

# THE HOUSTONIAN

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## Those Who Built This Nation

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I was horrified this past June when real estate mogul Donald Trump announced his candidacy for President of the United States. The words he spoke, particularly about immigrants from Mexico, stung. I simply could not believe that a man seeking the nation's highest office could be spewing such hate.

Did Mr. Trump simply forget that immigrants from all over the world built this nation?

Like countless other young Hispanics, my parents immigrated to this country searching for a better life than the one in their home country. Looking at them, you wouldn't see the "criminals" Trump claimed them to be. In fact, neither has been arrested of any crime.

Both my parents grew up in a poor rural village in state of San Luis Potosi in central Mexico. They had very little schooling and grew up in large families. Tragically, both lost their fathers to violence. They married at an early age and built their lives slowly by working hard trying to make a living.

Early into their marriage, my father began coming as far as Colorado to work the fields. Every chance he got, he'd send any money he'd earn back to my mother and his mother, who still had a full household of children to take care of. He felt it was his responsibility being one of the oldest.

Shortly thereafter, my parents reunited and ultimately settled in Bryan, where they still live today. Children soon followed with the birth of my older sister. It was

their dream to ultimately move back to the Rio Grande Valley to be somewhat closer to family back in Mexico. Those plans all changed when I was born.

Having a son with a physical disability altered their lives completely. They soon saw the advantage of being only an hour and a half away from some of the nation's leading medical experts in Houston. Nowhere else would I get the chance to live the full I now live.

My mother knew first-hand the challenges I would face if they had decided to move back to their home country.

"I remember one of our neighbors having a child with cerebral palsy. You never saw him but I remember hearing his cries," she recalled. "I know that in fact I didn't want that for my child."

I will be forever thankful that

they made every effort for me to live the most normal life possible. Soon after, they received their legal status to reside in the country. Then several years later, they finally became U.S. citizens. Although neither was born in this country both of my parents strongly believe in the fabric that makes this country great. Every Fourth of July, my mother will proudly wear her patriotic red, white and blue and watch the fireworks light up the sky. Both have made it a point to vote in every election since becoming citizens in 1996.

Even so, neither would allow my sister and I to forget who we were or where we came from. Spanish was spoken in our home and we held on to many of the traditions and values typical of any Mexican-American family. Both stressed the importance of

a quality education and seeing both their children attend four-year universities is one of the biggest sources of joy in their 50-year marriage.

Last week I watched with pride as Pope Francis spoke to a massive crowd on the steps of Independence Hall in Philadelphia. Here was this humble man speaking in Spanish telling the crowd full of immigrants that despite the hardships they faced they were called to be responsible citizens and that the gifts and traditions that are an essential part of their being could change their society from within.

My hope is that his words ring true and that we always remember that we are a melting pot of many nations and cannot live this country's promise fully until we recognize this truth.