

DECLARATION OF REDACTED
IN SUPPORT OF HIS APPLICATION FOR ASYLUM

I, REDACTED, hereby swear under penalty of perjury that the following statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge:

I am applying for asylum because I am afraid that I will be harmed by my family and the gangs if I return to El Salvador. My family abused me and forced me to work since I was a little boy. Two of my aunts hit me all the time. They hit me with belts, rocks or anything they could find. Sometimes they would choke me until I could not breathe anymore and many times one of them said that she wanted to kill me. They made me sleep in the streets and sometimes they did not give me any food. Also, when I was about 13 years old, the Mara 18 gang tried recruiting me and threatened me with death if I did not join them. Trying to escape from my aunts abuse and from the gang, I moved in with my paternal grandparents to find protection with them. Unfortunately, they also forced me to work and many times they offered me drugs and alcohol. When I was not able to finish a job on my grandfather's farm land he would hit me with the whip of his horse. Finally, I escaped to the United States in search of my mother.

Family Background

1. I am a native and citizen of El Salvador. I was born on DATE, 1998, in PLACE, El Salvador. Both of my parents were also born in El Salvador. PLACE is a small rural community with only one school. Most roads in PLACE are not paved and only a few people in the community have automobiles. We only have a small clinic and there are no police or firefighters in the town. The closest big city is CITY, which is about an hour and a half drive away.
2. I was raised by my grandmother REDACTED and I lived at her house with her children REDACTED, REDACTED, REDACTED and REDACTED in PLACE. My mother left me in the care of my grandmother when I was about one year old. She left to the United States because she did not have a job in PLACE and she needed money for my support. I considered my grandmother as my mother and I always called her mom. My father never recognized me or ever provided support.
3. My grandmother's husband left when my mom was little and no one knows where he is. My grandmother always said that we do not even know if my grandfather is dead or alive; one day he just left and never came back. My grandmother never got married again.
4. REDACTED controlled my grandmother's house. She was the oldest of all the siblings that lived at my grandmother's house. REDACTED was in charge of the house when REDACTED was not home. REDACTED and REDACTED were in their twenties and REDACTED and REDACTED were younger than them and just followed REDACTED and REDACTED's orders. REDACTED is about 9 years older than me and REDACTED is only about six years older than me.

5. REDACTED and REDACTED never listened to my grandmother and they controlled her. Many times I saw both of my aunts raise their hand at my grandmother as if they were going to hit her. My grandmother was getting older and she is a very quiet person. I believe my grandmother was also afraid of REDACTED and REDACTED because she always did everything they said.

My Aunts' Abuse

6. During my life in El Salvador, I have memories of my aunt REDACTED always being mad at me. My aunt REDACTED also mistreated me but REDACTED was the one that I feared the most. REDACTED hurt me in so many different ways. I believe she started mistreating me when my mother left but I start to remember being harmed when I was about four years old. I remember that my aunt was always yelling at everyone in the house and I was always afraid of her.
7. I have a clear memory of one time when REDACTED was hitting her brother REDACTED. REDACTED was about fourteen years old at the time. REDACTED was crying and begging his sister to stop hitting him. I was very worried for REDACTED but my aunt was not listening to anybody and just continued beating him. I do not remember why she was hitting him but at some point REDACTED was not crying anymore, he was just lying on the floor while my aunt continued to beat him. When he wasn't responding to my aunt's yells, she stopped. She didn't seem worried that he wasn't responding and just left. My grandmother tried to wake him up and she did not know what to do, so we just waited for REDACTED to wake up. At some point, he woke up but after that he was sick for a long time. My grandmother gave him some remedies. From that day, I was very scared of my aunt.
8. One day when I was about 5 years old, my aunt REDACTED hit me with a belt. She was hitting me so hard that she cut me with the belt buckle in my left arm. I remember that it was a pretty big cut; I still have the scar. Every time I see my scar it reminds me of that day.
9. When I was little, my mother asked my grandmother to enroll me in kindergarten but my aunt REDACTED said no and I never went to kindergarten. I think it was because at that time, I was in charge of taking care of REDACTED's baby daughter. I also had to do errands in the town and go to the farm land to take breakfast to REDACTED's husband. To get to the farm land I had to walk for about an hour each way.
10. Later, when I was about six years old I started attending elementary school at PLACE. I walked to and from school. I really liked going to school because I played with friends there. However, some days my aunt REDACTED would not let me to go to school because I had to work on the farm land taking care of her children or doing errands for her in the town. The days that I did go to school, I had to work after school. Every day after school, I had to go find wood for the kitchen about fifteen minutes away from our house and bring it back to the house on my back. I carried around 30 pounds of wood on my back. My family used this wood for cooking.

