

Middle School Winner: **Analia Rodriguez**

Tomlinson Middle School, Fairfield

Hispanic Heritage Month Essay Contest Submission

Dolly Filártiga and the Lawyer I Want to Become

Ever since I was little, I've know I want to be a lawyer. But learning about Dolly Filártiga was what really made me realize what I could actually do with a law degree. My family is from Paraguay, so seeing a Paraguayan woman change how human rights cases work in American courts makes me super proud.

Back in 1976, Dolly's brother, Joelito, was tortured and killed by a police officer in Paraguay. He was only seventeen years old. I keep thinking about how young he was, how much life he had left, and how heartbreaking that must have been for his family.

Dolly moved to the U.S. in 1978, and she and her dad decided to sue the officer who killed Joelito. Then in 1980, an American court ruled that they could actually bring the lawsuit here, because torture by a government official breaks international law.

That ruling was a huge deal because it let people seek justice in U.S. courts for human rights abuses that happened in other countries. Even now, over forty years later, people still study her case. To me, Dolly shows how much immigrants can contribute and how someone coming from another country can make our legal system better.

What really inspires me about Dolly is that she kept fighting even when she had no idea if it would work out. Her story makes my dream of becoming a lawyer feel way more real. It makes me want to learn how to stand up for people and give a voice to people who are being ignored.

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I also think her story proves people wrong when they act like immigrants don't belong here or shouldn't be trusted. People from all over the world have helped build this country. Dolly was just an ordinary immigrant from Paraguay, but her bravery became a huge part of American history.

Right now, I'm trying to practice being a good listener, doing research before I form an opinion, and speaking up when something isn't fair. Being proud of my background means wanting to give back. Dolly showed me that one person really can make a difference, and that's the kind of person I want to be.

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