

**Topic:** My family's struggle to try and live a better life.

**Abstract:** Even before I was born, my family had struggled to do pay bills, put food on the table, and get to work everyday. My father was never able to hold down a stable job, and my mom could not work because she has 3 kids to take care of; there were many times that we would not even eat at night. My father never established a career, he was just a job to job worker, but he realized the way he was doing things was wrong and a change needed to be made. And as we children grew older, my mother felt the need to contribute and help the family. We were sent off to school in the day, and my grandfather's farm in the evening; while my mother and father worked what seemed like everyday.

**Keywords:** Being poor, struggling, Mexican family, Alcoholism, Mexican's in school.

My mother would tell you differently, but my father is not ashamed to say it; we were dirt poor. The house we lived in did not even belong to us, it was my grandfather's, and we were just "crashing" there for a few years with reduced rent. Both of my parents barely finished high school, and were forced to work at a young age to help their families, and eventually when my mother and father made their own family, they ran into their own share of troubles. The story my mother still says to this day was when she was at my Grandmother's house, pleading for help with bills and the kids, and my Grandmother said "No!, él es su marido ahora, él es supuesto hacer todo para usted. ¡Salga de aquí!" Basically my grandma told my mom to leave and that she would not help her. I am guessing that was a turning point in everyone's life. My father was raised on a farm in

San Juan Bautista, and he had only 2 siblings as opposed to the 9 that my mother had.

The beginning of my family was my oldest sister Erica, and even she was a hassle. Since my parents were both not even old enough to drink and they had a baby girl; they became overwhelmed with how much a kid can consume time and energy.

One thing I remember about my old house was how cold it would get at night. My brother Eddie always told me because that's when the ghosts wandered the halls in our house, but I never believed him because all you had to do was look up and see the splitting roof. Luck was not on my dad's side when he was younger, but he was a hard worker who can do almost every job. He was a big, strong, proud Mexican who had the look of a prison inmate but he would not act or talk like one, in fact he was one of the more genuine people in San Juan. But that did not stop him from drinking; my father was an alcoholic and the constant drinking made it hard for him to hold down a steady job. When he was not busy drinking, beating my mom, or passed out somewhere at 3 AM, he tried his best to be involved in our lives. Baseball games, band competitions, even the occasional PTA meeting, my father would be there and be willing to listen and learn how to be a good father. My mother did everything; she was like a mother and father at one point. There were 3 of us kids, Eddie, Erica, and me; and she did not work but being a full time parent was harder than an 8 hour shift, because this shift seemingly doesn't end for 18 years, so it is more like a prison sentence.

I do not really remember my father being an alcoholic, because he stopped when I was born, but from the stories my brother and sister told me, he was a demon. Along with my Uncle Pimi, my father and my uncle would go out boozing around town and just living life, while we were at home waiting for him to continue ours. I remember one day I

came home and I was hungry; there was no peanut butter, or bread, and no one was home; my brother was at band practice, so I was basically allowed to do whatever I want. My uncle lived down the street from us, so I walked over to his house because I knew he had the best snacks; when I got there the door was locked and so was the back door, so I thought on my feet. I “broke in”, I climbed through a little window on the side of the back porch, but when I got in I found more than snacks; my uncle was not home either, so I continued to ravage through his house, eating whatever I could find while simultaneously watching Pokemon. I returned home satisfied and fed. Although that was not an everyday thing, I felt very weird breaking into my family’s house just to eat 2 sandwiches and a whole bag of cheetos. Eventually my mother wanted to go to work, and she was starting to get sick of my dad and his sad attempts to quit drinking. In the summer of 1994, my parents filed for divorce, and obviously changing the outcome of all of our lives.

We had 2 working parents and things were starting to look up, but my mother was fed up with my father and although he was in AA meetings what seemed like everyday, it was not enough. I used to love going to those AA meetings, I never knew what was going on, all I knew was they had coffee and those little red stirring straws and my brother and I could play with as much as we want; and they had the best doughnuts. Imagine 2 little Mexican boys running around having fun, while drunks are spilling their guts trying to get help for their problem. My mother moved to Hollister, while my father stayed back n San Juan, and although he stayed in the same house, it never felt the same. Now that both of my parents were working full time, my siblings and I hardly had seen them. My brother graduated from San Juan Middle school, and I was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and my mother

felt it would be for the best if I came to Hollister to continue my school, where I can be closer to her and the rest of my family. I attended Rancho San Justo Middle School in Hollister, and being away from the comfort of San Juan was weird for the first week, then I made some friends and learned the culture. My mother lived in these really crappy apartment complexes in the bad part of town, and she had gotten a job as an accountant at some credit card company, but she always seemed to be crying at the dinner table because the bills never left her alone. My father was worse off than my mother was; he did have a steady job as a Water Treatment Operator, but in between child support, his own bills, and trying to stay a recovering alcoholic, he should have been stressed out, but my father was always a very calm person, he always told us that everything would be okay and that he would not let us ever be poor again. Years went by and both of my parents built up their money and became comfortable on their own, but the relationship between all of us siblings was growing strained because whenever one of us was with our dad, the other was with our mom and we had hardly seen much of each other.

I remember my father once told me that I could be whatever I wanted if I stayed in school, and growing I wanted to be a Comedian because I made everyone laugh, and when I told him he laughed, so obviously I was good at it. My father wanted his life to be filled with his family and love, my mother on the other hand, hated seeing the parents that turned their back on her many years ago, and dreaded every Christmas card or invitation to my Grandma's for Thanksgiving, her mindset was "me against the world", and sadly that's how she is to this day. My father on the other hand, was able to work hard and work his way up at his work at San Jose State University, and he eventually became his own boss. He now owns a very nice house, and lives comfortably, and he got his wish,

his family is surrounded by him, and he loves his 2 nieces and does everything for them that he never did for us, which I am okay with, because I would do the same. My mother lives in her own home now and she works a lot, but she came from nothing to something with nothing but hard work. How many people can say they raised 3 healthy kids, worked at the same job for over 15 years, and came out of it sane? Not a lot I am guessing. I see what my parents came from and how hard they worked to support themselves and their family, and you and not help but be inspired by how much perseverance and determination each of them have. To the day my Grandma turned her back on us, to now, it has been more than a roller coaster ride. But if that all had not happened, if she had taken us in, I do not think we would have been who we are today, in essence, she forced my mother to grow up and take responsibility. There are no quick fixes in life. And my father being a job jumper did not help us either, but I believe that if he had not been as wild as he was, maybe he would settle at another job, and be content, he would not have taken the job at SJSU. What I learned from their hard work is unmatched; and my sister and I are fulfilling their wishes, we are both in college and getting our education. That is why they worked so hard, so all three of us can have better lives than they did. And although I am in college and my father still works at SJSU, I still want to be a comedian.