

TITLE OF VIDEO: Darío y Haydée López
 DATE OF VIDEO: Summer 2018
 TRANSLATED BY: Whitney Maness, Sofía Kearns
 DATE OF TRANSLATION: June 2019

<p>[00:01] Haydée López:</p>	<p>Uh, my name is Haydée Lopez and I'm from Panama.</p>
<p>[00:03] Darío López:</p>	<p>I'm Darío López. Uh, I come from, I came to this country from</p>
<p>[00:30]</p>	<p>Medellín, from a town near Medellín, because we are not all from the capital. I left Medellín when I was 19. I was poor so I was looking for a way, well at the moment I was looking some way to help my family, right? And to improve my situation. I arrived in Medellín, at the house of some uncles, they had three brothers, three brothers working in Fabricato. I thought they were going to help me get a job at Fabricato. But I spent a whole year struggling to get in and they could not help me. I had been there a year already, I was tired of being there in the house and they were all tired of me, so they gave me a week to return to my town. But a week later, oh a blessing from God, right? They put me in, they gave me a job in Pantex. I spent a lot of time there in that factory, sending letters to the head of personnel and I went to that factory after all.</p>
<p>[00:60]</p>	<p>Since I was so poor, I worked like crazy at nineteen years old, I had a lot of youth so I could do it, I had a lot of energy to work. And I was like that almost all the time, doing, moving here and there [inaudible] than normal. I'm glad for that, because I had to pass the two-months probation period, and because I worked so hard, well, I think that's why they kept me.</p>
<p>[01:30]</p>	<p>At first I got a job to manage a machine called "barber comber" that makes the knot, right? Knot the threads that end with the new ones, right? I had to do that little job and I did it for ten years. No [inaudible] teacher or nothing to learn more of anything, no. All that time in the same job.</p>
<p>[02:00]</p>	<p>After ten years, I wrote to a factory in Panama. The rumor had arrived there in Medellín about jobs people in Panama. So I did my best to communicate with them, and it turned out to be true.</p>
<p>[02:30]</p>	<p>There was an interviewer there in Medellín, who came to recruit people, so I looked for him or looked for him when I could, anyway. And he told me to bring my curriculum vitae [laughing] and show him my resume, like I knew what that was [laughing].</p>
<p>[03:00]</p>	<p>Uh, and so I brought him my CV, handwritten as best I could and expressing my textile knowledge, and in two weeks they answered me, they needed me in Panama. They knew that I knew how to handle those machines well. And thus my enthusaism for traveling began.</p>
<p>[03:30]</p>	<p>I almost didn't get the visa, It took me a long time to get there because I didn't know how to enter Panama. Because even</p>
<p>[04:00]</p>	<p></p>

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[04:30]	though I had all the papers, I had to be a resident in order to work there. They told me at the consulate: if you are not a resident, you can't enter and you can't work. So [laughs] while I figured out how to get there, several months passed by, right?
[05:00]	Someone told me: leave, go away as a tourist and so I arrived as a tourist to the factory, not knowing whether I'd be employed or not. So, it was that way. I went as a tourist and I introduced myself to the chief of staff [inaudible]. My name is such and such, I know this machine and you need me. And they let me stay.
[05:30]	After some difficulty with the supervisor and the staff, I didn't know people there, they were very strange people, the adjustment was very difficult for me, but there [inaudible] I stayed, they let me stay. Two years later, there were about ten more Colombians there. One day a letter arrived with a work contract sent to one of my friends there. And the man already had another way to come, with another gentleman who was helping him, so he didn't need the letter. So he gave it to us, we who were there, [inaudible] but no one was interested because we thought it was a scam, a fraud [inaudible].
[06:00]	
[06:10] HL:	You had to send two hundred dollars.
DL:	We had to send two hundred dollars to the man and he got us a work contract. To get us the contract here. You had to send him two hundred dollars. I said, oh, not worth it. That's what we earned in a month's salary there. And nobody dared. At last a friend of mine and I agreed and sent the money. And we thought if we lose it, we lose it [inaudible]. And exactly two weeks later the answer arrived, they had gotten us the contract. Lots of errands [laughing] and that's how we came. That's how we came from there, that's how I came.
[06:30]	
[07:00] SK	And where did you arrive to?
DL:	To Rhode Island. We arrived in Rhode Island to an old, very old house, one of the first ones built here in the United States. You were given room and board just anywhere.

