

ANGEL'S NARRATIVE



My name is Ángel. I was born in Guadalajara, Mexico in 1986. When I was one year old my siblings and I were taken to Guerrero to where my grandmother lived. We were four in total. I was the youngest and we were left there because my father and mother had to flee. It had to do with the land, and soldiers were involved. It started from my great-grandfather, a man killed my great-grandfather, and the problem continued. Then they were looking for my dad too so they just came here. They didn't know about asylum or anything.

So basically my parents fled Mexico and we stayed with my grandma in Guerrero, Acapulco, Mexico. Later on those same people killed my grandma. They shot her in the stomach and in the mouth and I don't know where else and she died. My

father was a pastor then and my mother was the choir lady. He said before he found God he doesn't know what he would have done when this happened but he had the confidence in God to let this pass.

Anyway, we stayed with my grandmother until I was four years old. We were then brought over to the US by one of my aunts.

I grew up here so I thought I had rights and police are legit. When I was deported and the police in Mexico assaulted me, I tried to file a report. I guess I was crazy or naïve to do that. I stood up to the police and, well, I ended up back at the border saying *I need help*.

Growing up in California, I was very sensitive. I took everything to heart. Just the other day somebody showed me a picture of me and you can tell from my face that something was not right. You can tell something's wrong. Because when I got to where my parents were living, my Dad's brother was living there with his family and his wife and kids and one of those kids raped me.

He was 17 and I was seven years old. I screamed and I told him I was going to tell my parents and he said *No, no, don't tell them*. But I did tell my parents and my brother and sisters but they never paid attention to me. They were always more preoccupied with church stuff, religion stuff. I grew up in a Christian Pentecostal home and we were really poor but they would always focus on Christianity and helping people, but they really didn't pay much attention to us, their kids.

So my whole life I grew up Christian and I grew up knowing that I was different. My mannerisms were feminine. My family, they'd say *You're a little girl*. I remember I was very very skinny and I was always worried about the way I looked. They would always tell me *Why are you so ugly? Why are you so skinny?* And I remember growing up not being happy, always looking scared. And I was scared because my family was

Christian and so I always felt there was a cloud following me around just waiting to strike me with lightning because I'm gay. I understand everybody's religion is however they want to believe but now I believe in a *loving* God.

School was OK. I never actually got bullied or anything. I had a girlfriend in middle school and I can't believe it, because of how gay I was, and we would just hold hands and we would kiss and now I think, wow! the girl didn't know. Then I went through another relationship in high school but I always had a crush on my best friend.

The way I came out was that my brother had a group of friends where I used to work. It's called The Marketplace. Now it's called Plaza México, it's in the city of Lynwood, it's a swap meet. So there was this group of friends and one of them was gay and it was kind of weird for me because I saw he's gay and they're accepting him, so I came out to him. Then after that I started going out with the guy to clubs, he invited me to parties. I was young, 16, and I ended up doing stuff with that person and then I told him I'm not going to continue. He started calling my house in the middle of the night. My mother told me one day that he called and was crying and asking for me and she said, *It's best you tell us what's going on.* So we sat down and I told them again what happened to me when I was young and I said all this time I've been dealing with this and this is the way I feel. They were not accepting and this just hurt me. I told them I'd done stuff with the guy but I didn't want to anymore and I started crying and my mom said *well OK you already know where you're going to go—she meant hell—and I said I know, I know.*

At some point they kicked me out and I went to Long Beach and I ended up with this guy and then I went somewhere else and when I came back to the house they told me my mother had cancer. They were so faithful to the Christian religion that they believed in leaving it up to God and they didn't want to go to the doctor but then we took

her because she couldn't breathe. She was diagnosed real quick and then they gave her treatment with chemo and at first she was better but then she went into a coma. Two or three months she stayed in the hospital in a coma and she was there breathing with a machine and I remember seeing her with the tubes and her feet and her hands were all dry and they would have to move her around for the circulation. It was really horrible but never did it cross my mind that she was going to die.

