

Immigrant Seafood Processing Woman -Interview # 7

Anonymous
32 years old
Female
Seafood Processing-cutter, packer
New Bedford
Salvadoran

Interviewer: Corinn Williams
Transcriber: Corinn Williams

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Immigrant Woman Processor Interview # 7

[00:05]CW- (English) This is Corinn Williams and I am going to interview another seafood processing worker, and it is August 5th, 2008 and we are going to do the interview in Spanish.\par (Spanish) Now, I'm here to listen to the story of your life if you are willing to share it with us. Everyone's story we listen to is different, and your story will help us better understand the history and the experiences of the woman who work in fish processing and of how government regulations and other factors are affecting your life and the lives of your family. This project is an attempt to speak and reach out to people whose voices are seldom heard. And your story and realities are often misunderstood sometimes quite distinct from the lives of people who were born here who also work in the fisheries. For this reason your voice is very important to help us understand how the lives of immigrant women in the seafood processing are different. Your name and personal information will not be used in the interview, and you are aware that we are recording the interview, and that we will be using the interview to measure the socio-economic impact of fishing regulations on your life and that of your family and for other educational purposes. Do you consent to recording the interview?

I7- Yes

CW- O.K. Well this is second try to record this interview, thanks again for having patience with me and as I explained last time, first we want to talk about what your life was like before in your country, starting from the beginning. Can you tell me where and when you were born?

I7- Where and when I was born. I was born on the 24 th of October of 1976. And I was born in San Sebastian, San Vicente.

CW- El Salvador.

I7- El Salvador and when I was born my father was so poor, he couldn't find work, he had no way of supporting us and we were many (in the family).

[03:07] CW- How many?

I7- When I was born, I was the third in the family, but after there came another and another, my mother had twelve brothers and sisters. And all lived. There were fourteen-two died.\par

CW- So fourteen in total?

I7- Uhhuh-fourteen in total .And the poverty that there was before is what made us come here to the United States .When all of is were small, and as we grew up one by one, my father felt more supported because then my brothers were able to help him out by working.

CW- What did your father do for a living?

I7- He was a farmer, he worked in agriculture . He raised corn, beans, rice. And he also was a farm

hand (*mozo*) and went to work on other people's farms. He would ask for corn or money to be able to buy beans, salt, sugar, the most important to be able to feed us. He loved to go fishing in a small river, he caught a lot of fish that we would eat. We were a very poor family, very, very poor. As we grew up I left at fourteen years old to the capital to start working, to help them. I went to the capital of San Salvador.

CW- But at home you worked too?

I7- Oh yes-

CW- What kind of work did you do?

I7- I made tortillas, cleaning, washing dishes, washing clothes.

CW- All by hand?

I7- All by hand.

CW- Did you have lights or electricity?

I7- None! We illuminated with lanterns (*candiles*) that we filled with gas and lit them, that's what we used.

CW- Did you have water?

I7- No we had to go to the well to fill the basins.

CW- Was it far?

I7- No not too far it was close. And we ate two times a day.

CW- What did you eat?

I7- We always had tortillas, we ground the corn on the stone.

CW- How do you make them, what's the process?

[05:58] I7- The corn? You harvest it, the men do. It's gathered and harvested it grows for two months and then the corn is ready. After you shuck and hull it, and then the women have to cook it. When it's cooked, you wash it.

CW- Then you dry it?

I7- It's dry but then you have to wet it and grind it on the stone, because where we lived the corn mill was two hours on foot in the town.

CW- So you were two hours from San Sebastian?

I7- Yes we were two hours away in the canton (rural region), so that's why we ground it on a stone to make the dough (*masa*) and then we made the tortillas.

CW- How often did you have to make the dough?

I7- Two times a day.

CW- Two times a day!

I7- We ate beans, eggs, rice and once in a while when we could buy a piece of meat, but not much, or fish. So like that we grew up little by little, one after another, so I went to work to help my parents, so I went to work in the capital, it was to help them. And I earned 60- because before we earned in *colones* - 60 *colones* a month and from that I gave it to my father and my mother I only had money left for a few things. Then my oldest brother grew up- no it was the third one of the boys who grew up, and a 18-19 years old he came here. He was the first to come and he had a place to come to. He arrived at a place they call Mendota in Los Angeles. The coyote who brought him gave him a place to stay for the meantime he looked for a week he gave him a place to stay. And after two years, I asked him to help me.

CW- But before that you were explain that when you were fourteen you were at home living with your parents and with your family, but at fourteen you went to the capital. Can you explain a bit about that?

[09:00] I7- Yes I worked a long time in the capital. From one job, I got another, and when I like another job I switched where I was paid better.

CW- What kind of work were you doing?

I7- Caring for children, house cleaning, cooking food, washing clothes. Only ironing is what I didn't do. But I would iron too but later they had another girl who would wash clothes and iron. I just took care of the children, cooked and cleaned. I did all the domestic chores of the house.

CW- In private homes?

I7- Yes private homes. One of the women worked at a bank, and another was a lawyer and she traveled a lot, she would travel here (to the U.S.). I worked for a long time.

CW- So you left home at 14 years old, were you going to school?

