

Narrator name: Myriam Verduzco (MV) and Anya Hanson (AH)

Interviewer name: Adan Salgado Morales (ASM)

Date: 5/8/24

Location: BLCI [Barrio Logan College Institute] site

Collection: Race and Oral History Course, Spring 2024

Length of interview: 30:03

ASM: Let's start. To begin, can you tell me your name?

MV: Yes, my name is Myriam Verduzco.

ASM: Can you spell it for me?

MV: Spelling?

ASM: Yes, the first name.

MV: M-Y-R-I-A-M.

ASM: Thank you. Next, can you tell me when and where you were born?

MV: I was born on May 23, 1976, in Tijuana, Baja California, in Mexico.

ASM: Can you tell me what it was like growing up in Tijuana?

MV: Well, growing up in Tijuana during my time was very peaceful. It was... Being able to play in open spaces, being able to go out and play with neighbors. It was very calm, with a lot of friendly people. There weren't as many cars and vehicles as there are today. Tijuana was very peaceful back then.

ASM: Do you wanna be part of the interview or?

AH: Sure, I guess.

MV: Yes?

ASM: Can I get your name?

AH: Anya.

ASM: And how do you spell it?

AH: A-N-Y-A.

ASM: Can you tell me when and where you were born?

AH: On April 7, 2010, in Chula Vista.

ASM: How was it growing up here in Chula Vista?

AH: Um, it was actually really good. Um, we didn't really live in Chula Vista, though. We mostly lived in San Ysidro, and now we live in Spring Valley, and it's been really peaceful and nice, you know, in San Diego.

ASM: Let's go back to Tijuana, can you tell me why you emigrated to the United States and what the process was like?

MV: The process was a bit difficult because my youngest sister was finishing primary school, so I really didn't know any English, even though we were U.S. residents. We had never lived here. It was always for travel or visits, but never to live. So, when we decided to come here, my youngest sister, who finished primary school, entered middle school here. She continued and completed all her studies here. So, my mom, my sister, and I decided to come to San Ysidro. Everything was very different, from enrolling in school to the language. I didn't speak any English, and it was hard because we didn't know anything here, neither the system nor what it was like to be here. It was difficult, a decision we had to make for her benefit and our own. And I think it was worth it.

ASM: I want to ask, what is it like seeing her (looking at Anya) growing up here as your sister did? Your sister grew up a lot here, right? How do you see it with your daughter?

MV: Well, it's similar in a way because with my sister, I wasn't as involved in her schooling. It was my mom. So, I watched my mom, and she did all the paperwork. I worked and studied to understand English better. My mom did speak English, but I didn't. So, she handled that whole process, and I would watch and think, wow, so many things, but I didn't understand the process. Now, living it with my daughter, my first child going through the school process, high school, it's very different. I'm experiencing it now, and it's something that in Mexico, you just enroll, submit some papers, and that's it. Here, it's different, the enrollment process for a school.

ASM: I want to ask, what is the biggest difference between living in Tijuana and living in San Diego or the United States?

MV: The biggest difference... Well, besides the language, here in the United States, everything is very structured. Everything has a structure. For example, transportation, everything has a time, a schedule. As I mentioned, school enrollment, everything is a process, step-by-step, and it all has a date. In Mexico, no. In Mexico, the transportation system, you can take it at any corner, there's no schedule. In school, yes, everything is by date, but it's not as methodical or structured. In Mexico, you have to spend on school supplies. Here, no. Here, oh, you don't have

to buy anything. You just take the kids to school. Some schools require uniforms. So yea it is... they're changes that if someone tries.. Well it's hard.

ASM: You were telling me when we were talking that it's a bit more... free here, right?

MV: Yes.

ASM: Can you tell me more about that?

MV: Yes. Free in the sense that, for example, in Mexico we are more, it's a more conservative culture. Here in schools, the culture is a bit more free for the... for the students, as I was telling you, in particular with my sister and...

