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MASTER'S DEGREE FINAL DISSERTATION

Stories and Oral Methodologies as tools to go beyond
the single story.

The case of Migrant Women in Castellón.

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Abstract

This Master's thesis aims at challenging the limits of the single story by reflecting on the existence of a pluriverse of voices and stories. In order to do this, it analyzes how the single story was spread since colonial times and reproduced by our systems of power, producing an unbalance of power in relation to stories. Confronting this problem, this academic paper tries to open the space for others, to listen and get close to the pluriverse of voices of migrant women that have been silenced by the story of separation, learning with and from them. As a result, it studies the possible contributions that the creation of a space of dialogue with the use of oral methodologies, oral history and life stories can bring to reveal the intersectionalities that shape each person's identity, experiences, oppressions and paths, as well as the possibilities to find alternative ways to perceive and feel with and for others.

Keywords

Life Stories, migrant women, Decoloniality, Intersectionality, Alternatives for peaces.

Resumen

Esta tesis de máster pretende desafiar los límites de la historia única, reflexionando acerca de la existencia de un pluriverso de voces e historias. Para ello, analiza cómo la historia única fue difundida desde tiempos coloniales y reproducida por nuestros sistemas de poder, produciendo un desequilibrio de poder en relación con las historias. Confrontando este problema, este trabajo académico intenta abrir el espacio para otras, para escuchar y conocer más de cerca el pluriverso de voces de mujeres migrantes que han sido silenciadas por la historia de la separación, aprendiendo con y de ellas. Como resultado, estudia las posibles contribuciones que puede aportar la creación de un espacio de diálogo con el uso de metodologías orales, historia oral e historias de vida para revelar las interseccionalidades que definen la identidad,

experiencias, opresiones y caminos de cada persona, así como las posibilidades de encontrar caminos alternativos para percibir y sentir con y por los otros.

Palabras clave:

Historias de vida, mujeres migrantes, Decolonialidad, Interseccionalidad, Alternativas para las paces.

Dedication

To my dad,

Hope that this thesis can symbolize courage and energy to continue embarking yourself on new and, sometimes, difficult journeys. Hope we can continue supporting each other for many more years.

To anyone out there with a pluriverse of stories to tell, to everyone who felt silenced, to everyone who is willing to act and change.

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INTRODUCTION

This master's thesis represents an exercise of reflection and openness to the existence of a pluriverse of voices and stories. It is part of the Master's Degree in International Peace, Conflict and Development Studies, having also the will to start challenging the single story spread since colonial times and reproduced in multiple ways by our systems and structures of power, inequalities and prejudices. I would like to bring the possibility of creating a space of dialogue to listen and get close to the pluriverse of voices of individuals and groups that have been silenced by the story of separation, learning with and from them. With these aims, I will start this master thesis exposing the reasons, personal motivations, research problems and questions that led me to approach the importance of this topic. These have also been the basis of the objectives and the methodology that I will follow within this master thesis.

1. Justification of the topic

Why is it important to challenge the single story?

The research topic chosen for this academic thesis relates to the analyses of oral methodologies (life stories and oral history) as tools that can contribute to the process of revealing the systems of oppression and power that still influence the daily lives of many individuals, groups and communities. Women, black and colour people, *mestizas y mestizos*, indigenous communities, migrants, queer people and many other subaltern groups have remained at the margins of the official history, especially, since the colonial times. This way, in a process characterized by orality, alternative voices could arise as a way to challenge the limits of the single story.

This could also provide a space of deep listening, recognition, interconnectedness and no judgements that could lead to learning new ways of perceiving and feeling with and for others. This would mean the possibility of reconsidering the values of empathy, recognition

and solidarity as alternatives which could involve a process of reflection and understanding. Going beyond this, these alternatives might also bring agency, responsibility and commitment towards a peaceful reconstruction and social and cultural transformation realizing the importance of giving space to all the voices and stories.

As it can be shown, this research topic is a wide one being connected to my personal path as the author of this master thesis, as well. My journey approaching this topic did not follow a linear way, but rather it has been open to changes and transformation as it will be presented in the following pages.

2. Personal Motivations

Why is it important to me?

Having been raised in a country that experienced war and a dictatorial regime, most of my life I grew up without knowing the reasons for certain behaviors, feelings, emotions or still existing wounds that affected the society surrounding me. The silence imposed during many years of violence was and is still a reality promoted by the official history and institutions. We still do not know a lot of the things that happened or how the events impacted on the minds, bodies and daily lives of many people here in Spain. We still do not know the different experiences of many people and, even while I was studying a degree in history, this was a reality.

A single and written story was spread considering who were the good ones, the bad ones; who were the winners and who were the victims. However, despite the fact that some things have changed in a democratic way, the truth is that there still exists a lack of recognition of many voices that were silenced in my country. I think that the frustration of realizing this made me feel interested in other ways of trying to approach the history of my country in a different form. Was it possible to go beyond the official history? Was it the only possible one existing? What was the paper of most of us within it, even for the younger generations that did

not experience the war and the dictatorship? Was I really living in a ‘peaceful’ and a ‘democratic’ society where fears, stigmas and wounds are still present?

All this made me think about the importance of just sitting down for a moment and listening to different stories and experiences that could teach us a diversity of aspects which was not written down in the official sources. This made me feel closer to my own context in a process of recognition of other voices and memories. This was the starting point of my academic path and my interest in applying oral methodologies, trying to understand how life stories and memories could be conceived as powerful and democratic sources of information.

However, my process of learning was really about to start when I arrived at the Peace Master program in Universitat Jaume I. I still remember how during the first course I felt that the bubble in which I was living before exploded, understanding how blind I was to the fact that the realities of silence of my context, the ones that I was trying to understand, were not an isolated case. History and narratives have been used to silence voices in many different places and contexts. They have been used to impose an official way of subordinating others, of knowing and understanding others through differences of race, gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, ableism, etc; through stereotypes and stigmas. I was starting to understand the power of history as a privilege (especially, since the colonial times) for some that still attempt to tell and write in their interests a reductive history and stories of others and their daily lives.

Personally, I think I would have never become aware of this if it was not because of the opportunity (and privilege) that I had to listen and dialogue with my classmates, professors and different people I met in the last years. My previous academic experience with these oral methodologies focused, especially, on the topics of memory and the case study of Spain. But, for the first time, the people surrounding me gave me the chance to know them beyond the surface of prejudices and stigmas promoted in the western white capitalist-racist-patriarchal bubble in which I was living (and I still live).

They opened their hearts and souls to me. They told me about their journeys and personal paths, being most of them women that arrived as migrants in Castellón. And, with this, I could discover that some people, even the ones that were sitting next to me every day in class, have a pluriverse of experiences and stories, moments of beauty, but also of loss inside of them. I will always be grateful for this and all the lessons I could learn from and with them. Also, for my experience with the New Tendencies course, the facilitators Gigio, I Jin and Jenny and all the topics we talked about in the classes. It was at that moment that I started to realise about the need to go further in the critical use of the oral methodologies I used to work with, taking into account feminists, decolonial and intersectional perspectives to include alternative voices in a process of reflecting about myself, as well.

Was I also promoting a single story of other people? Which was the way I was interacting, thinking and seeing others? Was I embedded with considerations of prejudices and stereotypes? Did I have a role in perpetuating the single story and the systems of oppression, patriarchy, racism, etc? Was I as 'open minded' as I thought? What did that even mean? Did I really try to know others? Did I know something about the realities of many subaltern groups living in Spain? What about my capacity for empathy? What about other values, such as diversity, recognition, inclusion, solidarity or support? Did I ever think about them in a different way as the one that is taught in my western education? With all these questions, the last few years have represented the beginning of a process of learning in which understanding my position in this world and power dynamics has been essential for me. Coming from a Spanish, western, white, female, working class and heterosexual context, my experiences are not going to be the same as the ones of other person who can experience, live, think, feel and see the world from another perspectives.

Nevertheless, now I believe more than ever in the importance of giving space to our personal stories and experiences since these are the ones that can shape our identities, our fears,

the way that we feel, the way that we know, the way that we love, the way that we interact with others. Related to this, these notions should also mean the need to try to understand why, in this pluriverse of stories and experiences, some were and are still silenced, relegated to the margins, and others were and are still listened to and privileged; why some stories have been made invisible by the systems of oppression and why other stories have been known.

To be honest, following this path has not been completely an easy way. I could never imagine how difficult it is to listen to the stories of the people that have been and are still oppressed without having the feelings of ‘what can I do to make them feel better?’. Hence, this led me to start rethinking about my own capacity of perceiving others and feeling empathy with and for others, and also with myself. Empathy should not mean to feel pity or sorry for others and their stories, even trying to take some action in order to deal with those feelings and forgetting later about them, going back to the normal situation that perpetuates inequalities and abuse. Rather, I think that we have a responsibility to cultivate our capacities of empathy, recognition and solidarity, reflecting about these as a process of re-learning about our interconnectedness with others while listening to their experiences and personal stories.

In this sense, the experience of developing a Human Library project showed me the importance of all this. I think I can only have words of gratitude for all the people that got involved in a space where we could leave aside our prejudices; where people felt comfortable to share their stories and to deeply listen, even connecting with our own experiences and fears. I felt that an atmosphere of recognition, understanding and deep empathy was created, being able to establish new connections and relationships. We put in dialogue a pluriverse of beautiful and inclusive stories and values.

Besides this, knowing how much people enjoyed the opportunity of joining a space like this has given me a lot of hope and motivation for the future. Even if we started as a small group, I believe that knowing the experiences and personal stories of others can reveal a path

to work towards social and cultural transformation. Realizing the fact that all stories matter was something that we were starting to internalize, including in this process our own personal stories. Talking about my personal experiences now, I think that this project and also the last years of learnings have helped me to better understand my own experiences and feelings, especially the ones I have never wanted to deal with. I have always been afraid to deal with them because of the pain and the trauma they symbolized for me. But the bonds I could establish in the last years encouraged me to connect with these parts of myself, feeling very related to the stories of others in a process in which I became part of them and, at the same time, they became part of myself.

This way, all this also helped me realize about the kind of social actor I want to be, reflecting about my own positionality. Situating myself and my personal context, and as long as we fail to transform the structures of inequality that affect the daily lives of many people, those with the most privileges (in which I include myself) can use them to make the situation of the most damaged visible and demand recognition, social transformation and justice (de Hoyos et al., 2021: 34). My personal motivation is not to produce a new hegemonic knowledge, but rather to show the importance of providing a space where new voices can help to develop a deeper understanding of the structural problems faced in our society. I really believe that this process of trying to know more about these realities could help to surpass the stereotypes and prejudices, the limits of the single and official story of separation that has marked the path of the people that stayed at the margins. It could show, finally, the way to understand the pluriverse of experiences, taking into account that all stories matter. And with this, we can try to deeply and politically emphasize with them to take action and promote social and cultural transformation while recovering our interconnectedness with others.

This is my hope with this academic thesis. I know that the road to do it might be a long one, but I am definitely committed to do it feeling with and for the people that I love and care about, who will also be by my side in this new journey.

3. Research problems

Why is it important to talk about the single story?

One of the first aspects that I had to consider while carrying out this research is the traditional and hegemonic notion of what is considered to be the ‘proper’ academic knowledge. Within this, especially in the western context, there has been a widespread misrepresentation of oral sources. They have not been considered as reliable methodologies that could bring new perspectives and knowledge regarding the consideration that what was not written down or collected can be characterized with a lack of scientific truth or verity. In this sense, there has been an underestimation of orality, forgetting that language can act as a way of communication. But also, according to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986: 13), as a ‘carrier of culture’ and, thus, local knowledges, perspectives, histories and values. Moreover, oral sources have remained as the kind of knowledge that belonged to what has been called ‘primitive’, ‘illiterate’ or, in the context of development theories, ‘undeveloped’ societies or cultures (Miralles, 1985: 15).

The factors that produced this situation are based on the structures of the process of knowledge production since the fundamental questions, theories, concepts and methodologies of research are generated from and within the western context and experiences (Oyewùmí, 2017, p. 69). This superiority, that is supposedly represented by the written and academic western (colonial) sources (wa Thiong’o, 1986: 12), has also led to a question of power in relation to the fact of who has been considered privileged to produce knowledge (Appadurai, 2006) and write the official and single story. The systems of oppression (colonialism, racism,

gender, etc) have favored a small percentage of the population in power (the Man/Human) who entitled himself to write and reproduce the colonial stories about himself and others.

The Man/Human decided which stories were important, and which had to be silenced and oppressed. As a consequence, a void still exists in official history embodied in the many voices, stories and experiences of subaltern groups (Folguera, 1994) that were excluded and oppressed. There is a need, hence, to approach these oral methodologies doing it now from a decolonial perspective that help to reflect about the power that characterize stories and knowledge production, emphasizing the need to go beyond the notion of ‘universalism’ and ‘homogenization’ (Mohanty, 2008: 2) and towards situated knowledge (Bendix et al., 2020: 123-125).

Following the previous research problem, the oral methodologies (oral history and life stories) proposed could be applied to different groups and communities whose voices, coming especially from the South, have remained or are still excluded at the margins. Unfortunately, this has been the realities of many individuals, groups and communities who suffered the consequences of the systems of oppression, hoping that future research in the fields of peace and decolonial studies can get closer, include and recognize all these voices. Nevertheless, a specific case study has been selected to show the powerful values that these methodologies can provide. This case focuses on the journeys of migrant women that have arrived in Castellón.

In the particular case study chosen, it is important to state that gender and ethnic-racial hierarchies have historically influenced men (in particular, white western men) to be the first to appropriate writing. In such a way, most of women's perspectives were not recorded in written sources and ended up being silenced by the official history (de Hoyos et al., 2021). However, what is even more interesting is that within this problem a new critique should be considered since this situation has been colonially reproduced within the hegemonic western and white feminist movements, theories and discourses. In this sense, the process of

homogenization of experiences and the ‘international sisterhood’ spread (Mohanty: 2008, p. 4-7) has also silenced the experiences, voices and stories of non-white bourgeois heterosexual women (Lugones, 2008, p. 92), not taking into account the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 89) of factors and structural factors and violences that can impact their daily lives.

With this, a common belief has been spread considering women as victims *only* of the patriarchal structures (Bidaseca & Vázquez, 2011, p. 26) from a western perspective. This fact can contribute again to the process of silencing voices, to the undervaluation of the recognition of a pluriverse of experiences and the perpetuation of stereotypes and prejudices. Moreover, this could be interpreted as a new form of colonization (*colonialidad discursiva*: Bidaseca & Vázquez, 2011, p. 26) which implies a relation of structural domination and a ‘suppression - often violent - of heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question (Mohanty, 2008, p. 2)’.

Questioning this, promoting the values of sorority and solidarity should mean a process that needs to start from the recognition of our differences, involving this a path of reflection about the structures of oppression, exclusion and inequalities that has marked differently and in an intersectional way the experiences and identities of other women (de Hoyos et al., 2021, p. 38; 63). Applying this to the case study chosen, the life stories of migrant women might present the intersection of different factors and experiences (gender, racism, classism, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc) that has accompanied their paths and journeys in all their stages (before leaving their homes, during and arriving at a new place).

However, all the diversity of their stories and journeys, the possible reasons to leave, the situations that they might find when arriving to a new place, etc are often covered or reduced again to a single story which is full of stereotypes and prejudices about what it means to be a migrant woman in our societies. With this, they might suffer again a new process of marginalization at the margins. As a consequence, it is essential to know more from and with

all these realities and these voices of migrant women that can reveal the existence of inequalities promoted by our systems and institutions of power.

The final problem that would be approached in this research thesis would involve the need to continue developing the use of oral methodologies as a process of reflection of our contexts, privileges, positions and capacities to develop alternative and peaceful ways of perceiving and feeling with and for others. The traditional sources and authors that have focused on the application of oral methodologies, such as Paul Thompson, Joan Miralles or Pilar Folguera (in the Spanish and European context), approached the techniques of oral history and life stories from a practical perspective. They have used them, especially, in order to get more knowledge and alternative perspectives to the one of the official history. Despite this, the method of research stopped there with this process of inclusion of new or alternative voices, with the possibility of still reproducing colonial imbalances in the process of collection of new information.

As a result, there has been a lack of consideration of the importance of the other possible contributions that these oral methodologies could have to promote peaceful alternatives and values for social and cultural transformation. Regarding this problem, the author Alexa Weik von Mossner called the notion of *empathy inhibition* as the “strongest barrier to feeling with and for others” (Gaard, 2020: 226). Actually, this lack of empathy might be an obstacle that impacts on the possibility of promoting the recognition of others, their feelings, their sufferings and experiences; as well as it can impact on the collective sense of interconnectedness, solidarity and justice (Leoni, 2019: 130-131; 149) that could be developed in our diverse western societies (considering, especially, my context as author of this thesis). Here we can find the importance of addressing and trying to provide new tools and paths like oral methodologies and spaces of dialogue which can provide alternatives to help developing new ways of perceiving and feeling with and for others, beyond stereotypes and stigmas.

As it can be seen, there are different and interconnected research problems that relate, first of all, to the process of decolonising the official knowledge, history and stories production. In this sense, the purpose of this research will focus on the analysis of the possible contributions that the methodologies of oral history and life stories can provide to this process of including and recognising the voices that were forced to remain at the margins. However, and as stated before, this process will need to involve a social, cultural and human perspective, as well. The reason for this is that the dialogue space that oral methodologies provide can be the initial point to start cultivating our personal capacities of perceiving and feeling with and for others as a way to think critically, politically and demand social action and transformation.

Trying to summarize this, the general question proposed will be “Which are the possible contributions of oral methodologies to the process of challenging the limits of the single story and to go beyond this with peaceful alternatives and values?”.

4. Research questions

Following the general question introduced in the previous section, some research questions arise considering the research problems stated:

- How can the methodologies of oral history and life stories be useful to decolonise knowledge and stories production?
- With regards to the case study of migrant women in Castellón, what does this pluriverse of experiences show related to colonality of the single story and the structures of violence and inequalities?
- How can these methodologies mentioned contribute to the development of alternatives to perceive and feel with and for others?

5. Objectives

Taken into consideration the above-mentioned motivations, interests, research problems and questions, the objectives of this master thesis will focus on:

- *General objectives:*

1. Engage through oral methodologies with a *pluriverse* of stories and subjects with voice, in this case migrant women that have arrived in Castellón, as a decolonial option that can make the limits of the single story unstable. Also, its dimensions of coloniality of being and knowledge which have fostered universalism, reductionism and colonial differences as a single totality (Mignolo, 2018: 3; 147).
2. Reflect about the values and alternatives that could be learned to perceive and feel with and for others by listening to their life stories.

- *Specific objectives:*

1. Show a path to reflect about the existence of a pluriverse of experiences and stories beyond a single and official story (and in the particular case study, beyond the process of homogenization within hegemonic western feminisms) that has silenced many voices.
2. Question the monolithic category of migrant women which have been presumed and is still reduced to a single 'less' human with a single identity. Related to this, the focus would be to try to understand the diversity and complexities of the stories and paths of migrant women in all the different stages of their lives.
3. Show the importance to apply a decolonial and intersectional perspective to use methodologies of oral history and life stories, developing an oral project that does not reproduce colonial inequalities.

4. Provide a space of empathic dialogue, recognition and solidarity for the migrant women that participate in this master thesis, learning with them, their voices, stories and values.

6. Methodology

The research proposed will be carried out considering a decolonial paradigm that can allow me to analyze the use of these methodologies and their contributions from a critical perspective. It should be mentioned that the research topic chosen is characterized by a mix between theoretical and empirical research with the design of an oral project. In this sense, the research method would be a qualitative one. Besides this, all the investigation will be based on different steps and tools which should complement each other in an interconnected, creative, dynamic and significant way.

In such a way, first of all a literature review will be needed to deeply understand, study and explain the key concepts, theories, research problems and questions introduced in the theoretical framework. I will present this in Chapter 1 and beginning of Chapter 2 of this thesis, analyzing the creation and reproduction of the single story, as well as the importance that represents the process of decolonising knowledge with the inclusion and recognition of alternative voices. In this procedure I will also include the methodologies of oral history and life stories as tools that can help to engage in decolonial alternatives to go beyond the single story.

Moreover, this literature review will be the foundation to prepare the next steps of the thesis with the development of an oral project with migrant women in Castellón. Hence, I will emphasize first the need for a decolonial reflection about the empirical use of the methodologies of oral history and life stories. The reason for this is the need to avoid the reproduction of the single story, inequalities and power imbalances while developing this

project with migrant women that come, in particular, from subaltern and racialised contexts. Based on this, I will try to design an oral project that will be characterized by a process of listening, horizontality, relationality and accountability with the hope to offer a space of dialogue and care to the migrant women that have decided to participate. I will use personal interviews as empathic and dialogic instruments to get close to and learn with and from the pluriverse of stories and voices of these women.

The sample selected to carry out this qualitative research thesis using oral methodologies would involve personal interviews of three migrant women that will be selected following a non-probabilistic sampling method. The reason for this is that one of the main objectives is to realize how we can learn from the pluriverse. The focus will be on their voices and their different life stories which can reveal the intersection of different experiences and systems of oppression being migrant women, coming from different contexts and having lived different experiences that led their path to the destination of Castellón. Bearing this in mind, and even if the number of participants can seem to be a small one, their life stories can provide a lot of information and details to carry out the qualitative research.

All the details about the preparation and the implementation of the oral project will be offered in Chapter 2 of this master thesis. However, I would like to introduce that this research thesis will represent a long term-project and it will include all the necessary elements and steps to carry it out properly, such as the preparation of the questionnaires needed for the organization of the interviews, the process of transcription or the presentation of the voices, stories and pluriverse of the participants.

To complete the empirical section of this research, in the final chapter (Chapter 3) I will present my learnings and experience with the investigation, the oral project and the pluriverse of voices that I will present in the following pages. I will also try to relate these learnings with some of the values and alternatives promoted by peace studies in a way that they can help us

to perceive others in a new empathic and political way while listening to their stories. With this aim, I will also use theoretical literature to present these values and alternatives of peace studies, trying to emphasize the important contributions that the use of oral methodologies and the creation of spaces of dialogue could have to bring solidarity, recognition, empathy, social action and transformation.

With this, the qualitative research would be completed with the combination of theoretical and empirical tools that will allow the analysis of the use of these methodologies and their possible contributions to the process of challenging the single story in multiple ways.

After I have exposed the notions and elements that will be the basis and initial point of this master thesis, I would like to invite the reader to embark him/her/themselves on this journey starting with the first chapter.

CHAPTER 1: Decolonising knowledge and stories

1.1. Introduction

Have you ever considered if our official History is the only one that exists? Have you ever thought about how it was written down and spread? Have you ever wondered if there can be more stories that we do not know? Having these questions in mind, in this first chapter, I will explore how the single story was created and maintained for centuries, emphasizing the importance of knowledge as a powerful tool to promote the coloniality of being and the coloniality of knowing. This will lead me to address the importance and the need of engaging with decolonial options to reflect about the existence of a pluriverse of stories and subjects with voice. Finally, in the last pages of this chapter I will try to analyze how methodologies such as oral history, life stories and testimonies can be deconstructed and understood following a decolonial perspective. This will help me to show how the existence of many stories can contribute to decolonising our knowledge production and the single story having a pluriverse of voices. I will present my learning remarks and conclusion at the end of this chapter.

1.2. The official and single story

The history book on the shelf is always repeating itself (ABBA, 1974).

What makes us humans? What is the meaning of life and being a human? How do we see ourselves and others? Are we very different? Or rather, are we all looking to achieve the same needs and goals? Are we all looking for love, freedom and other common values? Is it possible, then, to understand each other? Why can understanding and recognition *of* and *with* others be most of the times complicated? Each individual has a unique story; each person has a different origin, background, experiences. Each of these stories - which can represent and show the past, the present and the future - influence the way through which people can comprehend the world,

the society, the relationships with others; how they act and conceive others; the values and needs that are considered to be essential in their life, in their connections and that can create distinctions among different groups or cultures ('us' and 'the others').

Being inspired by the North American activist and poet Muriel Rukeyser, Eduardo Galeano believed in the idea that the world is not made of atoms, but rather is made of stories. These stories are the ones that we listen, tell, reproduce and multiply. These stories are also the ones that can allow us to transform the past into the present, what seems to be distant and invisible into something close and visible. In this sense, the fact that a story of separation and differences between individuals have been created in our societies (based on elements such as gender, race, economic position, class, sexual preferences, birthplace, etc) could only be explained as a consequence of the consideration that someone or a group deserved or still deserves a better or worse story than others; a story based on power values and relationships. The mental, political, cultural and academic structures used to interpret the world surrounding may contribute to the legitimation of an official story, History and a social order which are still characterized by injustice, violence, stereotypes and inequalities of all kinds (social, economic, political, cultural, academic, etc). They can all contribute to having a *single story* and the dangers that this supposes (Adichie, 2009).

As it can be realized, it is not possible to talk about the single story without introducing the question of power. According to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie stories are also defined following the same principle as our political, social and economic systems. They are determined by the concept of *nkali* (Adichie, 2018: 13). The translation of this substantive from Igbo to English is described by the Nigerian author as "to be greater than another" (Adichie, 2009). Consequently, the importance of power relies on the facts of who has been and is able to tell a story or stories about itself or others; when and how are the stories told; or how many stories can be told. All this depends on power, which has represented the capacity of someone

to tell the story of others. Furthermore, it has represented specially the capacity of converting this story in the official story of a person (what in Igbo is called *sraki*: Adichie, 2009) and in the official History. Our official narratives and History - generally told and narrated considering the interests of a small group of elites and people in power (in particular, white imperialist men in Western countries) - have spread messages of power and prejudices (Thompson, 1988: 263). Therefore, the single story can create stereotypes and dichotomies, leading them to the promotion of an incomplete story of others which become, finally, the permanent story.

Hence, a single (Adichie, 2009) and standard story of separation (Eisenstein, 2018) has been written focusing negatively on the differences among diverse individuals, groups and communities. This was due to the vulnerability and fragility that supposes the recognition of the intersubjectivity that characterized human relationships (Martínez Guzmán and París, 2010: 86-89) and the interdependence with others and the Earth (Arendt, 1996). Fears might have appeared along with the discovery of interconnectedness with others. This has fostered a detached perspective of 'othering' that can continue strengthening human separation from others and from nature, which can all be seen as the 'enemies' (Eisenstein, 2018). In this way, it has created hegemonic narratives, single stories that fostered the dispossession and dehumanization of certain individuals and groups of population, whose dignity, identities and experiences were stolen and reduced (Adichie, 2009).

This has been the case of the macro-narratives of the colonial matrix of power, spread and maintained in the last five hundred years (Mignolo, 2018: 107). Colonial domination did not only focus on physical actions, control and destruction. It included, above all, what Walter Mignolo (2018: 172) has called a 'massive conceptual (epistemic) machine'. This one was designed and ruled by actors (white Christian European men) who perceived themselves as the model of what it meant to be a *Man/Human*. The concept of *Human* was, then, invented to spread (being in a position of power) their own image as humanity, as superiors who were able

to introduce and manage the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo, 2018: 168-180). Nevertheless, in order to promote this image of themselves, it was also necessary to establish negative differences with those individuals, groups and communities that were considered to be inferior. Within this process, the social, hierarchical and universal classification of the world population was imposed. Especially, this was based on racial (Quijano, 2001-2002:1 in Lugones, 2008: 79) and hetero-sexual differences used to rank and exclude the ones conceived as ‘less human’ (Mignolo, 2018: 168; 174). The system of classification was, hence, a system of binary oppositions between white and non-white people; between masculine and feminine (with the exaltation of hegemonic masculinity, patriarchy (Oyěwùmí, 2017: 252) and heterosexism (Lugones, 2008: 98); and between Christians and non-Christians during the colonial times (Mignolo, 2018: 155).

Regarding this system of differences, it is important to understand that, in order to secure this epistemic domination, these racial and sexual classifications were invented. They were fictions, as well as the model of Man/Human and humanity. ‘‘Classifications are cultural because they are inventions, not representations’’ (Mignolo, 2018: 177). Therefore, the reason why some individuals and groups became ‘less human’ or ‘inferior humans’ is not because this was their previous condition by the time that the Europeans arrived in their territories. On the contrary, differences were introduced, disrupting the continuum of their lives (Foucault, 1975-76 in Sassen, 2019: 72).

They were simplified and classified following the single story nurtured by colonial and, later, imperial differences. Coloniality supposed with this the naturalization of these differences, a process that meant the negation of others humanity in words of Franz Fanon (1973, in Garzón López, 2013: 321). They became the ‘otherness’, an homogenized group that incorporated all the colonized people, groups and communities (Suárez-Navaz and Hernández Castillo, 2008). Given this circumstance, it could be seen here the principle of *nkali* stated by

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2018: 13). This supposed the reduction and silence of the other stories of self-identification that belonged to those individuals and groups that did not fit in the invented category of *Human*.

In addition, the Man/Human told the single story that would characterize the colonized and their descendants as the inferior, dangerous, voiceless and irrational people that felt more closed to nature and emotions than to civilization. Therefore, they needed to be dominated. Meanwhile, the creators of the colonial matrix of power and their descendants could persevere as the superior group (Mignolo, 2018: 153) that should take the decisions for the dependent and subordinated ones (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 28). The heritage of the Man/Human implied the continuation of this violence and oppressive consciousness that aspired to the dominance and appropriation of everything surrounding them (Freire, 1970: 58-59). This included land, goods, time, men, humanity and, even, storytelling. Hence, the colonized deserved, in the view of the colonizers, a worse story than theirs (or even, any story at all) based on power relationships and the existence of racial and sexual differences. Moreover, the Man/Human told himself and others ‘‘a story about their manifest destiny to rule and destroy, if necessary, cultures and civilizations that they invented as dangerous for their own well-being’’ (Mignolo, 2018: 220). If this story was the only one told and reproduced, this is the process of how the single story was created. By embodying the Man/Human and the ‘less human’ in only one sense, this transformed the fiction described and extended into the determinant ‘reality’ influencing intersubjectivities and relationships within the single story

1.2.1. Coloniality of being

Since the colonial expansion – and despite the process of decolonization in the 19th and 20th century -, these fictional and hierarchical, racial and sexual norms have impacted on every sphere of life. From culture, labor, politics, economy to academic production, languages or

storytelling. They were all marked by racism and sexism as two of the essential elements of the colonial matrix of power. On account of that, all the domains of control (publics and privates) are interconnected. They support each other within the coloniality of the matrix of power (Mignolo, 2018: 150). As an example of this, the categories of Western/non-Western, North/South (Mohanty, 2008) have been used to establish the distinction between the wealthy, advanced and privilege territories and the group that created the colonial matrix of power; and those territories, communities and cultures that could not follow the development standards imposed by the first ones. And more than in a geographically sense, this colonial distinction still has its impacts, precisely, on the social, political, economic, religious, cultural and academic fields, among others. Actually, *borders are everywhere and they are not only geographic; they are racial and sexual, epistemic and ontological, religious and aesthetic, linguistic and national* (Mignolo, 2018: 111).

Taking this into account, the concept of coloniality of power needs to be comprehended in a wider way. Colonial differences have provided a specific story, a fictional vision of the world which has remained universally until today as one of the most effective forms of social domination (Lugones, 2008: 79) of the Euro-Western narratives and modernity. The results of this single story of separation have been, then, the structures of domination, exclusion, violence (Martínez Guzmán and Paris, 2006: 28) and objectification (López-Domínguez, 2016: 284) that intersect between them to control the ‘others’, the ‘enemies’. Relating to this, one of the systemic consequences of coloniality was also its effects in the minds of colonized subjects. They were oppressed, denigrated and undignified with a story of inferiority that could be internalized undervaluing themselves and their identities (Freire, 1970: 64; Garzón López, 2013: 320-321). As a result, mental domination of the colonized was essential. With this it could be possible to control how they conceived themselves and how they conceived their relationships, as well (wa Thiong’o: 1986).

Classifications meant, thus, the powerful way to organize the world. As part of the colonial matrix of power, they alleged the oppression of many women, black, color, indigenous people, ethnic minorities and subaltern groups (Rodríguez, 2015) who have suffered the violence of the structures of domination and have remained at their margins. Social classifications involved the *coloniality of being* grounded, as mentioned before, in racism and sexism (Mignolo, 2018: 148). This has reduced their stories and identities to a determinant, common and inferior story for most of them. However, as it has also been introduced, these classifications were the fictions created as part of the epistemic machine and violence exercised by the minority who perceived themselves as the model of Man/Human. Concerning this, these classifications emerged following a specific view. They were designed by the thoughts and knowledge about the world coming from this particular group of white Christian European men. In fact, these specific notions were all assumed as the superior, official and universal knowledge.

1.2.2. Coloniality of knowing

Classifications were, hence, knowledge which represented power within the colonial matrix (Mignolo, 2018: 112). It represented the principle of *nkali* (“to be greater than another”). Eurocentrism and, today, the western perspective have the purpose of normalizing this particular knowledge as the only rational truth expressed through a certain culture, languages and narratives (Garzón López, 2013: 307). Along with this, it exemplified the capacity of *sraiki* trying to convert this single story into the definite story (Adichie, 2009), in the permanent reality of most part of the population in the world.

In this process, the knowledges, languages, cultures, cosmovision, systems of beliefs, stories and voices of those not belonging to the model Man/Human were, in the same way, dismissed or considered inferior as compared to the dominant knowledge. The story told about

them was one that did not contemplate them as valid, rational and scientific knowledge. Rather, it demonized them (Mignolo, 2018: 172). Due to this, the connections between the *coloniality of being* and the *coloniality of knowledge* can be realized. *Coloniality of being* involved and involves *coloniality of knowledge* and power, especially in the view of those who highlight the ‘benefits’ that colonialism could have brought to the ‘inferior and uncivilized less humans’.

This belief has continued being spread through the rhetoric of modernity. This one has focused on narratives and promises of progress, civilization, modernization and, actually, development. The reason for this was to justify the salvation and governance of the non-modern ‘less human that were not able to rule themselves’. Modernity was assuring, with this, the coloniality of knowledge and being by hiding with *salvific narratives* the violence it implied in all the domains of control (Mignolo, 2018: 110-117; 232). For this purpose, specific discourses coming from and expanded by institutions that systematized social organization (for instance, educational centers or religious organizations, family, and, nowadays, media) had a key role in perpetuating hierarchies.

Through these interventions, people learnt (and still learn) which memories should be selected and remembered. Even when they are personal, the stories and memories that we learn to judge as appropriate or not, as natural or not, as violent or not, are the result of the political, institutional and social structures of modernity (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 30-31). Therefore, modernity has been, and still is, ‘half of the story constantly hiding and repressing what doesn’t fit the imaginary and desires of storytellers’ (Mignolo, 2018: 112). It is the portrait of the single story with the principle of *nkali*. With this, it could be understood that there is no coloniality of power without modernity. It is part of the epistemic machine that has supported coloniality of being with a specific knowledge production that suited the imaginary and desires of the creators of the colonial matrix of power.

Regarding this knowledge production - and besides the social, racial and sexual classification already detailed as fictions invented - the rhetoric of modernity had also a strong influence with the formulation of the concept 'tradition'. 'Tradition' appeared to be the opposite of what was considered to be modern and academic in relation to the vision of the Man/Human. In this sense, this reinforced the dismissal or the epistemic genocide (de Sousa Santos, 2002: 77 in Mignolo, 2018) of all the other knowledges seen as 'traditions, wisdoms, folklore' (Mignolo, 2018: 118; 208). In the approach to this concept of 'tradition', one of the arguments that led to their rejection as part of the valid and scientific Eurocentric knowledge was based on the notion of orality that may have characterized them to some extent¹. The lack of interest coming from the creators of the colonial matrix of power to study, write, learn and know from and with these knowledges was hidden. The belief was that if information or ideas were not collected or written down (indeed, by the intellectual and knowledgeable Man/Human) they could not be treated as valid, rational and scientific knowledge.

According to this process of distortion, orality has also been left out as the kind of wisdom that pertained to what has been called 'primitive' and 'illiterate' (Miralles, 1985: 15) - or, in the context of development theories, 'undeveloped' – societies. These 'were not blessed with the capacities of producing universal knowledge'. Eventually, modernity has also impacted the academic production of knowledge in this way. Especially, in the western context there has been a widespread non-presence of oral sources, such as interviews, as reliable and objective methodologies that could bring scientific information in qualitative studies. As exposed by Robert S. Weiss, the results of this kind of sources might have been described as 'anecdotal' or as 'impressionistic'. This has implied 'not only that they are imprecise but also that they are more a product of art than objective scientific method' (Weiss, 1995: 33).

¹ The words expressed here do not try to undervalue or deny the existence of the previous writings and materials that belonged to the non-European communities and territories before colonialism and coloniality; some of which, unfortunately, were destroyed due to the violence exercised after the fifteenth century. On the contrary, they try to value the importance given to orality as part of knowledge and its expression in non-Eurocentric cultures.

In addition to all this, modernity strengthened what has been called the *totality of knowledge* (Mignolo, 2018: 197). This is the fostered imaginary in which the knowledge related to eurocentrism, imperialism and Western secularism has been conceived as the only possible way of knowing rationally, as the only truth (Mignolo, 2018: 118; 208). Universalism has been, hence, the consequence of this process of modernity/coloniality. A process which has been characterized by these two aspects that went hand by hand. On the one hand, the consolidation and expansion of the Eurocentric truth. In contradiction to this, the reduction and oppression of the knowledges expressed in non-European and western languages, cultures, narratives, visions, beliefs, stories and voices. Hence, the knowledges that were dismissed were the ones that could not be explained following the theoretical frameworks of the ‘scientific and rational understanding’. Ultimately, this fact has symbolized and justified cultural and epistemic hierarchies (Garzón López, 2013: 324).

By being the universal truth and knowledge, the claim about its neutrality and objectivity (Bendix et al., 2020: 3) was also raised, along with other benefits that have been reserved to *a minority marked by privileges linked to the history of colonialism*. It is the ‘right to research’ stated by Arjun Appadurai (2006). This has also allowed western academics to declare themselves as experts with the skills to engage in any field of knowledge production, related or not to their contexts and backgrounds. In the experience of Oyèrónkẹ Oyěwùmí, all the research questions, theories and concepts have been decided and introduced by the Western academic world whose orders have managed to keep other voices silent (Bendix et al., 2021: 8). Within these limits, other experiences, such as the African ones, have been rarely included as part of those theories, concepts and analysis. Moreover, if they were incorporated it was because they were ‘exceptional’ (Oyěwùmí, 2017: 63).

In such a way, the power of the totality of knowledge does not only rely on the content of knowledge, meaning this, what is enunciated? What is known? What is dismissed? What is

the truth? Which knowledge is considered as valid and universal? Which concepts and methodologies are important? Whose experiences and knowledge counts as valid, scientific knowledge? What is the link between the ‘universal and valid’ knowledge and ‘other knowledges’? (Bendix et al., 2020: 6). But, the totality of knowledge has also depended on the inquiries of who is in a privileged place and who has the power to know and produce knowledge. Some questions arise such as, who could create the single story? Who could affirm the universal knowledge and spread this imaginary to convince others about this reality? Who can/could design and control, within this process, the terms and power relationships within knowledge production? (Mignolo, 2018: 144; 207).

While approaching how social sciences have been built and how the official History has been written, the question of power emerges as an essential element to take into consideration. In both cases, they were envisioned to show and represent the perspective of a small dominant group in power. They have focused on the public achievements (de Hoyos et al., 2021) of characters with a particular race, gender and origin: white European (and now Western) men. The focus in both cases have been, thus, the stories and public experiences of a privileged group of people which were, certainly, universalised to all the population. Furthermore, this universalisation was done in a process of knowledge production which was and, is still, blind to race, gender and coloniality (Suárez-Krabbe, 2020: 63-64).

One of the best examples that can show this was the story narrated about the ‘discovery and conquest of America’. It was known from the perspective of the Man/Human *conquistador*. The modern story and History of the territory ‘started’ with these events trying to discard the pre-colonial experiences and the testimonies of those who were not allowed to raise their voices. Dispossession and dehumanization were key tools to achieve this power imbalance in social sciences and the official and single story. The aim was to silence, oppress and reduce the identities, experiences and praxis of living of those considered the subordinate ‘otherness’.

Thus, the recognition of the value of their voices, actions and experiences was not fomented in favor of the assumed universal and Eurocentric knowledge. Instead, they were given a new, less desirable, distorted and single story – characterized by prejudices and stereotypes - that could fit the interests of the dominant group (Randall, 1992: 35).

In this way, the initial questions raised at the beginning of this chapter *What makes us humans? What is the meaning of being a human? How do we see ourselves and others?* can have a very different meaning depending on the experiences lived on each side of the single story. What does it mean to be a human being if you have been privileged historically? Or, what does it mean to be a human being if you have been dehumanized historically and oppressed when trying to raise your voice? (Suárez-Krabbe, 2020: 63-64). Western conception of History continues to affirm its universality (Mignolo, 2018: 119). While we know many stories about events and experiences related to the privileged characters, unfortunately, the second question remains uncertain. The reason for this was that these experiences and voices were not understood as important to be part of the knowledge production of the official History and social sciences. Consequently, they were not included as part of the same. They were just simplified as the epistemic inferior subject that was exiled from the time-space of the historical events.

Furthermore - and despite suffering the effects of the social gendered-racial classifications and systems of oppression - all social markers that can influence life and experiences (such as sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, etc) were stolen (Garzón López, 2013: 315-316). Because of this, black, color, indigenous people, women, ethnic minorities and many other subaltern groups became a homogenous group. As the ‘otherness’ they became a detached object of study (Quijano in Mignolo, 2018: 200). Being this the case, their story of inferiority and dispossession was written by the white, rich, heterosexual, Christian and western man. The Man/Human entitled himself as subject of study with the

privilege of representing, talking and writing about himself, but also for others. As expressed by bell hooks (1989: 42):

as subjects, people have the right to define their own reality, establish their own identities, name their history. As objects, one's reality is defined by others, one's identity created by others, one's history named only in ways that define one's relationship to those who are subject (hooks, 1989: 42 in Hills Collins, 2000: 71).

Representation can have a problematic meaning in the coloniality/modernity structures because it may ‘‘presuppose a constituted world or reality that is somehow represented’’ (Mignolo, 2018: 109) as uniform and unvaried (Yúdice, 1992). Indeed, what was written down was biased by one specific perspective, content and terms. These tried to fulfill the individualistic and universal goals of the Man/Human within the elaboration of knowledge in which only one arrogant vision of the world fitted, the one of the *One or single World* (Escobar, 2016: 15). Taking for granted his role as subject of study, the Man/Human was able to use, then, the principle of *nkali* (Adichie, 2018: 13). Being in a position of power, the Man/Human could design the unbalanced knowledge orders in which he was able to tell the story of itself and others. What is more, he was in a privileged position to decide which and why some stories were important; who and which stories were excluded from the official History; and how were the stories told applying the power of *sraki* (Adichie, 2009).

Thereby, in the single story (and official History) we can find stories that mattered and stories that were silenced; voices that were acknowledged as relevant and voices that were ignored. It was a fictional separation based on power relationships that have become and remained as the reality. It was a fiction that has taken advantage of the process of knowledge production which is still contaminated, as introduced in this chapter, by this unbalance – the coloniality of being and knowing - in the absence of different voices that do not relate to the official History. Finally, the question of power cannot be told apart within all this process. The reason is that the single story has led to the dehumanization of identities and to difficulties for

understanding and recognising others, our humanity and common values (Adichie, 2009) by focusing negatively on our differences while classifying stories. It can be very easy to judge others having in mind only one perspective of how certain groups are, behave and think. The single story is, as a result, a story of power and its coloniality. Is a story where knowledge was and is still the powerful tool used in the appropriation of other's capacity and power to tell their own story.

1.3. Beyond the official and single story in Decolonial Studies

1.3.1. The need for decoloniality

Stories have been used, thus, during many centuries as an epistemic machine to denigrate, create and perpetuate a world order characterized by injustices. Despite this, following again the speech of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, there is the belief that stories *can also be put to work to empower and demystify* (Adichie, 2009) individuals and communities. Through words, voices and stories there might exist a chance to promote the transformation of the power relationships that still dominate intersubjectivities and human connections since the creation of the colonial matrix of power.

One of the main repercussions of this coloniality of power has meant, hence, that our world has not been completely decolonised (Mignolo, 2018: 124). In fact, the process of decolonization that started in the 19th century with the colonies in America, continuing later in the 20th century in Asia and Africa, was limited to the legal and political independence of the previous colonial territories. This progression did not entail necessarily the end of the hierarchical and social classifications imposed based on racial and hetero-sexual differences that affected the economic, ethnic, sexual, political, epistemic, etc, relationships (Garzón López, 2013: 313). It did not involve the ending of the single story. On the contrary, it supposed the coloniality of this vision of the world kept alive, especially, by the rhetoric of modernity.

Also, by the production of a specific knowledge to interpret the world and the interconnections that take place within it. In conclusion, it did not imply new stories for those who were oppressed by the single story.

Given these considerations about the persistence of the matrix of power, what is still needed is to continue a path that can allow us to approach its coloniality. What is required, then, is *decoloniality*. This a concept that did not appear in European and Western geography, neither from their concerns and interests that aimed at modernity, postmodernity, globalization and development. On the contrary, it arose from lived experiences between the 1960s and 1980s in South America, in what has been called pejoratively as the ‘Third World’. These were trying to raise their voices to respond *to needs prompted by local histories of coloniality* (Mignolo, 2018: 112). Accordingly, decoloniality might be comprehended as a response to the coloniality of being and knowing (Mignolo, 2005). It was a response to the project of modernity/coloniality that attempted to link the time-space of cultures, peoples and territories of all the planet to a big, single and universal narrative. In this sense, decoloniality alluded to the colonial and imperialistic agents of power as the creators of universalism, of an official History and story that were and are discriminatory (Peñuela Contreras, 2009: 43).

This notion has tried to flesh out and make visible the narratives and representations given to the individuals and groups transfigured as the ‘others’. In this process, storytelling constituted a way of violence and discursive colonialism that not only *described their reality*, but also *built* it (Suárez-Navaz, 2008) with oppression, dispossession and exploitation. This was sustained through modernity, justifying the need to save and control the non-modern and inferior ‘less human’. In this way, decoloniality flourished from the desire of these individuals and groups to separate themselves from the modern storytelling of progress and civilization. It was the desire of these people that did not want to be abused anymore. On the contrary, they wanted to re-exist again with the opportunity of telling, redefining, re-signifying and dignifying

their own stories for the first time (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018: 3; 145-146). Thus, the decolonial critique aims at the search of (new) narratives (Chakrabarty, 1995) to reflect about the official History and story from another place; from the voices of the colonized that are recovered (Guha, 2002 in Bidaseca and Vázquez, 2011: 24).

Because of all this, it has been important to understand, firstly, how the model of modernity/coloniality was established (Mignolo, 2018: 119) and how it could shape the single story of separation. Decoloniality addresses both sides of the official macro-narrative of modernity/coloniality which gave more importance to some stories of power over other stories. Nonetheless, an important aspect to bear in mind when reflecting about decoloniality is that this is not a specific plan that conceives itself as the one and only solution. Neither as a guide that needs to be followed precisely as an absolute truth or method (Rutazibwa, 2020: 66). Instead, the project of decoloniality studies is one of the possible emancipatory options that has been analyzed from multiple perspectives and positions. Likewise, by different authors, such as Walter Mignolo, Catherine Walsh, Anibal Quijano, Arturo Escobar, María Lugones or Ochy Curiel. They have understood that reducing decoloniality to a unique conceptualisation will mean to fall again into the reductionism and universalism promoted by the Eurocentric and, later, Western single story.

Furthermore, in the promotion of a universal and rational truth, the totality of knowledge was a key instrument to invent, control and maintain the colonial matrix of power. Therefore, in this process of decoloniality a big concern relies on the process of decolonising knowledge itself. As observed in the previous pages, knowledge can be a way “to be greater than another”. It can be a way to impose a fixed framework of knowing, being and understanding that relates only to the model of Man/Human and his experiences (Mignolo, 2018: 166) as mental domination (wa Thiong’o: 1986). In addition, knowledge production has been managed to create the ‘reality’ surrounding. It has been used to make us believe that what

was important was the control of politics, economics, etc and not the knowledge and single story that created that ‘illusion’ of progress and development (Mignolo, 2018: 135).

In this sense, the need of approaching the decoloniality of this field was already stated by Karl Marx. He expressed that to change the world it is fundamental to transform the dominant knowledge that claims its ownership to interpret the world and the perception of what it means to be a human. *The ‘world’ cannot be changed if the ‘knowledge and the knower of the world’ do not change.* This means that the change needs to reach all the dimensions of knowledge. In such a way, it will be required not only to modify the content of knowledge, but also the terms of its production, transformation and dissemination (Mignolo, 2018: 144; 177). Without changing the terms, it will not be possible to change what is enunciated, what is known, what is valid, which stories are told and which experiences and voices are included in knowledge production.

Amplifying the limits of the hegemonic knowledge should not be understood, then, as only a matter of how to ‘add new’ topics, stories and voices that were marginalized and silenced before, in the already existing universal and single History. The reason for this is that the goal of decoloniality should not be applying the scope of hegemonic narratives that could ‘recognize’ these ‘new’ stories as accurate or not (Rutazibwa, 2020: 66). Alternatively, the decolonial purpose should be to question how these topics, stories and voices can help to reshape what we think we already know (Bhambra, 2020: 63). Inclusion and recognition should refer to a bigger comprehension of these values. They could be factors that should engage in the process of resistance of silenced peoples that do not just demand to have a new space for their voices. Especially, they claim epistemic reconstitution (Quijano, 1992, 2007) and their desire to (re)exist within their valued local histories and stories. Through these new decolonial lenses it could be possible to look at elements of reality that can still contribute to epistemic violence. For instance, reductionism, silencing, non-representation or stereotypes (Bendix et

al., 2020: 2), uncovering the imperatives of universalism that influence all the orders of knowledge production. As a consequence:

Epistemological decolonization, as decoloniality, is needed to clear the way for new intercultural communication, for an interchange of experiences and meanings, as the basis of another rationality (Quijano, 2007: 177).

1.3.2. Situating knowledge

This interchange of experiences and meanings can connect local histories, knowledges, narratives, intersubjectivities and struggles while living and facing the modern/colonial structures. This emphasizes the importance of considering now the existence of a *pluriverse* of subjects of study in decolonial studies as an option that makes universalism and the single totality (Mignolo, 2018: 3; 147), which focused negatively on colonial differences, unstable. Reacting now to a monolithic idea of the World (Escobar, 2013 in Kothari et al., 2019), the decolonial shift is inspired by the Zapatista philosophy of the *pluriverse*, meaning this a world where many worlds fit (Zapatistas of Chiapas in Kothari et al., 2019: XXVIII). This involves the existence of a diversity of worlds which include the different and many knowledges, languages, perspectives, cultures, cosmovision and systems of beliefs. Furthermore, the stories and voices of all the peoples belonging or not to ‘the model of Man/Human’.

This aspect of decolonial studies supposes, then, the essence of what has been figured out as the geopolitics of knowing and understanding. This pays attention now to the questions of where, who, when and why that are immersed in the local and body-political histories and stories (Mignolo, 2018: 121; 188). In contradiction to a universal perspective, the acknowledgement of a pluriverse of subjects entails the process of relocating the principles of Eurocentric and Western secularism in their local origin. As well, it involves the praxis of life and knowing which were demonized and dismissed. Despite being denied, these knowledges

did not die, but, rather, they have survived in the bodies, conversations, stories and memories of these individuals.

Moreover, the revitalisation of these elements as perspectives that can interpret their own realities within the decolonial and pluriversal project can actually help to expand the limits of knowledge. This is due to the fact that this can help to amplify the traditional and limited written sources of knowledge. Conceived before only as academic, rational and scientific ideas written down and taught by a specific group in power, these colonial confines could be surpassed. This could be achieved encompassing the oral and symbolic wisdoms, memories and experiences that each of us carry as heritage, backgrounds and knowledge (Garzón López, 2013: 320).

As the philosopher from Mali Amadou Hampate Ba claimed, oral tradition is the great school of life. It reaches every sphere of the same (Oyěwùmí, 2017: 78-79) since language is, actually, *both a means of communication and a carrier of culture* (wa Thiong'o, 1986: 13). This reveals the efforts of situating knowledge as one of the decolonial strategies that can lead the path for an intellectual (and, also, political) project. There is a possibility of going beyond the binary and colonial classifications of modern/western/civilized/developed and tradition/non-western/uncivilized/undeveloped taking into consideration the existence of a heterogeneity of subjects, lives and stories of subaltern groups. Focusing on difference or differences does not imply, along these lines, a negative mechanism to promote separation and prejudices between groups considered inferior and others superior. Instead, the meaning approached here involves learning *with* and *from* the intersection of life spheres and different factors that influence the story of knowing, being and understanding of each individual, and not only learning from what was written in hegemonic academia (what has been called as *political ontology*, Escobar, 2013: 13).

This relates to the changes promoted with the subjective shift that claimed about the importance of experiences as sources of knowledge (Rivas-Flores et al., 2020: 49) which can be more connected with the local struggles and realities (Escobar, 2013: 14). Life experiences can help, then, to show local revindications and to question the generalizations, the reductionism of the single story (Hill Collins in Eudine Barriteau, 2007: 9). And, as a result, ‘post- and decolonial approaches claim to offer epistemological lenses that allow for a more pluralist, contextualized and enriched understanding of the social world’ (Bendix et al., 2020: 3), exploring further the processes of situating knowledge and intersectionality in the following pages.

Hence, *stories matter. Many stories matter* (Adichie, 2009), as well as the way they are told and reproduced. A significant shift can occur if more than one perspective is included. Different voices, actors and perspectives about what it means to be a human being can open our minds to a wider process of re-existence. Not only for the ones that were obliged to remain silent, but also for the ones that oppressed them, denying their possibility of telling their own story. In the process of dispossessing the ‘other’, transforming them into the ‘less’ human, the Man/Human and their generations also lost part of their humanity (Freire, 1970: 38). Decolonising ourselves and minds requires, like so, a reflection and a renounce of the colonial heritage that we have internalized (de Hoyos et al., 2021: 31). We should try to liberate ourselves from the fact of still being blind to the perpetuation of the power structures and narratives of the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo, 2018: 222). Perhaps with this it could be possible to propose a critical western perspective that can be honest when reflecting about its own hegemony (Dietze in Roth, 2012: 8).

As a result, an opportunity could exist to enrich our knowledge production not only in its content, but especially, in the terms of the conversation that have fostered the continuation of the colonial relationships, differences and reductionism:

Within asymmetrical power relations, positions in dialogue are not equal and the possibilities for horizontal exchange and of mutual exchange are not only limited but are also entangled in privilege and power (Chakrabarty, 1995 in Friz Trzeciak, 2020: 123-124).

In contrast, relationality might be one of the aspects to change the terms of knowledge production, entering in a space of conversation and understanding that “both cross geopolitical locations and colonial differences”. By being aware of our positionality in the world and about the *vincularidad*, the interdependence that connects all of us (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018: 1), a balance of local stories and histories could be achieved putting care in a central place of decolonial connections.

This might make it easier to work collectively with groups whose knowledges and voices were oppressed. The basis now should be to nurture horizontal relationships in which storytelling, differences and knowledge are not used as elements to create privileges. Regarding this, the decolonial perspective could encourage a new kind of dialogue and mutual exchange between subjects of study, running away of the dichotomies established between *experts* and *objects of study* as part of the colonial matrix of power (Rivas-Flores et al., 2020: 57). Hereby, the “right to research” (Appadurai, 2006 in Bendix et al., 2020) within western academia is experiencing a decolonial reaction against this power imbalance. Its terms were never questioned before as part of colonial heritage and universal knowledge. As stated, what is demanded is not inclusion and recognition within the colonial orders of knowledge. On the contrary, what is needed is a fundamental rupture with them that should impact all the spheres of knowledge production (Bendix et al., 2020: 1-2), including the methodologies used within academia.

Concerning this, Orlando Fals Borda (1987) reminds us about the importance of paying attention to the practices and methods of research since they can be part of the colonial epistemic machine and the terms that perpetuate modernity/ coloniality (Bendix et al., 2020:

123). A de-construction is also needed within the methodological field. Based on all this, the next pages of this master thesis will try to analyze how the existence of many stories can help us methodologically to decolonise the production, transformation and dissemination of knowledge. In this sense, the methodologies of oral history, life stories and testimonies will be explored. For this, I will follow some of the principles of decolonial studies already stated (geopolitics of knowledge, positionality, horizontality, relationality, among others). As a result, these oral methodologies will be proposed as one of the emancipatory and possible decolonial options to go beyond the single story through a pluriverse of stories that *can also be put to work to empower and demystify* (Adichie, 2009) individuals and communities. The question here is where to start telling the story. What can happen, then, if stories do not start with the single story, with prejudices and stereotypes; but with the local humans that embody those stories?

1.3.3. Oral history, life stories and testimonies

It should be important to remember the idea that Eduardo Galeano used to believe in, expressing that the world is constructed and made of stories; we are made of stories. In contradiction to a universal approach, each person has a personal story or stories since each individual has a different background, origin and experiences. This way, each of these stories can influence the way through which people can understand and experience the world, society. Also, how they behave and conceive others, and their relationships. As a result, when one person tells its life story to someone, its personal and situated interpretation (Leoni, 2019: 129) of the world, its experiences being part of it, its moments of beauty and loss (Eisenstein, 2018) are expressed.

According to Hannah Arendt, as diverse as the books of a library, human beings are the founders of a public space characterized by diversity and plurality (Fernández López, 2016: 104; 112-113). This reality highlights, hence, the need of empowering individuals and groups to foster their abilities to *name the world in their own words* (Freire, 2000: 88 in Omar, 2012:

47). Complementing this, it also emphasizes the need of being listened to and of listening to others in order to not fall again in a process of homogenization and universalism (Mohanty, 2008: 2). The reason for this is that this process might continue supporting the standard and single story of separation which is still ‘‘blind to race, class, gender and colonial inequalities’’ (Erin, 2015: 9-11) as it has been shown. Also, it would mean the perpetuation of the devaluation of the voices and stories of those who suffered the violence of the structures of oppression and their coloniality. Due to this, they were forced to remain at the margins, not being included in the decision-making process. As introduced in the previous pages, this has been the case of the voices of women, black, color, indigenous people, ethnic minorities or many subaltern groups (Rodríguez, 2015) considered as the ‘less humans’ within a reductionist single story that homogenized them and their stories.

However, it should be acknowledged that there are no standard life experiences and perceptions. Rather, the stories given to certain groups were fictions created within the colonial matrix of power. Despite the fact that they have persisted as the ‘determinant reality’, elements such as race, class, gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, etc and their intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991: 89) should not be ignored. The reason for this is that these are factors that influence the personal path of each person, group and community. In such a way, within a process of orality, meaning this interactive listening, communication and empathic dialogue (Erin, 2015: 42), diverse experiences could flourish. This can happen in a process of listening and recognizing the different and intersectional life stories, contexts and ways through which individuals can comprehend, perceive and live the world (Erin, 2015: 11; 42).

From an intersectional and postcolonial feminist point of view, this supposes a critical understanding about the fact that we can dwell differently (Morrow and Parker, 2020: 113) in a diversity of contexts, factors and experiences. Besides this, from an epistemic and decolonial perspective, this could mean a way to promote from the margins ‘‘new intercultural dialogue

and the exchange of experiences and meanings” (Quijano, 2007: 177 in Omar, 2012: 46) in a “world where many worlds fit” (Zapatistas of Chiapas in Kothari et al., 2019: XXVIII) or, in this case of study, where many stories fit. There is, hence, a need to listen and recollect a plurality of local voices, experiences and issues in order to put in dialogue empathically different world perspectives. This is due to the fact that this could be an alternative procedure to the imposition of silence with a single voice (Nos Aldás, 2019: 5) “which implies a relation of structural domination and a suppression – often violent – of heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question (Mohanty, 2008: 2)”.

All these elements are the powerful values that could be explored through methodologies such as oral history. Here, orality, this means the voices of people giving their testimonies and sharing their life stories, involves the understanding of their experiences as sources of knowledge. Oral methodologies have been used significantly in literature genres and historical analysis as a manner to reconstruct the official History with the events, experiences and facts that were not included before (Picornell, 2011: 118). Nonetheless, some genres started to go beyond this consideration. This was the case of slave narratives or testimony-novels, which became popular in South America after the 1960s. The interest in this kind of styles was due to the possibility of giving, for the first time, strength to the voices that were oppressed, excluded and silenced before. In this case, this happened especially with the voices of the indigenous people and slaves.

