



GABRIEL & CECELIA

Our dreams are being destroyed. We worked so hard for 18 years, raising our children, paying taxes, and even buying our own home. Now the administration is taking it all away.

We grew up during the civil wars in El Salvador in the 1970s. As children, we couldn't play outside. We would often see dead bodies in the streets and lived in a continuous state of trauma. The peace accords eventually came, but then things got even worse. During the war, many fighters had fled to the U.S. Some ended up in Los Angeles, where they learned about the U.S. style of gangs. When they were deported back to El Salvador in the early 1990s, they brought the "Maras" gang mentality and organization with them. The gangs found fertile conditions; the army had been trained by the U.S. in how to control and terrorize the people and use weapons. The El Salvador government was in shambles. The gangs grew and grew.

We fled El Salvador in 2000 with our 2-year old son, "Juan," and we all received TPS in 2001, after the earthquakes. Juan is now 20 years old and studying business and music at a community college. Our younger son, "Toby," is eight years old and is a U.S. citizen. Both our sons have gone to East Bay schools for their whole lives.

When we first arrived, we had nothing. TPS allowed us to receive work permits. We started to work three jobs at a time. Gabriel worked in hotels as a banquet server, and Cecilia worked at department stores. We worked all the time, but felt like the sacrifices were worth it. We saved and bought a small house in 2002, but we lost it in the housing crash. We continued to work and bought another house in 2012, where we still live.

If we are deported back to El Salvador, we fear for our lives. The gangs still control the neighborhoods, and we're afraid that they will conscript our sons. The police have been infested by the gangs; if you make a police





police report, the next day, you are dead. If you say something wrong or refuse to pay the gangs extortion money, you are killed.

We can't sleep at night. We will lose our home, our safety, and all we have worked so hard to achieve in the U.S. We will be forced to go to a dangerous country to start over, with no place to live. Our whole family will be under constant threat.

The main messages that we want to share:

- The President says he wants to deport gang members and criminals. We are neither. We are humble people who work hard and have been raising our children in the U.S. for almost twenty years.**
- El Salvador is a small country that is not able to fight organized crime on its own. Would you send your children into a country infested by these gangs? That's what you're doing to us.**
- El Salvador and the other TPS countries have many problems and dangers and are not prepared to receive TPS families.**