumbreras, Week 1 Lecture). This has to do with second-generation immigrants wanting a better life for themselves and their families. They also want to give a better life to their parents who migrated here, leading them to pursue more and more education. For most immigrants, it is hard to become successful as an immigrant. Still, they migrate to give themselves and their children a better chance at success.

Adjustment

She mentioned that in Calexico, most people speak Spanish as it is a border town. This made it challenging to learn English in America. Luckily, there were lots of people around her who spoke Spanish which made it easier to learn. After 2018, data was recorded stating that "the share of Latinos in the U.S. who speak English proficiently is growing (Lumbreras). Before this, not many Hispanic people spoke English in the U.S. Many people in Calexico only spoke Spanish. This led to many people who did not try to learn English. This shows how Maria had the dedication and determination to learn. The increase of Latinx people speaking English also increased the contributions they can make to U.S. society. It gives them more opportunities for a variety of jobs. As well as representing the Latinx communities socially and politically. I asked her about some of the differences between school in Mexico and America to which she replied, "In Mexico, you choose a career, and all the classes are given to you. You take the semester as it comes. In the U.S. you pick your classes based on your career". She compares Mexico and America saying there are different opportunities in each country.

It was a struggle to get her kids to school since they were living in Mexicali while attending school in the U.S. This was due to Maria's job in the U.S. Every morning she would wake up early, wait in line to cross the border into the U.S. and drop off her kids

at school. Then she would go to her job as an accountant assistant. It was difficult for her but she always managed to get her kids to school and make it to work on time. My sister recalls how much she hated waiting in that line before school. This was the preferred lifestyle mostly for access to cheaper rent prices than in America. As a single mother raising two kids, she needed all the financial support she could get, meaning this was the best option. She later moved from Calexico to Orange County where she experienced changes in culture and the people around her. Maria said, "It's been hard to adjust to the culture, especially in Orange County". She talked about encountering people who were not "warm and welcoming". It felt very



different from where she used to live.

I asked Maria if there is any advice she would like to give to people who are thinking about migrating to the U.S. to which she replied, "Make sure to prepare and educate yourself, strive to get a degree because you can and might have a lot of opportunities. Grow and you can have a better life than in Mexico". It was a struggle to move to the U.S. for Maria. There have been plenty of good things that have compensated for this lengthy journey. Migrating to America as a resident alien to then obtain citizenship was something Maria never thought she could do. She was not only able to get her citizenship, but she was also able to get her family better opportunities.

About Our Contributor

Isabella Rios is majoring in Nursing and looks forward to continuing her education and nursing career to help others. Isabella shares her mother's oral history to share why and how she migrated to the United States.

Ethnic Studies Speaker Series:

“Kaab La Colema-Bee Hive” by Alicia Maria Siu
Spring 2024



Más Que Una Madre

Jasmin Sanchez



**Disclaimer: Name has been changed to secure the privacy of the individual*

Abstract:

This story follows a young woman from childhood to her early twenties, named Liliana Sanchez. In her childhood, she had experienced poverty in Mexico and has worked at an office following her high school graduation. Knowing she couldn't have a stable life in her pueblo and earn enough money for her family, Lili decided with a strong sense of duty to her family, to venture to the United States to find a job to send money back to her family. She faced unexpected challenges on the way to the U.S and struggled with forms of discrimination in her early years there. Aside from the negative experiences, she built long lasting friendships, and her faith grew closer to God. Although she may have missed milestones during her young adulthood years, she gained an abundance of positive experiences*

and people that love her deeply.

Early Years

Liliana Sanchez is a mother, a friend, and a wife. She has four children, including myself. Lili connects with people through various avenues, such as making authentic dishes and shares them with her family, neighbors, close friends, and her community. Before building a network of strong connections and a loving community as she has in the present day, she had to go through a set of obstacles and carry enduring strength. Liliana is originally from Guerrero, Acapulco. I thought it would be great to start the conversation talking about her childhood as it is a story I haven't heard yet, *Cómo fueron tus experiencias al crecer en México? What were your experiences like growing up in Mexico?* "Era bueno, pero muy limitado. A veces no tenía zapatos cuando iba a la escuela." It was surprising that she said that

she had a good childhood despite admitting that her family struggled financially, as it was hard to get basic necessities like getting shoes. I asked her a follow up question about not having shoes in times of her childhood. I asked if it was painful getting to school, as she took a bus to school. She didn't seem to mind it. A topic that I'll be covering is Lili's journey of being a young single woman in Mexico and in the United States. Another topic that I will be covering is forms of discrimination in the United States that she has faced. The final topic I will be covering is one that has been brought up several times throughout the conversation, which is looking at different values like having a sense of responsibility for her family. I learned that she made many sacrifices to provide for her family in Mexico at the expense of neglecting what she wanted to do for her life. She didn't let herself the freedom to be a young adult and get an education. I wanted to talk to her because there are so many gaps to her story that I'm still piecing together. The pieces that I was given were mostly from family friends and other relatives; people that weren't Liliana. For as long as I lived, I've known Liliana as a mother; however, as I get older I realize there is more to her than being a mom of four children. She had a life before I entered it and I want to know that person.

Growing up in Mexico

To continue the previous question in more detail, *Cómo fueron tus experiencias al crecer en México?* I was quite surprised by her response and by her experiences in Mexico being good, despite the financial instability. Lili also told me she didn't have a stove or a fridge. I asked what they did to store the food they had. She told me that they got food for that day and that they didn't have any food left by the end of the meal. They were hungry and having a fridge wouldn't have been necessary anyways. Lili started to talk about her family experiences in greater detail. She was one out of eight children in her family. Even though Lili had four older siblings she felt responsible to provide for her family financially. She told me her older siblings married off at a young age and that they had to provide for their families. Lili's older sister, the sibling before her, married at the age of eighteen before her high school graduation. Because all her

older siblings had married and grew their own families to feed, she took on that role to bring money home to her family. Before I had this conversation with her, I vaguely understood the circumstances of her family dynamic and the roles each of them had to take at a young age. I wasn't aware of her thoughts and feelings as she didn't talk about how she felt in those times; so then I continued to ask her thoughtful questions about her life in Mexico.

Machismo Culture & Being a Woman

I then asked her, *al crecer como mujer en un sociedad (en México) que tiene una cultura machista, como te trataron y te vieron? Growing up in a society that has a machismo culture, how were you treated and seen?* She then responded by saying she worked at an office in Mexico. I asked her further questions to get a better understanding and picture of the dynamic in the workplace. She told me that there were more men than women who worked there. She also told me that they would only seem to hire young people from ages of eighteen to twenty-seven. I was stunned by that piece of information as there would be age restrictions. I was more shocked when she continued to tell me that she later found out that they hired her not for her qualifications but how she looked like. Later, Lili became aware that the money she made in her job at the office, will not be enough to live well and so, she made a life-changing decision.

Moving to the United States

Qué te motivó a mudarte a los Estados Unidos? What motivated you to move to the United States? She wanted to earn money and send it back to her mother. She said that her job at the office she worked at didn't earn her enough money for her to live as she would take the bus to her work and that cost her money. Lili said by the time they paid her; she already ran out of money which she needed for her bus ride. That job was not sustainable for her, so she couldn't stay there. With that on her mind, Lili then made the decision to embark on the journey to the United States.

Puedes contarme sobre el proceso de migrar a los Estados Unidos? Cuáles fueron algunos de los desafíos/ miedos que ha enfrentado? Can you tell me about the process of migrating to the United States?

What were some challenges/fears you have faced? The coyotes mislead Lili, saying that it would be easy crossing over. They downplayed it, that she and the group of people she came with needed to run a little in the journey of crossing the border. She didn't realize the severity of her situation until she had to run through a freeway and avoid being hit by incoming traffic. On the other side of the freeway, the border patrol would be waiting for them. Lili said that she was a bit nervous of them. When she successfully entered the U.S after many obstacles, Lili had many experiences waiting for her.

The interview continued with this question, *Al principio, dirías que sus experiencias en los EE. UU fueron en general positivas al encontrar trabajo y buscar un lugar para vivir? At first, would you say your experiences in the U.S were generally positive finding a job and looking for a place to live?* Lili said that it was easy to find a home, as she came with a friend. Her friend had already been living there for ten years and had a place to live. However, Lili did find it a challenge as there were language barriers as she couldn't speak English. In her early years of being in the U.S, Lili worked by cleaning at a house and took care of the house owner's children. One day, the owner was out late in the night, and Lili had to leave but couldn't because of the owner's children. Her friend was supposed to give her a ride, but as it got late, her friend had already went to bed and was preparing to go to sleep. She told Lili to ask her boss for a ride home. When she asked her boss if she could take her home, her boss responded, "No, I won't take you, I'm afraid of the 'Cholos' over there." Her boss was referring to where she lived — which was a Latino community. I asked her how she felt living there and she said she wasn't afraid of walking there at night. She did say that she was afraid of the border patrol because it's been going around that area and that they would come to their houses to knock on doors and take people away. I then asked her if she knew what the word 'cholo' meant when her boss replied to her in that time and she said that she didn't know what that signified, and she was more worried about 'la migra.'

Going further into the interview, we talked about how Lili was in her early twenties and throughout the conversation

we talked about how she felt responsible for providing money to send back to her family in Mexico. As curious as I was, I had to ask her if she did any activities for herself or had thoughts of getting an education. Lili said she only thought of giving money to her parents back in Mexico and said "Mira, nunca pense para educarme." It didn't cross her mind to get an education and do things for herself like going out dancing or doing sports. It was sad to hear as she didn't spend time to enjoy her early twenties and figure out what she wanted to do for herself. Her focus was on her family and less on her wants. Lili, however, did find community through church. Her friend that she lived with in her early years in the U.S, goes to the same church, which she introduced Lili to. Lili liked going to the church, as she made many friends there.

One of the last questions that I asked, *Qué ganaste o perdiste en las décadas que estuviste en los EE. UU, ya sean experiencias, lecciones, o personas en tu vida? What did you gain or lose in the decades you were in the U.S, whether experiences, lessons, people who entered or lost in your life?* I was stunned by her response. She said that her faith grew closer with God, she had kids even though she thought she wouldn't. She wouldn't have imagined getting shoes 'de marca', and even own a car. I grew sentimental at her response because Liliana is not known to have such a deep conversations. Listening to her response felt like a gift, and I'll forever remember what she told me.

Concluding Remarks

At the end of the interview, I gained a deeper understanding of who Liliana was in her past, before she became a mom. I understand that she had all these layers of herself that shone through the interview. The information that I received in the past was surface level and throughout the interview I gained insight and a sense of who Lili was as she told me about moments in her life. Her story is a lot more meaningful as she told me it through her lens rather than me hearing it from someone else. I learned that my mom sacrificed her younger years in the United States for her family and that more importantly, she is more than a mom.

Staff Feature: Aimee Vaquera



Eops counselor and undocumented student liaison for campus

Aimee spoke with Latinx Voices staff writer Fernanda Camacho to share her personal experience, purpose, and passion for representing students. Aimee Vaquera is an EOPS counselor at Saddleback College. During the interview, she shared about her journey supporting students and celebrating the Latinx culture. Aimee talked about the opportunities available to students at Saddleback, emphasizing the supportive network of faculty and staff.

How do you identify yourself?

Latina, first-gen student and professional, DACA recipient

How long have you been working at S.C.?

two years

What would you tell someone who is thinking about coming to S.C.?

There is so much to do and get involved in. There is a big community of passionate staff and faculty that want to help students.

What do you like most about your work?

Seeing the student's journey from the moment I meet with them until they reach their goals or get to where they want to be.

What do you like most about S.C.?

the students

What makes S.C. Special To You?

On campus, I've been able to connect with so many people. Since I first started I've gained a lot of trust in the community whether it is students, faculty, and staff. I even have a close relationship with the community off-campus such as with high school counselors and help them support high school students.

What is the best-hidden treasure about S.C. that you wish everyone knew about?

The Meditation Nap room on campus.

How do you feel connected to the Chicax/Latinx community here at Saddleback?

I feel connected when I see my students and when I host events that I organize every year, like the upcoming Undocu Ally training because I get to meet new faces and reconnect with other folks.

What makes you proud to be Latinx/Chicana-o/Hispanic?

The food and culture are rich in terms of history. Everything has a special meaning from the food that we eat to the people that we talk to, music, all of that is so meaningful and I think it is so beautiful to be part of that.

What is the last book or podcast you read/listened to?

Latina Financial podcast, hosted by a Latina that is out to teach other Latinas how to build their wealth. The podcast is "Say Hola Wealth," by Lucy King, a Latina that is first-gen who built her wealth by dismantling cultural norms that prevent us from having a healthy relationship with money. I think that this is very important because we don't think about money sometimes and when we do, it stresses us out. So listening to a lot of

Latina empowerment for different facets of my life is what I like to listen to.

How do you celebrate your heritage?

Music, I will listen to cumbias at home, on my drive to campus, or when I'm cleaning. I will make sure people know I'm Latina and I am very proud of it because sometimes I get that I don't look Latina or that I am white-passing. But I am very Latina and I am Mexicana and own it intensely so I think it's also letting folks know where I'm from, In anything I present I make sure to let them know, in anything I post, I make sure folks know I speak Spanish.

What advice would you give your 20-year-old self about your identity?

I would say take up space, don't be afraid to take up more space than you already do. You have the right to change how you feel about different parts of your identity as you get older because you are maturing and learning more about your history. Before I used to have my documented identity as my number one salient identity because I needed people to know I'm not like you but I'm still awesome. As I grew older, I was like I'm not just undocumented. I'm Latina, Mexicana, a professional, educated. I would say to my younger self it's okay to change and become comfortable in your skin.

What is your favorite city, other than the one you live in?

I live in Long Beach and love it, but I would say Pasadena because there are good coffee places and hiking trails.

Favorite thing to do when you are not at work?

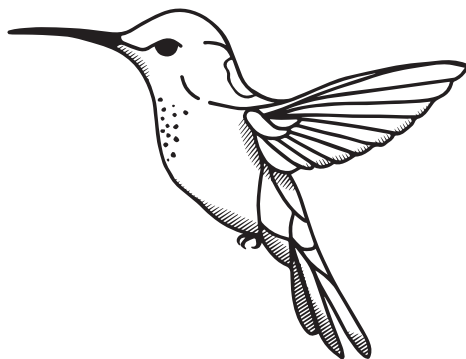
running on the beach

Favorite day of the week, and why?

Thursday I like to call it Friday- Junior, it's a gateway into the weekend.

Two words that people use to describe you?

I would say that, disciplined and energetic, strong presence, humor-wise, and energy



The American Dream

Joseph Fleischaker

Abstract:

This is the story of a couple immigrating to the United States from Colombia with their young daughter. Their hard work and perseverance not only supported their growing family, but also provided a solid foundation that is passed on to their grandchildren to experience the benefits of stability and a bright future.

In the 1970s, my grandmother and her husband arrived in Los Angeles, drawn by the promise of a prosperous life and new opportunities as flight attendants. They brought my mother, who was just a baby at the time, seeking a fresh start and a better future for their family. This bold move was driven by the belief in the American Dream, the idea that anyone, regardless of their background, could achieve success through hard work and determination. Over the years, my grandmother's experiences validated this belief. Her journey exemplifies the reality of the American Dream, as she transformed her hopes into tangible achievements, proving that with perseverance, the promise of a better life in America is indeed attainable.

Education and Political Activism - More Than Just a Wish

In the aftermath of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, which opened doors for many Colombians and Latinos, my grandmother made her way to Los Angeles. Upon arrival, she found established communities and support systems that eased her transition. Her first job in the United States was in an electronics factory, a position she secured despite her limited English. Her hard work paid off, earning her multiple promotions.

Notably, the factory provided health insurance, which significantly reduced medical expenses when my uncle was born. My grandmother's children, my mother and uncle, benefited from the American education system, attending school in Los Angeles for free. Despite the challenges, including my grandfather leaving to start a new family in Florida, my grandmother



was not alone. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act also facilitated her extended family's path to citizenship, allowing her mother and two brothers to join her in the U.S. Her brothers started their own families, contributing further to the thriving immigrant community. Despite being immigrants, my family was not treated as second-class citizens. They actively participated in the democratic process, empowered by the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which allowed them to influence government policies and improve their circumstances. Over time, the Latino presence in government has grown, exemplified by leaders like Congressman Ben Ray Luján and my mother's cousin Michelle, who held a significant role in the Health Department.

Thriving in Los Angeles

When I asked my grandmother if she faced racism upon arriving in the United States, she said no, attributing her experience to living in the diverse and inclusive city of Los Angeles. She was able to find rental housing easily, as most landlords were indifferent to her Hispanic background. When it came time to purchase a home, the bank provided her with a favorable loan, not influenced by her race. In fact, she bought two homes, later selling one—a decision she regretted—but keeping the other proved to be one of her best choices. Owning her home made life significantly easier, as she no longer had to spend money on rent and could instead invest in herself by paying off her mortgage. As her children graduated from college and moved out, she rented rooms to college students, benefiting from

her proximity to California State University, Northridge (CSUN).

This endeavor became profitable, turning her home into a source of income. My grandmother was not just surviving but thriving, thanks to the opportunities available in America. Her story exemplifies the American Dream. Despite being an immigrant, she found acceptance, economic opportunity, and the ability to improve her family's circumstances. Her experience highlights how the American Dream is attainable, showcasing the potential for success and prosperity regardless of one's background. As I prepare to attend



CSUN, I plan to live in the very house my grandmother worked so hard to maintain. This home, which once symbolized her hard-earned success, will now support the next generation's educational journey. I recently spoke with my Grandma about whether her life might have been better if she had stayed in Colombia and raised her family there. Her response was a firm no.

Growing up in Colombia during the 1950s, she faced pervasive sexism, with girls like her receiving only basic education while her brothers pursued higher studies. It was an environment where opportunities for women were limited, and she recognized that her chances for success were greater elsewhere. In the United States, however, she was able to achieve far more success than many of the men around her. Upon immigrating to the United States, she found a more supportive environment where she could thrive. However, she never lost touch with her Colombian roots, frequently visiting, and my mother continued the tradition by spending summers there. My grandmother owns multiple properties in Colombia—properties she could have never owned if it weren't for the United States.

Despite Colombia's better tranquility now, it wasn't always so; the 1990s were marked by the scourge of drug trafficking, prompting my mother to halt her visits due to safety concerns. Sadly, the specter of drug-related violence still haunts many South American nations, forcing countless individuals to seek refuge in safer lands. In response, initiatives like the Sanctuary Movement emerged in the 1980s, with churches offering sanctuary, sustenance, and solace to those fleeing brutal civil conflicts in countries like El Salvador and Guatemala. Although those specific wars have ended, the need for sanctuary remains as violence persists elsewhere. Fortunately, Colombia has undergone positive changes, becoming more peaceful and inviting. Consequently, my family and I now make frequent visits, reconnecting with Colombia and witnessing firsthand the progress of a nation once plagued by extreme turmoil.

Transforming Dream to Reality

The journey of my grandmother, from her arrival in Los Angeles in the 1970s to her success and contributions to her community, is a testament to the transformative power of the American Dream. Her story exemplifies how the promise of opportunity and prosperity can become a reality through perseverance and hard work. Through her experiences, she not only achieved personal success but also played a role in shaping the lives of those around her. Her involvement in her community, her dedication to her family, and her resilience in the face of adversity have left a lasting impact that extends beyond her own life.

Reflecting on her journey, it is clear that while progress has been made, there are still significant challenges that remain. Discrimination, barriers to citizenship, and systemic inequalities continue to affect many immigrants and their families, hindering their ability to fully realize their potential and contribute to society. As we look to the future, it is imperative that we continue to work towards a more inclusive and equitable society. By addressing these challenges head-on and advocating for policies that promote fairness and opportunity for all, we can ensure that the American Dream remains within reach for generations to

come. In conclusion, my grandmother's story serves as a reminder of the importance of perseverance, resilience, and community in overcoming obstacles and achieving success. Her journey is a

testament to the enduring power of the American Dream and the belief that with determination and opportunity, anything is possible.

About Our Contributor

Joseph Fleischaker is a Psychology major and plans to continue his career in that field. Joseph's oral history explores how his family came to the United States.

Staff Feature: Anthony Becerra



Director, Financial Aid

How do you identify yourself?

I am Mexican-American, Latinx, he/him are my pronouns. I am first-generation, as well.

What are you proud of in your Latinx identity?

Everything. I try to embrace my culture in everything that I do. I am very comfortable in my skin in that sense. I am not afraid to drive to campus blasting Spanish-language music. I love everything about my culture. The food, the music, the family, my faith, all of that is very important to me.

Who is your Latinx inspiration?

I have a special place in my heart for my grandpa. He immigrated to the US without knowing a lick of English, without knowing how to read or write, and took a lot of pride when he became a US citizen, but then also taught himself to speak and write and read in English. When I feel like things are getting hard for me, I always go back to that. If my grandpa did that, then I should be able to figure out what is in front of me.

What is your passion?

I enjoy experimenting with baking. It is a very relaxing thing for me. I kind of shut off the world for an hour or two and focus on putting a recipe together and seeing what happens and hoping that it works out. Professionally, my passion has been to reduce barriers to accessing education and providing equitable access to financial resources. From my own experience as a student, I sometimes felt "othered" because of my ethnicity or because I wasn't a traditional student living on campus and didn't always feel like I belonged in college. I hope that through the work I do, I can help reduce that feeling for our students.

Advocating for the Future

Matthew Neypes

Disclaimer: Pseudo names have been used for privacy reasons.

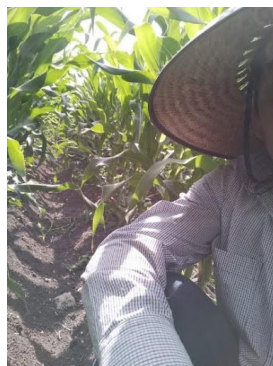
Abstract:

There are many stories told about the challenges and struggles that Latino/a/x and Chicano/a/x people face on their journey to the United States. Many, if not most of them, did it for the opportunity of providing a better life for themselves and their families. But after coming to the U.S., how do their children's stories turn out? In this report, I want to highlight the life of Rosa, the daughter of Mexican immigrants, as well as Ed and Eva Hernandez, and what life was like growing up as a first-generation Latina woman and her family in Southern California. This report will touch on Rosa's life and her journey through public education, college, and work.

The topics that will be touched on in this report are her childhood, education, adulthood, and work. Throughout Rosa's childhood, she faced different obstacles that left a long-lasting impact on her struggle with her identity. One theme throughout these topics includes the different instances of discrimination aimed toward her Mexican identity. After completing the interview, I learned that Rosa had so many hurdles to just to get to where she is today. She faced discrimination within the education system and now she is advocating for people within the community struggling with similar hardships. I wanted to interview Rosa to gain insight on struggles and hurdles she faced as a Mexican woman entering the public-school workforce which historically has been predominantly white.

Introduction

Rosa's lived experience starts with her parents migration to the United States. Her parents Ed and Eva Hernandez are part of the Latinx diaspora. In 1986, they migrated from Puebla Mexico to Santa Ana California in search of opportunity for a better future. They had six children — and one of them they named Rosa. From birth, Rosa's parents



provided her with the best care, guidance, protection, and life they could. She was taught many good values from her father, including “being thankful for whatever little they had and if you could, share that with others.” The street where Rosa was raised (and still lives) is full of loving neighbors that look out for one another, and although there are many rough neighborhoods just around the corner, she is thankful to have a street like hers. Rosa's educational journey began in the Garden Grove and Santa Ana Unified School districts, and since then, has earned her degree in Psychology at Cal Poly Pomona, and is now working on earning her masters/certification to become a school Psychologist at Loyola Marymount University (LMU).

Early Years

As a child, Rosa enjoyed playing in the backyard with her brothers and sisters, gardening vegetables, and attending school at Woodberry Elementary. She remembers many fond memories, as well as obstacles that she had to overcome during these public-school years. One instance was being told not to speak Spanish in the classroom. I asked Rosa to tell me the story.

ROSA: In second grade, my friend and I were speaking in Spanish, and we were told by the teacher, “You need to speak English.” I had no idea what we were talking about, but we were just giggling and having fun, I remember.

INTERVIEWER: How did it make you feel?

ROSA: I felt scared. I felt shocked, like, “Oh shoot, am I in trouble? I’m going to get in trouble.” It was at that moment, I think, because of that, I didn’t want to talk in class anymore.

INTERVIEWER: So, it turned you into a quieter person?

ROSA: Kinda, but no, because I was still myself after school. However, it made me go into a shell in the classroom. The teacher told me I couldn’t talk, so I decided I wouldn’t talk. If I can’t speak this language, then I won’t speak any language.

INTERVIEWER: When did you start speaking in the classroom again?

ROSA: It was when I got a new principal in 6th grade. I was just so excited that we got this new principal.

INTERVIEWER: Why were you so excited to have this new principal?

ROSA: I could identify with Dr. M. She is a beautiful Latina woman and I was like — wow, I can be just like her. She was just such an inspiration to me. I can remember the first time she talked to all us students, and she asked, “Does anybody speak Spanish?” At first, I thought, I’m not going to raise my hand, I might get in trouble. Then Dr. M explained she needed student helpers to translate for students who have just arrived in the country and are learning to speak English.

INTERVIEWER: Did raise your hand and volunteer?

ROSA: Yes, I began translating in the classroom and in the newly formed after-school program. Not long after that, Dr. M asked me if I could translate during parent-teacher conferences and other meetings. And so, I started translating for parents too.

INTERVIEWER: Looking back, how do you feel about being a translator for the parents in the Spanish-speaking community?

ROSA: Back then I was like, “I can do this!” I’ve been translating for my parents my whole life (laughter). Thinking about it now, it’s crazy. I’m a little kid, and they trust me enough to translate for all these parents. Talk about inequalities or inequities. How did we not have enough translators in the district?

Rosa faced the hurdle of discrimination at a young age by being told not to speak Spanish in the classroom. This action led to Rosa having an identity crisis which caused her to be silent in the classroom for many

years. Dr. M gave Rosa the opportunity to be a tool in the community, she was able to break free from her shell and use the gift of being bilingual to relay important information to parents. Rosa created a new identity for herself, and she never looked back.

Post Public Education

- Finding Purpose

Rosa graduated from Century high school in



Rosa's Family. She's the 3rd from right.

2009. As an adult, she was inspired to help those in need.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do after you graduated high school?

ROSA: I went to community college and worked at Home Depot, in the gardening department.

INTERVIEWER: Did you enjoy working in the gardening department?

ROSA: Yes, it was a lot of fun! I would hold gardening classes for mostly kids, and sometimes adults, teaching them how to start growing different plants from seeds. I would encourage people in the community to try and be somewhat self-sustaining by growing their little vegetables.

INTERVIEWER: Did teaching the gardening classes at Home Depot inspire you to become a teacher?

ROSA: Yes, after teaching these classes, it encouraged me to do something more. I was like, wow! I can see myself doing this as a teacher or in the field of education. It was at this point in my life, I started to look for a job in education.

INTERVIEWER: Where did that lead you?

ROSA: I started working as a paraeducator at a middle school in Irvine.

During Rosa’s time as a paraeducator, she was able to gain valuable experience

and insight from the special education community she was working with. She learned about different pedagogical strategies and approaches when teaching students one-on-one, as well as the services that students were entitled to, according to the law.

Advocating for Her Little Brother

In 2020, while Rosa was finishing her undergraduate degree at Cal Poly Pomona, her youngest brother was medically diagnosed with Autism. Rosa wrote a letter to the Santa Ana School District requesting services for her younger brother because she knew how important early intervention is for students with a disability.

INTERVIEWER: What happened after you requested services for your brother?

ROSA: We heard nothing from the district, and we were supposed to hear back within 15 calendar days, by law.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do next?

ROSA: We dropped off paperwork at the district, months went by, and my family heard nothing back. I reached out to the district via email. Still nothing. I decided to email them back, stating the law of being assessed within 15 calendar days and suddenly I got an email back. It was an appointment to be evaluated the very next day.

ROSA: I knew that the district was out of compliance, and we could sue if we wanted to, but my family was just happy that my

little brother was finally enrolled in school and getting the services he needs.

Advocating for the Community

INTERVIEWER: What made you want to become a school psychologist and not a special education teacher?

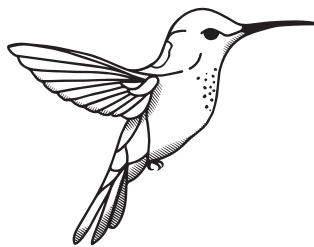
ROSA: I switched because when a family requests an evaluation, I want to be the person to not only respond within compliance of the law, but to also give a quality evaluation that is an accurate report of the student. I have also had to navigate paperwork and rating scales from a family perspective, and I understand how difficult and stressful it can be, especially for people in my community. That is why I want to be an advocate for my community, and to empower Latino/a's by letting them know that they have rights and the final approval in their child's education plan.

Closing Words

Rosa faced many obstacles as a first-generation Latina woman in Southern California on her way to achieve her dreams. The amount of discrimination, identity crises, and determination was overwhelming, but Rosa's contributions to her community continue to have a positive impact. As Rosa continues her path toward earning her certificate/credentials as a school psychologist, let's not forget the courage and strength of her parents, migrating to a new country for better opportunity.

About Our Contributor

Matt Neypes is completing his Liberal Studies to transfer to Cal State University, Fullerton. Matt's oral history highlights how Rosa redefined her Mexican identity and successfully made contributions to advocate in her community.



La Historia de Maria Duran

Skyla Velasquez

Abstract

This essay is to tell the story of my grandmother Maria Duran. I want others to know who she was and read her story of how she got to where she is today. The things she went through to have a better life not only for herself but for her family. I want to shed light on those who went through similar experiences or know a family member who has felt the same way she did. Not only that, but I also want to hear her perspective on how differently her life would've been if she had stayed in New Mexico with her children.

