

TITLE OF VIDEO: Sara Quintana

1

DATE OF VIDEO: 7-20-2018

TRANSLATED BY: Estéfano Del Valle, Matt Connors, Sofia Kearns

DATE OF TRANSLATION: 10-5-2018

<p>[00.03] Sara Quintana:</p>	<p>My name is Sara Restrepo, I'm Colombian, uh, I came to Greenville in 1987.</p>
<p>[00.15] Sofia Kearns:</p>	<p>And where in Colombia?</p>
<p>[00.16] SQ:</p>	<p>I am from, that is I was born in Caicedonia, but when I was little I was taken to Tuluá and I grew up in Tuluá, so, I say that I am a tulueña. I worked for the Office of Family Welfare in Colombia after I got married and I have a daughter. Eh, I worked for Family Welfare in Colombia for</p>
<p>[00.33]</p>	<p>12 years as a secretary assistant and I worked with adoptions. But as everyone knows in Colombia life is difficult, and with the secretary's salary I could not pay for my daughter's university. So, I decided to come here, to earn an extra little money and be able to afford that. I arrived in Miami initially. Eh my destination was New York, but I was very scared of the cold in New York because we came from very hot land and thinking about the cold of New York, I said, Oh God!</p>
<p>[1:03]</p>	<p>But I had some friends from the same Family Welfare office I had known and they told me "when you go to the United States you are welcome to our house." Then, when I was in Miami, the person who received me said "If you want to call them [that is fine] because you have work in New York." The mother of Jorge Martinez, who was the person who received me, told me she had a job for me in New York.</p>
<p>[1:33]</p>	<p>But I was very afraid of the cold and the size {of the city}, Eh, my friends, I called them on the phone and they said, "Come here, here you can work" and I said "OK, you have to try." And I traveled from Miami to Atlanta and they went to wait for me in Greenville. Eh, from Greenville to Atlanta (Inaudible) they went to wait for me there. And, I came and Greenville welcomed me very well. I felt at home, in the family where I arrived,</p>

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2

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[2:03]	Wonderful people, they are like my brothers and I started to work with them, not exactly in a textile factory, but in ... it was like a factory where women's clothing was made.
[2:33]	Eh, blouses, pants, I knew how to sew but I had never sewn in huge quantities, piles of cloth that were bundles as they said
[3:03]	of 12,15,30 pieces, but I was learning, I was learning, with very good people and so I got involved in the work. It was a form of textiles because there were many seams here called the company called Estridor. There I learned, but the salary at that time was 3.25 an hour. So then you had to work many hours to get a little bit of money.
[3:33]	Then I learned how to do it fast and you were paid by each production, if I made many blouses then I earned a lot. So according to what you produced you would earn around 4 dollars an hour. At this time in Greenville there was so much work that you could request work in three or four plants and in all three you were called because there was a lot of work.
[4:03]	Sometimes we left in the afternoons after work "we are going to look for work elsewhere". We were going but because of the distance for one thing or another and since we were all in a single car, because it was a single car for everyone, then we had to look where they gave us all work. And then someone would not settle for this and so for that reason we would remain working there in the same place. Eh, the friends where I was, the housemates where I lived who welcomed me, got their green card papers and had to travel to Colombia. Then they had to wait there for at least 6 months to do all the paperwork
[4:33]	and I stayed with the two brothers, with Alex and Omar in the house, but I wanted to do something else that would pay me better. There was a gentleman ... his name was Orlando. He worked textiles, he was a doffer, that was in a textile plant but with threads. Then he said "if you want I'll take you to the factory where I work but you do not speak English," and I said "well, I'll do what I can."

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3

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[5:03]	Then he took me to the factory, it's in Spartanburg, it was in Spartanburg, it was called Milford Mills and the man who was interviewing me because I spoke almost no English, he told me if you can, he told me "if you can learn the work by watching, you begin tomorrow." And then from \$3.25 that I would earn an hour I would earn \$6.50 an hour. For, the training, it was about 2 weeks during the day, because the training was only during the day.
[5:33]	But that's where there was a mini-shift, as they called it, from 12 on Friday night to 12 noon on Saturday. And from 12 o'clock on Saturday night to 12 o'clock on Sunday morning. You only worked 25 hours but you were paid for 36. So I said this is what I need.
[6:03]	The work was very hard at first, because there were very long rooms and there were some things up there ... like a cone of wool, it was a thick wool that was put up and you had to fill all these spaces with these wools above and the wool was coming through the machines and became a thin thread. Then these threads burst
[6:33]	and the yarn cones were forming below. Then you had to stop the machine with your finger when the thread burst, and return to tie, to tie the strand. This took me a very long time to learn, because I was pulling the thread from top to bottom and I was doing it the opposite way, not getting it, until the day I got the first strand and I shouted so loud that they thought I had pricked my finger [laugh]
[7:03]	but thank God no, the only thing is that they gave you some, some, like what they put on you when you cut your finger, a bandaid that you wrapped around your finger to stop the machine. Because it was too hot, that turned like [inaudible] and you had to stop the machine. It was a nice job but exhausting, because each machine had 50 cones
[7:33]	becoming a ball, like cotton ball. Then you had to be running all night, all night you ran because you stopped one strand, the other and all stopped, and you had to be constantly running. And it was not just a machine, it was three machines. Then, you had to run from one to another, from another to another, and look and go back and forth, it

