

# **Support, Love & Let Go**

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Independence and  
Growth is Important  
for Everyone!

**Julie & Rigo Gaona**





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## Rigo & Julie Gaona

Rigo and Julie Gaona are self-advocates from Los Angeles County. Rigo is the vice chair of the Self-Advocacy Board of Los Angeles County (SABLAC). Julie is also an active SABLAC member and a woman of many hats. Rigo and Julie began dating in June of 2007 and got married in April of 2010. They are both very active in the community and enjoy encouraging other self-advocates to get involved and continue making positive changes for people to have more productive and independent lives.





**Julie**

Julie was born and raised in  
Banning California.







I started at a "special school" but my mom fought for me to go to regular school.



My parents wanted me to grow up the same way as my younger brother and all my peers.

I did do some things  
that were just for  
kids with  
disabilities.



Horseback Riding



Camp for kids with disabilities

But most of the time  
I just did the same  
things as my peers.





**Junior High Graduation**





I am a very social person and I made a lot of friends at school.

One of my best friends is Jonny. We met in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. He didn't let anyone mess with me.

I did all the same things as my friends. Sometimes my parents were afraid for me but they knew I needed to experience life like all of my peers.



My mom made me do  
some things I didn't  
want to like drama. But  
these helped me build  
confidence.





**PROM!!!**



**Grad Night!!**





## Graduation

My mom made them  
build a ramp so I could  
walk across the stage with  
all my classmates.



I tried community college. When I couldn't keep up I was deeply disappointed.  
I started working for an ILS agency that was new in our area.



**First day working (2001)  
Community Access Center**



The Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)  
helped me buy clothes for my first job.



## My job



My best friend would visit me and help me do things around the house (non-paid). We are great friends till this day!



## My apartment

My parents prepared me to be an adult by holding high expectations, teaching me the skills I would need and providing the right support.



**Rigo**



Rígo grew up in  
México.

He emigrated to  
the US when he  
was 18.





My Parents

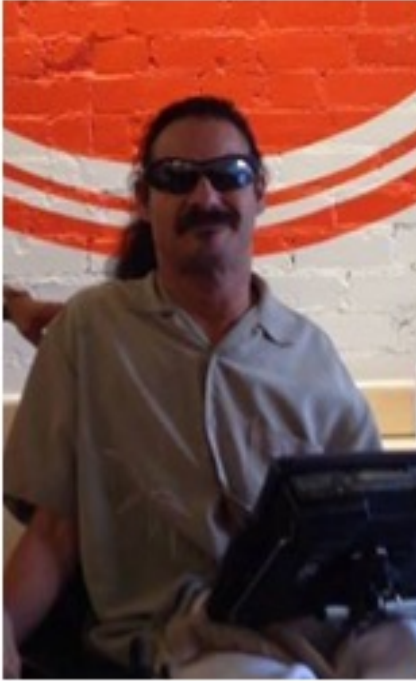




My family is split between the US and Mexico. My parents brought me here but returned to Mexico.



I went to school and quickly learned English.



I graduated with a high school diploma in 1994.

In most ways my life was that of a typical young man.



