[00:00:04]

[MUSIC] You weren't listening to Tell Me Your Story where we connect to HLS staff on a personal level. Hello everyone. This is Edgar Kley Filho from HLS Human Resources department. My pronouns are he, him, his. Today we're talking to Arlenie Oglesby from Faculty Support Services. Who will you tell us about her life, how long she is in disposition at HLS, and the work she does. Thank you for joining us, Arlenie and please tell me your story.

[00:00:42]

My name is Arlenie Oglesby and I am relatively new hear in HLS particularly at Faculty Support

[00:00:51]

How new?

[00:00:52]

Since August.

[00:00:54]

Since August last year?

[00:00:55]

I haven't had a full cycle of the academic year yet.

[00:01:01]

I want to ask more questions about this experience for you, but let's start from the beginning. Tell me a little bit more about your life? Where are you from if you are from Massachusetts or somewhere else? What you can tell us about your family history?

[00:01:18]

I'm originally from the Philippines.

[00:01:20]

Philippines?

[00:01:21]

Yes. From 2017-2019, I've been coming back and forth to attend summer school requirement of the Harvard Extension School.

[00:01:33]

You're taking courses at Harvard Extension School?

[00:01:35]

Yes, I was taking. I graduated last 2020. We had in person as for class 2020 and 2021 last May last year. My dad flew over here from the Philippines. He said it was a nightmare because they had a 15 hour layover in Japan.

[00:01:59]

Wow really?

[00:02:02]

But it was nice because he had two friends with him to accompany him or something. But I grew up in a family with a single dad, which is very unusual.

[00:02:15]

A single dad?

[00:02:16]

Yeah, a single dad. My parents separated when I was younger, and it was my dad who took all of us with him.

[00:02:26]

How many siblings you are?

[00:02:27]

I have three brothers.

[00:02:28]

So you are four altogether?

[00:02:30]

Yeah, we're four. I'm the only girl. We grew up in a single dad household.

[00:02:37]

How was that experience?

[00:02:41]

I think I can credit what I am today as a woman and soon to be a mom because we are planning to have a family soon with that experience because as early as 10 years old, I was actually budgeting the budget for the house at 10 years old. I have an older brother, but of course we know older brother at 12 years old. They're like playing outside and stuff. Since I was the only girl, my dad would leave us the budget for the week because he's also a police officer. He's always on the field and stuff like that. He would leave us, the four of us with the house helper, who of course, who would do the laundry, the cooking, but budgeting the household, paying for the bills for the telephone that time that the paying for bills is it's being collected by a person, you don't go or pay through the app or something, a person comes into your house and collect the bill.

[00:03:51]

That's what it was?

[00:03:51]

Yeah.

[00:03:52]

Interesting. Because for us would be I would say in Brazil when we have our land lines and the phone rings, you have to run all the way inside to answer. Is that how was?

[00:04:03]

No, my time was in 90's. We already have a landline at home, and that is we have to pay for that actually for long distance calls.

[00:04:15]

No. I come from the time that the town that you lived, we didn't have a phone in our house. We had to go to the city center where they have those cabins, that was like a store and there were cabins all around the wall. You'd say I would like to call this number, you'd say where to do and then should say, we can take the cabin number six or seven or whatever was. You'd go there, talk, talk, talk, talk, then it would go back and pay the person in the counter how much we spent talking and then go home.

[00:04:52]

Go home.

[00:04:52]

That far. Let's not talk about my age. But then you already and then later on you also had the land lines [OVERLAPPING], but you still consider what you have today. If someone mum someone is here calling yard, like your brother or something.

[00:05:09]

You have to go there. Also with electric bill, we'll call collector utilities.

[00:05:17]

They would have a collector that would go home for you to pay the utilities bills

[00:05:19]

From house to house.

[00:05:21]

Utilities bill you could.

[00:05:22]

Yes.

[00:05:22]

That's very convenient.

[00:05:24]

Very convenient. Actually yeah. At the 90s but way convenient now because you just.

[00:05:29]

Upload your app and do everything. How was being raised by four men around you?

[00:05:37]

Actually, I raised them them. I have two little brothers. Like I said, I was managing the household, giving my older brother his allowance for the day. He would always ask for more, but I said no of course.

