

Living in this New World

Coming to America meant coming to the land of opportunity for our family. We are from Peru, South America. It is a beautiful country, the land of the Incas Empire, the special place where most of my relatives still live. A country of majestic mountains, Inca ruins, deep blue lakes, an exotic jungle, alpacas, llamas and vicuñas. But also, a place where people live in fear because of so much crime, disrespect for human beings, poverty and terror which are part of everyday life.

My parents have always worked very hard for our family. In Peru my parents earned their professional degrees by working very hard and attending school at the same time. My mother became an elementary teacher and my father joined the Peruvian Navy. But even with all the education and hard work of my parents, they couldn't afford to rent an apartment. My parents had no other choice but to live with my grandparents and disabled uncle with severe diabetes. They had to provide financial support to buy medicine, food and pay all the bills in the house. They had to share a small apartment with my relatives. When my brother was born, he cried a lot and wouldn't let my relatives sleep well. There were too many people living in a small place.

The apartment was very small with no place for children to play or develop as normal children. Uncle Roberto had developed a very strong type of diabetes since he was 8. As an adult he was not able to work anymore because he suffered constant seizures. My family had to take good care of him and take care of the medical expenses too. The money my parents made was not enough to support him, our grandparents and our own family.

My parents were always looking for better opportunities to help our disadvantaged relatives and our own family. They knew that America was the land of opportunity for hard working people. They were looking for a chance to be happy as a family in this new land.

There was a place where our family could develop as honest, caring, useful citizens and human beings. A place that welcomes people of many races where they can have the chance of their lives and the opportunity to work hard and succeed. Aunt Ana, my dad's sister, had settled in America. She invited us to come and start a new life of progress, family unity and love.

My family left Peru, leaving our uncle Roberto and grandparents under the supervision and care of other relatives. We had to find this safe place and work very hard to support the relatives in Peru. We were going to make a big difference in the life our community too.

After all this time here we still can't believe the great miracle of life. It has been the most amazing change that happened to my family.

During the first few years in the U.S. my parents rented a small apartment in San Bernardino County in California. My father worked for Pizza Hut during the day, cleaning and delivering pizza and he also attended Chaffey College and took many courses related to computers. My mother worked for the City of Upland's Child Care Center and attended Chaffey College in the evenings. Although my parents had their professional degrees from Peru, they had to start again in a new academic system. Chaffey College helps the students because there's a Child Care Center where the children can stay when the parents are in the classroom.

My parents could only afford to buy one car when they came to the United States. But that was not an excuse for my mother for working and studying. For a long time she had to take the bus to work and take my brother to school. She told me that after she took my brother to school she had to walk for about an hour everyday to her job. Then, after her job she had to walk again to pick up my brother and walk with him to the bus stop to go to college. She had the same routine for about 3 years. Even when it was raining, when there was a storm or if it was too hot. My mother and brother left the house at 6 am and came back at about 10:30 pm everyday. My father delivered pizzas, cleaned restaurants and attended college in San Bernardino County too.

I can say that the greatest surprises came when my family moved to San Diego looking for better job opportunities, more colleges, universities and benefits for our family.

My father was hired at the University of California San Diego as a Data Entry Clerk. Now he is the Network System Manager of the Cancer Center at the University of California San Diego.

My mother obtained her Teaching Credentials at San Diego State University and her Master's Degree in Education! She is the Parent Academic Liaison at Horton Elementary in San Diego.

Both my parents are always receiving recognition from their supervisors, the other staff and from the community for their excellent work and active role in the Latino Community. They always make a big difference in the lives of many poor students and their parents. They work with so much dedication and are giving us, my brother and I, the best example of our lives!

I have been very lucky all the time. My parents usually take me to their jobs and let me help them and participate in many activities related to their jobs and the community.

For example, we have recently worked together organizing a Family Dance event for all the Horton Elementary families and school staff.

My mother wanted to recognize all the cultures of our school and community, the children and their families and school staff for their positive participation. During the party, my father took pictures, moved the furniture, helped serve the food. My brother and I decorated the auditorium with flowers and balloons with the help of parents, teachers and children.

My mother greeted everyone coming to the event and conducted the party. It was so much fun and special for everyone! I'll never forget it. Everybody was very happy. We all enjoyed it!

We live now in Mira Mesa, a very mixed community in San Diego. I usually play with children of many cultures. My friend Rosie's parents are from Vietnam. My friends Raquel is Mexican, my friends Nick and Netty are Americans and my friend Zoey comes from a Jewish family. My friends Lucas and Masha are from Russia. I teach them Spanish words, they teach me Russian songs. We always play together and celebrate their birthdays with their families.

I have learned so much from all my friends. Their parents are always talking to my parents and share so much about the traditions of their countries. For example, Masha's parents told me that they celebrate Christmas with special tree ornaments that have different meanings. Rosie's parents always have Vietnamese children and parents at their house. The parents want their children to be very good students and learn how to play piano well.

I can tell they really care so much about their children being very smart students.

Nick and Netty's parents are very happy and trust them very much. I usually have sleepovers

at their house and ride bike with them. My parents always get in touch with the parents of my friends and like to share something about Peru, our country. My mom sometimes teaches them some Spanish words. I attend the Language Academy school in San Diego, Ca. I can read in English and in Spanish. I have many friends of different races here too. The other day, I went to my friend Dasia's birthday party. It was a great experience being at her house with all African Americans friends and relatives. We danced and sang very loud and spent such a good time!

I think that being a new American means that I have been very lucky by living in a country of many immigrants and cultures. I really appreciate and enjoy learning about different people, who live in our society. I want to learn from them and enjoy everything they share, their beliefs, their different traditions, values, history, language and cooking!

My family and I appreciate all cultures so much. Our hobby is visiting many museums, theaters reading history books about many countries and enjoy traveling and learning more people their and customs, traditions and way of life. You learn so much from other people and you grow as a person too because you can understand how other people feel and how to treat them right.

We would like to travel to many countries and enjoy their people, food and customs.

I want to learn about these countries because there are many children who live in the U.S. whose families are from different countries. I want to be their friend and speak many languages too.

Today, being a new American is very important because you can make the difference in the life of many people. By learning about other races you are the ambassador of America and people around the world will give you a warm welcome as a friend. Because my family and I have struggled for a better life, I can say that we now understand how people feel when they

arrive to a new country with no friends, not knowing about the system, having difficulty speaking English or speaking English with a different accent than Americans, have a different color of skin, have different customs, other religions and beliefs.

I want to show consideration and respect for all cultures. I need to learn how to make them feel comfortable and accepted and that people be patient with them. I think our society is the best because all the schools have children of many countries. It is interesting to hear about their countries and traditions. We all live together and you feel happy if you are accepted with respect kindness and consideration in our society. I have been very lucky to be part of two countries!

Being a new American has also been the most rewarding experience for me. I have learned so much from the new culture and society. Now, I understand how children feel if they are welcome by other children and adults.

Here, people can express their opinions, work hard for their ideals and be able to buy food and have a better life for their families. We live in a country where people have many hopes in the future and are all learning to live together, accepting the differences of skin, countries and language. Our skins, countries and language differences make us a great country!

Thank you America. You can count on me!.

