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You're 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. And today, we are talking to Gale Hayde from Custodial Services, 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 Gale, and please tell me your story. How are you doing?

[00:00:46]

I'm fine. Where do you want me to start?

[00:00:49]

Let's go back. Well, I think the first thing that I should ask is, you are living here, but your family also is from here or is from a different place. What you can tell us about your background?

[00:01:02]

My family is from Trinidad and Tobago.

[00:01:04]

Trinidad and Tobago.

[00:01:05]

Trinidad and Tobago is one of the smallest Caribbean island. We are the furthest Caribbean island away from the US. You find Jamaica, a lot of people go to Jamaica because it's closer. We are closer to Venezuela. We share a sea border because we both drill oil. We both have oil in the country. We are very close to Venezuela. So we give a lot of treaty, a lot of help to Venezuela now with all what they are going through, we give them citizenship, residency that they can live and work and go to school. Right now, because of that situation.

[00:01:41]

Yes.

[00:01:41]

Right now in Trinidad.

[00:01:42]

Was it common to go to Venezuela?

[00:01:45]

Yes, it's common because a lot of our teachers go over there and teach and do training, and we always had good relationships with Venezuela. Yes.

[00:01:54]

How was growing up in Trinidad and Tobago.

[00:02:00]

Trinidad and Tobago, I think growing up was really enjoyable. We were poor, didn't know we were poor. We had a lot of good food, good culture, good history. For us, I enjoy my childhood. It was tough in some ways, but it was really good. We had more community. We had more love. The neighbors look out for each other. Vacation by aunties and uncles and tanties, whether we go from the country to the city within those areas, but we really had a really fun time. Up to now, we sit down and we can reminisce on some of the stories that we grew up on. The way we played, how we climbed mango trees, how we had good fruits. When we look at the young people today, I realize they have missed out so much because all they do is keep their head in a phone.

[00:02:56]

Yeah, that what I feel too.

[00:02:58]

When we climb trees, we made scooters, we flied kite, we were more outdoor kids.

[00:03:04]

Running around.

[00:03:05]

Yes, so we had more social skills. We learned how to interact, how to fight, how to solve problems, how to communicate. I think we were in a much better place than the generations of today.

[00:03:17]

Now it feels like everybody is so focused on social media and the phone in their faces all the time and feels like the social skills, we are watching someone to tell us things instead of we trying to, like you said.

[00:03:32]

Yeah, because most young people they have struggled getting jobs. They have the degrees, but they don't have communication skills.

[00:03:39]

Yes.

[00:03:40]

Because they depend on everything is a text. They don't even write a whole text. You is U, the letter U. We say Y-O-U, but they just put U and we're supposed to understand what they mean when they send a text to us. It's good, but it's also limiting their skills.

[00:03:59]

Limiting could be the word. How was going to school? Early days, going to school, friends, how was it?

[00:04:06]

School was great. We had good schools. We lived for school because we had a lot of activities in school. We played a lot of sports. We interact. We got free education, so we had a lot of good programs that were given to our children. Not everybody made use of it, like me, I was always clanging in the classroom, but we have prime ministers, we have Miss Worlds. We have a lot of people working here. The President of Howard University is from Trinidad and Tobago, and we have a lot of good lecturers that came from Trinidad and Tobago. We have two people that teach anthropology and different things at Princeton University. Trinidad has developed really good high education.

[00:04:57]

That's great.

[00:04:58]

And good sports athletes also, even though we don't promote sports, but they come away and they excel.

[00:05:04]

That's wonderful.

[00:05:05]

We have one gold medal, silver medal, bronze medal in the world games in the Olympics. For a small country of 37 square miles and 1.5 million people, stretching it when I say 1.5, and we have done and accomplished a lot.

[00:05:23]

Yes, it's wonderful. Food. Let's talk about you mentioned fruits that you have tropical fruits that we buy here in supermarkets, but there you have going to the country or in your backyard, that kind of thing.

[00:05:40]

For me, I really love Pommerac. Don't ask me how to spell it. It's red on the outside with a seed on the inside. It's white on the inside. And so we had it in our yard. We had Kaimit. Besides mangoes, we had Kaimits. We had Gru Gru Bef. We had so many other foods.

[00:06:05]

Amazing. Some of these I never heard of.

[00:06:07]

You know what is so amazing is that sometimes you have it, but we just have a different name. The Spanish countries, sometimes might have a different name. Like, we have Five Fingers, they call it five star here. It's a sour fruit with five pegs.

[00:06:23]

A yellow?

[00:06:23]

It turns yellow. It's out of green.

[00:06:26]

We have them too with a different names.

[00:06:28]

Yes.

[00:06:28]

I can't remember right now.

[00:06:29]

We call them five fingers. We call it have five sprangs. We have some of the same, but we just have different names.

[00:06:39]

Oh, I want to check those names later.

[00:06:41]

Because we say sul fish, you say bacalao. We have Park Choy. They say bok choy. We say baingan, the Indian call it baingan, you all say melanzana, or eggplant. No, we say melanzana, you say eggplant.

[00:07:00]

We say, oh, my God. What's the name for that in Portuguese? I can't remember now. We'll come back to me. It's the purple one,.

[00:07:08]

Yes.

