

## The Call That Changed My Life

by Eunice Carrasco-Hill  
Project Coordinator

In the early spring of 2010 I received a phone call. It was a day that changed my life. For 22 years I served as school director for several private and public educational institutions. In 2008 I accepted a position as the Director and Hispanic Outreach Specialist for a federally funded educational institution in eastern North Carolina, managing a school of 120 children and 20 professional educators, and providing outreach services to the Hispanic community in four counties - Halifax, Northampton, Bertie, and Hertford counties.

In my years as a school director I experienced many “significant events;” a term we used to describe any serious situation such as an accident involving a child, behavior issues, state licensing visits, and even when we received demerits from the State Health Inspector. What took place in April 2010 was more than your average “significant event.” I received a phone call from a police officer asking if I knew a Mr. Sanchez\*. I asked why they were calling me. I was concerned because Mr. Sanchez had just left the school campus with his two boys on their way to a doctor’s appointment.

Mr. Sanchez was stopped by a police officer because his brake light was not working and was arrested when he was unable to provide a driver’s license or a green card indicating that he was in the country legally. He and his 7-year-old son, who came to the country when he was 4 years of age, were here without legal documentation. I suspected that he had been a victim of racial profiling, and I was the only person he had to speak on his behalf.

In that moment I asked, God why me? And God’s soft voice responded, this is why you are here - to help those in need. By the time I arrived at the Police Department the officer was in the process of contacting Immigration and Custom Enforcement with the intention of deporting the father and little boy. My obligation was to plead for Mr. Sanchez and his son on behalf of

his family. His wife could not come near the police department because she was also without legal documentation. . While I was pleading, I spoke with the Police Officer and told him the kind of man Mr. Sanchez was - a good father, very involved at the school, a hardworking man, an important member of our community. As I spoke with the Officer, I prayed. I had only two things with me to convince him to release Mr. Sanchez; the files for his two children indicating that I was authorized to speak on their behalf in case of an emergency, and God.

After pleading, and an incredible amount of prayer, they released the 7-year-old into my custody. Mr. Sanchez was kept overnight, and then transferred to a prison in Georgia. Without being able to speak to his wife and children he was deported to Mexico one week after his arrest, leaving behind a 4 and 7-year-old, and his wife who was expecting a child.

I ask myself often, what is “Racial Justice?” Every day we see more racial injustice and prejudice against Hispanics. I believe the Police Officer could have simply given Mr. Sanchez a warning. His only offense was a defective brake light. Mr. Sanchez came to this country with a dream.- He was seeking an opportunity to provide for his family a better life. Six months after his deportation, Mrs. Sanchez left the country going back to Mexico with his two boys and a newborn little girl. Because of racial injustice, they were forced to leave their dreams behind.

\*Name changed to protect the privacy of the individual and their family

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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