This introduction of oral elements suggested a way to bring new memories and produce a change with regards to the authorized History of separation. It involved a decolonial shift since it started to question the hegemonic story of domination spread since colonial times (Roth, 2012: 1). Moreover, it highlighted a path to re-tell it from a diversity of perspectives that were marginalized; from the aspects, experiences and actors that had to remain at its margins. These oral methodologies have raised, as a result, as new subaltern perspectives, as

counter-narratives, as alternatives Histories. With their expansion, they have crossed the limits between the center and the margins; the western and non-western world; modernity and non-modernity (Pratt, 1999: 193 in Roth, 2012: 2). They have opened a chance for dialogue within the dispute of the legitimacy of storytelling and the hierarchies of the interpretative capacity. They have claimed with this the need for a change of these unbalanced power relationships (Roth, 2012: 2) by expressing the world in their words, as their own narrations of the world from their own local stories (Rivas-Flores et al., 2020: 51).

As it could be imagined, these oral methodologies have also faced resistance coming from rational, scientific and universal knowledge. As well, from the actors that created the colonial matrix of power. They were unwilling to accept the fact that the experiences of the 'less human' could be conceived as valued and dynamic sources of knowledge production (Roth, 2012: 3-4). The point here, as Gayatri Spivak introduced, was to question if the subaltern - understanding this term in the sense that Antonio Gramsci pointed out, as the person that is subordinated, oppressed due to factors of gender, class, race, age or other (Guha, 2002 in Bidaseca and Vázquez, 2011) – was or is able to speak. The answer for the Indian author showed that this was not possible. However, this was not because they did not have the physical capacity to speak. Rather, they could not raise their voices because they were not listened to. Their voices were not authorized by the official institutions that have supported the single story (such as educational and judicial centers, universities), having also a role in promoting their underestimation and silence (Bidaseca and Vázquez, 2011: 31).

Nevertheless, regarding this, the importance of opening the production of knowledge to the margins was conceived by authors such as Paulo Freire and Gloria Anzaldúa. They reflected about the fact that the experiences of the subaltern could reveal the contexts of oppression and the narratives that have supported them. We live through the stories that talk about our experience and contexts; stories that are personal, although, social, political, economic and

cultural, as well, building all of them our realities (Clandinin, 2013). The meaning of this is that each person can carry a specific knowledge. This is the result of our plural understanding of the world and the position we occupy in it, defining also this our capacities of action (Rivas-Flores et al., 2020: 49).

In this sense, feeling closer to the effects of violence in all the spheres of life, “those who are pushed out of the tribe for being different are likely to become more sensitized” (Anzaldúa, 1987: 38) about their positions in the world. Furthermore, about the world itself while trying to resist the impacts of the dominant discourses in their own bodies, minds and experiences. Subaltern groups might have, thus, the *facultad* (Anzaldúa, 1987), la *concientización* (Freire, 1979) to bring new perspectives about what has been told within the single story. They might be able to see deeper realities, structures below the surface (Anzaldúa, 1987: 38), realizing about the need of emancipation (Freire, 1970: 40). This shows the importance of studying *with* the oppressed to have alternative stories (Achugar, 1992: 66) involving this process the existence of a heterogeneity of subaltern subjects that goes beyond the colonial categories of ‘superior/less’ human.

As a result of this, oral history and methodologies can become a tool for “reconstructing trajectories of exclusion and for visualizing how racism, patriarchy, capitalism, homophobia (among other systems of oppression) intersect with one another” (Hernández Castillo, 2020: 39). They can become a strategy to reveal the effects of the systems of oppression and inequalities. Besides this, to know how their intersectionality has impacted the life of many individuals (de Hoyos et al., 2021: 19) considered as subaltern. “Personal narratives are products of complex interactive social processes and they constitute powerful and dynamic means of communication (Steffen, 1997: 110)”. Due to this, stories and, in this case, personal stories are essential to human understanding of individual experiences which,

indeed, are also part of the social, cultural, political, economic, institutional, etc relationships and structures (Steffen, 1997: 99).

This shows the essence that characterized these oral methodologies as a way to denounce the effects of the unbalanced power relationships and structures of all spheres of life. Researching about history should not be based on the existence of a single story. On the contrary, it should try to deeply understand the social, political, racial and gendered dynamics that elaborated it (Rivas-Flores et al., 2020: 56). These oral methodologies can become, thus, a way to bring light into the violence hidden by the rhetoric of modernity. This violence supposed the marginalization and the silences left by the official history (Hernández Castillo, 2015: 160), starting now to know the voices that were silenced. This could be a new beginning registering alternatives versions, perspectives and histories (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 15), that could destabilize colonial discourses and the ‘monocultural naturalization of differences’ that has remained (Hernández Castillo, 2020: 45) with the perpetuation of the single story.

Despite this, we should not forget the awareness also raised by Gayatri Spivak regarding the possibilities that oral methodologies could offer to amplify the limits of the official and single story. In her point of view, the process of recovering and bringing new experiences, memories and stories is impossible considering that the subaltern never had before the discursive position of a subject able to speak about their story (Spivak, 2003: 298; Bidaseca and Vázquez, 2011: 31). How can it be possible, then, to listen to the ones that never had a voice? Is it naïve to think that it can be possible to recover the voices of the subaltern and their stories? Having these questions in mind, and trying to not fall into a salvific rhetoric that can ‘give them back’ their voices, the critique of the author Gayatri Spivak remains important. As a postcolonial author, her revision and ideas have been important to understand the social context of colonialism and see how this influenced the colonality of the single story. Despite

this, I would like to embark myself now on a further path of alternatives. I consider here the belief that within oral methodologies the heterogeneity of subjects of study could imply decolonial debates about the appropriation of the principle of *sraki* (Adichie, 2009) which was not a reality before colonialism and coloniality. This recovery is more a question and a critique about the access to the power of representation, classification, definition, interpretation and expression of stories that was stolen within the single narrative of separation, generalization and homogenisation.

The reason for this is based on the decision that the subject(s) of study could make now through orality to not only choose what each of them wants to tell, but also how they want to tell it (Pratt, 1999: 191 in Roth, 2012: 2). The value given to these methodologies is located in the need of strengthening and listening to the subjects of study and identities which were not ‘authorized’ within the hegemonic narrative (Achugar, 1992: 67-68). It is like this that oral history, life stories and testimonies can have the benefit of empowering the people raising their voices in a dialogical space (Lara-González, 2013) where they can feel self-recognized. Also, where they can reconstruct and express with autonomy their own identities (Hernández Castillo, 2015: 160) and stories with their own words.

The essence of naming the world by choosing our own words (Freire, 2000 in Omar, 2012) can be connected with the theories of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o. He remarked on the double features that characterized language as, first, a way of communication with others, but also as a means that carries culture and its values which shape people’s identities (1986: 13-15). “Culture embodies those moral, ethical and aesthetic values, the set of spiritual eyeglasses, through which they come to view themselves and their place in the universe”. In this sense, language as culture symbolizes the expression of this “collective bank of people’s experience in history” (wa Thiong’o, 1986: 14-15). In this way, language can voice how individuals perceive in particular themselves and their cultures. This can reach their connections with other

beings within a specific historical context, place, community and culture. Language should not be separated from experiences which can be communicated using our voices in a regenerative way.

1.3.4. Decolonial approach of oral methodologies

In such a way, the historical work within the use of oral methodologies goes even beyond the reconstruction of the past or events with alternative voices and data, since an important role is given to meanings and to the way that each person value their experiences, memories and traditions (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 43). Therefore, through language, subaltern groups can become actors that are also involved in amplifying the limits of the standard story of separation and the official language (Leoni, 2019: 129) of silence of universal knowledge with their voices and counter-narratives. As a consequence, oral methodologies entail with this aspect the need of giving importance again, through language and orality, to the enunciative responsibility. This was instrumentalized within the rhetoric of modernity/coloniality and now it should be transferred back to a diversity of authors (Yúdice, 1992: 228-229) that can become agents of transformation (Consejo Municipal de Paz, Reconciliación y Convivencia. Suárez, Cauca, 2020-2021).

On their side, the listeners of the oral stories could be able to know alternative and authentic realities, histories and experiences. Moreover, they might get close to new life perspectives of different actors facing and experiencing the coloniality of inequalities in which different and interconnected factors have an influence. They might become aware of these situations that still have as an effect the existence of stigmas and prejudices. Indeed, these were designed as controlling images that could “make racism, sexism, poverty and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal and inevitable parts of everyday life” (Hills Collins, 2000: 69).

In contrast to this, here the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991: 89) gains attention again to show how elements such as race, class, gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, etc and their interrelationships can shape the identities, stories and, even, the way of remembering of each person (National Centre of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 14). Especially, this needs to be taken into consideration regarding the social, racial and sexual classifications imposed since the colonial times. The differences imposed based on race and gender were not ‘natural or inevitable’. Instead, they could be considered as the origin of intersectionality implying privileges for the small dominant group and dispossession to others based on the intersection of the previous aspects and differences (Mignolo, 2018: 158). Consequently, women and racialized groups have had less chances to talk and to be listened to. These historical, social and gendered-racial positions are aspects that should be taken into account while working with life stories, experiences and memories (National Centre of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 27).

Using oral methodologies, these differences should be taken, then, as constitutive of these different places of enunciation, as constitutive of diversity (Suárez-Krabbe, 2020: 136) and heterogeneity. As suggested by postcolonial feminists, ‘every view is a view from somewhere and every act of speaking a speaking from somewhere’ (Abu-Lughod, 2002: 53). This points at the perspective of the situatedness of all knowledge (Leinius, 2020: 71) that could be possible to recognize within orality, considering the importance of language in a decolonial alternative applied to oral methodologies. As a consequence, the intention now in oral methodologies should not be to universalise and homogenize (following the hegemonic and academic fetish, Bidaseca and Vázquez, 2011: 31), again, the stories raised from the margins. Following a decolonial approach, the aim is not to understand their paths and experiences as if they were exactly the same for all the ones that were oppressed. The story of

one particular person should not become again the historical, collective and representative story of many subaltern individuals, groups and communities (Picornell, 2011: 131).

As it could be introduced in the first pages of this master thesis, one of the most important cases of epistemic violence (if not the most important) was the colonial project that created the 'other' (Spivak, 2003: 318), the 'less', inferior, dangerous and uncivilized human. The consequences of this were not only the beneficial design of the image of the Man/Human in opposition to the 'otherness'. But, especially, the reductionism and homogenisation of many individuals whose stories were silenced by the single story as a way to not question the central place of the figure of the Man/Human. Contrasting, thus, the official History of the elites in power whose particular paths were reported, the 'less' humans with no stories were not completely ignored. However, they were only named with the purpose of fostering the perpetuation of the power of the dominant group (Achugar, 1992: 66). They were only named, hence, after the individual consciousness and the factors that intersect all their life experiences were transformed. They were reduced and homogenized into a collective character that represented all the subaltern groups defined by not having any particular trajectories and aspirations (Picornell, 2011: 137).

Going beyond this, the aim using oral methodologies should not be the reaffirmation of the model Man/Human. Rather, to start questioning as a breaking point the monolithic category of the subaltern which has been presumed and reduced to a single subject with a single identity, story and History (Spivak, 2003: 299). This critique could foster the need of listening and the need to acknowledge the heterogeneity of subaltern subjects (Spivak, 2003: 322), perspectives (Yúdice, 1992: 228-229), histories and temporalities (Cornwall, 2020: 191). What is more, with this it could be possible to begin to challenge the judgements, stigmas and prejudices used to give shape to the unique 'other' within the systems of oppression, having still a role with their coloniality. Exclusions have perpetuated the existence of incomplete narratives denying the

possibility of deeply understanding social, political, economic and cultural relationships and events (Hernández Castillo, 2015). Nevertheless, oral history, testimonies and life stories can be, hence, a tool to reflect. They can claim the importance of a diversity of personal experiences, memories and voices in a process that can lead the path for a transformation of the single story.

Besides this, the decolonial shift leads the way to reflect on differences by sharing our stories and experiences as an important aspect that can provide the conditions for having horizontal and de-centred relationships (Walsh, 2007; Leinius, 2020: 71). With this we could promote a change in both the content and the terms of knowledge production. Horizontality could flourish within the use of oral methodologies in which diverse subjects of study (the ones telling and sharing their testimonies, and the ones listening) can connect with each other, their stories and human perspectives through dialogue and the *concientización* as praxis (Freire, 1979).

Nevertheless, this level of equality should not be confused, again, with a process of homogenization, sorority and reductionism in the universal figure of ‘humans’. This could ignore or banalize colonial differences and the structural inequalities that have distinguished the life stories of the subaltern subjects of study (de Hoyos et al., 2021: 33). In the end, this could lead, even, to a process of revictimization of the people sharing their life experiences and testimonies. Conversely, these racial, gendered and other social markers should be acknowledged more than ever to foster a decolonial route to position ourselves and others, to re-think about ourselves and others, to know ourselves and others (Rivas-Flores et al., 2020: 51). Positionality, location and context are important elements that need to be acknowledged to foment accountability and trust connections (Mignolo, 2018: 123-125), instead of asymmetrical relationships, in the use of oral methodologies.

This could open a space of non-hierarchical and epistemic knowledge in which coalitions between a multiplicity of voices are possible (Roth, 2012: 9). In this sense, the dichotomies of position between the researcher and the subjects of study could be surpassed, as well. Moving forward the position of the traditional history researcher or academic in a privileged position, the interest here is not just to get information from ‘new’ informants in order to reconstruct the official History with the parts and details that were not included before in the same. The aim is not to extract this information from participants considered ‘objects’ of study. They should not be considered as ‘containers’ of information (Freire, 1979) that should be studied about. The purpose is not to develop new theories by the researchers (Leinius, 2020: 74) that have an interest to know about a specific phenomenon or event. This has been the case of many western historians, scholars and activists who, as *coyotes* applying epistemic violence, only wanted to gather information from subaltern groups of the so-called ‘Third world’. They wanted to export these stories (Carr, 1992: 91), not sharing, later, the results of their talks with them (Friz Trzeciak, 2020: 130).

Rather, the focus following the decolonial perspective is to be able to get to know these voices studying *with* them and learning *from* them and all their life intersections (Mato, 2000). We should try with this to not fall again into narratives of ‘otherness’ in which subaltern groups have the ‘‘primordial and alternative knowledge’’ that can save us (a process which is known as ‘‘orientalization’’). This is just another form of colonialism, as is pointed out by the author Rosalva Aída Hernández (2017, 2020: 57). In addition, it would be a way of reproducing the asymmetrical relationships established within the coloniality of knowledge. The appropriation of the subaltern stories that do not belong to the researchers, assuming the ‘representation’ of these voices (Rivas-Flores et al., 2020: 57) collected through oral approaches, could entail again the distinction between those that can tell their own life stories and those whose lives can be told by others (Fassin, 2010: 253). It could involve again a process of self-giving authority

of the western researcher that aims at the corroboration of its power position to the detriment of the 'other' (Picornell, 2011: 120).

In this sense, a danger could exist regarding the fact that the researcher might want to represent or talk in representation of others, in this case the subaltern (Spivak, 2003: 299). The researcher might want to manage what they should tell within an oral project, not giving them a real discursive position to speak. Moreover, this position of the researcher trying to occupy the place of the testimony could entail the decision of what the people receiving the stories are going to know. This would be based on the own parameters of knowledge of the researcher and not so much on the local realities of the people sharing their life stories. Finally, this can have the risk of reproducing the prejudices, stigmas and images of the 'otherness' and their cultures following the standards of the colonial discourses of the 'monocultural naturalization of differences' (Carr, 1992: 91).

Oral history, life stories and testimonies are not methodologies that have been lucky to avoid the reproduction of these asymmetrical and colonial relationships within qualitative social research. Many of the testimonies collected and written within oral projects have been known by the name of the authors that 'allowed' the subaltern with the opportunity of telling their stories (Picornell, 2011: 132). Hence, here recalls the need to reconsider and analyze the use of these methodologies following a critical and decolonial perspective. Trying to avoid these problematics, the space of dialogue that could be created with the use of oral methodologies should try to encourage the political engagement of both the researcher (the listeners, in this case) and the people sharing their life stories and testimonies in collaborative efforts to critically reflect on their lived experiences (Leinius, 2020: 71). A special mention should be given here to the role of the researcher. The aim of the use of oral methodologies should not be to just entitle him or herself with the privilege of being the one able to create 'a

space' of dialogue in which subaltern voices could be 'included'. Neither, considered as 'complementary' sources of the elitist production of knowledge (Picornell, 2011: 120).

The concept of inclusion should be questioned while developing an oral project, as well. In this manner, the generation of the space of dialogue should not follow an arrogant desire. Rather, it requires the humility of the researcher to share the space and to see others as autonomous partners and co-researchers of a common project. As introduced by the Cuban author Miguel Barnet, the vocation of the researcher working with oral history and testimonies should be to abandon the position of power to give the space of enunciation (Freire, 1967; 1979: 159) to the informants. These should be able to express, as pointed out before, the world in their own words (Yúdice, 1992: 121). This orality will be collected by the researcher in a process of respect and care with the testimonies to create a collective memory thanks to the interaction between, now, subjects.

We need to change the standards of objectivity, neutrality and distance between 'object of study' and the researcher. Instead, proximity (Leinius, 2020: 78) and relationality with the participants involved in an oral project may have as a result the possibility of feeling and thinking with the territories, cultures and the situated knowledge of the subjects of study (is the power of *Sentipensar*: Escobar, 2014: 16). Only with this would it be possible to achieve a critical and emancipatory conversation that could envision the transformation of the 'reality' (Freire, 1970: 67). This should be done according to the aspirations of those sharing their testimonies and experiences living in their contexts (Bhambra and Santos, 2017: 3). Aspirations that would be expressed with oral methodologies and the establishment of a place of dialogue in which many stories will be told and listened, involving the re-humanization of all the persons of the oral project. The process of sharing how we can live, experience and learn to be humans can help us to reflect about what has united us and what has separated us. Also, about which of

the lessons inherited should be transformed acknowledging the heterogeneity and diversity that define us.

As Chimamanda Ngozi (2021) reminds us, we cannot continue choosing ‘‘which stories and which points of views still matter because to do this would be an ugly exercise of brute power’’. Neither, we cannot continue telling only one part of the story. If each of us is made of stories, of a heterogeneity of dimensions and intersections, then one voice, the western voice of the Man/Human, is not enough to tell and explain all these stories. And, in order to do that, the unequal power relations that still affect lives and knowledge production with an incomplete story should be addressed. As stated, the colonial narratives of the past have powered a certain group to the detriment of the other ‘less’ humans who were devaluated and oppressed by transforming ‘their’ differences in justifications of a story of discrimination, subordination, violence and silence.

However, this unbalance of stories, which has been accepted and normalized in our societies, could be challenged trying to show the existence of a multiplicity of voices which were not taken into consideration before since they were exiled into the margins. In such a way stories and memory can be an open ground to start questioning hierarchies and exclusions (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 23-24) with alternative ways of understanding the world that could co-exist with the use of methodologies that might bring a space of horizontal and democratic dialogue. This could lead to an ecology of knowledge (de Sousa Santos, 2009 in Hernández Castillo, 2020: 57), and stories (in this case study). Here the contextualisation of the narratives and knowledge could be possible in their time and space of enunciation, revealing at the same time the systems of oppression that can impact on the existence of a plurality of stories and subjects.

1. 4. Conclusion

As a summary of what has been presented in this first chapter, the single story is a story of power. In this sense, I wanted to introduce why some stories have been considered to be more important than others; why some stories have been known while others have been silenced and ignored. Our structures and systems of power, especially since the colonial times and the introduction of social classifications and differences, have promoted a 'reality' in which the stories of a particular 'subject' (the Man/Human) became the official story and History. Meanwhile, the ones that were colonized and suffered the violence of the colonality of being and knowing have been reduced and homogenized into a collective character that has represented all them. They have been given a single story that, characterized by stigmas and stereotypes, has ignored their particular experiences, paths and voices.

In this sense, the single story is a story where knowledge was and is still the powerful tool used in the appropriation of other's capacity and their power to tell their own story. This led me to approach the understanding of the decolonial alternatives and studies as a way to realize the importance of engaging in the process of decolonising knowledge, transforming not only its content, but also the terms of the conversation. The decolonial critique aims at the search of (new) narratives (Chakrabarty, 1995) to reflect about the official History and story from another place; from the voices of the colonized and the subaltern (Guha, 2002 in Bidaseca and Vázquez, 2011: 24).

In such a way, I have proposed the methodologies of oral history, life stories and testimonies as tools that can help to know and register alternative versions, perspectives and histories (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 15) of a pluriverse, now, of subjects with voice. Moreover, their possible contributions as a decolonial option have been highlighted since oral methodologies can become a strategy to reveal the effects of the systems of oppression and inequalities through personal stories, experiences and the intersectionalities

that define our identities. Besides this, they can have the benefit of empowering the people raising their voices in a dialogical space (Lara-González, 2013) where they can reconstruct and express with autonomy their own identities (Hernández Castillo, 2015: 160) and stories with their own words.

Nevertheless, it has also been introduced that the use of these methodologies has not been lucky to avoid, in many cases, the reproduction of asymmetrical and colonial relationships within qualitative social research. As a consequence, that is the reason why it was needed to analyze the use of these methodologies from a decolonial perspective. This could lead the way to promote horizontal and collaborative relationships between the researcher and the participants, now actors and subjects with voice, while developing an oral project that can show the pluriverse of experiences and stories. All this will help with the work that will be presented within the next sections of this master thesis with the development of an oral project that will follow the decolonial interpretation presented. Furthermore, the oral project will focus on a specific case study, the case of migrant women in the city of Castellón.

CHAPTER 2: The oral project. The voices of migrant women in Castellón

2.1. Introduction

Within the first chapter I could start comprehending how the single story was created and maintained for centuries. It was necessary for me to start learning from the level of the big and single story of separation in order to approach the specific problem of its coloniality and reproduction in this second chapter. In this sense, the case study of migrant women will be situated. I will introduce, first, an analysis of how the western hegemonic discourses could have had a role in the perpetuation of the silence imposed on the stories and voices of migrant women, especially racialised and subaltern migrant women. As it will be realized, this process will be a critique of the use of knowledge again as a tool to foster the continuation of the coloniality of being and knowing.

Following this, the decolonial revision studied within the first chapter will be included again in the design of the oral project of this master thesis. This chapter will be the longest one since it will involve the different phases, steps and elements that I have considered to develop the oral project with three migrant women that have arrived in Castellón. I will present their life stories in a process that can help us to understand the existence of a pluriverse of subjects with voice. Finally, I will offer a small section of conclusions that can help to summarize the content and elements of this second chapter.

2.2. The reproduction of the single story

All countries have parts of their pasts that are not proud of, that they would rather forget, but it takes courage to face those parts and bring in some light. And this is a time for courage. The courage to listen to dissenting voices. The courage not only to

say we take your criticism, but to follow it with action. The courage to say we were wrong. The courage to do provenance work and to actively use local knowledge. The courage to believe that it can be better. [...] We cannot change our past, but we can change our blindness to the past (Adichie, 2021).

In view of all that I have exposed in the previous pages, I chose the case study of migrant women in Castellón chosen for this master to try to break away with the perpetuation of the single story through the coloniality of being and knowing. As introduced, colonial gender and ethnic-racial hierarchies have historically influenced the Man/Human to be the first one to appropriate the capacities of *sraki* (Adichie, 2009), storytelling and writing. The Man/Human has been able to tell their story as subject of study, also entitling himself to tell and write the story of the other 'less' humans. The Man/Human needed the oppressed so that he could design his own story as the superior and leader group by creating the fictions that would characterize the rest of the population.

In such a way, due to this unbalanced access to storytelling and writing, the experiences of women as objects of study and 'less' humans have not usually been recorded in the written sources (Hernández Castillo, 2015). These ones have been used as key tools in the process of the coloniality of being and the totality of knowledge. Despite being portrayers of oral history in many communities, these perspectives of women ended up being silenced by the official, traditional and single History (de Hoyos et al., 2021: 41) of the creators of the colonial matrix. Their narratives of power transformed women as part of the subaltern and dominated object with no voice to raise or story to tell.

For centuries, women that tried to talk and tell their stories were silenced. Moreover, they were considered as insubordinate (de Hoyos et al., 2021) in the perspective of the patriarchal and colonial structures. The fight for women rights with the feminist waves started to challenge this situation, listening to the dissenting voices of many women, especially white women. They claimed (particularly from the 1960s and 1970s) the path for the emancipation

of all women and sisters who were ‘united’ in this process. Despite this, a new critique should be considered since the single story has been reproduced within this fight that has had as main characters the hegemonic western and white feminist discourse² and white women as main actors.

2.2.1. Homogenization of experiences and ‘international sisterhood’: the coloniality of being and knowing in western feminisms

In this way, black and colour feminists have been claiming for decades the need to apply the concept of *intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1991: 89) when approaching feminist theories, movements and policies. Regarding this, one of the main critiques that hegemonic feminism is still facing, coming from black, colour, third world feminisms and the margins, concerns the so-called ‘sisterhood’ or ‘sorority’ (Lugones, 2008: 95). With this, white and western feminism has claimed a way to ‘include’ the experiences of all women. This unity was based on the idea that what connects and shapes the experiences and realities of women are the already existing categories of *gender* and *women*. Also, the *oppression* suffered equally by all women within the patriarchal system (Bidaseca and Vázquez, 2011: 26). It was their role as oppressed and victims which united them in an equal and ‘international sisterhood’ (Mohanty: 2008: 4-7) that should empower them against the patriarchal project (de Hoyos et al., 2021: 38).

Nevertheless, and as some black and postcolonial feminists have indicated, these categories were homogenised within the white, western and hegemonic feminist discourse. This one considered in this process only the image, experience, background, oppression, needs, demands and knowledge of white bourgeois heterosexual women (Crenshaw in Lugones, 2008:

² Acknowledging the existence of a spectrum of western and white feminist movements which might distinguish themselves in some aspects, the concept of ‘hegemonic western and white feminist discourse/movement’ is used in this master thesis not with the intention of reducing them all to a single movement. Rather, this concept has been consciously applied following the theories of postcolonial and decolonial authors which have made visible the path of superiority of western feminisms by transforming black, color, third world feminisms into the ‘other’ (Mohanty, 2008).

82). Hence, the hegemonic feminist fight was and has been developed primarily against the narrative of white bourgeois heterosexual women. In this narrative, they were seen as (both physically and mentally) fragile, vulnerable and delicate, having to stay away from the public space. They had to remain, thus, in the private area where they were supposed to be passive within the masculine mentality (Lugones, 2008: 92). The concepts of *women* and *oppression* were related only to a specific type or group of women, the one that was conceived to be the dominant one and, as a result of this, the ‘norm’ with their experience of oppression (Young, 2000 in Lugones, 2008: 104). The same process has happened with other categories. For instance, the case of *men*, referring to white bourgeois and heterosexual men, or *Black*, concerning to black heterosexual men (Lugones, 2008: 81).

In this way, the investigation carried out by Oyèrónkẹ Oyěwùmí (2017) highlights the fact that the important and ‘shared’ universal truths regarding gender oppression are coming from the particular perspective of the western dominant group. Universalism of knowledge has also characterised the approach of hegemonic feminism. Women have been recognised as a unique and articulated group (Oyěwùmí, 2017: 18) through the perspectives of the dominant and white group, regardless of the specific and personal backgrounds (Mohanty, 2008: 16). And, as a consequence, this process of homogenization has meant that other factors that might characterise women’s identities and realities of oppression, such as race, class, sexuality, age, ethnicity, etc, neither their interconnections were taken into account in gender and feminist analysis (Lugones, 2008: 73).

Thus, hegemonic feminists have forgotten the importance of intersectionality. This concept reveals the lack of attention to the different gender experiences and oppressions of those women who do not belong to the white bourgeois and heterosexual norm (Lugones, 2008: 95). In this sense, homogenization has also involved a process of silencing and hiding, especially, the experiences, sufferings, needs and identities of black, color and subaltern

women. The same thing could be said about their experiences of resilience since the only role given to them was the one of the victims, subalterns and voiceless. Then, these women, who were not considered as subjects, were, and are still, invisibilized (dominated and victimized) within the hegemonic category of *women*.

Therefore, according to the questions raised by black and colour feminists, can the concepts of feminism, women, gender and oppression be universal, transcultural and atemporal (Oyěwùmí, 2017: 18) within a single story? Moreover, what about concepts such as patriarchy, family, home, labour, sexuality or resilience applied universally while approaching gender and feminist experiences? Here it should be taken into consideration, first of all, the western invention and introduction (Bidaseca and Vázquez: 2011: 36) of categories such as *gender* or *women* (Oyěwùmí, 2017: 211). In such a way, all these concepts and categories socially constructed do not have a complete sense unless they are conceptualized in the specific and local contexts; unless there is an analysis of these concepts within the particular and historical circumstances and the ways that each woman creates her/their memories related to these concepts. This highlights the contradiction of hegemonic feminism and its process of homogenization. Its emphasis in equality of all women in their oppression suffered universally (Oyěwùmí, 2017: 50-51) has reduced women to their gender identity, to a single voice, story and feminism that should 'represent' all women.

Moreover, this process has continued strengthening the binary terms which have 'shape women's identity' and which are always the 'same' in all contexts (Oyěwùmí: 2017: 50; Mohanty, 2008: 12). Within the dominant discourse, patriarchy symbolizes in the single story the power of men, being men biologically opposed to women (Mohanty, 2008). Due to this sexual difference, men and women are already constructed as atemporal, pre-cultural and political-sexual subjects and objects in this story. They were introduced later within the social-economic-political-familiar-religious structures (Mohanty, 2008). These ones gave

responsibilities and freedoms to the first ones, and emotions and care for the second ones (Oyěwùmí, 2017: 15-18).

In addition, men are also the ones that have decided and have structured the economic, familiar, legal and religious systems. Within these, all women seem to have the same needs and struggles (Mohanty, 2008: 8-16) which have marked their inequalities since the moment they were born (de Hoyos et al., 2021: 19). This is due to the fact that the sexual distinction between men and women was also based on dichotomies such as mind/body and emotions, civilisation/nature, active/passive. These dichotomies have also influenced knowledge, discourses, narratives and cultural symbology (Franco, 1992).

Sexual difference was and is seen as the problem (bringing dependence to men and masculinity, romantic love, etc). It should be faced, then, in the view of hegemonic feminism with the foundation of a feminine subject that has a specific identity that sexually distinguishes her from the man. However, if this 'new' identity is also based only on sexual differences with men – since women have been considered as an identity previously constructed and introduced, later, within the social structures (Mohanty, 2008) -, this has created a stable and universal perspective that 'applies' to all women. As a consequence, this has fallen again in essentialism and binary terms that classifies people and experiences within gender analysis and in every patriarchal society (Oyěwùmí, 2017: 18).

As a result, this notion of hegemonic feminism has disregarded the intersections of race, class, sexuality, age and ethnicity, among other elements, backgrounds and memories (Bidaseca and Vázquez, 2011: 35). All these factors might have an influence in the development of the identity and story of each woman. However, this process has reduced all of them to the sexual difference. Besides this, all the possible systems of oppression that might have impacted on women's lives have also been reduced to a patriarchal and sexual experience in particular (Suárez-Navaz and Hernández Castillo, 2008). Conclusions were reached about

the oppression of all women relating it only to the abuse of the patriarchal and sexist system (Mohanty, 2008).

However, if differences are not taken into consideration, this can be problematic because the violence, oppressions, abuse and struggles that many women lived and still can live are not just related to the gender dimension, but also to others (Crenshaw, 1991: 88). The same could be said about experiences of resilience, as well. This is due to the fact that gender is not a stable concept (Butler, 1999: 35 in Bidaseca and Vázquez, 2011: 29). In every context it intersects with other dimensions of identity. For instance, race, class, ableism or, including here, migration movements. These intersections could create in many cases multiple levels of social injustice (racism, sexism, heterosexism, transphobia, xenophobia, etc: Crenshaw, 2016). All the concepts can have, then, their own cultural understanding in every context and every road of intersections. As a consequence, applying only one particular view of gender can lead to distortions and more inequalities in different cultures and backgrounds (Oyèwùmí, 2017: 17).

Furthermore, considering women as a unique and monolithic group already established and having the same experiences, interests and demands regardless of particular backgrounds, can perpetuate forms of cultural imperialism (Young, 2000: 104). Also, ethnocentrism, colonization and racism (Mohanty, 2008: 4-5). These forms of oppression are, ironically, the same ones that radical feminism tries to fight against. Again, this a contradiction that characterises hegemonic feminism (Oyèwùmí: 2017: 52-55) in its theories, policies, strategies and, even, development actions. These do not include the needs, demands and desires of many groups of women considered as the 'other'.

Here it could be found again the single story which has been reproduced by hegemonic feminists. Their theories and analysis also promoted the silence of many voices and experiences in order to create the new and modern image of the 'independent' women fighting for

emancipation. In this sense, in the same process as the one used by the Man/Human, they also needed the margins. Racialised, colonized, subaltern and ‘third’ world women should stay in these margins, in the monolithic role of the absolute victims of the ideology and patriarchal system (Mohanty, 2008; Suárez-Navaz and Hernández Castillo, 2008). As introduced in the first chapter, knowledge production is not always a naïve process. It can be used for the benefit of the group in power having an influence on the way we can think about ourselves and others. In such a way, the homogenisation of racialised and ‘third’ world women as ‘naturally’ powerless actors, uneducated and passive women being very close to traditions helped to configure, in contrast, the image of the center of power. This was represented by white women (Mohanty, 2008) that were consciously looking and achieving their path of liberation in opposition to men (Suárez-Navaz and Hernández Castillo, 2008).

This monocultural feminist knowledge has supposed the legitimization of the hegemonic feminist fight. Then, it has sentenced racialised, indigenous and many other women to the only role of ‘victims’. Furthermore, to a form of natural ‘non-existence’ as an object within the patriarchal and sexist structures of oppression (Mohanty, 2008). Finally, to silence, epistemic violence and dichotomies that have designed the perpetuation of the colonial basis of the single story (Hernández Castillo, 2020: 37).

This was also based on the coloniality that impacted on the feminists’ agendas. This critique was already raised by the Indian author Chandra Talpade Mohanty in 1986. She regarded the fact that all these voices and experiences were not taken into account as part of the particular and western story. This was due to the understanding of justice, rights, democracy and emancipation as the only path to ‘liberation’ from patriarchal oppression. The new female identity should be accompanied by a process that must claim for the productive work of women. Also, it should foster the transformation of the dichotomies of men/public arena and women/private space, as well as of the roles and ideologies related to femininity (Suárez-

Navaz, 2008). In this sense, this path of liberation was conceived grasping only the conception of History and progress that belonged “to Western feminist struggles having obtained liberal rights for women” (Hernández Castillo, 2020: 37-38).

According to this, other experiences of resistance and resilience that did not fit the ‘modern, progressive, civilized, educated and intellectual’ fight for rights were not included in the story. Within this timeline, coloniality of being and knowing still identified subaltern, racialized and indigenous women as ‘pre-modern women’. Racial, colonial and hierarchical classifications still contaminate, thus, the feminist agendas following the colonial monocultural naturalization of difference that may bring new abusive patterns that have reproduced the patriarchal power and superiority (de Hoyos et al., 2021: 33).

An example that clearly exemplifies this has been the field of development and gender scholars and theories. They have defined the situation of ‘other’ women as worse than the situation of oppression within the western patriarchal perspective (Mohanty, 2008; Suárez-Navaz and Hernández Castillo, 2008). In such a way, women of the ‘third’ world and subaltern women have been seen as the inferior and homogenized group. They have been considered as only victims, as the ‘little’ sisters that should be rescued through salvific rhetoric of modernity, again, from the patriarchal actors and structures. Their right to tell their own and particular story was and is still appropriated again with a reductive and homogenized story. This story is told from only the patriarchal perspectives, knowledge and views of western feminist academics using ‘humanitarianism’ as a strategy that perpetuates inferiority and dependence (de Hoyos et al., 2021: 34).

The western feminist fight for liberation from the single story has supposed, then, the reproduction of the subordination of non-white bourgeois heterosexual women within hegemonic parameters of knowledge and the coloniality of the single story. This was especially the case with the expansion and globalization of the local western knowledge through the

aspiration of transforming it into the ‘universal rights’ (Hernández Castillo, 2020: 38). This also has an actual influence in the actions and politics of governments and institutions such as the United Nations (Oyěwùmí, 2017: 286-287). Even, in non-governmental feminist organizations with a homogenised perspective of what women, experience and equity should mean. This has embarked them in the civilisation mission that does not involve the demands of all non-western women affected (Suárez-Navaz and Hernández Castillo, 2008).

However, all these facts have remained invisible due to the new single story of ‘international sisterhood’ promoted by the hegemonic feminism. The origin of the term stated by the Mexican feminist Marcela Lagarde referred as the possibility to achieve a social agreement to empower women and challenge the patriarchal competition. The importance of this is that this competition can still influence women to get the recognition of men (de Hoyos et al., 2021: 38). Despite this, the truth is that the dominant movements since the 1960s and 1970s have fostered, on the contrary, a political and exclusive agenda. As seen, this one has appropriated and stolen the experiences, fights, resistance and agency of different women (Mohanty, 2008: 19) in order to create the ‘reality’ of the ‘international sisterhood’ by universalising the experience of white bourgeois heterosexual women (Hernández Castillo, 2008: 15).

This could be interpreted as a new form of colonization (*colonialidad discursiva*: Bidaseca and Vázquez, 2011: 26) by new actors of oppression (western and white women). Their paths from oppression to liberation (Freire, 1970) implied again a ‘relation of structural domination and a suppression - often violent - of heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question’ (Mohanty, 2008: 2). Finally, this process has not transformed the sexist and patriarchal discourses and oppression. On the contrary, it has reinforced the coloniality of the story of separation in which the world and societies are always organized in a binary patriarchal sense. Still ignoring the effects of colonialism and imperialism (Suárez-Navaz and Hernández

Castillo, 2008), this single story does not conceive racialised and subaltern women as main characters with voice in the story.

Despite this, the question that could be raised again within this process of coloniality of being and knowing within feminist and gender analysis is, decolonially speaking, ‘whether universals indeed exist or whether they are merely concepts taken as representations’ (Walsh and Mignolo, 2018: 172). In this sense, the fact that in many feminist analysis and theories has been presupposed the use of western ‘universal’ concepts and stories, this has implied the hegemony of local Western knowledge over other possible cultural classifications (Oyěwùmí, 2017: 59). My intention here is not to promote the undervaluation of the possibilities of emancipation and knowledge that the hegemonic feminist discourse brought for women in the Western area. Despite this, the critique of many decolonial feminist authors and subaltern women should be considered regarding the imposition of this local dominant perspective becoming globally (de Sousa Santos, 1998).

And, as a result, hegemonic, white and western feminism and its knowledge production should reflect on the need of decentre itself. This process should engage in the recognition of its own promotion of ethnocentrism. Also, it should emphasize the rejection of the rhetoric of power in order to produce situated knowledge that can help to understand the different perspectives of feminisms, their historical paths and their actual demands, needs and aspirations. This is a precondition to comprehend the ways of emancipation and the rights that could be demanded by a plurality of feminist subjects, according to their particular stories and experiences. These have not been approached in the feminist fight considered as a universal phenomenon (Suárez-Navaz and Hernández Castillo, 2008).

Since, for instance, it was not the same experience lived by colonized women as compared to colonizers and European women. The reason for this is that one of the results of colonization was the introduction of the category of women as an achievement of the colonial

and patriarchal state (Lugones, 2008: 87-88). Moreover, the sexism that already characterized the creators of the colonial matrix of power intersected with racism. With this, colonized women were not even included in the concept of ‘women’ designed by Christian men (Mignolo, 2018: 157). They were never considered as ‘fragile and delicate’ creatures. As a consequence, colonialism meant for women a double process of oppression based on race and gender (Oyěwùmí, 2017: 212) which were inseparable and the origin, in this sense, of intersectionality. Furthermore, the rights fought by the first feminism based on the experiences of white bourgeois heterosexual women were not the same demands that women of colour, subaltern or ‘third world women’ had (hooks, 2017: 142; Mohanty, 2008: 1). Neither the actual experiences of white, black, Asian, Latinas, *mestizas*, indigenous, queer or migrant women are equal.

2.2.2. *The need of a pluriverse*

This shows, hence, the need to amplify and, especially, diversify the concept of *woman* (Suárez-Navaz, 2008) as a *subject* of study and action. The pluriverse of experiences and stories of women could help to surpass the limits of the single story. This one has seen women as only victims in a powerless position needed to be controlled by men within the western parameters (Oyěwùmí, 2017: 21). It cannot be denied the history of oppression lived by women as objects of subordination and the ‘less’ humans within the single story of separation. Nevertheless, the truth is that this does not suppose that this oppression has been or is exactly the same (Lorde, 1984: 740) as the narrative of white bourgeois heterosexual women (Lugones, 2008: 92).

Understanding gender as a social construct rather than as a biological difference can open the ground to diverse descriptions and realities about what does it mean to be a ‘woman’

in every context³. In this sense, all the actors involved within the social construction of gender should be taken into consideration (Oyěwùmí, 2017: 50-51). For instance, socially marginalized women might have lived different and unique challenges due to the overlap of the particular conception of gender with powerful heteronormative and colonial dynamics that create multiple levels of injustice (Crenshaw, 1991, 2016; Hill Collins, 1990; Hernández Castillo, 2015: 159).

This evokes, hence, the need to open the floor and study with different women whose experiences do not relate exactly with the ‘universal’ and historical truths spread by hegemonic western feminism and knowledge which have claimed the property of the position of *subject* and the concept of *women*. Acknowledging again about the concept of intersectionality, a pluriverse of local subjects, women’s identities and concepts might exist. This could foster the understanding of differences and intersections that each woman might accumulate during her life (Anzaldúa, 1987: 165). Questioning the ‘international sorority’ and the ‘universalism’ of social categories promoted in the last decades, to build sorority should be based on the acceptance of our differences as women which have been locally defined. This should involve the reflection of the inequalities and structures of oppression (sexism, racism, heterosexism, classism, colonialism, etc). These could have marked, especially, the experiences of women who are still not considered as subjects with voice, not even in the feminist theories and movements that have silenced these disparities (de Hoyos et al., 2021: 38).

In this sense, the basis of the homogenisation and universalization of experiences was due to the resistance to recognize and appreciate differences accumulated as elements that characterize us. This would confront the notion of differences understood only as something that divides us negatively, making incompatible human relationships within the single story

³ Opening also here the floor to transgender and queer perspectives that can help to think beyond biological differences, heteronormativity and coloniality.

(Anzaldúa, 1987: 165). Patriarchy, hierarchies, racism, misogynies, classism might have also impacted internally on women. They might have taught us to compete with other women, to see other women with condescension, superiority and criticism. Also, to see other women through the lens of prejudices and stereotypes; to not trust other women; and to not see other women's power and the importance of not questioning their voices (de Hoyos et al., 2021: 46-47). This has especially been the case with women who are still targeted by the coloniality of power structures.

In such a way, this process of homogenisation and double oppression coming from the hegemonic movements has made the dialogue with the 'other' women difficult. Their humanity, their identities and their capacities to tell their stories using their own words and terms (and not the ones of the dominant discourse) were denied (Suárez-Navaz, 2008). This could explain again the lack of active participation of these women who have been objectified (as well as their experiences and needs) within the western feminist theories and analysis.

In opposition to this, the decolonial aspect of differences means the need to engage with more and broader stories (Bhambra, 2020: 67) than the reductive single story of 'women'. This would comprise a 'heterogeneous field stemming from different locations and histories' (Leinius, 2020: 71) that should not reproduce the previous exclusion of stories and voices. We should now take responsibility for experiences (Popal, 2020: 67). Imagining other ways of conceiving the world, subjectivities, positionalities, agencies to build emancipation, resilience, and localisms (Suárez-Navaz and Hernández Castillo, 2008) might start challenging and destabilizing the universal and monocultural story. Also, the unequal power relationships in knowledge production with the voices of colonized, color and subaltern women which have not been listened to before within the social orders. Since, despite the criticisms already raised by Chandra Talpade Mohanty more than thirty years ago and the repercussions that these critiques have had, these voices are still not listened to. And, especially, this has been the case

of non-white bourgeois heterosexual women who has had to go through a double story of oppression and silence of their voices within mainstream feminisms or, even, a third process of reductionism regarding the case now of migrant women.

2.2.3. *Subject with no voice, woman, migrant*

Considering all that has been already exposed in the previous chapter and pages, migrant women have remained at the margins of all the structures of power and levels of reductionism within the single story. They were not included within the category of *Man/Human* and *subject of study*, becoming part of the homogenized ‘less human’. As well, their experiences have not been considered within the category of *women* promoted by the hegemonic feminist movements. Especially, the stories of color, colonized or subaltern women have been excluded. These voices were only taken into account and named after the individual consciousness and the factors that intersect all their life experiences and identities were transformed into a collective and homogenized object. They were homogenised into the ‘other’ women, subaltern women, women of ‘third’ world countries that helped to defined the centre of feminist power and emancipation.

Besides this, the third level in the single story of reductionism has involved the category of *migrant*. This one is understood, based on the approaches of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) of the United Nations, as:

An umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally-defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students (IOM, 2022).

In the actual contexts of increasing disparities, migration and mobility (an unalienable right within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) symbolizes for many people the chance to improve their lives, jobs or academic studies. This happens in a variety of situations that might include political, economic, social, cultural, religious, etc instability or, even, war contexts (Alianza por la Solidaridad, 2013-2022).

Despite this diversity of cases, and within the same process as the previous concepts of *Man/Human* and *women*, the concept of *migrant* has focused, especially, on the voices of the ‘subject’ of norm. In this case, it has been the figure of migrant men. Their reductive story tells the experience of leaving their place of origin in order to earn more economic and material resources to improve their situations and the one of the family (Ibos, 2019: 81; Sassen, 2019: 12). As part of this single story of migrant men, migrant women have only appeared as ‘partners’ that might accompany their husbands while moving to the new place. They become invisible, passive and dependent objects, even while being in the country of reception. This is a fact that has characterized migration, especially, as a masculine economic phenomenon in western and European countries (Sánchez-Leyva et al., 2010: 59-63).

In such a way, migrant women and, in particular non-white bourgeois heterosexual migrant women, have been positioned in the middle of these roads that have intersected producing their invisibility in the balance of stories and voices. One of the aspects that highlights this situation has been the fact that the stories of migrant women were only considered as significant elements of academic study after the 1980s (Morokvasic, 2008; Guerry, 2009 in Ibeas Vuelta, 2019: 81). This occurred despite the fact that the migration of women has been something recurrent in countries such as Spain since the end of the 20th century. Even these movements were not included in the migration analysis carried out by international organizations. For instance, the United Nations or the International Labor Organization (OIT) did not take into consideration gender perspectives. These could have

shown that the numbers of women that have migrated were as comparable as the ones of migrant men (Ibos, 2019: 82).

Nevertheless, the last years within academia have seen the rise of a field of studies, analysis and authors which have focused on the ‘feminization’ of migration. They have conceived migrant women as the protagonist of a constant and increased human mobility (Oso Cases, 2010: 34). As many studies have introduced, one of the main reasons that could have explained all this migration of women, especially from what has been called as ‘third’ world countries, undeveloped countries or the ‘south’, was the high demands of workers needed in the domestic and care sector (especially, as live-in workers: Oso Cases, 2010: 33-35). In the particular case of Spain, this territory has experienced since the 1980s a constant entrance of migrant women. In particular, they have come from different countries of Latin America. The field of care and domesticity has been the main ‘door’ of entrance for most of these women.

Nowadays, Spain counts with numbers around 700.000 women that work in the domestic and care sector, being most of them migrant women (Alianza por la Solidaridad, 2013-2022). This situation has continued with the flows and movements of migrant women starting what Arlie Hochschild defined as the ‘global chains of care’. These mean the system of care in which some women might delegate these tasks to other women in the transnational space (Ibos, 2019: 86). As it could be presumed, this ‘delegation’ could only be possible by being in a position of privilege. Many white western bourgeois and elite women has tried, then, to get their emancipation and independence from this patriarchal and low-paid domesticity sexually related to women in order to develop, on the contrary, their professional careers.

However, this path of liberation has not involved migrant women, especially coming from the ‘south’. Thus, this has revealed the social and sexual-racial coloniality of being and knowledge. Within an international context less favorable to migration, this coloniality has influenced the consideration of the domestic and care sector as depreciated jobs (Ibos, 2019:

86). In this sense, vulnerable and subaltern women (regardless of their previous working experience and studies) should take care of other vulnerable actors such as kids or old people (Ibos, 2019: 84).

This issue above and segregation of international labor (Pavón Mayoral, 2014: 104 in Ibeas Vuelta, 2019: 15) has also been promoted by the global imperialistic, neoliberal and capitalist political-economic contexts as a strategy to maintain themselves (Mohanty, 2003, 2008). These have conceived low-class racialised migrant women from 'third' world countries (Mohanty, 2003, 2008) as the preferred target of the international workforce, needing them to decrease labor expenses in the benefit of people in power (Suárez-Navaz, 2008). In such a way, the coloniality immersed in the social, political and economic structures has increased oppression, poverty and gender-racial inequalities (Mohanty, 2003; 2008). As a consequence, they have pushed migrant women to accept new ways of migration (Suárez-Navaz, 2008). Moreover, to accept devalued, unqualified, precarious and irregular jobs in the care sector (especially if they come alone, starting as live-in workers). Also, within informal or irregular economy (including, in some cases, sexual activities: Mohanty, 2003, 2008) in the countries of arrival, such as Spain. This has been a strategy to save money and maintain their families in the home countries whose circumstances are also affected by the global capitalist systems.

This situation has affected many racialised and subaltern migrant women, considering also the juridical situations of 'irregularity' that they might face when they arrive in Spain. Indeed, the *Ley de Extranjería* in Spain supposes a big obstacle in the reception and adaptation of migrant people. It organizes society in two groups, the 'citizens' and the 'non-citizens', being this second group certainly the one where the migrant population belongs at least the first years after arriving in Spain. These dichotomies imply privileges, rights and services for the first ones. In opposition, they involve difficulties of getting a NIE, permissions of residence, work or other legal documents; difficulties to validate the previous working experience and

studies; difficulties in the access to education, health, social security, etc (Alianza por la Solidaridad, 2013-2022). All these problems are lived while also having the pressure to help and send resources to their families (Oso Cases, 2010: 42; 46). All this is a reason that has put many migrant women under the stress of accepting, again, the devalued jobs that relate them to the figure of domesticity.

This reality cannot be denied. In fact, is still a consequence of the coloniality of power that reproduce exploitation, subordination, oppression (Oso Cases, 2010: 35) and sexual-racial differences to confine racialised and subaltern women to domestic and care work in our daily structures. Nonetheless, the truth is also that this focus of analysis within the ‘feminization’ of migration should not forget about the heterogeneity of experiences and situations that might exist (even as part of the domesticity and care sector). This should be acknowledged according to all the factors that may intersect in the life of every woman that migrates.

Since, even if the condition of migrants might be shared by different women, the intersections of race, class, ableism, sexuality, nationality, religion, etc, might lead to different reasons to migrate and different paths in the country of reception. In such a way, it might not be the same experience for all migrant women. However, this has not prevented the fact that the story which has been written for migrant women coming from ‘undeveloped’ or ‘third’ world countries has still been the reductive, binary colonial and single story related to ‘servants’ of the domestic and care work (Ibos, 2019: 91-95).

A single story which has been, indeed, perpetuated by the existence of prejudices and stereotypes in a country that is a ‘recipient’ of migrants, although a suspicious ‘recipient’ of mobility. Indeed, the narratives of victimization; naturalization of femininity, essentialism, domesticity; and the universalism of the ‘migrant women’ spread in Spain (as well as in other western countries) has had as a result the permanence of an incomplete and generalized story (Hernández Castillo, 2015) of racialised and subaltern migrant women. This single story has

characterized migrant women as invisible, passive and submissive victims of the patriarchal structures that need to depend, especially, on men in both the home countries and the places of arrival.

As a result, this colonial single story has still created an imaginary of stigmas about migrant women as someone that – desperately and hypersexually presented, especially in the case of *Latinas* - comes to Spain to ‘steal Spanish husbands and get their protection’ (Morán, 2019: 18). Besides this, they also come to steal ‘the jobs of care due to the poverty and the lack of education that defines their countries of origin’. In such a way, many people in Spain do not still conceive the fact of being a migrant woman and have studies as something compatible, especially if they are also mothers with many ‘responsibilities’ to take care of (Sánchez-Leyva et al., 2010: 199).

This is also connected to the victimized portrait that has characterized subaltern and racialised women as ‘uneducated’ and naïve women very close to traditions, maternity, care and domesticity (Sánchez-Leyva et al., 2010: 59). The hegemonic western discourses and theories had a big impact in the spread of this image, not giving capacities of action and agency on their own to these migrant women (Ortega Sánchez, 2019). Finally, this portrait has involved the colonial, racial, ‘traditional’ and ‘feminine’ roles of ‘natural’ mothers and wives given to women. These roles have made racialised migrant women the perfect objects to carry out jobs related to care and domesticity (housekeepers, nannies, cleaning ladies, etc) as seen before (Sánchez-Leyva et al., 2010: 64).

Hence, becoming the ‘otherness’ they are not seen as ‘equals’ as the locals (Suárez-Navaz, 2008). Local population in Spain transforms and classifies them, first, as the ‘other’ denigrating them (after that) according to those classifications that constitute the basis of the single story that rejects them and their stories (Stolcke, 2016 in Ibeas Vuelta, 2019: 131). This still denies, then, the possibility of deeply understanding the diversity and complexity that

might characterize their social, political, economic and cultural paths in their previous home countries. Moreover, the reasons to migrate, their experiences while they are traveling (their expectations, difficulties of traveling, etc) or once that they have arrived to the place of destination (the situations of oppression, resilience, their dreams, etc).

As a result, all this still makes it difficult to understand all the intersections of gender, race, migration, class, sexuality, religion, ableism, ageism, etc. They have become part of a universal collective subject in the separate concepts of *'less human'/ objects of study, women and migrant*. The intersectionality of these categories and factors of identity has revealed, at the end, the discursive suppression (Bidaseca and Vázquez, 2011: 26; Mohanty, 2008: 2) and invisibility of their condition as individual subjects with voice and story (Oso Cases, 2010: 33) embodying only the universal portrait of the 'other' in all senses.

With no intention to pretend that the information presented applies to all migrant women in the context of Spain (which would mean to fall again in reductionism and homogenisation), there is, despite this, a need to still listen to all the stories of migrant women. Above all, the ones of those women who are still obliged to remain at the racial and subaltern margins of the single story. I believe that they can lead us to know a pluriverse of women, in this case study migrant women, who are made of different dimensions, stories and *mestizajes* (Anzaldúa, 1987).

2.3. The pluriverse of voices: a process

2.3.1. Oral methodologies as a tool in feminist analysis

Based on the testimony of a migrant women that arrived in Spain, Verónica, the single story will not be possible to be surpassed with a hegemonic feminist movement

que deja apartadas a mujeres empleadas domésticas, a mujeres migrantes, a mujeres de pequeños sectores, a mujeres que no coinciden con la mujer europea ‘estándar’, como las racializadas o las gitanas (interviewed by Belsué Guillorme, 2019: 172)⁴.

Hence, the question now is how could it be possible to change this unequal access to storytelling? How could it be possible to change the unbalance of stories that exist in the single story and the coloniality of knowledge and being? How could it be possible, then, to acknowledge in contrast the existence of a *pluriverse* of stories of women? How could it be possible to listen and position the voices and stories of a heterogeneity of women, in this case study, migrant women?

The postcolonial feminist studies carried out by authors such as Gloria Anzaldúa revealed the importance to understand that any of us should entitle her/him/themselves to ‘represent’ and tell the story of others (Rivas-Flores et al., 2020: 54). Acknowledging this, an essential step to decolonise our knowledge, feminisms and the single story spread negatively through our differences might be:

to break down the constraining academic boundaries through bringing ourselves closer to these theoretical approaches which arise directly from the experiences and resistances of multiple oppressions (Hernández Castillo, 2020: 51).

In this way, this is what feminist researchers have tried to do applying now methodologies such as oral history, life stories and testimonies. With the use of these tools, experiences, personal backgrounds and memories get theoretical importance as sources of knowledge that can surpass the orthodox academic boundaries. According to decolonial authors, these academic structures are still influenced by the colonial oppressive heritage (Suárez-Navaz, 2008).

As introduced before, gender-racial hierarchies have promoted an unbalance in the process of storytelling and writing (Hernández Castillo, 2015). The Man/Human conceived

⁴ Translation of the original made by the author of this master thesis, Paula Valero Sala (12/07/2022): with a feminist movement ‘that leaves out women working in the domestic and care sector, migrant women, women from small sectors, women that do not relate to the ‘standard’ European women, such as racialised or gypsy women’.

himself with the capacity of *nkali* and *sraki* (Adichie, 2009; 2018: 13). In opposition to this, postcolonial and, especially after them, decolonial feminist authors have argued for the use of these methodologies as a path that can bring us closer to a diversity of experiences and life stories of women. With the decolonial perspective of bringing a regenerative project, these methodologies can bring us closer to the stories that were not written before as part of the single story (de Hoyos et al., 2021: 62). As a result, the use of oral methodologies could lead the way for these authors to fill the silences left by the official and colonial history (Hernández Castillo, 2015: 160). The results of this could be a ‘plurilogue’ (Schohat, 2001: 2 in Leinius, 2020: 71) of life stories, testimonies, voices and understandings of women which become, thus, subjects with voice and subjects of study.

Besides this, feminist authors have valued the use of these oral methodologies as tools that, as explained before in this master thesis, can make visible the interconnections between colonialism, patriarchy, racism, classism and more unequal orders (de Hoyos et al., 2021: 60). They can reveal how these systems of oppression led to the story of ‘non-existence’, exclusion and silence of women that were forced to remain at the margins of the colonial, official and single story. As stated by the decolonial author Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo (2020) - whose investigations have focused, especially, in the experiences of cultural exclusion, fight and resistance of indigenous women in Mexico -, oral history could become a ‘‘tool for reconstructing complex trajectories of exclusion’’. As a consequence, it could also become a ‘‘tool for feminist reflection’’ to work towards the challenge of racist and sexist colonial discourses by collectively reconstructing individual stories (Hernández Castillo, 2020: 39, 45).

The importance of situating knowledge is involved here as a way to recognize the experiences of oppression. But, especially, it is also a way to foster the acknowledgement and the reflection of historical and personal complexities and the pluriversal forms of resistance against that violence and oppression (Mohanty, 2003, 2008). Listening consciously to other

ways of conceiving the world, to other subjectivities, positionalities and agencies to build emancipation (Suárez-Navaz and Hernández Castillo, 2008) reveals, hence, the importance of localisms. This is expressed now by actors that may not talk from the reductive and stigmatized perspective of 'passive' and 'voiceless' victims. It cannot be denied that the stories of many racialised and subaltern women have been affected by violence and oppression. Despite this, within oral projects these voices might talk from the position of subjects. They now tell their own stories choosing their own words in a process that shows their autonomy and resistance and that could also contribute to cleaning their bodies and minds (Hernández Castillo, 2008: 19; 2015: 160).

A diversity of voices and stories might exist, thus, running away from the dangers of homogenisation, universalism, superiority and patronizing promoted by the dominant feminist discourse and the single story (Suárez-Navaz, 2008). In this sense, the feminist and postcolonial analysis that put emphasis in the particular contexts and stories have crossed cultural and political borders. That has happened in a process in which dialogue can be an essential step to promote collective reflection based on the acceptance of our differences as women which have been locally defined (Hernández Castillo, 2008: 15). For this reason, bearing in mind the feminist postcolonial critiques, oral history and methodologies have become a means through which it could be possible to go beyond in a decolonial and regenerative path to recover the possibilities of dialogue. These were difficult before since many women, such as migrant women, have experienced how their humanity, identities and the capacities to tell their stories were denied. Over and over again, due to the conception of differences as factors that separate people (Suárez-Navaz, 2008). And as a result, the use of these methodologies has been important in feminist and decolonial studies since they can help to begin the destabilisation of the 'monocultural naturalization of differences' (Hernández Castillo, 2020: 46). They have

promoted the understanding that we can dwell differently and express our stories using our own words and terms (and not the ones imposed by the single story and narrative).

