

00:00:01 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

My name is Joshua Deulofeu and I'm a first year student at Middlesex College and I'm currently with Rubi Perez, who is my mother and is the person that I'll be interviewing for my oral history project.

00:00:13 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Hello. I'm Rubi Perez, Joshua's mother. I'm very proud to be his mother and I'm here to do this interview with him.

00:00:27 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

OK, so let's get started. Can you describe your childhood in Mexico and what your daily life was like before your father moved to the United States?

00:00:39 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Sure. I remember my childhood. It was really, between fun and sad in the meantime because I used to be a student, same as you, as well as my siblings. But we were missing one part of the family, which is was my father. He was here in the USA, working hard to send money to us to continue our education and to be our best. There [Mexico], my childhood, I remember. We did a lot of parties, pinatas, celebrations, holidays spent with family. Things like that. I was supporting my mother, and I was supporting my sisters as well. And it was so much fun. I will come to a big celebration like Christmas, it was between sweet and sour because my dad was always missing in the picture.

00:01:48 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

Almost after she left, yeah.

00:01:52 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Yeah, it was really. But it was a good it was a good time. You know, to realize and I think being more understanding with why he was taking that decision to move to a different country to give us a better quality of life to all of us.

00:02:15 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

Right.

00:02:18 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

So, what did him leaving mean for the future? For you and your family?

00:02:30 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

What I mean by that uh, him coming to the United States. What does that mean for like the goals of you, your sisters and your mother?

00:02:40 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Well, his goal was to working hard as well and like I said before. The purpose it was to give us a better quality life for all of us in education. And his goal was bring, bring all of us to USA. Honestly to us,

continue our school and. Working over progress and. Having one of the best education you know in our family, because most of my family, they don't really have education.

00:03:24 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

So him leaving didn't change any of your goals. The whole goal for your from your parents was to give you guys a better quality of life with like education, career.

00:03:30 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Career, yes. And then also very dangerous in Mexico with all that's going on with. You know, political problems, and therein is the lifestyle. It was kind of danger at one point. And that's why we he he's the one to bring all of us here.

00:03:57 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

So the move to the United States was more of a good thing for like the better life and everything, but you all.

00:04:03 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Yes, that was the purpose, yes.

00:04:08 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

So moving on from, I guess your life in Mexico. How was it like actually trying to come to United States your first time, your first experience?

00:04:19 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Well, my first experience. To come to USA, it was extremely very surprising. It honestly wasn't my plan to come here. I remember that I was supposed to go to college at the time and my mother received a phone call from my father. Obviously they already have a plan for all of us. And uh, my mom says well. "You come with me, and your little sister". And then I was like, "what? I was supposed to go to college." And she's like, "no, your father wants a better life for you. Okay?" So we start packing our stuff and everything, and the next few days. Then we come to. To pretty much. I guess. That's the uh, the border and uh. Come to USA.

00:05:46 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

So, do you remember the emotions you felt regarding the impacts or like how your emotions impacted you during the experience cause? It wasn't your. Your first time wasn't successful. You were captured. So what was it like? Emotionally, throughout the entire time of just how you started and how you ended up getting recaptured, like what was it like throughout the entire experience?

00:06:11 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Well we got the tickets from Mexico to Agua Prieta, which is Sonora. And my mom says "we got this, and we're gonna go to meet your father. We haven't seen him for many, many years." And it was kind of excited and sad in the meantime because I we leave my siblings behind. And my friends and all feeling all my dreams it was there [Mexico]. And my dad obviously have a different picture for us to see him, all of

us too. A better quality of life, obviously. And I was kind of upset and happy in the meantime. So, we passed the, we passed the line. To get the tickets, we get the plane and then we fly. First time me being in the plane it was a lot of things coming in my mind. UM&UM. We hid obviously in the town. My mom was the most excited person in the world to see my father. And I just hugged my mom and my sister and I'm like, OK, so let's do this together.

00:07:58 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

So how did the attempt end? Because it obviously failed. You gotta try 2 times. How was it that everything kind of fell apart?