[00:07:09]

Wow. That interesting because it's just different.

[00:07:12]

It's just different name. Because I don't speak Spanish, I'm learning some of these names now within having those same food, but we just call them.

[00:07:22]

The eggplant in Portuguese is beringela.

[00:07:25]

We say melanzana.

[00:07:27]

Melanzana. That sounds a little closer.

[00:07:30]

Yes.

[00:07:30]

Then the eggplant.

[00:07:31]

Yes.

[00:07:32]

Because I didn't understand why eggplant.

[00:07:35]

In general, cooking. What's the main celebrations for Trinidad, that your family or the country would celebrate and like the family would get together to eat together?

[00:07:47]

Our big celebrations in Trinidad fest is Carnival. It's one of the full seasons. The full festival for the year, which is in February or March.

[00:07:56]

Before length.

[00:07:57]

Before length, yes. That's a big thing for Trinidad. It's an economic boost for the economy. We have people from all over the world that come and take part within our festival. We have the steel pan that we promote all over the world. It's one of the best the only instrument that was created in the 21st century. A lot of people trying to claim it, but it was developed in Trinidad and into, we own it.

[00:08:22]

Wow.

[00:08:23]

Now it plays classical music. Some people say it's noisy. But you could play any music on it. We play jazz, everything.

[00:08:31]

Wow.

[00:08:31]

It's international now. The Chinese has taken it over. We have a lot of China and Chinese people that come and play in our festivals in the Panorama festival and different things like that. They love the instruments.

[00:08:45]

Wow. Australia is big too.

[00:08:46]

Do you have a lot of percussion, as well? Because if you have the percussion-

[00:08:51]

Well, the percussion, of course, because with the steel pan, you have the drum set, you have the iron. We have the engine room. We call it the engine room, which is the drums and the iron and the percussions and all of these different thing. When it comes to our festival, we consider that the engine room that drive the other instruments as we play.

[00:09:09]

Is the Trinidadian good about dancing? Do you know how to move? Because in Brazil, you say, everybody in Brazil well.

[00:09:17]

We all have rhythm.

[00:09:18]

Everybody is a stretch.

[00:09:20]

We have rhythm.

[00:09:22]

Exactly.

[00:09:22]

We all have rhythm. It mightn't be as good as everybody, but all have rhythm.

[00:09:28]

But you hear the beat, you know how to move instead of falling apart?

[00:09:32]

Yes, we are very cultier.

[00:09:36]

The Carnival is also spread in other, as far as you know?

[00:09:39]

Yes, all over the world now has their own Carnival, because we have one in Boston that's called Boston Carnival which is on August month, and then ending of August. Then we have Labor Day in Brooklyn, which is part of August.

[00:09:51]

Why August?

[00:09:52]

I don't know. Because everybody has to take a season or a time, but it starts off with Trinidad, the first in February and March, the first one.

[00:10:03]

Same in Brazil.

[00:10:04]

Then they will go have Mardi Gras here, which is something like the same thing like Trinidad carnival Mardi Gras. But because we are Caribbean people all over the world, everybody want to celebrate the festival.

[00:10:16]

Together.

[00:10:17]

What we have to give a time when the government gave us time to do it or the state, wherever that we are living in, we'll say, we have a space here, you will get fit in here. That's why they do it in August in Boston, September in New York, Labor Day. We call it Labor Day celebration, and then we have the last one is in October in Miami. They say Miami Carnival.

[00:10:43]

Each different month?

[00:10:44]

Yes. We have one in DC. You have one in Houston. You have it in different.

[00:10:52]

In different dates as well?

[00:10:53]

Yes. We all have West Indian people living in those areas so we want to promote our culture. Whatever day they give us to have that freedom dance up in the street, our steel pan, we take it.

[00:11:05]

I wonder if you and Van go to all of them.

[00:11:09]

I know she goes to Trinidad. I think she goes to Miami too, yes.

[00:11:14]

Trinidad remember when I was working in Facilities Office, and she came in to work with us for a few months, I remember well, when it was time for her vacation, Trinidad was the place to go. That's it. Spent a good time there.

[00:11:31]

They love it. They don't care how much it chart, how much it costs, the price of the costumes or anything like that. You need to make a trip to all the Caribbean islands. There are so many beautiful islands. Saint Kitts, Antigua, those places, St. Martin, those are places which are still nice. Not crazy like Trinidad, because we are the crazy one.

[00:11:58]

Everywhere else, but Trinidad.

[00:11:59]

You can go to Trinidad, but make sure that somebody that you know from there is there with you.

[00:12:03]

That's what I tell about Brazil.

[00:12:05]

Exactly. I wouldn't say don't go, but be safe.

[00:12:08]

Yes.

[00:12:09]

But, I have to warn you.

[00:12:11]

That's what I tell about Brazil, depends on where you go, what time you go everything is beautiful.

[00:12:15]

It is good to go to Trinidad. Do you know why? The food. We didn't even talk about the Indian side of the food.

[00:12:20]

I imagine.

[00:12:20]

Because we have raw tea. We have all these good curries and different things like that. The doubles, coconut water. You don't even need to cook when you get down there, getting all the nice fresh fruits at the marketplace. We take everything and we sell. If we can sell we sell and all we might sell that.

[00:12:37]

Wow.

