

**Malcolm:** How are you doing today Lupe?

**Lupe:** I'm doing good. How are you guys doing?

**Malcolm:** I'm good we good.

**Lupe:** All right

**Malcolm:**hey. So, first we going to ask, Where and when were you born?

**Lupe:** I was born January 16 1986. And I was born in Guadalajara, Jalisco Mexico. So I'm originally Mexican, I migrated to the United States when I was young. And I was, I will say, about two years, two years old. So pretty much my whole life, I spent it here in South Central LA. I was born. I was raised in Mexico, but was, I was born in Mexico, but raised in the US.

**Malcolm:** When and how did you or your family come to South Central?

**Lupe:** South Central. So early days when I was young, like I said, we, my mom, my parents migrated here, back, in the early days? So they came here first. And they spent a couple of years here. And then what then happened was like, they went back to Mexico, right? Then they decided to come back again, give it another try. Because I guess, when they were here, so central in a go as well for them. And they you know, they have that support. They didn't know about all these organizations that are now here that helped people, right? They didn't know that. So there were young migrants, they didn't know, pretty much like you said no, no better than a lot. So they decided to go back to their sort of foreign countries, or whatever it is. So then, a few years later, they decided to come back, that's when we came into the picture, who was already born. And we decided that when I started, we my first, my first memory here is going to be on 82nd and San Pedro. From my younger days that I remember being here. But my parents kind of started off in May, Maywood. And they worked their way to South Central. As we were growing up.

**Malcolm:**How has South Central changed over the years?

**Lupe:** South Central in what form? What do you mean like?

**Malcolm:** Like, just like how you've seen it grow? Or how, if you think it grew or how it like, just evolved? In your view.

**Lupe:** My point of view throughout the years, I'm 37 years old. So from my childhood, to now I seen south central change in various ways.

I first growing up, like I said, I grew up in 82nd and San Pedro. So it's not too far from Coco from here. And um growing up in that area, back in that time, it was it was a bit different. Right. It was a lot. I felt that it was more. I saw more gang violence. More, I say pretty much more gang violence. It wasn't more in a sense that it wasn't, um South Central felt safe. but it didn't feel as

safe in a certain time of hours you know. you wanted to be home. You wanted to be home before the lights were out. Yeah, because it didn't feel safe. Because you know, that all the negativity will start at a certain time of the night. Right?

**Malcolm:** Yeah.

**Lupe:** And at that, at a young age, my parents wanted to be inside the house, but they didn't want us out. So in that sense, when I was growing up, I felt I didn't feel safe enough you know. And I felt there was a lot of gang activity. As I was growing up and started moving forward to elementary middle school days.

I felt a little different because my brothers were a little older. So I felt kind of like protected by them

**Malcolm:** Yeah

**Lupe:** You know so we always and then we always had like a lot of we I was an apartment where we live so it was a lot of a lot more people that live there older than us. So we felt protected by the older.

**Malcolm:** Yeah

**Lupe:** The older male figures that we were related with.

**Malcolm:** What do you feel are South Central's greatest strengths?

**Lupe:** South Central's greatest strengths. Um i'll say people. I think that that South Central when I think when people say South Central, they always think low class low income. That's how I feel people think like you know they like or they feel that you say south central oh that's thugs.

**Malcolm:** Yeah.

**Lupe:** Hardcore, violence, that's the only thing you know, they don't see. My thing is like, when I see South Central it's made up of a lot of different races you know.

**Malcolm:** Mhm

**Lupe:** It's made up like the like right now black, black and brown unity. That was one of the main things like, South Central was a mixture of Latinos, Hispanics and biracial. So now it's not it's not only like, Oh, I see African Americans on one side, I see Hispanics and another side No, you can see that it's it's United unity now.

**Malcolm:** Mmmm

**Lupe:** back then, and we can see the separation, right separation between Latinos and African Americans, because you can feel that the, it was kinda like, back then you could feel the tension between Latinos and Hispanics or Latinos and African Americans.

Now, it seems a little different. I think the times have changed.

You do see gang members around now, but you don't see them so much hanging on the streets or, or here and there, you know, it kind of changed. I guess a lot of folks grew out of it. I know some folks still stayed in that era where they want to be in gangs and to do certain things. But I feel that I see less of that now. It's a little different, you know, I don't see as much as how it was before.