[00:05:52]

Of course.

[00:05:53]

Then my younger brothers, I have to pack their snacks, their juice boxes, their everything because they're younger than I am. Help them with their homework. At the end of the day before they go to school, teach them how to brush their teeth, etcetera, wash their faces before going to bed. I raised the three of them.

[00:06:19]

Though you are not the big sister, but you'd be the big sister?

[00:06:22]

Yeah, I was a big sister to two of them, and younger sister for my older brother.

[00:06:26]

But it sounds like you were the big sister for that too? [LAUGHTER]

[00:06:29]

For everyone. I make sure that my older brother did his homework as well.

[00:06:37]

Did you put everybody on track?

[00:06:39]

Yes. Then I have a small notebook to record everything because I don't want my dad to think that I'm stealing, not stealing [OVERLAPPING] keeping some for myself no.

[00:06:52]

You're making sure that everything that you pay the bills and whatever, if he left this much, you would use a certain amount for this or that and then whatever's left. He could see that it was.

[00:07:03]

I will give it back to him. That's how we were. I think I was 18.

[00:07:10]

Really?

[00:07:10]

Yes.

[00:07:11]

How was your experience at not work I'm sorry, with the school because I know that you helped your brothers to get everything aligned with snacks and everything to go to school, what about you? How was your life at school early ages until you went through high school?

[00:07:28]

Well, I was an average student. I have friends, I don't want to say it, but I'm kind of on the bullying side, but not the bad one. The one that we see here, I'm sorry, but back home, I think I'm one of the loud crowds. I'm the one who goes to the corner and just study. I play sports, I participated in school activities.

[00:07:59]

Events.

[00:08:00]

Events.

[00:08:01]

But you would say that you are more introverted student than someone that were out there or you're more extroverted?

[00:08:07]

I'm kind of extrovert.

[00:08:09]

Extrovert?

[00:08:09]

Yes.

[00:08:10]

That's why you made that you were with the loud crowd?

[00:08:13]

Yeah.

[00:08:13]

I would be with the quiet crowd.

[00:08:16]

With the quite crowd.

[00:08:17]

In the corner just to watch, look at them show offs.

[00:08:21]

We are not show offs. Actually I think there were three classes of students or kids in our school. There were the introvert, and then the popular ones, the jocks [OVERLAPPING]

[00:08:36]

We're in the center.

[00:08:38]

You have a good balance in between.

[00:08:40]

I have the balance.

[00:08:41]

You are not the bulliest completely. You're just that you would deal with the bullies. I don't know. It's interesting, considering that you are from a different culture like I am. Bullying, maybe nowadays even in my country, I'm far from there for so long, but when I was in high school and everything, I don't remember bullying being something intense like we hear nowadays.

[00:09:06]

Physical.

[00:09:07]

Yes.

[00:09:07]

No, we don't have that back then either.

[00:09:09]

Or even if psychological with that intensity. [OVERLAPPING]

[00:09:11]

Just a little teasing here and there. That's it.

[00:09:15]

The sarcasm, the teasing, the calling nicknames, that's the perception that I have. I don't want to be insensitive to think, did something happen in the past that I don't remember that was someone felt bad, but would happen to me too and I don't recall. I think in my favor was even harder than whatever I went through school from early times until later on, unless you have someone that really pick on you for whatever reason. But I don't remember having that situation. It sounds like you didn't have the same.

[00:09:54]

Even even the popular ones, the jocks and the pretty ones seen in our school, they didn't do that. They have their own world, yes. But they're not downgrading people. [OVERLAPPING]

[00:10:05]

Exactly, hummiliating for whatever reason that was there.

[00:10:11]

We didn't have that.

[00:10:12]

[inaudible 00:10:12] was asking this question, you don't need to answer. Your dad never remarried?

[00:10:17]

No, he did not. He was very busy with his career.

[00:10:21]

With his career and everything and with four kids.

[00:10:23]

With four kids, yes, with three boys growing up. He did try to have girlfriends here and there, but I think one time he said something about, it's not like he was complaining to me or something, but if he had all boys, he might have remarried. But because he has a girl or he has a daughter, prevented him out of respect for me as a daughter, I guess.

[00:10:58]

That's nice.