The process of sharing individual stories can create a space of comprehension of the *pluriverse* of experiences, of the different ways through which women have learnt how to be a ‘woman’ in every context. With this it could be possible to realize about what has united and separated us, about the historical and colonial heritages that had an influence in many stories. Also, about how we want to transform them (de Hoyos et al., 2021: 39) with new perspectives and factors that diversify the limits of the single story of *women* and its reproduction. As understood by feminist researchers, the purpose with the application of these oral methodologies is not just to promote inclusion as a way to ‘incorporate’ new ‘colours’ or ‘voices’ of women from the ‘south’ (Suárez-Navaz, 2008) in a ‘new’ space within the dominant discourse. Instead, to have the courage to listen to dissenting voices (Adichie, 2021) that with their resistance and re-existence can make visible the systems of power and oppression.

Also, to have the courage to reflect about the need to engage in the process of epistemic reconstitution (Quijano, 1992, 2007) and the democratization and decolonisation of the structures, discourses and narratives of our world. Since, these are still embedded by the coloniality of knowledge and being and the single story. That could be possible engaging with a pluriverse of stories. Stories that come from a heterogeneity of women that, situated within their own specific and local contexts and histories, become subjects. They become actors that might share their stories within the development of an oral project that through decoloniality challenges the access to storytelling.

2.3.2. Situating the oral project

Taking this into consideration, the revision of feminist analysis has helped me to position some of the authors within their perspectives and lines of investigation that could be related to the

use of oral methodologies. Understanding the importance and the need that postcolonial studies had, my aim now is to engage with the decolonial critique. The purpose is to develop an oral project that could go beyond the limits of academia and bring the possibility to work closely and actively with people of the community of Castellón.

A great importance and role have been given to oral methodologies in Latin America⁵. Here, a diversity of authors, such as Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo, or, even, institutions such as the National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, have implemented them. They have done it within different contexts of armed conflicts, fights, resistances, and social movements. They have tried to get close to the diversity of stories of different women as actors that live and experience those conditions. Some of their works have been the basis of the design of the oral project which will be presented within the following pages.

Especially, I had the need to approach these oral methodologies from a decolonial perspective that might offer “epistemological lenses that allow for a more pluralist, contextualized and enriched understanding of the social world” (Bendix et al., 2020: 3). Therefore, as it was analyzed in the first chapter of this master thesis, the decolonial perspective can help to reflect about the power that characterizes knowledge production. It emphasizes the importance to go beyond the notion of universalism and homogenization (Mohanty, 2008: 2) and towards situated knowledge (Bendix et al., 2020: 123-125). I would like to promote this with a pluriverse of stories collected in the oral project of this master thesis.

With regards to the relevance given to the production of local knowledge in decolonial and feminist studies, the context selected for the oral project has been the province of Castellón. This has been my place of residence during the last two years. It is also a city that has become the place of arrival of many migrant women (both in the city and villages surrounding it). High

⁵ In case the reader wants to know more about this, you can find more information, for instance, in the website of Consejo Municipal de Paz, Reconciliación y Convivencia. Suárez, Cauca, 2020-2021: <http://forosuroccidente.org/memoria-suarez/memoria-individual.html>

numbers of Rumanian, Colombian and Venezuelan migrants have formed the biggest communities in Castellón. Continuous flows of migrant women have also arrived from many other countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe, besides the ones already mentioned.

Within this geographical context of Castellón, the aim using oral methodologies should be to start questioning the monolithic category of migrant women. As stated, this has been presumed and reduced to be a single 'less' human with a silenced identity, story and History (Spivak, 2003: 299). Even if the methodologies proposed could be applied to different groups and communities whose voices and stories have been silenced and marginalized, the case study was chosen considering the importance of no longer perpetuating the single story. Through the coloniality of being and knowing, the single story has impacted migrant women in all senses. Intersectionality reveals the void that exists when considering the stories of migrant women, in particular the ones of migrant women that have arrived to Castellón from non-western, subaltern and racialised contexts. They represent, in fact, some of the biggest numbers of migration and mobility towards this city. The concepts of subject of study, gender, race or migration have not included these voices when these categories are analyzed separately. This is due to the fact that they have only paid attention to the experiences of the subjects considered the norm (Man/Human, white bourgeois heterosexual woman; black/colour man; migrant man). A silence has been imposed on subaltern migrant women which has meant a form of natural 'non-existence' of their voices and stories. They have only been named to talk about 'victims', 'passive' and 'voiceless' women. Their destinies in the receiving country are generally and colonially thought to be connected with the reductive experiences of the domestic and care sector. Besides this, stigmas and stereotypes have described them as 'uneducated', 'naïve', 'submissive' and 'traditional' women.

They have been given a single story which has been repeated over and over again through the rhetoric of coloniality and modernity.

2.3.3. Objectives of the oral project

Having all these considerations in mind, the oral project of this master thesis has focused on the life stories of three migrant women whose paths have led them to the province of Castellón.

In such a way, the objectives of the oral project designed have been the following:

- Engage through oral methodologies with a *pluriverse* of stories and subjects with voice, in this case migrant women that have arrived in Castellón, as a decolonial option that can make the limits of the single story unstable. Also, its dimensions of coloniality of being and knowledge which have fostered universalism, reductionism and colonial differences as a single totality for the subaltern (Mignolo, 2018: 3; 147).
- Consequently, an important objective would be to question the monolithic category of migrant women which have been presumed and is still reduced to a single 'less' human with a single identity. Related to this, the focus would be to try to understand the diversity and complexities of the stories and paths of migrant women in all the different stages of their lives. This includes the moments and experiences while living in the home countries, the process of traveling and, also, arriving to the new country. The hope with this is getting close to a pluriverse of stories that have not belonged to the norm, being forced to remain at the margins of the single story in all its levels. Moreover, these stories might reveal the effects of the systems of oppression, but also the experiences of resilience and resistance of these migrant women (Mohanty, 2003, 2008).

Therefore, the purpose with this oral project has not been to bring a 'new and official story of migrant women' that has come to live in Castellón as a knowledge that should become

hegemonic in academic studies. Instead, the focus following the philosophy of the pluriverse (Zapatistas of Chiapas in Kothari et al., 2019: XXVIII) would be to open the floor to a diversity of voices that might have remained at the margins. With this, it could be realized how factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, migration, religion, capability, etc and their intersections can shape (being social constructs) the identities, paths and stories of every migrant woman that is in Castellón. Even, all these elements might influence their ways of remembering and sharing (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013) within the oral project.

2.3.4. Design of the oral project

Hence, intersectionality has been a key element in the preparation of this master thesis. When one person tells his/her/their life story to someone, the personal and situated interpretation (Leoni, 2019: 129) of the world, the experiences being part of it, the moments of beauty and loss (Eisenstein, 2018) are expressed with their own words and voices. Special attention has been given, then, to localism, to the specific contexts, temporalities, experiences, paths and subjectivities of the three migrant women living in Castellón. Their participation as subjects with voice has been the essence and basis of the project.

Nevertheless, to develop these objectives it was important not to forget the need to avoid the recreation of power inequalities within this oral project. These imbalances might appear as part of the colonial epistemic machine that perpetuates modernity/coloniality (Bendix et al., 2020: 123) while developing research and implementing different oral methodologies of study. These methodologies started to become an important technique, especially in the western context, after the events of the Second World War as a way to collect historical information expressed through orality (Miralles, 1985). Despite this, the truth is that the decolonial analysis

was needed to go further than the traditional conception of the use of these methodologies which might have reproduced colonial standards.

As stated by Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo (2015), even if the use of oral methodologies to approach life stories were the results of ‘intercultural dialogue’,

rarely have the terms of these dialogues been made explicit, and few critical reflections exist concerning the social hierarchies that mark the relations between researchers and the social actors with whom they work (Hernández Castillo, 2015).

That is the reason why the decolonial de-construction regarding the use of these methodologies was required within the previous sections of this master thesis. I had to realize the need to promote the change of the terms of knowledge production while using these methodologies. This is due to the fact that without changing the terms, the unbalances in storytelling, it will not be possible to change the content. It will not be possible to change what is enunciated (Mignolo, 2018: 144; 177), what is known, what is valid, which stories are told and which experiences and voices are listened to.

Relationality has been another key factor in the design of the oral project to try to enter in a space of conversation and understanding that “both cross geopolitical locations and colonial differences” (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018: 1) between the researcher and the participants. By being aware of our positionality a balance in storytelling could be achieved. Moreover, putting care in a central place, the focus has been the production of decolonial and horizontal connections in all the phases designed for carrying out the oral project. My aim was to always foster a process of collaboration with the participants.

The aspect of care has been, thus, highly essential to comprehend that horizontality should not be confused with a process of homogenisation. Both the researcher and the participants should not be reduced in the universal figure of ‘humans’ to ignore or banalize colonial differences. Rather, I should show sensitivity and empathy regarding the structural inequalities that might have marked the life stories of the three migrant women and their

possibilities to tell their stories. The importance of location, context and positionality has helped me, as an author, to reflect trying to foment accountability, communication, trust and collaboration (Friz Trzeciak, 2020: 125). Furthermore, to try to achieve an horizontality that is not fake and that does not reproduce asymmetrical relationships in the use of oral methodologies.

In addition, the importance of care could also help to reflect about positionality with the meaning of avoiding a process of ‘representation’ or ‘inclusion’ that appropriates the stories of others. Since, at the end, this might lead to cultural imperialism, ethnocentrism and orientalisng rhetoric (Said, 1990 in Hernández Castillo, 2020: 39) that could conceive the participants of the project as women with the ‘responsibility of saving us’ through their ‘alternative knowledge’ (Hernández Castillo, 2020: 39). In this sense, the design of this oral project has not aimed at the extraction and gathering (as coyotes: Leinius, 2020: 74) of information from informants considered as ‘objects’ of study. Neither, they have been considered as ‘containers’ of information (Freire, 1970) that should be studied to present a universal theory.

Contrary, and bearing this perspective of relationality, horizontality and care in mind, within the many oral methodologies that exist the one chosen in this master thesis has been the interview. Especially, the interviews have been done with the partnership and consent of the three migrant women living now in Castellón to get closer through their voices to their life stories and testimonies. As it has been described by the National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia (2013: 97), the interview as an oral methodology can work as a conversation between two persons. Here, the researcher needs to create an atmosphere of respect and connection that can allow me to listen and collect the biographical testimony and the voices of the participants. This means that this oral method can help to reach a space of dialogue which is more deep, familiar and intimate. The hope with this is that the participants could feel that their stories and

their voices will be listened to. The interview can be a manner, hence, to get close to the different ways through which the participants can interpret, feel, tell and share their experiences. Also, their memories which could have remained out of the single story being silenced (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 101).

Following the decolonial parameters, the method of the interview has been considered to be the least problematic in terms of the possibility to reproduce the distance relationships between the researchers and the participants of the oral project. This was due to the fact that, trying to approach these methodologies the best way possible, the participants could also have an important role and influence in all the process of the project. As the researcher, I might have been the one organizing the structures of the project. Despite this, the hope was that within the interviews the three migrant women that were willing to participate would feel free and autonomous to express themselves and their stories. For that, they could choose the words they desire to talk about what they want to talk about (Eriksson, 2020: 138).

In this sense, as the researcher who might guide at the beginning the project and the process of the interview, I needed to be, first, conscious of my position. After this, I could realize the need to share now the space of dialogue and the agenda of the interviews to learn *from* and *with* the subjects with voice involved (Mato, 2000 in Bendix et al, 2020). My intention has not been to try to impose my previous ideas or judgements or manage what the participants should tell within the oral project. Neither, I wanted to talk or represent them and I have tried to emphasize this aspect, especially, in the presentation of the three life stories giving all the value to the voices of the participants.

Hence, the methodology of the interview could lead to the development of a project that was as open as possible for the participants (Eriksson, 2020: 138). Consequently, the purpose of working with oral history and testimonies within this master thesis has followed the decolonial perspective to abandon the position of distance and power that I could represent as

the researcher. Giving the space of enunciation (Freire, 1967; 1979: 159), the participants should be able to make the decision about what they want to tell and express.

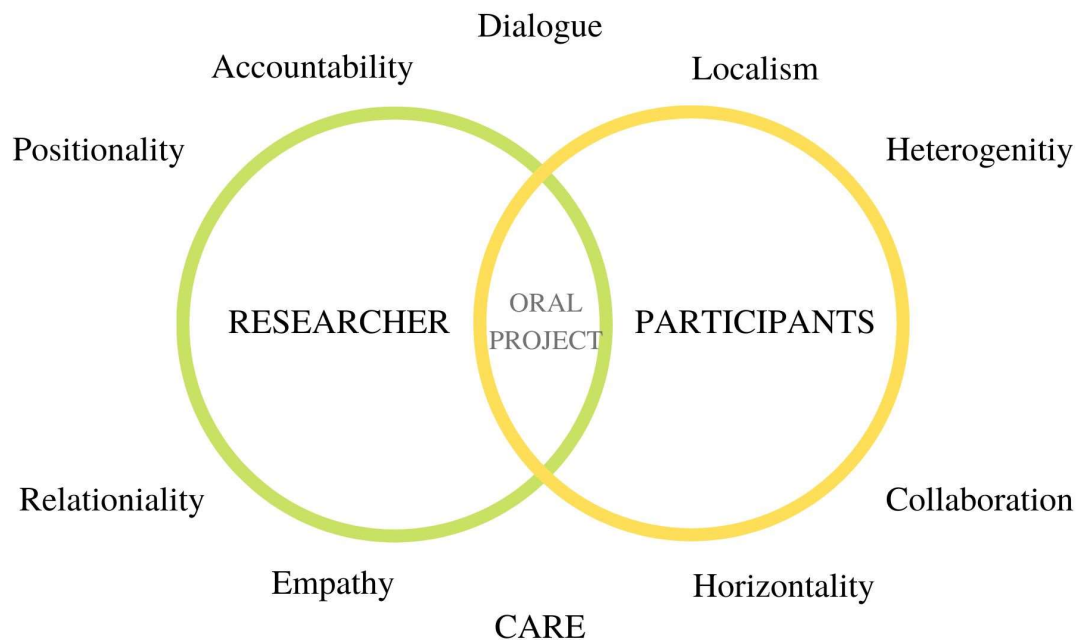
The importance of their words and voices connected, also again, with the essence of language (and in particular the native language of one person) as the expression of the ‘‘collective bank of people’s experience’’ (wa Thiong’o, 1986: 14-15). Also, as the bearer of culture that can help to situate the knowledge of the participants within their contexts, communities, experiences, relationships and intersections. As a result, language was considered with a special significance within this oral project, trying to empower the voices of the participants. Besides this, the desire was to promote, in the cases that have been possible, the use of their local languages or one of their native languages of the participants.

Moreover, language has been the *means of communication* (wa Thiong’o, 1986: 13) between me and the participants during all the process of the project that has been designed. A communication that needed to be dynamic and empathic with the hope of achieving collaboration in all the phases of the project. Hence, in this process it has been crucial to promote a process of sharing all the results and steps with all the people involved (Friz Trzeciak, 2020: 130). In this sense, I have not tried to claim the ownership of this oral project and of the space of dialogue that will be created. Neither, of the pluriverse of experiences that will be presented with the technique of life stories (which will be explained further in the subsection 2 called *Questionnaire*). The reason for this has been the understanding that all this could have not been possible without the partnership and dialogue with the participants. They have been conceived as main actors (de Hoyos et al., 2021: 68) with autonomy and their stories have been located at the center of the project.

As a result, all this has been part of the process of ‘‘enacting accountability, meaning the ‘sharing of interview transcripts, life histories and finished academic products with informants/subjects’’ (Lock Swarr and Nagar, 2010: 7; Lock Swarr, 2020: 75). In such a way,

the collection, interpretation and dissemination of the information voiced by the participants involved a democratic, responsible and ethical process. It has been a collective work to compile all the facts, memories and experiences introduced - even the violent ones; even the ones that hegemonic western knowledge did not want to recognize - which are the result of a pluriverse of subjectivities and interpretations (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia (2013: 14; 25-26).

As a summary, the different steps and phases of this oral project have tried to follow a decolonial perspective that could be characterized as it is visually presented in the image 1:



Personally, the decolonial perspective has supposed an intense process of reflection for me as author of this thesis and as academic researcher. In my previous works, studies and projects I have been part of the epistemic machine that has reproduced the coloniality of knowledge. I was not conscious about the importance of promoting these values presented. I am afraid to recognize that I might have been a *coyote* that only wanted to gather information. In such a way, this project has implied an important and a continuous process of learning for me. It has helped me to understand the kind of researcher I would like to be and the kind of

relationships that I would like to foment with other individuals, groups and communities to listen to their voices.

I have the hope to have been able to reflect all this learning in these pages of my master thesis. And continuing with this, I would like to introduce how the process and the different stages of this oral project have taken place.

1. Research phase

Starting from the beginning, the first stage in the realization of this oral project involved a process of research (Randall, 1992: 42). This has been presented in the previous pages and sections of this master thesis, starting from Chapter 1. Despite the fact of being, probably, the only phase in which I have not worked yet collectively with the participants, the analysis offered was necessary so that I could start comprehending, first, how the single story was created and maintained for centuries. It was necessary to start learning from the level of the big and single story of separation to the specific problematic of its coloniality and reproduction in the case of migrant women, especially racialised and subaltern migrant women. Only with this, it was possible for me to acknowledge the reasons why it is important to approach this problem through decoloniality. Moreover, to do it with tools that can contribute to the processes of decolonizing knowledge and the being. In this sense, there has also been the need to reflect about these oral methodologies and about which would be the best way to implement them in accordance with the objectives previously described.

Hence, this first phase of research was significant to start the project within the perspective of situating knowledge and the case study. I did not have the pretension to claim the universality or hegemony of the information presented in the previous pages of this master thesis. On the contrary, this research has helped me with the understanding of the existence of a pluriverse of subjects with voice to try to apply this in this case study of migrant women that have arrived in Castellón.

This initial step has also contributed to the preparation of the materials that were needed to carry out the interviews with the participants. In particular, this has had an effect in the development of the questionnaire that, generally, organizes the interviews in oral projects. Within the traditional use of oral methodologies, the questionnaires are prepared and adapted to the specific case of study. The adequate and standard questions are chosen in order to get the most valuable information that can benefit the historical or social research and study. However, as it will be shown within the following pages, the questionnaire of the oral project of this master thesis has followed, above all, the philosophy of the pluriverse. It has been considered, then, as a guideline. Especially, as a spectrum of different questions that may help in the process of getting close to the pluriverse of experiences and their intersections within the interviews.

Subsequent to the provisional preparation of the questionnaire, this was shared with the three migrant women that have been willing to join the project. The three participants, who will also be presented in the next pages, were given the possibility to make changes, decide if there is a question they would prefer not to be asked, etc. Therefore, it started at this stage the process of collaboration and horizontality that, luckily, has continued within the next steps of the oral project. These phases have been the creation of the space of dialogue to do the interviews, the transcriptions and the presentation of the life stories, giving more details about them within the next sections of the oral project.

2. Questionnaire

With reference to the specific characteristics that have shaped the design of the questionnaire, the philosophy of the pluriverse has been essential to realize the fact that a change was needed regarding the traditional perspective of making research and investigation. Within the single story, subaltern groups have not been considered as possible participants that could be asked about their stories. Furthermore, from the hegemonic point of view, the consideration of

women as a unique and homogenized category with the colonality of the single story has made it difficult to reflect about what kind of questions were appropriate. Conceiving the ‘equity’ of all women within their binary role as victims of ‘only’ the patriarchal structures has supposed the imaginary of a universal category of ‘women’. They have had universal experiences that had built the ‘reality’ in every context which was previously conceptualized within the single story. The same process might have occurred when considering the universal category of ‘migrant’ and what could have been their experiences and stories. As a consequence, when considering all these intersections a void appeared regarding migrant women. What questions should be asked, then, during the interviews if I wanted to get close to their life stories, memories and experiences?

The questions considered in many studies and investigations have been based on the specific experiences of a particular perspective and knowledge. This one has pretended to make these local questions the ones that should be applied in every different case study. The questions became, hence, standard and pre-fabricated questions that might have not connected with the specific contexts of many subaltern women. They might have followed only the colonial single story and its reproduction (Oyěwùmí, 2017: 285) that has only name migrant women, especially coming from subaltern contexts, to talk about a monolithic and reductive image of the ‘other’ not considering their stories and experiences.

In contrast to this, here the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991: 89) gains attention again to approach the development of the questionnaire. A wide spectrum of different questions has been considered since they might be useful in the process of getting close to the pluriverse of experiences and their intersections within the interviews. The questionnaire is included within Annex number 1 (called *Materials of the interviews*). As it can be seen, it involves a diversity of questions that is not considered now as a standard procedure. Rather, it has been more an open guideline since the flow, the questions that were asked and the dialogue

within the interviews has been determined, at the end, by the participants of the projects. Also, by the way they have expressed, shared and remembered their stories and testimonies. This has been due to the fact that memories and experiences are not standard. They are dynamic according, possibly, to elements such as race, class, gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, abilities, etc and their interrelationships (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 14; 34; 66-69).

The questionnaire has been organized in different topics or sections that might be useful to approach during the interviews. Here it also helped the reflection about the things I already knew about the participants. These aspects are the results of my personal and previous relationships with them. In this sense, the previous information known from them and from the initial research in this paper has been useful to adapt some of the sections or questions of the questionnaire to some of the possible experiences of the participants. This is something important since as the researcher I had to try to stimulate the memories of the participants with these possible questions. But, especially, this is important because it can contribute to the creation of an environment of confidence with the participants. I wanted to make them feel that the questionnaire and the research show an especial interest in their personal stories (Randall, 1992: 42).

Despite this, there was the belief that within the process of dialogue the perspective of intersectionality would appear to guide the flow of the conversation from one question to another, from one section to the other. Again, the questionnaire prepared was only understood as an open guideline of possible questions to know the events and experiences that the participants have lived and how they have interpreted and felt them (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 63). In any case was it something static or the definite way of developing the interviews. Neither was it considered as an interrogatory to evaluate the participants asking all the questions. Indeed, the questions represented a high number

considering the philosophy of the pluriverse and the existence of different experiences. And, at the end, the most beautiful part of this process is that every dialogue with every participant has been unique (Randall, 1992: 44).

Nevertheless, a fact that should be mentioned in relation to some of the sections of the questionnaire (such as infancy, youth or adult life), was the approach to build the life stories of our participants from the position of the body (*la cuerpa* as a decolonial concept: de Hoyos et al., 2021: 58-60). The importance of the body is revealed due, again, to the single and colonial History and story. Their creators claimed, in fact, control of the bodies of the 'less humans' as territories of conquest of the Man/Human. In this sense, and even when the bodies symbolized the 'weak' side of humanity⁶, the 'less humans' experienced how their bodies were denied because of the violence and power of the systems of oppression influenced by the social gendered and racial classifications (Oyěwùmí, 2017: 37-40).

Thus, since colonization the body has been used to create differences between the creators of the colonial matrix of power and the 'other'. In particular, the body has become a site that has received oppression. In the case of many women, their life stories and growth have been marked by the sexual and biological differences established within the patriarchal systems. Moreover, for a pluriverse of women the body has been situated in the middle of the road in which more and multiple structures of oppression, especially racism, have intersected. This means that different bodies of women might have experienced a diversity of experiences and, within these, a diversity of situations of subordination and control. In such a way, narrating life stories from the perspective of the bodies (*la cuerpa*) could imply a way to know about the different ways through which many women⁷, in this case migrant women from subaltern and racialised contexts, have grown. Moreover, to know how they have lived the intersection of the

⁶ In the binary comparison between the body and the mind used to privileged biologically the Man/Human as the ones in control of rational and intellectual thinking (Oyěwùmí, 2017: 37-40).

⁷ Understanding this category not in a binary sense, but as a concept that includes non-binary, transgender and queer people.

systems of power. These have also organized the development of life stories based on the stages of growth of the bodies (infancy, youth, adult life (especially related to motherhood in the case of women) and old age).

These biological stages of the body have been used as an element of organization while developing interviews to know about life stories. Also, as a way that can help the participants to remember and tell the events and experiences lived, organizing them chronologically or thematically. In such a way, this has been used in the development of the questionnaire presented as a process that could also help the participants to connect their individual life stories and biological stages with the social systems and events (family, social relationships, politics, migration movements, etc). This is the purpose conceived with the use of the technique of life stories, also known as social biographies in oral projects (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 101-102).

Despite this, the intersections carried out by the bodies (*la cuerpa*) could also show that these biological stages are, again, social constructs. They may differ in a pluriverse of social, cultural, political, economic, etc contexts. In this sense, our bodies can tell as many diverse stories as the pluriverse of realities that women may live (de Hoyos et al., 2021: 62-64). For instance, perhaps some women have never experienced the stage of youth, having to grow up faster due to economic pressures, classism, racism, etc. Perhaps many women have felt or comprehended these stages in a different way, not even using these categories that might come from the western context. This fact needed to be also taken into account in the development of this project. The reason for this is that this has been ignored within the universalism promoted in the process of the totality of knowledge. Also, within the hegemonic feminist discourses that have perpetuated the imaginary of these life stages in a unique perspective based on the experiences of white western bourgeois heterosexual women.

As a consequence, the sections proposed within the questionnaire presented have been understood as social constructs that could, rather, lead to the amplification of their limits. The hope was that the pluriverse of experiences that the participants might bring with their stories could surpass the limits of the traditional conceptions. The process of sharing life stories from the bodies (*la cuerpa*) could mean, hence, a way to acknowledge the differences that might exist between a pluriverse of subjects. It could help to understand the different life trajectories of the participants which could be related in a particular form to the big and local gender-racial-social-economic-political(etc) contexts (National Centre of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 102).

All this has been the basis considered in the proposal of the questionnaire of the interviews regarding the colonality of being and knowing that has maintained the image of migrant women as the 'other' with a general body, face and a reductive story affected by stereotypes (Oso Cases, 2010: 33). Finally, the questions proposed at the questionnaire have also aimed at the perspective of the bodies not only as receptors of oppression, but also as sites of resilience and hope (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 19; 83). The focus of the questionnaire was not that the participants talk only about stories that might have caused pain. This could cause it again in a process of feeling re-victimisation. On the contrary, the questions proposed pretended to get close to the many stories that might have characterized the lives of the migrant women that participate in the project. They were not reduced to the category only of 'passive victims'. Instead, they have been considered as social agents. As a result, I also wanted to include all those experiences that can also show their feelings, their resistance, their paths of re-existence and agency, and their future expectations and dreams (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 40; 63) in a diversity of contexts and situations.

inner events include perceptions, what the respondent heard or saw; cognitions, what the respondent thought, believed or decided; and emotions, how the respondent felt

and what strivings and impulses the respondent experienced. They can also include the respondent's preconceptions, values, goals, hopes and fears (Weiss, 1995: 140).

As a consequence, there was hope to get close to these inner experiences of resistance and resilience, as well. They could show the meanings given to the events and situations that might have influenced the identities of the participants. Also, their paths and the challenges within them. This is also the purpose that appears with the use of the technique of life stories. To collect these stories can lead to the reconstruction of the life of the participants and, especially, to the recognition of the testimonies, their voices and their memories as actors in all senses (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 102-104). For that, some questions that might be useful were introduced within the guideline. It should be interesting to mention that these were based, actually, in the technique and methodology of 'Empathy maps' (see the last questions of *Questionnaire of the interviews*). This can contribute to work with these personal levels of the person interviewed, also considering it as a tool that could provide a way for the participants to close their stories. The process of sharing all their stories might be difficult and sensible. They might be opening the floor to express their emotions and feelings, to maybe remember experiences they do not talk about often. And, for this reason it has been important to try to close the process again.

3. Participants of the project

With regards to the participants of the project, it has been stated that the process of the interviews has focused on the life stories of three migrant women whose paths have driven them to the province of Castellón. Their willingness and courage to share their stories have been the basis of the project (Achugar, 1992: 71). In this way, it was needed to understand how difficult and sensitive it must be for some people (especially, for the ones constantly suffering the violence of the systems of oppression) to tell their personal stories and Histories. Indeed, this has been the reason why some possible participants decided not to participate finally in the

project. Being personal experiences, it can be difficult to share them if there are not trust relationships with the researcher who might appear distant and cold as a *coyote* that only wants to gather information.

Taking this into consideration, as well as the aspects and decolonial perspectives that characterize this oral project, one of the most important goals of the project was to build an atmosphere of confidence and connections. This could make the participants feel that what they will tell and share is absolutely important for others, even if they could never think about that (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 20). To facilitate this process, the three participants that were contacted and asked if they would like to be in the oral project were already part of the close relationships that I could establish while living and studying in the city of Castellón.

The decolonial perspectives considered to carry out this oral project have supposed, hence, the qualitative decision to foster care, trust and connections with the three participants sharing their life stories and testimonies. My aim was not to pursue quantitative research with a big number of migrant women participating (Weiss, 1995: 13). As stated with the objectives of this project, the aim was not to provide new hegemonic knowledge or theories. Neither, to try to find the ‘best’, ‘most interesting’ or ‘illustrative’ stories from distinguished or popular figures. Rather than this, to share the space with the pluriverse of stories that the participants can reveal understanding that every story is an important story.

All of the participants have the condition of arriving in Castellón as migrants. However, their experiences, their ways of living and feeling them might vary considering the intersectionalities that might be present in their stories, coming also from three different contexts of what has been called the ‘Global South’.

Introducing now the participants of this oral project, they are: Iraca who arrived from Colombia; Pam from Libano and Carolyne from Kenya. Iraca and Pam are currently living in

the city of Castellón de la Plana, while Carolyne arrived with her family to the village of Almassora. This is the reason why the geographical location of the case study has not been limited to the city of Castellón de la Plana. Instead, it has also been considered the territory of the province of Castellón. The information already presented about the participants supposes only a brief introduction about them. Nevertheless, this is needed to start situating the knowledge they will share with their stories in the following pages. Then, I invite the reader to continue reading this master thesis to get closer to their powerful stories.

A fourth participant from Romania was also supposed to participate in the project. This was due to the fact that this community of migrant population is very significant in the city. In the case of this region and the country of Spain, migrant women from Eastern Europe have also been reduced to the subaltern and marginalized 'others', obtaining a single and social story full of stereotypes (Sánchez-Leyva et al., 2010: 63). However, the participant from Romania could not join the project finally since she was not in a process of being able to talk about her stories. And, although the community of Romanian migrants is the biggest one in Castellón, in relation to the decolonial logic introduced it did not make sense to approach another person of this eastern european community. Neither to do this considering also the increased number of Ukrainian women arriving in Castellón. The reason has been that there was not another previous connection that could make the person feel comfortable to share her/their stories within the short duration of the oral project. As it has been proposed, it has been more important in this project to foster the values of trust, care and comfort instead of promoting a process of representation of others with distant relationships.

Having found the participants who were inclined to participate in the project, the positionality of both the researcher and the participants needed to be acknowledged again. The purpose was to develop our horizontal, relational, accountable and collaborative relationships, a fact that led me to the following step in the design of this oral project.

4. Preparation of the interviews

Continuing the process, a first meeting was needed with each of the participants to carry out what could be called a *pilot interview* (Folguera, 1994: 32). This encounter, previous to the final interviews, has been very important since it is the moment to share the objectives, characteristics and process of the oral project with the participants. Also all the materials and steps required within the oral process were also explained in detail. In the end, all this could help the participants with their final decision regarding their participation as volunteers within the project. Their rights as actors with autonomy within the interviews were described, as well. As a consequence, it has been necessary to ask the participants to have their consent (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 144; 173) to listen, record, share and learn with their stories within this master thesis and having purely an academic and human intention to develop it. The document of consent is also included in the Annex 1 called *Materials of the interviews*.

Moreover, the pilot interviews may have helped to develop the environment of care and collaboration with the participants in a diversity of ways after having expressed their desire to join the project. Firstly, it has been the time to start sharing the provisional questionnaire, as well as the design of the space of dialogue with the participants. In this sense, the process of sharing the questionnaire could contribute to asking for the involvement of the participants. They should be free to express if they felt comfortable or uncomfortable with any question or topic; if they would like to make any change; emphasize or avoid some specific memories of their stories, etc. All this understanding that, at the end, is the person and her/their stories what matters in this oral project.

Moreover, being personal experiences that might make the person feel vulnerable or sensitive, any of the migrant women joining the project should feel forced to share anything they do not want. They have decided how much they want to share, and how they wanted to express it within the space of dialogue and the final interview. I had to be respectful with their

feelings and emotions. These might appear during the interviews with laughs, tears, non-verbal communication or, even, silences. In the particular case of silences, these can be, indeed, a mechanism of protection for many people that have gone through bad or difficult experiences. The process of sharing memories and personal stories can lead to remembering situations that were painful and that can make the testimony feel victimized again (National Centre of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 41-42; 49).

The ideal process in the development of an oral project would have been to count with psychological and care resources and professionals that could have supported the participants. However, this has not been possible considering my limited resources as a student. Despite this, as the author of this thesis, I needed to get ready for the possibilities of emotions rising during the interviews and all the process of the oral project. Some of the participants are already in an emotional state in which they feel ready, confident and comfortable to talk about their stories. They had a previous personal process to deal with part of their experiences, which is, in fact, something very important while developing a project like this one. Even so, I have tried to look after the participants, their emotional worlds and how they have been feeling during all the process of the interviews (Folguera, 1994: 39), before and after them.

There was also the belief that this previous step of the interviews could help the participants to get confidence in themselves and the author of this thesis, getting to know a little bit more about each other (Weiss, 1995: 111). Moreover, it could stimulate their memories.

As a result, all this has helped to cultivate mutual support within the relationships of partnership between myself and the participants. They have also been able to take part with their voices within the design of the dialogue space, for instance, agreeing about the date and place of the final interview. The place has had a special significance. It should be a location where the participants could feel the most comfortable or familiar to talk and share their stories

and memories (Thompson, 1988: 231) within an intimate atmosphere (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 174). In the case of our three participants, the place selected by them was their own houses. The participants have also been the ones that could decide about the presence of other people listening to the interviews (such as their partners, relatives or close friends who they trust) if that was their desire.

Besides this, the participants had to be able to communicate during the *pilot interview* their decision with reference to the language they wanted to use to *name the world in their own words* (Freire, 2000: 88 in Omar, 2012: 47). Bearing in mind the works of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986), the use of their local or native languages might help these migrant women to express themselves in the most comfortable possible way for them. Their languages might have accompanied their paths, their contexts, their cultures, their relationships and experiences, maybe, since they were children. Also, from a decolonial perspective this would mean the break out of the universal perspective of the imposition of a certain language as the 'hegemonic' portrayer of knowledge.

The participants of the project speak a diversity of languages (Swahili, French, Lebanese Arabic, English, Spanish, etc). The best way to proceed in these cases would have been to find translators and interpreters that could help in the immediate reception of the stories expressed by the testimonies during the interviews (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 100). Unfortunately, this option has not been possible within this oral project. Considering the resources that I had available as the author of this master thesis being a student, it has been difficult to find interpreters for some of their local languages. In particular, this has been the case of Swahili for Carolyne and French for Pam.

Despite this, even if this ideal decolonial aspect could not be completely achieved within this oral project, the communication and understanding with the participants could take place without interpreters. Pam and Carolyne speak English as native languages doing the

interviews in this language. In the case of Iraca, the situation was easier since we both have Spanish as native language. Sadly, this has been the only possible way to work now in this master thesis. Although, there is the hope to improve this aspect within the development of future works and projects in which it can be possible to promote communication with more local languages.

Finally, to complete the process of the *pilot interview*, this first meeting could have helped to achieve “horizontality and negotiation of dialogical knowledge praxis by challenging the binary roles” between the researcher and the participants of the project (Friz Trzeciak, 2020: 117-118). In such a way, as the author of this thesis, I have also tried to be involved in a decolonial process of sharing some of my life stories, experiences and insights. This is a step that, generally, is not considered within the development of a traditional oral project. Generally, the participants are asked to share a lot while the researcher does not reveal information about her/his/themselves being in a position of power.

However, as a researcher, I personally value the importance of this step with the hope to not appear as a stranger to the participants with whom I had a previous relationship. Also, with the hope to have encouraged, with this, the best dynamics, rhythms of interchange (Weiss, 1995: 111) and connections of care, understanding, empathy and friendship. In addition, this could also help to comprehend the different positionalities, perspectives and intersectionalities that may exist for each of us, researcher (coming from the Global North) and participants (coming from the Global South), nurturing a flow of communication that is honest, respectful and empathic between all of us.

With all these considerations in mind, the oral project continued with the realization of the interviews and their transcriptions, presenting the results in the shape of the technique of the life stories of the three participants within the following pages.

2.3.5. Recognition of voices

Before giving all the space to the voices and life stories of Pam, Carolyne and Iraca, I would like to present briefly the work done with all the information that the three of them offered in our dialogues and the interviews. Their voices have been, first, transcribed. I have tried to respect in this process the language, the expressions and the way of remembering and narrating that each of them has. Their voices, their orality and their natural ways of talking have been written down (Yúdice, 1992: 121). Although, I have also tried to give some coherence to the text in this process of transforming orality into written words⁸. This step has been essential since it has allowed me to get even closer to the life stories that I could listen to during the interviews. All of them shared a lot of facts, anecdotes and interesting aspects about their contexts. I invite the reader to check the full transcriptions of the interviews, if it is your desire to know more about them. The transcriptions have also been included in the Annex 2 of this master thesis.

However, within this section what I have presented is the exercise that I have done using the technique of life stories (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 102-104). This biographical method represents the reconstruction of their stories in the format of a text that reproduces the voice of the person that has given the testimony. In this sense, what the reader is going to find within the following pages is the voices of Pam, Carolyne and Iraca. This was my main aspiration, after doing a process of reflection regarding my previous use of these methodologies.

The reason for this is that in other studies and projects, I used to present the voices of the participants written in the third person. I used to reframe and tell with my own words the stories of others, trying to summarize all the information collected and what I witnessed

⁸ Understanding also here that there are some oral elements and aspects, such as silences or emotions, that are difficult to translate into words.

(Fassin, 2010: 254). Nevertheless, the approach to decolonial theories and studies gave me a new perspective about how I could carry this important part of the oral project. I did not want to feel that I could be ‘representing’ others, appropriating their stories. Rather, my desire was to work collectively to construct the story with the participants and not write only about them. Thus, I have offered my writing (de Hoyos et al., 2021: 62) in a space where the most important element was the voices of Pam, Carolyne and Iraca.

The life stories have been written, then, in the first person singular since my contribution in this process has only been the selection and organization of the moments that have marked the lives of Pam, Carolyne and Iraca and the value that they have given to these experiences. I have also translated the life story of Iraca since she decided to do the interview in Spanish, which is her mother tongue. However, the reader can find the original life story of Iraca in Spanish in the Annex number 2 of this master thesis, as well.

One of my inspirations in this step of reflection has been the work of Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo. In particular, her book called *Historias a dos voces* (2008) in which, as the title indicates, she engaged herself in this collective way of working with the indigenous women that shared their testimonies with her. Regarding this collective procedure, one of purposes with this has also been to try to approach the ethical and colonial problem that has remained within the written sources. In these traditional sources the researcher might write from a different position and perspectives (regarding nationality, race, sexuality, etc) to the participants of the project. This could lead, at the end, to the imposition of the interpretation of the researcher (Franco, 1992: 126), especially writing the stories using the third person.

Trying to challenge this, and in the view of still promoting horizontality, relationality and accountability with the participants of the project, the life stories that will be presented in the following pages have gone through a process of revision. They have been given back (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 60-61) and shared with the main

characters of these testimonies: Pam, Carlyne and Iraca. In such a way, they have also had a space to share their feelings and comments about the selection and organization of memories. Also, their desires in case they wanted to change any aspect of the life story. As said, this has been a collective work in which I needed to enact my accountability, sharing all the interview transcripts and life stories with the participants. The result of this is the work that is going to be introduced in the next pages.

I am giving the space now to the pluriverse of Pam, Carlyne and Iraca. I sincerely hope that their brave voices can reach the reader.

The Stories of Pam

I'm Pamela Daccache. I prefer to be called Pam. I'm 33 years old until July 29th. I will turn 34. I'm from Lebanon. I was born there, but I did not live there for a long time after I was born. Basically, I was raised in France. We emigrated to France and now I live in Spain.

Being born in Lebanon

I was born in 1988, in the middle of the civil war in Lebanon. I have my older brother who is five years older than me. And, then I came, but that was in the middle of the Civil War. The war was all over Lebanon. It started in the main areas in Beirut, but then it spread everywhere. And one day, my mom was telling my dad "Let's go to my aunt's house", because they could hear the shelling that was very loud and very close. There was a military base that was very near to our house. So she told him "We should go to my sister's house", which is in front of ours, because they have a basement which they used as a sort of bunker. We lived in a building on the third floor, so it was more dangerous. She eventually convinced him to go. They took both of us, my older brother and me, to my aunt's house. They were having coffee and right there, this moment a bomb landed in our house. Everything was destroyed. That's when my parents had to really take the decision. The war had been going on for years, but up until then

they didn't want to leave. They were trying to stay as much as possible. But, at this moment, they had to take the decision to leave. That's when we migrated to France.

I was maybe barely one year old when we went there. My father went first to try to set up the house, get some help, support from other family members who had already migrated to France years before because of the war also. And then my mom took me and my brother. When my mom followed, during the war the airport was closed. It wasn't functioning. My mom had to find a way, a car, a taxi to take her to Syria. She was in a shelter for a few days with nuns who took her in until she was able to take the boat to go to Cyprus. And from Cyprus, by plane to France.

First time in France

I always heard comments from both my parents that culturally was so different. Where we lived, there was a very old population compared to Lebanon and they were culturally very different. So it was hard to adapt to that. But eventually, I think they did. They had to because we could not go back to Lebanon. The war was getting worse and we didn't have a place back home. My dad was working. He was able to find a job; a good job as an accountant because that was his job also in Lebanon. My mom didn't work. But that was more, according to her, of a personal choice. She was a journalist in Lebanon and well, she couldn't be a journalist in France. She wanted to take care of us, but also, I imagine she couldn't be a journalist if she didn't know perfect French. But then after a few years, my mom got pregnant again with my second brother, Steve. So she was mostly in this woman's center where she started teaching French after.

I remember having a lot of friends in where we live because it was a big residential area with many blocks of buildings. There were a lot of kids. We had a green area for us to play. And then also another we used to call bac à sable. It's like a sand pool. So it was fun. My best friend, one that I remember the most, his name was John Paul. I think he was from Senegal.

We were also friends in school, so we were always together. I have very good memories with him eating rocks and sand, trying to climb... That's what I remember the most.

But I also remember one event that really marked me. There is the Ice Cream Truck, sometimes that passes and they play music. I went with my older brother, Anthony, to get some ice cream. I was very young. I remember that when we got there, we were choosing the ice cream we wanted and then there were some boys (white french kids). I don't remember exactly how many. They were bullying us, me and my brother. We got really, really scared. I don't remember what happened after that, but I think probably we ran home or my brother told the ice cream truck person to help us. Someone helped us out, probably, but that was a very scary memory that I never forgot. Most of our friends actually, now that I think about it, were from an immigrant background. I never knew about racism before. I mean, I was very young. I was maybe six... five, I don't know. Growing up, I never noticed that 'Oh, it's because I'm Lebanese'. I don't know if there were racism problems or not. My parents, yes. But me, I never really realized that. I was just young and I wanted to play.

The school we went to, at least, was very mixed. A lot of colored kids and me with my curly hair and dark eyes. Maybe it was like half of us were immigrants and half were really blond and blue eyes. The exaggerated extreme of whiteness. We're mixing in school but, again, I was too small to feel... I felt bullying and things like that, but I could not reason or understand why it was. If I think about some memories now, then yes. I know where it comes from. I can analyze them and think 'Oh, was it because of Racism?'. I'm sure.

Somehow, most of my friends or all of my friends were boys. But I don't know if that's just because of my preference. I prefer to hang out with boys or, because there weren't enough girls (at school). I'm not sure. I remember a story. My mom always forced me or wanted to force me to wear very girly things. And since I was really young, even before I understood, I did not like it. She forced me one day to wear a very colorful jacket that she bought me. I was

refusing to wear it and I was crying and shouting. Still, she did not allow me to remove it. She took me to school like that. The teacher took me and I remember they were trying to also calm me down, tell me to start the class that day and I was just too upset. Then they had to call my mom again to pick me up because I wasn't calming down.

The war ended in 95. It really took years of transition. During that time we were in France and my parents were not going back to Lebanon until things got better after the 90s. Then we started going maybe in the summer, visiting family and so on. But before that, I remember and I was young, but I had this memory, a very clear memory that we had some cousins over. They were at home. I think we were playing. And then, I remember a phone call. I remember my mom was crying. We all went to the living room and then everyone started crying. They were older than me, so they would understand what was happening. For me, I remember just looking around. It turns out that my grandpa, my mom's father, died. He was killed near their house. We never knew for sure who killed him. But, the speculation says that he was a very strong leader in his community, in his town and, although he was not officially a politician, he was a strong figure, a strong leader. He probably got killed because of that. I don't want to speculate whatever from my uncles that it could have been some members of Hezbollah who killed him. We are Christian, originally a family. I think that's also important because the war was very religious.

I think I was nine when we went back to Lebanon. My dad had an accident, broke his leg. Very severe accident. He could not work for a long time, for many, many months. He had multiple surgeries. Because of that, in the end, he ended up losing his job. And he was already getting anxious about coming back to Lebanon. They were missing their culture, their country, their families, their parents, everyone. The closest members of their families were still in Lebanon. And the complaints of all old people. They're always complaining. Mostly was racism problems. Older, white French people would complain about us, even when we were playing,

me and my brothers and other kids in the neighborhood. I think my dad really wanted to come back. My mom too. And of course, she agreed. We came back maybe in 96 or 97 to Lebanon.

Back in Lebanon

My parents got a call from the landlord because they were renting that apartment before it was bombed. But they got a call from the landlord offering them to buy it. It was a new building and everything, but it got bombed. My parents decided that it would be good to have something in Lebanon, like owning an apartment, for example. So one day they could return, they could afford it and they decided to buy that apartment. When we were going back, I think they were already planning our return the last year or two, probably. I remember going back in summertime and they were fixing the house. There were no walls. So that's where we lived the first years.

The apartment felt like home. But Lebanon did not feel like home for a long time. Probably, it didn't feel like home until maybe the last year before I left again and went back to France. I probably, all in all, lived in Lebanon for maybe 10 years in total. I have some memories, but they're not so great. Actually, most of them were in school. They did not accept me to be in my year, in my level because I didn't speak Lebanese and I didn't speak or write Arabic, although my dad taught us a little bit, but it wasn't enough. I was sent back a year because of that so I could actually study Arabic during that year. During that year I would have a private tutor that would teach me Arabic. Writing, speaking, reading. My older brother did not go through that because he was already too old. They assumed "Oh, he's too old to need to learn Arabic". But me, I was too young and they said I still have a chance to learn it. That was the condition for me to be accepted in that school. That's what we did. I learned Arabic with a tutor every day for two hours while other kids were playing. It was hard, but it was worth it.

Most schools in Lebanon are very segregated. Especially, because it was after the war. After the war, all the regions became segregated, divided by your political party or your religion. My school was a Catholic school, and it was called 'Sacred Heart'. So I remember all through my primary, secondary, High School, all of those, we probably had just one Muslim person in school. So it was not at all diverse.

We were all Lebanese, but some of us, like me, were half something else. Like, kind of adjusting identity. Because we were coming back. We were returnees after the war. Kinda I felt like an immigrant in my country. I did not feel Lebanese. I did not make friends, especially, the first years. I felt it was very hard, they would make fun of me. Even the teacher was not nice to me. I think it was not diverse at all. I know I struggled a lot and my older brother struggled a lot, too. Because people could make fun of you because you didn't speak Lebanese well. Or, you didn't belong there, but you were Lebanese. My younger brother did not struggle much because he was a baby when we went back. So it was the opposite. He was born in France and raised in Lebanon. I was born in Lebanon, raised in France. So Steve, who's the only one who was born in France, is the most Lebanese of all of us actually. He didn't have to adapt. He was raised there. It was harder for him when he tried to study in France and he couldn't adapt to French culture, actually. He had to go back.

I remember the second year in Lebanon. Supposedly, I should know Arabic better. The teachers would just assume that I was at the level of any other child. But I wasn't. I remember this one time, the teacher was very strict with us. She asked me to read the text in Arabic. And I wasn't reading it well. I remember she actually slapped me. It's not a common thing. I've never been hit, or I haven't seen anyone else that's been hit in our school after this. But, I remember this happened and it's really bad. Eventually I learned and I started having very good grades in Arabic. My mom is a writer, poet, journalist, so she really focused on that with me. On the writing part, actually. So essays and stuff like that in Arabic. I sometimes had really

good grades. And sometimes teachers would ask me to read my essay in class. Well, mostly it was my mom who wrote it and I had to memorize it. But it worked. That was a good technique because memorizing her words actually made them my own. And that's why, probably, I am a writer myself.

I remember I loved Sundays because we used to go out a lot on Sundays to somewhere in nature and do hikes, walks all together. And everyone was always there. Sometimes my mom, when I was a bit older already, would skip some Sundays, so she could take time for herself. And also cook because Sunday's the big meal, a special meal that she does every week. We're not the type of family that sits down together for breakfast or for lunch because we have different schedules. So the only times we actually sat down for a meal was on Saturdays and Sundays for lunch.

I loved to play all the time. When I was younger, I used to play with my cousins. My cousins lived in front of me. This was the house where my parents actually survived, where they escaped the bomb. They had a big field outside that house, which was kind of used as a parking. This is where we would play every day. They were my friends, not just my cousins. And in the neighborhood I gathered kids who were around that age. We became a group of friends that we would play together all the time. We had a lot of funny things that we'd do. I remember one Christmas, I asked my parents that I wanted a book that was called 'Friends of the Forest'. It taught you everything that you need to know about being in a forest. Knots, how to build a tent, how to build things from things that you can find in the forest. So my parents got me this book for Christmas. And I used that book to actually get my friends to do things. I was telling them how to build a tent. We built benches and stuff like that. I was a very leader type so they would always look for me to know what we're gonna play today. Then one time I remember, I don't know how, I told everyone that we should start a store. To sell chips, candies and drinks. And they agreed.

Now that I think, they were all boys. There were no other girls. It was just me. And we were very close with our friends. But, of course, I was closer to my cousins. I was kinda like the protector. My cousin Tony was very effeminate from the beginning. He was always called names. 'Sissy', or this or that. Then, if people made fun of him or hit him or something like that, I was always the one who was ready to answer. I remember this one time, we were playing basketball. One of our friends hit my cousin. He snatched him and grabbed him. I got angry and I turned and I punched him in the face. It was a little bit violent. But you know, we were kids and maybe that was the only time I hit someone. But, I was always protecting everyone. I was always protecting like the underdog.

So when you're already sixteen, seventeen, that's when I started having really good friends outside of my cousins. I had a couple, maybe even three friends, good friends. This time they were girls. Finally, I had girls. Girl friends. And not just boys. So, I started making friends in school a bit later. I don't think I was feeling very good in our school. There was a lot of bullying in school. Our school was a very elite school and it was mostly bullying people that looked poorer than others. In my case, I had some bullying from very few people. Mostly about the way I dress, although we were all wearing a costume. Usually when some of the guys, it was usually guys, made fun of me it would be about that. You know, like maybe 'I'm very boyish' or 'I'm not girly enough'. I never liked my school actually. Also it was a nun school, so they were very strict. My parents, I remember actually saying 'It's okay for girls to be in the nun school, but it's too hard on boys'. So my older brother at one point, maybe the last three years of high school, they moved him to a secular school. But me, it was okay to stay there cause 'It's okay for girls to have this discipline'.

The decision to leave

I did not think I was gonna come back to France. For sure, in the first years when we were back in Lebanon, yes. The narrative was ‘I will finish high school and I will go back to France. I wanna go back’. For my brother it was clear from the beginning. And he did. But then in those later years of my time in Lebanon, those years when I started making friends, actual friends outside of my cousins and all in school, those teenage years, then I started thinking actually about studying in Lebanon, meaning my university. I was already choosing which university I would go to in Lebanon.

Lebanon was never calm. In 2006, another war erupted. Between Hezbollah and Israel, the war started. There was a one month war. That really impacted Lebanon. It was heavy. The Israelis were bombing all the bridges in Lebanon and it was very dangerous. They destroyed Beirut again, mostly the part where the Hezbollah area is. I even remember witnessing one of the bombs. There were bombing bridges and antennas for communication. Everyone was trying to run away from the coast. The biggest part of the war was in Beirut, in the vicinity of Beirut. We were in the village house, in the mountains and a friend of mine was staying with us also to run away. She was there with me and I remember we're sitting outside on the balcony and we started joking. There was an antenna two hundred, three hundred meters away. We were looking at it and we were joking because we heard a sound of an airplane. ‘Imagine, there is the Israelis there coming to bomb it’. Half a minute later, they bombed it. It was not a joke. It was actually a bomb. They bombed in front of us. So, the war was really bad. In that summer, that's when I decided ‘I have to go to France’.

My parents, just like before, needed a really big reason to move from Lebanon. They really love Lebanon. So I moved alone. My brother was already living there. We lived together. We moved to an apartment that we rented. I started my university in France actually. I finished my bachelor's degree there and then my master's degree. I could have gotten a residency if I stayed longer and started working there, but I also was not thinking about that. I thought ‘I

just wanted to move''. When I went back to France, I definitely did not feel French anymore, but I didn't feel Lebanese either. In Lebanon, I never felt Lebanese. So it didn't feel like home, France. France didn't feel good to me. I felt very insecure also. I was usually discriminated because people thought I was Algerian or Moroccan or Tunisian, which are nationalities that are usually badly seen in France. Or maybe they thought I'm Muslim and also there's discrimination against Muslim people. I did not feel very welcomed in France. I did make an effort to be there, to live there. But outside of my friends, I did not feel like it was home. But then I got to Spain, and I immediately felt home. Spain felt home because it's the middle ground. It has some of the Lebanese culture, the chaos of Lebanon, but also the organization of a European country in terms of maybe less corruption... Things like that.

Part of my identity

When I discovered myself more, my identity, that I was more attracted to women than guys, or my partner, who I wanted my partner to be, I already had a partner and everything. That's when I decided to tell my parents. I was already living in France. So it wasn't beautiful and peachy, but it wasn't the worst either. I remember I told my brothers first. My older brother was very accepting. Probably because of his wife who is French and she's a lot more progressive than he was at the time. Now he is progressive. But he was not so much. I remember comments growing up cause he would comment about my cousin being gay and us discussing things. But, he accepted it very well, except the comments like ''But if you can, maybe make an effort to dress more girly or something, then it's better. It's okay if you're gay, but maybe...''. But that got better with time.

Because I told my brothers first, they were there when I told my parents just to support me. It wasn't the easiest for them. But they did not reject me or anything. They tried to do things to show me that they love me. Because I said, ''If you don't want me to come back, I'll just stay

in France. I won't come back''. They were so scared that I would really. I remember that week, I was just on vacation in Lebanon. They tried so much to show me love and everything so that they would make me feel like nothing has changed. They were trying that. But, it took them time. It took them years, I think, to accept the idea. And then to accept the idea that I wanted to have a family or to get married. 'Why?'' It was always a big deal. Then, we don't talk about it because that's how you deal with things in Lebanon.

Now they're very supportive. Of course, the fact that I'm pregnant, they're okay with it. Probably, it was hard for them, but it's not for them.... That's what they keep saying, anyway. It's for the family. 'But, you know we are very open minded, and it's not for us. But what will the family say about us? What will the family say about you?'. I don't care because that's not my problem. It's theirs.

Even though my parents are a little bit less conservative than other Lebanese parents, probably because they lived in France, or maybe just because they are different, they still have some very traditional values. Like my dad telling me before, not anymore, because now he knows who I am, that it would be good if I could study to be a teacher, this way I have the vacations off when my kids are off and I can take care of them. Things like that for me never made sense. But now he understands it. They never forced me. But, at home you would notice that my mom is the one who cooks or cleans. Sometimes it helps if she asks him, but she really has to ask for some help. It's a very traditional family. It's one of the biggest reasons I guess my mother decided to stop working. Because she has to take care of us and my dad has to work and provide for the family.

Arriving to Spain

I came to do another Master's degree in Spain. It was something I really wanted to do, to move to Spain. I came to Spain on holiday visiting some friends who were on Erasmus during my

third year in college in France and I really liked it. It was in Alicante. So I thought ‘I wanna go studying in Spain’. As an immigrant student in France, I was not allowed to do Erasmus. So my option was then ‘I move to another country myself’. That's how I moved to Spain. I think it was 2011, at the end of 2011. I've been here for almost 12 years.

This master's was an intensive one year. After that, I was already dating someone who came with me from France actually. I did not want to go back to Lebanon. So, I had to stay. A lot of people offered me jobs, but when they knew that I was not a resident, that they had to go through a process and everything for me to get the residence, then they just didn't go through. So the only way for me to stay was to get married. I got married with my girlfriend who is French and because she's French, I was able to get the residence through her.

It was very stressful. This is why I have now sort of a fear, phobia even, to paperwork, especially when it's related to immigration issues. And this started here in Spain. I remember I started having anxiety attacks because of immigration papers. For a year or maybe less, between waiting for my renovation of my student card and deciding to get married and processing the papers, which is very complicated and expensive, I was almost illegal here. I was kinda ilegal. So that was a scary time. That's the time where I had anxiety. The solution was to get married. That was the only solution and that's why I was regularized and I was able to start working and living in Spain, not being separated. These anxiety attacks stopped after that. We lived in Spain. I was living in Madrid for about, maybe, 10 years. I started working at Telefonica, but in a different way. I was teaching English there until I had my papers and I was finally able to actually work on translation and interpretation. Then I got into training and that's what I'm doing now.

Last years

I was living in Madrid until 2018. I met Reney in 2017. So 2018, I think it was July that I partially moved to the Philippines, and then I fully moved there in February of the next year. I needed to be between both countries because it coincided with my five year temporary residence expiring. Then, I was there for maybe two years all in all. We actually had a good time during the pandemic, Reney and I. It was the longest time we spent together, 24 hours together in Manila during the lockdown. Before that I was traveling a lot for work.

After that, we came to Castellón. I work remotely, so it doesn't matter. Where I live, I can work. Reney wanted to do this master here. She found the masters in UJI, so that's how we moved to Castellón because of the masters. We found the apartment very fast, easily also. And we moved in. After my divorce, I stopped planning long term life plans. I just realized this doesn't work. This builds false expectations in life, a lot of false hope. This new life philosophy works better. I'm happier now. But if I think of it, it's true that in the Philippines we cannot start a family, we cannot get married. All these things are not legal in the Philippines. It's not legal in Lebanon either and I never thought of going back there and living there in Lebanon. I just never felt roots or home there. So I guess it was a very good thing that we came to Spain where we started our family. Now we're struggling to get the right papers for Reney, so she could stay with us but also work which seems like it's not gonna be possible. She will get her residency but without the work permits.

Pam, today

I guess the decisions I make today are because of my lived experiences. Maybe even my choices of who I want to spend life with, who I am attracted to and all these are influenced by who I am, by what I lived. Now I'm pretty sure of that. It has a big impact. I don't regret anything. I mean, anyway, it was not under my control. I couldn't control the wars and everything and I cannot control anything that happened to me. But I am, at the same time, kind of glad for it

because it made me a resilient person. All these wars, for example, taught me to just feel that life continues, that things happen, you just get up again, rebuild and continue. So I do have a mixed kind of identity from also having this French experience and also Spanish now that makes me a bit European in some ways. It makes me a mix of Lebanese and European. I think these are the resilience from Lebanon and maybe the organization from Europe.

I'm very proud of being Lebanese today. I was not for a very long time. I never identified as Lebanese, so I wasn't proud of it. And finally, today, I can say yes 'I am proud'. Even I remembered I was disappointed in France because of the discrimination that I felt there. I was not proud of being Lebanese and I was distancing myself from that. I was very young, and I'm still learning. Now it's different, for sure. Now I'm so excited to teach my Lebanese culture and things to my daughter. And I'm proud of being a migrant. I am happy with my identity. I think I'm also excited for my daughter to be half Filipino, half Lebanese, and a little bit Spanish. To be this mix, to be this descendant of migrants. Because it's not easy to get to where... Well, we're still struggling. It's not over yet until we get, maybe, Spanish nationality. We're still gonna be struggling and even then, who knows, right? But, these struggles make you a lot stronger and proud. So I'm proud that she is gonna inherit this resilience from us.

