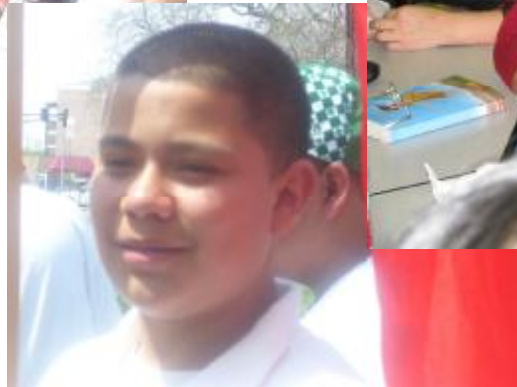




Stories of Logan Square



A Collaboration between
The Mozart Elementary Parent Mentors
The Kelvyn Park High School Social Justice
Academy Students
The Logan Square Neighborhood Association



Stories of Logan Square:
An Introduction
By Sean O'Bra and Maura Nugent

The stories contained on the following pages were the result of a collaborative project between the Sophomore Social Justice Academy students at Kelvyn Park High School and the Logan Square Neighborhood Association Parent Mentors at Mozart Elementary School. We hope that this publication will serve as a document of the rich cultural and human history that exists right here in Logan Square, as well as a testament to the importance of strong relationships between adults and youth.

This project began when the Kelvyn Park SJA students were exploring a unit focusing on the broad concept of culture. Through our work with LSNA, we realized we had a connection with the parent mentors at Mozart Elementary School. Our first meeting provided the opportunity for parents and students to become acquainted with each other. They worked in small groups to develop a working definition of culture while discussing and charting many of the things that made the diverse representation of cultures in the room unique. The subsequent meetings gave the students the opportunity to acquire oral histories from the parent mentors. First they had broad based discussions about the parents' cultural history and personal stories. The students were able to record and later transcribe these interviews. Before returning for the next meeting, the students looked over their notes and came up with an idea of a "cultural" story that they could further inquire about. The following meetings consisted of more recorded interviews in which the students gathered information to help them write a narrative about an event in the parent mentor's life that connected to their cultural identity. The students transcribed these interviews and turned them into narratives. After working the narratives through a few drafts, the students shared them with the parents, asked any remaining questions, and rectified anything the parents didn't think seemed accurate about their own stories.

The following pages represent the fruits of this process. Not only will you be able to enjoy the narratives, but you also have the opportunity to see some of the communication that occurred between the parents and students, evidence of the friendships that developed between the youth and the adults. The letters between the students and the parent mentors demonstrates the importance of young people having supportive adults in their lives beyond their own families and teachers.

The most important parts of history, that we believe need to be recorded, are the experiences of every day people. We hope that this publication will help to tell the rich and diverse stories of the Logan Square community.

Motherhood

By Amanda Mcabee
As told by Vanessa Brown

"Latrice, I can't believe this, how could you do this to yourself?" Vanessa takes a deep breath in before continuing her statement. "I'm so disappointed in you."

"But Momma!" Latrice screams out.

"Don't but Momma me nothing Latrice." Vanessa interrupts and puts her head in the palm of her hands and tries to regain her thoughts about her daughter's situation. "You have messed up your whole life Latrice. What could you possibly do with a baby in your life right now?"

"That's what I've-" Latrice tries to interrupt but her mom pays no attention and she continues without hesitation.

"Maybe you're just too young to understand that the decision you choose to make was irresponsible and selfish of you," Vanessa continues without hesitating. "I mean you now have to devote all of your time to this child. All of your plans for the future have been ruined."

"Maaaaaaaaa!" Latrice screams for her mom's attention. "Don't you think I know that already? I'm scared Ma, and I don't know what to do. I didn't plan on doing this...it just happened, and since it did I have plans on taking care of my responsibility. I love you ma and I never meant to disappoint you." Latrice looks at her mother who is apparently upset and breathing hard and feels even more ashamed of herself.

