

Pilar

Pilar left her city Mendoza, Argentina with her young son to join her husband who was already living in Charleston. “For me a house was made of bricks with a nice fence. Instead, we came to live in a trailer—those tin houses where you could see the wheels. It was very disappointing for me.” At the time of this interview, Pilar was thirty-eight years old.

P: What we knew was that they were making good money. For us to earn eight dollars an hour was a lot of money. He told us that he lived in a trailer, but I did not know the concept of a trailer, so for me a trailer was, I do not know, B.J. and the Bear. BJ's truck I imagined was a trailer.

And they were fine, he said that there were many trees and that it was all very nice, all was good. I arrived in Atlanta and when I got there with David, I was extremely desperate because nobody was waiting for me. I had nothing. I did not have a coin to make a phone call and David, looking very worried told me, “Mom, don’t cry, we’ll go outside and we’ll take the bus, ok? Why are you so worried?” I was desperate, but as always, there were those good people walking by that offered us a cell phone to call. Then we found them. They were lost in the airport and that was the reason why no one was waiting there for me.

ML: They were waiting for you in a different place.

P: Yes, then we went from Atlanta to Charleston and the trip was never-ending

ML: What do you remember? What were your first impressions?

P: After arriving at the trailers, I thought they were terrible. I had imagined an apartment or a house, something like that, because in Argentina we always lived; we did not live luxuriously, but we had a house of brick. For me a house was made of bricks with a nice fence. Instead, we came to live in a trailer—those tin houses where you could see the wheels. It was very disappointing for me.

ML: Where was it? Where was the trailer where you lived?

P: It was in North Charleston on Lisa Street Avenue. For me it felt like a very long time to have traveled and when I arrived, I thought I was going to be in a house, not a trailer. When I got into the trailer it was even worse because everything was so small, it was very tiny.

ML: Smaller than the house you had?

P: Of course, a lot smaller. Moreover, the trailer was under the freeway, between Dorchester and Lisa St. on this little piece of land. I remember that at night, when I went to bed, it was hard to

get to sleep because when I heard the cars driving by I thought, "One day I'm going to wake up with a car over my head." How awful, my God.

ML: How was the process of saying goodbye to Argentina?

P: That was terrible. I think it's still a nightmare that I have that I keep repeating to myself; the embrace of the people, my dad, my friends. Some of them came by and I was able to say goodbye, but another group of people I worked with had arrived ten minutes late, and by that time I have gone inside the airport and was waiting for my plane to leave. I am glad that this happened, I think, because if not I would not have left. I would not have come, that is, because there were many things that made me want to stay there and among those were the people I love —my friends. These friends were not just my workmates, they were people with whom I had lived for a long time, because after I graduated, they were part of the first school I went to work for. I was working there when I got married and when I had my son. They were there for all the important moments of my life, including coworkers and former coworkers.

ML: How did you prepare spiritually or emotionally to come here? Your husband was there and your son would shout every day, "Dad, come get me."

P: Yes, yes.

ML: And how did you get ready?

P: No, I did not get ready; I felt like I had to tear myself away, like I have to go.

Pilar, Interview by Marina López, May 1st, 2009