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When a Mother's Love Becomes Violent

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KALW.

[00:00:01] **MAYITO:** You're listening to Uncuffed, recorded and produced by people in California state prisons. I'm Mayito Guzman, and we're all here at Solano. Can you guys all introduce yourself by name, who we got here today?

[00:00:22] **JOHN:** John Lopez.

[00:00:24] **ORLANDO:** Orlando Hasan Hasan Johnson.

[00:00:27] **bf:** bf Thames

[00:00:28] **MAYITO:** Okay guys, so we're gonna listen to an episode today that's titled Mother's Love. It was a story by Francisco Magaña, and it was produced by Uncuffed producer bf Thames. This story has to do with the relationship between a man and his mother. I know there's exceptions, but it seems to me anyway from my general observation that around here a lot of men have close relationships with their mother.

For you guys, is there anything that's particular that stands out or is memorable about your mother?

[00:01:00] **bf:** Yeah, I think that my mother was probably one of the original terrorists before they start labeling people terrorists. She was five foot one. Well, let's get this straight first. I love my mom. She was still a terrorist.

She was five foot one. You could not tell by the way she ran through the family. The way, I mean, my sisters and I got the same type of beatings. It wasn't as if one got whooped lightly and the other one got whooped.

[00:01:27] **MAYITO:** So she carried a big stick little woman with a big, big stick,

[00:01:30] **bf:** Figuratively and literally. Yes.

[00:01:33] **JOHN:** My mom never laid a hand on us ever growing up. My dad did very few times, but my mom was always with words. She used to try to tell us like, give was good advice, but she was she wasn't heavy like that. She didn't have iron fist. She, she, you know?

[00:01:48] **bf:** Do you think you deserved it every single time? Whatever you described as her discipline of you, you think you deserved it?. Because we tend to say, yeah, because it was my mom.

[00:01:57] **MAYITO:** Yes. We give her the green light on the pass. She gets the pass.

[00:02:00] **bf:** Yeah.

[00:02:01] **JOHN:** Yes. And, and I never ever spoke back to my mom or disrespected my mom. You know, she would've been a little harder. I don't know if that would've brought out another person than me where I would've, you know.

[00:02:13] **MAYITO:** Do you think she understood you and that was the best approach for you that she had?.

[00:02:18] **JOHN:** Mm. Not really because she did, she was unaware of a lot of things that I was doing until I was in prison. And I would tell her, and she was like, what? Like she, I shot myself with a 3 57 before. Right. And to this day, she does not believe that I shot myself.

Does not believe it. Wow. Baby. Her baby wouldn't shoot herself because she thinks that somebody shot me, and I just don't want to tell her.

[00:02:41] **ORLANDO:** Oh, yeah.

[00:02:42] **JOHN:** And I try to tell her like, why would I, why would I hide it still to this day? You know, and I'll telling you the story of my dad, how it happened. My dad's looking at me at visit like, You're a dumb ass laughing.

[00:02:52] **MAYITO:** (laughter)

So he understands the real situation with you maybe a little more.

[00:02:56] **JOHN:** Don't believe you. Yeah. Yes. But when it did happen, he didn't believe me either. It took him some time, like okay. For him to be like, All right, now I believe you.

[00:03:04] **ORLANDO:** My mom's been gone for well over 25 years and... I regret not being able to have her here now, not just because you know, of the given of course, cuz she's passed away. But there would be a lot of good things that we could do for our relationship because we had, we, we had our problems.

[00:03:27] **MAYITO:** For myself, my mother growing up, I've always been a hard head. Stubborn.

I was like the kid that was sneaking out in the middle of the night, coming back in the middle of the night, and I mean, it wasn't all like bad fun. Some of it was like, good fun. I wasn't hurting nobody or nothing, but through all that I was stressing my family out cuz I, I was a little kid that was gone all day, like, where the hell is he at?

He come back all dirty. And so over the years, I, I started getting into trouble. My mom, I noticed she was always the consistently hopeful and always close. Even when my dad was like, driving them nuts in the house, she somehow managed to tolerate me. You know? And to me, that's one of the things I think that stands out to me the most is how, how she was able to tolerate me and my brothers and see us through, cuz both of my brothers, they were following in my footsteps growing up, and they turned their lives around. And so to this day she's still like, Okay, you still have hope. You know what I mean?