"Whatever Latrice," Vanessa says as she begins to touch her face. She takes a glance out the window from her seat and realizes the sun is no longer out and that means she is late for choir rehearsal. At that point she really isn't feeling up to going to church, even though that is the one place she really needs to be. She rises from her living room sofa and walks slowly to the bathroom to wipe off the remaining makeup from her face that the tears hadn't already removed. She touches her puffy eyes and begins to sigh. She looks even harder at her wrinkles and excess body fat and says to herself, "No I ain't ready to be no granny!" After a second glance in the mirror she decides, "Or maybe I am." She returns to the living room where her daughter sits on a chair staring at the floor. "So what are you going to do?"

"There is nothing I can do Ma." She closes her eyes and touches her stomach "I have nothing, nobody, no money, no father for my baby. I'm just trying to fix this, I'm trying to do what's right, Ma."

"Baby girl you have to understand from my point of view. I'm hurt from the inside out. I wanted you to graduate from high school, and go off to college and travel around the world. I don't want this to be it for you. However, I refuse to feel guilty in any way. I raised you the right way and you insist on doing the opposite." Vanessa drops to her knees and pulls her pregnant teenage daughter down with her. "You may not have anything right now but you do have me and the Lord." The two began to pray, cry and hold each other. As they do Latrice begins to cry so hard that she is barely breathing. They both sit there for hours just praying.

(Motherhood Continued)

8 months later...

“Ok ,I need you to give me one last good push Ms.Brown,” says the doctor.

“I can’t!” Latrice screams

“Yes, you can baby,” says her mom.

“But Momma I’m so scared,” Latrice cries.

“You’re already halfway there baby girl just one more and it will be all over with,” Vanessa says while rubbing her daughter’s forehead and face.

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!” Latrice screams and then throws her head back on the pillows.

“That’s good baby girl!” Vanessa has a moment of mental happiness as she sees her grandchild. Here, three family generations of Browns, in one room. She is so excited that the baby is finally here that how and when the baby got here didn’t matter. Even before knowing the gender of the baby, names begin to come to mind at that moment. As she sees the doctor giving the baby to Latrice, she knows that this day will be a new beginning for all of them.

A Special Tradition

By Mayra Albarran

As told by Yolanda

In Guadalajara, Jalisco Mexico There’s a special tradition before Christmas, and that tradition that mostly all Hispanics celebrate is the “Posadas.”

When the clock hits seven, all the neighbors on Yolanda’s block get together with each other’s families, each with a candle in their hand. They also pick a boy and a girl to carry Virgin Mary and San Jose. As soon as everybody is ready and where they are supposed to be, they begin going door to door singing “Entre Santos Peregrinos”.

“I can see friends, family, kids and even babies at the posada,” said Yolanda. She can also hear people singing all types of songs and having a great time. “When it comes to this type of tradition, I get happy and sentimental,” murmured Yolanda.

When they finish going door to door everybody goes to a special house. There they eat and play. The kids play around with each other. “I could smell the fresh and delicious food they cook, for example tamales, posole and buñuelos,” Yolanda said with excitement. When it comes to games, that is when the little kids get together to break the piñata, the little kids can get hurt. Once when a boy was hitting la piñata, he hurt his right leg but nothing serious.

In a posada you see all kinds of people. They all wear Christmas colors, to get with the spirit of Christmas. You also see all the families happy and excited. “In this occasion or holiday is the only time when I get to see and be with all my family,” Yolanda said with a big smile.

Christmas Day

By Angelica Dominguez

As told by Yolanda

“Are you ready?” Yolanda asked her kids.

“Yeah mom, we are ready,” they all said in unison.

“Ok, then let’s go,” finished off Yolanda.

It was December 24, by Jalisco Guadalajara, where Yolanda and her kids were going to a posada. A posada is a Mexican tradition where the neighbors carry Virgin Mary and sing songs. Yolanda and her kids were now headed to the house where there was going to be the posada. Outside the house Yolanda saw the table with colorful decorations. She could hear the loud speakers booming with Christmas songs and could smell all the delicious food. There were also kids running around, laughing, and screaming like crazy. The adults were talking as if they had never seen each other in years. Yolanda never felt as happy before. She felt as if she was in a place where she belonged, being with her family and friends, eating the food that she loved.

