

### ***Determined to reunite with her children – a mother's love***

Maria was a client of MCHA when her first baby was less than six months old and when her second baby came along. She was an active participant in the health education classes and breastfeeding support group, as she breastfed both of her children.

Maria decided to go back to her country with her two children, her two and a half year-old boy, and her girl who was one year old. Her plans with the father of her children were that he would be sending money for her to start a business in her small town and eventually he would join her and the children there. But she never imagined the ordeal she would suffer as the plans changed.

The business she opened didn't thrive, so in 2015 her partner proposed that she come back to Los Angeles with the children. But when she tried to cross a bridge in Texas she was detained and forced to let her daughter taken from her and Maria was dumped in jail, both desperately crying through all of this. Since her daughter was an American citizen, she was taken back to her father in Los Angeles.

Maria was then detained for about three months and finally was deported back to her country. She missed her children so much that four months later she began working in Mexico trying to make money to cross the border again. But again in 2016 that attempt failed and she ended up in different jails for three months, including Los Angeles where she made some phone calls to her cousin to try connect with her former MCHA counselor but was unsuccessful. So, she ended up deported back to her country again in 2016.

Her desperation for her children was so great that she didn't care about the difficulties she would have to face and again tried to reunite with them at the end of 2016. She failed again in Texas, and when taken again to jail she met the only female police officer ever who treated her with respect and consideration and told her to keep trying to reunite with her children. The judge in Texas didn't want to deport her and told her that she would be free soon and she got very excited.

But she was still in jail at the time of the change in federal administration, and in 2017 Trump's policies prevailed and a different judge told her that she would have to be in jail for 14 more months. A journalist wrote an article protesting against these policies and using Maria's story, so the judge got really angry at her. Even when she asked to be deported to her country the judge hesitated, wanting her to be punished. Maria shared a very small jail cell with other three women and; she felt she wanted to die. But that night she dreamed that an angel told her that this trip was not the one in which she would reunite with her children but that she would on the next trip. She ended up in jail for ten months and then was deported once again.

Because of the dream, she felt at peace. Seven months later, she tried again and in March, 2018, she entered Los Angeles and when she surprised her now five year-old daughter and seven and a half year old boy. They were extremely happy and the three of them hugged and cried. Finally, Maria was reunited with her children.