The Stories of Carolyne

My name is Carolyne Chemutai Mbadugha. I'm 37 years old. I was born in Kenya, particularly in Nairobi, which is the capital city. I was a lab scientist before I relocated to Spain. But now I'm seeing myself being a peace and conflict development worker.

The Cinderella of the family

I grew from a single parent family because my mom and my dad separated back in the 1980s. I was four years, thereabouts. So when they separated, I only knew my mom and I. Then, when I turned five years old, she had to take me to boarding school because she was a police officer

being transferred from one state to another state. She couldn't just be changing me from school. She had to put me into a boarding school. I felt so bad. Because, as a child, you need your parents. It also made me become an introvert because I couldn't express myself. When I was young, I was always alone. And I've grown up with that. I can't even know when I'm okay, or when I'm not okay because I always kept quiet. I think that affected me so much because that bond is not there. Because when I joined boarding school, from my preschool, primary, secondary to the university, I was always alone.

I think when I was in boarding school, she remarried. That is when I was able to have other siblings. I come from a family of five. I have been the first one. I have one brother and three sisters. But to be honest, life was not like before. It's an emotional story. Having a stepdad who doesn't take you as his own child, that discrimination was really evident. I believe I was the Cinderella of the family.

Even at a time when I was still in primary school, there was a nationwide strike for teachers. They asked all the parents to come and pick their children from school. But, since during that period, my mom had gone for training for the police for promotion, she couldn't come from the training camp for almost three months. The only person that was left to come and pick me up from school was my stepfather. The days that they gave him to come and pick me, he didn't show up. The last day, there were only three children left in school. The family that came to pick their kids, because they already informed the school that they're going to come late, asked me "Where are you coming from?". I told the lady that I'm living in Nairobi. "Ah, I'm also going to the same place. We can drop you instead of you staying alone in school because the teachers are on strike. Nobody is there". I said, "Okay". They took me to my house. When I arrived there, I just met my siblings. My brother and my sister. They asked me "Where is our dad?". I said "I don't know". He said that my dad went to pick me from school. He didn't come in time. The next thing I remember was that there was an announcement on

radio that they're looking for somebody that has gotten lost, me. Because when he reached school, he was told that somebody had carried the daughter. But he didn't know the person.

He didn't come in time. But, the day the strike was called off, when I went back to school I was given a beating of my life. I'll never forget. I was beaten very well by the principal, by teachers. I don't know what he told the teachers. 'Why did I make my stepfather come and not meet me in school?', instead of questioning the man why he did not come in time.

When my mom is around it's okay. But when my mom is not around, I have been beaten in my head. Just every slight provocation. If he does get angry, he will start beating me for anything I do wrong. Beating me, insulting me 'You will never become anything in life'.

It's part of all those things. Where my dad worked he had insurance and it covered everyone except me. Then, every year the company will give them tickets to travel anywhere they want within the country. So they'll go. I'll be left alone at home. When I was fourteen, that's when I started realizing 'No, no. Things are not okay'. But why would my mum be supporting this? He had to declare where he was working. He didn't declare that I'm his child so they only recognized people that he already declared as his children. Under his social security, he included my mom and the other children. I was excluded. I was not too inquisitive that period because I just understood things the day when they travel to the coastal parts. They told me that they are going for a wedding. They gave me twenty shillings. Twenty shillings is just so big for that time. They left. Once in the future I was worried 'Why have they not come back?'. Because they said they're going for a wedding. But when you go for a wedding you are supposed to come back the same day. Almost a week, I didn't see anybody. When they came back, my siblings were so happy. 'But Mommy did not tell you the truth? We went to Mombasa, the city. We did this, we did that... '.

But, I do not allow all those things to let me down. I always focused and I know where I'm going, even today.

Always on the move: the boarding schools

I've always been moving since I was five. My preschool was my first boarding school. Then my primary, another boarding school. Secondary, another boarding school, another region. Moving from one place to another place, a different environment. Every Sunday we had to go to church and all the boarding schools that I was at were all mission schools. We have nuns from Italy and they would like to shape you according to their religion. So, religion took a very important and disciplined role. In Catholicism, before you receive your First Holy Communion, you have to go to class. I went to class for one year, when I was young. That is when I'd be taught many things, all the values, things that you need to know about God and also about my life too. I always looked forward to Sunday when you go to church, because I knew how to play kayamba. In my primary school we had boys, but the boys were separate. And the girls were separate. It was Catholic school. The secondary school was also a girls school. The same thing.

My boarding school, especially the primary one, was difficult for me because, first, you have to bring things that you're supposed to use in school. Also some things like what children like, juice, biscoutes. I didn't have anything like that. Then I just always relied on what the school gave me. But, other children came from wealthy families. They'd bring all those things. Some people, they would be feeling superior. Because when it comes to visiting days, days when parents come, they will do something like a picnic that day. But for me, I didn't experience anything like that. I don't know why my mom never visited me throughout my primary school. I've never understood that because maybe she was always working. But I didn't question that because anytime my stepfather came, he carried bread. It should be towards the end of the day. When the visiting day started at eight o'clock, then by around six all parents should leave the premises. My stepfather would come around five thirty. Thirty minutes to close. So me, I would just be sitting in one place. I'd be waiting, waiting.

We also had a lot of activities at school. So for me, to be honest, I used to feel more happy when I'm in school than when I'm at home. Of course, also because of my friends. As a child, I loved to play so much. Also, I used to like to dance. They knew me so much as somebody that could dance. I remember in primary school they quoted me as an entertainment prefect. But at some point it affected my studies because I could always look forward to a certain day, "Let's go on dancing". Because I used to have Saturday evening from eight to ten as an entertainment night in boarding school. It was good, but very strict. I see a lot of freedom here in some boarding schools.

Funny part is, I also became an entertainment prefect in secondary school because of dancing. That's when I started opening up because of having friends, people that come from different backgrounds. We talked, we laughed. I was trying to become acommoditing because the problem was I couldn't even sometimes sustain a conversation. But I could see most of the students would be laughing, would be saying some stories, something funny. So as time went on, I began to open up. I met some people that were always jovial. I realized that "I can also be funny". Actually, people would laugh. Anything I talked, they would laugh during my secondary school. We used to have these extracurricular activities. I was in debate class. Also in drama. Then, I also joined the Agri(culture) club but I couldn't maintain it because I was not too much into agriculture.

My mom

I remember the first time I saw my monthly period, I cried. I told my mom "I don't know what cut me". It's something I realized. Sex education, and even reproductive system education, it's been taught in school, but psychologically you're not prepared. I said that "Something has cut me". I was crying. So after crying, it disappeared. I didn't see it again for some days and then it just vanished until the next month. So that's the point when my mom explained to me "So this

is what happens once you reach a certain age. This is what happens as your body is developing, it's not a big thing''. But I was really scared. I didn't expect that. I was so naive. Because being far from my parents, there are many things that I really needed to know. In boarding school I didn't have that time, so much closeness with my mom. When they closed school for the holidays, I wanted to stay with my mom. Once the school opens, then I go back.

Having been a police officer, she was very strict. Because if you do anything wrong, she had one whip to use. Another thing is if you lie, because she really didn't like any of our children to lie. So if you make mistakes, lie or do anything wrong, she will not touch you until midnight when you've forgotten. Because she knows that if she touches you, then you would run away. Particularly I climbed the tree. She'd wake you up, begin to discipline at midnight.

People really felt fear. I don't think it's respect, it's fear. For example, many people during that period in our society tended to look at police officers, especially a woman, as somebody who is moved. 'You can't sustain marriage'', especially her being separated from the first husband. There's a lot of stigma attached to it because also they don't stay in one place, they're transferred from here to here. If it's the man, it's a normal thing. But if it's the woman, the story is different. Right now some people don't value women. They take women as a weaker vessel. Especially, I'm so sorry to say, my tribe, the Kalenjin. They feel that women don't have a say in society. If a woman wants to say something, they ask you 'Who is your husband?'. Stigma is still there. That's why all these gender issues are always hidden in Kenya. But we are changing the narrative.

Outside boarding schools

All that did not stop me from focusing on my study because I was a very, very brilliant student. When I finished my secondary school, I had As. I got a scholarship for my university, so my mom and dad didn't have to spend a dime. Uni is now in a different region. Is the capital city,

in Nairobi. For me, It was difficult. After fifteen years coming back, it's like I'm starting from scratch again. So 'It was exciting, at the same time I'm scared. I don't know what to expect'.

I went with my mom when I got the admission. She made sure that, at least, I get a room in the hostel. When she left, I started crying. My stepfather was living also in the same city. But, I felt like 'Now I'm alone'. I asked my mom, 'Can I be going to my stepfather's house over the weekend?'. Because I just needed to have family. She said 'Yeah, you can be going'. But I always liked to stay there. I met one girl. She's my best friend until today. She's called Lisa. Over the weekend we went to her home. I met her parents and siblings, so they were just like my second family. I felt at home. The university was okay for me because of my friend that made everything easier for me.

I think I discovered myself fully in my undergraduate studies because of the course that I did. I wanted to study something different, but I did this because of my mom. Because she told me that 'Is better for you to do a course that even when you retire, it's used. You can still run it'. In our society in Kenya, they value some professions. I'd always like to do a Bachelor of Commerce. I wanted something different related to business and also mostly social sciences studies. My mom, she decided what I was supposed to do. I met a lot of students who are also forced to study the course because of family pressure. But along the road I fell in love with it. I kept on doing the studies well. We had a lot of critical thinking, creative thinking. It really had a lot of impact, positive impact.

Then after graduation, I joined the traumatic streets where you'd be moving around with envelopes looking for jobs. I was so excited and hoping that everything's going to be very smooth. Because you always have that mind of no critic thinking like that. You're trained to become a civil servant. This way, 'Just keep on applying, keep on applying'. But then that's when reality came.

My father

I remember in 2010 that is when I met my real father. Twenty years after. I was so happy the day I met him. It's very interesting because through my friend Lisa, I also met my father. Because the father of my best friend, Lisa, was an educational officer. They were having a retreat in one of the hotels. Lisa told me that the father will be around, whether I want to go and meet them after the retreat. I said "No, I don't think I'll be able to go. But let me know the time so that when I'm done with a thing, it can be able to meet". So, she gave me a link whereby I can be able to see the time. When I went through the link, I saw a name that looks familiar. "Alphonse Misoi? Maybe? Because a lot of people attended the retreat, it could be the same person". The institution was the principal of the technical schools. I also had a friend. He got employed in that same institution. So when I saw this, I had to call him and ask him, "Are you still working in this technical school?". He said "Yes". I asked him "Do you know this person? Do you know Alphonse?". "Yes, he's my boss". "Do you have his number?". He gave it to me.

Oh, my God. That is a call that made me feel complete because I had a lot of questions in my mind, but I don't know who could give me the answers. I had a lot of "Why, why, why, why". So when he gave me the number, I had to look for a place to sit comfortably first and compose myself, cause I don't know where to start. I said, "What if it is not the same person I'm calling?". "What if his response would be negative? What if he doesn't want to hear anything about me completely?". Another voice was like "Carolynne, go ahead". We always have inner voices.

I saw him last when I was three or four years old. I've never seen him again. When I called the numbers, he picked. He said "Hello". I mentioned my native name, "Carolynne Chemutai, daughter of Rose". My mom was called Cheptanui. He said "My daughter". My daughter, where are you?". I started crying. I could not talk again. "Please, can we meet

tomorrow?’. I said ‘yes’. When I saw him, I just didn't know if I'd be communicating. I was crying. That's one of the best moments for me, to feel that you have a father. All what I used to tell God was ‘Dad, show me the way. Let me know’. I was crying. I asked him ‘What happened? Why did you just abandon me and leave?’.

I thought everything was going to be okay, but another battle was ahead. I said ‘I just finished my university’. ‘Good, you have to go for a Master. I want you to continue the studies’. I was happy. At least I would be able to continue my studies, so I would not be struggling and looking for jobs. As he left, the communication stopped. Even when I went and organized everything, I called him. He couldn't pick my calls. Probably because he also has another family. I asked myself, then ‘What happened to me? Does it mean that nobody wants me?’. But ‘No, Carolyne. Remember, always focus. Don't allow this to distract you’ because I've always been alone. ‘So, just keep on the line’.

Sometimes he writes me on my whatsapp. I've never asked about the Master and everything. I told him ‘Okay. Are you going to introduce me to your family? Let me know my other siblings?’. He said, ‘Yes, I would do’. Ten years down the line. But, I'm not even bothered because the most important thing is I have already seen him. I know this will bring us together someday.

Becoming Obama's sister

I met my husband in 2009 and then I relocated to Nigeria in 2011. He is a traveler. We met in Kenya. Actually, how we met is very, very interesting because I remember I've gone to the airport where my father is working to collect pocket money. I saw two people, they were waiting. I just passed and he said ‘Excuse me, can I use your phone to call somebody? Because we've been here waiting and the person could be late’. I said ‘No problem’. He called the person and the person told them that because there's an accident on the road, there was just

too much traffic. He couldn't even come in time, but he was coming. So they had to wait. I left. I met my stepfather. He came and gave me the money and I went back to university. The next day, I found a miscall and I saw a message "Thank you very much for yesterday for helping us". So from that "Thank you for yesterday"... I didn't hear anything from him again until 2010, april. He was calling me from Switzerland. I didn't remember the person, he had to describe himself "that I did help one day in Kenya". He said "It's Anthony". "Anthony? Yes I remember". So, "I'm still grateful". One thing led to another one. In 2011, he came back home. He asked me to move to Nigeria with him in June.

Nigeria is another country on its own. It's a very beautiful country, beautiful people, very diverse. It's just like a free country. I cannot compare to where I'm coming from because Kenya, it's just too much law. The people from the way I speak, they knew that I'm not from Nigeria. "Where are you from?". I said, "From Kenya". "Oh, Obama's sister". They just treated me well.

I didn't tell my mom properly, just that I'm traveling. "I'm coming back.". But when I told my friend, Lisa told me "How do you know this person? How long have you known this person? What if...?". I already made up my mind because I just wanted to leave the country. Be another person. I just wanted to be in a different environment because I think the first life prepared me for that. Being in boarding school, moving for me was okay. Also, he had a very good family. The mom was very welcoming. I also found another home. Because I was like "The mom is going to be around. The mom of my husband could pet me". "Do you want anything? Are you okay?".

It was just fantastic. Then, as time goes, the love keeps on developing. I spent ten years in Nigeria. I was managing a business. Because we started a business. My husband, when I met him, he was working in importation.

It was during that period that I fell in love with giving back to society, to help the less privileged because I know what it feels when you don't have. I could sometimes try to go to the orphanage. There are abandoned children. Also, there are some elderly widows that don't have anybody to help them. So I tried to buy some foodstuffs. We did to empower them, not only giving. We wanted to make this sustainable before I came to Spain. I was thinking of maybe starting apps. Some of them can still be able to run some businesses. Some of them maybe were tailors, but because of too much financial costs, they couldn't be able to continue.

Last years in Spain

My husband got nationality some years back. He was saying "I know the security situation now in Nigeria and also the economic hardship. Even if you are doing well in your business, everything is difficult because the cost of living is very, very high". And the worst part is the security, you're not secure. Boko Haram, they're now even spreading to other regions in the name of headsman. They move from one region to another region. Then, the next few years, maybe some headsmans, they went to somebody's house and they were slashing people. They killed people. He said "No, we cannot be here comfortably". That is when we had to relocate.

It was stressful because I had to go to Morocco. I used Air Maroc so we had to stay in Morocco before coming to Valencia. It was stressful, but when I arrived at Valencia the police were just so calm. They're not like other immigration officers. When they asked for the children's passports, they were so friendly, talked to the children. The children just felt at home instantly.

We moved here (Almassora). Once I arrived here, I thought I would meet someone that could speak English. I didn't know that it's only Spanish to you. I was expecting that it's a cosmopolitan place, to meet some people that could speak in English, but I was wrong. When I arrived here, the language barrier was my problem. I couldn't understand anything, up until

today. It took me like six months before I could go to supermarkets alone. I always asked my husband. I don't know how to ask questions because I didn't have that confidence. At least now, I'm getting better. But, what gives me joy is no matter what I talk, and I will just add maybe some English, the person that is attending to me would understand me. Despite the language barrier, they are loving people here.

The only bad experience I had was once when I was trying to get my kids card for hospitals. Luckily, I was with my husband. The lady asked 'How did you get nationality?'. What type of question is that? Who would question that? So my husband said: 'The children already have the DNI. You have to give the hospital card. That's your responsibility, not to question how you got nationality. Does that mean that a black person doesn't have rights to get nationality? C'mon, I've stayed over 25 years in this country'.

When I came here, I met Lydia. She was speaking Swahili, she said she was studying. I told her 'That's good', because when I came here my main aim was 'I don't want to just sit back because of the language. I need to be doing something'. I've always been on the move, but I don't let things happen. She told me, 'There's a university here, a beautiful course'. 'Which course is that you are doing?'. 'Peace and conflict'. I wanted to continue something in health related, because of what I already studied. She said, 'No, you can't be able to get that here because most of the courses are in Spanish'. I said, 'Okay, maybe I will go for this'. I didn't know that peace is so wide. There're a lot of components in that program, which is very beautiful.

Studying with kids is not easy because sometimes they need my attention about the time I need to be reading, doing my assignments. So the only time I would be able to do that is from 10 o'clock. My husband goes out early. Unless maybe he's not going to work that day, he will not help me.

I'm hoping and I look forward to getting more opportunities after this Master. My desire, first, is I would like to proceed for my doctorate studies. In the back of my mind, I want to involve myself mostly in community projects at the same time here. Give back to society. Empower young girls out there. There are many girls out there that they are going through what I went through and they give up along the road. If you don't have a father figure, you end up looking for maybe a nearby person that will look like a father figure to you. You end up doing things that you're not supposed to do. Mostly I also want to focus on young girls that are young mothers. In some regions in Kenya, some people once they get pregnant, they are teenagers, they cannot be able to proceed with education. Some of them think that maybe that's the end of everything. But the narrative is changing.

Carolyn, today

(All these experiences), they shaped the person I am today. Because today I can be able to make a decision that if I look back, I'll be happy. It's also been a lot of resilience in me. I've always been very happy. Even until today. I didn't allow anything to just... No matter what I see, I have to be strong. So life is a lesson. I always push myself. Since I was small, I have always looked forward to achieving something in life, but not allowing anything to distract me.

I always aim higher. I always believe that every day is an opportunity for me. I'm always thankful for everything I have. I always do my best and then leave the rest for God to do for me. I'm so spiritual. In my heart I don't have any room for hatred, no room for malice. I just let everything go and once I realized that, my doors always kept opening.

The stories of Iraca

My full name is Quihicha Hisca Iraca Vargas Salamanca. I am from Colombia. I am 39 years old. I was born in Bogotá, in the capital.

My name

I am the daughter of Luis Alfredo Vargas and Francia Elena Salamanca. I was born in 1982. I have a twin. We have an older sister. We are six years apart. My full name is Quihicha Hisca Iraca. It's a Muisca name. Mine means 'Fifteen years of the Holy Land' and my brother's means 'Brave warrior'. His name is Hunzahua Tinanzuca. We are the only ones with Muisca names in the whole family. My dad has a degree in Social Sciences. He used to climb and while climbing he came across a Muisca book where there were many words, many concepts, many terms. And as it is an indigenous community from the center, from the Andean region of Colombia, he said 'No, she is not going to be called Ana María anymore'.

Well, happy with my name. When I was little, it was very difficult because bullying is very bad. Both for my brother and for me because all the weird names are for jokes, they are for teasing. The children didn't understand how to pronounce it. Being from Bogotá, contact with the indigenous communities is very difficult because I come from the urban area and the indigenous people are from the rural area and far from Bogotá. When you are a child, you don't even know how to defend yourself. But then, after thinking a lot about changing our name, we said 'No. We are not going to change our name'. And if we have to defend the name, we'll defend the name no matter what.

The family

That's how we grew up. My parents have been separated since we were born. When we were little, it's not so easy to understand that your dad comes every now and then. Little by little, you grow up and you understand what oil and water are. So, it was better that way. Separated. We have a very good relationship.

I feel that my mum must not have had such a great time because my mum did fall in love with my dad and he has always been the love of her life. But, not my dad. My dad had

many women behind him. He always accepted that, too. So he didn't have an infinite love for my mum. But, my mum, I think she was very brave to say "No more. I am not interested in you having other women".

They both come from peasant families. But my dad comes from a family where his father abandoned him. My first surname is on my father's maternal line. I have my grandmother's surname, Vargas. I guess my dad also did his best being a dad because he never had a dad. My dad has always been there, but I understand that the lack of his father and that being the first son, he had to work first rather than study. He started to work at the biggest university in the country, which is the National University, which is the public university. Then he said "Yes, I want to study". My dad and my mum studied much older. In fact, my mum finished high school when I was in high school and my dad did study at university. But he was also very old. He was the one with the academic life. So my mum said "But if I dedicate myself to studying, who is going to feed these three children?". Because I have to recognise things as they are. My dad wasn't responsible. So, who was the financially responsible one? My mum. Literally, whatever she could, my mum got in. For my mum, her priority was work all her life.

They were very different people who thought about the world differently. The academic for one and the work for the other. And there is one thing that happens in Colombia, it is economically stratified. When you belong to a stratum, it is very difficult to move up a stratum. Moving up means that you have to move because if you move you get better living conditions. We didn't live in Bogotá, Bogotá, but in a neighborhood that would be one of the marginalized neighborhoods on the outskirts of Bogotá. Stratum 1, 2. Maximum, 3. To get to the city center we spent two hours. An hour and a half on the day when there was less traffic. My mother always fought so that we would never have to live in very low living conditions, if not the average. The average is stratum 3 in Colombia.

Finally, who raised us? My paternal grandmother because my mother always lived very close to my paternal grandmother. The one with the surname Vargas. She couldn't afford a nanny. It wasn't possible. And she was the one who took us to school. She was the one who fed us. She was the one who let us play. She was everything. She was always like the neutral part. Yes, it's very important to work, but take care of your children. Then we realized that we were from the generation where all of us were raised by grandmothers. How hard it was to have to choose between taking care of my children or going to work.

Feminine strength

Migrants, from my grandmother. My grandmother is from Boyacá, a village in a rural region. She ends up in Santander, which is another region. Infinite gratitude. She was a woman who taught us a lot. She is a woman who also had a very hard time. She did come from a very rural area, very peasant. She is from the time when they were forced to marry the person that parents told them to marry. She got married, but then she ran away when she was very young. She started to make a living looking after children, washing clothes from village to village. And, when she was a bit older, she got pregnant by a policeman. That's all I know about my grandfather, by blood. He was a policeman. His surname was Santos. And he left the day she went into hospital.

My grandmother was beautiful. She was a very attractive woman in the Colombian context. And, she said 'Well, it was very easy for anyone to want to be with me. Sometimes I had to flee from one town to another because Fulanito was chasing me''. And she was a woman who would do whatever she could to work. In order to live.

When I grew up I realized that, as well as having a very special name, I have a feminine surname. We are Vargas because my grandmother made it very clear. I am so proud to have

that surname! The surname of my grandmother who raised us, who saw us cry, who saw us get frustrated, who saw us fall and wiped our knees. And she let us go back to play.

The women's line has been very much influential. It was their decision to leave. My mother comes from an area and a region that was full guerrilla. My mother said "I have two options. Either I join the guerrillas, who are the ones who say here what to do and what not to do. Or, I leave. I run away and go with a guy who knows who he is". My mother, rather, has had a revolutionary spirit all her life. She tells us "I saw the guerrilla as a dream. I saw those armed women, who didn't have to wash men's clothes, who were independent". She experienced a lot of physical and psychological abuse from her family. Obviously the guerrilla was a very attractive thing. But a teacher in her village told her "I have some relatives in Bogotá who have children and they need a nanny". And so she took her. She went to look after some children who would have been five years old. A small girl looking after other children.

I feel she saved her from being in the guerrilla. And also from being in more dangerous contexts. The capital was something else because we lived it on television. "They put a bomb in...". "Oh, we can't go back to that town". For example, my mother. She hasn't been able to go back to her village for almost sixty years because it was one of those that was bombed. One of those that the guerrillas kidnapped. I lived through the period around the 90s, the 80s, the vision of drug trafficking, more than the guerrillas. What Pablo Escobar was doing, for example, putting bombs in Bogotá. Oh, that part was tenacious.

From the city to the village

My dad always had more academically and professionally lucrative jobs than my mum because my mum, without university or anything, what? She worked for many years in a bank. The bank ended, they sold it. My mum goes out. She bought a shop. She opened an ice-cream parlor. We leave to live in a town outside Bogotá. It's like a big city. During the two years we were in

Fusa, as the town is called, she did her validation. In those two years she got her baccalaureate. When we returned to Bogotá again, she could at least look for another kind of job.

I did my sixth and seventh year of baccalaureate there. Moving to the village was the best thing because we were the play kids. We were the kids who came from the big city. All the kids would say ‘‘What’s Bogotá like? Is there a sea?’’. We said ‘‘Sea? No. There’s traffic. There’s pollution. Everything is far away’’. But, for the kids at the time, imagine that. We were the kids who were doing the best academically. We knew everything. Everyone wanted to be our friends because ‘‘They’re the kids from the big city’’. I was a student representative. We were the best, which didn’t happen when we came back. Because ‘‘You come from a village’’.

Return to Bogotá

Living that transition, even though you’ve been from the city, of moving to a town and then back to the big city, tells you that we see the world differently. I’ve moved seven times. It’s different because I’ve moved from the sector, because I’ve moved from the city, because I’ve moved in my mum’s vision of ‘‘I want the best of you’’.

I think my mother made a good decision and when we were in our teens, she chose to rent the flat in the neighborhood of Soacha. She said ‘‘Even if I have to work more, I’m going to pay a little more rent in Bogotá so that you can go to school at the National University’’. My brother and I. She had to get a much harder job in order to have a higher income, so that we wouldn’t have to spend four hours a day on the bus. What did that mean? That we started to grow up alone because our grandmother was no longer by our side. It was very hard. Arriving in the big city was like ‘‘I don’t trust anyone. I don’t know anyone. Well, you take care of yourselves’’. So, you say ‘‘How important it is for us to feel that it’s important that someone picks you up from school, that someone takes care of you at lunch’’. I think that the concept of care plays a lot in this transition of movements, of migrations.

There we could already see the differences in academic terms because we had gone to primary school in a neighborhood that was not so play, not with all the resources. Then we lived in a village for two years. So, for example, English was something that everyone was very good at. And we were not. ‘Of course, they're the ones who come from the village’. And we said, ‘No, but we're from Bogotá. We went to primary school in Bogotá’. ‘Yes, but in what part of Bogota? In what stratum were you studying?’. You start to realize that we don't all live the same realities, nor do we have the same opportunities. What did the school make us see? That we could study the children of people from the general services, from service employees to the children of the rector of the most important university in the country. And that we were all the same. So, it was nice because it was giving value to the public sector. I can proudly say ‘I came out of a national, public school’. Which is the opposite of what is happening nowadays. There, the public sector has been stolen, the public sector has been mistreated.

We arrived at a disadvantage academically. And socially because people already have friends. ‘I'm the new one and I come from a village’. So, you are no longer the attractive one. There, for example, I considered myself the shyest, most introverted person in life.

Adolescence began, the time of parties. Then I started to have friends from older years. In eighth grade I had friends from eleventh and tenth grade. That wasn't the time of bullying because of adolescence, but because of who your social class group was. The most popular ones played volleyball. We didn't play volleyball. We started to make like a little group of friends and be with the ones who were less popular. They were the ones we would party with. Since we lived in Bogotá, but initially not so close to the university, that made my mother say ‘It's not possible for you to pay for a taxi. So you have to stay at your friends’. And that is very difficult in Bogotá because nobody trusts each other.

We are very afraid of the other. That the other will steal from me. That the other will knock me down. That (the other) will get me into a bad deal. That (the other) always wants

something for himself. There is no trust between people. My mum has always been a very fearful woman. My sister was drugged. We didn't know how. My sister was hospitalized for eight days. So when it happened to my sister it was really hard because 'This really exists. People are bad. That's what living in the big city means...'. Being alert. That mobilization also made us see another city. Finally, like 'Learn to defend yourself from a young age'. But, of course, it has other advantages. In terms of having more activities to invent, to do, to visit, to go out. Then, as adolescence nears the end of school, the plans are already different. It's a bit more risk-taking to live in an adventurous way.

Living in parallel

It's a different experience, because it's living parallel to your brother, who has a different gender. You share many things, but you also fight for others. As we've grown up, we've discovered more things. He has a different perspective on the world than I do. And, basically, it's also gendered because we solve things differently. He was very rational about a lot of things. But when it occurred to us to do crazy things, well, both of us did the same. For example, one day we were very cold in the apartment. It was raining and he said 'What if we made a fireplace? A bonfire'. We turned the kitchen rug upside down and with the gas cylinder and everything next to it, we had the idea of almost using the whole notebook, making a fire in the kitchen. Imagining it was a big campsite.

We were company, because (the one who) didn't fit in with the things we did was my sister. Because she thought it was immature, ridiculous, a waste of time. Well, six years older.

We never shared a classroom. I think it's nice because we always talked about different friends. I don't think it would have been possible if we had both been from the same classroom. Always siblings, twins and the same classroom, no. That helped us to have each of us our own

things, our own independence, our own friends. So, I knew his friends. My brother knew my friends. It was a nice time too.

Lost

We were the first ones in our family to go to university. So, we looked like the rich kids in the family. "They did make it. Of course, because they are in Bogotá. Because they can. It's because you have had opportunities". We come from such an unequal country that I understand about opportunities. Well, what a sin if sometimes life is sold to you as "The most important thing is to work" and there is not the slightest possibility of leaving school to go to university. Instead, for us it was like "Yes or yes. You're going to university". What's the small detail? "We're not going to pay for a private university because there isn't (money). It has to be in the public one".

I initially wanted to be a psychologist. I applied for psychology. I didn't pass. It was traumatic. Not knowing what the hell I wanted to do with my life. I had no idea that social work existed. It was my first semester doing other things, like taking care of my grandfather because he was already very sick. And then being frustrated with what I thought I was going to do allowed me, by taking my grandfather to a medical check-up, to meet a social worker. I said "Oh, that's so cool what she does" because she helped us at a critical moment. She explained it to me. So, I said "Oh, I like this a lot. And, is it in a public university?". And yes, indeed.

I started applying for social work. I passed. It was learning to question social reality a lot. To learn about public policies. To understand that the issue of the strata is a blunder in terms of the fact that it sought as public policy to help the least favored, but it divided us. Geographically it divided us. It left policies that favored some more than others.

It has always been a very critical view. My parents finally supported, with my anthropologist brother too, that we should participate in marches, in community movements.

Because the vision of social work in Spain is very different. In Colombia, the term, rather than assistance, is one of building networks, so that the process that this person undertakes is sustained by public policy.

At the same time I got to know the university pastoral. I got to know a different kind of pastoral care because they were young people who were in different public and private universities in Bogotá, who did missions in villages, who talked to people, who got to know other realities, who took food to homeless people. I said ‘I like it’. In my third semester, I knew that every three years the Pope summons young people and organizes World Youth Days. I had the first opportunity to go to Canada. My mother told me ‘Oh, if you can count, don't count on me’. It was three million pesos. At that time it was a lot of money for us. I remember I cried a lot because I said, ‘I want to leave the country. I want to travel’. I had never taken a plane in my life. I didn't even know the sea. But my mother said to me, ‘You want to sell sandwiches, I'll help you with the sandwiches. You want to make buttons, tell me where. I'll help you sell. I help you with the operations, but I can't give you the money’. That's how I managed to get it. If I didn't go on this trip to Canada, I don't think I would have ever gotten so excited about the need to travel. It has become a necessity.

Social worker and traveler

My first job was with homeless people. That also made me a much simpler woman physically and materially. And in human terms. It was getting to know a very dark side of humanity. It was getting to know the addicted person. There was something that happened in Bogotá. There is a street called El Bronx and before that there was a sector called El Cartucho. The homeless used to make their homes out of cloth and they sell there. It was human trafficking. It was drug trafficking. Children were born there. Drugged women gave birth there. See children consuming. I came home crying. I said ‘What am I doing here? Social work is useless. I'm not

going to change anyone's life here. What a frustrating thing to do''. I was hired by an NGO. Our task was to get homeless people out of El Bronx and El Cartucho. We paid for their flats. In the meantime, to look for work for the people. Rehabilitate them. I began to realize that there were people who were unregistered. I was the bridge between the homeless person and the judicial and administrative aspects that every human being has to have.

At the beginning it was a huge burden for me. I didn't sleep. I dreamt about those families, those cases. Once one of them threatened me. He put a piece of glass on me and said "Let me out or I'll kill you". And I said, "Then kill me". What did I have to lose? God is very big and nothing happened to me. (The person) didn't leave the house because (he/she/they) knew (he/she/they) was going to consume. Is it possible to change someone's life? Then I realized that it is possible. You help as much as you can. You don't have the magic wand, but you have skills that can help someone else. You can be the bridge to other things. I had the possibility, unlike other professionals, to know their life, their past, their present and try to help them in their future. So I said "No. Now I really love social work. This is my thing''. I spent a lot of years working with homeless people and that shook me up.

Then I started to work with a school. An abysmal change. From there, I moved to a hospital in the mental health area. It was another perspective. That opened up other lines of work for me unintentionally. Then, from there I became a university lecturer. In two universities, one public and one private, in Social Work because I already had experience in different fields of professional action. My subject became a bit more academic. It was like the opportunity to make the click between theory and practice. To speak to them from theory, but to tell them about my experience. I was there for nine years.

I continued with pastoral care. I continued with World Youth Days. I continued to travel. I kept going out of the country, but with my feet on the ground saying "This is one side of the coin''. You don't see homeless people. You think your country is the worst. People don't

really know the other side of the coin when you have an addiction, when you live on the street or when you were born on the street. But, being away for short periods of time in one place and in the other allowed me to broaden my vision of the world and to understand that there are problems here as there are problems there. Which are in different proportions, of course.

With a friend from Pastoral, what we used to do was, once a year, we would both go to some region of Colombia. The two of us would go alone to know because we said ‘We have to get out of the realities in which we are, because not everything is Bogotá. Not everything is Colombia’. This also allowed me to see that there are many ways of migrating. That we don't all migrate in the same way. There are temporary migrations. But you also realize that there are migrations in which, for example, arriving at an airport and saying ‘I'm Colombian’. ‘A special line’. ‘Well... And why?’ ‘Because in your country you never know...’. ‘I do know. I know that I have never seen cocaine in my life. But you're going to stop me here’.

Once in an airport, ‘Open the camera’. ‘But, if I open it, the film fades. I damage all the pictures I've taken’. He takes the camera from me and says, ‘I'm going to take pictures. But, drugs do not come out’. And I said ‘What?! Do you think I...?’. ‘Oh, you are Colombian’.

One year in Spain

It was a family decision. We had thought about it. Guille said ‘Wow, how cool to migrate to Canada’. It was like the initial idea. But when I started looking for a master's degree, I found one at the UJI and I fell in love with that curriculum. At one point, there was an opportunity when the guerrillas demobilized to visit some camps with other professionals. They were called ‘transitory territories’ for the guerrillas to demobilize, even before they handed in their weapons. After this experience of getting to know the other side of the coin, that they were also

peasants, that they were also victims of this horrendous conflict, why don't we really talk about peace from these two sides?

It was analyzing what we were losing. We were losing our jobs. Then, everyone's visas came and then we said "Yes". Why not give the girls this opportunity? For the family, especially Guille's, it wasn't so easy. But, my mum told me a phrase that I will never forget in my life and she said "I'm not going to take something from you that I can't give you. Do it. And if you see that this is a better place for the girls, go ahead".

Thank God and the opportunities because, in the end, that's what it has been. To show the girls that, from being babies, it is possible to travel. It is possible if you look for the opportunities and take advantage of them. But it's not easy. Even with that experience that I am telling you, that I am blessed and that I have been able to travel for many years, getting here was very hard. It helps you because there are already many things that you think you have overcome. But people, stereotypes seem to hold you back. They say "Sure, we give you a visa X to a country because we have already noticed that you have used other visas and have returned to your country". But then you arrive here and they say "But you don't have a credit life in Spain. How are we going to rent you a flat?" If you don't have a credit life in that country, "You don't exist. I'm not interested in you".

You realize that migrating is not always easy because you don't go with nothing secured. With nothing. Instead of people helping you to have opportunities, they become problems. I was telling some mothers at the girls' school "Look, and I'm not just saying this for my sake, but for the future. This depends, more than on the migrant, on the person who receives them". We already have a small group, at least in the school, of people we know, but it is because of the families who have taken the time to. It is possible thanks to the local people. Because no matter how much energy and attitude you have, if the local people don't open their doors to you, it's a shit. It becomes total chaos because you say "Come on, we speak the same

language''. 'No, we don't. We don't speak the same language''. It happens at the big scales of governance in a city. 'Tell me how you work and I translate what you are telling me into my reality and I understand that what you call the Libro de familia, for me is called Registro civil. But, tell me what is there''. But, if I have to look for it, I try it with my own terms and I can't find it. So, tell me what to do. Tell me how to look for a school. Tell me how to register. Tell me how to get the NIEs. Who teaches you that? It wasn't easy to find my way around because it wasn't very common for students to arrive with children.

It is not possible to find someone who will give you a hand and say 'Pull it over there. That's the rope''. So it's been like 'trial and error''. I also think we are still blessed because in the end the hardest part was the first month, I feel. But in terms, for example, of the social aspect, which is very important to me, it has been good because we have found families in this school who have been the ones who have opened their doors to us. 'Do you want to travel this weekend to the village house that we have?'. 'Okay, let's go''. I think I already know all the villages around here in the community of Castellón thanks to them. Thanks to my landlord who said 'I leave you the car, are you interested?'. There have been many things, I can't generalize. Clearly, it has not been the same for everyone.

Little by little it has been interesting to see and show the girls other realities. That they could know the seasons, which we don't have in Colombia. That they can have the sea when we are from a city that is so central and so cold. Of course, it has been hard for them. They told us 'Is it possible, mummy, that Spain's neighbor is not France, but Colombia? Because if Colombia were Spain's neighbor, we would see our grandparents more often. We would be with our friends more often''. They wouldn't have to fly eleven hours. They wouldn't have to pay so much money.

Iraca, today

I think the greatest value I still place on it is feminine strength. I thank my grandmother for the decisions she made. I thank my mother for the decisions she made because they were very important decisions to migrate internally. But they changed the lives of the following generations. I value their strength, their courage, their drive. The two of them alone. In different years, in different rural and urban contexts. I feel that both consciously and unconsciously, they come to the surface in me saying there are many fears that I have, but not of knowing something new. Although my mother is a person who is afraid of many things, she also taught us that, in terms of making decisions, it is worse not to make them and to accommodate ourselves.

Guille also highlighted it to me a lot, and he thanked me a lot. ‘We are here thanks to you. We wouldn't have lived this if you hadn't said ‘Well, let's do it’’. The Iraca of these thirty-nine is very proud to still have the illusion to move, to believe in the capacity of two girls of nine and six years old, to believe in the capacity of innovation and surprise of Guille. I still believe in the possibility of discovering other things. Life still gives me hope. I believe that the Iraca of today is still in love with life. She is still in love with things she does not know. And she still has the energy to say ‘Let's do it. Let's discover. Let's break frontiers’’. Because I believe that, from my profession and from what I have seen in Colombia, one of the worst problems humanity has is to set frontiers. Because internally we live it in Colombia. We have many frontiers. And the last thing I want is to put a frontier on myself. I want to prove to myself and, secondly to my family, that borders can be broken. I believe that if we build more bridges, we can open the space for others. Start to travel. I believe that the Iraca of today is opening the way for the possibilities of future generations.

In the future, what we hope is that things will work out so that legally, for example, Guille's company can be here and that I can get involved with NGOs. Because working life not only helps you to put down roots, but also to see the dignity and potential of the human being

that you are. For me, working is the possibility to say 'I am useful'. What interests me is that what I study is useful to people. Society has given me a lot because I am a child of the public sector.

2.4. Conclusions

After hearing the stories of Pam, Carolyne and Iraca, I cannot but feel immense respect and admiration for the strength and power of these three women. I feel honored that my path has crossed with theirs and I am truly touched by what they have taught me when sharing their stories. It is because of women like this that, in this second chapter, I have tried to get close to the damage that the single story has caused to people. I have tried to expose how the coloniality of being and knowing has been reproduced on multiple levels. I have presented, first, a critique to the situation within hegemonic feminist movements and discourses. Following this, I situated the case study of migrant women. As a result, I was able to realize that the stories of migrant women have been affected. They have been given a single story; put in the faceless framing of "the other, the foreigner" that does not take into consideration the rich pluriverse of experiences, voices and stories that each of them has carried on their paths. This has happened especially in the case of the ones coming from subaltern and racialised global south contexts.

Trying to challenge the single story, I have tried to open a space that can show the beauty and power of the pluriverse of stories of three migrant women that have arrived in Castellón. In order to do this, I have applied the decolonial perspective discussed in the first chapter with regards to oral methodologies. I have made a reflection about the adequate methodology using it in the oral project that I have presented with all the steps and elements that I needed to avoid the perpetuation of power imbalances. As a result, hopefully the reader could have gotten closer to the stories and voices of Pam, Carolyne and Iraca. In the next

chapter, I will present my learnings with this project and the potential that these voices can reveal to have peaceful alternatives to the single story.

CHAPTER 3: Beyond the single story

3.1. Introduction

In this last chapter, I will present my interpretation of the pluriverse opened within the second chapter with the voices of Pam, Carolyne and Iraca. The concept of intersectionality will be key in this analysis to approach the diversity of their stories and experiences, acknowledging also how their voices have challenged the limits of the single story. After this, I will present my learnings with this project, which I could relate with some of the values and alternatives promoted by peace studies in a way that they can help us to perceive others in a new empathic and political way while listening to their stories. Finally, I will present a small section with some proposals and projects that can help us to develop connections of solidarity with migrant women and populations. Some of these might involve political engagement and the development of spaces of dialogue

3.2. Interpretation of the pluriverse of voices

When we define ourselves, when I define myself, the place in which I am like you and the place in which I am not like you, I'm not excluding you from the joining - I'm broadening the joining (Lorde, 1984).

I would like to start this last section by mentioning again that the interpretation of the pluriverse opened in the second chapter has not been based on a desire of promoting a universal knowledge about migrant women arriving at Castellón. Contrary to this, the voices of Pam, Carolyne and Iraca can show that “every view is a view from somewhere and every act of speaking a speaking from somewhere” (Abu-Lughod, 2002: 53). The situatedness of their experiences, emotions and knowledges can show that their stories and voices should not be universalised and homogenized as if their paths were exactly the same for all of them who have

migrated. I am not trying to present these voices as a new historical, collective and representative story that should be told and reproduced to talk now about different migrant women coming to Castellón. Doing this would imply again a process of reductionism of these different places of enunciation which symbolizes diversity and heterogeneity (Suárez-Krabbe, 2020: 136).

However, what I would like to propose is that it is possible to have counter-narratives listening to these life stories. Moreover, that we can have alternative narratives in which Pam, Carolyne and Iraca do not talk only about intersectionality, but they are, indeed, intersectionality (Belsué Guillorme, 2019). Having the three of them as common their condition as migrants that have come to Castellón, I could realize that their ways of living, experiencing and feeling life vary coming from three different contexts and having different identities. It has not been the same stories for Pam, being a colour lebanese queer migrant women; than for Carolyne, a black kenyan catholic migrant women; or Iraca, a white colombian working class migrant women.

Their memories growing up, attending school, socializing or moving to different regions, cities or countries since a very young age have been different. As Pam, Carolyne and Iraca have told us, the experiences have not been the same for someone that became a refugee of war at a very young age; for a young girl that move to different boarding schools being away from the family; or for a social worker whose dream was to travel and know more than Colombia, after moving internally there. Also, their relationships with family, with friends and other humans; their mestizajes (Anzaldúa, 1987), their experiences in foreign countries; their connections to religion, their cultures or their languages have been different. Their dreams, hopes and desires have been and are still diverse, as well as their personal, physical, working and emotional paths.

Their reasons to migrate to Castellón, their decisions about when they were coming and with whom have not been equal for all of them. And, even being immersed in the big systems and structures of oppression, inequalities and their margins, the effects of power, patriarchy, racism, xenofobia, capitalism or heteronormativity have led to a pluriverse of experiences, both of pain and resilience. Each of their stories is very personal; each story of migration has been lived and felt in a different way and even within one person there can be multiple stories to tell and listen to as these three strong women have shown us. There is not, hence, a single story of a migrant woman. Iraca also taught me this experience directly during our conversations:

Porque cuando escucho acá [Castellón] tantos colombianos con historias tan distintas, yo digo ‘Uff’. [...] La historia de Laura no es la misma de Óscar. La de Óscar no es la misma de este muchacho que nos acaba de servir el café. La de él no es igual a la mía. La mía no es la misma que la de Guille. La de Guille no es la misma de las niñas (Vargas, 2022)⁹.

Despite this, some questions could be raised here again since why have we never tried to listen to all this pluriverse of voices? Why have we never tried to learn and connect with them? Why have we never tried to accompany these women with their stories, memories and paths? In my personal and academic experience, I believe that one of the big reasons has involved the power of the single story. Its multiple levels of violence have implied a relation of structural domination and a suppression of the heterogeneity (Mohanty, 2008: 2) of migrant women. In this case study, the dimension of Pam, Carolyne and Iraca as migrants, especially coming from non-Western realities and contexts, as well as other factors that have intersected, have created a standard story of separation and a single story for them which has invisibilized all their life experiences, complexities, feelings, perceptions, and visions of the world. A

⁹ I have translated to English this excerpt of the interview I had with Iraca in Spanish: ‘‘Because when I hear here [Castellón] so many Colombians with such different stories, I say ‘Uff’. [...] Laura's story is not the same as Oscar's. Oscar's is not the same as this boy who just served us coffee. His is not the same as mine. Mine is not the same as Guille's. Guille's is not the same as the [my] girls’’ (Vargas, 2022).

monolithic category of migrant women, of how they should be, act, feel, think and look has been reproduced with the coloniality and modernity of the single story, silencing and reducing them to a single identity in which they have become the 'Otherness', the subaltern.

All the factors that shape their identities, minds, bodies and projects in all the stages of their lives have been homogenized in the invisible, ahistorical, apolitical and permanent category of 'migrant women'. They have been thought to face all of them the same issues, having the same experiences and the same needs, demands. Even, they could have been reduced to a common physical appearance since their bodies and faces could have also been racialized according to the areas of origin (Oso Cases, 2010). It should be said that here the media still plays an important role. Media influences the creation and perpetuation of cultural violence and the stereotypical and reductive image designed to associate migrant women with the invisible 'other' in Spain, no matter their previous and personal contexts.

Moreover, the universalism promoted by the hegemonic feminist discourse and movements in Europe has made invisible this problem. They have placed the 'other' as 'part' of the experiences, needs and demands of the local white bourgeois heterosexual Spanish and castellonense women. As if they were all the same, this 'sorority' hides the position of migrant women, in particular racialised and subaltern women, within the socio-economic, political, working, juridical, cultural structures and their intersections (Sánchez-Leyva et al., 2010: 59). As if they were all the same, this 'sorority' still mistrusts 'differences' towards migrant women (Suárez-Navaz, 2008). For this reason, they have only been named in the 'democratic and paternal' Spanish society when migrant women and their daughters are seen as victims of patriarchy and sexism. In such a way, they need to be 'protected' and 'saved' (Fassin, 2010: 74).

As a result, all this still makes it difficult to approach the pluriverse of voices and stories of migrant women. It still makes difficult to understand all the intersections of gender, race,

migration, class, sexuality, religion, etc as social constructs that can be lived in a different way, as Pam, Carlyne and Iraca show with their stories. At this point, I am not pretending to say that the existence of this pluriverse means the ignorance or the banalization of the effects that these categories and the systems of oppression could have generally had on migrant women or other subaltern, marginalized and racialised individuals and groups. Neither my purpose is to reduce these voices only to the category of migrants that have arrived at Castellón. Rather, what I would like to state is the absolute need of learning from and with these stories and of how these women have been and are still impacted by all these systems of oppression, violence and the single story.

We, as a society, still need to reflect on how Pam, Carlyne and Iraca, as well as many other migrant women, individuals, groups and communities have become part of a universal collective subject in the separate concepts of 'less human'/objects of study, women and migrant. The intersectionality of these categories and factors of their identities has revealed, at the end, the powers of *nkali* and *sraki* (Adichie, 2009; 2018: 13). And, with this, the invisibility of the condition of migrant women as individual subjects with voice and story (Oso Cases, 2010: 33), embodying only the universal portrait of the 'other' in all senses due to coloniality, modernity and all the prejudices and stigmas that these have spread towards them.

Patricia Hill Collins (2019: 2) expressed that "without serious self-reflection, intersectionality could easily become just another social theory that implicitly upholds the status quo", not bringing, thus, any change. As a consequence of all this, I need to state the still lack of recognition of these stories and experiences and the pluriverse they represent within my western context. The society of Spain and Castellón, in particular, still need to engage in a process of reflection giving value to the strength of these women and to the power of these voices, acknowledging and listening to them so that we can avoid the further perpetuation of

the single, limited and fragmented story imposed by the creators of the colonial matrix of power.

That is the reason why we need to have alternative stories, counter-narratives coming from voices that from the margins can highlight a path to tell a diversity of perspectives that can amplify the limits of the official narrative. The aim of listening to these stories of migrant women should not be just a matter to include ‘new colors’ (Suárez-Navaz, 2008), ‘new voices’ to the universal story. The purpose should not be to ‘represent’ or ‘incorporate’ them simply as a peripheral or a subaltern problem of the single story.

Rather, I believe that Pam, Carolyne and Iraca and all their stories have already challenged with their voices the attitude of superiority shown by the creators of the colonial matrix of power. Their voices have diversified all the categories of *subject with voice* (previously and always related to the *Man/Human*), *women* and *migrant*¹⁰ which have remained as the norm within the colonial structures of power and its reproduction in hegemonic feminist analysis and theories. They have also brought diversity with their stories in relation to concepts such as migration, gender, race, class, sexuality or religion which could have also been attached before to the experiences of specific groups in power.

Moreover, this could reveal the importance to study with the margins, from the borders and spaces of intersection where any category is close. Where being a woman, being black, color women, being a migrant; or where sexuality, class, origin etc, are not understood with a simple and reductive perspective of values (Rivas-Flores et al., 2020: 54). Positioning these voices of Pam, Carolyne and Iraca within their own stories, experiences, backgrounds and intersections can help to surpass the limits of the single story in all these senses (the center/the margins, inclusion/exclusion, us/ the ‘other’).

¹⁰ Understanding also here the fine limits that exist between the concepts of *migrant*, *refugee*, *asylum seeker* or *internally displaced person* used to categorize experiences of mobility. In fact, these are difficult to define only with one of these terms due to the connections and commonalities between these situations.

3.3. Actors of change

I am glad to know that the three of them, Pam, Carlyne and Iraca, have felt good participating in this project, having our dialogues and sharing their stories. For some of them, in their personal paths, this could have been a step further for understanding and dealing with the experiences lived and making things less heavy; an exercise for healing, letting some things go and continuing getting to know more about themselves. These are some of the feelings that Carlyne, for instance, shared with me at the end of our interviews (using for this some of the questions provided by tools of Empathy maps):

I'm feeling so relieved because I hardly talk about this. Like, I only talk about this with my friend Lisa. I don't talk about this because everybody has their own problems. Even, I'm not given the opportunity to talk about it unless somebody asks me which nobody has done that. Because I'm always a happy person. So you can never know that there's something behind that. For now, I feel good. I just feel relieved when I talk about it. The more I talk about it now and I look at what God has been doing in my life, I feel like it's okay to go through some things, to be able to see there's not a straight path to success. It has to be like crooked and then you'll meet some hills and mountains and valleys along the road (Chemutai, 2022).

I also feel very honored and grateful for the opportunity they gave to me to share this space of dialogue, their experiences, their vulnerabilities and their feelings about their journeys with me. In this sense, I think that Pam, Carlyne and Iraca have also challenged the limits of the single story by choosing values that promote empathy, kindness, love, hope, strength and resilience when telling their stories. The three of them became political actors with their voices, their stories, their strength and their power. And, they have done it in a process in which they have also learnt about self-empathy, care and, especially, resilience from all their own experiences, the painful and the good ones. The words of Pam still resonate in my mind when she told me about the values she got within her journey:

Kindness and empathy is such a big thing. Because one part is the kindness of some of the people that are found on my way, that made my journey easier. And the other part is the lack of kindness and empathy that I got from people that also led me to where I am today. Because of those people who did not show any empathy and kindness, I am more empathetic and kinder to strangers, a lot of people because I needed that and, maybe, they were not giving that to me all the time. [...]

And then openness. Being open to anything. Anything meaning, not just other religions, other cultures, other genders. Love for everyone. Hope she [my daughter] learns that from us. That we love everyone, no matter where they come from, what they look like, no matter what. We love everyone, even those who don't love themselves. I believe that everyone is good. There's goodness in everyone (Daccache, 2022).

Their self-reflections have also led them to think about the kind of connections they want to have, the kind of values and solidarity they want to nurture in their relationships with others, even while they are still critical of the systems of oppression and dehumanization that have affected them until today.

In our conversations, I could also realize about the things that we had in common and the things that are different for each of us. However, in this process of sharing this space of dialogue, listening and care, these differences did not mean something negative; but I think they gave us the possibility to understand each other better, our own stories and the experiences that we have lived being situated in different contexts, time spaces and positions. This space gave me the opportunity to understand diversity without fears, feeling that we were “broadening the joining” (Lorde, 1984) between us. And for this, I still feel very thankful for all the learnings I could get with Pam, Carolyne and Iraca and their stories and I would like to express how much I admire them, their resilience, their power and their values.

Acknowledging this, I think that we can learn from this kind of dialogues and values (understanding them not as universal, but as locally situated as well) to continue transforming

the narratives characterized by the colonality of power, being and knowing into narratives and ecologies of solidarity, co-existence, empathy and support. However, with all this I am not trying to characterize these women or any other individual, group and community who had to remain at the margins of the single story with the responsibility or obligation of educating our societies and the privileged ones with their stories and these values. Coming myself from a western and privileged position and context, I want to highlight the commitment that we also need to show if we really want to stop being blind to the effects of power, colonality and modernity in all the spheres of life, being and knowing. We also need to be involved in the promotion of change as Iraca expressed with her experiences arriving and living in Castellón:

Te das cuenta que migrar no siempre es fácil porque tú no vas con nada asegurado. En vez de que la gente te ayude a que sean oportunidades, se vuelven problemas. Les decía a unas mamás del colegio de las niñas ‘‘Miren, y que esto no solo se los digo por mí, si no a futuro. Esto depende más que del migrante, de la persona que recepciona’’. Ya tenemos un grupito, por lo menos en el colegio de personas conocidas, pero ha sido por las familias que se han tomado la molestia. Se puede gracias a la gente local. Porque por más de que tú le tengas mucha energía y muchas ganas, si la gente local no te abre las puertas, esto es una mierda (Vargas, 2022)¹¹.

We are still living in a society embedded by prejudices and stigmas; in a society in which differences are still considered as a problem, as something negative to create separation. Stereotypes go along with fear, fragility and the vulnerability that suppose the discovery of others; of diversity; of differences as something positive; of our interdependence with others (Comins-Mingol and Martínez Guzmán, 2010: 37). Despite this, what can happen if we try to go beyond the surface of the single story? What if we sit down for a moment and listen to the

¹¹ I have translated to English this excerpt of the interview I had with Iraca in Spanish: ‘‘You realize that migrating is not always easy because you don't go with nothing secured. Instead of people helping you to make opportunities, they become problems. I was telling some mothers at the girls' school ‘‘Look, and I'm not just saying this for my sake, but for the future. This depends, more than on the migrant, on the person who receives them’’. We already have a small group, at least in the school, of people we know but it has been because of the families who have taken care. It is possible thanks to the local people. Because no matter how much energy and desire you have, if the local people don't open their doors to you, this is shit’’ (Vargas, 2022).

story of someone we never thought we would talk to due to the things we think we already know about that person?

In the next section, I would like to present the contributions that the pluriverse of stories can have to promote the breakdown of the single story and a change in how we can perceive and recognize others. I would like to introduce the potential that these voices can have to make peaces (Martínez Guzmán, 2000: 90) broadening the joining (Lorde, 1984) and cultivating alternative narratives and ecologies that can lead to empathy and solidarity with others.

3. 4. Learnings as alternatives for peace(s)

I should recognise at this point the limits of the thesis that I have carried out. I am conscious that this project alone (even following a decolonial perspective in its development) will not destabilize the systems of oppression that still affect the life, experiences, stories and voices of many individuals and groups. Either it will produce the same reaction and agency in all the different readers and how they can perceive now migrant women that arrive and live in Castellón. Despite this, during the development of this oral project with Pam, Carolyne and Iraca I could also get some lessons and insights which could be connected with the values promoted by the peace studies. These aim at deconstruction (making visible and denouncing the situations of violence, marginalization and exclusion), but also at alternatives for a pacifist reconstruction and cultures of peace (Martínez Guzmán et al., 2009: 91-95).

One of these alternatives highlights the importance of learning new ways of perceiving others and, I also include here, their stories. These new paths should be based, especially, on empathy, recognition and solidarity (Martínez Guzmán et al, 2009: 100-105).

With regards to this, I have introduced that fears might have appeared along with the discovery of others, fostering a detached perspective of ‘othering’. This can continue strengthening human separation from others, which can all be seen as ‘enemies’ (Eisenstein,

2018). The results of this story of separation have been the structures of domination, exclusion, violence (Martínez Guzmán and París, 2006: 28) with their colonial reproduction and objectification (López-Domínguez, 2016: 284). They have been created to control these “enemies” in a world of competition where power influences the importance of the stories known and told about ourselves and others. Moreover, where power influences the fact that the well-being of others does not affect the well-being of our separate self (Eisenstein, 2018).

Related to this, the author Alexa Weik von Mossner stated the importance within this process of the notion of empathy inhibition as the “strongest barrier to feeling with and for others” (Gaard, 2020: 226). Actually, this lack of empathy might be an obstacle that impacts on the possibility of promoting the recognition of others, their stories, their voices, their sufferings, their hopes and experiences; as well as it can impact on the collective sense of interconnectedness, solidarity and justice (Leoni, 2019: 130-131; 149) that we can promote in our societies.

As individuals, our most important lesson should be to make *peaces* (Martínez Guzmán, 2000: 90) with each other and the Earth (Kothari et al., 2019: XXIII) so that it can be emphasized that our existence can be relational and that who we are depends on who the other is. In this sense, the events, experiences and sufferings of others can have an impact on ourselves, as well (Eisenstein, 2018). In such a way, we can realize that we are all part of an interbeing (Eisenstein, 2018) if we try to recover our capacity to feel and foster empathy as a guidance. Empathy can be the emotional and affective basis to connect with each other in an intersubjective and collective way of living (López-Domínguez, 2016: 283-286). The experiences of trying to get to know, understand and empathize with others can help us to become aware of the fact that the walls, the stories of power and prejudices that separate and create differences between people, including the ones conceived as the “enemies” before, can be surpassed.

Even if for some authors the capacity to feel empathy for others is a natural ability obtained at the moment we are born, the truth is that this capacity can be affected. It can be silenced or numbed by dominant and colonial narratives that promote values of competition, domination, apathy, stereotypes and stigmas, as we have seen in the previous chapters of this thesis. Despite this, there is also the belief that this personal faculty can be cultivated again following a perspective in which we are in a process of interaction and learning with and from others (López-Domínguez, 2016: 219; 283-286); a process in which voices and stories can make possible that interaction between diverse persons.