Introduction

This interview will be with my grandmother Maria Duran, who spoke about her life from a young age to where she is now. She spoke of her experience coming to the United States and her motivation for wanting a better life. In her story, she spoke about deciding to



leave her old life and start a new one in a new place. She also spoke about what her life might've been had she stayed with her children in her country and the challenges she along the way. I decided to question my grandmother because she had a significant story to tell about life and struggles. A mother traveling with two young children, a group of people she had no connection with, and a special way of viewing things after having to travel alone.

Decision

Maria Duran was a 32-year-old woman who

sought a better life. She wanted to build a better life for her children, husband, and herself. She was a wife to a man named Arturo Duran and later became a mother to a young boy and girl whose names would be Erika and Alejandro. She lived in a small white house in Mexico City in El Distrito Federal with her two children and husband. She was the youngest out of 6 siblings and they all stayed in the same area since most of them were close. She explained her life as very simple yet hard. She had no education, only making it to her 7th grade. She worked every morning and night as a maintenance worker at a hospital to help support her husband and children.

At one point in her life, both her husband and herself were tired of life in Mexico City but still always grateful they had something. She tells me, "Lo tenamos todo aunque no fuera mucho". Her husband first brought up the idea of starting a new life in the



United States, since it had better education options for their children and better-paying jobs. She explained it took weeks for him to build up the courage to leave without them, she knew he couldn't. Her husband decided he wanted something better for them and left for the United States to give them what they deserved. She was alone for a while providing everything she could for her children playing both parts as a mother and father. Her husband still sent as much money as he could back home regardless of the year that passed since she'd seen her husband. They tried to stay in contact as much as possible while he stayed renting a room until he had enough to go. His children, now 8 and 9, were tired of waiting for the

nothing. She told me, “quería algo mejor para nosotros, era ahora o nunca”. She took action and used this as a motive to stop sitting around.

A Better Life

Days pass as she planned on how she would go about leaving. Her family found a man to cross her and her children into the United States in the company of others she knew nothing about. Her worst fear was knowing something could happen to her children along the way, so long as they didn't leave her side she planned to keep them safe. The day came and she explained how cold it was with her children and them being worried/scared to leave everything behind. She knew it was for the best and to be able to give them everything they needed. She remembered her whole family stayed with them the night before they left. Her mother and father could not bear to see her leave. She still remembers the last thing her mother said before she left, “siempre estarás con nosotros”. She said her last goodbyes to each of her siblings and she watched her children say goodbye to their friends as it was time to leave.

Leaving

She also had a hard time remembering how many people were with her that day as it took a while before she answered me. She could only remember a small group of around 12 people. She explained how a man drove up in a van beside them, collecting their money as each one sat inside. She sat her children close, the man only drove them to a specific spot so they wouldn't be seen. They all got off, including the man, he gave certain instructions she said. She could only remember being told to stay close and to all continue at the same pace unless they wanted to be left behind. She remembered so vividly how quiet and deserted it was when they finally made it to walking on foot.

Her only thought was how badly she wished her husband could have been there to walk her through it and not alone. Her children cried a lot about how badly they wanted to sit. She finally couldn't keep up so the three settled to finish the rest of the way alone. The man gave them directions and wished them the best of luck. She continued holding her daughter's hand and her son on her back. They had small breaks in between but it roughly took around 7 hours

for them to finally get where she planned to meet her husband as he promised.

Education Achievements

She watched her children look around and around till they were all reunited. She told me in such an emotional voice, “Fue mi momento de mayor orgullo ese día.” He takes them in this small gray car he had gotten off someone that he seemed to know. It wasn't much when she first arrived, they lived in a house with another family it was all so new to her she said. She tells me how she thought things were so different and so big. She had been so used to the smaller things. Her children enrolled in school, and she noticed how hard it was for her children to learn English, especially her daughter. Now at the age of 66 years old, they are her greatest accomplishments, they are the most fluent speakers in English She still struggles to speak it. Both her husband and her worked job after job putting her children through school. They would be able to afford a home they would call their own. She watched them graduate, she then never regretted starting over with her husband.

We start to reach the final minutes of our interview. But I looked forward to hearing more she hadn't said. I started to ask questions about how her life would've been if she decided to stay. She gave me a simple answer but as she thought about it, there was more detail. She believed she would've had her children working at such a young age rather than completing school. She thought her husband would've kept working job after job to set food on the table.. In a way, her face was saddened because she never got the chance to





say her final goodbyes to her mother and father. She also left her children's memories behind. I now ask her, "What are some things you've experienced that you never thought to see if you were still back home?" Her response was so confidently said, "Vera mis hijas graduarse". Her biggest day after coming to the United States was being able to watch her children walk a high school graduation ceremony to receive their diplomas. I asked whether she had set goals before she came and if

they were accomplished. She had never thought to set goals. I guess you could say a plan. A plan to have a better life, more opportunities, and give more to her family because she knew they deserved it.

Now Maria Duran is a 66-year-old United States citizen, who has been here for almost 33 years. Has accomplished more than she could ever imagine to give her children her all.

About Our Contributor

Skyla Velasquez is studying Nursing and will continue her education to become a Registered Nurse. Skyla's oral history helped her bring depth and perspective to her grandmother's experience of migrating to the United States with her two children by her side.

Staff Feature: Efren Randel



EOPS Care Coordinator

How do you identify yourself?

Latino & First Generation college graduate

What makes you proud to be Latinx/Chicanx/Hispanic?

The culture it what Efren loves the most: the food that comes with the parties that bring all family and friends together. The culture is full and rich with loving memories that can hold us all together. There is love in my culture and that is what makes me proud.

Who is your Latinx/Chicanx/Hispanic role model?

I am the third Efren in the family. So, my dad and grandpa are my biggest role models. They knew the hustle better than anyone and never gave up.

What is your biggest passion?

My family is my biggest passion. I have a wife and 2 daughters ages 10 & 12 they will always come first. I hope to support them in any way possible.

Jaguar



Author and Photographer's pseudonym: milkteaseccy

The Jaguar, a great Mayan god, sits in the cool shade of night, and is at peace there. His great whiskers quiver and He holds in Him a heavy breath. My family doesn't believe in ghosts, but He has seen too many, too soon, all of them rattle their chipped white bones at Him yet are unsatisfied when He can't answer their two-toned questions. He inhales the eons of lonely time, and the ghosts chatter their mysteries into the night air. He sighs out his riposte.

It is midnight, and it is the summer of fourth grade.

The great Jaguar God regards me: shallow breaths, tangled hair splayed on the mattress, my eyes unfixed and unseeing. My window is open to let the darkness in, and He tiptoes his leather paws into the room. I see Him, standing, in the corner. He is all shadow, and I am bathed in moonlight; we watch each other, and we wait. We breathe in the night air, and I have no questions for Him. We bask in the cool shade of night.

Bien Educado

Stacey Shapero

ORAL HISTORY OF BEATRIZ LANDEROS

Abstract:

Maintaining a strong Latinx identity through cultural connection, pride, and language is a value passed down by strong matriarchs from generation to generation in the Landeros family. With the solid foundation created by Luis and Beatriz, and their encouragement of all their children to focus on education, Bea created a successful life, raised her own children to be well-educated both academically and culturally, and is able to enjoy the experience of having her grandchildren know their Mexican heritage, traditions and language.

Introduction

Bea Landeros, the daughter of Luis Landeros and Beatriz Torres Landeros, is a naturalized American citizen, who moved here with her family in the early 1970's. She has children and grandchildren who were born in the U.S. and she ensured that they were well-educated in their Mexican culture, to appreciate and know it, especially through the Spanish language and traditions. Through a focus on cultural connection, cultural pride, and native language, she was able to protect and maintain cultural identity and values against the rigors of diaspora and in spite of legal, systemic and individual racism. The following is Bea's story.

Lessons in History

America's border with Mexico has had periods of more and less fluidity, driven both by American economic needs and political ideations at any given time.. The Landeros family arriving in America was shaped both by the Bracero program of the 1950's and immigration policy of the late 1960's to 1970's. Stories of opportunities in the north, a drive for adventure and not wanting to follow in his father's footsteps as an electrician, brought Luis Landeros to Tijuana from his home in Guanajuato, Mexico. Beatriz Torres, grew up in a rural

area of Jalisco, Mexico, but was a city girl at heart, and also headed to a life in the border city of Tijuana. She married, and then, sadly, found herself supporting three sons as a single mother due to the death of her husband. Luis met the beautiful widow, they married and started adding to their family with three daughters, one of which was Bea, and a son.

To provide for his family, Luis joined the Bracero program accepting various contracts to perform field work ranging from Escondido in Southern California to San Jose in Northern California. His hard work in the fields of America allowed him to provide for the family in Tijuana. When there came a point that contracts were not available, Luis crossed without papers into California and found work in San Juan Capistrano. His employer assisted him in obtaining a green card, which allowed him to continue working in Orange County and spending weekends with his family in Tijuana. It was important to Beatriz that their children be born and raised in Mexico to learn the native language and culture. Bea was raised in Mexico, steeped in her own traditions and speaking only Spanish while her father traveled back and forth from San Juan Capistrano to Tijuana. At that time, vehicle traffic at the border was minimal, making crossing back and forth a simple process.

Due to changes that were occurring in the U.S. politics and immigration system in the mid to late 1960's, when Immigration learned that Beatriz and the children had green cards, an ultimatum was made that the entire family would need to move permanently to America, within one year, or the green cards would be canceled. Now, the Landeros family was facing the choice between severe economic hardship or family separation, which are issues that are still impacting Latinx families today.

New Learning in the U.S.

As Bea's story continues, the family made the difficult choice to leave their home in Tijuana so that they could remain together and still support Luis' work. The challenges



of such a drastic change were made worse for Bea by various forms of racism that she encountered. She had been eagerly anticipating entering middle school in Mexico, excited to select classes, shop for new school supplies, and the many opportunities to be with her friends. She was a bright student who had a love of learning, especially math, reading and studying history.

Suddenly, she was starting school in a new area, knowing only her family, and not understanding the language. The only middle school in the area at that time was Marco Forster Middle School, which she bussed to from San Clemente. Support for Spanish-speaking students and families were virtually non-existent at that time. A custodian from the school had to be called to the office to help translate so that her parents could enroll her in school, as he was not office staff but knew the language. While this may not have appeared as overt racism, this lack of accommodation for diverse needs is an insidious form of discrimination and barrier for Latinx students and families. She recalls only about 7-8 students with her in her English-learner classes, and she struggled to understand in the remainder of her courses.

Other Spanish-speaking students at the school, who were also fluent in English, had internalized the racist attitudes and would ostracize the new students, even refusing to help Bea find her way to classes on the new campus. With resilience and her own rebel spirit, Bea refused to let the barriers, challenges, and poor attitudes of others stand in her way. She mastered English, finished school, created

friendships, her own family and now works at the same middle school that she attended. Her lived experiences have provided her with an empathetic spirit, especially when working with those who are struggling with English. She is sensitive to the subtle and not-so-subtle ways that prejudice can be expressed and works to show respect to students and their families, many of whom are newly immigrated to the United States in search of safety and a better life for their families.

Teaching the Next Generations

Maintaining Latinx cultural identity is a conscious choice, particularly when faced with being in the middle of a new and foreign country. It can be a tightrope walk of balancing the integration of American culture and values with keeping alive the history and traditions of native culture. With the strong foundation provided by her early childhood, Bea has a firm sense of pride in her Mexican identity. Wanting to spare her own children from the struggles and racism she experienced when moving to America, she made certain that they spoke English, but also prioritized Spanish



to connect with their heritage so they could communicate with grandparents and other family members who were living in Mexico. They learned with Bea and extended family to enjoy traditional activities such as harvesting and cleaning nopales, and making tortillas and tamales, even though some of those activities were not part of her everyday life as a “city girl” in Tijuana.

She made sure to infuse the Spanish language into their lives and make real the stories of her experiences growing up. The benefits of her dedication to making sure her children had pride and experience in Latinx culture can be seen even in her grandchildren who speak Spanish in dual-immersion schools and are aware of their Mexican-American heritage.

About Our Contributor

Stacey Shapero is a Human Services major looking to work in Hospice Care. Stacey’s essay explores the multi-generational impact of keeping traditions alive in a new country.

Staff Feature: Yadira De La Cruz



Adult Education Instructor

How do you identify?

Latina/Hispanic

Share a little bit about yourself.

My parents migrated from Nayarit, Mexico. I am a first-generation Mexican American and the first to attend and graduate college in my family. I also have my Master’s in Literature and I am a full-time faculty member for the high school equivalency program here at Saddleback.

What is one of your favorite movies?

I really like guilty pleasure, so it would have to be “13 going on 30” or “The Devil Wears Prada”. But I do really love period-piece movies like “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.”

How long have you been working at Saddleback?

For the part-time capacity, I have been here at Saddleback since January of 2022 and as a full-time this would be my first year in the Fall of 2023.

What is a favorite childhood memory?

I was born and raised partially in Orange County but would travel to Mexico every summer and went to secondary high school in Mexico. During that time we would be sent to buy milk by taking a container to the lady that sold the milk. So we were walking with 2 liters of milk in an open container when a dog came out of nowhere. We ran since the milk was in an open container and it started spilling everywhere, and when we got back home our parents were just laughing at us and as we turned around we could see spilled milk on the rocks.

A New Chapter in Life

Stephanie Dena

Abstract:

Yadira Oseguera is a strong woman who migrated to the United States from Mexico. Born in Mexico, but far from her father in San Clemente, Yadira always had little motivation to be in the U.S. There were many obstacles she had to face in the journey, once in the United States there was a huge culture shock for Yadira. She would soon find that there are lots of opportunities for her, especially as a woman. She doesn't have to be stuck in her traditional role as a mother and can pursue an education. Soon she will be able to continue her story how she wants.

Before the Journey

On October 8th, 2023 I interviewed my aunt Yadira Oseguera, a 36-year-old mom who shared her story about coming to the United States of America. Throughout the interview, we talked about past family members who have also tried to go to the U.S. and the cultural differences she experienced getting to California. Yadira was only 9 when coming to the U.S. She didn't know what to expect. Imagination and stories were what she used to picture the U.S. When she got there she saw it was a lot different than she had imagined.



Yadira was born in a small city in Michoacan Mexico called Cotija. She is the youngest of three girls and the daughter of farmers. She stated, "I never really thought about going to the United States of America, I only ever really thought about the beach." As her

father traveled back and forth from Mexico to the U.S. to provide for his family, he would tell his daughters stories about the beach town he lived in called San Clemente. Her father Jose worked any job he could get to send back as much money as he could. Yadira stated "My father crossed the border four times illegally since he would come back home to see us in Mexico any chance he could. Two times he hid in a truck's engine and the other times he would hide on trains to pass through."

The Journey

Life in Cotija was calm and filled with close family. It was a slow-paced life with room to grow, but there weren't enough resources to get to where Jose, her father, wanted to be. Jose eventually was able to get citizenship in the 1980s during the presidency of Ronald Regan. One thing her father never wanted was for his daughters and wife to cross illegally like he did. He dreamt of opportunity and knew if they came with no papers they would work the jobs he had to. With this act, Jose was able to bring his whole family to the U.S. and begin a new chapter of life. Except many families were not as lucky as he was.

Yadira stated, "I remember this day because of how excited I was to go on an airplane and see the beach for the first time". 1996 was the year that Yadira's family started their journey to the border. A two-hour flight from Guadalajara airport to Ciudad Juarez was the first destination where they crossed into Texas. From Texas was a two-day train ride to Los Angeles California where her mother's sister lived. Yadira stated "We stayed in South Central LA. I remember seeing so many African Americans. I was so culturally shocked as I had never seen so many different people in one place before. I could hear gunshots at night and people arguing on the streets. This was not the beach town I had imagined."

Her father Jose never wanted his kids to grow up in a dangerous environment. For a couple of weeks, he worked extra hard and managed to move his whole family to San



Clemente where he first fell in love with America.

When arriving in San Clemente for the first time Yadira experienced another culture shock as it is a predominantly white area. She entered 3rd grade speaking no English she stated “There were 3 Mexicans per class in my grade.” That is where Yadira learned about college and how important the school system was. Back in Mexico, she had never heard her teachers talk about college. College in the small town where she was from back in Mexico was never an option.

Opportunity

In Mexico, Yadira had a large home with chickens, a family, and many other amazing things. Mexico was a home but in the U.S. life was different. Her family went from living on a big plot of land with many rooms and tons of family to a two-bedroom apartment on the south side of a small beach town called San Clemente. Home life was one of the biggest changes for Yadira herself as there was no room for privacy and no place to play outside. Running around in the streets with a group of little kids was no longer an option as everyone around was a stranger to each other.

My aunt shared many stories of family members back in Mexico. One that stuck with me was her grandpa and many uncles who came to the United States during the Bracero program. When taking a Chicano studies class one semester I learned it was a horrific program. A program during WWII described as “Renting Mexicans.” I had never read or heard about the Bracero program before. It was extremely sad to hear the stories my family had to go through before actually making it to a new country.

Some things experienced during the Bracero program were discrimination, being sprayed with pesticides, and extremely hard labor. Many went back to Mexico due to the harsh conditions like my family.

Identity

As Yadira went to high school she experienced her first identity crisis. The girls who looked nothing like her were the ones going to college and getting good jobs. While the girls who did look like her including her sisters were having kids and working minimum-wage jobs in the area. She had a big decision to make on whether she would stay in San Clemente and attend a local community college or start over in a new area. Feeling out of place she decided to go to a four-year school. Yadira stated, “I knew if I stayed I would get too comfortable in a place I did not want to be in so I challenged myself and left because I knew that would be best for me.” With that, she applied and got into SDSU.

With such big dreams, Yadira was alone. Her parents had just bought a condo in San Juan and did not support her decision to attend college. They told her she was on her own and she understood as they did



not have the money to help. Yadira applied to many scholarships and was able to do it on her own. She stated, "My parents didn't think I was going to go until the day they helped me move into my dorm room and they realized I meant it." With no support she still did it. Since the day she entered 3rd grade at the age of 9 in a new country, she knew she wanted to go to college.

Attending San Diego State University she felt more accepted. She stated, "One girl asked me oh my god you are from Orange County I always thought there were only white people there." San Diego felt like a place she belonged as it was a predominantly Latino community and very close to the U.S.-Mexico border. She had found a new identity. She realized she was Chicana a Mexican American. Yadira stated "I do identify as a Chicana because I came here at such a young age. I am Mexican. I always will be but I am also American and I need both to be who I am." The word Chicano/a was an identity used by Mexicans and Latinos who felt both Mexican and American since they came to the U.S. at such a young age like my aunt Yadira.

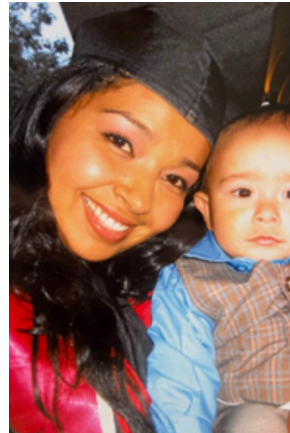
I asked my aunt "Why do you feel you attended college and your sisters did not?" She went on to explain how her sisters were about five years older than her and almost in high school. They were already at the age where most had already decided what college they wanted to go to and what future they may want. While she was a lot younger and still at the age where most learn about college. So for Yadira, there was a better chance of being successful since she was so young when migrating to the United States. Except for her two sisters Yaneth and Leticia, they only saw the old-fashioned ways of Mexican women which were marriage and kids since they were a lot older when migrating to the United States that was all they knew.

With being the only one going to college Yadira felt she had to major in something that would make her a lot of money so she chose civil engineering. That eventually did not work out because all she ever wanted to be since she was a kid was a teacher. She changed her major multiple times and joined many clubs like M.E.Ch.A. Eventually choosing to major in liberal studies and Spanish. She was finally happy and started accepting who she was as a Chicana.

Women Hood

Throughout her college journey, Yadira would see her friends back home having kids and getting married; she felt out of place again as a junior in college. So Yadira decided to have a kid herself, a little boy named Andy. She had to take a semester off because she could not juggle being a mom and a full-time college student. Yadira was married to a traditional Mexican man which made things extremely hard for her as she was not a traditional Mexican woman. In 2011 Yadira graduated college and walked down the aisle with her kid in hand. She was now a proud college graduate with a little boy.

Yadira's marriage eventually did not work out and she became a single mother in her early 20's living in San Diego. Life was hard for Yadira but nothing ever stopped her. She got an office job in the city and lived in a one-bedroom apartment by herself with bars on the window. Eventually, she moved back to the area she knew best and where it all began. Yadira stated "I still



have a lot to accomplish. I'm young and life is what I make it and right now I am happy." Nothing is ever easy for an immigrant child with big dreams.

Yadira is 36 years old and her little boy Andy is now 13 years old. She is a teacher's aid and working on becoming a Spanish teacher. For now, she travels and lives in an apartment in Mission Viejo still close to where she began her new life in America. Two questions I saved for last for her were "Do you ever wish you did anything different? Or do you regret anything?" She stated, "No I do not regret anything but

there are some things I wish I did differently like save money, or buy a home when I could have but there is a lot of time left for me to figure everything out for now I live.”

for the first time to start a new chapter in life.

The Chapter Continues

Life is not easy for anyone coming to the United States as there is so much hatred in this country. That is why coming at a young age gave Yadira a bigger advantage to fight that hatred and become who she is today. Yadira just celebrated her 37th birthday and her son will be 14 this summer. Her life will continue as she is still young and exploring who she is and will become. For now, this was the story of a 9-year-old girl traveling



About Our Contributor

Stephanie Dena is majoring in Political Science. She plans to transfer to a four-year university and continue to study Political Journalism. She wrote about her aunt who was the first person to attend college from her mother’s side of the family. It was a great opportunity to learn and talk with her about her experience.

Staff Feature: Javier Corrales



Program Coordinator, Adult Education

How do you identify yourself?

I identify as Chicano. When I was growing up, there was not a lot of other terminology at that time, and we identified with Chicano because it was something that was created internally within the group rather than something the government created for us. You could say that I was a little rebellious, and we were creating our own identity so I am very proud of that.

How do you celebrate your heritage?

I celebrate every day. What I do culturally, with family, food, language, and returning to Mexico every year are all my celebrations and how I show my pride. When I was going to high school and college, being part of Hispanic clubs was another way I celebrated by being more vocal with, “this is who we are.”

Who is your biggest Chicano/a inspiration?

There are so many figures that I am proud of, but what really opened the door for me to find my own Chicano identity was the influence of Malcolm X and reading his autobiography. His whole situation being in jail, educating himself, and discovering himself.

What is your favorite resource on campus you wish people knew more about?

The best resource that is underutilized is the library and everything that is in the library, especially tutoring. The library is a great starting point. It’s not just about books and checking out books, it is set up for getting students to get help. When I was a student at Saddleback College, it looked a little dark and gloomy in there, but now it’s bright and beautiful.

UCI Obstacle Course

Summer 2024



Sacrificios De Una Madre

Tanitany Hernandez

Abstract:

This story honors the strength and resilience of how powerful a mother's love can be. Lulu was left alone in a foreign country as a single mother, far from anything she had ever known as home. She would sacrifice herself by working day and night through poor conditions and discrimination to provide for her children, even though it meant missing many of their milestones and the chance to see her own parents again before they passed.

Life in Mexico

Lulu grew up in Morelia Michoacan Mexico in a family of 10. Out of 4 brothers and 4 sisters, she was and still is the only one in the family that decided to travel to the U.S. She was certain this was the way to live a better life. Like many immigrant parents, my mother did not finish school due to having to work to provide for her family. As an angry alcoholic, her father often lashed out, resulting in the traumatic brain injury he gave her mother/his wife. Unable to create real connections with her mother, her father became the only parent she could truly connect with. Her need for change was more than enough for her to make the decision to migrate to the United States following her marriage to a male in the Mexican Special Forces. It would also be enough to remain in the U.S. even when her husband decided to go back to Mexico without her.

Still, while finding balance in a foreign country as a single mother, she never failed to make sure her kids always had a roof over their heads and food on the table. Such events have made her a strong and resilient person that deserves to be acknowledged along with the many other immigrants who were able to make a living in the U.S. on their own. Through this interview, I was able to understand and appreciate the struggles my mother overcame. Although she was always tough and held back in many forms of affection, it is clear now that this is the person she had to become in order to survive such racial discrimination, economic/political barriers, and many

other forms of racial profiling. It is also the reason she was able to bless me with so many opportunities.

High Risk Journey to America

Becoming a mother at the young age of 22, Lulu decided working the fields to provide for her child was not going to work for her the way it did for others. She married a male in the Mexican Special Forces who later was able to pay for her trip with El Coyote from Morelia, Michoacan in Mexico to Los Angeles, California in the United States. During this 7-day trip, Lulu got through several life-threatening conditions. One of the many obstacles was jumping three fences and getting caught in the barbed wire by her shirt. She had to rip the shirt



She is pictured when first arriving in the U.S.

to fall from about 30 feet high and land on her back, knocking all the wind out of her. On another night, she fell into a little pool of quicksand and needed help getting pulled out. Lulu was almost left behind since she had no strength left and was having a hard time keeping up with the group. She mentioned praying over and over again even though she was never really religious.

She believes it was all the praying that allowed her to catch up on time to get on the truck that would take her to the hotel she would stay in until it was her turn to be picked up by her husband. Her husband, Izzy, would use his personal visa to get there with her child as he had already presented himself as the father at the time of birth.



This is her brother Ansel who she has not seen in 20 years.

This million dollar idea would last six years until it revealed itself as the controlling tactic it really was. His decision to leave back to Mexico followed the severity of his physical and mental abuse. This would be the start of a new life as a single mother of two kids now having to adapt to a new country completely alone.

Determined to Succeed in America

Lulu decided she would do it all on her own not knowing the true extent of her choice. Her only motivation would be to give a better life to the children she had. During the follow-up interview, she was only comfortable enough to elaborate on her work experiences after a glass of wine. Her first job was as a Target employee working night shifts. This was during the winter and all of her coworkers wanted to get a hot coffee from Starbucks to keep warm. She was the last one to order and when she had a hard time communicating, the barista rudely handed her an ice-cold coffee even after all the other employees got a hot one.

It was at this moment that she realized she did not need words to understand how Americans felt about her, especially after her coworkers sarcastically laughed when asking about her odd order and she had to play it off by pretending she liked it that way. This would be one of the very rare moments I would see tears streaming down her face even though she was trying to hold a smile. It was clear, she did not like being seen in a vulnerable position and that she only felt safe enough to express her emotions when she was less aware of the situation.

After Target, getting a job with a fake identity was not as easy. When Lulu became aware of the risks getting a fake social security number would bring her possible deportation, she stopped trying to use one. House cleaning would be the only option available. The work would be as long as ten hours with a paycheck of only eight dollars an hour from Monday to Saturday. This would mean spending very little time with her kids and more pressure to work harder in hopes it would buy her more time.

However, this was not the reality, and the neighbors next door called Child Protective Services after noticing how many hours her kids really spent alone. The neighbor claimed there was no food in the fridge and that Lulu was not fit enough to be a parent. After speaking to the social workers and allowing them to inspect her living conditions, the case was dismissed as it was obvious that she was a hard-working mother. She would work long harsh hours for six years as a single mother while renting a two-bedroom apartment, sleeping in the living room. After completing a family therapy treatment plan to treat her kids'



Her and me as a baby in Mexico right before leaving.

extremely defensive behavior towards other men, she was able to get remarried and start again.

All these forms of resilience show me the strength and courage my mother had to have to survive as a complete foreigner. She was able to change many of her own beliefs and values such as not believing in the importance of mental health and seeking help when needed. She was willing to go through treatment to do what was necessary to give her kids a better life. Lulu never gave up or stopped trying and that determination explains why she was always so harsh on me. Going to college and becoming successful is my way of showing her how thankful I am for the sacrifices she made. The memory of her trying to hide her tears when she found

out about her parents' death since I was too young, reminds me I need to make her struggles worth it.

This interview showed me a side of her I did not know while also giving me huge insight into the racist discrimination the Latinx community has been facing for years. The Latinx community does not have the same opportunities as Americans, they are still seen as incompetent when they are far from that. The Latinx community is willing to work twice as hard as the Americans do and they deserve to be acknowledged. Education, housing, and working conditions need policies that include and support them through systems created to help the Latinx communities make the stable living they deserve and have earned.

About Our Contributor

Tanitany Hernandez is studying Sociology to serve the community as a counselor or therapist. Tanitany's oral history essay shares the hard work and dedication needed to find a better life, even at the sacrifice of leaving the life one knows behind.

Staff Feature: Yvonne Belardes



Administrative Assistant (for 16 years)

How do you identify yourself?

Chicana hispanic

What makes you proud to be Latinx/Chicana-o/Hispanic?

Being Hispanic, there are so many traditions and family ties that other cultures do not have. Traditions that are always changing and coming back. They come and go which means there are always new ones that we can connect with, so that makes me proud.

What is the best hidden treasure about Saddleback College that you wish everyone knew about?

We have so many resources that students do not know about, for example the Undocu-ally program, the care corner, and more available for all students.

What advice would you have for your 20-year old self about your identity?

Since I was a young mother at the age of 20, school was not my first choice. I was a stay at home mom and I loved it but it slowed me down putting a stop to my education. I would tell myself to pursue my education even if it was harder, to keep going in order to be further along in life than I am now.

What would you tell someone who is thinking about coming to Saddleback College?

It is a great idea, there are many resources, it is cheaper and even if you transfer you can get your GED here and save some money. You also make plenty of friends along the way.

Trabajadora y Valiente

Daniela Nuñez García

Abstract:

Camila is the oldest child in her family. She had to deal with the struggles of life at home while fighting for a higher education. Doing it alone she was able to. Overcoming the bad and leaving family behind because she knew it was the right decision got her to where she wanted to be. Nothing stopped Camila from following her education.

First Daughter

For my oral history assignment, I decided to interview my aunt, Camila. I wanted to interview her because she is one of my oldest aunts, which means that she has a lot of good and bad stories and many different experiences to share with me and the world during her interview. This also helps me understand more about my family and what they went through over the years, it was also a bonding experience for us both because we opened up and became closer during the short time we spoke together.

