

TITLE OF VIDEO: Aliz Henao Rodríguez and Teresa Rodríguez (nickname: las Latino)

DATE OF VIDEO: August 4, 2018.

TRANSLATED BY: Sofía Kearns

DATE OF TRANSLATION: August 1, 2019

<p>[00:03] Aliz Henao:</p>	<p>My name is Aliz Henao Rodríguez. I arrived in this country in 1969, on December 13. We arrived because of [pause] an interview that my dad had in Colombia with some Americans from a company called Cadillac textiles</p>
<p>[00:33]</p>	<p>uh, they went to Colombia to hire textile mechanics in that company. We were very lucky because my dad was one of the chosen ones and then they gave him the opportunity to bring him here. Ah, he arrived in 1968 and a year later he brought the family.</p>
<p>[1:03]</p>	<p>So, uh, the story of us is that we came through that work contract from my dad. He worked there at Cadillac and from there he started, and we started. We arrived young, ah, my older sister was fourteen years old and the youngest fourteen months, and, and there we started meeting people and studying and living there.</p>
<p>[1:33]</p>	<p>We were the third Colombian family that arrived in Central Falls, Rhode Island. And there we lived for five years, from 69 until the beginning of 1975. But because of my dad's health problems, with asthma from cold weather and snow then, ah,</p>
<p>[2:03]</p>	<p>a friend helped him come here, and this is where he resided, he came first and resided here in South Carolina, Greenville, South Carolina. There he found work, he started working in textiles and all the time he was a textile mechanic. And there we started, we moved immediately after and the whole family</p>
<p>[2:33]</p>	<p>came in 1975. I started working at a company called Burlington, it was located, the company was big and then I started working and then I moved to work at the Beatty Plant, in Fountain Inn, which was</p>
<p>[3:00]</p>	<p>one of the big companies here from Simpsonville. And there were all kinds of mills and plenty of Colombians. There I worked, I went to work in 1977 until 1993. Ah, my job there was as a spinning machine operator.</p>
<p>[3:33]</p>	<p>Many times when contracts were handled well, then I went to the loom room, helped another sister of mine who worked filling batteries and in that way I learned about the entire textile system.</p>

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[4:03]	Textiles were the most popular job here, especially in matters of payment, money, for money. As all Colombians do, we are Always wanting more money, get the best salaries. I worked there until I quit in 1993, but part of my family remained there working, Almost all of us worked at the Beatty Plant doing different jobs there
TR: [4:33]	I am Teresa Rodríguez
Sofía Kearns:	And you, I understand that you didn't work in textiles in Colombia but your husband did work in textiles, right?
TR:	Yes, he was a textile mechanic and it was also, first he was a weaver and then he learned mechanics. When people came from the US to Colombia to hire people to work in US textiles,
TR: [5:03]	he was one of the first. He had a friend who helped him. And he came in a recruitment of mechanics and weavers.
SK:	And do you remember in which company he worked in Colombia?
[5:33] TR:	In Tejicóndor, Fabricato, and Pantex.
SK:	Were all three mills in Medellín?
TR:	In Med ... in Bello, Antioquia. Tejicóndor was in Medellín.
SK:	Ah, I get it.
TR:	And Fabricato and Pantex were in Bello.
[6:03] SK:	Oh, ok. And tell me, ah, how did you take the news that the family was coming to the US? How did you all make the decision?
	How was that, if you remember some details [laugh]
TR:	Yes, of course. That was some news that gave us a lot of joy because in Colombia he was earning very little money in his work as a mechanic. Then the friend made him excited about coming here, and he decided and said yes, that he was coming here.

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[6:33]. TR:	And, and so it was. There was the recruitment and he was one of those who got a job contract to come here. He came and we stayed there in Colombia, in Bello, Antioquia. I told him "Yes, I have one condition: if you leave for the US.
[7:03]	don't forget us and [pause] remember that we are, that there are six children, then ...
AR:	And if you don't send for us, you don't take us there, you don't see your children again. [laughter]
TR:	And then he said yes, and, that he wasn't going to leave us. He promised me that he send for us. And I, well, then
[7:33]. TR:	I accepted that job contract.
SK:	Did you come with a work visa or resident visa?
AR y TR:	a work one
AT:	Yes, because they signed a five-year contract
TR:	Yes, then, mm and they promised him that they would help him bring the family. So it was. He came, we stayed and time passed
[8:03]TR:	He called us, we wrote, and then he was told that he had gotten the visa. He was now a resident of the USA and he could now ask for his family.
AL:	Then we came huh, on December 13 of '69
SK:	Your father and husband's name was Latino
[8:33] AL:	His name is Latino Rodríguez
TR:	Latino Rodríguez, yes.
TR:	So it was [at the airport in Boston]. This man saw me downstairs begging her to go through a door, that I would hold her hand, I was