“Can you bring the piñata,” demanded Yolanda.

“Ok I will,” answered a kid.

“Everybody make way!” bellowed Yolanda.

“Who wants to go first?” Yolanda asked excitedly.

“I do!” a seven year old boy barked. The kid started to hit the piñata, but he missed. Then a girl also hit it, but missed.

“Ok who’s next?” an adult from the crowd asked.

A boy shouted, “It’s my turn!”

“YAY,” a whole bunch of kids scream in unison.

They finally broke the piñata and all the candy fell to the ground. By this time the kids were pushing and each other trying to get the candy.

“AAHHHHH!!!!” A kid from the crowd wailed.

“Are you ok?” his mom asked anxiously.

Everybody was worried, wondering if the kid had broken his ankle. The music had stopped. There was no more talking or laughing. His ankle was a little bit swollen but after all he was in good condition.

The posada continued again with people laughing and talking!!

Dear Jackie M,

Good afternoon, its me, Jessenia. I just want to thank you for letting me interview you and talk about your personal life. I really enjoyed every little time I had to interview you. The story I wrote was about your son coming home from Iraq in Christmas of 2006. I added a little more to the story that you didn't tell me. But I think the story sounds fabulous. Can you please give me some feedback on how my story was? And can you please send me some pictures of that day when Joshua came home from Iraq, and of the family? You will be getting the pictures back. I just want to put pictures of you and your family in the book we are making about you all. Thank you so much for your time and effort. It was nice meeting you and seeing you.

*Sincerely,
Jessenia*

P.S. I miss you Jackie! Hope to hear from you soon and see you one more time. I really loved working with

*Dear Brenda Jessenia,
and Jehnay,*

Hi Girls! I hope when you are reading these couple of lines you find yourselves in the best of health and happiness. As for me, I'm doing great. I've read the stories. They're great! Too bad I wasn't able to see you guys! I'll be sending pictures. I really have missed seeing all three of you. Great job! God Bless.

Jackie

Surprise Visit

By Brenda Molina
As told by Jackie Morales

It was a cold Christmas day. Wind was blowing the snow from the sidewalks and people were in their houses with their family enjoying the day and spending it together. December 24th, 2006 was the best Christmas ever. It was around 4PM when I received a call from my son Joshua who was staying in Iraq.

"MOM!! Step outside!" Joshua exclaimed.

I was very excited just to hear his voice and I replied confused, " Why? It's too cold to be outside!"

Repeatedly, Joshua said, " Mom step outside."

As I was heading to the door my heart was beating quickly and I was wondering to myself, "What is going on?" As I approached the door, there he was: my son Joshua in his beige, green camouflage uniform and his boots looking as handsome as usual. From that moment I saw him I thought it was a dream. I couldn't believe my son was actually here. It was a great surprise to see my son after a year. I couldn't stop crying. I couldn't believe he was finally home. And as I finished kissing him, hugging and crying we went inside the house and the whole family approached and hugged him.

We all stopped crying and hugging him and we all settled down for dinner. The family thanked God for the food and the family and for Joshua who had come and ate up the food. We ate Arroz con Gandules, which is orange rice mixed with the beans, Pernil, the meat which is one main thing we eat at our holidays, (the meat tasted so good that we asked for more!) We also ate ensalada de papa and made Parcha, which is a drink that tastes like orange juice, but with more taste in it, and some other traditional Puerto Rican food. All of the food tasted so good that it felt like we never ate in years.

We finished and started talking with the family about what Joshua had missed out on while he was in Iraq and some family conversations and we enjoyed the rest of the day. We couldn't wait for the day to finish to spend more time with the family.

Jackie's Son Joshua Comes Home!

By Jehnay Santos and Jessenia Rivera
Told by Jackie Morales

On a mild December the 24th of 2006 around 7pm, Jackie Morales had received a phone call from her baby Joshua. Jackie was so shocked when she found out it was her son Joshua. She was thinking to herself, *isn't my son fighting in Iraq?*

But Joshua told his mother, "Mommy step outside."

Jackie replied, "No sweet heart, esta muy frio outside."

