

THE LOVE ISSUE

February 2023  
Volume 26

# LA HABRA HEIGHTS

Neighbors

Hazel & Elbert:

Celebrating Love and Relationship

Cover photo by Cathleen McGrath Photography

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RESIDENT FEATURE



# Hazel & Elbert:

## Celebrating Love and Relationship

By Wanda Valenzuela | Photos by Cathleen McGrath Photography



When they met 14 years ago at a Hollywood Jazz club, they both knew they had met someone special. For him, she was an angel wearing white. Today, Hazel Ortega and Elbert Irving IV celebrate the life they have created together.

As we sit down and talk, it is clear they have a relationship that is a true inspiration – so how do they do it? “We are committed to each other – and in that commitment is the promise we have made that we are here to make each other shine and grow,” Elbert confirms.

When they met, Hazel was in her beginning years of becoming a successful entrepreneur and Elbert was working in Hollywood in the visual effects department on big movies like “12 Years a Slave” (2013), “The Twilight Saga” (2008-2013) and “Faster” (2010), just to mention a few. Finding inspiration and realizing that they wanted to spend time together, they both made that commitment five years into their relationship.

Hazel has her visualization workshops, where she teaches people to dream big by overcoming limiting beliefs and to realize their dreams. “I teach them by sharing my own journey of growing up poor and living the life of my dreams. We start by going through guided visualization exercises and having them draw it out. And Elbert is creating reels (short movies) for people, helping them to manifest the life they want their lives to be in the future,” she continues, explaining that she created what she wanted in her life and in her life partner, and through Elbert – they are manifesting and creating together.

As they travel the world as entrepreneurs and philanthropists, they make sure to also see where they can assist by being a resource and creating opportunities that will help the local community thrive and grow. Just recently they returned from Gulu in Uganda. Through donations made to their non-profit *High Tide Global*, they have been able to assist in building a much-needed medical building at the *Garden of Knowledge School*. They went to the school and



**Tree of Life Medical Center Ribbon Cutting Ceremony: Gulu, Uganda**

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met the founder Charles Komakech for the ribbon-cutting ceremony, a celebration of speeches and dancing that lasted five hours! The medical building was not only necessary for the school to facilitate over 400 enrolled students (and now they can accept even more children) -- but it is the only medical building in the local district, which now will benefit the entire community! Through Charles and *High Tide Global's* cooperation, they are creating a better future for the children. It is a collaboration that will continue and has as a goal to make the school self-sufficient.

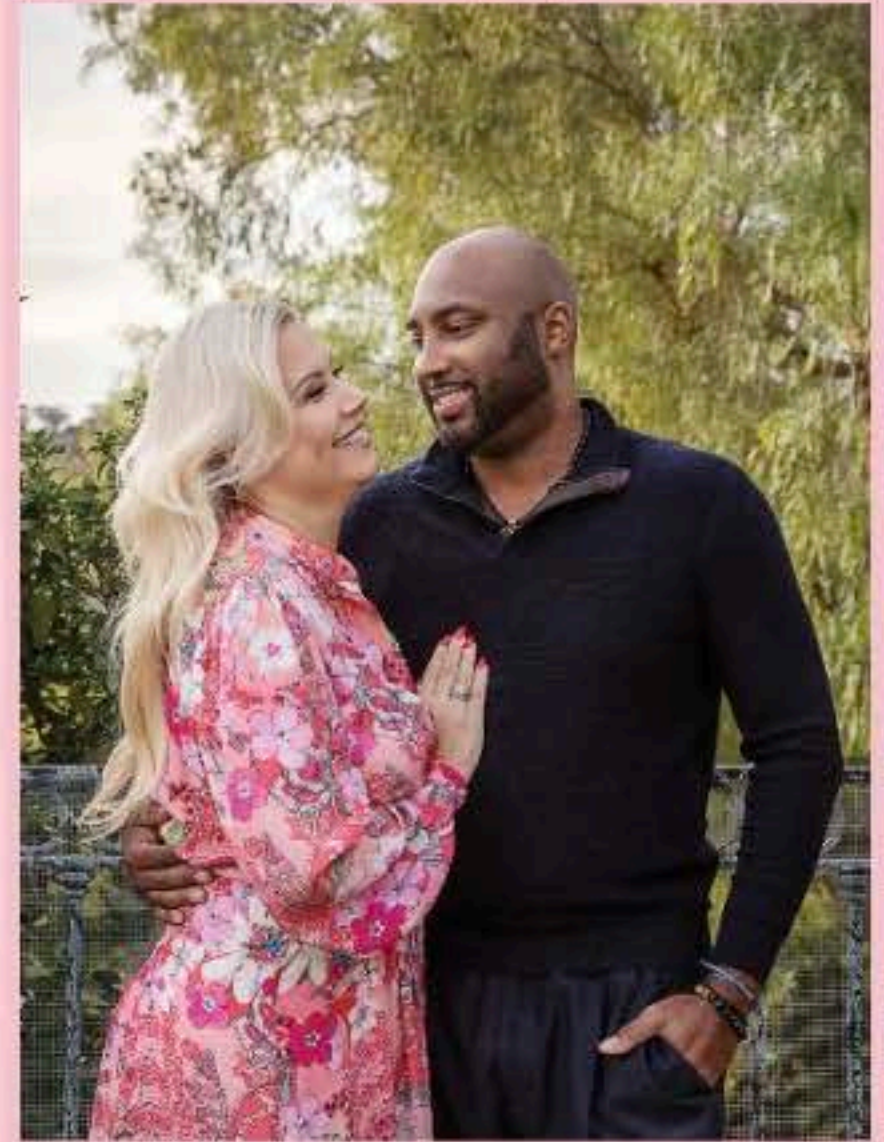
For Hazel and Elbert, it was important to be there in person and meet Charles and the students. Along on the trip was also Hazel's daughter Frances - she was able to experience and see the impact of the work Hazel and Elbert are doing, and how important it is to contribute to society. Through her motivational and inspirational speaking, Hazel hopes to make that impact and influence everyone she meets.