[00:12:38]

Anything in food, you can get it. When you go to Maracas Bay, you get a bacon shark and all of these cool stuff with all different delicacies chop up cucumber time run, any sauce you can think about. It's awesome.

[00:12:52]

I wonder how much the Indian descendants in Trinidad changed the way of cooking because of what they found in the island.

[00:13:01]

Yes, they have. Because when you go to India, the food is different. Indian food that we get in Trinidad. I would be they use the spices that they had there, and they change it. They have the same food but it's different. Even I eat the Indian food sometimes because they have these Indian restaurants. There's one in GAP and different things like that. I still prefer the one from Trinidad.

[00:13:27]

Is the farmer's market there, the foods still, I always say, certain things the farmer's market in Brazil was better?

[00:13:36]

Yes.

[00:13:36]

Then it will go to rail?

[00:13:37]

Yes, of course. But the farmer's market, we don't have a farmer's market, but we have the market place where you go and get all your fresh produce. But they don't really sell cooked food in the marketplace. You will get all your fresh meat, your pork, your chicken. You will get some Indian delicacy, like the kuchela, the achar, those things, bottle and the sweets and stuff and things like that.

[00:14:01]

Don't you have the street fair, people come to buy things, that's what I'm trying to refer?

[00:14:06]

No. I don't know if we had any in a long time.

[00:14:09]

Interesting.

[00:14:10]

Street fair. You are not watching the bandits. The bandits will come and rub them.

[00:14:19]

Better not have a street fair.

[00:14:21]

Because if you have open money, and you're collecting money and stuff and things like that, they can hold them up. If they're invading people, so I don't think we had street fair. We also have buzzers and stuff in the street and different things like that. I see we have it in New York in Brooklyn, we have it, the West India and we do it in Brooklyn. But in my country-

[00:14:45]

Because of the security. They felt okay to be in New York but not there. Interesting. No, we still have in many places in Brazil, my mom's town always have in different neighborhoods where they have them, and certain things that, well, we can buy in small stores or bars, a thing. But only streets on the farmer's market area, my God, they're so much good.

[00:15:13]

We have Borough Day coming up, which is a special day in Point Fortin. Point Fortin is one of the boroughs of Trinidad and Tobago, so we have Arima, we have celebrated I think 45 years of being a borough. They have the governor. When you come to that, that is a good time to go to Trinidad. It's in the first week in May, it's called Borough Day. If you have my number, I can send you some of the activities that they're going to have when they go there. A lot of West Indians, they might go for Carnival, but the Trinidad, especially people from Point will go to Borough Day. There you will find a street fair. You will find a market place with all the food, all the boots. Because there's extra security because the governor is there, the senator is there. They want to come to these shows and different things, so they have extra security. You got to pay for the police service to protect the place, but it's one of the best. I've never been there yet, but I hear it's one of the best celebrations. A lot of them even put it more in front of the Carnival.

[00:16:19]

Wow.

[00:16:20]

That's lovely.

[00:16:21]

It's more community and family. They will have the Juve. They might have a lot of pretty costumes on that day.

[00:16:27]

That will be beautiful to see.

[00:16:28]

But they will have the morning celebration, the steel pan going doing an the streets and different things like that. Borough Day is a big thing in Trinidad. After Carnival now is Borough Day.

[00:16:40]

Borough Day.

[00:16:41]

Then after Borough Day then we have Labor Day, you have all these other things come down. Every religion in my country has a day off. Nobody works on Good Friday in Trinidad. For the Easter weekend, just like in Brazil is shut unlike here.

[00:16:57]

It is a big deal there

[00:17:00]

The Shelter Baptist, which is the baptist religion, they have a day off. The Hindu have a day off. The Muslim have a day off. When they have Ind each of the culture. That's why we have so many holidays.

[00:17:14]

That's beautiful.

[00:17:14]

In Trinidad.

[00:17:15]

Because they respect each other.

[00:17:16]

You have to give everybody.

[00:17:19]

Instead of being just like Easter or nothing else.

[00:17:24]

Every religion have their holiday. We have the Christian lent and everything that goes after that. But the Shelter Baptist, which was came from the ancestors. They have the day off too and they have the big celebration, the Indians, the Hindus, they have Diwali which they do in November when they light all the deers and Muslims have Ind and Ramadan and which they make the sawin and the different things and they feed the homeless and different things like that.

[00:17:51]

Beautiful.

[00:17:52]

That's why we're such a hard place to cover. Because living in America is very stressful. We work more than we pray. In Trinidad, they pray more than they work. Trinidad has one of the most holidays in the world. We have over 20 something.

[00:18:09]

For mental health is a phenomenal place it is because you enjoy life as well.

[00:18:14]

Yes. It's not as stressful. It might be poor, but people they enjoy it, they live it. That's your weather.

[00:18:21]

That's what we would say in Brazil as well, Gale thinking back in our life history. We didn't have much money, but I think we were in a better place mentally. We would enjoy. We always had 20, 30, 40 people in my mom's house almost every weekend. For no reason, not special celebrations. Just to get together the family was a common thing to come into my mom and dad's house, all the brothers and sisters, cousins and aunts.