[00:10:58]

He never remarried. He's now taking care of his grandchildren with my brothers.

[00:11:05]

Your brothers. Overall, a good dad, taking care of everything?

[00:11:10]

Yes. He's the best. My God, he's actually a military guy.

[00:11:16]

Which is sometimes can be perceived as [OVERLAPPING] he's strict or very much a disciplined or this thing.

[00:11:25]

But no. [LAUGHTER]

[00:11:26]

No?

[00:11:28]

No. Whenever our house helper is held busy with cooking or cleaning the house and he's at home, he's the one actually washing our clothes.

[00:11:44]

Wow.

[00:11:45]

That's nice.

[00:11:46]

Making sure that our shoes are all lined up. He's never strict with us.

[00:11:50]

That's really lovely.

[00:11:51]

A lot of people said, your dad was not strict? No. He graduated from a military academy, and then went to become a police officer and he retired as, I think, a brigadier general back home.

[00:12:07]

Wow. That's phenomenal.

[00:12:10]

But he's not very strict. He's not at all strict.

[00:12:13]

Which is great. Another thing, I know that mentioning that you were raised by a single dad, but you had a big family circle?

[00:12:24]

Actually, no.

[00:12:25]

No?

[00:12:25]

Yeah. [OVERLAPPING]

[00:12:27]

Grandma, uncles?

[00:12:29]

He only has a three other siblings and his other siblings only have few children as well, but we're not close. My dad, because of his work in the National Capital Region, we grow up in urban area, and his siblings and his nieces and nephews and even my grandmother lived in the rural area.

[00:12:56]

It was more difficult to have that connection then. Unlike me, most of my relatives on my mom's side is Italian. That is something that I feel like, what is happening here? Because my mom they moved from South East to South. My mom and my dad first, they had, I think, one or two children since then or three maybe, and then my mom's sister and brother all came. Then they've moved a little further West of that same state. Little bit later, everybody was there. [LAUGHTER] From there, you moved again was I went first because dad asked me, go check this town where your sister is living in Center West of Brazil way far North, close to Amazon. If it is a good place, I think we should move there and start a new life.

[00:13:49]

All of you?

[00:13:50]

Then I went, told dad, Dad, it's good place. My sister is leaving. Did you want to come? Yeah, let's do. My dad, my brother and my mom and my younger brother came. Took like not even two years, everybody, my mom’s sisters that married with children, grandchildren all came as well.

[00:14:09]

My God.

[00:14:10]

They are always around, it's really close by, which was fun. I enjoyed having the cousins and having the holidays and everything.

[00:14:21]

Together.

[00:14:22]

But I think mom and dad always enjoy this. They loved the house full of people. I am the one that a little bit was, can we have less? That's a lot. But my sisters and brothers always enjoyed that as well. It was always that is interesting to hear. For example, we're just saying because they were not close and not in the same town, that makes a perfect sense.

[00:14:44]

Visiting my grandmother would take us 10-hour drives.

[00:14:48]

10 hours? That makes a perfect sense.

[00:14:51]

Well, I was close with my grandmother. Actually I grew up with her because my dad was still fighting the communists in the Philippines that time, so he was always in the field. That time, my mom is still around, so my dad wouldn't want us to be with him in the jungle of the Philippines. We actually grew up with my grandmother.

[00:15:18]

How was that? Was it a good experience?

[00:15:20]

I don't remember that much about it, but it made me very close to my grandma that even if we only see each other 4, 5 times a year, it's really nice to be with her.

[00:15:36]

You have a good connection.

[00:15:38]

Her cooking was really good, especially sweets. I love it.

[00:15:41]

That, I need to know a little bit more. Tell me about Philippine food.

[00:15:45]

Philippine food, we love pork. Yes. That's the only thing that my husband doesn't like in the Philippines because he doesn't eat pork. It doesn't go perfectly with his stomach, but we love pork. All the celebrations that we have, birthdays, weddings, town fiestas always with, we call it lechon. It's a full-grown pig roasted whole. Yes.

[00:16:23]

I think we have that. It's roasted.

[00:16:28]

In a bamboo stick.

[00:16:31]

In a barbecue style that keeps rolling.

[00:16:34]

Keeps rolling. Yes.