To cultivate again our capacity to feel empathy and to follow its guidance we should recuperate, first, our capacity of listening (and active listening: Martínez Guzmán et al., 2009: 103). This one could have also been numbed and impacted by social trauma and dominant and apathetic narratives (Eisenstein, 2018), as the ones showed with the multiple levels of the single story. This is important since it could be said that the capacity of listening can lead to the discovery of others, being part after that of them and their stories, personal paths, contexts, insights, surroundings, and experiences (including both experiences of injustice and violence, but also experiences of hope and happiness: López-Domínguez, 2016: 286). Moreover, others will become a part of ourselves in the process of being listened to, as well as we can be able to develop a sense of recognition and belonging with others (Erin, 2015: 115).

I would like to say that this is the feeling I have after the experiences that I have shared with Pam, Carolyne and Iraca. I feel now that their stories gave me the possibility of discovering them beyond the surface. Also, that their stories could connect us in a way in which now I am part of their paths in Castellón, as well as they are part of my personal learnings and journey. Again, this does not mean the insignificance of the differences that each of us have, coming from different positions, contexts and experiences. On the contrary, the space of dialogue with Pam, Carolyne and Iraca has allowed me to acknowledge these differences,

perceiving these extraordinary women and their strength from their own places of enunciation and powerful voices.

It is like this that life stories can have the benefit of empowering the people raising their voices in a space (Lara-González, 2013) where they can feel recognized and where they can reconstruct their own identities, being the rest of the listeners able to know alternative and authentic realities, experiences, histories and stories not related to stigmas and prejudices. In such a way, within this process of oral history and life stories, being present and listening to others for the first time can allow us to go beyond the official history that we might know. We might get close to new life perspectives of different actors facing and experiencing the coloniality of inequalities in which different and interconnected factors intersect. We might become aware of these situations that still have as an effect the existence of stigmas and prejudices. This fact also connects with the deconstructive perspective fostered by peace studies going even beyond with alternatives for reconstruction (Martínez Guzmán et al., 2009: 91-95) of our capacities of perceiving and feeling with others.

This can help to recognize others, especially the ones that were forced to remain at the margins, such as migrant women, and to acknowledge the importance and the value given to their own realities and stories considering that all stories matter (Adichie, 2009). Recognition (Comins-Mingol and Martínez Guzmán, 2010: 57-58; Martínez Guzmán et al., 2009: 102) is, thus, an important value gained in this process of listening to life stories. In this sense, we might become aware of all the intersections that shape the different identities of others, doing it also in a process in which we can be able to “allow each other our differences at the same time as we recognize our sameness” (Lorde, 1984). This can also help us to realize the capacities of agency and resilience of all these voices.

In my experience with Pam, Carlyne and Iraca, I think that the process of listening to others and their stories can help us to learn to feel free of prejudices, understanding that feeling for others involves

trying to feel what the person is feeling, but from where they stand. The idea is not to think about what I would have done in that person's place but rather if I were that person – with their life story, their knowledge, their impossibilities – could I have done something different? Now that I understand their situation, can I judge them?

(Leoni, 2019: 150-152).

In this way, the concept of *ethical witnessing* (Gómez Fuentes et al., 2016: 835) related to oral methodologies and life stories, is being used to reflect about this process of knowing and feeling with others and their experiences. This one takes into account not only the testimony of the individual who communicates its life story and its role becoming now an empowering actor, but also the function of the witness who listens to the testimony (Gómez Fuentes et al., 2016: 836). This is based on the idea that a complementary effect may also happen regarding the person listening to the stories.

The listener could start to cultivate our personal capacity to feel empathy which can go even beyond the emotional and affective reaction of only ‘putting ourselves in another's shoes’ (Leoni, 2019: 129-131). Especially, in the western and neoliberal contexts, this is the way through which empathy is normally understood, trying to ‘imaginatively experience’ the thoughts, emotions and stories of others (Pedwell, 2016). However, now I would like to propose, based on my experience listening to the stories of Pam, Carlyne and Iraca, the consideration of empathy as a path towards a political response (Gómez Fuentes et al., 2016: 834).

This means a process of reconsidering the value of empathy itself since coming, feeling and thinking from different origins, contexts and intersections our experiences are different and we do not all walk with the same shoes. It can be difficult to completely empathize with a

pluriverse of situations and emotions that has never been our experiences. It happened to me because I have never had a story of migration like Pam, Carolyne and Iraca. That is the reason why the revaluation of empathy is needed. In this sense, empathy should also be considered as a process of reflection and advocacy where listening and feeling with and for others can let us realize what Audre Lorde stated (1984):

You do not have to be me in order for us to fight alongside each other. I do not have to be you to recognize that our wars are the same. What we must do is commit ourselves to some future that can include each other and to work toward that future with the particular strengths of our individual identities. And in order for us to do this, we must allow each other our differences at the same time as we recognize our sameness (Lorde, 1984).

Hence, even having each of us different identities, there is a way of feeling with and for others if we do not perceive differences as a monocultural separation. There is a path for broadening the joining (Lorde, 1984) and being empathic if we try to connect with all the stories that shape others (Adichie, 2009). After listening and witnessing the voices of others, a feeling of indignation (Martínez Guzmán et al., 2009: 105) might arise towards the injustices of the situations listened to with the personal stories and paths. Also, in my experience a feeling of solidarity (Martínez Guzmán and París, 2010: 45) arised towards the hopes, emotions and experiences of the ones sharing their stories, Pam, Carolyne and Iraca.

I believe that life stories can help us to be more conscious, instead of neutral. They can help to make us closer to other realities which could be thought as distant, even within our context (in this case, the Global North context) and which could be not understood then to be our responsibility. We could have excused ourselves with statements like “what we don’t know, we don’t count” (Eisenstein, 2018), as many locals in Castellón and Spain have done, for instance, with the situations of many migrant women and populations. Being blind to these situations from a privileged position is always easier than trying to make an effort for others,

an experience in which I have included myself many times before. Also, fears and prejudices might stop us from trying, thinking that it was enough to consider ourselves as ‘open minded and tolerant persons’.

Nevertheless, after this project I can say that we can begin to change this after listening to others' stories since it is not enough to continue being neutral. The concept of ethical witnessing (Gómez Fuentes et al., 2016: 835) might bring a path towards self-reflection since we are not living outside power relationships and systems (Gómez Fuentes et al., 2016: 837-838), which affect us in a different way. This can lead to developing political empathy, indignation, agency and moral responsibility towards migrant women, in this case study, or other groups and individuals sharing their stories in a space of dialogue that can connect us.

Learning from the pluriverse (Kothari et al., 2016: XXVIII) of stories and voices, we could start perceiving ourselves as conscious actors that should start paying attention to denounce the violence and the circumstances lived (Gómez Fuentes et al., 2016: 837); to accompany and support migrant women in the difficulties they might face while arriving and living in Castellón (such as the complications related to the bureaucratic processes of Extranjería, for instance). We need to reflect thus about values that do promote the need to not be indifferent to the vulnerabilities, experiences and situations that occurred to others, even if these do not affect us directly (Martínez Guzmán et al., 2009: 98; 105).

Hence, I have the feeling that life stories can make people feel closer to a pluriverse of realities, contexts and daily frames finding “truth in every human encounter” and, with it, “many different variations of truth relative to each encounter” (Dietrich, 2018: 63). In this sense, I do not want to forget here the fact that different ways of understanding empathy or other values introduced in these pages, such as recognition or solidarity (which will be further explored in the following pages, as well), can be felt and experienced differently by different subjects in different contexts, locations and personal paths (Pedwell, 2016).

Acknowledging some of the critical, feminist and anti-racist studies with regards to the value of empathy, I am not trying to provide a universal formula or remedy for social problems that can “move the privileged subject from empathy to selftransformation, to recognition or responsibility or obligation, to action” (Pedwell, 2013: 18-21). Neither a kind of empathy that, being in a privileged context, can appropriate the experiences of the people sharing their stories, reproducing colonial hierarchies that can silence those at the margins again by explaining what they must feel and experience (Pedwell, 2013: 19; Pedwell, 2016).

Within these pages, I am trying to expose one of the learnings that I got during the development of this project with Pam, Carolyne and Iraca. Talking from my experiences and within my context, I could see the connections that can exist between listening to life stories and the revaluation of empathy itself in a political dimension. And I propose it as a pacifist alternative that I hope could help us to surpass the limits of the single story (not excluding, of course, the co-existence and solidarity with other alternatives). I consider that a kind of political empathy could lead us to develop the capacities of agency and commitment based on responsibility, indignation (Martínez Guzmán et al., 2009: 105), performativity (Comins-Mingol and Martínez Guzmán, 2010: 58) and critical thinking to denounce the intersection of violence(s), inequalities (Gámez Fuentes et al., 2016: 837), and discrimination that come from the existing systems of oppression (Nos Aldás et al., 2021: 10) and the imbalances of stories.

Also, this could be a path to break frontiers and build bridges that can open the space for others (Vargas, 2022). Cultural and structural transformations could happen. The essence of these transformations would be the process of fostering a kind of empathy with others which is not “naïve” or superficial only by “no judging others” (Leoni, 2019: 150-152) going back later to the ‘normal’ and ‘problematic’ situation that still perpetuates a world of injustices (Feminism(s) and Degrowth Alliance, 2020). Rather, a kind of political empathy that can help

us to understand and address the specific contexts and needs of different individuals, groups and communities and their surroundings based on their personal stories and experiences.

Moreover, the reconsideration of the need and the presence of inclusive, democratic and emancipatory values and actions could be recognized with the different and subaltern voices that are telling their stories. Recovering, reflecting and understanding, then, the kind of empathy that we want to develop - considering the pluriverse of different experiences, stories and feelings - can be the initial point and the push to start questioning the imbalances of stories, power and the official discourses (capitalism, colonialism, liberalism, racism, patriarchy or ecocide) that have promoted the separation between humans with inequalities, injustices (López-Domínguez, 2016: 283) and diverse stories of power and powerless.

This is due to the fact that within this process an opportunity to reflect about our own privileges and power relationships could be possible. We could reflect about our roles in the perpetuation of the systems of power (Pedwell, 2016) and, also, about the need of decentering ourselves (Martínez Guzmán et al., 2009: 100-101) with the individualism that has embedded our western societies. Even if at the beginning this empathic process might start on a personal level, little by little with every person that starts to listen to other life stories (Lara-González, 2013), I think that the chance of finding new ways of perceiving, seeing, being and feeling with others ‘‘that do not simply confirm what we think we already know’’ (Pedwell, 2013: 26) can bring social consciousness.

We could reconsider the concepts of interconnectedness, justice, dignity and solidarity in order to demand collective solutions (Leoni, 2019: 130-131). It may be a path to start acting in a different, political and empathic way, in which life and care can be put at the center of our efforts (Barlow et al., 2020). It can be a path to think about how we want to live in proximity with others (Pedwell, 2016), moving from solitary resistance to collective resistance, solidarity (Gámez Fuentes et al., 2016: 840) and a truly more just society (Leoni, 2019: 152).

Nevertheless, if we want societies characterized by caring, some questions should be taken into consideration such as ‘‘Who is still being left out? Who is unrecognized? Which are their needs and their experiences?’’ (Eisenstein, 2018). In this sense, I have introduced that recognition is also one of the values that could be gained within the process of listening to others. In such a way, it should also be an important alternative for reconstructing our way of perceiving others and, also, all their stories.

However, I do not talk here about a kind of recognition that is based on tolerance of others’ stories. Following the perspective of peace studies and within a process of empathic listening and dialogue, I would like to propose recognition that focus on others’ stories, identities, integrity (Honneth, 1997 in Martínez Guzmán et al., 2009: 102), feelings, experiences, voices, values, hopes, intersections and differences as a path of emancipation, freedom (Comins-Mingol and Martínez Guzmán, 2010: 57) and connections within human relationships. Considering Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s (2009; 2018) ideas, I consider that it is not possible to connect and recognise others unless we try to listen to and understand all the stories that are part of that person, even if we do not share the same experiences. This commitment is the path for recognition.

In addition, recognition should involve the perspective of justice which is not neutral, but instead, it has its roots in the lack of understanding, subordination and oppression (Fraser in Comins-Mingol and Martínez Guzmán, 2010: 59) of some groups by the creators and promoters of the colonial matrix of power and the single story. As a consequence, recognition should include solidarity and care, considering each person with their identities, diversity (Martínez Guzmán et al., 2009: 90-91), plural stories and intersections as members with voice of a community of rights. This could suggest the recognition of migrant women that live and arrive at Castellón as members with rights (Martínez Guzmán et al., 2009: 102) that should participate and be part of this community with their journeys, experiences and voices.

This means a process of social justice and political care that should be relational (Kothari et al., 2019: XXXII) and that, as a result, can start by listening, knowing and recognizing the stories of others. Once that we start recovering our capacity of recognising and feeling for and with others, our commitment to achieve just societies in all their spheres (for instance, in the structural levels and the distribution of resources and opportunities, as pointed by Fraser in Comins-Mingol and Martínez Guzmán, 2010: 59) needs to go further than a process of social inclusion in the structures of inequalities (Eisenstein, 2018) and the existing status quo. It demands, then, a stronger engagement in a process of de-alienation (Bock, 2021: 173), democratization, *Sentipensar* (Botero Gómez in Kothari et al., 2019: 302) and community. This process involves a solidarity that should go along with our actions, commitments and responsibilities, recognising the capacities of the ones that had and have to remain at the margins of the single story (Martínez Guzmán, 2000: 86-87).

With the results of this project carried out within this master thesis, we need to recognise the capacities of migrant women that live and have arrived at Castellón as members of this community if we do not want to reproduce the single story. After all that I have exposed, I believe that this can happen if we change our way of perceiving others, going beyond the limits of the single story. In this sense, we also need to start opening opportunities for migrant women to develop their own capacities (Martínez Guzmán, 2000: 87) and use their own voices to express their needs, feelings and demands. It is about time to open the space for others (Vargas, 2022) which should be defined by listening and empathic dialogue (Erin, 2015: 42), expressing the world and our stories with our own words.

As a consequence, I would like to finish this last chapter with some proposals or projects that can help us to continue developing these connections and solidarity with migrant women and populations. Some of these might be related to political engagement, while some others

include the creation of spaces of dialogue that can also be related to the alternatives, values and learnings exposed.

3. 5. Creating more connections and solidarity

As I have presented, I would like to finish this third chapter with some proposals or projects that can help us to get closer to more life stories and to connect ourselves with the values and alternatives to perceive and recognise others in a more empathic, political, responsible and solidarity way.

Considering again the perspective of peace studies, one of the priorities for making peace(s) also highlights the need of listening to voices that have been silenced and oppressed (Martínez Guzmán et al., 2009: 105) by dominant narratives of the single story and the western culture. This has been one of the purposes of the thesis carried out. As a consequence, I would like to propose now a process to continue engaging with others' stories promoting the creation of spaces of dialogue, such as the one that has been created in this master thesis with the oral project with migrant women; or adapting it to the specific needs, contexts and positionalities of other subjects with voice participating. For doing that, I hope it could be useful the experience and reflections that I have shared regarding the understanding of oral methodologies, their use to listen to other's stories and the elements that the project should have, following especially a decolonial perspective. The aim is, above all, the avoidance of the reproduction of the single story and relationships of domination and power imbalances while creating these spaces of dialogue.

These spaces of dialogue could be created starting from a very small and interpersonal level. As I have said, even if it is little by little, every person that tries to make the effort of listening to and engaging with others can continue embarking her/him/themselves in a path of recognition, political empathy, agency and solidarity with others. In such a way, I invite the

reader to try to promote and have these spaces of dialogue with the migrant women and populations you probably have around as neighbors in Castellón (or other place), always having their previous consent to open the space of dialogue with them. Do not let prejudices stop you and try to break the frontiers that separate you from others. Try to connect with people you never imagined you would talk to, you might discover way more than what you think you already know about others' stories and the values that you can gain.

As a result, these spaces of dialogue could also be considered as projects that could be developed within social communities and neighborhoods with populations coming from a pluriverse of contexts and intersectionalities (also having their consent and their will to participate in this kind of spaces). I exposed within the second chapter the context and flows of mobility that continuously arrive at Castellón from many countries of Latin America, Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. As well, this is also probably the situation in other cities of Spain. In this sense, the creation of spaces of dialogue could be a way to foster the connections between the locals of Castellón and the new arrivals, getting to know more about each other, their stories, their needs in a process of interactive dialogue and listening.

This process of dialogue could be adapted to the needs and people of the community or neighborhood, as well. For instance, the group of people participating in the activity or space could be organized in pairs of two or small groups of three mixing locals and migrant population. The idea could be to have a small dialogue between them in which it could be possible to listen to the stories of the new arrivals, doing it in a space that should be felt free of prejudices, as well. These spaces of dialogue could also be developed in schools, universities or any place of Castellón in which we daily co-exist with migrant women and populations (working spaces, cultural centers, etc). Besides this, these spaces could also involve the participation of local organizations, both of locals and migrant populations (such as

‘Asociación Un Solo Corazón’ in Castellón) that might start getting in contact to develop future connections, partnerships and activities.

This could mean an opportunity to show the possibility for migrant women and more individuals of participating within the community of Castellón as members of the same with their own capacities, demands and voices. I believe that we can get many insights and learnings that can help us to develop collectively more just and solidarity societies if we start to include the voices, stories, feelings, experiences, needs and demands of all the members of the community (breaking the limits between ‘us’/the ‘other’); if we start opening opportunities for them too.

With regards to the last statement, I would like to share this space now with Renelyn Lastimosa (2022), highlighting the need of giving value to voices of migrant women within our communities and to proposals like the one she has carried out approaching the situation of migrant students in the level of education and high schools in Castellón. Being herself a migrant student that arrived at this city, Renelyn has been motivated by her own experiences, path, intersectionalities and stories to do this investigation and show her learnings, seeing the need of a proposal that could be considered a way of transformation.

As she exposed with her study, there exists a reality of invisibility in the classrooms of migrant students that arrive at Castellón. I could see the connections of part of her analysis with the reproduction of the colonial single stories and the systems of inequalities since one of the problems that she has exposed as causes of this invisibility was

that often teachers see ‘students’ with migrant background as a single monolithic group, known as the ‘other’ which in turn reduces the multiplicity of social identities among migrant communities in Spain (Lastimosa, 2022; 138).

Considering this problem, Renelyn warns us that, in the specific case of public high schools, teachers cannot continue to disregard social and cultural diversity. In this sense, a change is needed regarding classroom approaches so that migrant students can also participate in the

classroom with their own lived experiences (Lastimosa, 2022: 149). Hence, her proposal involves three Rs which mean Reception, Reciprocity and Reflection. Within the first R, Reception, Renelyn has also seen, among other elements, the importance of getting close to the social and historical backgrounds of the incoming students as a path that can allow teachers to be more aware of their realities and to design activities that can also interact and connect with them and not only with the realities of the local and dominant group of students. Renelyn has also considered the importance of intersectionality within these reception programs as a way to better understand the social complexities of students, as well as power dynamics in relation to education access (Lastimosa, 2022: 156-157).

Moreover, the third R, Reflection reveals a great significance of a person's situated realities in the case of both the teachers and students. As Renelyn explained:

Situated realities explain a person's background and how we see the world. If we acknowledge that the way we see the world is greatly influenced by our past experiences, we can gain a critical awareness of an individual's multifaceted identity rather than assuming that we are all 'created' and born equal (Lastimosa, 2022: 160).

In such a way, reflecting about this process of situatedness can help us to acknowledge the need of creating more opportunities for social identities and stories such as the ones of migrant students, or also migrant women, to be more visible. Also, I believe it can help us realize about the power imbalances that should be transformed with the recognition of all the realities, ways of seeing the world and past experiences that define each individual's multifaceted identity (Lastimosa, 2022: 160). I could find a connection here again between Renelyn's reflections and the importance of making visible the pluriverse of stories that each carries within her/him/themselves.

Learnings as the ones that Renelyn has presented are crucial to start reflecting about the need of bringing social change. We should show support to this kind of initiative which actually, in the case introduced, comes from the position, situatedness, learnings and

experience of Renelyn as a migrant as well. This is the solidarity I have tried to talk about before, pushing ourselves, the locals, to open more opportunities that can make, for instance, this proposal of Renelyn come true, applying it with all its value in many high schools of Castellón.

Also, in this sense we could show support to more initiatives such as the one called #RegularizaciónYa, a state movement self-organized by organizations, groups and migrants themselves that claim rights for these populations and communities. In such a way, their aims focused on the possibility of writing their own story as well as achieving social justice within the living experience of many migrants in Spain (Website #RegularizaciónYa, 2022). This action is still needed since there is not in Spain a migration law that fully ensures the rights and freedoms of migrant populations, as well as their social integration. As a consequence, the last changes approved in July of this year 2022 will supposedly allow some improvements for foreigners to work legally in our country. However, the critics raised towards these changes of the *Ley Migratoria Española*¹² (July, 2022) highlight that the changes promoted by the Spanish government have their roots in the lack of workers in sectors such as agriculture, construction or tourism.

The demands of the working force coming from the Spanish government have made again invisible the perspective of human rights (BBC New Mundo, 2022) that should be recognised for migrant populations due to the fact that mobility is considered as an unalienable right within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This continues happening in a country that benefits from the work that migrant populations keep doing accepting devalued, unqualified and precarious jobs, as I have generally exposed with the case of migrant women

¹² In case the reader wants to know more about the Ley Migratoria Española: MINISTERIO DE LA PRESIDENCIA, RELACIONES CON LAS CORTES Y MEMORIA DEMOCRÁTICA. 12504 Real Decreto 629/2022, de 26 de julio, por el que se modifica el Reglamento de la Ley Orgánica 4/2000, sobre derechos y libertades de los extranjeros en España y su integración social, tras su reforma por Ley Orgánica 2/2009, aprobado por el Real Decreto 557/2011, de 20 de abril (Julio, 2022).

in the second chapter of this master thesis. These obstacles related to the *Ley de Extranjería* and the recognition of human rights were produced by the consequences and colonialities of the single story, at the same time that they still reproduce the detached story of the 'other' in Spain.

As a result, we should engage locally and nationally in political transformation with actions and demands such as the one raised with the platform #RegularizaciónYa, as well as supporting projects and activities carried out by groups and organizations that try to make visible the situations, problems, injustices, as well as the dreams that migrants have when arriving and living in Spain. For instance, in the case of migrant women the group *Calala, Fondo de Mujeres* has been working since 2009 with this aim. They also try to promote the support and achievement of equal rights for migrant women. Moreover, one of the projects of this organization (called #Estamosaquí) has also focused on life stories of migrant women using their voices to tell their stories. If the reader would like to know more and engage with Alba, Fran, Dalila and Norma, their learnings and stories, feel free to find more information in the website of *Calala, Fondo de Mujeres*¹³.

Finally, as a volunteer of the organization The Human Library, I did not want to miss the opportunity to share an invitation for the reader to join the spaces of dialogue organized both presential in many cities or online by this platform. In Castellón we were lucky to organize a Human Library event this last January of 2022 and we have the hope to continue organizing it to bring a space where people can have real conversations that they would not normally have, going beyond prejudices listening to others' stories. It is true that these spaces of dialogue are not only focused on the stories of migrant women or populations, although they also participate with their voices and experiences. For instance, one of the participants of this master thesis, Pam, was able to share her stories in the event of January. Despite this, they can also give us a

¹³ Link of the website of this project of *Calala, Fondo de Mujeres*: calala.org/proyectos/estamosaqui/

chance to know more, interact and listen to the stories of many individuals who have been affected by the multiple levels of the single story with stigmatization and discrimination due to their ethnic origin, lifestyle, beliefs, love preferences, abilities or social status. In this sense, these spaces of dialogue can help us to expand the limits of the single story with a big pluriverse of voices, stories and experiences that live within many diverse people.

My final wish with these pages is to invite the reader to continue challenging and reflecting about the single story and its consequences; to continue supporting those who still suffer its effects and opening the space for them. I invite the reader to build more bridges (Vargas, 2022) with others not seeing them with prejudices and stereotypes. I invite the reader to connect with others and their stories, rejecting the single story because as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie suggested, when we realize that there is never a single story about any person, *we regain a kind of paradise* (Adichie, 2009).

3. 6. Conclusions

In this last chapter, I have presented my interpretation and the learnings that I got while developing and opening the space of dialogue with Pam, Carolyne and Iraca, which actually come from my situatedness within this project and not from a universal knowledge perspective. In such a way, I have exposed how Pam, Carolyne and Iraca, their stories and voices have challenged the limits of the single story with counter-narratives in which these three powerful women do not only talk about intersectionality, but they are, indeed, intersectionality (Belsué Guillorme, 2019). I could reflect about the pluriverse that has defined their paths, experiences, complexities, feelings and identities with the result that a single story should not exist for migrant women.

In such a way, I needed to express the absolute need of learning with these women and from their stories, values and strength to know and reflect about how these women have been

and are still impacted by all these systems of oppression, violence and the single story. This deconstructive process led me to acknowledge the lack of recognition that still exists related to these voices, the pluriverse they represent and the power of Pam, Carlyne and Iraca as actors of change within my western context. In this sense, the voices and stories of Pam, Carlyne and Iraca help me to realize about the commitment that we, the locals, need to also have to stop being blind to the effects of power, coloniality, modernity and the single story and to promote a change acknowledging, listening to and giving value to these extraordinary women and their stories.

As a consequence, I have presented my learnings with this space of dialogue connecting them with alternatives for a peaceful reconstruction. I have focused on the importance of learning new ways of perceiving, of feeling with and for others and also their stories which should be based, especially, on empathy, recognition and solidarity (Martínez Guzmán et al, 2009: 100-105). Nevertheless, I have also reflected about these values themselves to bring a path that can lead us to acknowledge and allow differences, the intersections that shape the different identities, positionalities and stories of others as a process of reflection and advocacy.

Hopefully, this would raise a feeling of indignation towards the injustices of the situations listened to with the personal stories and journeys. But, also a feeling of solidarity, political empathy, responsibility (stop being neutral) and agency to have more just societies and to open more spaces and opportunities for others with the recognition of migrant women as members with rights, voices and capacities within our communities in Castellón.

As a result, I have finally presented some proposals and projects that could help us to continue challenging the single story, listening to others' voices and trying to make others' identities and stories more visible. Some of these proposals have been related to the development of more spaces of dialogue, while others have involved more political and supportive engagement.

CONCLUSIONS

The motivations that I had when I started this master thesis were to begin challenging the single story that has been spread since colonial times and reproduced in a multiplicity of ways by our systems, structures and actors of power. I had the belief that it might be possible to provide or create a space of dialogue to listen and get close to the pluriverse of voices of individuals and groups that have suffered and still suffer the silence and violence of the story of separation. As I have stated along this master thesis, my aim with this work was not to bring a new hegemonic and universal knowledge. Situating myself and my personal context, and as long as it is not yet possible the complete transformation of the structures of power and inequalities that affect the daily lives of many people, I acknowledged that the ones that we have the most privileges can use them to make the situation of the oppressed visible. We can start to open the space for others and for their voices. In this sense, I really wanted to start learning with and from others, from their stories, realities, memories, feelings and experiences as a path that can help us to surpass the limits of the single and official story of separation in multiple ways to demand recognition and social transformation, as well.

In such a way, I considered the analysis of oral methodologies (oral history and life stories) as tools that could help me to design the space of dialogue where alternative voices and their pluriverse of stories could arise as a way to challenge the limits of the single story. Perhaps, they could contribute to the process of revealing the systems of oppression and power that still influence the stories and daily lives of many individuals, groups and communities. Moreover, I wanted to study the possible contributions that these methodologies could have with regards to alternatives and values that can foster the possibility of going beyond the single story with peaceful and new ways of perceiving and feeling with and for others and their stories.

With these considerations in mind, I considered the research questions, objectives and methodology that I would follow with the development of this master thesis.

However, to be able to carry out this investigation I had to embark myself within the first chapter on the journey to understand initially how the single story was created and maintained for centuries. I needed to understand why some stories have been considered to be more important while others have been silenced and ignored. As a consequence, I had to comprehend the reasons why we should challenge this problem. Hence, I could realize that the single story is a story of power. The actors, structures and systems of power, especially since the colonial times and the introduction of social, sexual and racial classifications and differences, have promoted a 'reality' of separation that have gone along with the existence of stereotypes and prejudices.

Within this process, knowledge has been a powerful tool to promote the coloniality of being and of knowing that have marked the path and the stories of the people that have suffered the consequences of colonialism and their coloniality. The Man/Human told and spread a homogenized story for all of them, reducing them into a collective character that has represented them with a single story. Moreover, this reductive story has been characterized by stigmas and stereotypes at the same time that it has ignored their particular experiences, paths and voices. This process of reductionism affected women, black and colour people, *mestizas* y *mestizos*, indigenous communities, migrants, queer people and many other subaltern groups that were forced to remain at the margins of the official history and story. Contrary to this, within this colonial reality the stories of a particular 'subject', the Man/Human, became the official History and story since the Man/Human entitled himself to appropriate other's capacity and their power to tell their own story. He also focused on a monocultural conception of differences as aspects that only created separation.

All this made me become aware of the need of promoting a decolonial shift that could start to question the hegemonic and single story of separation spread since colonial times (Roth, 2012: 1). Based on decolonial critiques and studies, alternatives should be considered to highlight a path for (new) narratives (Chakrabarty, 1995) that can promote the reflection about the official History and story to re-tell them from another place. This meant from the margins, from the pluriverse of voices of the colonized and the subaltern; from the diversity of perspectives, intersectionalities and stories that were marginalized and silenced at the margins of the single story (Guha, 2002 in Bidaseca and Vázquez, 2011: 24).

I could understand, then, the importance of engaging with decolonial alternatives in the process of decolonising stories and knowledge production, transforming not only its content, but also the terms of the conversation. As a result, I proposed the methodologies of oral history and life stories as tools that can help to listen and get close to alternative versions, perspectives, histories and stories (National Center of Historic Memory of Colombia, 2013: 15) of a pluriverse of subjects with voice. I exposed the decolonial contributions that these methodologies could bring since they can open a chance for a dialogical space in which many worlds and stories fit (Zapatistas of Chiapas in Kothari et al., 2019: XXVIII). Thus, with the use of these methodologies unbalanced power relationships can be challenged with the voices and stories of the subaltern expressing with autonomy the world in their own words and from their own localities (Rivas-Flores et al., 2020: 51).

The value given to these methodologies is located in the need of strengthening and listening to the voices and identities which were not 'authorized' or 'included' within the single story (Achugar, 1992: 67-68). This can have the benefit of empowering the people raising their voices, at the same time that personal stories and experiences that define the identity of each person can reveal the effects of the systems of oppression, inequalities and their coloniality. The concept of intersectionality revealed a great importance within this analysis, understanding

that factors such as race, class, gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, etc and their interconnections (Crenshaw, 1991: 89) should not be ignored as aspects that influence the personal path of each person, group and community.

Besides this, the approach to decolonial alternatives and studies provided me with important elements and concepts to empirically implement the methodologies of oral history and life stories within this master thesis. Going beyond the traditional notion of these oral methodologies, I had to reflect critically about their use following a decolonial perspective if I wanted to avoid the reproduction of asymmetrical and colonial relationships while trying to challenge the colonial single story. This analysis was essential, applying all the learnings and insights with the development of the oral project that focused on the life stories of migrant women that have arrived at Castellón.

With regards to the specific case study, in the second chapter I described the reasons why I decided to work together with migrant women as one of the groups and individuals that have suffered the colonialities of the single story on multiple levels. The initial analysis of the creation and maintenance of the single story led me to discovered the situation of its reproduction within the hegemonic western feminist discourses, theories and movements. I presented the role that these also had in the perpetuation of the silence imposed on the stories and voices of non-white bourgeois heterosexual women. In such a way, hegemonic femenist movements and discourses have talked about an international ‘sorority’ that has produced, instead, an homogenisation of the experiences and oppressions of all women. This homogenisation relates only to the experiences of the particular group in power as victims only of the patriarchal oppression based on sexual differences and binary terms.

This critique connected again with the use of knowledge as a way to sustain the coloniality of being and knowing that has affected especially racialised and subaltern women. In addition, the condition of racialised and subaltern women as migrants coming from global

South contexts supposed another level within the reproduction of the single story. As a result of all this, they have become 'the other' and they have been given a single story characterized by stigmas and prejudices. Also, this monolithic story has not taken into consideration the rich pluriverse of experiences, voices and stories that each of them might have carried on their long paths and life journeys growing up in their home countries, leaving them or arriving at a new place. In such a way, intersectionality revealed the void that exists when considering the stories of migrant women, in particular the ones of migrant women that arrive from non-western, subaltern and racialised contexts.

Acknowledging all the levels of coloniality of the single story that have affected migrant women, I tried to challenge the single story with the development of an oral project with three migrant women that have arrived at Castellón: Pam, Carolyne and Iraca. My intention was to try to open a space that could show and help us to engage with the existence of a pluriverse of stories of migrant women, especially racialised and subaltern women that have come from a diversity of contexts, experiences and stories. As a result, my objective was also to try to challenge the coloniality of being and knowledge that have promoted universalism, reductionism and colonial differences as a single totality for the subaltern (Mignolo, 2018: 3; 147). I wanted to start questioning the monolithic category of migrant women which has been presumed and is still reduced to a single 'less' human with a single identity. Going beyond this, I wanted to try to understand the pluriverse and the complexities that could have defined the stories and paths of these three powerful migrant women, Pam, Carolyne and Iraca, in all the different stages of their lives and coming from different contexts of the global South.

With these objectives in mind, I applied the decolonial perspective studied within the first chapter to be able to design an oral project in which I could avoid the perpetuation of power imbalances. Instead, my hope was to promote horizontal and collaborative relationships

between myself as the researcher and the participants as actors and subjects with voice. I tried to put care at the center of the design and the development of this project. I also emphasized the importance of elements such as positionality, relationality, intersectionality, accountability, dialogue or localism in a process of proximity to the personal stories of Pam, Carlyne and Iraca and the journeys which made them arrive at Castellón. I also considered empathy, understanding and friendship as important values that I should foster in my conversations with these three brave women. In this sense, the significance of these values made me take the decision to carry out an oral project that should be based on quantitative research with a small number of participants so that I could be able to foster care, trust and connections with the three participants sharing their life stories, testimonies and diversity.

Following the design of the oral project, I also presented the steps required to continue with the creation of the space of dialogue. I prepared the materials (Questionnaire and Consent form) that were needed to carry out the interviews and dialogues with Pam, Carlyne and Iraca, presenting them as actors of this project with their voices and stories. I introduced the organization of the interviews, preparing them together and deciding the details, such as the place or language, with the *pilot interviews*. This meant a process of fostering and cultivating mutual support and collaboration within the relationships of partnership between myself and Pam, Carlyne and Iraca who were, indeed, the main actors of this oral project.

After this, I gave the space to the pluriverse of stories and voices of Pam, Carlyne and Iraca, presenting also the methodology of life stories that I implemented to present their stories in a written format after the dialogues and the time that we shared together. I sincerely hope that the reader could have gotten closer to the stories and voices of Pam, Carlyne and Iraca, acknowledging their power, strength and resilience. I truly hope that the reader could have felt the respect and admiration that I felt for these three incredible women and for all that they have taught me when sharing their stories.

Finally, in the last chapter of this master thesis I have presented my interpretation with regards to the pluriverse of stories opened in the previous chapter with the voices of Pam, Carolyne and Iraca. I could reflect about the diversity that has characterized their journeys, experiences, feelings and identities, understanding that there is not a standard story that can relate to a monolithic and single category of migrant women. On the contrary, I consider that the stories and voices of Pam, Carolyne and Pam have challenged the limits of the single story with counter-narratives in which these three powerful women do not only talk about intersectionality, but they are, indeed, intersectionality (Belsué Guillorme, 2019) with all their complexities, moments of beauty, loss and resilience.

Having the three of them as common their condition as migrants that have come to Castellón, I could realize that each of their stories is very personal. In such a way, each story of migration is lived and felt in a different manner. Moreover, even within one person there can be multiple stories to tell and listen to as these three strong women have shown us by diversifying all the categories of *subject* with *voice*, *women* and *migrant* which have previously related to the norm or group in power. Besides this, their stories can be considered as counter-narratives due to the diversity that they have revealed with reference to concepts like migration, gender, race, class or sexuality; as well as for the values that they show, such as empathy, kindness, love, strength, resilience and hope while facing the effects of the coloniality of the single story. As a result, the stories and voices of Pam, Carolyne and Iraca have challenged the attitude of superiority of the creators and the ones that have promoted the maintenance of the colonial matrix of power in multiple ways.

These are the reasons why I stated the need of learning from and with these powerful women and their stories, which unfortunately are still impacted by the violence of all these systems of oppression and the power of the single and reductive story of separation. I needed to state the still lack of recognition of these stories and experiences, the pluriverse they

represent and the power of women such as Pam, Carolyne and Iraca as actors of change within my western context. In this sense, the interpretation that I have presented about this pluriverse did not mean the banalization or ignorance of the effects that the single story and the systems of oppression could have generally had on migrant or other subaltern, marginalized and racialised individuals and groups, invisibilizing all their life experiences, complexities, feelings and visions of the world and transforming them into the 'Other' with the perspective of differences as a monocultural separation.

Rather, Pam, Carolyne and Iraca and their stories helped me to realize the still need that exists in the local society of Spain and Castellón to engage and give all the value that these women, their voices, power and strengtheness deserve. The locals, in which I include myself, need to show a real commitment to also stop being blind to the effects of power, coloniality, modernity and the single story; and to promote a change acknowledging, listening to and perceiving these extraordinary women and their stories in a reconstructive way.

In this way, I wanted to explore and present the potential and the possible contributions that the pluriverse of stories can have to promote the breakdown of the single story with a change in how we can perceive and recognize others. In order to do this, I tried to connect my learnings with the space of dialogue created with Pam, Carolyne and Iraca with alternatives of reconstruction promoted by peace studies. I focused especially on the importance of learning new ways of perceiving and feeling with and for others and, I also included here, their stories. I exposed that these alternative paths should be based, especially, on empathy, recognition and solidarity (Martínez Guzmán et al, 2009: 100-105). Exploring the concept of *ethical witnessing* in relation to the use of oral methodologies, I think that the reflection about these values from a decolonial and peaceful perspective can be possible, producing a change in the person receiving and listening to life stories of others. This could be a process to understand that each

of us feel and think from different contexts, origins, intersections and experiences that have made us walk through a diversity of paths and with different shoes.

In such a way, we need new ways to think about values such as empathy and recognition that can guide us to acknowledge and allow each others' differences, the intersections that shape the different identities, positionalities, needs and stories of others, broadening the joining (Lorde, 1984). Moreover, this could happen in a process that can bring reflection and solidarity, feeling indignation towards the injustices of the situations listened to with the personal stories. But, hopefully this could also lead us to reflect about our capacities of action to open the space and opportunities for others, their stories and their identities; to stop being neutral and perceive ourselves as conscious actors that can denounce the situations of violence; to put care at the center of our connections, considering each person with their identities and pluriverse; to break borders between us and others; to reconsider the concepts of interconnectedness and justice in order to demand collective solutions in all the spheres; to think about political empathy, commitment, responsibility and agency to have more just societies with the support and recognition, in this case study, of migrant women as members with rights, voices and capacities within our communities in Castellón.

With these ideas in mind, I concluded the last chapter with a small section of proposals and projects that might be useful to continue challenging the limits of the single story. I tried to highlight the need of continuing listening to others' voices and making their identities and stories more visible with the development of more spaces of dialogue or with the engagement with political and supportive action.

After all that I have exposed, I believe that all these contributions listening to others' stories and voices can be possible if we start changing our way of perceiving others, going beyond the limits of the single story. As a result of this master's thesis I believe that we can have the capacities for changing, for opening the space for others and for political and social

action starting first by cultivating our commitment to listen to others and their stories. This can be the path to understand that all stories matter.

Concluding my experience

On a personal level, the experience with this master's thesis has brought me many important lessons that have allowed me to grow in the academic sense, but also in a personal and human way. The academic project that I have presented with all its research, steps, elements and relationships of partnership has meant a continuous process of learning for me that I hope it can continue in the future. I especially learnt about the importance of situating myself and my work. I have to recognise that sometimes this long journey had some difficult moments trying to realize the consequences of the single story that still affect the lives of many people and the role I could have had in its perpetuation. There have been many times in which I have doubted about myself during the process of this master's thesis and how I could avoid power imbalances or doing new harm to the ones that have partnership and supported me with this master's thesis.

However, I can say now that this bumpy journey has been totally worth it and I feel honored for having had the opportunity of carrying out this master's thesis and for having learnt with extraordinary voices and stories. I feel very grateful for the possibility that I had to connect with Pam, Carolyne and Iraca from their own places of enunciation. In this sense, one of my biggest lessons has been the acknowledgement and perception of differences as a path of connection and learnings, as well. I believe more than ever on the fact that we are shaped by and we live through the stories that talk about our experiences, contexts, identities and relationships; stories that can be personal, social, political, economic or cultural. For me, this has meant the recognition of the fact that each person can carry a specific knowledge which is the result of our plural understanding of the world and the position we occupy in it, leading this to the need to continue opening the space for more voices, identities and stories.

My hope now for the future is to continue fostering the challenge of the single story in this sense within my academic and professional work. I hope I can continue learning with and from others, at the same time that I keep all the values that I got with the development of this master's thesis. Empathy, recognition and solidarity will be the guidelines to keep on reflecting about my positionality and my capacities for opening the space for others, their stories and for political action since we still need a change in our educational and structural institutions and systems. As Chimamanda Ngozi (2021) has warned us, we cannot continue choosing *which stories and which points of views still matter because to do this would be (still) an ugly exercise of brute power.*

I hope that these values will also accompany me in my personal path and growth to carry on finding new ways of perceiving and supporting others and their stories; new ways of fostering care and cultivating my connections with others, getting to know more beautiful, resilient and powerful pluriverses. I wish I can be able to look and listen beyond stigmas and stereotypes.

For all this, I hope that my experience and insights with this master's thesis could have brought some motivation on the reader to reflect about the need of continuing challenging and rejecting the single story together and with others. I do not pretend to transform my experience now into a single story. Rather, I hope that the reader can find his/her/their own way to understand the existence of a pluriverse of voices and stories since all stories matter. I hope that we can regain a kind of paradise and that we can do it together, listening to each other, supporting each other, caring for each other, and feeling with and for each other.

I would like to end with this thought: when we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place (or any person), we regain a kind of paradise (Adichie, 2009).

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ANNEX 1: Materials of the interviews

In this Annex 1, the reader can find the materiales that I have designed and used for the preparation of the interviews with Pam, Carolyne and Iraca. The aim was to get close to the pluriverse of their voices and stories. Firstly, I have included the *Questionnaire of the interviews* which involves a diversity of questions since it has been considered as an open guideline to use while carrying out the interviews. Secondly, I have attached the *Consent form* which was needed to get the permission from the participants to listen, record, share and learn with their stories within this master thesis and having purely an academic and human intention to develop it.

1. Questionnaire of the interviews

Personal data/ Datos personales:

1. What is your name? / ¿Cómo te llamas?
2. How old are you? / ¿Cuántos años tienes?
3. Where were you born? When? / ¿Dónde y cuándo naciste?
4. What is/was the name of your parents? / ¿Cómo se llaman/llamaban tus padres?
5. What is or was their profession? / ¿De qué trabajan o trabajaban tus padres?
6. Do you have brothers or sisters? (Order and ages of siblings) / ¿Tienes hermanxs?
(Orden y edades de lxs hermanxs).

Infancy/ Infancia

7. Do you know how did your parents meet? / ¿Sabes cómo se conocieron tus padres?
8. Where did you live when you were a child? / ¿Dónde viviste cuando eras pequeñx?

9. Did you live many years in the same house or place where you were born? / ¿Viviste muchos años en la casa o lugar en el que naciste?
10. Did the family move? Where did you live after? / ¿La familia se mudó? ¿Dónde viviste después?
11. Was it hard to leave your hometown? Did you move far away? / ¿Fue duro dejar el lugar natal? ¿Te mudaste a otro lugar lejano?
12. Did you have a first impression about the new place? And about the people living there? / ¿Qué primeras impresiones tuviste del nuevo lugar? ¿Y de la gente que vivía allí?
13. Which memories do you have from your infancy? / ¿Qué memorias tienes de tu infancia?
14. Did you have a group of friends? / ¿Tenías un grupo de amigxs?
15. How did you meet your friends? Were they from the neighbourhood or school? / ¿Cómo conociste a tus amigxs? ¿Eran otrxs niñxs del barrio o del colegio?
16. What did you use to do together? / ¿Qué solíais hacer juntxs?
17. What kind of games did you play? Did all the kids play the same games, regardless of the gender? / ¿A qué juegos jugabais? ¿Jugaban a los mismos juegos todxs lxs niñxs, sin importar el género?
18. Did your parents let you play with anyone you wanted? Or did social considerations have an influence? / ¿Tus padres te dejaban jugar con quien quisieras? O, por el contrario, ¿afectaban las consideraciones sociales?
19. What did you like to do? Sport, music, etc? / ¿Qué aficiones tenías? ¿Deporte? ¿Música o baile?
20. Did your body experience any change at a young age? (Period, for example) What did it suppose for your body, for you and for your family? / ¿Experimentó tu cuerpo

algún cambio desde temprana edad? (El periodo, por ejemplo) ¿Qué supuso ese cambio para tu cuerpo, para ti y tu familia?

School and education / Escuela y educación:

21. Did you go to school? / ¿Fuiste a la escuela?
22. At what age did you start going? / ¿A qué edad empezaste la escuela?
23. Did you like to go to school? / ¿Te gustaba ir a la escuela?
24. Which kind of school was it (Public, private, religious, separated by genders, mix, etc)? / ¿A qué tipo de escuela fuiste (Pública, privada, religiosa, separada por sexos, mixta, etc)?
25. Do you remember something special about your education? / ¿Recuerdas algo destacable de tu educación?
26. Do you think that all kids had the same education in your school? Was there any difference in subjects or skills regarding gender? / ¿Consideras que todxs lxs niñxs recibían la misma educación? ¿Había diferencias de asignaturas o habilidades en función del género?
27. Did you think that all kids had the same opportunities to attend to school or continue their studies? / ¿Consideras que todxs lxs niñxs tenían las mismas oportunidades para ir a la escuela o continuar sus estudios?
28. In case you attended a religious school, how did religion influence your education? / En caso de haber asistido a un colegio religioso, ¿cómo influyó la religión en tu educación?
29. Did you always go to the same school? What was the reason for changing the school? / ¿Fuiste siempre al mismo colegio? ¿A qué se debió el cambio a otro colegio?

30. In case you change of school, was there any difference between the previous and the new school? / En caso de haber cambiado, ¿qué diferencia había entre el antiguo y el nuevo colegio?
31. How many years did you go to school? / ¿Cuántos años fuiste a la escuela?
32. At what age did you finish or leave school? / ¿A qué edad terminaste o dejaste la escuela?
33. Did you continue your studies after school or did you directly start working? / ¿Continuaste con tus estudios posteriormente o empezaste la vida laboral?
34. Would you have continued your studies in case you have had the chance? / ¿Habrías continuado tus estudios de haber tenido la oportunidad?
35. In case you continued studying, which studies did you do? Did you go to university? / En caso de haber continuado estudiando, ¿qué estudios realizaste? ¿Universidad?

Familiar life and home/ Vida familiar y hogar:

36. Which memories do you have from your home? When you were a kid, did you like to live there? / ¿Qué memorias tienes de tu hogar? ¿Cuándo eras pequeñx, te gustaba vivir en tu casa?
37. What kind of things could you do at home? Was there a televisión, radio? / ¿Qué tipo de actividades podías hacer en casa? ¿Había televisión, radio, etc?
38. Did you have visits from the family or neighbours? / ¿Recibíais visitas de vecinxs o familiares?
39. Tell me about your house, could you describe it? / Háblame de la casa, ¿podrías describirla?
40. Which part of the house did you like the most when you were a child? / Qué parte de la vivienda era la que más te gustaba cuando eras pequeñx?

41. Did you have a room for yourself or did you have to share it with your siblings? /
¿Tenías una habitación propia para ti o la compartías con tus hermanxs?
42. How was organised the familiar life? Were the tasks distributed? / ¿Cómo se
organizaba la vida familiar? ¿Había distribución de tareas?
43. Do you think that life at home was very different, as compared to the present
moment? Why? / ¿Consideras que la vida familiar era muy diferente a la actual?
¿Por qué?
44. Who was in charge of taking care of the children? / ¿Quién cuidaba de los hijxs en
el hogar?
45. Did your dad help you mom with any task at home? / ¿Ayudaba tu padre a tu madre
en alguna de las tareas del hogar?
46. How was the situation at home? Was it stable economically? / ¿Cómo era la
situación familiar? ¿Era estable económicamente?
47. Who was the main responsible of bringing economic resources? / ¿Quién era el
principal responsable de los ingresos familiares?
48. Did your mom continue working after she got married or did she just take care of
the house? / ¿Tu madre continuó trabajando una vez casada o se dedicaba solo al
hogar?
49. How was the relationship with your parents? / ¿Cómo era la relación con tus padres?
50. Could you talk easily with them? / ¿Se podía hablar fácilmente con ellxs?
51. Did you spend a lot of time with them? / ¿Pasabas mucho tiempo con tus padres?
52. Did your parents consider that all the children had to be raised in the same way,
regardless of gender? / ¿Consideraban tus padres que todxs lxs hijxs debían de ser
criadxs de la misma manera, sin importar el género?

53. How was the relationship with your siblings? / ¿Cómo era la relación con tus hermanxs?
54. Besides your parents and siblings, did someone else live at the house? For example, your grandparents or another family member? / ¿Residía alguien más en la casa, además de sus padres y hermanxs? Por ejemplo, lxs abuelxs u otrx familiar.
55. Do you remember your grandparents? How was the relationship with them? / ¿Recuerdas a tus abuelxs? ¿Cómo era la relación con ellxs?
56. Which is your happiest memory at home? / ¿Cuál es el recuerdo más feliz que tienes en tu hogar familiar?

Youth/ Juventud:

57. Did you meet new friends during these years? / ¿Conociste a nuevxs amigxs durante tu juventud?
58. How were the relationships with other young people? Which was the way to socialise? / ¿Cómo eran las relaciones con otrxs jóvenxs? ¿Cómo era la forma de socializar?
59. In your free time, what did you use to do? / En tu tiempo libre, ¿qué solías hacer?
60. Were you allowed to go out at night? / ¿Tenías permiso para salir por las noches?
61. Did your gender condition have an influence? Did you feel that people from your close context tried to overprotect you? / ¿Tu género tuvo alguna influencia? ¿Pensabas que la gente de tu contexto cercano intentaba sobreprotegerte?
62. Did you parents disapprove any of the activities you did? / ¿Desaprobaban tus padres alguna de las actividades que realizabas?
63. Did your parents know your friends? What did they think about them? / ¿Conocían tus padres a tus amigxs? ¿Qué opinaban de ellxs?

64. How were the relationships with the other genders while being a youth? / ¿Cómo eran las relaciones con lxs otrxs géneros durante tu juventud?
65. Was it during these years that you started to know and experience your sexuality? What did that suppose for you and your social-familiar context? / ¿Fue durante tu juventud que empezaste a experimentar tu sexualidad? ¿Qué supuso esto para ti y tu contexto socio-familiar?
66. Did you have any romance while being young? / ¿Tuviste algún amor en tu juventud?
67. Which was the discourse about sexuality and relationships at that moment? / ¿Cuál era el discurso sobre sexualidad y relaciones en ese momento?
68. Do/did you believe in romantic love? / ¿Crees o creías en el amor romántico?
69. Did something remarkable happen during these young years? / ¿Ocurrió algo destacable durante tu juventud?
70. Did you move somewhere else or did you still live at your hometown? / ¿Te mudaste a algún lugar nuevo o seguías viviendo en tu hogar natal?
71. Was there any political or social change during these years? How was your experience related to it? / ¿Hubo algún cambio político o social importante durante esos años? ¿Cómo lo viviste?
72. Did you continue your studies after school? What kind of studies? / ¿Continuaste tus estudios después de la escuela? ¿Qué tipo de estudios?
73. In case you study at university, how were those years of education? / En caso de haber cursado estudios universitarios, ¿cómo fueron esos años de educación?
74. Did college suppose any important change in your life? New friends? New political attitudes, intellectual thoughts, etc? / ¿Supuso la universidad algún cambio

importante en su vida? ¿Nuevxs amigxs? ¿Nuevas actitudes políticas, pensamientos intelectuales, etc?

75. If you couldn't continue with your studies, did you work? Where? / Si no continuaste con tus estudios, ¿trabajabas? ¿Dónde?

Adulthood/ Edad adulta:

76. Do you think you become an 'adult' in a specific moment or with a particular experience? / ¿Piensas que te convertiste en 'adultx' en un momento específico o con alguna experiencia en particular?

77. How is/ was your life during these years? / ¿Cómo es/ era tu vida en esos años?

78. Do/did you experience any change? New job? Home? Country? / ¿Experimentas/ experimentaste algún cambio? ¿Nuevo trabajo? ¿Casa? ¿País?

79. What expectations do/ did you have at that moment? / ¿Qué expectativas tienes/ tenías en ese momento?

80. Do/ did you have a romantic relationship? / ¿Tienes/ tenías una relación romántica?

81. How did you meet your partner? / ¿Cómo conociste a tu pareja?

82. Where is your partner from? / ¿De dónde es tu pareja?

83. Was your partner born in Castellón or did your partner arrive as a migrant? / ¿Es natural de Castellón o llegó como migrantx?

84. How many years have you been together? / ¿Cuántos años lleváis juntxs?

85. Is or was your relationship socially 'well-considered'? Or have you experience some prejudices? / ¿Es o era vuestra relación 'bien vista' en la sociedad? O, por el contrario, ¿habéis experimentado algún tipo de prejuicios?

86. What is or was the opinion of your family and close friendships? / ¿Cuál es o era la opinión de tu familia y amistades cercanas?

87. Can/ could you live together at the same place? / ¿Habéis podido vivir juntxs en el mismo sitio?
88. Are you married? / ¿Estás casadx?
89. Did you need the permission from your parents to get married? / ¿Necesitaste la aprobación de tus padres para poder contraer matrimonio?
90. Did you get married in Castellón or in your home country? / ¿Te casaste en Castellón o en tu país?
91. How was the juridical process? Too much bureaucracy? /¿Cómo fue el proceso a nivel burocrático?
92. Do you remember the day of the wedding? Any traditions regarding it? / ¿Recuerdas el día de tu boda? ¿Alguna tradición relacionada con el matrimonio?
93. At what age did you get married? Do you think you were very young? / ¿A qué edad te casaste? ¿Consideras que eras muy joven?
94. What age did your partner have when you got married? / ¿Qué edad tenía tu pareja cuando os casasteis?
95. Did you feel pressured to get married? / ¿Te sentiste presionada para casarte?
96. After getting married, where did you live? Did you continue living in the familiar house or did you get a new house? / Tras casarte, ¿dónde viviste? ¿Seguisteis viviendo en la casa familiar o comprasteis una casa propia?
97. In case you moved, what was the reason? / En caso de mudarse, ¿cuál fue el motivo?
98. Did you continue working after getting married? / ¿Seguiste trabajando una vez casada?
99. What did your partner think about continue working? / ¿Qué opinaba tu pareja de que continuases trabajando?
100. Do you have children? (Order and age) / ¿Has tenido hijxs? (Orden y edad).

101. How was the pregnancy period? / ¿Cómo fue el periodo de embarazo?
102. Did your body experience many changes? / ¿Experimentó tu cuerpo muchos cambios?
103. And the period after giving birth? Was it difficult to go back to normal life or were there too many changes? / ¿Y el periodo tras el parto? ¿Fue difícil volver a la vida normal o hubo muchos cambios?
104. Did you feel any social pressure to have kids? / ¿Tuviste algún tipo de presión social para tener hijxs?
105. Or have you always had the feeling and desire of becoming a mom? / ¿O siempre has tenido el sentimiento y deseo de ser madre?
106. At home, how have you organised the familiar life? / En cuanto al hogar, ¿cómo habéis organizado la vida familiar?
107. Do you live with your partner and kids? Or, do they live in other place or country? / ¿Vives con tu pareja e hijxs? O, ¿viven en otro lugar o país?
108. Have you organised it collectively with your partner? Or do you feel you might need help with different tasks at home? / ¿La habéis organizado de forma colectiva con tu pareja? O, ¿crees que te haría falta un poco de ayuda con algunas tareas en casa?
109. Which one do you think is your role within the family? / ¿Cuál crees que es tu papel dentro de la familia?
110. Who takes care of the kids most of the times? / ¿Quién cuida de los hijxs la mayor parte del tiempo?
111. Who is the main responsible of bringing economic resources? / ¿Quién es el principal responsable de los ingresos familiares?

112. In case you stop working, did you need to do it again? / En caso de haber dejado de trabajar, ¿en algún momento te viste necesitadx de volver a trabajar?
113. Do you think that raising a kid/kids is difficult? / ¿Consideras que criar a lxs hijxs es complicado?
114. Are you still married? / ¿Sigues casadx?
115. If no, how many years did the marriage last? / En caso de que no, ¿cuántos años duró su matrimonio?
116. In case the marriage ended, how was the process? Did you feel any prejudice for getting divorce? / En caso de haber finalizado, ¿cómo fue el proceso? A nivel social, ¿sentiste algún tipo de prejuicio por divorciarte?
117. Did you get married again? / ¿Te has vuelto a casar?
118. What is your opinion about marriage now? / ¿Cuál es tu opinión sobre el matrimonio ahora?

Working experience / Experiencia laboral:

119. At what age did you start working? / ¿A qué edad empezaste a trabajar?
120. Did you have to work while you were at school? / Mientras que ibas a la escuela, ¿tenías que trabajar también?
121. Which was your first job? / ¿Cuál fue tu primer trabajo?
122. Was the salary good for the job? / ¿El salario era adecuado al trabajo?
123. Did you have to give part of your salary to help economically to your family? / ¿Debías dar una parte del salario para ayudar con el mantenimiento familiar?
124. For how long did you work in your first job? / ¿Durante cuánto tiempo trabajaste en tu primer trabajo?

125. Did it suppose any important change in your life? For instance, independence of the family / ¿Supuso algún cambio importante en su vida? Por ejemplo, la independencia del hogar familiar.
126. In which jobs have you worked after that? / ¿En qué trabajos has estado posteriormente?
127. Have you changed a lot of job? Which job was the longest one? / ¿Has cambiado mucho de trabajo? ¿Cuál fue tu trabajo de mayor duración?
128. Have you felt pressure to carry out certain types of jobs in your context or society or here in Castellón? / ¿Te has sentido presionadx a realizar cierto tipo de trabajos en tu contexto o sociedad, o aquí en Castellón?
129. How are/ were the relationships with the colleagues? / ¿Cómo son/ eran las relaciones entre lxs trabajadorxs?
130. Do/ did men, women and other genders work together? / ¿Trabajáis/ trabajaban juntxs hombres, mujeres y otros géneros?
131. Regarding your gender, how do/ did you feel at work? / En relación a tu género, ¿cómo te sientes/ sentiste en el trabajo?
132. Do/did you have a supervisor or boss? What do/did you think about that person? / ¿Tienes o tenías unx supervisorx? ¿Qué opinas/ opinabas de esa persona?
133. Does/ did the supervisor or boss treat the workers well? / ¿Trata o trataba bien a sus trabajadorxs?
134. If you have moved to other place, was it easy to get a job in the new place? / Si te has mudado de lugar, ¿ha sido fácil conseguir un trabajo en el lugar nuevo?
135. Did you notice there were many changes as compared to your home country? / ¿Notaste que había muchos cambios en comparación a tu país natal?

136. Have you ever felt you did not have access to certain jobs? / ¿Alguna vez has sentido que no tenías acceso a determinados trabajos?
137. Could you get a job related to your studies? / ¿Puedes trabajar de lo que has estudiado?
138. How do you feel now in your working life? / ¿Cómo te sientes ahora en tu vida laboral?

Community and class/ Comunidad y clase

139. How was the community in your neighbourhood, village or city in your home country? Were there feelings of belonging to the community? / ¿Cómo era la comunidad en tu barrio, pueblo o ciudad en tu país? ¿Había algún sentimiento de pertenencia a una comunidad entre los vecinos residentes?
140. Did your neighbourhood had all the services needed to live? / ¿Tu barrio tenía todos los servicios necesarios para vivir?
141. Did you think that in your neighbourhood, village or city there were differences of class? / ¿Consideras que en tu barrio, pueblo o ciudad había diferencias de clase?
142. Were there different social groups? How were the relationships between them? / ¿Existían distintos grupos sociales? ¿Cómo eran las relaciones entre ellos?
143. Did you think that your family belonged to a specific social group? / ¿Consideras que tu familia pertenecía a un grupo social en particular?
144. In your neighbourhood, village or city, were some families or certain people considered as the most important or privilege ones? / En tu barrio, pueblo o ciudad, ¿había familias o determinadas personas consideradas como las más importantes o de mayor prestigio?

