

## Mother finds daughter 26 years after father abducted her, now fights for new law

By Shelley Childers



Wednesday, January 11, 2023

Private investigators said Bianca Lozano was brainwashed after being abducted by her father, Juan Lozano, in 1995. Her mother now fights for new law.

KTRK

HOUSTON, Texas -- It was April 1995 and Bianca Lozano was just 20 months old.

"She didn't meet a stranger. She was always happy," her mother, Deana Hebert, said.

A home video captured by Hebert shows the toddler walking down the sidewalk of her grandparents' Baytown home, picking flowers and smiling at her mother. Hebert recorded the moments of calm and bliss just hours before her ex-husband, Bianca's father, Juan Lozano, took the toddler for a court-ordered weekend visitation.

"I just, I had this feeling something was going to happen," Hebert said.

She filed for divorce from her husband the previous summer, after she said he became controlling and abusive.

"It started out name calling and picking fights and it escalated, got physical some," Hebert said. "I didn't think he would hurt Bianca, but he told me he would kill me."

Lozano was charged with domestic violence.

Hebert filed for divorce and was granted custody of baby Bianca. Lozano was granted unsupervised visitation.

And just as she suspected that day, in April 1995, Bianca never returned home from the weekend visit.

Hebert believes Lozano took her that weekend to begin a life in Mexico where he had family.

Bianca was listed with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and her father was profiled under the FBI's Most Wanted and charged with interfering with child custody. Hebert began a new life dedicated to finding her daughter.

Over the years, she spoke with ABC13 and to the public pleading for help.

"Sixteen years is long enough," Hebert said, through tears during a Crime Stopper press conference in 2011.

But it would take another decade of searching, scouring the internet, and three private investigators before a break in the case.

"I found her," Mark Stephens, a private investigator, said.

The retired Houston Police Department detective tracked Lozano and Bianca to a town near Cancun in May 2021.

"Going from - this girl's been missing for 25 years - to finding her, and now seeing her face-to-face, I mean that is a high you cannot imagine," Stephens said, while taking a moment to pause and hold back tears.

This case became emotional for him because even after finding her, Bianca is still not home.

Her father is still not facing justice for criminal charges filed in 1995.

During that discovery trip in May 2021, Stephens said FBI agents were also with him to positively identify father and daughter, but what Stephens expected to follow next never happened.

"We were gearing up to kick the door. Whatever we needed to do, they were gearing up to do that," he said. "And then the next day, they called and said, 'we got a stand-down order. The warrant's no good anymore. Harris County dropped the ball.'"

The Harris County District Attorney's Office told ABC13 they did file a Red Notice with Interpol in 2010.

The international paperwork, requesting extradition should Lozano be caught in Mexico, was reinstated in 2015, but not in 2019, according to the DA's office.

"They just made that decision and never told me," Hebert said.

Without that legal paperwork Stephens and the FBI agents left Mexico without ever making direct contact with Bianca and her father.

But months later, Stephens, who refused to give up, said the U.S. State Department helped get Mexican police to assist.

In August 2021, Hebert and Stephens flew back to Cancun where Mexican police arrested Lozano on a charge of using a fake ID.

Inside a Mexican police station Hebert laid eyes on her daughter for the first time in 26 years.

"It was overwhelming for both of us," she said.

At 27 years old, Bianca was still living with her father, under a changed name and with a forged Mexican birth certificate.

"If you know anything about Stockholm syndrome, that's what this was," Stephens said.

Investigators believe Bianca spent her life largely in isolation under her father's control.

"It took a couple of hours just going through everything and convincing her that this is real. This is what happened. This is your life," Stephens said. "At first, she didn't believe her mom existed. So, we had to talk her through that."

"She was told her mother had died in childbirth," Hebert said.

Stephens said it took two hours of convincing, but the young woman agreed to meet her mother.

With the help of a translator, Hebert showed Bianca a baby album. Inside were pictures of Bianca with her mother and with her father.

The meeting between mother and daughter lasted only 90 minutes and without that extradition paperwork, Mexican police released Lozano.

"Oh, it was very frustrating because all those years that he took from me, and then he was let go within a few hours," Hebert said.

Bianca has had little contact with her mother since.

"Because as long as he's in the picture, and as long as he's controlling her, she's not coming back," Stephens explained.

ABC13 reached out to the DA's Office, who declined to comment in person, but sent a brief statement:

*The DA's Office has met with Ms. Hebert multiple times. The warrant remains valid and executable to apprehend Mr. Lozano, should he return to this side of the border.*

"Well, that does us no good. Unless he crosses that border, we can't take him into custody," Stephens said.

"Even after we learned where she was in 2021, we went back and asked them, and they said, 'No,'" Hebert said.

The district attorney's office told Eyewitness News that reinstating the Interpol Red Notice would have done no good because in Mexico interfering with child custody is not an extraditable crime.

"I don't think you should be able to abduct a child and then just run out the clock," State Rep. Cody Vasut, R-25, said.

He is sponsoring House Bill 559, dubbed Bianca's Law, to eliminate the statute of limitations for interfering with a child custody order.

"The sense of justice being violated here is very strong," Vasut said.

It took 26 years of searching to find her baby girl.

"I turned 50 last year and so over half of my life I spent looking for her," Hebert said.

The fairytale ending this mother had been working for, she hopes will one day be salvaged for other parents through Bianca's Law.

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