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[07:19] HL:	In nineteen seventy one.
[07:21] SK:	And you both arrived?
HL:	I arrived three months later. I stayed in Colombia. And then when he got there to Panama, but he skipped part of the story...
[07:30]	He was a knotter in Colombia, but with old machines. In Panama the machines were already more modern. So he told the girl who was knotting that he had to watch her to see if she knew how to do the job well. And he learned from her because he did not know how to use the machine.
DL:	It was very different.
HL:	[Laughing] And so he stayed in Panama to learn. He would say: no, go and work with the other machine, do the other one, I have to see it and that's how he learned to knot really, so that was how he stayed there. And in the two and a half years we were working there we fell in love. I was divorced, had two children.
[08:00]	Then we, when he got his visa to here, to come to the U.S., I was still his girlfriend. So I went with him to the embassy, to do the immigration papers, when the gentleman asked him: and that young woman, who is she?
[08:30] DL:	The consul.
HL:	The consul says to him: and that girl, who is she? And he says that's my girlfriend. And he says: and do you plan to marry her? I don't know if he really thought about it, but he said yes [laughs]. And then from there on the visa came out and we got married and immediately I was included in the visa. Then when he came (to the U.S.), he left me in Colombia. Three months I stayed in Colombia. Then I also arrived in Rhode Island. We arrived in Boston, from Boston we went to Rhode Island.
[09:00]	Because at that time the airport was right there (in Boston), but we were going to Rhode Island. And we started working in the factory that was called Pencil Mill. There we worked, he began to work up to eighty hours, I worked sixty hours and very soon we brought my children, my father came, they all came for a

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[09:30]	little while, this happened very quickly. We went back to Colombia some, but then I told him that I did not like that state (Rhode Island) because of the snow, it was very rough, coming from Panama, which is a very temperate climate, and arriving there where the snow reached my middle here, we didn't have a car or anything, so we had to wait for the cars to pass for us to walk there (to work). When a car came, we had to get out of the street and sink our feet in...
DL:	It was horrible.
HL:	It was horrible. I said no. We spent two winters like that, I told him, I don't want to spend the third the same way. I'm sorry, you have to find a way to move somewhere else, or I'm going back to Panama. So he went to Miami. In Miami he had to make door frames. At that time, he earned, well, two years later (after we came to the U.S.), he earned four dollars and ten cents (an hour). And I earned three dollars and twenty five (cents an hour). So he came to Miami and there, putting on doors, he earned two
[010:00]	seventy five.
[10:25]	
DL:	Two seventy five an hour.
HL:	Yes. Then with the other friend with whom they had traveled from Panama, he met him in Miami and they went. Then they came back to Rhode Island again, because he told me that for two seventy five he could not work. And he could only work
[10:30]	forty hours [in Miami] but he was used to working eighty hours.
[10:41]	
DL:	I was there for a week and no longer.
HL:	So he went to Atlanta. They went to Atlanta to look and found a factory. There we stayed a year in that factory, because he had brought me here and so I came. And then we stayed a year but I am a person who likes to talk, converse, chat, and in the year we were in Atlanta we could not find friends. We tried, we got into
[11:00]	catechism classes at church, church marriage encounters but most people wer Cubans or Mexicans and they didn't say much, just simply "you are welcome, you are welcome. Then a gentleman came from here in Greenville, he came to visit us and said, "look man, come to Greenville, that's where the textiles are," then Darío arrived and right there he was placed here in the Woodside (Mill). And after that, I also arrived and settled in
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[12:00]	Woodside. There was a Cuban who was going to North Carolina to bring Colombians, so this area was filled here with Colombians, by the Cuban man's effort, what's his name? Leonardo Caballero. He started (the community) because he was sent to look for a lot (of Colombians) because at that time we were no more than fifteen, twenty families. We were only ourselves, the Bedoyas, very few of us around that time. And there we continued working on all the textile mills, I went through a lot of them, I was in one, then in another, until we set up the store, and by then he had already left textiles and then I did too.
[12:14] SK:	Do you remember the names of other textile companies where you've worked here?
HL:	He worked at Woodside, at Woodside, worked at Milliken,
DL:	In Milliken, yes.
HL:	No others after those?
DL:	Yes, just those two and no others.
HL: [12:30]	Yes. I worked at Woodside, then I worked at the Monagan, Monaview, at one called Kendall, which is over there on Piedmont, another was called Simpsonville, and the last one was the Beatty Plant.
DL: [13:00]	This was so that where you came to ask for work, you [inaudible] you could work where you wanted. Wherever you would ask for work, you would find it. There were about fifteen factories, perhaps more, and each one with more than, about eight hundred, a thousand workers. So many people in textiles, it was a huge number. This town was the textile center of the world.
HL:	Yes.
SK:	What kind of work did you do? Were you a knotter here too, or what?