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4

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[8:03]	<p>was, that is, it was an exhausting job, 12 hours without stopping.</p> <p>But it was a very good pay, eh ... full insurance as if we worked full time. And they pay one 24 ... you worked 24 hours and they paid you for 36. Then, I earned very good checks on two days of the week. It was hard for me to learn and, since I did not speak English, I suffered a lot because I needed to say something and I did not know how to say it.</p>
[8:33]	<p>The doffer was the one who would come afterwards, - we were two people handling the machines - we had all those bobbins already full down there, the doffer would come quickly and removed them and then we would start all over again. We had to put up one by one the ... the bobbins out of thread, which were very big and heavy. To put them up there to start again making the thin thread. The very thick thread was converted into a thin and fine thread. Then, they took it to be dyed, they painted it in color and everything. Eh ... I started from there and I was learning the trade.</p>
[9:03]	<p>from there they assigned me to other looms where I didn't have to run so much, but I had to be very careful because they would overheat and fail easily. Then there was a very nice machine, which they called the hydro-extractor I was there a short time but it was as if a lot of threads came out of a corner</p>
[9:33]	<p>They seemed like, those threads shined in the distance because that's where they produced the color. Very nice, it was a very nice job but in the midst of the business, you could not understand how the machine worked ... It was a nice experience, it was a very big company, the heat there was intense because there was no air conditioning. Then you would sweat from the start to the end of the workday.</p>
[10:03]	<p>Then I quit and I went back to sewing, but now in a different company that was an Australian company. They made beautiful bedding. But it was so good at that time that, look, I got to work at that company and it's also ... the more I talk the more I remember. I got to work there and there they were, almost all of us were Hispanic. But, if you recommended and introduced someone who worked very</p>

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5

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<p>[10.33]</p>	<p>hard, the company would hire the person, and after a couple of months of good work, they would give you 50 dollars as a reward for having brought a good worker. So, everyone would bring another worker, and another worker would bring someone else, and we all were Hispanic [laugh]. What is sad here is to see all the waste.</p> <p>This is because we come from a country where there are a lot of needs, people lack the essentials</p> <p>Then you don't waste anything but in here they discard everything. That was the way then, I don't know how it is now, but you get used to see materials being thrown away. So, we would tell the supervisor "look that fabric is torn: and she would say "it doesn't matter, sew it", I would say "but why should I sew something that is in bad shape?" "Sew it." And this happened to me and others.</p>
<p>[11.03]</p>	<p>And the company started producing bad quality garments. So, for example we would sew for Macy's, JCPenney, and other big companies, and they started to return what they had ordered. Truckloads of returns. The company started to lose money. And more trucks coming. Then they started sending us to work repairing the defective garments. But this was due to lack of organization, and lack of care on the part of the supervisors.</p>
<p>[11.33]</p>	<p>The supervisors never cared that the job was not being properly done. And we would let them know but they would say "go ahead, go ahead, go ahead, complete it." A lot of garments were lost this way and the company closed. From there I went to Colombia because it was my daughter's graduation. When I returned here I had no job, but, as I told you, at that time there was... one would apply for jobs in various places and would never be without a job.</p>
<p>[11.59]</p>	<p>I arrived on a Saturday, on Sunday I settled in my place, on Monday I went to apply for jobs, and I would be working on Tuesday morning. Then I worked in a factory that had looms but for embroidering. It was a different type of textile job. These were huge looms where you would tie the fabric, huge looms where they would put the rolls of fabric to spin.</p>

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6

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[12.29]	But the machines produced the embroidered pattern on the fabric. It was a different kind of textile job. Everything was computerized, and the machinists would look out for broken threads all the time, they were in charge of that. I never had to do that. What I did was mending, as they called it. That is to fix what the machine would not do. Kreiger was the name of the company. Thus I learned. I told them, "I have never ...
[12.58]	I have sewn but I have never embroidered." They told me "You will learn." These were simple machines to embroider, but you had to do the embroidering, that is, you would move the embroidery hoop with your hands over the fabric, and thus your learned how to embroider. That is, with this machine, it was the movement of your hands that would produce the flower pattern that the machine would not do by itself. I also worked in quality control there. They loved me because I was picky, so that the result was good.
[13.29]	But I was in quality control a short time because my English was not good, not good, and they explained me what I had to do and I did exactly what they told me, but the people working the machines were left without work that week because their job was not good and therefore I placed a sticker on each error, I had to put that up on a big board
[13.59]	And I was told to put a sticker where there were defects, and then they would have to be mended. Well, there was an American woman who was very angry with me, and I didn't know why, it was because she had not had any payment that week. People were doing a bad job and a lot of fabric was returned and we had to mend them completely, and while a machine would do the job in one day, the mending would take three or four days.
[14.29]	One by one, the flowers that were not well made or the little holes, we would need to do everything all over. Then they removed me from that job because I was too picky, and I went back to sewing [laugh]. But I worked there many years, around 9. I did the seven am to seven pm shift, or the four pm to four am one, I never had a problem with these shifts.

