

Winter 2020

Climbing the Branches of a Family Tree: The Genealogical Journey of Angelina's Grandparents

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Recommended Citation

Santoro, Angelina, "Climbing the Branches of a Family Tree: The Genealogical Journey of Angelina's Grandparents" (2020). *Genetics and Genealogy Family History Narratives*. 8.
<https://nsuworks.nova.edu/genealogy-reports/8>

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**Climbing the Branches of a Family Tree: The Genealogical Journey of Angelina's
Grandparents**

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HONR 1000N: Genetics and Genealogy

Dr. Doan and Dr. Schmitt

April 21, 2020

Abstract

Students in the Honors Genetics and Genealogy class—led by Nova Southeastern University faculty members, Dr. James Doan and Dr. Emily F. Schmitt Lavin—were supplied with a DNA test from 23andMe to discover their heritage and ancestral roots. Upon retrieval of the genetic data, some students, like myself, discovered extraordinary surprises. While I was already aware that I was a mixture of Italian from my paternal side, and a mixture of Spaniard, Portuguese and Guatemalan from my maternal side, I never expected my DNA results to appear as they had. I was surprised when the DNA results revealed a considerable portion of my genetic makeup to be East Asian and Native American rather than Spaniard and Portuguese. From my DNA sample, the 23andMe test concluded my main points of origin were Molise, Italy and Mexico-Central America. Using the genealogical data from 23andMe, I interviewed my paternal grandfather (who was born in Molise, Italy) and maternal grandmother (who was born in Guatemala City, Guatemala) to create a personal family narrative to illustrate who I am and how I got here.

Climbing the Branches of a Family Tree: The Genealogical Journey of Angelina's Grandparents

In August 2019, I enrolled in the course, Honors Genetics and Genealogy. The class was led by Nova Southeastern University faculty members, Dr. James Doan and Dr. Emily F. Schmitt Lavin, a professor from the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and a professor from the Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography, respectively. Dr. Doan and Dr. Schmitt were inspired by the work of Spencer Wells to create the course. Wells was a distinguished geneticist and anthropologist known for his studies and findings on the origins of modern humans. Students in the course were supplied with a DNA test from 23andMe to discover their heritage and ancestral roots.

My 23andMe DNA results

Upon retrieval of the genetic data, some students' smiles of anticipation turned to frowns as they received genetic results describing information they already knew. Others like myself, however, discovered extraordinary surprises. While already aware I had possessed some southern European ethnicity from my paternal line (48.0%), specifically Italian ancestry (24.45%), I was surprised when the DNA results also revealed a considerable portion of my genetic makeup as East Asian and Native American (25.8%), specifically Native American (24.4%). From these findings, the 23andMe DNA test concluded my main points of origin were Molise, Italy and Mexico-Central America, specifically Guatemala (see Appendix A, Figure 1).

My maternal haplogroup assignment

Haplogroups are hereditary populations of people sharing a common ancestor on either the paternal (father's) or maternal (mother's) line. Maternal haplogroups are families of

mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) traced back to a single common ancestor (Maternal Haplogroup-23andMe, 2020). Paternal haplogroups are defined by sets of genetic variations on the Y chromosome. Since females derive approximately 50% of their DNA from their mothers and not Y chromosomes from their fathers, I was unable to trace my DNA sample to my paternal haplogroup (Paternal Haplogroup-23andMe, 2020). Nevertheless, my maternal haplogroup finding provided me with genealogical insight as to how my 23andMe analysis identified one of my main points of origin to be Mexico-Central America (Guatemala).

According to 23andMe, I am part of the maternal haplogroup A2 (see Appendix B, Figure 1). All maternal lines were traced to a single woman living in East Africa between 150,000 and 200,000 years ago. This particular woman was a member of haplogroup L. While many of her descendants stayed in Africa, a small group called L3 migrated east across the Red Sea to the tip of the Arabian Peninsula. Two branches emerged from L3 in southwest Asia. Haplogroup N was one of these two groups. The female descendants of haplogroup N spread all over Eurasia, giving rise to new branches from Portugal to Polynesia. A branch of haplogroup N, referred to as haplogroup A, spread across most of Central and East Asia. From there, a branch of A called A2 migrated to either North or South America. My particular branch of A2 migrated to and settled in South America. Such findings explain the ancestral journey of my maternal line, as well as why one of my main points of origin was Mexico-Central America (Guatemala).

