



A small baby girl crossed the border from Mexico into America, was taken to a predominately Hispanic community in Denver, and was given to a family that was not her own. She knew her blood siblings, but the memory of her birth parents was a blur. She always asked herself why she had been singled out and handed off.

This young girl would later be placed in various homes for girls, at which she learned little. She was naturally rebellious, and as she grew up, she became difficult and resentful. By the time she reached her teens she had street credibility. It wasn't long before the girl became pregnant. At only 15 years old, she was told, "put the child up for adoption or else you will be left at the hospital." She refused and was left there with her baby son.

Lost and confused, the girl didn't know what she should do or how she was going to survive. She had grown up in a Hispanic, Catholic community with no exposure to black people, so she found herself conflicted when the black nurse who cared for her during her hospital stay offered to take her in. She was frightened and alone, but what was once an unimaginable, taboo thing to do became a blessing that saved her and her son's lives. Despite being uneducated, it didn't take long for this young mother to get on her feet. The black nurse and her family helped with babysitting while she went out and sought work.

After a newly found connection to the black community, the girl met a young, black soldier coming through town. She was beautiful, and he was handsome. There was an immediate attraction. He was on his way to the City of Angels. What a dream life that would be to live in California, she thought. He promised to send for her once he got settled. He kept his word.

Two young people would need more than looks and attraction to keep a relationship together. It was the early sixties, and the cultural barriers were strong. The young woman became pregnant again, had a baby girl, and not long after giving birth, would go back to fending for herself. She remained friends with the father, and he supported his child. Yet Ms. Antoinette "Toni" Espinoza was left out in the world to raise her Mexican son and biracial daughter during a time when racial tensions were at their height.

How is it that when gang violence, drug dealing and all sorts of other criminal elements were prevalent, a single, uneducated, young woman raised two well adjusted, children in the heart of Los Angeles? Both sister and brother would obtain master's degrees and become successful professionals in their fields.

The black nurse saw no color, took a young woman in, and gave her a chance. Without that help who knows where Toni and her baby son would have ended up. Because of Toni's hard work, determination and struggles, her children would go on to make a difference in the lives of many.

Toni was diagnosed with a terminal disease in her fifties. She beat the predictions, and lived for another 6 years. She was never a homeowner, so her daughter decided to purchase a home in Las Vegas where she could live the rest of her life. Toni was called by God earlier than we hoped. Just a few months after moving in, Toni fell too ill to live in the house. She died not long after at her son's home.

This house was purchased for Toni to fulfill her dream of being a homeowner. Her daughter Monique decided it was time for her to fulfill her own dream and create a home for those in need of a safe environment to get back on their feet, like Toni once was. Just like the nurse in the hospital where her brother Dennis was born, she too would take in people who need a helping hand.

This is how Toni's House began.

OUR MISSION

Toni's House provides a safe living environment to help people in transition with the process of healing as well as support in developing skills needed for a healthy and successful life.