

Immigrant Seafood Processing Woman -Interview # 3

Anonymous
27 years old
Female
Seafood Processing-cutter, packer
New Bedford
Guatemalan

Interviewer: Corinn Williams
Transcriber: Corinn Williams

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Immigrant Woman Processor Interview # 3

Corinn Williams (CW) :(Spanish) I am here to listen to the story of your life if you are willing to share with us. With every story we listen to, it helps us understand better the experiences of the women that work in the fish industry and how the regulations of the government and other factors would affect their lives and the lives of their families. We are trying to get your story out because we know that a lot of the time your stories are never heard. Your story and your reality, in truth, people do not understand well and so your voice is very important in helping those who don't understand the lives of immigrant women in the fish industry and that it is very different from those who have lived here for many years. Now you are informed that we are recording this and we can utilize this interview to analyze the social impact of the regulations and for other purposes like archiving the other interviews. If you need to take a rest you can let me know. It is the 20th of February of the year 2008 and I am here with a person who is also in agreement to give an interview. The interview will have three parts. The first part is the your story before coming to the United States, a little bit of your family and how is life in your country. The second part is the decision the come to the United States and after that is how did you build a new life here in America.

CW -To start how old are you?

[03:06] I3-I am twenty-seven years old.

CW-Can you tell me where and when were you born?

I3-I was born in Guatemala on April 4, 1979

CW-What part of Guatemala?

I3-I was born outside of the Capital, outside of the Capital and I was raised in the city. After when my parents split up I was raised in the Capital, Zona 18 (neighborhood).

CW-Can you explain to me a little bit how your family was and how your life was when you were little or your first memories as a child?

I3-I have a lot (laughter) a lot of good memories and bad memories. When I was little what I

remember most is when my parents divorced and the suffering to adapt with other people who obviously wasn't my mother. She was the other wife of my father and I suffered a lot when they separated me from my father because my step mother didn't love us so we had to leave the farm (*fincá*) to go the capital that way we could be away from our father. So that the person who was with my father wouldn't feel jealous that he gave us affection. Practically we lived apart from our father for a long time and my mother too. From what I remember when I was five years old- that's when my parents split up. From the time I was five until I turned twenty-three I didn't live with my parents.

CW- That's a long time. So you said you lived in a farm at first?

[05:07] I3-Yes a farm. From the time when I was born until I was five I was raised on a farm. This is where we were born my brothers and I. My oldest brother was seven years old and I was five. The two oldest ones were separated from my family, from my grandparents and cousins. My father said "You are going to the capital to educate yourself because here there isn't a future for you. I want you to go to the capital. I am going to rent an apartment and you all are going over there". That's how we got separated. Practically all our lives we lived alone since our childhood, we lived alone. There are a lot of reasons why we lived badly- because my mother on one side, my father on the other, my grandparents on another. We all wanted to be together with our grandparents and our parents. When I was with my father I wanted to be with my mother. My mother was at another place and when I was with my parents I wanted to be with my grandparents and I couldn't have them. I also didn't grow up with my brothers because my oldest brother- they sent him to another place, to a sanatorium. Where you study to become a priest- sorry, a Seminary. They sent me to an all girl school with my Aunts I was at the Capital. We rented an apartment in Zona 6 and after we kept growing and growing and we told our father that we want to separate from our aunts and uncles but they made the decisions for us. We would go out or something and they would reprimand us. They would ask us why are going out, things that my father never did. There was always a problem with the food. My father would give us an amount of money but when it ran out we would have to ask him for more or we would have to ask our aunts and uncles and tell them there is no more food or whatever else was needed.

CW-During all this time where was your father?

I3-My father always lived in the farm. Even today he stills lives in the farm.

CW-What type of farm is it?

I3-It's the type of farm that you grow coffee, cacao, rubber and all types of fruits. The most that grows at this time is the rubber and the coffee for export. He lives with his second family right now over there. He has years of living there. He is going to die there and he still lives there with his new family and with the rest of my brothers.

CW-How about your mother?

