

Learner Spark

A MAGAZINE *BY* LEARNERS, *FOR* LEARNERS



INSIDE:

"I believed this beautiful land could give me a chance to build a better future and a better life" (p. 2)


LITERACY CENTER
OF WEST MICHIGAN

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All stories are published and translated exactly as written and submitted by the learner.

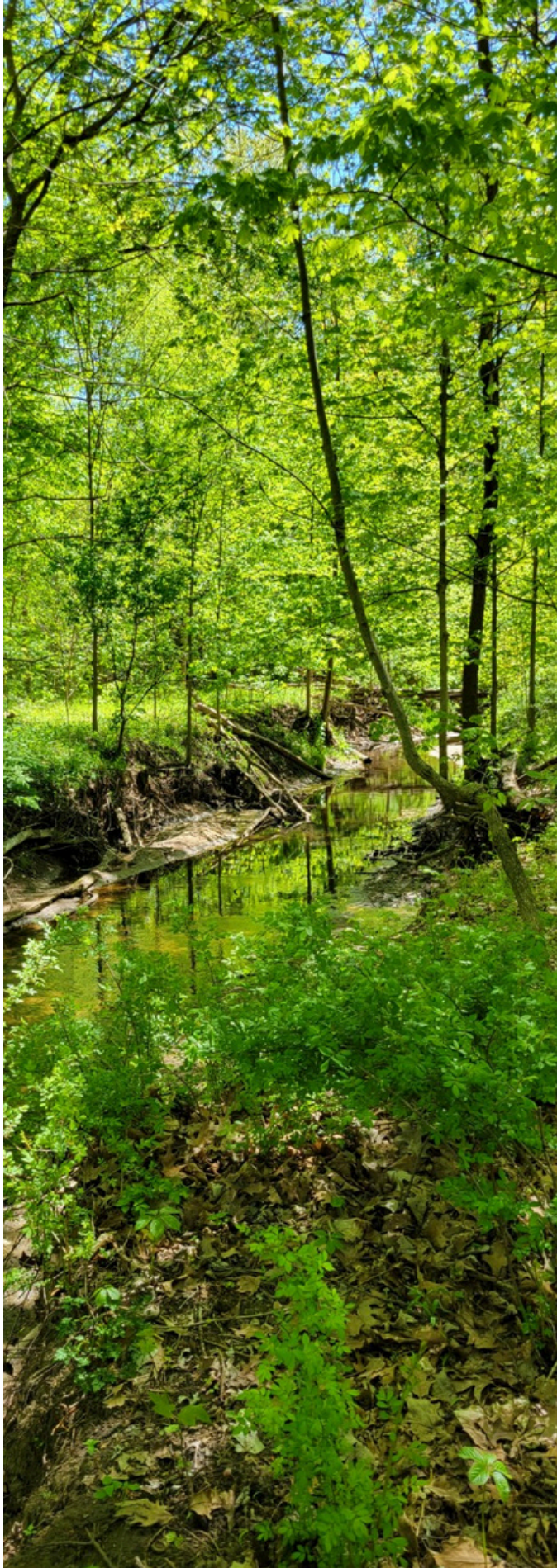


BAG OF DREAMS

BY MAYA

I am an immigrant, and my story began when I arrived to this country when I was just 16 years old. I didn't know the language, the culture, the laws, or what my future would look like. I only knew that I had hope and a bag full of dreams that I took and carried with me. Everything felt new, scary, and uncertain, but I kept moving forward because I believed this beautiful land could give me a chance to build a better future and a better life. Those early years were not easy. They were filled with challenges, mistakes, learning, and growth. But they shaped my strength and taught me perseverance.

Today, the center of my world are my three boys. They are my greatest pride, my motivation, and the reason I keep pushing forward even on the hardest days. The bag full of dreams I once carried has now started to become a reality as I watch my children grow healthy, safe, and begin to chase their own dreams. Every sacrifice, every long night, and every challenge has been worth it because of them. Their smiles remind me why I started that journey. Being their mother has filled my life with purpose, deep love, and a strength I never knew I had. Everything I do is for them and because of them.



MI VIDA CON UN IDIOMA DISTINTO

BY DULCE ORTIZ

My name is Dulce. Since starting the class, I have started understanding more words at work. I have also started to understand more at restaurants and supermarkets.

