[00:00:04]

You are listening to January story where we connect your 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 are talking to Susana Arteta from Legal Aid Bureau, who will tell us about her life, how long she is in this position at HLS and the work she does. Thank you for joining us, Susana, and please tell me your story.

[00:00:42]

Well, I arrived to the United States for the first time to go to college.

[00:00:51]

Yeah.

[00:00:53]

My family is from several different countries. My father was from Peru. My mother is from Northern Spain. My sister and I were born in Venezuela, one brother in Panama, and the other one in Peru. [OVERLAPPING] Puerto Rico.

[00:01:19]

Puerto Rico.

[00:01:20]

Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico is where my father went to settle down once he resigned from his previous job with Chrysler, which relocated him.

[00:01:43]

Okay.

[00:01:46]

My parents didn't want to put us on a boarding school or up root us every 2-3 years. He settled in Puerto Rico because of his love of the sea, and because he's only trade that he knew was car parts.

[00:02:15]

Car parts.

[00:02:16]

Puerto Rico in the '60s was a very good growing market or so he was told [LAUGHTER].

[00:02:26]

For car parts.

[00:02:27]

For cars. The island was growing really, really fast. He started from scratch there and did very well. At the end, when we left Puerto Rico, I left to come to college.

[00:02:50]

Yeah.

[00:02:52]

My parents and my young siblings left while I was in college and they relocated to Costa Rica.

[00:03:02]

Costa Rica?

[00:03:04]

Yes. My father had sold his business. So there was a non-compete.

[00:03:09]

Yeah.

[00:03:11]

He didn't know whether he would want to continue to work. He wanted a country that had no army. He grew up in Peru with a dictatorship and left Peru to go to Venezuela because of the situation.

[00:03:35]

Because of the situation.

[00:03:36]

Yes. Again, Costa Rica because no army, and because of his love of the sea.

[00:03:46]

Always love for the sea.

[00:03:47]

Love of the sea. We used to call him a sea lion.

[00:03:50]

Wow. Tell me a little bit now that we have more or less a picture of your family. But I have so many questions because of that. How much do you know about your father's history in terms of what age he stayed in Peru and then move to Venezuela.

[00:04:10]

He was orphaned. His father died during the ripple of the Great Depression in South America. He stopped going to school in sixth grade, I think, to start earning a living to feed all the kids and the family and stuff. He worked since a very young age. He left Peru because there was a lot of unrest with the Adria dictatorship. Young men were either recruited for rebellion or were recruited for the army.

[00:05:13]

Yeah. One way or the other.

[00:05:14]

Exactly.

[00:05:15]

There is no way.

[00:05:17]

He saw truckloads of young men being loaded. One day because of a strike or a protest, he couldn't go where he was working. If he didn't work, he didn't earn. He and his younger brother that was just a year apart, decided that they needed to emigrate and they went to Venezuela, that was going through a huge boom.

[00:05:52]

Yeah.

[00:05:53]

I mean, in credit, that was a boom.

[00:05:56]

Yeah.

[00:05:57]

It was the oil.

[00:05:58]

Compared with the rest of South America. Venezuela was the one at the time, yeah.

[00:06:03]

At that time.

[00:06:04]

Yeah.

[00:06:05]

Believe it or not, it's sad to where it felt.

[00:06:08]

Because I think Peru, Colombia, Chile, I think I would say those three were the most affected at the time. Brazil for a period of time around the '50-'60s I think Argentina was always in turmoil, but way down. But in that region, Peru, Columbia, and Chile were the ones, the way that you describe, you either would be join the army or you'd be joining the fire, so then both brother decide to go to Venezuela.

[00:06:45]

Again, it was a huge boom, and they needed immigrants. When in mostly Caracas, it's really a city of immigrants.

[00:06:56]

Yeah.

[00:07:01]

They did very well. My father got hired by Chrysler.

[00:07:08]

Nice.

[00:07:09]

My uncle set up his own car parts.

[00:07:14]

Live there for a good time of his life there, right?

[00:07:18]

Yes.