**Malcolm:** What did you do for fun when you were my age?

**Lupe:** Remind me how old are you?

**Malcolm:** I'm sixteen

**Lupe:** Ah, for fun, I was a sports guy. So I went to Locke High School during that time. And that was actually living on 105th and Figueora, which is like a couple of blocks down. It's not that far from here. And around your age, what I did for fun was pretty much I was into sports. So when I was in high school, I did weight training because I had to practice for football. And after football. Uhm. I joined different, different sports, right? So after the football season was over, I did track and field. So it was kind of like I was always busy. Either doing weight training, playing football and school pretty much that was like, my parents were like, going to school. That's your job. I don't know. That's how it is now with your parents. To me when I was young, my parents were like, as long as you bring good grades, as long as I don't have no complaints that you're not going to school, as long as you stay in school, and I don't, I'll be your provider, like my parents will. I didn't have to. I didn't have to work for money. They were like, okay, whatever you need, if you need this for your playing football, what if it's a lot of things that you need, you're gonna need cleats, you want to look good around in my coaches to say, you look good, you pay them. So my thing was like, I was always wanting good stuff. So my job was to do good at school, get good grades. So are we getting good grades? I was able to my parents were able to like, oh, well here, this is what you're gonna get. This is what you get. Right? So that was my incentive for doing good in school. And look, not to put it out there. I know you guys are out there. But I did have straight A's from ninth to 12th grade.

**Malcolm:** Ok Lupe!

**Lupe:** So that was a 4.0 GPA. Okay, you know, I'm saying you know, and I still played ball, sports and all that. So remember, never judge a book by its cover. Yeah, it doesn't matter how people look. You just never know what they're about. Or, or what they've been through. Would you have thought I had straight A's in high school 9th through 12th?

**Us:** \*Laughter\*

**Lupe:** Does it look like it? No, no!

**Laura:** B's and A's

**Lupe:** Right. Okay. Yeah, so so that. That's what I did for fun. I played plenty of sports. That's what kept me kept me busy. Because, you know, at our age, at the time, we didn't have phones, we didn't have tablets. They weren't around, if you had a phone because you have a Nokia. Like, it was not like you can get on the internet. It wasn't. It was new. stuff was new. So our main thing was playing out around or doing stuff. We didn't have that technology. That technology didn't kick in until a couple of years later now. Yeah.

**Malcolm:** Do you feel a sense of community in South Central and how?

**Lupe:** Do I feel a sense of community in South Central? Do I feel a sense of me being in South Central community or the community or what do you mean? Like can you rephrase that question for me?.

**Malcolm:** It's kind of like because you've kind of stated earlier that like you answer my question or like the African American and the Latino and Hispanic community being together as like a community like, do you like, feel the community?

**Lupe:** Oh, okay. So based on that, yeah, I feel that the community now is more united. Like, I know that, that the system that that that we have in place, you know, they're they're always trying to separate, separate us from not being together. Because they're, it's like, it's better to fight one person separate than everybody together. That's how I think I'm looking at a perspective from like, white supremacists. Yeah, like, you know, that's what I'm looking at it. So they see if they see one group of person, or people try to make change, they're like oh, it's just a group of people. Yeah. But then you see, two groups of people, different race. You don't they don't know each other. Yeah. But they're fighting the same, same problems. And once they see him reunite, they're gonna try to break that part yet. Because they know that if, if we stick together, like more than one race, I'm talking about one race we can talk about not white. I'm just saying that it can be you can be Indian, you can be Armenian, that's, that's a race, you know. So imagine everybody sticking together. We can control.

**Malcolm:** Yeah

**Lupe:** You know, but I feel that the system will always try to break everybody apart, just to suit, so it won't build that much power. Just remember people build power, people, power, progress. You know, people build power. So the more people you have, the more power you have. You want to make change in life. You got to build that power by with the people.

**Malcolm:** What kind of house did you grow up in? And what was the neighborhood like?

**Lupe:** So I grew up in, at first it was a one bedroom apartment, which they had a one bedroom apartment. It had a living room. So it was kind of it wasn't a single because when you call a single, it's like it's an open space. Right?