Tia Camila was born in Jalisco, Mexico on May 11, 1973. She describes her childhood as a happy but difficult one. She was happy because she had many siblings and many cousins to play with, and difficult because of the traditions and mannerisms that people during those times followed. As the third oldest child and the first daughter, she remembers she had a bunch of responsibilities that normally adults would perform, like taking care of the youngest children around and doing house chores at a very early age. She then explains better what she meant, “En aquel tiempo, donde, los más grandes, mujeres sobre todo, teníamos que hacer labores siendo muy niños de no muy niños, de los adultos.” Tia Camila remembers that she would play with her siblings and cousins but that more often than she was prevented from doing so and when she was allowed to play, games were very gender-biased between girls and boys meaning that because of her gender, she wasn’t socially allowed to play certain games.

However, she always challenged these separations and would play games like Cars



and You Are It Now (which back then were mostly seen as boy games). The follow-up questions revolved around her religious views and her feelings about her beliefs. She elaborated that she was brought up catholic and that back then it seemed like fanaticism to her young self, they were so strict with religious holidays, to the point that Semana Santa (the holy week, happens around easter) during los dias santos (the holy days) she wouldn’t be able to shower and do certain chores like folding or washing clothes. She wasn’t allowed to question these practices because her mother and grandmother would instill fear if so, due to this she felt obligated to participate, she mentioned, that she never felt she voluntarily chose to practice in something she was part of.

She now believes there is a god but when growing up she felt it was never like she was told it was, so she grew up fearing. Tia Camila then added that because she was told to fear, she also grew up to be insecure in not only her religion but many aspects of her life growing up.

Family Struggles

During her teenage years, Tia Camila described to me a more difficult upbringing and challenging times for her with her family. Tia Camila remembers that she did not possess a regular part-time job like many teens nowadays, however, her job was to take care of her siblings, stay

home, and do house chores. To add to this, she emphasized that her mother did not want her to go to school after she finished elementary school but rather stay home and help around. She mentioned how this affected her daily life from then on, “Era difícil porque peleaba con ella y casi fui a fuerzas a la escuela. De muy mala manera me acompañó, y fui en la tarde porque en la mañana tenía que ayudarle, dejar ciertas cosas listas y ya podía ir a la escuela, y las tareas las hacía en la madrugada o cuando podía.” Tía Camila remembers fighting with her mother about going to school, she almost did not attend.

She had to attend night classes most of her teens because she had to help her mother during the day, get everything around the house ready, and then go to school. She describes this experience as not having a normal childhood, she wasn't permitted to be a normal child and enjoy normal children's activities. She now looks back to this time of her life as useful things and skills she had to learn but is grateful she did now that she is an adult.

Father's Trips

Tia Camila mentioned the most impacting moment of her childhood was the fact that her dad was never home because he worked in the United States where for a long period he lacked proper documentation, he went to see them every two to three years, and she mentioned that she did miss him dearly. She elaborated deeply regarding one of my questions about the subject, that once her father had gained the proper documentation to stay in the United States, he went back and took some of the kids with him during the return journey to also get them visas and passports, however, she was already working at this time and over the age of 18, so she was left out from the process.

Education

The follow-up questions referred to her life after graduating high school and if she went to college, Tia Camila proudly went to college after graduating high school, where her focus was becoming a teacher, then later on in her life went back to school and got master's in education, one of her greatest passions was becoming a teacher since she was around five years old. She started the paperwork to enroll in college

by herself because her mother did not want her to continue studying once more, “A tu abuelita no le pareció tampoco pero me fui, me fui a fuerzas ya.” She left home shortly after she enrolled in college. During her college years, Tia Camila remembers that the way you gain experience as a teacher back in the day was by doing practices she would be assigned a school to teach at for about 15 days and was forced to stay at the school or near the school for that time, but she was fine with this because some of her friends were studying the same subject and would go along with her, she would stay like this either with a student or in what she called the teacher's house (which was inside the school as well).

Building Family

Finally, I asked her about her now family and husband. Tia Camila met her husband at the school she used to work at, but it wasn't love at first sight, she hated the guy. She explained that the reason she disliked her now husband at that time was because, he took a protective role over her and the other female coworker, and this bothered her because all her life she was the one taking care of people, so she thought she didn't need a protector, that she was capable of protecting herself. In her own words, “Se crecía nuestro protector, me arimaba una silla para sentarme y nos caminaba a todos lados, yo era un año mayor que él. Yo me podía cuidar sola pero él siguió insistiendo.” After some time, other coworkers began to leave for other schools and they became friends since they were the only ones remaining. From friends to lovers.

She and her husband got married after



a couple of months of dating and started to rent apartments to live together. They got married in 1996 and not long after she gave birth to their first child. Tia Camila mentions that when she was working in a place where the infant mortality rate was very high, she didn't want her child to suffer the same fate, so for the next 4 years she was voluntarily separated from her child, who was left in the care of her mother. She described this situation in great detail, "Hacía mucho frío y allá no había ni luz, y las casas eran de tablas. Te entraba el frío, del que te entra hasta los huesos, el pueblo se llama los samueles, era lo más alto de la sierra. Allá hay partes que nunca les da el sol, cuando hiela o nieva, tarda muchísimo en secarse. Era demasiado frío, y el año que tu primo nació, murieron dos niños de hipotermia y me dio miedo dejarlo conmigo."

Reunited

During the 4 years she was separated from her first child, she had another child a year later after she had her first child. But this time she was determined to keep the baby with her. After some time she got a more permanent position in a small city, so she came down the Sierra first with her second child and left the toddler with her mother while she went back up the Sierra to collect her belongings once she traveled down the Sierra for the second time, she moved the children and her things to a new house where most of the family could be together. This whole process took around 6 months. After some years of living in the small city, she had her third and final child, her first daughter. After she moved to the small city, she was alone for many years because her husband had a teaching position far away from them, and the family would only be able to see him every Friday to spend the weekend together.

Lastly, she and her family moved to another small city one last time. They moved to her hometown, the place she

grew up in and now calls her home. Where they were close to relatives and friends. First, they moved to a small apartment on the outskirts of the town however, she explained to me that the apartment they lived in was too small but it was cozy. After 7 years of living in the apartment, she and her husband were able to buy their current home, where all the family lives together.

She Was Able

Tia Camila's life was affected by various



aspects throughout her life. During her early life, she was affected by the fact that her dad left the family to work in The United States in search of a way to provide for his family which is an example of a push and pull factor for many Latinx families that seek a better life and are forced to leave loved ones for years and years. The fact that she was a woman who fought for an education in a very conservative and religious time and place with no help from her parents made it even more difficult for her later on in life. When the interview was over, I found myself wondering how I didn't know about her story before and also was very surprised by how much she had to suffer and work throughout her life. I am very happy and proud of my aunt and would love to know more about her life and other relative's lives in the future.

About Our Contributor

Daniela Nuñez Garcia is majoring in Political Science and Criminology. Her goal is to transfer to a four-year university. She wrote about a family member close to her because of what her story means to her and the people around her.

Staff Feature: Jazlyn Londaverde



Counselor for Saddleback College

Jazlyn spoke with Latinx Voices staff writer Fernanda Camacho to share her personal experience, purpose, and passion for bringing equity and resources to the Saddleback College Latinx community by providing support and guidance to students, advocating for diversity and inclusivity within higher education. Jazlyn Londaverde is an EOPS counselor at Saddleback College and during the interview, she reflected on her journey as a first-generation professional. She emphasized the importance of representation and community amongst students and staff at Saddleback College and discussed the importance of resourcefulness and community engagement in navigating educational opportunities.

How do you identify yourself?

First gen student, professional, Latina, Daughter of Salvadoran immigrants, Salvadoran

How long have you been working at S.C.?

Since August of last year, so two semesters.

What would you tell someone who is thinking about coming to S.C.?

Be as resourceful as possible, even when programs and opportunities are promoted they don't always reach everyone, and being proactive and resourceful can get you very far. I would also tell students they don't ever have to do anything by themselves that is the entire premise of our programs. Also, there is no such thing as a dumb question, if students didn't have questions I wouldn't have a job and once you understand that you don't have to do it by yourself then you know you can ask all the questions, be resourceful, and take up space. Taking up space is super important, imposter syndrome can be intense, especially in certain places. Find your community and don't be afraid to step out and bring that representation and be authentic to yourself.

What do you like most about your work?

I love connecting with first-gen students. I remember what it was like to be a first-gen student. I'm now a first-gen professional and I will never stop being first-gen no matter how far I go in education or my professional career. I will always be first-gen. For me, paving the way and empowering students is the most rewarding part of my job, I was in that position not that long ago, and being able to keep doors open for other students is important for me and I'm happy I get to do that every day, I love getting to know students hearing their stories and being able to connect with all of them. As a first-gen student, you can get support from friends and family but they may not always understand, so providing support to students and letting them know I hear, feel, and understand is very important to me.

What do you like most about S.C.?

What I like most is interacting with the students daily and having cool co-workers. At Saddleback, I have the opportunity to bring more representation given the demographics of the campus. I like that I can create a space on campus to support students to build a sense of belonging on campus. It is also important that students see that there are first-gen professionals, like myself, and that they can see themselves as professionals because I know how important it was for me to see

someone who looked like me or who came from a similar background in a position as a professional. Saddleback is trying their best to be inclusive so being a part of that is pretty cool and I like being in EOPS.

What makes S.C. Special To You?

Saddleback has provided me with support in my professional career, It's a smaller campus compared to other campuses where I have worked, but that works because I have felt and had the support I need from my colleagues. Even something as simple as knowing my dean on a personal level was great and important for me. Saddleback is also where I had my first counseling position ever, so that will always be special to me as well as the students I've connected with.

What is the best hidden treasure about S.C. that you wish everyone knew about?

A hidden treasure at Saddleback is definitely the students and on-campus clubs, something like this journal I'm sure not enough people know about. For example, the un-docu club does a lot of cool stuff and research and I feel like not enough people know that is happening. In general, I know what students are doing and what changes students are making. A lot of advocacy work comes from students. Truly the hidden gems are all the student efforts that bring changes at a large level and it is admirable and should be given more attention.

How do you feel connected to the Chicana/Latina community here at Saddleback?

As a counselor, my connection comes from my one-on-one meetings with students. I feel particularly connected because a huge chunk of our EOPS students are Latina so I get to serve them in a very personal way through our EOPS. I get to connect with them and use my role to serve them. Another way I have connected to my community is amongst my colleagues, professionally we are not a very big group, so being able to find that community and talk about our experiences is important to me. As I mentioned, being a first-gen professional is its own experience and to talk about that with other folks who can relate on a cultural level is important. and looking to mentors who have paved the way and shown me how to navigate is how I feel most connected. Students and my colleagues help me feel connected.

What makes you proud to be Latina/Chicana-o/Hispanic?

Everything! I'm a very proud Salvadoran and I try not to hide that in any of the spaces I am in because that representation is important and the Latina community is not a monolith, there is so much diversity within the Latina community. I try to wear it proudly so people can see we are not all from one place, we don't all speak Spanish, we don't all have the same food, same skin tone. What makes me the proudest is the sense of community within a vast community. There is a lot of closeness and we work hard to back each other up and have a family feel. That's how I connect with my co-workers. We feel this sense of community and camaraderie, and again it comes down to representation. I saw a stat that said less than 5% of Latinos have a master's, and going through my program it wasn't until after I graduated that I realized very few of us get here. So, I'm very proud to open doors and keep doors open, Thanks to the people that came before me.

What is the last book or podcast you read/listened to?

I recently finished *Solito* by Javier Zamora - he is a Salvadoran immigrant, the story is about his immigration story to the U.S. when he was 9 years old and he came by himself. I connected to this book a lot because my parents were young when they migrated, and it gave me a deeper sense of their migration story because it is not something they talk about very often so it opened my eyes to what that looks like. It's a story that a lot of people share in many different ways whether it is you specifically, parents, siblings, or grandparents. For me, the book provided the human experience of the story of migration that is out of touch to some people. I think it helps with raising awareness and the way it was written is heartbreaking but

eye-opening. If more people saw this human side of migration, there would be a lot more empathy in the world. Reading the book tore my heart out and was sad but it is an important book.

How do you celebrate your heritage?

The biggest way is through language and food. Being able to share that part of my culture with other people is another way to expose our heritage and culture. Also, it was very important to my parents that me and my sister grew up speaking Spanish and I thank them forever for that.

What advice would you have for your 20-year-old self about your identity?

It would be to not make yourself small for anyone or any in space. If you are in spaces that make you feel small maybe you are not in the right space or maybe those people just suck. Don't be afraid to take up space. Also, if anybody or any space forces you to compromise who you are it is not worth it. Often when we are young we are told to take what we can and to suck it up, our mental health doesn't matter. Your mental health does matter and it is important. If someone or any space compromises who you are or your authenticity it is okay to step away sometimes because being resilient gets you tired, and a lot of times people tell you you are not allowed to be tired when you are young, yes you are. It is okay to need breaks, your mental health is super important, but also don't shy away or hide from anybody.

What is your favorite city, other than the one you live in?

Definitely, where my dad is from. He is from a small pueblo in El Salvador called Paulo, thankfully we have the privilege to visit, it is my favorite place because my family is there. I get to see them, but it is a different pace of life that I'm grateful for when I'm there. I get to slow down and indulge in my culture and connect with my roots and where my parents are from.

Favorite thing to do when you are not at work?

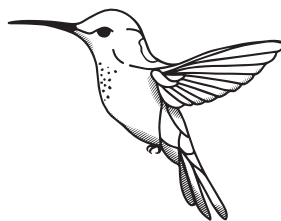
Reading is a big one. I love to read. I recently picked up running and I try to be active because at work I sit all day.

Favorite day of the week, and why?

Friday because I don't work on Fridays and I like my job but I also like my day off.

What are two words that people use to describe you?

"Servicial" and "empathetic."



One Woman in the U.S.

Erica Cook

Abstract:

This tells the story of a Mexican American woman working her way through the tough times in the U.S. From growing up in Texas right by the U.S. Mexico border to the suburbs of Orange County, California. California suburbs were a lot different than a small town where everyone knew each other. With that comes rebuilding a life from the ground up and having to change the ways from before.

The First Words

“There is no right or wrong way to answer any of these questions,” I tell the woman sitting on the other side of the computer screen from me. She nods to me in agreement, pushing the square tortoiseshell glasses higher on top of her nose. Across from me sits my mother. A middle-aged Mexican-American woman, whose hair has now grayed slightly and whose face wears the lines of many joys and many sorrows. I smile back at her, trying my best to make her as comfortable as I can. “All your answers should be based on your own experiences,” I reassured her. I am about to interview my mother regarding her experiences as a Mexican-American woman and I want this to be a space where she feels comfortable speaking with me about her life and culture. I take a deep breath and begin my first question.

Cultural Identity

Traditionally, my Mexican heritage hasn't been something my family openly speaks about. I grew up in the 1990s and early 2000s, so my childhood and teenage years were filled with tension and negative feelings toward Mexicans. At first, my culture was ignored by my mother and her family. We were just another “American” family. But by the 2000s, my culture was completely denied. In the early 2000s, the heightened tension in America toward Mexicans caused members of my mother's family to begin identifying as Spanish, not Mexican. However, thanks to modern technology like 23 and Me, I can now see that my great-great-grandparent's

birthplace was in Mexico during the 1800s. Now through this interview, my job is to begin to unravel the mystery of my family history. To gain acceptance, are we assimilating and changing our image and culture to appear as if we fit the mold of what society deems “American”?

Place to Place

My mother was born on August 31, 1961, in the small town of Falfurrias, Texas. Falfurrias is on the Rio Grande and is a town where everyone knows everyone. Most of the residents in Falfurrias were Latino and the main language that was spoken was Spanish. The work in such a small town was limited and poverty was common in my family. My grandparents were not well off. In the early years of their marriage, my grandparents made their income as seasonal agricultural workers, picking produce in the fields throughout the country. By my mother's 5th birthday, my grandparents had decided to move away from the small town they had grown up in. Seeking a fresh start, my grandparents decided to move their family to Southern California.



Language Barrier

Suburban Orange County during the 1960s was very different from the small Texas town my family was used to. Orange County provided the perfect picturesque Californian life. When my mother first arrived in Southern California, her family lived with relatives in Santa Ana. Here, my mother started school for the first time. Kindergarten would prove to be a difficult



time for my mother, as she struggled to adjust to her new environment. The new suburban community she lived in was very different from the rural town my mother was used to. Unlike Falfurrias, no one she knew spoke Spanish in Santa Ana, besides her own family. Because of this, my mother's first memories in Orange County are of fear. The language barrier made my mom feel isolated from her English-speaking kindergarten class. This was very discouraging because she couldn't understand her teachers or classmates. This communication barrier sent my mother home crying after school and she hated going back.

The retelling of my mother's traumatic experience in school brought to mind a conversation I had once had with my grandmother and mother. Gently, I approach the question to my mother. "Can you tell me about your experience with the teacher who punished you and your mom for speaking Spanish?" To my surprise, my mother does not remember the conversation with that teacher nor does she remember when my grandmother retold the story to me and her. However, I do remember the story. I remember this story because it is a rare admittance of racial discrimination towards my family and an inability to appear completely "American". To admit that we were judged for speaking Spanish is to acknowledge that we are different from other English-speaking Americans. When my mother was in kindergarten, my grandmother was brought into a parent-teacher conference, to be told that my mother should not be allowed to speak Spanish. The teacher asserted that even in their own home, the only language that should be spoken to my mother was English. The teacher claimed that speaking in Spanish to my mother was harmful to her development. The only language my mother

should be communicating with is English. Because of this, my mother was never spoken to in Spanish again because of the shame and guilt that the teacher made my grandmother feel.

And to this day, neither my mother nor her siblings can speak Spanish. Could this hurtful story be something my mother has buried and forgotten in her desire to appear just like everyone else? This is another reason I believe that our story has been altered and intentionally forgotten, in hopes that if we don't admit our experiences with racial discrimination, then that means we are just another "American" family.

Settlement

After moving from Santa Ana, my grandparents found a triplex in San Clemente and lived there for five years. In San Clemente, my mother felt more comfortable speaking English and enjoyed school more. With their small Latino town in the past, my family assimilated to the Orange County culture and lifestyle. From San Clemente, my grandparents were able to buy a newly built home in El Torro (now Lake Forest). In the 1970s, El Torro was full of newly built track homes and orange groves. My mother remembers that the neighborhood was mainly white and my family was the only Latino family in the community. At her new elementary school, my mother was one out of two Latinos in her class. Despite this, my mother doesn't remember feeling as if anyone called out her family's race as a reason not to associate with her or her family.

As the family adjusted to their new life in California, my grandfather found work managing the produce department of the local grocery store. Because of his hands-on experience working in the fields himself,

my grandfather closely followed Cesar Chavez's strikes. My mother remembers hearing about the work Cesar Chavez was doing, as a kid. My grandfather spoke to his family about his admiration of Chavez and his appreciation of Chavez's concern for the well-being of migrant workers. Cesar Chavez is discussed as being the co-founder of the National Farm Work Association (NAWA) in 1962. This organization and what it stood for empowered my grandpa to take a stand for field workers' rights, regardless of their immigrant status. Reaching adulthood in the early 1980's, my mother entered the workforce. At the time, she was unmarried so 'Solis', her maiden name, was used on her job applications.

Despite her being Latino, my mother claims that she never felt discriminated against in the workforce. After she married my father, who was caucasian, she took his last name. From then on, she assumed that most of her coworkers assumed she was white. Once I was born, my mother would take me on walks or to the park and sometimes other moms would question if she was my nanny. Even in her leisure when she would watch television during the 1980s and 1990s, my mom remembers how Latina women were portrayed. These women were typecast as mouthy, feisty, and opinionated. Young Latinas were also overly sexualized and portrayed as voluptuous seductresses. The role of the media, books, movies, and television has to create a rhetoric of false notions about nonwhite people.

Belief

As my interview began to come to a close, I wanted to get my mother's perspective on

how she envisioned our ancestors would have felt becoming American citizens through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. To her, she believes her ancestors would have been proud to become Americans. Her Welo, who was her Spanish-speaking grandfather, never learned how to speak or read English.

However, she believes that his parents wanted to be American. Anglo-American settlers felt superior to their Mexican neighbors and exploited their labor. However, to avoid discrimination and oppression my mother thinks that my ancestors might have used the caste system to their advantage to prove that they were of European descent. My mother believes our family could have used a family tree to date our lineage back to Spain. To this day, my grandmother still keeps a family tree that dates our lineage back to Spain in the 1500s. Mexicans would show their direct line of descent from Spain to prove their racial purity and elevate themselves above the majority of the Mexican population.

I do believe my family has altered their narratives to fit the mold of cookie-cutter "American". However, I also think that two things can be true at once and that my mother could have been met with more mild forms of racial discrimination than other Latinos have encountered. In addition to feeling forced to fit into societal norms that were common at the time in white suburban Orange County. I do hope this paints a picture of who my family is and where we fit in the intricate and dynamic quilt of Latinx culture.

About Our Contributor

Erika Cook is majoring in Interior Design to transfer to a four-year university for a Bachelor's degree. Erika's oral history focuses on better understanding her culture through learning about her mother's experiences as a Mexican-American woman.



From Dream to Reality

Gilbert Gomez

Abstract:

Going into this interview, discussing my mother's past was going to be interesting. It was interesting that I got the opportunity to learn more about her past, as she has always kept her experiences to herself and hardly ever shared her life story. Nonetheless, I was also uninterested as I already knew what I was going to hear from her, "Algun dia vas a valorar lo que tienes en tu vida," meaning, "One day you will be grateful for what you have." I never really understood why she would always repeat that saying in such a warm, heartbreaking tone, significantly when I did value what I have in life. I finally realized and understood why she would never get exhausted from saying that phrase to me growing up. It was when I finally heard her story, Mariela's story.

Introduction

Mariela Hernandez grew up in the largest city in Guerrero, Acapulco. A family of nine, Mariela and her seven siblings worked at a young age to make ends meet. Acapulco is a major tourist attraction all year round. Mariela and her siblings worked at their restaurant and sold coconuts beside the beach. Mariela worked all day to support the family; her days consisted of attending school and working afterward. Mariela's education lasted only briefly, as she only completed one year of high school. She wasn't the only one; most of her brothers and sisters had to do the same thing to get everyday essentials.

Working all year round, Mariela saved money daily to emigrate to the United States. At the age of twenty-three, she left her family and friends behind. After three days of crossing the border through high heat, Mariela settled all over Orange County. Eventually, after four years of working two jobs, she bought a house with her husband, Marcelo Hernandez. The first topic that will be focused on is her childhood and her lifestyle. After going over her childhood, next is her teenage years. Mariela's adolescent years consisted of

taking on more responsibility and working at a young age to provide for her family. After working throughout her teenage years, reaching her early twenties, she moved to the United States to pursue the American Dream. The next topic I will share is her journey to the United States and her experiences assimilating into the American Culture and lifestyle. The opportunity to talk about Mariela's life and experiences taught me about the different lifestyles Mariela had compared to people born in the United States. Also, the struggle of Mariela's mental health took a toll on her expectations of fulfilling the American Dream. While trying to assimilate into American culture, she endured many barriers to make her life easier.

Childhood/Lifestyle

In 1976, Mariela Hernandez was born and raised in Acapulco, Guerrero. Mariela's family bought a house in Puerto Marques, ten minutes south of the central city of Acapulco. Mariela grew up and remained in the same house with her five siblings before moving to the United States of America. Mariela's childhood was different from many of her friends. She said, "Working at a very young age was hard; I didn't like working when I knew most of my friends were playing outside." She constantly faced obstacles in her day-to-day life but never thought about leaving her home. At the age of 10 years, she began working by selling coconuts near the beach. The times when she wouldn't be selling coconuts, Mariela spent most of her days helping out with the family business. Her family had a restaurant



near the beach that sold all types of food, such as ceviche, fried fish, and cocktails. Consistently working five to six days, Mariela had to stop going to school and only finish up to middle school. Mariela's childhood was different from many of her friends, but she realized that her long days of work were mandatory and was her only way to put food on the table.

From a Teenager to Her Early 20's

As she grew older in her teenage years, Mariela accepted the necessity of working to support her family. Over time, Mariela's responsibilities as a young woman only kept increasing, starting from selling coconuts to now being more involved in her family business. She was expected to be more in the kitchen now, learning to cook and serve the clients in the restaurant. She would enjoy playing beach volleyball with her friends in her free time. Working in the restaurant was her regular work, besides still expecting to go home and help keep the house clean and organized. When she got older, hitting her late teen years, she began to go out occasionally as she was always expected to keep up with her responsibilities. Mariela enjoyed going to nightclubs with her cousins and friends, as dancing to the sound of the maracas and guitar was the key to her happiness. After working for her family restaurant for many years, her friend suggested moving to the United States. She had no intention of migrating as she had no family in the United States, but she did have her dream of living the American Dream that was always heard about in her hometown. Mariela was twenty years old when she finally decided she wanted to move to the United States to fulfill the American Dream.

Journey to the United States

Mariela's journey to the United States began in her early twenties when she tried to save every penny she could. Mariela said, "It took three years to have enough to pay the coyote finally and have enough for at least a couple of months of food and shelter." A coyote smuggles people into the United States. Once she has enough money, she begins her journey by riding a bus that takes approximately a day and a half from Puerto Marquez to Tijuana. As she stepped foot in Tijuana, she met up with her friend, and the next day, they began their journey

of walking over the deserts from Tijuana to San Ysidro. Mariela said, "Crossing the border was different back then, way different than what it is now, but it was easy to cross without having any troubles along the way." It took the coyote, Mariela, and her friend around a day and a half to finally be safe in the United States. Mariela was relieved that she had finally made it to the United States. She met with an aunt in San Diego who lived nearby. Settling for a few days, she moved north and lived in Orange County.

Assimilation to the American Culture & Lifestyle

Mariela began living in Orange County with her friend, Sofia, renting a room and paying about one hundred and fifty dollars a month. Mariela's first job was working at Las Golondrinas as a cook for a couple of years. Mariela quickly realized she needed to use English at her job and everyday activities. Mariela stated, "I never imagined how hard it was speaking a language people do not understand... I needed to do something about it." Mariela did precisely that, taking English night classes at a nearby school. Every week, Mariela would study every night, improving her English every day until people could understand what she would say. After four years working at Las Golondrinas, she met her husband, Guillermo. They would later buy a house and, to this day, still live in their first home in the United States. Mariela needed a change, so she started her own business cleaning houses. She quickly grew her clientele and started to work full-time cleaning houses. Cleaning houses was easier for Mariela to run her schedule as



she had a baby boy after cleaning houses for one year. Years later, she worked many jobs cleaning houses and offices and decided she would have two more children. Her English skills escalated as her business grew, leading her to adapt to the culture of the United States.

Final Thoughts

Mariela Hernandez grew up without having a proper childhood and having responsibilities early in her life. She knew that to provide for her family, she needed to sacrifice her childhood. Working at a young age, she

matured early and only thought about working. Leaving her family and friends all behind is a choice that she will live with for the rest of her life. It wasn't easy, but she also felt her relationship with her family was gone. The journey to the United States was difficult; she thought it was like starting life but just an adult version. Quickly adapting to the culture in the United States, there were many challenges along the way, but she achieved something that she could not do in Mexico. Mariela created her version of the American Dream twenty years later with a house, stable job, and family.

About Our Contributor

Gilbert Gomez is a Business major with plans to transfer to a four-year university to study Finance and become a Financial Analyst. Gilbert shares the story of his mother from her birth to the present day, in appreciation of her hard work and sacrifice for her family.



A Starting Journey in Argentina

Gio Rodriguez

Abstract:

The focus of this paper starts with Natalia Ballbe-Page, my mother and interviewee. In 1973 she was born in a small town in Córdoba, Argentina, and grew up during the infamous Dirty War. A military dictatorship overtook the government, and militant soldiers lined the streets: citizens disappeared by the thousands, and the economy was in shambles. Like most of her community, Natalia was incredibly poor. Her widowed mother and four older siblings were lucky enough to have enough chickens and crops to make their food, but this was the extent of her fortune. The state of the world around her was unstable and disastrous.

The Beginning of a Struggle

She began working at 12 years old to support her family. The peso was so unstable that each paycheck would be spent on sugar, a good that held more value than rapidly inflating money. She always placed first in track and field but could not afford to pursue it any further: too busy working to



support her family, Natalia had no time for passions. Many of her meals consisted of homemade bread and canned tomatoes. College was out of the question. Because of these struggles, Natalia dreamed of leaving Argentina for years.

Hyperinflation and a militant government prevented her and her family from escaping poverty, and she wished for better opportunities elsewhere. She spent a decade saving whatever bits of spare change she could, and when she eventually turned 22 years old, Natalia bought a plane

ticket to the United States of America. She was eager to survive, to work, and to live the American dream. But a nation so heavily founded on xenophobia and hate made this an incredibly difficult task. Racism was an overarching theme that had a direct impact on immigration, the ability to survive in the United States, and the forming of new relationships and communities.

The Struggles of Coming to the U.S.

Natalia finally arrived in the United States. However, she immediately had to leave a piece of herself behind. The United States government scratched off the last name Ballbe, and she legally became Natalia Page. This was the first step in the country's lengthy attempt at "Americanizing" my mother. Since the beginning, the United States has done all it legally can to keep non-white immigrants out of the country. White supremacist ideals uphold the idea that America equals white, and those who stray outside of this category do not belong. While white Europeans were more willingly accepted into society, latines like Natalia endured the consequences of being brown. In this case, the last name Ballbe did not uphold whiteness: it posed a threat to national-state identity and thus was removed without her consent. Just like that, a large piece of her identity was stolen from her. But Natalia quickly learned that it was beneficial for her to sound whiter. When applying to art shows with my father, applications under the name Rodriguez would get rejected, while ones under the name Page were approved. There was no difference between the contents, only the last name. But even then, her last name would only get her so far.

