

*Metete Rapido! Get inside now!* I could see the fear in my aunt's eyes as she and my mother approached me. We made our way inside the house and slammed the door shut, crouching down next to empty suitcases in the corner room. Suddenly, all I could hear was the sound of non-stop gunshots, echoing as closely as the next room. I felt the grip of my mother's fingers on my shoulders. After what felt like an eternity, silence finally came.

The image of bullet-ridden homes and shattered windows is ingrained in my memory. Just a week later, I began unknowingly packing my life in Mexico into a medium-sized backpack. I often think of how I never got the chance to say goodbye to my grandparents before they passed and how the life I had known suddenly disappeared forever without warning. After my tourist visa expired within six months of moving to the United States, I resided in the country as an undocumented immigrant for ten years.

For years, I lived in constant fear of deportation. Beyond that, I feared that I wouldn't be able to attend college or pursue a career. I wondered if my only option was working an underpaid cash job that didn't require a social security number. After my high school counselor discouraged me from applying to college, I had nearly counted myself out. It wasn't until my English teacher offered to guide me through the process that I considered enrolling in community college.

While in school, I worked a full-time cashier job at a local ice cream shop to pay for classes and help my mom with bills and childcare. When I was granted permanent resident status, I was selected for an internship with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute. After my internship, I was hired as Staff Assistant to Congresswoman Veronica Escobar on Capitol Hill. The privilege of working in Congress is one I do not take for granted as it granted me the opportunity to draft memoranda on foreign affairs and immigration issues for legislative staffers.

I've channeled my experiences with the immigration system as an undocumented immigrant to mentor undocumented students and individuals, sharpen my advocacy skills, and work on immigration policy. At Berkeley Law, I've joined the Berkeley Law Immigration Group

to work with the ACLU of Northern California to assist migrants facing inhumane conditions in detention centers. I became an associate editor for the Berkeley Latine Journal on Law & Policy and will work during the Spring break of 2024 providing Native Hawai'ians with direct legal services.

I still have much more to learn to fight for immigration reform and human rights. I hope to support the needs and dreams of undocumented immigrants in the United States by pursuing a legal education. As a future attorney, I bring with me my passion and ambition to be part of the changemakers working towards providing those in the shadows with a fair chance to live and succeed in the land of opportunity.