Validating my genetic DNA findings

I decided to interview my paternal grandfather (who was born in Molise, Italy) and maternal grandmother (who was born in Guatemala City, Guatemala) to create a personal family history supported by genealogical records from my recent 23andMe ancestry and DNA test.

Family interviews were used as a method of laying the general groundwork for family history and genealogical records were used to validate family interview information. Using this method, I created a detailed picture of who I am and how I got here (see Appendix C, Figures 1 and 2)..

The narratives of two war refugees

The history of the United States of America is one of immigration. Genetically speaking, those of foreign descent are all immigrants. While some disregard, or are unsure of where their ancestors emigrated from, it is important for people who wish to know more about themselves to find out where their ancestors emigrated from, why they fled their home countries (e.g., political or religious persecution, war, poverty, etc.) and why they choose to settle in the United States.

My maternal grandmother and paternal grandfather were both immigrants. Upon completing my genetic DNA analysis, I interviewed my maternal grandmother and paternal grandfather to create a personal family history from genealogical data from my latest 23andMe ancestry and DNA study.

My maternal grandmother, Marta Eugenia Tejeda-De Leon

Marta was born to Maria and Jose Tejeda on March 27, 1949 in Guatemala City, Guatemala. She was the second born of four children: Rolando, her, Marco, and Sandra. Growing up, Marta was a bit of a mischievous child, craving for attention. Marta, her friend Ruben, and her two brothers, Rolando and Marco, would skip school to play with one another in the local park, and pick on one another as most children do. Marta was always full of energy and loved being the center of attention. Little did Marta know that her childhood would have been disrupted so abruptly. Many Guatemalans living in the countryside were unaware that the most brutal civil war in Latin American history was brewing within the country.

Guatemala's 36-year Civil War (1960 - 1966)

In 1954, Jacobo Arbenz, the democratically-elected president, endorsed a land reform in support of the indigenous peasants in Guatemala. Unfortunately, however, Arbenz's support for reform was subject to a great deal of skepticism as it supported peasants at the expense of the United States (U.S.) and other private sectors (PBS, 2011). To defend their interests, the U.S. CIA backed Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas' coup against Arbenz, under the presumption that Arbenz was a "communist" and a "threat" to society (McDonnell, 2018). After the coup, Castillo became president. Little did Castillo realize, however, that this coup would lead to an uprising to overthrow the Guatemalan military regime six years later.

Guatemala's 36-year civil war began in 1960 when left-wing rebel groups started challenging the government military forces (McDonnell, 2018). The country was governed by the autocratic General Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes, who assumed power in 1958 after the assassination of Castillo (McDonnell, 2018). While battles were waged between the military and the left-wing guerrillas, the military threatened anyone perceived sympathetic to the rebels. These included Catholic priests, nuns, and entire indigenous communities. Abduction, torture, rape, and killings—including mutilations and the disposal of civilian bodies—occurred throughout the duration of the war.

The direct effects of war

As years passed, the conditions in the country worsened. Guerrillas began organizing and enlisting young adults to help them fight against the government. Young adults, unwilling to fight or protesting against the war, were often kidnapped or killed (McDonnell, 2018). Marco, Marta's younger brother, was among those killed for protesting. Wanting to protect his eldest

children, Jose formulated a plan to send Marta and Rolando out of Guatemala.

Since Jose worked for the American Embassy and had ties to the United States (U.S.), he decided to use his connections to send his two children there under the impression that they would be "safe." Sandra, Marta's younger sister, remained in Guatemala. According to Jose, Sandra was too young to be sent overseas and was not at an age where her life would be threatened by war; she was too young to be recruited for war.

Welcome to New York

Pan American Airlines arrived at John F. Kennedy International Airport in Queens, New York, on March 14, 1970. At the time, Marta was the first and only one in her family to move to the United States. Upon arrival, she felt lonely and anxious as she had never been away from her family before. When she arrived, she asked herself, "What am I doing here?" She often cried when thinking back to her family and the devastating war that divided them. While she loved him, there were times she resented her father for sending her away at the tender age of 19. Over time, however, she came to the conclusion it was to protect her from being kidnapped, raped, or killed like her brother Marco.