Because of the Color of My Skin

Regardless of Natalia's name, her brown skin is always visible. Her English will always come with an accent. She tried as hard as she could to be the perfect American, but her existence as a latine immigrant could never be hidden. She suffered the consequences of this. In the interview, Natalia says "People always point out my accent. I've been called

dirty, trashy, or stupid. Customers at work would tell me to go back to my country. I learned so many insults because I was called them.” Because of the connotation that being latine has, my mother had an intense and long-lasting fear of being seen as an immigrant. She understood the very real danger that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) presents. She adds, “One time a customer told me that people like me should be shot and killed. I couldn’t fight back or say a word. I was scared of him, and I was scared that he would call ICE on me.” Even in the face of violence and abuse, Natalia was forced to save face. The United States has a long history of enforcing the idea that latines are savage, violent, and aggressive; according to white culture, it is the responsibility of a victim of racism to ‘be the better person’ and stay respectful, even in the face of violence and persecution. On top of that, Natalia has never felt safe calling the police or reporting an issue because she feared deportation.

Institutions in the United States exist to protect racists, not people of color; because of this, she did not feel welcome. She had to deal with unsafe and exploitative workplaces because she was afraid of retaliation and even more afraid of having no other options. For a long time, she did not have healthcare because she could not afford it nor trust that she would not face discrimination (or worse, deportation). The United States institutions are inherently anti-latine, and these systems trickle down into society as well. But if Natalia Ballbe-Page is anything, she is a fighter. She continued surviving despite these barriers and embraced her identity in the United States. In the interview, she expressed that “I never gave up on myself. I was poor, I was sick, and I was alone. But I worked so much and learned all that I could about everything. I learned how the economy worked, I saved my money, and I moved. I talked with everyone I could. Even though I left my family behind, I am lucky that I found people. I wasn’t alone.” And with support from a certain community, Natalia was able to thrive.

Breaking the Barrier

Being a non-white immigrant in the United States can be tremendously difficult. But despite the many barriers that being latine has brought Natalia, good has arrived as

well. While every immigrant has a unique experience, there are many similarities. She has unwaveringly loved her culture. Being able to embrace her Latinidad and bring it to a new country allowed her to make connections with many other latines facing similar struggles. Her identity and existence were under attack in the United States, just like many other latine immigrants: this often led to strong communities being formed to oppose the status quo and support one another. Over time, Natalia met many families who understood her struggles, and they helped each other survive and grow. When a friend of hers worked at a grocery store, they would help each other with discounts and food that was thrown away. Other friends knew of a hospital that they could vouch for, and Natalia was safely able to go to the doctor. When she and her husband both worked grueling shifts, she could trust that a friend would be willing to watch her children. The favor would always be returned. She and other latines had a space to build community, to vent, to relate, and to trust.

Over time, these friends had become family. It can be incredibly isolating for immigrants because they often leave the rest of their families behind. However, having a support system in the United States allowed for a large and rich found family to blossom. In the interview, she says “I was lucky enough to have a family here. I felt so guilty that my children didn’t have their aunts and uncles around. They never got to see grandma or grandpa. But I’ve known my friends here for years, and they are my family. We got together every holiday. My kids were able to have aunts, uncles, and cousins.” This is very important because it highlights the struggle that many immigrants face when experiencing cultural isolation. But Natalia is incredibly grateful that she has been able to share her traditions with others who understand. Her family in the United States consists of people from all sorts of backgrounds, not just Argentina.

They exchange their cultures and support each other through the battles they face in the United States. Even though this is beautiful, it is still necessary to highlight why it occurs. This country has a predominantly white society that highlights individualism, not community. Families are raised to be independent rather than

support each other. On top of that, many latines like Natalia experience racism and other social issues as a direct result of their race. But instead of fitting into this mold, people have come together to express their culture in meaningful ways. Instead of individualism, latines like Natalia choose community. And because of that, many like her are still very grateful to be in the United States.

Her Identity

As of 2023, Natalia Page still lives in the United States. She and her husband successfully run a construction company and live comfortably. She received her citizenship in 2017 and was able to cast her opinion in the 2020 election. She tries to visit her family in Argentina once a year and otherwise is still close with the family she created here. Her two children are in community college and working on receiving an education that she was never able to afford for herself. She is confident and proud of her identity as a latine and

stands up for herself when she needs to. There have been decades of struggle and resistance that she has faced, but Natalia is ultimately grateful to be where she is. She does not thank the United States, but rather her strength and pride. Despite what the papers may say, if you ask her, her name is Natalia Ballbe-Page.

It is abundantly clear that the United States' systemic racism has affected many processes in her life. She has lived more years in this country than in Argentina, and yet it was only a few years ago that she was recognized as a legal citizen. She has faced violence and harassment and had to learn to survive without institutions and resources aiding her. But in a country that values individualism and whiteness, she has found a way to build warm communities. She has found a way to be latine and be proud. Her identity as a brown person, woman, latine, and immigrant in the United States has heavily shaped who she truly is: Natalia Ballbe-Page.

About Our Contributor

Gio Rodriguez-Page is majoring in Sociology to serve communities in need through social work. This essay expresses the pride for being Latine that was fostered in Gio by the person's story he shares.

Staff Feature: Jose Flores Nava



Art Instructor

How do you identify yourself?

Mexican

How long have you been working at Saddleback College?

I haven't been working here for very long, I started to teach here around two years ago, starting fall of 2022.

What is the best hidden treasure about Saddleback College that you wish everyone knew about?

For me, that is a hard one to answer because I am constantly learning about new resources, and because I am only here during the night time, but I always tell my students to use the health center because when I was a student here I didn't have insurance so I used the health center.

What would you tell someone who is thinking about coming to Saddleback College?

There is a lot of help, so please ask for help, even if professors don't know they will try to direct you to the right person, we are here for the students.

UCLA Campus Visit

Spring 2024



A Walk Through the Past

William Victoriano

Abstract:

This essay is about the story of my mother Rosa. Rosa is an immigrant from San Salvador, El Salvador who decided to migrate to the United States at a young age. The reason was to seek a better life for herself and her family. Rosa has always been a hard worker and would go above and beyond to achieve her aspirations. This essay will talk about her childhood and how that has helped her shape into the woman she is today. As well as the migration from El Salvador to the United States. Lastly, this essay will discuss some of the other challenges she faced along the way such as the hunt for employment as well as the hunt for housing.

Introduction

The person I decided to interview was my mother. Throughout this essay, she will be known as Rosa. She was born on January 25, 1975 in San Salvador, El Salvador. My mother grew up in a family of four which consisted of her mom, dad, and two brothers. Her mother also known as my grandma name was Tilde, her dad also known as my grandpa name was Beto, her brothers also known as my uncle's name Aldo were the older ones and Leo was the younger one.

She has not had the easiest nor the best relationships with any of them except her mom Tilde. Her father was usually never present due to neglecting them and being violent and abusive towards her and the rest of her family. Unfortunately, her two brothers were also rarely present because they would be facing drug addictions as well as alcohol addictions. The younger brother Leo passed away in 2010 due to the excessive use of drugs and alcohol. Her older brother Aldo is still around but is still addicted to drugs and alcohol. He goes to further lengths to obtain drugs to fulfill his addictions.

My grandmother Tilde would work two jobs. One was taking care of children during the day and the other would be at night cleaning hotels. My mom Rosa would go to school during the day and afterwards

would go home to do chores as well as help her mother Tilde at her night job cleaning hotels.

Migrating

The topic we are going to discuss is how it was for my mother Rosa to migrate from El Salvador to the United States. Her experience was coming alone with unknown strangers and risking her life to fulfill the American dream. Migrating from one place to another is not an easy task for anyone or a risk people would take. My mother Rosa is one of those people who got out of their comfort zone to migrate from one place to another—being able to come to the United States and use those opportunities to



Individuals migrating from South America to North America

live a better life. She migrated at a young age, she was approximately 16. Rosa was scared of the experience but she did not want to give up. Rosa mentions, “Tuvimos que caminar y escondernos varias horas. Los recursos como agua que había traído se nos acababa rápido porque estaba haciendo mucha calor” (We had to walk and hide for several hours. The resources like water that we had brought with us were running out quickly because it was getting very hot). What Rosa is describing is her experience crossing the border and a few of the things she faced. This journey she took lasted around one month. She had to travel alone because she was the only one willing to take the risk. Her mother Tilde had also traveled alone and migrated to the United States a few months prior and had a similar



Students in El Salvador

experience. Before making it to the Mexican American border she had to previously go through two other countries which were Guatemala and Mexico.

She mentioned, “En el camino observé y aprendí mucho sobre las diferentes personas y sus culturas. Es muy bonito contar y aprender cosas nuevas a través del camino. Conociendo las diferentes personas y sus tradiciones” (Along the way I observed and learned a lot about the different people and their cultures. It is very nice to tell and learn new things along the way. Getting to know the different people and their traditions). What she is saying is that along her journey traveling through those two other countries, she learned a lot about people and their cultures and how they differ from her own. She says it was a very beautiful experience she encountered being able to learn new things along her journey being able to meet different people and their traditions.

Once making it into Mexico and near the border she got with the group of people she was going to migrate with. It was a very scary experience because there was no guarantee for her or the other individuals to make it safely. Some can get caught or left behind if not prepared to walk and be cautious for the endless amount of miles. In the end, Rosa was thankfully able to migrate with no great difficulties. On the other hand, she mentioned, “Era una tristeza mirar a la gente llorar de dolor de sus pies porque ya no aguantaban más. Varias personas lloraban del dolor, la tristeza y del miedo de la posibilidad de no reunirse con su familia nunca más” (It was sad to see people crying from the pain of their feet because they could not stand it anymore. Several people were crying from the pain, sadness, and fear of the possibility of never being reunited

with their family again). What she is saying is that it was emotionally draining observing and hearing people endlessly cry because they were in heavy pain in their legs due to the extensive walking as well as the thought of not being able to reunite with their family if they did not make it.

Childhood

My mother Rosa has always been a helpful individual by fulfilling tasks given to her or any she can find. At a young age before going to school, she would have to go and feed the few farm animals they had such as chickens and goats. After that, she would go and attend school with the other children of her age. There was no other transportation available to her other than walking. It would take approximately 30 minutes to get to school and another 30 minutes to go back home. After getting home from school she would have to wash the dishes and cook for the family. Her mom Tilde was not able to help her most of the time because she would work two jobs to provide for her family. She would work during the day as day care and at night she would be a cleaning lady for a hotel. Her father on the other hand was not helpful.

My grandpa Beto was an alcoholic and would not do anything to provide for the family. Beto was just someone who would cause trouble and punish my mother for not completing tasks while her brothers were left alone and not bothered. They on the other hand had the freedom to do whatever they wanted whenever they wanted. She attended high school in El Salvador as well as in the United States. She was later forced to drop out of high school to be able to provide for herself and my grandma who had migrated a few months prior. This helped shape Rosa into the woman she

is today because she strives to do better for herself as well as her family. She has become strong mentally and physically to face any struggles that come her way.

Employment

Rosa has gone through a few struggles when looking for employment. She initially was working as a housekeeper as soon as she got to the United States for a family friend. She wanted to branch out and get a different job because she was not satisfied with her wage. She would go to fast food places and restaurants and would have a hard time finding employment because she did not speak English or have any prior experience. Although she was very grateful for the opportunity of being able to have a job as a housekeeper, she wanted to find a better opportunity for herself at a higher-wage job that also provided benefits such as health insurance. I will also discuss the

expectations she had before coming to the United States.

Final Thoughts

There are a variety of things that I learned from the interviewee. One of those things that I learned was that her father Beto was not a good father figure. He would neglect the family for friends and alcohol the majority of the time and not help support the family. I also learned more about my mother's experience migrating to the United States as well as how her childhood has shaped her into who she is today. The reason I wanted to talk to my mother was because I wanted to learn more about her. I wanted to know more about where they come from and their childhood and how it would differ from mine. I have had a different experience than her and I am thankful for all the hard work she does and the life she has presented me with.

About Our Contributor

William Victoriano is an Accounting major with plans to transfer to a four-year university. William's oral history honors his connection with the person who raised him.

Staff Feature: Alejandra Hurtado

EOPS Counselor

How do you identify yourself?

Hispanic/Latina

What do you like about working at Saddleback College?

I love to communicate with students and help students with what they want to do in the future. As well as guiding students through their journey of education and open possibilities that students may not know of. Essentially, giving back to students as I once was also a community college student.

What is a family tradition that you do?

To me, Mexican culture is very collective. So my family enjoys doing Secret Santa with the family as it is a time when everyone is together. Before our gathering, everyone would make a list of what they might want so everybody would get at least something from that list.

What is your favorite childhood memory?

My favorite memory would be when we would all be together during Easter. Our mom would have us wake up very early to get to the park where there would be no one and just have fun with all the cousins and siblings.

Shadows to Freedom

Michelle Palmer

Abstract:

Guadalupe Rodriguez, a fake name to protect her identity, was born in Acapulco, Mexico. Guadalupe had a rough childhood in which she had to endure a lot of violence from her home and community. There are a lot of reasons why this environment was created, including generational trauma from women to women in their households. Women had to deal with a lot of the pain of the family because it was expected of them to carry the family forward somehow. Many women from the Rodriguez family were forced into marriages due to it being seen as their duty to do so. Guadalupe was forced to come to America but soon realized that this was a blessing for her. She has never felt more free.

Introduction

Mexico is a beautiful land where many can experience the rich culture it produces. Although people love the land, many others were glad to be leaving it. Migrating is a hard thing to do, one leaves a family behind and part of one's life. Mexican women have a hard time wherever they stand. They had to become strong to protect themselves as well as their families. Often people become disconnected from their environment by trying to protect themselves too much. Guadalupe Rodriguez is one example of a young teenage girl having to migrate due to hardships of violence and economics.

Family Background

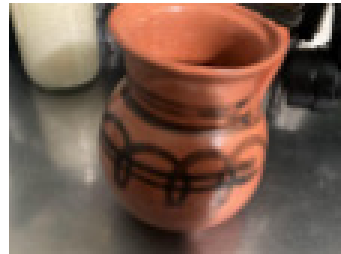
Growing up, Guadalupe Rodriguez had to endure a lot in her childhood. She came from a family of generationally abused women. Every woman before her had to endure some sort of violence and teach it to the next. When talking to Guadalupe about her family she revealed how

They don't talk anymore, but she has respect for her mother. She goes on to explain that although her mother did horrible things to her, her grandmother was worse. Guadalupe's grandmother also abused Guadalupe's mother physically, and emotionally and even allowed sexual abuse.

Generationally each woman seemed better than the last but still had many problems. Guadalupe had to endure a lot from her mother and stepfather, for the men in her life were deemed more worthy than her based on their sex. Guadalupe describes how women were treated by stating how men used to tell her "Los hombres en México, pues te casi te dicen que cállate, no tienes que opinar, tú no trabajabas, tú tienes que cuidar los niños"(Guadalupe). What Guadalupe just said was how men used to tell her at a young age that her opinion doesn't matter because her job is to care for children, not work like a man. Guadalupe also saw an obvious bias that her mother had toward her brothers rather than the girls.

Life in Acapulco

Acapulco Guerrero is the place where Guadalupe grew up. Living on a farm and selling all kinds of food is how they got by. Guadalupe shares how she had to care for all her siblings when her mother went to work. When asked how Mexico was when she grew up she responded with "[México] recibió golpes de todos...es un país con mucho abuso hacia los niños."(Guadalupe). What Guadalupe is saying is that when she was little there were major physical punishments for little kids. With an absent father, her mother had to take care of all of the kids alone but mostly pushed



that responsibility toward Guadalupe. Guadalupe couldn't continue her studies due to this task. Guadalupe emphasizes how little kids were not safe back then because there was nobody to protect her



right to go to school. After a while in this type of environment, she was moved many times with different people, like a foster care situation. Guadalupe moved in with many of her extended family members.

With all this moving she was able to see a lot of culture in her community, but not be able to experience it. She never got into a lot of customs like Dia de los Muertos nor does she like certain common features like Mariachi. One group that she did seem to like is the indigenous group. She recalls how often she would hear them being outcasted or called weird for their style and how “poor” they seemed. Although growing up she went in with the crowd, she never understood why people were too harsh and began liking their style and culture after a while. She remembers how one day before migrating her friend took her to a festival in which indigenous people did a dance, “Allá cada año había un celebración de Pascua...y mirando sus bailes fueron el primer ves que mire indígenas...mi amiga me explicó cómo fueron los primeros mexicanos en el tierra”(Guadalupe). She has some jarros which are types of jars that remind her of Mexico that she keeps.

One thing that was taught to her in her isolation was catholicism. Although a lot of her culture was not taught to her, her family did bring up god a lot and they would go to church 4 times a day. She recalls how there were times when some of her foster homes would make her knock on people’s houses and pray for hours and hours. She learned catholicism less because of her mom and more because of her extended family. She describes one of her foster care parents which was her great aunt as “mi mama no es de la Iglesia nunca me enseno de la iglesia, la que me enseno bien fue su tia de ella...ella fue mucha mas estrita”(Guadalupe). What Guadalupe was saying is how her mom was not really religious, but her great-aunts were actually the strict ones when it came



to religion.

Moving to America

Finally, years go by and her mother wants to send Guadalupe off for two reasons, one is that Guadalupe is her least favorite child and she needs the money. Guadalupe goes on to explain how she felt about this opportunity by stating “No es porque quise primero, pero tambien pense que podria buscar algo mejor y yo no me sentía bien cuando estaba con mi familia”(Guadalupe). Guadalupe wanted to take this opportunity to better her life. Guadalupe’s mother had a coyote to help Guadalupe cross the border. A coyote is a person that sneaks people in. Guadalupe describes her stay in America to be so much more freeing. Although she didn’t quite fit in, Guadalupe states how much more equal she felt in America than in Mexico. When asked if she ever wants to go back to visit Mexico, she said no because she wants to leave all that behind her. Although she doesn’t want to go back, Guadalupe states how “yo si extraño mi casa en méxico, los mascotas que tenía porque vivía en un rancho, fijate que aqui queria muchos animales como vacas, pollos, cerdos y más. No me considero ranchera, pero eso si fue bueno”(Guadalupe). Guadalupe misses her



pets back home.

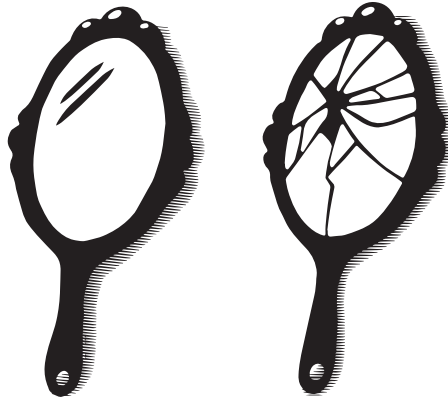


Final Thoughts

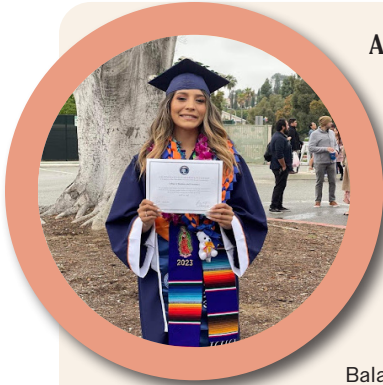
It was really hard for Guadalupe to adjust to America, but she states how it was easier than going back. Listening to her story showed me how strong women need to be. Not just in Mexico, but those who are forced to find their way in life alone. Guadalupe ended up marrying and starting her own family in which she instilled her own values.

About Our Contributor

Michelle Palmer is a Psychology major and would like to help others as a therapist. Michelle's oral history tells the story of a hard-working person who migrated and created a new home in the United States.



Staff Feature: Alondra Hernandez



Adult Education Specialist in the Division of Extended Learning

How do you identify yourself?

Latina y Mexicana.

What makes you proud to be Latinx/Chicana-o/Hispanic?

What makes me proud to be Latina is the richness of our culture, our strong family values, and the resilience and strength we embody. As a first-generation Latina and the oldest child in my family, my journey has not been easy. My parents immigrated from Mexico and brought me to the U.S. when I was just six months old. Growing up, I had to mature quickly to help them navigate various systems due to language barriers.

Balancing the responsibilities of helping my parents, attending school, and also working two jobs to support my family financially has been challenging. Despite these difficulties, I always reflect on the sacrifices my parents made to provide me with better opportunities. Their story and my experiences have been driven by strength and resilience and have been molding me to become a role model for my family and being a proud Latina!

How do you celebrate your heritage?

I think every day I try to find ways of celebrating my heritage. Whether it's listening to music while I am cleaning! I love going to community events in Santa Ana to celebrate Cinco de Mayo! I also try to stay connected with my local church in San Juan Capistrano to celebrate posadas in December. In January, my family gets together to celebrate El Dia De Los Reyes where we buy a Rosca, drink champurrado, and have a gift exchange at my tia's house. El Dia De Los Reyes is a holiday that many Christians and Catholics celebrate and commemorate the visit of the three wise men to the baby Jesus.

What is the best hidden treasure about S.C. that you wish everyone knew about?

During my time as a student at Saddleback College, I didn't get to spend a lot of time on campus because I had to work when I was not in class. Recently, since I've been working on campus, I have seen the Science building to have a lot of comfy cubicle workspaces for students to use! Also, the ATAS (Advance Technology and Applied Science) building has a patio that has an awesome view!

How do you feel connected to the Chicax/Latinx community here at Saddleback?

There have been a variety of ways that I have been able to stay connected with my culture here at Saddleback College. For instance, working for the Adult Education Department and participating in my former professor Erica Vogel's and Claire's research on Undocumented Student Experiences has allowed me to feel connected with the Chicax/Latinx community. This work has allowed me to meet students who are Adult Learners, and currently share a lot of similar values and traditions that we carry in our community!



History of Three Generations

Berenice Ramirez



Mr. Ledesma's mother (girl on the left side of her mother age 8), grandmother and aunts/uncles. (Barrios in East L.A. 1942)

Abstract:

This oral history explores the generational journey in this family of Mexican Americans and their experiences. Originating from grandparents who immigrated to the United States in the early 20th century, Generationally this family has persevered in dealing with economic and racial struggles, influenced by each other and their achievements and adaptation to America. David Ledesma's experience provides an inside look at American as well as Mexican heritage, highlighting how generational challenges and progress have shaped his identity.

Introduction

For my oral history report, I will be interviewing David Ledesma. Through this interview, we will learn about his Mexican grandparents, Mexican American parents, and his upbringing as a second-generation Mexican American third-generation resident. We will explore the topics of mobility, experiences with identity, discrimination, and contributions to the US. As shown by Mr. Ledesma's family journey, I will discuss how the four topics can change and be experienced in different ways among different generations.

Background

David Ledesma is a 53-year-old second-

generation Mexican American. He was born in San Pedro, CA, and in 1972 at the age of two grew up in Westminster, CA, the same city that pursued the civil rights movement in 1947 in what we know as Mendez v. Westminster School District. This case later supported the civil rights struggles to end segregation nationally (module 6).

This movement would later benefit the Ledesma children as well as many others in the community. Mr. Ledesma is the youngest of six children. Both of his parents were born and raised in Los Angeles or what is known as "The Barrios of East LA". This is where many Mexican Americans were forced to live due to racial discrimination (module 5, The Home Front). Both parents became U.S. Citizens at birth due to the 14th Amendment established in 1868 which allowed any child born to Mexican parents this right to citizenship (module 3, lecture 1). His grandparents came to the US from Mexico in the 1920s. Their journey was similar to the many immigrants who migrated to the US in the hope of a better future for themselves and their families. This is an example of mobility, the moving from one place to another in search of a better life (module 3 Lecture 1). They were able to adapt to their new environment and remained focused on their end goal, a better life than what they had. His paternal grandfather worked for the railroads and his maternal grandfather worked as a painter. He was involved in painting city hall in Los Angeles. One of his proud contributions to the United States (module 3, lecture 1).

Both grandmothers were primarily homemakers and did side jobs such as clothes washing and were seasonal fruit pickers, (agriculture) but they were not part of the Bracero program that began in 1942 (Module 5, The Home Front). More than likely his grandparents were replacing the white workers who had left for better-paying jobs in the defense industry (module 5). His father was in the

Air Force during the Korean War and after the war, he worked as a Longshoreman in the Los Angeles harbor for forty-five years. He was able to advance and become a manager. His mother was primarily a homemaker and when Mr. Ledesma entered High School she began work as a bilingual teacher's aide for a local elementary school. Through her job, she had regular contact with families coming from Mexico and enjoyed helping them get established in the US. I asked Mr. Ledesma if his family recalled the Zoot Suit Riots or if they had any involvement. The Zoot Suit Riots were important for the recognition of African-American and Mexican Americans. It had a positive effect on ethnic consciousness among Americans of Mexican descent, and also for the recognition of separate Mexican American identity, but no linguistic impact (online The Mexican American Experience).

Mr. Ledesma took a moment and responded, "That took place in 1943 which meant my father would have been about 12 years old and my mother 9, so they had no direct involvement with the Zoot Suits." He did report that his mother told him that two of his uncles tried to dress like Zoot Suits but their mother would not allow them. She went as far as cutting up the slacks they bought. The Zoot Suits were seen as troublemakers by his grandmother and she did not want her sons to have anything to do with them.

Language and Identity

Ledesma's primary language was English although his parents, aunts, and uncles would occasionally speak to each other in Spanish. David and his siblings were never formally taught Spanish by his parents. He recalls his father telling him that when he was a child Spanish was his first language. When his father attended school, he would get in trouble for speaking Spanish and would also be made fun of by the English-speaking kids, racial discrimination he encountered at such a young age. He experienced internalized oppression and this caused him to feel embarrassed; he later decided that when he had kids he did not want them to go through the same experience, therefore, English would be their primary language.

An ideology and self-conscious decision he would embrace in an attempt to protect his children from having similar negative experiences.

Mr. Ledesma, through school and classes, has developed/learned very basic conversational Spanish. His father in his later years came to regret that he never formally taught his kids to speak Spanish as he eventually saw the value of being bi-lingual. Mr. Ledesma states he has experienced occasional backlash for not being fluent in Spanish. Over the years people of many of the same culture (cultural racism) have made negative and racial comments about him not being fluent in Spanish since he is of Mexican descent. However, he reported his self-image was never negatively impacted by these negative comments.

Generational Struggles and Achievements

Mr. Ledesma recognizes how he has benefited from the efforts and struggles of his grandparents and parents. His grandparents left Mexico a few years after the Mexican Revolution in hopes of better economic opportunities. However,



Mr. Ledesma's father (little boy in front row age 4) and grandparents (1935)

being Mexican natives living in the United States during the 1920s, 30s and 40s was not easy. All his grandparents faced challenges such as discrimination, inequalities, limitations, and low wages because they were native Mexicans.

For example, his maternal grandfather was a painter but because he was a native Mexican (racial category), he was unable to join the union. The unions legitimated their requirements and stood by them (racialized labor). Not being able to join the union restricted him from better-paying painting jobs

which limited his earning potential. This is an example of racism, power, exclusion, division, and the limitations of non-whites. This idea of “whiteness” or white by law, (race) was legally constructed by the courts. Thankfully, in later years the rule was changed and he was able to join the union and was able to obtain better-paying jobs (like painting LA City Hall). Mr. Ledesma’s grandparents were eventually able to maintain steady employment and establish a steady foundation for their children (Mr. Ledesma’s parents) to progress as first-born US citizens.

This steady foundation allowed Mr. Ledesma’s parents to take the next step in pursuing the “American Dream.” Both his parents graduated high school (something their parents did not do) and were more assimilated into the mainstream American (white) culture. Their assimilation was reflected in the music they listened to (Elvis, Chuck Berry, Frank Sinatra, etc.), foods they enjoyed (Japanese, Italian, and “American”), and interests they had (American sports [football and basketball] and movies). They grew up comfortable with cultural assimilation, after all this is all they knew. It is safe to presume they still faced racism, discrimination, as well as other challenges as first-generation Mexican Americans but did not feel oppressed or forced to assimilate.

Mr. Ledesma believes his father’s career as a longshoreman made it possible for him and his siblings to take the next step in the “American experience.” Because the longshoreman union was so strong, the workers were paid very well and were given very good medical benefits. The longshoreman income allowed Mr. Ledesma’s father to buy a new house for his family in Orange County. From this home, they would plant firm roots which allowed the family to further establish itself and grow. Mr. Ledesma’s father was able to afford to send all his kids to Catholic school from elementary to high school. David’s parents instilled good values, morals, and strong work ethics. He does not recall experiencing racial disparities. Eventually, all six kids would go on to graduate from college and four would obtain graduate degrees.

Assimilation and Identity

In terms of cultural assimilation, Mr. Ledesma describes himself as, “a US citizen of Mexican descent who practices the predominant mainstream American culture with elements of Mexican culture sprinkled in.” Mr. Ledesma grew up listening to English music, movies, television shows, and American sports. He grew up doing a lot of the “mainstream American” activities (playing AYSO soccer, surfing, BMX biking, and skateboarding). The “sprinkled in” Mexican culture is from the food he enjoys (menudo, chorizo, pozole, etc.), the religion he practices (Catholicism), Spanglish that is spoken



*1958 Anthony’s Studio L.A
Mr. Ledesma’s parents*

in his home, and traditions like piñatas at children’s parties.

I asked Mr. Ledesma if he was proud of his race and ethnicity to which he replied, “Race, I am of the human race and I am neither proud nor not proud of being of Mexican descent”. I was taken aback by his answer. Module 4’s lecture defines race as a social construct. He stated, “he has thought a lot about the issue of being proud of one’s CULTURE (ethnicity). As he sees it, being born of Mexican descent is similar to being born with brown eyes. He had no say in the matter as it is merely an unchosen result of birth. Therefore, he takes a neutral stance regarding being proud of his ethnicity. He believes Mexican culture, like every other culture on earth, has “its good and its bad.” Instead, he takes pride in things he has freely chosen to accomplish and pursue (i.e. being a husband, father, college graduate, a social worker, a practicing Catholic and

being a fan of the Miami Dolphins).