[00:04:30] **ORLANDO:** That's that mother's love.

[00:04:31] **bf:** That's what I'm just gonna say, that, that's a mother's love.

[00:04:33] **MAYITO:** And that being said, let's hear what Magaña's story is. We're about to hear Mother's Love.

It's a story that Francisco Magaña shared with us through Uncuffed producer bf Thames.

[00:04:52] **FRANCISCO:** I was born in Michoacán, Mexico. I had three sisters and two brothers. My dad, first I didn't know if he was still with my mom or not, cuz I hardly see him.

[00:05:02] **bf:** What was your family life like with just your mom?

[00:05:06] **FRANCISCO:** Today I understand her, but at the time it was like, she was always mad at anything, anything.

So she would just stay her frustration on me. Well, we used to get whooped with a branch. If she didn't have no branch, she would get like the cable from the radio or anything she could get her hands on.

[00:05:25] **bf:** What were some of the reasons that she would beat you?

[00:05:28] **FRANCISCO:** I believe I was eight. Or about to turn eight. I was with my uncle, like he used take care of the house.

And the house is so big, it has swimming pool, it has everything. So I used to go help him a lot, but I didn't know how to swim. So that day I went, and I want to go inside the pool, but I didn't have no supervision. So I went and I got myself. I, I grabbed myself from the, from the little upstairs before you go to the swimming pool.

So I was inside, and I don't know how it happened, but I let go. So I tried to reach back and I couldn't reach back. So I start going deeper and deeper. Well, I, when I woke up, I had a lot of people around me. I, I didn't know that even I had drowned. So everybody was looking at me and, and then, here comes my mom. Instead of telling me like if I was alright, she just got me with a broom and you start whooping me. Because she said that I wasn't supposed to be over there.

I was a pattern of me getting whoop all the time. And the first time I run away. And I got whooped real, real good. By the second time, I remember I was coming from school. And we got jumped by other other kids, so I was so bloody, and I knew if I would go to the house like that, I was gonna get whoop again with my mom.

So I patched myself, and I told my brother, I'm gone. I know I'm gonna get whoop. She finds out that I got beat up like this. So what I did, I left and I went to the bus station. And my, my, my thought was like, I'm gonna get in any car and just get away from right here. So I convinced my brother to go with me.

I don't know how did she find out that I was there. She went and picked me up, grabbed me, took us back to the house, and she tied me around the tree. She tried, she tied me, hands and legs. And I remember that was one of the, that time she is. They call (sp). That's some branches. And they're like, like, thing, but they hurt.

So I remember she got three of them. She just whooped me. He, she didn't whoop my brother. She just got me cuz she say I was the older one and I was, it was my, it was me convincing my brother. You know? That was when I decided anything that I do right. I'm gonna get whooped. If I do something wrong, I'm gonna get whooped.

I didn't start caring about nothing no more.

[00:08:07] **bf:** You're here in the United States illegally, right?

[00:08:09] **FRANCISCO:** Yes.

[00:08:10] **bf:** How'd that come about?

[00:08:12] **FRANCISCO:** I remember one day, my, came from, from school and my mom said that we all were gonna leave to the United States. I didn't want to come. I didn't want to come because I didn't know nobody over here.

And I said, My daddy is gonna bring everybody, the whole family. At first, thought she, I thought she was just playing, just, you know. And yeah. We came in a, a bus, it took us seven days to get just to the border. So we all came, and I remember when we crossed, we had my little brother. He was about, like, he was, he was about three.

So my mom was carrying him. But that day, I remember exactly the day, it was probably like 30 or 40 some people. So it was a big, big, big crowd. So we had been moving. Like they all said,

like, Let's move. So I remember seeing the, the helicopter. On top of us throwing the lights. So they kept telling us, Don't look up.

Don't look up cuz that light will reflect the eyes, and they'll find us. So everybody's looking down to the floor. We kept moving, we kept moving. One of my sisters, I remember that she was talking about she want to go use the restroom, but you gotta keep moving. So it took us like, probably like, I'll say like a little more than an hour.