[08:03] I3-My mother when my parents separated for five years decided to come here to the United States. I was eleven years old when she decided to leave for the United States but we thought that it was a joke because really we didn't see her a lot. She worked and everything so we would see her sometimes and one time I visited her and she said I'm leaving to the United States, but who was going to help her? We didn't know. In eight days I was told my mother was arriving here on the road also illegally because one knows that in our country there is a lot of poverty so everyone says "well if in the United States you earn a little more then let's go over there". Then my mother decided not to go back with my father because she already suffered enough bad treatment physically and

verbally. She said "I am not going back to your father, but your father won't give you everything, but you will have enough to eat and I want you to stay with them because I am going to the United States". Eight days later I found out my mother was already on her way, which means we didn't even get to say goodbye to her. Nothing. We didn't even get to say goodbye to her. Rather, my parents left each other but they were still seeing each other. They had ten years already separated and after that she wanted another baby with my father. She had my little brother the one you've already met. He was born before and they separated but my father would chase after her. They had another child. She left my little brother and my two other brothers in another house. The oldest ones and I lived in the Capital. The youngest ones lived in another place very far from the farm of my father where they were abused physically. They were family?.

Over there my mother left them and like I told you in eight days I heard that she was arriving and what could have been done? I couldn't have done anything. I was still just a little girl practically and she left us there so basically we were raised without parents. Always without parents that's why we suffered a lot.

Psychologically I think I still carry that with me because with being lied to I would say when I get married I don't want to have a husband that will cheat on me because I would hate him and I won't want to have children and with an ugly mentality. But I do have a bad attitude, because that does make you have a bad attitude. When I remember everything that I have suffered it makes me remember and its like I react badly. I can't have a relationship (like that) with my husband because he did cheat on me and that makes me remember all of my childhood just like all that I seen and heard my father do to my mother. When he hit my mother he would even start to hit us for the same reasons. It was really hard, but that's how things happened and now we are adults. I have a daughter and a husband and I have to try to find a way to be different because if they were like that I have to be a completely different person to break the cycle. We do have a really bad past all of us do. We are five siblings in total, four brothers and myself from the first wife of my father and all of us have suffered a great deal because to this day my father asks "do you need this and that"? Ill give you (money) for your studies, I am going to pay for the apartment , and maybe economically we didn't need anything, but we did need the love of our father and of our mother and we never had that. My father would dedicate his time to his other children from his second wife.

CW-How many kids do they have?

[12:50] I3-Six or seven I think they have now. My father was a womanizer. Even though he had kids with our mother and his second wife, he still has children from other women. He only really cares about the children he has with his second wife. We are all siblings and one day we are going to have to get to know each other.

CW-You don't know them yet?

I3-Well yes we do know them but I don't visit my father. When I lived in the capital I would travel to the farm but only to visit my grandparents not my father and I knew that I had more siblings but I never talked to them or anything like that , but I do know that I have more siblings. Apart from all that I decided to come to the United States and the father of my daughter was coming here too and I said well the situation in Guatemala is really hard and everything is really expensive and the street crime are tremendous, really bad. The most that you worry about is the economy. One works and every fifteen days they pay you then you have to pay for everything else so you don't even sense that you had a check because everything is expensive, you pay for transportation all the time, your lunch or breakfast or whatever.

CW-Where did you work in Guatemala?

I3-I worked as a receptionist with some architects then afterwards I was a receptionist for a

construction company and that was my last job. Since I was fourteen years old I was working. When I was fourteen I needed a lot of things because I was growing up and I would tell my father that I needed things and I was becoming a young lady. I needed a lot of things and then I started to work cleaning houses.

CW-With your aunt?

[15:23] I3-No, my aunt would recommend me to lawyers and she would tell them that I could clean everything well, and they would say "your niece does the housework so and everything so well." So I started to clean houses like that at age fourteen. I stated to work cleaning houses. I would earn my money apart from what my father would give me and if I needed something I would buy it.

CW- Were you going to school as well?

I3-Yes, I was going to school during the mornings and I would go to work. I said I liked to work and I like to have my money. I started to study in the morning, but I changed my mind and said no I want to work and have money so then they gave me the opportunity to go clean houses and I said well I'm going to work so then the next year I said I am going to work in the morning and at night I am going to study and that's how I did it. Afterwards I started in *basico* (High School) and then I kept working because I liked it so much. I always liked to work and to have my own money. Sometimes we would sell cakes and I would go shopping and buy the cheapest ones at the factory, and at school I would go with my little box of cakes and I would sell them really quickly. That's how I made most of my money. My earnings were from selling those cakes and I would go to my house. I kept growing and growing and I've just always enjoyed working. I have done various jobs. The person who worked cleaning in the office where I worked for the architects left and I told them "if you pay me more I will come in earlier to do the cleaning for what you were paying the cleaning lady". And because they liked me so much there wasn't a problem. I would arrive two or three hours earlier, I would do the cleaning in the office and I would earn the wages of the cleaning lady and my wages that I already had. I knew my way around the capital so I told them "if you need someone to handle the papers I'll go to the bank or wherever you want with pleasure. Just tell me where and I will leave the papers, there is no problem". The messenger didn't arrive then "I will go" and I went. At payday they paid me extra. Well you can earn really good money if you want to, but really when you do your calculations you have to pay all the rest, Rent, water, light, telephone and cable and after all that that money earned doesn't cover all of it. By then my daughter was born. I started to think that one has to definitively emigrate because its very difficult living in your country in that situation, imagine. What I earn here right now in one week I would earn in three weeks in Guatemala. Imagine three weeks! I earn \$200 and change here we're talking 2,000 Quetzales. Everything in price is rising. Why everyone decides to immigrate is because everything is expensive. If you want to eat a tortillas- the corn is expensive .If you have sugar, corn and beans you're happy, but its all expensive. That's why so many decide to come to the United States because you know that sure, you still have to pay bills ,but every week a check comes and you can buy what you need and still have enough to send back to Guatemala and help out the family a lot. The family waits for the dollars to be sent because that was the whole purpose of coming here.

