

TITLE OF VIDEO: Rocío and Jaime Gutiérrez

DATE OF VIDEO: June 8, 2019.

TRANSLATED BY: Charlie Lott and Sofia Kearns

DATE OF TRANSLATION: May 2020

<p>[00:06] Rocío Gutiérrez</p>	<p>Well, my name is Rocío, Ester Rocío Gutiérrez. I came from Medellín in the year... July 27, 1975. And I came to discover, to explore, to see what was there. Because I wanted to find other opportunities. I came to Miami, I was with some friends in Miami. Then I went to Chicago.</p>
<p>[00:36]</p>	<p>Later, I came here because I had some brothers-in-law here and wanted to visit South Carolina. So, I liked it. I thought there were good opportunities. They offered me a job in textiles, and they paid very well. I said, "I'm going to see what happens. I'm going to experiment. " Because in Colombia, in Medellín when I worked in textiles, it was always in the office. So I got a job at a company called Brandon Mill.</p>
<p>[01:06]</p>	<p>It was a textile company where they made fabrics. The work seemed too hard for me. I came to the house with swollen feet but I did not give up. It went on and on. Well, I worked there for a year until the plant closed because... I don't know why they closed it. They were going to move us to another factory, but I decided not to go because I was already pregnant with my first girl, Erika.</p>
<p>[01:36]</p>	<p>So I retired from textiles for a little while. Later I came back. I worked at Wunda Weave, also in textiles. I was there for 15 years and I retired at 62. They kept calling me to come back but I decided I was done because I already had my two girls and they had a good education. The two girls ... One of them Erika, she is one of my girls...</p>
<p>[02:06]</p>	<p>They were both very smart, very studious girls. Erika works for the United Nations, for UNICEF. And Paola has also had good jobs. She has worked as a director of hospital programs. She has worked with Clemson. She now works for an organization in Columbia. And Erika already has a girl. a 16-year-old named Sofia. And Paola has a boy, Marco, eight years old.</p>
<p>[02:36]</p>	<p>I'm very proud of my girls. I am very grateful to this country because it has given me many opportunities. And yes, very satisfied with everything I have achieved here. The work has been excellent. I have been treated very well. And no, I have no complaints about this country.</p>
<p>[02:59]</p>	

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Jaime Gutiérrez:	My name is Jaime Ernesto Gutiérrez. I came here to Greenville from New York already with many friends here. They were all working in the textile industry. I had never worked in textiles in my life and here I was introduced to the industry ... In 1976 when I came this was ...
[03:36]	the center of the textile world. That is why so many workers came here... Not only from Colombia but from Panama, from Venezuela, from almost all Latin American countries, Mexico. And that's how I started. They gave me the opportunity, and I learned several operations.
[04:06]	I worked for about 14 months at one ... I think it was one of the best-known textile companies, the Woodside Mill. I spent 14 months there, until the work there seemed a little monotonous and I went to another textile company.
[04:36]	But the new company was from a branch that specialized in rugs. It was a little bit different. I started working there in the year 19... At the Woodside Mill I worked from '76 to '78. And in Wunda Weave, which is Dan River's company, I started working in '78 until 1995. And when I was there I learned different...
[05:06]	I worked on different things. I had a lot of experience, not only as an individual but also in general with the textile companies here in Greenville because there were very few who spoke English. And my English wasn't perfect,
[05:36]	but pretty good. So, they looked for me a lot to serve as an interpreter in one way or another. When I served as an interpreter to fill out forms, the process of filling out the forms gave work for the person whose form we filled out and also work for me as an interpreter.
[06:06]	And in that way there was always work. Textile work was very well compensated, very well paid. The people who came from Colombia, who, the majority of them, already had a family, could support themselves and maintain the family in Colombia as well. In other words, instead of having two jobs, a person could more or less get by with one job.