The limitations of monolingualism. Jose sent Marta to Manhattan, New York because he had a trusted friend with whom he believed his daughter would be safe. Jose's friend seemed sweet at first, and she even helped Marta get a job in Avon's cosmetic factory manufacturing soaps. Unfortunately, Marta did not understand English, nor did she know much about American culture before coming to the U.S. The linguistic and cultural structure was different from Guatemala. Remembering her mother's insightful words, "Necessity is the mother of creativity," Marta began using hand signs and gestures to communicate. As time passed, she started to pick

up basic English words by reading people's lips, listening to conversations, and associating with her colleagues at work.

As Marta began to establish herself with her work and a steady income, Jose's friend with whom Marta was staying, decided to move out. Unable to pay the rent on her own, Marta was offered room and board by a friend of the woman in return for babysitting the children of this new woman. This particular woman regarded Marta as her own. She encouraged Marta to pursue her beloved job at Avon and even agreed to drop her off and pick her up from the factory.

New arrivals. A few months after working at the factory, Marta's older brother Rolando and his wife were sent to Manhattan. Marta rented an apartment with a couple as they were the only family she had. While living together, some friends of the family decided to emigrate from Guatemala to the United States. After learning that Marta was living with her brother, one of the friends sent word to Marta's childhood friend, Ruben, that she was staying in Manhattan. After hearing the news, Ruben contacted Rolando to see if he could visit. With permission, Ruben left Guatemala to reconnect with Marta.

Alone again. Without his father's confirmation to return, Rolando decided to go back to Guatemala with his wife three months after their arrival. Marta, afraid to return, felt abandoned. Afraid to be alone again, Marta married her childhood friend, Ruben, with whom she had her first and only child, Deborah, on October 12, 1971.

Violence in Guatemala escalated at the time of Deborah's birth. That year, the newly-elected president Carlos Arana placed the country in a state of siege, allowing the military to exert more power over the people. Such power enabled military-dominated governments to increase violence against rebel groups and indigenous peoples. Jose decided to send his wife,

Maria, to Boston after hearing from a friend that they would be willing to provide her refuge and a job for the time being.

Lost love and new companionship. Six months after Deborah was born, Ruben and Marta's love diminished when Ruben's family offered him rent, a job, and a better life if he would leave Marta and move back to Guatemala with them. Following his family's offer, Ruben offered to take the baby back with him to Guatemala and transfer money to Marta in Manhattan. He tried to convince Marta that doing so would make it simpler for him to make financial arrangements to buy a home for the three of them. Distrustful of his intentions, Marta divorced Ruben and gained full legal custody of the child. Marta, once again on her own, struggled to work and support her child. Maria worked as a babysitter in Boston at the time. Upon learning about Deborah's birth and Marta's divorce, Maria moved to Manhattan to care for the baby while Marta worked. The three moved to Kensington, Brooklyn in 1984.

My paternal grandfather, Antonio Santoro

Italy has had a long history of exploration and migration. There have been two major diasporas (large-scale migration) in the history of Italy. The first diaspora began in 1880, two decades after the unification of Italy. It ended with the rise of fascism in Italy after the First World War in the 1920s and the early 1940s. The second diaspora emerged at the end of the Second World War and ended in the 1970s. Together, these diasporas marked the largest rise in voluntary migration in modern history, with nearly 15,000,000 Italians fleeing the country permanently. My paternal grandfather, Antonio Santoro, was one of the 15,000,000 who fled Italy due to war.

World War II

As France was about to crumble in June 1940 and World War II seemed almost over, Mussolini proclaimed his decision to allow Italy to enter the war on Germany's side. The real war for Italy only began in October 1941 when Mussolini invaded Greece from Albania in a disastrous offensive that forced the Germans to rescue Italian troops and take over Greece themselves. The same year, 250,000 Italian troops sent to assist German invaders in Russia faced untold hardships that left thousands dead (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020). About 85,000 Italian troops failed to make it home from Russia (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020). To many, the war was an almost unending series of military defeats caused by ineffective commanders and the low morale of Italian conscripts fighting far from home for causes they did not believe in.

Molise, Italy during World War II. Isernia is a small city in the region of Molise, nestled between Naples and Rome, in the central part of Italy, between the Carpino and Sordo rivers, west of Campobasso. What was once a big city consisting of bridges, highways and railroads to the north had been devastated by the Allied Forces during the Second World War.