I became a  
marathon  
racer

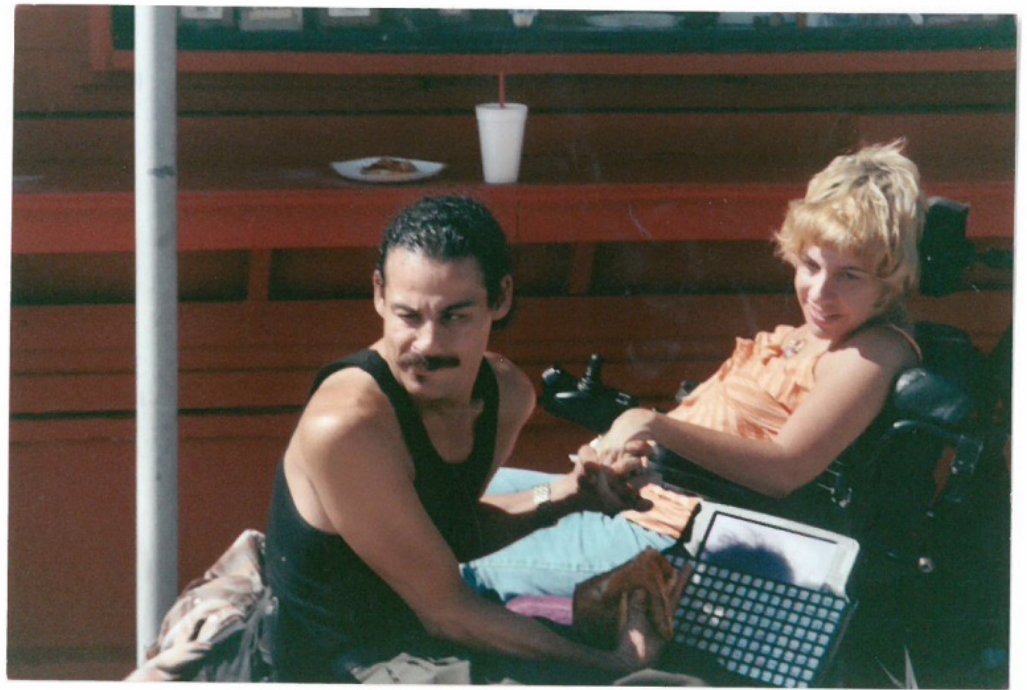


1990-2007





We met in 2007.

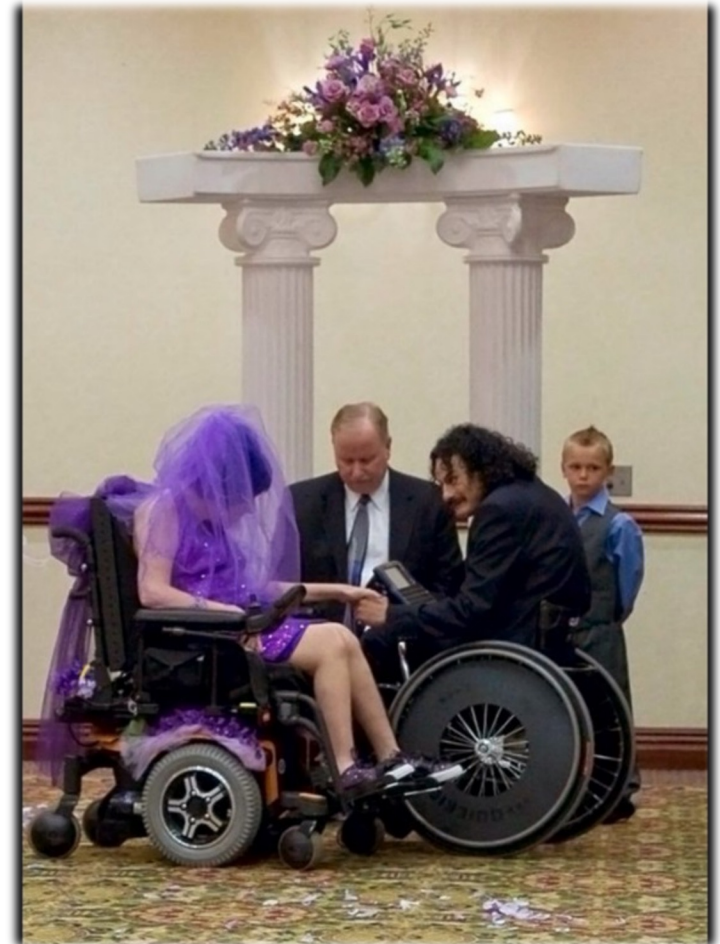




We married  
in 2010



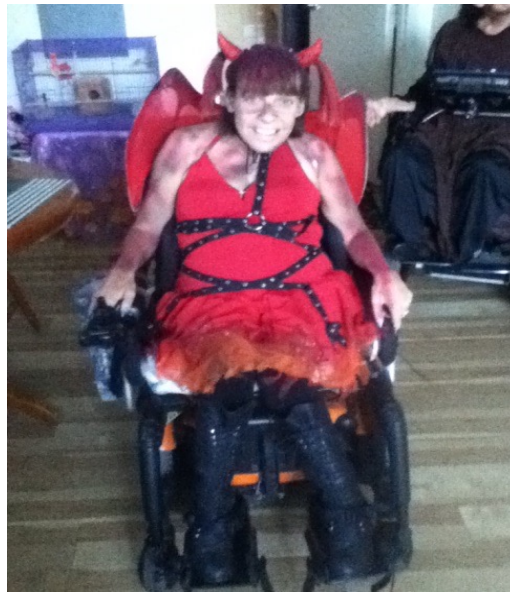
Our friends  
and family  
celebrated  
with us!







We love doing crazy  
things together!







We like to go out  
and have fun!



Here we were celebrating  
Rigo's 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday!





On April 3<sup>rd</sup> we celebrated our 14<sup>th</sup> year anniversary!







We expect to spend a  
lifetime together!



# Thank you for coming!



Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.  
Email us at: [Rigo17@msn.com](mailto:Rigo17@msn.com)