

Immigrant Seafood Processing Woman- Interview #14

Anonymous

25 Years old

Female

Seafood Processing-

New Bedford, MA

Guatemalan

Interviewer: Corinn Williams

Transcriber: Corinn Williams

Place of interview: New Bedford, MA

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CW- (Spanish) Ok now it's recoding let's start again, let me see... let's start again.

Hello, It's Corinn Williams it's August 20, 2010 and I'm here to do another oral history, and I will be conducting the interview in Spanish.

(Spanish) Hello, I'm here to listen to the story of your life if you are willing to share it with us. Every story we listen to helps us understand women's experiences who are working in the fishing industry and of how government regulations and other factors can affect your life and your family's life. This study attempts to reach people whose voices are seldom heard, and whose stories and experiences are often misunderstood. And so, your voice is very important how the story of immigrant women in the fishing industry might differ than those who have been here for generations. You are aware that this interview is anonymous and your personal data will not be included, and you are aware that we are recording and that we will use the interview for educational purposes.

I14- Yes I agree.

CW- And at any time if you would like to take a break, just let me know.

I14- OK

CW- So let's start with where you were born and in what year?

I14- I was born on the 30th of July 1985, I was born on a farm with a lot of cows, a lot of cattle.

CW- A lot of cows.

I14- I was born on a farm and my mother didn't come from there she was from another place, another town.

CW—Which town?

I14-My mother was from Quiche, but when she married my father they went to the farm far away.

CW- Also in Quiche?

I14- No, it was in the East (Oriente) because Quiche is in the West. No (my parents) went east because during that time there was a big war in Quiche, a long time ago, so they fled from the war.

CW- So your father was also from Quiche?

I14- Yes, he was from there and they fled, and that is where we were born.

CW- Was is the name of the place?

I14- La Gomera Escuintla, that's where I was born. And there we worked, I grew up, that's where we were, I liked that place very much, it was very pretty, I loved the country. It's beautiful, but as time goes on and you grow up. My older sister went to the Capital and after I went too. I started working when I was 10 years old.

CW- 10 years old! Well maybe you can tell us more about your life on the farm? What kind of work did your mother do? How many are in your family?

I14- Seven, There are seven in the family. My father worked on the farm as an administrator, that is to say the person in charge of the workers, of everything. That was my father's job. My mother stayed at home.

CW- What would she do at home?

I14-She would take care of us, make the food.

CW- What kind of house did you have?

I14- It was a nice house, we were given the house to live in by the farm (owner), and they gave us a house. We all lived there, my father was working. When my sister was 9-10 years old (doesn't finish thought-CW). We raised cattle, we grew sugar cane, we would put two canes in a hole in the dirt and it would grow and after it would blossom they would burn it and they would cut it, the day workers would come to cut it and they would bring to a processor to make the sugar. That's what they would do at the farm and from those cattle, they milked the cows, they made chesses, *requesón*.

CW- Requesón What is that like sour cream?

I14-No firmer, they sell it here in a container (like ricotta).

CW- So you learned how to make all that or they just made it on the farm?

I14- At the farm, but sometimes my mother made it at home, because there was so much milk, they would give me a gallon. And when we wouldn't drink it all -my mother would make cheese. And once a year or sometimes every six months, they would kill a cow for the people and they would give us some. So it was a happy life there.

CW- So your father didn't have any land he was just the administrator?

I14- He was the administrator, he had land but it was in Quiche that is where my late grandparents lived. There was the father and mother of my father and the father and mother of my mother, they were all there, and it was just us who lived on that farm. And as time went on, we didn't want to be on the farm anymore because it became very dangerous. There were a lot of thieves. On seven occasions they broke into the house, they knew that my father made good money so on the weekends every year, every year people would get a vacation and he would get his salary and a bonus every six months and people knew it and they would come to the house and ask for money or else, but the last time I remember, I was very small, they tied him up and we thought he was dead. Any my mother was just recovering from having my last sibling, and they came to our house and they were just about to rape my older sister. And we all had to hide, this was so hard.

CW- How old were you then?

I14- Me? I was about eight years old, I remember I was very little and we had to hide under a bed, it was the last bed we had, my father bought, he bought beds, furniture, stereo equipment but it didn't last- all of it was stolen. Sometimes my mother would be making tortillas or something like that, and the men would come all of a sudden for nothing, and they would ask her for a glass of water, and she would give it to them and I don't know how they would know that my father wasn't there so they would break in. And they told my mother to watch out and

not say anything or they would kill us. So my mother wouldn't say anything and they would take everything. And later on my father would buy more things and then the same thing would happen. I remember it happened like seven times, and finally my father was desperate and he started to drink and drink and he took on that bad vice from his disappointment. And from this desperation he decided that we should go back to Quiche because we couldn't live there anymore. Yes, because we couldn't save anything, and there were many of us, seven of us. And my mother never wanted to take care of herself and she thought that whatever God gave her she was to have, and so we couldn't make it and so I went to the Capital. My older sister went first and then I went.

CW- And so your parents went to Quiche and you went to the Capital? At 10 years old, you were so young to be separated from your parents.

I14- At 10 years old, I think because my sisters were very tall, and my mother told me I must have carried many heavy things and so I didn't grow tall, that's what my mother told me. They say that when you put a lot of heavy things on top of your head you don't grow.

CW- So when you were little you carried a lot of things on top of your head?

I14-Yes because I worked 8 years right in the Capital City, Guatemala City.

CW- What were you doing there?

I14 (11:55) After I left the coast I went there to clean houses, I was 10 years old. And the lady of the house was very good to me, she was an evangelical, she went to the evangelical church, and she said, "come work with me, it won't be hard just sweeping and mopping." So for two years that's all I did, I swept, mopped, washed dishes and watched T.V. that was my life. The lady had a daughter, I would take her to school and go get her in the afternoons, that was all I did. But then, when I was twelve began to make tortillas by hand. We would make 5 quintals of corn a day. (1 quintal =100 kilos=220 lbs.)

CW- That's a lot!

I14- Every day I would get up at 3 AM and go to bed at 11PM every day.

CW- How many times were you making tortillas?

I14- All day long- from 4 AM to 9:30 PM at night. We only rested when we had a break or lunch. And it's not like here you have a break at 9 AM there it was like at 11 AM, lunch was at 4 PM and dinner at 11PM. We would make a lot. The lady was blessed, she went to church for God a lot, but look how many people would go to the shop!

