

When Rodolfo Valenzuela arrived in Australia for the first time in 1985 as a refugee, he didn't know much about Australia, all he had on his mind was "getting as furthest away as he could from El Salvador", the country he once called home.

Growing up in a small town of El Salvador named Ahuachapán in the late 1960s", was nothing but fearful. Noting that from 1979 to 1992 the Salvadorian Civil War occurred.

Living with his mother and sister, there weren't many opportunities, rather many "bombs and shootings" happening every day.

Deciding to move to the Capital City of El Salvador at the age of eighteen to study at the University of Technology (Universidad Politécnica de El Salvador) it was Rodolfo called himself 'lucky' to get the opportunity.

During his time at University, he used to work on the side to make extra money.

He said, "I was so lucky I was at work when massacres were happening at my university".

He had so many horrible stories to tell, but he says now he would rather "ignore them to put those stories aside".

Constantly living in fear, not knowing what will happen next was a key reason he wanted to leave El Salvador and never turn back. "I just need to get out of here" he said.

Coming to Australia with his then-wife, stepson, and his daughter was his first obstacle, knowing he had left his ex-wife and his oldest daughter in a country he didn't want to go back to.

Staying in a migrant hostel was his first real reality of living in Australia. Not only was his English a problem, but they were told not to talk to anyone in the hostel.

Rodolfo said, "You couldn't trust anyone".

During his first few years in Australia he worked three jobs a day just to keep the dinner on the table for his than family. Jobs such as a cleaner, bin disposable worker and a mushroom picker.

While working, he also studied a Diploma to gain more English skills and knowledge.

Through his university, he was offered a job to become a cleaner for a drafting company.

In his spare time, he used to pick up the spare parts from the models that were made by drafters and make different models and sculptures.

Recognised for his skills in developing scrap into models, he moved higher up the ranks in the business and became a drafter with the company.

He has been a drafter for the last several years, and he says, “will continue to, until I retire”.

He joined many groups, such as The Salvadorian Club, Several Radio Stations and Newspapers to share and express his knowledge on certain topics.

Throughout his time on several radio stations and writing in many newspapers, he was criticised by a lot of people because he spoke not only the truth but shared his opinions about his country El Salvador and many Salvadorians along with it.

The radio station he worked on part-time as a volunteer was quite successful, therefore, he was able to interview several people on his station.

Napoleon Rodezno a friend and refugee from El Salvador was interviewed on Rodolfo’s radio station for his high achievements in basketball and for his involvement in volunteering for the Spanish Community.

When asked about his friend Rodolfo, he said he is a “Optimistic person, with a balanced outlook on life”, a “revolutionary” who always wants change and someone who “seeks justice” as he is a “compassionate person always thinking about others”.

Thirty-Five years on, Rodolfo has emerged his life in Australia with his new family including wife, Louisa Castaldo and daughter Maya Valenzuela and has no regrets about moving from El Salvador to Australia.



**Rodolfo Valenzuela at his Job**

