

I rise

POR LA GUERRA, POR LA GENTE, POR MI GENTE, Y POR VOS

Gerardo Herrera-Cortés, Hispanic and Latinx Student Outreach Intern

¡Hola! Me llamo Gerardo Herrera-Cortés y soy un pasante por los poblaciones hispanos y latinos en *el Mosaico: centro para la diversidad y cultura en UMBC*. Estudio diseño gráfico, pero tengo una pasión para la vida y experiencia de los universitarios.

In translation to the American English language, I just said my name, that I'm the Hispanic and Latino/x intern for the Mosaic, as well as my major and my main interest. Those two sentences took about half an hour to write. If you're fluent in written Spanish, you can perhaps see the mistakes I made. I search endlessly through search engines and Spanish websites to ensure that my grammar is at least decent. In English, that's lesser of an issue.

I was born in Puebla, México and immigrated to the United States with my mother at *tres meses*. I already knew that I was an undocumented immigrant, along with other members of my "nuclear" family (Side note: I found out what nuclear family meant this past weekend and it's quite a weird concept).

It was no biggie – my family had their life and other folks had theirs. We kept a sharper eye at the skin tones of police officers and the immigration Q&As on Univisión Noticias than others. It was normal. *Normal*.

My hermanos, 19 and 14, are American-born and, as my dad likes to put it, *malagrededidos*. They're enjoying the American experience and the benefits of health insurance, an American passport, and citizenship. Aren't they lucky, huh?

I applied to colleges, the first in my family, and got stuff done. I didn't know how money worked nor how much it was but I went for it. During my sophomore year in high school, my sister and I applied for and were granted I-765 work permits and deportation deferral through DACA. I worked full-time for slightly above minimum wage – \$7.80 at the time – because I had the ability to speak (decent) Spanish. I worked full-time, every week, from October 2013 to August 2015. Then, my mother revived her Permanent Residency application that was filed in 1993, back before the time of any children, with a costly lawyer during my junior year.

El trío was granted residency status in March 2015. We spent more than *dos mil dólares por persona*. I helped my older sister in funding the federal "forgiveness" fee, biometric fees, application fees, and



lawyer costs. I came to UMBC, paid for my first semester with the *dos mil* that was left in my bank account and whatever leftover money the federal and state government had (and none from UMBC at the time).

Fast forward, I'm working several jobs here at UMBC, living financially unstable, enduring discriminatory and unjust practices and cultures, and still worried about several loved ones. Mi familia transverse the six of us. I acknowledge that the 1993 case was a life (and deportation) savior for most of my family. I acknowledge the ability to live in lesser fear. I want you to acknowledge that getting benefits and "security" is not always truest to their words. I want you to acknowledge that la experiencia de un inmigrante no ha cambiado y la guerra para igualdad sigue más fuerte que nunca. Yo quiero lo más mejor por mis padres, mis parientes, y esos de la misma o peor experiencia. Tú eres querido, importante, y vital en este mundo. Y en el fin, yo ascendo por la guerra, por la gente, por mi gente, y por vos.

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