CW- So it was her business to sell tortillas.

I14- Yes and she would pay me to make them.

CW- So before you were just cleaning her house.

I14- Yes before I was just cleaning the house, and then they told me “you life is over-try to *tortellar* (make tortillas) if you can.” Yes I could do it but at first I got very tired.

CW- Getting up at 3 AM, and you never thought about going to school?

I14- Never, I never went. Well I went two times, but my mother didn’t let me go because we were on the farm and we were in the only house, the next house over was about 2 kilometers away and it was all cane fields and there were a lot of men there, a lot of thieves so my mother said it was dangerous because we were girls and they could rape you. My other sisters used to go, and now they are going to school, I am paying for their school. They started to study when I came here. But I never studied. I want to study, I am thinking about it now, looking for somewhere I could study.

CW- But back then you didn’t think it was too important to study?

(15: 23) I14- I did and including the time I went to the city, I went for three months to a school that was two years in one, but at the time my mother got sick and so I left school. Yes I had the intention to go to school.

CW- Were you with your sisters in the city?

I14- Yes three of us worked together.

CW- And you lived together too?

I14- Yes we worked and lived in the same place. It was a big house and the lady had 5 employees, 5 women. She has a room for us because our house was outside of the city like six hours away we couldn’t come and go. And so what they do over there, a business will hire people but you have to sleep there because you can’t go back home to sleep. So I was there making tortillas for six years.

CW- Six years.

I14- Six years doing the same thing, and then I got tired, and I still have pain in my hands still today. I would get up so early, sometimes I wouldn’t have time to wash up. We would stop making tortillas at 4 PM and we would eat and bathe but my body would be very warm and that was harmful. So over time, my sister left and went to Quiche, she opened a business, she saved money to open a business. I kept working there, then another sister left and I was all by myself in the Capital. And later I was desperate but the lady said “why don’t you start your own tortilla

shop, I'll give you the *comal* (pan to make tortillas), you know how to do it, you have experience."

CW- In the Capital?

I14- In the Capital. Because after we finished making tortillas I would be the cashier and it was more responsibility because if the drawer didn't add up they would scold you, so I knew it was a commitment. So she said "you know how to do everything you have experience." Yes, at that time I was 18 years old, so yes I opened the business and I had it for one year, but I couldn't take it.

CW- But how did you get the place?

(18:23) I14- She gave it to me because she had three stores. When I first started with her she only had one tortilla store and after her business grew so she had three. So she kept two and gave me one. I was undecided because it required money, investment and a lot of responsibility. So I hired boys to work for me and I was still very young, I didn't know much but she told me she would help me.

CW- So she invested in the business?

I14- Yes the business was up and running, so I just had to run it, it was the same only the owner changed. And so I started it and had it for one year but then I didn't want to do it anymore, it was too much. I said, "no more, I can't take it". I got so tired and I couldn't save anything. I was just paying my help and I couldn't save. So I said "no more". So I sold it. So I sold it to someone else and at the time I didn't have the idea to come here (to the U.S.). Not yet.

CW- Well a question about the sea, when you lived on the farm did you ever have the chance to go to the beach or the sea?

I14- We went to the river a lot.

CW- What was that like?

I14- It is like a lake, fresh water a little gorge where water passes, we used to go fishing there.

CW- What kind of fish are there?

I14- There is that kind of fish here, but you don't see much of it. There is morjarra, crab and shrimp.

CW- All in fresh water?

I14- Yes all in fresh water. There is another one that I haven't seen here. We would fish with nets –*atarrayas* we called them. We would go at night with my father to fish, he liked to fish a lot. And I like to river, the water, I love it. So we would go at night, we would throw out the net then pull it in and the fish would be inside-alive. They we would throw them in a bag, and then prepare them. But I never went to the beach.

CW- Never?

(21:31) I14- We lived close to the beach, there was a beach about two hours away, but I never went to the beach. There is a beach that is very famous call San Jose Beach, but I never went.

CW-But you like fishing and you knew about all the different types of fish.

I14- Yes I liked it a lot, I liked going to the countryside. I liked picking herbs because there are a lot of them there, like (wild) spinach , there in another one called *yerba mora* but they don't sell it here.

CW- Yerba Mora- like moras- raspberries? I haven't heard of it.

I14- No, but I have seen it by here. There is this herb here I have eaten it here but they don't sell it, it is just in the woods. So I liked to go into the woods, I had two dogs, I'd bring them and go to the woods. I liked it my mother would send me to get *yerba mora*.

CW-So during this time you were living in the Capital you would go back home?

I14- I used to go back to Escuintla from the Capital I would go with my mother to the river because she used to wash clothes there. Over there it is not like here with running water, over there you have to go to the well and get water with a rope. So my mother used to wash clothes there.

CW- And what is that like –to explain it to people who don't know how you wash clothes in the river?

I14-For example here is the river and here is a rock (demonstrates) and you have to have a bowl where you put soap. And you wet the clothes to make them very soft and you leave them for about 10 minutes. And if they are very dirty you leave them longer. The soap there isn't like it is here, in powder or liquid, over there is in a ball, then you have a big pan (*juacal*) and you start to scrub the clothes hard on the rock-hard! And when you squeeze it out the dirt comes out and if the close are dirty- and so you standing in the water and you have the pan and so you can get more water to rinse off the clothes to get rid of the suds.

CW- And to dry them?

(24:50) I14- You squeeze them out well and you bring them home and hang them up, on a rope hung from the house to a tree, if not you can't dry the clothes.

CW- I imagine the clothes are very heavy to carry them home?

I13- Yes very heavy, but what my mother would do, is spread out the clothes first on a branch until they were damp and leave them for us kids to get them later or my father would go and get them. The house was close by- it was two blocks away, I would bring them back and my mother would finish drying them at home. Now at home it is the same thing-because in Guatemala there are washing machines.

CW- But they wash more by hand.

I140 They wash more by hand, because they say the clothes last longer.

CW- That's what they say?

I130 Yes, the clothes come out cleaner, so that's how she would wash and dry them.

CW- And in the city too do they have washing machines?

I14- Yes they have them but they use a lot of electricity and it is very expensive so they don't use them.