CW-So you were living in the Capital did you imagine yourself working with fish? To go to live in a port, did you have any memories living near the sea?

[20:07] I3-Well, I really didn't have any idea about work in this field. When one watches the television they look and say "wow the United States how miraculous" but when you're here you have to face the reality. In no moment did I think I would be working with fish but of course I did go to the beaches in Guatemala and how beautiful (they are), but to come work over here how one works here is really difficult.

CW-Are their fishing ports and fisherman in Guatemala?

I3-Oh yes of course. They fish and all that. We have places to go as a tourist and if you go to the piers that's where the majority of the people are fishing. In Guatemala where the ports are is where the majority of the people make their money because imagine, they fish a lot, big fish little fish and shrimp too but not lobster. Everything that is a shellfish is expensive. The situation in the United States is different. I never thought that you have to pick ice, you have to lift heavy things but of course it's what you have to do, not that they obligate you. One has to have an interest in their work but it is nice to work with fish.

CW-Do you like working with fish?

I3-Well I already got accustomed to it. It is difficult your first year when you end up with your hands all beat up from picking ice and having to pack scallops and fish in the ice. I have worked in those two jobs; I've worked fish and with scallops.

CW-What is the difference between working in fish and scallops?

I3-The difference is well, fish harder for me because you have to grab the knife as so and start filleting it and if the fish has bones or you have to clean it, it's something very difficult. I admire the people who know how to do that job because it is something difficult. You have to clean them, take the spines out and fast because while the machine is working it's something very difficult. I really do admire those who do that work in fishing. I personally liked it but I found another job in scallops. But I had to leave it (in fish) because one looks for the best opportunities.

CW-Returning to the part of your story where you explaining to me that with the rising prices in the city and with your job it didn't help pay for all of what you needed, how did you come to that point of making that decision that you were going to come over here to America?

I3-Well, I made the decision because my daughter was born she was another expense .

CW-How old were you when you daughter was born?

I3-I was twenty.

CW-During that time were you working as a secretary?

I3-Yes, I was a receptionist and cleaning and everything and that's because I lived in the capital and those who lived in the country where would they get money from?
[24:05-26:49] (brief interruption)

CW-Sorry

I3-Are we going to continue to talk about fish and all that?

CW-I think it might have been recording when I was gone-oh well. We're recoding, parson me. Going back to when you were telling me when you were 20 and your daughter had just been born what did you realize?

I3-Well, one starts to see that they need diapers, special baby food, there's another little mouth to feed.

CW-Were you already with your husband?

I3-Yes. I was pregnant when I was going to and my parents turned their backs on me. They said she is pregnant so she has to decide what she does. Does she stay here or goes with him. The father of my daughter didn't work so I made the decision to stay at home and that's when I stayed with my mother. That's when my mother came back to Guatemala. When my mother found out that I was pregnant my mother said no I'm leaving and she made the decision to leave and she left.

CW-Where was she?

[28:33] I3-She was here in Washington, in the State of Maryland and she worked in Washington. When my mother found out I was already six months pregnant so at that time in three months later she decided and she left. There was one month left for my daughter to be born and she went back to Guatemala again. My mother when she was in Guatemala regretted it because she started to see that everything was expensive in Guatemala. It was about a month before my daughter was born that my mother arrived and right after that my daughter was born. Then they called my mother and said that they were going to give her the papers.

CW-In Guatemala?

