Sanctuary

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UNDOCUMENTED RECIPES

Aurora Nazario
Judith Paez
Myrna Lazcano
Edilberto Cumero
Rica Madrid
Mauricio Higuera

edited by
Sumeja Tulic
WHO COOKED?

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To recognize our light, we must know our darkness. Even if it sounds out of place, today we wake up with a new opportunity: to improve ourselves as people, only today, because that's all we really have.

What happened yesterday in the USA is a wake-up call for the whole world. What are we doing? How did we get to this point? In moments of decadence and crisis, the answer to our problems does not come from outside, but from within ourselves.

No politician, religious leader or teacher is the solution. The exit this sick system is in healing oneself to be able to share the best with all. It takes empathy, tolerance and, although the word already sounds trite to some people, much love – love with a capital letter. This world needs love. And that love begins with you, me, him, her. With and for each human being that inhabit this wonderful planet.

Donald Trump is just the reflection of the lie we have been selling for years. The supposed American Dream is nothing more than a fantasy out of Disney’s wildest script or a science fiction film, and the USA (as an ideology, not as a people) is no more than a collection of increasingly obscure and obsolete beliefs.

It is time to analyze ourselves as humanity: is this the ideal we have dreamet of? Is this really the country that we should admire? What is our goal as a society? I think the time has come to review our priorities and understand that the change is in creating our own square meter of respect, consideration and construction. It is time to realize that the neighbor is not the enemy. It is time to face our biggest ghosts and face them to finally be able to overcome them. Today is when we have to rethink everything to start again.

Although everything is not lost, on the contrary: when we touch bottom we can rise and be reborn. When we enter into crisis we can become stronger. When the night is darkest, it is because it is about to dawn.

Now it’s our turn to wake up.

Because Trump is the end of that world in which we were kept distracted. Because we have the opportunity that we can be the beginning of the change. Because the USA is not the center of the world, but we can be the epicenter of its transformation. Because politics is not the way out, but we can be the solution. Because politics is not the solution, we are.
As President Barack Obama said at "YES, WE CAN".

So, if you feel a void today, remember that filling is in you. If today you see the end of the world, remember that rebuilding it is in you. If today you do not see where to go from here, remember that the road is in you. If today you feel sad, remember that the joy is in you.

What I’m saying with all this is that not everything is lost and we have everything to win. We just have to rediscover ourselves as individuals and as human beings. We have to remember that humanity is bigger than a character or a speech. We have to know that we can do something. It’s just about taking life in our hands and being better people day by day.

If you see inequality, help. 
If you see intolerance, respect. 
If you see sadness, encourage. 
If you see indifference, love.

Trump is only a poor rich man, and he is nothing without the dollar sign; but we, together, are everything.

No doubt: what happened yesterday is a wake-up call for all humanity, but also an opportunity for each of us. And you, what are you going to do? Because in order to recognize our light, we must first know our darkness. The road is in you. The course is in everyone.

Respect, unite, propose, build, love.

Today is the time. There is no more "tomorrow."

What a joy, world.

Today I promise to be better!

Judith Paez, Novembre 9, 2016
Aurora Nazario

TOSTADAS DE POLLO
AURORA’S STORY
I left Mexico because I wanted to survive, and because I wanted my parents to have money to put food on the table.

I crossed the border twice: the first time I was caught by U.S. immigration, the second time I made it. Both times, the crossing of the border was a horrifying experience.

Endless walking while the smugglers shouted “Walk! Walk! Walk! If you don’t we’ll let you die here.” I was hungry, thirsty and afraid.
I held Virgincita close to me.

When I arrived in New York, everything looked beautiful. Whereas soon afterwards, very little was beautiful to me.

I found a job at a restaurant. I was underage but I lied about it. I wanted to study, but I couldn’t because studying would have meant not working, and not working would have meant having no money for myself or my family back in Mexico. I started to miss my parents and my sisters badly.

The loneliness drew me to a man who drowned his sorrows and ambitions in alcohol. We had a baby together. My husband didn’t change his ways. So, with my parents in mind, I took my baby son and left my husband.

I worked hard, long hours for days on end, but the sacrifices were worth it: my parents and my sister in Mexico were better off because of the money I sent.