CW-So they prefer to have someone working at the house that can do it.

I14-They put someone in charge of doing it, everyday you would have to wash some- and it was better that way because they would last longer. For example, white clothes, you leave them in soap and squeeze them and they get clean. It is not necessary to use bleach, it is not necessary. That is how they do it in the Capital. They use washing machines in the Capital but only people who have money. People who has two or three servants they use washing machines. But people who live in the country, no they wash all by hand. It's nice to live in the country, it's nice because I experienced it, it's beautiful, I like living in the country, because, look you don't die of hunger. In Quiche yes, I don't like Quiche.

CW- Why?

I14- It's too cold. There is fruit but you have to buy it. On the farm you don't have to buy it.

CW-So when your family moved to Quiche did they move to the town or to a village?

(27:39) I14- A village. We almost died there.

CW- What is the name of the village?

I14- It's called Membrial. They call it that because it is named for a fruit called membrial you can find it here but not much. There are a lot of apples, peaches, apricots all that- avocado, oranges all that because there is a lot of fruit. It's nice, a lot of fruit but you have to own it, you can't just go and cut it off the trees you will get beaten.

CW- You have to be the owner of the trees?

I14- Of the trees and the land, that's a problem.

CW- Where is it near?

I14- Quiche, Santa Cruz (provincial capital). Yes, Santa Cruz del Quiche. Quiche has like 22 big departments. It is right next door. Now we don't live in that village, now we live in the town. We left there; cars can't enter there, only every week a car goes by.

CW - It that where you parents were born?

I14- Yes they were born there but we weren't (she and siblings).

CW- So you weren't used it?

I14- No we never got used it because we weren't born there. It's cold, very cold in December. Very cold it burns your cheeks (shows), in contrast it is not like that on the coast, it is like it is here (now-August) . All the time winter and summer it's hot but in Quiche it's cold. I don't like Quiche. But my parents are from there.

CW- All of the family is there?

I14- Everyone- so like it or not we are from there.

CW- So your parents still live in Santa Cruz del Quiche?

I14- Yes they live there. They didn't live there they lived in the village but when I decided to come here, when I told my mother that I wanted to come here, I was one year at home over there .

CW- So you had your business in the Capital...

(30:15) I14- Then I went back to Quiche, my mother told me to come back and I went to Quiche. I was there for one year; I had my 20th birthday there. So I got the idea to come here, another girl was leaving too, so I got the idea in my head.

CW- So is that how you came with the girl who was leaving?

I14- Yes, I didn't know anybody and family here. I don't have anyone here. So the girl said she was leaving, I met here there. And it was like I was curious.

CW- But what did they tell you about life over here? Did you know of anyone who had been here?

I14- Yes I knew of people who had been here and they said it was great, there was a lot of work. But at that time I thought could it be true? After I told my mother but she didn't want me to go, and later I told my father and my father said "It depends on you- if you want to go, go but be smart about it, that despite not having schooling, you are very intelligent about things". As you know over there very young girls go off with boyfriends and they have lots of kids. So my father said "Well you are already 20 years old, and you haven't left home yet, but think about it carefully". By that time I have thought about it a lot, we suffered a lot, we were a lot of kids and my father couldn't cover all of our expenses, there were too many of us. We suffered too much.

CW- So you were already 20 and I imagine the other sisters were already married, how what it that you were different?

I14- No they weren't married either.

CW- And why not, it seems normal (for many Guatemalan women) to marry young?

I14- Well in my case, my older sister had a boyfriend when she was 15, but not me. I didn't think about it. I thought about things more clearly when I was 20 years old. I thought about having a boyfriend. But on the contrary, I was always inside.

CW- Working.

(33:04) I14- YES that! I didn't go out, I never met anyone. And my older sister is 30 years old and she is not married. The sister who is 18 already got married and she has a baby.

CW- So most of the Guatemalan women are married what is it like to be 30 and single, it must be different.

I14- Yes it's different.

CW- It there a lot of social pressure that she should get married.

I14- I would say so but the problem with her is that at 17 years old she was raped and so she remained traumatized. She told me about it when I was going to come here, and she gave me a lot of advice: " Be very careful about the people you meet, I wouldn't want you to become traumatized." She was walking at the farm, and there are only men who work there and she was walking and a guy grabbed her, she didn't even see who it was and she had been raped, she

didn't want it to happen. And so that is why she is like that. And it's been a long time, and I would ask her "why don't you have a boyfriend the boys are always flirting with you?" "I don't want one" she would say. But a year ago she met a boy, but he is over here. He is in Los Angeles. So now she says they are going to get married. But it has been a long time that she has had that (experience) in her head. That happened to two of my sisters (were raped) but thank God it didn't happen to me. But it happened to her and I understand that is why she never wanted to (marry). She had a boyfriend but she didn't want to get married. And another problem is that my mother is very jealous.

CW- She is very jealous?

I14- She is very jealous because there are 6 of us girls.

CW- Six girls and one boy- is he younger?

I14- Yes he is younger, he is 20 years old now.

CW- But my mother is very jealous.

I14- It was hard to convince her that I should get married. I got married here but she is very jealous. She told me, "If you are going to the United States but you have to get married here."

CW- In Guatemala.

I14- In Guatemala. So I didn't have it in my head that I would be getting married. So my parents said if you want to go you can go, but we don't have any money. The trip is \$5,500. So I started to look for the money since I had friends, a woman who was a friend, I knew she had a lot of money but I asked her to lend it to me. "What do you want so much money for?" she asked. I told her I wanted to come here. "That's great" she said. But I paid close to \$10,000 because I paid \$5,500 for the trip and \$5,500 in interest. I paid a lot.

CW- So you borrowed the \$5,500 then you had to pay back an additional \$5,500?

(37:08) I14 So I had to get the money together, I would send the money and send the interest, send the money and send the interest. So I had to put up something like collateral, so I put up my father's house.

CW- So your father agreed to that?

I14- Yes he agreed, but he scolded me about it, "be attentive". But the house was worth a lot of money like 200,000 Quetzals close to \$20,000. "And so if you are going, you have to put the house up" my father said. I had to sign it with a lawyer. I didn't see that part my sister and

parents took care of that part. And so I left, and didn't pay the money until I arrived in Los Angeles. But I suffered a lot on the journey.