As they travel, they also make sure to experience fun and create amazing memories for themselves. One of Hazel's fondest memories is when they had a champagne brunch at Mount Everest base camp, ate the best seafood in Portugal, and went to ride the world's fastest roller coaster at Ferrari-world theme park in Abu Dhabi (southwest of Dubai).

When they are not traveling, they volunteer at different projects and help where they can. They spent a day in a state prison listening to the powerful stories of the inmates, urging that everyone deserves a second chance. They also went to a wolf sanctuary that helps troubled youth connect with animals and nature. An experience like no other, Elbert also showed he has a connection with everyone he meets - at the sanctuary, he connected with a wolf and gave it a massage.

A big part of their family is their animals, and they are excited to be able to add more dogs to their mix in the near future.

Even with their busy schedules and activities, Hazel and Elbert always make sure they are there for each other





and support what they want to do. "Compromise and communication are a big part of success. I learned not to react in the moment, so now - if there is something that bothers me - I table it, and we talk about it when I am in a better mindset. The key is to create solutions and not repeat what is wrong. I treat him like I want to be treated, and he does the same. He also makes me laugh every day," Hazel gushes. As they have grown, so has their relationship, and there are no expectations - instead they give freely in abundance. "Focus on what you like instead of the things you don't like," Hazel remarks. They are both inspired by love and the importance of showing love as an action.

The message they both bring is, "Create a vision of the relationship you want. And make it big, look for examples of other relationships you admire. Write it down and draw it out. Don't worry about the how, just dream of where you want to be and dream it, and it will show up."