At work, I met my future husband, Alfonso. What I loved most about him is the respect he has shown me, his regard for my decisions, and his kindness. He is a man deserving of my love. We got married and now we have two daughters together: Stefani, 6, and Jennifer, 2. Today I’m living for the two of them.

I’m fighting for them to have a warm home and the opportunities I didn’t have. As an undocumented person, I fear separation from my children who are U.S. citizens. I’m nothing without my children. I already suffer from being separated from my parents. That separation hurts every day.
I wonder how would Trump feel if he couldn’t see his children and grandchildren? How would his children feel if they couldn’t see him?”
Delicious Tostadas de Tinga

Ingredients:
2 pounds of chicken breast
4 tomatoes
1 big white onion
2 garlic cloves
2 tablespoons of oil
1 can of chiles chipotles
1 package of tostadas
cream
grated cheese
lettuce
avocado
salt
Preparation:
Boil the chicken breasts with a little bit of salt, two garlic gloves, and a piece of onion.
While the breast boils, cut the lettuce in small pieces, as well as the tomatoes, the onion, and the avocado.
Put a cacerole with oil on the stove, add the onion and the tomato together, let them there for a while.
By then, the chicken must be already cooked.
Crumble the chicken and add them to the cacerole, add the can of chipotles, and half a cup of chicken broth (of the same broth where the chicken was cooked).
Once that all the ingredients are in the cacerole, stir them and let them cook for 5 more minutes. Then your tinga will be ready to make your delicious tostadas.
You put the tostadas on a plate, add some tinga over them, and then add the lettuce, cheese, cream, and avocado as you like. And mmmmm... time to eat.

Thanks for making my recipe.

Aurora Nazario
MYRNA’S STORY

In 2013, after living almost five years in New York, I decided to move back to Mexico. My oldest daughter Heidi was 12 and my younger daughter Mitchel was about to turn 6. I thought it was time to move back home. My husband and I just bought a piece of land in Mexico where we planned to build our dream house: the girls would have their own room, with windows and enough space to put all their toys and books. It felt right to go back home.

Upon arrival in Mexico, I was shocked to learn that the piece of land we bought was a fraud. We had been cheated. The land didn't exist.

The land fraud wasn't the end of our troubles there. I was receiving death threats about which I can’t speak, and my girls were not safe.

Every day, my youngest would come from school crying. The kids at school would pick on her, hit her and steal or ruin her stuff. Compared to them, Mitchel was better off: she had a school bag, textbooks, and a sandwich. Most of those kids were from families living in extreme poverty and confronted with violence on a daily basis.

The final blow came when I discovered that the human trafficking mafia targeted my oldest daughter: she received a Facebook message from an underage boy she barely knew asking her to leave with him to Monterrey, a city in the northeastern state of Nuevo León. He said he
wanted to marry her. Heidi was 12 at the time, and the boy was 15. That is how the human trafficking mafia works: they solicit minors to lure in young girls.

I discovered the messages on the day the boy was supposed to pick Heidi up from school. I ran to the gates of Heidi’s school. I was there before the boy arrived. I hugged my daughter and thanked God for letting me save my daughter.

After all of that, it became obvious that we needed to go back to New York where my husband was still living and working.

Since both of my daughters are American citizens, I sent the girls back to New York without a problem. As for me, I needed to pay the coyote to smuggle me back into the country. I couldn’t wait for my husband to earn the payoff, so I borrowed money from my boss and went to the border. I had to be back in New York, with my girls in my arms. Michelle was about to have a birthday. We never hosted a proper birthday party for her. I had to be there before her birthday.

On November 24, 2013, I tried to cross the border.

The smugglers had put these stairs on the wall that divided Sonora, Mexico from Arizona. It wasn’t easy to climb the makeshift stairs and make it safely to the other side. The coyotes made it clear: “If you don’t make it, we’ll rape you. We don’t care if you are ugly and fat. And when we are done with you, you’ll be on your own in the desert.”

Somehow, I made it to the other side. Hours of walking in the pitch dark followed. I was completely disoriented, and I was scared. I could hear the animals of the desert; the true coyotes and whatnot…

I don’t know when the immigrant patrol caught us. I was taken into a van that took me away into the unknown.