And then we realized that she wasn't around. And I remember that I told my mom that I knew around where the place that she was talking about, she wanted to go to the restroom, so I wanted to go back to pick him up. So she grabbed by my hand and she told me no.

[00:09:45] **bf:** Who?

[00:09:46] **FRANCISCO:** My mom.

[00:09:47] **bf:** Told you, No.

[00:09:48] **FRANCISCO:** My mom.

[00:09:48] **bf:** What?

[00:09:49] **FRANCISCO:** Don't go back. She said, I'd rather lose one person than lose two. So I still, I still went back and got my sister. I went back and find her and brought her back.

[00:10:03] **bf:** You love your sister?

[00:10:04] **FRANCISCO:** Yeah, I do.

Yeah. Until this, until this point, I think that still, she's still resentful because of the day. She say that if it wasn't for me, I don't know.

She said she were, she can't forgive my mom, and that hurts me because. It hurts me because I mean, my mom. Well, anything that she did, I always believe she did it out of love he, she didn't know what to do, you know. I think that for me, being in prison is a blessing because it probably prevent me to treat my kids the way I was treated.

I was a monster when I was out there. I, I made a amends to my mom right after I came outta, the county. She move out a new house or we went and do a barbecue, and we spoke about it. She was trying, she was telling me she was real sorry, because she felt that it was hurtful for me becoming the way that I am.

I told my mom that I had a ra, a lot of resentful because I never understood why she was doing everything. So I told her, Look, now I understand you. I understand what you were going through, what you were doing, everything by yourself. I understand you and don't ever feel that it is your fault. Yeah, I went through some pain and everything, but it was, it was my decision.

You couldn't, you couldn't stop me if you wanted to. You tried to gimme the best you can, and we, we spoke about it. She, she told me that she was real sorry for everything she done to us. I said, Look, mom, there's nothing to forgive. I love you. You're my mom. You're giving me everything you can to make me a better person.

I understand her fully now. That's one of the things that I don't want nobody to see my mom as a monster because she's not.

[00:12:09] **MAYITO:** That was Francisco Magaña as he was sharing a story with Uncuffed producer, bf Thames.

You know, in, in in, in Francisco's story he grew up getting whooped on, right. And, and he mentioned on there that rather than blame her, he chose to love her. Earlier some of us had mentioned that we, we were a handful. Do you feel like you understand your mother and things you've been through with her?

[00:12:36] **bf:** You know, I, I kind of feel the same way in some respects that Francisco. The way he was telling about his mother. I mean, I understand some stuff now. I mean, I know that she loved me. I know that she was trying to do her best, but, I mean, his mother wanted to leave a sister behind. You know what I'm saying?

I mean, and that resentment lasted all the way till adulthood. He, he and his sister still got resentment. And, and you know, I could look at it and, and try to look at it objectively and say, , I get it. She didn't wanna lose a child. Rather lose one than lose two. My mother has never done anything so severe, but she has done some stuff that I question.

[00:13:23] **ORLANDO:** This is complex issue for me because I lost my mo, my mother when I was like 21, somewhere around that age, and I was in prison. She died of complications to HIV. She died of AIDS. But the reason why I had said earlier that I lost out so much because I was so young, and I didn't get to grow up and have understanding, empathy and knowledge to where I could get a better understanding of where my mom, what my mom went through.

I had a lot of resentment, not just because of one thing or another, but of a lot of things when it came to my mother. So the fact that when I was young adolescent, the time that I did have with my mom, I was so busy trying to get outside of myself with drugs and alcohol and doing all these, you know, the type of things that got me to this point in life, that I didn't get to naturally come of age.

And finally, where you, the age where you start living your own life and making your own mistakes. And you really wanna start having understanding and empathy for other people. And usually the first people are the ones closest to you. And that would've been, you know, my mom would've been one of those, but I definitely loved my mom.

I know she loved me. But we just has a. It was difficult. It was difficult.