MY NAME IS WILIBAN

BY WILIBAN LOPEZ ZACARIAS

I can drive and I can go shopping. I can use transit signals. I can speak English in my work. I can go to restaurants. Since starting the course, I have started with vocal exercises to improve pronunciation. I have learned many things such as pronunciation and verbs. This has helped me with things like going shopping, using transit signals, and speaking English in my work.

MY NAME IS JUAN

BY JUAN DIAZ

I can go to the bank. I can go shopping. I can speak in my work. I'm improving my reading a lot. I can order my food. I study three times a week and I'm improving a lot.

JUILLET, LE MOIS OÙ TOUT A BASCULÉ POUR UNE PERSONNE QUI M'AS BEAUCOUP AIDER*

BY KADI D



**July, the Month When Everything Changed for Someone Who Helped Me a Lot, by Kadi D*

Introduction:

Tout s'est écroulé sans prévenir. Une dispute, une porte qui claque, et son monde a basculé dans une ombre que rien ne semblait pouvoir chasser. Ce n'était que le début — le début d'une série de douleurs, de secrets étouffés, et de choix impossibles. À ce moment-là, elle ne savait pas encore que ce mois de juillet allait marquer la fin de leur innocence... et le début de leur descente en enfer.

Chapitre 1: La Rupture

Tout a commencé en juillet, juste après le départ de son mari. Quelques semaines plus tard, la belle dame a tenté de discuter avec lui à propos du loyer. Ce simple échange s'est transformé en violente dispute. L'homme en question, froidement, a décidé de ne plus rester aux USA, affirmant que la rentabilité de "l'usa" ne l'arrangeait pas. Depuis ce jour, il n'a plus jamais contacté sa femme.

Introduction:

Everything collapsed without warning. An argument, a slamming door, and her world plunged into a shadow that nothing seemed able to dispel. It was only the beginning—the beginning of a series of pains, stifled secrets, and impossible choices. At that moment, she didn't yet know that this July would mark the end of their innocence... and the beginning of their descent into hell.

Chapter 1: The Rupture

It all started in July, just after her husband left. A few weeks later, the beautiful woman tried to discuss the rent with him. This simple exchange turned into a violent argument. The man in question coldly decided to leave the US, stating that the profitability of "the USA" didn't suit him. Since that day, he has never contacted his wife again.

Les gens suppliaient la belle dame de lui pardonner, de lui parler, de ne pas laisser sa famille éclater. Mais ses yeux s'étaient durcis. Elle a interdit aux gens de se mêler de leur histoire. « Si vous continuez, c'est la police qui viendra nous séparer », dit-elle. À ce moment-là, tout le monde a compris que sa famille était seule.

Chapitre 2 : Le Silence et le Secret

Quelques semaines plus tard, ses enfants ont surpris leur mère dans un état étrange. Puis, le choc: elle était enceinte. Elle s'est fait promettre de ne rien dire à personne. Et à garder le secret... un secret de plus, enfermé dans une maison déjà pleine de douleurs non dites.

Chapitre 3 : Le Début de la Chute

C'est à ce moment précis que tous les problèmes ont commencé. La belle dame, déjà fragile, tombait fréquemment malade. Les médecins lui ont interdit de continuer à travailler. Mais elle refusait de s'arrêter. Malgré la douleur, elle s'est battue pour ses deux enfants, et pour celui qui était dans son ventre. Elle se levait chaque matin, le visage fatigué, le corps brisé, mais l'âme toujours en feu.

Chapitre 4 : Le Point de Rupture

Et puis, un jour... tout s'est arrêté. La belle dame a perdu son travail. Son corps ne supportait plus les charges lourdes, ni même les petits efforts. Et c'est là, précisément là, que leur véritable calvaire a commencé.

Chapitre 5 : Le Poids du Vide

La belle dame n'avait plus de travail. Le silence dans la maison n'était plus un simple calme: c'était celui de la faim, de l'angoisse, du doute. Chaque jour, elle s'inquiétait — comment allait-elle payer les factures ? L'électricité, le loyer... Et surtout: comment elle et c'est enfants vont manger? Mais elle tenait le coup. Je me suis mise à pleurer dit-elle. Pas pour moi mais pour mes petites enfants. Pour ce bébé encore invisible, qui grandissait dans le ventre d'une mère brisée. Comment allaient-ils survivre? Comment pouvons-nous leur offrir autre chose que le froid et la peur?

