

Topic: My voyage through life

Abstract: My father worked long hours and dedicated his life to the field for us to eat, and eventually reach the “American Dream”. He was a partner of Cesar Chavez, fighting for a better future for all of us. In the journey, my family got separated, torn apart. All of this was to bring the family together? A big part of my life as well as my sister’s has been taken from us. While being treated like we really did not belong.

Key Words: Separation of my family, left behind, intruder, USA. Cesar Chavez.

Mexican/American.

In the year of 1970, my dad decided to bring all of his family to the USA. He had worked in the United States for many years now, before he decided to bring all of us “his family”, to join him. I was only four years old, when I came to the United States. I remember when my mom told me I was worried and confused, at the same time. I was afraid because I was not very familiar with my dad, he was not around that much. To my mom it was exciting, because we were going to come to the big, exciting dream land of USA. The land of opportunity where all of your dreams can come to pass, that is what people said. To me that whole picture was frightening a strange place with a strange man, that I didn’t really consider my father. I think that my mom was more excited about the idea of being here than coming here to be in the company of the father of her kids.

The planning of the trip was very difficult for my mom. My father had underestimated the cost of our trip, the money was not sufficient to cover our expenses of bringing us here. So

she called my dad and explained the situation, and he told her to leave one of us. I think that was drastic. My mother went through a few days of heartache, and hardship. She even called him and told him that she “couldn’t do It”. She could not decide who to leave behind, so he told her to “leave my sister Delfina”. That seemed so easy for him to decide, and my mom was so devastated.

She was my sister, the one that was only one year and a half younger than me, she was my play partner, fighting partner, getting in trouble partner, she was going to stay. I wanted to stay with her; I did not see why I had to come and she had to stay behind. I’m going to go with this man that is a stranger to me. To a strange place with out my sister, why?

Then she found out she was going to be left in Mexico. Although she was only two and a half years old, she comprehended and she asked why? Why did she have to stay, and we were not staying with her? She pretended to run away from home. “Because we didn’t love her any more”, that is what she said. I also know that she did feel like that, she felt neglected and unwanted, so she wanted to go to grandma’s house. That is where she was going to stay, after we came to the USA. The main idea of us coming to the United States, was for all of us to be together as a family, with our dad, to have a better life to be a complete family.

Time passed and I found my self in the United States. I heard people speaking different and somehow thought of my sister and how she hated change. Inside of me it was intriguing the way people spoke. I wanted to speak like them, to learn how to communicate with them. The music was awesome the way to dance. Everything was like a brand new world to me. I thought of my sister very often, I needed her companionship. I wondered what was happening in her life,

when the mailman came, I ran to check if we had any news from my sister. My grand mother was not one to write often.

My mother called and asked how her baby was doing, she would talk to her on the phone. Then after she would hang up she would cry for hours, and promise herself that she was going to get money together to bring her baby to be with us.

Time came when I had to go to school. I was so excited and fearful because I was afraid of people. They didn't understand what I was saying. The first day of class I got in a fight. My teacher called my mother to the office. My mother did not know how to speak the language, so I told them that the kid wanted to take my lunch. The principal understood some words in Spanish. That day, I knew that I had to put special interest in learning the language to help my mother and father. The learning part has been an ongoing process.

I started learning about not only different language, and I also noticed that there were people that treated me different. With a dislike, white kids treated me like a Mexican. I didn't think of me as a different human being. I thought that once I learned the language I was going to be the same as everybody else. When I could speak English and comprehend how some people saw me, I felt depressed. I thought of my sister and cried, I wanted to go back home. I was not even five years old and I felt that I was an intruder; I had to defend myself and my parents.

My father never learned how to read, and I became his interpreter. My father and mother did not have a "green card", therefore no legal rights were given to them. Sometimes when I needed to interpret my mother or father, it was very hard for me. Some of the things, or papers that my parents had to fill out, were beyond my comprehension, and that made me feel like I was

not doing my job. Some of the ladies at the offices would tell me that they needed to talk to an adult. I would get frustrated because my dad and my mom are adults.

One day as I was walking home from school I saw a tall handsome man walking in the same direction. I started talking to him I asked him, why was he wearing a green uniform that look's, like the army uniform but it is not an actual army uniform? He was very polite and explained that he worked for the government and his job was to keep the USA, safe from other nations. To defend this great nation from other nations, and the harm that they can cause on the state. Our conversation ended when I got to my house and I said good bye.

I noticed that my mom was not where she usually waited for me, when I came home from school. She was inside and she was frightened, because I was talking to an immigration officer. How was I expected to know that he was an immigration officer, I was a seven year old child. The conversation that I had with this man never left me, he said, "he worked for the government, he worked defending this great nation from other nations, to avoid harm that other nation's could cause". In my mind there was confusion. There is a man that is telling me that "other nationalities cause harm to this great nation".

My sister now is a married woman, in Los Angeles Ca. We have gotten together and talked. It has been good to see her but she holds a grudge, she thinks that I had a better life style than she did. I have tried to explain that due to my dad's way of treating us, and all of the things, we had to endure that it was not easy for us either. The way she relates to me is not proper. I have asked her what would make her, feel better. What can I do to make things better between us? She answered that no matter what I did nothing would ever replace her lonely passed. The

loss of our mother and the idea of her not getting to see her could never be substituted, by anything. She said, “you were able to have a mother, I was not”.

I went about my goal, learning the language to comprehend the new people in my life. In the late 70s I was not even in my teens when my dad would take me with him to the “huelga”, this meant strike. He was involved in the strike, which was going on at that time in Salinas Ca. It was United Farm Workers, with the leader Cesar Chavez. It was a big movement, and I was very interested because it made sense to me. All of a sudden I saw people standing up for what they believed, and for their needs. It was awesome; I felt that it was my time to help in everything I could, to speak up for my parents. I was excited to see something finally happening for the good of these humble people.

I saw people joining the strike, and on the other hand I saw people working the people working called my attention. Because in my mind I could not understand, how could anybody not see that the strike, was for a good cause. I went and asked one of the ladies that was working, I asked her why she was working instead of joining the strike? Her answer was ” because I am pregnant and I need money for me child”. That answer caught me by surprise. That made sense to me. If you are pregnant you have to provide for your baby.

The whole idea of this strike; was a bid to improve wages, and benefits, and also better working conditions. One of the main focuses was the SunHarvest, the nation’s largest lettuce producer. Cesar Chavez, was the leader of the union and the person representing all of the workers. He was the cause for many of the workers to gain, some rights, among the families that

he impacted was my family. I remember seeing that there was such a great need for change. All that the people asked for was to work, and an opportunity to survive. In return, they are giving up their life, themselves, their time, and the time that could be used for their children.

Too many people, coming to the United States, might think it is the best thing that ever happened to them, but to me I don't know. I don't think I will ever know, because not only did I lose a sister. I also lost myself, coming to a place where I have always felt like I really don't belong. Like no matter how hard I try, I can't let go of being indecisive, of not knowing who I really am. My parents are in the same manner as so many other parents, who gave their lives to this county,so all of us would feel welcomed. Instead, not only do I feel like an intruder, I am also viewed of as one. I will never hurt this county, even if I am not of this nationality.