The day of the bombings: Antonio is 76 years old, but he still remembers what it felt like to wake up every morning, wondering if the day would be his last. Antonio was born to Pietro and Maria Campagnale-Santoro at 5:30 am on September 10, 1943 during the Second World War in Isernia. He was the youngest of the four children: Umberto, Franco, Lidia and him.

One week after Antonio's birth, Pietro and his sons Umberto and Franco had gone to their farm to harvest fresh fruit and vegetables, and to tend to the animals. His wife Maria stayed home cooking breakfast and watching over Antonio as her daughter Lidia played out on the yard. At approximately 9:30 am, sirens started sounding for evacuation. In the spur of the moment,

Maria took her baby and hid in the closest room she could find. Although many attacks had affected the city, none killed as many people as this one. The entire house, except for the room, in which he and his mother Maria hid, was destroyed.

After the bombing raid, Pietro and his sons Umberto and Franco returned to find their house completely demolished. They discovered Antonio and Maria alive under the plaster and stone from the house, but not Lidia. Believing there might be another bombing raid, Pietro took his remaining family to their farmhouse for shelter. They stood in the farmhouse with their animals for two months without clothes or much food.

After those two months, Pietro had left the farmhouse to scavenge whatever means he could find from their almost completely ruined city. It was then that Pietro learned Lidia was provided shelter by one of the neighbors. While the family lost no lives, they lost everything to the war except for the farmhouse. This had damaged houses and fields, factories, religious sites, roads, and highways. Since there were no jobs or much livestock, people began to starve. As conditions in Isernia worsened, any remaining glimpse of hope one may have had, vanished.

Coming to the United States. Thirteen years later, Pietro moved his family away for a better life. The 1953 Italia Line ship, the Andrea Doria, departed on February 26, 1956 from Naples, Italy and arrived at Ellis Island on March 5, 1956. Pietro, Umberto, Lidia, and 12-year-old Antonio were only four of the 14,369 passengers on board the ship, hoping for a better life in the United States. Pietro and his immediate family immigrated to the United States with green cards with the aid of Pietro's brother, Tony. The family settled in Brooklyn, New York. At age 20, Antonio met Anne Concetta-Padovano through a blind date. From there, the

two fell in love and moved into Anne's childhood home in Kensington, Brooklyn where they conceived three children; Anthony, my father Vincent, and Annemarie.

Conclusion

While I cannot imagine what life must have been like for Marta or Antonio as war refugees adjusting to life in a foreign land, I am thankful that they made the trip from their countries to the United States. If the two had not settled in Kensington, Brooklyn, then my parents Deborah and Vincent would not have met or conceived my younger brother Anthony and I.

Interviewing my maternal grandmother and paternal grandfather helped me to turn my genealogical discoveries into a story of who I am and how I got here. These stories illustrate how families tend to grow like trees. Immediate families are like branches that produce many leaves, and even though some leaves fall in difficult times, new leaves will emerge in their place. New genealogical discoveries are continuously emerging as families continue to expand and prosper. As such, I look forward to seeing my family tree and those of my peers blossom beautifully with each coming generation.

