

Immigrant Seafood Processing Woman- Interview #10

Anonymous

27 Years old

Female

Seafood Processing-

New Bedford, MA

Mexican

Interviewer: Corinn Williams

Transcriber: Alba Contreras

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Immigrant Woman Processor Interview #10

Corinn Williams (CW): (Spanish) I am here to listen to the story of your life if you are willing to share it with us. Every story is different and it help us understand better the experience of women that work in the fish industry and how the regulations of government and other factors would affect their lives and the lives of their families. This project consists of trying to reach people to get their stories out because we know that a lot of the time these 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. This interview is anonymous and you are informed that we are recording this and we can utilize this interview to analyze the social impact of the regulations and for the purposes such as archiving the other interviews. If you need to take a rest you can let me know.

CW- Let's start of the beginning where and when were you born?

I10-I was registered in Matias Romero, Cuchitan Oaxaca by my grandmother and I was born in 1983.

CW- Can you explain to me a little bit of how your life was in Oaxaca?

I10- In the town where we lived my mother taught me how to work, how to earn a living, by cooking, and cleaning.

(3:25) CW- So Life happy?

I10- Yeah it was happy, we shared everything we had, well the little we had we shared, and that's how life was with my grandmother.

CW- and your grandmother had other children in the house?

I10- she had 2 other grandkids they were my aunts sons but she had left to Indiana and I didn't hear much from her because she was always moving, and I lost her phone number. Then I moved here, because I used to live in North Carolina and from there I moved here to New Bedford and I haven't heard from her since.

CW- But you didn't grow up with your mom?

I10- No I didn't grow up with my mom or my dad. My dad died before I was born. Once I was born my grandmother told me that my mom had left me with her because the man she was dating didn't want me to go with her. If she wanted to leave with him she had to go alone, and that's what my grandmother explained to me of why I was with her.

CW- But did your mom visit you?

I10- She visited me once in a while, but how can I say it, she wasn't affectionate with me, it was as if I was just a sister. She could care less if I was or wasn't there and I noticed she would care more for her other kids.

CW-She had other kids?

I10- she had four more by the man she's with now.

CW- Did you feel bad?

I10-I felt bad because my grandmother would sometimes hit me or yell at me and she didn't care, she wouldn't defend me or say "don't hit my daughter" It didn't make a difference to her, she didn't care what was being done to me.

CW- In your house it was only your grandmother?

I10- It was my grandmother, me and the other 2 kids.

CW- What did your grandmother do?

I10- My grandmother would sell medicines, vitamins and she would also raise chickens, pigs so when it was holidays like Christmas people buy a lot of chickens and she would

sell the chickens, the eggs and sometimes killed the pigs to sell the meat plus the vitamins she would sell that's how she would provide for us.

(6:19)CW- And the people that lived in the town, what would they do?

I10- They would work in the orange fields, others with cows making cheese, and milking the cows, some would own businesses and restaurants and that's how they would provide for themselves.

CW- And did you go to school?

I10- I went to school, but like I said since my grandmother raised lots of animals sometimes I didn't have time to go to school, some days I would go and sometimes I didn't so because of that the teacher didn't give me much opportunity to continue school. I made it as far as going into fourth grade but I didn't continue because I didn't have time to do all my chores. Because if I was going to school I had to wake up early enough to feed the pigs and the chickens and then I wouldn't have time to go to school.

CW-So it was a lot of work?

I10- A lot of hard work, and then by the time I got to school; and over there they closed the gates going in, they have a set schedule and if you're not at school by that time they close the gates and you can't go into school.

CW- So your grandmother had a business?

I10- Yes, a business of raising and selling animals.

CW- She was a single woman?

I10- A single women because she got a divorced from my grandfather a while back and each one decided to redo their life on their own.

CW- And their kids were big already?

I10-Yeah, the smallest one was already 22 and she was already married, and when my grandmother got a divorce he decided to move to where my mother was in Cosajualos.

CW- Is Oaxaca close to the sea?

I10- Where I was there's rivers but in Veracruz there's sea and where my mom is it's close to the sea.

CW- But you worked with pigs and chickens but not with fish?

I10- No, not there but sometimes people and I myself would go fishing and catch some fish.

(9:00) CW- But it was not a prior experience working with fish?

I10- No I learned to work with fish when I came here.

CW- How about a typical day when you were with your grandmother? How would you start off in the mornings?