Anyway we got her home and she told me *Once in the hospital I saw you. I came out of my body and I saw you with your boyfriend*, and then I broke down and cried and told her I was sorry for being a bad person. I told her *I don't want to be gay*. God knows I tried to change. I was hugging her and resting my head on her shoulder and I said, *I'm sorry I'm not the son you wanted*.

After that she stayed two months in the house and then she couldn't breathe anymore. She never actually cried. She has always been the tough one in our family. She's a very strong lady and because she couldn't breathe we called the ambulance and they took her to St. Francis. They revived her twice and then she didn't come back.

We hugged her and we had the *velorio*—the wake, the burial and it still didn't cross my mind she was really gone. I was trying to get tears out and I couldn't get tears out, but then later it hit me hard. It started hitting me real bad. I was so depressed, crying, making myself miserable, blaming myself for her death. I didn't want to come out of my room. It was a feeling of anxiety, of desperation. It's like my whole body went haywire. I couldn't feel normal, I felt like I was high or I was gone.

I always had the feeling there was somebody looking at me through the window or through the closet. Then one night I had a dream about my mother. In the dream I woke up and I ran out to the door and when I opened the door I saw my mom right there. She looked younger, her eyes were wide, and she had the most beautiful golden

brown hair and I remember she was wearing a white gown and in the middle she had some kind of belt and in the middle there was like a crystal diamond and it was flashing light. It would flash and then go off again, and there was light all over her like an angel. I felt peace right away and then suddenly I looked at her and said *Mom, it can't really be you, you are dead.* She said, *Well, they give me time to come say goodbye, especially to you* and I hugged her and I remember smelling that scent of hers which is gardenia, the gardenia flower. That was her scent, she would even have flowers in her room in the house and I smelled her scent and I felt relaxed. I rested my head on her shoulder and I hugged her and I felt good. How is it possible? She said *That light flashes on and off and when it stays lit, it's time for me to go.* She said, *Tell your dad that I'm here* and he was like, *Your mom already passed away, you need to let her go, don't worry about it, she's in a better place.* She told me to put both of their hands together and have faith. When I grabbed their hands and put them together there was a spark and then he saw her and he hugged her real bad. We then went to the futon in the living room and she lay down in the center and I lay down next to her on the side of her heart and I hugged her and my brothers and sisters all of them came and this is my mom in the middle and I was lying on this end and my sister over here, my brother over here, my other sister here, all around her. I asked her, *How's God, Mom?* and she's like, *I can't really tell you how he looks. All I can say is that God is like gold when it was discovered. Like a beautiful light, he's very very valuable.* She said, *Just be good, be a good person, and you'll be just fine.* And she never mentioned anything about being gay. She also said to take care of my father. *Don't forget him.* Her diamond started flashing real fast and she said, *It's time for me to go. I love you. Whenever you need me, call me. Remember me.* It stayed lit and she became all light around her and she became like a small orb of light. I woke up to the smell of gardenias coming from the window. It was very healing.

But the next day I couldn't sleep. I was pacing the floor, walking up and down and there on the TV was an infomercial about attacking anxiety and depression. I got the program—cognitive behavioral modification. I did it religiously and it helped me so much. I also sought psychiatric care and they gave me Zoloft and that was what made me feel better. Little by little I started going out and I put all the right things together.

I was finally comfortable with being gay. Until what happened to me in Mexico.

Anyway here I got into a relationship for six or seven years. We dated and we lived together but we had problems because he liked to go out and I was the one who liked to stay home and not be partying all the time. One night we went to a club and he was flirting with a guy right in my face. We went home and we went to bed and somebody was still calling him on the phone. I tried to take the phone away and we wrestled for the phone and he pushed me. We had a metal candleholder that had some leaves on the side and I scraped myself on it and I saw blood and the next thing I saw was an iron and I threw it at the wall. The bed was right there and he was over there next to the wall and I threw the iron and I walked out and I heard a noise and I looked back and I saw blood pouring out of his side here and I called 911 right away and told them everything that happened. I felt so bad, and they took me in. They said even though he didn't say anything against me and he went to my court hearing later on, it's a domestic violence charge.

My sister bailed me out and I completed anger management classes and I went to all the courts except the last one. There was no hearing so I left. They had postponed it but I didn't know about that. There was no notification so I didn't go to the last court date and I also didn't know that because I didn't go they put a warrant for my arrest. And because of that warrant I later ended up in ICE's custody.

