

Monika: Today I will be interviewing Patricia Cunningham. So, the first question I have to ask you is: Was the decision to move to the U.S yours or your sisters?

Patricia: It was my decision

Monika: Why?

Patricia: After my mother died, I really have nothing to look forward, I felt... I felt lonely. Even though I still had my brother's and sisters, I just wanted a change. So, my older sister that was already living in the United States asked me if I wanted to, you know, come to the United States and live with her. So, I said yes.

Monika: Okay, and how did you feel leaving Ecuador and your family?

Patricia: Um... I didn't really feel anything at that time.

Monika: Okay, and how was the arrival here?

Patricia: Um... the arrival was okay. I remember going to the Lincoln Tunnel and they were telling me that I was going underwater and you know, it was scary to know that we were driving under the water, but anyway I got here and it was late at night. All I could remember is getting to the place and going to bed.

Monika: And what was the most difficult thing you faced when you arrived here?

Patricia: I think it was almost a week into the United States that it finally hit me that my life was totally different. I was 21 years old and I was in the house most of the time, yes, most of the time by myself from the morning to 5 o'clock in the day that my sister would arrive. Because I was, I actually came to the United States to take care of her kids. She had a baby just born and one that was 18 months old, so it was hard for a 21 year old to go through that.

Monika: Did you feel obligated to take care of your sister's kids 24/7 without pay and stopping your education because she brought you here to the U.S?

Patricia: Well, when I came to the United States I knew I was coming to help her with the kids. I just didn't know how different, how lonely, it was going to be. Not speaking the language, not knowing anybody and no, I was not obligated. I came under my own will looking for something, for a new life.

Monika: Okay, and how was your first job experience?

Patricia: My first job experience was... actually after four years, four to five years of living in the United States. I started working outside the house. The kids were older so I was able to get a job because the kids were put into preschool, they were like four or five. I don't really remember, but my first job was working for Roy Rogers, a fast food place and I actually hate it. But, I don't know for whatever reason I felt embarrassed working there, but I did it. I was there for over a year or something else, that was long ago.

Monika: Would you have wanted to complete a degree at college?

Patricia: Yes, that was one of my dreams to do so, but I should not blame anybody but myself for not doing it. I probably had the opportunity, but my concern was always money, money, money. I did not want to get any loans and when I asked for help from the government, I was denied, so I never completed my degree. I just finished my ESL program and that's it.

Monika: And was it harder to make friends/relationships with others because of the language barrier or your accent?

Patricia: I think the problem was not the language, I think it was more just me being shy. I was shy, I had low self-esteem, I didn't really feel confident and so usually people, the people that I talked to actually talked to me first. I never approach anybody, so I was able to count my friends on those days on my fingers, one two three. I didn't have more than that, people that I knew in those days

Monika: How did it finally feel when you reached financial stability and started raising your own family?

Patricia: Oh, actually it was a blessing because when I finally married in 1998, you know I married a great man and I had two daughters. I didn't have to work when my kids were little and even after that, I

was never forced to work. My husband was able to provide for the family and we had a good life, but you know what, I wanted to work and make my own money so, you know, I still work

Monika: And was it difficult for you to raise children without your family around?

P: It was not difficult, no. I love taking care of my kids. I did feel some kind of uh... frustrated because my husband's job was not the easiest job; as the wife of a firefighter I had a lot of fears that something was going to happen to my husband, but no. I was, I was okay to take care of kids

Monika: How did it feel when you were able to see your family in Ecuador after living in the U.S for so long?

Patricia: Well, when I went to see them after like, I think it was like 10 years, that was even before I got married I went to see them. It was great, it was great to visit them, to be with them, but I wanted to come back to the United States. It was not...it didn't feel like my home anymore, but it was nice to see the family.

Monika: Do you believe all the hardships you faced while coming here was worth it seeing like everything you have achieved?

Patricia: Oh definitely, yes. Everything was worth it. Whatever I went through I can not even remember anymore. Right now I'm remembering because you are asking me, but I don't go back there. I'm living in the present and looking to the future, maybe, but right now I just enjoy the time with my husband and my daughter's and I can not ask for anything more than what I have right now. I feel blessed.

Monika: Okay and thank you. And that's all the questions I have for you today.

Patricia: Thank you

