

2021

A Quilt of Memories

Abbyleeny Gonzalez Ramirez
Humboldt State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/courageouscuentos>



Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [Chicana/o Studies Commons](#), [Civic and Community Engagement Commons](#), [Community-Based Learning Commons](#), [Creative Writing Commons](#), [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence Commons](#), [Educational Sociology Commons](#), [Ethnic Studies Commons](#), [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), [Gender and Sexuality Commons](#), [History Commons](#), [Inequality and Stratification Commons](#), [Latin American Languages and Societies Commons](#), [Latina/o Studies Commons](#), [Modern Literature Commons](#), [Politics and Social Change Commons](#), [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#), [Reading and Language Commons](#), and the [Theory, Knowledge and Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gonzalez Ramirez, Abbyleeny (2021) "A Quilt of Memories," *CouRaGeouS Cuentos: A Journal of Counternarratives*: Vol. 4 , Article 24.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/courageouscuentos/vol4/iss1/24>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 License](#)

© 2016 Department of Critical Race, Gender & Sexuality Studies (CRGS) at Humboldt State University.

This Counternarratives and Reflections is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Digital Commons @ Humboldt State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in CouRaGeouS Cuentos: A Journal of Counternarratives by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Humboldt State University. For more information, please contact kyle.morgan@humboldt.edu.

A Quilt of Memories

By Abbyleeny Gonzalez Ramirez

My first day in high school, it was something that left a mark on me because I came from a different school, country, culture, and language — everything was different.

My name is Abbyleeny Gonzalez Ramirez but I like to be called Abby. I live with my parents, Jose Antonio and Maria, my brother Jesus and my sister, Yaritza. We are from Oaxaca, Mexico. Oaxacan culture is beautiful because they wear their huipiles with extravagant colors. Their cuisine is nationally recognized, its climate is really beautiful and there is so much to say about its beaches. A very special tradition is the Guelaguetza, a folk-dance festival, where we represent our traditional dances from the different regions in Oaxaca.

I was born in a small town in Oaxaca. When I was 5 years old, I lost my grandfather from my father's side, to this day it still hurts me, losing him was a lot for me. Another death that affected me was my grandmother's aunt sister, who was another grandmother to me. She died two days before my birthday. It was something very emotional because everyone in my family knew the moment of her death would come, except me, and they were right because she had cancer, which I didn't know, and seeing her die was something that I still cannot overcome.

When I was little I really liked school, I went to one of the most outstanding schools in the area. I competed with several schools, where we would have competitions to see who was smarter in several subjects. It was not only one subject but all of them, which were: mathematics, Spanish, science, history, government, and ethical training. I placed in the top 3 of all of the students. At the end of the school year they gave us the diplomas with the place that we had won, and they gave us an award from the community. Once I won 200 pesos and all of us who won one of the first places got to go eat at a place where you could also play soccer, volleyball and other games. There was also a small lake where you could feed the fish and ducks. It was a very happy moment for me because I felt a sense of accomplishment for the first time in my life.

Even though I was in 9th grade when we moved from Mexico, I had to start over when we arrived in Fortuna because I lost most of the

school year due to the move. I have many memories of the year that I was in high school, but a funny memory that I have was 3 days before the Day of the Dead. My class wanted to make an offering in the room and the teacher agreed since there was a lot of space in the room. The next day we began to put offerings on the ofrenda, and the teacher brought a portrait to make it look more beautiful. However, students from another room saw the offering and began to steal the fruits and sweets. They did it when the teacher was not there, so one of my classmates stood at the door so no one could enter, and I don't know how it happened, but the door came off the hinges and landed on a classmate. The students and I helped her out from underneath it, at which point we realized that she had a huge bump on her forehead. Nothing ever happened with that because the teachers never knew, but it's still funny to me.

Once I reached 9th grade, laziness began to set in and my grades began to drop. At first I liked going, but I saw a lack of respect there, not even for the teachers, much less among us students. The principal who was also a teacher bullied the students that he felt were either weak, mentally challenged, out of shape, or not the same religion as him. He would specifically bully students that he knew did not have a father to defend them, maybe because the dad either passed away or left the home, and the moms were too afraid to do anything about it. I was lucky because I had a dad, but I would always help my friend who did not. He always had a favorite student and discriminated against the others, so I didn't like being in that school. It was like being in a hell that I wanted to end and leave, but I never thought of going to another state, much less leaving the country. The day they told me that I was going to come to the United States, I was shocked, but at the same time I was happy because I was going to meet my mother's side of the family and I would be able to leave that school.

The process to come to the US was long; we spent about half a month in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. A lady who was hired to help us with everything was very kind to us. I remember very little about that place, but the lady showed us several tourist places. One place that she took us was the house of Juan Gabriel, a famous singer and composer. We could not enter but from the outside the garden looked very beautiful, with a large green lawn with trees, and flowers and songs were heard in the background. Something that I do remember perfectly is that the lady who helped us with the process to go to the United States, had us plant a rose bush or a tree in the

park that she would take care of as a symbol of our new residency in the United States.

When we arrived, my father wanted to go see his brother who lives in San Diego, so we went to San Diego when we entered California. We stayed for almost a week, I liked its climate, but I especially liked meeting my uncle and his family. One day my uncle took us to a park near his house, while my brother played soccer with my cousin. I would lie down on the green grass watching the sky and the air would feel fresh on my face. Then we went to Bakersfield. Another uncle lives there. He is my father's brother and there was a lot of family that we visited, so we stayed for more than a week. One memory I have is that they invited us to watch a soccer game. It was very hot, but the good thing was that they put up tarps and it was shady. When it was over they invited us to eat, and then they started singing. The atmosphere was fantastic, and it continued until around 11 at night. Lastly, we came to Fortuna.

The truth is, I didn't want to come to the United States, but I wanted to meet my mother's family and another uncle on my father's side. That same night we arrived at my aunt's house, my uncle Lalo also arrived. I did not know what he was like but when my very religious Catholic uncle Israel brought us dinner and began to pray, we all noticed Uncle Lalo's food was already gone, and I remember everyone laughing. What I really liked was seeing the trees and the tranquility and I felt that I was in my town. What I liked the least was the climate, I was used to the heat and it was very cold in Fortuna. It was fun though, I thought I was going to miss my town in Mexico, but it wasn't like that, at least, not at first.

The first day I went to my new high school in Fortuna, my way of thinking changed, mainly the first days. I didn't have an interpreter, and my only company was my sister but we had different classes. I saw how Latinos, mainly Mexicans, made fun of me for not speaking or understanding English. Since then I promised myself not to do the same, the day a Latino arrived and did not know English I would help him. Then I met Diego, Daniel and so on and I made sure to help them navigate the school. I like being in high school despite everything. I feel very happy now I have friends, favorite teachers like the Fem and Holmes. I have many memories and that makes me very happy.