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HL:	No, he started here as a textile mechanic. I was a weaver the whole time. I started doing everything in Panama until I ended up being a weaver [laughs].
[13:30] SK:	So in Panama you also worked in textiles?
HL:	Yes. That's how we met, there in the factory.
DL:	Yes, she was a supervisor. [laughs]
HL:	When I left Panama, I was a textile and weaving supervisor. I was the weaving master teacher there, that is how my position was called.
SK:	And do you remember the name of the company in Panama?
HL:	It was Panama International. But that did not last long at all. It didn't last more than three years. They went bankrupt. Everything was modern and there were many thefts.
[14:00] DL:	It was a new factory but in three years it was ruined by salt. The salt from there, in the air, it eats the material, the iron. Everything rusts.
HL:	No, it was that the Spaniards arrived and began to earn impressive salaries. Salaries that, in Panama, the minimum wage was at that time one dollar per hour. And those people, imagine that when the Colombians arrived they started earning two hundred and fifty, three hundred and fifty. And the Spaniards before them earned around seven hundred. And another boss earned nine hundred dollars. We made fabrics. We were people who didn't know how to weave. We were learning to weave. Then at that time we (workers) went, I was one of those who went to the presidents' office to fight so that the factory would not close. Forcing the stores to buy the fabrics. Because China produced fabrics at that time at fifteen cents a yard and in Panama they were selling the fabric at twenty five cents. Then the president forced them to buy our fabric, so when we made a defective piece they came and put it on display. They would see the defect and they would go ahead and buy from another vendor, they would not buy our fabric. And that's what brought up the bankruptcy, because of [inaudible] high salaries. Later, when they wanted to bring Colombians, because it all started
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<p>[15:30]</p> <p>SK</p>	<p>with Panamanians, eh, with Spaniards, textiles began with just Spanish. When they went bankrupt then they went to look for Colombians workers. And then they paid them less than half of what they were supposed to, but it was not possible anymore to save the company, it was not possible. This was at the time of what was his name? Torrijos</p>
<p>[16:00]</p> <p>DL:</p>	<p>How did the working conditions in Panama or Colombia compare with the working conditions you found here in Greenville, for example? Or in Rhode Island?</p> <p>The textile work is hard everywhere. That's an [inaudible] as they say here. It is hard, it is difficult, it is necessary to be attentive, running around all the time, and they are always harassing you. Most of all it is difficult because they are always asking for more production and today you give one and tomorrow they ask you for more. Then because of that, you feel harassed. And about working conditions, it's hot all the time. It is always hot.</p>
<p>[16:30]</p> <p>HL:</p>	<p>When we arrived, the rule about wearing ear plugs was in vogue, after our ears were already ruined. Because it's a horrendous noise. Then about five years before leaving, I stopped working in 1980 and we dedicated ourselves to the store. It was about five years after we had started working in textiles that the ear plugs came out but no one put them on because you were so used to the noise and you wouldn't hear the noise of the looms anymore.</p>
<p>[17:00]</p> <p>DL:</p>	<p>Because you get used to it.</p>
<p>HL:</p> <p>[17:30]</p>	<p>Yes, and like he said, what they demand is production, production. Back in Panama I had no problems with my boss and I didn't here either. I only had problems with one boss and no one else because I had to go to Social (Social Services Office?) because of him because that boss would arrive, this was at the Dunnin Mill, that boss would come and say "Good, good, Haydée," "Good, good" on the days that I made production. And the one day I did not produce as much, "What's the matter, what's the matter?" Then one day he saw that I had not much production and said "What's the matter?" He had talked to me the previous day, he had congratulated me. And that day I had</p>

