

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: Where were your parents born?

Subject: My parents were born in Puerto Rico.

0:00:29.0

My mother was born in Guyana and my father I don't know because since I was a child, I never met him. When my mother was pregnant with me, she was living in Chicago, so then it appears there was a problem with the children, some of the other children got sick or something like that and she had to return to Puerto Rico, and so, he didn't return with her and since then they don't live together.

Interviewer: Okay. When did your mother move from Puerto Rico to the United States?

0:01:04.0

Subject: About six years ago.

Interviewer: Six years?

Subject: Yes, the problem was that my older siblings, came here. My older sister came to study at university in Buffalo. And my older brother came to live in New York and then I would call them to tell them to come back because they didn't want to go back and since we'd always been very close, my mother decided that the only ones missing were the youngest ones, and so they'd come with the rest of the family. I was the only older one who was left.

0:01:30.3

I had to drop out of college there and finish here.

Interviewer: So, the reason that she came here, you've already said, for your sake.

Subject: Mm-hm. For the older ones.

Interviewer: Which of your siblings was the first to come here?

Subject: The two oldest.

Interviewer: And what was the purpose of them coming?

Subject: Well, first my two oldest siblings came.

0:02:00.8

My older sister came to live with an aunt who lived here in Philadelphia and then she moved to New York and she got married. Then other one came to study university and she started calling my other brother saying that perhaps the job prospects were better here and they could learn two languages and they decided to come. And when they arrived, it seemed like they liked it.

Interviewer: They didn't want to go back.

Subject: I don't know what it was that they liked.

Interviewer: To which state did they come first?

0:02:31.5

Subject: To New York.

Interviewer: And how long did they live there?

Subject: About four years.

Interviewer: Do they still live there?

Subject: No. One moved to here to Philadelphia when he got married and the other returned to Puerto Rico when he got married. He returned to Puerto Rico.

Interviewer: Any reason in particular for why they chose to go to New York?

0:03:02.5

Did they have friends, family? Or just simply, they chose it; possibly because...

Subject: Yes, it's a city that it's often talked about, lots of people live there.

Interviewer: Has your mother ever worked?

Subject: Yes. When I was in Puerto Rico, she always worked outside the home sewing as a seamstress, as far back as I can remember.

0:03:32.5

She was always sewing and she worked in a factory.

Interviewer: When she arrived here?

Subject: She hasn't worked anymore. She recently started worked at a factory putting buttons on clothes, because she was in an emotional depression and I told her it would be better if she went out to work as a way to be distracted even if she still didn't have a lot of energy. But she has gotten a lot older since she got here.

0:03:59.4

Interviewer: And so, as soon as you got here, you converted to Pentecostal religion?

Subject: Oh, that thing I see it as common and from there everything has changed. My father has always been working.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you still stay in touch with your father now that you're older?

Subject: Yes. Always.

Interviewer: But in terms of money, did he support the family even though he wasn't present?

0:04:29.8

Subject: Yes. When he was in New York, he always paid support.

Interviewer: Does your father live in Puerto Rico, or...?

Subject: My father – well, now we live with my step-father. Because I don't know my biological father. But my step-father has always worked to support the family. Has worked and all.

Interviewer: When your mother came, she came with...?

Subject: He came first. When my brothers came, he came first. He got a job and got money to send to look for her.

Interviewer: So, he came here to Philadelphia first?

Subject: To New York.

Interviewer: Oh.

Subject: Where my brothers were.

0:04:58.7

Interviewer: So, it was a case of having the family always together. What kind of work did he have there when he worked in New York?

Subject: They were working in a metal factory, they made like refrigerators, those large refrigerators.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. Did he work there for a long time?

Subject: Since he arrived and until they moved here to Philadelphia.

1957A English Translation

Interviewer: And was he satisfied with his work?

Subject: Yes. He was more satisfied there than here. [unintelligible 5:27]

Interviewer: What kind of work does he do here in Philadelphia?

0:05:29.9

Subject: Here was working at one of those places where they have plants, what do you call that?

Interviewer: Where they plant them?

Subject: They take care of them and...

Interviewer: A nursery?

