

The Ugly Reality

Every child deserves to play and live life without having to worry if there is food on the table. For as long as I can remember, I've witnessed my parents having to wake up long before the sun rises to work in the fields...

My parents grew up on farms, so they knew what the farm life was like. They were only able to get up to a sixth grade education, from then on they had to abandon school and go off to work to contribute for their families. Working in the farm didn't change the fact that they were still poor and food was still scarce. It was for that same reason my parents chose to migrate from Mexico and into the United States. Little did they know they were in for a rude awakening.

In May of 1996, they risked it and luckily made it safely to Texas. Their next stop was South Carolina, where my parents lived in a small trailer. They picked crops such as strawberries, green beans, tomatoes, green peppers, corn and even watermelons. Working from sunrise to dawn, earning \$4.75 an hour. This is what they had to do on a daily bases, for the next six months. Until the winter began and the crops started to die off. They had no other alternative, but to migrate to South Florida, and that's where the Rhythm of the Harvest began.

They started off by working in the fields and packing all types of plants. Transportation was always an obstacle for them, due to the fact that my parents didn't know how to drive, let alone own a car. But my parents persevered. They had to car pool and in some cases walked to and from work, just to earn a couple of dollars.

My parents finally applied for special housing for farm workers. They moved into their first one bedroom house in 1998. I was six months old. Mind you, we moved in and we didn't have anything (and I'm not exaggerating). My dad started saving money to buy what we desperately needed, and some things weren't new. My sister, Irene, was born four years later. We lived in that same old, one room house for the next nine years. I remembered living so cramped. I slept on the floor, my sister still slept on her crib and my parents shared a twin sized bed. I was nine years old when my family moved to a two room house down the street. I was so relieved to move out, only because I was finally going to sleep in my own room, for the first time. I still have to share a bed with Irene, but I don't complain.

Being the daughter of illegal farm workers has not been easy and on top of that I'm also the oldest out of three girls. I've had no other choice but to grow up quick. I had to leave behind all my dolls for a tortilla maker, pick strawberries in the fields and stay home alone with Irene when we had teacher planning days because my mom didn't have anywhere else to leave us. At times, the rhythm of the harvest doubles causing my parents to work 12-13 hours a day.

Unfortunately, my sisters and I don't know what a family vacation is. My parents don't have the time or money for it. Like my mother always says, 'si perdemos un dia de trabajar, ustedes no tiene para comer.' In other words, if they don't work, we don't eat. My mother gets sentimental when I bring it up.

She's always saying if only she could, she would do a lot more things with us. Another major challenge my parents face is getting caught and being deported back to Mexico. If this were to happen, everything that I'm aiming for will all go downhill. My parents are the reason why I'm going to school. I witnessed them come home every day, all dirty, with back aches and sore hands. Over the years, I've seen the kind of damage the sun has done to them, it's horrible. Despite all their obstacles, it still surprises me that they never seem to complain. I admire my parents and all of their hard work. The least I can do is go to school. Be the best that I can be, be the first in my family to graduate high school, be a great role model for my community, prove critics wrong and most importantly, make my parents proud. I'm their first and only hope. I want to show them that migrating to the United States and working in the fields was definitely worth it. I plan to graduate from college and change the rhythm of the harvest...