



JAY'S STORY

Keywords: Mexico, Asylum, LGBTQ+

Jay is a 26-year old man who was born in Jalisco, Mexico. He lived there for 8 years until he migrated to the U.S. Jay and his mother migrated from Mexico because of the intense poverty that overpowered his family. In 2018, Jay was granted asylum and in 2019 he began the process to apply for his residency. This interview from November 2019 was conducted at the courtyard of Trinity United Methodist Church where EBSC is located.

“In 2008, I heard about EBSC through my friend Alex. We met up for coffee and I explained my situation to him. At that time, I hadn’t processed my trauma and I didn’t think that they would take my case. A while later, he mentioned East Bay Sanctuary Covenant again and I made an appointment. I remember I came in and I talked to a girl and she asked me if it was okay for her to type it in English and I told her I can do it in English or Spanish. She made sure the process was the easiest for me. She wrote everything down that I told her and after that, I met up with Cristina who has been amazing.

Cristina referred me to the OLAS LGBT Sanctuary Project and I’ve met some great people there. OLAS helps LGBT asylees emotionally and psychologically. The people at OLAS have been a resource that I needed but didn’t know I needed; they made me feel that I wasn’t alone.

While going to OLAS, I applied for asylum. I remember receiving letters from immigration and saying “oh my God, it’s happening. What if I don’t make it?” There’s always that possibility. Fortunately, it’s been such a great experience, I feel very grateful. I can finally breathe. I don’t want to be in limbo or forced to wait years to become legal. I’m so glad I got that little push from my friend Alex.

The first immigration interview was to make sure that you are who you say you are and that your case is valid. From that





interview, it could go two ways. One way is a follow-up interview and the other is sending your case straight to court. I remember being so scared that my case was not good enough. I walked into the officer's office and the interview started. In the end, she told me, "all right, we're going to do a follow-up interview."

My next appointment was on January 2nd. Unfortunately, they had given a lot of people an appointment that same day and they had to reschedule me. In February I go with my lawyer and a translator. I walked to the asylum office and met with my officer. He was really nice - and very handsome, too. During the second interview, I told the officer what had happened to me in Mexico. He only interrupted me once or twice during the whole interview. At the end he said "all right, well this is the date when you're going to come back and get your response." I left thinking, "that's it?"

I received a letter again telling me to go pick up my response in early March. I went with my best friend. I remember being there and thinking "I'm back here again in this building. I'm scared." The worst part was that we were given a number and we had to wait to be called. I'm sweating and thinking "what is happening to me?"

They called me and I went to the desk and I blanked out. I noticed the lady's talking and I see her mouth moving. But I can't hear anything. I just see her pull some papers with a blue stamp on it and I don't know what that means. I look at the bigger letter and it says "asylum approval notice." When I read that I was so happy.

I'm looking at her and nodding and saying thank you so much. I didn't even notice anything else she was telling me but she was giving me papers and talking to me and I was just agreeing while saying "Thank you." I was just so happy. I walked to my best friend and told him, "my asylum case was approved."





HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Jay's mother made the hard decision to migrate to a new country with her youngest son (Jay) in order to find a better life. This migration story was motivated by living in poverty and not having enough to sustain her family. Living in poverty makes it difficult for individuals to carry on a day to day life because they are wondering if there would be enough money to live. Food resources become sacred and it becomes apparent that parents will make sure their kids are nourished.

This interview was shared at the Journeys to Sanctuary hosted by EBSC in February 2020. Jay is currently working as an interim office administrator where he is the first point of contact for clients. Jay is committed to LGBT advocacy and has been an active member in the OLAS LGBT Sanctuary Project. With his charisma, dedication and passion he has worked to provide community-building support to LGBT asylees.