I7- Well I went to school when I was with my parents, but only until the 4th grade. They didn't have classes in the *canton* where I lived. And it became very dangerous during the time of the war, the war affected us a lot.

CW- And what happened during the war?

I7- During the time I was going to start going to 4th grade, I had to go to school for about a month, it's when they killed some of the teachers

CW- Why did they kill the teachers?

I7- Because they were teaching classes in the *cantones* over there to Santa Elena, Omoa, El Paraiso all of the *cantones* La Esperanza, La Rosa there were like five *cantones*.

CW- It was a large area-

I7- A large area, and they killed the teachers who would come on motorcycles, they killed them and not one teacher (after that) would come into the area to teach classes over there because it was far, it was like two hours away from the town where we lived, so they were afraid, not one teacher came out to teach classes. It was like two years that passed and it wasn't the teachers and it was others who were sent to give classes that we didn't know them, because the others were afraid of what had happened. So other teachers came and maybe they weren't professional teachers but they were learning to become teachers and they weren't afraid and they came to work. And then they learned and had the intelligence to become professional teachers. And so then that is why I couldn't continue to study after that.

CW- You couldn't?

I7- No one couldn't.

CW- So that's why you decided to go (to the city).

[12:09] I7- That's why I decided I thought and thought about leaving my mother with the ton of brothers and sisters that she had, all little ones, and she was pregnant, with small kids, and the two older boys spent more time at my grandmother's than with my mother. And I had to help both of the boys and the girls, so that's why she didn't want me to go to work (in the city).

CW- because you helped out a lot.

I7- Because I helped her out a lot, and I was the oldest and I used to do everything. And she didn't want me to go, I said "Mother I am going to live with my godmother".

CW- In the capital?

I7- In the Capital, so I went to the Capital to visit with the sister of my Godmother and I later she said to me "stay here" because I already had that idea in my head that if my Godmother asks me to stay working with them then I would stay there. And yes they asked me to stay. And it stuck in my throat when she asked me to stay and the woman I was traveling with left and I told her to tell my mother that I was going to stay here. Well, I went back a month later and she wasn't there, and when I went there (it seemed) everything was different we lived in a shack it wasn't a house where we lived it was a shack made out of sticks of wood and earth, a shack.

CW- Not made of adobe?

I7- No of wood *parrales* (small tree trunks) and when she saw me she cried, it was hard, but then she got used to it, my sister grew up after me and she helped out my mother too, my sister told me not to go back because it was very hard on her. But I wasn't held back when I left, I would go back (to the city) and when she grew up she also left, because she said "(my parents) they don't give me anything, I need to buy what I need, I'm going to work" and she got a job too and my mother was left behind, but it was a help for them too, because you know that to raise corn and beans you need fertilizer and poison (insecticide) so when my father cultivated, he could harvest more he had the means to get more land to cultivate more because my brothers were older and he could work the land more, more corn, beans and rice.

CW- Rice too?

I7- And with the two of us working we could buy him the fertilizer so it was a help for him. And we

missed our mother but we know that they couldn't buy for us what we wanted. They didn't want us to work in the Capital but we needed to do it to buy things for ourselves. And so that's how it was, we worked for a long time in the Capital, years. And when my sister got married at twenty-nine years old, she left. Not me I kept working I had my daughter when I was twenty-four, so I kept working with my daughter in the Capital.

CW- So you had your daughter in the Capital?

[16:01] I7- In the Capital and I kept working always, I got pregnant, I found a boyfriend and I got pregnant right away (laughs) he wanted to marry him or to love with him but I didn't want to.

CW- What didn't you want to?

I7- I don't know, when I became pregnant I couldn't look at him again. I decided to stay single with my daughter. And I said I will get ahead even if it's just me working, and when my baby girl was fifteen days old I went to show her to my mother. And she didn't want me to bring her back with me she said "the poor thing will suffer" and when my baby girl was 3 or 4 months old she took her away from me she said "you go back, and leave her with me". So I accepted and I went back to work alone and I wasn't used to being by myself without my little girl, I missed her. And later I heard that my little girl was sick. So the next day I got up at dawn to go back to San Sebastian to see her.

CW- What distance was that from the Capital?

I7- From the Capital it was two hour or an hour and a half in bus.

CW- And then 2 more hours to get to the canton?

I7- Two hours more to get to the canton. Let's say four hours. But when I arrived home she was o.k. She was with her aunt but I didn't just come without a reason, and fifteen days later I went to see her again and that's what it was like until I went again I had to go to take care of her, I wasn't myself without her (*no me hallaba*) and later when I met the father of my (other) children, and married him my daughter was two years old, she was afraid of him, she was little and she was afraid of him.

CW- How did you meet him?

I7- When I was shopping one day in San Sebastian and I was going back to the canton I had to walk, Corinn! For two hours, walking because there we no cars and the road were bad, so I meet him on the road (laughs) that is were I found him.

CW- And he was from San Sebastian?

I7- Yes- and later we got married we had a quick courtship and we got married.

CW- Can you explain a bit how life is different there, did you have a wedding and a party?

