

This Country Showed Me Justice

I Got Support as a Survivor of Domestic Violence

Maria Loera

BEFORE YOU READ: What is domestic violence? What are some special challenges that immigrants who are experiencing domestic violence might face?

The Violence Started after I Moved Here

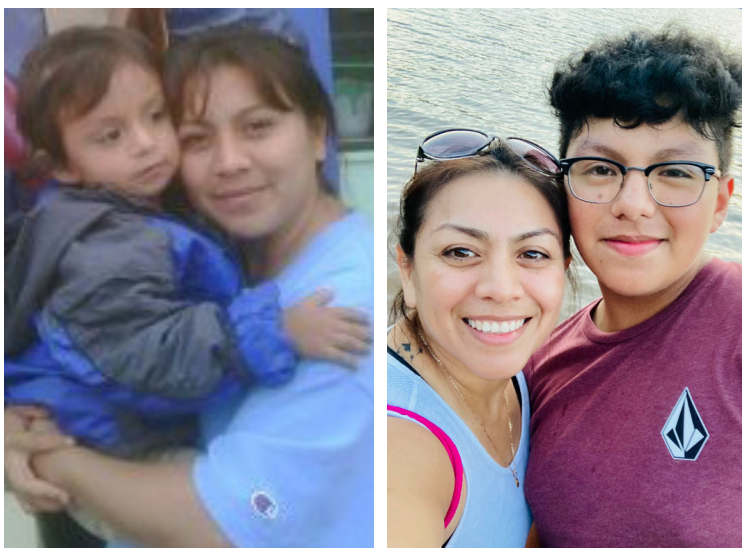
When I came to the U.S., I never imagined that this would be the country that I would adopt as if it were mine. This country is where I became a survivor of domestic violence. And in this country, I also found justice.

After I moved here, the violence started. My life was completely destroyed. I lost everything – my family, my friends, my self-esteem, and even myself. I lived with so much pain and injustice in my new home in my new country.

I Got Help

I feared I would also lose my son. But hope returned to my life. Someone rescued me and my son. I call her “My Angel.” She took me and my son to a shelter for women who suffered the same agony. In that place, I was able to find the support and love that my son and I needed.

Non-profit agencies helped me get custody of my son, stay legally in this country, and find a home that my son and I rebuilt with love and hope. The Center for Hope and Safety gave us shelter, food, and clothing. They helped me get a lawyer through Legal Aid Services of Oregon. The lawyer helped me get a divorce and custody of my son. Catholic Charities helped me get work, and they are still working with me to get my residency. I had only been in this country for a couple of months when I received this support, which changed my life completely.



Now I Feel at Home Here

This country gave me back everything I lost. I am very grateful for all the care that my son and I received. I never thought to say this, but I feel at home here. I am surrounded by my people. I am happy that this country has shown me that justice and good people still exist.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Some centers for people experiencing domestic violence accept donations of clothing, toys, and other supplies as families often arrive with nothing. Do you know of any centers in your community? Consider ways you might join with others to support the center.
2. Read “Many Kinds of Violence Against Women” in <https://changeagent.nelrc.org/issues/issue-56-august-2022-our-immigration-stories/> (pp. 24-25).

Maria Loera is a student at Chemeketa Community College in Salem, OR. She is studying English and plans to get a degree in Social Work. She wants to help people like her to know their rights. By the time this is published, she will have become a U.S. citizen.