**Malcolm:** Yeah.

**Lupe:** So this one had his own. We had one room. So it's a one bed, one bedroom apartment, right?

**Malcolm:** Yeah.

**Lupe:** So my parents, and at that time, I remember, like, my dad's family, like, had migrated over here too. So just imagine, maybe like three families and one and one apartment. So it was kind of like people sleeping in the closet. We had mattresses in the kitchen. So it was kind of like I always been and that's how I felt that family always came first. Because I saw my parents always helping the brothers out. Because these the people that live in our houses were either my dad's brothers or sisters, that I Oh, you know, they migrated like, they don't have nowhere to go. My dad was okay, you guys stay here for for as long as you can or you want him. And once you set yourself here, you get a job and find a place where to live. And they moved out with my dad has always been the, the head of their family, and our family and I he's, he's a person that I always look up to. Because the way his work ethic, right, my parents, my dad's work ethic, was like, You got to work hard in order to survive and make it in life. And he's always he always had put family first no matter what. And that's why I feel that I've been following his legacy right? In my dad still alive, my mom still, and I'm happy because their legacy to me, it's kind of like, I feel they taught me to look out for people to have compassion for people, right? Not only like to help people, the more you help, the more good comes back to you. So it's something that I've seen a lot in my life. And, and what was the other question that we asked when I was in our living

**Malcolm:** Yeah, the neighborhood

**Lupe:** The neighborhood, so my neighborhood was always like, happy, right? A lot of kids always playing out in the streets, because it was an apartment and we lived in an apartment building and then right next to like, right next to us was another apartment building. So I used to hang out with 50 Plus, folks with brothers sibling, like my brothers and their brother will always be on the street playing hide and go see, tag. We just made up different games. Yeah, baseball, so whatever, soccer. So I have pretty good, a pretty fun childhood. It The only problem was that the neighborhood we lived in, it was a lot of a lot of gang violence. So there was a lot of drive by shootings, there was a lot of stuff in that young age. It's like, for you being 10, nine years old, and you hear in a car, burning rubber, you already know, maybe somebody's coming to the block to try to shoot somebody that was there. So first thing that our thing that we they taught us, well, the older people that, they taught us like, once you hear stuff like that, either hide, hide, behind the tire, so on and so forth. You know,

**Malcolm:** yeah.

**Lupe:** So I saw a lot of a lot of that, like a lot of gang violence, like shootings and stuff like that. Throughout my neighborhood. So it wasn't the greatest. But my parents, right before I finished what I was going to finish my fifth grade, right?

**Malcolm:** Yeah

**Lupe:** I was, like, 10, 11 years old.

**Malcolm:** Yeah

**Lupe:** They decided to move us to this side of town, because my brothers were a little older already. See I have five brothers.

**Malcolm:** Yeah.

**Lupe:** So I have two older ones. So when I was 11, one of them was already 13, the other one was already 15. That's the main age where, where people want to recruit you to be in gangs, and do all this stuff. So not me. I'm not saying my parents move mainly because of me. No, they move mainly because my older brothers are getting older. And if you know, you usually what happens when, when you have an older brother and he falls into like a Tito's bath, you want to go into what he's doing, as opposed to you doing? Oh, and that's where that comes about. Right? So we decided, my dad decided to move. So we moved, moved out of the neighborhood. So we decided to move to this neighborhood over here, which wasn't that bad. There wasn't that much gang violence. It seemed like it was more mellow. Yeah, the neighborhood we moved into, it was a lot of older people that live there. So all the young ones, all the young kids and people that are moving, it was just us, right? So I felt it was different. The vibe was different, cut me out whenever you need.

**Malcolm:** It's alright

**Lupe:** So the vibe was different there. So and when I was gonna say that, if you have a sibling, you always lead by example, right? So you have an older sibling. So the younger ones always want to follow that. Right? So I'm gonna just tell you guys that my brother was the first one to go to college. He graduated college. Right now he works. He teaches teachers, he works over there and down to the downtown offices, you know, where we go, and then do all these rallies and all that. Yeah, behind that he works there. He's like he has he's in charge of several schools. And like I said, so you always lead by example. So he will finish school. I my older brother finished school was go two years older than me. And then I finished school. So we were kind of like, yeah, we want to be like him, right? You know, we want to. So imagine if he was, he would have been like a gangbanger or went into gangs, drugs or whatever. What do you think would happen to us?