[19:11] I7- Yes we had a big fiesta but it's different here, one looks for *padrinos* (godparents) for everything, over there you get married in the church, you have the fiesta, the food, you invite everybody who gives you wedding cards, you rent a hall to have it. It's not the same here, everybody has a a lot of people with the brides (bridesmaids).

CW But there did your family participate in festivals?

I7- My father, yes he participated in the festival committee in my canton over there, he would participate with the church he was very Catholic. He worked a lot because over there they celebrate August 30th. Its our patron (saint) fiesta.

CW- Of San Sebastian?

I7- No of the canton?

CW- What is it called?

I7- La Rosas, he was always on the board, where they chose three men and three women- a board of six. And they go out to raise money for the fiesta, they sell things and have raffles, he like to participate in that.

CW- That's how the Portuguese feast is organized here too there is a committee who puts it on.

I7- That's how it is too they call it a committee too, he liked to be involved every year for the 30th of August. There were rides and vendors who would come.

CW- Rides?

[21:44] I7- Rides for kids to go on it would go on all night, all day and all night from the 29th to the 30th it was very nice how they have it there. And over there everyone likes to light firecrackers.

But in January it will be five years now since he has died. But he managed to come here.

CW- Really?

I7- Yes, when my brother was burned in (an explosion) at a company that cooks fish heads, its in the South End when two *muchachos* were burned, do you remember that?

CW- Yes think so.

I7- My brother was one of the ones burned in the accident, that was really hard for him. But thank God we were able to bring our parents here to see him. Because my mother was dumbfounded she has heard things about the burn victims-that they were blinded that they were deaf that they were mute she was told all of that, until we were able to bring them here. It wasn't as if they got a visa, they gave them a visa for six months so that they could come and see him. But it cost a lot with lawyers- letters from his doctor who was treating him. And they didn't believe (my parents) over there. Immigration didn't want to give them a visa over there.

CW- But did your brother die after?

I7- My brother healed, his body was scarred even he was left with small ears, his mouth and lips are small.

CW- But he healed.

I7- He healed, my brother, my sister and I would go up to Boston. I was working at a company right in front of where he was working and I was there when the ambulance took him and followed them to St Luke's hospital and from there they rushed him to Boston in a helicopter. And we followed them to Boston and he was taken into intensive care. And his face was all swollen you couldn't recognize him. I didn't go to work the next day because I had to call my mother. And I told the woman who has the phone because my mother doesn't have a phone and she lived 5-10 minutes away. And when I called at six AM my mother was at the corn mill where she was making dough for tortillas and the woman was the phone was nearby, so I asked the woman to go find my mother at the corn mill and she said "she's over there at the mill" so the woman said "what happened *mihijita* what happened?" I explain, "this and that happened but don't tell my mother anything yet" I told her. She said "o.k. I'll go talk to her and invite her in to sit and for some warm milk" but I said "Please watch out for her because my mother will faint when she finds out" and at that moment my mother grabbed the phone and said, "what happened" she didn't even say hello. And I had to steel myself to give myself the strength to tell her because no one wanted to break the news to her. So I tearfully told her and she screamed out that was so hard for us. But thankfully when they came to see him he was already sent home. When my father came he wept and he didn't want to leave because he already had a premonition that he was dying. That happened in September \par

CW- Five years ago-2003.

[26:48] I7-2003 because my son was born in 2003 in March, so he was seven months old when that happened. He (brother) was one month in a coma without moving from the bed at all, without moving. After that month he started to move, and I would talk to him because the nurse who was caring for him told me to talk to him he said "It's good for you to talk to him, that he know that you are there". My brother and sister would rush like they would faint from there. They didn't have the courage to see him -they would faint. And I would talk to him, I would rub his hands and feet. And I don't know, I give thanks to God for giving me so much strength to give me the desire to be there with him and I didn't want to leave I would ask him questions and he would nod his head. I'd say "here we are we came to see you, and so and so, and so and so came to see you" I'd tell him. And they only gave him liquids I wouldn't ask if he was hungry. But when he started to respond and they put him in another ward but he would get mad because he wanted to get out and they would call us on the phone to calm him down, he was something else.

CW- He always was in Boston?

I7- In Boston, we would go up on Saturdays, Sundays and Wednesdays but any day of the week we'd go, we would have to gently scold him sometimes we'd say, "You have to heal, now, behave yourself" as if he were a child. So he was there for another two weeks. And they transferred him to another clinic to give him therapy that was closer to here, but it was still an hour away. But there he received therapy, how to move his mouth. But there he could drink and eat again. I would bring him

pupusas, tamales, atol. The first time I brought him *pupusas* and he told me: “ Today I really ate well” He ate *pupusas* and a thermos full of *atol* that I brought him and he was very satisfied and happy. He was there two weeks more and when my mother and father were coming, two days before we went to get him, two days before. But they gave me a great big lecture and a big packet of papers because I would be in charge of him or if not they would have to find him a nurse and she would come one hour a day to give home therapy. But if not, I could I could give him the therapy . So I took charge of his therapy and I would change the dressing with yellow paper and clothes to change in the burned areas that he had. But I did it so we wouldn't have to go back there (to rehab hospital) because it was so far away. I would come from work to bathe him, wash his clothes in a special soap, his clothes were washed separately, special creams. As soon as I would get home from work I would take him in to bathe him and later to do the massages and therapy all of that. It was hard.