David made it clear that he is not ashamed of his Mexican heritage but for him, it is not a major factor in his self-identity. He believes everyone has equal worth and dignity, he likes Martin Luther King's famous quote "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character". Mr. Ledesma

emphasized that he does take pride in how his grandparents and parents overcame challenges to ensure a better future for himself and his siblings. He recognizes the value of the sacrifices, challenges, and struggles of that time and is extremely grateful. He acknowledged that he has "had it very easy" as compared to the previous generations of his family and is forever indebted to them.

About Our Contributor

Berenice Sanchez is a Sociology major and plans to transfer to California State University, Fullerton. Berenice's oral history traverses three generations, bringing understanding to the differences in experiences and perspectives for each.



La Caminata Inolvidable

Daniela Valencia



Fig. 1: Photo: Alejandro Valencia.
Santa Ana, 1995

Abstract:

Alejandro Valencia Lopez's journey from poverty in Tuzantla, Michoacán, to California reflects the transformation migration can make in a person's life. Alejandro was seeking liberation from limited opportunities and struggles. Initially, his life in the U.S. was a life of harsh working conditions and financial hardships. He found challenges adapting to a new culture and overcoming the language barrier. Ultimately his success in the United States was achieved through his hard work and perseverance illuminating an inspiring story of migration.

Early Life and Family Background

Alejandro Valencia Lopez is very reserved and does not like to speak much about his past since it opens wounds that have yet to heal. Thirty years ago, Alejandro decided to come to the U.S. to make more money and have a better life. He explained that he had been surrounded by poverty his entire childhood. He immigrated from Tuzantla, Michoacán, Mexico, to California in 1994. Alejandro has nine siblings, so his mother, Sarah, struggled to raise all nine children independently since his father was often absent. As a young adult, Alejandro had dark brown curly hair and stood at about 5'8. Growing up in Michoacán, his family was impoverished; therefore, he stopped attending school in order to help out his

mother with expenses. Since he stopped attending school and did not receive an education, he went to work with his brother-in-law as a trailer driver. Although the hours were long, when payday would come, Alejandro was grateful knowing his family would eat well that day, since this was not always the case.

Decision to Immigrate

Alejandro knew he could never make something of himself in Mexico due to a lack of opportunities. His mother was stuck in an abusive relationship, and his only brothers had turned to drugs, leaving him, a teenager, the man of the house. Growing up in Michoacán was not the safest. Alejandro was always worried about the dangers that awaited in the streets, so he spent most of his time working. At the age of 14, Alejandro began to work for his brother-in-law as a trailer driver. His schedule consisted of three to four days on the road and coming home for a day to sleep. Considering the mental and physical toll this took on his body, he was always exhausted. I questioned Alejandro and asked him why he did not consider getting a less physically demanding job. He responded that his trailer driver job would bring sufficient money for his mom, and that was his only concern. Alejandro's only escape from poverty and drugs was to flee to the United States, which is why he decided to come to California.

Immigration Journey

His journey was very similar to that of other individuals who were immigrating, and it was mentally and physically exhausting. Alejandro flew to Tijuana alongside other family friends from Mexico. From Tijuana, they paid a "coyote" (a person who smuggles individuals into the U.S.) to cross them over to the U.S. Once they landed in Tijuana, Alejandro felt the nerves rising through his body. On a cold December morning, Alejandro began the unforgettable journey to San Diego, California. They walked three days throughout the desert and eventually arrived in San Diego. Those three days seemed like an eternity for him. Alejandro

expressed that crossing was mentally more challenging because so many thoughts were rushing through his mind. He said that he was terrified traveling to the U.S. because he was entering a country that was “not his” and felt as if he did not belong. His most consistent thought was the fear of getting caught, which grew larger and larger. Although this walk was relatively short, he said it is one he would never forget because it shifted his perspective in life. The crossing was different from what he expected. There were hardly any immigration officers or, as he states, “Migra,” which made their journey much easier.

Establishing a New Life

Upon arrival, Alejandro and the group he traveled with were picked up and taken to the place where they would now call home: a one-bedroom apartment in Santa Ana, California. It was there where he lived with his sister and five other family friends. Although the space was tight, Alejandro was grateful that he had a roof over his head. The day after arrival, he began to work at a factory where he would print shirt designs. He would work seven days a week, and his pay was \$4.25. Although that was minimum wage back then, it would barely make ends meet for him. Alejandro would send money back to his mother and had to pay for expenses such as rent, food, and other basic necessities. He continued working at the factory for about seven years until he was offered another job.

Challenges Faced

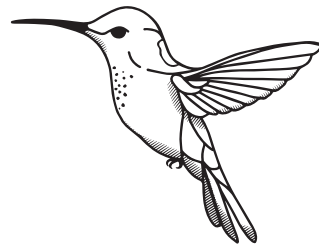
Throughout the seven years of working in the factory, Alejandro considered returning to Michoacan. He thought that the U.S. was not for him and could not adjust to the American lifestyle. A big factor that made Alejandro feel like it was impossible to adapt to the U.S. was the language barrier. Talking is the most common form of communication, but Alejandro felt very frustrated he was not able to communicate. He only spoke Spanish, and the most common language spoken was English. After considering returning to his hometown, he remembered his “why” and continued to move forward, trying to make as much money as possible to send back home. Alejandro greatly appreciates his sister and brother-in-law who also crossed with him because they helped him navigate

the American lifestyle. He also thanks Maria Valencia, who is now his wife, whom he met at the age of 23. She was a first-generation Latina navigating college but did her best to show Alejandro all she could. Alejandro was eventually offered a job at a car shop as an assistant. It was there that his interest in cars grew. After being an assistant for two years and observing the work of others, he became an auto body technician. Alejandro was beyond grateful that he was able to work in a job that would eventually give him the benefits he never knew of.

Fast forward after being an auto body technician at the shop he initially began with, he grew the courage to explore other car shops that appreciated his work and dedication. He noticed his salary rise and recognition from other employees. He mentions that he is fulfilled when a young employee asks him for work help and advice. He states, “I do my best to teach the upcoming generations and help them seek opportunities that I never once had.” Besides having doubts about himself, Alejandro continued to work hard because he knew he wanted to make something of himself to have something to be proud of. Throughout the years, he never once stopped sending money back to his mother.

Growth and Fulfillment

Alejandro Valencia Lopez’s story is just one of the many. Every journey is different, but it is important to remember that no story is more valuable than another. With all the stories told, there is a consistent pattern. These brave individuals’ lives changed the moment they came to the U.S. because they worked hard for a country that did not accept them nor want them here, but here they are now sharing their journeys.



Chef Smokey

Emely Limon



Abstract:

This story highlights the journey of Daisy Alejandra Villa, she was from a well-off family growing up in Mexico due to her father's role in the Air Force, Unfortunately concerns for her family's safety grew and they were forced to leave the country, immigrating to the United States, a complex journey that ultimately led her to excel in many aspects of her life, she had education, she became pregnant and was successful in careers. Owning a food truck that became very popular and a thriving restaurant. Regardless of her initial struggles her determination and entrepreneurial attitude helped her become a successful businesswoman and a role model to her daughter.

Early Life

Daisy Alejandra Villa was born on February 11th, 1986 in Culiacan, Sinaloa. She is the oldest of a brother. Daisy's father was part of the Fuerza Aerea Mexicana, also known as the Mexican Air Force. Due to this, Daisy's parents had very high expectations towards her. Growing up Daisy never had to worry about money and had a very comfortable life, her mother was always very supportive and made sure Daisy went presentable to school and always had a meal in her lunch bag. Her father also provided his family with everything needed. Although they had a very good income, Daisy wanted to spend more time with her father, but he was always getting sent out on deployment. Alejandra was a young girl, she loved nature and going shopping with her mother.

Safety Concerns

Growing up Daisy had a wealthy status

but being wealthy in Culiacán wasn't completely the best. Since her father was very much known for his contributions to the Fuerza Arena, Daisy and her family were in danger. Cartel members were aware and could kidnap my mother or any of her family anytime. At the time Cartels were active and that made the Country unsafe. Daisy states, "On the way to school gunshots were fired and even though I was driven to school, the reflexes would trigger me every moment they were launched." The violence was not the only problem. Education was very much limited, they had many good schools but it was not very encouraging. Her peers were very rebellious and spoiled. She was always surrounded with "Niñas Fresas," a term used to call a girl a spoiled brat. They just talked about having the best clothing wardrobe and going to school until they found a wealthy husband to look after them. My mother loved fashion and was very girly but she had aspirations and goals to follow. She just didn't want to be daddy's girl for the rest of her life or wait until marriage. She had an idol, a hero, a fighter, who didn't just spoil her, he taught her self-defense and how to fight the world with your head up high in a Country where you face it like it's war every day.

One morning like any other day, my mother mentioned that this day is where life changed for the Villas. She said, " On my way to school there was a massive cartel shooting right a block away from our school." The exact words she used were "Me and my brother were on our way to school to get an education but this violence didn't make it safe for any of us." She and her brother decided to return that day home. Explaining to their mother what had just happened, she decided she didn't want to let them go back anytime soon. My mom's father had just returned home from being gone for almost 2 months. Daisy's parents had a long conversation that day and decided that life in Sinaloa was getting them nowhere. Moving out of Mexico and into the United States was a better option for their family. However, it wasn't easy due to their immigration status. The only option

was for Balthazar, my mother's father, to transfer into the United States Army and obtain citizenship so his family could obtain it as well.

Immigration Journey

The journey was different for her family like others. Daisy's father transferred, her mother was going to cross alone, and she and her brother were going to separate into two families to cross with fake passports. Daisy and her brother were both very light-skinned with light-colored eyes and light-colored hair, they both fit the image of American children. My mother's experience wasn't worse than other stories I've heard. She was presented to an American family working with an organization. Daisy met up with her false "family" and hopped in their vehicle and started the journey. She states that her journey wasn't as bad but was scared because of it to be known they traffic children at the border, so anything can go the opposite side. Arriving at the border officers were quick in asking questions. They asked my mom her name, age, and reason for crossing. She answered and mentioned everything they had told her to say. They told her to say she was on a trip with her parents and was just going back home. Before the big day, she had to practice over and over her answers and the way she spoke. Her English wasn't good and her Spanish had a strong accent. She had to find ways to seem convincing.

After crossing they met up with their mother and father. They settled in Tustin California and everything was fine but very different. My mom, her brother, and my grandparents lived in a condo on Pasadena Street. Her family was ready to start a new life, they both got enrolled in the Tustin District and attended Currie Middle School, now named Sycamore Magnet Academy. Her journey was great, she adapted very well and she and her family were able to obtain Citizenship. As I mentioned Daisy was adapting and doing well in this new chapter of hers. However when she attended High School things kind of changed for her. She was always interacting with her peers, she was part of clubs and always socializing, and my mother was well known. She attended Tustin High School and her biggest

specialty was dancing, she was part of the dancing musical for Grease. My mother played the role of Sandy in the musical. Everything was fun and games for her till her Senior year when she got pregnant. Due to this, my mother was able to graduate but not further her education.

Finding success

Daisy moved to Atlanta, GA with her fiance and started her life there. When I was born my mother wanted to grow and be someone to provide for me. She started taking online classes for real estate and eventually started growing from here on. One morning my mother decided to sell food in the back of a bar that belonged to a client she had sold a house to. Atlanta was a State full of African Americans so having Mexican food was very exotic and different for them. Along the way more and more clients came and tried my mom's food. It became so popular that she even was able to leave the parking lot and buy a food truck. Many clients posted her food on social media which got so much attention. Famous Tiktokers even came to review the food on lives and muckbangs.

My mom's food truck was a success and the owner of the bar Carlos contacted her and offered the deal of a lifetime. He offered her to expand her food and create a restaurant. My mother agreed and worked so hard to build that restaurant called Chef Smoky ATL. My mom is now a Businesswoman who owns two restaurants in the State of GA, even if she didn't have the opportunity to further her education she made a fortune to support me and everything I needed.

Thanks to my mama, I never had to go to bed with an empty stomach. Me and my mother had our ups and downs but I see her as my role model and someone I look up to too. When asking my mom if she considers herself an immigrant? She says, "No, I am not because my father worked hard to get us all citizenship and even though I come from a different country, me and my father worked hard for this and I will always know where I stand but I will never look back, We are now American Citizens and the word immigrant stays in the past but will stay in our hearts."

Ethnic Studies Student Conference

UC San Diego Spring 2024



The Journey to a Better Life

Eric Maciel



Abstract:

The journey to the “American Dream” often involves hard work and dedication before being able to reach the end goal of attaining a life of better opportunities, financial stability, and security for our families as illustrated by my father’s experience. He left Mexico in 1984, leaving behind the struggle of working treacherous labor for minimal payment, to seek financial stability for himself and his future family. This story of migration highlights how personal determination and resilience play crucial roles in achieving success.

Quest for New Opportunities

Since the establishment of this nation, the United States of America has always been considered a “melting pot” with people from different countries, cultures, religions, etc. This country has historically been known as a place where people could come to escape persecution, start a new life, and have better opportunities. In my dad’s case, he decided to come here in search of better opportunities. In my interview with my father, we talked about his journey to the United States, his early experiences once he got here, and his reasons for leaving Mexico. Many people who pursue the “American Dream” do so out of necessity, and the definition of the “American Dream” may be different from individual to individual.

Chicanx/Latinx mobility is prevalent in many Latin American countries, in part, due

to many problems imposed on them by the actions of the U.S. government. Luckily for my dad, he wasn’t forced to leave in fear of his safety like many others. My dad left Mexico in 1984 at the age of 21 in search of a job opportunity in the United States. In a few months, I will be the same age that my dad was when he immigrated to this country and I can’t even imagine having to move to another country and having to learn a new language. It took a great amount of courage to be able to face this daunting task and proceed.

He recalls having an unpleasant journey to Tijuana from his rancho, El Naranjo, in Guerrero, Mexico. “Me vine en autobús pero fue terrible porque no comí en todo el camino a causa de que me vomitaba cada vez que comía. Luego crucé por el cerro con muchas personas.” “I came on a bus, but the journey was terrible because I didn’t eat the entire bus ride since I would throw up every time I tried to eat. Then I crossed through the mountains with many others.” It took him three days to reach Tijuana and despite being on the road for days, he still had a treacherous trek ahead of him on foot. He stayed in a hotel for one night and the next day he set off for the border. He crossed through the mountains along the border and when he reached the other side he had a ride waiting for him. My dad was one of the fortunate ones because many people who have tried to cross the border either get caught or end up dying along the way. “Since the 1990s, nearly 8,000 human remains have been found in the US borderlands (Todd Miller, Week 7).” This statistic is very concerning because it averages out to roughly 267 people who die every year while attempting to cross the border, which goes to show how dire the situation must be for the thousands of people who attempt to cross every year.

Countless people have tried to make it to this country and have perished along the way. The ones who do make it to the other side know what a blessing it is. My dad knew the risks involved and yet he still went through with it because he was determined to make it to the United States.

Struggles and Hard Work

When my father first made it to the States, he worked various jobs to make ends meet. A lot of these jobs contributed to U.S. society. “Primero estuve cosechando aguacates. Me subía a una escalera de 18 escalones para alcanzar los árboles altos.” “First, I worked harvesting avocados. I would get on top of an 18-step ladder to reach the tall trees.” This was an essential job that benefited many U.S. citizens by providing them with produce to put on their tables. The wages he earned were less than suitable to pay for a living, but he had no other option, being that he was undocumented and didn’t know any English. These types of jobs in agriculture were the same jobs many Mexicans worked during the Bracero program (Lumbreras, Week 4 Lecture). 40 years later Mexicans were still going through the same cycle of working a physically taxing job in exchange for low pay just to make a living and provide for their family back home. My dad lived a humble life when he first got here. “Lo que ganaba del trabajo me alcanzaba para rentar en un apartamento y dormir en la sala. También mandaba dinero para mi familia que estaba en México.” “What I earned from my job was enough to rent a space in an apartment and sleep in the living room. I would also send money to my family in Mexico.” For my dad, earning this type of money was a blessing. It may have seemed like a little to other people, but this was unattainable in his rancho. It was enough to pay for a roof over his head and he still managed to have the ability to send money back home.

To put this into perspective, after talking to some people from my dad’s rancho, I found out they are earning as little as thirty to forty dollars a day. This was as recent as five years ago, so one could only imagine what they were making when he was growing up. When my dad was growing up, the entire country of Mexico suffered economically due to the crash of oil prices. This led to many Mexicans having to work up to 85 hours per week to meet basic needs (Kelly Hernandez, Week 3). 85 hours a week equates to roughly 12 hours a day on average. Spending half of your day working just to meet basic needs is no way to live. It’s no wonder so many went looking for opportunities elsewhere. There is a vast array of different reasons for mobility such as fewer opportunities, climate change, and

violence (Lumbreras, Week 7 Lecture). For my dad, his biggest push factor was the lack of opportunities to make a decent living. The appeal of work for those who were willing was the most enticing pull factor in the United States.

Starting a Family

After years of hard work, my dad went back to Mexico and married my mom in 1991. He brought her back to the United States with him and shortly after, my older brother was born in 1992. Technically, you could say he was an anchor baby because he was born to a non-citizen parent and was granted citizenship through birth (Lumbreras, Week 8 Lecture). After my brother was born, my mom was eligible for WIC, which was a tremendous help because it was one less expense they needed to worry about. Once my mom was able to work, she got a job at McDonald’s. With two sources of income, they were now able to afford an apartment on their own. For my dad, this was a big accomplishment and was what he had dreamed of when he immigrated to the United States. “Aquí está mejor porque hay más oportunidades. Allá andaba uno muy apenas porque no había muchos trabajos. Trabajando en el campo no alcanzaba. Sembrábamos para nosotros mismos y lo que sobraba lo vendíamos.” “It is much better here because there are more opportunities. Over there [Mexico], one was barely surviving because there weren’t many jobs. Working in the fields wasn’t enough [to live off of]. We would plant crops for ourselves and sell whatever was left over.”

Life was very different in Mexico. My dad was one of nine children and they all had to contribute in order to survive. Having enough food for everyone was a challenge in itself. Not to mention, they had to make money off whatever food they grew. I asked my dad what he thinks life would’ve been like for him had he stayed in Mexico. He said he probably would’ve been a farmer like everyone else. He most likely would have stayed in the same rancho he grew up in because he had no better options for work elsewhere. His main reasoning for this is the fact that he only had an Elementary school education. My father was forced to stop going to school once he graduated 6th grade to help support the family. He would have to take care of the livestock and would

also go to the nearest city to sell crops in exchange for money. Another big reason for not continuing with his schooling was that there was no middle school nearby. The nearest middle school was over two hours away on foot and this commute was not feasible given that they had no car.

Education Aspirations

When he finally had the means and the freedom to attend school, he decided to attend adult school to further his education. He would attend school at night after getting off working a laborious 8-hour shift. The courses he took to learn English not only helped him to get a grasp on the language but also aided in improving his reading and writing skills. School has always been very important to my father because he wasn't able to advance his education like he had hoped when he was younger and now he can allow me and my siblings to do something he couldn't. Our academic success is something that he has always emphasized. Because of this, both my siblings and I were at the top of our classes growing up. All three of us have gone to college and pursued degrees in STEM.

Pursuit of Excellence

Mediocrity has never been acceptable and we have always been taught to strive for excellence, a theme that comes up often in my father's story. He wasn't content with continuing the cycle of living in poverty so he pursued a better life in the United States. When I asked my dad if he thought it was worth it to start a new life in the United States, his response was, "Claro que sí. Aquí uno vive mejor. Le he echado ganas a trabajar y nos ha ido bien." "Of course it was. You live better here. I have worked hard and things have gone well for us." This is exactly what my dad envisions when he pictures the "American Dream". You get out what you put in. He genuinely lives his life based on this ideal. So much so, that he has worked seven days a week for over twenty years. He works five days a week at one job and on the weekends works his second job. He could easily work a forty-hour workweek like everyone else, but he doesn't want to be like everyone else. My dad has always told me that you have to work hard to earn nice things and he has led by example his whole life. Because of my parents' hard work, we've always had a roof over our heads, food on the table, and clothes on our backs.

Staff Feature: Guillermo Vasquez

Success Coach

How do you identify yourself?

I identify as Chicano/Latino of Mexican descent

How long have you been working at Saddleback College?

I have worked here at Saddleback since July of 2021, so it's been almost three years.

What is the best hidden treasure about Saddleback College that you wish everyone knew about?

I think the wonderful part about Saddleback College is that all of the resources are a great place to gain support here, but it depends on what the student is looking for. I always like to tell students that success coaching is one of the most accessible and informative times to get a good idea or lay of the land when it comes to Saddleback College.

What would you tell someone who is thinking about coming to Saddleback College?

I would say Saddleback is a college that provides so many opportunities for students to advance themselves as professionals and future professionals, as well as a place where students can create and find their community.

What is the last book or podcast you read/listened to?

The last book I read is called *Palo Alto, a History of California Capitalism and the World* by Malcolm Harris.

The Journey and Adaptation of my Grandmother's Life

Alexa Cisneros

Abstract:

In this essay, I plan to talk about my grandmother's life before deciding to immigrate here to the United States of America and the aftermath of immigrating here and getting used to the "American life." Growing up my grandmother had always heard about American life and how it can change one's life and give more opportunities than they will be given in their homeland. My grandmother was one of the people who decided to cross the border to make sure her children and grandchildren will have a better life than they will in Mexico. When immigrating here to the U.S. my grandparents faced many difficult problems as they did not understand nor spoke the language, had no jobs to financially support themselves, and had no housing. So with this essay, I hope to illustrate the journey and struggles of my grandmother's immigration story.

Introduction

In Guerrero, Mexico when my grandmother was just a little girl she had always stood out from the rest of her siblings as she was always "Buscando Trabajo" as said by my great-grandmother. My grandmother was always a very curious child as she wanted to learn how to raise cattle, make food from recipes brought down from generation to generation, and do what a typical man's job would be back in her pueblo. My grandmother never seemed to fail to make her mother proud as she would go beyond just to make her proud and worry about her health.

Some topics that I will be bringing up are the stories of how my grandparents met each other and the journey it had taken for them to leave everything behind and cross the border to start a new life and as well as how they had to adapt to their new lives as immigrants and then as American Citizens. Throughout this whole interview, I feel like I have gathered a new meaning of life as my

grandparents sacrificed everything that they had for their children to grow up with a better education, a good paying job, and opportunities.

Love and Determination

As I had said in the previous section, my grandmother was a very curious, hardworking, stubborn person and this leads to the story of how she met my grandfather and their supposed "love story". My grandparents' pueblos were very close and I suppose that you can say that they were neighbors and the families were somewhat close to one another but there was of course rivalry between the families based on the cattle they raised. My grandfather's family was very striven to get what they wanted so when he laid eyes on my grandmother he knew he wanted her all for himself as he had asked her out on numerous occasions, but at the time my grandmother had her eyes on a different man; so as the gentleman my grandfather is, he then threatened my great grandmother's life if my grandmother didn't come with him and since my grandpa was left with no choice she followed my grandpa. Throughout the time my grandma had with living with my grandpa's family it was very rough for her as her mother-in-law did not like her and made the choice to make her life miserable. But throughout all the pain



my grandmother never left. Whenever I would bring up the topic to her she would tell me "porque la amo" translating to "because I love him" and that stood out to me. She never thought of leaving him because she began to fall in love with my grandfather. When my grandparents had their first child, aka my oldest uncle, my grandparents decided that they couldn't just live in Mexico anymore as they wanted for their son and cuter kids so that's when they first decided to cross the border into the "American Dream".



Crossing Borders for Dreams

When my grandparents decided to cross the border, they were the first ones in their family to do so. Before they came to the U.S they knew that they may never see their family again and leave everything that their parents had built for them, but they were willing to take the risks, so they did so. My grandma and grandpa only crossed the border once as since they had their 4-month-old son with them they didn't want to take the risks of being deported and separated. When crossing the border, my grandmother said their coyotes told them to cover themselves to avoid detection. When you're covering your face, you're essentially blocking the sweat from appearing because when a flash is shined on one's forehead it causes a shine to be seen which leads to many immigrants getting caught. When my grandparents successfully crossed they had to find a way to get a job so they became strawberry pickers. As my grandparents were the firsts this paved the way for the rest of my family to cross as well.

Taking Risks for a New Beginning

When my grandparents became strawberry pickers it was a difficult time as they couldn't speak nor understand English. So, they began to learn it little by little. When my grandma crossed the border, she said she felt a sense of freedom even as an immigrant. She said that she felt that she could do anything without feeling others' judgment. Back at my grandma's home in Mexico, she felt that Mexico was her home,

but she seemed to like the U.S. more so they stayed. Over the years throughout my uncle's life, my grandparents made sure that he would take advantage of the opportunities given to him when he was young because they knew that he would have a better future.

My grandmother truly struggled when living here in the U.S., my grandparents would move around a lot as they struggled to find places to call home but with their kids growing up every year that made it a bit better. Even now where they found a place to call their forever home, they never quite looked at wanting to live in Mexico. Yes, there would be times when they missed Pueblo and how quiet and calm it had been but whenever I asked my grandmother if she regretted coming here, she would say no because she knew that here in the U.S we would have a future awaiting us.

A Family Searching for Hope and Opportunity

All the struggles that my grandma had faced when living in Mexico, from crossing the border with her 5-month-old child to having no job, to then having a stable house and family have all been the result of the bravery of my grandma. Although there would be bittersweet moments when my grandma would miss her home and seeing her pueblo perish day by day she never regretted her decision to come to the U.S. and for that I have her to thank since I would not be able to seek further education, job, etc if it weren't for her so much as gracias Ama y te quiero mucho Ama.

About Our Contributor

Alexa Cisneros is majoring in Theatre and Performance Arts and plans to transfer to a four-year university to continue her education and acting career. Alexa tells the story of her grandmother to honor the struggles she endured.

Marco's Story

Cassie Nero

Abstract:

This is the story of Marcos who shares his experience of migration from Mexico to the United States. He discusses how he was resilient despite the obstacles he faced because of his status in the United States. He shares his realization of being undocumented and how he built a new identity to persevere.

Introduction

Over two and a half million Hispanic immigrants have attempted to cross the U.S Mexico border in the past year alone. Most of these people are fleeing their country in hopes of finding more opportunity and providing a high quality life for their families. Marco Lineras, knows first hand what this narrative is all about. Marco was brought to the U.S by his mother and father when he was only three months old. His parents wanted to give him and his siblings the most beautiful life they possibly could. Unfortunately, Marco has faced many trials and tribulations because of this. He has questioned his identity and wondered if he even belongs in this country. No one deserves to feel like this. We need to start prioritizing educating and nurturing children like Marco. These people are our future and they all deserve a fair chance. Children of immigrants play an important role in the United States because of their wide variety of contributions to the country.

Marco's growing up story was not



unique, unfortunately. In September of 2001, Marco's family packed up their things and left Mexico City never to return again. This narrative of mobilization is extremely common amongst Mexican immigrants.

Taking the risk of leaving a country that is familiar and walking towards the unknown is a petrifying thing to do. The bravery and strength it takes immigrants to push for a better life for themselves and for their families is extremely honorable.

After Crossing the Border

Once Marco's family crossed the border they settled down in Desert Hot Springs, California. His childhood was "generally pretty normal" (Marco). He went to school, hung out with his friends, and played sports. Overall, he had nothing to complain about. He grew up very content and had no worries whatsoever. Then, on his sixteenth birthday, his entire world flipped upside down.

Like almost every teenager on their sixteenth birthday, Marco was ecstatic to be able to get his license and drive around all on his own. He arrived at the DMV shaking with excitement and nervousness. He walked up to the window where the worker would confirm his personal information. What's your name? Age? Date of birth? Little did Marco know the next question he would be asked would change his life forever. What is your Social Security Number? Marco was taken aback by this question as he had never heard of a SSN. He explained to me "I was so confused, but at that point I wasn't worried because I didn't understand how important that set of numbers was" (Marco).

After his appointment he went to the car where his mother had been waiting for him. He looked at her and asked "What's a Social Security Number?" It was on this day that Marco finally realized he wasn't a U.S citizen. His mother explained to him on the car ride home that he had been brought to the United States as a baby without any form of documentation. At sixteen years old Marco realized he wouldn't be able to get a job, access public benefits, travel freely, vote, or partake in certain educational opportunities. The identity crisis that Marco endured following this life changing news was brutal.

My Life was a Lie

It took Marco years to finally come to terms with the fact that his whole life had essentially been a lie. He began having severe identity issues and questioning who he was. He lived his entire life thinking he was a part of this country and within a matter of seconds that was all stripped away from him. He felt like he didn't belong or deserve to be here. He felt guilty that he had lived here so long without documentation. He confided in me and explained that he's always felt fraudulent and fake. In a way, he feels like he doesn't exist. Not only that, but he has a new level of anxiety that something bad could happen to him. He is terrified that one day he'll be forced to go back to Mexico and be separated from his family.

As Marco got older he became more and more frustrated by his limitations. He applied for a program called DACA. DACA



protects individuals who were brought to the United States illegally when they were children from deportation. However, in 2021 a handful of children's DACA applications were put on hold. Marco began to feel stuck. After graduating highschool in 2020 he decided to begin his higher education at a community college. He knew that if he were ever to obtain his bachelor's degree, he wouldn't be able to work without some form of documentation. On top of this already frustrating circumstance, Marco wasn't provided with his own car to get to and from school. Because of his inability to work he couldn't even attempt to buy one for himself. Marco's lack of citizenship made him feel out of control and stuck.

No child should ever experience these debilitating feelings. The general public needs to be more aware of the effects of immigration on children. There should be more programs and support for them to feel accepted and to help them feel less alone. When a teenager feels like the odds

are stacked against them it causes them to feel hopeless. These innocent children did absolutely nothing to deserve the restrictions they are under.