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June 2021  
Volume 6

# LA HABRA HEIGHTS

*Neighbors*



*Hazel Ortega:*

**Living Her Best Life...Everyday.**

RESIDENT FEATURE



# Hazel Ortega:

## Living Her Best Life...Everyday.

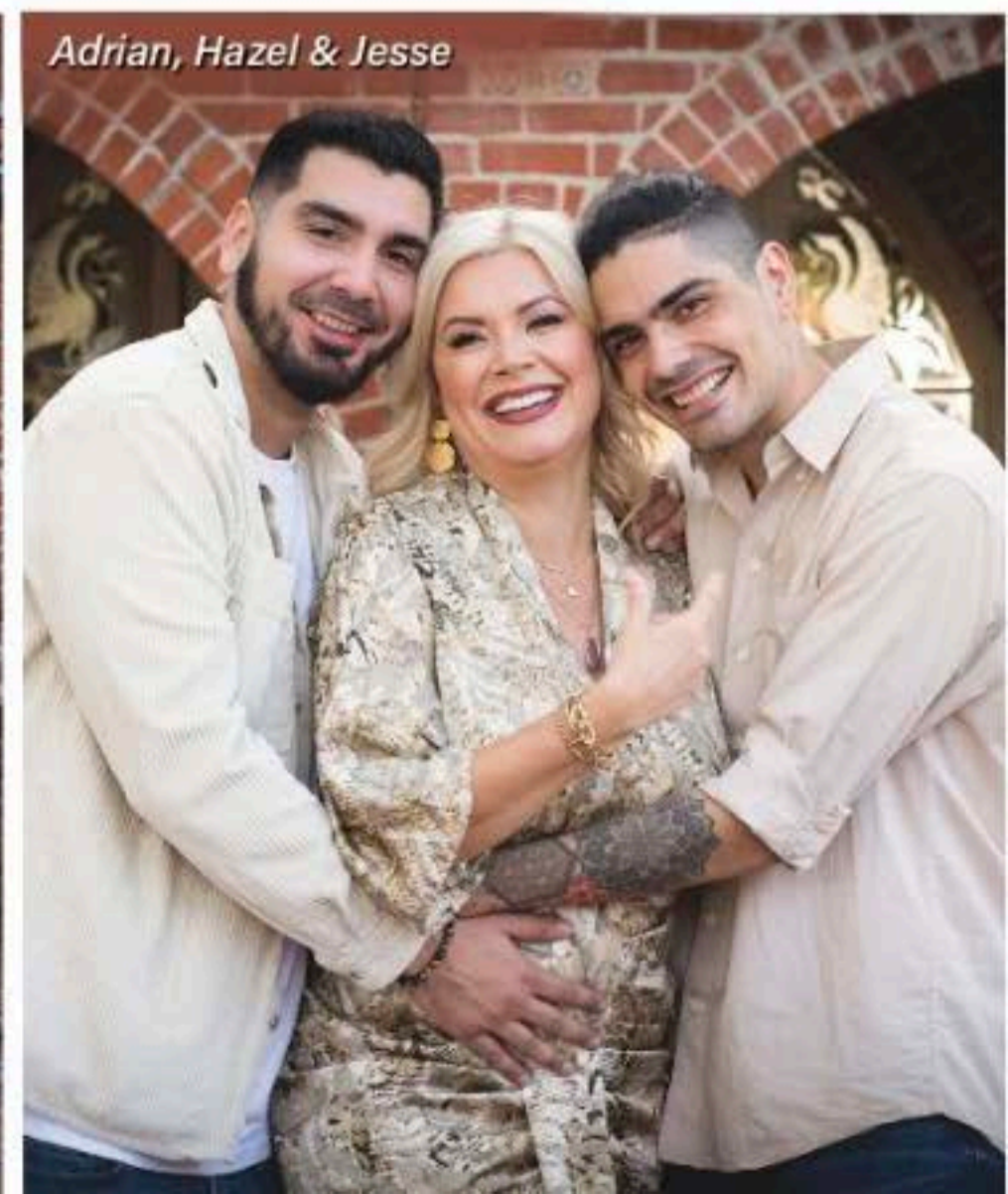
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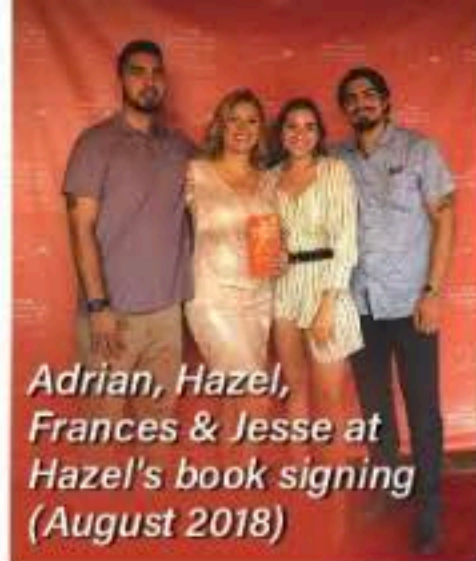
Hazel & Frances