[00:15:09] **JOHN:** Ah, man. I've actually talked to my mom for three hours to four hours straight sometimes. And we laugh about a lot of things because yeah, we grow, we've grown. We're not the same kids we were back then, you know? So we're a little older now, a little wiser, and she talks to me a lot more about things that she wouldn't have.

Talk to me about back then, you know. When the, we'll go to the day room in the morning, a lot of the workers will be gone. There'll be nobody in the day room, day room be empty. I will sit there on the phone from 9:00 AM to 11:30.

[00:15:39] **bf:** That's a long time.

[00:15:40] **JOHN:** Yes.

[00:15:41] **bf:** That's good stuff.

[00:15:42] **JOHN:** Sometimes I will miss my shower.

[00:15:44] **ORLANDO:** Well, and now you're just showing off, bro.

Cause nobody talks to their mom. If you talk and have good relationship without their mom talking and, you know, I was on time with their mom.

[00:15:53] **bf:** He's showing out.

[00:15:53] **ORLANDO:** Just showing up. Right. Take that as a form of disrespect. .

[00:15:59] **MAYITO:** Francisco mentioned also that, you know, he understood and actually expressed to her that she, he recognized it.

She was doing her best, that she was on her own and that she didn't know what to do.

[00:16:13] **bf:** You made a joke. Mayito made a joke that is, to me, rooted in reality. And that joke was, Yeah, we gave our moms a pass so we gave our moms a pass. I firmly believe he did that, and I wanna parallel it with, with my own mom. But I wanna, mention an example first. When Francisco said, Well, yeah, I get it.

You know, I understand. Now I look back and she did the best that she could. Nah, man. No, she did not. She tied him butt naked to a tree. And whooped him naked to a tree. What was the point of that? My mother has whooped my a** and talked about it too many times already, but sometimes I didn't deserve it. She whooped me that one time where my sister and I were playing and she told us ahead of time, Mayito, don't play by that evergreen tree.

It was a new evergreen tree. It was very small, but it was like as tall as us. So we're running. My sister is running from me. I'm chasing her. She jumps and tries to jump over the tree, and her leg hits the tree. And my mother's looking out the window at that precise time. When my sister went past, I'm running behind her. My mother saw the tree swing.

She said, Get in here. I looked at my sister. You know, dry snitching, right? I looked at my sister. And my sister just looked at me, and I looked at my mother and she said, You, get in here. She was locking eyes with me. I'm like, Yeah, my sister, she, she gonna turn herself in. You know what I'm saying? The right thing's gonna happen.

So I start walking over to my mother, cuz I know, John, I know I'm gonna hear it.

[00:17:54] **JOHN:** Right. It's like come out, sis, we that she got us, we busted, come out.

[00:17:57] **bf:** Yeah. I mean, well I would, I would, I mean, you know, I hadn't risen to that level of snitching, but I definitely dry snitched by looking and it didn't work. And my mother took me in the house and gave me two whoopings. You know what they were for?

One for jumping over the tree and playing around a tree cuz she said not to. And I didn't do that, so I wasn't guilty. And two, for having a gall to speak the truth and tell her, no, I didn't do it. Which was essentially saying my sister did. It's like she said I was lying. So now you whooping me for an act that I didn't do.

And I held resentment against my mother.

[00:18:34] **JOHN:** She was doing her best, Brian.

[00:18:36] **bf:** Okay. My whole life for that. When I say whole life, my mother died in 2006. In 2005, she apologized to me for doing that. Wow. But that's because I brought it up.

[00:18:51] **ORLANDO:** Oh.

[00:18:52] **MAYITO:** Well, at the end of the day, though, you look, I'm, that's beautiful that you had that at least.

[00:18:57] **bf:** Yeah, but I held it. I just held it cuz I'm like, why, man? You know, I mean, is this how the world is? It's like you tell the truth, you know?

[00:19:05] **ORLANDO:** And she did the best she could, Brian.

[00:19:06] **JOHN:** I, I believe what his mom did. I don't think no mom has any reason, and no excuse to actually do that. To actually do what she did to provide, tying him up, the way she disciplined, the way she carried it out, the discipline, what she believed was okay.

You know. Nobody, no kid deserves to be beaten. I don't care what the kid did. You know, that's wrong all the way around.