00:08:08 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Yeah, the first time the guy, the guide. They're calling coyote. Crossing us it was. Between all of us, there was like 12,12 people together in the group. But it was different kind of groups. We don't even know anybody. And my group only know my mom and my sister. Nobody, it was all strangers. The guy said you guys packing your stuff. You, you gonna take the, the necessities like water, your few snacks and your pocketbook and your hoodies and that's it. So, my mom says well, we obviously at that time we don't have cell phones. No, we don't have nothing. We can't take anything else. So what I did, I start writing down the phone numbers in my legs. In case something happened, at least I know the numbers of my dad to contact or something. So then. Uh, the, the taxi come to pick us up in the hotel and then the guy says, well, when you see the next,next cross, like next Road, then we're gonna leave you there and then you guys need to run. You guys need to run until you guys come until you meet all of you guys together because they was groups by groups like three of us at at the time until all twelve of us would get together and walk. So, then we, we I was the first group, me, my mom, and my sister. Boom. We walk. For maybe 10 minutes and then the guy always having calculated for all of us until we went, met all of us together. So and then we walking for hours, hours, hours. We didn't stop until one, one point. Like we can't walk anymore. It was 3:00 in the morning. We walk all night,thirsty. We tired we, you know, exhausted. So when the guy said, well, let's take a nap. And then around 5:00 in the morning and we had to take the next step, which is. We're going to run and we're going to cross that and then the guys, somebody come to pick it, pick it, pick you guys up. So we're sleeping picking up. When we heard the dogs. And people looking for flashing our faces, they say, come on. Get up. Get up. He needs to get up. Ohh Mexicans, why are you guys here? You don't understand. And then we said no. We need money. No money in Mexico. We come here to, to work, we want just to work. We wants to work. And he's like, well, too bad. Well, you guys need to go back to your country. So then back it up. And then we go back again. The second time I can continue, right?

00:11:24 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

Yeah. I guess to transition to the next question, what was it like for you to try again?

00:11:31 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Well, we was like obviously we were exhausted. We walked so many hours, so we had to recover again. For another two days. The guy said, well, we gotta have to try again. Until, we pass. And that's what we did. So the guy, in the room with all of us. Therewas a lady with a baby. And the guy says he clearly says. Whoever's come behind. I don't respond and it's not my problem. I don't care. You guys pay me too, Pass you and I'm not responsible for you guys. And if, if the migra the border people ask you? Yep, who

who is the leader? Or Who took you? You're gonna say nobody. I went by myself is. We just met in, in the in the walk in that obviously was for his safety. That's why so, we feel looking each other. And I'm like it was only four ladies, all of us. My mom, the lady, my sister and the baby. And everybody was gentlemen's, like guys. So anyway, we helping each other, we walking, we blah, blah, blah. So we coming in and we're walking again the second time for many hours. Again, many hours. We so tired and it started raining and the guys said, well, we don't have much time. We just take a quick nap underneath the river. It was like a little little toquito, we call then within half an hour we recover and we keep going. But we see a lot of like, like a few steps. It was the river. The literal river with a lot of bushes and then we, we're asking him, like really we're gonna cross that? And the guy said yes, that's the only way we can go. I was like, nobody can swim. And I was so worried for my mom and my young sister. I said, well, that's the plan, mom and the guy said, well, the water is going to go all the way to your neck. No more than that because it hasn't rained for day, so we're safe. OK, so we trust this guy even I'm, I'm shaking myself. And I was like, so afraid. So I got my sister in my shoulders and I'm pulling my mom and it was like a little chain up for all of us, to go and the guy says watch because they send the light around lights to look in US.

00:14:13 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

The helicopters.

00:14:14 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Yeah, helicopters. And uh, the guy said well, when you see the helicopters, so don't, don't, don't be afraid. You just be quiet. And try to get down that way these guys they not see you guys. OK. That's what we did. And we keep walking and it just water was chill and it was like the bushes. It was very, very. I don't know in my head so many things coming in my mind could be something could be wrong and I'm dying here. I don't know. So we pass. We cross the the river. Thank God we did it. All of us. We were safe. And there was called a little hill, like a mountain that goes up and down. So we're going up. We try to walking. So, we walking and then the lady fell and twisted her ankle, and fell all the way down there.