Joshua complained, "Ay mommy, por favor step outside please."

So finally she went outside and right when she opened her front door she saw her son Joshua in his uniform, looking as handsome as ever. She couldn't believe it. She thought she was having a dream. She couldn't stop crying, she looked like a running faucet.

Joshua laughed, "Si, mommy estoy aqui! Tu lo sabe, lets go upstairs quiero comer comida puerto ricana como arroz con gandules, pastels, morcilla, pudding, flan, and ensalada de papa."

Jackie replied, "Ok baby lets go up stairs, *chacho* what at a surprise."

Joshua laughed, "You know it mom I had to come spend some time with the family. I miss y'all."

The family was shocked to see Joshua also. Everyone came up and hugged and kissed him. Finally, they all sat down to eat dinner.

Now Jackie's son is home safe from Iraq.

*Por Jose Rosas y Joshua Rodriguez-
Esta muy bien su historia, aunque no es la mia.
Hay muchas historias como la que escribieron. To-
dos los días se viven historias asi.. Sigán adelante
y estudien mucho para que logren sus metas y para
lograrlo. Se teine que estudiar mucho!*

Aida Banuelos

JOURNEY

By Jose Rosas
Inspired by Aida

"Mom I don't want to go," said Aida.

"Honey we are doing it for you," mom said.

Her mother and father brought her here so that they could have better jobs. She was an immigrant, but now she is a U.S citizen.

She said crossing the border was a very difficult the thing. While walking through the desert at night she would see cactus, a few coyotes, lizards, armadillos and some other desert creatures. All of a sudden she heard someone shout, "LA MIGRA!" (US Immigration authorities!)

As soon as she heard lights went on and everyone started running. Aida stood there confused and startled. Then her mother grabbed her hand and started running. Aida fell and her mother tried to pick her up, but people were pushing her forward trying to run from immigration. Aida lost her mother and father, but her uncle picked her up and grabbed her in time before the people trampled her.

As they were hiding by the river she saw the most horrible thing she saw dead bodies floating in the river. She turned away and saw a lot of white crosses by the fence. She closed her eyes while her uncle carried her across the border.

When they got to her grandmothers house she saw her father. "Ay mija, gracias a dios," cried her mother.

"Gracias hermano gracias, te lo agradezco mucho," said her father.

Her uncle responded, "Esta bien. No mas cuidanla."

A few days later Christmas arrived so they chopped a tree down and brought it home. They decorated with the brightest lights that could be seen from space.

"How beautiful the tree looks," said Aida.

They made food. They made posole, mole, tamales, and of course tortillas. For drinks they had atole, horchata and jarritos. Later on they went to church to pray and thank god for Aida's arrival.

The Big Change

By Ricardo Matos and Cesar Rendon
Told by Miriam Gonzalez

Miriam Gonzales born in Cuernavaca Morelos, Mexico. She is a very good person. When she was younger she came to Chicago for the first time in 1989 with her mom Bruna, father Alberto, 3 sisters- Leticia, Luz, and Biatrix, and her brother Ricardo. She was only six. She left again in 1994 back to Mexico when she was eleven. Then out in Mexico where you can see the heat waves through the streets and the horses running free, she met her special someone. They got married after they had been together for one year. They were in a lot of love.

“Hey baby what are you doing?” asked Miriam

“Nothing much just relaxing,” replied her boyfriend

“My dad told me that we should move to Chicago,” said Miriam.

“Why, we don’t even know any body there?” wondered her boyfriend

“Yea, I do a couple of my cousins, aunts, and uncles live in Chicago. And plus my dad said that there is better opportunities out there for us,” she replied.

“Are you sure about this? You know what this means right? We are going to live in Chicago?” questioned her boyfriend.

“Yea, I know. The first thing we have to do is start looking for jobs because I really need one,” sighed Miriam.

“Okay well let’s start getting our stuff ready because we’re going to Chicago!”