CW- Did the other man also recover (from the accident)?

I7- Yes he recovered too-

CW- So we were talking about how before you came to New Bedford you would eat fish sometimes, did your father fish?

[31:38] I7- Yes my father fished, he would fish in a little river. They were fish-small fish- and *mojarra* they were very delicious.

CW- Was it close to the house?

I7- Yes it was close, he would go to fish all night at the river and come home at dawn with a lot of fish.

CW- And the Capital is close to the sea?

I7-Yes it is close but we didn't have the sea (at home).

CW- Did you ever go to the beach?

I7-Only when I was working I would go with the family I was working for, I went about five times. They would go during Holy Week .

CW-That was the custom?

I7- Yes that was the custom, they would stay there for four days\par

CW- What would you do at the beach?

I7- We would leave on Wednesday and come back on Sunday. One could swim and eat we would bring a lot of stuff to eat and I would take care of the kids.

CW- Would you cook?

I7- We'd cook eggs, meat or buy food already made, rice , shellfish. The shellfish prepared at the beach are different. Lobster, fried *mojarra*. The beach is very beautiful. And there is an abundance of coconuts in El Salvador at the beach. .

CW- Coconut water , cold coconuts.

I7- Uhhuh

CW- So it's hot at the beach?

I7-yes, it's very beautiful.

CW- So during the time you were living in the Capital , you said that your brother had come to the U.S. first.

I7- Yes he came first .

CW- He went to Los Angeles, what ideas did you have about the United States what kinds of impressions did you have before coming here?

[34:16] I7-Before coming I thought that the United States must be beautiful but I thought “ What is it like?” What kind of work would I be doing (if I were to go) I would ask myself, I wanted to go but I was also afraid to come.

CW- because your brother told you what it was like crossing the border?\par

I7-Yes , people would tell me maybe their sons who had come who had been carried off by a river (crossing) but I said“In the name of God I will make the trip” and he said (brother) “ with the money you put up I will receive you when you get here”. But he was already here in New Bedford, a friend has brought him here.

CW- How did he get to New Bedford?

I7- He had a friend he got his phone number and they talked and he said to him look come over here I will bring you here because (in California) he worked in the fields harvesting melons, cabbages, that's what he was working in. I don't believe he was earning much. So he came here and he liked it more.

CW- Did he find work in fish processing?

I7- Yes in fish processing.

CW- What year was that?

I7- When I came here?

CW- No, what year did your brother come here?

I7- In '85 no, no I'm wrong, in what year let me see...'86 because I came in '89,-85,86.

CW- And during that time were there many Salvadorans here?

I7- No there were few not like there are now, but there was a lot of work then. They would call you to work if you wanted to work , you could work all day and all night if you wanted to. There was a lot of work . When I came-no wait I'm wrong, my brother came here in '95, because I came in '96, I was here '96-'99 for three years and later I went back (to El Salvador).

CW- So when you came the first time, how did you make the decision to come? Were you still working in the Capital?

[37:22] I7- No, I was married, I was living with my husband . I had my daughter and my second child. I had two children. He let me come here. He said “go- we now have two children, to buy a little house here, and there isn't any work here and working on the land you can't buy anything”. We were living in his father's house, his father and his grandmother lived there.

CW- What kind of work did he do?

I7- He worked on the land in agriculture. “You go first and I come later” he told me. I said , “And the two kids?” They stayed with my mother. And so I came. It took me one month on the road. Since it was the first time that I came, I was very anguished and very worried on that road.

CW- Did you travel alone?

I7- No, I came with many people I knew. Women, Men, one doesn't travel; alone-there are a ton of people, up to 200 get together in those woods on that road and in Mexico more people join and as we travel more people are picked up (to travel). But when one is moved across the border to this side, one is moved along in groups. A coyote goes in front watching and another in the back and after there are trucks that are up ahead waiting for you. There are people who are police too but they are paid off, they don't do anything and they let you pass by. The first time we arrived at San Diego and there we bathed, we were given something to eat and at night we were taken out again and then I was brought here right away, we paid for a van to come here. No, I'm lying-how is it I got here... they came to get me in Boston. From there the van traveled to Boston-from Arizona, something like that.. They found someone who would come and get us, there were four of us who went too. Five of us, I was the only woman. We paid two men to come and get us and to paid for the van to take us here. We went to Arizona by bus-it took three days and nights from San Diego to Arizona. So they picked us up at a gas station so we got into the van to go. They made a lot of money on us because each one of us gave them \$500 a piece.

CW- \$500 -was everyone going to New Bedford?

[41:11] I7- Yes, all of us we traveling here and so they found these two guys to bring us. But it was three days and three nights without sleeping at all-to arrive here. We only stopped to go to the bathroom at McDonald's , to eat and then back on the road. We didn't rest at all.

CW- And you were the only woman, were they respectful to you?