La belle dame, malgré la fatigue et la douleur immense, répétait avec une force qu'elle n'avait plus : « Dieu est avec nous. Il nous voit. Il ne nous laissera pas tomber. » disant (hasbouna allah wa nimam wa kim la haoula wa allah qu ouata lazim) Je me voyais, parfois, le regard perdu dans le ciel, comme si

People begged the beautiful woman to forgive him, to talk to him, not to let her family fall apart. But her eyes had hardened. She forbade people from interfering in their story. "If you continue, the police will come and separate us," she said. At that moment, everyone understood that her family was alone.

Chapter 2: Silence and Secrecy

A few weeks later, her children surprised their mother in a strange state. Then came the shock: she was pregnant. She was made to promise not to tell anyone. And to keep the secret... one more secret, locked away in a house already filled with unspoken pain.

Chapter 3: The Beginning of the Fall

It was at that precise moment that all the problems began. The beautiful woman, already frail, frequently fell ill. The doctors forbade her to continue working. But she refused to stop. Despite the pain, she fought for her two children, and for the one she was carrying. She got up every morning, her face weary, her body broken, but her soul still burning brightly.

Chapter 4: The Breaking Point

And then, one day... it all stopped. The beautiful woman lost her job. Her body could no longer bear heavy loads, or even the slightest exertion. And it was there, precisely there, that their true ordeal began.

Chapter 5: The Weight of Emptiness

The beautiful woman was out of work. The silence in the house was no longer just calm: it was the silence of hunger, anguish, and doubt. Every day she worried —how would she pay the bills? The electricity, the rent... And above all: how would she and her children eat? But she held on. "I started to cry," she said. "Not for myself, but for my small children. For that still invisible baby, growing in the womb of a broken mother." How would they survive? How could we offer them anything but cold and fear?

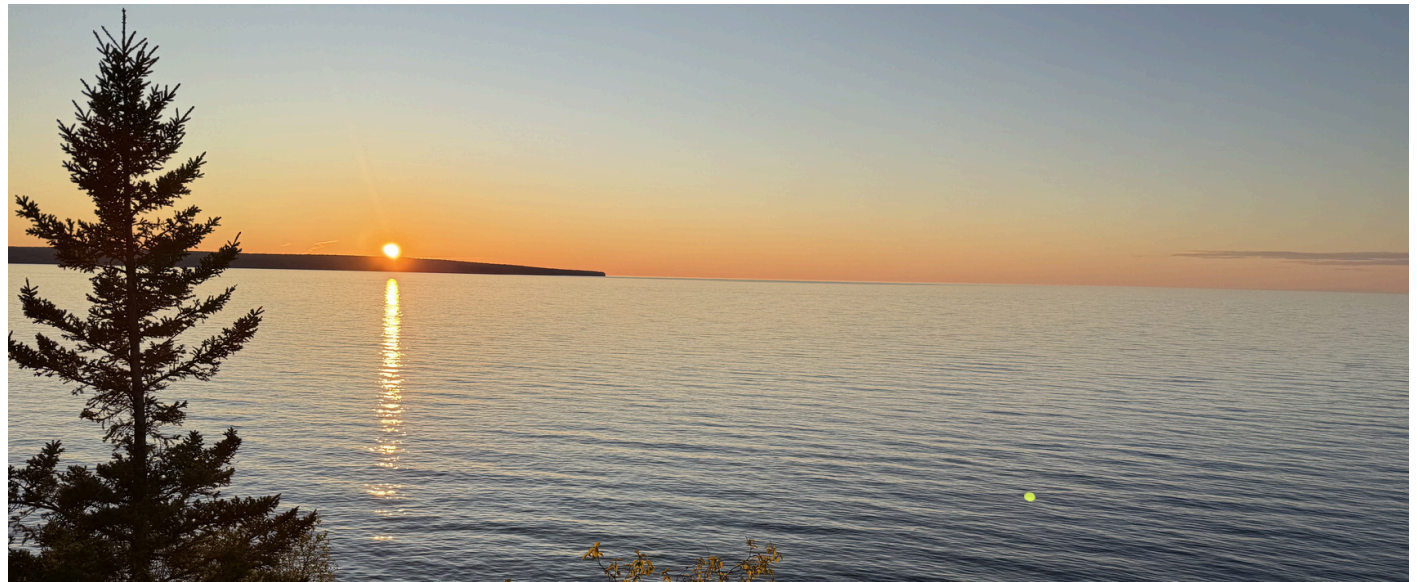
The beautiful lady, despite her fatigue and immense pain, repeated with a strength she no longer possessed: "God is with us. He sees us. He will not let us down." saying (hasbouna allah wa nimam wa kim la haoula wa allah qu wata lazim) I sometimes saw myself, my gaze lost in the sky, as if I were waiting for a miracle, my eyes filled with hope but my heart drowned in pain.