“And just remember change is always a good thing,” said Miriam

Together they came back to Chicago to live their lives. The only bad thing was that she didn’t know that much English. She had remembered just a little English when she had stayed in Chicago from 1989 to 1994. With the little English she knew she managed to live. She managed to still do groceries like normal, and some of her family in Chicago knew English so they helped her out in that. Then when she started to know English better, she started making friends. She is happy that she came to Chicago, but it took her a long time to get used to the city. Now she has one son named Leoverdo and he is 7 years old in the 2nd grade, born in Chicago.

So, now she is very happy that she chose to live in Chicago. She said that moving to Chicago is one of the best things that ever happened to her besides giving birth to her son.

Don Jose:

Como esta, Jose? Espero que bien. Espero que le guste la historia. Me gustaria pedirle un favor. Si por favor me puede mandar fotos, con gusto se las devuelvere. Tambien, si me pudiera contar mas detalles del dia de los muertos. Gracias, Jose.

Gracias de Brian

Dia De Los Muertos

By Brian Perea

As told by Jose

Dia de los muertos is celebrated in two days, November 1st and the 2nd. November 1st is when the souls of children return and November 2nd is when the souls of adults return. The way it is celebrated is by doing rituals and taking to the graveyard what the returning soul liked before his death. Dia de los muertos is celebrated in almost all southern countries like Mexico, Ecuador, Peru, Guatemala and many more.

It's a November cool day in which Jose and his family wake up early in the morning. Jose starts preparing the things their going to take to the graveyard. What they usually take to the cemetery are candles, food, liquor, water or even soda. They might take some candy and toys, depending who's going to be the soul that is returning. All the family gathers up in a one house. After every one gets together they all leave to the cemetery.

Once they get there they start cleaning the grave. Then Jose starts putting the things he brought in top of the grave. Jose and his family then have a conversation with the soul of the dead. Then they pray for the soul, after they pray they offer the soul the food they took him. Before they leave they turn on the candles.

All the family goes back to the house and they put an altar. They have dinner and drink a purple liquid, which is made of violet corn, blackberries and other fruits.

El Dia De Los Muertos

By Diana Delgado

As told by Leticia Romero

A cultural experience of Leticia's was El Dia de los Muertos. They celebrate this by visiting the family and friends that had passed away. It mostly takes place in the graveyard or in their house. Leticia and her family woke up at five o'clock in the morning, started getting ready, and then started preparing to celebrate El Dia de Los Muertos. When they finished getting ready, they started on their way to the graveyard. When they got to the graveyard, they started cleaning the graves. They started cleaning the dust, and took out everything that is in the way or that they didn't need.

Leticia said, "I'm going to start cleaning the graves."

"Leticia, when you finish with cleaning the graves, me puedes ayudar a hacer la comida? Por favor?" asked Leticia's mom.

"Ayudarte con que?" replied Leticia.

"So you could help me put the meals in the graves!" Leticia's mom responded.

After that, they started making meals for the dead. When they were done they started saying rituals. Leticia's mom questioned, "Are you done cleaning the grave Leticia?"

"Yea, I'm going to help you already," answered Leticia.

"Ok, so we could start everything already!"

They finish doing the meals, and then put them on top of the graves and started setting up an altar. The altar was two candles and a picture of the Virgin de Guadalupe torn from a calendar that once sat atop an unused mini-refrigerator in the one-room home.

"Mom, could we start the play already?" nagged Leticia.

"Yea, hold on let everybody else finish doing the rituals." When they finish doing that they do a play of what the people used to do or work on.

If there are graves that are empty and nobody comes to visit them, they would do rituals for them even if they didn't know them. Then, when it's time to go, they said goodbye like if they were alive.

Dear Leticia,

Hi! My name is Diana. I'm from Kelvyn Park and I am one of the students that you explained about El Dia De Los Muertos. How have you been? Thank you for talking to us and explaining to us how you and your family celebrate El Dia De Los Muertos. I wrote a story about how you and your family celebrate that day. It was interesting and exciting how you and your family celebrated the same as when you were little. I would like to thank you for spending some time with us!

Diana

Hola Diana!