I10- In the morning like I mentioned I would start out early to feed the animals and the daily chores of making tortillas, and cooking, and sweeping, she had a routine of sweeping the yard (patio) I would sweep the patio, and then around 9 or 10 am we would have to go to the mill to grind the corn to make the flour, and then come back to make tortillas.

CW- You would mill the corn every day?

I10- Everyday, we had to do it on a daily basis

CW- Was the mill close by?

I10- Yes, it was close by and then in afternoon we had to go get wood with machetes we had to cut the wood and bring it back.

CW- But was it far?

I10- Yeah it was a bit far and sometimes they would pick us up to help with the corn fields (the crops) we would go work in the corn fields

CW- But did your grandmother own land?

I10- No she didn't, she only owned the land where the house was, so then sometimes they would hire us to work in the corn fields and then other times we had to go cut wood, and they would give us some wood for us and the rest for the people who would hire us.

CW- So there was no gas stove?

I10- No, there was only a wood stove, there were people that had gas stoves but they had the resources to buy them, but we didn't.

CW- Did you have water in the house?

I10- Yes, but there was a time we didn't have clean water so we would go to the neighbors well to get water. But afterwards we had water in the house.

CW- How did you wash your clothes?

I10- When we didn't have water we would go to the river to wash the clothes, but once we got water in the house we would wash it at home.

CW- And did you have electricity?

I10- Yes we had electricity but in August when it rains a lot and the river rises, the light posts fall down and then we have no light and it takes a while for them to come and fix them. The thing is that the light posts were close to the river, so as soon as the river would rise the light posts will come down.

(12:00) CW- Life is so different there than here, well that's why the story is interesting because now your living life differently than there. So your grandmother worked in the city, in the towns, or did she go to the church?

I10- She didn't teach us much about church, when we did go we went to the Catholic Church, but what she mostly did like I mentioned she was a single woman so she would sell the vitamins and the chickens. We didn't get to go to the cities a lot because she didn't give us a chance to go out because she would say that if we went out it was to find a boyfriend, so she was really strict with me and we couldn't go out from where we were.

CW- So then you stopped going to school?

I10- I stopped going to school and couldn't go back because I didn't have time.

CW- So you grew up at home?

I10- I grew up at home but I learned a lot at school because my teachers would tell me I was good at school but I didn't finish because of the reasons I explained before. So I grew up at home and sometimes I would review the old books I had so I wouldn't be so dumb, and that's how I learned a little bit more to read and write, and that was it.

CW- But during that time you were still helping your grandmother?

I10- Yes, during the whole time, until I grew up and got the urge and desire to come to here.

CW- And how was it that you wanted to come here?

I10- Because I would hear a lot about the people that would come over here, and they would say "oh in the United States you can work" and you can earn your money easily than here and in Mexico it's harder, and over here it's dollars and here in Mexico it's Mexican money so it's more over there. Until an opportunity came up that a girl who had

left before me said she would help me, and her mother talked to my grandmother and told her that if I wanted to leave she would help me.

CW- Did your grandmother agree?

I10- My grandmother didn't want to, so I told her since the opportunity came up if she didn't let me I would just go on my own.

CW- How old were you?

(15:00) I10- Oh I was 16 years old, I came here and turned 17, and that was one of the reasons she didn't want to let me come. So I was already bored of raising pigs and chickens and all that I wanted to detach myself, because sometimes if I didn't find something or took too long in the store she would yell at me or sometimes she would hit me because she would think I was talking to a boyfriend. There was also an older man he was about 45 years old he owned an orange field and he would sell them and he was alone and he had mentioned to my grandmother that he wanted to be with me, and my grandmother told me that if I wanted to marry him, that I should, and I didn't want to be with him. And because of all those things and the opportunity came so I decided that I wanted to leave. I told her "you go" out because she would have to travel to other towns to sell the medicines and she would take a week or two to come back, so I told her "I would just leave then and when you come back I'll be long gone". Then she decided to let me leave. She said okay if I really wanted to leave she would let me go, and that's how I got here.

CW- How was it when you began your trip?

I10- When we left there we went to a place called Acayuca, from Acayuca we took the bus to DF(Distrito Federal), from DF we took another bus to Aguas Prietas, in Aguas Prietas we were there for 3-4 days waiting for the man that would bring us here. In the way it was a bit difficult because I've always being a little chubby, so from running and all that I would get tired on the way.

CW- Where you with a lot of people?

