

Margarita

When Margarita's daughter was denied access to higher education in South Carolina, she applied and was accepted to Delaware State University through a program for "Dreamers"—foreign-born students who have been raised in the United States. The young student, however, worried that her mother would not support her leaving South Carolina. "Do not worry my dear," Margarita told her, "if I need to take you to the end of the world I'll do it." Margarita, a native of Oaxaca, Mexico, was about forty at the time of this interview.

M: For those who are dreamers the door is narrow. There is no help and one despairs. I wish I could speak English well and go to school and say "Please look at my daughter; she has talent, give her an opportunity." I cannot say that. I lack English. Although I have many people to help me translate, the girl did not have the opportunity to go to a college and she despaired. They sent notes to apply and she said, "Mommy, I'm just not going to be able to go."

ML: How did you find out about the resources available through the City? Were there people supporting the students? Were there groups organizing?

M: I thought there was no help in Charleston or if there is, I completely ignored it. Ms. Christina was the one who told us the about the Pilgrim's Program. My daughter was involved, but we are very guarded. We do not socialize. We did not know enough about the group simply because of the language, because we do not speak English. They have meetings, but if you do not attend those meetings, you do not learn.

Sometimes my daughter would say, "Mommy, there's going to be a meeting. I'm going to go." I'd say, "Do you want me to join you?" "No mommy it is not necessary." Because even if I go, I won't understand. She always tells me, "Mommy do not worry, they'll pick me up" or "Please take me there and pick me up." And I would take her and pick her up. She was attending this program, but then when she was ready to graduate from high school, all the children, her teammates went to New York, to Florida, everywhere and she was disillusioned. She did not complain, but her face was sadder than ever. And she kept going to teach English in the afternoon, to not despair, to not isolate herself and lose connection with other students. Ms. Christina got her a job. And I say, "Thank God, I know my daughter is capable."

She got a job with an attorney to translate, but you know the attorneys are stern because they are attorneys. So she says, "Mommy, I'm not going to put up with it." She has a strong personality. And I say, "You see mijita, your mommy does not yell at you, but there you will have to pull yourself together." My husband says, "Mija do not go, if they treat you poorly do not go." The next day, she said "No mommy, here in America you cannot just quit. If you do not go, you have to let them know in advance because these people are counting on us and if you are responsible, you have to let them know in advance, you cannot just say I'm not going to work tomorrow. That's wrong," she said.

She clung to that job, and she put her heart in it and she won the lawyer's trust. She was always serious. She learned quickly, in three, four months. She already knew about the papers, the

appointments, the files. She got along very well with the other lady who still works there. In the end, she never left that job until she went to school.

ML: And how was that. How was it because she's in Delaware?

M: Delaware State.

ML: Tell me about going from Goose Creek to Delaware?

M: It was so quick that sometimes we still do not believe it.

ML: Tell me.

M: It's in a very short time because as I said, she was working with the attorney. She graduated in 2015, but that year she could not go to school because we did not fill out the applications and the applications we filled were not accepted because she was not born here. So she stayed, continued to work, continued teaching in the afternoons.

It was at the end of May, when I watched the program on television. It was very fast, sixteen states do not accept the students entering college, but now the program is going to open and it would include South Carolina. I did not know if I wrote it down or shouted out or jumped to let everybody know. And when my daughter came back from work, "Mija," I say, "Look, I heard this news and they will repeat it at 9:30, go and watch it. She said, "Mommy, I already saw it on the internet. Ms. Christina already sent me the message that there are other programs that are helping." I want to know the program name.

And I was anxious. "Have you completed the application?" "Yes, mama. Give me the tax forms, give me the papers, I need the shot records, everything." We began to gather the documents one by one. Luckily, I have a bad memory so everything goes in a suitcase. So we have everything. Now I'm anxiously waiting the response. I do not know what's going to happen. In the meantime, she was still working and teaching. One day she came back home and we were having dinner. "I have news." Tell us, "Are you quitting your job? Do you have a boyfriend?" "No, none of that." "Now tell us what's going on." They accepted me at the school. We were jumping. But she said "Wait, do not rejoice, because it's out of state. I would like to know if you will support me going that far—it is in a state called Delaware, only there and Connecticut, these are the two states that will accept the Dreamers." "Do not worry my dear, it is OK, if I need to take you to the end of the world I'll do it." And she says, "I still do not believe it. Tomorrow I'm going to speak to Ms. Christina, and see if this is true."

ML: Of course.

M: So, I could not celebrate. So I said, "Yes, yes, it has to be true. Do not lose faith. It will be God's will." And the next day she spoke to Ms. Christina. She said, "You still do not believe it? Here they do not lie, give me the phone number to confirm it." She called the school. "Oh yes there is a program. They accepted thirty-five, forty students, all of them were Dreamers and they are going to come here. We are going to accept them here. They have to register before this date and present all the necessary documentation." And then she said, "Mommy it is true." Ms. Christina confirmed it. I say, "My dear, we're going to have a party. And she responded, "No party until I get there. So we did nothing because we still could not believe it."

Margarita, Interview by Marina López, October 26, 2016