[MUSIC] You are listening to Tell Me Your Story where we connect to HLS staff on a personal level. Hello, everyone. This is Edgar Kley Filho from the Equal Opportunity Office. My pronouns are he, him, his. Today, we are talking to Ligia from HUDS who you tell us about her life, how long she is in this position at HLS, and the work she does. Thank you for joining us Ligia, and please tell me your story.

Thank you, Edgar. Good morning. Thank you for inviting me today to the podcast. Edgar, I'm from Colombia.

You're from Colombia?

Yes. I'm living in Cali. I was born in Cali and I grew up in one little town outside the city. The name is Florida Valle.

Florida Valle.

Florida Valle is like 20 minutes outside of Cali.

Tell us a little bit because it sounds like a when I think about Colombia and make me think about Brazil as well. The small villages near the big town, sometimes are the most beautiful areas that you can think of. Is that how it is your town?

Yes, Edgar, is like that. Florida when I was living over there, is a little town now is modern. Do you know?

Really?

Yes. It's a lot of people when I go to over there, is a new buildings before I had the only small houses and now has big buildings.

Do you think that's because of Cali because Cali is growing to much and is reaching?

I think it's like that and especially because the town is surrounded by mountains. The weather is perfect. In the mornings when you wake up and you see for the windows, you can see sometimes a little water in the trees. Maybe after 10 in the morning, you can see the sun and in the afternoons.

Around your town, for example, wherever you lived there, you could see the mountains right outside?

Yes.

Really?

Yes. I have two rivers, beautiful.

That sounds like a perfect place to be.

It is. I was living in the town…

Not living in the center of the town living outside.

When I was over there, living in the town. But my dad have one little house outside the town. He do the plantains, the avocado, the orange because it's in the middle to the town and the river.

Oh my goodness.

It's beautiful. It's amazing.

He would have all vegetables growing right there for himself.

Yes.

That's really like a paradise for his because I can only imagine being there or spending the weekend and being able to cook and food and like to describe the river on one side, the mountains on the other side. It must be really beautiful.

It's a beautiful, Edgar. Because I'm from a small family it's only my sister and me. Then my sister living in Boston, too, so my parents living in Colombia.

They still live there?

Yes. Sometimes I talk to my dad to come to living over here with us, but he doesn't like it, and I understand because how he would want to change his life over there. He living in the town and had business over there. But every morning he wake up. He ride in the bicycle because he is training the cyclism

Really?

Yes. Every morning. He going in his bicycle to the farm and then he come back and after that, he going with my mom. Sometimes he does the launch over there and then come back to the house again. This is the life my dad and my mom right now. I can't change this is perfect life.

If they are happy where they are it feels like a very healthy life.

Yes.

I can definitely understand. Why would I leave that if life is good? I know that with this is going.

I know. I have normal and happy childhood.

That's what I want to say.

Yes.

Did you go to school there? Until what age you stayed there?

Okay, Edgar. I always go to the school in the city in Cali.

You had to go to Cali?

Yes. I had the schools in the town, but I think in Latin America everybody think the good education is when you pay.

Sometimes is true.

My dad thank God he thinking too much about that.

It's a good thing.

Yes. He brings a good education for my sister and for me.

For both of you.

I go every morning to study in Cali.

It would be a 20 or 30 minutes.

Yes, I like 20 or 30 minutes. Depend how is the traffic, but I finished the high school. After that I take the Santiago de Cali University. I do the business international.

College you did that?

Yes, I do the college.

Curious about schools, too. Was a private school in a way?

Yes. How was going to school in Colombia.

Is the environment similar to what you hear about US. Do you know with the students being sometimes annoying or was just a good way out way through college quiet and calm?

I think for me it is very different, especially in the time when I went.

Number 1, because I was going to the private school and the Catholic School, too.

Discipline there is a little difference.

I do it, and the college is only woman's too.

Yeah.

Yes.

That's what the Catholic schools do. They have a one for boys, one for girls.

Yes. When I finished the high school, the private school with the woman's. After that one, I going to the college, very difficult. [LAUGHTER]

That was mixed?

Yes, it's mixed.

All the way up to high school, you are study in a Catholic school, private and was only girls schools.

Yes.

Then when you went to college, it then goes back to regular, normal, mixed groups, mixed genders?

Yes. It is very difficult.

You felt that was difficult?

Yes.

Really?