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[9:03]. AL:	nervous, all nervous. And then this man came down and said, "I am a friend of Latino Rodríguez, of her husband, I am going to help you."
	We had no idea what the United States was like.
	My dad sent us photos and said "See this is snow." And we saw white, but "And where does it fall from?" And how does it pile up and all that? "
TR:	[laughter]
AL:	We were in admiration when we arrived because we arrived in the middle of the winter
TR:	Winter
AL	With snow to the knee. When we got there to Rhode Island, uh, another family, two other families were waiting for us with hats,
[9:33] AL:	with coats, with boots, gloves, because we had arrived with normal Colombian clothes and getting to that cold ...
TR:	we thought it was normal, imagine!
AL:	But, we started, that to study and everything ... as my dad did not drive yet, we always had to go to school on foot, wearing warm clothes, and with snow to the knee. And when going to the market, each one with its market bag, but everything was very nice.
[10:03] AR:	Now we remember all that and say,
TR:	Oh yes!
AR:	"Oh Lord". We tell our children and they don't believe us. There are some whose eyes lit, others tear up, and everything. But it was very cool, very pretty.
TR:	Very beautiful history, yes.

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AR:	Because in Colombia, in those times, in the sixties, when in Colombia they said, "Oh, the United States," it was a rather extraordinary country.
TR:	Yes
[10:33] AR:	The powerful country in the world
TR:	That was like, like winning the lottery for those who came here.
AR:	So, very lucky, uh, that the family were able to travel to the United States. Then yes...
TR:	The biggest family that came here at that time
AR:	We arrived in Rhode Island,
TR:	It was us, yes, the third family.
AR:	We were helped by a man named, an American gentleman, whose name was Freddy
TR:	Freddy Ramos
TR: [11:03]	Freddy Ramos, and he was the man who helped there in the textile company, in the Cadillac.
SK:	And how was the arrival in Greenville? Did you have a hard time adapting here from Rhode Island? How was that?
TR:	Oh yeah. We were already very adapted, we had five years of living in Rhode Island. When my dad came here to South Carolina
[11:33] AR:	through a friend, he came with my younger brother, who is before, ... the second
TR:	of the oldest
AR:	My sister is the oldest, then my brother follows and then I, then he came with him and [pause] and here they came to my dad's friend's

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	<p>house and they took him to the factory. It was called American Spinner, that factory is closed now</p>
[12:03] AR:	<p>And that's where he started working and about three months or four months later, my dad said, "No, uh" ... The coming here was because of my dad's health problems, aha, he suffered from asthma because of the cold weather, because of the snow, very cold there in Rhode Island. Then he, having work here for a while, he said</p>
[12:33] AR:	<p>"I'm going for my family." So yes, we packed up, we came, but when we got here, we didn't like this. Although we arrived in January 1975, the temperature was as if it were summer. The temperature was very good. It was like between 65, 70 degrees. We liked that for a change, but we didn't like it here because everything is so far away</p>
[13:03] AR:	<p>and everything was still not as good, It was quite undeveloped. Hm But however, my older sister was already married to Rodrigo, so they stayed there and my mother came with five</p>
TR:	<p>with five [children]</p>
AR:	<p>with five. My brother and I were the elders, and now, I came here when I was 16 years old.</p>
[13:33] SK	<p>And did you start working immediately?</p>
AR:	<p>Not immediately. I went to school and then when I saw that I could work, then I left school and then I started working before I turned 18, I started working in the, in the, in the Beatty Plant. First I worked in companies located in Greenville, such as American Spinning, and then in the Burlington,</p>
[14:03] TR:	<p>and after the Burlington, I got married and came to work here at ... I would travel from the Beatty Plant to Greenville with my husband. So that's where our textile story started to unfold.</p>
SK:	<p>And Don Latino, what job did he do in Medellin and what job did he come here to do?</p>
TR:	<p>In Medellín he worked first in Bello weaving;</p>