j'attendait un miracle, les yeux remplis d'espoir mais le cœur noyé de douleur.

Un jour, elle a dû faire ce qu'elle n'aurait jamais imaginé: demander l'aide du gouvernement pour obtenir de la nourriture. Grâce à Dieu, sa demande a été acceptée. C'était peu, mais c'était une bouffée d'air dans un monde qui se refermait sur eux.

Un soir, alors que la nuit tombait, une femme est venue frapper à leur porte. Une connaissance de la belle dame, très gentille. Dans ses mains, elle tenait une enveloppe. Une somme d'argent. Un geste d'humanité. Un miracle discret.

Mais ce miracle n'allait pas suffire à les sauver...



Chapitre 6 : La Vie, Fragile Comme un Souffle

Les jours se suivaient, lourds, incertains. La belle dame toute fatiguée par la grossesse n'en pouvait presque plus. Elle était faible. On aurait dit qu'elle se décomposait de l'intérieur mais plus forte que jamais. Pourtant, elle ne disait rien. Elle attendait... le jour où elle devrait accoucher.

Son mari, lui, ne rappelait toujours pas. Il était comme effacé. Son absence était une blessure que le temps ne guérissait pas.

Elles sont restées seules, enfermées dans le silence, dans la peur, jusqu'au jour de l'accouchement. Ce jour-là a été le plus dur de tous. La belle dame, déjà malade pendant toute sa grossesse, a été conduite à l'hôpital. Trois jours plus tard, elle est revenue à la maison avec un petit être dans les bras: Nabi. Le petit prince.

One day, she had to do something she never imagined she could have done: ask the government for help to get food. Thank God, her request was granted. It was little, but it was a breath of fresh air in a world that was closing in on them.

One evening, as night was falling, a woman knocked on their door. An acquaintance of the beautiful lady, very kind. In her hands, she held an envelope. A sum of money. A gesture of humanity. A quiet miracle.

But this miracle would not be enough to save them...

Chapter 6: Life, Fragile as a Breath

The days followed one another, heavy, uncertain. The beautiful woman, exhausted by her pregnancy, was almost at her limit. She was weak. It was as if she were falling apart from the inside, yet stronger than ever. Still, she said nothing. She waited... for the day she would give birth.

Her husband still hadn't called back. He was like a ghost. His absence was a wound that time couldn't heal.

They remained alone, locked in silence and fear, until the day of the delivery. That day was the hardest of all. The beautiful woman, already ill throughout her pregnancy, was taken to the hospital. Three days later, she returned home with a tiny being in her arms: Nabi. The little prince.

Mais à peine deux semaines après ce moment de joie fragile, tout s'est effondré à nouveau.

La belle dame est tombée très malade. Elle ne pouvait plus tenir debout. Son corps criait, fatigué de tout supporter. Ce même jour, elle a fait une prééclampsie. Sa tension ne cessait de monter. Son cœur battait la chamaille. Pensant à ses filles et à son nouveau-né.

Quelques jours plus tard, après trois jours passés à l'hôpital, la belle dame est revenue à la maison. Quand ses filles ont vu ses pas hésitants, son sourire fragile, son regard posé sur eux... Elles senti une immense joie, une lumière dans le noir. Elle était debout. Vivante. La belle dame était sur pied.

Chapitre 7: Mais le destin n'en avait pas fini avec eux

Quelques semaines plus tard, elle a déposé son CV un peu partout, cherchant désespérément un nouveau souffle. Le silence des employeurs était assourdissant. Aucun retour. Rien. Jusqu'à ce jour... où un simple e-mail venant de son ancien boulot a changé le cours des choses.