I7-Yes of course, they were acquaintances (from El Salvador). There was a nephew of a sister-in-law- a sister-in-law if my husband. Understand the relation? A nephew of a sister-in-law, she is married to a brother of my husband. Later she invited her nephew to her house to eat , “ Come over to have dinner” she told him and he later told me that the only reason he asked him to come was to find out if I behaved myself on the road while we were traveling! So her told her “No man” or how Salvadoran men talk “*No jodas*” (no fucking around) - “Auntie, he told her “ It was only

because of her that we were able to eat during the journey". That woman asked for food she could cook for all of us- although it was only eggs and rice she would always make food for us, even if it was just five tortillas she would make them for us to eat- it not for that *maistra* (woman) we would have all gone hungry, Auntie" he told her. Because it was true, because you get here you are taken to a house and left there up to eight days. Until the road is safe, that's what to the coyotes do, if the road is safe and there is a way to get out and it;s nit surrounded by police, they they manage to get you out. When they see that the road is clear and free from police they they get you out, but in the meanwhile they keep you in a house.\par

CW- How many people are in the house?

I7- The whole group who is traveling, up to 60 or 50. All in a small house, it;s just that the women sleep on one side and the men on the other. But men who wanted to fool around could and women who wanted to could too- but anyway. So I said to the owner of the house because they get paid to keep the people there they are paid well. So when we got there I said ,”Who is the owner of the house here? We are all very hungry we haven eaten for days” They said “f you cook, we can buy you some food”. “Of course! We women can cook something even if it's just some eggs and some rice”I said. So I feed all of the acquaintances I knew and the other women fed the people that they knew they would ask for food. There was enough for everybody. So that's why that woman (sister-in-law) asked her nephew to dinner to ask about me. Later he told me about it and told me what he said to the woman after. After when we arrived here, my brother got some papers for me so I could start working. And after I started working and I earned \$5.00 an hour. But there was a lot of work.

CW- So what were some of your first impressions of New Bedford?

[44:53] I7- I didn't like it. I couldn't get used to being away from my children. I missed my country. I felt so strange here, everything was so unknown.

CW- But you were living with your brother?

I7-But it's not the same- It's not the same. That's why I missed my country, my children\lang1033\fo , my food,\lang255\fl my home, I cried.

CW- What was your first job?

I7- Cleaning fish, flounder, cod. The other women who worked there showed be how to do it and I learned later.

CW- What was the job like?

I7- Cleaning fish with a knife

CW- By hand?

I7- All by hand, later I was moved to a machine to put flounder in a machine, to skin the fish. Later to pack cod in pans, the job was nice I liked it especially after seeing my first check, I liked it (laughs).

CW- So you had it in mind that you would build your house over there (El Salvador) ?

I7- Yes but that was later, after I paid for the trip and my husband joined me here after 3 months that I was here, he came too. So with the two of us here we paid off the money (for the trips) . Because when I was here alone I couldn't pay off the trip and send money to him. So after with him here we paid it off together. After we worked and worked.

CW- He found work in fish processing too, you always worked in fish processing?

I7- Always, I always worked in fish processing.

CW- And your husband too?

I7-He worked a time in fish processing too but then he left it. So then we went ahead and \par I got a raise to \$6.00 to \$6.50

CW- During what years?

I7- '97, '98 then there was a lot of work , and you could really earn well. Also both of us played *cundina*, do you know what that is? Every week they chose of a number, up to 20, and you put in \$100 a week. So whoever gets the number gets all the money.

CW- It's like a raffle? What is it called?

I7- *Cundina* we call it. So we would put in \$200 between us every week. And because my children weren't here they were over there, I never went to stores to waste money. And I said I didn't come

here to spend money . So I would buy the cheapest things and comparing the times from before with the times now, one could buy all your food for \$65 a week back then or with \$100 it would last all month. And now the bills, gas and everything, before you could really save money. Now you can't, now you spend \$300 and it doesn't even show it. Everything is so expensive. Well, \$200 from me and \$200 from him we we got it (*cundina*) we would get \$4,000 back that we send over there (to El Salvador). During that time we made money. We saved a lot. We bought our little house a beautiful house, we bought a little land, 5, 7 lots. Five because I bought two more later.

CW- So you bought a lot!

[49:07] I7- Yes the house was already built. So in '99 we both went back. And I went back very pregnant, with my third child. Because he had it in his head that the government was going to take it all away. And I told him “ You go, I am going to wait until he baby is born, after three months after the child is born, I'll go” . “You won't go” (he said) “Yes, I will” (I said). “No, we are going back together” he said. And so I said to myself the Captain rules not the sailor so I obeyed him and I had the child over there. We went in January of '99. We were there for one year and he didn't like it. Months passed, weeks passed and he didn't earn anything and here one is used to a check every 8 days, so he went back (to the U.S) he returned in 2000.

CW- But you stayed.

I7- I stayed for one more year more and he got to the point where he told me “come back, I'm not getting anywhere by myself”. “See! You aren't getting anywhere,” I told him. So we agreed “Come” he said. And it was painful, I don't know if my sister will take care of my children I said. I always left my children at my mother's house and my sister took care of them, I paid her because now there were three. And so two years later I came back. But the second time the journey was different. I arrived in 18 days it was very fast. When I went back from Mexico I laughed and I said to myself, “ If we have to get through, we have to get through”. In 18 days we arrived, in Los Angeles. From Los Angeles only I knew the way, there were a lot of is who come from there (El Salvador) but they were all going to different states. So when i got to Los Angeles they bought my ticket, they sent me by plane.\par

CW- By plane?