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7

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[14.59]	I worked my regular shift, from seven am to seven pm, but if I had to go somewhere or to go to the doctor, I'd come later and my machine would be there, nobody but me would touch that machine. I knew that was my machine. The rolls of fabric would run to the floor and one had to bend them to throw them in a big machine. This was part of this type of textiles related to embroidery.
[15.24] SK:	We had not heard about this type of textiles and their history.
[15.29] SQ:	Yes. That is embroidery.
[15.30] SK:	Sí.
[15.31] SQ:	I learned how to do this. I never worked with the big machines but I worked alongside them because whatever the machine would damage I had to mend it in the sewing machine. They take out the presser foot and only the needle would remain and you embroider with it. That is, the foot does not press the fabric, only the needle. It all depends on the speed of your hands to move the embroidering loop.
[15:59] SQ:	All of that was called mending
[16.02] SK:	An did all those plants close down?
[16:06] SQ:	Yes, completely.
[16.08] SK:	When? What years?
[16:09]	I think some sixteen years ago. I remember the Krieger company, it was one of the last ones to close. In front of it was another, the Stone manufacturing. I never worked there,

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8

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[16:29]	But a lot of Hispanic people did work there. Their embroidered products were distributed all around the US.
[16:39] SK:	With so much work, what was the social life like? How did you have fun?
[16:41] SQ:	Yes! Social life. We had, we had a Hispanic party every month at Knights of Columbus. It was a church group which included of Americans too.
[16:51] SK:	(inaudible) yes.
[16:52] SQ:	Then, the Americans met every week; we, Hispanics only had the right to party every month
[16:59]	and we celebrated also for example on the twentieth of July, Valentine's day, Halloween, Christmas not much but I did have a small Christmas party. So, it was the same people that we all always knew about. We met in that place on the scheduled days. One time, it was not very long, a time when I worked from seven in the morning to three thirty in the afternoon there. I came to my house
[17:29]	I could go walking because it was very close, I had something to eat and I came back to do a second shift, "a mini-shift" they called it, which was from five in the afternoon to ten in the evening, too. In the same factory. But there were different wages, that is, they paid one on one side and they paid one on the other side. They did that from Monday to Thursday. On Friday I only worked from seven in the morning until three thirty in the afternoon, and I would go to sleep.
[17:59]	Because I entered at twelve on Saturday night at twelve o'clock, at night on Friday night, at the textile factory at twelve o'clock at night, that is, it was [pause]. So, initially we went to mass. That was the only one, ... we went to Mass there was only one Mass in Spanish on Sundays at the Santa Maria church at one o'clock in the afternoon. There



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9

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	we returned and met the same people: Doña Carola and her husband,
[18.29]	Eh, Don Elkin Berrio and his wife. We were almost the same people, the Latinos, Latino Rodriguez who, was, Aliz's mother and them, the sisters. It was the same people that went to mass. We were so many that we would fill the front pews. And then more people started to come, and more people, then it was St. Mary's church that was the Hispanic church [pause] who was Hispanic, but then there was the other one, the other Catholic church. [pause]
[18.59] SK:	Our Lady of the Rosary?
[19:01] SQ:	Our Lady of the Rosary where Father Park was, Austin Park was a priest who was very supportive of the Hispanic people. He was American but he spoke five languages. He gave the Mass in Tagalog, ... Spanish, English, French, and Tagalog. We met so many nice people at that time.
[19.23] SK:	Yes.
[19:24] SQ:	The times changed, the people changed
[19:29]	not everybody stayed the same, but I believe that every person within themselves keep beautiful memories.
[19.38] SK:	Is there any other anecdote that you would like to share?
[19.40] SQ:	[laugh] many many many anecdotes. I cannot think of any at this moment. Especially with the English language, because one would make a lot of mistakes, as for example, I met an American guy who wanted to learn Spanish. He was wonderful, his wife was a flight attendant.
[19.59]	But he would not say flight attendant (azafata) but stewardess (aeromoza). He would say "My wife, my girlfriend is "beautiful" (hermosa) and I would say yes, very pretty [laugh]. He meant to say "aeromoza" but mispronounced it, so it sounded like "hermosa."

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10

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<p>[20.27]</p>	<p>Another day we went to eat together at a friend's house. She made empanadas to sell. We went there because he wanted to eat Hispanic food. So, he says, in Spanish, Sara, call that cat. And I called it by saying "Mis, mis, mis, mis." The cat didn't pay any attention to me. Then he said "Sara, this cat is American. Kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty" and the cat immediately came. [laugh]</p>
<p>[20.54] SK:</p>	<p>Anything else?</p>
<p>[20.59] SQ:</p>	<p>No, I think that my experience working here in this country has been delightful... A lot of people say "oh, we come here just to work and work.' Thank God we have something to do. Thank God this country welcomed us and gave us what we needed: jobs, tranquility, peace. There is peace in this</p>
<p>[21.20]</p>	<p>town.</p>