

TITLE OF VIDEO: Carlos Tobón

DATE OF VIDEO: July 10, 2018.

TRANSLATED BY: Sofía Kearns, Madeline Brousseau and Reilly Caldwell

DATE OF TRANSLATION: December 3, 2018

<p>[00:03] Carlos Tobón:</p>	<p>I was born in Colombia, in Bello, Antioquia. I started textiles in Colombia, Bello, at the age of eighteen. I worked at Fabricato. There I worked ten years as a weaver. Afterwards, mm a friend of mine came</p>
<p>[00:30]</p>	<p>here, to the United States, who was my supervisor there in Colombia. After a year he returned, and one day I left Fabricato at twelve o'clock and he was there at the door. Then, he said, "Tobón, I need to talk to you." I said, "yes, Don Fabio." "Do you want to go to the United States to work there?"</p>
<p>[1:00]</p>	<p>I said, "Well, I have to think about it, Don Fabio." He said, "Well, look, take this card, my card, and on Saturday, mmm, come to my house, my address and phone number are in the card. You call me before you come, so I know, then, when are you going to come. So, mm invite two other friends of yours like Francisco</p>
<p>[1:30]</p>	<p>Gutierrez, a mechanic. Tell him I need to talk to him." And so I did. I spoke with my friend, and then he said "Let's see what this is about". Then, we went to his house and then he told us: he had been given some work contracts to bring people from Colombia. And,</p>
<p>[2:00]</p>	<p>and then he told us that there were a lot of textile jobs here[in the US], they paid very well, and compared to Fabricato, we were going to earn more money. And that we would migrate to the United States. So, if we completed the application, he, if we filled out an application and signed a paper for him, and he would bring it here [to the US]. And so we did.</p>
<p>[2:30]</p>	<p>We filled a paper, a contract and a month after he had left, he called us and told us that we should wait for the Consulate' call, there in Colombia, which was located, at that time there was a consulate in Medellín. That, then, we should check periodically to see when our applications would be approved. And, about three months later</p>
<p>[3:00]</p>	<p>our applications were approved. Then, he called us and said, "Well, did they approve your applications?" And we: "Yes, Don Fabio, they approved the applications, what do we do?" Then he said, "Well, then what you have to do is, see, we are going to give you the</p>

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	<p>tickets. We are going to pay three months of rent for an apartment, we will give you a ride for three</p>
[3:30]	<p>months. And we are going to give you an interpreter for three months, for what you need. You do not have to pay a dime. So, I said to Don Fabio, "Well, that is fine, Don Fabio." Then he said, "Well, then let's do this: You're going to tell Fabricato, back at the office, that you're going to retire from the company." And there were sixteen of us who were coming. I was doing</p>
[4:00]	<p>a course for weavers, they were going to send me to Nicaragua.</p>
Sofía Kearns:	<p>Wow</p>
CT:	<p>Because Fabricato had bought a company there. Then, they were going to send me as an instructor. Then I was doing a course of weaver trainers. So, I went to the office, to my boss and told him, "I'm quitting my job at the factory." Then, he said to me, "Why?" I said, "I'm going to the United States."</p>
[4:30]	<p>Then, he said "You have to go to the office, to the human resources department, and then, there you have to talk to the chief of staff, to see what they are going to say to you." So, I went and submitted the resignation, then they said, "See, you are doing a course for weaver's trainers. So you have to</p>
[5:00]	<p>pay us for the course because we're paying for it." I said, "OK, but..." " Well, and then after you pay for it, then you start paying the pre-notice with my room manager." Then I spoke with the head of the room and I told him. As I was a very good weaver, very good worker, then, they had me in high regard</p>
[5:30]	<p>in a good job. Then he said "I'm going to help you. In order to, so you do not pay for that course." Then a week later he called me and said, "You can quit when you want to, Tobón. No problem." Then I resigned, [inaudible] resigned. Don Fabio also called me in those days. He was always calling us. And he said "Have you already quit</p>
[6:00]	<p>Fabricato?" Then, we immediately said, " Yes, and we have to pay a month's notice." Then we payed the month, and that was it, when we had paid the month he called us back and said, "Well, everything is</p>