CW- So you left with the girl, with the curiosity to find work. Did you come directly to New Bedford?

I14- Yes.

CW- So tell me a little bit about what the journey was like -did you suffer a lot?

I14- We left and got to a place in the Capital of Guatemala, and there my mother and my oldest sister left me- and Oh I got so sad! I thought- "When would I ever get to see them again, if something happens to me?" But my sister said "let hope to God nothing happens." I felt like going back, but she said "you have to resolve that you will get there, if you are like "should I stay or should I go" you won't make it. So we said goodbye and from there we went to the border of Guatemala and Mexico. We were only there for about six hours until we were caught.

CW- In Mexico?

I14- In Mexico.

CW- How? Were you on a bus?

I14- Oh no, when you go that way it is very bad, we were in a truck full of cans, it was very hot inside and someone was drinking some water and it spilled so they found out we were there.

CW- How many of you were in there?

I14- Like 25 of us in a little truck! We were piled up and we had been there inside the truck for 8 hours. So they caught us and brought us to jail. We stayed for 2 nights and then they send us back again to Guatemala. And the guide who took us was with us and he told us to wait 3 or 4 days and we would leave again. So we got in the truck again but we went by another way and we got to a place called Puebla. It took us 24 hours to get there and we were in the truck without stopping, without water, without seeing the sun when it rose.

CW – Is it cooler over there?

(40:47) I14- No! We were closed in there, sweating. I weighed 130 lbs when I left Guatemala and when I arrived here I weighed 115 lbs. I lost 15 lbs. on the journey. We sweated a lot and we arrived in Puebla and we stayed there for about a week. And from there we were put in another truck that was carrying mattresses and blankets and we were in there another 12 hours.

CW- So they put the mattresses and blankets on top and you guys underneath?

I14- Yes, that's where we were very covered up there was not even a peephole . And from there we were brought to another state in Mexico, I forgot the name, but it is far from Puebla. And I thought it was so far that we were not getting there. So we would stop once in a while because they were mattresses and it was very hot. They would check on us to see if we were alive, they would wake us up to see if we were alive, if everyone was alright. And we would say "yes". And they told us if we couldn't stand it we should drink water. But how were we to drink water, if we couldn't go to the bathroom? Nothing we couldn't go to urinate, nothing.

CW- Were you all women?

I14- Mixed-men and woman and even children were with us! So we arrived in that other place in Mexico and they left us there. And they told us we were going to take a bus and they put make-up on me to look like a Mexican woman and they even put a curly wig on me and put me on a bus.

CW- How was that they made you up?

(43:03) I14- All painted up, big curly hair, earrings, all cleaned up so I went on the bus and this was next the border. But from there we had to travel 3 nights, Mexico is very big! We traveled 3 nights until we got to a place called Cananea very close to the border. Cananea, I was there for three days. And from there I went to the desert.

CW- With a group?

I14- With a group I traveled for 12 days.

CW- 12 days!

I14- I walked a lot, I think we must have traveled the whole area of what they call the border.

CW- 12 days, what were you doing during all that time?

I14- Walking.

CW- And at night?

I14- Sometimes we were walking , sometimes we slept. I the daytime we would walk but then stay there because there was too much sun. We were out of food, they gave us a gallon of water, and thank God we found a little stream who know where it came from, so we filled up the gallons and we continued walking. At the end we couldn't take it. The only thing we ate was a fruit that they have there. I didn't know it was eatable but I saw that it had a flower and it had

a red thing and with three other women we went to look for them because Immigration would chase us. Half of us stayed and half of us ran. I ran and I still have the scrapes here and there (shows on legs). That's what I did over there because when they were supposed to come and pick us up at the border, a helicopter came and the border patrol, police and even dogs and I fell into a hole so they passed me by. I fell in the hole and they passed by me and I just covered my head.

CW- Were you all by yourself?

I14- All by myself. And when I here they was no more movement, I ran. I met up with a woman ahead of me, but the girl I was traveling with was caught by immigration. And she was sent back. She told them she was Mexican and so they sent her back to Mexico. But she couldn't, speak Spanish and as you know in Quiche they speak another language

CW- Do you speak K'iche also?

I14- Yes but only a little bit, not much because my mother speaks more Spanish than K'iche.

CW- But she speaks it and your father speaks it?

(46:12) I14- Yes they know how to speak it but they don't speak it to us much. She said we should try to learn more Spanish but we should also learn the dialect too because it is useful. I can speak it, some words and I understand it well when it is spoken. I can explain things but to have a great conversation no. My sisters can speak it well, they studied it.

CW- They studied it? Oh now they are offering it in school now?

I14-They are studying it now. We didn't know how to speak it because they have a two-hour class in the afternoon, and they write the letters like they are in English., something like that-strange. But they know how to speak well, but not me, I don't know much.

CW- So the poor girl (you were traveling with) was sent back to Mexico?

I14-They sent her back. On the road I told her, "You need to speak Spanish". So I tried to speak Spanish to her, and in Mexico there are a lot of indigenous people. So she declared herself to be Mexican. So they just dumped her off over the border. And so she called (the guide) because it wasn't just her but a bunch of people (deported to Mexico), it was like 15. So they brought them over the border again. I was already in Los Angeles when she crossed again.

CW- And she was coming to New Bedford?

I14- Yes she was coming to New Bedford.

CW- She had her family here?

I14- She had her husband, her brother-in-law, brothers, cousins, etcetera. I didn't have anybody.

CW- So you were in Los Angeles.

I14- I stayed there waiting for her. I knew her husband a little, but I stayed in Los Angeles because we were both going to the same place, and her husband was going to take me in, I had to wait for her. I waited for her in Los Angeles for one week. I had already paid for my trip but I still needed to pay for the trip from Los Angeles to here (New Bedford) it was a three day trip and still a risk. Yes I suffered a lot (on the journey). Finally, what we did (in the desert) was to eat fruit. We called the people to come and get us, and they got us. And they brought us to a farm in Arizona and then they took us to Los Angeles. And finally I ate when I got there in Los Angeles. But I arrived so thin. I was a little sad and little happy. Glad because I made it, but I didn't feel happy until I finally made it to New Bedford. I came to New Bedford on October 12th.

CW- What was that like?