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[06:36]	And people worked more or less ... I think you could work up to a hundred hours. There were people who worked a hundred hours a week. And since it was well paid, after 40 hours they paid you time and a half. In other words, it was possible to support one's family in Colombia or in whatever country of origin. It was an opportunity ... what they could practically call the golden age,
[07:06]	There was a sign posted from the supervisors that showed everyone who would man the first, second and third shifts. The first shift was from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., the second shift was from 4 p.m. to 12 a.m. and the third shift was from 12 a.m. to 8 a.m. Everyone here liked to work, so the supervisor came and
[07:36]	the only sign he would give was... [shows with arm and hand to indicate overtime] to stay overtime. [Laughs] That was the signal, and everyone wanted money and everyone already knew the job. They specifically liked to employ workers who came from another ... especially workers from Colombia because they didn't just know how to operate the machines
[08:06]	but they could also function as a mechanic. And that's what caught their attention, that they had two people in one. <b>It was profitable</b> and they liked it very much. And we were and still are good workers. That caught their attention a lot and that's why there were opportunities for everyone. There was no... the only people without work were the ones who didn't want to work. But the rest ...
[08:36] RG:	Yes, I also remember when I entered Brandon Mill, during my first shift the boss said to me: "Do you know more Colombians? Bring them to me! I need a lot of people here." So, whenever I saw someone arrive I told them, "Come here, there is work". And soon there were many here, when we first got to Greenville there were a few families. Like 5 or 6 families. We were very close because when we got here we had a simple life.
[09:06]	There wasn't much here ... There wasn't ... There were few families. And well, now I am surprised to see Greenville has grown, now it's like it's another Greenville. I believe that textiles helped a lot because many people came, as my husband said, from other places. Not only from Colombia but from other countries. And now I am very proud of my roots, of being Colombian

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[09:36]	But I feel so grateful towards this country because it opened its doors to me, they have treated me very well. I am extremely grateful to this country. Watching my daughters grow, become professionals. Seeing my grandchildren. That fills me with joy and satisfaction, and what else can I ask for if I have everything? This is a country where you can come and if you follow the laws and behave as you should, you grow.
[10:06]	It is a country where you have to respect others and if you respect others, you grow. And you do well. But the important thing is to follow the laws, live honestly, respect everything and everything will go very well for you.
[10:25] JG:	Now you come to... Returning to textiles, the economy was tremendous because as a city Greenville was very small. And getting to the downtown area...
[10:36]	downtown didn't have many options. When we arrived there were, for example, JC Penny or Macy's chain stores, but they were very small stores in downtown.
[11:00] RG:	There was nothing. There was only JC Penny in downtown.
[11:06] JG:	And Sears a little further down Stone Avenue. The only place that was still there was McCallister Square.
[11:11] RG:	And for Hispanics there was only one store. Mr. García's store.
[11:17] JG:	No, it was Mr. Gaviria. Francisco Gaviria.
[11:20] RG:	It was Mr. Francisco Gaviria, it was the first Hispanic store, and yes, Greenville has grown immensely. Now I go out and I go to church. All I hear is people speaking Spanish. Not before. Before when we spoke Spanish everyone looked at us. "You speak Spanish?" When I went to work, I was a sensation. "Where are you from?" They asked me: "Where are you from? From Brazil? From where?" Everyone was curious. Not now. Now wherever

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	<p>you go, they speak Spanish. I think that in a few years everything here will be in Spanish. It will be like Miami, I imagine. Like New York, where almost everyone already speaks Spanish.</p>
[12:01] JG:	<p>We all got to know each other well, because we all did the same thing. On weekends there was not much to do. So, for example, we would meet at someone's house. One of the best hobbies was playing cards. Everyone got together and played cards. Sometimes people listen to music. People asked how each other were, how was the family in Colombia or Panama. And it went on like that, <b>every week</b>.</p>
[12:36]	<p>Until the little group started to grow. There were no longer five families but ten families, fifteen, twenty, fifty. And so on the Latin American community began. Back then we were helping each other. If someone didn't have a job,</p>
[13:06]	<p>here, here's a job. When someone said, in quotes, "Aunt Emilia," which was the immigration <b>officials</b> [Laughs], then everyone would say it so that they wouldn't notice, "Aunt Emilia is over there." So everyone <b>would take</b> notice. People helped each other hide. "Don't go here." It came often ...</p>
[13:36]	<p>Because the money couldn't run out in Colombia, so sometimes it was my turn to collect <b>letters [with checks inside]</b> to take them to the post office so that nobody had anything new happen, nobody had any surprises. Because of that everyone was very careful. People took care of each other or we helped each other. And that was</p>
[14:06]	<p>an event that we always ... I don't remember... how many people had surprises and unfortunately were deported. I imagine that some of them returned. Others stayed in Colombia. I think I knew ...</p>
[14:36]	<p>No, if I start to talk about or name the people I worked with, I'll never finish. <b>And I can't remember all of them.</b></p>