[00:18:57]

They always have a lot of food. They never cook a little bit of food. Because you never know who's going to drop by. Unlike the US, you have to call and let them know you're coming. They have to give you consent. If you can come to their home, people will just drop in and so your parents always used to have some mobby or some cool aid, something that can stretch long and some leftover food that somebody can always get something to eat. As poor as we were, we never heard up when it came to food.

[00:19:29]

Yeah. Mom had that same mentality. Mom used to say, I remember asking her long, long time ago, and I was much younger, why should have so much leftover. Her answer was exactly that. You never know who's going to stop by or, be traveling and sleeping over just because they are going from one place to another, and needs something to eat. I don't have to, the whole work to cook it again.

[00:19:57]

Cook it again. Exactly.

[00:19:57]

If they are in a hurry as well.

[00:19:59]

Yeah, because when we will eat it for two, three years after.

[00:20:03]

Another thing that she used to do that I thought that was always cute, it doesn't matter which child was because sometimes we always have mum has preferred one, which I always think that moms have, but she would always hide a piece of meat or something that she cooked. For the one that was in school or the one that was not there to have the dinner. She always hid one piece.

[00:20:26]

Because that is parents, they wanted to make sure that everybody got a piece of the good meat. Because remember back in those days, meat was like a cuisine. Because many days you're eating the salt meat and the salt beef and these cheap cuts of meat. But on Sunday, a special day is when you're going to get the chicken and the pork and beef and they will sit down the whole part of that. You were happy. Those were happy days.

[00:20:54]

In the way to cook too Gale, mum, for example, the hard times when you, we had quite a few years there of a hard time when the economy was not that great. That was didn't have much work. Everyone had to help somehow. The way to cook things would be few pieces of meat, and then you had a big stew, whether it was cabbage or potato or whatever.

[00:21:21]

Or beans. Beans used to go a long way. Even, like in my country, a lot of people don't want to eat normal lentils, because lentils was one of the cheapest beans and peas that used to go a long way. Corn beef in the can. It was cheap. Normal is Mr. Corn beef and so, your mommy will cut up with plenty onions and tomatoes on a Saturday, or they just took the fish head and they make fish bone. It's only the adults will get the meat.

[00:21:50]

So many ways to try to make ends meet.

[00:21:52]

Exactly and they didn't have no degree. But they knew how to manage the house. How to get food and we didn't have no microwave. We didn't have none of this fancy stuff. Everybody and the food use to last for days.

[00:22:08]

Another thing that I remember that I always thought that was so clever from mom and dad. We had our house and what do you call the lot. Where you put your house inside. We used to be a little longer. Not too long, but much bigger than you see around here. We used to have everything was fenced up. Simple fence, but that was why are those, like little piece of wood is taken up.

[00:22:35]

Oh, we didn't know that was expensive fence for us. Everybody had this chain wire that went so along the yard.

[00:22:44]

My mom used it, depends on the season, she would have beans or green beans or whatever it is.

[00:22:52]

That's why we used the wire fence also because we could grow the beans. We all had some sort of beans. I remember we had banana tree in the yard. We had lemon tree in the yard. The neighbor had the pommerak that was hanging over that we like. Then we had a china tree in the back. Some people skin the Jamaicans, though it's a green food with orange inside and you eat off the meat of the seed. I don't know what you all call it. That tree, we used to go and pick it was in the playground. Or we call it savannahs because it didn't have no swing on those things. We call it a savannah. It had coconut trees, and we clear off a piece. You play soccer and they will play some little football and things like that. That's where I lost one of my brothers. He fell off the tree when he was nine years old.

[00:23:40]

Oh, my God, sorry.

[00:23:42]

Brothers were fighting for a bunch of Chinatown on the tree and my nine year old brother fell from there and he never regained consciousness and he died, like 21 days after in the hospital.

[00:23:52]

That's very sad.

[00:23:54]

But, I love him and I always feel that he's looking out for us. I glad that in a way that he died at nine years old because the way how the world is today, when they die at that age, you know where they're going, they're going in a better place. It hurt us at that time. I was about 11 when he died.

[00:24:17]

It's a big shock. How many siblings?

[00:24:21]

In all I had my mother had eight children.

[00:24:24]

Eight children.

[00:24:24]

Yeah. But three of them were born in St. Vincent. Only one of them I knew of because two of them died while they were pretty young. I never met, brother and sister.

[00:24:35]

I had a sister that died pretty young in Brazil. I was not born yet at that time.

[00:24:40]

I wasn't born.

[00:24:41]

She was mom said that was chicken pox. They used to live in the farm and was kind of whatever.

[00:24:48]

I think one of my sister died at crib death. Then my brother, Elmo, he got bunged on by a car in St. Vincent. I think he was about seven years or so, so we never met them.

[00:25:02]

It was always always a big full house and a lot of fight like siblings. Fight of course.

[00:25:09]

One bedroom with two with a double deck kind of bed and who have to seven cross way. We didn't have no special room. One bedroom. Mommy was in one. Then the rest was for the children. Which was one bedroom with a big bed and a double decker.

[00:25:26]

I miss the conversations because I remember being home with my brothers and sisters, sometimes all the cousins coming to visit for holidays. Mostly Easter or Christmas, my God, the noise and the jokes and laughter until late at night until everybody fell asleep. You had a lot of cousins around there?