I was stripped down and searched. The officials touched my body in search of drugs and weapons. It was utterly humiliating and I felt violated. I think reparations should be given to victims of such treatment.

I remember coming before a judge and pleading my case. I told the judge that my children are U.S. citizens. The judge said that I would receive an official response in two weeks. I was taken to the immigration detention center in Florence, Arizona. The judge’s response was never translated to me. After a month of being detained, I was discharged to Mexico. Signs hanging in the detention facility and at the border crossing said “If you have children that are US citizens, let the officials know!” In my case, the immigration authorities didn’t pay any attention to that. “I have children,” I told the immigration officer. “Me too,” he responded.

Despite refusing to sign my deportation order, I was deported like a criminal with excessively large handcuffs.
They deported me without money, personal belongings and identification documents. As the bus carrying us to Mexico crossed the border, I realized that I was once again undocumented – only this time, undocumented in my own country.

When I came out of detention, I didn’t remember much. I didn’t remember much about my life. When I saw my nephews, I wanted to call them by their names but I couldn’t. I didn’t know their names anymore. The trauma of detention and deportation shut down parts of my brain.

For days, months, and eventually years, I was depressed and worried about my daughters: Who will take them to school? Who will make food for them? Who will tell them bedtime stories? Who will do everything a mother does for her children?

The three years spent away from my children were unbearable but eventually I took charge of the situation. I joined human rights groups working with families that underwent separation. I pleaded my case before all domestic and international organizations and institutions to no avail. I still didn’t lose hope. The idea of never seeing my girls again was unbearable.

I studied, I worked hard -- I wanted my girls to be proud of their mother when we finally reunited.

At the end of March 2016, I joined the Caravan for Peace, Life and Justice. The caravan gathered a diverse group of people from different nationalities: victims of violence, drug trafficking, human rights defenders, journalists, community and religious leaders, and activists. We were set to travel to Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico and eventually to the United States. My application for a US visa was denied, but I still joined the caravan.

Thanks to the New Sanctuary Movement in New York City, my two girls were able to join the caravan while it was touring Mexico. After three years, I was able to hug my daughters.

When we approached the U.S. border, I made a decision: I’ll cross the border in Laredo and deliver myself to the U.S. immigration authorities. I knew the risk: months in detention while waiting for a judge to review my case, and very possibly, deportation again. Still, I had to do it. And I did.

Together with my daughters I walked to the border. Soon after, I was separated from my daughters and taken away into a separate room.

After hours of interrogation, I was told to leave. Instinctively, I started to walk towards the Mexican side of
the border. The immigration officer said “Not that way!” and then, while pointing to the American side, said “This way ma’am.”

I started running to the American side where my girls were waiting. I was finally back!
“My heart was a broken up heart because without my mom we couldn’t do anything. I was depressed and I had to drink medication. I was having problems in my school. I wasn’t paying attention.

My mom was thinking about me, and we never celebrated my birthday with my mom. This year will be the first time in three years that we celebrate my birthday with my mom.”

Michelle
Homemade Quesadillas

Ingredients:
Corn flour
Spinach or mushrooms (or any other vegetable)
Water and salt
Olive oil
Cheese or curd

Preparation:
1. Stir the corn flour with water until you have a paste.
2. On a pan, cook the spinach on low fire, and covered with a lid. (You can also cook mushrooms or squash blossom)
3. You make little tortillas with the corn flour paste and you cook them in a comal (a flat Mexican pan) from both sides, until they sponge.
4. You add the cooked spinach.
5. You add a little bit of curd or cheese and you fold the tortilla until you give it a form of quesadilla.
6. You serve them on a plate, and enjoy them. Delicious, healthy, and also cheap!

Note: This quesadillas are delicacies that my mother used to make for us when we were kids. The main ingredient was the love towards her kids. I love you Cecilia Olivares Huerta!
Guajillo sauce in molcajete

Ingredients:
Chile seco (guajillo)
One garlic clove
Salt

Molcajete:
Mexican utensil that looks like a mortar. It is used to crush different foods. It is made out of quarry stone from the Mexican region of Puebla.