11. REDACTED and REDACTED did not work. My mother often sent money to my grandmother for my support, but REDACTED and REDACTED did not allow my grandmother to go pick up the money by herself. She had to go with REDACTED or REDACTED. My grandmother had to go to CITY to pick up the money and REDACTED was the one that always arranged someone to drive them there. My grandmother never liked to travel alone. My grandmother said that REDACTED always kept the money and paid the driver. They used the money for themselves and never gave me any of it or bought me things that I needed. I asked my aunts for soap, food, clothes and shoes that I needed but my aunts always said no. I always wore used clothes and shoes that were given to me by neighbors. I never had a pair of new shoes. My aunt REDACTED only bought new clothes for her and her children with the money that my mother sent for me. My grandmother sometimes bought clothes for REDACTED and REDACTED but never for me.
12. When I was about eight years old, we all moved to a different house that was still located in PLACE. I liked this house much better because we were closer to neighbors and we had electricity. When we moved, my aunt REDACTED bought a TV and a radio.
13. After school my aunts never let me watch TV or go outside and play with the kids from the neighborhood. Sometimes when my aunts were not home, my grandmother would let me watch TV. I remember that watching TV made me very happy because I could distract myself. REDACTED's children, REDACTED and REDACTED watched TV all the time and they were allowed to go outside and play. I was the only one who was treated differently.
14. Some days REDACTED and REDACTED did not let me go to school and they forced me to go and work on the farm land. They sent me to work with a man named REDACTED. REDACTED usually came and picked me up at my house and from there we would walk to the farm land, which is about an hour from where we lived. At the end of the day, REDACTED paid me for my work but my aunts always took the money away from me and they never let me keep any of it. With REDACTED, I worked from 5:00 am to about 3:00 pm and after that I had to return home and do my chores like going to get wood for the kitchen. Other times they did not let me go to school because I needed to stay home and take care of REDACTED's children and clean the house. REDACTED and REDACTED also sent REDACTED and REDACTED to work with REDACTED but I think she let them keep some of the money because sometimes I saw that they had money to buy candies or other things.
15. We had a cellphone at the house and my mother called often to talk to me and to ask how I was doing. Every time my mother called, my aunts never let me speak to her alone and REDACTED or REDACTED was always there. REDACTED was the one that controlled the cellphone and no one was allowed to use it. REDACTED threatened me that if I said something to my mother about not going to school because I had to work or not having enough food she would hit me. REDACTED always told me to tell my mother that I was fine and that I liked going to school. I never told my mother what was happening to me because I was afraid of REDACTED.

16. Later, REDACTED was pregnant again and I remember that while she was pregnant she became even meaner. After the baby was born, I had to take care of the baby and if the baby cried for any reason REDACTED would become very mad at me and blame me for it and then she would beat me.
17. Once I was around nine years old my aunt REDACTED sometimes did not give me any food for days and when I got to hungry I usually asked the neighbors for food. At my grandmother's house, I was never allowed to eat good food. REDACTED would often feed her children and husband chicken, beef, fruit and vegetables in front of me but I was always told that I could only eat tortillas or beans and other times not even that. REDACTED, REDACTED, REDACTED and my grandmother were also allowed to eat good food.
18. Sometimes at night, my aunt REDACTED would kick me out of the house and tell me that I was not allowed to sleep there. REDACTED said that I needed to learn how to sleep in the streets. Some nights I had to ask a neighbor to let me sleep in their house or find a place to sleep in the street. It was like my aunt REDACTED did not love me. I don't know why she didn't love me.
19. My aunt REDACTED never treated me well either. She used to yell at me for no reason or when she said that I disobeyed her. REDACTED usually would throw me against the wall and choke me until I couldn't breathe any more. She also would beat me if I returned late from church or school. She sent me to do her errands in town and made me work at the farm land with REDACTED. REDACTED later was pregnant too, she left the house for about a year to live with the father of her child but one day she returned to live with us with her baby REDACTED.
20. When REDACTED returned, she also wanted me to take care of her baby. In the past she rarely beat REDACTED and REDACTED but when REDACTED returned she started beating them more often. She also beat me for no reason. It seemed like she was mad with everyone at the house.
21. REDACTED and REDACTED sometimes would fight with each other about who had more control of the house or about money, but REDACTED seemed to always have control over REDACTED. REDACTED and REDACTED never beat their own children. I do not even want to imagine what would happen if someday REDACTED attempted to beat REDACTED's children or if REDACTED beat REDACTED's child, I am sure they would kill each other.
22. In the neighborhood there was a very nice lady, REDACTED, who helped me the most. She usually gave me food and allowed me to stay at her house. REDACTED attended church very often and I sometimes went with her. I liked going to church because it was quiet there and learning about god was interesting to me. They also sometimes gave food away and I really liked that part.

