

**‘THE BEST THING THAT’S HAPPENED TO OUR LIVES’  
EXPERIENCE: GABRIELLA LARIOS,  
INGLEWOOD, CALIF.**

**Gabriella:** I am originally from Nicaragua and I came to the United States in 1985. Two months ago, I met a beautiful lady, Momoyo Martin, at West Los Angeles College in my English class. We had an assignment to discuss something in front of the class, and Momoyo brought the pamphlet “The Winning Life” and talked about her religion. She gave me the pamphlet to read and I started to feel that this was what I had been looking for all my life. I felt warm inside. It seemed too good to be true, so I asked Momoyo to teach me about Buddhism.

I took the pamphlet home for my kids to read. I told them how beautiful it was and how I felt my life going in a new direction.

I didn’t believe in anything; I was tired of religion. My life felt empty and I wasn’t sure how to change it or solve the problems in my family. The kids were always fighting with each other and with my husband and me.

**Nick:** At first I thought the pamphlet was boring, but later on I into got it.

**Eddy:** Yeah, it was interesting.

**Gabriella:** One day Momoyo briefly told me to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, but she couldn’t explain much more because she was in a hurry. So I started chanting like crazy with my kids whenever we could. A couple days later, I felt peace in my home like never before. I was always fearful for some reason, but I started to feel light and I was no longer afraid of anything. My day feels different when I chant; it’s not heavy.

Also since we’ve been chanting, my son Eddy, who has asthma, doesn’t have to go to the hospital and he hasn’t had to use his inhaler much.

**Nick:** We chant mostly together. Usually I chant for what I want—like for this game I wanted. Then I started chanting to stop fighting with Eddy and then to cool my temper.

**Eddy:** I chanted for my mom to change. She used to scream a lot but now she’s doing much better.

**Gabriella:** I’m really chanting for my family’s happiness. I grew up with a philosophy that was very wrong for me. I didn’t know the purpose of life. I didn’t know what to teach the kids. Now I teach them about cause and effect, and help them understand why things are happening. I want to give my kids the right material to read so they can decide if they want to practice.

**Nick:** At first my mom made us chant, but later on when we came to activities it became fun. I thought chanting would be boring, but I chanted 45 minutes and I wasn’t bored one minute—especially learning gongyo! I am a part of Z-Wave [an activity group in Los Angeles for youth ages 9–12].

**Eddy:** I like learning about Nichiren Daishonin and the history of Buddhism. We are also

learning to cook Japanese food from Philip in Z-Wave.

**Nick:** Yeah, he said we need to learn the basics before we can learn to cook like him.

**Gabriella:** I really feel this practice is going to help my kids. At one point, I wanted to leave Los Angeles because I didn't want my kids to be influenced by so many [negative] things. But I'm not afraid anymore because they know the truth.

**Eddy:** I shared with my teacher that I was Buddhist, and she asked me so many questions, so I gave her "The Winning Life." She thought it was very interesting.

**Gabriella:** The teachers are noticing a big improvement in my son Eddy.

**Nick:** This counselor at school was going to hold Eddy back in the seventh grade because of his poor grades. She told my mother that if he doesn't improve within a few weeks he won't graduate. We started chanting and he started doing his homework more often and reading a little bit more each day and some of his grades improved. Then they decided not to hold him back.

**Eddy:** I was happy and I think chanting really helped.

**Gabriella:** I'm pushing them to study more. I tell the kids chanting is not going to give you As. Chanting is going help you become happy and more interested in school. Education is so important.

I really want to thank my friends Momoyo and Lillian for all their support. Without their support, I think I would be depressed. But I'm not—I feel so happy. I feel this Buddhism is the best thing that has happened to my life, and I'm not going to let it go.

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