They moved me to Mira Loma in Lancaster and then they flew me to Texas. I was there for three months fighting my case but I didn't see there was a way I could fight it. I told my sister, *The attorney is just getting your money and we're not going to get anywhere* so she said, *It's your call. What do you want to do?* I thought I don't know Mexico, I've only been there when I was small but then my ex was also deported, he was in Tijuana and my father was there too with his new wife, so I thought OK, I'll go to Tijuana. I got deported in 2011, voluntary deportation, and they sent me to Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, that's next to Laredo, Texas and from there I went to the bus station to buy a ticket and it took me three days to get to Tijuana.

It's very different from here, but I had a job—I was working in a call center. My ex was in Tijuana. We broke up but we were still friends and I had new friends too. Life was OK. Well, I was coming home, it was on a Friday. The week before I had lost my wallet, left it in a taxi. So I didn't have my identification. After arriving home and deciding I would go to the store, I was walking and the police stopped me and asked for my identification. I said, *I don't have any with me right now, I'm just going to the store.* They put chains on my hands and these big guys put me on the back of the pickup truck. I was saying, *I'm a Mexican citizen, I know my rights.* I'm saying in Spanish, *I'm from here and I don't know why you treat me this way over an ID.* They start calling me *maricón* and making comments about my being gay.

I can't believe I'm in the truck, the whole day I'm sitting there, the sun beating down and then they took me to a side of downtown to Zona Norte, a really bad zone, and I asked, *Where are you taking me?* I'm being a smart mouth still and one of the guy he takes a gun out and he put it at my head and told me, *Shut up, shut up, be quiet.* They put a hood over my head and placed me in the front with them. They put the gun to my head and I was saying to them, *No, please, don't,* and they're like, *We're going to*

blow your head if you don't shut up. I was scared. I was crying, my legs didn't stop shaking. They drove me around, they stopped and got me out and I didn't see nothing or say nothing. I felt there was something like wood under my feet because I was stepping on stuff and it cracked. Then inside this place—I know it was inside because I felt the air outside and then there was no air there and I felt the door shut behind me and I was scared and it was cold in there and I didn't know what was going on.

They put me on my knees and told me to shut up. They tied me next to some kind of tube, some kind of metal. They were cussing at me and laughing. I didn't know what to do. I was crying and shaking and peeing on myself and then one of the guys came next to me and he said *machito, putito*, and then he pulled his thing out and he put it in my mouth and he put the gun to my head and he said *If you bite it, this is what's gonna happen.* Then the other one was touching me here and here and they were saying *cooperando cooperando* but I wasn't cooperating and the guy that I did oral to he was hitting me after I finish. He was socking me in my face. I couldn't see, my eye was really bad, he was hitting me and hitting me and I blacked out. Then I don't remember nothing till I remember waking up under a bridge.

I was covered in blood. I walked up the bridge and I remember seeing taxis there and I asked the guy if he could give me a ride. He wanted to take me to the hospital and I told him no because this was done by the police. So he just took me to my house. I didn't have my keys. I didn't have nothing with me. I remember getting out from the taxi and going behind the house the window was open, I jumped in and I came out and paid the guy and he asked, *Are you going to be OK?* and I told him everything was fine but then I was crying next to the bed and I felt real real bad and I was bleeding and I remember there was no running water and I remembered I had put a bucket in the sun

so it would warm up and I took the bucket to my room. I was grateful I was alive but I was in pain, you know. I didn't come out of the house for at least a week or two.

It was very hard to come out of the house. I'd get in a taxi to go to work and they'd ask what happened because I couldn't see out of my right eye and it was bloody. Later on when I started feeling more comfortable I wanted to go do a police report for this because somebody has to know what happened to me. But my friend said, *No, no, don't. They can just kill you.*

So I just continued living there, just in my house. My life was miserable and little by little I started going out again. So one night I went downtown. There's a little place called Santa Cecilia where there's gay clubs and somebody there in the street was looking at me and I had seen him before. He was with the police officers in that truck. So I kept walking to the taxis and I always take out my phone when I'm nervous and I act like I'm making a call, that someone will hear me. He went behind me and he tried to take my phone. He grabbed my shoulder and I ran to a taxi and I said *Just go, that man is following me. We got away.*

Two months later the same guy came up behind me again. He socked me and I fell on the pavement, When I got away from him I didn't go to my house. I went to a friend's house and I told him everything that happened and that I wanted to go do a police report. Somebody needed to know. This guy was with the cops and I thought there must be some kind of superior over these cops who could do something.