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[14:33] TR:	and working as a weaver, he was told that they were going to teach him loom mechanics, so he agreed he said yes, he liked mechanics and then there in Bello, in Pantex they paired him up with another mechanic to teach him. It was at Pantex where he was taught
[15:03] TR:	mechanics. After Pantex he worked in Tejicóndor, he already knew weaving, mechanics, then he started as a mechanic in Tejicóndor. And when he was working in Tejicóndor it was when the opportunity to travel to the US came about.
[15:33] TR:	He was hired to come to the US as a mechanic and our son learned weaving, after weaving he learned mechanics, and he remained a textiles mechanic.
SK:	And you, what were you working on, what was your work in textile companies?
[16:03] AR:	OK, well, my dad, a textile mechanic. I have the older sister who worked in the loom room where my dad worked; she filled the thread cones; I worked in spinning machines, I was a spinning machine operator, and, and my brother, he was a weaver and a mechanic too. My mom cleaned the
[16:33] AR:	machines, she cleaned them, with an air instrument, and then, uh, she worked cleaning the spinning machines. And my other sister, the little one, she also did spinning, she worked with me.
SK:	Hm, then, everyone got involved ...
AR:	We all work
SK:	What is difficult in that job?
AR:	Textiles are very hard,
[17:03] AR:	especially weaving and mechanics. They are hard jobs. Spinning was hard because they always required production, production, production. In textiles, in the loom section it was always quality and production. So that was it. And what motivated us the most was that if you produced a lot and at good quality, then

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[17:33] AR:	they paid more. Yes, and overtime. We would negotiate the overtime hours. Then with them ...
SK:	Did you work many extra hours?
AR:	Quite a lot. We worked many extra hours. For example, my husband and I worked a lot of overtime. Rodrigo was tireless, he worked hard. He worked 14 to 16 hours [a day]
[18:03] SK:	And in spinning, what was it, what specifically did you have to do?
AR:	Well, there in the spinning huh, it was the cotton cones. They were big cotton cones. Each cone could weigh between 6, 7 to 8 pounds. One had to raise them and hook them up in the upper section of the spinner. It was a long machine, like, coils in front and coils on the other side.
[18:33] AR	Then the process was the cotton passed through some rollers. With the rollers' pressure the cotton turned into thread. The thread was produced and coiled this way. Then I would lower the thread and fill the bobbins that would go to the looms. On the looms they put the thread on drum, and, and that was where the weaver wove and produced the cloth. Oh and uh
[19:03] SK:	It was a very physical job, right? Always on your feet
AR:	walking, because the coils demanded, they all had to be filled. They went up and down filling, up and down. Suddenly one burst, and from a corner one saw the void of this coil because it was not equal to the others; All filled at the same time. You have to change the hooks constantly because they sharpened, from turning so much they got very sharp.
[19:33] TR:	I had to change them
AR:	And many times one would get a burn.
TR:	They were called travelers.
AR:	The travelers, yes, which in English is "travel," the "travelers." And they rolled and rolled because the thread went inside. So, back then,



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	<p>I was about 17 years old, but I said I was 18 to get a job. Then I went in to work at 17. My co-workers were all Americans.</p>
[20:03] AR:	<p>So, of course, when I entered so young, full of energy, was the one who ran the most machines. Then they were angry at me. But I did it because they paid me more money for more production. At that time when we lived ... in the eighties, yes, in the mid-seventies and already around here in the eighties there was not so much discrimination, nor was there racism or anything like that. Everything was as normal,</p>
[20:33] AR:	<p>everything was the same. The only problem was that they were jealous because "she was running more machine, why do you give her more machines? --Ah, because she can, she can handle the machines, all the machines we give her. " It was like a touch of jealousy, but everything was, it was very normal.</p>
[21:03] AR:	<p>And we did what we could. As you know, Colombians don't drown in a glass of water. Eh, we do what we can to make things work, to to make something run, or fix something we have. We don't say "Oh, we can't fix it." No. "We are going to hammer it, tinker here and there, that is our system.</p>
[21:33]. SK:	<p>And Doña Teresa, do you remember some things about your work in particular in textiles, something you would like more, something you would like less, or some anecdote that you remember</p>
TR:	<p>No, all the jobs were the same to me, I liked to work in anything, thank God. Yes, I don't, I never had a problem. Everyone helped me, taught me, despite not knowing English</p>
[22:03] TR:	<p>I worked with Americans and never had a problem with an American or anything.</p>
SK:	<p>And how did you combine work with the house chores, with so many children?</p>
TR:	<p>Oh lady, [laugh]. My daughters helped me. I worked first [first shift] and they stayed at home. I taught them at the age of seven that they</p>