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[18:00]	bad production and, sorry, he came to congratulate me but the day before he had scolded me, so turned my back to him and ignored him. In the afternoon they called me and told me that I had to collect my final paycheck and leave because I had lost my job, because the factory was in bad shape. Oh I was happy because I'd heard people say they were thrown out and had the right to collect (their paycheck). We had never collected, never any of those things. And I was happier and I said good, one day I'm going to rest, I'm going to have money. When I had to go to the Social they told me, no, you can not collect because you
[18:30]	disrespected your boss. I said: "I disrespected him? How can I do that if I don't even know how to speak English?" He says: well, do you want a hearing? I said, yes, I want my hearing. So when they arrived and they sat us down, I had my son, who was a child, as my interpreter. Then the good thing was that they let the supervisor talk first and he began to say that I spent a lot of time in the cafeteria, that my looms were stopped, that I talked a lot. And he started talking, but when it was my turn, then I said to my son, "Tell him." Oh but he also claimed that I told him the
[19:00]	"F" word, to fuck off. I did not know how to say those words in English, I did not know them, that day I learned it. Then my son translated this to me. Then I said to my son, "Tell him that I knew he was a hypocrite, but I never thought he was a gossip and a liar." Hypocrite because he always congratulated me when I was wrong, but to tell him he was a gossip and a liar, that man turned beet red (with anger/embarassment) And I didn't know how to say that word. Thank goodness for that hearing, I learned how to say it. See, I won the case nevertheless
[19:30]	[laughing]. It was the only issue I had, everything else I left because, well, I was bored in that factory and well, in those days you had the the luxury of choosing where to go, to choose the fatory you wanted [laughing].
[19:51] SK:	And then for how many years did you work here in Greenville in the textile companies?
HL:	We worked from 1971 until about 1985, we worked there.
[20:00] SK:	And then, what was the reason for leaving?

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HL:	Because we set up the business.
SK:	Do you want to tell us a little about the business?
HL:	The business? Yes, the business was from a relative who sold it to Darío for two hundred dollars, but when we arrived, it was actually nothing. There were some tables, some things like that, but well, we started with that and it was hard, we would work twelve hours in the factory, he would go straight to sleep and I to the store, to work in the store. I would go to the store at five in the afternoon when he would get up and come to the store and then I would come running to make dinner and bring dinner to him and go back to bed around 7:00 or 6:00 pm in order to get up at 11:00 pm (to go to the mill). That's how it was until one day he decided to take care of the store, and then I joined him from there on, we stayed like this [inaudible] in a day we were selling nothing more than twenty dollars. And Darío wanted to close shop and I would not agree, I'd say Darío, things are going to improve sometime, people are going to start coming. There will come a time and yes...
[20:30]	
[21:00]	
DL:	[inaudible]. There were only Colombians, no Mexicans or anything, no foreigners from any other country, no Mexicans...
HL:	Colombians
DL:	Only Colombians. Waiting for [inaudible]. And yes, things really improved. Around 1990.
[21:30]	
HL:	But then good times came, after I left textiles, we both worked in the business, and we were able to take trips, because there was a time when if he went somewhere I I couldn't because we could not leave the store alone. And there was a time when I started, I had up to seven employees. From there I left for Brazil, I went to Panama, I went to Honduras and spent some time there. But there came a time when the end of our business, big stores, big competition arrived and we never, since there were only the four of us, with my two children. And of my two children, my daughter was the only one who helped me in the store. My son graduated and worked in business administration and went to work in companies. And then we thought of opening. Store
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[22:30]	branch but we didn't trust anyone. Because someone else had tried thios and and got his money stolen. So we didn't dare. So what happened? The bigger stores came with more competition and the thieves came to us as a result. They came here to our house, knocked the door down, they threatened us with a gun, and at the store we were often threatened with a gun. So he said, let's sell. I was not scared, I just faced them defiantly. And he would tell me, one day because of your defiance they will shoot you, because they would point a gun at me and I would not be afraid that day. But then another day I would have panick
[23:00]	attacks. I was mostly afraid of arriving home at night, I would be shaking all over when opening the door I felt that I was being watched. But at the moment being at gun point I wold not feel fear, the Darío said the children graduated, and he retired, and I continued working at the store [inaudible] He said let's get out of that becuase we faced fierce competition, so not really...
DL:	[inaudible] We had to keep up with retail stores
HL:	We couldn't compete with them
SK:	And the the name of the store was...?
HL:	Spanish Amigos
[23:30]	
SK:	Yes, that was a very prominent business here
DL:	Yes. There was a time that it was. [inaudible] We paid the rent of this house, the one of the store, the cars, we went on vacation, we lived well.
HL:	The problem was, as it's called, that when the store was about two years old, and it was advertised, people from Columbia came because there was no store in Columbia, they came from Spartanburg, they even came from North Carolina. Then I started to set up a restaurant because people came from far away and had no place to eat, so I set up the restaurant. Afterwards I had the store and the restaurant. But from there other stores and shops opened in all those places and so the people didn't need to
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SK: [24:30]	come here anymore, the customers came from around here and the local crowd didn't bring in as much revenue. When you think about your relationship with textiles here in Greenville, uh, how do you feel, how do you remember that time? It sounds like it was a little difficult?
HL: [25:00] [25:30]	I don't know, I felt good, I was young and strong, no, on the contrary, we felt good because you saw the money, because no one earned better money than textile workers. These people who worked in the banks and in the offices didn't make the kind of money we did. Imagine, many times we came and got paid [inaudible] and we went bankrupt, because you were convinced all the time that we had money, for example, I was broke one summer, the next summer I had six thousand, ten thousand dollards saved, let's go to Disney World, let's go to Colombia, let's go to Brazil, because you were paid well working in the textile mills. The few people who worked in the textiles lived very well, the few who had very good savings because the textiles pay well. And it's a job that they, well, I don't know, I never felt, I don't know about other people but in my experience I never felt harassed by the bosses, I came and did my job and left. They were just waiting for my production and if I didn't do it well, my paycheck was less, so you worked hard to produce more to have the biggest salary.
SK:	And did you work overtime a lot?
HL:	Yes, yes, [inaudible] he worked eighty hours sometimes, but I would not work more than sixty. Yes, I couldn't stand it because I had to come home to cook, wash, and clean too.
DL: [26:00]	[inaudible]
HL:	It's not like in Latin American countries where we have help from the maid or the mother or aunt to keep the house. Here you have to do everything. So I worked sixty hours. But he worked eighty hours.