I3-In Washington. The lawyer called her telling my mother that she won the case and that they were going to give her the papers in the state of Bill Clinton (Arkansas) and when my aunts and uncles got their papers. That's when they were giving them to the Guatemalans and that's when my mother was supposed to receive her papers. The lawyer told her to stay for a while and then return but my mother didn't want to return illegally it's too difficult and how would she go? she didn't want to go. During the time my mother arrived she had a little bit of money and we had enough to keep eating but when the money was almost used up and my daughter was born and I was without the father of my daughter, I had to make the decision to come here because I never wanted to come to the United States. To adapt without your family is hard, and of course I had family here but they are only cousins and I barely knew them and aunts that I didn't even remember and imagine I hadn't seen them in fifteen to twenty years I didn't even remember and I didn't want to come over here but just like that I made the decision to leave my daughter. It was a really hard decision to make.

CW-How many months were was she?

[30:36] I3-She already was four years old when I decided to come here. I was still working but I was paid bi-weekly. I was feeling like I overworked and I would receive the bi-weekly check and in two to three days I didn't have anything left. I said "well the money here doesn't suffice". The father of my daughter came here when she was eleven months old. At eight months he still sent me money and after one year when he was probably having other affairs he forgot about us and he didn't send any money. My aunt arrived and said she would help me to get to the United States. I made my decision to come here and it was difficult because, one, I would be leaving with people I didn't even know, the guides and it was a lot of money and I thought if I don't pass through they were charging me twenty thousand quetzales in Guatemala which is three thousand five hundred dollars, something like that here and if I don't pass. My mother told me not to think that I am not going to pass so I made the decision and the trip is really difficult but I had to emigrate because the situation in Guatemala and that's how I came to deciding on emigrating and abandoning my daughter when she was four years old when she needed me the most.

CW-Did she stay with your mother?

I3- When I would call my daughter she would cry and say "Mommy no", she didn't want to stay with my mother because my mother ever since she was little suffered a lot and she is really violent. She doesn't know how to talk to a young child. She treats them however she wants to treat them and my daughter would cry. She would beg me to come back and what could I do? I didn't even have money here but thanks to God I had some luck coming here to the United States. That's why I give thanks to God for is arriving here because in two years I got out of my debt from working and paying it.

CW-How about the journey (to the US) ?

[33:15] I3-It's a journey so difficult that I really don't like to talk about it because you suffer a lot. You sleep in the desert where the wolves are howling and screaming and I was so frightened. I saw snakes and wolves, deer, snakes.

CW-You're a person used to the city and not the countryside so there is a difference.

I3-I came here with my fingers busted up. I walked through swamps. They threw me in a train where they bring trash, they through me in the freight cars. During midnight I was standing in the wilderness standing so the train would stop and in the middle of a bunch of men. I felt like they would rape me and kill me but in the meantime I would kneel wherever I could find a spot and thank God that they didn't abuse me. I suffered a lot. I went through hunger, I walked a lot, I didn't sleep and it was really cold. When I was already in a desert part of the United States I slept on the sand and it was so cold because it was winter. I arrived on November 8, I arrived practically on the first days of November because in Los Angeles is where I stayed a bit before they sent me over here. A lot of days and it is something terrible that happened on the road that I wouldn't wish on anyone. You get all kinds of bug bites from mosquitoes and whatever bugs that would come upon you. I saw two corpses on the road and it would break our hearts to leave them abandoned. In the group that I came in people would faint. We needed to wait for them and hold them.

CW-How many were in you're group?

I3-Eighteen with me included.

CW-Were they from the capital or from all over the place?

I3-From all kinds of places. I knew people and I was the only one from the capital. They came from a lot of places.

CW-All of them were from Guatemala?

I3-No they were from Guatemala, Mexico and there were some from El Salvador. There was a good amount them. They were people I didn't know but we all had the same needs and we were going to struggle and we would come together to pray so that they wouldn't catch us and give thanks to God that I am here telling my story of how I came to the United States. It's something very difficult and sometimes some of them would ask me how did you suffer and I would say, oh we suffered a lot and there are people who suffered a great deal. Sometimes they would take care of me a little bit because I am a woman. They would tell me to go further up front and when the immigration would find us or see us, everyone ran to the woods with the snakes hissing and I would be screaming!

CW-Were you the only woman in the group?

I3-Yes, I was the only woman but thanks to God no.

CW-The immigration never caught on to you?