Appendix A

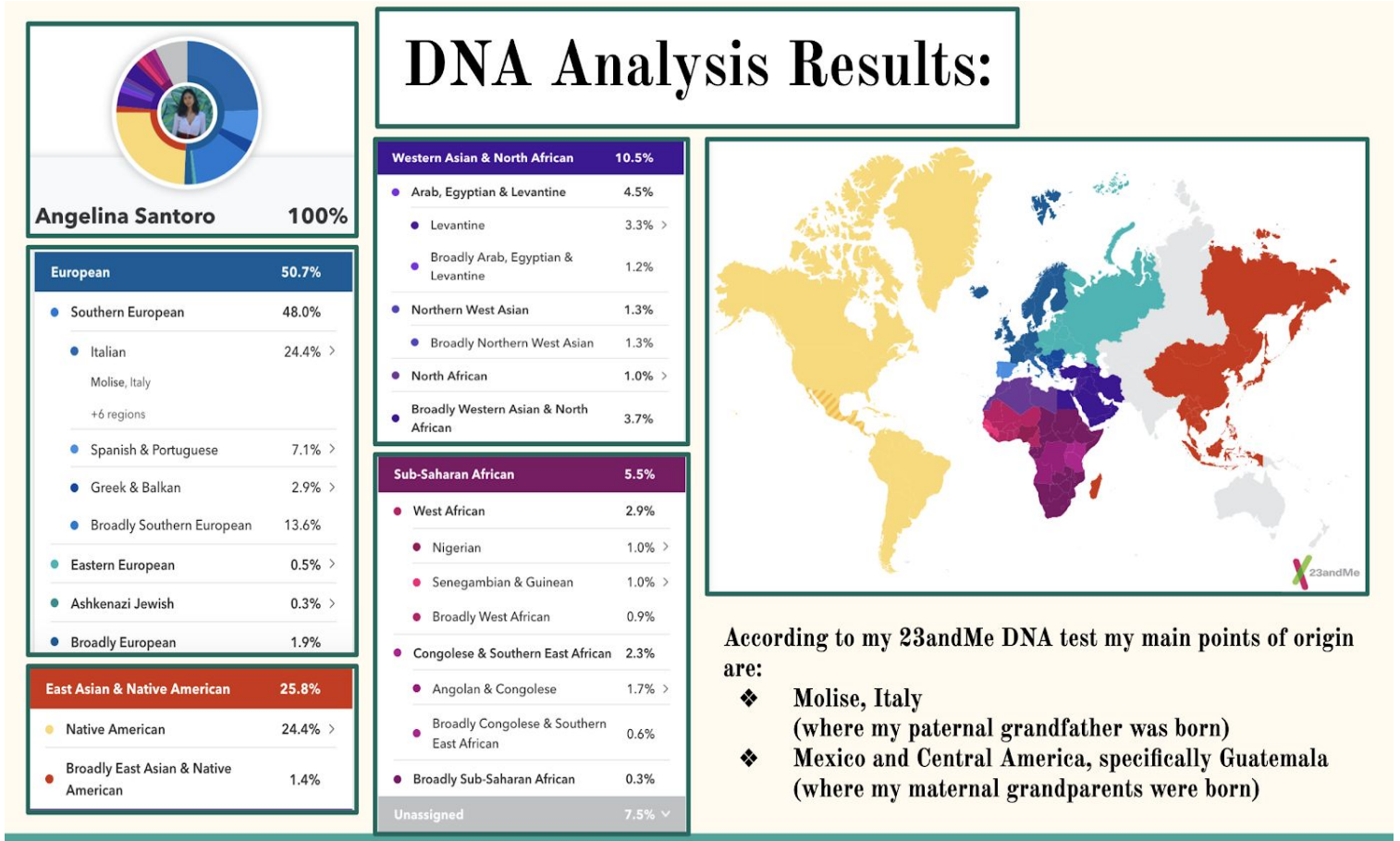


Figure 1: The chart above shows my DNA results from my recent 23andMe DNA test.