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<p>[14:54] RG:</p>	<p>I was 22 years old when I got here. I met him here. He came from New York to visit, to explore, to see Greenville. And then we met here and got married. And we have been married for 43 years.</p>
<p>[15:04] JG:</p>	<p>I came to Greenville and found a treasure. [Laughs]</p>
<p>[15:12] RG:</p>	<p>We knew each other for two months and we dated for a month... We knew each other for two months and a month of dating. And people said, "That marriage is not going to last." And here we are: happy. Very proud of our daughters and doing well. Very well.</p>
<p>[15:30]</p>	<p>But seeing ... Taking that issue, for example, immigration and all that. Because most of the people who came here came with a tourist visa.. In Colombia there was work, but the payment was not so good.</p>
<p>[15:58] RG:</p>	<p>More than anything, that's why I ... That's why I was struck with coming here. I worked for Comfenalco and aside from that I went to university. I did the first year of dentistry school but I wasn't making enough money. They paid me and I paid for my transportation, and I didn't have enough left over for a shirt. I don't ... "This can't be. I have to go to another country and then come back here to continue studying." Well, it didn't happen like that. I came here and stayed here. My goal was to continue my career. But I got stuck. I stayed here. I had the girls. And for me, that's it.</p>
<p>[16:36] JG:</p>	<p>Plans change, yes.</p>
<p>[16:40] RG:</p>	<p>God had other plans for me. And what He gave me is very good. In textiles I was "filling battery," filling batteries. That was my first job. It was a row of I don't know how many machines. I said: "My God, I can't do it." They were three long lines. I would finish with my feet ... I would come to the house to put my feet in a tub with salt because of how they were. My brother in law said to me:</p>

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<p>[17:06] RG:</p>	<p>"What?! Why are you doing that? You have no obligations. Leave for Colombia." But I was not married at that time, I had just arrived. And I don't, I have to continue. I have to do this. Finally the supervisor told me: "You can train people," using the experience I had. At the Woodside Mill I was also spinning. Spinning is wrapping the cotton up into tubes. Sometimes I brought lunch with me,</p>
<p>[17:36]</p>	<p>because I worked the second shift, from 4 to 12. I brought my food and he would pick me up at 12 and I would say to him: "Here is my food, I couldn't eat." Because I didn't have time. I came home with my hands cut because they gave me a knife to cut the little pins. Because the cotton tangled in the rollers, and if I didn't tend to it, <b>it would become a mess</b>. And when I got home: "No, here is my food. I didn't have time to eat. " And so life was work, work.</p>
<p>[18:06]</p>	<p>Many times I had to work Saturdays and Sundays. And the supervisor told me: "I need you on Saturday and Sunday." And I said: "But I have no one to look after the girls on Saturday and Sunday." "Bring them in and my wife will take care of them." How am I going to leave my girls with a lady they didn't know? So, he would say to me: "If you don't come this weekend, don't come back on Monday." So, I had to go. So, he would take care of them, or I would go to the lady who took care of them during the week to ask her to please take care of them for the weekend too. But yeah, it was really hard at first.</p>
<p>[18:44] JG:</p>	<p>The other thing about textiles that they taught me when I first started... since I first set foot in a textile factory here in Greenville, they gave me the opportunity, I learned that one can more or less look for the work he likes to do the most. Let's put it like this.</p>
<p>[19:06]</p>	<p>Many of the jobs were very fast, pretty much like any other manual work. So, if you could perform a job quickly then... Because it was mostly based on production and many of the machines had little clocks. So if you did the job well, let's say, you had three, four, five machines, running roughly at 95 to 100 percent efficiency, and you had to be fast.</p>
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RG:	Yes, the best job I had here in America was the last one. I worked in quality control. It was inspecting. It was a job I loved. The time I spent working went by quickly. You worked from seven in the morning to three in the afternoon. I lived very close, I could be there in five minutes. I eventually retired from that job and it was excellent. It was the best I had. Most of all it was the easiest. The others, the spinning jobs, filling batteries, were hard, but this one was the best. Sure, I had more experience. When I applied for the job, which lasted nine years, they asked me what experience I had. And I had many years of experience.
[20:40] JG:	I started out... on the drying stage. I know I started on the drying stage. I worked there for about two years. Later, I started working as a chemist. Doing...
[21:03] RG:	Mixing the colors.
[21:06] JG:	Mixing the colors, the chemicals, everything. I worked on that for about five years or so. Already they asked me... I was doing well, so they gave me work making the formulas, doing everything in the laboratory. And the last years ... The last six years, it was my turn to be a supervisor
[21:36]	And I was really in charge of everything. The staff and the work. I think the decline of textiles began in 1995 because that was when work was no longer available. There was some work but it had decreased significantly. They had already closed let's say,
[22:06]	Maybe even 70 percent of all the textiles.
[22:10] RG:	Yes. They had already closed the factories or they had moved them. The Wunda Weave was moved to Dalton, Georgia. They offered to give us an apartment there because he was a supervisor and I had worked as an inspector in the same Factory. They offered us an apartment so we could go to Dalton, Georgia, but since we already had the house here, the girls at school, we didn't want to leave anymore.