[00:07:18]

How did he meet your mom?

[00:07:20]

[OVERLAPPING] He met my mother.

[00:07:21]

From Spain.

[00:07:23]

My grandfather was evacuated from Spain by one of the last US ships leaving because he had honorable discharge papers that proved he had served in the US Army.

[00:07:46]

Okay.

[00:07:47]

But he's family, they were from a tiny, while he was from, not even a village. He was from a little hamlet in the mountains, in northern Spain. My grandmother was from the nearest village to his. His family was what they called that back then red.

[00:08:15]

Yeah.

[00:08:16]

Against Franco. My grandmother's family was pro Franco.

[00:08:26]

Wow.

[00:08:27]

They married and everything was okay. But I don't know if you know about the Spanish Civil War, but it was extremely sanguine. It rippled everywhere, even in tiny little Hamlet's, people would turn on people and get them killed. When my grandfather's only brother was killed in prison, he decided he needed to leave and thought that my grandmother having a family, that was pro Franco, and people knew that he would be allowed to leave later. He left her pregnant with my mother and took place on that ship that would evacuate him. It took two years for my grandmother to be able to leave Spain. My mother was born a US citizen by virtue of my grandmother asking for asylum for her daughter. My mother was the only one of us that even though she couldn't prove it except with a little letter, was born a US citizen. My grandfather went through a lot of places but ended up in Venezuela, like a lot of Spaniards did. He did well, and eventually bought a, it was not a hotel because it was a series of cabins with a main house. He bought a large finger that had several houses and stuff. He had guests. He called it a hotel. It was in the outskirts and a lot of land and very beautiful apparently. My father, who was already an executive at Chrysler, he had done very well. We would go there for lunch. Mind you, he was 17 years older than my mother.

[00:11:11]

Seventeen?

[00:11:12]

Seventeen. He liked it there and the food and my grandparents a lot so he became a friend of the family. He would go there almost daily, constantly. From a gas to became a family friend. He would eat with the family. Unbeknownst to him, my mother, a precocious though sheltered, [LAUGHTER] young woman, had decided that she was marrying, if not him, a man just like him.

[00:11:53]

Oh my God.

[00:11:58]

Apparently my father was so taken aback by the fact that he actually felt attracted to such a young person. That this person, this young woman would relentlessly flirt [LAUGHTER] with him in a nice way because my [inaudible 00:12:22] was in front of the parents and everything. But he actually, and I know it's true because when she was alive, I talked to his mother, he left instead.

[00:12:36]

[OVERLAPPING] Wow, because he was worried.

[00:12:39]

I am about to fall for something that's not right.

[00:12:45]

Yeah, he respect for his family too.

[00:12:48]

I can't be. I need to separate for awhile. His mother, rest in peace, said that is the silliest thing I've ever heard. You're already 36 and 37. Love is blind. Love is what it is and few people are lucky enough to achieve it. She sent him back to Venezuela and they started going back.

[00:13:25]

[OVERLAPPING] He went back to Peru?

[00:13:27]

He went back to Peru or no, he left.

[00:13:28]

I thought we're talking like, he left the proximity to the family.

[00:13:33]

He left.

[00:13:33]

Oh, wow.

[00:13:34]

I need to luckily, he didn't outright quit. But went to Peru and said to his mother's some changes need to happen because I'm in this situation.

[00:13:50]

She gave him advise to say you are being.

[00:13:52]

[OVERLAPPING] Yes. But when he went, I said, nice gentleman to ask permission to court my mother without even talking to her yet. My grandfather threw him out.

[00:14:06]

This is what I think is interesting to point it out because you mentioned that before, that your mother at the time was flirting with him but in a nice way. We cannot forget that this is a conflicting thing about the Latino culture in general. We are a open, funny, joking, but there is a seriousness in terms of how things should be going, in terms of a family matters, and how might you have to respect that. They welcome you as a friend, as someone part of the family. But don't forget that there are, right, boundaries that you need to respect. That thing is amazing even for him to be that respect and say, I have this group of people that I am friends with. I respect and love them and I cannot just betray them by doing something silly, that he was feeling that was coming. Then when he comes back and asks to court her, your grandfather said no.

