

## Felipa

*Though born in the United States and a long-time resident of South Carolina, Antonio was forced to sue the state of South Carolina for the right to attend the College of Charleston at the in-state tuition rate. His mother, Felipa was deeply pained by the state's rejection of her son: "When they learned that I was an immigrant and he was the child of an immigrant—that he has no papers—they took away his scholarships. Imagine how I felt, because he worked a lot. I have worked a lot with him for this, and then they took it away." Antonio won his lawsuit in 2015 and gained access to the college. Felipa is from Oaxaca, Mexico. She was forty-six years old at the time of this interview.*

F: Sometimes I feel sad because I'm lonely, but I'm happy because my children are well. They strive to have a good life and that helps me a lot, but when one of them does something bad, I feel even worse because I have worked so hard for them.

ML: Antonio was born here, right? So, he's going to school, but you have other children that were not born here, with different countries of origin and documents right? How do you deal with the fact that the fate of one child is different from the others because of their documents?

F: Well, that's each one's luck. My oldest daughter was born in Mexico, the other daughter was born Mexico, my youngest child was born Mexico and the two in the middle were born in the United States. One died and the other one is studying, and he is able to study because he has his papers and because he put a lot of effort in his studies; his dream from the start was to study and he is doing well. He got good grades, he won his scholarships, he was a very good student, he graduated, he— how do you say it? He was high—

ML: With honors?

F: Honors, honors in high school, thanks to his own effort.

ML: Because he wanted it.

F: Because he wanted to. The only thing that I am giving to all my children is a roof, their meals, their clothes, and to make it so they lack nothing: their soap, their shampoo, a place to sleep, a place to eat. That is what I am giving. I have given the same to all of them, but Antonio committed himself to studying, and when he needs a little bit extra, I help him. That is the way he is progressing, but when I gave the others the same, they made different decisions. That's it.

ML: And you have children who have DACA right?

F: Yes, I have two: my daughter and my son.

ML: Are you worried about what might happen to DACA?

F: No.

ML: Why not?

F: Because if the government takes me out with my children I'll have to go to Mexico, and I have a place to live there and my children are grown-ups. They speak Spanish and English, so I don't worry about that.

ML: They are already grown up. You mean your children already know how to defend themselves?

F: They know how to speak English, Spanish, Mixtec, so no, I do not worry about that. I do not worry.

ML: You've given them enough and they have learned to be on their own from that. Do you feel proud?

F: I really do not worry about that.

ML: I see you are proud. And the last thing I wanted to ask you about was this; you have a son in college, Antonio, and he was very special because he had to sue the state to let him pay [state resident tuition].

F: Because first of all, my son won all his scholarships. He was a good student, he won everything. Later, when they learned that I was an immigrant and he was the child of an immigrant—that he has no papers—they took away his scholarships. Imagine how I felt, because he worked a lot. I have worked a lot with him for this, and then they took it away. I was like dear God, what am I going to do?

But, I was at work thinking, “If I can't help my children, I have to find a way out,” and an idea came to my head; I told him, son, why do we not talk to an attorney? We already have an attorney that helped with our papers, so I called this lawyer and the lawyer answered me. Since I could not explain the situation well, I gave my son the phone number and he called and explained it again. I gave him the phone and he explained everything, okay. The lady said that she could not help because she was not working those cases, but she knew someone who would help. My son found him and thank God, the lawyer who came won his case.

ML: How did you feel seeing your child out there, in the newspapers, with people naming him as an example; how do you feel about that?

F: Good, very good, very happy and we won the case. He received his scholarship back and now we are better, that's why I thank God.

Felipa, Interview by Marina López, December 25, 2016