I10- We were 16 all from the same town. It was 16 but some couldn't take the walk and some broke their knees from the run, so it was something very difficult. We were cold, hungry, and thirsty because we didn't bring much water, so when we got to the exit where the car was going to pick us up to take us to Arizona we were running, and then we got on a van and on the way the tire exploded and we had to throw ourselves from the car because if not we would flip with the car and were we ended up there was no woods or anything so we had to hide inside because there was an helicopter around so we had to hide. Since it was two cars one in the front on the look out for cops and the

van we were in so the man who was driving called the other guy and explained the tire exploded and we were there. The other guy came back to pick us up to take us to the place we were going to.

(18:43) CW- So this was after you crossed?

I10- After we crossed we got to a trailer, and there were more people there, a lot of people there and told us that they were waiting there for a month, they kept passing and returning them, and they kept trying.

CW- But where was that place?

I10- It was in Arizona but I don't remember what the place was called. We were kept there, and a woman would bring us food and it was so awful but we would eat it because we didn't have anything else to eat, and then we waited there.

CW- How long were you there?

I10- We were there for about four days until the other man that would take us, and then they wanted to split us up the people from our town and take us with other people from another town. We said no that we needed to be kept together or else we would stay. They agreed and took the 11 of us in one car, and the other ones went on a van.

CW- In a car or what was it?

I10- It was two cars, because we were 23 all together, but 11 from our town and the other people I didn't know where they were from. So when we were getting in the car they said half of us in one car and the others in the other car, so they were turning some of us away, and we said no, and they had to end up taking all of us. So then we were finally getting to Indiana.

(20:26)CW- You went all the way to Indiana?

I10- Yeah, because they were delivering people in each location we went through Indiana, Chicago, and all those places. We couldn't take it being in the car lying down. We couldn't move there was no bathroom or eating break, so we asked the man to please rent a hotel just to sleep because it was 6 women and 5 men and the men had to go in the back and we were in the front. Then they called the man from the van that was in front of us that the van stopped to put gas and there was a cop and the cop checked the car and realized there were immigrants and they detained them and sent them back, and this happened to the people that were in the van in front of us. So we went into a hotel, and the man told us that if someone comes knocking and asks who your coyote is you have to say that you don't know anything that he left and abandoned you guys and

that you don't know, because if you guys say that its me you guys are going to be stuck here because their going to take me and who's going to take you to your place?

CW: So where did he go?

I10: He was there with us, but he told us not to say anything, that we didn't know anything. But no one came that night, we couldn't sleep we paid the hotel for nothing because we didn't sleep. At 5 am we woke up to keep going to Indiana. Arriving to Indiana we left a young girl there, and after we went through Chicago to get to Missouri to drop of a man, and we kept going around until we got to North Carolina.

CW: So you knew you were going to North Carolina?

I10: Yes, he was dropping off people because he knew where the family wanted them to be dropped off.

CW: And who did you have in North Carolina?

I10: In North Carolina was the young girl who was helping me. Then when I got there the girl didn't want to give me room or space for me to stay, so I told her "what can I do now? The reason I came was because you told me you were going to help me", and the girl said she couldn't because there was another couple living with her and there was no room for me to stay. So I told her I can stay in the living room, and she said no because sometimes guest come over, and you sleeping there is not right. And since I didn't know where I was living in Morgantown that's where I arrived, I didn't know there were more people that I knew from my town (in Mexico), and those people helped me.

CW: What did you feel like when the girl said she couldn't help you?

I10: I felt awful, because I didn't know anyone, I didn't know what to do where to go for a job or food, I didn't know anything. I don't know how those people found out I was there and they came and got me and they gave me somewhere to live and eat but in reality I didn't like it because it was only men living there.

(24:00) CW- Oh you where the only girl?

I10: It was me the only woman, and they liked to drink and smoke and sometimes they wanted me to cook for them like chicken soup for their hangovers, and I said no. Yeah, I stayed there for two weeks, because there was another guy there but he didn't drink and he helped me find a job and get papers and with that I started working the same place where he worked which was KFC.

CW: KFC, the restaurant?

I10: Yeah there I started working there, I would work 3 to 2 days a week and they would pay me bi-weekly. They would pay me \$150 to 200, I started off \$6.75 an hour and I didn't get enough hours, I owed money in Mexico, I owed money here, and the money wasn't enough.

CW: How much was the cost of the trip?