I7- But I flew so afraid! They dropped me off at the airport to take the plane. Yes, in a plane. No..from Mexico they sent me by plane.

CW- From Mexico?

I7- From Mexico they bought my flight and there was immigration all around the airport. They brought me and another guy who was going to Los Angeles a suitcase. They only put one pair of pants and a shirt in it. And they brought the guy to the bathroom and then they deported him again as he was boarding the plane. .And so we ran like crazy to not be detected. So we landed in Tijuana at the Mexican border where they were waiting for us. We took a taxi and we gave them the address but “be alert, they could be grabbing you and then the other” he said. So instead he brought us to a hotel. That's where they will be waiting. First came one an then the other and the taxi brought us there. One came and then others and from the hotel they passed us across the border at night. We had to hike a long way to cross the border.\par

CW- But it was fine you crossed without any problem?

[53:19] I7- It was fine, I didn't even have to cross the river. The first time I did cross it, but the second time no. Then I arrived in Los Angeles and they bought me clothes and shoes. And they sent us on a plane. I landed in Virginia where my sister is. She went to get me at the airport.

CW- So a lot of your brothers and sisters were here already?

I7-Yes, a lot of them. There are eight if us here, there were six here and with me seven. And they one more who came later made eight. My husband's brother and my husband came to get me from Virginia. So we continued working together, working. In 2003 I became pregnant with my last child. But n the meantime I kept playing the *cundina* and I saved money if I might want to go back or if I might want to send for my children. But it would cost us \$20,000 to send for the children from there.

CW- \$20,000

I7- \$20,000 for the three of them. Each would cost \$5,500. Thankfully, it all went well because they came just like we did . Its hard when they are on the road traveling one came in fifteen days. I became very skinny when they were on the road coming here. First my daughter left in August of 2003 she came. No I lie, 2004.She arrived at the end of September, it took about a month and fifteen days, or the beginning October she came.

CW- Who did she travel with?

[55:54] I7- With my sister , she took care of her. And the other boy left, as one arrived the other left from there (El Salvador). He came with a cousin who took care of him too. He arrived in 18 days, very quickly. It depends on how the road is for the people to be able to cross quickly. If the road has a lot of immigration scattered about, one cannot cross. But if the road is empty one can cross quickly. He left on October and arrived here in October it only took 18 days. October, November, December...in April the other one left. The other one was the same he came in like 20 days, with an uncle.

CW- Always with a family member.

I7- Always with a family member.

CW- But you must have been a big worry!

I7- It was a big worry, you don't sleep at night, thinking if they had eaten if they are cold. Because that road is hard. It's hard, you endure cold and hunger, you can't bathe just anywhere. You suffer thirst, some people die of thirst, or pass out or throw themselves on the ground in the desert the desert is all dust where you can't walk and with dry trees with pricklers, the desert is very ugly. Sometimes you have to sleep in the desert, in the cold without a mattress or anything. Sometimes it rains and you are just given a little tarp in case it rains to put on top of you. But that's all.

CW- That's all you get in th cold, no food?

I7- You only eat when you can. I told my sister “ bring some candy to give to my daughter when she gets hungry and a little bit of water or what have you” . It's hard. She (daughter) arrived in Virginia at my sister's . When she got there we talked about when we would pick her up. When she arrived in Virginia we left from here to get her. When she had been there for four or five hours, my sister when to get her and we left from here. One always brings clothes to change into, she came all wet after how long she had been delayed in the journey. She passed through the river, and so she came with wet clothing and she had no other clothes to change into it and gotten all wet.

CW- So the whole family was reunited in 2003?

I7- In 2004, just in 2005 there was only one (child) left. But then in 2005 we were all reunited.

CW- All five of you were together.

I7- Yes, but with the children here I feel much better.

CW- How is it different?

[59:08] I7- I said “ If the children don't come by this year, I'm leaving” . And since I had people who could bring them, with them here I feel better. It was a concern when they were there of they were going to school, if they are not in school then I'm not alright with that. They are just hanging around, with the three of them, I feel better .But know that my daughter is growing up and the others too it's also a worry, but also I'm glad they are with me.

CW- Yes, sometimes when speak to women whose children are other there...

I7- That is very hard, when they are growing up and they become rebellious.

CW- it's hard when they are with the grandmother.

I7- Here it's less so because you are here to guide them because you have them close to you.\par

CW- So did you live in the same house with your husband when the children came?\par

I7-We lived in apartment.

CW-With other family members?

I7- No by ourselves, just one of my brothers lived with us. After we moved to a bigger place and after we lasted only about five months and I left him (husband) we moved and he didn't pursue me. They told me “ do it for your children to move there” . And that's where we are. He comes by to see the kids, I don't deny him that.

CW- How long has it been that you have been separated?

I7- It's been two years, no it's been three years, two and a half years almost three.

CW- And you have always working in seafood processing?

I7-Always, I'd like to find another job but no.

CW- How is work these days?

I7- Now its bad, one is exploited more. Now your work is take into account. When there is work you are exploited until the work is done. When there is no work you are not needed you get sent home. You make very little and few hours and with everything so expensive it doesn't make it.