Subject: A nursery, yes. When he arrived he worked there because he couldn't find a job, but now at this moment, I honestly don't know what he does. I know he works outside, but I don't know exactly what he does.

Interviewer: But he currently has a job?

Subject: Yes, he has a permanent job.

0:05:59.4

Interviewer: While you were living in Puerto Rico did the family live together on their own, or did other relatives or people live with you?

Subject: No. We've always lived together. All of us.

Interviewer: In what part of Puerto Rico did you live?

Subject: We lived in Patillas and in Guyana.

Interviewer: And you went to school there?

Subject: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay.

0:06:29.5

Around what year specifically, if you remember, was it that you came here to Philadelphia?

Subject: I remember because I had been in college for two years, let me see... Around '71.

Interviewer: And what place specifically did you come to live in here?

Subject: First we arrived to New York and I almost fainted in the street because I saw waste baskets and the dogs and I remember the people looking inside the waste baskets...

0:07:02.5

And I thought, "Was is this?" In Puerto Rico we had a furnished home, a beautiful house in the country and all of a sudden my mother came without knowing where she was going to live. We rented a house that I couldn't believe. So, I told her that I wasn't going to live in a place like that. So, I left with my sister for Boston. Then about a month later, they moved from where they were and came here to Philadelphia.

0:07:31.0

Interviewer: And here in Philadelphia, specifically in what area, what address, was it where you lived first?

Subject: They lived on 6th and Lima [unintelligible07:40].

Interviewer: Okay. And are they still living there?

Subject: Because they had a house in New York, they rented a house, but my aunt owns a house and she was getting married and the husband was building a house further up in the North East so she asked my mother if she wanted to live in her house in the meantime and then later they could buy a house here. So, they went to live there and then they bought a house on 9th and Indiana.

0:08:02.4

Interviewer: Okay. So, they own the house now. Good. When you lived at home and you worked, did you give a part of your money as a support for the family?

Subject: My older sister worked and gave money towards the home, but I didn't give money because I had – like I said...

0:08:29.8

...I came here with them, but I went to Buffalo, and I had to pay my studies and I had to live in an apartment that I paid for over there. So, I've never given more to them. I've given them money for emergencies if they need it, but I've never given them a monthly amount.

Interviewer: And your siblings didn't live...

Subject: No. They all got married.

Interviewer: There are four...

Subject: There are two sisters older than me. One is a teacher [unintelligible] college in Boston. The other is in New York.

0:09:01.2

She's married. And two older brothers. One in Puerto Rico and one here and then me. And six younger ones from my step-father. [Unintelligible 09:07].

Interviewer: And all six live now here with him?

Subject: They live with him.

Interviewer: The children that are living here, were they all born here?

Subject: No, they were all born in Puerto Rico.

Interviewer: All of them? The six, as well? Okay. So, now they're here in school and everything.

Subject: Yes.

0:09:29.3

Interviewer: Okay. Regarding your parents' point of view regarding religion, education, on which of these values did they place more importance?

Subject: Between religion and...?

Interviewer: And education.

Subject: Well, my mother has always given priority to education, but since they- When we were in Puerto Rico, I went to church and she went to church every once in a while, but it wasn't as intense as it is now where she goes to church almost every day. She wants to be in church every Sunday.

0:10:02.5

Interviewer: But they've always been aware of what you're all doing in school and where the children are going to go when they graduate?

Subject: They don't separate one thing from the other.

Interviewer: They always placed importance then on you having a degree?

Subject: Yes.

Interviewer: In terms of the education your parents received, how far did they get in school?

0:10:29.2

Subject: My mother studied until first year of high school. When she arrived here, she tried to finish, but she couldn't understand. "English doesn't fit in, like she says. So she hasn't been able to finish". And so my step-father, I don't know exactly how far he got.

Interviewer: Do you find that you have any problems in particular because you belong to a second generation here in Philadelphia?

0:11:01.1

Subject: When you speak about a generation, what do you mean? So, like, if my parents were the first to come, and then me?