Attending College

Marco was determined to succeed and do his best even under his circumstances. He began college hoping to become a nurse someday. I asked him what his reasoning behind being a nurse was. He calmly responded, "all I want to do is help people in whatever capacity I possibly can" (Marco). Marco's heart is unbelievably pure and generous. He wants to do good in this world and give back to his community. He is passionate about changing other people's lives and giving them the best chances they can get. He further explained that he wants to work with sick patients to encourage them to keep going no matter how hard it can get. He wants to use his knowledge and expertise to nurture them back to health. Last, he wants to make connections with his patients to encourage them that they're not alone and that he will always be there to help them.

While in school Marco joined a club that would nurture relationships between immigrant children. His second year of



attending he decided to run for president of the club. He won and was able to develop a community of people that had each other's backs. It is heartwarming to know that Marco chose to find support and leadership rather than running away from his fear and frustration.

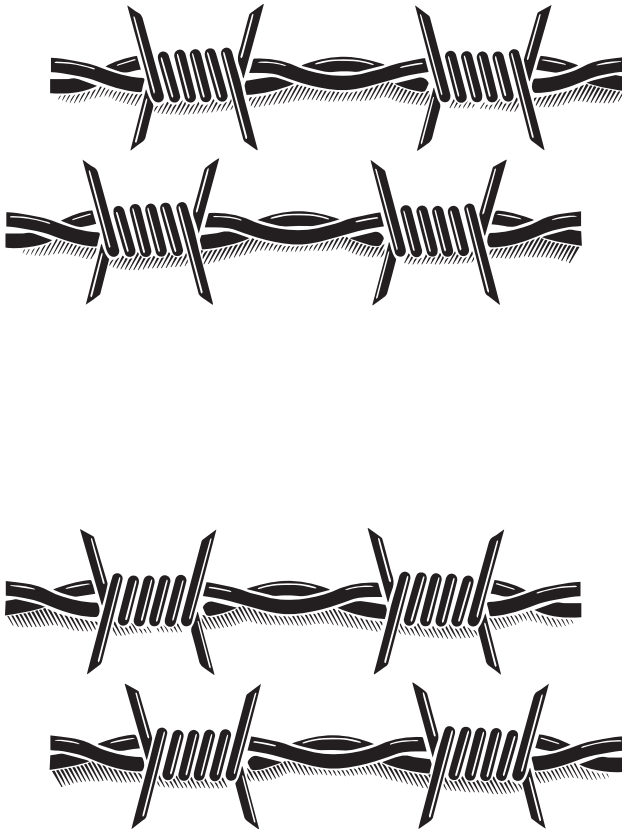
Marco has finally arrived at a place in his life where he has come to terms with his identity and where he came from. He understands that his status in America doesn't define him and that he deserves to be here. He wants to live his life advocating for children like him to get the support and love they need to navigate these hardships. I truly hope that more children

of immigrants can find this peace too. No one deserves to endure the hardships and misunderstanding that immigrants face on a daily basis.

Conclusion

Marco has been through a tremendous amount of ups and downs throughout his life. He has worked hard to unlearn the

negativity associated with his circumstance. Through Marco's story we can see how important children of immigrants are because of their contributions to American society. We need to continue nurturing and spreading awareness for these children so that everyone has equal opportunity and chances to live the most fulfilling life they possibly can.



Feeling More Latino Outside of Latin America

Gabriela Urdaneta-Carrera

Abstract:

We follow the story of my abuela and my father who were born and raised in Caracas, Venezuela. My abuela lives primarily in Venezuela and my father immigrated to the United States as a young man where he built a life here. In this essay, we evaluate the similarities and differences of their upbringings that explain the trajectory of their life. We also examine how their experiences shape their ideas of what it means to be Latino. We discovered that neither of them considered their identity of being Latino while living in their homeland, but that the topic of ethnicity didn't come up until my father immigrated to the States. The "otherness" of being Latino does not exist for him anywhere else outside the US. In conclusion, I realize that one's environment and the amount of exposure to the hardships and experiences involving race and class directly impact one's perception of racial identity.

Introduction

As a child, I spent countless evenings in my father's office hearing him explain Venezuelan history. Venezuela is known for being the homeland of Simon Bolivar who went on to liberate much of South America from Spanish rule and is known for the world's largest waterfall, Angel Falls. This country is not only rich in culture and natural landmarks but is also rich in oil. However, with great wealth, great corruption often follows. Limited opportunities, political unrest, poverty, and more plague the nation and threaten the beautiful parts of Venezuelan culture. Today we still see many Venezuelans immigrating to the United States for opportunity, just like my father did many years ago. I chose to interview my abuela and my father because their experience living in Venezuela shapes their perception of the Latino identity. I learned that even though they are both Venezuelan, what they learned and were exposed to in their homeland set the foundation for how they would perceive themselves as Latinos outside of Venezuela as well.

A Journey of Love, Loss, and Perseverance

My abuela's parents met at a party in Venezuela. Her mother is from Maiquetía, Venezuela, a popular beach resort town and her father is in a city in the Los Andes region called Michelena. Her grandfather was a general, who spent time imprisoned in a castle for opposing the government at the time, and once he was released, he retired to his rice farm along the Orinoco River enjoying life with the aboriginals of that land. He was a man of honor and did not cave to the temptations of power and was punished for it when he was imprisoned.

Much like his father, my abuela's father was a government accountant and set the example for his children that he would not exploit his position to obtain wealth. My abuela grew up traveling often with her thirteen siblings due to her father's government job. Having so many siblings who were all very close with each other was a great blessing for her because she didn't have to look far to find a friend. She was particularly close with her sister Belen who was closest in age. Belen was her outgoing other half while my abuela was shy and loved to challenge her parents and teachers with curious questions. She has many wonderful childhood memories of playing with dolls, climbing trees, and swimming in the rivers. In school, she was an enthusiastic student who loved geography and history.

At sixteen years old she attended a party for the anniversary of the National Guard in Margarita Island, where she would meet her husband who was a military doctor. She was never looking for a relationship and



didn't consider him at first because he was older than her, however, they kept in touch after the party and got to know each other better. My abuela found herself growing up in this relationship, where she once couldn't identify what love was, she found the answer in loving her husband. After they got married, she was excited to start building a family. She always wanted to be a mother and would watch her sisters have kids and care for them as her own.

Fearless in her task to be a mother, she had five children with her firstborn being twin girls. My father was the third eldest in his family with a younger brother and sister following him. They bought a house in a gated community in Caracas, Venezuela where my abuela tended to many plants and fruit trees. In the early years of their family, they did a lot of outdoor activities like camping and hiking. My abuela remembers the hot summers spent at the Puerto Azul club on the coast of Villa Marina, Venezuela, where there were crystal clear beaches, Olympic diving pools, and a bowling alley. Their family was very fortunate to take vacations like this as well as be exposed



to the art and culture of foreign places. At home, one of the twin girls loved listening to her Beatles record even though rock and roll clashed with her father's more conservative taste in music. My abuela's husband was a serious man with a love for classical music, dancing, and nature. His appreciation for the natural world was perfectly complemented by my abuela's affinity for gardening. The house was filled with and surrounded by plants, fruit trees, and yellow foot tortoises that she would feed scraps from cooking family meals. They had a good life and were well supported by their father's job as a military doctor.

Unfortunately, tragedy struck their family on a family car ride. The brakes of the car malfunctioned, and their car crashed

with only my Abuela, my father, and his two younger siblings surviving the accident. Life changed forever for them when they lost their father and twin sisters, and my abuela had to muster all her strength to take on life as a widowed mom of three. She reflects on this turning point in her life as a time when her trust in God's path for her was crucial to moving forward. Her husband's job in the government kept her family financially stable, though the loss of their father and sisters took a huge toll emotionally.

My father remembers his childhood from then on feeling lost and hurt from the tragedy and struggling in school for misbehavior. He was lucky to have an uncle in his life who he looked up to like a father, and who inspired his passion for piloting and dentistry. With the support of their extended family in Venezuela, my abuela raised my father and his siblings into good people with reverence for family and perseverance. As adults, my father, and his brother both emigrated to the United States to attend school and pursue their professional careers. My father alternates visiting my abuela's house in Venezuela and bringing her to stay with his family in the States. My father loves his homeland deeply but has also built a prosperous life in the United States that he is grateful for.

Understanding Latina Identity Through Abuela's Perspective

When asking my abuela's perspective about being Latina, I was a little surprised by her answer. I supposed that she would have given her Latina identity great thought just as I have done, being that I am an American of Latin descent. However, she explained that as a youth she never had a distinction of "us vs them" when it came to race or nationality. She grew up with plenty of family and friends of different nationalities, skin tones, and cultures. Her interest in history and geography subjects in school further widened her understanding of different cultures. But instead of seeing how her own culture was different, she found a sense of "oneness" and appreciation in seeing the similarities between her cultures and others. She reflects on her fondness for the Venezuelan indigenous Wayuú culture, saying that she felt she was Wayuú in a past life because they both shared a deep respect and affinity for nature. In high school, she spent a year at a school in Trinidad to

learn English. She was introduced to many different cultures there, particularly Indian, British, and Trinidadian cultures. I asked her if she saw any signs of racism in this melting pot of a school, and she said no. If people were getting picked on, it had nothing to do with their skin color or country of origin. Though she didn't continue to become fluent in English, the experience of learning with different races furthered her sense of unity with people from all walks of life.

Embracing Cultural Diversity and Oneness

My father is just as Venezuelan as my Abuela, however, his perception of being Latino became a little different later in his life. Growing up his perception of being Latino was the same as his mother's- he didn't consider it often because it was never being challenged or brought up. Things started to change when he went to dental school in Maracaibo, Venezuela. He witnessed a lot of the country's struggles with crime and corruption. His university was often shut down for long periods due to rioting, which pushed back his academic goals greatly.

My father began to see the bigger picture of Venezuela's shortcomings and needed to search for a better country to study dentistry. Though migrating to the United States was no easy task, my father had some extended family who lived on the East Coast he could stay with. This is where he met and married my mother and started dentistry school at NYU. His identity as a Latino man became more apparent to him while living in the States. My father is a well-traveled man, always eager to immerse himself in new cultures, and he states that he has never felt more labeled as "other" than when living in the States.

He faced racism in school where professors would make his life unnecessarily harder. It was clear that he and other Latinos were a target for discrimination. When he started his family, he didn't insist that we

speaking only Spanish in the home so that we wouldn't have to face discrimination speaking English with a Spanish accent as he did- a strategy for Americanization that my mother's parents implemented on her. I remember my father telling me a lot about my Venezuelan heritage and discussing the pros and cons of American culture. My perception of my Latina-ness is influenced a lot by those conversations but mostly by the demographics of my environment.

Journey from Venezuela to the United States

My idea of being Latina is a product of the oral history my father and abuela shared with me about their life and country and a product of my time growing up in northern and southern California. I grew up in predominantly white neighborhoods and felt in between worlds - not white enough to be all American but not Spanish-speaking enough to be all Latina. I've learned that the amount of exposure to the topic of race, be it on the education or personal experience of prejudice or stereotyping, directly impacts your perception of your own racial identity. My abuela who persevered through a family tragedy, also lived an affluent and sheltered life, which is consistent with her more relaxed perception of her Latina identity.

My father, having migrated to a country with deeply racist roots, considers his Latino identity with more focus than was necessary in his country of origin. The more you learn about racial injustices on paper or experience it yourself the more you are aware of the "otherness" that race and ethnicity are burdened with. I see how my education and experience in the United States have contributed to my perception of my Latina identity, and how it may have been different if I grew up in Venezuela like my father and abuela. What transcends race and what all of us have in common is our drive for a better future.

About Our Contributor

Gabriela Urdaneta-Carrera is an Animal Science major and looks forward to transferring to Veterinary School. Gabriella shares the story of her father and grandfather because of the pride they instilled in her for being a Latina.

Staff Feature: Liz Leguizamo



Counselor, Rising Scholars

Liz Leguizamo is the Saddleback College counselor for the Rising Scholars program. Rising Scholars serves anyone who has been formerly incarcerated or system-impacted, including juvenile halls, jails, prisons detention camps, or base camps. Liz spoke with Latinx Voices staff writer Stacey Shapero to share her personal experience, purpose, and passion for bringing equity and resources to this specific community.

How do you identify?

I identify as a first-generation, Mexican, college graduate. I am a daughter, a sister, a cousin, a friend, a Godmother, a counselor, a colleague, and a professor. And I say all those because they do shape who I am, and where I work. Who I surround myself with impacts me and also influences who I want to become.

What is your passion?

My passion is helping others, especially anyone who has been marginalized in their community or education. It's amazing to see the students' effort, excitement, and motivation just to start school or to finish their education and how life really throws a lot of challenges at them. One of my life goals is to open a housing apartment or building for anyone who is facing homelessness.

What are you proud of in the Chicax culture?

I love the Chicax culture - the lifestyle is from the neighborhoods that our families are from and it's the clothing style (you will never see me without my hoops), the lowriders (I have a goal to own one), the music, the artwork of my people. I have struggled with my identity at times, and now I embrace it. It is never too late to find your identity, be patient, and accept that it can change.

How do you celebrate?

The celebration is about food. I grew up with my great grandma and everybody hanging out. I did not know what extended family was. I thought the family was just family, and I loved those moments. We still come together and make tamales - keeping the tradition and family recipes going. The other traditional celebration I do is Día de los Muertos. I set up and decorate my own altar at home and grab all the pictures of all my loved ones. It is always a good moment to connect and honor them. I also like to attend cultural events, it is important to be present.

Who is your Latinx/Chicax role model?

Karol G, who is a musician and Reggaeton artist from Colombia. She has accomplished so much in so little time and the way that she carries herself and her attitude within her work, with her fans is inspiring. Also, the way she puts her personal life and what she has gone through into her art. I love artists who incorporate feminism and empowering women in their music because that is mainly what everyone is hearing. I grew up listening to a lot of music because that was a way my family was able to express themselves, as I grew up not being able to communicate those feelings.

What encouragement do you have for students?

When I was finishing graduate school, I started learning what imposter syndrome was, and how common it is for people like me. So what I wanted to tell those who may feel that or have self-doubts: Don't have it! You can achieve anything as long as you stick to it. Don't lose patience, because you never know when the door is going to open. Anyone out there wanting to go for a career that they are passionate about, go for it. No one can stop you, just seek any opportunity that can help you. It takes time. Don't have any self-doubt and kick that imposter syndrome out of your way from going for what you want.

La Historia De Un Niña Inmigrante

Josue Pina

Abstract:

In my oral history assignment I decided to interview someone very close to me. Her name is Erika Janet Pina Gonzalez or recently married name, Erika Mendoza. She is undocumented immigrant who is currently under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). I chose her for this assignment because she shares a story that may not be told a lot. She shares her experience as an illegal immigrant child who moved and grew up later in Lake Forest, California

Introduction

The story of an immigrant child is a hard one to tell or to explain. There are things that one does not expect or hope for a child to experience or witness during their lifetime, but when parents want a better life for their kids, they will try to protect them from the change, or attempt to. I begin with this because the story I tell may not be something different from those who immigrated when they were kids but at the same time may have not been told to a bigger audience of people. This Story is from the perspective of a person who is currently 30 years old but remembers how it was like to be an immigrant from a very young age, in Orange County, in a city named Lake Forest. Their name is Erika Janet Pina Gonzalez, they are from D.F, Mexico. They were born in 1993 and moved to the U.S in the early 2000s. This interview was focused on seeing how it was being an immigrant at a young age and how certain events have affected her both psychologically and experience of her reality. I will also talk about what her experience of crossing the border was like.

We begin in 1993, Erika was born in Mexico City, raised by a father and a mother. Living in their grandma's house, her dad gets told by a cousin of his that in the United States, specifically in California there are jobs, and it is in abundance with good pay, the old American dream you would hear before. He soon gets convinced to go to make a trip to California and go work. During the interview Erika shared, "He came

to the U.S and we did not see him for about 9 months, then he later sent us money so we can cross. She explains how after they crossed successfully, she started attending Olivewood Elementary School, located in Lake Forest, California. She expressed and explained that it was a shock to her, that she could not understand anyone, and to find so few hispanics in the school. She goes on to say that there were about 7 hispanics in total in her elementary school. She says that she struggled a lot because she did not know english and hardly received any help from the teachers and could hardly get any at home because obviously her parents did not know English either. She was telling me that they had to use a translator device that would help her for her homework, but the questions would be wrong because it would all be English from the U.K. She later explains to me that her brother was born in 2002, when she was 9, and her mom was struggling to raise a baby on her own and missed her family a lot, and decided to move back to Mexico. She explains that at first it was all happy and good, but the baby kept getting sick constantly, so they had to make a hard decision, and decided it was best to move back into the United States. They flew the baby out and had someone pick him up, but for them, they had to reattempt to cross the border. A process that was not easy this time.

Crossing the Border

She explained to me that in 2003 they had moved to Tijuana for a month and had to go from house to house, staying at random houses, in hopes of crossing again. She was with her mom, and when they made their first attempt the second time they were heading back, they had an option to go in separately but a mother not wanting to leave their child with a stranger, she opted on staying and crossing together, they got caught by border patrol sadly. She explained that they took her to a separate room. She explained to me that they would feed them peanut butter sandwiches for breakfast, lunch and dinner there, that she doesn't know if it's the taste or the bad experience

she had, but till this day she can not have peanut butter.

I want to take this time to explain something in psychology they call classical conditioning. I had mentioned earlier that I was also trying to see the psychological effects this part or event in their life had. What exactly is classical conditioning, involves the pairing of two stimulus events, typically a neutral conditioned stimulus, and an unconditioned stimulus, meaning for example, you ring a bell in front of a dog and feed it a treat, and they begin to salivate, you repeat this a couple of times and they begin to do it with just the ring of the bell without bringing a treat. It works the same with fear or disgust. You relate a bad memory with something and you won't eat it. For example, when someone has too many lays chips as a child and throws up, their natural response is I don't like lays chips because it makes me throw up, it brings a bad memory. In this case it is peanut butter for Erika, although it may seem small to others, it's a notice to see that events like these do take some type of psychological toll on a kid, whether it be on food or something of behavior.

With that said, she later explained to me that her mother had to make a tough decision, that no mother ever wants to make, and that is leaving her child with someone she doesn't know, let alone, having them cross her child to a different country. She said that for a 10 year old, she was very aware of her surroundings and would sometimes not sleep, and would sleep very lightly, because she didn't know where she was or what they were doing.

She said to me "They had me play all day and tried to tire me so I could fall asleep. They saw I wasn't getting tired, and I overheard in their conversation, this girl is not getting tired, how are we going to cross her over? We need her to be sleeping. I went to them and responded that if you needed me to be asleep I could have just pretended

to be asleep, why didn't you tell me before, we could have been done with this a long time ago. So I pretended to be asleep and crossed over."

Hope

She later adapted to "American live", and learned English. She was exposed to it, it was a struggle, but she was able to get by. She expressed to me that at first it was a struggle to get any help in Spanish, whether it be doctors, supermarket, or at school translation, she told me that because there were more hispanics/Latinos moving into Lake Forest and the surrounding cities, they started making the translations a priority. She said that now she is happy to see that it is a bit easier to get help in Spanish, that there is a lot of work left to be done, but it all has changed in a good way since she was a kid.

With this in mind, let me move on to her later days, mainly in the 2008 election year. Why is this election year important? She expressed to me that this election year was not just a historical event, but also marked a different direction in her life along with many other students who were also undocumented and came when they were a child.

"I remember my English teacher turning on the tv, and having us watch



the last moments before they named who won, she told us that this is history in the making and that we should not just see it in the textbooks but witness and experience it for ourselves. I remember the bell ring, no one got out of their seats. When they had announced that Barack Obama had won, the halls were filled with scream and joy, people could not believe that we were having our first black president. Students were in joy, others were making jokes, and



others surprised. During my senior year, they had created Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and passed the law a little bit after I had graduated which allowed me to work and study in the U.S.”

Although it was years after he had won, this very moment led her to an opportunity to study, to get a driver license and to work. She was able to go to school and get an AA in psychology and is currently studying child development and is enjoying working with kids.

Erika was happy to share her story, she did say along the way she experienced racism, and wasn't allowed to speak spanish

at school. She obviously has psychological effects and witnessed history with her own eyes, and saw how it all led to a positive outcome. I asked her if she ever wanted to go back. She expressed that she misses her family, her cousins, her aunts and uncles. She was very sad that she couldn't go to her grandma's funeral, but she said it would be a thing she would discuss with her husband, but she would prefer it here. Erika is my sister, she is 9 years older than me. Hearing these stories made me think a lot. How many things go on and the effects it has years later.

About Our Contributor

Josue Pina is majoring in Audio Engineering with plans to pursue music production. Josue's essay opens up a different view and experience of someone immigrating to the United States at a very young age.



“Either Way, You’ll Grow.”

Yamila Guzman

Abstract:

Courage is scary. It is so scary that a majority of us purposely avoid crucial steps to fulfill certain goals only because we fear the unknown. It terrifies us because the only way to know what could happen next is to get up and just do it. My grandfather, Ramiro Llamas, tells me everything happens for a reason. And that reason doesn't necessarily need always to be good; it just needs to be valid. Because either way, you'll grow. His reason for migrating to the United States of America was valid, but he also knew he didn't have a choice. He needed to help his family in any way he could. That meant having a stomach full of courage and resilience to make a living in Southern California with only his shirt on his back and loose change in his pockets.

Introduction

Ramiro Ayala Llamas was born and raised in the beautiful Tispan El Alto Jalisco, Mexico, on February 19th, 1948. His mother, Maria, and father, Ignacio, were parents to 8 children, Ramiro being the fourth child. His childhood was filled with many great memories. He lived in a happy household and thrived off, knowing that at the end of a long day, he could come home to one of his mother's home-cooked meals and buzz with anticipation for one of his friends to knock on his door to ask to play the ball down their moonlit street. I have always known him to be someone who had endless light-hearted stories about his childhood. Still, he rarely spoke about his hardships and even less about the struggles of migrating to the United States, so I chose him to have this difficult yet impactful conversation. Initially, I didn't think there was anything new I could learn from him, but I was wrong. I learned that he had great aspirations, I learned that he didn't have a choice to migrate to the U.S., and I learned that being a Mexican man living in California during 1965 meant always taking the high road.

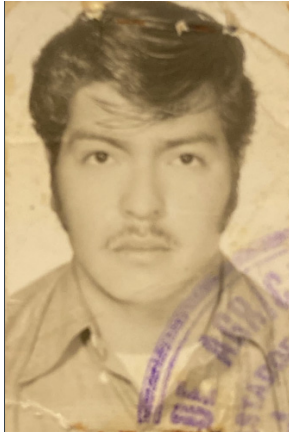
Winter Morning 1956

Ramiro went to school with his two older

siblings. He never understood why he had to go. He works at El Campo, helping his dad sometimes, but his mom says school is important for his future, so he tries. At first, he's bored, but his teacher says he's very good at math, which makes him feel a different sense of pride. Walking back home, he promises to work on his schoolwork to improve his math. But once he sat down to try to concentrate, his dad walked in through the side, tired and thirsty. “Ey mijo, me puedes ayudar afuera con las vacas?” This happened a couple of times. He would sit down, try to do a couple of math problems, and then get interrupted by work. At age 10, he decided to quit school and help out his parents full-time. It was better this way. This made him feel useful, a much different sense of pride. I asked him, “After doing well in your school work, did you develop any dreams or aspirations?” He was in deep thought when he mumbled, “No. The only thing I wanted or aspired for was to support my family financially. I wanted to be rich. Get us out of this hell hole.” He chuckles. “It's why I was excited to go to the U.S. I thought it would be our way out.” He had hope; this made him work harder.

Working in America as a Teenager

When you're seventeen years old and find out you're going to work in an unfamiliar country with people who don't know your native tongue, anyone would be terrified, not Ramiro. He was oddly excited. His father, Ignacio, who was a part of the Bracero Program, would come and go to the U.S. Sometimes, his father would bring back a fresh pair of socks or, if he was lucky, a new pair of jeans from America. Ramiro thought the U.S. was a great place with a great quality of anything and everything. He couldn't believe his eyes. At the time, he thought, “If this is what living in America will bring me, then I couldn't wait. Initially, [he] was very happy.” Later, I asked him about his feelings after working in the U.S. for a while. “Well, eventually, reality sunk in. I would work 60-hour weeks [at Highland Ranch], but I sent all the money I earned to my mom. Now, I wasn't a Bracero, but my dad was, and



seeing him go through all those conditions, well, I didn't understand it at the time, but yeah, I didn't know he went through any of that." He sighed, "I don't know how he did it." I'd never seen him like this, regretful and lost all in one. It looked like he was living through it all over again in his head. I didn't know what to say.


From Excitement to Reality

To then live in San Clemente, California, a beautiful place with beautiful beaches; Ramiro thought this was paradise—that is until he opened his mouth and spoke broken English. He didn't understand how so many people could be racist while he was actively trying to accommodate their way of living. He would go to Grocery stores with his wife, Guillermina, and they would get dirty looks. His wife could ignore it; she held her head high, but Ramiro was protective. He wanted to not only defend his wife but himself as well. But if there was one thing he has learned from living among people like that, you had to let their looks and comments roll off your back because if you didn't, there was no telling what could happen in repercussions of you defending yourself or your family. I asked him how he coped with discrimination in private, away from the public. "I didn't cope with it. At that time, you kinda just had to accept that

was your reality. However, It was difficult to suppress the urge to punch some of those racist [redacted]. Yeah, I'm just glad times have changed,"

Everything Happens for a Reason

Looking back on the initial interview, I started to recall all of the times he mentioned how the only reason he was excited to move to the United States was the money and how his dreams and aspirations included becoming rich. He wanted to be financially stable. At first, I thought it was because he wanted to support his family. Now I realize it was because he knew at a young age that having money would be the only solution

JAN-MAR	APR-JUN	JUL-SEP	OCT-DEC
 SMALLPOX VACCINATION CERTIFICATE CERTIFICADO DE VACUNACIÓN CONTRA LA VIRUELA UNITED STATES-MEXICAN BORDER LA FRONTERA ESTADOUNIDENSE-MEXICANA			
NAME NOMBRE <u>Ramiro Llamas Ayala</u>			
SIGNATURE FIRMA <u>[Signature]</u>			
AGE EDAD <u>17</u>		SEX SEXO <u>M</u>	
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for his father's back to stop hurting after every shift. It would be the only way for his children to go to college. He believed that coming to America for work would end his struggle and his family's struggle. But to everyone's disappointment, America was falsely advertised to so many. So, when I asked the last question, "Do you have any regrets?" He simply answered, "No." I was somewhat stunned. He saw the confusion on my face and said, "Everything happened to me for a reason. Listen, I know it doesn't seem like it now, but I was a stupid, naive kid. I made mistakes I'm not proud of, but I learned from them, and that is all we need to grow." Listening to his story and his optimistic view toward the end made me grateful that I got to learn more about his past. It brought a sense of pride to see how far he has come since 1965.

About Our Contributor

Yamila Guzman is an English major with plans to transfer to a four-year university and work as a publisher and editor. Yamila's oral history expresses how much she looks up to her grandfather for overcoming and prevailing when everything was against him.

The Life of Sol

Diana Bahena

Abstract:

Sol was one of the millions of Mexicans who migrated to the United States of America. She crossed the border on July 4th, 2003. She did it for a better life, just like anyone who crosses. Her journey has not been an easy one, she has been on a rollercoaster her whole life. Sol is an inspiring woman who had to go through the hardships of being an immigrant woman coming from Mexico. As a hardworking mother of three, her motivation is her family, especially her children and aunts. She has inspired many, especially me, her firstborn daughter. The story of her life before and after Mexico will be expressed as what she has had to endure in her life.

Bright Start in Mexico

Sol was a young, bright girl in Mexico. Sol had grown up in Morelos, Mexico, and eventually moved to Guerrero, Mexico, before coming to the United States. She would get into all sorts of trouble because of her curiosity. She was eager to learn about the world through school and real-life lessons. Her childhood was full of fun memories of her trouble-making with her cousins and brothers. Her childhood was cut short when both of her parents left for the United States of America for good. She wasn't aware they wouldn't come back to raise her and her brothers. Both her father and mother had gone to the US and always came back, they would usually go to work to bring more money. Sol remembers, "Tal vez tendrías paz o tal vez te sentirías libre, pero económicamente no tenías suficientes recursos pero al menos eras feliz." (Maybe you'd have peace or maybe you felt free, but economically you did not have enough resources, besides that you were happy.)

She loved her life in Mexico, she was free, but economically, her family was not. When her parents left, she had to drop out of school to care for and provide for her brothers. Her youngest brother was two years old, all her time was ripped away. Sol had to stay with her grandparents in Morelos, Mexico, but that didn't mean they

were taking care of her. They provided food and a roof over their heads while my mother had to take care of herself and her brothers with the very little money her mom or her dad would send them. She states, "Hacia mis tareas domésticas, limpiaba la casa, cuidaba a mi hermano, a veces trabajaba en el campo." (I did my housework, cleaned the house, took care of my brother, and sometimes I worked in the field.) Eventually, Sol's other grandparents decided she and her brothers would move in with them Sol's uncle picked them up from Morelos to Guerrero, Mexico.

From The City to Country Life

Guerrero, Mexico was a big difference to my mom, she had moved from the city to the country. She had met my grandma from my dad's side and quickly became friends with her. Others may have thought it was strange for a teenage girl to be friends with an older woman, but my mom had always found my grandmother comforting. Sol was growing up quickly alongside her brothers, she had received help raising her brothers from her grandparents. She had felt that they became her parents, she preferred to call them Mama and Nachito. Sol remembers getting punished for misbehaving and doing things she shouldn't have done.

My mom met my dad in 1995, through my grandma (dad's side) because she would sell farm goods. My dad was first interested in her, but because he would travel to the U.S. often, my mom wasn't as interested. Eventually, my mom began to fall in love as they got to know each other and they were married in 2002 in Mexico.