[00:25:46]

Yes, most of my relatives were living in a countryside, so which was good. We live in San Juan. I grew up in a Spanish area because remember we were ruled by Spain one time. Then we got the British. We have, streets like St. Joseph, San Juan, lscor. All these are Spanish names and Spanish influence from we had a minister the governor of Chacon. We have a street called Chacon Street. These are from our Spanish heritage. Then after we were ruled by England. Then there's when we have the Huraah Butler Highway and those different things we change government and whoever they was before we got independent and Republic.

[00:26:34]

Wow.

[00:26:35]

We are very influenced in a lot of different culture. My country it's one of the hardest country to govern. The reason is because we have two dominant races. Like when you go to Jamaica, it's only African race. In my country, we have Indians and we have Africans.

[00:26:57]

You have the double.

[00:26:58]

We have a divide. Yeah. When one party in power is either the Indian party or when the other parties in power is either the African party. It's a different cultures so many different groups.

[00:27:13]

To get an agreement.

[00:27:14]

Then we have 1%, which is called the Syrians, because they came after the Indians, because we came as slave, the Indians came as dentural labors to work on the sugar plantation in Trinidad. Then we have the Syrians who came with the stores and the Chinese who came with the restaurant. We have so we call them the 1%. Because 49% is African and 49% is Indians, which raised between Muslim and Hindu. Then we have the 1%, which is a Syrian and the Asian and who else make up the rest of the country.

[00:27:51]

Wow. That might be very well, I would say with the variation and the size of Brazil would be very difficult as well with the amount, but you describe really well in an island of you said.

[00:28:06]

1.5 million. 1.5 yeah.

[00:28:09]

Pushing it.

[00:28:09]

What's the story between Trinidad, Tobago and Barbados?

[00:28:15]

Is it Barbados a better place to live or is it Trinidad?

[00:28:18]

It might be a safer place to live right now, but we are one of the most productive Caribbean island. Even, like, when we travel and stuff, we don't get any breaks. We don't have anything offered to us because we are one of the most wealthiest third world country. One of the most developed third world country. Barbados has now start to climb because people like Rihanna and they who pumping money into the economy now and developing it. The new Prime Minister that they have, and it's a woman, and she's furious.

[00:28:52]

Yeah.

[00:28:53]

She's doing things that they took long to do. All the Caribbean island at one time, depended on Trinidad and Tobago.

[00:29:02]

Wow.

[00:29:02]

We were the richest Caribbean island, so Guiana took all our money and never pay us back.

[00:29:09]

Guiana?

[00:29:09]

Yes. Which is French.

[00:29:11]

Very close in Venezuela.

[00:29:13]

In Barbados, we build the airport for us and they didn't pay us back either. That's why they feel smarter than that's because they take our wealth, and then after they make style to pay us back or they don't have the money or they can't pay us back. So that's why we were considered the Father of the Caribbean. We pumped into all these Caribbean island because we produced oil. We had oil.

[00:29:43]

That's the source of the major difference?

[00:29:44]

Because of that we had, yes, we had oil, we had bauxite, we had sugar. We were one of the most fortunate Caribbean island to have a different industry.

[00:29:53]

You have resources.

[00:29:56]

To push it.

[00:29:56]

Wonderful.

[00:29:59]

When did you come to US?

[00:30:03]

I think I came to the US, I think it is 1999.

[00:30:07]

1999. Yeah. You live most of your life in Trinidad and Tobago?

[00:30:15]

Well, because I'm 62, so I think I lived most of my life, probably in America. Because I left Trinidad and I went to Saint Martin and I spent six years.

[00:30:26]

Oh, you spent six years in Saint Martin.

[00:30:29]

Saint Martin. I left Trinidad when I was in about 20, 25 or something like that. I spent most of my time out of the country.

[00:30:38]

How was the experience in Saint Martin? It was good?

[00:30:40]

Oh, I loved it. It's one of the best Caribbean islands. Yeah. It's run by, half is French and half is Dutch. It's smaller than Trinidad and Tobago.

[00:30:51]

Wow. I just see advertisement for Saint Martin in the Wheel of Fortune when they are giving out awards of trips for somewhere. I have seen advertisements, my God, sounds so lovely to go there.

[00:31:07]

Right now, when you go down on a plane to Saint Martin, check the combination of the people. It might be 10% black and the other is Caucasian because they are buying out all the properties and use them as vacation island.

[00:31:26]

Saint Martin became a paradise?

[00:31:29]

Yes, it is a paradise, the water, the beaches. They don't have all these laws and strict like Trinidad or those other Caribbean island. If you want and you have money, you can go down and invest. You get all your papers very easy and different things like that. Once you're bringing money into the country, they're glad to have you. A lot of people go down there and they build houses and they do open guest house or bed and breakfast, and different mostly everybody who own the stuff there in the stores from Pakistan or India or different places. Most of the people who born in Saint Martin are living now in Holland and France, so different places because those are the mother countries

[00:32:17]

You said that you enjoyed being there for six years. What's the difference? What do you remember that was so nice.

[00:32:25]

They call it a friendly island? Which is their logo, and it's true. It was easy to get help. It was easy to get support. It's not like America. It's not a lot of red tape. It made you feel free. Like in my country, I love my country, but you always feel tense because of the crime rate. Yes, Saint Martin gives you a more relaxed island.