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Subject: I can give you an example.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Subject: My husband. I'm married to a Puerto Rican who was raised here. He was born in Puerto Rico, but he was raised here, like I said. So, in terms of cooking and eating, I have to force him and convince him that the things typical to Puerto Rico are good, because he didn't even like avocado, nor cod 11:29.

0:11:30.8

So, now he eats those things. But I see that in spite of the fact that we have so many things in common, there is always something different between us.

Interviewer: How old were you when you started to work?

Subject: I never worked until I finished school. Oh, well, yes I finished college.

Interviewer: So, you finished your education and you worked specifically as a teacher.

0:12:01.8

Subject: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: You finished...

Subject: When I finished college – No, actually, I'm lying. I worked before I finished school. I worked when I was in Buffalo. Every summer I worked at different places. I worked at the Department of Labor Helping students find summer work.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

1957A English Translation

Subject: Then when I finished, I quickly began as well and during the summer I have worked here in the council.

Interviewer: You studied here in Philadelphia, as well?

0:12:29.4

Subject: I finished my Masters.

Interviewer: In Education?

Subject: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: Did you have a specialty?

Subject: Reading.

Interviewer: Have you ever had a problem with discrimination with regards to finding a job?

Subject: I don't think here's so much a matter of discrimination in terms of race or color...

0:13:01.0

...but what happens here and what I've noticed up to now, is that in order to get something you have to have what we refer to as a "lever". There's a group connected and if things aren't for that group or if you don't know anyone in that group, then you're not going to get anywhere. That's what I've seen primarily, but in terms of racism, I haven't encountered that.

Interviewer: When you refer to a group, are you referring to a group of Hispanics?

0:13:29.0

Subject: Well, since I'm more involved with Hispanics, I've seen it more among Hispanics. In terms of work, in terms of work outside and in terms of education also, I've seen that it's the same.

Interviewer: The first job you had as a teacher, how long did you work at that?

Subject: I worked teaching English and teaching Spanish as a second language to Americans.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

0:14:00.1

Subject: Then I taught basic skills to Puerto Ricans in Buffalo. Then I returned here to Philadelphia to teach reading.

Interviewer: And how long have you been teaching?

1957A English Translation

Subject: Four years?

Interviewer: Four years. What school do you work at now?

Subject: Penn Treaty

Interviewer: How long have you been working there?

Subject: Three years.

Interviewer: Are you satisfied with your job?

Subject: Well, no, I'm not so satisfied because it is a very frustrating job...

0:14:33.6

...because I currently work with students that I see are arriving from the island and they have been raised in places like where I was raised in the country, and the basic concepts that I learned when I was in sixth grade, or in first grade, or things that I already knew in sixth grade, they don't even know them in first grade. Nor things from first grade. For example, I ask a boy in ninth grade how much is two plus two and the fact that he doesn't know how to answer is something like...

0:15:01.1

Or many times I ask them to write their name here, and what they write looks like worms- There's a problem somewhere. So, a lot of people blame television, some blame the move from one country to another, but I think there has to be something else, because I went to a school in the country. I had to walk to school and it wasn't a big deal and I learned a lot. So, I don't understand what is going on.

Interviewer: And it's a thing that's widespread?

Subject: It's a thing that's pervasive among most of them.

0:15:30.9

So, it has to be the place where they come to live here that makes them stagnate. They somehow forget everything they learned there, or I don't know what it could be.

Interviewer: Do you think it could also be related to their environment, their home? When you were raised, your parents helped you depending on what importance they gave it.

0:16:00.4

Subject: I am pretty conservative, and I think that the way my parents raised me, I believe, was good. Even though they have been very conservative and they didn't let me go

out nor did they let me watch TV when I wanted to watch TV and I had to do my assignments there, I think that way of raising me was better than the way that children are being raised now, that they sit to talk, all of them like they say to communicate; We have to communicate. Besides communicating, I believe there are other things that people need to know. A lot about discipline. There are a lot of discipline problems and that's why...

0:16:29.2

Interviewer: Have you ever been in a strike or do you belong to a union?

Subject: I belong to the Teachers' Union, but I have never been in a strike.

Interviewer: What is your opinion about unions?

0:16:59.0

Subject: What is that you want to know, specifically?