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[22:33]	had to do everything that had to be done in a house. They learned how to make a bed, they learned how to wash, they learned how to cook, how to clean. And they, I never never had problems with any of them.
[23:03] SK:	And what was social life like, for example working so hard, here in Greenville they had time to socialize, for example, did they meet other Colombian families?
AR:	Oh yes, look here.
TR:	Saturday and Sunday
AR:	here was a room, the Knights of Columbus, which was where all the Hispanics who were here in Greenville met for parties. For Christmas parties, turkey parties, parties every two weeks, to be all gathered,
[23:33] AR:	then we had dances and everything. All right!  That was where we all met. We were all like very outstanding and house parties
TR:	Yes, very close. United families, very beautiful.
AR:	Yes, at that time, in my time, all those you have interviewed, like the Posadas, were from my time, then we would meet and go out to party.
[24:03] AR:	In one house there was a party, they invited us all, we met there, very good. It's been a long time since we saw each other last because one lives here one is very busy, they live in Greenville, in other areas, so we are not in touch.
[24:33] AR:	But previously everything was very good. Life was very, we all contributed to create a nice vibe. Both in Rhode Island and here.
SK:	In Rhode Island, did you also have a group of Colombian friends?
AR:	Yes, the first three families that arrived, we always met for every holiday occasion. We all met. In a house everyone.

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SK:	And do you remember the name of those families in Rhode Island?
AR:	Oh yeah. In Rhode Island there are still, the first family to arrive Raúl Jaramillo,
[25:03] TR:	Raúl Jaramillo
AR:	and his wife, well, Raúl Jaramillo and the family.
TR:	The family
AR:	I don't remember her name. And the other was Gustavo Álvarez and Doña Blanca
TR:	Blanca.
AR:	Blanca Álvarez, yes. That was the second [family] and we were the third. Each year more families were arriving.
TR:	José Bedoya arrived after us.
SK	And, did these families come to Greenville later too?
[25:33] AR:	No, they still, well, the Jaramillo family, both have passed away; and the Gustavo Álvarez and Doña Blanca family, they still live in Rhode Island.
TR:	in Rhode Island
AR:	Yes, they still reside there.
SK:	Have you seen them afterwrds?
TR:	No, since we arrived, since we came, never again
AR:	We didn't see each other again. Recently a lady friend of us who lived there came, she arrived later around the nineteen nineties, and she came to visit here, she was here in my house, and then we will see if my mom and I make a trip to go see Doña Blanca. Don Gustavo, who were the second family
[26:03]	

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TR: [26:33]	Yes, the second family. She made all the errands for the visa with me in Medellín. She lived in Medellín. And I went out with her and made the errands, we went to the consulate to get the tests and one thing and another.
SK:	Then a connection of many years. Decades. [Laugh]
TR:	Very pretty.
SK: [27:03]	At the beginning of the interview, Ms. Teresa said that for people in Colombia at the time the idea of coming to the US was like winning a lottery, then, perhaps to conclude, I want to ask you, do you feel you won the lottery? Has it been a good experience or not? In general, in general, any opinion?
TR:	Yes, I feel, I have felt a lot of joy [clears the voice], sorry, and I thank God because he gave us that joy of being here in this country and I owe him everything, what I have and what I am [cries ] and my children.
[27:33] TR:	Because this country gave us everything. And raising my children and education. And the happiness of being all together. I thank God very much. And I feel happy to be here in the USA. And I thank God for giving me such a great joy.
[28:03] TR:	And I am still happy here, but I feel lonely because my children are no longer all united here with me, they are all so separated, each one with their own families, that is what makes me feel alone. But they are very good and are always watching me.
[28:33] SK:	Is there anything else you want to share about textiles in particular, anything else you remember or some anecdote?
AR: [29:03]	Well, here, textiles, which was the big source of income here, because there were lots of textile companies, when we arrived in '75, even if you lost your job, left or didn't like it, had problems with his supervisor, you would go out and find another company, immediately, the next day, you'd have a job. So it was, it was a very great experience for us to have learned textiles because we learned

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<p>[29:33] AR:</p> <p>TR:</p> <p>AR:</p> <p>[30:03]</p>	<p>how to, where a blouse comes from, where the pants come from, the blue jeans, the clothes. So it was a learning experience for us.</p> <p>It was a great job here. Too bad textiles are finished.</p> <p>finished, because, although they were, the jobs in textiles were so hard, it was a very good job, it was a constant and very busy job. Once you got used to the rhythm of the work you was doing, it was a very good job, very pleasant.</p>
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