New Independence in America

My mother did not want to migrate at first, my father had to convince her. Before she crossed, my father had experienced crossing the border a few times prior.

After a few months of marriage and lots of convincing, she thought it might be beneficial. According to Sol, "Porque quería tener un mejor futuro para mis hijos, porque quería una mejor vida." (Because I wanted a better future for my kids and better life.) My



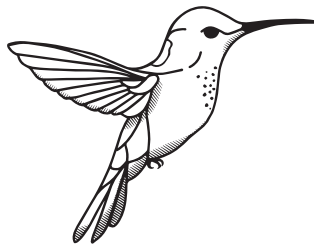
parents had crossed with a few other people in a white van. She remembers a pregnant woman in the front and a man sitting in the front while she and a few others hid in the back. She claims she was scared at first, but when arriving in the United States, she got excited and liked what she saw. My parents crossed on July, 4th 2003, and the first thing my mom experienced in the U.S. was eating a Jack In The Box burger. She claims it was the best burger in her life, and she had witnessed her first Fourth of July fireworks. Sometimes Sol wanted to go back to Mexico, but she would remind herself why she was there. She reunited with her family fairly quickly, most of her family had already crossed before her. “Nunca me gustó la Navidad aquí... Me gusta la cultura de

Estados Unidos y la respeto y me adapté a la cultura.”(I never liked Christmas here... I like the culture of the United States, and I respect it, and I adapted to the culture.) She says Christmas is celebrated better in Mexico, and I hope one day she can experience that again. My parents had their first child two years after they crossed for good. My mom had begun to build her family and worked hard from the beginning.

After I had turned two months old, she decided to go back to work to help support our small family. She says she regrets working so early because she missed out on those special baby milestones. Sol now takes her time with creating memories with her children even if it means to travel to Arizona or get amusement tickets when money is tight. Sol only wants the best for her children and strives to give them the best parent-child bond. My mom has been through it all, but none of that stopped her. She has inspired me to continue my education and to advocate for those who want a better life. Everyone deserves a chance to achieve their dreams. My mother sacrificed her life for an idea that might not be achievable, yet she accomplished something many can't. This is why I need to study hard and get my nursing degree. I want to accomplish something for my community and for my mother. I don't want her to regret coming to the United States, I want her to see it was all worth the trouble.

About Our Contributor

Diana Bahena is currently majoring in Nursing to transfer to a university. Diana chose to share the story of her mother, an inspirational woman who endured and preserved to be where she is now.



The Journal Committee

2023-2024



“Un Beso en mi Mano”

Ana Hernandez

Abstract:

This is a story of a young woman that migrated from El Salvador to the United States by the name of Francia. The story shares the decisions Francia had to make as a mother and her experience when she crossed the U.S./Mexico border. Then it shares the experience of living in San Francisco and returning back to El Salvador.

Introduction

A woman with light brown freckles, a soft smile, and eyes longing for a place of peace grew up within the landscapes of the country of El Salvador. It was the year of 1988. A young woman named Francia Veronica Ortiz, a simple woman who worked on the farm, planting beans and corn, would be lucky enough not to have the job of collecting wood. Francia was humble and appreciated all the love she received from a single plate of food because she knew there were days when she would have absolutely nothing. Living in poverty took a massive toll on her and her family; she was not able to participate in any sports or other fun activities due to her rugged old clothes and lack of money. Then, a man came into her life when Francia was only sixteen, giving her the chance for riches and love.

What's the man's name? Well, it is not his story but Francia's. She married the man not for love but to have a place to sleep and eat; she could not handle another day of living so lowly of others; she took this as a chance for a happy and peaceful life. Sadly, this was not the case in her story; she faced physical and verbal abuse throughout the relationship. She did not have the cliché teenage love story that most teens had; that is how her teenagers started and ended: abuse day by day throughout the years. Francia, within the marriage, conceived two children named Yohana and Roberto, thinking it would help the broken marriage, but the abuse continued either way. Her fate felt written already; she was going to die at the hands of her beloved husband.

Being a Mother

That is her fate? Is that how things were going to end? Well, things continued for the worse, day by day, suffering at the hands of abuse only to fulfill the needs of her children to survive. One day, a woman came to Francia with an opportunity that could change her life. “I have a daughter in need of babysitting,” the woman said. The woman had a daughter in the United States; her daughter struggled to find a babysitter and couldn't work. The woman encouraged Francia to go and accept the job; it also came in living with the family and, who knows, starting a whole new life. Francia saw this as an opportunity to make more money for her children instead of providing for them with punches and words thrown at her face. Family and friends also encouraged her, but what about the kids?

Yohana and Roberto were only six and one years old, and although it felt like her heart was being pulled apart, she needed to survive for her kids; she deserved a future, a purpose, a life. She needed to act fast; she needed the plan to cross the border, keep her children safe, and, most importantly, not die. Francia knew that if her husband found out about her plan, Francia would face death once again, and her story would be over. Days passed, and she decided to prepare to leave El Salvador, take the opportunity to go to the United States, and accept a job that would help her provide for herself and her kids.

To her luck, within those days, her husband was arrested for running someone over; she took this as an opportunity to make a run for it and leave as soon as possible since she did not know how long he would be in prison. Francia said her heartfelt goodbyes to her children and left them in the hands of her mother and the rest of the family. It was bittersweet; seeing the faces of her children, one last felt like no other pain; not even the pain that she endured in her abusive relationship can compare. Francia aimed to escape death and provide for her children independently. During prison, he found out she was heading to the United States and claimed



Fig. 1 Francia Veronica Ortiz at 26 years old

that she would find her, and once he did, he would kill her. Even though she felt the target behind her back, she continued with her mission and still went through the plan of crossing; she was a new woman that day who saw a future within her eyes. It was the day of August 29, 1996; Francia was now twenty-six years old, and on that day, she set on her journey to the United States. Her first step was to get into a bus that led her from El Salvador to Guatemala. Once she arrived in Guatemala, it took three days to get to Mexico. During the three days, she switched to sleeping in a hotel or a nearby park to rest. Finally, she got to Mexico; the river to cross to the United States was in a condition that if anyone tried going across, they would drown and die. Francia and the other individuals she was with decided to sit it out and wait for the currents to calm down to cross; it took three days for that to happen.

Crossing the Desert

Thankfully, she and the others crossed safely; they started walking day and night to reach the border wall quicker because of the three days waiting for the river to calm down. During the walk, she had to consume dirty water found anywhere to stay hydrated, but she had no food and had no luck finding it either. The hot desert clung to the ones that walked past it; Francia and the others kept hiding from helicopters that flew around to find any individuals trying to cross. Then she saw it, the border wall that led to the state of Texas; her goal was to get over the wall and look for a vehicle that was ready to pick up any immigrants and take them over to safety; of course, they had to

pay their fair share of money to receive that help. Francia did just that: she successfully went over the wall, got into the vehicle, and headed to her new home, her new future.

Arriving to San Francisco

Where do we go now?

“San Francisco”, she said. The daughter of the lady who offered the job to Francia was in San Francisco, so that is where she needed to go. Finally, on September 19, 1996, she arrived in San Francisco, California. The first time she saw a glimpse of San Francisco, she listened to “Hotel California” by the Eagles beneath the car window. Humming the tune, she felt it was her entrance song to the big city. It was the first song she had ever heard while being in the United States; she remembered the repeated car ride to San Francisco when she listened to the tune. Her babysitting career was seven days a week and almost twenty-four hours a day; the parents rarely even saw the children. The babysitting job only lasted seven months. So soon? Well, it turned out that the daughter had offered another type of job to Francia: prostitution. It was sickening; it felt as if she had to give up her body to pain all over again to survive.

Coming to The United States was supposed to be a different path and a future she deserved. Refusing, she decided to move on and find another job. “Where am I going to go now?” she said. Unexpectedly, she met this couple. They were acquaintances with the woman Francia worked for; they knew she had a bad reputation for mistreatment towards people who worked for her or even acquaintances. They asked her if she had been experiencing issues with the lady she

was working with, and Francia hesitated to answer; for all we know, this could have been a trap. She ended up caving and telling the truth, being constantly offered the job of prostitution, and having limited access to reaching out to her family was too much, and she needed a way out. In their hearts, they had this calling to help Francia; they did not know what it was; they could have ignored the situation and gone about their day, but no. The kind couple provided their house as a place to stay and offered to join in the job of cleaning houses, and for extra cash, she took care of the couple's children during the weekend. The names of the individuals who helped her start her journey were Nora and Neftali Ayala. She will never forget those names, for those who are the people who practically saved her from falling into the path of pain and deception the United States also had in their country of dreams and freedom.

Four years have passed, and Francia is still living in Nora and Neftali's home and still has the same job; she sent money to provide for her Yohana and Roberto, who were back in El Salvador. One day, she had free time to shop to get new clothes. Once there, she glanced at a guy who seemed to be staring at her for an extended period. Francia was a little confused, and she didn't know whether the man was interested in her or just a man bothering women around the store. The man was interested in Francia and asked her out; she didn't see any harm in it and said yes. The lucky fellow who took Francia on a date was named William Hernandez. Through time, they started a relationship, and she received gifts and the luxury she hadn't ever had before. Although she seemed happy in the relationship, her heart still ached for her children; she always kept in contact with them and sent enough money to provide for them. Francia knew she deserved happiness. She tried to enjoy life as much as possible, even through the pain. Francia fell in love with William, and their relationship continued. Years passed, and it was 2004. "I'm pregnant", Francia said. Francia was pregnant with William's child. It was another bittersweet moment; it felt like a gift, but she couldn't but feel guilt because of the single thought of her remembering her two other kids back at home. "I hope it's a boy," William said. It turned out he also had a separate child, a daughter, with an ex-partner. Months later,

the day came. Francia and William were working delivering packages as a job. She worked while Francia was pregnant and almost ready to have a baby. They reached the second-to-last destination to drop off packages, and suddenly, Francia was about to give birth. Her guilt consumed her, and she still wanted to finish the job instead of going to the hospital, but William noticed her in pain, and liquid started strolling down her legs. "We need to go now," William said. Once she arrived at the hospital, the baby was already coming out; she gave birth quickly to the baby, and a girl was born.

William was upset; he wanted a boy and had a grudge for not being a boy, but he ended up complying and dealing with it. They both named her Ana Yasmine Hernandez after William's mother. It was all well; Francia started a new story, began living with her beautiful family, and still provided for her children in El Salvador.

Overcoming Violence

Then it started, the luck disappeared in Francia's beautiful family and home, and William began to verbally and physically abuse her. It worsened over the years, with black eyes and bruises all over her body; her daughter Ana saw it all. She saw the abuse and experienced abuse herself at a young age. Where was Francia going to go? William was her only resource, and she felt guilty to go back to living with the couple because it wasn't only her and her daughter. Years passed, and it is now 2008, "I'm pregnant again," Francia said. Her daughter Ana was now six years old, and with a baby on the way, she feared William's reaction to her pregnancy. William saw it as a good opportunity, he had another chance of getting a son, and his only goal was to get a boy. Francia prayed her whole pregnancy for her child to be a boy; maybe this could've been the chance William would change and stop the abuse once he knew he would have a son. Her prayers came true; she gave birth to a baby boy. William was in awe of his son and never felt happier. The son's name was William Samuel Hernandez. The abuse stopped, and the future years within the family started to bloom again; Francia decided to push away her emotions and forget the abuse because of how in love she was with William.

Since the birth of her son William, she has been a stay-at-home mother without

having the trouble to work because her husband preferred it that way. Throughout the years, she saw her children grow and still worked a little to send money to her other children. The year 2014 came along. Ana was ten years old, and little William was five. Francia's now husband, William, has been helping her get a chance to receive papers to see her children from El Salvador. In that year, 2014, they finally made a move to buy plane tickets to El Salvador. It was nerve-racking for her because of how much time had passed since she saw Yohana and Roberto. They were only six and one years old. Yohana and Roberto grew up to be adults when she saw them again. Yohana was twenty-three years old, and Roberto was eighteen. They loved Francia even though they missed the part of growing up with her, being made fun of by their mom for leaving them from their own family. They did not stop loving her. They knew her reasons since she always kept in contact with them.

Returning to El Salvador

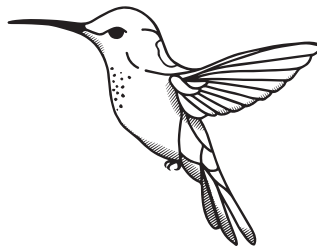
In March 2014, Francia flew to El Salvador with her family. It was a five-hour flight, and they got tickets to board the plane at night and arrive in El Salvador in the morning. This was Francia's first time being on a plane, she was scared but excited to see her children all together. "Bienvenido a El Salvador", said the captain. Francia's stomach turned with nervousness. She didn't want to panic, but it was like an adrenaline rush of how much excitement she was experiencing. Everyone got their carry-on luggage and headed to the gate where the other luggage was. Her daughter Ana helped with most of finding the gate and luggage. She was Francia's little translator since she never ended up learning English while being in the United States. The family went through the luggage and then off to immigration. It was intimidating; Their faces were stern, and by the tone of their voice, they just wanted them to leave sight

to get to the following individual.

The hot, humid air, the smell of the rainforest, the sound was echoing in her head. She was home, El Salvador. She knew her family was among them when she headed to another gate for the waiting families to pick up their loved ones from the airport. Francia took a step out the gate. So many people felt like they were on the red carpet. Individuals shouted their loved one's names with posters and flowers. Then everything went in slow motion. Francia stopped and saw two beautiful freckled individuals with curly hair and eyes that longed for their mother's presence, Yohana, twenty-three years old, and Roberto, eighteen. She ran, they ran, and they embraced with so much joy and heartache. "Mami!" Yohana and Roberto cried out. Francia was complete. She got the other part of her heart back. Francia hugged Yohana, Roberto, Ana, and William hugged in a group and sobbed. She kissed every one of their hands, in the palm, to be exact. "Hay mami tengo un beso en mi mano", said Ana. Francia laughed and promised to continually kiss them in their hand, a special connection to her children. Francia always saw herself as a mother, not a woman, but a mother, driven by the love of her children, which made it possible to be with all four of them together.

Conclusion

Immigrants don't always have a happy ending. With years passing, she divorced William Hernandez, due to his infidelity, and that trip of March 2014 was the last time she saw all her four children together. Life isn't a fairytale, but individuals strive for that moment of happiness that makes up for all the pain they have encountered. A woman with brown freckles, curly hair, and eyes that have longed for joy. She strived for her children, survival, and the "American Dream". Francia Veronica Ortiz was her name.



Forming An Identity When Faced With Anti-Latinx Racism

Brooke MacDonald

Abstract:

Throughout the past semester, I have had the immense opportunity to learn more about the experiences of Latin American people within the context of United States history. Taking this course has shown me the importance of oral history and knowing the experiences of real people. It is crucial to listen to these stories and understand how events, concepts, and ideals shape the way we live and are treated. I decided to sit down and talk with one of my closest friends, twenty-two-year-old Alexandra Carlos. She has been kind enough to share her story of living in the U.S. as a Mexican-American Woman. I am honored to share her story as she highlights the discrimination that millions face every day but also shows that finding oneself and establishing an identity is essential despite the pushback that is commonly faced. Ethnicity plays a direct role in shaping the experience of Latin Americans in the United States through the racism that they encounter and the sense of belonging that they have created with their shared identity.

Introduction

Throughout Alex's life, she can recall many moments where anti-Latinx ideas have been presented to her and have impacted her living experience. Alex grew up in Kansas and lived in a town that had a majority of Black and Latino people. When she was thirteen, she moved to San Clemente, California. Moving to a place where a majority of White people exposed Alex to a much different environment. She explained that one of the most shocking examples of racism that she experienced was when Donald Trump won the presidential election in 2016.

Alex: "There was a time during my sophomore year of high school, whenever Trump won the presidency, I was called a Wetback. That was probably the most jarring." Using the term "Wetback" as a

derogatory term dates back to the post-World War II era. In 1954, thousands of people of Mexican descent were deported under Operation Wetback, a plan that targeted Mexicans and blamed them for low wages in the Southwest as well as social ills throughout the country. This mass deportation was a scheme that found its roots in the idea of a "Latino Threat." During the postwar era, those of Latin American descent were accused of being destructive to American society. They were painted as criminals and detrimental to the workforce/economy. And this unwelcoming fear of Latinx people still exists seventy years later. Using a term such as "Wetback" shows the disparity amongst those of Mexican descent and the continued idea that they are detrimental to a functioning society. The feeling of being unwelcome and not belonging is constantly pushed into their faces. These racist ideas have been embedded in our country for decades, and they continue to affect Latinx people like Alex today.

Anti-Latinx Racism

The racism Alex faced did not only come from ordinary people but from our political leaders as well. She was very vocal about her experience during the Trump presidency. She specifically mentioned the discrimination she faced after one of Trump's speeches that generalized Mexicans and immigrants as criminals, rapists, murderers, drug lords, etc. She stated that the negative connotations made about her ethnicity made her feel shunned, and angry that she was thought of this way. Trump's speech is an example that can be connected to two certain concepts: racist nativism and politics of fear. Racist nativism in the 21st century is heavily influenced by the media, policies, and politicians. It uses rhetoric and false notions about nonwhite people to explain that they are not native and do not belong to a national entity.



Politics of fear also holds the idea that immigrants are the problem, that they use all the resources, and that they are criminals. Trump's speech and language used about Latin Americans were a direct use of politics of fear, creating the image that they pose a threat to the country. The way the media portrayed immigrants and those of Latin American descent also contributed directly to the rise of racist nativism. People became convinced through Trump's words and what they saw in the news and online that Latin Americans bring crime and destruction to the U.S. They became convinced that Latin Americans do not belong.

Alex faced microaggressions and comments from peers as well as total strangers that made her feel like an unwelcome foreigner. On multiple occasions people have made sly remarks at her such as mockingly sounding out words to her face, assuming that she didn't speak English. She was not alone in this experience as Latin American people all over the country had to face this discrimination and rejection in a place that should feel like home. Despite all of the racism that Alex has experienced here in the U.S., she does not let it define her identity. She does not allow racist remarks or political values to make her feel ashamed of her ethnicity. However, it has taken her some time to achieve this self-confidence and acknowledges that she has felt inferior to others in America before.

Alex: "But the negatives can sometimes outweigh the positives. I think my grandparents being immigrants put our family at 0% if that makes sense, I guess I'm trying to say instead of being established like the majority of White Americans, we are barely just starting to build up." Alex emphasizes that she feels that she has had to start from the bottom to live comfortably

in this country, while she has observed that many White Americans get a head start. Coming from a family of immigrants, Alex knows that her life has been different than many Americans. She knows that being Latinx has affected the way she lives and is treated, but over time she has learned to appreciate her background and her character.

Being Proud of my Identity

One of the ways that Alex has become proud of her identity is through Latinx representation in schools. She is extremely grateful for the educational and personal opportunities that many institutes offer to Latin American students. However, the rightful recognition that these students receive today has a long history of action behind it. According to The Chicano and Chicana Movement, actions such as the first national Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in 1969, sponsored by the Crusade for Justice, allowed Mexican-American youth and students to fight against injustices that ultimately "reflected the persistence of broader social, economic, and political inequalities." This event was for more than just educational reform and social justice, as it also demanded to be recognized and appreciated for their Latinx identities; "For Chicanos and Chicanas, their ethnicity was a source of empowerment and pride and not a deficit." Chicano/a youth were tired of being underrepresented in America, and they made the nation aware that their identity was a strength, not a weakness. Their ethnic backgrounds were a way to form a sense of belonging.

Today, there are a variety of different programs that can provide help to Latinx students and aid them in obtaining financial help, scholarships, mental health resources, job opportunities, exposure to new communities, and much more. All of these resources provide a sense of belonging and a community for many Latinx students. Alex made it a main point to acknowledge how her ethnicity is recognized in her life, and how she can proudly claim her Latinx identity. Millions of Mexican-Americans and other Latinx people across the nation can have pride because of how communities have been able to create environments of empowerment.

Alex has also been able to grow into her identity by connecting with others and

actively indulging in her culture. The feeling of recognizing other Latinos by engaging in cultural practices allows ethnic pride to shine through. A great example of this unification is when Selena passed away, and people were able to create a proud image of what it meant to be Mexican-American; “I think of Selena like this vanguard, who gave us a visual language, a way to spot each other. Like Emily, Selena’s death made me realize there were so many more people like me. It was the first time I experienced solidarity, like I was part of something



bigger than myself, like I wasn’t alone. Like we will never be alone” (Anything For Selena: The Birth of A Symbol). Through people like Selena, public images and meanings can form and bring Latinx people together. Connecting through culture is a feeling of solidarity that is special to Latinx identities. Having a community that will always be there for you allows people to be proud of who they are and what their background is. It allows the capability not only to have identities that are unique to each individual, but that can also be empathized with so many others. For Alex, this is the most valuable thing she has learned throughout her experience of being Mexican-American.

Being Latina

Alex: “I love being Latina. I used to be really ashamed for years, but honestly, I think that’s a right of passage when you’re brown. I am in my 20s now and I have learned to appreciate who I am instead of listening to those people. I am grateful for my traditions and the way the people before me weren’t afraid or ashamed. I love the food I eat regularly. I love to speak Spanish. I like how being Latinx has allowed me to open several doors as well as several different perspectives.”

Alex has been able to establish an identity that takes no shame in being Latin American but instead relishes in it. She has learned to love and appreciate every aspect

of who she is. She not only loves how her identity makes her unique but also how she is welcomed in a community of countless other Latinx people who have similar perspectives.



Conclusion

The experience of Latin American people in the United States is unlike any other. The racism faced through ideas like the Latino threat narrative, racist nativism, and politics of fear influences the lives of millions everyday. But the Latinx people who have experienced this type of discrimination have been able to continually come together to ensure that their meaningful presence is heard and understood. Alexandra Carlos has shared her experience of racism in the U.S., and how she has not let it determine her purpose in her own life. Now in her twenties, she has learned to love her Latin American background, appreciate her culture, and connect with others with similar experiences. It is imperative to understand the history and the context in which these experiences have been lived to grow and evolve as a society. Alex’s final thoughts during our interview was this important message: “Don’t be ignorant. See color and understand it.” Every individual has a unique story, and each one is worth listening to.



Wasps

Author and Photographer's pseudonym: milkteaseccy

The wasps bare their teeth, but we do little to disturb them. We are sitting on the porch,

eating chips and

the world

The flowers

time of year

the wasps

angry figures.

their hollow

the last,



iced tea, while

unfurls around us.

are blooming this

but all we focus on is

with their sleek,

They crawl out of

nest, each as deadly as

and we can't look

away.

They are dangerous, and we love to see things we don't want to see.



Shared Desitnation, Divided Paths

Leonor Flores Diaz

Abstract

This oral history captures the experiences of two individuals who have immigrated to the United States together and separately, focusing on their experiences, challenges, and victories in navigating the complexity of relocation. Their stories enlighten multiple dimensions of immigration, the hopes and dreams that push individuals to seek a new beginning, the obstacles they face, and the determination that supports them in the face of hardship. The stories of these two people serve as a testament to the enduring human essence and the power of resilience in the face of change, with the hope of having a deeper appreciation for their culture and experiences that unite us all, transcending beyond the borders and boundaries.

Queta's Interview

Our first interviewee, whom, for privacy reasons, we will call Queta. She had the option to answer the answers in whatever language she decided and felt more comfortable. She chose English.

Interviewer: Tell me about the circumstances that led to the decision to move to the United States.

Queta: My family and I are citizens of the United States; we have dual citizenship. As my girls got older, and so did my son, I decided that they would benefit from an education, and so did my son; since he has autism, I knew that there would be more options for him, so the whole family moved up.

Interviewer: What were your expectations or hopes for your life in the United States before you moved.

Queta: My hope was for my girls to have an international experience; when they were growing up, I ensured they would grow up bilingual, and I wanted them to have the best of both worlds. The first part of their lives they lived in Mexico, and I wanted them to have better opportunities. Yes! There

were some considerations that I did not think about, like the residence. It was too expensive, but they are both thriving, and I am very pleased with that.

Interviewer: Tell me some of the biggest challenges she faced while relocating to the United States.

Queta: Finding the resources for my son. As mentioned before, one of the biggest reasons why I moved was to give more opportunities to my son. In this situation, my girls live in California, and I live in Washington. The place where I am is a very small town, and the resources are very limited, so that has been one of the biggest challenges, and it still is.

Interviewer: Please share any memorable or



significant moments from your early days in the United States.

Queta: My girls went to the United States first. The second time with my son was when I was finally able to sit down after very long conversations and difficulties with bureaucracy when I was able to sit down with the IEP (Individual Education Program) for my son and when I saw the team so engaged with my son's needs; it was not easy, but that is probably one of the most memorable because that's what I came for. To seek and have the opportunities that I wanted for him.

Interviewer: How did you establish yourself in the new community and build a support network?

Queta: In my case, as I came to the United States already with an education, an

International Education from the University of London, and it was already validated by the international Certification here in the United States, I was able to apply to the University, and I am currently working as a retention counselor at the University of Washington State, thanks to my international education.”

Interviewer: Mentioning that you grew up in



a bilingual and bicultural family, what role did the language barrier play in your experience of moving to the United States?

Queta: Yes, language is still a barrier because even though I speak English, I must admit I speak academic English even though I have been educated in English. The language has evolved, and I wasn't here in the country for many years, so trying to learn the lingo and all the jargon at university has been challenging. There are many expectations, especially using acronyms and things that are assumed that we international workers, in this case, international staff, know; it is too much assumed. That is still a struggle. Sometimes, it is still embarrassing, but I just have to ask for idiomatic expressions and things like that. So yes, the language is an important part of the shock. Definitely.

Interviewer: How have you adapted to the educational or professional systems in the United States?

Queta: It has been difficult and challenging because my education was first in Mexico, then in the United States in high school, and part of my college years. Then I studied in England as a resident of London, and then I studied in Canada. So, I was very aware of all those systems; I thought that I knew what the education system was, but there were many subcultures within the university that it's very important to learn how to navigate. You know all the professional systems, all the connections; I don't belong to any sororities

because I didn't graduate here in the United States, and that sometimes can take a toll as you work in the university system.

Interviewer: Having experienced US immigration multiple times, have you experienced discrimination or prejudice as an immigrant in the United States.

Queta: Yes, I think that we all have encountered it. Sometimes, you don't even know if it's discrimination or just personality, but unfortunately, yes, I have encountered it. Not so much. I am currently working at a predominately white institution, PWI, but interestingly enough, most of the ethical barriers have been within other minorities; it makes it feel like a competition. It has been tough. I have had some encounters, especially with doctors, but not so strong as with other members of the community. Here at the institution, they call it student



or staff of color. It has been within the staff of color that those differences are made.

Interviewer: How has your identity or sense of self evolved since moving to the United States?

Queta: I was very aware of who I am, you know, since I came as a Mexican with dual citizenship born from an American mother and Mexican father, and very bicultural, as I mentioned before, but the sense of self can always be doubting depending on the environment. Right now, when I was labeled as staff of color, it was very difficult for me because I was never labeled, so I learned not to let it bother me, but at some point, I felt that just that term, instead of including us, it reminded me that I was part of this section, you know, a minority. At the end of the day, it's just terms, it's just terms.

Interviewer: Have you faced any cultural differences and how do you manage yourself, being from Mexico but currently living in the United States.

Queta: I grew up five to six years of my life as a student in California, so my family is

very bilingual and bicultural, so in many respects, I didn't confront any cultural shock personally. For my girls and my boy, it's a different story, but I do not want to speak for them.

Interviewer: What stories or traditions from your home country do you maintain or adapt to the United States?.

Queta: As much as possible, we try to keep the Christmas traditions. We have our *posadas**; the Mexican culture is very embedded with the catholic faith, which is my faith as well, so most of the traditions we have really struggled with, but I would like to



maintain are the traditions from Christmas. We try to, but it's a bit difficult. Also, the most difficult one for me recently was Lent* and Good Friday* where we celebrate the passion of Christ. Culture and spirituality have been difficult for me because I have to come to work on the days that I consider sacred. Obviously, I had to comply with my job, but it was shocking and incredibly difficult for me to do.

Interviewer: What do you consider to be a rewarding experience or opportunity due to moving to the United States?.

Queta: I have grown professionally as a retention counselor for the Latinx community. That has helped me share my roots and help other people be proud of their roots, to help them realize that the roots are very strong; there is no stigma but identity. The fact that I have been able to make many of my students aware of that has been one of my important accomplishments.

Interviewer: Looking back, what advice would you give someone considering moving to the United States?

Queta: Ouch! I know many stories, difficult stories, of immigrants, and I know that immigration is always difficult, no matter the process. It is very difficult for me to advise as I don't have the typical immigrant story of the majority of the people that I work with. But my advice would be to come with an open mind and heart. You will encounter many, many differences, and that's when the open mind comes in, but be able to confront that with a willing heart to accept the differences and even though you don't need to conform with some of the cultural stereotypes and issues based on race. Acceptance is a big part of a willing heart because we have no right to impose ourselves. Also, do not let other people impose their beliefs on us.



Elo's Interview

Our next interviewee: for privacy reasons we will call Elo. He had the option to answer the answers with whatever language he decided and felt more comfortable, he chose Spanish. The answers have been translated to English.

Interviewer: What circumstances led to the decision to move to the United States?

Elo: *Quando me casé por primera vez, mi primera esposa era ciudadana americana. Ella me ofreció muchas veces el darme la nacionalidad por matrimonio, pero yo siempre me negué a ello, pero me dejé convencer por la residencia legal. Durante los primeros diez años de residente la utilicé para cruzar la frontera una sola vez, y al término del primer período apliqué entonces por la naturalización, pero me fue negada porque de hecho no había utilizado el primer período para venir a los Estados Unidos. Sin embargo pude renovarla por otros diez años. Durante este segundo periodo me divorcié de ella y conocí a una persona que me invitó a venir a trabajar con él, dado que yo contaba con papeles para cruzar y*

trabajar legalmente en este país. Así, debido a que en mi país México no podía encontrar un trabajo estable debido a que ahí al momento de cumplir 35 años, las empresas no quieren contratarte, fue que empecé a trabajar con esta persona dos o tres veces al año, durante ocho años ya.