Interviewer: I mean, in your opinion, what is the role of a union? Is it important for an organization to have a union? And for what reasons?

Subject: Well, yes, because in case I was to lose my job, for example, I have to have that union. I have to have someone who is in a position above mine, or who's in a union with me, to help me to conserve that job.

0:17:31.2

That's the only reason that I think.

Interviewer: When you were a young girl, what were your aspirations? What did you want to do with your life?

Subject: The first thing I wanted to be was a teacher.

0:18:00.2

When I was little, I wanted to be a teacher because the teachers I had when I was in my first years of school motivated me a lot. And from first grade kind of I had a scholarship and I think that inspired me more. But then when I went to college, I wanted to be a lawyer. I wanted to study law. But I had an experience at court that I didn't like and so then I wasn't interested in that degree any longer.

0:18:30.4

Because I was living in a room that I rented from a woman and I started to defend another student she was insulting and we were kicked out of the rental. We had to

go to court and everything. And I didn't like the experience we had. I didn't like... We had to place the other woman in a situation that was uncomfortable for me and uncomfortable for her, because I was trying to get them to close down her rental property, because the way she treated us was not the way to treat another human being.

0:18:59.1

Even though we were successful, I didn't like the results.

Interviewer: Was the other person Hispanic?

Subject: Yes. It was in Puerto Rico.

Interviewer: In Puerto Rico?

Subject: Puerto Rico, yes. I think that's the problem with us, the "Oh, my God." and the shame that gets hold of people it doesn't let us get anywhere.

0:19:29.8

Interviewer: So, you decided to be a teacher. Do you think you're going to continue in that line of work for ever, or do you have some other aspiration?

Subject: I would like to specialize more in reading because I'm interested in that area. I think that 90% of the students who are currently in school are very low in their reading level and I think that basically what a student first needs to do is learn to read,...

0:20:01.0

...because reading is everything and I think that most people in school don't know how to read. And that should be one of the first problems that needs to be taken care of, and I want to get my PhD for that.

Interviewer: Good. When you speak about reading in a specific language, are you referring to English or Spanish? Or any language?

Subject: What's important to me is that the student knows how to read something.

0:20:27.9

Okay? Because I think that once a student learns to speak a language, he can learn a second language. For example, in my classroom I have students like them who know more English than Spanish, okay? But these are children who already know how to read in English, for that reason I'm going to teach them to read in Spanish, so that they know how to read in another language. But there are students who know

English, but they don't know how to read in either language. So, I'm going to teach them how to read in English. I'm interested in [unintelligible], first.

0:20:58.5

Interviewer: Are you satisfied with what you've done with your life?

Subject: Yes. Technically.

Interviewer: In regard to family atmosphere in your home, with whom do you feel more affinity, with your father or with your mother?

Subject: Well, with my mother, because with my step-father— I have a step-father and he was always out of the house working and I almost never — there was not a lot of communication between us the older ones, since we were from a different father.

0:21:31.2

There was not much communication.

Interviewer: Would you consider the relationship between your parents as a positive one in regard to their relationship as a couple?

Subject: Yes. In addition to positive, I would consider it typical because my students talk to me about things that their parents fight about...

0:22:02.5

...and sometimes when I go home, I understand my students, because the same thing is happening at my home. The same nonsense, as I call it, about who gave money, or who's going to by this or so; the same... But I think that in general it is a good atmosphere.

Interviewer: Was either one of your parents strictly authoritarian?

Subject: Oh, my goodness. My mother. My mother "wears the pants", even though she never puts them on.

0:22:30.1

She never wears pants. That's one of the strange things that I find in Puerto Rican families. Men always have that macho attitude, but at home the one who rules is the mother. She always [unintelligible], "You belong in the kitchen." But at home the mother was always the one who took care of everything.

Interviewer: Do you believe that this was an advantage or disadvantage in the way you were raised?

0:23:02.1

Subject: When my mother got together with my step-father, we were already older. Therefore the ideals in life that I had and my personality were already defined, but for my younger siblings, I think it has affected them a lot. Negatively. Their attitude towards my step-father, my mother's way of being so authoritarian, makes them be less respectful towards him.

