

Topic: My youth without my father

Abstract: This personal narrative is reflective of my experience growing up without my father. It highlights the ways my mother's personal struggles have been inspiring to me to want to work hard and fulfill her and my father's dream for our family's success. I share a discussion about my challenge with being bullied and discouraged from fighting as well as a discussion about other individuals who have been role models in my life in my father's absence.

Keywords: single parents, diseased father, work issues, bully, school fight, suspension, family history, educational and responsibility to parents, personal growth/development, hopes and dreams, work and impact on intimacy, persistence to succeed, school and identity, limited opportunities for women, women exclusion. U.S. and family separation, Language and isolation. Leaving Mexico, family dinner, work accident, American Dream, el norte, gang avoidance.

The individual who I was a part of, who would take me, embrace me, and raise me to become a better man than him has been absent in my life. I feel a misconnection to what a father can and should be because for the past twenty years of my life I have not had one. Yet, through stories he has remained an important character in my life. Those countless stories I have listen to about the man who I would look up to are moving and inspirational. He remains only a character to me, nothing real. I hold no real interactions with him, I cannot remember back far enough to that one year when he was present. My father was not disconnected from my family and I, but transcended through us all. In fact his life and goals were cut short for him but my family continues to strive to accomplish the goals my father helped establish. My family continues even through the faulty start we were given to move forward positively and together as a family united.

Where we begin

My family is from Cuernavaca, Guanajuato, Mexico and my father was a construction worker for construction companies in the United States. My Father's work required him to be continuously contracted to come to the U.S and work in large constructions projects across the country including the building of houses, apartments, shopping malls, multiple story buildings and other large projects. My mother who stayed in Mexico when my Father came to the states was later granted the opportunity to go join her husband in the new country where he worked. Work became plentiful but with a price of having to move around constantly and swiftly following my fathers new job opportunities.

One late night when my father was out drinking with some friends in a local bar in Washington D.C his tragic accident occurred. The stool my father sat on that night was placed next to an open stairway waiting for an accident to happen. My father fell and rolled down eight flights of stairs: he died from head trauma having received severe head and back injuries which affected his basic survival functions such as breathing on his own.

My mother received the news and was left devastated; she was widowed and unemployed. When my father died he left behind a young wife, two young daughters, and a one-year-old baby boy. My mother found herself lost and disorientated even his family was no help. The family was a broken link of support. In her husbands house they spoke to her as a failure, not capable of successfully raising her offspring now that their relative had deceased. My mother did not find the support she was seeking from the family, instead she was blamed, cursed, and disowned by my fathers' family. She had felt no hope, my father's family even had the nerve to request that my mother give up her children and leave us with them, my father family because they felt she could not adequately provide. Feeling she could not provide a future for her children in Mexico she left. My mother left Mexico for a

new beginning in search of the American Dream to give her kids a future she made her way to *El Norte*.

Early Years

As I was growing up, the moments my mother and I shared were few. Moments of interaction became very rare for she was always at work and my father was no more. My mother found work as a farm worker as she needed to provide for her young family. She was gone working all day, Monday through Saturday sometimes even Sundays. If work called her in she wouldn't turn it down. No matter how tough the conditions were my mother keep going. The few precious times we would share, as a family was late at night. After making a late dinner for us my mother would tell us to go shower and get ready for bed. When we had time to spare we would follow and stick along side my mother as she says "*como chicles pegados*" (like stuck gum) to simply spend time with my mother. When my mother would sit on the dinning table I would jump on the chance to sit on her lap. I would sit and doodle with a pen and notebook in the comfort of my mother's presence.

I was taught to be passive; my moral lessons came from a woman, my mother not my father who probably would have taught me different. My mother advised my sisters and I to keep far away from any violence. Her advice has been very good and well appreciated but I could not keep others from harming me, especially once it became repetitive. I wanted and needed an ok to defend myself; I always envisioned listening to my Mother say to me "*hijo tu no te dejes*" but this never came maybe it would have come from my father. My mother had no time to help; she was too busy with work. I was not only bullied at school but the place I named home away from home.

When I was younger and I was not at school with my mother working we were left with a babysitter. These babysitters were never the best trained but they were just friends from friends that we knew at that time. The babysitters always had mood swings towards my sisters and I. These individuals were biased and we were never treated equally, always segregated and for the most part ignored. When the babysitter had kids of their own it became even worse. They would pick on me and make me cry because they knew they would get away with mistreating me for I was just a visitor and foreigner to their home. Once home I would tell my mother and she would tell me “*no quiero que te pongas a pelear con los otros niños, Tu deja a ellos en paz*”. I was not allowed to stand up for myself for it would only bring more problems. Bullied or not it was not acceptable to be physical and defend myself. My mother did not want or need any more trouble from my sisters and I. My family had plenty of difficulties at home to worry about such as getting all the bills paid and food on the table.

