

Lost Angel Latinos

Latino Los Angeles to me means being Japanese-Mexican-American living in a time period where life is so diverse. I am proud of our culture, our people, and the way we unite through times of pride and pain like the great tribes we descend from. It's the diversity of our community in Los Angeles that makes us great. For example the area I'm from is the city of San Gabriel; our ancestors were the Gabrielino Indians. We have adapted other cultures from those of Asian descent to our Native American customs.

Being half Japanese and half Mexican, yet 100% American has helped me to realize my significance to my community. The blood that runs through me is from the far east of Japan and the far west of Mexico. Both of my cultures have warriors, whether they are Aztec warriors or the Samurai warriors. Obviously it's in me to fight my way through life for what I am determined to become, no matter what the trials and tribulations I face. Half of me can't deny that special love of Chevy low rider's while my other half loves those fast rice rockets. My life is a tribute to my Mexican grandfather born in Arizona and raised in East Los Angeles. Our community has that same love in the air that our ancestors showed to their neighbors. My grandmother is a Japanese woman born in Hawaii, and in her early childhood moved to East Los Angeles where she met my grandfather. They fell in love even though these two cultures did not understand each other's heritage and how much they had in common. They have learned to respect, love and adapt to each other. I'm a product of this equation.

Even though I'm incarcerated, I know one thing above all else: the majority of our youth has truly become "Lost Angels". Latinos will always pull together through times of need, such as the recent walk outs in downtown Los Angeles, and the Zuit suit riots in the 1940's when there was racism towards Mexicans in Los Angeles. In our present time we have finally learned to live together as a community of Anglo Americans, African Americans, and last but not least, Latinos. I'd like to think we are the hot sauce of the city. We are that extra something; our people are the ones you see celebrating life, whether it be at a quincenera, a wedding, or just inviting our neighbors to keep close as a community. We are the creators of mariachis and salsa dancing, and we are the creators of that popular tradition loved by so many non-Mexican Americans- tamales on Christmas. Our people are the ones you see in the barrios selling elotes, respados, and chicharones, covered with all that Tapatio. We are the inventors of those classic low riders that are a part of our Latino culture of Los Angeles. We are the one who created Olvera Steet.

Latino Los Angeles means being diverse, but honoring our traditions and living together with other ethnicities. By coming together as one big tribe under the name Lost Angels, we help each other find our paths and not become lost. Our youth in the city are going to be the ones to carry this way of life on, persevering to make life in our city better.