I10: In that time it was like three thousand dollars (\$3,000), that was more money back then in 2000, for me it was too much money. I had to pay over there and I had to pay here because the half of the coyote like we call it, the girl hadn't finished paying it because she only helped me with half and I had to pay the other half. Since I didn't really have a job, and after I left that house. A couple came asking me if I could rent them a space, I told them that's not my place and it's all men that live there and there is no room they offered that if we found a place we can pay it between the three of us. After I moved in with them I regretted it because there was no light, no water, no gas, no clothes or blankets, nothing to cover ourselves, nothing at all.

CW: How far away was it?

I10: They were trailers right next to each other but each one that you rented you needed to connect and pay the gas, water and light. Since we didn't know we didn't have any of that because we had just gotten here, we didn't know. In front of where we lived there was a lady named Salome and she helped us she gave us food, where to shower and gave us some blankets for when it was cold, and we would help her too because she had lots of kids. So when she would go do laundry we would go with her we would help her fold the clothes, when she went food shopping we would help her, sometimes we would help her around the house because her husband and everyone else worked and she would stay alone and she was sick she had problems with her heart and with one foot.

(27:16) CW: And she was Mexican too?

I10: Yeah she was Mexican from this place called El Tesoro, and she would help us and we would help her so she could give us food because we didn't have enough. After a little while we each decided to go our own way. When I started working at KFC I met this girl and we became friends and she told me she had an empty room and asked me if I wanted to move in. I moved in with her but after a while she decided to go back to Mexico, but there was this other lady that lived in the second floor I didn't know them but with out knowing them they offered me a room, and there we each paid our own things, food, and bills.

CW: Where you still working at KFC?

I10: After that place it was far for me to get there I couldn't find rides, sometimes I had to walk in the rain or in the snow, it was about from here to, city hall (about 1 mile). It was a little far, and sometimes I had to walk at night. During the snow I suffered a lot so after that this girl told me they were building a hotel, and the girl told me I could probably work there and they would pay me cash, and not in check, and I never really left KFC because they gave me 2 or 3 days but I needed the other job because I needed to pay what I owed. So she would pick me up to drop me off at the hotel they would pay me \$280 to \$250 depending on the hours.

CW: And what would you do there?

I10: In the hotel they were under construction so the cement that would fall to the tubs or sinks and you would scratch it off so the tubs and sinks so it would look clean. After the construction was over I stayed with that job, but I didn't like it.

CW: Did you work in other places?

I10: I tried to find a job in other places, and I found a job in the restaurant Denny's

(29:51) CW: Denny's?

I10: Yeah, I worked there too and they would pay me bi-weekly, and I didn't work as much I would only work 20 to 25 hours and it was bi weekly, so when it was time to get paid I already owed the money from lunch and bills because the money wasn't enough. After, while I worked at Denny's I got sick.

CW: What happened?

I10: I got a cold and fever, and since in my hometown we cure ourselves with teas, and pills, and home remedies as we call them and I didn't call the restaurant to let them know I was sick and that I couldn't go into work. So when I went back they asked me for proof from the hospital that I was sick, but I told them I didn't go to the hospital and that we cure ourselves with home remedies, and they told me if there was no proof then I couldn't work there anymore, So they asked me for the uniform back because I couldn't work there anymore. So I was unemployed, so I kept looking for work and after three days I found another job in a welding company. The company was called capris industrial, and there we would weld sofas, chairs, tables, and we would weld and cut the metal and make the shape.

CW: Was it like garden furniture?

I10: No, it was regular house furniture we would do all that in the company, cut the metal and they would give us a sheet with a model and design of the furniture and we

would have to build it by welding it, sanding it, wash it, painting it, and then packing it. That job was nice but afterwards I met my husband.

CW: How did you meet him?

I10: (laughs) I met him in a dance, because when I found that job I didn't owe money any more I had finished paying it and I had quit in KFC and Denny's didn't let me work there anymore, because I got sick.

CW: And they didn't pay you?

I10: Who?

CW: Denny's

I10: They paid me the last week I worked, but that was it.

CW: But they didn't pay you while you were sick?

I10: No they didn't pay me. Then I met my husband in a dance because I quit the job at the KFC because since I didn't owe money anymore I said why kill myself working? Then I quit and I was only working at the welding place, and on the weekends I had time to go to the dances and that's where I met my husband.

(33:01) CW: And where were the dances?

I10: In a place called Hickory, that was a club the place is called Hickory but the place where we went to is called El Senorial, and that's the dances we would go to and I met my husband.

CW: In the dances were there a lot of people?