Preparation:
Grind the clove of garlic in the molcajete, then add the chile (previously roasted) and grind it too. When it is pulverized, add water and salt.
You will have a delicious guajillo sauce to add to your tacos and other Mexican food.
“As a husband it wasn’t easy to be without ones partner. I missed talking to Myrna. I even missed our fights.”

Miguel
My brother was caught by the immigration law enforcement. I didn’t visit my brother because I was afraid that I would also be deported. I was undocumented at the time. The day my brother was detained at my home that was the last day that I saw him alive. My brother, he told my family over the phone that he is being injected. He didn’t know what it was. They said it was vaccines but they injected him with things in the detention centers. Regardless, it didn’t feel like a good place for him to be in and they kept him there for six months before they he was deported back to Colombia and then after being in Colombia about six months he started developing these headaches, really intense headaches and then later we found out he had brain cancer. Of course, this whole process created so much stress for my all family but as soon as we found out that my brother had brain cancer, my mom, who was undocumented at the time, left to go take care of him. That split my family apart. Not only that we loose my brother but later due to the stress of loosing my brother to cancer, my mother also developed cancer and she also passed away.

Mauricio Higuera
Arepas

Colombians are serious about arepas. It is a food staple, for one, and corn mills are as common in homes as blend- ers. In New York, if you hear of an arepa place, it is most likely Venezuelan and they prepare them stuffed. Those are delicious too, but Colombian arepas are prepared differently. We toast them flat and add ingredients on top. There are many types of corn in Colombia so arepas vary by regions. Some of these types of corn are so delicious that only butter is added. Preparing arepas is as easy as making toast. The only difficulty is in finding them. When I want to remember the taste of home I go out of my way over to grocery stores in Queens or a few in Brooklyn where they have arepas de chololo (sweet corn patties) or arepas de maíz (maize corn patties). These are the most common varieties and the only ones that are exported. Sweet corn arepas are best prepared in a toaster oven with a good amount of butter. Fresh cheese should be added over the butter right after toasting. Maize arepas taste best topped with savory additions. My favorite addition for a maize arepa is tuna mixed in mayo, ketchup and lime. It’s too bad I was never interested in cooking but arepas are easy enough for anyone. Nowadays the closest thing to a home cooked meal I get to experience is when I make these for breakfast or a quick dinner.
Rica & Edilberto

FOOD
OUR STORY
We arrived in New York City around the same time, 24 years ago. I came with my mother to buy clothes for my upcoming high school graduation. We were supposed to stay only three months, but my love story began two months into my stay.

It all started with her jamming the door of my apartment with her laundry bag. I fell for her instantly, and later I’d learn she did for me too.

We spent countless nights in front of our building, talking for hours. I feared she would discard me eventually: I was just a kid, she was a beautiful woman.
My worst fears materialized in the form of a letter she sent to me saying that the four years she is older than me make it impossible for us to be together. “What would people think of me dating someone much younger than me?” she wrote. “Go find a nice girl your age, and leave me alone.” Too late for that my love, I thought. “There is nobody for me but you,” I wrote back in a letter. We continued to see each other.

Two days short of the one year anniversary of my stay here, I was scheduled to fly back to Mexico with my mother. We packed everything. Rica told me to go.

Our suitcases were in the trunk. My mother and I were sitting in the back of the taxi when I told her that I had forgotten something important. I run up the stairs to her. I knew my last plead with Rica would take some time, so I shouted from the balcony to my mom: Go to the airport, I’ll catch up with you there.
I never went to the airport. Instead I married Rica and had two wonderful children – Guadalupe who is 22 years old, and Edgar who is 16.

I thank God for sending her my way, for her unwavering love and support during the last eight years of kidney dialysis. Both of my kidneys stopped working.

Where is the logic in letting undocumented people donate but not receive organs? I’m expected to save lives of US citizens who do not want to save me because I’m “illegal.” My mother died of kidney failure too. She worked all of her life in a hospital, yet she died not being able to pay for treatment in the very place she gave all her working years to. Sad, but true: we had to pay them to release her corpse to us.