Hazel & Elbert w/Kila & Ramsey



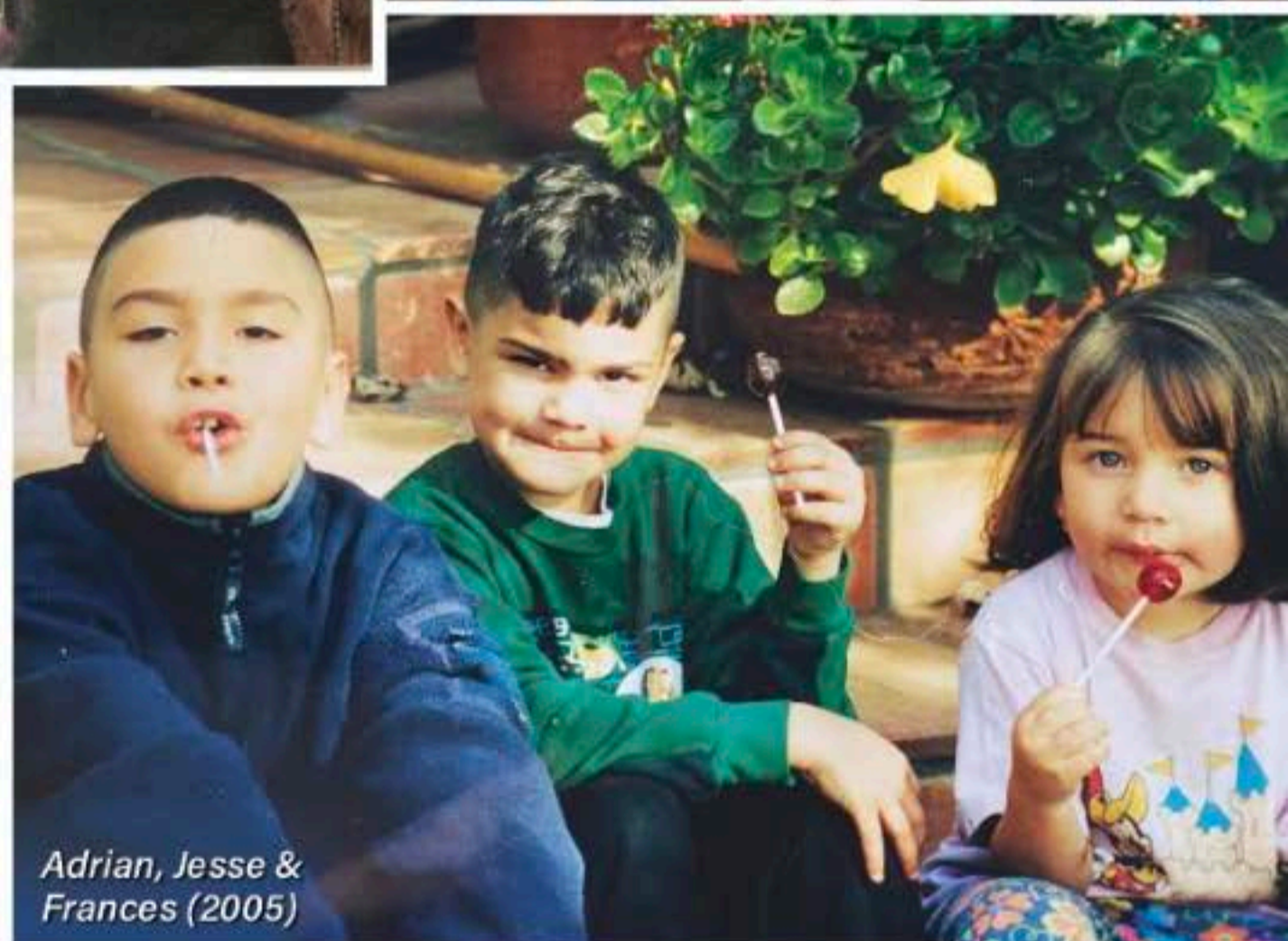
Adrian, Hazel & Jesse



*Adrian, Hazel, Frances & Jesse at Hazel's book signing (August 2018)*



*First Christmas with Mom after release in Tijuana, Mexico (2014)*



*Adrian, Jesse & Frances (2005)*

**H**azel has lived life in the fast lane, and she is achieving all her wildest dreams.

Hazel has come a long way from her 800 square foot apartment in Downtown Los Angeles. She recalls the kids in the neighborhood were routinely involved in drugs and gangs. Teen pregnancy was a huge issue. Hazel's mother was a single with five children and living on welfare. Hazel was not getting along with her sisters.

After 17 years of employment as a Legal Secretary, she developed carpal tunnel syndrome. Ironically, this workplace injury catapulted her success. She realized it was time for her to go back to school. Her supervisor accommodated her modified schedule for school and she persevered; working 9-5 daily and attending school from 7-10pm every day.

Hazel credits her education for opening doors to her dreams. Getting her high school diploma at age 30 changed her life. She earned her AA Degree from East Los Angeles College and her Bachelor of Arts majoring in Psychology and Interdisciplinary Studies at Cal State Dominguez Hills, where she attended full time on the weekends and finished her degree in one and a half years. She pushed through and received her master's degree in educational psychology at Alliant International University. She enrolled in the PhD program to be a psychologist; she was determined to learn to get along with her sisters to transform her life.