[00:15:03]

No. Well, a long story short, they courted with my grandmothers.

[00:15:11]

Okay, permission.

[00:15:13]

Permission behind her father's back [LAUGHTER] until she finished. She was in her senior year of high school.

[00:15:21]

Yeah.

[00:15:24]

She was 17.

[00:15:28]

My mom was married when she was 17.

[00:15:30]

When she turned 18, she could marry without her father's permission because back then you needed your father's permission.

[00:15:37]

Right.

[00:15:39]

Until very recently, women needed permission.

[00:15:42]

[OVERLAPPING] Permission.

[00:15:43]

My grandmother traveled to Mexico when my parents were living in Aruba, and she couldn't return without her husband's permission.

[00:15:58]

Yes, amazing.

[00:15:59]

You need husband's permission to travel as a married woman. But anyway, they married. They had one of the most beautiful relationships I've ever witnessed.

[00:16:16]

Really?

[00:16:17]

Ever. Yeah.

[00:16:19]

Wow.

[00:16:24]

They were in love until his death. My mother is still in love. Not just loving him, but in love. They were true partners.

[00:16:38]

Isn't that amazing?

[00:16:40]

Very much true partners. That's them.

[00:16:47]

They have their kids there. One at least.

[00:16:50]

They had two of us. My sister is just 10 months apart from me.

[00:16:53]

From you.

[00:16:54]

We were born in Venezuela and then.

[00:16:59]

He decides to go to Puerto Rico, with family.

[00:17:02]

We went to Cuba.

[00:17:04]

You went to Cuba too?

[00:17:05]

Yeah, we went to Cuba.

[00:17:06]

[OVERLAPPING] That's wonderful.

[00:17:07]

Because he was still with Chrysler. They assign him to La Havana. Right before.

[00:17:13]

This was right before the victory.

[00:17:15]

They entered, they arrived to La Havana the day that Castro marched in La Havana victorious.

[00:17:24]

That's incredible.

[00:17:25]

They lasted there about two years. Which is how long.

[00:17:30]

[OVERLAPPING] Until everything was sorted out.

[00:17:31]

[inaudible 00:17:31] took, because things were not gelling. A lot of companies were leaving, so Chrysler was one of the last ones to leave Cuba. He actually met Che.

[00:17:46]

He met Che Guevara

[00:17:47]

Yeah, he negotiated with him on behalf of Chrysler. He was actually also in jail just for a couple of days though.

[00:18:01]

Your father?

[00:18:02]

Yes, in La Havana. Because they didn't believe him that he was carrying a large check which was given by the government to Chrysler.

[00:18:15]

He spoke to Che Guevara.

[00:18:18]

He actually always told us that he respected the man very much. Because regardless of his beliefs, he was a man of his word. You could tell that he respected people of all backgrounds and colors, which was very hard back then.

[00:18:44]

Very much, I believe you.,

[00:18:50]

He always told us you have to give respect to someone who earns it.

[00:18:57]

Yes.

[00:18:58]

That doesn't mean that you're going to be their best friend, that doesn't mean that you're going to be their best friend. It doesn mean…

[00:19:01]

Yes, regardless of his ideology and everything that he did.

[00:19:05]

But if a person deserves respect, you give respect. Anyway. From Cuba, that's when they decided that they didn't want to uproot us, so they went to [OVERLAPPING].

[00:19:22]

To be moving from one place to another, yeah.

[00:19:25]

In the transition, my father stayed in Panama for a while, so I have a brother born in Panama.

[00:19:39]

In Panama.

[00:19:41]

Then we moved for Peru [OVERLAPPING] when he was ready and he had found someone to partner with to start selling car parts on his own.

[00:19:54]

That's wonderful. That's a really good way to pass over history and now everything. I think it's an amazing, those things that you say that you've seen in novels or movies. For your father, look at his background.

[00:20:13]

Yes.