[00:19:34] **ORLANDO:** It made me think about a story that I'm a little, I'm a little, I'm a little kid. I'm probably like seven or eight playing outside, and I run upstairs. Something like, I'm like in a fighter, being picked on outside.

I run upstairs crying. My mom's like, You go downstairs and you, you know, I come, I come to her for help. Tell her what, what happened. She says, You don't go, you know, go back downstairs and fight. And I didn't want to. But she said, If you don't go back downstairs and fight it, I'm gonna kick your a**. So, you know, I had to go out and do that.

So my point being is like, we look back at, some of us, look back, like me, I look back on that now.

[00:20:09] **bf:** She's just doing her best man. Right?

[00:20:11] **ORLANDO:** But I look back on that now and be like, you know, I may not have do, I wouldn't do the exact thing, same thing to my son, to my son. However, I look back on the now, it's like, man, she, you know, my mom, she raised me right. You know what I mean? She, you know what I'm saying? She, that, that's like, to me and to a lot of us, it's like, we think that that was a good thing.

[00:20:31] **MAYITO:** Well, I wanna say this. I know I can relate to some aspects of that cuz both of my parents were born in Mexico. And I know growing up, there came a point where I realized that we're from different worlds.

That I, in my mind I was like, these two are never gonna really fully understand me, my perspective, what I'm going through, my choices, the way I'm seeing the world over here. And earlier when I mentioned how my mother was always the one to tolerate and to continue seeing things in the positive light.

Cause I, I, I drove nuts for a long time, right? And one particular time that I remember that I drove her to like, go hard on me. We were in Mexico visiting my family on her side in Michoacán, right? And by my grandmother's house, there's a canal. And then down lower, there's a river. And then down lower, it looked like an island to me with cows, and I wanted to get there.

Right. And I was with some kids from, from that town. Right. And they know their way around. But to get down there, you gotta cross on a top of a pipe, like walk on a pipe over the canal. And then you gotta cross the river by getting on rocks. And I'm like five, six years old, right? So there's people that have died in that canal.

You know what I'm saying? But I'm not knowing this. I'm just knowing, I'm trying to get down there and I'm seeing that, Oh, I could cross the pipe, and I could, I'm, I'm already plotting my way down there. Right. Man, I end up down there, right. And my mom, like, I noticed Magaña, even when he ran away, he didn't know how, but she found him.

Mm-hmm. You know, that's, there's a mother's instinct in there somewhere. Regardless of what they were going through, she was tuned in to her son. And she found him, and however she dealt with him, that was her way. But I understood like, cuz in my case, my mom found me too. And I just remember my mom was at the top of this hill thing, and I saw the silhouette and I was like, She got me, you know what I mean?

I didn't make it back in time. So she whooped me all the way back to my grandparents' house. And then when I got there, she got creative. She threw some rice and had me sitting on my knees on top of that rice.

[00:22:40] **ORLANDO**: Oh yeah. That, that's OG, that's that's, oh, yeah, I know about that.

[00:22:42] **MAYITO**: I was, I've never heard of that. I, I was on my knees on top of this rice, and I just remember going, I was just like, I was whimpering, right.

[00:22:52] **bf**: Mayito, she did her best, bro.

[00:22:53] **MAYITO**: I, I was whimpering, right.

[00:22:55] **JOHN**: I never heard of this.

[00:22:56] **MAYITO**: Get this. I was whimpering.

[00:22:58] **JOHN**: She did the best she could.

[00:22:59] **MAYITO**: I was whipping. And I remember my grandmother was, like, telling my mom like, you know, maybe you should let 'em up now. You know? And so when grandma's intervening, you know it's bad, right?

And my mom was like, No, no. He needs to learn. No. And now looking back at it, you know, I think it was rooted in fear. You know, it wasn't, she was trying to break me. It was like I scared her to death.

[00:23:23] **bf**: Do you mind if I ask the question?

[00:23:24] **MAYITO**: Sure. Ask the question.

[00:23:25] **bf**: I wanna know how we all feel, if you have any thoughts at all about the Sophie's choice that Francisco's mother made.

