



THIS IS MY IMMIGRATION STORY

#SHAREYOURSTORY



NAME: MARIA L CARAVEO

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: MEXICO

STATE: TEXAS

I was born in the year 1952 in Durango, Mexico but was raised in Juarez, Mexico after we moved at a young age. I am 1 of 7 children in my family. My mom was a homemaker and my father worked at a clothing store. I was only able to go to school up to the 8th grade because I did what most people do at a young age which was get a job and start helping bring money into the household. I helped my family by cleaning homes and as a teenager, I started working as a domestic worker and had a passport to cross the border daily to clean houses in El Paso, TX. I met my husband in Juarez and got married in 1972. Not too far after, I expected my first baby. I didn't think about coming to the United States until my daughter was born. Motherhood impacted me in such an impactful way where I knew I wanted my daughter and future children to have more; better opportunities, a better life. Coming to the United States meant freedom and getting an opportunity to make it - and that's

different for everyone. For me and my family, it meant being able to find the means to work honest jobs, help raise kids that know the value of hard work and integrity. My American Dream was being able to buy my home and pay it off and enjoy all I've accomplished.

We immigrated to the United States through El Paso in 1973. I was working at Providence Hospital and lived in Segundo Barrio during that time. Soon after, my husband and I sought help from the local Catholic Diocese in El Paso who helped immigrants on their journey. They helped with explaining the immigration process, filing of paperwork, and informing us of essential information such as differences between residency, and so on. In November of 1972, after giving birth to my daughter, my husband and I filed our paperwork soon after this life changing event and eventually gained our legal permanent residency. It was a different process compared to what the process is today. It was much quicker although the fear and doubts still remained. The fear of not knowing or fully understanding the language, and dealing with government officials was prime. Eventually my husband became a citizen in 1981 and I in 1991.

After 32 years at Providence Hospital, I retired in 2013 to enjoy the fruits of my labor. My husband and I have 3 amazing children, Veronica, Rafael Jr. and Sandra who gave me the blessing of being a grandmother to 5 beautiful grandkids. We've lived, worked, and helped contribute to putting our kids through college and now are able to enjoy spending time with our grandchildren. I would be lying if I didn't tell you that it was always easy. There were times where money was tight and we had to take on extra work and overtime. Many times things didn't feel fair and people made me feel less because I may have been working a lower paying job or people made me feel like I didn't deserve respect. I also had a lot of guilt of not doing more for my family in Mexico to help them, a mental struggle that I had to take care of everyone.

Some advice I want to include focus around not being scared to take chances but be ready to work. People have a lot of misconceptions about immigrants and what they contribute to this country. On top of the stereotypes, it feels like you will have to work twice as hard to show that you belong here and that you matter. I worked cleaning hospital rooms for 32 years, 6 days a week for the majority of my life so that my kids and grandkids wouldn't have to do the type of work. Thankfully they won't have to. Although I never had a formal education, I feel rich in spirit, health, and faith thanks to God. I was able to achieve my American Dream giving my family and future generations a better life, opportunities, and outcomes. For that I'm thankful to God in making this possible, I'm thankful for trusting myself and taking a risk, thankful for my hardworking husband and our partnership and marriage (49 years!) in making things happen for our family and all the good people that helped us along the way in our path.