[00:20:14]

He and his brother decided to migrate to Venezuela. Look at your grandparents' background, coincidentally coming to Venezuela, and then he meets your mom there. What is happening here, that two sides completely opposite come to converge to the same place, and they get you, and you say, she's still in love with him after all these years.

[00:20:43]

The world, there was a lot of upheaval happening. Some countries were very welcoming, so there was massive migration happening.

[00:21:01]

It's interesting through the time when you see how much Venezuela grew, of course, one of the biggest countries in the world in terms of oil and everything.

[00:21:09]

I know, it was so rich.

[00:21:10]

Then now with a change in politics and everything else, the upside down and where they are right now, their people migrating, I know that some of them are going to Brazil.

[00:21:19]

I know. Very sad.

[00:21:19]

Going to Colombia. It is an amazing thing.

[00:21:25]

I still have family there.

[00:21:26]

You do.

[00:21:27]

I still have two cousins whose children, both of them, have emigrated, but who continue to live there.

[00:21:42]

They are okay.

[00:21:44]

Well, they survive.

[00:21:46]

The condition there, you can.

[00:21:48]

If you're healthy, it's okay. If you already own a house.

[00:21:57]

It's okay.

[00:21:58]

It's okay. But my uncle died, last time I went there was for his 90th, and it was just so sad to see Venezuela that way.

[00:22:14]

He lived the entire life there.

[00:22:16]

We couldn't find the injectables for his insulin.

[00:22:22]

Oh, wow.

[00:22:23]

He actually did die not getting the insulin on time.

[00:22:27]

Because of a lack of care, because they didn't have the medicine enough.

[00:22:32]

On time.

[00:22:32]

It is sad.

[00:22:32]

A lot of people I know have either died, emigrated, or the ones that remain there, remain there very stoically, but because they had a leg up, having already been at least middle-class.

[00:22:54]

That means you'll still survive there in the condition that they have.

[00:22:58]

Exactly. I know. It is sad.

[00:23:00]

It is.

[00:23:01]

I worked for a very long time for the Venezuelan government. When I graduated from college, my family was already in Costa Rica. I tried to go there as my new country, but it was very, very hard to get a working visa. [LAUGHTER]

[00:23:24]

Let's go back a little bit to your family settled in Puerto Rico because your father was, of course, we have the part of the ocean, how much he loved the ocean, and also because he wants his kids to be.

[00:23:38]

Stable.

[00:23:39]

Stable in a place that they could go to school instead of be changing for. How long your family stayed there?

[00:23:47]

Well, we stayed there for a very long time. I got there when I was around four, and I left for college, so I left when I was 17.

[00:24:00]

Perfect. All your school years.

[00:24:03]

Yeah, all my school years were in Puerto Rico.

[00:24:04]

How was going to school there?

[00:24:07]

It was good. We tried going to public schools, and it was so sad that even though my father did not want to, we ended up in a nun's school.

[00:24:33]

Catholic school.

[00:24:34]

Yes. Mary and I went to an all-girls school from first grade on, and when my brothers were of age, they went to a Jesuit all-boys school.

[00:24:51]

Very similar in Brazil, many places there.

[00:24:53]

It was back then. Now, it's better. There's been some improvement in some sectors of public schools, not all. They actually have Montessori public schools there nowadays.

[00:25:13]

Oh, wow. Montessori. Nice.

[00:25:13]

Thanks to a friend of mine who has worked very, very hard at that. I first went to a Spanish nuns school that was very, very strict. You couldn't see their neck, they had those full black and white habits.

[00:25:38]

They were strict, my Lord.

[00:25:40]

We were quickly transferred in sixth grade because English was very poorly done, we were not learning English well enough. I had decided that I wanted to become a nun.

[00:26:03]

You did.

[00:26:03]

My father was like, the what? [LAUGHTER] You are a very young girl and they are recruiting you, so this is not you deciding something, they are actively recruiting you. They would take me behind to their cells. I did have a nun at fourth grade, a nun that was really actively recruiting me. But I loved her. She had been a trappist, whatever, a trappist.