### **Laptop dies and video cuts**

MV: Ok. Yes, it was different in the sense that, for example, theres the bathrooms in that school didn't have doors, they didn't have anything. So, when doing, for example, some sport or going to the bathroom, everything was open. So, you saw, well obviously, the other girls. So... We, for example, in our culture, everything is about having your privacy, no one can see you, no one can, well yes, see you. So, when she came here and saw that, she was like "mom," so it was different. Here, for example, we see that many girls already have more freedom in the sense that, oh yes, go for a sleepover with your friends, go to the store or go here and there alone or with a friend or with the friend's mom. So, personally, we were never allowed to do that, we were always like no, you're not going into any house without permission, you have to ask for permission or you're not going into any house at all, you're not going to sleep at anyone's house. So, there was that, well yes, a culture not as free as here. So those are things that you have to adjust to day by day, to adapt to. So, yes, that's also difficult.

ASM: I want to ask you how school is for you or how is it? How free do you feel over here if you've been to Mexico?

AH: I haven't been to Mexico but here so far it's free just a little different now that I'm in middle school, you know, we're going through a lot of changes. Um And so right now, like in the beginning of middle school, we probably felt a little bit more free, but now we probably feel a little bit more insulated, more to ourselves. Like I think it's harder for us to come out more, you know, if we have any problems or anything or even ask for help, like it could be anything even in homework. And so, but free, I do feel free just sometimes, you know, the thoughts could get to me, especially because we're in this like um change from middle school to high school.

ASM: Do you feel you have like a lot more responsibility because you're free? Like do you need to kind have more self control or?

AH: Yeah, I think we definitely do because it's kind of like managing everything. If you're free, you also have to manage all the responsibilities like your chores or your homework. So you need to manage your time to complete that.

ASM: Is she on your case for that? Like, is she always telling you to keep going, do your chores, do your homework, things like that?

AH: Yeah, she reminds me if I don't. So yeah, she definitely does.

MV: Yes, I do.

ASM: That's how you said you did.

MV: Yup.

ASM: I want to ask, because you were telling me about the differences, what was the most difficult thing when you got here?

MV: The most difficult thing when arriving here, yes, it was the language, even though a lot of Spanish is spoken in San Ysidro. But the language, for example, entering school, when I went to adult school to learn English, it was difficult because obviously, many people already spoke English, and I didn't. So it's a barrier up to a certain point, but also, if you want to achieve it, if you set your mind to it, you will learn the language, you will understand it, you will practice it. And in terms of culture, I think the most important thing is not to lose where you come from, your roots, your country. Because many times, with so many changes from one place to another, sometimes, as I said, arriving here is very structured. So, a life change like that, well, many don't like it, and that's why I think they return to their country of origin. Others stay, but they have to adapt to this type of life, which is very different.

ASM: Also, I want to ask, as a child of an immigrant, what do you think is the most difficult challenge you see comparing yourself to other students or other people?

AH: Most difficult challenge?

ASM: Do you see any challenges? Do you think of it as a challenge?

AH: I don't really see any challenges, just differences in like being strict. I see some other children go to their friend's house or to the mall. But you know, at my house, you know, doing my stuff. But challenges, probably not much really. I don't really see a difference.

ASM: To connect it, how did you hear about BLCI?

MV: Through a friend. A friend told me about it a while ago, and I said, I didn't have a car at that time, so I thought, how am I going to do it? Because, well, with them, there are three of my kids, so I thought, going to this event, I didn't think it would be possible. And then later, fortunately, we had a car, so I told them, well, let's start with this program because I don't know anything about the process for university, and I want them to have at least that opportunity that we often didn't have due to lack of information from our parents who were also dedicated to work. So, just like I thought it was the same as enrolling in school in Mexico, you think it's the same here in university, but you get to a point where you realize, no, university here is very expensive, and the requirements to enter university, if you don't know them, many stay on the way and don't get there. So for them, I don't want that. I want them to have at least the opportunity to know... that they can get to university, that there are programs like BLCI that guide them, help them find the best path for them.

ASM: How did you feel first about BLCI?

AH: I was pretty nervous. I didn't really think it was going to be for college, but now that I see it more, not only is it focusing on college and universities, but it's also focusing on our well-being because in order for us to do well in school, we have to also do well, you know, mentally and physically. So I think honestly BLCI is just a really great place for everything. Not only to work on your skills for school and college and university but also for yourself.