When I was in elementary school, kids continued to bully me. I was pushed around and put down verbally. At first it became so overwhelming I could not understand why. I had a dual schedule, daily I was pulled out of one class to go learn something else and felt I had no clear focus. I had to learn English and Spanish at the same time so it became more of an academic challenge to grasp everything from both languages. Perhaps I was bullied due to my lack of well-developed communication skills but I cannot say exactly why. I would tell my teachers that I was being bullied and yet all they could do is ask. Ask the other student and of course the other student would deny all accusations but I knew the real truth.

After so many lies and no action from the teachers I was fed up and I finally fought back. Oh I remember that day, the day I began to fight back was at an early morning assembly in my elementary school, and some kid was punching me and elbowing me. He almost made me cry. I looked around and the other students around me just watched. The teachers did not notice, they were too busy clapping about something. After two more elbows I had enough so I turned and swung back. I hit the bully twice.

I ended up being blamed for it all since everyone saw me physically harming the bully. I was accused of starting a fight and suspended. I was ashamed and yet at the same time I was so proud of myself. This moment became the day I stood up for myself. I decided I would not allow it to go further anymore. I ignored being passive and said I must stand up for myself especially now that my dad is no longer here to protect me. I remember sitting in the office wooden chair with the stitched blue fabric seats. I sat anxiously waiting to be picked up by *mi Tia*. My Aunt was called because my mother was working.

I could not ignore that I was growing up without a father during school especially in elementary school. I have two mothers' day celebrations every year. I dreaded father's day, that was the one day I never wanted to be in school and be making father's day ornaments. I had to make ornaments for someone who would never get them. From time to time I would make them for one of my uncles who really wanted to look after me but was also restricted because of his work schedule. I then decided to treat Father's day as a second Mother's day. I did not like that it made me weak and ask why my father was not

here. On the bright side to this day my family and I celebrate two mothers' days which honors all of my mother's virtues.

My family had a very limited income and yet my sisters and I felt spoiled. My mother was the only source of income supporting our essential needs. Spoiled by my mother's love and passion she has constantly shared with us we felt we needed nothing much more. My mother's limited presence with us meant more to my sisters and I since it was very difficult to come by. When it came to getting our goods we would be getting our needs versus our wants, we were to follow strict proportions. In theory I feel if my father would have been around to be the one always bringing in the family income he would have still be missing out on our family time. We would be spoiled with plentiful needs and goods but he would still be absent further more.

When I was growing up I notice I was expected to be a part of a gang lifestyle because I came from a low-income family and with the absence of my father only helped strengthen the expectancy to be a failure and not succeed. I had no role model, I had no protection but I did have family to support or look up to. I would look up to my cousins and one of my uncles. My cousins were a few years older but they had a father so they must know what is right from wrong for men. I was able to be true to my family and keep away from the unwanted and dreadful social groups. I feel and recognize that a gang lifestyle was very present and very close, yet I was curious to give it a quick glance but I did not fall into it.

My Mother and my two older sisters are my biggest and most significant role models. They have shared everything with me so they really know "what's up". I

understand their teachings are different but good and proper to learn and be able to give to my future family and share how to be better socializing skills.

I have picked up a role model, it was *mi Tio Pancho* or how my elders knew him as *El Camarada*. This man to me became the closest thing I continue to experience as a father. *Mi Tio Pancho* has given me words of wisdom, entertained me, fed me, spoiled me, and understood what it was like missing a parent growing up. Maybe *mi Tio* is a second uncle but to me but he is closer and better-fit uncle than my directly related uncles. My uncles, who doubt everything I do, judge everything I do as negative. I find my uncles be two-faced leaches that are very critical and always negative towards me. They see me as a failure and interpret my mother's effort on me as a failure, but their own flaws blind them. They always have run to my mother's rescue when they need something and deny the support she offers them. My uncles who feel I should be sent to go do a "real mans work" instead of going to school but on the other hand *Mi Tio Pancho* is a solid foundation for me who has encouraged me to succeed and go to school for the better of my family and I. *Mi Tio* understands education is the future, the longer steady benefit not the now! Easy temporary fix solutions would keep me in labor-intensive work for a lifetime.

Fulfilling Dreams

I never met my father and I do wish I would have memories to share. In many ways not having my father has made me more thankful for many things that I see others

do not appreciate. My work has always been motivated as a way to be gracious for my Mothers hard work. I want to fulfill my parents dream by going to college to open new opportunities for my family and myself. The dream to provide even though my fathers family doubted my mother, my mother is triumphant as she was able to do well and appropriately provide for her children. I am a Man born from afar overcoming boundaries that are set along my path; I am confident that just as my mother was able to overcome I will overcome as well. My father absence is only physically but mentally he is my sculpture who has helped me shape myself to be more successful.