[00:26:35]

Oh, yes.

[00:26:36]

In her youth.

[00:26:37]

Then became a nun?

[00:26:39]

Yes. But anyway. We transferred to an American nun school, the Sisters of St. Joseph.

[00:26:48]

Was different?

[00:26:49]

Very different.

[00:26:49]

More relaxed?

[00:26:50]

Totally.

[00:26:51]

Wow.

[00:26:53]

I remember being reprimanded once by the principle. As I had been taught, I would look down in penance. It's like you did something wrong. The woman was incensed. It's like, you look at me in the eyes. It's like, you answer me when I [OVERLAPPING].

[00:27:16]

The opposite, right?

[00:27:17]

Exactly. I'm like, I don't know what's going on.

[00:27:20]

One time that you look down because you should show respect, another one said, look at me in the eyes. It is incredible, the difference.

[00:27:29]

But it was good. I have to say for my siblings, they really felt accepted and felt Puerto Rican, like if you asked them.

[00:27:45]

So community-wise it was a welcoming environment?

[00:27:48]

Not for me.

[00:27:49]

Not for you.

[00:27:51]

It just happens [OVERLAPPING].

[00:27:53]

What have you done, Susana?

[00:27:54]

I know. [LAUGHTER] It just happens that I had a group of young women in my class that were not very nice and were very much influenced by one of our social studies teacher who was very much an independentista, a pro-independence in Puerto Rico, and very nationalist.

[00:28:30]

I remember because it hurt being told when I said we that we said it's like they would correct me and say, you mean you because you're not one of us. In class. It doesn't mean it makes sense. I befriended mostly foreign [LAUGHTER] girls with one or two Puerto Ricans but my sister was just one grade ahead and her experience was totally not like that, completely not like that. But I remember telling my father's like, what have you done to us? It's like people are living in the house where they grew up. They have friends, they're from here. He would tell me it's like you're a citizen of the world and you should feel privileged that you do not have the closed mindedness of extreme nationalism. I have seen firsthand and so has your mother's family. What extreme nationalist can do.

[00:29:56]

Yeah.

[00:29:59]

Rise above it. It's okay.

[00:30:06]

It was hard, right?

[00:30:07]

It was difficult because being in high school, you want to belong.

[00:30:15]

Yeah.

[00:30:16]

Very much.

[00:30:17]

Yeah.

[00:30:18]

I did have a very close knit friend. I'm still friends with two of them very closely. A couple little bit much closer relationships than I even forged in college.

[00:30:34]

Wow.

[00:30:35]

It's not like I was a little lonely girl. But it totally colored. Like when people would ask me, where are you from is I can never say Puerto Rico. While my siblings say Puerto Rico. That's it, because that's where they-

[00:31:02]

They felt that they were part of that community in a different way. It's so interesting.

[00:31:07]

It was beautiful being there.

[00:31:10]

Yeah.

[00:31:11]

It's a beautiful island.

[00:31:14]

Yes.

[00:31:15]

People are incredibly nice. There are really a beautiful people and usually very welcoming. I think I actually had a misfortune with.

[00:31:30]

For some reason, the connection that you didn't have.

[00:31:32]

They little click of girls that were quite frankly mean. [LAUGHTER] There's no other word.

[00:31:38]

It's really interesting.

[00:31:40]

But other than that living in the island, I felt very much except it and-

[00:31:47]

Was mainly high school experience that was hard and umplesant.

[00:31:50]

Exactly.

[00:31:51]

But community-wide?

[00:31:52]

Very nice.

[00:31:53]

Completely different story as well.

[00:31:54]

Very nice.

[00:31:55]

That's a good point.

[00:31:56]

Very nice.

[00:31:57]

Because something they sign you something that triggered them for whatever reason it was.

[00:32:03]

I think they would do the same thing to my other friends that were Cuban, for instance.

[00:32:11]

Yeah.

[00:32:12]

I actually to Cubans, they were even not nastier

[00:32:15]

Wow.