0:23:32.5

They respect him less. And, we, the older ones, don't communicate with him so much because we already had other interests and we were out of the house and were older. But they, even though they are young still, they don't have much communication with him, either.

0:23:59.0

Interviewer: Did you parents think it was important for you to start working?

Subject: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: What was their reason for placing importance on that?

Subject: My mother always plans what one— They're always planning what one is going to do in life. And when they see our dreams fulfilled, I image that it makes them feel more proud that we have followed in the footsteps that they wanted for us.

0:24:30.3

Besides, I think that they think that after we find jobs, we should pay back everything that they've given for us. It's something that I don't agree with. My older siblings might agree, but I don't agree. I don't think that just because they raised me, now I have to pay them for everything they've done.

Interviewer: Financially?

Subject: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: Do you currently help?

0:24:59.9

Subject: No. Only, on Mother's Day I might give gifts, so if she needs a refrigerator, I'll go buy her a refrigerator, or I'll help get her credit if she doesn't have credit, or something like that. But that, about bringing home 100 pesos well not. Because I think that's spoiling them.

Interviewer: Are they in agreement with that or have they...?

Subject: They have always – My mother always makes comments, every once in a while – even though almost everything they have has been given to them by their children, but she always makes comments like,...

0:25:30.5

...“I have spent so much money on you,” and this and that. “And you can’t help me.” I don’t know. Because they want to see the money there on the table and that can’t be because that is spoiling them. I think that as long as they have strength and energy, they should go out and fight and work for it, but not depend on us, you know, to live their life, because then they’re going to age before they should. That’s what I think.

0:26:00.7

If we enable them, and they just stay home, and they don’t have to work or anything.

Interviewer: Has this happened at any point in your life, or have they always worked?

Subject: No, they have always worked. They have always worked.

Interviewer: Financially they have never had any problem, nor have they had [unintelligible].

Subject: Well, when we came from Puerto Rico we left everything there. My mother left everything in Puerto Rico because they thought they were going to go back.

0:26:32.8

I don’t know what they were thinking. She says she left everything there. Most of her stuff, the refrigerator, the washing machine, was damaged. Other things had to be sold. She had to rent the house. So, when we arrived here, we didn’t have anything. Absolutely nothing. We had a sofa that someone had given us and the house was completely empty. But it’s a little problem that they, they overcome, they overcame very fast, because my parents have always worked.

0:26:58.1

Interviewer: Do any of your other siblings help your parents financially?

Subject: No.

Interviewer: When you came to live here, in Philadelphia, were the people who lived around you Puerto Ricans, or what mix of races was there in your community?

Subject: In Philadelphia, when we came to live here, in the surroundings there was a mix of Puerto Rican and Blacks.

0:27:30.2

There were more Blacks than Puerto Ricans. My family has always had this thing about Blacks. I don't know where they got this from. I remember when I went to live with them, they didn't dare go to the store alone, and Puerto Ricans if the Blacks did something like throw rocks at the windows, that they didn't dare talk to them or anything. Until I arrived, and I explained to them, that they only difference between us was our language. I asked why they were afraid of those people if they were the same as them.

0:28:00.0

And when you demonstrate fear of someone, the worse that person gets. So, I don't know what their attitude is now, but I think they've changed a bit with regards to that.

Interviewer: But that first place where you went to live, were there any palpable problems between Puerto Ricans and Blacks?

0:28:27.7

Subject: In that place there were a lot of fights, but I don't know... I don't think it was a thing between Blacks and Puerto Ricans; it was a mixed thing... I can't tell you exactly.

Interviewer: When you moved from there, what was the main reason they moved from there?

0:28:58.6

Subject: It was personal.

Interviewer: Okay. Did they ever move because another different ethnic group arrived to that area and that they no longer felt comfortable?

Subject: No. I think that the relationships they had – because, my aunt, when she lived there, she had a lot of problems. She said that they broke her windows and a lot of things happened to her and when my family arrived,...

0:29:30.7

...I remember that the house next door was torched and some Blacks on the other side of the street told my mother to come and stay with all her children. They were very kind with them. So, I think that the relationship they had with the Americans, even though they don't speak English very well, was very good.