

**Topic:** My mother's experience as a prisoner

**Abstract:** My mother was born in Los Angeles California; she was second born of the girls and from a family of eight. Her parents wanted to raise their family in California. My mother parents were born and were from Texas. Her parents felt it to fast pace in Los Angeles and not enough work for her father, so they came to Gilroy Ca so he could work as a carpenter. My mother met my father at a local store pay phone on down town, they were very different. My father was from Jalisco Mexico and my mom barely spoke Spanish and my father barely spoke English. My mother was exposed to more of Mexican culture with my father in first years of them meeting that she had her whole life. My mother made Northern California her home with my dad and they got married two years after they started going out and had my older sister and me.

**Keywords:** falsely accused in the immigration system. Treated with no respect first experience with immigration

#### My mother's experience as a prisoner for a day

My mother's experience on July 1992, the day she has held prisoner by the immigration in San Ysidro border patrol station. My mother and our family members and relatives where coming back from Tijuana Mexico. We stayed for the weekend visiting our relatives that lived there. I remember that day it took us approximately an hour to get to the border line of san ysirdo. While we were waiting our turn in the van we saw numerous of men, women and even small children trying to sell merchandize such as candy, cremanicas, sports clothes toys and food. There were also some asking for donations my mother gave them five dollars to help them out but so did my aunts and uncles. When it was finally our turn an overweight Mexican immigration man officer asked to see all of our documents. We showed him all of ours, when it was my mom's turn she handed him her birth certificate the border patrol carefully inspected the documents and took a very long pause. He motioned to us to pull on to the shoulder on the right side. They made us park on the other side and get off the van. They had us sit in a role while five other officers came

and searched the van. They also told us to put the luggage on the table and open it. They were going through our stuff we didn't know what they were looking for. We were getting upset. When they finally searching our luggage. They made a big mess of our clothes they were scattered everywhere.

over the border patrol was on a hand held radio, my mother could see that he still had all the documents in his hand but was only still looking at the birth certificate that was hers. What seemed to my mother like hours was only really minutes. Finally the border patrol came to my mother and asked another border patrol agent came and escorted my mother to a building. The building wasn't very far away. The border patrol agent let us go but my mother had to stay.

My mother was patted down by a female agent she was confused and scared at the same time. She was sat down at a desk and told her birth certicate was a copy and they showed it to her and asked if it was hers. She said it was and the border patrol agent told her that she was lying and that she was trying to enter the United States illegally and that she had bought or stole the copy of the birth certificate that she was trying to give the agent when she was crossing the border.

My mother pleaded with them that she was in fact she a U.S citizen and she were returning from visiting her new family. She began mumbling in disbelief and asked about her family. They informed my mother that everyone else in the vehicle was free to go. My mother was terrified and began to cry. The agents showed the empathy for her. Furthermore they told my mother that she going to be imprisoned for trying to enter the United States with false documation. She asked what she could do to prove that she was not lying and repeatedly apologized for the copy of the birth certificate but she was unaware that it was not the original.

Feeling hopeless she sank into her chair and wept for hours, my mother was also taken to holding cell. She was first put in a room all by herself where they took her finger prints and also a picture. She felt violated when asked her to take off her clothes and she saw the women put on a plastic white glove and approach her from behind and checked to see if she was hiding any drugs inside of her. My mother said when that happened that was the worst experience she had in her life. They had her change into a beige button down jump suit with open sandals. Then she was escorted to her cell where they gave her a worn out thin blanket. She says that her bed was hard as a rock and that it was so cold that she would shiver in the night. The reason it was so cold because the fan was going around and around and no officers would turn it off. In the early morning finally an agent came up to her after almost 24 hours in holding and informed her that her daughter and mother had contacted the border patrol and was working to get her original birth certificate, her school records and her high school and even picture of her throughout her life in the United States.

My mother could not sleep all night; she kept rethinking about what was happening. The border patrol agent was Mexican he spoke great Spanish, my mother was light skinned and red haired and she spoke very good English and if anything her Spanish was still a little broken. How could they possibly think that she could lie about where she was born and raised and California was all she has ever known? She was just a hundred feet away from California but in a jail cell forbidden to leave she could be on the other side of the world she thought,

My mom began to pray that my sister could contact her family and retrieve everything to prove that she did belong in the United States; my mother knew that my sister was too young to solve this misunderstanding of her and prayed that she could get everything soon. My sister made a dozen of phone calls and reached my grandmother. My grandmother and sister got her school

records while she was attending school. Her high school diploma pictures when she was a baby to now. They had to travel to los angles to get her original birth certificate at birth records after they gathered all this information. Once it was there turn they threw each document and order explained each one in an angry voice to the border patrol agents. The border patrol agents reviewed them and said that the release of my mother would be in four hours; paperwork had to be processed but not once was an apology was given.

My sister and grandmother will always recall the joy and relief when they saw my mother, she was so happy to see us that she couldn't even yell or be angry at the boarder patrol for all the hours that they held her. Rather she was happy and relieved that she was free. She had tears of joy.

My mother sometimes cannot even believe that she was treated unfairly and that she had go through such discrimination. Even though it has been almost 20 years my mother is emotional scared from the ordeal that she never has had any temptation to ever visit Mexico again. Luckily for my mother that once my father's family found out what she had been through they began to visit the United States every year so she still got to see them and they were able to watch me and my sister grow up.

As the years past in California often a similar story was told on how the border patrol would make mistakes and all the innocent people that suffered and were accused and put in jail and just waiting for someone to help them for they can get released. My mother was very lucky to have two strong women by her side fighting and going through all the obstacles to get her out of prisoner. My grandmother and sister were my mom's heroes to setting her free from that terrible cell.

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