In 2006, she started Ortega Counseling Center in her garage in Whittier. It was all done on a shoestring budget, but eventually her business grew, and she began to make money. She was flying high, and things were starting to look up for her and her family. Her kids were doing great. She was traveling and just bought a new car. Life was going amazingly well.

Then reality hit. She came home from work one day and checked her mailbox. Sitting there were two letters, one from her mother and one from her father; both were written from jail. It was such a contrast to the life she had built for herself. It was a huge reality check. She was living an incredible life and no one outside of her family knew that

both of her parents were in jail. She wondered if her colleagues and friends would even believe her if she told them. From the outside, she looked like she was living a charmed life. Hazel claims, "It was my dirty little secret. It was bittersweet, I suppose, I hated thinking of them in jail, but here I was, their daughter, creating a life I loved. I got out. I might have ended up where they did, but I chose another path. I was making a life that was not only fulfilling basic needs but was well on its way to surpassing them."

Today Ortega Counseling Center is still in Whittier but is now located in a building owned by Hazel. It is the largest counseling center for injured workers in the state. They contribute to their local city office, police, and firefighters. Supporting their community is at the top of their list. Hazel remembers how she went from welfare and bounced checks to abundance, private jets, and financial freedom. She grew up in constant chaos and drama, and now she lives a peaceful and drama-free life, that she has created through persistence and hard work.

"You are creating your reality. If you want more money, be on the lookout for how many times you talk about not having any. If you do not want more money, keep complaining. Pay close attention to the



words you use. This is not easy but be diligent and catch yourself when you are withholding kindness or assuming negative ideas. When you change your operating system, you get to live a bigger, better life. It's like turning your life from black and white into brilliant Technicolor," Hazel explains.

Hazel is the author of the Amazon best-selling book *"From Bounced Checks to Private Jets: The Mastery of Miracles"*. She was invited to speak across the globe, as far away as Japan. Her book was translated into Spanish and Amharic (Ethiopia). Her desire is to reach and inspire as many people as she can. Her story is available for purchase and download on Amazon, it has already moved so many. Hazel spoke at a conference about goals setting and childhood trauma. A producer in the audience approached her with interest of making a feature film on the story of her life.

In 2020, she was nominated as a "Latina of Influence" by *Hispanic Lifestyle Magazine*. She is a member of the Entrepreneur Organization (EO), a global organization with over thirteen-thousand members. She has been a member for five years and travels all around the world to meet and learn from other entrepreneurs. She attended the Entrepreneurs Master's Program at MIT and EO Universities around the world.

Hazel is living her best life. Everyday. She lives with her partner Elbert Irving. They met 13 years ago at a lounge in Hollywood. Hazel reminisces, "We have traveled the world together and one of our best memories was drinking champagne and hitting golf balls at Mount Everest Summit." We love to play golf, travel, and eat at great restaurants and spending time with friends and family." Together they run Savvy Socks. She also is one of the founders of The Nixon Steakhouse in Whittier, named a top restaurant by the *LA Times*.

In 2018, she wrote about her relationship, "It seems a little formal, but we made an agreement at that very moment and that is when seeing each other became a relationship. We made a commitment to be great people together. We didn't get into any details. We just became softer and more loving toward one another. We

became more sensitive and responsive. There was no going back to inconsequential and vague. We were in it.

This is an ongoing practice. We are always choosing the way we relate to one another. I constantly remind myself that I want to be in this super-powered relationship with him. I am committed to loving him and I give him my time and attention. We make each other better."

Hazel's daughter, Frances, 23, is a nursing student at West Coast University and graduates this month. She works at Presbyterian Hospital in Whittier as a Nurse Assistant.

Because of the difficulties her family was facing, Hazel raised her two brothers Jesse and Adrian. She calls them her kids, she is their "Sister Mom". Jesse is a Music Rapper and Inventor. He is working on starting his first business. He has an 8-month-old son, Jude. Adrian is 27 years old and is a stock day trader.

Hazel shares, "Kids naturally move away from their parents a bit as they grow up, but I want to make sure my kids know how loved they are, so I am making more and more efforts with them as they get older. When I made a list of things that make me happy, the item at the top of the list was talking to my kids every day. It makes us more present in each other's lives. So, I asked them to please let me hear from them in some way each day. We talk or at least text daily and it deepened our relationships so much. It's a small action, but I seek them out and they respond. This has made my kids more present with one another as well."



Hazel & her siblings  
Claudia, Jeannette, Rosie,  
Brenda, Adrian & Jesse



Hazel & Frances,  
6 months (1999)



Elbert & Hazel



Hazel with Adrian,  
5 & Jesse, 3 (2001)



Hazel & her kids