23. I continued going to school but sometimes my aunt REDACTED or REDACTED would not allowed me to go because I had to work. The teachers sometimes would ask why I was not at school and I would tell them that I had to work with REDACTED. In El Salvador, school is not like it is here where I need an excuse if I do not go to school or they call my mother to ask why I am not there. In PLACE, my teachers did not care whether I was there. I really liked school and I was very sad when I was not able to go.
24. When I was about nine or ten years old, I remember that REDACTED left the house because he got married. After this, my aunts REDACTED and REDACTED made me work more and I noticed they would beat me more often. REDACTED and REDACTED would hit me sometimes with a belt. Other times, they would throw rocks at me or anything they could find. Sometimes, REDACTED would hit me so hard that when she was done hitting me I would feel dizzy and my vision seemed blurred for a while.
25. Sometimes when my aunt REDACTED was very mad at me, she would say that she wanted to kill me. I really believe that someday she was going to kill me. My grandmother was always there when my aunts beat me but she could not do anything because she was also afraid of my aunts and most of the times she only cried. My aunts were always yelling at my grandmother and told her that she had no reason to defend me because she was not my mother. When my grandmother tried to say something to them for beating me they would also raised their hand at my grandmother. REDACTED sometimes would say that my mother REDACTED was not my real mother and that I had no mother at all. I do not know why she said that. I wished my mother was there to defend me, but no one did.
26. Sometimes when I got sick, my aunt or grandmother would send me to the clinic by myself. The doctor would usually prescribed me medicine but I was never able to buy the medicine because I had no money. My aunt always said that she had no money for my medicine. Even when I was sick, my aunts would send me to work. When REDACTED's children got sick she took them to the doctor and she bought medicine for them; she had money for her own children's medicine but never for me.
27. One time when I was on my way to town a snake bit me in the leg. I started feeling dizzy and I went to the clinic. By the time I got to the clinic my whole body was turning purple and I started to throw up. After that, I had to stay in the clinic for about a week. When I was in the clinic only my grandmother came to visit me, but only a few times and she could not stay very long. When I returned home, my leg was still very swollen and sore. REDACTED told me that she hoped I would die from the sneak bite. For days, I was still in pain and I could not walk right but my aunts still sent me to find wood for the kitchen.
28. I thought about escaping many times but I had no place to go. Everything was really far away. There are also no police in PLACE. I knew that there was a police station in CITY but I did not know how to get there and I was afraid of getting my grandmother in trouble with the police. I was also afraid of REDACTED if she found that I went to the police she would most likely kill me. I did not have anyone that could help me.

29. Sometimes, I asked my neighbors for help, but they would always say that they did not want to have any problems with my aunts. Everyone in the town was afraid of my aunt REDACTED. Sometimes she would fight with neighbors in the street. I believe the whole town was afraid of my aunt REDACTED because when she is mad she beats people for no reason. Sometimes I saw REDACTED even fighting with older men and she always seemed more powerful.
30. One day, my grandmother told me about my father and that his name was REDACTED. She said that my father had returned to town and that he was at a bar in PLACE that day. I got very excited and I ran to the bar. I asked a man if he was REDACTED. This man responded that his name was REDACTED. I told him that I was REDACTED's son and that he was my father. He stared at me and then said that I was not his son. I started crying and left this place. I thought that my father had returned to get me but he did not. My neighbor REDACTED later also told me that the man that I spoke to at the bar that day was my father. After that, I was sad for long time because my father refused to recognize me as his son.