When I married the first time, my wife at the time had the American citizenship. She offered many times the opportunity to get the nationality through our marriage, but I always said no. I agreed to obtaining legal residency. During the first ten years of my residency, I only used it once and before my ten-period ended, I applied for the naturalization, but it was denied because I didn't have the first period to travel to the United States. However, I was able to renew it for another ten years. During my second time, we got a divorce, and I met a person that offered me the opportunity to work, because I had papers to cross the border and I was able to legally work in this country. In my country, Mexico, I was not able to find a stable job because once you turn thirty-five, the companies do not want to hire you. That's when I started to work for that person two to three times a year. It's been eight years now.

Interviewer: What were your expectations and hopes before moving to the U.S.?

Elo: *En realidad mis expectativas no eran muchas, dado que yo solamente conocía un poco de California y un pedazo de El Paso, nada más. Vine a trabajar a Arizona y he tenido la fortuna de conocer otros lugares que, ahora me han ampliado más mis expectativas de vida.*

I had not that many expectations because I only knew a bit of California and El Paso, I only came to work in Arizona and I was lucky to go and know other places, that now have opened my expectations of life.

Interviewer: What were your initial impressions and experiences upon arriving in the United States?

Elo: *La primera vez que vine a este país fue como turista. Para mí fue un choque cultural porque no conocía nada de aquí, excepto por la televisión o el cine. Ver la diferencia tan notable en la frontera entre El Paso y Ciudad Juárez fue como ver dos mundos diferentes separados por una valla. La limpieza de las calles en Estados Unidos, las casas, los autos, las carreteras, etc. Todo es muy diferente a como es en México.*

The first time I came to this country (US) was as a tourist. For me, it was a cultural shock because I knew nothing about this place besides what I have seen on TV or movies. To see the noticeable differences in the border between El Paso and Ciudad Juárez was like looking at two different worlds separated by a fence. The streets being clean in the United States, the houses, the cars, the streets, etc. Everything was completely different compared to Mexico.



Interviewer: What were some of the biggest challenges, if any, that you faced during the process of relocating to the United States, specifically, your experience of Arizona?

Elo: *Primero, la soledad. Aquí estoy solo. Mi familia está en México y mis hijos están lejos de mí. No puedo decir que el idioma, porque hablo inglés fluidamente, sin embargo, también he enfrentado casos de discriminación por mi color de piel.*

For starters the loneliness. Here I am alone. My family is in Mexico, my son and daughters are far away from me. I cannot say that the language is one, because I am fluent in English, nevertheless, I also had to face some cases of discrimination because of the color of my skin.

Interviewer: Because of those challenges, how did you navigate the cultural differences between your home country and the United States?

Elo: *Podría decirse que simplemente me dejé llevar. Afortunadamente he tenido la suerte de viajar mucho, tanto dentro de México como a otros países, antes de establecerme aquí, por lo que el choque cultural no fue tan difícil de sobrepasar.*

It could be said that I simply allowed myself to let go. Fortunately, I had such good luck because I've been able to travel as much as I have, in Mexico and in other countries, before finally establishing myself here, which allowed me to not have a big cultural shock by the time I made that decision.

Interviewer: Please share a memorable or significant moment from your early days in the United States.

Elo: *Uff, bueno. Han habido varios, sin embargo, la primera vez que vine a este país, cuando lo visité por trabajo la primera vez, esto fue en la ciudad de Nueva York. Yo tenía la impresión de que los Neoyorkinos eran personas groseras, ásperas, rudas... Sin embargo me encontré con personas muy amables, sensibles y fuertes.*

Well. There's been plenty. When I came to this country because of work for the first



time, was in New York. I had the impression that the people there were extremely rude, rough and harsh. I found them to be sensible, strong and kind.

Interviewer: How did you go about establishing yourself in your new community and building a support network in the US?

Elo: *No soy parte de ninguna comunidad, o al menos no me siento parte de ninguna. Por mi trabajo paso la mayor parte del tiempo en Quartzsite, AZ, un pequeño pueblo donde la población es muy pequeña y no me inspiran ninguna confianza para crear lazos aquí. Sin embargo, puedo decir que, si bien no cuento con muy buenos amigos, al menos conozco a varias personas en otros lados, como Sedona o Phoenix, con quienes llevó una buena relación.*

I do not belong to any community, or at least I didn't feel like I do. Because of my work I spend most of my time in Quartzite, AZ, a small town with a small population. I don't trust them enough to build a connection with them. I can say that even though I don't have that many friends, I do know many people in other places, like Sedona or Phoenix, with whom I do have a connection.

Interviewer: Even though you are fluent in English, do you still find any kind of language barriers that have affected your experience in the US?

Elo: *Como mencioné antes, hablo el idioma*

fluidamente; sin embargo, mi conocimiento del idioma era más bien tecnológico y no coloquial, por ejemplo, para descargar un camión de mercancía yo solía decir "download" en lugar de "unload" pues mi perfil escolar es Ingeniero en Sistemas Computacionales. Algunos errores de comprensión como tratar de usar la palabra "stuff" en plural (stuffs) y cosas así. Sigo aprendiendo día a día, pues existen modismos que no alican al idioma español y que son comunes aquí.

As I mentioned before, I speak fluent English, but I do recognize that my knowledge is more technical and not colloquial. For example, to unload the merchandise of the truck I would say download instead of unload, since my academic knowledge is based as an engineer in computer science. A few other errors based on comprehension like trying to use the word stuff in plural, which would be "stuffs". I am still learning every day; there are many words that exactly apply to the Spanish language that are common over here.

Interviewer: Please discuss any experiences of discrimination or prejudice that you have encountered as an immigrant in the United States.



Elo: *He tenido experiencias con personas que, al ver mi color moreno, deciden de una manera muy grosera que no quieren que yo les atienda en nuestras ventas, y que prefieren que alguien más lo haga.*

I have had experiences with people who after seeing the brown color of my skin, they act and decide in a very rude way that they do not want me to help them out, but rather receive help from someone else.

Interviewer: How has your identity or sense of self-evolved since moving to the United States?

Elo: *Me he vuelto más retraído hacia mí mismo, dado que estoy mucho tiempo solo, sin nadie con quien hablar. Mi esposa está en México, mis hijos*

lejos, mi madre igual, así que, aunque existe la tecnología que me acerca a ellos, al final del día soy solamente yo conmigo.

I have become more withdrawn within myself, since I am alone most of the time, with no one to talk to. My wife is in Mexico, my children are far away, my mother is the same. Although there is technology that brings me closer to them, at the end of the day it is just me, myself, and I.

Interviewer: Can you share any stories or traditions from your home country that you have maintained or adapted in the United States?

Elo: *Quisiera poder hacerlo, pero no he podido adaptar tradiciones de mi país aquí, sin embargo, he tratado de mantener al menos algún espíritu gastronómico lo más cercano a lo que solía cocinar o comer en México, dada la dificultad de conseguir ingredientes iguales. En ocasiones me preparo enchiladas lo más parecidas al sabor de allá.*

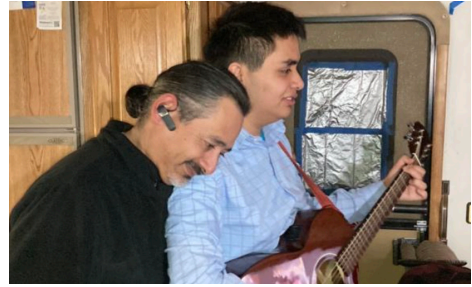
I would love to be able to do it, but I have not been able to adapt traditions from my country here. I have tried to maintain at least a bit of the gastronomic spirit as close to me as I can to what I used to cook or eat in Mexico. It is difficult to find the same ingredients. Sometimes I prepare myself enchiladas that are as close to the flavor as possible.

Interviewer: What are some of the greatest rewards or opportunities you have experienced as a result of moving to the United States?

Elo: *En el año 2022 me convertí en Ciudadano de los Estados Unidos de América por derecho propio, con la finalidad de poder traer a mi esposa y mis otros hijos eventualmente y darles una mejor oportunidad de vida. Mis hijos sanguíneos son ciudadanos por nacimiento, así que ellos ya cuentan con ese beneficio, sin embargo, los hijos de mi esposa, a quienes también identifiqué como míos, no cuentan con dicho beneficio, y yo no puedo dárselos porque no son hijos de sangre; sin embargo, mi esposa eventualmente podrá darles nacionalidad.*

In 2022 I became a Citizen of the United States of America, with the objective of eventually being able to bring my wife and my other children and give them a better chance at life. My blood children are citizens by birth, so they already have that benefit. However, my wife's children, whom I also

identify as mine, do not have this benefit. I cannot give it to them because they are not



my blood children. My wife will eventually be able to give them nationality.

Interviewer: How do you stay connected to your cultural heritage while living in the United States?

Elo: *Solo en mi pensamiento, ya que mi entorno no cuenta con muchos mexicanos, por lo que las fiestas patrias y otras festividades las celebro solamente yo.*

Only in my thoughts, since my environment does not have many Mexicans, so national holidays and other festivities are celebrated only by me.

Interviewer: Looking back, what advice would you give to someone who is considering moving to the United States?

Elo: *Primero, que lo hagan de manera legal. El tratar de cruzar ilegalmente es lo peor que pueden hacer. No es seguro ni sano. Segundo, que entiendan que, el venir aquí no significa que inmediatamente van a hacer dinero. Se tiene uno que sacrificar para ahorrar el dinero que enviará a su familia. La gran verdad del migrante es que uno se sacrifica para que la familia goce. Hay ocasiones en que uno no trae ni 10 dólares para gastar en algo que se quiere, porque es necesario enviar esos 10 dólares a la familia en México. La vida aquí no es fácil. EL sueño americano existe, pero es muy difícil de alcanzar. Lo mejor que se puede hacer es trabajar todo el tiempo sin mirar atrás.*

First, do it legally. Trying to cross illegally is the worst thing they can do. It is not safe or healthy. Second, understand that coming here does not mean that you will immediately make money. One has to sacrifice to save money to send to our family. The truth of the migrant is that one sacrifices oneself so that the family can enjoy it. There are times

when one does not even have ten dollars to spend on something one wants, because it is necessary to send those ten dollars to the family in Mexico. Life here is not easy. The American dream exists, but it is very difficult to achieve. The best thing to do is work all the time without looking back.

Conclusion

The journeys of these two individuals,



my parents, illustrate the profound transformation accompanying the conclusion to immigrate to a new country. Despite their shared destination, their paths divided, each encountering unique challenges and achievements. Nevertheless, through their separate experiences, a common thread emerges, a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of change.

Their stories remind us that immigration is not simply a physical relocation but a journey of self-discovery and reinvention. It is about facing stigmas and prejudices, reshaping identities, and taking new opportunities. Their narratives are essential to American society, reflecting the diverse journeys of immigrant experiences that have shaped the nation.

Staff Feature: Madeline “Maddie” Hernandez



Success Coach

How do you identify yourself?

Latina

What do you like most about your work?

As a STEM Success Coach at Saddleback College, what I enjoy most is witnessing the moments when students overcome obstacles in their academic and personal journeys. Supporting and guiding students as they navigate through their STEM careers and witnessing their growth and success is incredibly rewarding!

What made Saddleback College special to you?

Saddleback College holds a special place in my heart because of its strong sense of community and dedication to student success. As an alumna, I started my academic career at Saddleback College. I am so happy to see the strides that Saddleback has made in supporting our students by fostering an environment where they not only feel included but also encouraged to pursue their goals and dreams.

How do you feel connected to the Chicana/Latina community here at Saddleback?

I feel a strong connection to the Chicana/Latina community at Saddleback College. By understanding the cultural and systemic challenges that students may face, I strive to provide personalized support as their STEM Success Coach. My identity allows me to offer culturally relevant guidance and resources that ensure students feel understood and empowered to succeed in STEM. I aim to foster a sense of belonging and inclusion by serving as both a mentor and source of inspiration throughout their college journey.

Generational Trauma and a Machista Culture: How Catholic Fascism in Latin America Affects Latinx Students' Self-Perception and Academic Success

Galia Diaz-Montoya and Robert Ly

Introduction

From the 1920s-1930s, Catholic fascism originated in conjecture to anti-imperialist nationalist movements across Latin America, influenced by WWII antisemitic rhetoric and the pathos appeal to immediate political power through violence. Today, authoritarian regimes in Latin American countries continue to approve intransigent legislation under the guise of catholic conventionalities and theology. The chauvinistic underbelly of fascist beliefs now permeates the youth culture in Latin America and most notably, trickles down to immigrant Latinx-identifying students in the United States. While scholars have examined the impacts of fascism on the macro scale, our study examines how these catholic constructions and fascist practices affect the psychology of the Latinx youth culture in the US. As a result, this study utilizes a survey to evaluate the potential academic and social effects for Latinx students, and what possible solutions can be implemented or developed to foster a more unified approach to creating accessibility in higher education.

Literature Review

There have been multiple studies on the topic of fascism and sexism within Latinx culture and religious congregations. One such study that highlights the effects of fascism inside the psyche of individuals within recent decades comes from Michael A. Peters (2022), a New Zealand professor of Education who has spent years covering a diverse range of issues focusing on education, youth, and cultural development. In his research, he looks into multiple studies from other psychologists and philosophers and comes to the conclusion that “the social pathology of fascism in the twenty-first century requires a social antidote to sadism and masochism and why and how people gain pleasure

from the misery of others,” (Peters, 2022, p. 1282). This mindset, we argue, is evident in Latinx culture. Specifically, Latinx parenthood, as there is evidence of the way fascism has affected their belief systems through their prevalent machismo and marianismo culture. This culture has the belief that within the family, the husband must be masculine with traits such as pride and aggression, while the wife must be feminine with traits of kindness and nurturing. Therefore, our research focuses on how these beliefs caused by fascism can be transferred from the older generation to their children through parenting.

In addition to this, there has been research into the consequences of structural sexism within religious congregations by Patricia Homan and Amy Burdette (2021), two Professors and Directors of Research and Strategic Initiatives for the Public Health Program at Florida State University. In their study, they found that in some religious congregations, sexism, the discrimination of gender, was part of the culture and they had a system that did not include women in leadership roles. This led to them researching if it has any effects on women's health and then comparing their findings to women who did not attend religious congregations. Homan and Burdette concluded that “women who attend more sexist congregations have worse health than women who attend less sexist congregations” (Homan, 2021, 244). Furthermore, they found that women who did attend sexist congregations had the same health as those who did not attend any congregations at all. These findings give an alarming view of how individuals can become physically and mentally drained and distressed through the debilitating beliefs of sexism. This further correlates to another study done by Edith Herrera (2023), a student researcher from California State University Stanislaus, in

which they interviewed 10 participants about the Latinx stereotypical beliefs of “machismo” and “marianismo” between men and women, and investigated where it was evident in the parents of Latinx youth and their grandparents. Herrera’s results showed that every parent and Latinx youth saw machismo stereotyping within their fathers with feelings of dominance, selfishness, and strength. Fewer of the participants saw marianismo stereotyping in their mothers with feelings of kindness and safety (Herrera, 2023).

Similarly to Homan’s research, the continuous sexism is hurtful as these traditional gender stereotypes in Latinx culture are causing Latinx youth to feel less open and argue back with their parents to change their minds. Due to Latinx parents potentially being influenced by fascist ideology along with religious institutions pushing traditional gender norms, we found a gap in the current research as there needs to be more information on the roles fascism and religion have in shaping Latinx culture and how they influence relationships amongst Latinx families.

Question & Hypothesis.

The goal of this study is to examine if there are psychological impacts on Latinx/Hispanic identifying community college students from their relationship with their Latinx parents who resided in predominantly Catholic fascist societies in Latin American countries before immigrating to the US, and how could this affect their familial, friends, or sentiments/bonds to religious congregations. Our hypothesis was that there would be a psychological impact on Latinx community college students from their relationship with their parents who resided in Evangelical fascist societies in Central America before immigrating to the U.S. As a result, we argue that this would make it harder to form bonds with other family members and friends.

Methodology and Definitions.

We created a cross-sectional survey that was distributed to two community colleges to students who identify as Latinx. We reached out to students who participated in the Puente Program, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), and students outside these programs. The questionnaire included questions such as

“Have you or did you ever feel excluded from academic programs/career opportunities because of your Hispanic, Latin, Spanish, or other ethnicity?” along with “I have at times felt pressure by Christian-affiliated religious congregations to...” followed by choices that state “Make family members proud for decisions I make, influenced by their personal beliefs. Hide my true identity or actions... Hide my socioeconomic status...Hide my sexual activities or sexual orientation. Read certain political material suggesting their ideology. Join or be associated with their religious congregation. No, I do not agree with this statement.” These questions focused on identifying how Latinx students perceived themselves, others, and their self-image in the face of evangelical constructions, fascist gender roles, and sexuality. Our survey sample was 83 students in total with a great range of people that identify as male, female, and queer.

Findings

General Information on Populus.

The gender demographic displayed that 1.2% identified as prefer not to say, 3.6% identified as Non-Binary, 36.1% identified as male, and 59% identified as female. In terms of racial demographic, 72 out of the 83 participants choose Mexican/Mexican-American, equating to 86.7% of participants identifying with this ethnicity. Of the participants, the most frequent GPAs reported were 3.0 (10.8%) and 3.3 (13.3%). Of the student equity programs available at one of the community colleges, 53 participants chose the Promise Program, a student resource to help with financial aid (63.9%), and 24 participants for EOPS (28.9%). When reporting hours of work, 10.8% said they work 4-5 hours a week, 33.7% reported they do not work part/full time outside of school, and 39.8% said they work 12+ hours a week.

General Populus Information on Religion.

The religious demographic was 21.7% identifying with Christianity, 28.9% identifying with no religious affiliations, and 39.8% identified with Catholicism. In terms of feeling the pressure from religious congregations and their ideology of familismo, 33.7% of individuals either responded to feeling the pressure to live up to parental expectations and “make them proud,” while 38.6% and 37.3% reported

feeling the need to hide their true selves and their sexual activities and orientation.

Marianismo Gender Role Stereotypes.

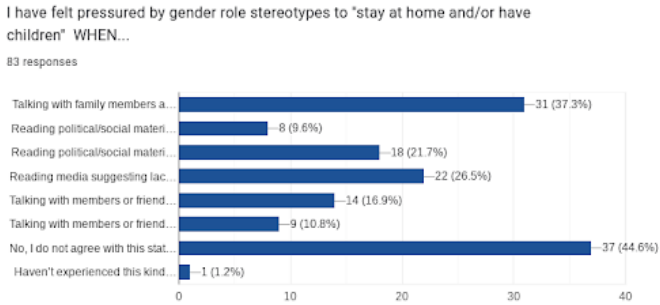


Figure 1. Number of Responses and Checkbox Marianismo Identifying Statements.

Overall, 26.5% of participants reported feeling pressured into marianismo ideals by reading media suggesting a lack of human rights for people of my ethnic origin, 37.3% reported this feeling when talking to family members about children/gender roles, and 44.6% reported not agreeing with this statement. It is interesting to note the similar votes of participants agreeing with this statement (31) and individuals not agreeing with this statement (37).

Machismo Gender Role Stereotypes.

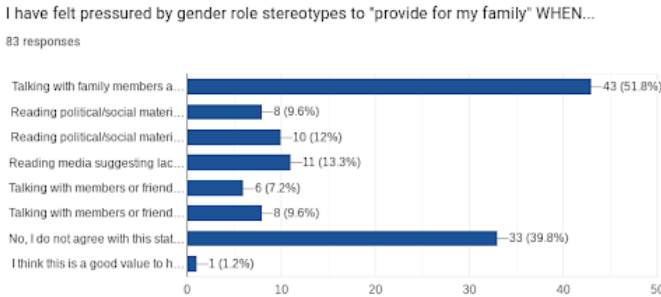


Figure 2. Number of Responses and Checkbox Machismo Identifying Statements.

The most notable results from participants are that 39.8% reported not agreeing with this statement, while 51.8% of participants stated talking with family members about money (helping with rent, future plans with them, etc.). It should be kept in mind when reviewing both these bar graphs that about 59% of respondents identified as female.

Concluding Remarks

By continuously perpetuating this never-ending cycle of stereotypical gender roles, more Latinx/Hispanic youth are subjected to generational trauma through being forced into these beliefs by their parents. This causes even more doubts and distrust towards parental, guardian, or authority figures. Therefore, leading to the belief that

we have to ultimately hide our identity and not feel comfortable sharing our identity and who we are. This is the ultimate flaw of our socially structured systems that allows for these fascist beliefs and gender roles to oppress Latinx peoples' culture, thoughts, and selves by constricting every generation into the same mold. Although some of our data was inconclusive in determining

whether the female respondents were significantly affected by marianismo gender stereotypes, further research is necessary in order to either re-evaluate misconceptions of the Latinx populous female youth or further understand how machismo and marianismo gender roles affect females. However, we were still able to find that a ⅓ of students — despite their gender — report that these prevalent gender roles socially affected them in some way.

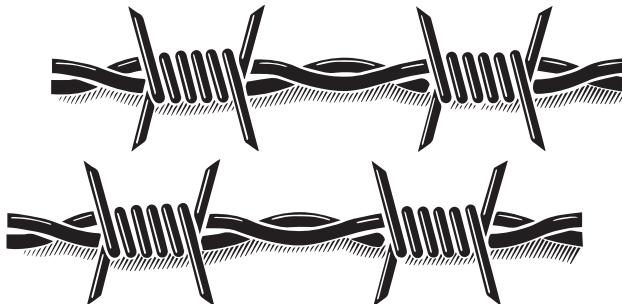
Recommendations and Taking Action.

We must first acknowledge there is a societal issue and pressure Latinx adolescents face from generational gender stereotypes. A key component to continue combating these stereotypes is to have safe conversations with family members to talk about Latinx generational trauma or other familial struggles. Family therapy and practicing self-care can help Latinx youth advocate for themselves and voice their opinions in a safe and welcoming environment. Similarly, with the Latino community growing in electoral power every year, it becomes increasingly important to spread voter awareness so that Latinx communities can speak up on issues such as this. Learning to set personal boundaries and start goal setting is another way to combat negative gender role stereotypes, which can sometimes pigeon-hole students into feeling they can only pursue opportunities that fit a socially accepted mold. Continuing to build Latinx Hispanic programs to create Hispanic/Latinx safe spaces is also

another academic avenue to dismantle the machismo and marianismo stereotypes perpetuated, and help future generations to have more opportunities in higher education. It is important for the Latinx community to understand how religious and gendered beliefs can subconsciously affect their sense of self and identity. The Latinx community will benefit from having more open and safe conversations about their culture to inform one another of the influence it has on each other and how can the Latinx community overcome the effects of machismo and marianismo. Essentially, challenging traditional roles that have taken a toll on youth and the relationships among families. The Latinx culture is beautiful, fun, and rich in history. As a community, people of Latin American descent can reverse the effects of traditional gender roles and foster a culture that is anti-machismo and anti-marianismo.

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Know History

Illustration by Jordan Wiley



Meet the Journal Committee

Daniela Nuñez Garcia



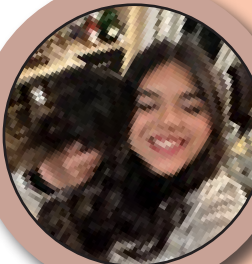
My name is Daniela Nunez Garcia. I am double majoring in Political Science and Criminology. My goal is to become a lawyer specializing in International or Criminal Law. My favorite part of being a Saddleback College student is the community you get to build AND you find along the way. At first, it might seem difficult and impossible because of the adjusting period every student goes through during their college experience. Still, once you take it step by step and realize that you must be true to yourself and not to what others think or want of you, college will become less scary. I hope that people read the Latinx Voices journal and feel at home, represented, and able to embrace themselves as who they are.

Evelyn Barrera



My name is Evelyn Barrera. I am working on my associate's in Child and Adolescents Development at Saddleback College. This is my first step towards my goal to work as a high school teacher. My Favorite part of being at Saddleback College is to meet and connect with people. My goal in school is to earn my bachelor's, master's, and PhD. I hope when people read the Latinx Voices Journal they can connect with people's stories and feel represented.

Fernanda Camacho



My name is Fernanda Camacho and my major is Anthropology. I want to use it to pursue a career in law. My favorite part of being a Saddleback College student is all the opportunities available to me and the helpful people, staff, and faculty I have met. I hope that people who read the Latinx Voices Journal read it with an open mind, gain new perspectives, and admire those who share their stories.

Galia Diaz-Montoya

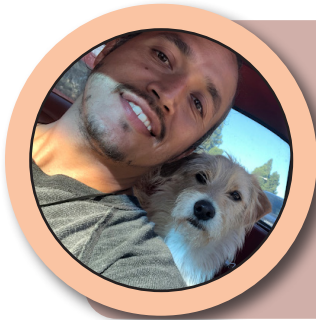


My name is Galia Diaz-Montoya and my major is Public Health! I want to use my major to pursue a dual PhD-MD program, where I am considering becoming a Cardiac Electrophysiologist, or a doctor who specializes in heart arrhythmia and disorders. My favorite part of being a Saddleback College student is the unique sense of community and atmosphere, which is welcoming to everyone and underrepresented students like myself. I hope that people who read the Latinx Voices Journal take away that this initiative is mainly to represent where we come from, and how far we will go, as we celebrate our heritage while pursuing higher education. We had a lot of fun creating this journal, and I hope you all find a sense of joy and community as well! Have fun, and always use your voice to advocate for yourself!



Jordan Wiley

My name is Jordan Wiley and my major is Graphic Design. My goal is to work with brands to create design solutions. My favorite part of being a Saddleback College student is connecting with people from different backgrounds and having the freedom to learn and grow in a supportive community. I hope that people who read the Latinx Voices Journal feel empowered and know that there is strength in sharing your story.



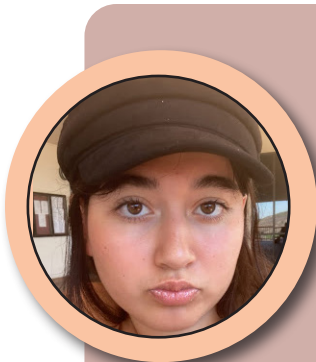
Jose Lumbreras

My name is Jose Lumbreras and I am a faculty in the Ethnic Studies Department at Saddleback College and the advisor for the Latinx Voices Journal. I love teaching at Saddleback College because I have the opportunity to meet students who are passionate about obtaining their goals in life. My favorite part about being a professor at Saddleback College is spending time with students outside of the classroom working on research projects that nurture their passion for learning and advocating for a better and more just society.



Krystelle Cervantes

My name is Krystelle Cervantes and my major is Graphic Design. I'd like to use my degree to make the world more beautiful through color and design. My favorite part of being a Saddleback College student is getting to know my fellow creatives and having teachers who care very much about the subjects they teach. I hope that people who read the Latinx Voices Journal can find the beauty and courage in the stories and that these important snapshots of life experiences foster understanding and a continued discussion about how we view one another.



Michelle Marie Gonzalez Palmer

My name is Michelle Marie Gonzalez Palmer and my major is Psychology, and I want to use it to become a therapist or a Psychology professor. I also plan to double major in Cinema. I am in love with cinematography and love to translate stories on screen for people to see. Psychology has always been a passion for me. I'm so interested in how we function as people and how our interactions with each other shape us. My favorite part of being a Saddleback College student is its affordability. I love taking advantage of all their opportunities such as the Care Corner which helps me with groceries each week, and low health costs, and the Promise program which allows me to cover my tuition. I hope that people who read the Latinx Voices Journal can relate to it or better understand the Latinx community's experience.



Stacey Shapero

My name is Stacey Shapero and my major is Human Services. I would like to use my education to serve in hospice and elder care and advocate for unhoused people. My favorite part of being a Saddleback College student is to connect with others who value education and are passionate about making the world a better place. The care, dedication and support of all the professors and staff makes such a difference. I encourage everyone to get involved beyond the classroom, find your community and enjoy the full Saddleback experience. I hope that people who read the *Latinx Voices Journal* find a mirror where they see themselves valued and reflected, and also find a window into other people's experiences to learn that we are all more alike than different.



Stephanie Dena

Hello my name is Stephanie Dena and I am double majoring in Political Science & Anthropology. I hope to one day join the Peace Corps and work as a political journalist. Urban Planning is something I have come to be interested in as well. I identify as a Chicana because I was born in the United States and have Mexican roots. My favorite part about being a Saddleback College student is the community. The college is in the area I grew up in and know, which makes me feel comfortable. On campus, I get to see the people from my community and that is beautiful to me. I hope the people who read the *Latinx Voices Journal* get inspired from reading the different stories. I also hope other students are curious and interested in learning about the process we, the *Latinx Voices Student Club*, have gone through to publish the first edition of the *Latinx Voices Journal*. I know that we, as a group, have been very motivated to publish the journal.



Tanitany Hernandez

My name is Tanitany Hernandez and my major is Sociology. I would like to become a counselor or a therapist in mental health/substance abuse. My favorite part of being a Saddleback student is making new friends. I also enjoy learning new knowledge that I can use in my future career and daily life. I hope that people who read the *Latinx Voices Journal* enjoy the opportunity to learn and understand the lived experiences of different members of the Latinx community. I also hope that readers can find acceptance and motivation in the stories they read and are empowered to do great things in life expressing their heritage and interest in their history.

Shout Outs!

This journal has been the work of organizing with faculty, administration, staff, and students from across the Saddleback Campus. We want to thank everyone who has supported our project with funds, advice, administrative work. Thank you!

Anthony Becerra, *Director of Financial Aid Office*

Susie Castellanos, *Director of College Equity, Inclusion, and Access*

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Christina Hinkle, *Dean of Humanities and Social Science School*

Jessica Kaven, *Assistant Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences School*

Carrie-Ann Mansel, *Administrative Assistant of Humanities and Social Sciences School*

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