

The Change that Gave Me Life

It Was an Expensive and Challenging Process, but I Finally Got My Papers

Brenda Castañeda

BEFORE YOU READ: What is something you saved money for? What sacrifices did you make to save the money you needed?

No Papers and No Money for a Lawyer

I arrived in the U.S. without papers in 2018. My husband is a U.S. citizen. He had work in El Paso, and that is why we moved here.

When we arrived, we had to fix my papers so I could live here legally. However, we did not have the necessary money. We had to raise \$4,500 to pay the lawyers. We started saving, but we had problems. We had to rent an apartment, and rents in the U.S. are very expensive. My husband's

truck broke down. He had to buy a new one and make monthly payments. It took us a long time to save. We had to make

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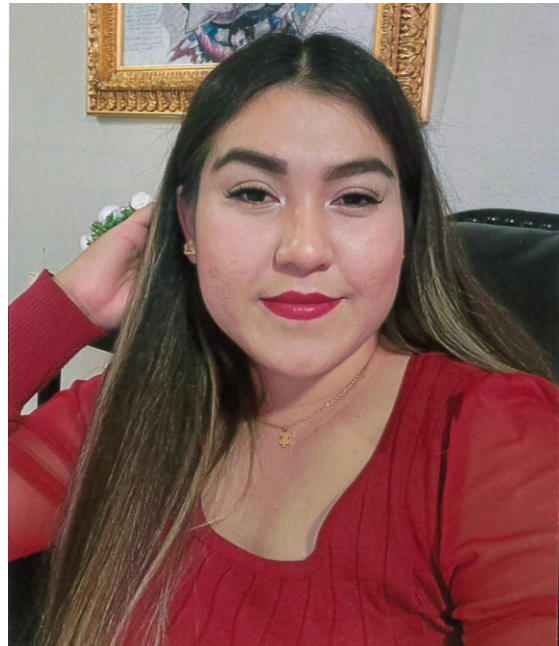
many sacrifices. We didn't go out or eat in restaurants. We bought only things that were absolutely necessary to live.

More Fees and More Obstacles

In addition, there were more expenses besides the lawyer's fees. We had to collect many papers, such as birth certificates, marriage certificates, certificates of naturalization, and photographs. It seemed like there were always more appointments and more costs.

Money was not the only obstacle. It was very difficult for me to be here without my family and to adapt to this new culture. Above all, I did not speak English.

Another challenge was finding a good law-



yer. There was a pandemic going on, and no one wanted to take my case.

And Finally a Chance at a Better Life

Finally, in October 2020, we filed the papers. On April 1, 2021, I had an appointment at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. On April 12, my residency arrived. Now I have a Social Security number, so I can work. I can go visit my family in Ciudad Juarez and return safely to the U.S. Also, I can study English so that I can have a better job and a better life.

AFTER YOU READ: What obstacles did the author face as she tried to get her documents?

Brenda Castañeda is a student at Ysleta Community Adult Learning Center in El Paso, Texas. She works in the cafeteria of a high school, and she hopes to be able to pursue her career as an industrial engineer (which she studied in Mexico).