00:15:18 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

Down the mountain.

Yes all the way underneath. And uh, we were behind. We're running. To try to catch her, but she was all the way down there and the baby she was carrying the baby. And I know she was screaming. She was hysterical. She was screaming. Like what happened? And then the guy said you cannot scream shut up. Shut up. So, we're like, Oh my God, she needs help. And all of us. And when we look at the baby, the baby was bleeding. She was bleeding. She can't walk. And the baby died. Literally, right there. Because she's squeezed the baby. And the guy, we told the guy he need to come back and the guy said I don't care. You guys decide if you guys continue, or it's not my problem. And I was like, all of us we said that this is your life. It's you guys. You guys decide whatever you're going to do. But I'm not coming back. You guys continue and then the, the lady says. Well, I'll stay here because I know for sure. They come to pick me up. We are all my heart, my broken. My heart was broken, my mom crying. All of us were crying. We are upset, we sad, but we scared because there was a lot of groups of people around. We don't know if they have the guns, they have something. So I continued with my mom and my sister. I just care about them. I feel so terrible.

00:16:41 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

You had no choice but to continue.

00:16:41 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

And continue. Yeah, because the guys literally tell us.

00:16:48 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

You didn't have a choice.

00:16:48 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

It was really. Until today, I'm still. Feel so terrible. Really sad.

00:17:00 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

So, transitioning into after crossing. What was it like for you to, I guess, the car ride to America and from Arizona to New Jersey and how you eventually met up with your father? What was that reunion like? And finally getting in the USA.

00:17:22 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

We, after we cross the border, we now we in Arizona we recover again for a few days until my dad collect the whole money the entire money to send this guy pay this guy. That way he can pay and we can release us. But it was like we still no can't believe it. What? What? What happened other time it was really frustrated and and we really upset. But we just hugged my mom. It was OK my dad, my sister, we felt terrible for the lady. UM. The guy says, well, you guys not flying. We gonna take a car, we gonna drive. And we drove. We drove for many, many hours for days. It was really. Oh my God, that was the more exhausting ride ever had. With no, we need to eat just snacks, once in a while sandwich, but that's it. We can't stop. W, it was 2, 2 drivers. The guy and somebody else. They taking turns. That, that, that ride took us like maybe two weeks just to get to New Jersey. Yeah. we're sitting. In the back seats, we come back, we take a nap, we eat, we just go pee and come back and keep continue. And uh, It was really exhausted.

00:19:02 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

But you've actually met with your father. What was that like?

00:19:04 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Yeah, but well, we we came to. In north, in New Brunswick. And we waiting for my dad to we come to around 2:00 A.M, I remember and. My dad leaving work at 5:00 A.M, so we're waiting for another three hours. And right in the street, we were waiting there. We see people, strangers, and we have no idea what's going on. I was so like, so lost and everything and. Crazy. So then my dad come back and pick us up. And my dad, still did not have a place to all of us stay so we. Our home, it was a car in the street. This is how I, I come to USA. Because, uh, my dad used to live in a small room and that room uh, we can't- he can't bring people, so he needs to go. He, and then we decide to sleep in the car for a few days until we find, uh, something to stay.

00:20:29 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

Once you and your family settled, then you, your mom and your sister went to all kind of just. Like you said, found your place and stabilize things. When you finally have the time to absorb what was going on around you, what was your like, your- your initial impressions of the United States? And when you really started living here, what were the challenges you faced as someone without rights and protection?

00:20:49 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Many challenge. Many. Number one, it was the language. Number two, it was to be Spanish, to be Mexican. We, get up so early in the morning and go to work. I thought when I was in Mexico, I thought my dad was working in the office. I never thought that he, he wake up so early and go to work. Pushing pallets and work in the cold. I never know that. And, and me to to. It was like a student and come here to work. It was really difficult for me, for my sister, for my mom, for all of us. We wake up at 3:00 in the morning every day. We don't have a car. We don't have any ride. We walk to these offices. Looking for a job. Agencies. Agencies. And we went, we went to, to factory, to factory, to factory like that continue like that. But the most difficult was the language. And have no paper. No, no, nothing in this country. Like we felt like we were in a cage.