[00:32:16]

Because there was a massive immigration of Cubans.

[00:32:21]

To same that happened to Miami, they went to [OVERLAPPING].

[00:32:24]

There was a lot of resentment.

[00:32:28]

They weren't signal me out. They had their own little tripping their head.

[00:32:35]

Like you said, it's nationalism that sometimes blind people for the possibility of understanding other immigration.

[00:32:43]

I don't blame them. I actually blame the teacher. She was an adult.

[00:32:48]

Not having a control over.

[00:32:50]

Yeah. She was an adult. Very controversial teacher. But now and then from Puerto Rico I came to the States for college.

[00:33:02]

For college?

[00:33:03]

Yes.

[00:33:04]

Then what happens? You come to US for college and then your family stay a little while and then moving to Costa Rica?

[00:33:12]

Yes. The first year that I was in college, my family was in Costa Rica, but during my sophomore year, they relocated.

[00:33:22]

They relocated there.

[00:33:23]

Exactly.

[00:33:26]

By the time when you used to go back to visit, they would be already in Costa Rica, which would be a completely different place where you a different community that you don't even belong anymore. You're already. Where did you come to college in the US?

[00:33:44]

I went to Brown University in Rhode Island.

[00:33:46]

Yeah.

[00:33:46]

Yes.

[00:33:48]

Good experience.

[00:33:49]

But frankly, I didn't choose it. We didn't know anything about colleges. My sister who had come to Harvard where Radcliffe it was then because.

[00:34:04]

She came to radically.

[00:34:05]

She actually got a diploma from Radcliffe. That's how old we are. She was the last year that they hadn't Radcliffe women.

[00:34:16]

The famous Radcliffe referred to him as good, my God, that's amazing.

[00:34:22]

While she was here, and that's why actually, I became a US citizen. Because until then, Maria and I were Venezuelan, Jorge was Panamanian and Miguel was Puerto Rican. My father was Peruvian [LAUGHTER]. My mother was US. Every time we traveled, it was all of these pieces that had to be.

[00:34:43]

Did people ask you questions, because it might be complicated for customs. Just see so [LAUGHTER] they know. How do you explain this and that?

[00:34:58]

I don't recall. I'm sure my parents were the ones answering those questions.

[00:35:04]

Among yourselves?

[00:35:06]

Yes.

[00:35:06]

Was there jokes about each one being born in different places or not? How was it? Because it is a very beautiful combination of a family being born in different places.

[00:35:21]

Not at all. I mean, my mother's sister was born in Aruba. The story of migration had been there from the beginning.

[00:35:40]

Your father has the best and most beautiful way to say it. You were citizens over the world.

[00:35:45]

Yes.

[00:35:46]

Not from one or displays.

[00:35:49]

But my sister came to the states to Harvard and she was, as a foreign student, was given a host mother or a host family.

[00:36:01]

That's interesting.

[00:36:02]

Yeah. They used to do that. Which was very nice actually. Because there were so few and foreigners, [LAUGHTER] I think because right now the US couldn't do it.

[00:36:11]

Yeah.

[00:36:12]

But a lady who had read her application has requested her. She would be invited to go to these family and have lunch or whatever and that we're trying to be nice. I met them because I came to visit her for thanksgiving. They hosted us for thanksgiving. My sister basically told my mother's like this being a foreign student it's for the birds. We should all become American. It's easier when we travel. I mean, once we actually like the Visa's of some of us expired and the other ones didn't. It was like this whole thing we're trying [OVERLAPPING].

[00:37:05]

To renew everything.

[00:37:08]

It didn't mean a lot of cajoling from my parents. We had lived in Puerto Rico for so long that we got naturalized. Instead of my mother claiming us, which she could've, but she was always very timid about how to prove her citizenship by birth. Because literally what she had was just a rumbled letter that said this child should be given a passport. We got naturalized. I came to college already, as a US citizen.

[00:37:53]

US citizen.

[00:37:54]

Yeah. We didn't even know, it was my sister who told me it's like you should apply. I went to visit the school. You should apply to that school because I think it's really like you.

