

Declaration of Domitila Servin

1. My name is Domitila Servin. During the 1960's and 70's my family and I lived near Hadley and 20th Avenue in Phoenix. Corrina Lopez and her eight sons were my neighbors there for many years. My husband and I had four sons and three daughters, and Corrina had eight boys. Since some of our kids were friends, Corrina and I got to know each other, and over time we became friendly.

2. The area where we lived was a hard place to raise a family. Our neighborhood was poor and all of us who lived there had to struggle to make ends meet. That was bad enough, but money wasn't the only problem. Everywhere you looked in our neighborhood, there were crime and drugs. As parents, we always had to worry about the danger of these things to our kids. We lived in a poor neighborhood, but we were like any other parents – we loved our kids, we wanted to take good care them and make sure they were safe. Unfortunately, there was so much trouble out there waiting for kids that the only way to make sure they stayed out of it was to be with them all the time, and nobody can do that. Life was a struggle and most parents had to work all day to pay the rent, buy the food, cook it, keep the lights on, and make sure the house was running smoothly. There just wasn't enough time to follow your kids around and make sure they were safe. As a parent, it was scary because you knew that one wrong step could ruin your kids' lives.

3. The dangers were always out there waiting for our kids. I can say this from experience. Even with all the work my husband and I did to keep our family going, two of our sons ended up spending many years in prison. Even if you were lucky and your kids stayed out of trouble and avoided all the drugs and the crime and the bad influences, they still weren't safe.

The neighborhood was so dangerous that someday someone might just pull up and shoot one of your kids for no reason. This happened to my own son Peter. All the families in our neighborhood had to face these fears. It was a dangerous place where we couldn't take anything for granted. Keeping your kids fed and alive and out of trouble was a struggle that never ended.

4. For Corrina, taking care of her kids was even harder than it was for the rest of us. Many of the rest of the other mothers had husbands to help with the responsibilities of raising a family. Some husbands brought home money, helped raise the kids, and taught them what they needed to know to try to keep themselves safe from all the dangers of the neighborhood. Without that help from my husband, I don't know what I would have done.

5. Corrina was my neighbor for many years, and we saw each other all the time since our kids were such good friends. Still, I never got to know her well. Corrina didn't like to talk about her past. All I ever learned about her personal life was that she came from Texas and that her kids didn't have a dad. I never saw a man with Corrina. If she had a man, he was never around because I didn't know about it.

6. Since she was the only one taking care of her eight boys, Corrina had to work day and night. Even more than the rest of us, she had to worry that she might not be able to earn enough to keep her kids fed and sheltered. She didn't have the chance to save money and move her boys away to a different part of town like I eventually did. Corrina had to get up before the sun to run off to work, then she worked all day, came home late at night and made sure all the cooking and cleaning and laundry at home was done. Then she had to sleep so she could do it all again the next day. She always looked drained. Life was hard for all of the families in our neighborhood, but Corrina had to struggle even harder than the rest of us did. Having eight boys and no husband to help out is just too much for any woman struggling to survive in a poor,

dangerous neighborhood. Poor Corrina. I honestly can't think of anyone who had it harder.

7. Life was also hard on her boys since all eight of them had to share what little money Corrina brought home. When we talked, one thing she did tell me was how hard it was for her to make ends meet. After she paid the rent and bought the food, there was nothing left. Her eight boys grew up splitting nothing eight ways. I knew those boys had even less than the other people in the neighborhood, so I told them they were always welcome in our home. I fed them a lot of times, and they liked coming over, not only to eat, but also because I had a little time to spend with them. They really seemed like they were starving for the attention of an adult. Since she was always working her fingers to the bone, poor Corrina just didn't have time for her boys.

8. Every once in a while, Corrina came to visit me. It didn't happen often because she was almost always working or resting so she could go back to work. When she did come over, Corrina told me how hard it was for her. I never started working until my youngest was five or six, but I still knew what it was like to struggle to keep a family fed. I tried to comfort her, but many times I couldn't, and Corrina just cried and cried about how about how hard it was to keep her boys fed and clothed. Once she started talking about it, she couldn't stop crying. With all she had to do to keep eight boys alive, fed, and clothed, it was just too much for her. Raising eight boys on your own in that part of town was too much for anyone. It touched me to see such pain in a good, hard working woman. She talked about how busy she was and how she tried to make sure her kids stayed safe. She said she always told them to be good before she left them, and she couldn't understand why some of them still ended up in trouble.

9. Another thing Corrina said was that things were even harder because all eight of her kids were boys. I knew the boys and I thought they needed a father more than anything else.

10. Corrina's sons were good boys. They were at my house all the time, and they always respected me. Corrina's sons were always honest, respectful, sweet boys, and I never had any worries about them being in my house.

11. When I learned that Sammy was accused of a murder, I just couldn't believe it, and even today it's hard for me to think he really did something like that. I still think of him as a sad, little, gentle boy who just needed a dad. I pray that he won't be executed, not only because I remember him so fondly, but also because I know what it would do to his mother. Poor Corrina has already been through so many tragedies. She deserves a little kindness and understanding at least once in her life.

12. When Sammy was arrested for this crime, I was living with my family in Phoenix, and Sammy and his brothers knew how to reach me. I was never contacted by Sammy's attorney or by anyone else working on Sammy's trial. I wish they did contact me, because I would have begged the judge to spare Sammy, for his own sake and, more than anything, for his poor mother's.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States and Arizona that the foregoing is true and correct. Signed in Phoenix, Arizona this 4 day of April, 2004.


Domitila Servin