But it was the stupidest thing to go to the police. They had me sitting there and they were telling me, *Are you sure you want to do this? Do you know what can happen to your family if you do this?* I said, *Well, somebody has to do something about this* and I did the report and asked for a copy. They said I had to come back on Monday and I thought wow, my address and everything was on the form. They had my address, they

knew where I was living and I was scared. I didn't want to go back on Monday but they could come for me.

On the 25th or 27th of October I went to file that report and on the 31st I finally made up my mind to get my stuff and go to the border. I didn't know about asylum or anything. I just walked to the border and when I got to one of the officers from this side I told her I was afraid to be in my country because I was having issues. I said, *I want help* and she said that anybody can just come and ask for help. I showed her my pictures of the injuries and the police report I had done and I told her I'm gay. It's accepted in Mexico but not really if this is happening. She took me to a little room and that's when the whole process started.

They sent me to CCA in San Diego which is really a maximum security prison so that's how they're used to treating people. One half is for immigrants but they treat you like a criminal. They send you to these pods and there are automatic doors they seal and the COs don't talk with you. They scream at you, they shout at you and that's not the kind of attitude that we should be giving because the US of A shouldn't be represented by that sort of people. The USA has been so good for me since I came here as an immigrant and I don't think it's right. People come here from other countries and they need help and the COs treat you like garbage.

I tried to act masculine. I was scared people would know I'm gay. And in CCA there was a cop from Mexico and I was scared of him at first. But he was really a good cop. The police and the cartel organization went after him and he left with his family and his arm was broken, he was walking with crutches. Not everyone there is corrupt but I think the honest ones are afraid to do anything. He was a good cop and he got really messed up there and here he was in detention.

I tried to stand up to the police in Mexico. When I grew up I would see my father hit my mom and I never stood up for her because we were scared and it's always stayed in my mind so much so that now whenever I see something that is not right or it's somebody I can help or it's me who needs to stand up I push myself to do so. But there's only so much you can do.

At CCA, too, you stand up for something and they send you to the Hole. Because there was this older man from Acapulco. He didn't speak English so I was interpreting for him and the CO screamed at me. *You think you're the hot shot in here?* I say, *No, I'm just trying to help him.* The guard says, *Lock him down! Lock him down!* He sent me to the Hole. It was Friday and the day they do the hearings is Wednesday. So first you get punished, then you have the hearing.

It's horrible because you're in shackles, chains, in yellow, and they take you outside and make you pass by so everyone sees you and I was just looking down and the old man is saying *I'm sorry, I'm sorry*, in Spanish and I'm thinking I don't believe this is happening.

On Wednesday, the CO didn't even present himself. I told them what happened and I didn't think it was fair. *Well*, they said, *you already did what six days, five days, so now it's fine.* Then they sent me back.

I'm not a criminal. I have evidence to show what happened to me and people who will come from Mexico to be witnesses. I needed relief and some kind of help.

Now it's four months since they let me out on bond. My sister paid my bond. I'm staying with her. She's my sponsor but she's very stressed and she has a lot of bills. After six months of applying for asylum you can ask for a work permit so that's what I'm trying for now so I can work and help my sister out. I'm on a waiting list for Public Counsel to get my case. So I'm hoping.

I still think somebody has to speak up. But I'm shaking. I'm not used to this life. Really I tried so hard. Now I'm trying again to feel that it's safe to be gay. I try not to think about what happened to me in Mexico or what will happen if they send me back.

I want to work and help my sister and go back to school. I want to work someday for an organization that helps people, like people who are coming from other countries and have nothing. I want to make a difference.

You can read more survivor narratives at www.secondchancesla.weebly.com