



# Some Illegal Immigrants Want Nothing But To Be American

*The names have been changed to protect identities of sources in this article.*

This is a story of one of the thousands of families who cross the Mexican-American border every year in search of a better life. The Talon recognizes this story in the Human Rights Issue because of the hardship these families go through when feeling forced to cross the border illegally because of the long, grueling process to come here documented. Only 350,000 immigrants are allowed into the U.S. legally per year. Currently, more than 1 million are on the waiting list in Mexico alone, and more than 4 million total. (cis.org)

Bianca Yurdock & Amanda Gonzalez

## Thirty-nine years ago...

Maria Cruz was born in a beautiful, small town called Oaxaca, Mexico. Twenty-five years later she found herself crossing into the United States of America -- illegally.

In Mexico, the schools were much smaller. In her grade there were a total of 22 students, nearly the average amount of students in one American classroom. Her family ate beans, corn, tomatoes, and more from their garden. Everything was fresh and organic; chickens and other animals were cooked and served the same day from their farm. She spent most of her days playing basketball or swimming in the river that flowed behind her house.

"When you're a kid living in Mexico, you're free to do whatever you want, but as you grow up you realize life isn't easy," Maria says.

In Mexico, it's hard to get even the basics a family wants and needs - a house, nice shoes and clothing. She decided that if she wanted to be successful and live a comfortable life with her family, she would have to emigrate elsewhere. When emigrating, foreigners have to follow regulations to be eligible to live in the United States. To live in the United States legally, a foreigner has to have family or employment relationships, or humanitarian protection such as refugee or asylum status. Maria's family had no such connections.

"I would see people crossing in

real life, but I never imagined I would be doing it myself," Maria said.

On Nov. 9, 2003, Maria Cruz, her husband Jorge, and her 1-year-old daughter made it their mission to cross the border successfully - no matter what.

They began collecting supplies: canned food, baby food, two gallons of water and warm clothing for the baby. Maria borrowed cash from her brother and paid the rest to the guide later after arriving. They borrowed \$1,800 for each adult and \$600 for Rosa.

behind. The responsibility of bringing Rosa terrified her. After hours in the freezing cold desert night, Jorge began

to have trouble walking because of the poor quality of his shoes, making him even more exhausted. Their guide warned the group to run and hide to get away from

immigration authorities.

While everyone slept, Maria stayed up all night caring for the baby. She didn't rest until they arrived to the United States.

To help Jorge get away in time,

"estamos juntos," Cruz said. If we die tonight, at least we will all be together.

On the entire journey, the group was only allowed two 5-minute breaks. There were moments when everyone was too tired and wanted to give up. But Maria, kept pushing forward for Rosa's future.

"I wanted Rosa to have more opportunities than I had growing up as an adult," Maria said.

After 14 hours of walking, running, and hiding from immigration authorities, everyone was exhausted. Finally, the fatigued group reached California, where they had a safehouse waiting for them.

"Seeing the house gave us motivation to keep pushing and to ignore the pain in our feet. We knew in a few minutes we'd be able to rest," Maria said.

Shortly after, she experienced one of the most terrifying and heartbreaking moments in her life. Rosa wouldn't wake up.

"She wouldn't move," Maria sobbed. "Her hand was freezing cold."

Maria was hit with a rush of emotions. She began screaming, kicking, and sobbing uncontrollably. She thought it was all for nothing.

Jorge grabbed the child from her arms while Maria tried to calm down. Eventually, Rosa woke from a deep sleep - the baby was exhausted from the long trip.

After resting, they took the nearest flight to Raleigh, NC, where Jorge had family waiting for them.

"It was worth it because I was able to offer my children a better lifestyle," she said.



Because she heard that women were often raped while crossing, Maria cut her hair short to avoid drawing attention to herself.

It was a dark, rainy Sunday afternoon when they began their 14-hour journey to the United States. Maria carried baby Rosa and tried to keep her from crying.

She felt sad for the family she left

Maria supported him on one side and another woman in the group supported him from the other side. At times, they barely escaped the spotlights as Immigration Customs Enforcement (I.C.E) closed in. Every time they heard the 'chop, chop, chop' of a helicopter overhead, they dove to the cold, hard ground, sometimes landing in thorny bushes.

"Si nos morimos hoy, por los menos

# Americans Are Still Fighting For Rights

*Women's rights and rape culture have been problems for centuries. Americans are doing more to fight for their equality, and create awareness in our society.*



## Worldwide Women Suffer From Inequality

Kailey Cota

"I would like to take this opportunity to extend your formal invitation. Gender equality is your issue too," said actress Emma Watson in 2014 as she addressed the United Nations in her role as UN Women Goodwill Ambassador.

Gender equality has been an unresolved issue spanning time periods and cultures, even until today. The status of each sex differs as it crosses cultural lines, and while men and women have both had their time at the top, no society has achieved total gender equality.

While the call to improve women's rights has a worldwide presence, every country has different levels of gender equality. To measure the global inequality between sexes, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has established a ranking system called the Gender Inequality Index (GII).

The GII ranks countries by looking at maternal mortality ratio, adolescent birth rate, share of seats in

parliament, and comparing the population with secondary education as well as labour force participation rate between females and males. The lower the rank is, the worse conditions for women are. According to the UNDP, the United States is ranked tenth, meaning nine nations have better gender equality than the U.S.