Because its different friend, but in this moment, I know the men was a good friendship with the men better with the women. I had a very appreciation for very good women friendship, too, but I think for me the boys is better.

The boys were better. Had a better relationship, a better communication with them.

Yes, Edgar.

What was difficult going to college? Was the change in environment, or was because not all your friends from until high school could be there? What was more difficult?

Yes, I think, Edgar, is because I'm coming from one traditional family. Very complicated about the relationship.

With everybody in college.

Yes.

Because it was more open, like everything is okay.

Yes. It's more open, Number 1, and sometimes the people because my family living not in the city, outside of the city, the people thinking that I'm different.

Interesting, right?

Yes.

You feel okay, we see these issues happening here in the US, but I think it happens everywhere.

Everywhere.

Is that way that they look at you because you are from a smaller town or if you are outside of the town, and sometimes most of them, if it is the same as in Brazil Ligia, we have the upper class people who always go to private schools, competing later with federal colleges that are free in general, but then they have that attitude, they are the rich kids, and that is that clash in terms of, you are different. Is that how more or less?

Yes, Edgar. Another thing is because I was the only child in my family until have been 16-years-old.

Really? You and your sister are 16 years apart?

Yes.

Wow.

Yes. In my life, it changed when my sister is born because before looking for the sisterhood in my friends and in the cousins too. When I go to the college, I'm looking for that because I moved from the college when after my sister born. I finished my high school when I was 16-year-and-a-half, and when I was 17, I started the college.

College already.

I leave my sister the baby.

Yes.

As for this now, I can see my sister not like my sister, like my daughter.

Exactly.

Yes.

Well, I have my baby brother is 11 years younger than me. I had the same thing when I used to go out when he was around 10-years-old, I was on my 20s something, because he looked like me. People used to think that he was my child, he was my son. That was one of the things that I can totally understand what you're saying. Leaving I think a family, like you said, a traditional family, always involved with your cousin, having good relationships, being in a school all the way up to high school in also very conservative teaching and education, you create those relationships that are very close to you.

Close, it's true.

Then if you're looking for that environment in a college, that's not the place. I can see now why you say I got a little bit lost and was a little difference in terms of how people behave because they are from different places, different family, different education as well. Wow, that's not... When you used to go to school up to high school, you used to stay all day. How was the system there? How many hours you would go? You leave in the morning and come back what time?

Yes, I start the class always in the morning to 2:30, something like that.

Oh, really. Close to 3:00, you would be still in school, and then come back home and do your homework and have a regular life.

Yes, I'm very close to my dad, Edgar. For this, I learned from my dad the hard work, the honesty.

Yes.

Then I learned from my dad responsibility too. Because when I was child, I need to wake up earlier than the other kids because I need to prepare for my dad to bring me, ride with me to the city, to the school. Every morning, I need to wake up early, and I go into my bed late. Early 2:00 in the night because I need to wake up.

Be ready to go to school, right?

Yes.

Your dad was the one always making sure that you were doing the right thing and teaching you the lessons?

Yes, I learned from my dad that. For my mom, I learned to clean always, be good with my presentations.

Yes. It's interesting.

Yes, Edgar.

Tell me one thing that I'm curious. I know we talked about how beautiful the area around Cali is. What other places in Colombia that you had a chance to visit?

Edgar, in general, for me, the people from Colombia are very friendly and very hospital. In this moment, Colombia is a good part to the people going to travel, to visit it. I had very lucky because my dad is from Medellin.

Medellin.

Yes. I had many people from Medellin and Boston. Yes and my mom is from Cali. But I'm born in Cali too. But half of my family is in Medellin cousin so every time there is vacation time. My dad going to Medellin for a couple of days. After that, he tried to visit another little town so cities in Colombia. I think from my dad, I learned every year, two, I need to take one [LAUGHTER] one place in the world.

We are going to get to that one so now I know who was the one who.

Yes dad working very hard, but he say.

That's wonderful.

I need to work, but I need to take only one week depend how some going to visit something because you learn different cult. The food and then you can tell too many things for your kids too.

Yes, that's important I agree.

I tried to teach to my kids to Edgar.

The same thing that your dad taught you.

What's the difference between Medellin and Cali?

I had different cities and this moment for me, Medellin is the best city in Colombia.

That's yes.

Yes. It's my my opinion because Medellin is a clean city it's very clean.

I thought Bogota was very clean.