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[22:33]	<b>Then</b> I did a summary about how Greenville Tech helped, about a 700 word summary. It was the bare minimum and I wrote my summary about how "Greenville Tech helps me by opening doors for me. For example, now that the textiles have closed, I can go down a different path."
[23:03]	And they accepted me, or they chose me, and they gave me a scholarship to Greenville Tech. I decided, I'm going to study something different. So, I studied things related to hospitality and tourism and business. I started working at the Marriot.
[23:33]	I worked there for about eight months, and it was very monotonous. I had to dress up and present myself well. And the job ... I kind of preferred having a more practical job, one that used my hands, I don't know. So, I met a man who asked me, "Do you want to work for me?"
[24:03]	"What job do you have?" "I have a company where we make a type of, for example, bits, nails, everything they use in..." Let's just call it different types of tools. And it gave me an opportunity, I learned about the job and it opened a whole new sector.
[24:33]	<b>Which was what...</b> I did what they call a flash course at Greenville Tech related to CNC, everything to do with CNC. CNC Machinist. I was interested in it and the money was better. And I enjoyed it more, because I could use... I kept myself busy, and it was interesting because I preferred working
[25:03]	on geometric stuff. Issues like that. Working with angles. All kinds of different questions that I found interesting. So I went down that sector all the way until now. From 1996 to today, well, that's what I've been doing.
[25:25] RG:	But now he works for Honeywell. For another company.
[25:30] JG:	Now I work for Honeywell, which is an Aero Space Site, which is where we make turbines and engines for jets and for helicopters, for war tanks. All that stuff.
[25:51] RG:	So you can see that we've been through all the jobs? [Laughs]