00:22:16 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

So, with those obstacles in mind. How did you and your family navigate those things in the early years of coming here with the work, like the work environment in your early years in America, especially with those like language barriers and other limitations, how was it like trying to work through that, things like work through stuff?

00:22:38 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Well, I, I work like that for many years until I get tired to, to looking for somebody to translate it for me to to, to see they they always seem people minimize us because we're immigrants. And we feel like useless or like. They don't care about the emotions that we have or. For example, my mom, no English, no nothing, she was treated like, like, whatever. And I said no, you know what? I can't, if I live in this country, my dad bring me here for, for get a better quality life. So I had to get my shit together and sorry for my language and uh. Work for me like educate myself, obviously. Obviously they don't have money to send me to school here because everything was really expensive at the time and we were still working to bring my other siblings to USA. So I say, you know what, let me start studying myself. And read and learn myself because I can't live like this. If I'm gonna be one of those people, live in this country. I had to put myself in better circumstances and educate myself.

00:24:02 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

Right. One of the big things that helped you in the beginning. Obviously, I know this because I'm your son, but it's your husband. He was a very influential person in your life and more your early years of being a resident in the United States. How, did meeting your husband influenced your life and aspirations, in your early years? Like how did that put you want a better trajectory in life. What did he do for you and how did he help?

00:24:30 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Well, he, he barely speak Spanish at the time and I think that helped me a lot to learn English with him too, but. I was so in love and I just want to be uh the best for myself and for my family because. I already have. I was pregnant and I said, you know what, I had to push myself and, and he supported me 100%. To, to get better and continue working for our family.

00:25:11 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

So once you met him, it became more of a family oriented thing where it was you would have focused on life, that you could build together? Okay. So, what key events in your life after meeting him and everything else. What are those, what things push you to have a good career.

00:25:30 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

You (Joshua). You, you and your brother. I said I want to give you better education. For them, because they, you guys are the future. I, I tried to do myself a better person to, to, give you better quality life for you guys. I know my dad and my mom try so hard to all of us. Be success. And then I understand now as a parent, how stressful, could be. But the only thing that we want is the you guys have a better, quality of life. Education is most important. For the future, for this country, for the kids behind you guys, now. You guys now growing. What are you guys cannot share with these kids, you know? To appreciation. For the values for education, it's very, very important. So that's what I wanted for you guys.

00:26:32 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

Meaning your kids? Yeah.

00:26:34 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Meaning you and your brother and the other kids too.

00:26:43 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

Okay. Kind of explains to me more of um, your career, like obviously with the motivation of having a family and your husband and all those things. How did it come, or, how did it start with you being uh a, very disadvantaged immigrant to you want it to be as successful as possible. How? Just give me a brief timeline of like, your career.

00:27:09 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Well, Before I used to work with three, three jobs at one point. I work so hard. Even with your dad. Like my, my, my, quality of life it was poorly. How do you say it? Um, extremely. Like. I want to be somebody. I just want to have a career or something. I can't live like this. So then I start, you know, working hard and learning until. My sister used to work at restaurant and she called me and she's like Rubi, you, I know you're looking for a job. And uh, and then I said, how about you come and join, join work with me? So at the time, well, obviously we, we, moved to New Jersey because before that we used to live in Massachusetts for, for many years. And then we moved back to New Jersey. So I didn't have a job at the time. So my sisters is like come. So this is how I come for the first time at Cheesecake Factory. I started working as a baker and uh, my English, it was poorly. You know. Um, for 100%, maybe it was .5. Nothing. I didn't speak nothing. And I said no, I had to push myself to do this and every day I have homework for myself. Learning. watching TV in English. Listen music. And a year passed by, two years passed by, three years passed by, four years passed by. I'm like, I can't. I don't want to do this over and over. But, that,

