

Mi papa grew up in Zacatecas, Mexico. Mi mama grew up in La Lima, Honduras. They started off as a long distance romance before mi papa brought mi mama over to the United States to be with him. They wanted to give their family a better life. It's the Hispanic dream, and it quickly became mine, whether I liked it or not.

I have three older sisters, making me the youngest of four. The two oldest came from mi mama's previous marriage in Honduras. She left my sisters with mi abuela in Honduras, so only my older sister and I grew up in Tulsa. I would learn throughout my childhood that being the only boy in my family would come with lots of pressure and expectations. The constant stereotypes of what a man is supposed to be were forced down my throat. You work, provide, and protect. Although these qualities are admirable, it was presented as a burden and not out of love for your family.

Mi familia underwent some long, difficult years. I was only 9 when the storm started. In mis padres' words, my sister began to spiral out of control. She was diagnosed with depression and an anxiety disorder at 13, which prompted her to turn to substances and self-harm. This led to her being in and out of treatment facilities. Mis padres' entire focus was on my sister and her dramatics. They didn't have to worry about me.

While everything with my sister was going on, I observed. I realized that my sister was stressing out mis padres, and I didn't want to add more to their plate. Mis padres always thanked me for being "un niño perfecto," and I trained myself to be exactly that. I did well in school. I did what was expected of me. I told myself, "Un niño perfecto no molesta a sus padres." So I suffered in silence. I muffled my cries with pillows. I had no one to turn to.

Soon enough, my sister dropped out of high school. The two oldest came to the United States in the midst of the chaos and built their own lives, but not to mis padres' standards. With that, their dream came crumbling down. They desperately grasped for any hope; I was that hope.

All of the dreams and expectations mis padres had for their new generation was left to me. I would be the first to graduate high school, the first to go to college and graduate, and many more achievements that my sisters failed to obtain, according to my parents. Mis padres' "niño perfecto" had no room for imperfections. Suddenly, their focus was on me and everything I did, which became frustrating. They constantly praised me, but mentioned my sisters' failures. It always turned sour and sexist, which I didn't enjoy. It was an odd change since I had trained myself to survive without them. El niño mis padres once knew and loved was no more. And they had to accept that.

Although every family goes through similar struggles, I got a unique, Hispanic experience that made me grow into who I am today. Being Hispanic to me means to be ambitious, dream, and work yourself into the ground to achieve that dream. You push yourself through any conditions to get to your end goal. Mi vida could've been better, but I carry values and traits that I wouldn't have if it wasn't for the hard life I lived by being a Hispanic man. It was hell. But I wouldn't trade the heaven it brought me.