

Luz

Luz reflects on the ways in which her life has changed since obtaining a U Visa granted to her as a victim of domestic abuse. “Now my life is more tranquil and full of dreams and full of desire to move on.” Luz was born in Mexico City. She was twenty-six years old at the time of this interview.

L: Thank God, in 2012, fortunately I was able to apply for a visa called the U Visa. A friend recommended it to me after we talked a little about my life, not much, then she told me that maybe if I applied to the U Visa, there was some way I could get some kind of permission, to work. So I did not work illegally because I constantly lived in fear with the uncertainty of driving without a license, that if I were to be stopped by the police and have to go to jail, my daughters would be staying with the baby sitter. Perhaps I could be deported, you know, and, I do not know, who would take care of my daughters?

Then in 2012—well, I applied for the U Visa in 2011, honestly scared but hopeful. And I drove over to apply for the U Visa I think it's because I kept wanting to finish school. Then in some way or another I tried to get the GED and go to college, because the first thing they asked me was a social security number, if you add to that the driving without a license. Then thank God someone gave me very valuable information and I went to see a lawyer, Emily Guerrero of Catholic Charities. Very nice person. So she helped me to apply for a U Visa, and in 2012 I got my work permit.

ML: Here we will clarify that the U visa is a visa for people who have been victims of crime, right?

L: Exactly, yes.

ML: Can you explain how it changed your life from not having a visa to having one? What changed in your life as a mom?

L: My life changed radically, my life changed. I am now enrolled in school to improve my education, I was able to get a driver's license and was able to rent a place to live with my daughters where I'm comfortable and I am alone. I do not have to be asking for help to rent a place or live with other people who were already there and only left me the place, or live with other people sharing the rent for lack of money, lack of papers, lack of documentation. I was able to apply to buy a car that does not overheat every ten minutes leaving me lying on the freeway. I no longer experience the stress of driving and seeing the police, knowing that I have to get off at the next gas station, but knowing I have to resist the urge to pee because I used to get nervous, knowing that the police could stop me and find I am without a license.

Now my life is more tranquil and full of dreams and full of desire to move on. I know that somehow or in one way or another, yes we suffer a lot, but it is life. Who does not suffer in this

life? It is life, but knowing that somehow or another someday I'll be able to return to Mexico to see my mom and see my dad, and at the same time to return here to work and be able to send money when my mom talks to me and says to me "Daughter, I need money for my medicine." I'll be able to send money. Then, my daughters will have a better education than I did. I will be able to be in a country of opportunities without having to be hiding; I think my life has changed radically.

Luz, Interview by Marina López, June 13, 2013