**Malcolm:** You would've followed

**Lupe:** we probably would've followed, You know, this, you, us or young people like your age always you follow? Or like, whoever you think your idol, right?

**Malcolm:**Your role model

**Lupe:** your role model, because everybody has a role model, right? Everybody has a role model. Everybody wants to be like somebody. So you see them do certain things, but oh boy, he does it. It's why not? It's cool to do it. Everyone's doing. So you know, and then that's when I say like, I have very good role models in my life, because my older brother was more centered to going to school and doing all this kind of stuff. So that's where I felt my life change. And then my parents were very strict with us also, like, Oh, you gotta go school for this and that and so on.

**Malcolm:**Can you recall any negative experiences that has happened to you?

**Lupe:**early age, mid age or what time? Or, here in South Central?

**Malcolm:**Yeah, just any age, or like one that really resonates with you.

**Lupe:** Something that really resonates to me. One is when I was younger, I was what 23 years old or something like that? I was coming out of Hollywood but you talking about here in South Central right?

**Malcolm:**Yeah

**Lupe:** okay so some things that resonates with me okay. My high school days. That to me, I felt were good experience. My high school days were one of the best years of my life because I got to interact with a lot of folks that at a young age I didn't really like know when I play football, right? So we play football. Okay, when you play football, it's kind of like a mixture of a races, right? So I'm Latino, you know, African Americans. And when I was playing football, I feel or when I was playing sports, to me, that felt great because I felt that I had the the unity and, and the support of other people, not just not just my people like my my Hispanic friends, but as I had my African American friends, you know, as well, that was, to me was one of the best experience I had, and just playing sports and being able to compete and have fun, with what I was focusing on

**Malcolm:** lastly, is there anything else that you would like to share or add or feel that's important?

**Lupe:** Important, Well, I feel that if I just wanted to let you guys know that whatever path you guys choose, throughout high school, always think of the college you're gonna go to? That's why that's the first question I asked. Or I asked you guys, I don't know, when right before we started the interview, is like what grade you guys in, because I want to, you always want to,

you always want to pick a path that you love, you know what I mean, that you feel passionate about. But sometimes you don't know what you're passionate about, until you go that route. Because I guess, honestly, I was, I got a degree in kinesthetic, kinesiology, that's my BA in physical education, I was thinking like, I will be, I'm gonna be a teacher, I'm gonna be a coach, I'm gonna be this. So that was my thing. That's I wanted to do that. But I got my degree in that, but unfortunately, I didn't. I didn't follow that, you know, my, then I decided to, to go different routes, which it was a different way. And I felt it was to me that way. It was like, I'm not saying Being a teacher is not a good thing. But you find your path.

**Malcolm:** Yeah

**Lupe:** And everybody's gonna find their path like you like when you say, oh, community college, no, that that's nothing that's you need to be proud. Like, you need to be proud that you have a choice, and that you want to go somewhere. There's people that don't do anything. But you always I'm glad you're, I'm glad you chose to do something. Because that's just the first step. And I promise you, once you go and you see the vibe, you see how everything is good. You're gonna inspire yourself to do something else. And that's when you start seeing other things. Okay, that's gonna help you see what you really want to do. You know, because I know sometimes when you're young right now you're not. I don't know if I want to do this or want to do that. But you'll constantly find somewhere to go okay.

**Mariana:** Okay

**Lupe:** Just keep up the good work, stay in school. And stay positive, you know. So always stay positive. That's always always fun. From a negative thing, find the positive things. Every time something bad has happened. There's always something good out of it. Just remember that no matter what, whatever it can be in any situation, something bad happens to you. And just think about it. Oh, maybe let me think about the positive like what what is the good thing out of this? Because there is you might think not because you will at all why happens to me? But no, there's always something good. That comes out of the negative. Okay? Just keep that in mind and stay focused and just have fun in school. Enjoy. Enjoy your days.

**Mariana:** Thank you.

**Lupe:** I'm glad, hopefully I gave you enough information.

**Malcolm:** You did