Espero que cuando recibas mi carta te encuentres bien. Espero que te la estes pasando bien tambien la navidad y has recibido muchos regalos! Yo te recuerdo con mucho cariño. Saludame a todos los muchachos que estuvieron conmigo. Gracias por la historia. Esta muy bonita cuando lei. Me recuerdo mi niñez. Sinceremente, Leticia

*Dear Parent Mentor Martina,
I am writing this letter to tell you that the social justice students were thankful for getting a chance to interview you all. We were able to do some great stories, but we need some pictures. If you all could send us some pictures, it would be great. Then our teachers will send you a copy for you all to see and enjoy. We are thankful to you, especially me because I enjoyed going over to my old school. It was fun to see how they changed the school and made it nicer. Well, the class of social justice and me are very thankful*

*Sincerely,
German Rosales*

Lei la historia que hicieron de las cosas que conte de mi historia y estan muy bien. Lo que escribieron son unos muchachos muy inteligentes y van a seguir adelante. Cuando ustedes se graduen, por favor lo quiero saber. Me dio mucho gusto conocerlos y me da gusto verlos por aqui. Att: Martina Aguirre

My Parent Mentor's Story

By German Rosales and Ernesto Rodriguez
As told by Martina Aguirre

My parent mentor said that one event that she and the family like to celebrate is Mothers Day. On Mothers Day they go to her mother's house and then they go to cook for her mom and have all the family over. They have different types of food. For example, they have red and green tamales, and enchiladas. They all listen to different types of music. They listen to Mexican music and merengue. While some one is cooking and getting everything ready, the others go and play sports. One sport is soccer, and they get into teams. They have up to seven players by teams and they use different colored shirts. Those who don't go and play soccer go to play cards and dominoes. At the end, they all relax and have a good time and eat with the family. After it gets late they go to the house and clean up the mess. They don't let the mom clean up anything. Then they say bye to her mom and go home.

Mother's Day Party

By Vanessa Jimenez

As told by Martina Aguirre

It was a sunny warm day. The clouds looked like white cotton candy. They looked fluffy. IT WAS MOTHER'S DAY! Martina and her family members: brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins, daughters, sons, etc. went to Martina's mom's house to make her breakfast to surprise her.

Everyone was in the kitchen helping out. Helen was washing dishes. She was scrubbing pans while the rest of them were making the batter to make pancakes. When the batter was done, Uncle George put the pancake mix in the pan. After that was done Martina made eggs and bacon. The bacon smelled so good when it started to sizzle in the pan. Once they were done they were walking up the stairs to mom's room.

"Todos, silencio por favor," said Martina.

"Ok, ok," replied Helen when they got to the room.

"SURPRISE!" everyone yelled.

"Ay dios mio!" said mom all shocked.

After breakfast they got started on lunch. Meanwhile they played all kinds of music.

"Ven, vamos a bailar," said the children.

"Ok," Martina replied.

They danced cumbia, bachata, and lots more. More people were arriving at the house. They would come in shake hands and greet each other. They would say, "Hola como estas?"

Then uncle George would reply, "Bien, y tu?" They were all dressed up: the girls with their makeup on and their dresses, the guys with their "Tejanas" (Mexican hats) and looking good. They were so friendly with each other. They showed that they really care and love one another. They were hugging and smiling. Everyone was having a good time. They were laughing sharing stories and dancing.

Finally it was time to eat. Everyone got in line to get some food and then they went to sit down. They ate hot, spicy, delicious chicken mole, and pozole. After they ate dinner they had desert; they ate chocolate fudge cake. There was fudge everywhere... it was delicious and so good. When you would take a bite it was as if you were in heaven.

"This cake is good," said Frankie, one of the children.

"I love this cake too," Martina replied. When they were all full they went back to sharing stories and dancing. They were all having fun and enjoying the time they had together.

"Hopefully next year could be the same as this year!" Martina said with joy.

"I hope so too," replied Martina's mom. They went on with the party... the party lasted about 6 to 7 hours. It was a great mother's day party!!!