I10: Yeah it was a lot of people but only Hispanics

CW: How about Americans?

I10: Not much, only the ones that worked in the bar those were Americans, but the people that went to dance were Hispanics.

CW: But the place where you worked it was all Hispanics?

I10: Yeah, only Hispanics but the owner was American, the majority were Guatemalan's where I worked.

CW: Did you know any Guatemalans before when you lived in Oaxaca?

I10: No, I didn't know that Guatemalans existed, or Salvadorians or Honduras, I didn't know none of those places existed. I use to think Costa Rica was part of Mexico. Since my grandmother didn't let us go anywhere, we were always in the same place I didn't know anything else existed.

CW: So you met him at the dance?

I10: Yes, in the dance he began talking to me and then we became a couple, and because of that when I got pregnant I quit that job because we would do hard labor there, and we had to carry furniture or bed frames and everything was made of metal so it was heavy, and I couldn't lift heavy things. I mean I would still do it but when I would go home in the afternoon my belly would hurt because of the pregnancy. I had asked to be changed to another place, because there was other departments were the job was easier, but each one was already assigned I asked to be moved but they wouldn't change me of my section. Then my husband told me to stop working and that's how I stopped working there but I liked that job, and then he ended up leaving his job too.

CW: And where did he work?

I10: He worked making auto parts, in what that place called? I don't remember but that company was in Leonor, which is another part of North Carolina and he would make auto parts.

CW: In a factory?

I10: Yeah, in a factory, and then he got laid off, and he found another job but he wasn't earning the same so we weren't having enough money for rent or the bills.

(36:00) CW: And you couldn't work because you were pregnant?

I10: Yeah, and since he had family over here they told him that there were jobs here but with fish, and since I couldn't find a job either because I didn't have papers I wouldn't get a job so we decided to move here and that's how I began working with fish.

CW: And during this whole time were you still helping your grandmother or calling her?

I10: Yeah, I would call her but my grandmother how can I say it? She was happy when I would send her money but if there was no money she would argue with me. So when I got with my husband she told me why did you get together with a Guatemalan? That he would give me a bad life, that it wasn't the right man for me, to get out of him whatever I could and then leave him. But I didn't listen to her (so I call) only when I'm sending money to her because if I call her just to say hi then she starts saying mean things and then we end up arguing, so I just don't call her until I need to send her money.

CW: So when you got here where did you go?

I10: Here it was different, I felt different because I was used to living over then for four years in North Carolina. I felt different and lonely, and I would get sad because when I got here I didn't know anyone and I would be in the house alone. I would go to work and home, work and home for a long time.

CW: So you had your baby?

I10: I had the first baby when we were in North Carolina.

CW: Then you came here?

I10: Yeah, when I came here I had already had the baby.

CW: Then you found a job working with fish?

I10: Yeah, I found work with fish

CW: What was the first job you found?

I10: The first job, the thing is that when you start working there you do a little of everything. Each company does a different type of fish, but where I am we do monkfish, and squid, we clean, pack and fillet the fish.

CW: And what kind of job is it? How is the job?

I10: The job is like I said when you have to clean the fish; you have to remove the intestines that the fish has.

CW: Is it big, the monkfish?

I10: Yeah, it's big so when they ask for it clean we just clean it and remove the intestines, when they ask for it in fillet we have to remove the skin that's on top, and we make it in fillets. The same for the squid, when they ask for the fillet of the squid they peel it and that fish has some type of bones, and they remove it, and we make fillets.

(39:17) CW: But was there a lot of work? What year was that?

I10: In 2004, I went in February. When I started, there was some work, afterwards slowly it began decreasing. They said, how can I say, they have some type of permit of what amount of fish they can catch, and they said that they had decreased the amount of fish they can catch and they couldn't bring in the same amount, and that's how work decreased, and now there is not much work.

CW: But you were always with the same company?

I10: Yea, with the same company and with the same fish.

CW: That was in 2004?

I10: The whole yeas of 2004 it was okay. But in 2005 there wasn't as much work as in 2004.

CW: So ever year it's decreasing?

I10: Yeah, the higher the years, the less the work. Like right now there is not much work, sometimes we only work 20 hours. One time in 2006 we got a check for \$24.

CW: Twenty-four dollars?

I10: Yeah, because we were only called for two days for about 3 hours.

CW: That was really small, so are you still working now?

I10: Yeah, I'm still working still with fish but not much. I work only about 3 to 4 hours a day.