[00:38:04]

That's nice.

[00:38:05]

Yeah. She felt pretty lost at Harvard, Harvard College, there's a lot more support now for undergraduates. But Harvard was centered on graduate students. College kids were not very.

[00:38:26]

By what you say. At the time, diversity was not the biggest thing?

[00:38:30]

Not at all. Exactly.

[00:38:32]

She was also a foreign person learning and, was a tough experience in general, or it was more difficult because of the circumstances, or she felt that towards this.

[00:38:43]

She actually felt very homesick.

[00:38:45]

That's what I wonder.

[00:38:47]

Extremely homesick. Her freshman year was very unhappy. When I first got to Brown, I mean, I had been counting the days, go to college, like counting them. When I got there, I remember pretty much after a month or so, I told my parents, I think this is some mistake. I actually want to go back. My father said, "Well, your tuition is settled. Give it a semester and then we'll re-evaluate.".

[00:39:33]

Figure out what to do.

[00:39:34]

Exactly.

[00:39:35]

You did.

[00:39:36]

I did.

[00:39:37]

In six months?

[00:39:39]

Six months. Well, I actually left Brown twice.

[00:39:44]

You did.

[00:39:45]

Yeah.

[00:39:48]

I also had a complicated stay and they were very generous with me. The first time I left, I went to Costa Rica and without having made any plans, I enrolled in the University of Costa Rica one semester because it was boring [LAUGHTER] not to do anything because I couldn't work. They wouldn't give me a visa. My father thought it would be a good experience to experience Latin American University, which just the ethos of the student body is so different. Yeah, I imagine. You took a leave from Brown? I took a leave from Brown and I enrolled there. When I came back, they actually gave me partial credit, which was very nice. They didn't have to. Then on my senior year, I had met a young boy, an American in Costa Rica, an exchange student at the University of Costa Rica.

[00:41:04]

You met in Costa Rica.

[00:41:06]

I met in Costa Rica. He had graduated and had gone home to Arizona. I had been interested in cultural anthropology. I was able to convince Brown that they had given me all the cultural anthropology courses that they had to give. I needed more because I want it to be an anthropologist. They let me transfer, not transfer because my degree was from Brown, but they let me enroll in the University of Arizona in Tucson in their anthropology department, which was a lovely experience. Tucson back then, was really a quaint, old town and it was very interesting.

[00:42:05]

Tucson, Arizona.

[00:42:08]

It gave me a feel for how the United States is really. It was maybe more so then at least four or six countries. Just because they share a language but cultural-wise, climate-wise, values-wise, it was really very interesting.

[00:42:35]

I feel the same when I travel around the year. There are like many different countries inside of this country.

[00:42:41]

Exactly.

[00:42:42]

I went to Arizona, I went to Tucson, and I went to Flagstaff, and all the way up until Colorado.

[00:42:47]

Beautiful.

[00:42:48]

But then now, recently last year, I went to New Mexico. Everything that I thought that Arizona was one thing, New Mexico is completely different.

[00:43:00]

It's so near.

[00:43:01]

In every corner a different kind of vegetation and climate, up in the mountains. I was like, what's happening here? First Nations tribes there, and the history of that place too, the Bandeliers yes. I was looking at those a place, I went to Chaco Canyon.

[00:43:24]

Oh, beautiful.

[00:43:25]

Have you been there?

[00:43:25]

No, unfortunately.

[00:43:27]

Oh, if you ever have the chance.

[00:43:28]

I know, I really want to.

[00:43:29]

It is something that I was fascinating, looking at that place. I sat down, I remember in Chaco Canyon sitting down because when there's not too many people walking around, it's just the wind. Then you are looking at the vast place, remote, there is not a sound of civilization, like noise in modern world. You just smell the thing and you hear the wind and everything. How I wish I could be transported at that time to see how it was. All these aside, and I tried to learn a little bit more, and I went to see other places, Bandelier, for example, that also fascinated and everything else. Like I said, there's so much to learn from this cultures and everything.