[00:16:36]

Do you have it in Brazil? That is a big thing. My family, my sister, this last time that we went to, she made sure that I knew the new technique that she has to make this skin very crispy.

[00:16:47]

Yes.

[00:16:48]

You have this soft meat [OVERLAPPING] and everything and really good seasoning?

[00:16:53]

Yes.

[00:16:53]

But the skin has to be crispy when you crack it like that. She would spend some time showing me, that's how you do it with very hot oil pouring on top of the skin that was already baking.

[00:17:06]

Yes.

[00:17:07]

Then I would say, she was so proud to show how it was done. Now I learned something I would never do, but it's good to see that.

[00:17:19]

We cook lechon just in the backyard.

[00:17:22]

Same about Brazil.

[00:17:24]

Nothing about oven or something, just the backyard.

[00:17:26]

One thing that I always tell, for example, my husband and his family, that's very different here. I believe that in certain areas in US, probably it's the same. But for us, going out to restaurants is not a common thing. Everything that we do, usually in someone else's house, would it be a barbecue in my brother's house or in my sister's house or in my nephew's house. That's from one weekend to the other, people tend to get together. If my brother goes, all the other brothers and sister goals as well, and all the nephews and then the loved ones, their boyfriends, husbands, everything. We end up getting together and then there is loud music, [LAUGHTER] ends up because someone is always drinking, there will be dancing somehow. It doesn't need to be a special day of celebration. [OVERLAPPING].

[00:18:22]

Just a weekend together.

[00:18:25]

Is there something like that in Philippines as well?

[00:18:27]

Yes. We do that a lot in the Philippines. That's one of the things that I really miss back home because here in the United States, I don't have family members here.

[00:18:40]

They're all there.

[00:18:42]

They're all there.

[00:18:43]

Exactly like me. All of them are back in Brazil.

[00:18:48]

My husband's family is in Baltimore, so it's far.

[00:18:54]

Just the two of you are here?

[00:18:55]

Just the two of us here. I always kid my husband, but I don't think we're good in making friends because [LAUGHTER] we don't have friends yet, and we've been permanently in Massachusetts since 2019. We still don't have friends. I know some Filipinos around here in Boston, Massachusetts, but they're always busy because they're in the medical field and they're older than me. I haven't met someone who's in the same age as I am. Back home, just sometimes out of the blue, my brother would text me, are you busy? I said no. "Come over. We have pizza over here."

[00:19:43]

Nice.

[00:19:44]

He's a car mechanic. He's very good with cars and he has his own garage, like a car shop.

[00:19:58]

Yeah. He would text me, there are you busy? I said no, just go over it where we're getting a lot of pizza. He just want someone to be with him in the garage while he's fixing cars.

[00:20:10]

Oh, that's lovely.

[00:20:11]

Then my youngest brother is also a fanatic of car so the two of them fix cars together. My other brother who is, I don't want to say girly, but he doesn't like dirt or something.

[00:20:28]

More sophisticated.

[00:20:28]

More sophisticated.

[00:20:29]

I like the video, exactly.

[00:20:30]

That wouldn't be me. [LAUGHTER] No,

[00:20:33]

I went through the process of a helping in doing that kind of thing, getting dirty. But if I could choose between a place that was more than a clean slate and not getting too much involved in the whole but my brothers and sister loved the other. Is interesting. The same thing applies when anyone there were building something, then all, I need to do another room here, because everything there, you cannot be paying for construction.

[00:21:03]

No, you do it yourself.

[00:21:05]

Yes. Hey, I need you to do this, do you want to come and help us? There we go, the entire family. Then we would help with bricks and other one preparing concrete to put in place and then someone would be cooking or barbecuing.

[00:21:20]

Yes.

[00:21:20]

I do have a time to stop to eat and move on so we spend the whole day.

[00:21:24]

Together.

[00:21:25]

More or less like your brother. He was working but want so much to be there.

[00:21:28]

To be there just to be there, just to chat with and something like that.

[00:21:31]

Yeah, I remember. Those are also really great memories, the time that you spend together.

[00:21:37]

It doesn't have to be a lot of people, just the four of us. Four of us. Well, my older brother's girlfriend and ever his family's also there. I get to see my niece a lot and my youngest brother would bring his very cute kid with him. Sometimes we would call my dad if he wants to come over and sometimes he said, "Oh, I'm playing golf," with his friends, We let him because he worked hard for it, I guess. But yeah, just the four of us were okay.

