

**Topic:** What I Faced Throughout My Life

**Abstract:** Born in California as a Mexican American and belonging to different social status. Going from a happy family to facing a battle with my father's alcoholism, we lost respect and social status. We had to start from scratch after many years of hard work.

**Key Words:** Ethnicity, family, discrimination, nationality, education, social status, work, language, alcoholism, respect, opportunities, success.

### What I Faced Through Out My Life

I was born in San Jose, California in the year of 1992. I was raised in a middle class society, where everything had to be perfect for the rest of the people. You had to have your lawn cut, bushes nicely shaped and your cars clean and it went for everyone in the neighborhood. We were all Hispanic heritage in my neighborhood, except for one family. The house across the street from us, were Americans and as odd as it sounds their house was a disaster. They had two unmovable cars in their driveway, toys, dirty cloths, and dirty broken dishes on the lawn. That house was the opposite to the rest of the neighborhood and that made everyone mad.

Regarding my family, we were one happy family that went for long trips every weekend. We never came back home until Sunday night. My father worked as a former in a construction company. He was highly respected by many because he had the skills to manage a large group of men and get the job well done in less time than what was given to him. My mother was a night custodian, also highly respected for her well done job and open availability. She always made time for any extra work assigned to her. They weren't school educated, but their ability to understand English and being able to answer their question was enough for my parents to have a great stable job and most important be accepted and respected by their coworkers. We had big parties where all the family gathered, they came from outside of the United States, or we would go out of state to visit them. We were very united as a family. We always had friends over,

invited or uninvited, we had a great life and nothing was missing.

School was really great at teaching, but not so good in keeping discrimination away. I never understood why some teachers were “nice” and others “mean”, but now that I’m an adult I do understand the meaning to those words. The “nice” teachers were bilingual Hispanics or Americans; they helped the bilingual students by interacting with us in every way and answering all our questions. They had a lot of patience to help us learn both languages and learn the rest of the curriculum in both languages. The “mean” teachers were the Americans or Chinese; that only spoke English and didn’t have patience for any student that didn’t speak English well.

The truth behind all this was that bilingual teachers never gave up on their students; they helped them throughout their education, while the English speaking teachers never wanted to work with those students because of their low understanding of the American language. Playing at the playground was another problem. Students said hurtful things to one another and everything because of their nationality, or at least what others thought you were. For example, one day I heard a teacher’s conversation in which she was telling another person how tired she was of having to teach these “dam Mexican students” and that only her American students were excellent. The others weren’t even close to having a real education because they didn’t have the intelligent brains to understand the curriculum right. When I heard that I was a little confused because to what I have understood I am Mexican American. I asked myself, “So which category do I fall in?”

When my Father and Mother decided to move to San Martin, California I was nervous to go to San Martin Gwinn. I had noticed it was a high class society because of the big ranches and luxurious life style people tend to live there. The second day we were at our new house the

neighbors came over and presented themselves and just told us that if we needed anything they were there to help us out. Which was great because we were clueless of what San Martin really was, and it was basically a little solitaire town that only had three liquor stores and no fast food places unless you went to Morgan Hill.

My first day of school, I noticed that there was an equal amount of American and Hispanic students there, and the teachers were from many different nationalities. My experience there was great. Everyone was equally treated with respect and all the students interacted with each other. It was really rare when someone got in trouble for being disrespectful. The neighborhood in San Martin was very clean, almost spotless. The only difference was that the neighborhood didn't expect everyone's house to be spotless and perfect like how it was when we lived in San Jose.

After living a year in San Martin, my father started to have drinking problems, which led to alcoholism. At that time I was 12 years old, I was old enough to know that there was something wrong since my father was never home. My mother's explanation was that he was working until late and went really early to work. I believed it until I turned 14 and I opened my eyes and realized it was all a lie. My father indeed was an alcoholic after 2 years of hiding it from my sisters and I. When our family and friends found out my father was in bad steps everyone and everything seemed to disappear with time. Family, friends, money and respect faded away rapidly that we didn't even notice when it was completely gone until we were left alone. The only people that actually knocked on our door were our neighbors. The only reason why they did was because the happy family that was always in the front lawn playing basketball or croquet wasn't seen for around a year or two and they were worried something bad had happened to us. Although deep inside of us we knew something was definitely wrong, we just

said it was because we were busy with school and work.

In high school many things happened, I was an A's and B's student as a freshmen, I received a lot of recognitions and awards. Teachers, staff, and students respected me for being the strong smart girl I was, but slowly the problems in my house made me careless about school. I stopped trying and my perspectives in life changed. My mind was set on "if my father doesn't care and doesn't want to succeed why should I" deep down inside me I knew it was the wrong choice. Slowly I started to be "one of the Mexicans that comes to school and does nothing" and for being part of them I had fewer opportunities in school. People looked at me with hatred as if I had done something wrong, the only wrong thing I did was stop trying at school. The truth was I was "one of the Mexicans" I was not "the respected smart girl" anymore.

In my senior year we saw the big separation in ethnicities, Cinco de Mayo came around like every year. Mexican Americans brought their Mexican Flag like usual, but something just didn't feel right that day. It was very different than previous years, as the day went on discussions between American and Mexican students were going on and the tension rose up by lunch time. Towards the end of lunch all the Americans took their American Flag out and gathered to outside of the school. They started to shout nasty mean things to us Mexicans like "go back to your country leave us alone", "wet backs", etc. All the Mexicans went to the opposite side of them and didn't say anything. We were speechless because we didn't do anything to them. Finally, there was going to be a big fight because they just kept insulting us and they started to throw food and drinks at us. The administration would just tell them to stop and once a couple of people started to fight that's when they took actions. At the end they expelled the Mexicans because they hit the American back and the American just got suspended for seven days. It was very unfair many people were in disagreement.

After 4 years and my father was still drinking, my mother decided to sell the gigantic house we had and leave everything in the past and start a new chapter in our lives without my father in it. We moved to Gilroy, California a nice middle class neighborhood. When we got there the next day the neighbors showed up and offered to help around except for one family. Since we moved to Gilroy, all that family does is complain about everything, when others don't say anything. They even put an American flag outside their house; the lady of the house became friends with my mother and admitted to my mother that her husband put the flag outside their house because of us. He thought we were going to put a Mexican Flag outside because to him that what all Mexicans do.

When our family and friends found out my father had overcome his alcoholism and we the daughters got married and were having a successful life. Everyone seems to want to be part of our life again, but once again we will not fall for their games no more. Why should we be only accepted for being somewhat wealthy and not poor? Why should we be respected only with a successful life and not receive the help when you most need it. Throughout my years I have been accepted for being Mexican American, but I have been also denied and have lost many opportunities for not being just American. Social status has been a big part of my life although I don't agree with it, but others believe it's most important. I believe we should all be equal since this country has stated to be liberal and equal.