Cruz Lizarraga,who is using an alias for this interview, came to the U.S. over twenty years ago (before 2002) from a small town near Mazatlán, Mexico, where everyone knew everyone, and they all shared in the workings of the community. It was a peaceful, seemingly idyllic place, but Cruz wanted an education but couldn’t have one and was told he’d have to move to the U.S. to get a better life. He moved to California initially, then found his way to Nevada where he’s lived ever since. At the time of the interview, he was in his forties and remained undocumented.

Soon after arriving in Carson City, Nevada, Cruz began working two jobs, and managed to save enough to bring his wife over. With one child from a previous relationship [as he told us outside the interview], eventually they had four more children. In the U.S., Cruz has consistently been working two jobs so his wife could always be a stay-at-home mom. Cruz had everything planned out when he left Mexico, including the sacrifices he would have to make, and he achieved everything he set out to do; his oldest child graduated from UNR and the second and third are current college students. The others are in high school and middle school.

Cruz excelled at every job he had, but he knew he could be terminated at any time due to his undocumented status. So, he always had extensive back-up plans, including saving as much money as possible. For the first few years, his exhausting work schedule made it difficult to make friends, but once his kids first got into sports, he met other immigrant families, and is now part of a large, mutually supportive community. He cannot overstate how deeply he loves Nevada. He’s always felt safe and secure here, even considering his undocumented status.

His legacy, he says, is to have raised wonderful, productive children who will be sources of pride and joy to him and, most important, be gifts to their communities into perpetuity.

Summary by Lily Egan, UUFNN Borderlands Justice Team

Interview by Gary Cortes Solis, student at the University of Nevada, Reno