[00:32:50]

You didn't have to worry about security?

[00:32:52]

No. You didn't have to worry about security. It's so much safer than living in Trinidad. I have more friends I think now in Saint Martin than in Trinidad. I'm going to Saint Martin on the fifth of April.

[00:33:06]

Oh, wonderful. You were mentioning something that I tried to explain to my family when I visit them, the difference, for example, in Brazil, you are in a constant worry about how to live, where to go, looking around, what's going to happen.

[00:33:20]

Trinidad is like that.

[00:33:22]

Even being in your home. For example, my mom's house rarely now is a little bit better, but I remember well in the past, if you had parties in someone else's birthday parties, whatever party was in some relative's house, not everybody could go. One had to stay home. Because if everybody left, when you got back.

[00:33:46]

Your house would be empty.

[00:33:48]

Would be taking everything, it would be stolen.

[00:33:50]

No, it's so sad because the crime rate is so high in your country, my country. I went to a funeral in Trinidad recently, and then I went over to Saint Martin to another funeral. I swear I was on a vacation and I went for a funeral. The atmosphere, even though it was sad moments, but there was so much more joy, be being there, walking the beaches, going down front street, back street,. I'm going again.

[00:34:23]

Isn't that interesting how we take for granted this kind of values. Or sometimes you get used to them. I don't know if you get used to them as the right word, but you deal with them. You live in Trinidad me living in Brazil. We had hard times and lived in the condition that you were you were living in at that time and making the best out of it. But when you go to a place where you sense a different freedom or security, that you don't have to be always worried about everything.

[00:34:57]

Yeah, and worry is important because when you get too much worries, you get sick. For my country, they will say, well, you're not going to come? No, I'm sorry. I don't want to go on line up long in the bank. Then while you're line up long in the bank, somebody watching you, by the time you come on the bank, they rob you, they knock you out, they kill you. Yes.

[00:35:18]

They wait for you by your house, they invade your privacy, they invade your space. When you don't feel safe in a place, America has plenty of crime, but because a place is so large. Yeah. You can find a good spot to hide.

[00:35:32]

Yes.

[00:35:32]

You know what I'm saying? And feel safe.

[00:35:36]

You were there for six years in Saint Martin, and then you decided to come to US?

[00:35:41]

Yes.

[00:35:42]

Where did you start first?

[00:35:44]

I started in Brooklyn.

[00:35:45]

In Brooklyn?

[00:35:45]

Because most of my relatives are in Brooklyn.

[00:35:47]

Oh, so you have connection there?

[00:35:49]

Yes.

[00:35:50]

Was that a cultural shock in a way, or you just said, "This is my mind set, I arrived in the US, and I'm going to do this and this and that."

[00:36:00]

It was a culture shock. Why I said that too, I remember even coming on vacation, I saw a taxi driver, two taxi drivers they hit one another car, and then one come out with a craw bar, one come out with a cut glass, and they meet on flat bush. We run back in the house because we wasn't accustomed with these things. But when you go to Brooklyn, it ease you into the culture, even though it's a big difference. Because there's a lot of West Indians living in Brooklyn.

[00:36:30]

All right.

[00:36:30]

Yeah, there's a lot, whether it's from Jamaica or Trinidad, so you can go down the coast.

[00:36:35]

Since you have the community.

[00:36:36]

Yes you can go down in the corner. I remember going by a friend every Sunday and get good food, she will cook all the traditional food that we have from our country. There's still a lot of people who keep such a tradition.

[00:36:49]

You see a sense of home, right?

[00:36:50]

Yes. You feel at home because once you get at home, cooked food and a clean house, you feel that you're still back in your country.

[00:36:58]

Yes. Then when Boston happened.

[00:37:03]

I came to Boston probably like six years after I came to New York. I think I lived majority in Boston.

[00:37:12]

Yeah, so 99, you got to Brooklyn and then six years, that is 2005, you came to Boston?

[00:37:19]

No. I came to Boston in 2001.

[00:37:26]

2001?

[00:37:27]

Yeah, I think I only spent like two or three years.

[00:37:29]

Two, three years in Brooklyn?

[00:37:31]

Yes.

[00:37:31]

Great.

[00:37:31]

Because I got a job opportunity here. Those days I didn't have documents to work and so I was considered illegal in the country, so wherever you can get something to do and safe I did and so that's how I end up in Boston and so since then I moved back to New York after I loose a job here and I didn't have a job and I went back to New York because I have my family there, so I had a place to stay until I catch myself. But then after living in Boston, New York felt too busy, too dirty.

[00:38:10]

That's my feeling too.

[00:38:12]

To everything it was too crazy, and so I decided that as soon as I got a job offer I came back to Boston because Boston too I think it was easier to get help. New York is so big. Brooklyn is so big. Everything takes longer. To do your paperwork in New York it takes longer than if you do it in Boston. Do you know that?

[00:38:35]

To move around as well.

[00:38:37]

Yeah, and even to get your documents file and everything it's so much more concentrated in a certain area in Massachusetts unlike in New York is so big, so I think I felt more comfortable, more safe.