Yes, long time I no going to Bogota. Maybe seven or eight years or maybe ten years. Not going to Bogota. But Medellin is a clean city my opinion is because the people from Medellin had the nationality.

Oh patriots.

I don't know how say the part. I had a good architecture.

Architecture.

I had a hospitality from the people over there.

For tourists and everybody?

Yes.

Wow nice.

Now I had couple parts of the Medellin. Is like the seaport in Boston. Similar to over there. The only thing Medellin the have is the ocean you can see the buildings. Ha maybe in the first floor, had the stores and everything, or restaurant. But up-stair in the top in the roof? You can see the pool, you can see the restaurant, you can have the view for the beautiful city because Medellin is one of the city. The the building is in the in the mountain. Is in the top of the mountain.

You can see, so that's the difference because Bogota. Well, they have a little part in that extinct volcano there. But the Bogota is lower, and then you can see the mountains high.

Cali is for this they stay the name is Valle del Caucas because it's plain valle is like you can see the mountain, but far away. But the city is in the It's like a valley.

You have mountains on the sides like really far. You have that flat part in between the mountains so that's Cali.

The Cali.

Medellin is in the mountain.

Yes.

It must be beautiful too.

It's amazing the name is everybody called Medellin the city of the spring because always is like a spring here. The weather.

Nice temperature.

Excellent.

Wow, that's amaizing.

Cali it's very hot. The weather is very hot. But it's not humid but it is hot.

Maybe because of it is in a valley in between the right that holds the winds and everything else.

Yes.

Interesting. I didn’t think that Bogota was hot. I thought Bogota had a good temperature when I was there, too.

Bogota years ago was a very cold.

Cold.

Because I like a little high.

Is because is high.

I felt that, too. Let's talk about food in Colombia.

In Colombia.

That is also because you said that you traveled with your family in different places. You sense that there are different in between the food in your town here in Cali and also Medellin. They have different foods in the region.

Yes. Colombia is very rich about the food.

Because it hits the tropicals.

Yes.

fruits there might be amaizing.

Wow it's amazing. Edgar and miss to much. [LAUGHTER] Yes, the food but I had couple good places for the traditional Lavanda Pisa it's very traditional for Medellin.

How is it made or if you can describe more or less.

Yes.

What's the name in Spanish?

La Bandeja Paisa is very traditional from Medellin.

How is it made? If you can describe it more or less. What is the name in Spanish?

 Bandeja Paisa and Paisa is how it is called by the people from Medellin. Paisas like “paisano” (countryman) or “gentilicio” (demonyn)for for the people from Medellin. Bandeja is like plate, big plate It's because in the plate is coming rice, beans, like por belly, like the name is “Chicharron? Beef too.

all in one plate.

I had in insalata (salad) too. Arepas like corn bread (pancake like). It's very traditional Medellin, I know. From Cali, very typical food is Sancocho it's like chicken soup.

From Bogota Ajiaco is like one soup, too.

A kind of soup.

With the cream. It's very traditional and very good too.

You said, Cali was a chicken soup style.

Yes.

What Bogota would be?

Aijaco, it's like one soup too but with cream.

But is there meat inside or not?

Yes, there's meat too.

Also chicken or beef?

Beef.

Is any of those spicy or just regular?

No. It's not spicy.

Perfect for me, because I don't eat anything spicy.

Yes. It's traditional use service with Aji, it's like something spicy, its like “Pico de Gallo” but a little more liquid.

How was growing up? For example, you described some foods that from these different places. Growing up was regular, like, you would have bread in the morning, you have rice and beans for lunch and dinner, how would be your regular food?

Yes. My traditional breakfast because I always wake up super early, and I grew up in Cali because the weather is warm, so I don’t drink coffee.

You don't?

No. My mom always tell me that we live Colombia.

Your parents did?

Yes. Always.

Your family in general?

Yes. Edgar it's very traditional.

Yes.

You can go to one house in Colombia.

I'm surprised here.

You can see the machine from the coffee always full. For example, if you come right now to my house and you visited my parents, my parents the first time to say, Edgar, you want to drink one coffee?

Exactly. That's how in Brazil too. But your mom didn't let you to have it?

Yes. Always for my breakfast, I drink orange juice.

Did you change that later? You drink coffee now or you still have the same?

Edgar, when my parents come in to visit, I always drink coffee with my dad.

Isn't that's amazing?