CW: During the day?

I10: Yeah, in the daytime.

CW: But are you still at the same company?

I10: Yeah, in the same company.

CW: But is it hard to learn how to cut the fish?

I10: Yeah it's hard because in the beginning your hands get tired because you're not use to holding the knife for long periods of time, and you get tired. Especially with the squid, because when you have to clean it, since the spine is hard that you have to cut you get tired faster.

CW: And the Monkfish?

I10: The Monkfish is softer because it's a fillet instead the squid not so much because it has the spine all in the middle so you have to cut it with the knife and you get tired with that fish faster than with monkfish.

(41:43) CW: But there is another called Dogfish?

I10: Yeah, Dogfish, that's another type of fish but we don't do that, the men do that and cut it.

CW: How many people work in there?

I10: Right now we're about 25.

CW: 25 people?

I10: Yeah, around that but before we were many more of us we were working through a much bigger temp agency, and right now the man decided to move to a smaller company because he was paying too much before, and since there wasn't many workers he said he had to change temp companies and there wasn't much workers or fish to sell he decided to move to another place.

CW: And about how many people worked there before when there was more work?

I10: Before there were a lot of people, about 70 or 80 people. Because there is a season that the dogfish comes the majority of men go to that section and only a couple of women are left to pack the fish and move the buckets of fish around. So the men are separate from the women.

CW: So now there are only 25 people?

I10: Yeah about 25, since there is not much work, and there are other places that for example like (name) they opened a night shift, and some of the men left to go work there. Right now there are not many hours, and that's why little by little there are more and more people leaving, since there is not much work.

CW: But can you still find work?

I10: Yeah, sometimes it depends like right now there is people that go over there to get a job because I see them, but the man tells them that there is no work because it's slow, that there is barely enough for the people that are already there and they're not doing many hours.

CW: how much do you get paid an hour?

I10: \$8.00

CW: At \$8.00 has it always being \$8.00?

I10: No, when I started working there in 2004 it was \$6.75 after they increased the minimum pay they started paying \$7.50, and now they pay \$8.00.

CW: And now you have two kids?

I10: I have two kids, two girls.

CW: And what time do you have to go into work?

I10: There's no exact times sometimes we go in at 4 or at 5.

CW: At 4 in the morning?

I10: Yeah, we go in at 4 in the morning when we have to make fish fresh and they want it early. Other times when we only go in for a few hours we go in at 6 or 7. Like tomorrow we're going in at 7, because there is not much work, and I'll just go in to work 3 or 4 hours. So for people that have kids it doesn't work out because we pay the babysitters, and sometimes you don't feel like going in because there is not much work.

(45:24) CW: So at 4 in the morning you take the kids to the babysitter?

I10: Yes, at 4 I call the babysitter to make sure she can come in to watch the kids, when she says no I have to call in my boss and let him know that I can't go in because I can't find any one to watch the kids.

CW: Does your husband leave early too?

I10: Like right now, he has a job painting boats he goes in at 8 AM so he can take them.

CW: Does he have family here?

I10: Yeah, he has family here, his cousins, but only cousins.

CW: But on holidays do you guys get together?

I10: Yes. Days that we celebrate are 4th of July or Christmas when we get together. (Otherwise) to just go visit them, not much. It's really only on holidays.

CW: But do you have friends here?

I10: Yes, he has friends.

CW: How about you?

I10: Yes, I have friends but less than him, he has more.

CW: Do you know of Mexicans that live here from Oaxaca?

I10: No not here that come from Oaxaca, I do know Mexicans but they say they're from San Luis Potosi, so I didn't know them. In North Carolina there were people that I did know that were from the towns close to me of where I lived in Mexico.

CW: And what's the difference between living in a place where there are *paisanos* and a place where there is none?

I10: There is really no difference.

CW: Are you used to it?

I10: Yeah, I'm used to living like that.

CW: Do you like the lifestyle here?

I10: Yeah, I like it it's happy.

CW: So what do you do to entertain yourself? Do you go out with your family?

I10: Yes, I go out with my family on the weekends. We go out around sometimes to the stores or out to eat. But we just don't go much to the relatives because sometimes they're not there, or he just doesn't want to go.

(48:18) CW: At work do they talk about the regulations of fishing, are they explaining to people why there is not much work?

I10: They say because the boats are not catching as much fish and that the quantity they allowed to catch are being decreased, and that there are other companies that are buying fish too, and that they're not getting as much. That is the explanation they are giving us of why there is not much work right now.

