



# Family Stories: Camerina Santa Cruz

*Camerina Santa Cruz began searching for her son Marco Antonio in 2013, when he disappeared in southern Arizona. She filed a case with Colibrí in 2016 and participated in the DNA Program that same year. In 2018, her DNA matched positively with Marco Antonio's remains in the Pima County Medical Examiner's Office. She is an active member of Colibrí's Family Network group in Tucson, Arizona, and now works to support other families with disappeared loved ones and raise awareness about the issue.*

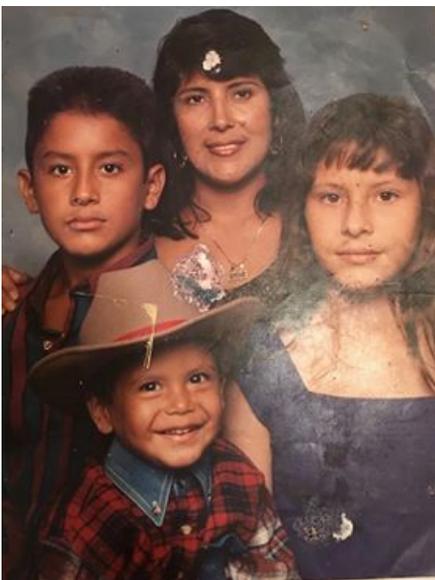
My name is Camerina Santa Cruz. I was born in Mexico and now live in Tucson, Arizona. I'm the mother of five children, the oldest of whom is named Marco Antonio Ramírez Moreno. He was born on July 1, 1981 in Nogales, Sonora. He was married and had three children. The last time I saw him was in August 2013 in Nogales. He was going through a very difficult period in his life — his wife had left him for another man, and she wouldn't let him see his children. To support him, I went to see him often. The last thing I ever told him was that I loved him, that I would always be here for him. I remember smiling and saying to him, "Behave and take care of yourself, my sweet, beloved son."



*Camerina alongside a portrait of her son, sharing her story on a panel in November 2018*

He disappeared later that month while crossing the desert of southern Arizona in search of a better life for himself and for his family. When I learned that he had disappeared, I looked everywhere. I knocked on so many doors, but every one was closed to me.

The first two years, I tried to get help from the Mexican Consulate. They made all kinds of promises and told me they would do everything possible to help me find my son, but they were all lies. They sampled my DNA but sent it to Mexico City without explaining why. They made a mockery of me, my suffering, and my anguish as a mother. I also went to the Sheriff's Office in Tucson in the hopes that they would help me search for my son. But they treated me, a Mexican woman, disrespectfully and shamefully. They were no help.



*Camerina and three of her five children in 1994, including Marco Antonio (left)*



*One of Camerina's favorite photos of Marco Antonio*

After two years of searching, someone told me about Colibrí. Once I got in touch with them, they immediately helped me with my case, taking a missing person report and sampling my DNA. In fact, I was the first woman to participate in their DNA program for families who've lost a loved one on the border. They always treated me with compassion and with dignity, and they gave me hope to one day reunite with my son. In addition to taking my DNA and helping me search for my son, they bring families together through the Family Network and our group meetings. I'm a member and leader of the Network, which has helped those of us searching for missing loved ones keep supporting each other and maintaining hope.

In November 2018, Colibrí gave us the news that would change our lives forever: they had found my son. Our family's DNA had matched positively with his remains in the Medical Examiner's Office. It was a devastating day. My hopes all those years of finding him alive were lost. Five long years of searching, five years of pain and frustration came to an end.



*Camerina (left) on her wedding day, with her son Marco Antonio (center) and daughter Érica (right)*



*Camerina (left) with other families in the Tucson Family Network group searching for their disappeared loved ones*

Today I'm working alongside Colibrí to raise awareness about the problem of disappearance and deaths on the border. I give interviews on TV and radio stations, I speak at rallies and other events, and I present to classes at the University of Arizona. I do this so that people realize that the human beings who disappear in the desert aren't animals, and they aren't just statistics. They are human beings. They have families who love them and miss them and who demand that the government bring them back to us.

I'm going to continue sharing my story and expressing what has been the greatest pain of my life — the loss of my dear son. I'm going to continue fighting and raising awareness about this government's unjust laws. I am deeply and eternally grateful to Colibrí for their humanitarian work.

*Your support helps Colibrí reunite families like Camerina's and build community, resilience, and healing among the thousands of families searching for loved ones who disappeared on the border.*

### TO MAKE A DONATION:



Colibrí Center for Human Rights  
3849 E. Broadway Blvd, #206  
Tucson, AZ 85716



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