Where are you going to work? There are jobs but they are far away.

CW- What happened when there was an earthquake in El Salvador, is that how you received TPS (work permit through Temporary Protected Status) ?

I7-Yes that is how I received TPS

CW- How does that work? Is it that you were living here when the earthquake happened?

[1:02:56] I7- Yes because I was living here I could prove it since I had been here since 1996.

CW- So if you could prove that you were here prior to the earthquake then you were able to apply?

I7- Yes it was an amnesty that they gave the Salvadorans because of the earthquake and all the Salvadorans had been given a work permit. And I had proof that I was here.\par

CW- What year did you received it?

I7- He (husband) was already here and he put me on the application with the children. That is what is included in the application. So I received it quickly because of his application. And my boss where I was working wrote a letter for me because I worked there six years, almost seven years at the same company. No I worked there two years and later when I came back I worked there again.

CW- What kind of work?

I7- Packing fish and cleaning fish. I like to work in fish.\par

CW- Why do you like it?

I7- Because I like to pack, more than anything I like to pack and clean cod.\par

CW- Do you like to eat fish?

I7-Not all fish, (I like) some not others. But if I could find a better job, I would leave fish processing, just to get eight steady hours.

CW- It could be in fish processing but to get the eight stable hours. What has been the difference now that you have TPS is live different than when you didn't have papers?

[1:06:04] I7-Before anyone could get a job without papers. You could work anywhere without papers. And it was are that someone would have their papers . Now it's different, wherever you go to apply for work you are asked about your papers. Before it was better without your papers, you would be paid in cash or personal check. That was the difference from before, where I worked before they paid in cash. With the hours you worked it was totaled and that's what you would be paid. Up to \$600-\$500 paid in cash. They stopped that now in the companies, to pay on cash or personal check. Now with papers they take out a lot of deductions form your check. With the difference or how would you say the advantage that you get some of it back at the beginning of the year.

CW- When you get your tax refund when you file.

I7- But now everywhere they ask for your papers.

CW- But do you feel more at ease by having your papers?

I7-Yes one feels a little more secure. You don't feel entirely secure. I don't feel secure because of my children because I sent in the application for them with the money orders and with the seal of Immigration, and the application was sent back and I couldn't change the money order in any back when it was returned.

CW- So you applied for them twice?

I7- Twice I applied already. The first time they only approved my daughter. And then we applied again, was it because I was here and they weren't with me during the time the earthquake happened? But I am going to find another lawyer but god willing there will be another amnesty for them too. I'm waiting for that god willing .If they had their good Social Security number I would feel a lot better and more secure. My daughter she has a work permit that way she has it now, she has a good

Social Security number. Just her and the boy who was born here, but the other two don't have a good Social.

CW-So are you used to living here, do you think you will live here for good? You still have the house and the land over there do you think of going back someday?

[1:09:14] I7-I think I will go back someday, what am I going to do here as an old lady? I won't be able to work and if my kids don't want to support me then I will have to go back.

CW- So you have your house for later?

I7- When I can't manage here.

CW-But for the meanwhile while your kids are growing...

I7- Yes While they are going to school and when they grow up and can be on their own and make their separate lives, I will see if I will stay, it might be more possible that I would go back.

CW-Are you in touch with your eight brothers and sisters who are here and the others?

I7- There are four over there (El Salvador).

CW-And your mother is still living and you help out..

I7- Yes when I can but with four children.

CW- But among the eight of you?

I7-Between the eight of out we can help her out a little

CW- At work do you hear about what is going on in the fisheries with the reasons why there is less fish and less work?

I7-No but they tell us that next year is going to get better. Because some of the closed areas will be opened up again and that will bring a lot of fish but not as but as before. It's not the same. Where I work there are good weeks and there are bad weeks. Last week I worked 46 hours. The week before that I worked 28 hours.

CW-So one doesn't know...

I7- One doesn't know how to balance it out because of the hours. If I had 40 hours I would feel secure.

CW- When it is unstable like that , how do you manage with the family and your budget and expenses?

I7-The expenses it is and, above all its the expenses every week you have to buy food, it's a big worry. But I have a vacation August 23rd and I am going to fill out an application over at a company that gives you 40 hours and all the benefits.

CW- and where you are working do you get benefits, vacation, medical insurance?

I7- Yes, everything.

CW-How many people work there?

I7- 60

CW- 60, It's a big place.

I7- It's big.

CW-Is it fresh fish or frozen fish (that is processed)?

[1:12:26] I7-Both kinds-frozen, fresh. There is a freezer where they freeze scallops, shrimp that's separate.

CW- Are you formally divorced or just separated?

I7- No just separated.

CW- Do you find it harder as a single parent to support your family?

I7- Sometime I feel better like this because to be fighting its better this way. When you are fighting you can't live, you don't sleep or eat well, you can't rest. But alone you can rest well.

CW- But with the expenses you can tell the difference?

I7-It's much harder.

CW-Its harder. But when your hours are cut are you able to collect?