145. Did other racial groups or minorities live in your neighbourhood, village or city?
What was the social percepción about them? / ¿Vivían otros grupos raciales o minoritarios en tu barrio o pueblo? ¿Cuál era la percepción social hacia ellos?
146. Were there migration cases in your neighbourhood, village or city? / ¿Había mucha migración en tu barrio, pueblo o ciudad?
147. Were there women organizations? Did they play a role in the communities? / ¿Había organizaciones de mujeres? ¿Qué papel tenían en las comunidades?

Religion/ Religión:

148. How important was religion in your family? / ¿Cuánta importancia tenía para su familia la religión?
149. Did you practice it frequently? / ¿Se practicaba el culto con frecuencia?
150. How did religion influence your education and social life? / ¿Cómo influía la religión en tu educación y vida social?
151. Were you part of a religious community? / ¿Formabas parte de una comunidad religiosa?
152. Did you participate in activities organised by the cult place or your religious community? / ¿Participaba en otras actividades organizadas por el lugar de culto o por su comunidad religiosa?
153. Do you still believe in and practice religion? How important is it for you in your daily life? / ¿Aún cree y practica la religión? ¿Cuánta importancia tiene para ti en tu vida diaria?

Politics/ Política:

154. Was there any political interest or participation in your family? / ¿Había interés o participación familiar en la política?
155. Did your family talk about politics? Why? Why not? Was it dangerous? / ¿Se hablaba en tu familia de la situación política? ¿Por qué? ¿Por qué no? ¿Era peligroso para tu familia hablar de política?
156. Did you know which were the political opinions of your parents? / ¿Sabes cuáles eran las opiniones políticas de tus padres?
157. How did the political situation influence the family? / ¿Cómo afectaba la situación política a la familia?
158. And the neighbourhood or village? / ¿Y al barrio o pueblo?
159. Did/ Do you participate in any political activity or party? Do you remember when you started to have an interest in politics? / ¿Participaste/ participas en alguna actividad o partido político? ¿Recuerdas cuándo empezaste a interesarte en la política?
160. Have you experience any important political moment? / ¿Has vivido algún momento político de importancia?
161. Do you feel represent in the political discourses and movements? Why? Why not? / ¿Te sientes representadx en los discursos y movimientos políticos? ¿Por qué? ¿Por qué no?

Migration/ Migración

162. Which were the news in your home country about the possibilities to migrate to Spain or Castellón? / ¿Cuáles eran las noticias en tu hogar natal acerca de las posibilidades de migrar a España o Castellón?

163. Did you have any relatives or friends here? / ¿Tenías a algún familiar o conocidx aquí?
164. Which were your feelings and opinions about migration? / ¿Cuáles eran tus sentimientos u opiniones acerca de la migración?
165. Which were the feelings about leaving your home country? / ¿Cuáles eran tus sentimientos acerca de dejar tu país de origen?
166. Did you think you could go back soon? / ¿Pensabas que podrías volver pronto?
167. Which were the reasons to leave? Did you have a project in mind? / ¿Cuáles eran las razones para migrar? ¿Tenías algún proyecto en mente?
168. How was the process of leaving your country? / ¿Cómo fue el proceso de salida de tu país?
169. Did you find any problem or difficulty while travelling? / ¿Encontraste algún problema o dificultad al viajar?
170. Were you traveling alone? / ¿Viajabas solx?
171. Did you have to stop in other places or countries before arriving to Castellón? / ¿Tuviste que parar en otros lugares o países antes de llegar a Castellón?
172. How did you arrive in Castellón? / ¿Cómo llegaste a Castellón?
173. Why did you come to Spain and Castellón? Who took the decision of migrating here? / ¿Por qué viniste a España y Castellón? ¿Quién tomó la decisión de migrar aquí?
174. Which was the first impression of the new place? / ¿Cuál fue la primera impresión del nuevo lugar?
175. Did you have expectations about the new place? / ¿Tenías expectativas sobre el nuevo lugar?
176. How did your new life start here? / ¿Cómo empezó tu nueva vida aquí?

177. Did you have the support of your family and relatives, even if they were far away from you? / ¿Tuviste el apoyo de tu familia y conocidxs, aunque ellxs estuviesen lejos de ti?
178. Did you feel alone at any moment? / ¿Te sentiste solx en algún momento?
179. Which kind of help or resources are given to the migrants arriving in Castellón? / ¿Qué tipo de ayuda o recursos se dan a lxs migrantxs recién llegdxs a Castellón?
180. How was the process to get the legal papers? When did you get your permission of residence and work? / ¿Cómo fue el proceso de conseguir los papeles legales? ¿Cuándo conseguiste el permiso de residencia y trabajo?
181. Did you ever feel you would be forced to leave the country due to legal regulations or other situations? / ¿Alguna vez sentiste que serías forzadx a dejar el país debido a regularidades legales u otras situaciones?

Present moment/ Momento actual

182. How many years have you been living in Castellón? / ¿Cuántos años llevas viviendo en Castellón?
183. How do you feel living here in Castellón? / ¿Cómo te sientes viviendo en Castellón?
184. Do you feel accepted in the society of Castellón? / ¿Te sientes aceptada en la sociedad de Castellón?
185. How have you meet people here? Was it easy? / ¿Cómo has conocido a gente aquí? ¿Ha sido fácil?
186. Have you lived any experience related to stigmas and stereotypes here in Castellón? / ¿Has vivido alguna experiencia relacionada con estigmas y estereotipos aquí en Castellón?

187. Do you think you belonged to a specific community, social group or class? /
¿Crees que perteneces a una comunidad, grupo social o clase específica?
188. Do you feel represented in the discourses and movements within the politics and society of Castellón? For instance, in the feminist discourses or other social movements. / ¿Te sientes representadx en los discursos y movimientos dentro de la política y sociedad de Castellón? Por ejemplo, en los discursos feministas u otros movimientos sociales.
189. Do you feel that your gender, race, class, religion, culture and other experiences, including migration, might influence that? / ¿Crees que tu género, raza, clase, religión, cultura y otras experiencias, incluyendo la de migración, pueden influenciar lo anterior?
190. Which are the differences between your life here and in your previous country? / ¿Cuáles son las diferencias entre tu vida aquí y tu vida en tu país?
191. Do you think that your life conditions have changed as compared to your home country? / ¿Crees que han cambiado tus condiciones de vida en comparación a tu país natal?
192. Are you or do you feel part of a community here? / ¿Eres o te sientes parte de una comunidad aquí?
193. Have you met other migrant women in Castellón? / ¿Has conocido a otras mujeres migrantes en Castellón?
194. How has it been the process of adaptation in the new place? / ¿Cómo ha sido el proceso de adaptación en el nuevo lugar?
195. Would you recommend other strategies to foment cultural integration of migrant women? / ¿Recomendarías otras estrategias que puedan fomentar la integración cultural de mujeres migrantes?

196. If your family members that live outside of Spain were here, would that change your daily life or your feelings living here? / Si los familiares que viven fuera de España estuvieran aquí, ¿cambiaría eso su vida cotidiana o sus sentimientos viviendo aquí?
197. Which jobs have you had here in Castellón? / ¿Qué trabajos has tenido?
198. Did someone help you to find a job in Castellón? / ¿Te ayudó alguien a conseguir el trabajo en Castellón?
199. Do you like to work there? Or, if you could choose, where would you work? / ¿Te gusta trabajar allí? O, ¿en qué te gustaría trabajar, si tuvieras la posibilidad de elegir?
200. Do you have good conditions at work? / ¿Tienes buenas condiciones laborales?
201. What has the new place (Castellón) meant for you? / ¿Qué ha significado el nuevo lugar (Castellón) para ti?
202. What do you feel when you think about your home country? / ¿Qué sientes cuando piensas en tu país?
203. What are your expectations and dreams for the future years? / ¿Cuáles son tus expectativas y sueños para los años futuros?
204. How would you describe all the path lived until today? How do you value all your experiences lived? / ¿Cómo describirías todo el camino recorrido hasta hoy? ¿Cómo valoras las experiencias vividas?
205. Do you think that all the experiences lived have shaped your identity and the person you are today? How? / ¿Crees que todas las experiencias vividas han modelado tu identidad y la persona que eres hoy? ¿Cómo?
206. After all what we have talked today, how would you describe yourself? / Después de todo lo hablado hoy, ¿cómo te describirías a ti mismx?

207. What do you see? / ¿Qué ves?
208. What do you hear? / ¿Qué oyes?
209. What do you feel? / ¿Qué sientes?
210. What do you think? / ¿Qué piensas?

2. Consent form



COMISSIÓ DEONTOLÒGICA

Conformitat personal
Conformidad personal

Dades personals / Datos personales

Nom i cognoms / Nombre y apellidos

DNI

Nom del TFM / Nombre del TFM

Stories and oral methodologies as tools to go beyond the single story. The case of migrant women in Castellón de la Plana.

Nom i cognoms de l'estudiantat / Nombre y apellidos del estudiantado

DNI

Paula Valero Sala

21798825T

Programa de màster universitari / Programa de máster universitario

MÁSTER UNIVERSITARIO EN ESTUDIOS INTERNACIONALES DE PAZ, CONFLICTOS Y DESARROLLO

MANIFESTE / MANIFIESTO

Confirme que s'autoritza la gravació de la entrevista mitjançant el mètode d'Història Oral en el qual la veu i, de manera opcional, altres materials audiovisuals (com fotografies) son concedides amb una possible utilitat en estudis, investigacions i publicacions, sense ànim de lucre ni objectius comercials.

Que les dades incloses en aquest formulari, juntament amb la resta d'informacions i possibles materials que són objecte del projecte de la entrevista, s'inclouran com a part del TFM el responsable del qual és la investigadora Paula Valero Sala de la Universitat Jaume I, amb la finalitat educativa de dur a terme el projecte de recerca "Stories and oral methodologies as tools to go beyond the single story. The case of migrant women in Castellón de la Plana".

Que puc exercir els drets que la llei em reserva davant la investigadora Paula Valero Sala amb DNI 21798825T (correu electrònic al403584@uji.es)

Confirmo que se autoriza la grabación de la entrevista mediante el método de Historia oral, en la cual la voz y, de forma opcional, otros materiales audiovisuales (como fotografías) son cedidos con posible utilidad en estudios, investigaciones y publicaciones, sin ánimo de lucro ni fines comerciales.

Que los datos incluidos en este formulario, junto con el resto de informaciones y posibles materiales que son objeto del proyecto de entrevistas, se incluirán como parte del TFM cuyo responsable es la investigadora Paula Valero Sala de la Universitat Jaume I, con la finalidad educativa de llevar a cabo el proyecto de investigación "Stories and oral methodologies as tools to go beyond the single story. The case of migrant women in Castellón de la Plana".

Que puedo ejercer los derechos que la ley me reserva ante la investigadora Paula Valero Sala con DNI 21798825T (correo electrónico al403584@uji.es)



COMISSIÓ DEONTOLÒGICA

Conformitat personal
Conformidad personal

La persona interessada
La persona interesada

Investigador/a principal del projecte o director/a de la
tesi doctoral o del TFM
*Investigador/a principal del proyecto o director/a de la
tesis doctoral o del TFM*

..... d de 20.....

Informació bàsica de protecció de dades
Información básica de protección de datos

Responsable <i>Responsable</i>	<i>Paula Valero Sala</i>
Finalitat <i>Finalidad</i>	Gestió d'informació generada en les entrevistes a dones emigrants de Castellón, recopilació i presentació d'experiències <i>Gestión de la información generada en las entrevistas a mujeres migrantes, recopilación y presentación de experiencias</i>
Legitimació <i>Legitimación</i>	Investigació científica <i>Investigación científica</i>
Personal destinatari <i>Personal destinatario</i>	Divulgació científica, respectant el dret a la intimitat <i>Divulgación científica, respetando el derecho a la intimidad</i>
Drets de les persones interessades <i>Derechos de las personas interesadas</i>	Pot exercir els drets que la llei li reserva davant Paula Valero Sala amb DNI 21798825T i correu electrònic al403584@uji.es. <i>Puede ejercer los derechos que la ley le reserva ante Paula Valero Sala con DNI 21798825T y correo electrónico al403584@uji.es.</i>

ANNEX 2: Transcriptions

In this Annex 2, the reader will be able to find the Stories of Iraca in the original version in Spanish. I have provided their translation to English in the main text of Chapter 2 to give coherence with the structure of this master thesis which I have written in English. However, I thought that it was also important to include the original version in Spanish as a way to recognize the importance of the local language of Iraca, which she used to express the world and her stories with her own words. Besides this, I have included in this second annex the full transcriptions of the dialogues and interviews that I had with Pam, Carolyne and Iraca. These can interest the reader to know more about the facts, anecdotes and aspects that they shared with their pluriverse of stories.

1. Las historias de Iraca

Mi nombre completo es Quihicha Hisca Iraca Vargas Salamanca. Soy de Colombia. Tengo 39 años. Nací en Bogotá, en la capital.

Mi nombre

Soy hija de Luis Alfredo Vargas y de Francia Elena Salamanca. Nací en el año 82. Soy melliza. Tenemos una hermana mayor. Nos llevamos seis años. Mi nombre completo es Quihicha Hisca Iraca. Es un nombre Muisca. El mío significa 'Quince años de Tierra Santa' y el de mi hermano significa 'Valiente guerrero'. Él se llama Hunzahua Tinanzuca. Somos los únicos que tenemos nombres Muisca en toda la familia. Mi papá es licenciado en Ciencias Sociales. Él escalaba y escalando se encontró con un libro Muisca donde habían muchas palabras, muchos conceptos, muchos términos. Y como es una comunidad indígena del centro, de la región andina de Colombia, dijo "No, ya no se va a llamar Ana María".

Bueno, feliz con mi nombre. De chiquita, muy difícil porque el bullying es muy verraco. Tanto con mi hermano como para mí porque todos los nombres raros son para chiste, son para burlas. Los niños no entendían cómo se pronunciaba. Y porque siendo de Bogotá el contacto con las comunidades indígenas es muy difícil porque yo vengo de la zona urbana y los indígenas son de la zona rural y alejados de Bogotá. Uno chiquitico no sabe ni cómo defenderse. Pero entonces, luego de pensar mucho en que nos íbamos a cambiar el nombre, dijimos ‘‘Pues no. No nos vamos a cambiar el nombre’’. Y, si nos toca defender el nombre, pues defendemos el nombre como sea.

La familia

Así crecimos. Mis papás son separados desde que nosotros nacimos. Digamos que desde pequeños, pues no es tan fácil entender que tu papá viene cada tanto. Ya, poco a poco vas creciendo y vas entendiendo qué era el agua y el aceite. Entonces, era mejor así. Separados. Tenemos una relación muy buena.

Yo siento que mi mamá no la debe haber pasado tan chévere porque mi mamá sí se enamoró de mi papá y siempre ha sido el amor de su vida. Pero, mi papá no. Mi papá tuvo muchas mujeres detrás de él. Él siempre también aceptó eso. Entonces él no tenía un amor infinito por mi mamá. Pero, mi mamá me parece que fue muy valiente al decir ‘‘No más. No me interesa que tengas otras mujeres’’.

Los dos vienen de familias campesinas. Pero mi papá viene de una familia en donde el papá lo abandonó. Mi primer apellido es por la línea materna de mi papá. Yo tengo el apellido de mi abuela, el Vargas. Yo supongo que mi papá también hizo lo que bien pudo siendo papá porque nunca tuvo un papá. Mi papá ha estado ahí presente, pero entiendo que la falta de su papá y que al ser el primer hijo le tocó primero trabajar que estudiar. Entró a trabajar a la universidad más grande del país, que es la Universidad Nacional, que es la universidad

pública. Luego dijo “Sí, yo quiero estudiar”. Mi papá y mi mamá estudiaron mucho más grandes. De hecho, mi mamá acabó el bachillerato cuando yo estaba en bachillerato y mi papá sí estudió en la universidad. Pero también ya muy mayor. Él era el de la vida académica. Entonces mi mamá decía “Pero, si yo me dedico a estudiar, ¿quién le va a dar de comer a estos tres niños?”. Porque hay que reconocer las cosas como son. Mi papá responsable no era. ¿Entonces económicamente quién? Pues mi mamá. Literalmente, lo que podía mi mamá se metía. Para mi mamá su prioridad fue el trabajo toda la vida.

Eran personas muy distintas y que pensaban el mundo distinto. Lo académico para el uno y para la otra lo laboral. Y, en Colombia pasa una cosa y es que está estratificado económicamente. Al pertenecer a un estrato, te cuesta mucho subir de estrato. Subirlo implica que te tienes que mudar porque mudándote te dan mejores condiciones de vida. Nosotros no vivíamos en Bogotá, Bogotá, si no en un barrio que sería uno de los barrios marginados que quedan a las afueras de Bogotá. De Estrato 1, 2. Máximo, 3. Para llegar al centro de la ciudad nos gastábamos dos horas. Hora y media el día que menos había tráfico. Siempre mi mamá luchó porque nunca tuviéramos que vivir en unas condiciones muy bajas de vida, si no la media. La media es Estrato 3 en Colombia.

Finalmente, ¿quién nos crió? Mi abuelita paterna porque mi mamá siempre vivió muy cercana donde mi abuelita paterna. La de apellido Vargas. No podía pagarle a una niñera. No era posible. Y ella era la que nos llevaba al colegio. Ella era la que nos daba de comer. Ella era la que nos dejaba jugar. Ella era todo. Siempre fue como esa parte neutra. Sí que es muy importante trabajar, pero cuida de tus hijos. Luego nos íbamos dando cuenta que éramos de la generación en la que a todos nosotros nos criaron las abuelas. Qué difícil tener que escoger entre o cuido a mis hijos o voy a trabajar.

La fuerza femenina

Migrantes, desde mi abuela. Mi abuelita es de Boyacá, un pueblo de una región de la parte rural. Termina en Santander, que es otra región. Una gratitud infinita. Fue una mujer que nos enseñó mucho. Es una mujer a la que también le tocó muy duro. Ella sí salió de una zona muy rural, muy campesina. Ella es de la época en que obligaban a casarse con la persona que los papás dijeran. Ella se casa, pero luego se escapa siendo muy chiquilla. Se empieza a ganar la vida cuidando niños, lavando ropa de pueblo en pueblo. Y, ya siendo un poquito más grande, queda embarazada de un policía. Es lo único que sé de mi abuelo, consanguineamente hablando. Era policía. Su apellido era Santos. Y el man se fue el día que ella entró al hospital.

Mi abuelita era hermosa. Era una mujer muy atractiva para el contexto colombiano. Y, ella decía ‘‘Pues, era muy fácil que cualquiera quisiera estar conmigo. A veces me tocaba huir de un pueblo al otro porque Fulanito me está persiguiendo’’. Y, era una mujer que a lo que fuera para trabajar, se le metía. Pues, para poder vivir.

Ya de grandes que yo me vengo a dar cuenta que, además de que tengo un nombre muy particular, tengo un apellido femenino. Somos Vargas porque mi abuelita lo dejó clarísimo. ¡Qué orgullo tener ese apellido! El apellido de mi abuelita que nos crió, que nos vio llorar, que nos vio frustrarnos, que nos vio caer y nos limpiaba las rodillas. Y nos dejaba volver a seguir jugando.

Ha sido muy influenciada la línea femenina. Ha sido la decisión de ellas de salir. Mi mamá viene de una zona y una región que era full guerrillera. Mi mamá decía ‘‘Yo tengo dos opciones. O me meto a la guerrilla, que son los que dicen aquí qué se hace y qué no se hace. O, me voy. Me escapo y me meto por allá con un tipo que quién sabe quién sea’’. Mi mamá, más bien, ha sido de espíritu revolucionario toda su vida. Ella nos dice ‘‘Yo veía la guerrilla como el sueño. Las veía a esas mujeres armadas, que no tienen que lavarle la ropa a los hombres, que eran independientes’’. Ella vivió mucho abuso físico y psicológico de su familia. Obviamente la guerrilla era una cosa súper atractiva. Pero, una profesora de su vereda le dijo

“Yo tengo unos familiares en Bogotá que tienen unos niños y necesitan una niñera”. Y así se la llevó. Se fue a cuidar a unos niños que tendrían cinco años. Una niña cuidando a otros niños.

Siento que la salvó de estar en la guerrilla. Y, también, de estar en contextos más peligrosos. La capital era otra cosa porque la vivíamos en televisión. “Que pusieron una bomba en...”. “Ay, ya no se puede volver a ese pueblo”. Por ejemplo, mi mamá. Casi sesenta años que no volvía a su pueblo porque era uno de los que bombardeaban. Uno de los que la guerrilla secuestraba. Yo viví la época hacia los 90, los 80 un poco como la visión, más que de la guerrilla, del narcotráfico. Ya lo que hacía Pablo Escobar de poner bombas en Bogotá, por ejemplo. Uy, esa parte sí fue tenaz.

De la ciudad al pueblo

Mi papá siempre tuvo trabajos académicamente y laboralmente más lucrativos que mi mamá porque mi mamá sin universidad ni nada, ¿pues qué? Trabajó muchos años en un banco. Acabó el banco, lo vendieron. Mi mamá sale. Compra un local. Pone una heladería. Nos vamos a vivir a un pueblo fuera de Bogotá. Es como una gran ciudad. Ella hizo en los dos años en los que estuvimos en Fusa, se llama el pueblo, la validación. En esos dos años sacó el bachillerato. Ya cuando regresamos a Bogotá otra vez, por lo menos podía buscar otro tipo de trabajo.

Allí hice sexto y séptimo de bachillerato. Pasar al pueblo fue lo máximo porque éramos los niños play. Éramos los niños que venían de la gran ciudad. Todos los niños decían “¿Qué tal es Bogotá? ¿Hay mar?”. Nosotros “¿Mar? No. Hay tráfico. Hay contaminación. Todo nos queda lejos”. Pero, para los niños en su momento, imagínate. Éramos los niños que mejor nos iba académicamente. Nos la sabíamos todas. Todos querían ser nuestros amiguitos porque “Son los niños de la gran ciudad”. Yo fui representante estudiantil. Éramos lo más, que no pasó cuando regresamos. Porque “Resulta que ustedes vienen de un pueblo”.

Vuelta a Bogotá

Vivir esa transición de que, aunque hayas sido de la ciudad, pasar a un pueblo y volver a la gran ciudad, te dice que vemos el mundo distinto. Yo me he mudado siete veces. Es diferente porque me he mudado de sector, porque me he mudado de ciudad, porque me he mudado en visión de mi mamá de “Yo quiero lo mejor de ustedes”.

Creo que mi mamá tomó una buena decisión y es que cuando estábamos en la adolescencia, optó por alquilar el apartamento de Soacha, se llama el barrio. Dijo “Así me toque trabajar más, voy a pagar un poco más de alquiler en Bogotá para que ustedes puedan estar en el colegio de la Universidad Nacional”. Mi hermano y yo. Tuvo que conseguir un trabajo mucho más duro para tener mayores ingresos, pero para que nosotros no tuviéramos que tener cuatro horas diarias en bus. ¿Qué eso qué implicaba? Que empezáramos a crecer solos porque ya no estaba la abuelita al lado. Durísimo. Llegar a la gran ciudad era como “No confío en nadie. No conozco a nadie. Pues, se cuidan solos”. Entonces, una dice “Qué falta nos hace el sentir que es importante que alguien te recoja del colegio, que alguien te cuide en la comida”. Yo creo que el concepto de cuidado juega mucho en esa transición de los movimientos, de las migraciones.

Ahí ya veíamos las diferencias en términos académicos porque nosotros veníamos de haber hecho la primaria en un barrio no tan play, no tan de todos los recursos. Luego, de haber vivido dos años en un pueblo. Entonces, por ejemplo, el tema de inglés era una cosa que todos estaban muy bien. Y nosotros no. “Claro, es que ellos son los que vienen del pueblo”. Y nosotros “No, pero somos de Bogotá. Nosotros hicimos la primaria en Bogotá”. “Sí, ¿pero en qué parte de Bogotá? ¿En qué estrato estabas tú estudiando?”. Ya empiezas tú a notar que todos no vivimos las mismas realidades, ni tenemos las mismas oportunidades. ¿Qué nos hizo ver el colegio? Que podíamos estudiar hijos de personas de servicios generales, de empleadas

del servicio hasta los hijos del rector de la Universidad más importante del país. Y que todos éramos lo mismo. Entonces, fue bonito porque fue darle un valor a lo público. Yo puedo orgullosísimamente decir “Yo salí de un colegio nacional, público”. Que es todo lo contrario de lo que pasa actualmente. Allá lo público se ha robado, lo público se ha maltratado.

Llegamos en muchas desventajas académicamente. Y socialmente porque ya la gente tiene amigos. “Yo soy el nuevo y vengo de un pueblo”. Entonces, ya no eres el atractivo. Ahí, por ejemplo, yo me consideré la persona más tímida, introvertida de la vida.

Empieza la adolescencia, la época de las fiestas. Entonces empecé a tener amigos de los años mayores. Yo en octavo tenía amigos de once, de décimo. Ahí ya no era la época del bullying por la adolescencia, si no por quienes eran tu grupo social de clase. Los más famosos jugaban volleyball. Nosotros no jugábamos volleyball. Empezamos a hacer como un grupito de amigos y meternos con los que menos eran famosos. Ellos eran con los que nos íbamos de fiesta. Como vivíamos en Bogotá, pero inicialmente no tan cerca de la universidad, eso hacía que mi mamá dijera “No es posible que tú pagues un taxi. Pues les toca quedarse donde sus amigos”. Y eso en Bogotá es muy difícil porque nadie confía en el otro.

Somos muy temerosos del otro. De que el otro me va a robar. De que el otro me a tumbar. De que me va a meter en un mal negocio. De que siempre quiere algo para él. No hay confianza entre la gente. Mi mamá siempre ha sido una mujer muy temerosa. A mi hermana la drogaron. No supimos cómo. Mi hermana estuvo hospitalizada ocho días. Entonces, cuando le pasó a mi hermana fue durísimo porque “Esto existe de verdad. La gente es mala. Eso es lo que implica vivir en la gran ciudad...”. Estar alerta. Esa movilización también hizo que viéramos otra ciudad. Finalmente, como “Apréndase a defender desde pequeño”. Pero, claro que tiene otras ventajas. En términos de que tienes más actividades para inventarte, para hacer, para visitar, para salir. Entonces, ya la adolescencia a puertas de terminar el colegio, los planes ya son otros. Es arriesgarse un poco más a vivir de manera aventurera.

Vivir en paralelo

Es una experiencia distinta, porque es vivir paralelo a tu hermano, que es de un género diferente. Compartes muchas cosas, pero también peleas por otras. A medida que hemos venido creciendo vamos descubriendo más cosas. Él tiene una perspectiva de ver el mundo distinta a la mía. Y, básicamente, también es por género porque resolvemos las cosas distintas. Él era muy racional en muchas cosas. Pero, cuando se nos ocurría hacer locuras, pues, a los dos por igual. Por ejemplo, un día teníamos mucho frío en el apartamento. Estaba lloviendo y él dijo ‘¿Y si hacemos una chimenea? Una fogata’. Le dimos la vuelta al tapete de la cocina y con bombona de gas y todo al lado, se nos ocurrió casi que gastar todo el cuaderno, haciendo fuego en la cocina. Imaginándonos que era un gran camping.

Éramos compañía, ya que (la que) no cuadraba en las cosas que nosotros hacíamos era mi hermana. Porque le parecía inmaduro, ridículo, una pérdida de tiempo. Bueno, seis años más grande.

Nunca compartimos salón. A mí me parece bonito porque siempre hablábamos de amigos distintos. Creo que no hubiese sido posible si los dos hubiésemos sido del mismo salón. Siempre hermanos, mellizos y el mismo salón, no. Eso nos ayudó a que cada uno tuviera sus cosas, su independencia, sus amigos. Entonces, yo conocí a sus amigos. Mi hermano conocía a mis amigos. Época bonita también.

Pérdida

Fuimos los primeros de la familia en ser universitarios. Entonces, parecíamos los niños ricos de la familia. ‘Ellos sí lo lograron. Claro, porque están en Bogotá. Porque ellos sí pueden. Es que ustedes han tenido oportunidades’. Somos de un país tan desigual que entiendo lo de las oportunidades. Pues qué pecado si a veces la vida te la venden como ‘Es que lo más

importante es trabajar'' y que no exista la menor posibilidad de que sales del colegio a estudiar a la Universidad. En cambio, para nosotros era como ''Sí o sí. Se van a la Universidad''. ¿Qué es el pequeño detalle? ''No te vamos a pagar Universidad privada porque no hay. Tiene que ser en la pública''.

Yo inicialmente quería ser psicóloga. Me presenté a psicología. No pasé. Fue traumático. Sin saber qué diablos quería hacer con mi vida. No tenía ni idea que existía el trabajo social. Fue mi primer semestre haciendo otras cosas, como estar pendiente de mi abuelo porque ya estaba muy enfermo. Y, entonces, el frustrarme frente a lo que yo creía que iba a hacer me permitió, llevando a mi abuelito a un control médico, conocer a una trabajadora social. Yo dije ''Ah, tan chévere es la labor que ella hace'' porque nos ayudó en un momento crítico. Ella me explicó. Entonces, yo dije ''Ay, esto me gusta mucho. Y, ¿está en una universidad pública?''. Y sí, efectivamente.

Empecé a presentarme a trabajo social. De una pasé. Fue aprender a cuestionar mucho la realidad social. A conocer las políticas públicas. A entender que el tema de los estratos es una vaina garrafal en términos de que buscó como política pública ayudar a los menos favorecidos, pero nos dividió. Geográficamente nos dividió. Quedaron políticas que favorecían a unos más que a otros.

Siempre ha sido una visión muy crítica. Mis papás finalmente apoyaban, con mi hermano antropólogo también, que participáramos en marchas, en movimientos comunitarios. Porque la visión del trabajo social en España es muy distinta. En Colombia el término, más que asistencial, es de construcción de redes, de tal forma que el proceso que lleve esta persona se sostenga a partir de una política pública.

Al mismo tiempo conocí la pastoral universitaria. Conocí una pastoral distinta porque eran jóvenes que estaban en diferentes universidades públicas y privadas de Bogotá que hacían misiones en pueblos, que hablaban con la gente, que conocían otras realidades, que llevaban

de comer a los habitantes de calle. Yo decía "Me gusta". En tercer semestre, conocí que el Papa cada tres años convoca a los jóvenes y hace Jornadas Mundiales de la Juventud. Tenía la primera oportunidad de ir a Canadá. De entrada mi mamá me dijo "Ay, si sabes contar, no cuentas conmigo". Eran tres millones de pesos. En su momento era mucha plata para nosotros. Me acuerdo mucho que yo lloraba porque yo decía "Yo quiero salir del país. Yo quiero viajar". Nunca había cogido un avión en mi vida. No conocía ni el mar. Pero, mi mamá me decía "Usted quiere vender sándwiches, yo la ayudo con los sándwiches. Usted quiere hacer botones, dígame donde. Yo le ayudo a vender. Yo le ayudo con lo operativo, pero no le puedo dar la plata". Así fue que fui consiguiendo. Si yo no salgo a este viaje a Canadá, yo creo que nunca me hubiera ilusionado tanto con la necesidad de viajar. Es que ya se vuelve una necesidad.

Trabajadora social y viajera

Mi primer trabajo fue con habitante de calle. Eso también me hizo ser una mujer mucho más sencilla en lo físico y en lo material. Y en lo humano. Fue conocer una parte muy oscura de la humanidad. Es conocer a la persona adicta. En Bogotá pasaba una cosa. Hay una calle que se llamaba El Bronx y antes un sector que se llamaba El Cartucho. Los habitantes de calle hacían sus hogares con telas y ahí vendían. Era tráfico de personas. Era tráfico de drogas. Nacían los niños. Las mujeres drogadas parían ahí. Ver niños consumiendo. Yo llegaba llorando a la casa. Yo decía "¿Qué hago acá? El trabajo social no sirve para nada. Yo aquí no le voy a cambiar la vida a nadie. ¡Qué cosa tan frustrante!". Me contrató una ONG. Nuestra tarea era sacar a los habitantes de calle de El Bronx y de El Cartucho. Se les pagaba los apartamentos. Mientras tanto, buscarle trabajo a la gente. Rehabilitarla. Fue empezar a darme cuenta que había gente sin registrar. Yo era el puente entre el habitante de calle y lo judicial y administrativo que todo ser humano tiene que tener.

Al principio me cargaba muchísimo. No dormía. Me soñaba con esas familias, con esos casos. Una vez uno me amenazó. Me puso un pedazo de vidrio y me dijo "Me deja salir o la mato". Y yo "Pues máteme". ¿Qué podía perder? Dios es muy grande y no me pasó nada. No salió de la casa porque sabía que iba a consumir. ¿Será que es posible cambiar la vida de alguien? Luego me di cuenta de que sí. Tú ayudas hasta donde se puede. Tú no tienes la varita mágica, pero tienes unas habilidades que le pueden ayudar a alguien más. Puedes ser el puente de otras cosas. Yo tenía la posibilidad, a diferencia de otros profesionales, de conocer su vida, su pasado, su presente y tratar de ayudarles en su futuro. Entonces yo dije "No. Ahora sí amo el trabajo social. Esto es lo mío". Duré un montón de años trabajando con habitante de calle y eso me zarandéó.

Luego pasé a trabajar con un colegio. Un cambio abismal. De ahí, luego pasé a un hospital en el área de salud mental. Fue otra perspectiva. Eso me abrió otras líneas de trabajo sin querer queriendo. Después, de ahí pasé a ser profe de la Universidad. De dos Universidades, una pública y una privada en Trabajo Social porque ya tenía experiencia en diferentes campos de acción profesional. Ya mi tema se volvió un poco más académico. Fue como la oportunidad de hacer el click entre la teoría y la práctica. Hablarles desde la teoría, pero contarles mi experiencia. Ahí duré nueve años.

Seguí con pastoral. Seguí en las Jornadas Mundiales. Seguí viajando. Seguí saliendo del país, pero con los pies en la tierra diciendo "Esto es una cara de la moneda". Tú no ves a las personas habitantes de calle. Tú crees que tu país es el peor. La gente no conoce de verdad la otra cara de la moneda cuando tienes una adicción, cuando vives en la calle o cuando has nacido en la calle. Pero, el estar así fuera tiempos cortos en un lugar y en el otro me permitió ampliar mi visión de mundo y entender que hay problemas aquí como hay problemas allá. Que son en proporciones distintas, claro.

Con una amiga de Pastoral lo que hacíamos era, una vez al año, nos íbamos las dos a alguna región de Colombia. Las dos solitas a conocer porque decíamos ‘Es que tenemos que salir de las realidades en las que estamos porque todo no es Bogotá. Ni todo es Colombia’. Eso también me permitió ver que hay muchas formas de migrar. Que todos no migramos de la misma manera. Hay migraciones temporales. Pero, también te das cuenta que hay migraciones en las que, por ejemplo, llegar a un aeropuerto y decir ‘Es que soy colombiana’. ‘Una fila especial’. ‘Bueno... Y, ¿por qué?’. ‘Porque es que en tu país uno no sabe...’. ‘Yo sí sé. Yo sé que en la vida he visto la cocaína. Pero, tú me vas a parar acá’.

Una vez en un aeropuerto, ‘Abra la cámara’. ‘Pero, si la abro, velo el rollo. Daño todas las fotos que he tomado’. Me quita la cámara y dice ‘Yo voy a tomar fotos. Pero, no le sale droga’. Y yo ‘¿Qué?! ¿Usted cree que yo...?’’. ‘Ah, es que es colombiana’.

Un año en España

Fue una decisión de familia. Lo habíamos pensado. Guille decía ‘¡Uy, qué chévere migrar a Canadá!’’. Fue como la idea inicial. Pero, cuando empiezo a buscar un máster, encuentro el de la UJI y me enamoré de esa malla curricular. En un momento, hubo la oportunidad cuando la guerrilla se desmovilizó a visitar con otros profesionales unos campos. Se llamaron ‘territorios transitorios’ para que los guerrilleros se desmovilizaran, incluso antes de que entregaran las armas. Después de esa experiencia de conocer la otra parte de la moneda, que también fueron campesinos, que también fueron personas víctimas de este conflicto horroroso, ¿por qué, de verdad, no hablamos de paz desde estas dos partes?

Fue analizar qué perdíamos. Perdíamos el trabajo. Luego, llegaron las visas de todos y entonces dijimos ‘Sí’. ¿Por qué no darles esta oportunidad a las niñas? Para la familia, especialmente, de Guille no fue tan fácil. Pero, mi mamá me dijo una frase que no la olvidaré

nunca en la vida y dijo “Yo no te voy a quitar algo que no te puedo dar. Dale. Y si tú ves que ese es un mejor lugar para las niñas, dale”.

Gracias a Dios y a las oportunidades porque, finalmente, ha sido eso. Demostrarle a las niñas que, desde bebés, es posible viajar. Es posible si buscas las oportunidades y las aprovechas. Pero, no es fácil. Aún con esa experiencia que te estoy diciendo, que sí que soy una bendecida y que he podido viajar desde hace muchos años, llegar aquí fue durísimo. Te sirve porque ya hay muchas cosas que tú, entre comillas, crees que superas. Pero, la gente, los estereotipos parece como que te frenara. Dicen “Claro, te damos una visa X a tal país porque ya hemos dado cuenta que has utilizado otras visas y has regresado a tu país”. Pero, luego llegas acá y te dicen “Pero, es que tú no tienes vida crediticia en España. ¿Cómo te vamos a alquilar un piso?”. Si no tienes una vida crediticia en ese país “No existes. No me interesa”.

Te das cuenta que migrar no siempre es fácil porque tú no vas con nada asegurado. Con nada. En vez de que la gente te ayude a que sean oportunidades, se vuelven problemas. Les decía a unas mamás del colegio de las niñas “Miren, y que esto no solo se los digo por mí, si no a futuro. Esto depende más que del migrante, de la persona que recepciona”. Ya tenemos un grupito, por lo menos en el colegio de personas conocidas, pero ha sido por las familias que se han tomado la molestia. Se puede gracias a la gente local. Porque por más de que tú le tengas mucha energía y muchas ganas, si la gente local no te abre las puertas, esto es una mierda. Se vuelve un total caos porque tú dices “Venga, hablamos el mismo idioma”. “No, no es cierto. No hablamos el mismo idioma”. Pasa en las grandes escalas de la gobernanza en una ciudad. “Dime cómo funcionas y yo traduzco lo que tú me estás contando a mi realidad y entiendo que lo que tú llamas Libro de familia, para mí se llama Registro civil. Pero, dime qué hay”. Pero, que a mí me toque buscarlo, lo intento con mis términos y no lo encuentro. Entonces, dime qué hago. Dime cómo busco un colegio. Dime cómo me empadrono.

Dime cómo saco los NIEs. ¿Quién te enseña eso? No era fácil orientarme porque no era muy común que llegara gente estudiante con hijos

No es posible encontrar quien te de una mano y dice ‘Estira de ahí. Esa cuerda es’. Entonces ha sido como ‘Ensayo y error’. Que también creo que seguimos siendo unos bendecidos porque finalmente lo más duro fue el primer mes, siento yo. Pero, en términos, por ejemplo, de lo social, que para mí es muy importante, ha sido bueno porque hemos dado con familias en este colegio que ellos han sido los que nos han abierto las puertas. ‘¿Quieren viajar este fin de semana a la casa de pueblo que tenemos?’ ‘Vale, vamos’. Creo que ya conozco todos los pueblos de aquí aledaños de la comunidad de Castellón gracias a ellos. Gracias a que mi casero dijo ‘Les dejo el carro, ¿les interesa?’ Han sido muchas cosas, yo no puedo generalizar. Claramente, no ha sido lo mismo para todos.

Poco a poco ha sido interesante ver y mostrarle a las niñas otras realidades. Que conozcan las estaciones, que en Colombia no tenemos. Que tengan el mar cuando somos de una ciudad tan céntrica y tan fría. Claro que les ha dado duro. Ellas nos dijeron ‘¿No habrá posibilidad mami de que el vecino de España no sea Francia, si no Colombia? Porque si Colombia fuera el vecino de España veríamos a los abuelitos más seguida. Estaríamos con los amigos más seguido’. No tendrían que volar once horas. No tendrían que pagar tanto dinero.

Iraca, hoy

Yo creo que el mayor valor que yo le sigo dando es la fuerza femenina. Yo le agradezco a mi abuela las decisiones que tomó. Le agradezco a mi mamá las decisiones que tomó porque fueron decisiones de migrar internamente muy importantes. Pero, que nos cambió la vida a las generaciones siguientes. Valoro su fuerza, su verraquera, su empuje. Las dos solas. En años distintos, en contextos rurales y urbanos distintos. Yo siento que tanto consciente, como inconscientemente, afloran en mí en decir hay muchos miedos que yo tengo, pero no de conocer

algo nuevo. Aunque mi mamá es una persona que le teme a muchas cosas, también nos enseñó a que, en términos de tomar decisiones, es peor no tomarlas y acomodarnos.

Digamos que me lo ha resaltado también mucho Guille, que me agradeció un montón. ‘‘Estamos aquí gracias a ti. Esto no lo hubiéramos vivido si tú no hubieras dicho ‘‘Bueno, hagámosle’’. La Iraca de estos treinta y nueve se siente muy orgullosa de tener todavía ilusión por movernos, de creer en la capacidad de dos niñas de nueve y seis años, de creer en la capacidad de innovación y de sorpresa de Guille. Todavía me creo en la posibilidad de descubrir otras cosas. La vida me hace ilusión todavía. Creo que la Iraca de hoy todavía está enamorada de la vida. Todavía está enamorada de las cosas que no conoce. Y todavía tiene las energías para decir ‘‘Vamos a hacerle. Vamos a descubrir. Vamos a romper fronteras’’. Porque creo en que, desde mi profesión como desde lo que he visto en Colombia, uno de los peores problemas que tiene la humanidad es ponernos fronteras. Porque internamente lo vivimos en Colombia. Tenemos muchas fronteras. Y lo último que quiero es ponerme una frontera. Quiero demostrarme a mí misma y, en segundo grado a mi familia, que las fronteras se pueden romper. Yo creo que si construimos más puentes, podemos abrirles el espacio a otros. Tú empieza a viajar. Yo creo que la Iraca de hoy le está abriendo el paso a las posibilidades de las generaciones futuras.

A futuro lo que esperamos es que se nos den las cosas para que legalmente, por ejemplo, la empresa de Guille pueda estar acá y que yo me pueda vincular con ONGs. Porque la vida laboral no solamente te ayuda a echar raíces, si no a ver la dignidad y la potencialidad del ser humano que eres. Para mí trabajar es la posibilidad de decir ‘‘Soy útil’’. A mí lo que me interesa es que lo que yo estudie, le sirva a la gente. La sociedad me ha dado mucho porque soy hija de lo público.

2. Transcriptions of the interviews

2.2.1. *A Dialogue with Pam*

Paula Valero: Okay, so we can start with the first question. Like to introduce yourself a little bit, like the name, how old are you. I don't know... the place where you were born. Like, how would you present yourself?

Pamela Daccache: Okay. So, I'm Pamela Daccache. I prefer to be called Pam. I'm 33 years old until July 29th. I will turn 34. And I'm from Lebanon. I was born there. But I did not live there for a long time after I was born. Basically, I was raised in France. We emigrated to France and now I live in Spain.

Paula Valero: Like the longest answer that you can do, you can explain whatever you want. So that's up to you, I guess. Maybe we can go back a little bit. Like, which year were you born?

Pamela Daccache: Oh, yeah. I was born in 1988, in the middle of the civil war in Lebanon.

Paula Valero: So in the middle of the war in Lebanon. And you said that you lived like, only a few years there, right?

Pamela Daccache: Yeah. I was born in 1988. And so my parents are... I have my older brother, who is six years... five years... five years older than me. And, then I came, but that was in the middle of the Civil War. So one day, is it okay if I tell? So, one day the war was all over Lebanon, really. Started really in the main areas in Beirut, of course, but then it spread everywhere. All over Lebanon, really. And one day, my parents... my mom was telling my dad "Let's go to my aunt's house", cause they could hear the shelling that was very loud and very close. And there was a military base that was very near to our house. So she told him "You know, we should go to my sister's house", which is in front of ours, because they have a

basement which they used as a sort of bunker. We lived in a building on the third floor, so it was more dangerous. My dad likes to stay home and he was home and his office. But she eventually convinced him to go out. So they went out, they took both of us, my older brother and me, to my aunt's house. They were having coffee and right there, this moment a bomb landed in our house. Yeah. So everything was destroyed and it was really in the building. It was just our apartment that was completely burned and destroyed. So that's when my parents had to really take the decision. The war had been going on for years, but up until then they didn't want to leave. They were trying to stay as much as possible. But, at this moment, they had to take the decision to leave. So that's when we migrated to France. I was maybe barely one year old when we went there. My father went first to try to set up, you know, house or something. Get some help, you know, support from our... from other family members who had already migrated to France years before because of the war also. And then my mom took me and my brother. And yeah, the journey to France.

PV: So, like... you don't have memories of all these things...

PD: I don't have, of course, memories because I was just a few months old. I do have some maybe unconscious memories. Not memories, but like traumas maybe of the war because that was not the only war that I lived in Lebanon. Of course, this one I was too young. But there was another war when we, after France, went back to Lebanon for a few years. So I lived another war. But mostly it was from probably this trauma from the first years living, yeah.

PV: And the first time that you were... well, that you went to France as a family, how was the process? Because you said that you had already family living there?

PD: So, well, a lot of Lebanese people had to leave and a lot of them went to France. A lot of to the US and to Venezuela, to a lot of countries. From our family, it was... the decision was

between the US and France and my parents ended up going to France first. Because we had some people that said that could help us to find an apartment, you know; the information, what do you need to do with this and that. And so that was... that kind of made it easier for my father. Also because of the language, probably. In Lebanon we speak French. So we also speak English. But my dad, in their generation, it was more French than English so probably that's why he decided to go to France. I'm not sure. And then when my mom followed, of course, during the war, when you had to travel to France or outside the country, it wasn't, you know, you go to the airport and take a plane. The airport was closed, it wasn't functioning. So my mom had to find a way, a car, a taxi to take her to Syria. She was in a shelter for a few days with nuns who took her in until she was able to take the boat to go to Cyprus. And from Cyprus, by plane to France.

PV: And now with you and your brother?

PD: Yes, it was with my brother, who was maybe five years old or six years old at the time, and me, so a few months or maybe one year old already. I'm not sure.

PV: And was it easy to settle down in France for your parents? Like, I don't know, for example...

PD: My mom, for example, she had to take French lessons, because she did not... From the schools where she went to, and in her generation too, she just did not learn French as well as she could have. So she had to take some French lessons. But also at the same time, it was like a women's center that they offered that and all of them were immigrants from one country or another. So that helped, maybe, with adaptation. But I always heard comments, even until now. I always hear comments from both my parents that, you know, culturally was so different and like French people... Where we lived, there was a very old population compared to Lebanon

and they were culturally very different. And so it was hard to adapt to that. But eventually I think they did. They had to because we could not go back to Lebanon. The war was getting worse and we didn't have a place back home.

PV: And your parents were working in France?

PD: So, my dad was working, yes. He was able to find a job; a good job as an accountant because that was his job also in Lebanon. He had a very good position in Lebanon but he chose to leave, of course, because of the war. Like the family members we had in France were able to also help him with contacts. He was able to find a job and in the same field, accounting, as well. My mom didn't work. But that was more, according to her, of a personal choice. She was a journalist in Lebanon and well, she couldn't be a journalist in France. She wanted to take care of us, but also, I imagine the language was not, you know... She couldn't be a journalist if she didn't know perfect French. She was a journalist for the stars. So it was a very specific field, also. Yeah, they worked. But then after a few years, my mom got pregnant again with my second brother, Steve. So she was mostly in this woman's center where she started teaching French after.

PV: She was teaching the new arrivals?

PD: Exactly.

PV: And how long did you stay in France?

PD: I think we stayed in France for... this is a very good question. I think I was nine when we went back to Lebanon. So maybe eight years or so. I'm not very sure. My dad had a work... well, not work accident, but an accident. It's a big story that I never got to the bottom of this, so I'm not sure what really happened... It was something with some faraway family, you

know... I'm not sure, really, what the story is. But, basically, he had an accident, broke his leg. Very severe accident. So he could not work for a long time, for many, many months. He had multiple surgeries. Because of that, in the end, he ended up losing his job. And he was already getting anxious to coming back to Lebanon. They were missing their culture, their country, their families, the parents, everyone. The closest members of their families were still in Lebanon. And the complaints of, you know, all old people. They're always complaining. Mostly was racism problems, really. Older, white French people would complain about us, even when we were playing, me and my brothers and other kids in the neighbor. So, I think my dad really wanted to come back. My mom too. And of course, she agreed. So yeah, they came back maybe in 96 or 97 to Lebanon.

PV: And before going back to Lebanon, because you said that you went back when you were nine years old, what things do you remember when you were in France? I don't know, like school, or group of friends, the neighborhood. How was life in France?

PD: I remember having a lot of friends in where we live because it was a big residential area with many blocks of buildings. So there were a lot of kids. We had a green area, wide green space for us to play. And then also another, we used to call it *bac à sable*. It's like a sand pool. It really looks like a pool. I mean, in my memory at least. It was a big big pool, but sand instead of water. And we used to play there also. So it was fun. I remember my best friends were... Well, my best friend, one that I remember the most, his name was John Paul. And I think he was from Senegal. And we were also friends in school, so we were always together. I have very good memories with him eating rocks and sand, trying to climb... That's what I remember the most. But I also remember one event that really marked me. There is the Ice Cream Truck sometimes that passes and they play music. And so I went with my older brother, Anthony, to get some ice cream. I was very young. I don't know what age but I was young. But I still

remember this... what happened. So my parents let me go with Anthony to buy some ice cream for everyone. And I remember that when we got there, we were choosing the ice cream we wanted and then there were like some boys. A few of them, not just one. I don't remember exactly how many. Let's say three or four boys and, and they were bullying us, me and my brother. And I had really scared. I don't remember the details. But I feel like in my memory, I feel like I remember maybe they were saying that they're gonna steal our ice cream, that they're gonna steal our money, they're gonna hit us and things. And we got really really scared. I don't remember what happened after that, but I think probably we ran home or my brother told the ice cream truck person to help us, something like that. Someone helped us out probably, but that was a very scary memory that I never forgot.

PV: But the kids, they were French kids?

PD: Yeah, french.

PV: So was there a problem in the neighborhood related to... because your friend was also from an immigrant family?

PD: Yeah, most people. Most of our friends actually, now that I think about it, were from an immigrant background cause my other friend, was not as good a friend as John Paul, was from... Well, I'm not really sure if either Morocco or Algeria. I'm not very sure now. But my brother's friend, one of his friends from the neighborhood was actually French, I think. I mean, white French because everyone is French, but not originally maybe. But I never felt... I never knew about racism before. I mean, I was very young. I was maybe six, five, I don't know, growing up, so I never noticed that 'Oh, it's because I'm Lebanese'... I never noticed that... I don't know if there were, you know, racism problems or not. My parents, yes. But me, I never really realized that. I was just young and I wanted to play.

PV: And the same at school in France? I don't know, when you went to school was...?

PD: Actually it's funny because I have some pictures, well not here but my mom has them, school pictures of class, of our class. Like the class pictures. And the school we went to, at least, was very mixed. A lot of colored kids and, you know, me with my curly hair and dark eyes and all that's very different from... Maybe it was like half of us were immigrants and half were really blond and blue eyes. You know, the exaggerated extreme of whiteness. Yeah, we're mixing in school but, again, I was too small to feel... I felt bullying and things like that, but I cannot reason or understand why it was. If I think about some memories now, then yes. I know where it comes from. I can analyze them and think "Oh, was it because of Racism?". I'm sure.

PV: So, also your school was a mix of maybe different nationalities or backgrounds? Also genders?

PD: That's a good... that's a very good question. I think so, yeah. But somehow, most of my friends or all of my friends were boys. But I don't know if that's just because of my preference. I prefer to hang out with boys. Or, because there weren't enough girls. I'm not sure. Actually, I don't know. I know my teacher. I remember the name of one of my teachers that I really, really love. And her name was Frederick. And, yeah, I remember her. She was French, French. White, French. Maybe this was one of my later teachers because I remember her, but I don't remember a lot of the earlier teachers, probably. Yeah. Well, I remember a story. My mom always forced me or wanted to force me to wear very girly things. And since I was really young, even before I understood, I did not like it. So she forced me one day to wear a very colorful jacket that she bought me. And I was refusing to wear and I was crying and shouting. And still, she did not allow me to remove it. She took me to school like that. And I don't remember the face of the teacher. But the teacher took me and I remember they were trying to also calm me

down; to, you know, tell me to start the class that day and I was just too upset. I don't know why, but because of the jacket. And then they had to call my mom again to pick me up because I wasn't calming down. I started off with everything.

PV: So was it a thing in your family maybe this binary roles between girls things for girls, boys things for...?

PD: Of course, definitely. I mean, it's one of the biggest reasons I guess my mother decided to stop working, right? Because she has to take care of us and my dad has to work and provide for the family. So yeah, of course. Even though my parents are a little bit less conservative than other Lebanese parents, probably because they lived in France or maybe just because they are different, I'm not sure, but they still have, of course, some very traditional values. Like my dad telling me before, not anymore, because now he knows who I am, what I am... but before telling me that it would be good if I could study to be teacher. This way I have the vacations off when my kids are off and I can take care of them. And, you know, things like that, that for me never made sense. But now he understands it. They never forced me. But yes, at home you would notice that my mom is the one who cooks or cleans and, you know, that sometimes helps if she asks him, but she really has to ask for some help. But yeah, it's a very traditional family.

PV: And did that... Cause sometimes when you move to another country, like it's also like a thing, right, to try to preserve maybe the traditions or the values of the home country. I don't know. Like, maybe...

PD: I didn't feel it so much because, I mean, at the time when we're talking, in the 80s right, 80s, late 80s, 90s, even French people were also, you know, traditional for today, compared to today. Maybe more French women had cut their job after marriage than in Lebanon but a lot of them didn't. So it was, I think, more or less the same. The only thing that I felt like my

parents wanted us to kept...I'm not sure how to say, but like they really wanted to preserve maybe from the culture the language. My first language was French, it wasn't Lebanese. But they tried to always at home they were talking to me Lebanese. So I understood it, I just couldn't speak at the beginning. And then my dad when we were old enough, he taught me and my brother. He had some books and he taught us the Arabic alphabet also. So at least we knew how to write Arabic a little bit. And yeah, these were like the biggest things. And of course, some family values like 'our house is always open to people'. So one of my... I call him my uncle, but in reality he's the cousin of the cousin of my father, but he used to live with us, you know. So that was a big thing, very Lebanese thing to do that probably is not so common in French families, right? You open your door to other people who need it.

PV: Maybe we can move now to the moment when you go back to Lebanon, did you all go back together? Or also separated?

PD: Yeah. There was another story before we move on to that. I just remember. It's a memory in France. It was still during the war. I mean, the war ended in 95... Well, it really took years of transition. The dates, you know, are not exact. 90s, 1990... So, during that time, we were in France and my parents were not going back to Lebanon until things got better after the 90s. And then we started going maybe in the summer, visiting family and so on. But before that, I remember and I was young, but I had this memory, a very clear memory that we had some cousins over. Not really close cousins, but well, the cousin of my dad's cousin, nieces. So, well, let's call them cousins. They were at home. They were my brother's age, more or less. Anthony's, so the older... my older brother. And I think we were playing. And then I remember a phone call. And then I remember my mom's crying. Started to cry. My dad was not there. My dad, I think, was traveling for work. And we all went to the living room and then everyone started crying. They were older than me, so they would understand what was happening. For

me, I remember just looking around, they're crying. My mom is crying. I've never seen my mom crying. What's happening, you know? And it turns out that my grandpa, so my mom's father, died. He was killed. And near their house. And yeah, so I remember that very well.

PV: Once that the war was over?

PD: No, that was still during the war, really. He was killed by... we never knew for sure who killed him. But, you know, the speculation says that he was a very strong leader in his community, in his town. And although he was not officially a politician, but he was a strong figure, a strong leader. So he probably got killed because of that. So I mean, I don't want to speculate whatever from my uncles and so on that it could have been some members of the Hezbollah who killed him. So we are Christian, originally a family. And I think that's also important because the war was very religious. Not just political. Religion played a big part in it. So yeah.

PV: And how was that lived in the family, especially for your mom?

PD: I think it was very hard because she couldn't go back, she couldn't travel back. And she received pictures. They sent her pictures of the funeral and everything. And I remember that cause one time years after, I think we were already back in Lebanon, I saw the pictures. I was playing, I don't know, adventure, discovery, whatever at home and I found the pictures that were very well hidden. And I think these were the pictures they sent her. Very graphic pictures of her father, the funeral and all that. And I think it was very hard for my mom. Yeah, I don't remember my grandpa. I just have pictures of him holding me and things. But I don't remember.

PV: Was that one of the reasons why your mom also wanted to go back to Lebanon?

PD: Yeah, of course, to be with the family. Definitely. It was one of the biggest factors, of course.

PV: So then, once that you go back to Lebanon, do you have a first memory? Like, I don't know, how is going back after being...?

PD: I have, yes, some memories, but they're not so great. Actually, most of them were in school. They did not accept me to be in my year, in my level because I didn't speak Lebanese and I didn't speak or write Arabic, although my dad taught us a little bit, but it wasn't enough. So I had missed some years where, you know, kids my age had, apart from all the other lessons, they also had years of lessons of Arabic. And I did not. So I was sent back a year because of that so I could actually study Arabic during that year. So, when I started this first year in Lebanon, it was clear like everywhere. We knew that it was just going to be a year that I'm gonna repeat. So they just put me there to pass the time, to learn maybe something and during that year I would have a tutor at home, a private tutor that would teach me Arabic. Writing, speaking, reading. Mostly, reading and writing because we don't actually speak Arabic. Yeah, the grammar, all those things. My older brother did not go through that because he was already too old. They assumed "Oh, he's too old to need to learn Arabic". So actually, whenever they had Arabic lessons, because we don't teach in Arabic, Arab it's a subject so we had some Arabic lessons; so whenever there were Arabic lessons, he would go out of the class to basic level Arabic in the way they would teach them how to write the alphabet and things like that. And he wasn't alone. He actually... his best friends for life, his best friends that are still friends now, were with him in that... That's why he met them in this special class where a lot of immigrants came back to Lebanon and were in the same situation. But for me, I was too young and they said I still have a chance to learn it. So why not? You know, do it. And so, that was the condition for me to be accepted in that school. And that's what we did. So yeah, I learned

Arabic with a tutor every day for two hours while other kids were playing. It was hard, but it was worth it.

PV: And what about the school? Because, was it very diverse in religions or...?

PD: No, our... my school... Well, most schools, anyway, in Lebanon are very segregated. Especially, because it was after the war. And after the war, all the regions became segregated, divided by your political party or your religion, and so on. So my school was a Catholic school, and it was called *Sacred Heart*. So I remember all through my primary, secondary, High School, all of those, we probably had just one Muslim person in school. So it was not at all diverse. And yeah, everyone was either Lebanese and... We were all Lebanese, but some of us, like me, were half something else. Like, kind of adjusting identity.

PV: But only the religious one? Or, also I don't know...

PD: No, because we were coming back. We were returnees after the war. We were... Kinda I felt like an immigrant in my country. I did not feel Lebanese. Imagine you're nine, eight, ten years old, I don't know. And the people, I'm not calling them my friends cause I did not make friends, especially the first years. I felt it was very hard, they would make fun of me. Because, I don't know... just I'm not sure, but they were just making fun of me. And it was hard. Even the teacher was not nice to me. And yeah, I think it was not diverse at all. No, we were all Christians. Maybe there were two different types of Christians because we have the Orthodox and, you know, Catholics. So in our case, Catholic Maronites. So that's the only diversity there was, but it's not really. Yeah, but everyone there was a Lebanese who stayed there during the war and the Lebanese who came back after the war. That's it.