I14- It was strange, they picked us up in New York first and we ate at a McDonald's. They asked if I wanted to eat and I said yes I was hungry. I hadn't eaten in three days, they gave me \$20 in Los Angeles, but I didn't know about the money in the United States, I bought a hamburger and they gave me dollars back and I didn't know what to do with them. So I didn't buy more food because I thought I wouldn't have enough money. So I was hungry for two days.

CW- Two more days.

I14- Two more days and we arrived in New York, at about 3 AM. And we ate at McDonald's and then we came to New Bedford.

(interruption)

So we arrived in New Bedford at about 6 AM and they told us "Welcome to your home"

CW- In New Bedford

I14- In New Bedford, in the North End, "welcome to your home, now rest" they said. And I slept. I woke up at like 3 PM, I was so tired from the long trip! I finally slept in a bed, on the bus you are always sitting, if I slept I would wake up, I could never sleep and there were a lot of people on the bus. (tape ends)

END INTERVIEW 14 PART ONE (50:59)

INTERVIEW 14 Part 2 (14 b)

CW-Ok this is the second part of interview 14 and I'll go back to Spanish.

CW- Ok, so you finally arrived in New Bedford, and when you got to the apartment, in your home, how did you feel?

I14-It was strange, I thought the house looked strange and they said "Welcome to your home" we arrived at 6 AM. And they said, "there is the bed and go to sleep." I had already had breakfast at 4 AM and it took 3 hours to get to New Bedford and I woke up at 3 PM.

CW- You slept all day.

I14- I woke up at 3 PM I got up, they told me to take a bath. "Let's go to the store to buy you some clothes" "Ok " I said.

CW- Because you didn't have anything with you?

I14- Nothing, I remember we went to the Mall, it was the first time to go to a Mall "How big!" I said. I looked strange and sickly; I had just arrived very dark-skinned. And I bought my clothes and they said "Wait a month before going to work, we'll find a job for you".

CW- So you were with your friend and her husband, how many people lived in the house?

I14- Like five of us.

CW- And they worked in fish processing?

I14- Yes, and they work where I am working now. So they told me to wait a month and they showed me all the factories. And so my first job was in shellfish and the shellfish has guts but there are dirty parts.

CW- Big shellfish, Sea clams?

I14- Yes they have back parts that you have to take out, clean and wash, others are in charge of packing so you have to clean them well without sand. That was my first job. I remember I didn't know what to wear but they gave me some white boots that were so heavy, I couldn't even walk in them, I felt very strange. That day I worked for 12 hours- Oh I was SO tired! It was a while since I had been working, more than a year, year and a half. I was so tired.

CW- On your feet.

I14- On my feet, I wasn't used to it.

CW- Was it cold?

I14- Cold, and then after the work slowed down so I asked the man (supervisor) “why is work slowed down?” I wanted more hours. So he told me “ they are changing the fishermen’s schedule , the day they go out”.

CW- They told you that?

(3:15) I14- That’s why they told me -work was slow, because sometime the fishermen go out and now they are taking days away. Before they had a month, I think he told me, and now they only have 15 days, depending on the time they can fish. If there are a lot of waves they can’t go out if there aren’t a lot of waves they can go out but they might not bring back much, very little. That affects (the situation) he told me. And if it’s raining there is no work because they can’t go fishing. That what he told me and I thought “how strange”. After, I got another job in another company. They asked me if I wanted to work there but they paid very little only \$6.75 an hour. I thought it was very little.

CW- And you had a big debt to pay?

I14-I had a big debt, like \$10,000, and I was alone and I thought I couldn’t do it. But I asked God, when I was in Guatemala I went to the Evangelical Church. I asked God, I went to church, to ask God to help me pay of this debt. I didn’t want to leave my father without land and I left his land mortgaged so I had to pay it so that he could keep his land. So I went to work there for about two months.

CW- Two months, what was work like there?

I14- It was scallops. They made me sort them, sort different sizes. Scallops come in different sizes- there is 20-30, 10-20, 10, 8, 30-40, and there are some called Chinese, there were some called pieces- pieces small, large all that I had to sort. I almost couldn’t do it because the line was very strange I thought. And we packed shrimp.

CW- Shrimp too?

(5:32) I14- Shrimp all that, I was sorting and later I was sent to packing. There was a lot to pack, we packed different lots. Every order had a different lot and size, so we would finish packing the 10-20’s, then finish the 20-30’s, 40 when there were 10 bags, each bag was 5 lbs. we had to fill a box with 10 bags. Or if we would fill 8 bags of 5 lbs. it was 40 lbs. So after that I was looking for another job at another company to earn a bit more. So after the company where the people at my house worked there was a woman who left, so that is where I work now (company name). They said “fill out an application”. It was with a temp company not at the company. “How do I fill it out?” I said. “Go there and find out” they told me. So they said “there was a woman who left so we will need you on Monday”. It would be good for you, it’s with a temp company but

you will start at \$7.50 an hour and they will give you a lot of overtime. So I noticed (that the people in the house) came home late.

CW- What year was this?

I14- This was in 2005, in the middle of 2005. Because I was working at the shellfish and later at the other place. I was working 2-3 months and then it was 2005. So they told me to "get ready for Monday for work and I will talk to the boss and tell them you want to work. And if they don't take you, you can go back to your other job." So I arrived at 6 AM and they gave me the job thank God. I also worked 12 hours too, but there I worked very hard. It was the same there, scallops, but another style. The other place sorts in one way and there they do it another way.

CW- Are they fresh or frozen?

I14- Frozen, they freeze them there – there are a lot of areas in the place: the packing area, the fresh area, the freezing area and another fresh area but the product is sent to France. The other sorting area, the packing area where they pack 5 lbs, 2 lbs, 1 ½ lbs, where they sort pieces, many areas.

CW- A lot of areas, how many people work there?

(9:04) I14- There are about 70 of us, but depending on the time of year, there are less. When I started working there I worked a lot, I worked 80 hours in 2005 when I started, 2006, 2007.

CW- You worked 80 hours a week, did they pay you overtime? How much did you make?

I14- \$8.00 hour when I started in 2005, no \$7.50 when I started then in 2006 I made \$8.00 an hour. After every year it went up- \$8.50 then \$9.15 in 2009 and now in 2010 I make \$11.00 an hour. It keeps going up, up every year I made a lot before. Thank God because when there were a lot of hours, I paid the debt I owed.