[00:38:51]

Even some people think that New York is amaze. Well, I can see that my family in Brazil want to talk about coming to visit or something. They want to come to New York. With New York, there is a different view in terms of whoever comes as a tourist to see the city and someone who works here and lives there because there is so much going on, so much to see and usually you are so busy in everything that I have to do because it's not a tourist place anymore. It's just the place where you live and you have to work and have to go back and forth. That's what the main thing that it is. You come to Boston, you are working here, when Harvard happened?

[00:39:36]

I started to work in Harvard in 2016.

[00:39:38]

2016.

[00:39:40]

I got my green card in 2015.

[00:39:42]

Nice.

[00:39:43]

I started to work in Harvard in 2016 and the reason why I think I was able to get a job at Harvard, my daughter was an executive chef here.

[00:39:53]

Your daughter worked at Harvard already?

[00:39:55]

My eldest daughter was working here at that.

[00:39:58]

For HUDS, for the dining service?

[00:39:59]

Yes, she did residential dining.

[00:40:03]

Wow. She's still working at Harvard?

[00:40:06]

No.

[00:40:06]

No, she left.

[00:40:06]

She's general manager at MIT.

[00:40:09]

What's her name?

[00:40:10]

Her name is Akisha.

[00:40:11]

Akisha.

[00:40:12]

Akisha Hedia.

[00:40:13]

She worked here for a while?

[00:40:14]

For seven years.

[00:40:15]

Seven years, and then went to MIT?

[00:40:17]

Yes.

[00:40:18]

That's wonderful, and then through your daughter because she knew people?

[00:40:22]

Yes. No, she able to pull at the sector help me to get an interview and then I did the interview and they hired me off the back and it was changed for me because I always did babysitting before, but because I never did commercial cleaning before, but I cleaned people house and different things like that and so I always know how to clean and so I started to work on the night shift, just 20 hours from 8:00 in the night to 12:00 in the night and then after before I came over. It was Kennedy School first.

[00:40:57]

Kennedy school.

[00:40:57]

I started at the Kennedy school.

[00:40:58]

That's what I was going to ask you, of course.

[00:40:59]

Yes.

[00:40:59]

I started at Kennedy school and then shifts to change here?

[00:41:02]

Yes.

[00:41:03]

For day shift?

[00:41:04]

Yes. I worked at the Kennedy School for three years and now I'm at law school for five years.

[00:41:09]

Five years?

[00:41:10]

Yes.

[00:41:10]

How is the work, how is the relationship that you have with co workers and then the students if you have connection with them?

[00:41:18]

The students are amazing. There are some good ones. There's a lot of them who treat us with respect and some of them who probably wouldn't even notice us, but I have a good bunch of students because I work at the Bureau of 123 Everett and so it's more close. It's more community.

[00:41:40]

The clinic?

[00:41:41]

Yes, the clinic.

[00:41:42]

Legal Aid Bureau?

[00:41:43]

Legal aid Bureau. Yes, so I get to see the child advocacy program on the second floor and so we all course parts. I clean their offices and stuff and it really does treat me with respect and make me feel that I'm doing something that they appreciate.

[00:42:00]

That's wonderful.

[00:42:03]

I love working at 23 Everett st.

[00:42:04]

Do you know Susan Arteta?

[00:42:07]

[inaudible 00:42:07] Suzanne retiring. Yes, so she's very nice because she's in charge of the [inaudible 00:42:15]

[00:42:15]

Suzanne is around and for Melisa Minaya

[00:42:17]

Yeah, and Patricio he's one of the lawyers there on with Susana.

[00:42:22]

I don't know if I know Patricio.

[00:42:24]

Patricio he's a guy.

[00:42:26]

Yeah, Patricio, but I don't know if I know him.

[00:42:28]

He look like you.

[00:42:29]

Yeah.

[00:42:29]

Yeah. He's Spanish also. I don't know which country he's from and then Esme.

[00:42:35]

Esme Carmello.

[00:42:37]

Yes.

[00:42:37]

Yes, Esme Carmello.

[00:42:38]

Yes. I see them every day really nice people to work for and even Mike on the second floor. Michael, I forget his last name, really nice guy. He works with the child advocacy program.

[00:42:53]

Nice.

[00:42:53]

Yeah, and then we have Crissane. I know all of them by name. I'm the therapist while I'm there.

[00:43:00]

Yeah.

[00:43:03]

I give them a different perspective; the Caribbean flavor.

[00:43:07]

Yes.

[00:43:07]

Perspective when they're going to if there's any situation, so we bring a little fresh air.

[00:43:12]

That's wonderful, and the connection with the students, why do you think that they connect with you or why they come to talk to you asking for advice or it's just the connection because they are already there and then you are close by?

[00:43:26]

Yes, and I make conversation with them. I bring them out of their comfort zone, and because a lot of them would like to pass you straight because they're so intense and focused, but because I'm a mother, I tend to look out for young. I have a heart for young people and even though they might be an older than my girl sometime because my eldest is 40 and they are like children to me and so I try to reach them out and just give them a word of comfort because being in this place is really a tough place to work and to study and sometimes I can see the stress and the frustration.

[00:44:05]

A lot.

[00:44:06]

I watch how they eat, what they pull in every day to eat and I know my goodness is not always healthy, so sometimes I make a little banana bread and I bring a little home favor something.