[00:22:14]

You have good relationships, the four of you, you and your brothers?

[00:22:17]

Yes. We are very close. We were very small but close-knit siblings, my three brothers and myself. My dad sometimes complains at us. He said, "Oh my God, your older brother only has two kids. Your youngest brother has only one kid, [LAUGHTER] you don't have a kid yet, and your other brother doesn't even have a girlfriend yet so I only have three grandchildren."

[00:22:51]

He want's more?

[00:22:51]

He want's more.

[00:22:55]

[LAUGHTER] That's lovely.

[00:22:56]

He wants to be surrounded by kids or children that he likes to spoil.

[00:23:05]

He spoil them too, of course.

[00:23:07]

Oh my God, the youngest was very spoiled. If his dad says no, he goes to [OVERLAPPING].

[00:23:14]

That's what grandfathers are there for, to spoil the kids.

[00:23:18]

To spoil.

[00:23:19]

That's what my sister always tells me, "That's it. I tried to discipline my kids as much as I can. They spend a weekend with mom and dad and that's it. Everything is gone.''

[00:23:29]

Everything went to the door.

[00:23:30]

Then grandma is better because of this, grandpa is better because of that.

[00:23:34]

I want to go spend from grandma.

[00:23:36]

Exactly. Oh, one thing that I forgot, you talked about pork. What about the sweets? What are famous sweets in Philippines that people should be mindful if they ever come across?

[00:23:51]

I'm not sure if it can count as sweets, but what do we call this? Not sticky rice, but sticky rice.

[00:24:02]

Oh, it is, but sweet?

[00:24:04]

Yeah, there are sweet. There like rice puddings.

[00:24:07]

Interesting, because we also have that. Because some people put made with milk for sure, some people put coconut milk.

[00:24:19]

Yes, coconut milk.

[00:24:20]

Yeah. Sometimes coconut flakes as well.

[00:24:23]

Yes, coconut flakes.

[00:24:23]

Some people don't put the coconut flakes on top but put this cinnamon.

[00:24:27]

Cinnamon, yes.

[00:24:28]

To have a mix, but it's really strange to tell people that sweet rice because everybody is used with the regular spicy rice.

[00:24:36]

Yes.

[00:24:36]

But it is delicious.

[00:24:37]

It is.

[00:24:38]

I remember my mom used to do that. Cheap sweets that doesn't have to invest too much and you can give it to your kids.

[00:24:48]

You just get it somewhere.

[00:24:49]

And balancing your budget instead of spending too much outside with chocolate, whatever.

[00:24:54]

We don't have those yet. We don't have chocolates and the stuff. We have those sweets and dried fruits.

[00:25:01]

Dried fruits as well?

[00:25:02]

Yes. Actually dried mangoes is one of our best dried fruits.

[00:25:06]

You have a lot of mangoes?

[00:25:08]

Oh my God, our mangoes. Well, there are certain portion of Philippines where mangoes are very sweet.

[00:25:13]

It's funny. I need to go to Philippines because sounds a lot about everything that we have. a similar situation as in Brazil as well. That starts the fight between [LAUGHTER] whoever is from this or that state. My mom, dad and three of my siblings were born in the South East, my brother and I were born in the South and came to live in the Center West. Center West has mangoes like natural, grown in wild, was not planted, was there. They have a different quality, but they are delicious. Where my mom came from, every fruit is better than anywhere in Brazil [LAUGHTER] Is sweeter, we call it bigger, juicier, all that.

[00:25:58]

Is bigger, juicer.

[00:25:59]

We always used to tease both of them. Espirito Santo’s(estate) fruits that is nothing compared in the world is the best. But you are saying that regions in Philippines also have different kind.

[00:26:10]

Yes. They have their own, what do we call this? Something to be proud of as fruits, yes.

[00:26:22]

Yes. That's exactly what my mom did.

[00:26:24]

But of course, there are mangoes in some other parts of the Philippines, yes. But in this region, I'm not from there, my dad's not from there, the doctor, she even told people not to eat more than two of whole mangoes.

[00:26:41]

Because of its sweet?