CW- How long did it take to pay off \$10,000?

I14- I paid it off in a year and a half.

CW- A year and a half?

I14- Working like crazy and sending living expenses to the family.

CW- You send money for living expenses to your parents?

I14- I have to send it because we are a big family, I send money because that's how I am. I send \$150 or \$100 every month, because everything is very expensive over there. And your wages don't go far. What my father earns doesn't last.

CW-What does your father do now?

I14- He works in a store, a supermarket, but his money doesn't go far. Over there you have to buy corn, and it doesn't last so that is why I send money. \$150 I send in dollars.

CW-Are you siblings going to school?

I14-My sisters are studying and some have started their career studies. Since I came here and paid of my debt, I started to help them (study). But I hadn't saved anything, so I thought- if I don't start saving, one day when I go back I won't have anything.

CW- So you started to save?

I14- I started to save and save and I also took on another debt, because you know what my father did? I paid off his debt and released his land, and then he borrowed \$5,000, a little less . He mortgaged all his land and set up a business but he lost it. So now he owes money, so I lent him \$3,000 that I borrowed here, and I sent it to him. And who knows what he did with the money, he lost \$3,000 just like that. It seems that business is just not his thing. He can't administer a business instead of growing it went down.

CW- What kind of business was it?

(13:00) I14-It was a store. So after that I didn't want to help him anymore, it was too much. He would always ask me for money and it was for nothing and I couldn't save anything. Until I they lost their house. So I proposed- my sister told me that the people who took the land told my parents to get out of their house.

CW-So where did they go?

I14-Since I was here I told my sister to find a house, whatever, as long as there is electricity and water. They were renting it. So they were there for one year. And because it wasn't their house the owners told them to leave it. Then they found a house in the town, Santa Cruz del Quiche, so my sister told me that it cost 70,000 quetzals which is \$14,000. And I said "what am I going to do?" I got into another debt, I am grateful to God, because another woman that they know let them borrow another part and they took it to the bank.

END Interview Part 2 -14b -14:28

START of INTERVIEW 14c (part 3)

CW- So we were talking about the house.

I14- So they offered the house to me, so I said "what am I going to do? I was working here making \$9.00 hour. And I thought "Well, I have no commitments, I didn't have anything. I would always send it to my parents, and when my father ended up like that, and since then I couldn't save anything. So it's me who is stuck with this. So I always have to send money. On the one hand I feel good about this but in the other hand I feel bad. I feel like I am the man of the house because it is I who has to send money (to support the family). So at times I feel bad about it, and sometimes I get angry that my father did this. He lost a lot of money; he had a LOT of land! Too much and he lost it all. For just a little bit of money that he got for it. I told him to pay it off but I don't know what he did with the money. He couldn't pay it off and I didn't want to help him anymore. If I would keep giving him money and giving him money, who knows what he would do with the money.

CW- But you keep sending money for the household expenses?

I14- Yes

CW- But to lend money?

I14- No more! No more I said, because he does the same thing. I said you are better off not starting a business. "Because you can't run a business" I told him. So instead my sister told me that there was a house for sale with land, a lot of land with the house already built. Because it is expensive there and land is too. Especially (to install) electricity, it costs \$3,000 over there and water because there is plumbing there. So they told me it had it already installed. So I told them, "try to get a loan, and if they give it to you, take it. And I will have to see what I can do here. So I committed myself again with a big debt, with \$14,000. I could pay half of it, and the other half I borrowed like \$5,000.

CW- You borrowed it here? Who did you borrow it from?

I14- From a woman who works with me, who had some money saved. She said "I'll let you borrow it."

CW- Do you have the sense that a lot of people are saving money here?

(2:53) I14- It depends-if you know how to manage your money. If you know how to manage your money you will save, if not you won't. And so, the woman said yes, and I sent the money. I paid a little interest. But I sent it to buy the house.

CW- So you bought the house for your sisters, but is the house for you if you go back?

I14- No, now my parents live there mostly. But the house is mine, but it is not in my name.

CW- But it is paid for?

I14- Yes last year I paid it off. Already it will be two years that I have the house. I finished paying it off and now I am fixing it up. They sent me a video, photos to show me how it is. And so I told them (parents) to go live there so they don't have to pay rent anymore, it's their own. So now they went to live there in the house, I always help them now and I send them money for expenses, I ask if they need anything. I always try to help them. I tell them that when there is a lot of work, I take advantage of it. I earn a little bit, but from the little I earn I am able to help them. Sometimes at the end of the month and there hasn't been much work, as you know at the end of the month you have to pay the bills, the rent. So I tell them that I can send them money on the middle of the month. And they say "ok". But they are grateful to me because they say "In spite of being a woman, you always worry about us". But my mother is a little jealous, she didn't want me to get married.

CW- So tell me, you were here working, and helping the family, you were working where you are working now-right? So how is it that you got married?

I14-Well I fell in love!

CW-How long ago?

I14- In 2008.

CW- Just a little while ago, just two years.

I14-Well I met him,

CW- Is he from Guatemala?

I14-Yes he is from nearby, like ½ hour away (from where she lives in Guatemala). But he lived in the Capital and he has been living here for 14 years in the United States. A long time. He has a lot of family here. I met him, we went out for a while, and then he asked me to marry him. "I don't know" I first told him, I was nervous.

CW- And your mother had said she wanted you to get married in Guatemala.

(6:17)I14- Yes she was mad at me, and she still is mad at me. When I told her I was getting married she got mad and now she hardly talks to me. She has never spoken to my husband.

CW- Even after all you have done for them! She is still mad.

I14- She is still mad.

CW- Why do you think your mother felt it was so important to get married in Guatemala?

I14- She said she wanted to see me get married, to be at the wedding. She told me to go back to get married, but I told her that would be too difficult to return.” No, I still need to fix up the house more, and save some money, I can’t do that over there, I come back later” I told her, so she got mad.

CW-So you met your husband, but what was it that attracted him to you?

I14- His character (personality), his manner.

CW- Hard-working?

I14- Hard working, he worked at a factory, his manner.

CW- Does he like to save? Does he know how to manage his money?

I14- He saves , he has a business in Guatemala, in the Capital. All of his family live in the Capital. I didn’t know he has a business in the Capital, I didn’t know he had a house in the Capital. He didn’t tell me, he only told me after we got married.