[36:52] I3-No. There was a thing that went right in front of me that detects you and I stayed so still and no. Like I said we had such luck, thank God and until this day I am thankful to God because he knows the sacrifice and the necessity for one to come to this country. The majority had luck and you have to be grateful and try hard and to do something because it's difficult to emigrate. It is the most terrible and then to interact with the people from here. I have worked with a lot of people who are racist who think that because a person is illegal they can discriminate but I always learned that one no matter where you are have to fight for your rights. For me something that I have never liked is when you humiliate other people. Here I've had to face a lot of things that until this day where I work there is a lot of discrimination with my coworkers and me. They talk about the Guatemalan this and that. They don't say anything to me because on occasion I've said "if you want respect you must respect me as well". I am not the same as the rest. If they let themselves get disrespected it's because they want to be disrespected, but I know in this country I have my rights be it legal or illegal, so you better respect me or definitely I will speak to the owner and I am going to explain to him what the situation is. The one who has me here is the owner because in reality that's how it is, the owner is the one who has me here. He knows that I like to work. I do my work and he himself begged me to come back to the company. Like I said one comes here and has to put up with a lot of things that frankly is quite hurtful because one leaves all of their family behind and they humiliate you and they treat you like garbage because one is illegal. It's something difficult. If we all united ourselves something could be done but a lot of them are afraid and they are from the countryside and they can't defend themselves they barely speak in Spanish. Thank God that I can defend myself in speaking Spanish a little bit but there are a lot of people that can't speak in Spanish and that's why they are discriminated more. I've seen a lot of discrimination. There is more discrimination towards the illegals in the company that I work with. They call them illegal, but if it wasn't for the illegals imagine so much work hard work that we have in this country. And you have to admire the fishermen as well because they risk their lives to go fishing. They don't know if they're coming back or not coming back. They leave their families without knowing if they are going to return. It is very difficult. One needs to recognize that.

CW-Coming back to when you were arriving to the United States, when you came from Los Angeles after to New Bedford. What was your impression of New Bedford?

[40:36] I3-No, first I came from Los Angeles to Washington with the family of my mother. They were the ones that brought me. The father of my daughter didn't come; it was my mother's family who helped me come to this country. I arrived in Los Angeles then Washington, that's where they received me. When I was in Washington, the father of my daughter found out that I was here and he started calling, offering me the sky and the stars and to come here. How is it over there? I arrived in Washington to work near the Capitol, the second building you wouldn't miss it. I don't know what the building is called but right there near the Capitol there is a big building and that was my first job cleaning tables in a restaurant. It was a big building that in various sides you would see places to eat in every corner and my aunt talked to her and I started to clean tables and everything and after they started talking to me about starting other jobs in Washington for almost two months working, but love was stronger and he convinced me to come to New Bedford and that's when he kept calling and calling saying I'm going to pay for it. Deep down I still felt something for him so I didn't think about it much and I told my aunt "I'm leaving and Thank You. When I get there I am going to be working and I'll send you money to pay you back" and that's how it was. I came to New Bedford and I was surprised when I came here to New Bedford because imagine over there cleaning tables and just cleaning its normal doing all that work at home but when I came here that it was ALL FISH!.

CW-He was working in fish?

I3-Yes in fish and scallops too. If you go to a company here in New Bedford the most have both. If it's a fish company always they will have a little bit of scallops and if they sell scallops they always sell fish so they sell both at the same time, lobsters, fish, shrimp and all that. Wow-it was terrible the surprise that I felt because imagine I had to do a lot of difficult things that I would say were man's job. I ended up doing it. After eight days I called my mother up regretting it and she said "be quiet and don't tell me anything because you didn't go over there nothing". I had to overcome the challenges of life in New Bedford.

CW-What was the most difficult thing about New Bedford that you had to get accustomed to?

I3-The work. I can't be sharpening knives anymore and when I cleaned the fish my hands would be like this (fingers bent) and my hands would hurt a great deal from taking out the spines and the dirty parts that the fish has.

CW-Your shoulders hurt?

I3-Yes my shoulders and arms. Imagine cutting everything all day. We worked seven to eight hours a day and all day cutting fish and filling knives that is tiring. That is what was the most tiring although everything having to do with seafood is tiring.

CW-And that was your first job that you had was cleaning fish?

I3-Yes, cleaning fish and I said "this is the United States"? Whatever, keep going because we are here and with the great debt on top of us we have to work but yes- that was my biggest surprise because at the time cleaning the fish was so hard with the knives to sharpen and like I said it's tiring. It's like I'm telling you, I know a lot of people who do that job. Right now at this moment I am working in scallop and fish too. I've already worked with fish and lobster, breaking the lobsters and taking out the meat from the lobsters.

CW-Can you tell us in more detail about the job that you are doing now?