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[6:30]	<p>ready." And he sent us a ticket for this particular date[laughter]. The eighteenth of December. There was nothing more to do. Oh,</p> <p>I was very sad because I had my wife and my children. But now I had nothing else to do but come to the US. Then when I arrived in Rhode Island, I requested my wife, my family to come to the US, it took eight months to get the Green card. Then we accepted: "ah, well." Then he sent us the plane ticket.</p>
[7:00]	<p>for December eighteen. And, uh, then he told us how things would be, contracts, and everything. And that he would be waiting for us. We arrived in Boston. There would someone there waiting for us. I arrived on December 18, 1970.</p>
[7:30]	<p>When we got there they were waiting for us, and we were taken to Rhode Island. It was already very cold there. Then they brought us jackets, and we arrived. They took us to the hotel where we were going to stay. We arrived on a Saturday at eleven o'clock at night. And on Monday we went to the factory, and we started</p>
[8:00]	<p>working. Then on Monday- we started working on Tuesday. We were introduced to the company on Monday. Then they told us that we would start right away on Tuesday. And so we started working. We worked there for four years. After four years they closed the company. Its name was Bargon Mills. And then, at that time, a friend came to,</p>
[8:30]	<p>to Greenville. Then he told me, [inaudible] a friend of mine named Armando Marrugo. Then he told me, he called me, and he said "Tobón, do you want to come here to Greenville to work in a textile factory? Here where there are textiles. Here there are only textile factories. The jobs are good here. Then, think about it and call me."</p>
[9:00]	<p>I called him a week later and he said "What did you decide?" [Inaudible] "I want to go there, Marrugo." Then he said, "When are you going to come?" Then I told him, "In a week." Then he said, "You can stay in my house until you get an apartment, no problem." A week later I came and he was waiting for me. I arrived at his house and well,</p>

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[9:30]	I arrived on a Saturday at eleven o'clock at night. On Monday at nine o'clock in the morning he took me to a company where he worked, called Woodside Mill,
SK:	Mmm
CT:	Woodside Mill. In Easley. And then, right there he told me what to do, he introduced me to the boss and he said, "Complete the application." I completed it, and then they told me "then, you can come to work
[10:00]	at three in the afternoon." That same day. And I entered at three in the afternoon and left at eleven at night. Well, at eleven at night, my supervisor told me, "Do you want to work four hours or ..of overtime?" and so- I asked Armando, "Marrugo, he asked me if I wanted to work four hours of overtime. What do I say? What do I do?" He told me, "That's your decision." So, I told him, "It just pains me that I'll end up waking you up at three in the
[10:30]	morning at your home". He said, "it's not a problem, here, take the house key. Do you know how to get back home?" And I told him, "More or less." [inaudible] because it was nearby. And then he gave me the key. I stayed in his home, in his apartment. Then the next day the supervisor told me "do you want to stay another four hours today?" And I told him yes. Then he said, "Well, I will not have to ask you anymore."
[11:00]	
SK:	Hm
CT:	"You can do overtime everyday." So I did, I worked there for eighteen years. At that company, Woodside Mill, six days a week and [pausa] then they closed the company. Itt belonged to Dan River. Dan River had some sixteen companies. [inaudible] They told me to transfer Beatty Plant. And at Beatty Plant
[11:30]	I did the same thing, working ten hours everyday. I was there for ten years. And in the eighteen years I worked at Easley, I only missed four days. Working twelve hours, every day of the week. I worked [inaudible]. From there I went to Beatty Plant where I worked ten years. After that I went to

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[12:00]	my country and spent a year there. After I came back [to the US] I was hired in another company, but I don't remember the company, it was located across the street from the flea market.
SK:	
CT:	Well, I worked there some six more years until I retired. And it turns out that company closed when I retires.,
[12:30]	So, I worked until they closed it and then I could no longer work. I was already of retirement age.
SK:	How was it, how, how do you compare your experience working in Colombia, in Medellin, with, working here? How-
CT:	No, no comparison. Imagine that there was hardly any heating in those companies [in the US]. Very hot, very hot, no, no comparison to Fabricato. The machines
[13:00]	were better, better weavers, mechanics, better workmanship, everything better [in Medellín]. We kept wondering "Man, look what we came from, from Fabricato to here. These old dirty factories here, oh no.
SK:	So, did you regret having quit Fabricato?
CT:	Oh yes. Of course one was already here in the US and one did not really have the option to going anywhere else.
SK:	Mhmm
CT:	Do you understand? Better. It's a
[13:30]	Well, that was the advantage there.
SK:	Clearly.
CT:	But one didn't need to quit because the companies were closing.
SK:	[Laugh]
CT:	Then they started to close factories, close factories, close factories.