And when I say Sophie's choice, I'm talking about one child or the other. Like she told him, No, don't go back to find her. I would rather lose one than to lose two.

[00:23:44] **JOHN**: I think that, that, ah, man, I can't even put myself in her. When you actually think that you're actually gonna lose one, and you actually feel you're telling your other kid, Hey, I'd rather lose one or the other, I can't imagine what she was going through herself.

[00:24:03] **bf**: She's not saying that the daughter is expendable. Yeah. No, I get it. Yeah. That's, that just was hard to me though. That was just so incredibly hard.

[00:24:11] **MAYITO**: No doubt. And, and, you know, that kind of puts in perspective like, you know, like I said earlier how much other people are going through throughout the world, you know, that's a lot more common than we tend to think here in the United States.

You know, we're, we're lucky in a sense. But I was, think.

[00:24:28] **JOHN:** I have one question. I, I have one question for every, for everybody. He said in the piece, he said that he's glad that he was in prison if he had a kids. Do you believe the way you were raised by your parents, the way they, do you believe you would carry that on to your children if you were to have children?

[00:24:48] **bf:** Y you, you're saying that was part of that, you're asking?

[00:24:50] **JOHN:** Yeah, he, he said that, that maybe he would've done that to his kids. Didn't he say that?

[00:24:54] **bf:** You know what? He did say that. He did say that, and I... man, I'm about to go out on a limb. I don't think he would do his kids like that. No. It's just my interactions with him, man.

And, and how deeply felt, and, and, and especially the fact that he was able, in retrospect, to look back and see all this stuff, even relive some of the pain and still say, I love my mother, and she did the best she could. Mm-hmm. I can't, he's, I can't see him doing that. No. That's not saying no discipline, but no.

Nah, man, he'll probably be a great father.

[00:25:32] **MAYITO:** Yeah. It seems to me like he took the all the best parts out of the experience, and that's what he holds most meaningful. You know, the, he, he's looking at it from the optimistic perspective of, Okay, well where'd that come from and what was gained from me and the parts I didn't like, I won't carry those into my future.

[00:25:49] **ORLANDO:** Right, right.

[00:25:50] **MAYITO:** The last thing I wanted to touch on was on, on making, making amends. That made me feel like, you know, how. Making that effort to reach that understanding with mom, how, how much of an impact it can have, you know? And I know that for myself, I've made those efforts in these recent years, and it's funny to me now because when I'm talking to my mom. Before, like I used to terrify them. Now, when I talk to her, she and she don't speak really English. But I'll call her and she'll say, oh, estoy (sp) just kicking back, you know. She'll say something like that. Like, Oh, I'm just here kicking back. So I've noticed that, you know she started to adapt to us. Like, she started joining my brothers and, and me and things like that to, as, to way to bond with us, you know?

[00:26:46] **bf:** Yeah. That's good. You remember that Francesco made amends with his mother. He said that they talked about it and everything, and that they were good. You know, even though my mother and I, you know, we had a visit in 2005, like I said, she passed a year later, but that year from 2005 to the time that she passed in October, 2006, you know, we got along a lot better.

But the thing that I remember that I hold onto is that I made my mother laugh. I used to talk to her over the phone, and used to make her laugh. I'm talking about laugh out loud, and that had never been happening in our life. Laughing at the stuff that I was saying and our interactions. That was evidence that we had made amends.

So yeah, that's us. Uncuffed. You can find Uncuffed on the radio at KALW 91.7 FM, and weareuncuffed.org. Or you can subscribe to Uncuffed in any podcast player. Join our community on social media by following @weareuncuffed. I'm bf Thames. Thanks to the team at KALW Public Radio. Ninna Gaensler-Debs, Angela Johnston, Sonia Paul, James Rowlands, Andrew Stelzer, Ben Trefny, Eli Wirtschafter, and our super duper sound designer, Eric Abercrombie, also known as Maserati-E. Our theme music is by David Jassy. And thanks to the staff at Solano who make this possible. That will be Mr. McCann, Principal Nessie, Ms. Rice and Lieutenant Speight, who approved this episode. Please know that we fact checked everything to the best of our ability.

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