that helped me a lot because I used to support the cashier. This is how I start picking more my English. So, I moved to food runner now as a runner. Uh, learning the plates and uh, learning the tables, blah blah blah. So then after the another year passed by another year, continue. And I said no, you know what, I'm going to do a server. So I was hungry to, to move up and be better for myself. And this is how my career started. And I was like, this is not enough. I think I can do better. And then for serving. Working hard. And um, I moved to bartender, which was my favorite. Bartender um, and um, I started meeting a lot of people. Uh, you know, to help me improve myself. My managers, my, my coworkers and everything and and, and, I say you know what I do like this. To, I can see my career growing like this, learning about business, learning about numbers and um, a lot of requirements for corporations, used for restaurant business. So it was a good started myself and they promoted me to be a manager. And I'm like, yeah, I think I'm ready. So but, before that it was a lot of obstacles to surpass language. It was the number one. But I continue to push myself and you guys give me that strength to keep going. Mom, you got this. And I remember sometimes I bring you guys (her kids) at work. And working with you guys there. It was rough, but we did it. And that's how I continue my career.

00:30:58 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

And still to this day, you're a very successful manager at a different restaurant. And although it's different, you still have accumulated a lot of success. Personal growth, wealth, things of that nature. So.

00:31:10 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

I did and I'm very happy.

00:31:11 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

I commend you for that.

00:31:18 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

I'm very happy that everything happened for a reason, right? Like I always said. And um, I'm very um, thankful for my dad do all those sacrifice my mom. My sister. You guys, you guys the most that I was almost never home. And this is all happened with a lot of families. That we have to sacrifice a lot of things sometimes. Just to have a good, quality life a little bit.

00:31:50 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

Right. So, based on all the experiences of your journey to getting to where you are today and all the things you've lived through, what message would you give to people who feel apprehensive, like nervous, afraid. People who don't like immigrants. What would you say to those kinds of people?

00:32:11 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Well, I think all, all of us, we are um, good people. All immigrants come here for live a dream. In this country. And I think, they need to um. How do you say that? I'm trying to find the words.

00:32:43 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

Like, more open minded?

00:32:45 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Yeah, open minded that they, not everybody is bad, bad people. We are good people that we come here to live the dream and, and give you better quality life, our, our families. You know and, and unfortunately for a few of those people that. They mess it up or they do a mistakes like that. We pay. All of us, we pay the consequences. It can't be like that. We're all humans and we need to, this countries is based on immigrants. All of us, we are immigrants at one point, and I think with the cultures and everything. We come to a beautiful country. To, we need to learn to respect. And respect each culture, because each culture has their own thing.

00:33:38 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

Right. And for my last question. What advice for someone else in your shoes, whether they're in another country if they're in Mexico, if they're in the middle east, wherever they are, what advice would you give to someone who's thinking of taking the leap to the United States? Wherever else, someone who wants to leave their country for better. What would you say, what would you say to them?

00:34:01 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

I think they need to um, to feel free to fly. Fly to try and live the dream. Because, at the end of the day, we are living our dream, For having better quality life for our family. And don't be afraid to go and try. It's good to try new things every day. Every day is a challenge for all of us. And you need to learn how to face that. UM. But always do the right thing, always. Don't take the shortcut. Never do that. Like, do the right thing no matter what, because we need to learn to have our manners and respect. Even if you don't like the opinion, you need to no agree 100%, but you have to listen. You have to listen to that person. And, and I think, uh, with communication everything is possible. Continue to go to your dream. And be successful.

00:35:12 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

Be successful by being the best person you can be?

00:35:15 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Yeah, yes. Be respect with honor with. Um, that's the most important.

00:35:25 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

Right. Okay, well. Thank you so much for your time and I hope that this serves as an amazing not only story, but. An inspiration for the people that are also in the shoes of someone like Rubi or who wants to hear and remind themselves of these important things, because these issues are very prevalent in our lives today, no matter what. So, I'm very humbled to uh, have been able to document this, so thank you so much.

00:35:55 Rubi Perez (Interviewee)

Thank you for having me.

00:35:57 Joshua Deulofeu (Interviewer)

Of course.