I can’t go back to Mexico. I can’t travel, I can’t afford the treatment there, and most importantly, I can’t afford to be separated from my family.
Red Oaxacan Tamales

Ingredients:
2 pounds of dough (corn flour with water and salt)
1 piece of lard
pork ribs in small slices
250 grams of chile seco costeño
plantain leaves

Preparation:
Mix the dough with the lard and with water, until you have a homogenous and uniform dough.
Add salt and let rest for one hour.
 Crush the chile seco (previously put in water) and season it with garlic, onion, clove, pepper, cumin, and a piece of cinnamon.
Cut the plantain leaves about 20cm on each side.
Extend the dough over the plantain leaves previously cut.
On the center of the dough, place the pork ribs, but before mix it with the seasoned chile seco (this is called enmolada).
Cover it perfectly with the leaf.
Cook it on a steamer approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes or until the leaves don't stick to the dough anymore.
Enjoy a Oaxacan tamale with an atole de granillo (crushed corn cooked with milk, cinnamon, and sugar or piloncillo) or an arroz con leche (rice cooked with milk, cinnamon and sugar or piloncillo).
Preparation:
1. Boil the pork ribs with a piece of onion. Once they are completely cooked, let them drain and then fry them on a pan.
2. For the green sauce, boil the green tomatoes and the chiles. Once they are cooked, you mix them on a blender with the half onion, the garlic and the cilantro. Preferably use fresh cilantro, the amount that you like.
3. To finish, pour the green sauce in the pan with the ribs, and add the purslane previously washed and disinfected. Leave it on medium fire for 20 minutes or until the ribs are soft.
4. Serve the plates of pork ribs in green sauce with a side of white rice.
JUDITH’S STORY
I crossed the border with my husband and my 5-month-old son. We arrived in the US 23 years ago during a cold April. Snow was still lingering on the pavement. Everything was different here: the landscape, the customs, our new house. We had to adjust and make things work. Where we lived, who we lived with, who we called friends: accepting the changes and making adjustments wasn’t easy. How does one really adapt to a culture where often because of skin color or because of not speaking English, one is treated badly or, at the very least, is less appreciated?

I’m not being resentful here. We are not resentful. It’s the rejection that people like me have felt; it’s suffering from others thinking and saying that we don’t deserve to study, or achieve our dreams and goals… After all, the pursuit of happiness is a right for all human beings.

After arriving in this country, I worked several jobs: as a waitress in a Puerto Rican restaurant, in a printing company, as an assistant and a bookkeeper in a church. Nowadays, I clean houses. The work is demanding but it allows me to contribute to my family’s budget. Also, this work gave me the opportunity to help other women that are struggling financially.

Before I go to bed, I take time for my oldest passion: poetry. Back in Mexico, my girlfriends had me write love poems they would send to their boyfriends. I continue to write here, but not as much as I would want. At the very least, I read poetry before going to bed. One of my favorite poets is Khalil Gibran.

I continued my high school studies here. I also took a course in floral design. I would have loved to go to college and study business so one day I can open my flower shop. I can’t afford that now, but perhaps one day soon. My dream is to employ single moms with low income in my flower shop.

I didn’t want to leave my country. But I had to. Like many undocumented people in this country, I pay taxes, I don’t rely on handouts, I work hard. So, why do some people call us frijoleros and the most hurtful of all, illegals? If anything is illegal, it is the fact that we complete our part of the bargain but we don’t get to reap the benefits.
Cochinita Pibil
Rinde: 10 portions
(High on protein)

INGREDIENTS:
2 ½ pounds of pork loins
½ pounds of tomato
3 small habanero pepper
½ onion (white)
5 garlic cloves
5 pieces of big black pepper
11 tbs of black pepper
1 cup of orange juice
It’s incredible what a little piece of paper, a number, can leave one without. I see these photographs and videos of my family back in Mexico together, celebrating happy moments: weddings of my brothers, baptisms of my nephews, and I’m not there. For 23 years I didn’t hug my father on his birthdays, on New Year’s, on Christmases, and on Father’s Days. I wasn’t there for the sad and difficult too: when my grandmother died, when my dear aunt died, when my brother got sick. I’m not there for my father who is 80 years old now and suffers from diabetes. I’m not there to take care of him and pamper him.

