

Bio:

Felix Rubio is a patrol deputy with the Uvalde County Sheriff's Office, where he has been employed for seven years. He served six years with the United States Army National Guard between 2006-2012, including two tours in Iraq.

Kimberly Mata-Rubio is pursuing a degree in history from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas. She is an award-winning journalist, having earned multiple first- and second-place awards from the regional South Texas Press Association and statewide Texas Press Association. During her career with the Uvalde Leader-News, where she served as a staff writer and later assistant editor, she covered crime, public schools, the court system, and city and county governments.

I am Kimberly, this is Felix, Rubio. We are the parents of Alexandria Aniyah – best known as Lexi – Rubio and five other children, who all attended Uvalde public schools during the 2021-22 school year. Kalisa, who completed high school this year; Isaiah, who attends Uvalde High School; David, Morales Junior High; Jahleela, Flores Elementary; and our two youngest children, Julian, 8 and Lexi 10, who were at Robb Elementary. On the morning of May 24, 2022, I dropped Lexi and Julian off at school a little after 7 a.m. My husband and I returned to campus at 8 a.m. for Julian's award ceremony, and again at 10:30 a.m. for Lexi's award ceremony.

Lexi received the good citizen award, and was also recognized for receiving all-A's. At the conclusion of the ceremony, we took photos with her before asking her to pose for a picture with her teacher, Mr. Reyes.

That photo, her last photo, ever, was taken at approximately 10:54 a.m.

To celebrate, we promised to get her ice cream that evening. We told her we loved her, and we would pick her up after school. I can still see her, walking with us toward the exit. In the reel that keeps scrolling across my memories, she turns her head and smiles back at us to acknowledge my promise.

And then we left.

I left my daughter at that school, and that decision will haunt me for the rest of my life. Afterward, Felix dropped me off at my office, the Uvalde Leader-News, and returned home, because it was a rare day off for him, between normal shifts and the security gigs he takes to help make ends meet. I got situated at my desk and began writing about a new business in town when the editorial office started hearing commotion on the police scanner. A shooting on Diaz Street, near Robb Elementary.

It wasn't long before we received word from my son's teacher that they were safe, secure in the classroom. Once evacuated from campus, the children were reunited with parents/guardians at the civic center. My dad picked up Julian from the civic center and took him to my grandmother's house. One of our Robb kids was safe.

We focused on finding Lexi. Bus after bus arrived. But she wasn't on board.

We heard there were children at the local hospital, so we drove over to provide her description. She wasn't there.

My dad drove an hour and a half to San Antonio, to check with University Hospital. At this point, some part of me realized she was gone. In the midst of chaos, I had the urge to return to Robb. We didn't have our car. Traffic was... everywhere. I ran. I ran, barefoot, discarding the flimsy sandals I had chosen that morning to compliment my outfit for my children's award ceremonies. I ran a mile, to the school, my husband behind me.

We sat outside for a while before it became clear we wouldn't receive an answer from law enforcement on scene.

A San Antonio firefighter, Mario Carrillo, eventually gave us a ride back to the civic center, where the district was asking all families who had not been reunited with their children to gather. Soon after we received the news that our daughter was among the 19 students and two teachers that died as a result of gun violence.

We do not want you to think of Lexi as just a number. She was intelligent, compassionate, and athletic. She was quiet. Shy, unless she had a point to make. When she knew she was right, as she so often was, she stood her ground. She was firm, direct, voice unwavering.

So, today, we stand for Lexi, and, as her voice, we demand action. We seek a ban on assault rifles and high-capacity magazines. We understand that for some reason, to some people, to people with money, to people who fund political campaigns, that guns are more important than children, so at this moment we ask for progress. We seek to raise the age to purchase these weapons from 18 to 21 years of age. We seek red flag laws, stronger background checks. We also want to repeal gun manufacturers liability immunity.

You have all seen glimpses of who Lexi was, but I also want to tell you a little about who she would have been. If given the opportunity, Lexi would have made a positive change in this world. She wanted to attend St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas, on a softball scholarship. She wanted to major in math and go on to attend law school. That opportunity was taken from her. She was taken from us.

I'm a reporter, a student, a mom, a runner. I've read to my children since they were in the womb. My husband is a law enforcement officer, an Iraq War veteran. He loves fishing, and our babies. Somewhere out there, a mom is hearing our testimony and thinking to herself, "I can't even imagine their pain," not knowing that our reality will one day be hers, unless we act now.