I7-No, they don't let you that's a bad thing. Because if you don't work 40 hours, unemployment calls the company to ask them and if they deny it then they don't give it to you to complete the 40 hours. They tell you yes but they don't do it. When unemployment calls, they say "No , there is enough

work”

CW- Do you work for a temp agency or for the company.\par

I7-There are people who work for the temp company and people who work for the company.

CW-And these who work for the temp company are sent home sooner?

I7-No, those who work for the company are sent home sooner. We are treated worse. There are people who have worked there for ten years, don't believe that just because they worked for ten years there, they send them home early too.

CW- Do you think that conditions at work are worse now?

I7- Worse, worse than ever. Those who are working there for ten years, in order to earn \$10 an hour, that's nothing. No it's worse.

CW-How is it worse?

[1:15:11] I7-It's worse because, you are look down upon, you are looked at that way there are a lot of bosses who won't even speak to you, I don't know, they are very racist. Just because one doesn't speak English, that's why I think.

CW- Are they racist only with the Hispanics?

I7- Only Hispanics work there.

CW-Just Salvadorans work there?

I7-No Salvadorans, Hondurans, Guatemalans, Mexicans. More Mexicans work than others, the company is full of Mexicans. And those who work for the temp company have worked there for many years. They get paid vacations each year you work you get a week vacation and six paid sick days and one personal day and paid holidays.

CW- And if you work for the company?

I7-Yes for the company too. But its the workers from the temp company who have more time working there. And the new people who have been there two years they don't get the benefits. But why should that be? What shouldn't it be the same? The should give vacations to everyone and all the benefits. I have been there for two years in April. but just now I am getting a vacation I worked for one year, I knew that everyone should have the right to a vacation. You work first for the temp company and three months later you are placed with the company. But they didn't pass me to the company until a year later. and so now I've worked one year for the company so I get the vacation. If I ask for a day off, I get paid.

CW-How much do you make an hour?

I7- \$9.75 those who were hired with me are not paid the same, given vacations or anything. They should have the right too .It to exploit the people too. It's not fair what they are doing.

CW-Do you think everyone is treated the same or do they treat the Hondurans better than the Mexicans?

I7-The Mexicans are treated better.

CW-Really, why?

[1:17:56] I7- They are treated better because they don't put up with it. More so the men. They don't put up with it. If they are told one word they answer with two.

CW- So the Salvadorans and Guatemalans are treated worse?

I7- It's not that they are treated (son interrupts for a moment) its not that you put up with it but there are those who look for a translator to go to the office to complain that's what you can do.

CW- But there are those who are afraid to speak up?

I7-Ye because they know how hard it is to find work. And they are afraid that they might get fired. And now its not every company that is hiring people who don't have papers. And there are more people without papers than with papers. That is the fear that they have. That is why everyone keeps their mouth shut.

CW- So in general has working in fish processing been something positive in your life or negative in your life?

I7- Positive because that's Where I have been working. I have what I have from working in fish processing. If one knows how to manage your money, then you are able to achieve what you want to have. But if not , you won't achieve what you want.

CW-What are the hopes for your children and your family in the future?

I7-Hmm.. I don't know, they tell me...imagine if this doesn't happen that they are given papers, over time it will become even harder, so people without papers will not be able to live here anymore. Because look at all the people they are deporting, who don't even have a work permit .If one would achieve their residency then I would be happy for them to stay here, or for me too to stay .But if this doesn't happen, if they don't grant residency or anything, my hope is that one they will grant residency, so I could apply for them and for me too, so that they are able to stay here. And when they want to travel to see me they can,or to see that family. But if that doesn't happen, they day they would like to study here and to work here and if is our turn to go back- then we will go, they tell me.

CW- Do they like to study?

I7- Yes they like to study.

CW- In El Salvador is it more difficult to study, to get a degree?

[1:21:27] I7-Its more difficult because work is not secure working on the land, only if you are working in the Capital. The people that have anything over there is because there are people here working. Their sons and daughters are here. or those who are studying there have their parents here. That's how you can send a child to university there if their parents are here to send them money .Because studies are very heard over there.

CW- well, we talked about a lot of things, thank you so much.

I7- Yes this time we talked a lot

CW- Yes finally we recorded this time. Is there any other topic you would like to mention for the interview for anyone who is studying these themes of the fisheries and work?

I7- No , just that god willing as they have said that next year it will be better.

CW- Yes you are the ones who are affected when there isn't any fish.

I7- If their wore other jobs like in stitching, there are companies for stitching, but I don't like to sew.

CW- Its hard work too.

I7- I'm used to working in fish processing to be standing all day, but what I would like is that there would be work. Any when there isn't any what a disappointment! There is a time when work is good, when you go in to work at 5 A.M. In January, February, March it's good. No February, March and April work picks up.

CW- But now it is slower.

I7- Yes, very much so.

CW-Yes many people have told me that it is very slow right now.

I7-Work is tough now, hope to God it will pick up too.

CW- Many thanks for the interview and your patience with me (had trouble at first with recording equipment).

I7-Oh no, don't worry I wanted to come by on Monday or on Tuesday but last week I wasn't able to come.

CW- You had a lot of work

I7-There was a lot of work.

CW-You need to take advantage of that when there is work.

I7- I'm doing what I can\lang1033\fo We'll see God willing

End