

**Title:** Better Beginnings

**Key Words:** First Generation US Born, Graduated High School, Filipino, Philippines, Together, Motherland, Visa, Arrived to the US, English Not a First Language, Basketball, Sports, English, Hollister, Moving to the US, Identification

**Abstract:** Life in the Philippines was hard and expensive. Becoming a US citizen was difficult but it was needed for a better life. It was sad to leave family members in the Philippines when coming to the US, funds were raised to bring family to the US to all be together.

### **Better Beginnings**

As far as what I've heard, life in the PI was very hard. My mom's family is from the island of Luzon in the province Ilocos Norte. Living in the mountains and living off the farm was a simple but very difficult life. If the kids weren't at school, they were helping their parents on the field. Sometimes the kids weren't able to go to school since it was too expensive. This is where my family saw a better opportunity for the future generation by moving to the US.

Becoming a US citizen was a difficult thing but my family wanted a better life. My mom moved to the US when she was 19 years old and was living with my aunt and uncle in San Diego. She started working at Jack in the Box and part time nutritionist's assistant. My mom would write letters to our grandparents here in Hollister and tell her how much she misses her family. Then one day a mutual friend between my mom and dad were introduced to each other.

After a year or so I was expected to be born; and my parents got married. The city was a bit much for my mom and she missed her own family in Hollister. So after a couple months my parents finally settled in a small apartment in Hollister. Our neighbors were my mom's sisters,

Zeny and Nancy and our grandparents' downstairs. My mom had gotten her CNA license and was working in the nursing home right across the street from the hospital. My aunt Zeny was attending San Benito High School. And my aunt Nancy started as a hard working employee at Safeway's bakery to becoming the manager at Watsonville's bakery department. But my mom's family was still sad that they all couldn't be together and live a better life compared to what they had in the Philippines.

When I turned 5, my mom and her sisters decided to visit the motherland. The area was hot and I remember not having running water. I remember one day it was so hot, our aunt had set up a big bucket of water under a tree where we bathed. Our cousins were always saying how envious of our upbringing and how they wish it was them who were born in the US. But once we were done with the mini vacation and had arrived back to the airports in San Francisco; I remember my aunt Nancy crying about leaving her fiancé in the Philippines. After a couple months our aunt went back to the Philippines and they got married. And after petitioning for a visa, we went to go pick up our new uncle a year later.

Over a couple years, my mom's family would start a fund to help bring the rest of the family to the US. After a year my uncles Gil, and Renato with his son Clark arrived to the US. I remember the first time I met them. It was a late night and everyone made a big dinner to celebrate. That weekend we went to San Francisco to enjoy the Golden Gate Bridge. After a couple sightseeing it was time for them to really settle in. Both my uncles got a job working with a family friend who owns a farm. But my cousin was having a hard time adjusting at school. English wasn't his first language and trying to find friends wasn't too easy. The only advice the family could give him was to just try to find something to enjoy while he was at school, and that's when he found basketball and sports.

Then when I turned 14, our 3 younger cousins and their dad finally arrived to the US. The boys were all a year apart from each other; 6, 7 and 8 years old. Their mom didn't qualify for a visa until recently. But while the kids were trying to adjust to elementary school here, the other kids were always picking on them. They were made fun of for not knowing a lot of English and their hygiene was poor since they couldn't afford the necessities in the Philippines. Now these kids are in high school and are in sports, debate teams and succeeding in school. When they were in the Philippines, they would have to keep paying for school which was really expensive.

So for years we would send balikbayan boxes ("repatriate boxes") filled with essentials, clothes (new or old) and even nonperishable foods to our family in the Philippines. My other girl cousins always ask about our clothes and are so thankful for them; even though they were second hand. And if we had family go visit they would bring back boxes of goodies from the Philippines. Sometimes they would bring back Filipino sweets and candies we wouldn't be able to find here in the US unless we made it or went to a community with a lot of Filipinos.

But then in 2013 my cousin's mom was able to move here to the US and their little family was together. This was the same year my Cousin Clark's wife, Joy, moved to the US. She had already graduated high school and had a license of phlebotomy; which she got a job in the hospital for. Then a year later, they had their baby girl Jolie. She was now part of the first generation of US born in our family.