[00:44:17]

Actually, studying at the Anthropology Department, I actually visited a lot of sites, and they even have prehistoric sites, and very interesting. A lot of the dwellings were underneath the soil for keeping cool.

[00:44:46]

This one's I didn't. I saw one little part in Arizona and I was also impressed how they create this. They have the ladder just to go down because that would be the best way. New Mexico, by Santa Fe, there is a whole outdoors museum explaining some of these parts and how they kept everything underground.

[00:45:13]

It is unbelievable. I learned also about modern times. Even though coming from Peru to which I still have a very strong affiliation too, at one point I tried to become Peruvian. But back then you had to renounce to the US citizens, so my father wouldn't claim me because he thought it was a mistake. Yes, I went to the Andes, as my father said, [OVERLAPPING] to play anthropologist. [LAUGHTER] It was fascinating and I really did want to become Peruvian.

[00:46:05]

It's a place that I want to go so bad.

[00:46:08]

It is amazing because talk about an amazing geography. It's so hard to go from one place to the other that they really are different nations, and the food is amazing. Let me tell you, one of the best places to eat is Lima [OVERLAPPING]. Four of the top 100 restaurants in the world happen to be in Lima.

[00:46:40]

Wow, I didn't know that. Have you been to the Peruvian restaurant in Union Square?

[00:46:47]

Celeste.

[00:46:47]

Have you been? [OVERLAPPING]

[00:46:48]

Yes. I have been to Celeste.

[00:46:50]

I really want to go there. I haven't been there.

[00:46:51]

They have another restaurant here in Cambridge, La Royal. It's theirs too.

[00:47:01]

It's theirs too?

[00:47:02]

Yes.

[00:47:03]

I want to go. I want to try it.

[00:47:05]

They have, which I really want to try, a property in Vermont where a few days a year they do a Pachamanca.

[00:47:18]

What is a Pachamanca?

[00:47:20]

It's a Peruvian feast. You roast underneath. It's like a clam bake almost but with meats and stuff.

[00:47:30]

It's underground?

[00:47:30]

It's underground. You cook underground.

[00:47:33]

I think I saw something.

[00:47:36]

If you reserve, and you have to do it because there are only a few dates that they do this. If you reserve in advance, you're there for the day.

[00:47:47]

Wow. Just a fun thing or? [OVERLAPPING] Oh, that might be lovely.

[00:47:54]

Anyway, it's a very interesting a couple.

[00:47:59]

Now that we're talking about this, I want you to go there and try. I'm not familiar with the Peruvian food in general.

[00:48:06]

Celeste is more stylized. La Royal, it's a little simpler.

[00:48:17]

Usually is the one that I liked the most because it feels like a closer.

[00:48:22]

Tambo 22 in Chelsea.

[00:48:27]

Really?

[00:48:28]

It's also very good.

[00:48:29]

Also, Peruvian?

[00:48:30]

Peruvian, yes.

[00:48:31]

Tambo 22?

[00:48:32]

Yes. Because you have to get to Chelsea.

[00:48:36]

But they have some good Mexican places there too that I like a lot.

[00:48:40]

It's a very good Peruvian restaurant.

[00:48:42]

I have to remember. I really want to try now. Let's go back. You went to Peru to study anthropology as well. Oh no, you were in Tucson first.

[00:48:54]

I was in Tucson and my boyfriend then wanted very much to be Mexican but he wasn't. But he wanted to live in Mexico and wanted. He was working for the refugee resettlement program in Tucson. You remember the Marielitos, the Cuban exodus that Cuba actually threw out a lot of people?

[00:49:33]

The ones that didn't want to stay.

[00:49:35]

Well, actually, even the ones that they wanted to stay. I met them and I worked with them. Some of them were taken away from prison. Some of them were taken away from mental hospitals. They were just told, march and get on the boat. He was very idealistic. Anyway, the goal was for us to relocate to Mexico. But he had lived there and had friends. I knew no one there and I already knew what it was like because of in Costa Rica, not being able to work.

[00:50:23]

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