

## **Human Rights Defender Monologue: Marta Pablo Cruz**

**Written by Gabriela Loaria Pedroza**

**Performed by Lucero Angeles**

My mother told me that I had a chicken heart. I was the smallest - I don't know if that had anything to do with it. I was the 12th. With me, my mother completed her dozen. I only had 3. The youngest is Jassiel: Jassiel Vladimir Florian Pablo.

When the 43 students from Ayotzinapa disappeared, you watched TV, and whatever channel you put on, they talked about the missing students. That was in 2014. I watched the interviews with the mothers and fathers and I cried along with them. I thought . . . if it happens to me, I'll go crazy or die. And today I am neither crazy nor have I died. Here I am. Here I am. And I will continue.

My son Jassiel was kidnapped on May 22, 2019. From that day on I never heard from him again. He disappeared. Everything changed. My whole life took a radical and painful turn. I never imagined being the mother of a missing person nor did I imagine the pain this means.

He turned 32 in January. He was born on January 17, 1992. When they disappeared him, he was 27 years old. He and I are both born in January. We celebrate together. I'm turning 60 and he's 32. As a child, Jassiel was very sickly. He almost died on me several times. Finally, in his adolescence, he began to be healthy and I thought that we had already passed the hardest part, that everything was going to be fine.

“Go out and look for it because if you don't go out, no one is going to bring it. Go out to the streets. Make your seedlings. Shout your son's name.” So it was. A while passed and the authorities did nothing, there was no search form. I went to Mexico City to open my research folder. I met and joined the collective “Sabues Guerreras de Sinaloa.” They invited me to be a representative here in Oaxaca. We replicated what they did in

Sinaloa: the marches, sit-ins, visibility activities. More families joined. But Oaxaca is not Sinaloa. What worked there was not necessarily working or giving results. We began to do things differently and finally an independent collective was formed here in Oaxaca: "Mothers with the same pain" because the majority of us were and are mothers. We started with 6 families and now we have 20. When we formalized our organization, our name was changed, and now we call ourselves "Oaxacans looking for ours A.C."

Collective work has helped me. Bringing several families together gives a little relief and strength. When one falls down, the rest of us rise up. When we go to the authorities, the first thing that comes is revictimization, the speeches of criminalization of our sons and daughters . . .

VOICE 1: I'm sure he was on the wrong track.

VOICE 2: Surely it was part of organized crime.

VOICE 3: She probably went with her boyfriend out of pleasure.

MARTA: And one has to put up with those comments and be patient in order to advance the investigations. There is also a big difference when families go alone to report and when they go as part of a group. Here we already have a way forward and we can alleviate a little the tortuous process of dealing with the authorities.

Life and the level of violence in this country turned me into a social fighter, but it was not by choice, it was necessity. The hope of one day seeing him again keeps me going. I really don't understand how people can't understand our pain. It would be enough for them to stop for a second to imagine that absence, that gap and silence. The room and the empty chair. His clothes and things that never move. Food never tastes the same again. Among all the things we lose, we also lose the right to happiness.

From sunrise, you have your phone in your hand. Families cannot be kept waiting. They want and need us to listen to them. The despair and anguish are endless. I have approached the authorities in many ways and I understood that there was no point in coming screaming or overwhelmed with our pain. I have achieved more through

dialogue and trying to reason. At the end of the day they are people. We are people and we can understand each other. I also understand that not all stories are like mine, that there are mothers and families who have needed to scream and fight with that anger and frustration that the indifference of some authorities causes.

Today, much of the work we do at the association is to raise awareness and inform in a more humane way. Workshops in secondary schools. The regional meeting with the states of Veracruz, Chiapas, Yucatán, Guerrero, Quintana Roo and Oaxaca. Counseling Sessions. Strengthening workshops. The march of May 10.

MOTHER 1: United we are stronger.

MOTHER 2: We need a specialized prosecutor's office.

MOTHER 3: Let's implement the absence declaration law.

MOTHER 4: We want the forensic pantheon.

I dream of opening a shelter for families who are searching. I am not rich, but I have resources for a taxi and to eat. There are people who don't even have money for a cake. The ladies have to make tortillas. I have hosted ladies who have to come to the capital to do business with the prosecutor's office. Bed, bathroom, coffee, beans. It is an emotional, physical and economic drain. It is very hard.

When we see society's rejection or indifference, it does feel ugly. When we go out to fly we tell people: "This is my son. Have you seen him?" And sometimes they don't even answer you and ignore you. The only thing I think is that I hope they are never in my place, but if they ever are, I assure you that we will be here to help them search for their missing people.

My name is Marta Pablo Cruz. I am looking for my son Jassiel Vladimir Florian Pablo.

I am Marta Pablo Cruz. I am Marta Pablo Cruz. I am Marta Pablo Cruz.

[DARK]

[The light turns on over the audience. The real Marta Pablo Cruz rises along with the rest of the searching mothers. Each one says their name and the name of the person they are looking for.]