Elle avait été acceptée. Enfin une lueur, une promesse. On lui proposait de revenir, mais pas comme avant: plus de stabilité. Finissant les 25 dollars de l'heure, elle recommençait à zéro, à 17 dollars, à Fort. Une chute brutale. Et pourtant, elle a accepté. Car elle n'avait pas le choix.

Le premier jour de son nouveau travail, alors qu'elle sortait pour faire les courses, le sort a frappé une fois de plus: un accident. Brutal. Inattendu. Sa voix tremblait au téléphone en appelant sa camarade:

« Ma chérie... j'ai eu un accident... mais ne t'inquiète pas, ce n'est rien de grave. » Dit elle.

Ce jour-là, disait elle incapable de pleurer. Mes larmes étaient déjà épuisées.

Et j'ai murmuré: « Mon Dieu... qu'est-ce que tu nous réserve encore ? »

Ses yeux étaient tout rouges. Pas seulement à cause de l'accident... mais à cause de tous les fardeaux qu'elle portait en silence.

But barely two weeks after that moment of fragile joy, everything collapsed again.

The beautiful lady became very ill. She could no longer stand. Her body screamed, exhausted from enduring everything. That same day, she developed preeclampsia. Her blood pressure kept rising. Her heart pounded wildly. She thought of her daughters and her newborn.

A few days later, after three days in the hospital, the beautiful woman returned home. When her daughters saw her hesitant steps, her fragile smile, her gaze fixed on them... they felt an immense joy, a light in the darkness. She was standing. Alive. The beautiful woman was back on her feet.

Chapter 7: But Fate Wasn't Finished with Them Yet

A few weeks later, she sent her CV everywhere, desperately seeking a fresh start. The silence from employers was deafening. No response. Nothing. Until that day... when a simple email from her old job changed everything.

She had been accepted. Finally, a glimmer of hope, a promise. They were offering her a chance to return, but not as before: no more stability. After earning \$25 an hour, she would start over from scratch, at \$17. A brutal fall. And yet, she accepted. Because she had no choice.

On her first day at her new job, while she was out shopping, fate struck once again: an accident. Brutal. Unexpected. Her voice trembled on the phone as she called her comrade:

"My darling... I had an accident... but don't worry, it's nothing serious" she said.

That day, she said, unable to cry. My tears had already run dry.

And I whispered, "My God... what else do you have in store for us?"

Her eyes were completely red. Not just because of the accident... but because of all the burdens she carried in silence.

MI HISTORIA

BY MARIA GALÁN

My name is Maria Galán. I am Mexican, from the state of Michoacán. I am the oldest of six siblings. I came to live here in 1998. I am about to turn 28 years old, and my story is the same as many of those who come here to work and to have a better life, or in my case to help my parents, but in reality I always wanted to live here. It has been difficult not knowing English. When I first arrived here, I couldn't go to school because I had to work. Then my daughter was born, and it's difficult as a mother to find the time to attend English classes, especially since I'm alone here and didn't have anyone to take care of my daughter or children. My husband worked late, so I didn't have that opportunity. What little I know I learned over the years in the different jobs I've had, but I can't speak English, much less write it. I didn't have the opportunity to go to school; I only finished sixth grade, and from there I started working until I moved here. Once I was here, it was the same; I started working, and well, several years passed. This is my second year attending English school. The first year was 10 years ago. I only went to school for one semester, then I had to start working, and I didn't continue studying until this year when I decided to start again. My children are older now, and I don't have as many responsibilities with them as when they were little. This year, I decided to enroll to learn English so I can communicate with people and with my clients. I work as a house cleaner, and I understand what they tell me about the job. But when they want to talk to me about other things, like their daily lives, it's a little difficult to have a conversation. Some people make an effort to understand your limited English, but others don't. So that's been my reason for learning English, and I hope to continue learning.





