



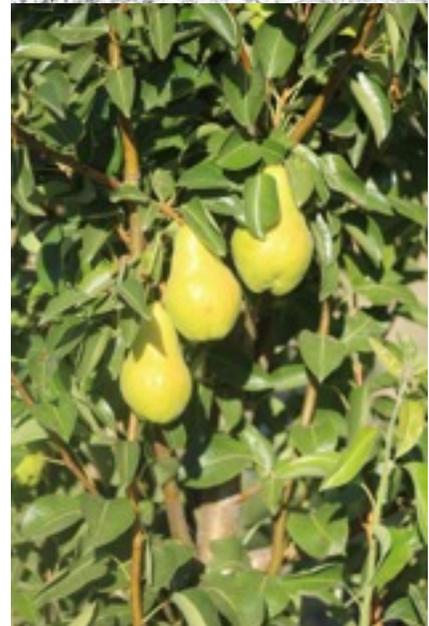
# LA LUCHA

**Esteban Hernandez**, a man who spent 8 years without shoes. A poor child who used to walk miles and miles with sores on his feet, with the thought of shoes being a luxury. A boy who quit school in the fourth grade to help financially support his family. And today a family man who values life with great emotion. As the child of Filberta and Gavino Hernandez, he shared his life with 8 other siblings. Esteban comes from a small ranch in Michoacán, Mexico. Living in a house that was made with blended red dirt and water. Sleeping on a wooden bed with pillows made of clothing scraps, but he was lucky to even have a roof over his head. A man with struggles and *ganas* has made him become

the man he is today. Esteban's youngest memory is of having to move around from *rancho to rancho*, because the villages would run out of water and food. As a careless child his favorite *juegó* was running around in the dirt while playing *canicas* with his neighborhood friends. He would walk 15 miles from his quite small ranch to the big loud city to help his father sell pigs. After the long enduring hot walks, he always looked forward to his tasty prize, his father would take the earning from the days' sell, and buy them *una raja de pan y una soda*. As a 13 year old who had to grow up fast he knew coming to the America would improve the life of his family, and he could only envision on when that day would come.

# El Camino

A Mexican boy crossing to the United States to reach *El Sueño Americano*, to later find out he would be treated by the color of his skin and not his thoughts. The first time my father *cruzo la frontera*, he was 16 years old in 1975. Unfortunately, half way through the journey, the immigration police caught him, and sent him to Tijuana, Mexico. My father, Esteban Hernandez said, "I was young, and I was very terrified. I was passing into territory I had never been to. I knew it was a crime, and I was scared to get caught". My father was so ambitious that he tried another time and successfully was able to reach Florida, where he got this first job in America picking oranges. My dad knew that as a so called *mojado* in America the only key to success was hard agriculture labor. Later in life my father had no choice but to go back and forth from Mexico to the United States to illegally cross over his family



members. I clearly remember one day as my father told all his children how lucky we were to have an American life. On one occasion as my father brought my mother to cross the border, he remembers being robbed at gunpoint by *cholos* who took all their valuable possessions. It was a traumatic event for my mother and father to overcome. My mother and father later in life had children, and the only way they could put food on the table was agricultural work. His only skills consisted of him working in the hot brutal endless fields. He didn't have much of options since he didn't have any professional working skills and only knew Spanish. He had endured this hard life working as a farm worker for 20 years. People will always have something bad to say about immigrants, but my father has proven to me that an immigrant can start from scratch and build himself into a successful man.

## El Sueño Americano

My dad is now 56 years old and he is a prime example La Lucha. Even with the discrimination, racism, and stereotypes, he kept going for his future. He participated in the 1986 Caesar Chavez march in Toppenish, WA. He understood that all the farm workers deserved better working conditions. Later in that year my father was able to become a citizen of the United States from the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. He no longer was going to be considered an illegal



immigrant. This was the moment that he had once dreamed of as a 13 year old boy. This was the moment that he truly understood the American Dream. My father endured suffering for such a long time, because he knew at least in this country one day he could



have better financial life than in Mexico. He was courageous enough to come to an unknown country to have open doors of possibilities that were once shut in his home country. My father has worked his whole life in hot sweltering weather, in order to have a home that has air conditioner. My dad has given me the opportunity to be able to go to college and have a well ranked job, in which I will not have to physically work as he did. My dad is just one more immigrant, but to me he is the most important man in my life. A man who every birthday, christmas, and holiday only wishes for a healthy family. He is the man of 4 children who now because of him are: U.S citizens, have jobs, are able to have higher education, and live *El Sueño Americano*.

\* This is a short biography of my father, Esteban Hernandez (featured in the photographs), in which his

hardships in life are mentioned. I interviewed my father about his childhood, and also used his storytelling. I decided to write this piece in Spanglish, because it showed my culture. Spanish was my first language and it is part of my roots. I decided to show the struggles that a Mexican immigrant had to endure when coming to America. I wanted to share just one of the many story of an immigrant coming to the U.S in look for a better life for their families. Writing this piece of work, has given me a sense of pride of my culture and my father.

