Angelica Lisbeth Garcia Mendoza arrived in the U.S. from Jalisco, Mexico, at the age of nine in the early 1990s. Though she did not have her own documentation when crossing the border, she eventually obtained legal residency in the U.S. through the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program, and now has U.S. citizenship. At the time of the interview, she was in her thirties and working for a nonprofit that helps clients in poverty. She was also enrolled in college part-time, working toward an Associates of Art degree in social work so that she can better help her community.

Angie recounts her first years in the U.S., initially sharing an apartment with many extended family members. Angie was a good student even while growing up in a family with alcohol abuse, domestic violence, frequent moves, and at times living in a neighborhood of crime, drugs and gang activity. Angie recalls the time when she learned she was undocumented -- at age 14 she wanted to get her first job but was told by her parents she could not legally work. Angie shares that she then “fell in with the wrong group of kids,” got pregnant, married and had children at a young age. She recounts how she was able to turn her life around, earn a high school diploma, gain legal status, and work to help others, some of whom faced similar obstacles to ones she herself encountered.

Summary by Kathleen Maloney, UUFNN Borderlands Justice Team