[45:12] I3-Right now I am packing scallops, during the months they sell fish I pack them, and I pack the scallops. When the scallops are finished we work on the fish. We pack and do a little bit of everything.

CW-Is the company big?

I3-Yes it's pretty big. There are various workers but the majority are Guatemalan.

CW- Do the workers work in the company all year, or are there seasons where there isn't much work?

I3-Right now we are at the time where there is less work because in October, November, December, January that's when there is less work. When the cold starts is when work starts to be scarce. March or April, June, July and August, throughout the summer is when there is a lot of work. I work steady. From Monday through Friday I have a secure job, but few hours for the winter season. From twenty-three or thirty hours a week, but if there isn't any work then you have to understand that there isn't any work. At least you can pay the rent and the bills and all that.

CW-During the time that there is a lot of work how many hours do you work?

I3-We work fifty to fifty five hours a week when there is a lot of work. We work a lot so that's why during the winter season we understand that there isn't a lot of work so we are going to have a bit of rest, but when summer comes we work Saturdays or sometimes Sundays.

CW-How do you work around your family budget during the winter when you work twenty-three hours and in the summer you work fifty hours, do you have to spend more or less?

I3-I send money to my mother and to my brothers that I have over there. It's not my responsibility but I am here in the United States and if I have the opportunity I try to help my mother out. I see what my bills are and the rent and I keep saving for that and also I leave some for my mother so if there is work or isn't work, we always save money. If it is every week or fifteen days I always send money to my mother. Like I told you the situation over there is difficult so I have to help out my family. When summer rolls around my mother gets a little bit more money because there is work and I have to do something and send money to do something there because imagine if tomorrow we have to leave where are we going to go, to my mother's house where my other siblings live. That's why I say one has to keep looking and make calculations to send money to your family. It's something difficult but it's doable.

CW-Right now does your daughter live with you?

[48:55] I3-Yes my daughter arrived a year and a half ago. After getting out of my debt I realized that my daughter is more important. My daughter is not going to grow up like I did with how my parents abandoned me. If they were like that I have to fight for my daughter. My daughter already has been here a year and a half and it is something horrible to suffer. It was something difficult because she also arrived illegally. It took her one month and two days to get here.

CW-How old is she now?

I3-She is nine years old. She was seven when she was traveling. She came with total strangers but when people in Guatemala find out that parents have left their child there is a possibility that they will kidnap them. A lot of people knew that the both of us (she and husband) were here. It was really dangerous to take my daughter so I said "I have to fight to get my daughter here". I don't want my daughter to grow up suffering because like I told you my mother has a bad temper and my daughter suffered a lot already. I had to make the decision to have her sent. She had a year and a half being with us and I am still paying my debt from getting her sent over here.

CW-Is she going to school?

I3-Yes, she is going to school and she is happy because the life in the United States is completely different. She is with her parents and if she wants something she can eat well and it is easy to buy things not like in Guatemala, how much does a hamburger cost over there?

CW-Do you live in a house with just the three of you or with other people?

[51:11] I3-Right now it's just us three.

CW-The two of you work?

I3-Yes both of us work. He also works in scallops, the same job.

CW-Do you work in the same company?

I3-No in different companies but yes we both work and the girl goes to school. We are all moving forward. Its difficult but...

CW-In comparison to what you life was like in Guatemala...

I3-That's why a lot of us risk our lives to come to this country to be able to have better lives.

CW-But there is a difference in how you are treated, you were telling me how there is discrimination at your job and you had to withstand that. Right now at work are there are a lot of Guatemalans but there are also a lot of Americans and Portuguese people?

I3-Puerto Ricans work there and also Salvadorians work there but there's a bit more of Guatemalans and Portuguese.

CW-But you were coming to me about the racism and discrimination but it was more among....wel is the owner of the company a good person?

[53:03] I3-He is really good person . He stays in his office but he knows of how his employees get treated. We have needs and sometimes- well I am the type of person that Ill go and I can't speak English but I will find someone that can translate to demand my rights with my boss because that's what it is. I speak up for myself. I would like to speak for others but sometimes when I say let's all speak up at the same time they say "no I need my job and I don't want problems". Well that's them but I will speak up for myself. There's a discrimination towards us but they don't dare say anything. Because we have to work.

CW-Would you rather keep working in the fishing industry if you had another opportunity to work elsewhere?

I3-If there was an opportunity I would go because you have to go and see what those opportunities can offer you, but for the time being I am working here and I am happy because I have my job that is secure and for the moment there hasn't been another job anywhere that I thought would be good.