ASM: I heard you wanted to be a lawyer, right?

AH: Yeah.

ASM: Do you think you're being set on the right path? Do you think you're building good habits for this?

AH: Yeah, I think I am... starting to *laughs*.

ASM: Good on you, high hopes *laughs*, but that's good that you're building these good things, these good habits.

ASM: Also, I want to ask both of you, how has BLCI changed your lives?

MV: Well, it has changed us, really. Even though we've only been here for a year at BLCI. As I mentioned, I come from a culture that is very, well, yes... It's strict, I don't want to say, but very closed, in the sense that sometimes there are topics that are not discussed with the children or young people, for example, drugs, sexuality, or communication with children. In Mexico, in my time, it was not allowed, for example, for a child to talk to their father or sit down to discuss how they felt or if they didn't like something, because it was seen as... bad manners, bad education. So here at BLCI, with all the workshops they give us, it has improved that communication, especially with them because as a parent, I don't want to follow the same system I had as a child. I want to understand my children, listen to them, and what better way than to know how to do it. And well, in these workshops, it has helped me. BLCI has given us the tools, but also the confidence that everything they do is for the well-being of our children, to make them feel safe,

secure, to know that they can rely on us as parents, to know that the BLCI community is like an extended family, where we all support each other, and well, I think that has been a great help. As I said, even though we have only been here for a year, I have seen a big change in us as a family. And well, I hope we continue, I hope my children reach university with the help of BLCI, and well, I am very happy that we belong to this community.

AH: So definitely the first thing I would say is discipline. Um, I guess coming to BLCI does sometimes take, um, you know, sometimes you just don't want to get off from home, but it takes motivation and coming here has built a lot of more discipline also managing my time with assignments because usually I used to leave everything at last minute, but now I do everything when I first get it. And so BLCI has really helped to do that and I really feel more better about my work. Um, also myself, understanding myself more. Um, I would usually just get trapped in my thoughts and emotions and it wouldn't really help me, especially with school. And so BLCI has really helped me with that and so I've seen big changes in myself too and also in my family. So, yeah, I'm really grateful.

ASM: Do you think it's helped you like, become more confident as a person?

AH: Yeah. I think I'm starting to become way more confident.

ASM: Do you feel closer as a family?

MV: Yes.

AH: Mhm.

MV: Yes, I'll tell you that. Um, it is challenging sometimes because it's a way of thinking that needs to be changed for the better, especially if we want them to have a better education. So BLCI, aside from involving the parents, helps us understand them, understand ourselves, and how to handle situations. And besides, they are teaching them everything they need to have a better education, a better opportunity. Additionally, BLCI has helped us all. Everyone is very friendly. So they understand you, they don't judge you. They open doors for you. They have a lot of help in one way or another if you need it.

ASM: Yes. Hey, they do workshops, right? There are things they teach you. What's one thing they taught you that you use daily, like you always think about?

MV: Ah, what they have taught me, wow, there are so many things, but I can tell you that communication with the children is one of the main things. One must be attentive to them in that

sense, not just say, "Oh, how did it go?" "Good, ah, ok." Rather, it's about having much more, a time with them, knowing how their day went, if they have something pending, something to do at school, an event, exams, or if something worries them, if something stresses them. So, that's one of the things BLCI has been teaching us. Besides, the topics of drugs which are day-to-day issues, we also have to be attentive to that and at the same time communicate with them and let them know what dangers are out there and they as students in schools.

ASM: I don't know, you already told me many things they taught you. Basically like every day, huh? Kind of putting that discipline. Yeah. Is there like, anything else they kind of, like, teach you on the side? Like, do you get closer friendships with people or?

AH: I do, I've gotten more friendships, but I've also learned to communicate more. I've got new friends because I've communicated with them. I've gotten closer to them because I communicate with them. And so yeah, I've gotten stronger in my communication, my socialization, my discipline, everything.

ASM: It's gonna be perfect skills to have when you're growing up because you're gonna be graduating with these people one day to have as a lawyer. It's gonna be amazing skills.

