



THIS IS MY IMMIGRATION STORY

#SHAREYOURSTORY



NAME: IVAN QUINTANA

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: MEXICO

STATE: ARIZONA

I grew up in Colonia Juarez, Chihuahua - a small town of roughly seven-hundred people. Often, I like to tell people that my town only has stop signs, and not stop lights to give them a reference to how small it is. Both of my parents only completed the equivalent of a middle school education but they wanted their children to have the ability to enjoy a better future. They made a lot of sacrifices that provided us with the opportunity to attend private school so that we were able to learn English from an early age. My parents knew that having a quality education would open doors for us that they themselves were not able to take advantage of.

The main reason I immigrated to the United States was because of the educational opportunities. It was a lot easier for me to go to school here in the U.S. as opposed to Mexico. I moved to Arizona the summer after graduating from high school. It was very difficult to adjust to life in the United States for the first months because I had left all my friends and almost my entire family. I worked full-time for two years to be able to qualify for in-state tuition, and save up for school.

I started my education journey at Mesa Community College, and my first year there was pretty difficult. There were a couple of times that I almost dropped out because I could not afford to go to school. I was able to have my financial aid issues resolved, and continue with my education. Upon graduating from MCC, I was selected to be the recipient of the Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship, one of the largest scholarships in the nation. What was most surprising to me was that I was selected to be the Class Honor's Speaker, and I was the first person of color in over a decade to deliver the student commencement speech. My favorite moment was looking down at the crowd and seeing my parents and brothers in the front row, the people that I am most grateful for in my life.

Most recently, I have been accepted into the UCLA Law Fellows program, which is designed to help students from different backgrounds attend law school. My immigration journey has had many highs and lows, but what always keeps me grounded is the people who have invested in my future. My achievements are not individual, but made possible by the efforts of my community and ancestors. It is absolutely terrifying and nerve-wracking to leave the life that you have always known, and the people that love you for the promise of a better life. You are taking a chance for yourself not knowing the outcome. Just remember that you matter and that you deserve an opportunity to improve your life. My American Dream is being able to lead a life of stability, safety, and happiness. This goal is not something that I only want my family to have, but also wish for any immigrant regardless of their origin. I have been afforded many privileges and opportunities, and I want to use my abilities to keep fighting for immigrant communities.