PV: So it was a big community, like the ones that came back?

PD: Yeah, it was. I mean, maybe I don't know... I'm just counting, like, out of forty people in the class, maybe three to five of them were like us, in the same situation.

PV: And where do you go when you are back home? Because you said that your house...

PD: Oh, so is a very good question. My parents got a call from the landlord because they were renting that apartment before, you know, when it was bombed. But they got a call from the landlord saying, offering them to buy it, and if they wanted to buy the apartment. It was a new building and everything, but, you know, it got bombed. And my parents decided that it would be good to have something in Lebanon. Like owning an apartment, for example. So one day they could return to, they could afford it and they decided to buy that apartment. And when we were going back, I think they were already planning our return the last year or two, probably. I remember going back in summertime and they were fixing the house. There was no walls, barely any walls left. It was full... So, they were fixing it and renovating it. So that's where we live the first years

PV: And after it was renovated could you feel that it was your like... your home?

PD: Yeah, I think so. The apartment felt like home. But Lebanon did not feel like home for a long time. Surely it didn't feel like home. Probably, it didn't feel like home until maybe the last year before I left again and went back to France. Yeah.

PV: And what do you remember between those years? Like, you go back until you again... How many years was it?

PD: So I probably, all in all, lived in Lebanon for maybe 10 years in total, right? So I think, if we went back and I was, let's say, nine or eight, not sure, I know that I left again in 2007. So I was 18. Yeah, let's say 10 years, all in all, in Lebanon. And in those 10 years, I don't have

great memories of, you know, friendships. In the beginning, it was very hard. And really, also with the teachers it was so hard because I remember the second year in Lebanon already I was... supposedly, I should know Arabic better and all. So, the teachers would just assume that I was at the level of any other child, right? But I wasn't. And I remember this one time, the teacher was very strict with us and she's our teacher for everything, not just like one subject. No. I remember she asked me to read the text in Arabic. And I wasn't reading it well. Maybe I wasn't articulating well, I was... My voice was very low because I'm also scared of reading wrong because it's not my language. And I remember she actually slapped me. And I was, yeah... I remember she slapped me. It's not a common thing. Like I've never been hit or I haven't seen anyone else, you know, that's been hit in our school after this. But yeah, I remember this happened and it's really bad. And mostly was like that also in school. Well, the good thing is that when we were in recess playing, we were forced to speak in French so that was good for me. There would be some supervisors going around and if they hear speaking Lebanese they would scold you, or punish you or something. So that was good for me. But, at the same time, not good because then I wasn't learning Lebanese as well as I should be, right? But yeah, eventually I learned and I started having very good grades in Arabic. My mom is a writer, poet, journalist, so she really focused on that with me. On the writing part, actually. So essays and stuff like that in Arabic, I sometimes had really good grades. And sometimes teachers would ask me to read my essay in class. Well, mostly it was my mom who wrote it and I had to memorize it. But it worked. That was a good technique, because memorizing, you know, her words actually made them my own and I was able... And that's why, probably, I am a writer myself.

PV: So your mom, could she go back to work?

PD: No, she never went back to work, at least not in journalism. Until many years later in Lebanon where my parents decided to start a jewelry business. Fashion jewelry, not gold. And that's when she started working again, so she was the one handling the business.

PV: And was it also difficult for them being returnees to the country?

PD: That's a very good question. I should ask them. I'm not sure actually. I know I struggled a lot and my older brother struggled a lot, too. Because you know, people could make fun of you because you didn't speak Lebanese well. Or, you know, you didn't belong there, but you were Lebanese. But I don't know about my parents. So that's a very good question. Probably I should ask them, though. My younger brother did not struggle much because he was a baby when we went back. So I think Steve was born in 95, so maybe he was one, two years old when we went back. So he was there very young. So it was the opposite. He was born in France and raised in Lebanon. I was born in Lebanon, raised in France. So yeah, it was like the opposite. So Steve, who's the only one who was born in France, is the most Lebanese of all of us, actually. He didn't have to adapt. He was raised there. So, it was harder for him when he tried to study in France and he couldn't adapt to the French culture, actually. And he had to go back.

PV: And how was the relationship with your brothers and, well, your parents, family when you were younger? Like was it...Did you used to do many things together?

PD: Yeah, we're very close. So we've always been close. We've never had any problems or drama. Difficult family dramas in the family, no with my parents. My mom is like a friend to us always. Of course, she would always... Growing up, she would use my dad as like the scary parent, you know. Whenever you wanted something and she didn't want you to... like "Can I go out?" or "Can I have some money to buy this?" or whatever and she didn't want to, she would say "Oh, go ask dad". That meant no, right? Because my dad knows if we go ask him,

then it means that my mom said no. Then he has to say no. So all my life I thought “Oh, my dad was really scary” and, you know. And then when I grew up and actually, when I was living in France already, I realized that he’s actually a very sweet person. He’s not scary or anything like that. It’s just my mom using him as her no tool. What was your question originally?

PV: How was the...?

PD: Oh yeah, yeah, we used to... I remember, I loved Sundays because we used to go out a lot on Sundays to somewhere in nature and do hikes, walks all together. And everyone was always there. Sometimes my mom later... I remember like later, when I was a bit older already, she would skip some Sundays, so she can take time for herself and do her hair, go to the salon, do her hair, nails. And also cook of course, because Sunday’s like the big meal, special meal that she does every week. We’re not the type of family that sits down together for breakfast or for lunch because we have different schedules. So we used to come back from school, maybe around four thirty or five. My dad comes back from work later. So we never really sat down and had... And also, dinner is usually just a sandwich. The Lebanese sandwich is sort of a wrap. That’s what usually you would eat at dinner in a Lebanese family. You should not sit down to dinner, right? So the only times we actually sat down for a meal was on Saturday for lunch, then not dinner because we don’t have dinner, we just have a sandwich, and Sundays for lunch.

PV: And about religion, like being a Catholic family, did that have a big influence for your family?

PD: My parents are not... They are religious, but they’re not. They don’t practice it so much. So we don’t go to church every Sunday. Like I know some of my cousins do. They used to do that with their parents. We don’t really go to church, but maybe once a year. Sometimes, some

years, not all years, maybe for Christmas or for Easter, then we go to church. But probably because the rest of the family was going to church and, you know, so we could maybe be with them. My dad is not so religious. My mom likes to pray at home. She has her pictures of the saints and the virgin things and she prays at night. I don't know if every night but she has some of those pictures of saints and she prays. But they were not very forceful with religion with us or anything. So both me and my older brother, we are actually not religious. Steven is, but that was his choice. And in our family he is too religious. So I remember having debates with my parents and me with Steve, you know. Steve telling us "Jesus is this... you have to do that" and whatever. And then me and my parents are like "God, you're too fanatic". More conservative. But of course, religion always had a part, but that's more on the culture side.

PV: In the history of the country?

PD: Yeah. Of course. And then families in general, right? Or also in some really bad comments that my parents would do sometimes. My parents or other people, right? Always about other religions not being as good or maybe being dirty and things like that. Yeah, but I did not grow up with those ideals.

PV: But your community was mostly Catholic families?

PD: Well, yeah. Where we lived... Again, as I said, Lebanon became really segregated after the war, so where we lived was a Christian area. And you had to go far to be in a Muslim area. So they did not mix a lot.

PV: But you lived in the capital?

PD: No. So in Lebanon, wherever your father's from, you are from, right? So that's why I say we are from Beirut, from the capital, but we did not live there. My dad and his parents lived

there. They had a house, but during the war they had to escape and their house was taken from them... by, well, the occupiers. So we never lived where we are originally from. My parents decided to live there, in this city where we were, which was, Lebanon is very small, so maybe 30 minutes away from Beirut. And this is kind of far, right, for Lebanon anyway. Yeah, but all that region was a Christian region. My dad still had some friends, actually his childhood friends, who actually were Muslim. Before the war it wasn't a big deal, it wasn't a big problem. And they were his friends from school. And they're still his friends now because, you know, these separations that happened in Lebanon were mostly because of the war and external powers. So before the war it was okay to mix and to be friends with other religions.

PV: Right now, it's almost one hour of interview. How are you feeling? Do you need a break? [...] The last part that we were talking it was about your younger years. These are years of growing up, maybe your own identity. And I don't know, maybe what kind of things did you like to do after school?

PD: We are talking about, what age? Eleven, for example? Or, fifteen? Or, seventeen? Or what?

PV: Yeah, that you remember.

PD: Well, I remember that I loved to play all the time. I mean, it's not a memory. Just even now I love to be out all the time. And, when I was younger, I used to play with my cousin. So back in Lebanon, now we're talking about back in Lebanon, right? I was always playing outside with my cousins. My cousins lived in front of me. This was the house where my parents actually survived, where they escaped the bomb. And so, they had a big field outside that house, which was kind of like used as a parking. It wasn't segmented or anything. And so this is where we would play every day. Almost every day, after school, I would come back from school and go there. Sometimes my aunt wasn't very happy, because she wants them to study. And so I was

kinda distracting my cousins. So I had one cousin who was one year younger than me, Tony. And then another one, Alex, who was maybe three to four years younger. And then, they are three brothers. The third one was six years younger. So he was actually the age of my brother, Steven. So they were friends. And, I used to spend a lot... So, they were my friends, not just my cousins. And in the neighborhood I gathered kids who were around that age. And so we became, you know, a group of friends that we would play together all the time. We had a lot of funny things that we'd do. I remember one Christmas I asked my parents that I wanted a book for Christmas that was called... Well, I'm going to translate it to English cause it was in French, *Friends of the Forest*. Something like that, that I had seen in school and in the library in school and I wanted it. It was very cool. It taught you everything that you need to know about being in a forest. Knots, how to build a tent, how to build things from, you know, from nothing, from things that you can find in the forest. Things like that. And so my parents got me this book for Christmas. And so I used that book to actually get my friends, you know... cousins and the other friends to do things. So, I was telling them how to build a tent. And so we started building one from pieces of wood that we found around and started cutting them and building things. And we built benches and stuff like that. Even one time I convinced them... cause I was kind of like the... I was very leader type. So they would always look for me to know what we're gonna play today. And then one time I remember, I don't know how but I made them... I told everyone that we should start a store, right? Like to sell chips, candies and drinks and things like that. And so they agreed. So what we had to do was go to different small convenient stores around us. And I told them we cannot go to the one where we all go to usually with our parents. And that's because, you know, we don't want her to know that we are opening our own store. But I mean, we were kids, right? And so we were diversifying our sources, buying from different stores Coca Cola, Fanta and bottles of drink, juices and chips and all that. And we were selling it like, maybe, double the price we bought it. We bought a little bit and then we

made some money. And from that money, we were able to buy more and make more money. And the people who were buying from us were the people... our parents and other people in the neighborhood, you know. We were living on the main street on the highway. So people are not just random people walking around. We know everyone who bought from us. So it was funny. But we made some money and with this money we went to... I think, if I remember well, back then the money we made was equivalent to \$40. Yeah, we made a lot of money in just a few days. People were very generous. They will give you five times what it really costs or whatever. And so I said 'With that money we should go all, go the ones who participate in that store, and have dinner. Eat pizza'. So we went to a place near in our neighborhood. And yeah, we ordered pizzas. And we had a very fun day.

PV: That's so cool. And how was the relationship with other teenagers?

PD: Yeah, they were all boys actually. Now that I think, they were all boys. There were no other girls. It was just me. And we were very close with our friends. But, of course, I was closer to my cousins. So I was kinda like the protector. My cousin Tony was very effeminate from the beginning. So for Lebanon, that was kind of like... I guess, for any country at that time anyway. He was always called names. Sissy, or this or that. And then, if people made fun of him or hit him or something like that, I was always the one who was ready to answer. And I remember this one time, you know, just kids playing, we were playing basketball. Yeah, because I also got one of our uncle's to build us a basketball in this parking space, which we didn't own but he built us a basketball hoop. And so we were playing basketball, I remember, and one of our friends... I can't remember what happened, but he hit my cousin. He snatched him and grabbed him. And so I got angry and I turned and I punched him in the face. It was a little bit violent. But you know, we were kids and maybe that was the only time I hit someone. But yeah, I was always protecting everyone. There were degrees or levels of friendships, right?

First, it was my cousins. And then it was my close friends. And then the friends who did not come play with us every day, so they were less friends. And I was always protecting the one... like the underdog, yeah.

PV: And talking a little bit about the situation of your cousin and like the way that he felt his identity and everything, was that also during these years that you also started to, I don't know, think maybe about other parts of your identity and how to explore or...?

PD: Well, I'm not sure about him. But I know that for me all I was thinking about until very late, until maybe I was fifteen, sixteen, I don't know, all I thought about was playing or having fun. I mean at sixteen I was probably... I wasn't playing anymore in that field with my cousins, but we were maybe doing other things, more teenage things for fun. But yeah, all I was thinking about was that. I'm not sure... I know that he maybe struggled more with identity than me at around this time. Because you cannot hide who you are. He was like that. His mannerisms were very strong from maybe birth or since he was pretty young. I remember one time we went back. When we were still in France, and went back to Lebanon in summertime. We were going somewhere with my parents. Taken us to visit someone. And, it was him and I with my parents. And we were sitting in the back and he told me that he wanted my clothes. So okay. So he took my clothes because my mum made me wear a skirt, of course. And so he wore my clothes and I wore his clothes. So we were both very happy and then he vomited on my clothes. But yeah, he has always been like that. But I think because of that... because it's hard, you cannot hide it. You cannot hide who you are. So it was maybe for him, it was more of a struggle. Identity, who am I and all that, it was maybe harder for him than me.

PV: So for you maybe try to think about that part it came a little bit later, when you were a little bit older?

PD: Yeah, it came a lot later. You know, when you start making friends, teenage friends. So when you're already sixteen, seventeen, those years. That's when I started having really good friends. Always we called them best friends back then, right? Outside of my cousins. So my cousins are still my best of friends now. So they're not just my cousins. And whenever I'm back in Lebanon, it's only them that I really wanna see or... So, I started making friends in school a bit later. So I don't think I was feeling very good in our school. I never felt good in the school that we went to. So friends in school came a little bit later in my teenage years. Yeah, before that there were not really friends and I did not like to spend time with them, like, birthdays or things like that. Not so much.

PV: And what about these teenage years, what memories do you have? Like, I don't know, the environment? As you said, new friendships?

PD: Yeah. Yeah. So I had a couple, maybe even three friends, good friends. This time they were girls, right? Finally, I had girls. Girl friends. And not just boys. And yeah, it was okay. But there was a lot of bullying of course in school. I was not a bully myself. But sometimes I received... I was on the receiving end of bullying. Not so much compared to others because our school was a very elite school and it was mostly bullying people that looked poorer than others. You know, and it's just not a great feeling. This school was a rich school, very elite school and it just wasn't good to be around the popular kids or whatever. In my case, I had some bullying from very few people. Mostly about the way I dress, although we were all wearing a costume. In school we had the uniform. It was either a skirt or pants that you have to buy in school at the beginning of the year with also a white shirt that's also with the logo of the school. And I never wore a skirt. But also, you know, even if you're wearing the uniform, you still customize it a little bit. Or the way your hair looks and this and that. And usually when some of the guys, it was usually guys, made fun of me it would be about that. Like maybe I'm

very boyish or I'm not girly enough and things like that. Or then I like Eminem, the singer. That's mostly that. So I don't know, I never liked my school actually. The people in my school, but also it was a nun school so they were very strict. And my parents I remember actually saying 'It's okay for girls to be in the nun school, but it's too hard on boys'. So my older brother at one point, maybe the last three years of high school, they moved him to a secular school. So non-religious school. Yeah, but me it was ok to stay there cause it's ok for girls to have this discipline.

PV: So was it also a matter between...? I don't know how to say... But did that also happen with your youngest brother?

PD: Yeah, at one point. But it wasn't because of that. He moved because he was really bad. And so they told him, either you repeat a year or you go to another school that was less strict. Our school is maybe the strictest school in Lebanon. So they moved him. But also, of course, because instead of repeating the year, which I did if you remember when I first arrived because of Arabic, they thought like 'It's not good for my brother to repeat a year, so let's move him to another school'. So it was also a secular school, not religious. It was French. Both brothers went to similar schools, but not the same.

PV: But even if you were all on the same high school, was there a difference between this binary perception for education for boys and girls?

PD: I don't know. I don't think so. I didn't feel that much. No, there were a lot more girls than boys in school. But I think that's in general in Lebanon. It was a... it's a big deal. There are a lot more girls than boys and guys in Lebanon. I remember some comments, you know, growing up of people and also some jokes on TV, comedy shows and things like that, like 'All the boys

are migrating and when you see one guy, then there are five girls running to get him to get married”. Things like that. So it was not very balanced in Lebanon.

PV: And then also in the perspective of working, also for that? Or was, either they migrate or either they have to...?

PD: Lebanon, I mean... Since before the war, we had another war. We've had wars, right? When I say the war, I mean the Civil War, the longest one that took fifteen years, a bit more even. Lebanon has always been an immigrant country, I guess, because we had a famine. Do you know the writer Yibrán Jalil Yibrán? One of the most famous. He's a very, very famous writer. And he migrated, he left Lebanon during the famine. That was in... Well, actually, during the First World War. We did not directly participate, but we were under France. So France was in the war, which meant we went in war and we were affected. And we had a few years of famine. Because we had also a wave of locusts that ate all the crops. And the war, the war in Europe, right? It all affected us. And so, that's when the first biggest wave of migrants left Lebanon. And then after that, we just kept migrating. So, I don't have the exact statistics now because surely in Lebanon they are not doing any statistics since a long time ago because they don't want to know the percentage of Muslims, Muslim Shia, Muslim Sunni, the percentage of Christians. They don't want to know because politically in Lebanon the President is always Christian, Catholic. And the Prime Minister is always Muslim Sunni. And the height of the department is always Muslim Shia. So, they don't wanna know. But if you ask, well, some numbers about how many people, the population of Lebanon... now I'm sure it's a lot more, but let's say there are four million Lebanese people in Lebanon. Actually, I don't know if more, maybe less because recently we've had a big wave of migration in the past two, three years because of the economic crisis. But let's say four million Lebanese people live in

Lebanon and more than fifteen, maybe eighteen million live outside of Lebanon. That's a lot. Yeah. So I don't remember your original question though, but...

PV: I asked about men working or men migrating.

PD: Yeah. So yeah, that's why a lot of guys, girls too, but mostly the priority would be the boys, the guys would migrate to find work, better work, better opportunities to study and so on.

PV: And did that also suppose like, some kind of pressure for girls or women in Lebanon? I don't know, because you said this joke like if you find a man then there were like five girls, I don't know... like maybe trying to get married or trying to find a partner?

PD: What type of pressure do you mean, though?

PV: Yeah, I don't know maybe this... Well, it also depends on how patriarchal the society is. But, for example, that also happened here in Spain. Like after the war, 'I'm a woman, I need to find a man that I can have a family and someone that can bring the resources. And what's gonna happen with me? There's no man like around me'.

PD: Yes, that's the same in Lebanon. And when a woman does not marry, there is a name, a very negative pejorative term in Lebanese for a single woman and who's already past the age of I don't know... Maybe in the past, maybe it was forty. Maybe now when you are fifty or something like that, right? Things change, evolve. But yeah, it's very badly seen. But maybe "Something's wrong with you because you couldn't find a husband" and, you know, people talk about you and so on. I remember we had a neighbor, the daughter of the landlord actually of the building who sold us the apartment in Lebanon. She never married. And, you know, I imagine her life must have been hard because everyone talked about her. Even my parents who

I always thought my parents were a lot more open and you know... I'd say like open minded than other families or other people in Lebanon. Even they made comments about her.

PV: And, well, what about... I don't know, maybe did you tell them when you started, I don't know... maybe finding out a little bit more about yourself? Like, for your parents was it like a big thing? In the society of Lebanon?

PD: Well, when I discovered myself more, my identity, that I was more attracted to women than guys or my partner, who I wanted my partner to be, I already had a partner and everything. That's when I decided to tell my parents of course. And I was already living in France. So it wasn't, of course, beautiful and peachy and everything but it wasn't the worst either. I remember I told my brothers first. And my older brother was very accepting. Probably because of his wife who is French and she's a lot more progressive than he was at the time. Now he is progressive. But yeah, he was not so much. I remember comments growing up, you know. Cause he would comment about my cousin being gay and us discussing things like that, so. But no, he accepted it very well, except the comments on like "Yeah, but if you can, you know, maybe make an effort to dress more girly or something, then it's better. It's okay if you're gay, but maybe...". You know, but that got better with time. And so because I told my brothers first, they were there when I told my parents just to support me. And my parents... well, it wasn't the easiest for them. But they did not reject me or anything. And they tried to do things to show me that they love me, you know. Because I said, "If you don't want me to come back, I'll just stay in France. I won't come back". And they were so scared that I would really. So I remember that week, I was just on vacation in Lebanon, that they tried so much to, you know, to show me love and everything so that they would make me feel like nothing has changed. You know, they were trying that. But, it took them time, it took them years, I think, to accept the idea. And then to accept the idea that I wanted to have a family or to get married, all this

stuff. ‘‘Why?’’. It was always a big deal. And then we don’t talk about it cause that’s how you deal with things in Lebanon. You don’t talk about it, right? So you don’t confront it. It’s not a direct culture. So you don’t talk about it and then time goes by and they’re okay with it. But we never really sat down and talked about it, that’s not how you do it. So now they’re very supportive. Of course, the fact that I’m pregnant, and of Reney. Reney is my partner, who is gonna be the mother of Kai. So yeah, they’re ok with it. Probably, it was hard for them, but it’s not for them.... I mean, that’s what they keep saying, anyway. It’s for the family. He said ‘‘But, you know, we are very open minded, and it’s not for us, but what will the family say about us? What will the family say about you?’’. And, you know, I don’t care because that’s not my problem. It’s theirs.

PV: Is it a big family?

PD: Mostly, it’s big. But mostly, it’s the part of my mom. So we’re not very close to my dad’s siblings. He has two siblings. We’re not that close with them. But my mom’s side, my mom has six brothers and sisters. They’re seven. So, yeah, I am close to them. We’re all close to my mom’s part of the family and with the cousins. And also, some cousins are old enough now that they have kids of their own. So, it’s this family that we’re talking about.

PV: Oh yeah, that’s huge. My mom, they are also seven brothers and yeah, sometimes it’s too much.

PD: Well, it’s okay for me because I don’t live there. Yeah, so I don’t deal with that all the time.

PV: So maybe we can go back a little bit, cause we were talking before when you were younger and a teenager and you said that you left Lebanon when you were eighteen, I think?

PD: Yeah, so I didn't actually plan, I did not think I was gonna come back to France. For sure, in the first years when I was... when we were back in Lebanon, yes. I had always my... the narrative was "I will finish high school and I will go back to France. I'm gonna go back to France. I wanna go back". It was always like that. And for my brother it was clear from the beginning. My older brother. "He finishes high school and he's going back to France". That was no question. And he did. He finished high school, maybe he was seventeen or eighteen and went back to France to study there. For me in the beginning, the first years... I'm not sure how many years, but the first year also "I'm gonna go back to France". But then in those later years, maybe the last three to four years max of my time in Lebanon, though, you know... those years when I started making friends, actual friends outside of my cousins and all in school, and you know, those teenage years, then I started thinking actually about studying in Lebanon, meaning my university. "After high school, I will study in Lebanon". Even that last year, I remember looking for... not the last year, the year before, because we study the French baccalaureate, so French system. So the two last years are the official exam. So I remember I was studying that and there were like university visits. Like, they would come in and like open house kinda, you can go visit the universities. They come to your school and they present their programs and so on. And I was looking into that. I was thinking... I was choosing already which university I would go to in Lebanon. So what happened is that in the summer of 2006... So Lebanon was never calm. It was calm, but, you know, in a European perspective they would think Lebanon is at war all the time, right. So, in 2006, actually the war, another war erupted. So between Hezbollah and Israel the war started. There was a one month war. That was very, very, very... really impacted Lebanon. It was heavy. The Israelis were bombing all the bridges

in Lebanon and it was very dangerous. So yeah, it was a scary month where you could see the boats barricading the coast of Lebanon because all of Lebanon is on the coast. So the boats were all over. And then air-raids, they were bombing bridges. And they destroyed Beirut again, another time, mostly the part where the Hezbollah area is, where they live. They destroyed all that. And I even remember witnessing one of the bombs. They were bombing bridges and antennas, so for communication. Everything that's communication they're bombing all that. And we were in a mountain, in the village house. So everyone was trying to run away from the coast, right? The biggest part of the war was in Beirut, in the vicinity of Beirut. So we were in the village house, in the mountain and a friend of mine was staying with us also because to run away. And her parents did not have a mountain house there. So you know, her house was on the coasts and you can see the boats right in front of you all the time. So she was there with me and I remember we're sitting outside on the balcony and we started joking. Can you see the antenna here? Really, there's an antenna?

PV: Yeah.

PD: So there was an antenna like that a bit further away. So this one might be... I don't know, 20 meters away, something like that. The other one was maybe, let's say 50 meters away. A bit more maybe because it was on the next mountain, on the next peak. Yeah, no... no, 50, more. Let's say 200, 300 meters away. And we were looking at it and we were joking, like "Imagine...". Because we heard like a sound of an airplane, something. "Imagine, there is the Israelis there coming to bomb it". Half a minute later, they bombed it. It was not a joke. It was actually a bomb. They bombed in front of us. So yeah, the war was really bad. For one month, it was very bad. My uncle, who I told you is living with us in France, so in Lebanon he followed us back after a few years. And that summer, he lived with us again. So before he would just come on the weekend, live with us on the weekend. But in that time, he lived with

us so he would also be away from Beirut because his house was in Beirut. And he had a gun. Actually, he bought a gun because he was afraid of all... He said very racist comments of all the Hezbollah people that are moving to our area because of the war going on. So everyone was very scared. And he had his passport ready all the time. He's a French citizen, so he had a French passport. And the French were calling for repatriation, so he was thinking he would go back. And in that summer, that's when I decided 'I have to go to France'.

PV: But did you move with the whole family?

PD: No, my parents really, just like before, they needed a really big reason to move from Lebanon. They really love Lebanon. So me, it's the summer I took the decision to leave. But I still had one year of high school to finish. And, although we thought maybe I could leave immediately and go to France and do my last year there, my older brother discouraged us because the schooling in France, specially in public high schools, which is where I would be going in France, the students, the people, everything was very different and maybe I would not adapt to it very well in my last year. And my parents said 'It's true, it'd be better if I finish the year with my friends and then go to university'. And this is what happened. So I moved alone. My brother was already living there. So I moved. We lived together. We moved to an apartment that we rented.

PV: And then did you start studying again in France, like university?

PD: I started my university in France actually. That's where... I started there. And I finished my bachelor's degree there and then master's degree. And then I came to do another Master's degree in Spain. You know, I think I was ready to move out of France. And we were living in the north of France, also very bad weather. Very cold. So yeah, it was something I really wanted to do, to move to Spain because I came to Spain on holiday visiting some friends who were in

Spain on Erasmus and during my third year in college in France, and I really, really, really liked it. It was in Alicante. So I thought ‘I wanna go studying in Spain’. As an immigrant student in France, I was not allowed to do Erasmus. So all my good friends actually went on an Erasmus here and I wasn’t. I had to make other friends that year. And yeah, so my option is then ‘I move to the other country myself’. That’s how I moved to Spain.

PV: And you didn’t have any... because you lived many years in Europe, so you didn’t have like any citizenship or residency?

PD: Actually I forgot to tell you that earlier, but because my parents were so itching to go back to Lebanon, because my dad lost his job, because of the accident, the surgeries and all that, they just did not wait long enough to get the French nationality. They needed maybe another year in France and they could request the nationality, but they just... they did not think long term. And then, just thought that ‘We’re just going to go back to Lebanon and that’s it, the war is over’ and they did not think about that. They really just wanted to go back. Mostly my mom blames my dad cause he’s the one who mostly wanted to go back. So yeah, they went back to Lebanon and so they did not get the nationality. And my younger brother could have gotten it, but you know, governments changed a lot in France. And so, in the past the requirement was that, well, he turns sixteen and he gets the passport and everything because he was born there. But then, government changed and socialist... and you know... right wing, left wing, all that. And so the requirements after that were they had to live three or five years in France together. But he was not able to do it. For me, I requested a student visa and I went to study there. I could have gotten a residency if I stayed longer and started working there, but I also was not thinking about that. I was... I thought ‘I just wanted to move’.

PV: How was the process? Yeah, like, being born in Lebanon. Then go to France. Go back to Lebanon. And then, go back to France.

PD: Well, when I went back to France, I definitely did not feel French anymore, but I didn't feel Lebanese either. In Lebanon, I never felt Lebanese. Maybe for the last two years in Lebanon that's when I felt the most Lebanese. But yeah, now in France, I was not French. And I was not Lebanese. So it didn't feel like home, France. France didn't feel good to me. I felt very insecure also. And I was usually discriminated against because people thought I was Algerian or Moroccan or Tunisian, which are nationalities that are usually badly seen in France. Or maybe they thought because I'm Muslim and also there's discrimination against Muslim people. And so yeah, I did not feel very welcomed in France. And I did, of course, make an effort to be there, to live there. But outside of my friends, I did not feel like it was home. It never felt like home. But then I got to Spain, and I immediately felt home in Spain. It was different. Spain felt home because it's the middle ground, right? It has some of the Lebanese culture, the chaos of Lebanon, but also the organization of a European country in terms of maybe less corruption or things like that or in organized administrative processes... Things like that.

PV: So you arrived to Spain to do your second master?

PD: Yeah, I think it was 2011. At the end of 2011. I've been here for almost 12 years.

PV: And after the master you decided to stay?

PD: Yeah. After the Masters... It was one year. This master's was like an intensive one year. After that, well, I was already dating someone who came with me from France actually. So I did not want to go back to Lebanon. And so yeah, that's... I had to stay. And the only way for me to stay it was... A lot of people offered me jobs, but when they knew that I was not a

resident, that they had to go through a process and everything for me to get the residence, then they just... they didn't go through. So the only way for me to stay was to get married. And yeah, so I got married with my girlfriend who is French and because she's French, she is able to get me... I was able to get the residence through her. Yeah, and I stayed and worked. Started working here in Spain.

PV: Until today. Even being in Spain, were you feeling afraid that you might be...? ¿Que te echaran del país?

PD: Well, yes, that started one of my... I never had anxiety. I was never an anxious or stressed person. Thing is, in France the immigration process was a lot easier. They helped me from university. They had an office that helped me process the papers. And so it was... it was a lot easier than here in Spain. I had to do everything on my own. And information online is not complete. It's not understandable. It's all in Spanish. And my Spanish was not perfect yet. It was not good enough maybe to understand everything, because it's very technical, right? It was very stressful. And this is where I have now sort of a fear, phobia even will say, to paperwork, especially when it's related to immigration issues. And this started here in Spain. I remember I started having anxiety attacks. And I didn't know what it was because I had never had those before. Because I was just applying to jobs and people said yes, but then you know "Oh, but you are a student, so no, you cannot" because of my residency. And I started having really bad anxiety attacks because of immigration papers and all. And so my student residency was only for six months. Because the time you apply for it, after your initial visa to enter the country, the time you apply for it and everything, it takes a long time. It's a long process. So when I received it, I only had four months left on it. And then I had to apply for a renovation and the renovation never came. And then when it was supposed to come, my master's was already over. So it was very complicated and very stressful. And so for a year or maybe less, many,

many months, between waiting for my renovation of my student card and deciding to get married and processing the papers, which is very, very, very complicated and expensive because you have to translate and legalize everything, I was almost illegal here. I was kinda illegal. Yeah, because I didn't have the court. I just had a paper that said that I applied for this and I was not receiving it. So that was a scary time. Yeah. That's the time really where I had anxiety. I never had anxiety. These anxiety attacks stopped after that. But I still have sort of fears or kind of anxiety every time we talk about immigration and then renovating papers or stuff like that. Thankfully, now for me it's all good. I'm not worried for myself anymore. But now I worry about my child. And this process would be easy, but now I'm worried about Reney, right? And what will happen. How can we make sure we're not separated? It's a big fear.

PV: So then the solution was to get married?

PD: My previous marriage, the solution was to get married. That was the only solution and yeah, that's why I was regularized and I was able to start working and living in Spain and not being separated. Yeah. So we lived in Spain.

PV: All that was in Madrid?

PD: Yes. I was living in Madrid for about, maybe, 10 years.

PV: And your first job was, then, Telefonica or...?

PD: I never was an employee. I did not have a job, job as to say it was. I was always a consultant. And I did start working in Telefonica. But in a different way. I was teaching English there. So there was a way I found to make some money. They were not strict and they never asked for residency papers or anything like that. So yeah, I was able to work in this way. I don't know if it was legal or not, I'm not sure. But there was a Spanish company. And so yeah, I

started working like that and teaching English until I had my papers and I was finally able to actually work on translation and interpretation. Then I got into training and that's what I'm doing now.

PV: And then, did you continue living here for many years?

PD: Yeah, I was living in Madrid until 2018. And then, well, I met Reney in 2017. So 2018, maybe I think it was July that I partially moved to the Philippines and then I fully moved there in February of the next year. Because I needed to be between both countries until I had... because it coincided with my five year temporary residence expiring. And so I had to be here to request another type of residency in Spain. So yeah, everything was at the same time. So until I got my long term residence, I couldn't move permanently. And then I was there for maybe two years all in all. Maybe on and off, three years. And after that, we came to Castellón.

PV: How did you arrive to Castellón?

PD: Well, simple. I work remote, so it doesn't matter. Where I live, I can work. Before the pandemic I used to travel a lot, so as long as there was an airport then I could still work. Reney wanted to do this master here. She found the masters in UJI, so that's how we moved to Castellón because of the masters.

PV: And did you have any, maybe, expectations coming here? Because you have spent all your life moving...

PD: Well, I did not know Castellón before but I warned Reney that, you know, it's gonna be a small, small city. Even a town I would call it, because we were living in Manila with more than 20 million people. It's a big, big city. So yeah, my expectations were that it was gonna be very small and very different lifestyle. But then two years would go by fast and then we can move

to anywhere you want, right? But yeah, I never planned... After my divorce, I stopped planning long term, like life plans or whatever. I just realized this doesn't work. This builds false expectations in life, a lot of false hope and things like that. So yeah, that works. This new life philosophy works better. Yeah, I'm happier now.

PV: And how was the process for you considering there was a pandemic, like, arriving at a new place? Although you knew Madrid, but how did you feel?

PD: You know, I don't mean any disrespect to... I know a lot of people suffered during the pandemic, but we actually had a good time during the pandemic, Reney and I. It was the longest time we spent together. Twenty four hours together in Manila during the lockdown. It was one of the longest lockdowns actually in the world. I think we were there maybe for seven or eight months in a small apartment together and it was really good. We had good times. Before that I was traveling a lot for work. So, you know, we were living together, but I was also traveling a lot. During the pandemic, it was a very good time that we spent together. And when we had to move here to Castellón, I guess we were already so well locked down in Manila that when we arrived here it was more of a liberation. The restrictions were a lot more relaxed in Spain than in the Philippines where they were very strict. You know, face masks and face shields. When we arrived here, people looked at us weird for "What is this thing you're wearing, right? The facial?". Yeah, so it was okay. The pandemic was alright because we were always very careful. And we did not get the virus until now actually. So we survived more than two years of the worst part of the pandemic until now without getting it. Yeah, it was okay. We found the apartment very fast, easily also. And we moved in.

PV: And the part, maybe, of arriving both of you as migrants, as a queer couple?

PD: Well, for me it felt like coming home. It was not my decision to come back to Spain. I was very happy in the Philippines. I didn't wanna come back but I understand Reney wanted to come here, do masters. And at the same time we could not really... Because, as I told you, I was not thinking for long term plans, no more. But if I would think of it, it's true that in the Philippines we cannot start a family, we cannot get married. Not for the fact of getting married, but we cannot have children. It's a lot harder. It's not legal. All these things are not legal in the Philippines, so I guess it was the right move for us to come here.

PV: And is it legal in Lebanon?

PD: It's not legal in Lebanon either and I never thought of going back there and living there in Lebanon. I just never felt roots or home there. So, it was never an option to go back to Lebanon. But it's not legal there either, even less than in the Philippines. And, yeah, so I guess it was a very good thing that we came to Spain where we started our family. Now we're struggling to get the right papers for Reney, so she could stay with us, but also work which seems like it's not gonna be possible. So she will get her residency but without the work permits.

PV: Maybe we can do like the last two or three questions and we can finish. Are you tired?

PD: No, it's fine.

PV: So yes, just like maybe the last couple of questions to maybe close like all these things we have talked about. You have shared a lot of things, so maybe just to know, how do you feel? Like, how do you think that all these paths and all the experiences and stories have shaped the person that you are today?

PD: I'm not sure how to answer. I guess the decisions I make today are of course because of my lived experiences, so maybe even my choices of who I want to spend life with, who I am

attracted to and all these are influenced by who I am, by what I lived. Now I'm pretty sure of that. Of course, it has a big impact.

PV: And what is the meaning that you maybe can give to all these experiences or path?

PD: Oh, definitely I don't regret anything. I mean, anyway, it was not under my control. I couldn't control the wars and everything and I cannot control anything that happened to me. But I am, at the same time, kind of glad for it because it made me a resilient person. All these wars, for example, taught me to just feel that life continues, that things happen, you just get up again, rebuild and continue. So I do have a mixed kind of identity, of course, from also having this French experience and also Spanish now that makes me a bit European in some ways. The ways I may be like... I'm not sure about that... Maybe thinking about saving money or you know, my financial literacy is maybe a bit more European than the Lebanese. Some things like that. So it makes me a mix hybrid of Lebanese and European. Yeah, so I think these are the resilience from Lebanon and maybe the organization from Europe, something like that.

PV: And what other things do you think that can describe yourself today?

PD: I'm very proud of being Lebanese today. I was not for a very long time. I never identified as Lebanese, so I wasn't proud of it. And finally, today, I can say yes 'I am proud'. Even I remembered I was disappointed in France because of the discrimination that I felt there. I always explained... Most Lebanese people do that, is that we always say 'We are not Arabs'. In a way it is true. Technically, we are. We come from Phoenicians so we are Phoenicians, but the Phoenicians now don't exist anymore, right? It's a civilization that was wiped out. I mean, the empire but we are the descendants from the Phoenicians and that still doesn't mean that we are not also Arabs because we are from Asia, from the Middle East, more specifically. And we do have Arabic. Is one of our main languages in the country. So we are part of the Arab world.

So yeah, I was not proud of being Lebanese. Before I always said ‘‘I’m not an arab’’. Maybe I was proud of being Lebanese, but not arab, something like that, you know, and I was distancing myself from that. I was very young, and I’m still learning. And now it’s different, for sure. Now I’m so excited to teach my Lebanese culture and things to my daughter. And I’m proud of being a migrant. I don’t want to be called Spanish, but I wouldn’t mind. But I am happy with my identity. And so, I think I’m also excited for my daughter to be half Filipino, half Lebanese, and a little bit Spanish, right? So to be this mix, to be this descendant of migrants. And because, yes, it’s not easy to get to where.. Well, we’re still struggling. It’s not over yet until we get the, maybe, Spanish nationality? We’re still gonna be struggling and even then, who knows, right? But yeah, these struggles make you a lot stronger and proud. So I’m proud that she is gonna inherit this resilience from us.

PV: And what other values do you think that have gone along in your journey, or like, even today?

PD: Kindness and empathy is such a big thing. Because one part is the kindness of the people, some of the people that are found on my way, that made my journey easier. And the other part is the lack of kindness and empathy that I got from people that also led me to where I am today. Because of those people who did not show any empathy and kindness, I am more empathetic and kinder to strangers, a lot of people because I needed that and maybe they were not giving that to me all the time. And also, of course, the ones that did give it which was very helpful. And then openness. Being open to anything. Anything meaning, not just other religions, other cultures, other genders or other, you know, looking people, everything. So we have tolerance. Not tolerance, cause is not the best word, but just basically that love. Love for everyone. Hope she learns that from us. That we love everyone, no matter where they come from, what they look like, no matter what. We love everyone even, you know, those who don’t love themselves.

I believe that everyone is good. There's goodness in everyone. So yeah, that's the philosophy. As long as you're not hurting anyone, no matter what you are, who you are, what shape, color, size, whatever. We will love you.

PV: This is just the last questions, I promise. Maybe to take some questions of an empathy map. Like, especially related now to this process of maybe sharing your story with others, what is the perception? Like, what do you see? And maybe, how do you feel doing this kind of action? Like, not everyone is ready to maybe share their stories with others.

PD: Well, I don't know. I guess I never had a problem sharing my stories. I think maybe my parents taught me that. My mom loves to talk about them. She's a journalist and a writer, right? So that's at her core. That's who she is. So maybe I was raised in this way too. I never had secrets or anything. Also, maybe this is a Lebanese thing that we don't make some things that could seem very big and very, you know, dramatic in other cultures, are nothing for Lebanese people. Maybe because of the wars we've lived and everything. So we don't over-dramatize things. Like, raising a baby, we don't complicate our lives and how we raise babies or this or that. So I think that's something that I got from my parents. So telling the story is not a big deal. It doesn't feel like "Oh, but I'm gonna talk about the war, my grandpa died and was killed...". It doesn't feel like a big thing or a traumatic thing. Like, we would not go to psychologists. It's very rare for a Lebanese person to go to a psychologist. It's, of course, a stigma and that's really bad. Things are changing now. And thankfully, you know, the younger generations are more open to seeing a psychologist, but before in Lebanon you'd say you don't need one. Of course, because of the stigma, like, "Oh, you're crazy if you go to a psychologist". But also, part of it is because just things break down. Like my parents, right? The apartment broke down. "Ok, let's build it back". That's the mentality, that's the resilience. So sharing my story, I think is good. I think I encourage everyone to share them. I'm not saying

it's easy for everyone to share the story, of course, but I encourage them to because it makes things less heavy. So for me, I just share my stories, as you know, like "Let's sit down, have a meal and talk and share stories". So I like to do that. And that in a way makes those stories less heavy or less complicated. It does not complicate my life. And that's why I said this may be a Lebanese thing. We tend not to complicate these horror stories.

PV: Okay, so that's it.

2.2.2. A Dialogue with Carolyne

Paula Valero: So, now maybe we can start with the first questions, if you can say like your name, where were you born? And the longest that you can make the answer is always... you can just say whatever you want.

Carolyne Chemutai: Okay, so the interview is like, how many minutes?

Paula Valero: Mmm... That depends on every person. So we can start whenever you want.

Carolyne Chemutai: Okay, okay. My name is Carolyne Chemutai Mbadugha. I'm 37 years old. I was born in Kenya, particularly Nairobi, which is the capital city. The capital city, yes. Then, I was named Carolyne, which is my name. And I was a lab scientist, before I relocated to Spain, but now I'm seeing myself being now a peace and conflict development worker. Yes. So I also have a brother, and sisters. So I come from a family of five. I've been the first one. I have one brother and three sisters.

Paula Valero: So, big family.

Carolyne Chemutai: Yes.

PV: Yeah, maybe we can start now with the things of the family and infancy. Like, for example, what are the memories that you have when you were a kid? Like for example, with your parents or at home?

CC: Like, from the question, how my parents met? I have never had a story because... I grew from a single parent family because my mom and my dad separated back in 1980s. When I was only like three years old. 1988-9. I was four years there, thereabouts. So that, when they separated, I only knew my mom and I. Then, when I turned five years old, she had to take me to boarding school because she was a police officer being transferred from one state to another state. So she couldn't just be changing me from one school if... if, for example, she'd be transferred from this region, she'll also go and look for another school for me. So she had to put me into a boarding school at five years. Then, I think, it was when I was in boarding school, she remarried. That is when I was able to have other siblings. Yeah.

PV: And how was, for example, the process of going to the boarding school and not seeing your mom?

CC: Oh, my God, I felt so bad. Because you know, as a child, at that point you need your parents. And... it also made me become an introvert because, you know, I couldn't... I couldn't express myself. When I was young, I was always alone. And I've grown up with that. At some point in my life, I think I was able to open up when I was around 18 years. But from submitting and below, I was always alone. I can't even know when I'm okay, or when I'm not okay, because I always kept quiet. So I think that affected me so much because, you know, that bond is not there. Because from my preschool when I joined missionary school... I mean, boarding school, from my preschool, primary, secondary to the university, I was always alone.

PV: Always in the same boarding school?

CC: No, my preschool was another. It was my first boarding school. Then my primary, another boarding school. Secondary, another boarding school, another region. So you know, moving for... Also moving from one place to another place... different environment. Yeah, university, another region also.

PV: So like it was always like moving from...?

CC: I've always been moving since I was five.

PV: And after you were five, that's when your mom get married again and you start having a big family?

CC: Yes, yes, yes. When my mom remarried, I started having other siblings. But to be honest, life was not like before. Life was not like before. You know, it's an emotional story. But, sometimes I always push myself. Since I was small, I always looked forward to achieving something in life, but not allowing anything to distract me. So when I was five, my mom remarried. Then we had another family but now being... having a stepdad who doesn't take you as his own child, you know, that discrimination was... really, really evident.

PV: But, you were not living with them most of the time?

CC: Yeah, because I was in boarding school. I was in boarding school. At some point, even at a time when I was still in primary school, there was a nationwide strike for teachers. So they asked all the parents to come and pick their children from school. They gave them. So they'd come and pick your kid from school. But, since during that period my mom had gone for training for police for promotion, so she couldn't come up from the training camp for like almost three months. So the only person that was left to come and pick me up from school, because I cannot go out of the school premises without an adult to come and pick me, it was

that my stepfather. And the days that they gave him to come and pick me, he didn't show up. So, the last day were left only three children in school. They waited. The number that they gave for school, they couldn't reach the person. So what happened that day, the family that came to pick their kids because they already informed the school that they're going to come late, so when they came, they asked me "Where are you coming from?". I told the lady that I'm living in Nairobi. "Ah, I'm also going to the same place, we can drop you instead of you staying alone in school because the teachers, they are on strike. Nobody is there". There's only one caretaker. So I said, "Okay". So I followed them. Then we went to the woman place, it was just around the school, before the other day. The next day, we traveled to the city where we're all living. So from there, they took me to my house. When I arrived there, I just met my siblings. My brother and my sister. They asked me "Where is our dad?". I said "I don't know". He said that my dad went to pick me from school. He didn't come in time. So I had to follow these people, go to their home, but then they dropped me at our home. So the next thing I remember was that there was an announcement on radio that they're looking for somebody that has gotten lost, me. Because when he reached school, he was told that somebody has carried the daughter. But he didn't know the person. So he just went to run an announcement, pay for announcement because he was scared. He didn't come in time. And my mom is also in a training camp, she cannot be able to come also, you know. So it was... maybe he was scared cause we couldn't come in time. But let me tell you the day the strike was called off and then we had to resume to go back to school, when I went back to school I was given a beating of my life. I'll never forget. I was beaten very well by the principal, by teachers that "Why did I make my...?". I don't know what he told the teachers. "Why did I make my stepfather come and not meet me in school?", instead of questioning the man why he did not come in time. Or you could have called the school, "Okay, so maybe I'm busy. I'll come to Sunday". So that somebody will be standby there to take care of me. But, is part... it's part of all those things.

PV: And then how was the... like the receiving or living with your stepfather and your new siblings? For this reason, was it complicated?

CC: No, no. With my siblings, we are okay. But, you know, I could feel also discrimination and like that. I could feel a little discrimination. But it's one of those things... I believe I was the Cinderella of the family.

PV: So then it was complicated. I don't know, to get into the family again?

CC: No, like for instance, where my dad worked he had insurance and it covered everyone except me. So for example, now if my siblings are sick, that's where they'll be taken. But if I am sick, I'll be taken just... or they will make me just go to the nearby pharmacy, buy medicine for me. You understand? And then every year they'll give them... the company will give them tickets to travel to maybe anywhere they want within the country. So they'll go, I'll be left alone at home. I was 14 years old and I knew what was really happening. Because, me, if the father leaves me alone... I could be very, very happy and I have freedom to play, you understand. But I made sure I entered our house before six o'clock. So when they're not there, I will just play and happy. I will just stay alone. But when I was 14, that's when I started realizing "No, no. Things are not okay". But why would my mum be supporting this? Because are things... But anyway I was not too much inquisitive that period because I just take things the day when they travel to like the coastal parts. They told me that they are going for wedding. I said "Okay". Then they gave me in that period twenty shillings. Twenty shillings is just... Is so big for that time because during that period it was mango season. So you know, we used to eat mango and the hot chili. So it would be very, very sour. So happy. So they gave me the twenty shillings and they left. Once in future I was worried "Why they have not come back?". Because they said they're going for a wedding. But when you go to a wedding you are supposed

to come back the same day. Almost a week, I didn't see anybody. So when they came back, my siblings were so happy. “But Mommy did not tell you the truth? We went to Mombasa, the city. We went to Mombasa. We did this, we did that...”. What can I do? But all that did not stop me from focusing on my study because I was a very, very brilliant student because when I finished my secondary school I had As. I got a scholarship for my university, so my mom and dad didn't have to spend a dime for my university because in Kenya we have that program that when you pass this program by the government called *Help*, they can hire education loans. They will now support you. So I was part of them. You know, I had that deal.

PV: But was there a reason why they, I don't know, never included you in this kind of plans? Like because of your stepfather?

CC: Yeah, you know... He has to declare where he is working. He didn't declare that I'm his child so they only recognized people that he already declared as his children. Just like for example... just like here. Because I'm not working, I'm included under my husband's Social Security. So him... that's also the same thing happening. Under his social security, he included my mom and the other children. I was excluded.

PV: And yeah, that must be difficult that they don't recognize you as a child, even because they got married, right? So it would have been like the logic that you will be recognized as his daughter, too. Did that create another differences between you and your siblings? Or was it...?

CC: No, not at all. I've always been very happy. Even until today. We are very, very strong because I didn't allow anything to just... I'm so spiritual. I always believe in God. And I always believe that you know, God everyday, before I do anything, I always just got to see me through.

Yeah, so for me in my heart I don't have any room for hatred, no room for malice. I just let everything go and once I realize that, my doors always keep opening.

PV: Yeah, that's very beautiful. It is. But then with your mom and your stepfather you had a good relationship?

CC: Yeah. When my mom is around it's okay. But when my mom is not around, I have been beaten in my head. Just every slight provocation. If he does get angry, he will start beating me for anything I do wrong. Beating me, insulting me "You will never become anything in life", you know. But as I said, I do not allow all those things to let me down. No, no, no, I always focus and I know where I'm going even today.

PV: Yeah, that's so brave. I cannot imagine... And talking about... because you said that spirituality has been very important, was religion part of your daily life when you were a kid? For your family was important?

CC: Yes, very, very important because every Sunday we had to go to church and all the boarding schools that I was, were all mission schools. Like my first boarding school and preschool was a Catholic school. The same thing, primary school. The same thing, Secondary School, yes. So, you know and we have like all these sisters. I think they are called sisters...

PV: Like nuns?

CC: Yes, the nuns from Italy and they would like to shape you to mold you according to their religion, yes. So, religion took a very important and disciplined role.

PV: Were you also part of a community?

CC: Yes, I was.

PV: So yeah, like then it makes a huge sense that you made like... well that it was very important in your daily life.

CC: Like me, first I always look forward towards on Sunday when you go to church, especially as a person, because I was... I knew how to play kayamba. Some instruments in church.

PV: Like the organ or...?

CC: No piano. No, is actually manual. We have it in Spain. But it has like some bottles on top. Let me see... Let me look for Swahili. In Swahili call it kayamba. Unfortunately, English don't have it... See, here. It had like some seeds in his head. So when you shake, it will bring some noise. It's made from reeds. Yeah, it's an African instrument for music. So we use these. Also, use drums. Until today, most of the countries they use this. But I was surprised when I came here, they don't do that.

PV: So you loved to go and play the instruments?

CC: Yes, yes. I loved playing with it so much. So you know when the choir is singing, then I would be shaking this. Oh my God, it made me look forward to going to church on Sunday in school.

PV: Did you used to do more things with the community, like besides Sunday? I don't know, like...

CC: Yeah, sometimes as a school we will go maybe to do some cleanup. Because there's also a Mission Hospital there. So we just go there looking outside the hospital, like maybe packing the papers, all those things, but not inside the hospital. No.

PV: I've never seen that instrument.

CC: Oh, yeah, it's made from... But now there is digital technology. They are now updating it and making it 3D. But like some cultures, they used to shake it, yeah, for transferring. So if they shaket it, maybe they'll be singing in their language, they will go to a church. So it has different purpose.

PV: Nice and well, being Catholic, were you raised with specific values like...? I Don't know, because you said no hate, love. Yeah, I don't know. Like what other values or maybe expectations for life being raised in a Catholic religion?

CC: Yeah, you know, with something like, for example, in Catholic before you receive your First Holy Communion, you have to go to class. Like me, I went for class for one year, when I was young. That one was in 1994. So, that is when I'd be taught many things, all the values, things that you need to know about God and also about my life too. So the things that you are taught there like, for example, you are taught the 10 commandments. 'Do not do this, do not do that. Don't do this'. Yes. So it was during that period I learnt a lot, a lot. And also we have religious studies in school in Kenya. It was called *CRE, Christian Religious Education*, during that period. So, I also learnt a lot of things there too. Yeah.

PV: That's very interesting.

CC: But now I think it will be scrapped now. And that is why children are just messing around in the country now. Because now it's called *Social Education*. No more religious studies, I think.

PV: And about your education being in boarding school, like what do you remember? Because it was like... well, basically you were living in the school, right? So I don't know, how was living and studying in the same place?

CC: Oh, my boarding school, especially the primary one, was difficult for me because you know, first, you have to bring things that you're supposed to use in school. And also some things like what children like, juice, biscuits. They need to have in your box. We used to use box. Not actually a box. Is made of iron sheets. Have you seen it before?

PV: Yeah, like. Like this...

CC: I think it's from zinc, but is big. You can put your clothes to the one side, and you can put food stuff here. So for me, I didn't have anything like that. So I just put my clothes like that. Then I'll just always rely on what the school gives me. But you know, other children maybe come from wealthy families, they'll bring all those things. So then we had also a lot of activities at school too. So for me, to be honest, I used to feel more happy when I'm in school than when I'm at home. Yes, of course, also because of my friends. You know, as a child, I loved to play so much. And also I used to like to dance. They knew me so much as somebody that could dance. I remember in primary school, they quoted me as an entertainment prefix. But at some point it affected my studies because I could always look forward to a certain day, "Let's go on dancing". Because I used to have like Saturday evening from 8 to 10 is entertainment night cause in boarding school you can't just leave like that. So, we go to the hall, maybe put some music, some could be watching a movie. It's only once in a week that we can able to have that access. I don't know how it is here.

PV: Well, here I never been in a boarding school. So I don't know how does it work actually, if maybe they have different schedules... I never had the experience of a boarding

school. And like when you say that you have to rely on the things that the school gave to you, did that suppose any discrimination coming from the other kids or from the teachers?

CC: No. From the teachers, no. From the kids... you know, the kids, it definitely has to be that, cause some people, they would be feeling superior, you understand. Because when it comes to visiting days, days when parents come, come with foodstuffs, come, you know, as a family, they will do something like a picnic that day. But for me, I didn't experience anything like that. Maybe sometimes when my stepfather... I don't know why my mom never visited me throughout my primary school. I've never understood that because maybe she was always working but I didn't question that because anytime my stepfather comes, he carried bread. And it should be towards the end of the day. When the visiting day started eight o'clock, then by around six all parents should leave the premises. So my stepfather will come around five thirty. Thirty minutes to close. So me, I will just be sitting in one place. Everybody's enjoying, everybody's happy, you know. In short, is a place where we used to end up waiting by the way, we'll be sitting there waiting for a parent. So everybody will have gone but a few people, that maybe their parents have not come, will be sitting in one place. So I'll be waiting, waiting. So when I see... One particular day when he came, so when I saw him I rushed. I was so happy. I wanted to come and hug him as a child. He just pushed me. "What happened to your shoe? One polisher shoe". That's the first thing he asked me. When a child is happy, I mean that to see my dad also has come and I didn't care about the time, I was just so happy. He said just "Brush it off. Go and polish your shoes". So, I just went. I prepared myself since morning, eight o'clock. So as I went and polish my shoe, I come back and said "So how is the academy?". I said "It's fine". "Tell me". Because now when parents come, they will put all the results on the boards. They have a pod there so he checked "Okay yeah, you're doing well.... Why did you perform...?". If maybe I didn't perform well, he'd begin to call me out

there. He never asked me, ‘‘Have you eat? Are you okay?’’. And when he finished, I said ‘‘Okay, okay, okay, okay, okay’’. ‘‘Took’’, he gave me the bread. Then he put his hands into the pockets, give me two hundred kenyan shillings as pocket money. ‘‘No, no, no, I know if I give you, it may get lost. So you go to the school accountant’’. So that money is meant for me to be buying bread every morning because the school only provided bread on Sundays. Bread and boiled egg. Other days it’s parents that will give their children money. Then, they will be able to be buying bread from a shop inside the school. So with two hundred kenyan shillings, I cannot even sustain me. Two hundred shillings, it’s just almost like one euro. One euro fifty now. So it can’t even be able to sustain even for one month. So you go to the accountant, give him. The accountant now calculates this one. So the accountant will tell you that this money is not rich for the whole time. He said ‘‘I will send more money’’, which he never did. So after that, I’ll just collect the bread and he said ‘‘Okay, I’m going. What should I tell your mom?’’.

PV: So, maybe continuing a little bit again with the school, because you said it was a Catholic school, for example, the rest of the students were also coming from Catholic families? Or was there a mix between girls and boys being a sisters school?

CC: Yeah, my primary school it was a... We had boys, but the boys were separate. And the girls were separate. And it was Catholic school. And the thing is that not all students came from Catholic backgrounds. No, it was not compulsory. But irrespective of your background, you have to follow the rules of the school, which are also being guided by Catholic rules. Yes.

PV: And also the same with the next schools?

CC: Yeah, the secondary school was also a girls school. And the same thing, you have to follow... In fact, our principal was a nun, very strict. So you have to follow the school

regulation, backed up also by Catholic Catholic rules because the principal, the school matron, was also a nun.

PV: And how was it like being in a school like, only with other girls? Like how was it?

CC: Yeah, it was... it was interesting, but you know, and that says, when you also meet people from different backgrounds, also you'll be seeing different characters in school. It was good, but you know, very strict... Also very strict. It's not like here, whatever you can do... Yeah, I see a lot of freedom here in some boarding schools. And you know, also another thing is that during that period we had an education system that is totally different from what the country has adopted now. Because we had a system known as 8-4-4. You spent eight years in primary, four years in secondary and then four years in university. So the primary is the longest. Secondary School, four years also. But now the program that they have might be totally different. Like now you're spending six years... something like six years in primary. Then you spend another three years in secondary. Then two years or three years in senior secondary. Yes. So the system that will work, we were using the entirely 1990s, before 2000, until 2005 or... no, until three years ago. It was the age performed. Very strict discipline. But since they changed us to the new system, things are changing. We have a lot, you know... This generation now, I think it's called generation Z, oh my god, they believe that the world started them and ended them. Yeah.

PV: And how was the rest of the education for you until you finished secondary school? Because you said that you were a very good student, so would you focus on that? Or in the boarding school did you also have time for friendships? Especially, when you're starting to become a teenager that you're trying to explore and...

CC: Funny part, also. I also became an entertainment prefect in secondary school because of the dancing, you know. And also, that's when I started opening up. You know, opening up because having friends, people that, you know, come from different backgrounds. We talk, we laugh, you know. So that's now that... I was trying to, let's say, become accommodating because the problem was just I couldn't even sometimes sustain a conversation. Maybe during bedtime, when you have a breakdown of 40 minutes after classes, maybe around ten, I'll just go and sit and lie down in the grass waiting for the girls to be moved back. But I could see most of the students would be laughing, would be saying some stories, something funny. So as time goes on, I begin, you know, to open up. I met some people that was always jovial. So me, I realized that "Okay, I can also be funny". Actually, people would laugh. Anything I talk, they will laugh during my secondary school.

PV: And how were these, I don't know, like the teenager years for you? Like do you have, I don't know, memories, something that you remember? Yeah, also like especially from the perspective of us being a woman that our bodies start changing... I don't know, relationships with boyfriends, girlfriends or whatever.