Hard Work

By Jazmin Martinez
As told by Antonia Reyes

Antonia Reyes came to the U.S. 12 years ago without her kids or her family. She didn't need any type of help from anybody. She believed she could do it herself, with no doubt. Ms. Reyes was born in Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico. She has five kids of her own. She still has contact with her family in Mexico. Ms. Reyes mentioned to us that it took her a long time to bring her kids to the U.S. She worked day and night with pride like a soldier. She would go to work and had to struggle. She had to struggle because she had to take the bus. She didn't have a car. So she would sometimes be late. That would cause her to lose money: the money she needed to bring her kids to the U.S.

It took her five years to bring her kids. And those five years she worked real hard to gather the money and bring them one by one. She was happy and proud to have her kids here with her in the U.S. She told us about when she had her kids all united. She was happy. All she wanted was to have her kids with her, and her dream came true. Now she doesn't spend her holidays alone; she has her kids now to celebrate.

Ms. Reyes told us about when she had her daughter go to school not knowing English. The smallest of all five of her daughters told her she didn't want to go to school. Why? She didn't know any English and didn't want to make a fool off herself. Ms. Reyes decided to go talk to the counselor. She wanted her daughter to do well.

"What brings you in Ms. Reyes?" the counselor asked politely.

"My daughter is having problems adjusting herself in this school. She's scared that she won't fit in" answered Ms. Reyes with a nervous voice.

"Ms. Reyes you don't have to worry about it, she's in good hands," replied the counselor.

"The thing is that she doesn't know English nor speak it," answered Ms. Reyes with a worried voice.

"There is nothing to worry about Ms. Reyes. Our teachers will help her with her English speaking and other things. We have bilingual classes we can put her in," suggested the counselor.

Ms. Reyes was pleased with what she had heard and happy that her daughter wasn't the only one in that school that didn't know how to speak English.

"Thank you for your help and time. I hope that my daughter will learn English," replied Ms. Reyes.

Ms. Reyes walked out happy. Now she didn't have to worry about her daughter not knowing English. Also her daughter will feel comfortable with the people that surround her.

When her daughter graduated from high school Ms. Reyes was happy. Her daughter got to learn English: meaning speak it and write it. Now she could become something in life, something that she might of thought she couldn't. With that she is more capable of herself.

Ms. Reyes is real happy to have her kids with her now. All she worked for (day and night) was worth it.

The Posada

By Thania Santiago
As told by Yolanda

Everything started in Guadalajara Mexico, in 1987 when Yolanda was in a nuns' convent. Around December 24th, Yolanda and the nuns of the convent that Yolanda was attending made a posada. The posada started when everyone walked through the streets asking for a posada. Everyone in the neighborhood looked like ants when they spread out to different houses singing and asking for a posada. Yolanda was carrying the Virgin Mary and was afraid to drop it.

After that they went back to the convent where the food and the gathering was. They saw a big table with Christmas decorations and many kinds of food. For example there were tamales, posole, buñuelos, tostadas and much more. The most fun part was when they hit the piñata full of candy, peanuts, and fruit. But something unexpected happened: a little boy fell down and hurt his foot while he was hitting the piñata. After this happened, Yolanda went to talk to her younger sister Leticia.

"Did you see what happened with the little boy that was hitting the piñata?" asked Yolanda.

"No, what happened?" Leticia asked.

"Some little boy fell down while hitting the piñata," Yolanda answered.

"OH DIOS MIO! Poor him. But why did he fall down?" Leticia murmured

"Because he jumped and slipped on some mole that was on the floor", Yolanda replied.

"De verdad y como esta?" Leticia said with sympathy.

"No se, I don't know," Yolanda replied.

"Ojala que este bien. Well, if you see him before I do --tell him to get well soon. So te veo despues."

"Andale pues. I'll tell him right now because I'm going to go see him."

After everyone knew that the little boy was okay, they started singing "Entre santos peregrinos". While they were singing were singing, some people were eating. There were a lot little kids running, playing, shouting and having fun. It all ended happily.

*Querida Thania,
Gracias que me mandaste la carta. Esta muy
bonita y tambien lo que escribistes. Todo
esta muy bien y gracias . Espero que estas-
bien y estudias mucho.*

Gracias, Yolanda.