[00:26:42]

Yeah. What do we call that, glucose?

[00:26:47]

Yes, glucose.

[00:26:48]

Yeah. Very good.

[00:26:49]

Would be the same, do you have enough papaya there, a lot of papaya?

[00:26:52]

Yes. Oh, my God, I love papaya.

[00:26:52]

Which is the same there. Papaya is pretty sweet as well.

[00:26:56]

Yeah. The smaller it is, the sweeter it is.

[00:27:01]

Yes.

[00:27:01]

The bigger it is, it lost taste.

[00:27:03]

You have a lot in your food as well?

[00:27:05]

Yes.

[00:27:06]

Sweets and now you prepare?

[00:27:08]

Yeah.

[00:27:08]

Because papaya is another big thing in terms of a cakes and like for a feeling and everything else which I thought that was very strange when I came here. The feeling for cakes is always something I don't know how to say, but a creams such.

[00:27:24]

Creams, yes.

[00:27:25]

In Brazil wouldn't be any kind of a fruit.

[00:27:27]

Fruit.

[00:27:27]

We have the coconut, papaya.

[00:27:30]

Mangoes.

[00:27:31]

Mangoes, figs. There is something else that I'm forgetting right now. Oh, plums.

[00:27:36]

Oh, plums.

[00:27:37]

But the dry plum and then they put a condensed milk with that and cook and then changes the taste completely. I know that Brian when we go, certain things he think is interesting, never ate and said the plum cake the feeling, he was like “no I don't know if I like that much” because sounds a little and I love it. But because the Philippines is also a tropical country mainly.

[00:28:03]

It's a tropical country.

[00:28:04]

And that's how it is.

[00:28:05]

We have eight months of sunshine and four months of rain.

[00:28:11]

My Lord, so close. [LAUGHTER] The region that we live in Central West, we have what you call a 66.

[00:28:19]

A 6x6?

[00:28:20]

Dry and wet season like a dry and rain season. That's what it is. We don't have the other like we don't know where the the fall is, and where the spring is.

[00:28:30]

We only have hot and wet [LAUGHTER].

[00:28:35]

Humid and that kind of thing.

[00:28:37]

Yes.

[00:28:37]

You lived more in the suburban area?

[00:28:39]

Yes. Suburban area.

[00:28:40]

The capital?

[00:28:40]

Yes. That's why whenever we go to a rural area, it's a vacation. It's beach over there, mountains.

[00:28:47]

It is different?

[00:28:47]

It's very different.

[00:28:48]

You enjoy everything because even walking bare feet and just enjoying to be in that rural area it's a different story.

[00:28:57]

When I was younger, me and my cousins, when we were still close, we fell apart I guess but when we were younger, we always played in the rice paddies. Yes, we fly kites there because there's no wires, the electricity wires.

[00:29:19]

I love that, yes.

[00:29:19]

That's where we fly our kites, we come home and my grandmother would be very mad because our legs are full of mud. [LAUGHTER].

[00:29:27]

Out there, you haven't figure out what like a shower and get clean again.

[00:29:33]

Don't you dare go to your bedroom with those feet.

[00:29:35]

[LAUGHTER] Tell me after you finished in terms of high school, you went to college in Philippines?

[00:29:47]

The Philippines, yes.

[00:29:48]

Was the capital there where you lived?

[00:29:50]

The capital is Manila. I went to school there. It's called University of Santo Tomas. I took a Bachelors of Arts in Political Science. It's a four-year course. After that, I went and get my Master's in Business Administration because I thought that would push me in a better position in the company that I was still working at. I worked at a logistics and supply chain for five years. At age 25, I was already managing the largest air-conditioned warehouse in the Philippines. I think I got burnt out. [LAUGHTER] I got worked out at 25. I had my masters. I guess I was hoping I would bump into not too much on the field work, maybe in an office area or something because I had masters, I thought. When it was not happening, I left work. I left the company and then went to Singapore because Singapore has the second largest port in East Asia. Next to Victoria of Hong Kong. I went there, applied, maybe a change of environment would be good for me. I got the job and I called my dad, said I got a job here in Singapore and he started to cry [LAUGHTER].

[00:31:34]

Our lovely conversation continues on the next episode. Make sure to tune in [MUSIC]