Appendix B

Maternal Haplogroup: A2

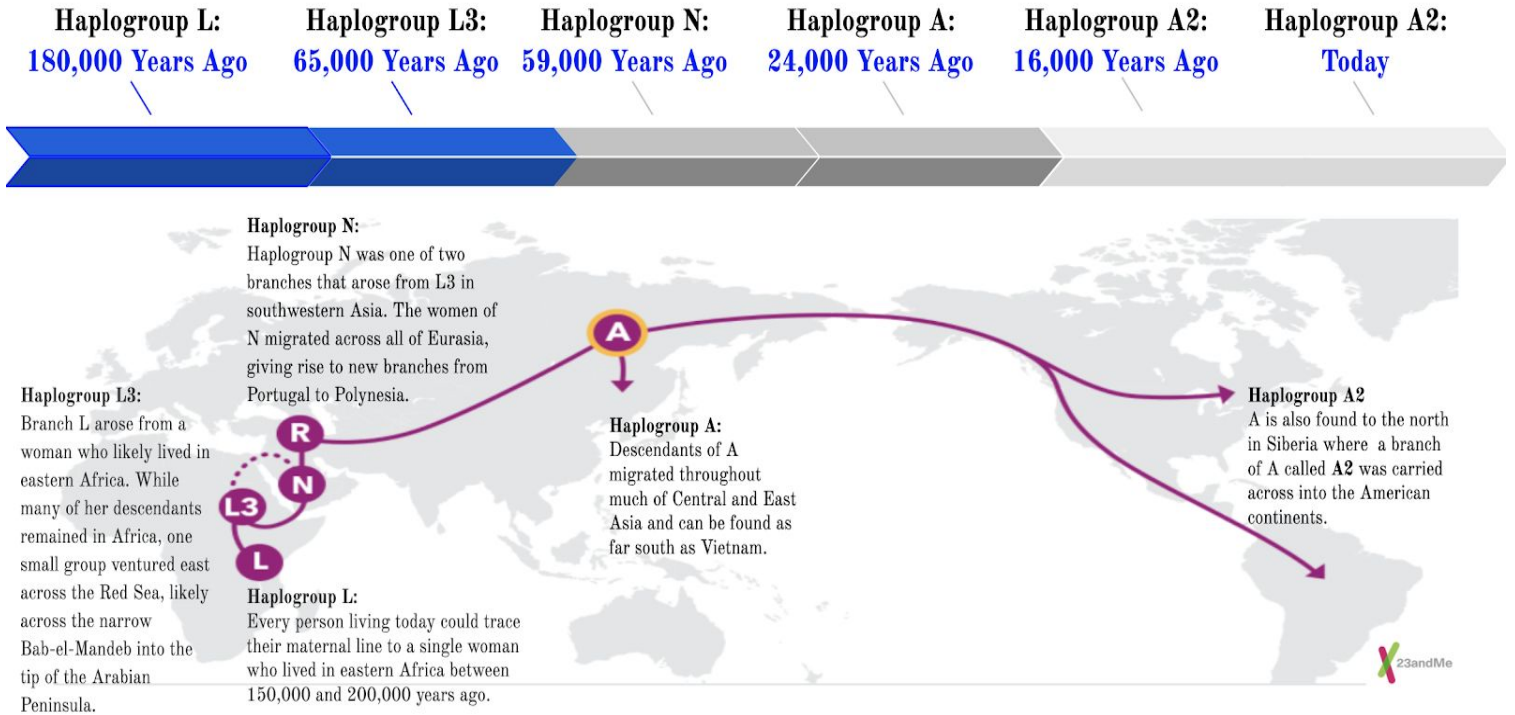


Figure 1: The chart above shows my maternal line’s ancestral journey from Africa 180,000 years ago to Mexico-Central America, specifically Guatemala.