AH: It will definitely. Yes.

ASM: You can be communicating like every day.

AH: I would hope!

ASM: And then talking about things they taught you and that you use every day, can you tell me about some traditions you brought from Mexico that still...

MV: Traditions?

ASM: Yes.

MV: Well, one of them is not losing your roots, continuing to preserve them. For example, Day of the Dead is a very strong tradition in Mexico, where we honor our dead. So, more than... That is the... I would say the most important part. Not losing your roots, where you come from, your culture, so that from that you continue to move forward and forge new things for the future. And that your children also know that they have roots in Mexico and that they know where they come from. And that from that they can be and feel proud and that the people who come from Mexico, the immigrant people who not only come to progress but to improve and for a better future for our children.

ASM: Do you hope to keep these traditions alive?

AH: Yes, I do.

ASM: Are there new traditions you're forming with them? Or with your children?

MV: Some what?

ASM: New traditions?

MV: Traditions?

ASM: Yes, traditions.

MV: The new traditions?

ASM: Yes.

MV: Well... New traditions? Well, I think... Traditions... Well, it would continue... Improving communication and combining what is, or reaching a middle point. Not making it like the Mexican tradition, which is very strict, and the American tradition, which is a bit more open. So, having a middle point. So, they can have it both ways. \*looks at dead computer turning on\* Did it turn on? *laughs*

ASM: Um What about you? Are there any traditions that you kind of hope to start forming or you like to just...

AH: Start forming? Well...

ASM: You ever see something your friends do and you're like, oh that would be nice. It's a nice time to tell your mom.

AH: Um you know, travel, we do enough traveling and really, I'm grateful for that. It's really freeing...

ASM: Where?

AH: Well, we've gone to San Francisco, Los Angeles. Solvang, Santa Monica, and Santa Barbara, I think that's it, and Las Vegas, it's been really fun. And the desert too. Um new traditions, I think for right now, no, she's doing really well, probably just get a little bit stronger in the communication, but so far we're going from where we used to be and it's really good.

ASM: Tamales for Christmas or no?

MV: Yes, tamales for Christmas. Combination. Yes, because in Mexico, Christmas is not celebrated. Well, in Tijuana, since it's a border, Christmas is celebrated, but really, it combines the US culture or tradition, which is Christmas. But we serve Mexican dishes there. For example, tamales, menudo, punch, champurrado, romeritos. So, the two cultures are combined. So...

ASM: Do you get food from here?

MV: We make it here. We make it ourselves. We make tamales.



ASM: I was talking about American food. Do you eat it?

MV: We do eat American food but really, as I told you, we are from Mexico and we are about caldo, menudo, pozole, vegetable soup, really Mexican food. American food, well, like pizza, hamburgers.

ASM: For the holidays?

MV: Thanksgiving, I can tell you, that's when I make a turkey, but I add Mexican things to it, right? For example, I put, I don't know, beans, rice in the turkey. So, it's not... And, for example, here in the US, they put mashed potatoes, stuffing, and pumpkin pie. So, instead of pumpkin pie, we make, I don't know, we make a cake...

AH: Tres leches.

MV: Tres leches or things like that. So, we do all that and we celebrate it. And they also celebrate it. So, I say, it's a combination of cultures. A little bit from here, a little bit from there. So, Christmas, New Year as well. Halloween too. That is totally a tradition from here. That is, they go out to ask for candy and... candy and that, because in Tijuana it's celebrated because it's a border, but really in Mexico it's not, it's not celebrated. So, it's not a Mexican tradition.

ASM: Those are all my questions. Is there anything else you want to tell me?

MV: Well, I just wanted to thank you, thank you for this opportunity to hear a story from people who come from another country and that sometimes it's not easy, but it is possible to progress here.

ASM: Do you have any last words? Any final statements?

AH: Thank you. I know it came last minute. But yeah, just thank you so much. And I'm glad to share some part of my story here with BLCI and how my relationship is with my family and how we've grown together. And yeah, thank you.

ASM: Well, much appreciated from both of you, thank you very much for this interview.

MV: Thank you too.

ASM: Thank you to you too for joining us.