

**Topic:** The small things that make me who I am.

**Abstract:** My parents met in the U.S. for the first time. Falling in love and starting a family together. Moving to the U.S. from Mexico my parents had to go through hardship and how that somehow affected who I am today. I come from a family of seven children and being the middle child from a big family, I was never alone. My identity was and still is being shaped and reshaped by my family, beliefs, the things I love to do and my memories.

**Key Words:** Family, Childhood, Upbringing, morals, Memories, Love, Life hardships

### My Identity

When someone talks about identities, I automatically think of my family, my childhood, the little things I do in life, and the things I love to do. All these things have influenced who I am, how I think, my beliefs, and my actions. The way I see my life is like a book, its writing itself as I guide, making decisions and dreaming of new paths, new endings. The main things that have influenced my identity are my parents and my siblings. To tell this story ill have to start at the beginning.

My parents came from respectable families, raised with good morals and had a decent life in Mexico. But they each wanted something more, the American dream. My parents immigrated to Mexico in the years of 1984 and 1985. Different years, different times, on different days, they did not even know each other. Theirs and many other immigrants had the luck of passing in those years, the luck being that president Ronald Reagan believed in amnesty for immigrants. That said, if you believe in fate, you can say my parents were fated to meet. They both settled in Morgan Hill, California. My father renting a room at my uncle's house, the same house my mother was staying in. My mother sister-in-law introduced them, even though my parents did not like each other at first they soon ended up dating, falling in love and starting a family together.

The family of two quickly grew to nine. I have six siblings, three older and three younger. Whenever my whole family went out to eat or just to a store people would always comment on how many children my parents had. I remember one comment that I really like was, having seven children is lucky, it's a blessing, I am not religious but I always felt like having a big family was a blessing. My parents raised us to be respectful and loving. Since we were small they trusted us to not mess around in school, to respect our elders and to accept our mistakes. Whenever we did something bad they would yell at us, and we would apologize. The apology was usually never accepted, not because my parents were rude and unforgiving but because they wanted us to understand that it was a bad thing and to learn from it. My mother was a religious woman and as I grew up she tried to pass her beliefs on to us. She would take us to church; early religious school on Saturdays and we were even baptized and did our first communion. Needless to say the belief that she grew up with diminished like vapor off of our brains and hearts. Religion was just something we didn't need and my mother came to respect that eventually.

I grew up in Gilroy, California, my childhood was one of those happy ones, long summer vacations, warm cozy winter nights, I never thought of what my parents had to go through to get to where we were. It was always fun and games for us children. But as we grew up we became aware that even now my parents have hardships, paying the bills, getting less work hours. I think to the past and I realize it must have been much worse back then, raising seven children that were three years apart at most. Like I said before, for us children it was all fun and games.

As children we would not get in trouble often but when we did it was the scariest thing in the world, not to mention it was unfair too. We would go out and play with the

neighborhood kids. Staying out till ten at night playing hide and seek amongst the neighboring houses or throwing a football across the street, the days were long as kids. Girls and boys alike, there was no discrimination of gender in my neighborhood; the girls were some what of tomboys including myself and my sisters. There were a few times we got in trouble with my parents for going out without permission. One time my dad passed by after work and saw me outside a friend's house. I ran as fast as I could back home but it was too late he knew and the consequences were dire. I suppose it was the way my father and mother were raised and they used this method to raise us, a few beatings were at hand for breaking the rules but we never got grounded. Holding a grudge or hating my parents is something I never even thought of, they did what they had to do to raise us right and it worked. Of course sometimes now my father comments that he regrets that he hit us but it is all in the past. Raising seven children is not an easy thing.

I am the middle child of the family so I was always busy. Hanging out with the older kids or playing pretend shooting with the younger ones. The middle child syndrome, not true, at least not for me, I never felt neglected or in need of more attention then what I always had. Everyone came to me for things, if someone needed help they would ask me and I would happily comply, if my older sister needed to rant, let out steam, I was there to listen. I would soon be know to be unselfish but in reality there where so many thing I would get in return for being there, the older ones would take me out, buy me things and probably the thing I most cherished being able to share things with them. I would also gain ideas from them.

My parents never pushed any of us to do sports or join clubs. We would go to school, come home, there was never any go join this or go learn that. You can say that

maybe money was tight but that was not the big reason we just had no interest in those kinds of things. I have always been a slow learner. My father would have to take time out of his busy schedule to help me with spelling and math homework. I would cry to try and get my way out of it but it never worked. He would make me write one word about fifty times and still sometimes he would get frustrated because the word would not stick. I now realize how much more work I gave my father. Now I love to read, my spelling is still bad but I also love to write. I embrace new knowledge although it is still difficult for me to learn it quickly.

I have always been a creative person. Since I was small I loved to color and draw. I liked playing outside with other kids but if I could choose I would always pick staying inside doodling. At school I would doodle on all my notes but I still some how managed to pass all my classes. In high school I was not much of a talkative person, which has not changed, I would sit in class doodling while the rest of the students interacted amongst each other. My parents would support my drawing and my siblings would boost my artistic confidence with praise. Finally my junior year I took art class, something I had always wanted to do. I love to draw but I am not the best, I prefer abstract art than anything else, and there is a reason for this. The reason being since when I was small whenever someone would say something I would play it out in my head but it was not concrete objects that I would see they were swirly shapes, round ones, skinny ones, all different colors depending on what the person is saying. I claim that I am obsessed with swirls but who knows I once claimed to be obsessed with wrists and I am over those.

The things that make up an identity all depend on the person. There are those who feel like their identity is defined by family, friends, culture, people they love, things they

love, family history, own personal events, concrete ideas, abstract ideas it varies. For me my family is the main one, they helped me grow up, they put ideas in my head I nourished those ideas and principles they support me regardless of who I claim to be and who I claim I want to be. I say I want to become a famous artist my father will say try your best. That is part of my identity I am support. I claim to love someone my family will support my claim and accept my decision. I am abstract, my thoughts, my feelings, my art, and even my writing is abstract. The way I see it I have a physical form, my body, but my identity, who I am, is always changing, always expanding. You can say that it was once a dot, simple childhood no worries, now it's a spiral, a swirl of emotions, ideas, beliefs, obsessions, memories. I am Mexican American but to me culture background is not a big part of my story, I embrace my culture but the food I eat or the things I celebrate will always be there, what makes my identity is what accumulates inside, an abstract identity that is always changing.