CW: And at home is it just you and your husband?

I10: The two girls, my husband and I.

CW: Was it always being like that?

I10: Before when we first got here we were living with his cousin, but there were too many people and the owner said that there were too many people, and we decided to move out of there. We decided to move in with a friend of his and 15 days later he said he was moving out. We didn't move in with him so we moved with another friend that he knows that's from the same town that he's from then we left and rented a big house and it was me, my husband and our daughter because we only had one baby, and two other men. So it was four all together.

CW: All Guatemalans?

I10: Yes

CW: So how was it living with your husband and your daughter, but two other men? Did you get along with them?

I10: Yes, we got along they cooked their own food, and I cooked our food. Even though we did the food shopping together but we cooked separately, and then the bank took the house, we decided to move to the house where we're living now. Where we lived

before it was 3 bedrooms and where we're now it's 2 bedrooms but since his sister was coming from Guatemala, we got that 2 bedrooms apartment, but his sister is with her husband and now we're alone.

(51:00) CW: But she came?

I10: Yeah, she came in 2006. She just moved in with her husband in March this year, and now we're left alone.

CW: Is there difference in how Guatemalans and Mexicans live?

I10: Yeah there are differences because Mexicans are more how I can say? They're more crazy, they drink, yell, put music on, instead Guatemalan's have different traditions. When it's late they won't put music on, if they drink they drink quietly they are not making so much noise, they let other people sleep. When I lived in North Carolina I lived with Mexicans and they would drink, put on loud music, and make messes in the house. The Guatemalan's instead they clean up their own messes, they clean up after themselves, instead Mexicans don't, my *paisanos* don't. If they make a mess they don't clean it up, if there is a woman there they expect her to clean it up. The Guatemalans don't do that, if my husband and the other Guatemalans I lived with made a mess they would clean it up.

CW: Even if it's a man?

I10: Even if it was a man, they don't wait for the women to do it. And my husband is that way. When I get out of work, if I get out late and he's home early, when I get home he has already made the food, the tortillas, he has mopped and cleaned and has picked the girls up from the babysitter.

CW: So they have different customs?

I10: Yeah they help out the women more, instead my *paisanos* expect the women to do everything.

CW: But in the house expenses do you guys split everything evenly?

I10: Mmm... No for example living with a Guatemalan they pay the rent and the bills, they pay everything, and I save my money. But I also know other Guatemalan couples that pay half and half, but my husband is different with me, he pays everything. But for example when he wasn't working because he couldn't find a job it was my turn to pay the bills, and when I don't have much work he pays everything.

(54:24) CW: So it's like a savings account, when you work you don't spend your money?

I10: No, I have to save it because sometimes you don't have much work like right now I don't have much work. So I save it and when we're tight and there is not enough money we use that money.

CW: Do you think it's harder here in New Bedford than in North Carolina?

I10: The only difference is that rent is cheaper over there and here it's more expensive because over there we would pay \$250 for the same thing we have here- the same rooms, and kitchens, and here we pay \$550, over there we paid \$250.

CW: \$250? Wow.

I10: Yeah \$250 and it was the same rooms, living room, dining room and kitchen it was all the same so that the difference that rent is more expensive.

CW: But do jobs pay better?

I10: They pay better because since rent is more expensive here they pay more. Over there the rent is cheaper so the pay is less, when I worked over there I got paid \$7.50 because in that time minimum wage hadn't increased so they paid \$7.50 at work.

CW: Well, do you think that working with fish has been something positive in your life?

I10: That has been an experience you learn. Because in North Carolina I learned how to do one job and here I learned another, and tomorrow I can leave there and maybe have to learn another job. So they are all experiences if one day I have to leave this country, even though in truth I don't want to leave, those are experiences you take with you and the things you remember you have done here, the goods the bad.

CW: And the bad? The negative from working in fish anything you don't like?

(57:00) I10: In the fish I like everything, I don't have any dislikes, I like everything, the only thing I can say is when the cold weather comes because you have to touch the ice and your hands get cold, and you get too cold, but to say I don't like the job no, I can't say that.

CW: Have you ever had any accidents?

I10: No, nothing.

CW: Sometimes do people end up cutting themselves with the knives?

I10: Oh, well cuts yes, but they have been small nothing big.

CW: How about the supervisors and the boss- are they nice?