I’m not there, so he can’t meet the person I became. I’m not the person I was 23 years ago. I want him to meet the better, wiser, older Judith.

I want to meet my nephews and I want my family to meet my sons: Marco-Antonio who is 23, Jesus-Adrian who is 21, and the male-version of me, Victor-Hugo who is 16. My children are the greatest gifts and treasures I have.

I don’t want to be separated from my children the way I am from my blood family in Mexico. Very soon my boys will have their own children and grandchildren will arrive. I want to be involved in their lives too. I can’t be separated from my family again. I can’t. I want to keep my family together. I have the right defend my family. We have the right to be together, and we will eventually succeed.
Preparation:

Wash all your tomatoes, habanero peppers, and onion. Place them in a blender with the achiote, both black peppers, some salt, the garlic, the orange juice & vinegar. Blend it until all ingredients are well dissolved into a smooth sauce.

Prepare your pressure pot with water just enough until it reaches the bottom, you'll be setting inside the pressure pot.

Wash 3 or 4 (depending on the size of the plantain leaves) and place them in the inside base of the pressure pot to be able to cover all the meat and the sauce you'll be searing. Once you have pour the gauché, cover the top with the leaves and —
nothing gets out of the plantain leaves.

Cook for 45 mins. When the time is over wait until the pressure pot have all vapors seeped on its own.

Uncover the pressure pot and remove the meat to a clean pot pouring over the juice.
With a fork separate the cooked meat. Taste to check flavor if necessary add more salt. Leave it for another 10 mins. on medium high mixing well.

ADD ON:

Beans, Rice, Red Onions & Radishes, and of course some fresh Jamaica flower water.
You ask me how I became a madman. It happened thus: One day, long before many gods were born, I woke from a deep sleep and found all my masks were stolen -- the seven masks I have fashioned and worn in seven lives -- I ran maskless through the crowded streets shouting, “Thieves, thieves, the cursed thieves.”

Men and women laughed at me and some ran to their houses in fear of me. And when I reached the market place, a youth standing on a house-top cried, “He is a madman.” I looked up to behold him; the sun kissed my own naked face for the first time. For the first time the sun kissed my own naked face and my soul was inflamed with love for the sun, and I wanted my masks no more. And as if in a trance I cried, “Blessed, blessed are the thieves who stole my masks.”

Thus I became a madman.

And I have found both freedom and safety in my madness; the freedom of loneliness and the safety from being understood, for those who understand us enslave something in us.

But let me not be too proud of my safety. Even a Thief in a jail is safe from another thief.
Love and Joy
NEVER ENDS IN A
Home that's blessed with
family and
FRIENDS
You will not regret the effort you put during all this process. The final results will make you want it to try it one more time.

Cheers!!

[Signature]
SUMEJA’S STORY

Dear Aurora, Judith, Myrna, Michelle, Heidi, Miguel, Edilberto, Rica, father Juan Carlos Ruiz, Elizabeth, and the rest of the New Sanctuary Coalition NYC family,

I was never undocumented, forcefully separated from my family, detained, or smuggled into a country “illegally.” I don’t pretend to know what that is like. All I know is the pain I felt while hearing your stories.

To my mother’s great disappointment, I don’t know how to cook. To my own disappointment, I can’t make a meal for you the way you did for me.

So, in the spirit of sharing, allow me to tell you one story. Like I said, I was never undocumented, but I was without documents for a year. It happened when I was living with my family in Libya, the year the war started in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Libyan government wouldn’t let me start school without every single document the procedure required. We couldn’t talk to our family members in Bosnia, much less ask for my birth certificate and whatnot. So I stayed home and had nightmares in which numbers and letters chased me. A year after, the war in Bosnia became the centerpiece of international politics, so Libya (my birth country by the way) said yes to educating me.

It’s a silly grievance, I know, but I’m still holding that grudge against the Libyan government.

Why?

I could have been denied education, and with it experiences and encounters such as ours.

Thank you for sharing your stories, food, sorrows and happiness with me.

I was never lonely around you.

I’m less scared of the future because of you.

Thank you!
eat your way home