

Felipa

At the age of nine, Felipa began traveling and working with her father to support family back home in Oaxaca. "We had to leave our state to go to another state to work, to make money, to buy clothes, shoes, and to help, a little bit, the others in the community." At the time of this interview, Felipa was forty-six years old.

ML: Antonio told me that you didn't speak Spanish in the village, did you? What language did you speak?

F: Mixtec

ML: Everyone in your town spoke in Mixtec? When did you learn to speak Spanish?

F: I learned to speak Spanish when I was eighteen.

ML: Why did you have to learn to speak in Spanish?

F: Because first off, I left my village.

ML: How old were you when you left?

F: About nine years old.

ML: You were little.

F: Yes, I came with my dad when we first traveled to Obregon, Sonora, then we went to La Paz, Baja California Sur, and then we went back to Culiacán again. We left for a year, my dad and I, and then came back to the village.

ML: Why did your dad travel?

F: He had to travel to work. For example, in our ranchos we had enough to eat, but you weren't able to get four or five changes of clothes, you only had two changes of clothes and no shoes because there was no money. We had to leave our state to go to another state to work, to make money, to buy clothes, shoes, and to help, a little bit, the others that are at home.

ML: What kind of work did your dad do traveling from place to place?

F: First, we went to Obregon to cut cotton and then to Pascua to cut cotton also.

ML: And you, at nine years old worked in the fields?

F: Yes, and then we returned to Culiacán where they payed you hourly, because all the cotton is on contracts [pay by piece work]. When I returned to Culiacán, I had to work for hours cutting tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and cleaning the tomato plants.

ML: You mean when your dad went to harvest the cotton, they hired him and they hired you too?

F: No, we were not hired, we went on our own. There, we borrowed money to go and work and then got repaid that money.

ML: You learned where the job was and then went there.

Felipa, Interview by Marina López, December 25, 2016