

Mi Abuela
By Leslie Buentello

Today, I wanted to ride a bicycle. I'm sick of being at home and having no one paying attention to me. They hear me, but they don't listen. I'm 77 and can hardly use my piece-of-crap walker, but I still hopped on to that bike.

When I fell, that was no surprise. It was worth it though, that brief instant before the fall was empowering. The fact that I made it onto the bicycle was an accomplishment in itself.

I wanted to travel; view the streets at a pace faster than that of a snail, but of course this was foolish. Well at least that's what everyone told me after I yelled for them to help me up. I'm certain they all think I'm crazy, but maybe it's easier for them to think that than to put the effort into understanding me.

For over twenty years, I've lived in San Jose. For over twenty years, I've been away from my home, my true home in Mexico. San Jose's diverse cultures and sites are beautiful, but Mexico is a different breed of beautiful. Where I'm from the only time young lovers see each other is at the doorstep of the girl's home, and only with the parent's consent of course. Here my grand daughter's boyfriend barges in the house and goes straight to her room, closing the door as he enters. Where I come from there is respect in place of disdain. There is simplicity instead of hastiness. Everyone here is always in a rush; there is no room for breathing and especially no room for family.

Did anyone ever ask me if I wanted to come? Did anyone take my thoughts into consideration? Now, I'm stuck, stuck in my daughter's home; but maybe next week, it'll be one of my other daughter's turn to watch me. I'm passed on like a burden and try to make myself as invisible as possible. My grandchildren seem especially bothered by my existence. I overheard one the other day:

"Ma, dile a abuelita que se bane, apesta"

I know I smell but showering is difficult and frankly quite dangerous. I fall on a regular basis and in a slippery shower surrounding it's just about inevitable. The older you get the more odors you seem to acquire, but they don't bother me much. I haven't been comfortable or felt wanted ever since I came to the U.S.

The freedom that this country supposedly possesses is not trickled down to me. In the paved streets of Arandas, Jalisco, I'd be free. Free to slowly meander from house to house, shop to shop, walk and explore to my heart's content. Here, everything is so distant. I have to ask to be taken wherever it is I want to go. I never learned to drive and walking clearly is not a choice an option, nor is biking for that matter.