From Guatemala to the United States: An Immigration Oral History

The struggles of an immigrant family coming to the United States are never to be taken lightly, especially when that immigrant family is coming from a country such as Guatemala, plagued with war and poverty amongst other things. The inspiring story of Daniela and her family serves as a prime example of how and why the troubles and worries never fully cease, even long after you’ve arrived.

I was four and a half years old when I left Guatemala for the United States with my cousin and aunt, not long after my mom and dad had made the journey themselves. Prior to our immigration we were living with my grandparents, whom I was very close with. In Guatemala my grandparents owned a store for some time (before it was shut down), and I remember how they would bring gifts home to me every so often. I plan on going back to visit them within the next two years at least. While living in Guatemala, our family was very poor, and neither my mom nor my dad had a job of any kind. If we hadn’t come to the United States, I would probably be working in the streets right now, with little to no money.

Before we came to the United States, I remember watching movies about it with my family and thinking that the whole country was one huge technologically advanced New York City, but that obviously wasn’t the case. Although I do not remember too much about the journey itself, I do remember traveling by both car and train in order to get here. At the time, I didn’t speak any English, and when I started school soon after arriving, no one wanted to be my friend. I think it was because I didn’t look anything like them, and they thought I wouldn’t be able to understand them. Now, I have lots of friends that I talk to about everything. In addition, my family and I now live a very comfortable life and both of my parents have stable jobs. Although it was extremely hard coming to the United States and learning English, it got easier over the years and school was a huge help with that aspect of my life.