

Coming to America for a Better Future

Nicaragua which is placed between Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea, is known for the famous lake named after the nation. Although it has beautiful scenery, and amazing weather; the government is very corrupt and the crime and poverty rates are very high. A lot of Nicaraguans often migrate to the United States in hoped of living a better life.

I had a family in the United States already, the plan was for me to join them. I prepared for my trip by making sure I had all my legal documents. I was alone, because there are a lot of documents and the waiting is pretty long. There's also the fact that many people are submitting requests for green cards, to come to the United States, so the consulate is having to work through all those requests and make sure all the information is factual and a person has been vetted before coming to the United States.

Coming to America, I hoped to go to college and continue my education after high school in Nicaragua. I also hoped to join the Air force and get my American citizenship. I already had family in the United States, the plan was for me to come and join them. I was twenty years old when I came here. I spoke English very well because I was educated in an American school system in Nicaragua. I still speak Spanish very well, I may have forgotten a few words but I still remember enough to be fluent. The public school system there basically teaches you the bare minimum, not as advanced as the education system here in the United States. You have very limited schools that offer English and even a smaller number of schools that will teach by an American educational system.

It wasn't a hard decision at all; my intentions all along were to move to the states, because I didn't see a future in Nicaragua. Right before I moved, I would say for a year and a half I felt like my life was on standby because as I mentioned, the process to obtain a green card is pretty long and somewhat complicated. I didn't have a job and I was basically just waiting for my documents to get finalized at the US consulate. Sometimes it was a little nerve racking yes, but I don't think I ever thought of quitting or giving up hope.

In the United States there's a lot more structure in many aspects of society, like the police department. They're pretty honest and straightforward. They're not corrupt. The government seems like there's more democracy. The educational school system has a lot more structure and it's a lot better than Nicaragua. Overall, I'd say the United States is a lot cleaner and safer. There's a lot more things to do in the States. I miss the food. The food was very delicious other than that there's not really much to miss.

Nicaraguans are mostly poor. They're very religious and unhappy about the lack of opportunity in Nicaragua. You're either born to poverty or you're born to some money but the majority of the people in Nicaragua are born to poverty or a very low class. It seems like in the United States there is a much bigger middle class. I mean there is poverty, but the rate of poverty in the United States is much different than the rate of poverty in Nicaragua. You can consider Nicaragua a third world country but the United States is nowhere near that. The cultures are night and day. Like I said the poverty is much different than it is here. Obviously the languages, they speak Spanish over there. The government structure is different. The percentage of people who are religious is very high over there, almost 100 percent. The work ethic and labor laws are very different. The sports that are featured in the United States are very different than those in Nicaragua. Yes the clothes they wear there are a little bit different but they get a little bit of influence from popular American culture. So you will see some people wear the clothes that they

see in music videos like the rap videos or things of that nature. And yeah the food is much different as well. They don't have the Italian restaurants and the Brazilian steakhouses and Taco Bell. They don't do many things like that there. And if they do they're very far in few between.

If I lived in Nicaragua I would not be in the Air Force because Nicaragua does not have an Air Force and its military is filled with corruption due to the fact that the government itself is corrupt. So if the government has control of the military, well the apple doesn't fall very far from the tree. I would be doing something completely different there. I'm not sure what, maybe be an athlete, but I certainly would not be in the Air Force. (When I first got to the States) I didn't have car. I didn't have a lot of money, and I was living with my brother and his wife at the time. Until I joined the Air Force and started making my own way, I felt like my life was in neutral. So that was difficult at first. There aren't many similarities that I can think of. I can just say that there are good people and there are bad people in both countries.

I thought the United States was a very big country and it was full of opportunity and that it got really cold in the winter. So in Colorado, I've only been here for eight months, but so far I like the views of the mountains they're very picturesque. There's not very much traffic here. There are a lot of outdoor activities a lot of people go hiking and camping and snowboarding when there's snow up in the mountains. And one thing I like is that the summers aren't very hot. Compared to Nicaragua when it's warm all year round. Nicaragua's got a little bit of everything. It's got two coast on the Pacific and the Atlantic. A lot of people think Nicaraguans live in the jungle. So I mean that's partially true but that's not the entire country. It has cities and towns just like in the US. Although those cities and towns are much smaller. For the most part, it's flat until you get up into the volcanic areas where it elevates a little but it's nothing like Colorado. Where I live it's 6,000 feet plus above sea level. Nicaragua I don't think it's even 2,000 feet. I wouldn't say there any traditions that I still do per se, but I celebrate Cinco de Mayo and I still listen to some of the music that I listened to when I lived in Nicaragua. Like Spanish rock and Spanish ballads.

It was just a complete transformation of my life from when I left Nicaragua to the person I eventually became here. But I'll say that I began to speak mainly English when I got here. I joined the military and made new friends. It helped that I was fluent in English. I mean I don't think you'd be able to join the military if you can't speak English at all. As far as whether it helped me that I spoke Spanish, I would say no not really because I was stationed in the United States once I first came out of basic training and tech school and it was in North Carolina. There's not a lot of Spanish speaking in North Carolina. But say for example if I got stationed in Texas, or if I was transferred to a base in Spain it would definitely help because if I spoke Spanish, then I would be able to do my job in Spanish as well.

If I ever were to return to Nicaragua, it would be only to visit. I have a completely different life here in the United States as an American citizen. There's no benefit or no real desire to ever move back to Nicaragua permanently.