Gang Threats

31. Later when I was about thirteen years old the Mara 18 started to bother me. One day on my way back from school, some Mara guys approached me and told me that I had to join the gang. They told me that if I did not join their gang they were going to kill me and also kill my family. I told these men that I needed to think about it and asked them to give more time. That day, they left me alone. I really did not want to join the gang and I only told them that to gain time and to get rid of them.
32. Weeks later, they returned and asked me the same thing. I told them that I was still thinking about it because I did not want to quit school. They offered me money and said that if I joined I would always have money and I did not have to worry about anything. I think that they knew that I was poor and that I was in need of money. That day, two gang members grabbed me from each arm and told me that they were going to give me only one more week to think about it but that it was the last opportunity and next time I had to join or they would kill me and my family. When they left, I was afraid for my life because I knew they were going to come back and kill me. I was afraid that something could happen to my grandmother. In the town it is known that the gangs usually take revenge if one refuses to join. I never told anyone about this because I did not want my aunts to become mad at me. I believe that if I told my aunt REDACTED that the gang was offering me money most likely she would force me to join so that she could take the money away from me.

My Grandparents 'Abuse

33. Before the week ended, I decided to leave my grandmother's house because I was tired of suffering my aunts' abuse. I was also very afraid that the Mara 18 was going to return at the end of the week. For days, I tried to memorize my mother's phone number and one day I left. I knew that my paternal grandparents lived in the town of PLACE and I knew

their names. I decided to go ask them for help. I had never met them before and I did not know if they knew about me but I felt that it was my only option.

34. I started walking in the direction of the road that takes you out of the town. PLACE is about two hours walking. After walking for an hour and half, a truck driver came by and I asked him for a ride to PLACE. Once I arrived at PLACE, I found my grandparents' house. I entered their house and I told them that I was REDACTED's son and that my mother was REDACTED. I asked them if I could stay with them for a while and they said yes. The first two days were great. We talked for hours and they fed me good food and allowed me to watch TV. I was really happy that they were nice to me. I told them about the way my aunts treated me and they said that I could stay there for as long as I need to. They had a son REDACTED and daughter REDACTED who also lived with them. REDACTED was about twenty seven and REDACTED was around 34 years old. Both of them are unable to walk.
35. By the third day, my grandfather took me to work with him on his land. When we came back from work, my grandmother REDACTED called my mother and told her that I was living with them. My grandmother only let me talk to my mother for no more than two minutes; she asked me why I was there. She was worried about me but my grandmother took the phone away from me. One day when I returned from work my grandmother told me that she had called my mother to ask her to send money for my support.
36. The town of PLACE is even smaller than PLACE. There are no roads and some people use horses to get around. My grandparents' house was far away from other houses and I did not know the neighbors.
37. After about a week of being there, one day my aunt REDACTED came to look for me with other men that I did not know. I saw her walking towards my grandmother's house and I was terrified, I ran and hide in the mountains. After about a half hour I saw her leaving. I went back to the house and my grandmother REDACTED told me that REDACTED was looking for me. My grandmother told me that she told her that I was not there. My grandmother REDACTED told me that REDACTED was very mad and that she told her that I needed to return home soon or else I will suffer the consequences. My grandmother advised me not to return.
38. My grandparents drank alcohol all the time. They usually sent me to buy their alcohol. They also smoke and grew their own marijuana. On occasions, they would send me to take care of their plants.
39. When my grandparents were drunk they would offer me alcohol but I always said no and they would get mad at me for this. They also gave alcohol and drugs to REDACTED and REDACTED but they were older than me. Every time they were on drugs, my grandfather would take his guns out and shoot. Sometimes he would shoot at my feet for fun and I had to jump around the shoots so that I would not be shot. I was always afraid of them when they were drunk.

40. One day my father came to visit my grandparents and he saw me there. He questioned them about me and why I was there. My grandfather told him that now I was living with them and that I was going to stay because he needed someone to help him to work the land. My father did not say anything else. He came to visit other times but every time he came, he never spoke to me, he just ignored me. He never gave me any money, not even for a candy.
41. My grandfather forced me to work on his land all day and I had to work even harder than when I was living in PLACE. I was not allowed to go to school anymore. There, I had to wake up every day around 4:30am to go work in the land. We usually returned home around 3 or 4. I then had to go find wood for the kitchen and go find food for the horse. They also made me water their marijuana plants.
42. One day, when we were working on the farm land my grandfather and I were unable to pick up all the wheat that we needed that day and he became very mad at me because he said it was my fault. He started beating me with his whip on my back and then he left on his horse. I walked back crying to their house. It was very painful. I regretted leaving my grandmother REDACTED's house. I missed my grandmother. That day I felt very alone.
43. Sometimes my grandfather got drunk while we were working in the land and he would beat me with his whip but he only did this when no one was looking. At home, he beat me either with his hand or with a belt in front of my grandmother. My grandmother never said anything about it and on occasions she also beat me. No one could defend me. REDACTED and REDACTED never said anything either. I was completely alone.