HISTORIA*

BY IRMA RIVAS

Hola a todos y todas, mi nombre es Irma, soy originaria de El Salvador. Nací el 27 de marzo de 1991. Soy mamá de 2 hermosas hijas y de un 1 hijo varón. Casada hace 15 años. Les cuento un poquito de mi historia y porque me vine para Estados Unidos en el 2010. Mi mamá se quedó embarazada de mí, cuando mi papá se vino para Estados Unidos, mi mamá cuando se casó con mi papa ya tenía a mi hermano mayor después se embarazó de mí y mi papá se vino para Estados Unidos. El trabajo unos años aquí y después se devolvió a El Salvador. Cuando el regreso nosotros vivíamos en el centro de San Salvador que es la ciudad de El Salvador y mi papa cuando llegó con sus ahorros compró una casa cerca de donde vivía su Hermana mayor en el cantón de las delicias del departamento de la Libertad. Ahí vivimos unos años en la casita. Cuando yo tenía 7 años mis papas se enfermaron mi mamá quedo embarazada de mi hermana menor. Cuando tuvo a mi Hermana menor ella comenzo a sentirse enferma y se fue a realizarse unos exámenes, salio que tenía cancer de utero y cuando mi mamá se enfermó, mi papá decayó enfermo y resultó que él tenía años de estar enfermo de leucemia. Mis padres murieron ese mismo año los dos, mi papá murió en agosto y mi mamá en diciembre. Mis

Hello everyone, my name is Irma, I am originally from El Salvador. I was born on March 27, 1991. I am the mother of two beautiful daughters and one son. I have been married for 15 years. Let me tell you a little bit about my story and why I came to the United States in 2010. My mother became pregnant with me when my father came to the United States. When my mother married my father, she already had my older brother. Later, she became pregnant with me, and my father came to the United States. He worked here for a few years and then returned to El Salvador. When he came back, we lived in downtown San Salvador, the capital city of El Salvador. When my father arrived, he bought a house near where his older sister lived in the Las Delicias canton of the La Libertad region. We lived there for a few years in that little house. When I was 7 years old, my parents got sick. My mother became pregnant with my younger sister. When she had my younger sister, she started feeling sick and went to get some tests done. It turned out she had uterine cancer, and when My mom got sick, my dad's health deteriorated, and it turned out he'd been battling leukemia for years. Both my parents died that same year; my dad died in August and my mom in December. My siblings and I were orphaned. My

hermanos y yo quedamos huérfanos. La hermana mayor de mi papá nos acogió cuando nuestros padres murieron. Ella tenía 12 hijos de los cuales 6 erradicaban en Estados Unidos y los otros 6 en El Salvador. Vivimos por años en el cantón hasta que las pandillas mataron al esposo de mi tía. Bajo amenazas tuvimos que movernos para Lourdes Colón, ahí mismo en el departamento de la libertad. Ahí viví hasta que cumplí los 19 años, pero por las pandillas que amenazaban mi vida tuve que emigrar para Estados Unidos. Gracias a Dios, los hijos de mi tía, la que creció me acogieron. Conocí a mi esposo, me casé, tuve hijos y hace 10 años nos movimos de New York para el estado de Michigan. Aquí he erradicado los últimos años, hasta hace 2 años comencé a estudiar inglés en Literacy Center. Y gracias a Dios, estoy bien tratando de ser mejor persona cada día, disfrutando mi familia y tratando de crecer más como persona para ayudar a los demás con mi ejemplo. Tratando de ser una mujer de inspiración para otras mujeres. Sabiendo y reconociendo que sin Dios y las personas que han sido como ángeles en mi vida, no estaría donde estoy. Dios y mi familia y mis ganas de salir adelante son lo que me impulsan cada día a crecer y seguir luchando. Gracias de antemano por la oportunidad de compartir un poco de mi historia.

dad's older sister took us in after our parents died. She had 12 children, 6 of whom lived in the United States and the other 6 in El Salvador. We lived for years in the village until gangs killed my aunt's husband. Under threats, we had to move to Lourdes Colón, also in the region of La Libertad. I lived there until I turned 19, but because of the gangs threatening my life, I had to emigrate to the United States. Thank God, my aunt's children, the ones who grew up, took me in. I met my husband, got married, had children, and 10 years ago we moved from New York to Michigan. I've lived here for the last few years. Two years ago, I started studying English at the Literacy Center, and thank God I'm doing well, trying to be a better person every day, enjoying my life. My family and I are trying to grow as a person so I can help others through my example, striving to be an inspiration to other women, knowing and acknowledging that without God and the people who have been like angels in my life, I wouldn't be where I am today. God, my family, and my desire to succeed are what drive me each day to grow and keep fighting. Thank you in advance for the opportunity to share a little of my story.



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