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DL:	And there were many expenses, we had many expenses because we had to think about our families that were still in Colombia and Panama.
HL:	And we came here with nothing, nothing, and we bought a house, bought furniture, raised the youngsters. We came with borrowed money when we left Panama. We had those debts for all those things.
[26:30] DL:	Yes, too many commitments.
SK:	Were the working conditions in Medellín better or worse than the working conditions here, for example?
DL:	In Medellín, you work in good conditions. People who get a job there have no problem.
HL:	There are many benefits, many things that they don't have here. I've heard Colombians talk about retiring young, that they're paid on holidays, I don't know how many holidays in the year, but they are paid well and there are many good benefits.
[27:00] DL:	In Colombia there are very good benefits.
HL:	The truth is it's hard to get one of those positions, those jobs.
DL:	Yes, it's a lottery system. Since there are so many people, [inaudible] there are lots of people waiting at the mills' doors hoping that a supervisor comes out to choose four or five of them, and yes, it's a very hard placement system, to get employed there.
[27:30] SK:	And Doña Haydeé, didn't you ever want to go work in Colombia?
HL:	No, on the contrary, people come from there because they want to be paid in dollars, that's why he left Colombia and went to Panama, because they want to be paid in dollars, that is what

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<p>[28:00]</p>	<p>pushes Colombians out. Otherwise Colombians would stay in their country. What I never thought of in my life was leaving Panama, I never thought of coming to the U.S. or anything, but because I married him, I came to the U.S. But it never in my life occurred to me. Yes. I am going from Panama to the United States.</p>
<p>DL:</p>	<p>[inaudible]</p>
<p>HL</p>	<p>And now that we have retired, we thought that we were going to go back to Panama or Colombia, but how could we, look at all those photos there of my grandchildren and I just can't, I can't. We were about to sell the house to leave but, no, I couldn't (leave our family here).</p>
<p>[28:30] DL:</p>	<p>She can't leave the grandchildren.</p>