I10: Where we worked before at the bigger company, the bosses were good people. The one that's there now that's Guatemalan he's a good person, but the company split up- one group left to one part and the other stayed there. That happened when I was in maternity leave from having my second baby. They decided to split up the company, and the bosses left to the other company they were nice because if you had a questions if you wanted vacations or to ask about paid holidays, we could communicate because we had people that spoke English and Spanish. Instead, now there one man he only walks by and if we're not working he gets mad and he tells the Guatemalan guy "those ladies are talking they are not working"

CW: Is he a supervisor?

I10: Yeah, he's another supervisor and he is American.

CW: And he's always reprimanding?

I10: Yes, he is always reprimanding and saying that we don't work, and so on so the Guatemalan guy comes and tells us that we have to work because the other guy is watching us. But I tell him we're working we talk but we're working I tell him "We're not working with our mouths we're working with our hands" (laughs), and he says no its that Mike, because his name is Mike, doesn't want you guys to be talking he wants you guys to work I tell him "darn it, we don't like that guy because he is always yelling at us, he's always trying to rush us, and we don't let him, and we gave him a nick name (laughs). He doesn't yell at the men, only to the women, and we call him a fag. I tell him you know that man is a fag because he doesn't say anything to the men only to the women it should be the other way around because he is here thanks to a women, if not he wouldn't be here. But he says it's because you guys talk and don't work. I tell him we're going to have a meeting and tell the big boss, the owner he is nice he comes in and says "good morning, how are you?" He doesn't talk much Spanish but he can say that much. So I told him we're going to have a meeting with because when the other girls left they told us that they were going to pay holidays and vacations, and since we were with the other company downtown, not a temp employment agency. Now we're with (temp company name), but they switched us to (temp company name) I don't think they're going to pay us vacations or holidays. We told the Guatemalan guy to ask, but he says he hasn't asked because that guy has nothing to do with it because there is another boss, and they have us with that story, so we don't know if we're going to get paid vacations or holidays.

(1:01:28) CW: So before the other temp agency paid you?

I10: No, they didn't pay us either, until we had a meeting and asked for us to get paid. Because before we got paid in cash and then they said they were going to start paying us in checks, and they said we could get paid vacations.

CW: Through the agency?

I20: Yes, and holidays. They did this throughout the years- they paid us vacations and paid holidays. But since we got changed to the other temp company we don't know if they are going to pay us this upcoming holiday which its 4th of July, and if you want to take vacations you don't know if you are going to get paid or not.

CW: There is a lot of going on at work, so it's 25 all together, how many women?

I10: Women there are 7 and the rest are all men.

CW: The majority are all Guatemalan?

I10: They are all Guatemalan, only 2 Salvadorians, no 3 Salvadorians. Of the women it's me, Mexican and one Salvadoran, 3 Honduras, and 2 Guatemalans.

CW: Do the women get along?

I10: Yeah, we get along.

CW: You guys get to know each other? Do you guys share lunches?

I10: Yes, we spend time together, and we get to know each other. I give them some of my food and they give me some of theirs, and we share everything.

(1:03:04) CW: And how old is your daughter, your oldest daughter?

I10: Five, she's going to turn 6 in September.

CW: Does she go to school?

I10: Yeah, she's going to finish PACE (Head Start) this May and in September she's going to the Gomes School, that's where she'll be going.

CW: Does she like it?

I10: She likes school, and the teacher tells me she's advanced.

CW: What do you think of the future for your family and your daughters?

I10: For their future I think they will study and grow up here and for thing to change. The president that just went in I hope that he changes things that they're going to give papers. I tell my husband if they give us papers then we won't be leaving here because the girl's future is here because they study and learn here. Instead if we go over there what are we going to do? Right now we have nothing, we don't have a house and with there being no jobs, what future will be waiting for us over there? There is no future over there.

CW: Does he have family in Guatemala?

I10: His mother and father and two siblings. They are four siblings, two here and two over there. It would be hard because he calls and his mom tells him that things are hard, that there are no jobs, because she sells food and that there is not much business, because of the same thing here the economy is hard, because not a lot of people from here are sending money, or they wont send the same amount as before or as frequently as before, so things are hard.

CW: We talked about a lot of things, I don't know if there is another subject you would like to bring up about the fish industry, or about your life, or anything?

I10: I'm all set.

CW: All set, okay well we can make copies of the interview as a gift for you for your daughters so they can one day hear their mom. Maybe 30 years from now, or your grandkids.

I10: Okay

CW: Thank you.

(1:06:05)I10: Thank you.