While U.S. citizens live in a nation where legally men and women are equal, women in most countries need help to enable women's rights—legally and societally—to improve.

### Past: Native American Women in Society

Not every culture always sees women as less valuable than men. Cherokee tribes were rare matriarchal hierarchies; before colonization, Cherokee women had autonomy and freedoms beyond that of Cherokee men.

In her book, *Cherokee Women in Crisis; Trail of Tears, Civil War, and Allotment, 1838-1907*, Carolyn Johnston makes the point that a woman's association with nature and mother-

hood "served as a basis of their power within the tribe, not as a basis of oppression." The same female traits that are looked down upon today were the very reason women were vital contributors to the Cherokee society.

### Present: Indonesian Women In Society

From a legal standpoint, men and women in Indonesia are equal; Indonesia even had a female president, Megawati Sukarnoputri, from July 2001 until Oct. 2004.

"In Indonesia, every girl can go to school, girls are allowed to go to college, women can work anywhere and receive the same wages as men," said Amani Islahuddin ('18), Indonesian foreign exchange student at NFHS.

However, in traditional cultural behavior, women answer to men. It is because of this cultural bias that gender inequality in Indonesia is ranked at 113 out of 188 countries by the GII.

"It is how people behave," Islahuddin said. "The husband's position is higher than the wife's posi-

tion... Women always say 'yes' to their husbands... It is the culture, it is nothing to do with the law."

### What Should I Do?

There are many organizations locally, nationally and internationally established for individuals to join and make a difference. One possible organization is the UN Women's HeForShe solidarity movement. HeForShe provides a "systematic approach and targeted platform where a global audience can engage and become change agents for the achievement of gender equality in our lifetime."

HeForShe breaks involvement up into six categories: education, health, identity, work, violence and politics. The website has information for each issue, detailing ways for individuals to make an impact and places where improvements have been made.

Fighting gender inequality is a necessary step to creating a safer, more peaceful world. Individuals must get involved; small efforts make big differences.

## Rape Culture Extends To Educational Settings

*The names have been changed to protect identities of victims in this article.*

Abbie Knight

With a recent push by Secretary Betsy DeVos, the educational system is changing the way rape is handled at not only universities, but also at all public educational facilities. This includes all public high schools. The Obama-era policy, known as the "Dear Colleague Letter," has included the procedure for schools and colleges in handling sexual harassment since 2011. On Sept. 22, the policy was officially removed and a new set of procedures were enacted.

"If a school knows or reasonably should know about student-on-student harassment that creates a hostile environment, Title IX requires the school to take immediate action to eliminate the harassment, prevent its recurrence, and address its effects," the old policy said.

DeVos' main concern with the former policy was that while it helped rape victims obtain justice, it didn't protect the accused.

"If everything is harassment, then nothing is," she says.

Minimizing the course of action

taken regarding a reported rape does not guarantee justice for the wrongfully accused. Her course of action certainly does not protect rape survivors who are actively trying to seek justice.

"Why would he even think that he could do that?" said Lucy, a rape victim and student of Nation Ford High.

She was raped by her best friend. She was raped on the brink of age 15, and she was raped at a time of her life where she never expected it. Along with other rape victims attending public educational facilities, Lucy may be impacted by the change in policy, making those who have had assistance from their schools especially vulnerable.

One in 5 women and 1 in 71 men will be a victim of sexual assault during their lifetime, according to the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN). Women are not the only ones that are at risk, men can also be assaulted.

"We were friends for a year and a half. Two years maybe," Lucy says about her rapist. RAINN estimates that approximately two thirds of sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knows.

"I was at a party at his house, and

he and his friend drugged me, took me into his room, and he raped me," she says. "I was really out of it. I remember some of it, but I didn't know that I was drugged when it was happening."

Lucy trusted her rapist, but when she decided to go to his party, that was not automatic consent to have sex.

A 1971 study conducted by Menachem Amir found that 71 percent of rapes are premeditated. Male sexual predators cannot blame rape on "uncontrollable desire," as seeing rape this way excuses the rapists and puts blame on the victim. This cycle is known as victim-blaming and is part of something bigger, known as rape culture.

Rape culture is perpetuated through the use of misogynistic language, the objectification of women's bodies, and the glamorization of sexual violence, thereby creating a society that disregards women's rights and safety, according to Southern Connecticut State University.

Rape jokes, sexual slurs, and slut shaming are all-too common examples of rape culture. These are not isolated incidents, and normalizing them leads to the excuse of sexual violence, and the

continuation of the rape culture cycle.

A study by Terry C. Davis Ph.D was conducted to determine the prevalence of forced sex among high school students and to assess student attitudes towards it.

The first survey, given before a presentation about rape, elicited information and attitudes about forced sex in 11 scenarios; the second, given after the program, asked if the student had ever been in a situation involving forced sex and, if so, whether he or she had told anyone.

The findings of this study directly and fully prove that rape culture exists.

Although one out of five students (20 percent) reported they had experienced forced sex, only half had answered the survey about the experience.

A majority of boys (60 percent) found it acceptable in one or more situations for a boy to force sex on a girl.

"But making women responsible for men's sexuality isn't just about excusing rape and sexual harassment. It's a cultural rule that enforces the idea that this is a man's world—women just live in it," said Jessica Valenti, criminal justice reporter for The Nation.