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<p>[25:56] JG:</p>	<p>Always. And coming from textiles, it was a complete change.</p>
<p>[26:03] RG:</p>	<p>I worked for a company, Western Textiles, but when they were going to close them, the southern textile factories, when they were going to close them they had other jobs for us. They took me to other factories, to other places. "Look, we are going to close, but she is a very good worker." And to me, "Do you want to work there? See, I found you another job. " I had a supervisor, Brenda, she said... "No, you aren't going to go without work. I know other factories I can send you to. Because you are a very good worker. I want to give you a good recommendation so that you can always find work."</p>
<p>[26:33]</p>	<p>That's something that I appreciate from the Americans. That was very nice because, well, now I can rest. People always got along well. I always ... all the English I learned, I learned in the factories. My daughter said to me: "Mommy, why do you speak like that, with those words ...? Why are you talking like that? " The English I learned with the people at the factory, I do not have perfect English. It's a kind of factory English. And that's how I learned, what should I do? I never went to school.</p>
<p>[27:03]</p>	<p>I learned with my coworkers. They said to me: "I can teach you English and you can teach me Spanish." And I said: "Yes." So there was very good communication, very good chemistry. When I eventually retired, they didn't want me to retire. They brought me things. You're the best, don't go. That made me ... That filled me with satisfaction, with pride. How they love me! What do you mean you don't want me to go? And when I left, for months, I got calls. "Come back." I went to Colombia.</p>
<p>[27:33]</p>	<p>And when I came back there were the calls. "We need you. Come back. Even if it's for a short while. We need you. The quality has gone down. We are losing money. We need you."</p>
<p>[27:49] JG:</p>	<p>I think the most difficult thing was the expressions. For example, in a way ... In the way that ... I didn't understand English, because there were a lot of</p>

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	<p>idioms. For example, someone was training me or something like that, and I couldn't understand them. Because of that we ran into some trouble: "You don't speak English?" No, I speak English, but when you if you tell it to me in a different way I can understand it. [Laughs]</p>
[28:32] RG:	<p>He studied in New York. His dad had his papers, he brought his family here. His wife and all his children. And he also came when he was younger, he studied English but the English from New York is different from the English here. So they did not understand him. I understood them because I learned English here.</p>
[28:51] JG:]	<p>But along those lines, I have to say there was no racism. Because back then we didn't see it ... we didn't feel it at all ... many times people do. But you could tell that it was mostly just that people didn't have the education, they didn't have the understanding,</p>
[29:21]	<p>and you could tell that they generalized everything: "Oh, that's how you all are ..." But, man, look, we are a group but we are also very, very different people. Very.... there is South America, there is Central America, and they are all different countries. They are totally ... So, they believed that we were all from the same place. And we weren't.</p>
[29:51]	<p>So, little by little, one could educate them. I said to them: "Ah, you don't speak Spanish, you all speak Mexican." No, it's not ...</p>
[30:05] RG:	<p>They thought we were all from Mexico.</p>
[30:08] JG:	<p>"It's not Spanish". And questions like that. But then you yourself tried to educate them. And slowly in that way they also learned certain little words in Spanish. And we all came together and became friends. I think our greatest satisfaction is letting the next generation know what those first years were like here in Greenville. Which can be called, as I mentioned earlier, the golden age of textiles. That many of us, for example, when we arrived here we were on our own.</p>

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<p>[30:48]</p>	<p>Now as a father, I see and I instill a lot in the next generation that it was a job that we accomplished, and that people will be able to see through this documentary of yours. What those years were like, all the things that went on then, because it was a very, very interesting time.</p>
<p>[31:35] RG:</p>	<p>I'll tell an anecdote. He worked at Woodside and one day he was tired after work, because he worked long hours. And one day he said to me, "Oh, I'm not going to go to work." And I said, "Okay." And I go out on the balcony, and I say: "Jaime, here comes your supervisor." He threw himself on the bed and put a blanket on. [laughter] And the supervisor came inside. "Jaime?" I told him, "Oh, he is sick." He wasn't sick. He was just tired. "It's just that I need him at work." "No, but he's sick" But the supervisor wanted to go looking for him even at his own home. So it was a time when everything was work, work.</p>
<p>[32:09] JG:</p>	<p>There was a lot of work.</p>
<p>[32:12] RG:</p>	<p>a lot a lot a lot. I already told you that when I started, my boss said to me: "Bring me Colombians. Bring me everyone you meet, bring them to me. I need more Colombian workers."</p>
<p>[32:21] JG:</p>	<p>Stories can give you an idea of how things worked, more or less, of individuals and families and all that. Supporting two families was definitely not easy.</p>
<p>[32:40] RG:</p>	<p>Living here, sending money home. For example, I had a brother-in-law here. He lived with us for a time and he had to work here and support his family back home. It was very hard for people...</p>
<p>[32:54] JG:</p>	<p>But the only industry where you could do it, where you had the luxury to do it, was in textiles.</p>

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