Life in the United States

By Oyuki Vasquez

As told by Maria Garcia

In the beautiful city of Mexico there was a lady named Maria Garcia! She lived with her family: five sisters and one brother. Maria told me that since there were five girls that there were always boys outside her house. But this one boy that really liked her was hanging with one of his friends. They saw Maria coming so they ran up to her. Ever since that moment Maria had found her sweet heart. Twelve years later they got married and have two wonderful girls.

Maria told me that she owned her clothing store and that her whole family was born and raised in Mexico! So one day her husband left to the United States to earn more money and to have a better life. He was only supposed to go for one year, and then we would bring Maria over. Over the time Maria and her two girls took English classes to get ready for the United States. Every other day they took their English classes, so that when they would arrive they would know what people were saying.

Maria told me that November 22, 1999 was an emotional day because she left her family behind to start in a new life in the U.S. Her family all got ready and took her and her kids to the airport and said bye to her kids. When she got to the U.S she didn't know anything. The class she took for English didn't help her or her children because all she knew were the basics like "May I get a hamburger?" or "How much is this?"

Her kids didn't go to school because she thought that no one was going to be able to help her because no one knew Spanish, only English. Her girls were seven years old and nine years old. By the next year she saw the bright side of the U. S. She was able to sign her girls into school and learned more English.

As the years went by she had a son that is now in 1st grade and born in the U.S. Maria now is studying English, taking computer classes, and works at Mozart elementary school. Her daughters are now 20 and 18. The 18 year old is about to graduate from Kelvyn Park. She is part of class of 2008! Her other daughter had her 1st baby and made Maria a grandmother. Maria also told me that she has no plans to return to live in Mexico, but plans to go back to visit. On November 22, 2007 she will have twelve years of living in the United States!

Antonia Reyes

By Mireya Valladares

As told by Antonia Reyes

Antonia Reyes had been living in Mexico with 5 kids and her husband. As her life passed, she noticed that she needed more money to feed her 5 kids. Her husband helped her, but not enough because at times he used to come home drunk and violent. He would come and hit her with the belt and wake her up early in the morning for to make food for him and his friends.

One day Antonia was crying thinking what can she do and how to be protected from her husband. She didn't want to live with him anymore because her kids were growing up with a lot of violence in the house.

One day Antonia decided to take her kids to her mom's house so she could talk to her husband. Antonia was waiting for her husband to get home so they could talk about what was going on. As soon her husband arrived home she told him, "Espera, no hagas nada, quiero hablar contigo. I want to talk to you," Antonia said.

"Si mujer, dime," he told her.

"Yo ya no puedo vivir asi con violencia y tu no me ayudas mucho. Lo que quiero decir es que me voy!"

Antonia left with her mom and kids. Her husband was looking for her, but he realized that he had lost them for real. Antonia worked hard to raise money so she could come to the United States.

Antonia was leaving her house and as she told her kids, "Portense bien y cuiden a su abuelita. Yo vendre por ustedes." Her kids were crying like if they were never going to see her again. Her kids felt like if they had lost her. Antonia's mom told her, "Que dios te bendiga hija."

While Antonia was living in the United States; she always had her kids on her mind. Antonia started working two jobs: one in the morning and the other one in night. She worked so hard that she started bringing her kids over. She had to pay the coyote \$1,000 so he could help them out. Antonia brought her kids one by one every year. When Antonia was ready to receive her kid, she was crying out of happiness and thinking that her whole family was going to be together again. Antonia always prayed for her kids and she had that trust in la Virgen de Guadalupe. Now Antonia is living with four of her kids. She was so exited that one of her last kids was coming to United States. She was so happy that she had made a big dinner with her kids.

Now Antonia has been living in the United States for 12 years and as her life passed she noticed that she doesn't need help from a guy who is going to get drunk and use violence. Antonia says she misses Mexico and all the good stuff like the posole and the hot spicy food. She also says that now she's a grandma and that she loves her grandchildren. Now Antonia is happily living her life!

The Social Justice Academy at Kelvyn Park High School integrates service learning projects and social justice with an academically rigorous Language Arts curriculum. The Logan Square Neighborhood Association partners closely with SJA to support students and teachers, and to work on community-based projects.

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