

Familia Living

Where Latinas Matter



The Ultimate Family Reunion by Roberta M. Rosa

I am an only child. My mother had me when she was sixteen years old. She also left my life at a young age. No, she has not passed away, she currently lives in Florida. I was raised by my father and grandmother.

All my life I had a deep craving to search and to meet family. While I was young I really never got to hang out with my aunts and uncles. You see my grandparents' were divorced way before I was born and since my grandfather didn't really make the best decisions in life, I only got to see him once in a blue moon. My father had resentment towards him for years.

My grandfather had 8 children, three from my grandmother. While growing up, I only knew the immediate family; my dad and his two sisters. He had an older brother named Carlos that lived not even 30 minutes away from us. I only met Tio Carlos one time and that was his son's funeral, Carlito Jr. He and my father never met up after that day, until last year.

My father and Tio Carlos had no bad blood in between them; I guess they were both living their lives. I tagged along on that cold day last year with my father to FINALLY visit Tio Carlos. On the highway my dad was saying, "Wow, I haven't seen Carlos in 15 years!" and I replied, "Yeah and the sad part is that you only live no less than 30 minutes away!" We finally got to Tio's house and I got to meet my aunt and my cousin. Sadly, Tio Carlos had Alzheimer and he didn't recognize my father.

I was angry on the inside as I saw my Tio and photos of the rest of the family. FIFTEEN years, I have lived so close to my family and not even know what was their favorite color or even sat down and had dinner with them! We are Puerto Ricans; we are supposed to be all about family! A few months after, my father and I returned to see Tio Carlos, but he was in Hospice. His pancreas was giving way. That same day, met another cousin of mine that I don't even remember meeting. A couple of days after seeing Tio Carlos, he passed away. He was suffering for a long time so everyone expected it.

Back

The day of the wake everyone came out of every nook and cranny there was...My Tia from Florida, my grandpa & step-grandma, my other two aunts, my uncle, my cousin from Kansas and my other cousins from Cleveland. Oh, it was crazy! At the wake I leaned over to my cousins and said, "This is a real shame that it took my Tio dying for everyone to come up here!" Such a thing should be unacceptable in all families.

The next day we had the funeral, then a family gathering at Tio's house. I am not going to say that we partied as if we were in South Beach but we had some drinks, my dad was playing cards, music was playing

South Beach, but we had some drinks, my dad was playing cards, music was playing and we just sat and enjoyed each others company. We all exchanged numbers and said jokingly, "Hope it doesn't take a funeral to see each other next time."

What I got out of all this is, no matter what distance, complication or past drama that you have with a family member. Squash it.

If they don't visit you, swallow your pride and visit them. My dad was never really close to my Tio, but I think my father never

really wondered how his nieces in Cleveland were doing. I know I was. I don't have to wonder anymore because I speak to my

primas on a regular bases, whether it's a call on my cell, email or text, it's communication and communication is what brings us together.