CW-How long have you been working there?

I3-Since I came from Guatemala.

CW-How many years?

I3-Six years. This was my first job. I left and quit three times already because they weren't going to treat me the way I wanted and I would take off my apron and I would go home because my job- I mean come on, I don't think I am that incapable, I can do any other job and if I can do this job I can do another! Just like that I knew of another company and they said "no you couldn't do the work you have to life heavy things" and I would tell them "but I have lifted much heavier things". I could get a job that I don't have to lift anything heavy and without discrimination.

CW-Is your job dangerous? Has anyone had an accident?

I3-No, but for me lifting something that is fifty to sixty pounds is somewhat heavy but if we wanted to do it, we could do it so we do and that's all. In other jobs they wouldn't let us lift anything saying "no it's too heavy for you". In other words there are places where women get treated differently unlike where I work everyone works equally. That's how it was before. After

some time one starts to change because I didn't know my rights in this country and I said "well I guess that's how it is and if I have to lift sixty pounds then I have to lift sixty pounds because if that's how they do it, then that's how I am going to do it". As I met other people they told me that's not how it is.. I have to fight for my rights whether I am an illegal or not. After a couple days they called me back saying that they wanted me to work there again and I told them no I don't want to return to work and afterwards they told me that they would pay me more if I returned and I said "well if they pay me more I better go." The last two years that I went back I said "well I am not going to do the same jobs that the men do. I am not going to do it because I am a woman and I won't do it. I want my vacation time even if you pay me or don't pay me on my vacation time I still want it.". I told them I have worked here for three years straight and I have never had any vacation time. "If you don't want to do those things for me then I will leave". You have to speak up for yourself confidently and make friends to get rid of the fear because if you don't stand up for yourself someone will walk all over you because that's life in the United States but one needs to know how to demand their rights in this country.

CW-But that was after you learned your rights because in the beginning you didn't know?

[57:48] I3-No I didn't know and I thought I had to lift heavy things and they would yell at you and call you awful names and I said to myself if that's how it is. I didn't know, I definitely didn't know but when I went to other places and other jobs and it was completely different because they didn't treat me like that. If the owner doesn't notice then I have to go up there and speak to him.

CW-What did the owner say when you told him that?

I3-He was really bothered by it. He talked to the other bosses about it. That's when it all changed and has changed a lot.

CW-Do they still mistreat the others?

I3-No nowadays not a lot. Before it was frequent and excessive. Yes, there is a little bit of verbal abuse. I now that in my opinion it is discrimination in the way that they treat us. "Your language is from Guatemala and you people should be living in the mountains" and "you people" should do I don't know what. They say "you people" and sometimes its only one person that is talking so you don't get involved. They still say some pretty bad things about us "you speak a strange dialect" but not the exploitation like bit was before so things have changed. If they won't speak up then I will and that's how we unite. Like they say "the people united we will never be defeated. " But we try to find ways to get along on the job.

CW- Do you work directly for the company with a temp company?

I3-With the company.

CW-But are there other crews that come in when the work picks up?

I3-No its always the same people because that way we have more hours.

CW-It seems like before at that company there were people that would come in to work for the season

[01:00:16]I3-Maybe it was before I arrived. Now we are all here and we all do the same job and when the summer comes everyone of us has more hours and we work more. They don't bring anyone else in so that the same workers can have more hours because we assigned to be there.

CW-Do they talk about the fishing regulations at work? Do they pay attention to the scallopers and the days that the fisherman can work? Have they commented on that?

I3-Yes you hear about them. The boss that works there speaks Spanish and she tells us but not too much because they speak in English and I can't speak in English but she tells us that "at this and so date they going to fish or they are not going to fish because there are storms". She always tells us something like "the scallops are expensive now because no one has gone fishing". Like I said I can't speak English so they only comment to me about these things about fishing and I don't have contact with the vendors and they talk about that upstairs. We stay downstairs and we put the product in gallons and clean the scallops. Whatever defect the scallop have we remove them and put it in the gallons then package the scallops. We put them in boxes with ice and all that. That what we call "*gallonear*".

CW-The scallops come outside of the shell?

I3-Yes in bags and boxes. They come already processed. They come from other companies that put them in big bags and they do prep. They put them in water. They put additives on the scallops so they don't spoil. Then they are put on ice. Then after all that they get delivered to us.

CW-So the customers buy them in the auction?