Yes. Not because I like the coffee, is because I like the company. Always when I drink my coffee with my dad, he start talking something about him. All the time is new for me.

Yes. Those are the things that I always loved about my family, my father, my mom, at the time when we had time to be chatting about stuff. Is about them telling stories about their lives or about how they lived in the area, there was always beautiful stories, I think it's the same about your dad when you're describing, when you sit down to drink coffee with him, he's going to tell the story that you've never heard it.

I always enjoy the time when my parents are here. Because when I was a child, I'm very close to my dad. I had a good relation with my mom. Because she's my teacher in my life. But I don't know. I had different connection with my dad.

It's connection. That's the word. It's connection. For example, on my side, I had a great relationship with my dad, too, but my connection with my mom is different from any other sibling. It's interesting to see, and I totally understand when you say, like your relationship with your dad. It is a natural connection. There is no effort.

Yes.

It just happen. It is good to be together. You know him for many lives, if you can say something like that. Is that right?

Yes, Edgar. It's true.

So you don't like coffee?

I don't like coffee, Edgar.

You don't drink tea, either?

Here, yes. For the weather. When there's winter, I always drink tea.

But you don't drink every day, you don't have needs or tea.

No, Edgar.

That's so interesting, Ligia.

Yes.

What kind of Colombian are you?

I don't know. I like another tea from Colombia, Edgar.

Yes. There is a plenty there. This isn't just about coffee or tea.

Yes.

But it's funny, I don't know. Maybe in Colombia is the same. In Brazil, the way that coffee is made traditionally, that's not in a machine is still with that cloth.

Yes.

That you boil water and then put coffee ground inside of that cloth, and then you stream the coffee there, so the funny thing is mum used to make the strongest part of the coffee for the adults or the ones that were in age to drink, and the weakest that was left over that should always have a little bit more water, that would come almost like a tea. Not even coffee anymore, but that is the taste.

Yes.

Those one, even kids like a three year old would start drinking. That's how early we start drinking coffee. It's something normal.

Edgar, I can see the difference in Colombia and USA, because the doctors, when I was pregnant with my kids, said they're not supposed to drink coffee, and the kids are not supposed to drink coffee. The caffeine. But in Colombia, you can see the babies, toddlers walk with a bottle, and you can see something like dark drink. Many times I said to my mom, what is that? She said, Ligia it's coffee. I said, okay. I don't know. Maybe my mum never do me coffee.

Exactly.

The bottle is for this, I don't like it.

It's funny that here, I always heard people say, don't give too much sugar. No, it's sugar here. Don't give too much sugar because they're going to be hyper. Can you imagine our kids drinking coffee with caffeine? They're going to be all over the place. But anyways, I think it's just funny how these things work in different places. Then you we went to college and you graduate?

When I had maybe seven semesters from Business International, I started to work. I started to work Edgar in the airport. In airport from Cali for the Avianca Airline.

The Avianca that's located in Bogota?

Yes, Edgar. I started to work over there, and then I had the opportunity to come in to USA to learn about the one machine from check the visas in this moment, so I come into Miami, doing that.

To have a training.

Yes, training. After that, I had a couple of days off, so I'm coming to visiting my cousins in Boston.

The training was in Miami?

In Miami. After that, my cousins invited me to coming to visit Boston, and I have a lot of connection to Boston.

Really?

Yes.

A lot of people from Colombia living here?

In this moment, I don't see too much.

Just the cousins?

Yes, cousins and I like the city. I like how the life over here is.

I'm so sorry. I misunderstood. You meant connection with the city.

Yes, with the city.

Exactly.

Then I stay only for four days, something like that, and then I come back to Colombia, and I work, and in this moment, when I come in Boston, I can see that everybody speaks English, but for my college, when I finish, suppose in my eight semester, four years, I need to bring one test for English. I'm thinking about it, then maybe come back to Boston to study English and I go back. For this, I finish my college four years only. I'm supposed to do one more year. But in this year, when I come here, I decided with my dad and my mom to move to Boston.

You didn't finish college there? You closed?

I'm finished. I had two opportunities in this moment. One, when I had eight semesters, four years or five years.

Two options there.

Yes. Because I had the four years, you need to take one more year for learning English. Because suppose I need to speak two languages. Because it's Business International.

It make sense. Then you left there, finish with four years and then came to Boston.

But I graduation for the four.

Perfect. We will finish our conversation with Ligia on the next episode. Make sure to tune in.