CW- So during the 14 years he has been here he has bought a business, a house.

I14- And land, he has a four story big house. His family lives there. They have businesses too in the Capital. But he didn’t tell me until we were married.

CW- So you weren’t marrying him for his money or business (laughs).

(8:38) I14- No I didn’t know. So I told my father and he knew that one day I would get married, here or not you would be getting married. They know that one day the children will leave. So he said, “Well if that is what you want, you are grown up and have made your decision.” So I asked him to speak to my mother but he didn’t want to, but he told my sisters and brother. And we were engaged and we did all the preparations for a wedding. He goes to the Evangelical church I go to, so we talked to the pastor and agreed on the arrangements. And so we make all the preparations for the wedding ourselves, last year I got married on the 24th of October. So it was just us, we spent the money for the wedding ourselves, and his brother and sister was there, only I didn’t have anyone (family). Just a friend was with me.

CW- What did you do as preparations?

I14-First the invitations, then we went to City Hall for the license. Then we made the wedding favors. We rented a hall, I didn’t have anyone to take me to do these things. I got out of work

late, he got out of work late. But we did it, it was nice, you only marry once in your life. It was hard getting it all together, we has bridesmaids and grooms.

CW- So it was big.

I14- Yes, I wanted my bridesmaids, groom, godmother and flower girls-it was a procession.

CW- So you made a video to send to Guatemala?

I14- Yes, we made a video and had photos. We needed to take pictures because his mother is in Guatemala. "So we will take photos and video to send there" we said. And that's what we did and not even that would satisfy my mother. She still hasn't spoken to him. She just speaks to me but just barely. So he is working and I am working.

(11:44) CW- So what is a normal day like for you now- what is life like? You are both working.

I14- Yes both of us are working.

CW- What happens when you get up in the morning?

I14-Oh we don't want to get up, but he goes to work, I go to work.

CW- Does he work in fish processing too?

I14- Yes in fish processing. I get up first, five minutes before he does, I start work at 7 AM, he starts at 6:30 AM. Sometimes I drop him off in the car, sometimes he drops me off, sometimes I pick him up or he picks me up at the company, like that. Sometimes I go in to work at 4 AM, two months ago I want in at 4 AM and I would get out at 4 PM, I would be working 12 hours. He would drop me off. He taught me how to drive. We help each other by driving. The days we can rest, like Sundays or Saturdays, but sometimes we work on Saturdays.

CW- What do you do on the days you can rest?

I14-I stay home or we go out sometimes.

CW- Is it just the two of you at home?

I14- No, another woman lives with us, a friend of mine.

CW- So three of you at home?

I14- Four, it is two couples.

CW- She doesn't have kids?

I14- Right now yes, she has a baby.

CW- When did she have the baby?

I14- 20 days ago yesterday. She has a baby, but me not yet.

CW- Just waiting?

I14- Yes, just waiting. She lives with me and we get along. We have been living together for 4 years and we have never had a fight or an argument.

CW- So how is it , do you share household expenses or do you live separately?

I14-They live separately. We share table items, paper towels, napkins, bathroom products and kitchen items. Minus the food, she buys it separately, I buy my food separate. I cook my own food, she cooks separately. It has always been like that. But if she doesn't have something she will ask me, and if I don't have something she will give it to me. So we understand and help each other out. We get along and we have been living together for four years.

CW- That is a long time. Is this the friend you traveled here with?

I14- No I met her here. We get along and never fight. If she is not home, if I get something for her I let her know. I might pick up something for her or I tell her I will pick it up tomorrow. And she does the same for me. So we have very good communication. That's why when I got married, I was going to live alone, but she told me not to go because the house was big enough. So I asked my husband if he wanted to and he said OK. He lived in the South End and I lived in the North End, so it was hard for him to adapt.

CW- So he had to get used to the difference between the North and South Ends? What is the difference?

(15:01) I14-I don't know, I don't really see it. He said that he lived for almost 13 years in the South End, he had never lived in the North End. He said there was too much noise. That's how stayed living where we are now. And we will continue for the time being. Its' been four years. Every day the same routine-to work, to work every day.

CW- Do you notice a change happening with the work, with the ups and downs of fish?

I14- Yes, it has slowed down a lot. As I said, before I used to work 80 hours, later it went down to 70 to 60 like that. Now the most I could work is 60 (hours a week) at the most, or 50, but the minimum is 40 (hours per week). But two –three weeks ago all I had was 25 hours a week it was so slow. No boats came in so the work was very slow. Sometimes at the company we have

meetings and they tell us not to worry, I know this anyway that in the months of December, January, February work is very slow. A few years ago, I would always work 40 hours.

CW- In what years?

I14- 2006, 2007 and 2008. Not in 2009 already (it changed). And now in 2010, let's see how it will be. I would be given 40 hours always. But from 2009 on it has slowed a lot. Not anymore, now in December, November, January, February we work 20 hours, 15 hours. There are days we go in to work and days we don't go in.

CW How do you manage? Is your husband also working less too?

I14- Well in the summer for him, he always gets 40 hours. In the winter it goes up, he gets 60, 70 hours.

CW- In the winter?

I14- It goes up because it is fish in the winter and the summer work goes down.

CW- And for me, because I work in scallops, in the summer work goes up and in the winter it goes down it changes.

CW- So he works with fish?

I14-So what I do is save. I know how it is. When it is July, August, I start to save.

CW- And you don't have to pay heating bills.

(17:58) I14-So I save. I try not to spend much, so that's how we get by in the month of January February, December, when it is the coldest. Then in March works starts going up again. And so I put the money back again.

CW- How did you learn to be such a good saver, it that just how you have always been?

I14- No I learned this when I came here.

CW- You learned here.

I14- I lived it so I learned here. Over there I spent a lot and that is why I never saved. And here I only buy what is necessary. Food, I buy ever weekend at Price Rite, Shaw's or Stop & Shop. I but things for the kitchen, if I go out we go to buy food. I cook, not every day, like the days I get home late I don't cook. Or if my husband gets out early and I get out early he helps me cook, so we help each other. So we buy just the necessities. For example is something breaks, we are in agreement we will need to buy it, so we go and buy it. If we don't need it, we don't spend it. We

save because maybe we might need the money on the future. So we put it aside. So if we don't need it we don't spend it and we have it saved. That's how we do it.