[01:03:11] I3-Yes they buy them fresh and then we sell them again like that and they go in gallons and in bags, boxes. We get big bags that weigh fifty to seventy pounds. We pick out the big ones, the small ones and if they ask for one size or another size then we take them out by size. The sizes are extra large, large, medium, small and extra small. We classify them by size and if we find garbage we take out small pieces and throw them out. We put them in gallons and in huge boxes depending on how much they ask for , and that's it.

CW-Does the company have their own boats?

I3-No our company is pretty small. Other companies that are pretty big I think have their own boats.

CW-How many people work at this company?

I3-About eleven or twelve people.

CW-Where do you get the product?

I3-I think from the auction. Like I said I don't go to the office and they don't tell us. The boss is the one who tells us things but that's when she speaks to us in Spanish but if it's in English we are not even informed of what's happening.

CW-The final destination of the product that person who buys them are restaurants or markets or you don't know?

I3- They send them to various places. New York, California and all over. The scallops get shipped off to different places. Not to just one place but to different places. They send the scallops outside the United States and inside the United States .

CW-You were explaining before about how you manage your family budget. Right now there are three of you in the household, how do you manage? Do you put your paycheck in with your

husband's ? How do you negotiate that within your marriage?

I3-Well for rent we pay X amount, it's \$600 so it's \$300 for him and \$300 for me. For food we spend \$100-\$50 for me \$50 for him, for gas and lights \$300 combined, \$150 -\$150 each, for cable \$60 -\$30 each. We split it in the middle, half and half.

CW-Does he help his parents and his family over there too?

[01:06:30] I3- Of course he also helps his family. He helps his younger siblings. He has a lot of siblings and he also helps them as well that's why we split the payments in half because my daughter is still too young. We split the bills in half and that's how we support each other because imagine in this country you have to pay for everything.

CW- When you first came here did you live with other people?

I3-Yes.

CW-How did you divide expenses it in terms of the bills?

I3-It was the same except at first and I didn't have a job and he would pay the bills. But if five people lived in the house the five of us would divide everything up. That's how you pay. Right now we live alone because of our daughter because you need to be careful because she is a young girl. So we found something cheap enough and that's where we are living at right now. In the future if we find something cheaper and someone wants to move in with us well, we will have to do it because we pay a lot for rent and everything else but for the moment we live by ourselves.

CW-Do you think that you spend less money in the United States on school expenses for your daughter?

I3-Over there is completely different. There are a lot more expenses there. Here my daughter has more privileges and she is always given things like clothes. We have had good luck. Sometimes the neighbors come to visit to give her clothes. Sometimes of course we do have to buy her clothes and other things but not all the time. My husband will buy her things and I will buy her whatever else she needs. She is still little so as she gets older she can start to understand. For the moment this is where we are.

CW-What hopes do you have for her life in the future?

[01:09:33] I3-She tells me she wants to study and learn English. Her biggest ambition is to learn English because she says that if we move back in one or two years she is going to teach classes in English in Guatemala and she is going to make a lot of money. If we stay she plans on continuing her studies. She always saying something new. Sometimes she wants to be a teacher then the next day she wants to be a doctor. She is not serious yet.

CW-Is she in the first grade?

I3-Third. She comes home and says, "Oh mommy I want to be a teacher, oh mommy I want to be a veterinarian" and I say, "That's great"! What I can tell is that she has a passion for two things, beauty, you know cutting hair and putting on makeup all that stuff. I studied that and I loved it when I was younger. I studied that too. The second thing she loves is Veterinarians. She loves to take care of the animals and she has a lot of patience for them and she cries if a worm dies on her or something like that. I say well at least she has two things but it could be that they will change

because sometimes children change. She would always bring her stuffed animals around. She tells me she wants to be an animal doctor and I tell her a veterinarian and she say yes that's it. We will see what happens as she continues studying and God willing she achieves her goals.

CW-In this past year with the situation of the raid in New Bedford has the climate changed for the immigrants?

I3-Yes it has changed a lot. Sometimes we go to work terrified that they (immigration) can come into the company. We go grocery shopping terrified that they will catch us inside or if we drive and pull us over they will ask us for papers or anything like that. It's since the raid that we think twice about doing anything. Yes it have definitely changed a lot.

CW-Has the atmosphere at work changed?

I3-Of course because its like I'm telling you we are terrified that they will come. All of us work with that terror inside entering in every corner and everyone wants to go back to their houses with the fear that immigration is coming.

CW- Were you working the day that immigration was on the waterfront?

I3-At the sewing company?

CW- No about two years ago there was a bus parked in front of the fish houses, immigration was looking for somebody

Recording cut off at the end

[01:12:34]