



THIS IS MY IMMIGRATION STORY

#SHAREYOURSTORY



NAME: DANITZA GARCIA JAMES
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: MEXICO
STATE: VIRGINIA

I was born and raised in San Luis Río Colorado in Sonora, Mexico and I am the youngest of 6 kids. My parents Gloria Pérez & Isidro García were immigrant workers who worked their entire lives in the crop fields of Arizona, California, and Washington state. Growing up seeing my parents tirelessly working to provide more and better opportunities for us was extremely inspirational. My parents filed for immigration papers for all six of us and saved money to pay and cover all immigration fees. It took over 15 years for me to receive a green card and be able to start school in the United States.

In 1996 my mom and sister moved into a one room apartment so that I could have a place to sleep and call home while I attended high school. My high school years were focused on English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and learning the English language. My last year of high school was focused on meeting the required classes to graduate. Upon graduating from high school, I was able to enroll in a local community college using financial aid but after a year in college, I was unable to afford my college tuition and joined the military.

In June of 2001, I enlisted in the Army as a Heavy wheel Vehicle Operator. Basic training was not easy to navigate as I had just learned English and now I had to learn how to speak "Army". I was thankful to have a battle buddy who was from Texas and was also Mexican and she helped translate things to me while I helped her with her physical training. The events of September 11, 2001 completely changed the course of my career and the reason for me joining the military. I joined for the college tuition opportunity but ended up deploying to Iraq twice (12 months each) and serving a country I was not even a citizen of. I served my entire military career with a green card that my parents worked so hard to obtain for me. In February of 2006, I decided to exit the military after being a victim of sexual assault and feeling as if I had no way out except fleeing the military.

My citizenship ceremony was delayed due to multiple deployments and changes in duty stations between Iraq and Germany. I left the military with the same green card I entered this country with. After leaving the military, I married my husband, an active duty service member at that time. After a year in Fort Hood Texas, he received orders back to Europe and I was still not a citizen. We had to travel to San Antonio and ask for an expedited process that still took over 8 months before I could take the citizenship test and attend my citizen ceremony. I became a US Citizen in September of 2006. I have worked serving the military community from families, service members, Wounded Warriors and families of the fallen for over 15 years. This is why I decided to pursue my Masters in Social Work with Military Focus, so that I can better serve our military. My story had many turns and twists along the way but I am a PROUD MEXICAN IMMIGRANT and love my countries. Serving the military has been one of the things I am the most proud of.

The American dream means having endless opportunities to do and become anyone you want to be. To anyone thinking about starting their immigration story, Do it!