CW- Is your husband older than you?

I14- Yes

CW- By how much?

I14- 5 years older.

CW- That is not much, but he has been here 14 years.

I14- He said when he came here he was able to save a lot because he works two shifts. I never worked two shifts. He left one shift and went into the other. So that is why he saved a lot of money.

CW- And during that time was there more work?

I14- During that time he could say because he told me you could get a job anywhere, but not anymore. Now you get a job and you stay there. They help me a lot too because sometimes when there is not a lot a work they send me to take a vacation week, and they pay me 40 hours.

CW- They pay you 40 hours for a vacation week?

I14- They pay me 40 hours.

CW- Are you working for the company now (as opposed to the temp company) ?

I14- Now I am working for the company and they have a lot of benefits.

CW- When did you switch to the company?

(20:44) I14- In 2007 I started working for the company. It has been three years.

CW- So at first you were with the temp company.

I14- They didn't pay holidays, vacation time. Now that I with the company they pay holidays and vacation time, I have health insurance, I first started paying \$5 now it is \$10.

CW- \$10 a week?

I14- \$10 a week.

CW- That's not too much.

I14- It's not much. When I go to the doctor's I pay \$20. That's all I pay. So it benefits me. Sometimes I want to quit, but my husband tells me I should stay because of the benefits. " Unless they fire you" he says, then you should go.

CW- What about work conditions, do they scold you a lot?

I14- No thankfully, they don't say anything to me. Sometimes they congratulate us, every end of the year we get a bonus check, for 40 hours. They give us gifts , they have a dinner for us at a club.

CW- So they have a Christmas Party for you?

I14- Yes they make a party. Over time I was sent to work on another production line, where they say the best workers are. That's why I got a raise. The rest are still earning \$8.00 an hour, \$9.00 or up to \$10.00. But the ones who are selected to work on that line earn more and I am in one of those lines.

CW- So in general would you say that working in seafood processing was a positive or a negative experience, what is your opinion?

I14-For me it have been positive, I have learned a lot and I like the work. I have learned how to do it, I know how to do a lot. Every day I know what I need to do, it is the same every day. Sometimes they send me to do other things but that's ok, I know how to do it. I like it. The only thing it that it is tiring. Now I feel like my back is hurting me from doing the same thing. From doing the same think I get tired, more so when I work a lot. I get tired. Maybe because I have been working since I was little, maybe that has affected me. I was working since I was very young and I didn't take care of myself so maybe this is affecting me. Maybe that is why. My back hurts a lot, my neck hurts a lot, I ask my husband to give me a massage because it hurts. But I am always working.

CW- So what are your dreams for the future, what would like to be doing in the next five years?

(24:17) I14-My husband tells me "let's go back (to Guatemala)". We have thought about it, to have two children here and then to go back. And since he has a business back there he says that "we won't have to work anymore".

CW- Because you are so tired from working here?

I14- He says he is tired, let's go back. The house is big, we can live upstairs. The downstairs is rented. It's like it is here, rented. With the rent we can get 5,000 Quetzals monthly, which is like, let me see... \$400.

CW- Monthly.

I14- Monthly. "We can live on that, and what we have saved" he says." We can start a business" he says. That's what we have been thinking about over the next five years. That's what we thought about, starting a business. Or he says he will have the business and I will stay home and not go to work he says. "No More" he says.

CW- You have worked enough, always.

I14- He says "We won't have to work, we can go over there."

CW- But in the meanwhile, you may be starting a family here.

I14- Yes that's what we were thinking to have the family here and then later we would go.

CW- And you would learn some English first.

I14—Yes I need to learn a little English. I can say some things, but not everything, He (husband) teaches me sometimes too, "this is said this way, this is written this way". "When you go to the clinic, ask them this" he says. "When you go to the pharmacy ask for pills like this" he says. "When they ask for your address tell them, like this". All this, how to talk on the phone, all this I know more or less. But I still need to go to school.

CW- It's getting to be the start of school , it's not a bad time to look into it.

I14- Yes, I have been thinking of this to sign up in the month of September so I can study. So let's see what will happen in the future, (my husband) tells me it is necessary to study English, for when the children are born and you can talk to them, and help them with their homework. He says "now that you don't have children yet, you can still go (to study). But with babies it will be a lot more difficult."

CW- More complicated.

(27:06) I14- More complicated with babies.

CW – And since you don't have family here that will be a little harder.

I14- Yes it's hard, sometimes it makes me sad because I don't have anyone here. Sometimes I have thought about sending for my brother, but he doesn't want to come, he doesn't dare to. He says "no". What I can think of is setting up a business for him over there, and I would manage it. We would have to see if it would work out. Set up a business because he doesn't want to come. They are afraid "we could die on the journey. We don't want to die in the desert".

CW- I don't know if you have any other comments or topics to talk about?

I14-My throat is dry already! I would say no.

CW- Well thanks so much for all your patience (equipment problems).

I14- Oh no it was an honor for me to have been able to tell my story. Sometime when I talk to my husband, or when we visit friends, we share these stories and they say “what a great memory that is.”

CW- Yes that’s true.

I14- It is all a memory, that you never forget. You didn’t forget it is always there. It stays there “recorded”.

CW- I’ll give you a CD (of the interview) when it is finished. That will be great for your grandchildren one day.

I14- How one’s life was.

CW- Yes it is so interesting.

I14- I tell my husband, it is so interesting, all that one suffers- I suffered hunger. I told my husband that I only had one pair of shoes until I was 13 years old. They weren’t even shoes. My shoes were *jene* (made from tires), I remember I still have the scars on my feet from going barefoot. Waking on the dirt until I was 14 years old, and I was ashamed too , I put on a pair of *jenes* because people would stare at me when I put them on. So I tell him “here there is a superabundance” He says “yes there is but that doesn’t mean you have to waste things.” And that is what I tell my sisters. I tell them “take care of your things because nothing is given away for free. So when you have something you have to take care of it. Because someday it might be that you don’t have these things.” I always remember what we lived through. Remember that we never had a pair of shoes until we went to work, then we would use them. Keep that in mind.” I tell them.

CW- Since you were very little worked very hard. Well, thank you for sharing your story, and have a happy weekend!

I14- Thank You, same to you.

End Part 3- 14c 31:08