[00:44:15]

You do?

[00:44:16]

Yes.

[00:44:16]

That's lovely.

[00:44:17]

Share with the staff and the students and stuff and things like that, and also I like to make them feel a little homely even when they're at home.

[00:44:26]

That's really lovely. Because I remember my time working in DOS when I used to have more contact with the students now I don't have as much, but there was always the ones that feels a little bit out of a place and trying to have more connection and trying to make sense of what's happening because some of them feel like if they are really in the right place.

[00:44:49]

Yeah, because I remember speaking to a guy from New Mexico. I remember his name right now and I worked on the tooth floor WCC and he was coming out of a class and he greeted me and I greeted him. He said how are you doing, and he said sometimes I wonder if I should be here. I say, yes, you're here because you should be here. I said, sometimes people don't always make you feel that you should be here, but for you to get here there was a reason why you are here. I said, "Where are you from?" He said, "New Mexico." Then I said, "What we have all these different groups. We have the Spanish group different thing." He said, "I've been to the group, but I don't feel part of the group."

[00:45:37]

Wow.

[00:45:38]

He said, "Because I am considered Mexican and the other Spanish doesn't see me. The Spanish people don't see me and because I'm poor, I don't have a credit card. There's a poll out to buy drinks and different things."

[00:45:55]

Social events.

[00:45:56]

Yes, so he felt so lost in this place and it all happened a couple of times after he was staying in the dorm right over our building where our offices which is Holmes.

[00:46:07]

Story?

[00:46:08]

Story.

[00:46:10]

I bump to him up in the hallway a couple of times when I work overtime because I don't do dorms. But when I work on the weekend, I bump to him up and I chat with him and there's others. I try to give them that piece of being belonging because I know how it felt.

[00:46:25]

The connection here.

[00:46:26]

[LAUGHTER] I didn't even realize that I didn't feel belong but because I'm from a different culture and a different place, they're going to find me rude.

[00:46:34]

Different upbringing and different experience.

[00:46:37]

Having to come to America, I had to fight for everything. I raised three girls on my own, and so I know what it is to fight, what it is to go into doors which they don't want to open for you being illegal immigrant in this country. Taking care of people kids who had so much more and I had to leave my children while I take care of other people children. Take them to music classes and different things where my kids couldn't go because I didn't have the money to take care of them, and I leave my kids for somebody to take them off the bus for me while I go take care of somebody else's children, so I know what it is to do without and to make sacrifices. I think they don't understand when a immigrant come to this country, how much of our respect and dignity that we lose and give up just because we need to take care of our family.

[00:47:31]

How much sacrifice is there.

[00:47:32]

Sacrifices that we have to make.

[00:47:37]

I don't know if suffocate is the right word, but you have to hide your own culture to adjust to another one.

[00:47:44]

But I think we choose to do that because Malcolm X and all of these people, JF Kennedy, all of these people give us an opportunity where we can let our voices be heard. Martin Luther King, all these guys, Rosa Parks, all of these people. They stand up and we have a right to stand on their shoulders and push ourselves forward because they opened a lot of doors, opportunities that we have now, they didn't have back in those days. We need to leave a better space for our generation, and if we stay quiet and just take the pay check and go home, we're not doing that. We get too comfortable, and there's so much more that we need to achieve and to accomplish, but because we're just comfortable and we're afraid, they intimidate some people. That they afraid if we say too much I'm going to lose my job or if I say too much, I'm not going to be the favorite on the job, and they want everybody to like them [LAUGHTER] I have no problem with it, but I can still fight for you because when I fight for you, I fight for me. I don't see it like, because you are Hispanic and I'm Black or I'm Caribbean or whatever the case. We are all human being, and that's the most important factor because if you fall along today, I can give you a pint of blood. You know what I'm saying? It doesn't matter which part of the blood comes from, it's the same blood that flows through through each and every one of us. I think we have to give ourselves more self worth. More credit.

[00:49:28]

Self worth. We put ourselves too much on the bottom of everything, and there are too many people fought for us to be in a better place.

[00:49:40]

Taking advantage of the situation just to keep it going.

[00:49:44]

You understand everything should come down and it should flow, everybody should get a fair share. But most of the time on the workplace, it doesn't happen.

[00:49:54]

Interesting. That's a good point. But overall, you have made good friends?

[00:50:00]

Yeah. Like Edgar [LAUGHTER] and Header, and Melissa. We have good conversation. Then I have Teresa, she used to work on the telephone, now she's over in one of those buildings over there. Then those girls up on the third floor. Sometimes I don't remember the name, but they treat me so nice, there's so many.

[00:50:26]

That's the good part.

[00:50:27]

Yes. Many good people.

[00:50:30]

On top of everything that you have to go through keep moving on and have your rights, respect and everything else. When you have folks that have connect I think that's what's an important thing.

Gale, I think is past your time. I'm sorry to take too much of that time from you, but thank you very much for accepting to stop by and talk. I think that's important that you have representation from all sorts of parts of this place. I'm glad that you chose. I loved our conversation, I love the description about Trinity. I learned a lot with you that I didn't even know before, so that was lovely. Thank you. For everybody listening out there, thank you very much. We see you around. Bye-bye [MUSIC]

[00:58:03]

Thank you.