Appendix B

The Life From The Maternal Perspective

Maternal Family Tree

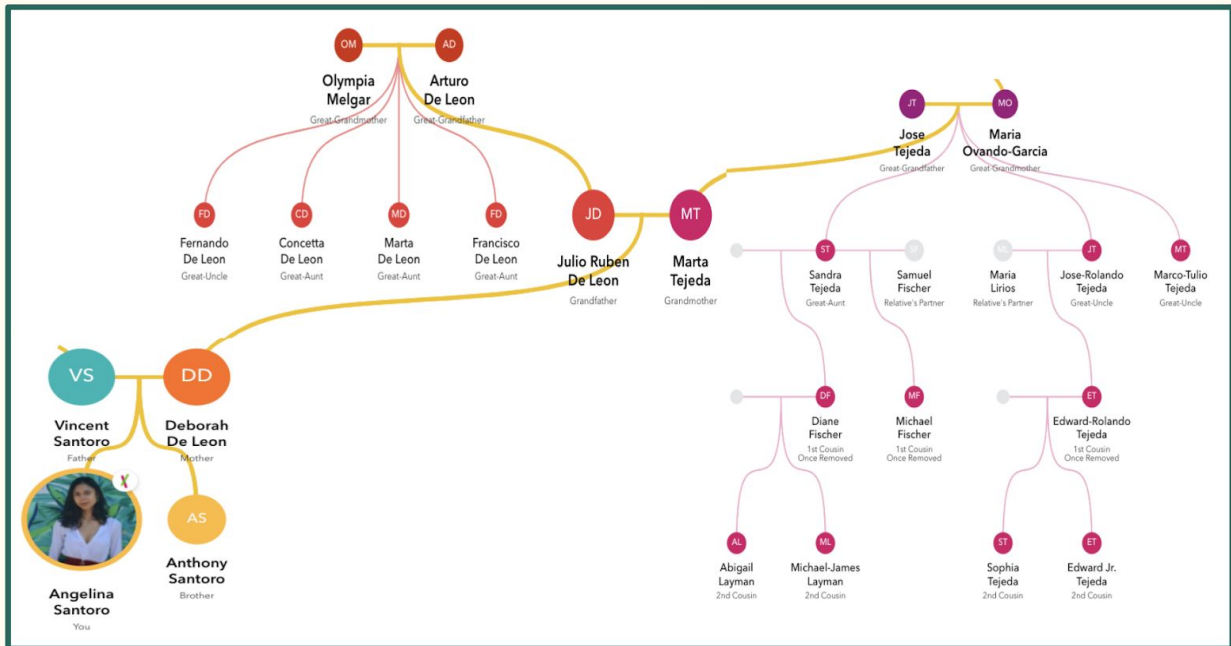


Figure 1: The following is a portion of my family tree created through 23andMe focusing on my maternal line who originated from Mexico-Central America, or more specifically, Guatemala.

The Life From The Paternal Perspective

Paternal Family Tree

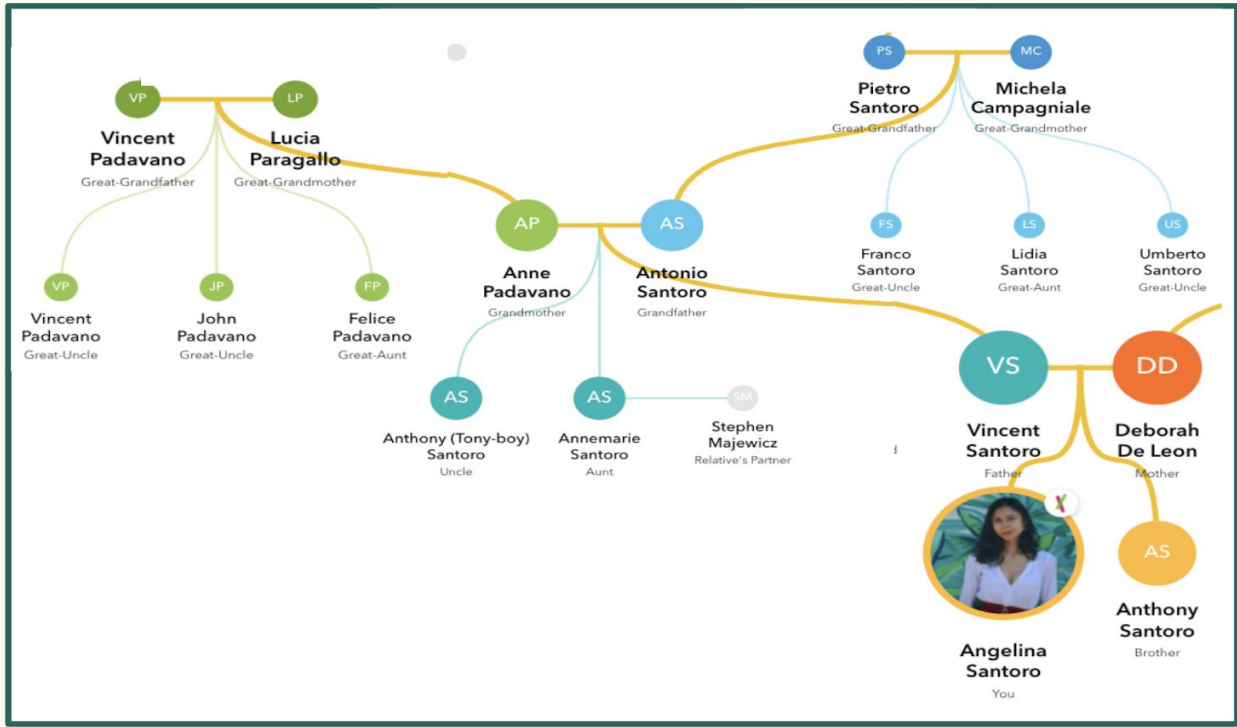


Figure 2: The following is a portion of my family tree created through 23andMe focusing on my paternal line who originated from Molise, Italy.

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