I came to the United States

44. I lived with my grandparents REDACTED and REDACTED for about eight months. After the first month I knew that I could not live with them either because of the way they treated me. For the next few months I planned to leave to the United States in search of my mother. I knew that my mother was the only one that loved me and I wanted her protection.
45. I saved some money from every time my grandfather sent me to buy his alcohol. Once my grandparents were drunk, they were usually not aware of how much money they had giving me, so I was able to keep some of the change.
46. One day when my grandfather was drunk I took his phone and called my mother. I told her that I was tired of suffering and that I wanted to be with her. I did not have much time to talk and in a hurry I told her about the way my grandfather treated me and she told me to go back to my grandmother REDACTED's house. I told her that the situation was worse there because REDACTED and REDACTED constantly beat me. I told my mother that I was planning on leaving to the United States to be with her. Two days later, I escaped to the United States.

47. I left PLACE in late January 2014 and I arrived in the United States on February 1st, 2014. I crossed the United States border through Texas. I was detained by an immigration official. I was later transferred to a detention center and then to a shelter for children. I really enjoyed staying at the shelter because I ate three times a day. I also went to English classes. After some time at the shelter, they told me that it was time for me to go home with my mother. They sent me to Indianapolis on an airplane and I met my mother there.

My Life in the United States

48. The first time I saw my mother I cried because I had only seen her in pictures. She hugged me and we cried for a while. We then went to her house. She had prepared me my own room. I met my little brother and sister and my mother's husband REDACTED. The next day, my mom and her husband took me shopping for clothes and shoes. I was very happy to feel safe and loved. After some days, I told my mother about the way my aunts and grandparents treated me, she cried for a long time and she asked me to forgive her. She also told me that she did not know that my aunts never gave the money she sent for me. Later my mother enrolled me in school here in Indianapolis and I am currently in 9th grade.

49. I really liked living with my mother and her family. My mother and her husband REDACTED always make me feel the same as my little brother and sister and I have my own room and they treat me really well.

50. I like living in the United States. It is nice to feel the love and protection of my mother. I have met some friends and I like going to school. I am trying to learn English fast so that I can understand my classes better. I like sciences and I dream to someday become an engineer. I also like going to church with my parents and play the conga drums with the church's band.

51. I do not want to return to El Salvador because my mother and siblings are here. My mother's husband REDACTED told me that he wants to be my father and now I call him father and I love him as if he was my real father. If I go back, I would have to return to living with my aunts REDACTED and REDACTED. If I return with my aunts, they would continue beating me and forcing me to work. My aunt REDACTED is very mad at me because I left and told my mother the truth. I believe that if I returned she is going to beat me until she kills me. My other option would be returning with my grandparents REDACTED and REDACTED but my grandfather is going to continue forcing me to work on his land. He only used me to work for him and never really loved me. If I refused to work for him, I am sure he is going to beat me again.

52. I am also afraid of returning to El Salvador because of the Mara 18. They have threatened me with death in the past for not joining their gang. If I return, most likely I will be killed by them because I do not want to join their gang. I have no place to escape from them. In El Salvador, the police cannot help me because they are also afraid of the Maras and some police even works for them.

53. I do not want to be alone again in El Salvador. I do not have anyone in El Salvador that could take care of me. Even though, I am older now I could not live by myself in El Salvador. The streets of El Salvador are not a safe place because of the Maras. My aunt REDACTED would not care that I am older because she beats anyone that comes her way. My family is here in the United States and I belong with them.

I have provided the foregoing statement in my native language, Spanish, and it has been translated back to me in its entirety in Spanish by REDACTED. I declare that it is true and correct to the best of my ability.

REDACTED

DATE

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSLATION

I, REDACTED, certify that I am competent in the English and Spanish languages, and I translated this statement to the declarant in Spanish before he signed it.

Date

Signature