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SK:	Hm
CT:	Until, until the textiles were finished here.
SK:	How, how was your adaptation to life here?
CT:	Here!
SK:	[Laugh]
CT:	Well, little by little. But I practically had no time for anything but work. I wasn't a dinker
[14:00]	I didn't go partying, nothing. I just didn't have time for anything.
SK:	[Laugh]
CT:	Do you believe it? I worked seventy two hours a week. And I practically, lost a sense of time, I didn't know what day of the week it was, I only knew when Thursdays came because that was the day I would get my check. And I would tell myself, "Ah, today is Thursday." [inaudible]. For example, sometimes my supervisor, he knew where I lived
[14:30]	and he would knock on my door at midnight. Then he would say, "Tobón, Tobón, you want to go to work? I'm missing a worker."
SK:	Hmh
CT:	Then I would say, "Then I'm on my way." And, in one of those those days, I failed to stop at a red light, and a policeman stopped me. He gave me a ticket. So,
[15:00]	It was like four in the morning. Then I got a ticket, and it took me a little while to get to work. When I got to the room, the supervisor said, "Hey, see what time it is, what happened Tobón?" And I told him, I showed him the ticket [Laugh] and he said, "Ah." [Laugh]
SK:	[Laugh]

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CT:	"Ok, no problem"
SK:	Oh
CT:	"Then I will pay your ticket" and then he gave me the money for the ticket... On another instance I needed to work four hours extra
[15:30]	"See, I need more hours this week." He said, "easy, easy. And the following week he wrote eight hours!" [Laugh]
SK:	So your supervisors, you considered them good?
CT:	Yes. Yes, yes, very much, yes
SK:	Because they supported you?
CT:	yes, yes, because they gave me a bonus every year.
[16:00]	
SK:	Hmm
CT:	For not missing work, and also for increasing production they gave us bonuses. But mostly for not missing work.
SK:	And how did that compare to Medellin? Did you have bonuses there, too? Did you feel appreciated?
CT:	Yes, I also worked a lot in Colombia, I worked three days a week, twelve hours. I worked a lot of overtime there as well.
[16:30]	
	[pause] In comparison it was better here
SK:	Yes?
CT:	It was more favorable here
SK:	In terms of payment?
CT:	Yes, in terms of money.
SK:	And in terms of the way workers were treated?

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CT:	Yes
SK:	Yes?
CT:	Well [inaudible]
SK:	When you were recruited from Medellín, were you given a green card?
CT:	Yes, ah, I came with a job contract. Yes
SK:	Hmhmm
CT:	Yes, I got a job contract and six months later I got my green card... [Inaudible]
[17:00] SK:	Could you give u, some details of your work as a weaver?
	So, when you decided to come to Greenville, did your decision have to do with the weather?
CT:	Of course, Hail Mary!
SK:	Were most of your co-workers Hispanic? or did you work with...
CT:	Yes
SK:	With others
CT:	Yes, yes
SK:	Races? or groups?
CT:	They were Hispanic, Hispanic. Yes
SK:	And.. Did Hispanics keep to themselves? Or, did they sometimes relate to others of other nationalities?
[17:30] CT:	No no, only Hispanics, Hispanics

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SK:	And tell us a little bit about some details of your work as a weaver. What did it consist of? What did you do?
CT:	we walked with a needle. [inaudible]
SK:	hmm
CT:	In order to pass the strands..
SK:	Uh huh
[18:00]	
CT:	Yes. So, we, for example, here is the comb, so big, then here came the cloth, then one had to insert the needle when, when a thread burst. A needle. Then one had to put the needle here and here, and it would come out, then I would take the thread and [sound] would pass it here. Then I'd put one on the loom. Then I would stop the loom.
SK:	Huh
[18:30]	
CT:	There were some buttons, then some inserts, then one moved the inserts, in order to know where the burst thread was. Then one would go over there, would grab the thread and the needle. To make blue jeans and fabrics like that, not very fine fabrics, right?
SK:	Huh
[19:00]	
CT:	We would not produce fine fabrics here. Very nice fabrics were made somewhere else, but where I worked not much.
SK:	And in Medellin?
CT:	Ah yes, there they produced fine fabrics for export
CT:	But also the machinery was very good. and mechanics, very good mechanics

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SK:	Uh huh. And, what- what, what was a difficult part of your job as a weaver? What was the most difficult?
CT:	Well, practically
[19:30]	We never stopped walking, going in circles around the machines, like this, and going around. That was what we spent almost twelve or eight hours doing.
SK:	Walking?
CT:	Walking, yes. I was told that I had gone twice to Colombia on foot. [Laugh]
SK:	[Laugh]