CC: I remember, the first time I saw my monthly period, I cried. I told my mom "I don't know what cut me". Because you know what? It's something I realized. Sex education and even reproductive system education, you know, yes, it's been taught in school, but psychologically you're not prepared. So and, you know, like now my kids, I also intend to teach them. So when it reaches, they will be able to have that knowledge. Me, I said that "Something has cut me", I don't know. I was crying. So after crying, it disappeared. I didn't see it again for some days and then it just vanished until the next month. So that's the point when my mom and dad, they explained to me "So this is what happens yeah, once you reach a certain age. This is what happens as your body is developing, it's not a big thing". But I was really scared. Yeah.

PV: That also happened to me, I cried. I remember that I got the period when I was in my cousin's house, because me and my sister we used to spend like some days there for summer, and I got my period and I spent like two days crying. Like my parents even have to come out to my aunty's house like 'What is happening? Why are you crying? It's nothing'. 'But I don't understand, I'm just bleeding all the time and I don't like that'. And I spent two days crying, I remember that. Because we didn't know anything. I was just scared like, 'What?'

CC: Yeah, you know, because yes... It's been taught in school, but you know, I as a person, I didn't expect that. Because you don't know when. If they taught, okay, once you reach like 17 years old or 14, it depends because it varies, it depends on the body. So me I think when I was 19, 18 that's when... I think 18 or 17, around that, and I saw it. So I didn't know. You know, I was so naive. Yeah, because one, being far from my parents you know, there are many things that I really needed to know. Because on boarding school I don't have that time, so much closeness with my mom.

PV: And did you come very often to your house or only, I don't know, vacations, holidays?

CC: When they closed school for like holidays, I wanted to stay with my mom. I would go there, I stayed. Once the school opens, then I go back.

PV: And can I ask, well, how did you feel like your mom being a police officer? Because even here in Spain, nowadays it's a little bit more normal to start seeing women being police officers, but before it was super strange. Yeah, how was that... I don't know, the feeling or the image?

CC: You know, having been a police officer, first, she was very strict. Very, very strict. Because if you do anything wrong, she had one whip to use. It's a stick, then a tire from the... So you know, this they used mostly in prison. So if she would whip you like this, it would go around. So, if you make any mistake. And another thing is if you lie because she really didn't like any of our child to lie. So if you make mistakes, lie or do anything wrong, she will not touch you that moment until midnight when you've forgotten. Because she knows that if she touches you, then you would run away. Particularly I'll climb the tree, I won't come down while my brother he used to like to enter under the bed. Once he knows there's trouble, he just go ahead. But me, I will top of it. So, 'Which way I do that?'. When you have forgotten. She'd wake you up, begin to discipline at midnight. So if she disciplined you at midnight, anytime you remember that thing that you did, you cannot... And people really feel fear. You know, I don't think it's respect, it's fear because, you know, also when they see that someone is a police officer, for example, many people during that period in our society, they tend to look at police officers as somebody like, especially a woman, somebody is moved, you understand. You can't like sustain marriage, especially her being separated from the first husband, you understand. There's a lot of some like... some stigma or something attached to it because also they don't stay in one place, they're transferred from here to here. Some of them couldn't live like that because if they transfer from there to here, they will start another relationship with different people. So, during that period there's a lot of fear, not respect.

PV: That's super interesting. Like the idea related to being a police officer, and especially being a woman. Would it be the same if he was... if he would be a man? Would they have the same idea like 'Oh, because they've been transferred everywhere, so they're not gonna maintain a family'?

CC: No, it's normal for them. If it's the man, is a normal thing. But if it's the woman, the story is different. I think until today even because we, you know, we are going to have general election by next month. So, one of the presidential aspirants the other day he just... I don't know how they do campaigns here, but what I'm seeing now, like my opinion, what they're doing is just like exchanging insults in public. So there's one of the opposition that said that "This social presidential aspirant almost slapped me". That he looks down on people. So, the presidential aspirant now came on public. He had won one campaign and they have a lot of, you know, groups of people. "So, what like... how can I slap? In fact, that man is a woman, you know". He just spoke demeaning words against women. So, like right now some people, they don't value women, you know. They don't take women as like... They take women as a weaker vessel. Especially, I'm so sorry to say, especially my tribe, the Kalenjin. But we are changing the narrative. They feel that women don't have a say in the society. If a woman wants to say something, they ask you "Who is your husband?". If a woman, for example, only a woman unmarried... maybe decide to do for condition to say "If you cannot be able to maintain your marriage, how can you be able to maintain maybe a constituency or this position we want to give you?" So that stigma is still there. That's why all these gender issues are always hide in Kenya.

PV: But, little by little, right? Maybe...

CC: Yeah. Things are changing because they are going to cut the amendments of the Constitution, you know. But, it's not really... It's just paper work, but physically on the ground it's totally different. It's interesting?

PV: Yeah, yeah because it's always good to think about that. Like, well, here in Spain we have this police system. But maybe you transfer only like the first years until you got...

How to say? Like your fixed place. So once that you get it, you can start like your stability. But I never, like for example... I never had this idea of police officers like being transferred. Or, especially related to the family and with the case of woman, like we... I think that we've never had an idea because they were never like part of the police organization maybe until 20 years ago or something like that. So it's a very interesting story to listen all this and also, especially because of your perspective. So the last years of school, like before going to uni, do you have any memories? Or something happened that you always remember? Maybe your memories between fifteen and eighteen years old.

CC: I think it was when I was about to finish my... I had a person, but this boyfriend was opposite in the next school. I know that sometimes we could communicate through the letters. We communicated with letters. So, a lot of times we were able to see ourselves on Sunday. Because on Sunday, the boys school is separate, so all of us are meant to meet in church. We exchanged letters. And then, you know, after writing the letter you will not write a dedication. You begin to write all this music like, for example, "I dedicate you this song...". You begin to write the lyrics. So, maybe if you don't have the lyrics, then you write the title of the song and all those things. But now technology has taken over. No more letters.

PV: Yeah, now only WhatsApp. But, then you met in church and then you started exchanging...?

CC: No... Well, we actually met doing... you know, we used to have these extracurricular activities. So, maybe, for example, we had... How is it called here? Discussion.

PV: Debates?

CC: Something like debates, all those things. We had drama competition because I was also in drama club. So it was through all these drama clubs, from there could go from maybe... for

example, start from the district level. Then if you pass, you go to the provision level. Then, final one is international level. So, there we just met. We became, actually, friendship.

PV: And what other things did you like to do? Like, besides drama and...

CC: I was in debate class. Also in drama. And then what again... Particularly those two. Then, also I joined agri club but I couldn't maintain it because I was not too much into agri.

PV: Agri, what is that?

CC: Agriculture. Agriculture club whereby they will just focus on planting all these like... planting carrots, all those things.

PV: That's very funny. Yeah. So after the last boarding school, you got a scholarship to go to uni?

CC: Yes, to uni. And uni is now in a different region. Is the capital city, in Nairobi.

PV: And before it was like in villages?

CC: Yeah, it was another states.

PV: And how was, then, the move to the capital? What did uni suppose? Like, I don't know, moving to another region, meeting new people probably?

CC: For me, it was somehow... It was difficult because, you know, let's start from the beginning. I was born in Nairobi. Then when I was five, I had to relocate to another like village for boarding school. Yeah, so now coming back... now after, how many years? Fifteen years. After fifteen years coming back, so it's like I'm starting from scratch. I'm starting from scratch again. So yeah, you are like someone that's coming to... like, for example, going to Madrid for

the first time. So ‘‘It was exciting, at the same time I’m scared. I don’t know what to expect’’.
Yeah.

PV: But were you going alone or with other friends, so...?

CC: No, I went with my mom when I got the admission. So my mom went there to the university, to the registration. She made sure that, at least, I get a room in the hostel. Yes. So when she left, I started crying because you know, just like a mother... And my stepfather was living also in the same city. But for me, I felt like ‘‘Now I’m alone’’. So I asked my mom, ‘‘Can I be going to my stepfather house over the weekend? Because I just needed to have family. She said ‘‘Yeah, you can be going’’. But I just always like to stay there, so... I met one girl, but she’s my best friend until today. She’s called Lisa. So, at least over the weekend, because also she was from a wealth family, over the weekend she said ‘‘Ok, let’s go to my home’’. Because their home It’s not far from the university. So, over the weekend we go to their home. I met her parents and siblings, so they were just like my second family now. So, I felt at home. So, the university was okay for me because of my friend that made also everything easier for me.

PV: And did that also bring, I don’t know, like new thoughts, ideas? Like political thoughts? Or maybe...?

CC: I think I discovered myself. I discovered myself fully in my undergraduate studies, because, you know, of the course that I did, that I got admitted. Because once you get a scholarship in that particular course, you’re going to study. For me, I wanted to study something different, but I did this because of my mom. Because she told me that ‘‘Is better for you to do a course that even when you retire, it’s used. You can still run it’’. So you know, medical lab, nursing, pharmacy it’s a lifetime profession. But when you retire, you can open your own

pharmacy, you can open your own company for the consumer. But for me, I had something different. I'd always like to do a Bachelor of Commerce. I don't know, bachelor of Commerce, just something different. I wanted something different related with business. Yeah, with business and also mostly social sciences studies. That is what I really wanted but... So, one of my friends was telling me that "You know, you can actually change your course". I can change the course without my parents being aware, even University. One of my classmates changed from that to environmental studies. So we're laughing. Told her "Why would you prefer environmental studies?". "Why taking care of the environment?" You know, we didn't know the importance of environmental studies. And environmentalists are making big now because of climate change and everything that is happening now. So she switched for the environmental studies and another switched to forestry. Wildlife and forestry. Because, you know, in our society in Kenya if you're not a doctor, you cannot... They value some professions. I don't know whether they do the same here.

PV: There are some professions, like lawyer, doctor, some business that, of course, they have more reputation.

CC: Yeah, exactly. The same thing. My mom wanted us to... "My children should be this, should be this...". So, she decides what I supposed to do.

PV: So you had the pressure coming from home to study...?

CC: Yes, yes, yes. But along the road I fell in love with it. Kept on doing the studies well and, then, you know, met a lot of students. They are some, most who are also forced to study the course because of family pressure. When you're in class, when it's time to write exam, you know, continuous assessment... when it's time to write a continuous assessment test, they'll be like "I'll sit close to you". Oh my god, it was funny. It was funny. Actually, some of them

were there after three years because, you know, they had a lot of D. If you fail, you have to retake a unit. I think it should be the same here, if you fail you have to retake it. If you're not focused, if you don't know what you want, if you're not like firm to your decision and you don't have that... some moral values, you just end up being swayed and being, joining different... and even living a life that you not planned for. Yes.

PV: Yes, totally.

CC. That peer pressure. My friend is doing this, I must also do the same thing. Yeah.

PV: Yeah, no and especially the thing also coming from the family because sometimes they can choose and you can be lucky like yeah, I fell in love with this on the road. But maybe for some people that they might not like it, four years studying or three is a lot. And especially in this years that you're trying to find yourself and it's like okay, "I don't like what I'm studying, so what am I gonna do?" and all this. But, for you, like you really enjoyed the university. Did it also bring more changes?

CC: Yes, yes, yes, yes. Because you know, we had a lot of critical thinking, creative thinking. So, for me, it really had a lot of impact, positive impact. Then after graduation, I joined the traumatic streets where you'll be moving around with envelopes looking for jobs.

PV: And how was the process after finishing university? I don't know, what were your expectations for life after uni?

CC: I was so excited and hoping that everything's going to be very smooth. It's going to be very smooth, that I'm going just to finish, just get employed. Because, you know, you always have that mind of no critic thinking like that. You're trained to become a civil servant. "Looking, maybe I'll get a job". But then that's when reality came. This way, just "Keep on

applying, keep on applying’’. And I remember in 2010 that is when I met my real father. When I was...twenty years after. That is when I met my real, my biological father. So I told the way I met him. I was so happy the day I met him. Even, it’s very, very interesting because through my friend, Lisa, my best friend in the university, I met also my father. Because the father of my best friend, Lisa, was an educational officer. So they were having like a retreat in one of the hotels. So Lisa told me that the father will be around, whether do I want to go and meet them after the retreat. I said ‘‘No, I don’t think I’ll be able to go. But let me know the time so that when I’m through done with a thing, it can be able to meet’’. So, she gave me a link whereby I can be able to see the time. When I went through the link, because during that time I had some phone that you pushed like this; so when I entered the link, I saw a name that looks familiar. Cause my father, my biological father is called Alphonse Misoi. I saw this name. ‘‘Alphonse Misoi? Maybe? Because a lot of people attended the retreat, it could be the same person’’. Then the institution, it was the principal of the technical schools, just like let’s say a polytechnics or something like that.. And I also have a friend that is working in that... He got a job immediately and is working as an accountant. He was studying also business studies. So he only started because during that period, to study a Bachelor of Commerce was only three years. Then he had done. So, he get employed in that same institution. So when I saw this, I had to call him and ask him, ‘‘Are you still working in this technical school?’’. He said ‘‘Yes’’. I asked him ‘‘Do you know this person? Do you know Alphonse?’’. ‘‘Yes, he’s my boss’’. ‘‘Do you have his number?’’. He said, ‘‘Why?’’. I said ‘‘No. Do you have this number?’’. Cause he was also curious. ‘‘Yeah’’, he said. It gave it to me. Oh, my God. That is a call that made me felt complete because I had a lot of questions in my mind, but I don’t know who could give me the answers. I had a lot of ‘‘Why, why, why, why’’. So when he gave me the number, I had to look for a place to sit comfortably first and compose myself, cause I don’t know where to start. I said, ‘‘Okay, what if it is not the same person I’m calling?’’. You know, ‘‘What if his

response would be negative? What if he don't want to hear anything about me completely?'. I said "Okay". Another voice was like "Carolynne, go ahead". You know, we always have inner voices.

PV: But you never saw him before?

CC: I saw him last when I was three years or four years. I've never seen him again. So I didn't even know how he looked like.

PV: It was 20 years after that?

CC: Yes. I don't know how he looks like. So when I called the numbers, he picked. The first thing I was like "Hello". He said "Hello". "This is Carolynne, daughter of...". I called my mom's name. The first thing he said "Let me call you back". He called back immediately. "So what did you say?". I said "My name is Carolynne". I mentioned my native name, "Carolynne Chemutai, daughter of Rose". My mom was called Cheptanui. He said "My daughter". I said "I could not talk again". "My daughter, where are you?". I started crying. I could not talk again. "So please, can we meet tomorrow?". I said "Yes". He said, "Just come. Do you have transport?". I said "yes". "So, just come". So the next day I went to meet. We met in the centro because of the city. When I saw him, I just don't know if I'll be communicating. For the time he was wearing a brown jacket and I saw him. He saw me. Oh my god, I was crying. That's one of the best moments for me. Not to have that father figure... To feel that, you know, you have a father because all what I used to say, tell God "Dad, show me the way. Let me know. Even if he have one eye, he is still my father". I was crying. I asked him "What happened? Why did you just abandon me and left?". Well, I thought everything's going to be okay, but another battle ahead. I said "I just finished my university". "Good, you have to go for a Master". I said "Yes". "Okay, okay. Okay. Go ahead, organize the papers,

so that you can apply''. And him, during that period, he was also doing his doctorate studies in one of the National University. He said ''Okay, try''. Because I have to pay two thousand kenyan shillings for application fee. ''So once you're done, you have to let me know so I can send you the money. You apply for a master. I want you to continue the studies''. And I was happy. At least I can be able to continue my studies, so I will not be struggling and looking for jobs. As he left, the communication stopped. Even when I went and organized everything, I called him. He couldn't pick my calls. Probably because he has also another family. I asked myself, then ''What happened to me? Does it mean that nobody wants me?''. But ''No, Carolyne. Remember, always focus. Don't allow this to distract you'' because I've always been alone. ''So, just keep on the line''. Even, that time I remember I told my husband. I told him. He told me ''Carolyne, you know, in life... you know, my entire life has also been really motivating but if you want to go, do not only be looking back''. So, I said ''Okay, okay, no problem''. That is that, I guess. But sometimes he writes me on my whatsapp because when I was in Nigeria I remember I communicated with him. I still have a Nigerian WhatsApp. He would write me ''How you been, my daughter?''. I said, ''I'm fine''. I've never asked about the Master and everything. I told him ''Okay. Are you going to introduce me to your family? Let me know my other siblings?''. He said, ''Yes, I would do''. Ten years down the line. But, wait, I'm not even bothered because the most important thing I have already seen him. I know this will bring us together someday.

PV: Yeah, sometimes there are bigger things that we never understand, like why they acted somehow? Or... But could you do your master, at the end?

CC: I didn't do anything because, you know, master is almost four thousand euros. I didn't have the money because I just finished my university. So I don't have really the money to continue. So I have to look for job and from there I can be able to go for my master. So, I

remember, when I met my husband in 2009 and then I relocated to Nigeria in 2011, 2012, 2013...I also tried to apply for my master in Nigeria. But because of the education system, and also a lot of corruption, I couldn't get any position.

PV: So, you first met your future husband and then you moved together to Nigeria?

CC: Yes, so we met in Kenya, then we moved to Nigeria. Yes.

PV: But, because he is from Nigeria or he is from Kenya?

CC: No, he is a traveler. He is someone that always likes to travel. So, we met in Kenya. Actually, how we met is very, very interesting because I remember I've gone to the airport where my father is working to collect pocket money. I didn't have anything. So my mom said "Instead of you calling me, call your dad". So I called him. He said I should go to the airport to take some pocket money. So I've gone to pick some pocket money from my father. So I saw two people, like they are waiting. Maybe, the person that was supposed to pick them can be late and they don't have the Kenyan SIM card to call the person. So, I just passed there and he said "Excuse me, can I use your phone to call somebody?". Cause they already had the number. "Can I use your phone to call the person? Because we've been here waiting and the person could be late". I said "No problem". I didn't even think like, you know, because in that period people are snatching phones. So when they say "Can I use your phone?", I just ran. I said "No problem". I gave them my phone. So he called the person and the person told them that because there's an accident on the road, so there was just too much traffic, he couldn't even come in time, but he's coming. So they had to wait and describe where they were waiting, because I was there. Then the person said is coming. And I just left. I left. I met my stepfather. He came and gave me the money and I went back to university. So the next day, I found a miscall and I saw a message "Thank you very much for yesterday for helping us". So from

that ‘‘Thank you for yesterday’’... Cause he also told me ‘‘Thank you so much for this and that’’. That’s 2009, 2010. I didn’t hear anything from him again until 2010, april. I just saw a call. It was plus... something. I didn’t know, so I just picked it. It was him. He was calling me from Switzerland. I didn’t remember the person, he had to describe himself ‘‘that I did help one day in Kenya’’. He said ‘‘It’s Anthony’’. ‘‘Anthony? Yes I remember’’. So yeah, ‘‘I’m still grateful’’. One thing led to another one. In 2011, he comes back home. He asked me to move to Nigeria with him in June.

PV: So, it was very fast.

CC: Yes. We moved to Nigeria. And Nigeria is another country on its own. It’s a very beautiful country, beautiful people, very diverse, you know. They have a lot of cultures because imagine a country with over 200 million as population. It’s so diverse. It’s just like a free country. I cannot compare to where I’m coming from because, well, Kenya it’s just like too much law. You know, you must follow. But there, it’s a free country. Happy people. They are very, very happy people. So I like the police.

PV: And how is the process of moving again? Because yeah, like after all these years of moving, and then... well, now you were migrating to other country. So how was the process?

CC: For me, personally, I didn’t tell my mom properly, just that I’m traveling. ‘‘I’m coming back. I’m traveling’’. So you know, but when I told my friend, Lisa told me ‘‘How do you know this person? How long have you known this person? What if...?’’ I already made up my mind because, you know, I just wanted to leave the country, you understand? And so that is the first thing, to be another person. I just wanted to leave the country. Just wanted to be in a different environment because I think the first life prepared me for that because being in

boarding school, being alone... So moving for me, it was okay. I used to watch a lot of Nigerian movies at home. So I could see. So I was like "Okay, I want to see my reality". And also he had a very good family. The mom, because their father is late, was very welcoming. I also found another home. Because I was like "Okay, the mom is going to be around. The mom of my husband could pet me". "Do you want anything? Are you okay?"

PV: So you feel like you're received in the family?

CC: Yes, yes.

PV: And also, do you believe in maybe this idea of romantic love? Or... I don't know, because it was like a short, fast relationship.

CC: Yeah, fast. It was just like fantastic. But then, as time goes, the loves keep on developing, you understand?

PV: That's beautiful. How many years did you spend in Nigeria?

CC: I spent ten years in Nigeria.

PV: That's where you start, like a family? Did you get married in Nigeria?

CC: No, we have to go to Kenya because our culture you have to get married in your wife's place. So we had to go to Kenya. That's where we did, you know. There's something that is called a traditional marriage, then the feasting. That's the culture, their own culture. Kenya, we have it also. So we had to go to Kenya. And then from there, we did our court wedding in Nigeria. So we are preparing now for the white wedding, when I write my thesis and hopefully this year.

PV: Will you do it here, in Spain?

CC: Yes. We could have done it soon, but there are some requirements from church. They asked me to bring my certificate of baptism. But I have a piece. But they want a certificate stamped by the bishop. So by next month, I'll get it through Nadine's cousin, the Father, because he travels to Kenya.

PV: And living in Nigeria, did you ever feel like a migrant in this society?

CC: No, on the contrary, because the people from the way I speak, they know that I'm not from Nigeria. So, "Where are you from?". I said, "From Kenya". "Oh, Obama's sister". They just treated me well, you know.

PV: And how were those years like? Because ten years is a lot. How did you live or experience those years?

CC: Another thing that kept me also busy, I was also running, I was managing a business. Because we started a business. Because, my husband, when I met him he was working in importation. Imports and exports. So I now focus on the family, the family business, which is running till up today. So, I was managing the business. At some point, even I got a job with an oil company, but I didn't work for long because the people that we have had in our business we're not managing it well. So I had to stop it. Also come back to the business. So it was during that period that I fell in love with giving back to the society, like to help the less privileged because I know what it feels when you don't have. So I could sometimes try and go to the orphanage. Buy some things, go there, give them because there are abandoned children. You feel so emotional. Also, there are some elderly widows that don't have anybody to help them. So I tried buy some foodstuffs. We had plans, like we did to empower them, not only giving. We wanted to make this sustainable, to be sustainable before I came to Spain. So I was thinking

of maybe starting apps, like some of them can still be able to run some businesses. Some of them maybe they were tailors, but because of too much financial costs, they couldn't be able to continue. So that is when I came here, I met Nadine's sister, Lydia. So, she was speaking Swahili and when I met her, I asked her "What are you doing?". She said she's studying. I tell her "That's good", because when I came here my main aim was like "I don't want just to sit back because of the language. I need to be doing something". I've always been on the move, but I don't let things happen. She told me, "There's a university here, beautiful course you can be able to get". "Which course is that you are doing?". "Peace and conflict". "What I'm gonna be doing with that course?". I wanted to continue something in health related because of what I already studied. She said, "No, you can't be able to get that here because most of the courses are in Spanish. So unless you go to language school first, before you can't be able to go for the studies yet. I doubted her. I went ahead from her back and I do some enquiries. Is it called University of Valencia, UV?

PV: Yeah, UV.

CC: So I had to email one of the program coordinator and ask him. He said, "No, the program is... some percentage is in Spanish, thirty percent is in English". So I realized that I'm going to lose a lot because how can I just get enough of a course I cannot be able to understand? So, Lydia now took me here. I went to our university and met Adela. So I told Adela "I want to study masters". Adela said "Here, it is only English language. But they have other English courses, maybe in economics or those things". I said, "Okay, maybe I will go for this". I'm going to meet different people and also get to learn more, many things in regards.... You know, I didn't know that peace is so wide. Peace, conflict and development is so wide. "Okay, let's talk about peace". There're a lot of components in that program, which is very beautiful.

PV: And I don't know if I get a little bit lost, but what was the reason to come to Spain and, specifically, in Castellón? Because you had all your life in Nigeria, right? Like, the three kids were born there?

CC: My husband got nationality some years back. So he was like, "No, we also want to bring his children". Even , they got the nationality.

PV: The Spanish one?

CC: Yes. Because when he applied for his own, they also asked him "Do you have kids?". He said, "Yes". So, he had to apply together. So he was saying "There's no point. I know the security situation now in Nigeria and also the economic hardship in Nigeria now. Even if you are doing well in your business, man, everything is difficult because the cost of living is very, very high". And the worst part is the security, you're not secure. The Boko Haram they're now even spreading to other regions in the name of headsman. So they move from one region to another region. So then the next few years maybe some headsmans, they went to somebody's house and they were slashing people. They killed people. So he said "No, we cannot be here comfortable". And his family is there and he has opportunity. So that is when we had to relocate. Because he wanted the children, at least, to finish primary school first in Nigeria before they can come and continue here. But, because sometimes... He said, "No, we have to relocate".

PV: And how was the journey? Because your husband was already here, so you came with the three kids?

CC: It was stressful. You know, I've been traveling with them, so it was not that stressful like that. But this one was stressful because I had to go to Morocco. Because I used Air Maroc so we had to stay for sometimes in Morocco before coming to Valencia, but for the same day. But

obviously I always go and use the direct flight. When I'm going to Kenya is direct flights so we don't need to be on transit. You know, with kids, can't control. So, they say "I want to do this, I want to do this". So, it was stressful, but when I arrived at Valencia, oh my god, the police was just so calm. You know, they're not like other immigration officers. They are so calm. When they asked for the children's passport, they were so friendly, talked to the children cause one was able to speak English. The children, they just felt at home instantly.

PV: And how was for you like arriving again to a new place? And especially did you move directly here, to Almassora? Because it's a small village.

CC: No, we moved here. For me, I didn't see this place is a small village. Because if you want to call a village, for example in Kenya, village is different. Village is different because, for example, you can see one house and the next house would be like ten kilometers. Well, it depends. Village is different because a lot of farms, but here is more developed. Buildings everywhere. I've not seen much farms and less orange farms along the road. Yeah, so for me to call this place village... I don't think. It's a city, a small city.

PV: But I don't know, like the process of adaptation because maybe for you... you were moving between regions in Kenya and then to another African country, but now you were in a different context. So how was the process or did you have expectations being here in Castellón?

CC: Yeah, one thing I didn't know, that once I arrived here I thought I would meet someone that could speak English. I didn't know that it's only Spanish to you. I was expecting that it's a cosmopolitan place to meet some people that could speak in English, but I was wrong. When I arrived here, language barrier was my problem. Yeah, that was my problem. I couldn't understand anything, up today. Cause sometimes when I want to go to... You know, it took me

like six months before I could go for supermarkets alone. I always asked my husband. I don't know how to ask questions because I didn't have that confidence. But, at least now, I'm getting better. Sometimes I could carry my kids. Last year, I could carry my kids. But, at some point my kids, especially my son he said "No, go alone. I'm not following you". So that's when I started getting small confidence. So even if I try my best, I will just translate what I'm going to say. But, back of my mind "Please, don't ask me question". But, what gives me joy is no matter what I talk, and I will just add maybe some English, the person that is attending to me would understand me. Yeah. They will know what, maybe, I'm looking for. Like, I go to an office and I will just talk like that. Despite the language barrier, they are loving people here. But, you can meet some people that maybe they didn't wake up from the right side of the bed, but 90% or 95% they're very, very understanding. The only bad experience I had was once when I was trying to get my kids card for hospitals. But, luckily, I was with my husband. So, him was giving some papers when the lady asked "How did you get nationality?". What type of question is that? Who would question that? So my husband said: "Your responsibility is to give... See, the children already have the DNI. You have to give the hospital card. That's your responsibility, not to question how you got nationality". So that was the only... She knew that she went out of the barn. "Does that mean that a black person don't have rights to get nationality? C'mon, I've stayed over 25 years in this country". And for me, from my own experience, I realized that I'm sorry to say the Spanish are not racist. Is other Europeans which are living in Spain, but are racist. That's my own observation. Most of them that are looking down on people, they are not spanish.

PV: And about the system or the bureaucracy and everything, like would you consider that is racist?

CC: The system? No, no, no, no. I love the system. Cause even the time I went to Ministry of works in Castellón to going to submit my CV, there's nothing like that. The system for me, I don't see any problem there because when the person was interveing asked me questions like, for example, 'Since you said you're almost done with your master's in peace and conflict and development, would you like to work in this place?'. You know, she just brought like options. 'Would you like to be involved in conflict resolution, for example, familiares?'. It's okay for me. I believe even them, maybe they're trained to receive people, be respectful there. So, so far I can't say that the system is biased for me.

PV: And how has been living in Almassora for the last years? Like, how are the last few years for you? Did you enjoy? Were they exhausting with the master?

CC: Yeah, especially the master, you know, is not easy. Especially studying with kids is not easy because sometimes they need my attention about the time maybe I need to be reading, I need to be doing my assignments. So the only time I could be able to do that is from 10 o'clock, to read, summarize before the next class. Yeah, then the one that really, really made me go mad is Orla class. Before nine o'clock you have to do the assignment. So there I almost had a nervous breakdown. Because our work was to make sure that, at least, I've finished my assignments, submitted. I have to get my kids to go to school. After, go to drop them. Because you know, my husband goes out early. Unless maybe he's not going to work that day, he will not help me.

PV: So most of the time, you're the one who's spending time with the kids and taking care of them and everything because your husband, normally, is traveling?

CC: Yes. Like they have to go for a trade fair with one company from A Coruña. So they went for a trade fair. So, through Nigeria, they went to Ghana. The next, they will go to Kenya and will be able to come back.

PV: So I think that we can do like the last questions to close, like, all the story maybe. Well, you have shared a lot. So, as a way to close all this, how do you think that all these experiences, all the path lived until today... what is the value for you? Do you think that they have maybe shaped the person that you are today?

CC: Absolutely, yes, they shaped the person I am today. Because today I can be able to make a decision that if I look back, I'll be happy. Yeah. It's also been a lot of resilience in me. But no matter what I see, I have to be strong. So life is a lesson.

PV: How do you think you will describe yourself after all the things lived? Because you said resilience, and that's something super important. Resilient, strong.

CC: Forecast. I always aim higher. I always believe that every day is an opportunity for me. Another thing is that I'm always thankful for everything I have. Yeah, though, sometimes to be angry, or be angry at what I don't have. But you know what? I always do my best and then leave the rest for God to do for me.

PV: That's really beautiful. And, what are maybe your expectations or ideas for the future? Now, what would you like to do here like, well, either in Almassora or if you consider to move as a family? What are your ideas for the future?

CC: For now, I'm hoping and I look forward, for example, to get more opportunities after this master. But my desire first is I would like to proceed for my doctorate studies. But in the back of my mind too, I want to involve myself mostly in community projects at the same time here.

Also give back to the society. Empower young girls out there. You know, there are many girls out there that they are going through what I went through and they give up along the road. Because I realized some girls, they tend to give up, or they end up in groups or even end up having unwanted pregnancies. Because, one, if you don't have a father figure, you end up looking for maybe a nearby person that will look like a father figure to you. And you end up doing things that you're not supposed to do. Mostly I also want to focus on young girls that are already... meeting young mothers. Yeah, because, for example, in some regions in Kenya some people once they get pregnancy, they are teenagers, they cannot be able to proceed with education. Some of them think that maybe that's the end of everything. But the narrative is changing. Some people, even some women that are going back to secondary school at the age of 40 because they couldn't have that opportunity when they were young. They are going to school like kids now. There's like a lady, almost 40 years, went back to secondary school to start from where she stopped because she dropped out of primary school. So she had to go back again and start from secondary school. So things are also changing. So also I like to emphasize on that.

PV: Like the last question after doing this process of sharing your story. It's not something easy for everyone, so I have taken a few questions from an empathy map. Thank you Orla. Maybe like to see a little bit now how are you feeling? What are you thinking? Or, maybe what are your perceptions now after sharing your story maybe?

CC: I'm feeling so relieved because, you know, I hardly talk about this. Like, I only talk about this with my friend Lisa. I don't talk about this because everybody has their own problems. Yeah, so I don't talk about it. Even I'm not given the opportunity to talk about, unless somebody asked me which nobody has done that. Because I'm always a happy person. So you can never know that there's something behind that. So for now, I feel good. I just feel relieved,

you know, when I talk about it. The more I talk about it now and I look at what God had been doing in my life, I feel like it's okay to go through some things, to be able to see there's not a straight path to success. It has to be like crooked and then you'll meet some hills and mountains and valleys along the road.

PV: Thank you so much, Carol.

2.2.3. Un Diálogo con Iraca

Paula Valero: Entonces ya podemos empezar con el proyecto de historias de vida. Y es un poco lo que te comenté, pues podemos empezar desde que eras así más pequeña. Y esto es libre, entonces lo que quieras es bienvenido. Y al final tengo esto, pero por ejemplo, con la experiencia de Pam y Carolyne, es que la conversación sale sola. Sí que es verdad que cuanto más largas puedas hacer las respuestas, luego es mejor porque cuando luego lo pasas por escrito sale como más ordenadito y esas cosas. Pero, al final, esto es completamente libre y autónomo. Puedes contar lo que quieras. Lo único sí que al principio sí que es mejor si te presentas

Iraca Vargas: Bueno, mi nombre completo es Quihicha Hisca Iraca Vargas Salamanca. Es un nombre Muisca. Soy de Colombia. Tengo 39 años. ¿Qué te puedo decir? Bueno, nací en Bogotá, en la capital. Soy hija de Luis Alfredo Vargas y de Francia Elena Salamanca. Nací en el año 82. Soy melliza. Nací con mi hermano de un segundo embarazo. Tenemos una hermana mayor. Digamos, nos llevamos seis años. Pues es una experiencia distinta porque es vivir paralelo a tu hermano, que es de un género diferente. Pero, que compartes muchas cosas, pero también peleas por otras, pero también ves el mundo distinto. Entonces, bueno, bien, que a medida que hemos venido creciendo vamos descubriendo como más cosas. ¿Qué más te cuento?

Paula Valero: Lo que has dicho de, ¿es un nombre muesca?

Iraca Vargas: Muisca. Muisca es una de las culturas indígenas de Colombia. El mío significa *Quince años de Tierra Santa* y el de mi hermano significa *Valiente guerrero*. Él se llama Hunzahua Tinanzuca. Somos los únicos que tenemos nombres muisca en toda la familia. Yo no me iba a llamar así. Creo que me iba a llamar como Ana María, una cosa así. No sé si me ves con ojos de Ana María. Pero, mi papá en el año en el que nosotros dos nacimos, él es licenciado en Ciencias Sociales. Él escalaba y escalando se encontró con un libro Muisca donde habían muchas palabras, muchos conceptos, muchos términos. Y como es una comunidad indígena del centro, digamos de la región andina de Colombia, dijo ‘‘No, ya no se va a llamar Ana María’’. El otro no se como era que se iba a llamar, pero ‘‘Ya no se va a llamar así’’. Entonces usted Quihicha Hisca Iraca y usted Hunzahua Tinanzuca. El mío es *Quince años de Tierra Santa* porque Iraca, que es mi último nombre, en realidad no es el primero. Porque yo pues obviamente me presento como Iraca, pero todo el mundo cree que mis otros nombres parten de Iraca. No, Iraca es el último nombre. Es una palma y era la tierra sagrada para los muisca de esa región. Y Quihicha Hisca era el hecho de que los indígenas terminaban de contar con los dedos de las manos, pero para contar más de diez tenían que contar con los dedos de los pies. Entonces, digamos que en ese ejercicio de quince es que es Quihicha e Hisca, que son los dos primeros nombres. Entonces bueno, feliz con mi nombre. De chiquita, muy difícil. Muy difícil porque el bullying es muy verraco, muy verraco. Tanto con mi hermano como para mí, porque todos los nombres raros son para chiste, son para burlas, son para lo que quiera. Y uno chiquitico como que no sabe ni cómo defenderse. Pero entonces, luego de pensar mucho en que nos íbamos a cambiar el nombre, dijimos como ‘‘Pues no. No nos vamos a cambiar el nombre’’. ¿No? Y pues, si nos toca defender el nombre, pues defendemos el nombre como sea.

Paula Valero: Pero también porque era, bueno lo que decías tú, que venía parte de una comunidad indígena, ¿de ahí también venía el bullying?

Iracá Vargas: No, era más como el que los niños no entendían cómo se pronunciaba. Entonces “Ay, es que tú te llamas...”. Por ejemplo, un santo le decían... ¿Tú te llamas Hunzahua...? No, es que ni me acuerdo cuáles eran los nombres, digamos, que utilizaban, pero para burlarse. Y porque siendo de Bogotá el contacto con las comunidades indígenas son muy poquitas. O sea, es muy difícil porque yo vengo de la zona urbana y los indígenas son de la zona rural y alejados de Bogotá. Entonces como que claro, te llamas raro, no entiendo qué diablos es una cultura indígena cuando tienes cinco, seis años. “Nunca las he visto”. O sea, “Para mí no existen”. Y, pues, la oportunidad pa’ montártela. Nosotros decimos montártela a que te hago bullying pues porque sí. Entonces, pues así crecimos. Mis papás son separados desde que nosotros nacimos. Entonces, con muy buena relación con mi papá. Pues, excelente relación con mi mamá, que es con quien vivimos toda la vida. Pero, lo que te digo. O sea, con mi papá siempre bien. Digamos que desde pequeños, pues no es tan fácil tú entender que tus papás... Digamos, que tu papá viene cada tanto. Ya, poco a poco vas creciendo y vas entendiendo qué era el agua y el aceite. Entonces, era mejor así. Separados. Bien, tenemos una relación muy buena, muy buena.

PV: Y el contexto de, por ejemplo, ser bueno... de estar separados, el divorcio y todo eso. No sé, aquí, por ejemplo, en España ya es más normal, pero igual hace veinte, treinta años como que aún chirriaba un poco de “Ay, es que se van a separar...”. No sé, ¿el contexto en sí era favorecedor?

IV: Pues yo siento que mi mamá, digamos, no la debe haber pasado tan chévere porque mi mamá sí se enamoró de mi papá y siempre ha sido el amor de su vida. Pero, mi papá no. Mi papá, además de que siempre tuvo una cara muy bonita, o sea, tuvo muchas mujeres detrás de

él. Él siempre también, digamos, como que aceptó eso. Entonces él no tenía como un amor infinito por mi mamá. Pero, mi mamá me parece que fue muy valiente al decir “No más”. Osea, “No más. No me interesa que tengas otras mujeres. No me interesa que tú tengas una vida exitosísima laboral”. Porque mi papá y mi mamá estudiaron ya mucho más grandes. Sí. De hecho, mi mamá acabó el bachillerato cuando yo estaba en bachillerato y mi papá, bueno, sí estudió en la universidad. Pero también ya muy mayor porque los dos vienen de familias campesinas. Pero mi papá viene de una familia en donde el papá lo abandonó. Entonces, de entrada mi primer apellido es por la línea materna de mi papá. Yo tengo el apellido de mi abuela. Mi papá sólo tiene el apellido de su mamá, que es el Vargas. Entonces claro, yo supongo, en mi perspectiva de sistémica, pues creo que mi papá también hizo lo que bien pudo siendo papá porque nunca tuvo un papá. Luego mi abuelita se organizó con otra persona, que es a la que yo siempre le dije abuelo, pero que consanguineamente no tenemos nada. Pero bueno, mi papá ha estado ahí presente, pero entiendo que la falta de su papá y que al ser el primer hijo le tocó primero trabajar que estudiar. Entonces entró a trabajar a la universidad más grande del país, que es la Universidad Nacional, que es la universidad pública y es la más más de todo Colombia. Y empezó a trabajar ahí. Eso hizo que el trabajo, el trabajo, el trabajo, el trabajo... Luego dijo “Sí, yo quiero estudiar”. Luego se licenció. Pero, pues ya la licenciatura la hizo, no sé, a los cuarenta y tantos, cincuenta y tantos, de pronto. Ya la hizo muy grande y él era el de la vida académica. Él era de estar en las universidades, de que luego se volvió profesor de universidad. Él era el académico y entonces mi mamá decía “Pero, si yo me dedico a estudiar, ¿quién le va a dar de comer a estos tres niños?”. Sí, porque hay que reconocer las cosas como son. Mi papá responsable no era. ¿Entonces económicamente quién? Pues mi mamá. Entonces mi mamá, lo que te digo, yo me acuerdo que cuando yo estaba en octavo de bachillerato, osea que aquí como la dos o tercera de la ESO aproximadamente, mi mamá termina el bachillerato. Y lo terminó, nosotros llamamos *validando*. Es decir, que haces en un

año dos cursos. Una cosa así. Entonces, así fue que mi mamá terminó el bachillerato. Claro, mi papá siempre tuvo trabajos académicamente y laboralmente más lucrativos que mi mamá porque mi mamá sin universidad, ni nada, ¿pues qué? Los trabajos siempre eran... Trabajó muchos años en un banco. Acabó el banco, lo vendieron. Mi mamá sale. Compra como un local. Pone una heladería. Nos vamos a vivir a un pueblo fuera de Bogotá. Allá vivimos dos años. Luego, nos regresamos porque es que, claro, son seis años de diferencia con mi hermana. Entonces, mientras nosotros estábamos en el colegio, ella ya estaba en la universidad. Y haberla dejado en Bogotá con mis abuelos y eso, como que no le estaba yendo muy bien. Emocionalmente estaba súper mal. Entonces, fue dos años en el pueblo. Luego nos devolvimos. Pero, te estoy hablando que el pueblo es como Castellón. Osea, es como una gran ciudad. No es como los pueblos que acá hay, que son muy pequeñitos. Que para nosotros es un pueblo, pero realmente es grande. Entonces, vivimos allí dos años. Nos regresamos. Entonces, mi mamá lo que hizo fue comprar un apartamento y arrendarlo, alquilarlo. Entonces, dijo “De esto va a ser nuestros ingresos y yo busco otros trabajos”. Entonces, literalmente, lo que podía mi mamá se metía. En fábricas de carpas de camiones, allá terminaba. En lo que fuera. Para mi mamá su prioridad fue el trabajo toda la vida. Toda la vida.

PV: Más teniendo tres hijos que criar. Osea, ¿entonces trabajaba y estudiaba a la vez?

IV: Ella hizo en los dos años en los que estuvimos en Fusa, se llama el pueblo, hizo la validación. Osea, en esos dos años sacó el bachillerato porque es una modalidad que existe y es que tú estudias en las noches. Y ves, solamente, lo esencial de cada materia. Y, luego presentas un examen. Entonces, ya con ese examen sabes si validaste el bachillerato o no. Entonces, nuestro bachillerato que es de seis años, que es obligatorio, lo haces en dos. Entonces, claro, era de seis de la tarde a diez de la noche, todos los días y los sábados. Y así sacó la validación del bachillerato. Ya cuando regresamos a Bogotá otra vez, ya tenía su bachillerato.

Entonces ya, por lo menos, podía buscar otro tipo de trabajo. Pero, inicialmente, cuando ella llegó a Bogotá, porque es de un pueblo muy pequeñito, ella llegó a cuidar unos niños porque ella salió del campo a los once años. Y se fue a vivir, a cuidar a unos niños que tendrían cinco años. Osea, una niña cuidando otros niños. Entonces, una dice, pues... Sí, eran personas muy distintas y que pensaban el mundo distinto. Para mi papá siempre lo académico ha sido súper importante. Decir "Te estés muriendo de hambre, lo importante es leer, lo importante es investigar, lo importante...". En cambio, para mi mamá es ilógico que tú estudies si te estás muriendo de hambre. "Si tienes hijos, no seas irresponsable. Lo primero es trabajar. Que estás enfermo, no importa. Tienes que ir a trabajar". Entonces, son como dos extremos. Súper extremos. Porque, cuando yo empecé mi vida laboral, yo decía "Ay, me duele una muela, es que estoy que me muero del dolor". "No, aquí a usted no le puede doler nada porque está trabajando y eso es imposible que usted falte un día". En cambio, mi papá es como "Pues, no pasa nada. Te entenderán". Pero, lo importante es, por ejemplo, mi papá está súper feliz "Es tu segunda maestría". Lo académico para el uno y para la otra es lo laboral. Entonces, finalmente, ¿quién nos crió? Mi abuelita paterna porque mi mamá siempre vivió, fue muy cercana donde mi abuelita paterna. Osea, la de apellido Vargas. Y ella era la que nos llevaba al colegio. Ella era la que nos daba de comer. Y ella era la que nos dejaba jugar. Y ella era... todo. Todo.

PV: Y, ¿con tu abuela qué memorias tienes?

IV: Uff. Una gratitud infinita. Fue una mujer que nos enseñó mucho. Es una mujer a la que también le tocó muy duro porque ella murió de ochenta y cuatro. Era que ella ahorita tuviera noventa y tantos. Noventa y dos o por ahí. Y ella sí salió de una zona muy rural, muy campesina que la obligaron a casarse. Ella es de la época en que obligaban a casarse con la persona que los papás dijeran. Ella se casa, pero luego se escapa siendo muy chiquilla, como unos trece,

catorce años. Se escapa. Luego, se empieza a ganar la vida cuidando niños, lavando ropa de pueblo en pueblo. De pueblo en pueblo. Y, ya siendo un poquito más grande, queda embarazada de un policía. Es lo único que sé de mi abuelo, consanguineamente hablando. Que era policía. Que su apellido era Santos. Y el man se fue el día que ella entró al hospital. Entonces, una mujer que luego conoció al que yo llamo mi abuelo. Con él tuvo... Tengo como cinco tíos. Osea, otros cinco hijos ahí. Pero, siempre fue como, digamos, esa parte neutra. Sí que es muy importante trabajar, pero cuida de tus hijos. Osea, porque finalmente, luego nos íbamos dando cuenta que éramos de la generación en la que a todos nosotros nos criaron las abuelas. Entonces, uno dice, ¿pero qué difícil, no? Que difícil tener que escoger entre o cuido a mis hijos o voy a trabajar. Entonces, uno dice "Difícil". Migrantes desde, por ejemplo, mi abuela. Mi abuelita es de Boyacá, un pueblo de una región de la parte rural. Termina en Santander, que es otra región. Además, con un perfil... Mi abuelita era hermosa, mona, ojiazul. No estoy diciendo que los otros tonos de piel, que todos tenemos distintos a los de ella, no lo sean. Pero, era una mujer muy atractiva para el contexto colombiano. No era la indígena de cabello negro. Entonces, mi abuelita era súper impactante visualmente. Y, claro, ella decía "Pues, era muy fácil que cualquiera quisiera estar conmigo. Entonces, a veces me tocaba huir de un pueblo al otro porque es que Fulanito me está persiguiendo. Sutanito está detrás de mí". Y, era una mujer que a lo que fuera para trabajar, se le metía. Pues, para poder vivir. Y, ya luego con los otros hijos, pues peor. Entonces, claro, mi papá siendo el mayor era como, "Pues, papito, estudiar no era como la prioridad. Aquí como que la prioridad, mi hijo, es trabajar". Entonces, mi papá también empezó de mecánico. Luego, empezó de mensajero en esta universidad hasta que terminó en un cargo administrativo. Y la universidad de la que te digo, ojalá la puedas ver. La Universidad Nacional de Colombia es lo máximo. Y que, para mí y para mis hermanos, no es solamente, digamos, donde estudiamos y eso, si no que hay muchas cosas en ese lugar. Allá me casé, también. Yo opté por casarme en la... Pues, con Guille, digamos, él aceptó porque yo

decía esa capilla. Es que la universidad ha sido muchas cosas para mí. Pues, para nosotros. Y, fue empezar a crecer en un contexto así. Como que cuando salíamos con mi papá era que cuántos libros nos habíamos leído, que cuántas tareas ya habíamos hecho. Y era como ‘‘Ay, no seas tan aburrido’’. Y mi mamá era como ‘‘No hagan esto. No hagan esto. Pero, chao porque me tengo que ir a trabajar’’. Y, en Colombia pasa una cosa, que creo que no pasa en la mayoría de países, y es que está estratificado económicamente. Entonces, al pertenecer tú a un estrato, te cuesta mucho subir de estrato. Y, subirlo implica que te tienes que mudar porque mudándote te dan mejores condiciones de vida. ¿En qué? En servicios públicos, en calidad de los servicios; en que de pronto la calle no esté rota, si no más bien pavimentada; en que el agua no se coge de una manguera, si no que llega del grifo. Entonces, siempre mi mamá luchó porque nunca tuviéramos que vivir unas condiciones muy bajas de vida, si no la media. La media es Estrato 3 en Colombia. Porque la más baja era cero. Ahora es 1 y la más alta es 6. Entonces, como lo elemental es la 3. Entonces, ¿pues quién nos cuidaba? Pues, mi abuelita porque no podía ella pagarle a una niñera. No era posible.

PV: Y, sobre todo, en vuestra familia había migración del campo a la ciudad, ¿no? Porque has dicho lo de tu abuelita, tu mamá también.

IV: Total. Además, porque siento que todas, y especialmente me refiero a todas, es porque ha sido muy influenciada la línea femenina. Sí, osea. Ha sido la decisión de ellas de salir. Mi mamá viene de una zona y una región que era full guerrillera. Y que mi mamá decía ‘‘Yo tengo dos opciones. O me meto a la guerrilla, que son los que dicen aquí qué se hace y qué no se hace. O, me voy. Me escapo y me meto por allá con un tipo que quién sabe quién sea’’. Y, mi mamá más bien, igual que mi papá, ha sido de espíritu revolucionario toda su vida. Entonces, como que mi mamá intentó... Ella nos dice ‘‘Yo veía la guerrilla como el sueño. El sueño’’. Mi mamá decía ‘‘Yo de chiquita las veía a esas mujeres armadas, que no tienen que lavarle la

ropa a los hombres, que eran independientes”. Ella vivió mucho abuso físico y psicológico de su familia. Entonces, pues obviamente la guerrilla era una cosa súper atractiva. Pero, una profesora de su vereda le dijo “Yo tengo unos familiares en Bogotá que tienen unos niños y necesitan una niñera”. Y ella “Sí. Pues tengo diez... once años. También soy pequeña, pero puedo lavar, puedo cocinar”. “Perfecto”. Y así se la llevó. Entonces, siento yo que la salvó de estar en la guerrilla. Si no, esta historia no existiría, yo creo. Y, también, de estar en contextos más peligrosos. Siento que esa profe le cambió la vida. Osea, la posibilidad de que la profe la sacara de la vereda. Justamente, ahorita que recibía la llamada estaba molestando mi mamá con lo de “Que te voy a llevar unos aguacates”. Porque hace unos dos años ella quiso volver a su vereda. Entonces, alquilaron una casa y se fue con su esposo. Mi mamá se organizó ya, no sé... yo tendría veintitantos años. Osea, un año, un par de años antes de yo casarme, se organiza mi mamá. La única persona que conocí que mi mamá se quisiera organizar. Y, con él han decidido alquilar una casa en esa vereda de donde era mi mamá. Entonces, fue volver justo en el 2019 a esa vereda, a ver su escuela, a ver su pueblo. Y hay muchos compañeritos de ella de la escuela, imagínate, que aún viven allá. Y, entonces, allá cultivan aguacates, pero son una cosa, una monstruosidad. Porque un aguacate puede pesar cinco kilos. Y, entonces, claro, cuando fuimos en el 2019 dejamos en vacaciones a las niñas un par de semanas allá. Yo fui. Me quedé casi un mes allá. Y yo decía “Es que esto es la verraqueda”. ¿Qué es lo difícil? Que las vías en Colombia, y especialmente en la ruralidad, están muy abandonadas. Entonces, la ida del pueblo a la vereda es hora y media, pero no por lo lejos, si no porque está totalmente destruida. Se han robado la plata de la obra. Entonces, decíamos “Uy, mami, pero si te pasa algo, acá no sube ni una ambulancia”. Pero, ya estando arriba en la vereda, decíamos “¡Qué nota el paisaje, la tranquilidad! Que entre los campesinos, a veces, se regalan la comida”. “Es que yo cultivo yuca. Entonces, tú dame cuántos aguacates”. Tenemos ahí un compañerito de mi mamá de su época “No, usted es la hija de Elena”, entonces nos regaló pescados. Entonces,

una cosa acá como muy familiar, que tú en Bogotá nunca vas a ver. Porque, pues además de que es un clima frío, somos muy temerosos del otro. De que el otro me va a robar. De que el otro me a tumbar. De que me va a meter en un mal negocio. De que siempre quiere algo para él. Entonces, no hay confianza entre la gente. En cambio, en la ruralidad, sí. Entonces, volver a caminar los pasos de colegio de mi mamá era como ‘‘Wow, mami, ¿en serio tú estudiaste acá?’’. Y para las niñas fue bonito, como ‘‘Abuelita, ¿tú también fuiste niña?’’. Y ella, ‘‘Sí’’. Y las niñas ‘‘No. Osea, la abuelita es la abuelita. La abuelita nunca fue mamá. Nunca fue hija. Nunca fue pequeña. ¿Cómo así que tú ibas a la escuela, abuelita? ¿Y ese columpio que son como los rodaderos? Tú no cabes ahí, abuelita’’. Entonces, claro, imagínate, tres generaciones, mis hijas, mi mamá y yo, viendo una escuela que una dice ‘‘Todo lo que debió haber pasado en esta época’’. Pero, también hay una reivindicación de las víctimas porque fue una zona muy azotada por la violencia. Explicarle un poco a las niñas que implicaba eso sin entrar en mucho detalle tampoco. Y entonces, uno dice ‘‘Uff, qué bonito hubiese sido una vida acá. Pero, bueno, las cosas tenían que pasar de esta manera y ya. Tú terminaste en Bogotá y, bueno, de allá somos nosotros’’.

PV: Y, cuando tú eras pequeña, ¿estando en Bogotá también notabas como todo esto del conflicto? También, como dices ‘‘Ay, en Bogotá somos muy... nos cuesta confiar en los demás’’. No sé. Sí que es verdad, por ejemplo, Laura me cuenta que la violencia es un poco más en zonas rurales, pero no sé si en la capital...

IV: No, la capital era otra cosa porque la vivíamos en televisión. ‘‘Que pusieron una bomba en no sé dónde...’’. ‘‘Ay, ya no se puede volver a ese pueblo’’. Por ejemplo, mi mamá. Mi mamá no había vuelto a ese pueblo desde que era pequeña. O sea, que te estoy diciendo que mi mamá tiene setenta. Cumple ahorita en agosto. Mi mamá no habrá vuelto hace cincuenta años a ese pueblo. Entonces, uno dice, what? Más claro, mucho más. Casi sesenta pico años que no volvía

a su pueblo porque era uno de los que bombardeaban. Uno de los que la guerrilla secuestraba. Entonces, ¿quién se iba a pasear por allá? Pues nadie. Entonces, digamos, que yo viví la época hacia los 90, los 80 un poco como la visión, más que de la guerrilla, del narcotráfico. O sea, ya lo que hacía Pablo Escobar de poner bombas en Bogotá, por ejemplo. Uy, esa parte sí fue tenaz porque mi mamá decía “No podemos entrar”. Bueno, hay otra cosa. Nosotros no vivíamos en Bogotá, Bogotá, si no, como en un barrio que sería uno de los barrios marginados que quedan a las afueras de Bogotá. De Estrato 1, 2. Máximo, 3. Y que, para llegar a Bogotá capital, digamos al centro de la ciudad, nos gastábamos dos horas. Hora y media el día que menos había tráfico. Y, no porque sea lejos, pero por el tráfico. Cuando teníamos que mi mamá, por ejemplo, llevarnos al odontólogo o hacer alguna diligencia, porque ella trabajaba inicialmente en el centro de Bogotá, era como “¿Ya se metieron a Bogotá? Estamos jodidos. Nos vamos a morir”. Porque Bogotá nadie lo tocaba. Entonces, claro, que tú digas que lo has vivido intensamente, no. Yo lo he vivido intensamente ya siendo trabajadora social. Ya trabajando con víctimas. Ya metiéndome a las regiones. Ya hablando con víctimas y victimarios, pero no de peque. Tú ves la cosa, pero por televisión. Entonces siempre, digamos, si tú hablas con otras personas de las regiones, los bogotanos somos los millonarios. Los que no les ha pasado nada. Los que la guerra no nos tocó. Pero, mira, también creo que mi mamá tomó una buena decisión y es que nosotros, cuando estábamos en la adolescencia, además de irnos dos años a vivir a Fusa, mi mamá después de que hicimos eso, optó por alquilar el apartamento de Soacha, se llama el barrio. Y dijo “Así me toque trabajar más, voy a pagar un poco más de alquiler en Bogotá. No tan en el centro, pero ya Bogotá para que ustedes puedan estar en el colegio de la Universidad Nacional”. Mi hermano y yo. Y mi hermana que estaba estudiando en la universidad, pues ya no tuviéramos que gastarnos dos horas de ida y dos horas de regreso. Y, esa movilización también hizo que viéramos otra ciudad. O sea, ya una ciudad más congestionada, pero finalmente, pues como con mucho cuidado en los buses. Como que

“Apréndase a defender desde pequeño”. Porque en Colombia hay un dicho y es “No des papaya”. O sea, no dé la oportunidad para que otro lo robe. O para que el otro lo trate mal. Entonces, migramos hacia Bogotá, Bogotá. Se queda mi abuelita. Se queda toda la familia paterna allá. Mi papá nunca había vivido allá. Mi papá siempre había vivido en Bogotá. Entonces, ya más cerca de mi papá. Físicamente, digamos, que ya estando dentro de la Universidad Nacional que era el colegio, pues pasábamos a su oficina. Ya lo veíamos un poco más. Y, claro, ahí ya veíamos las diferencias, digamos, en términos académicos porque nosotros veníamos de haber hecho la primaria en un barrio no tan play, no tan de todos los recursos. Luego, haber vivido dos años en un pueblo. Entonces, por ejemplo, el tema de inglés era una cosa que todos estaban muy bien en inglés. Y nosotros no. Entonces como “Claro, es que ellos son los que vienen del pueblo”. Y nosotros “No, pero somos de Bogotá. O sea, nosotros hicimos la primaria en Bogotá”. Entonces, “Sí, ¿pero en qué parte de Bogotá? ¿En qué estrato estabas tú estudiando?”. Entonces, ya empiezas tú a notar que todos no vivimos las mismas realidades, ni tenemos las mismas oportunidades. ¿Qué nos hizo ver el colegio? Que podíamos estudiar hijos de personas de servicios generales, de empleadas del servicio hasta los hijos del rector de la Universidad más importante del país. Y que todos éramos lo mismo. Entonces, fue bonito porque fue darle un valor a lo público. No solamente porque no era posible económicamente pensarte en algo privado, si no porque esto es tuyo y es muy bueno. Que es todo lo contrario de lo que pasa actualmente. Yo ahorita no puedo pensar en un colegio público para las niñas porque no es mi experiencia el colegio público. No es la experiencia de Guille, de su colegio público. Está totalmente tergiversado. Entonces, primero, mejor dicho, yo creo que los abuelos nos ahorcan antes de que las niñas lleguen a un colegio público. Que aquí están felices porque están en un colegio público porque saben que esto es otra cosa.

PV: Aquí es al revés.

IV: Aquí es al revés porque hay una inversión en lo público. En cambio, allá lo público se ha robado, lo público se ha maltratado. Lo público ha sido a lo que menos valor se le ha dado ahorita, en estos últimos años. Entonces, yo puedo orgullosísimamente decir “Yo salí de un colegio nacional, público”. Pero, es una cosa que dices “Claro, vaya y meta a sus hijas... Ah, juepucha”. Eso ya es otra cosa. Entonces, vivir esa transición de que, aunque hayas sido de la ciudad, pasar a un pueblo y volver a la gran ciudad, te dice como que vemos el mundo distinto. Muy distinto. Yo hablaba, por ejemplo, con Guille una vez y decíamos “¿Tú cuántas veces te has trasteado, te has mudado?”. Y, entonces, él decía “Nunca, pues ahora apenas nos casamos”. Dijo “Es mi primera mudanza. Nunca me he mudado”. Entonces, yo le decía en cambio, “Yo me he mudado siete veces”. Es diferente porque me he mudado de sector, porque me he mudado de ciudad, porque me he mudado como en visión de mi mamá de “Yo quiero lo mejor de ustedes”. Pero, lo mejor no es que ella se haya matado en el trabajo para que nosotros fuéramos de Estrato 6, si no reducir las probabilidades, por ejemplo, de tráfico. Entonces, claro, tuvo que conseguirse un trabajo mucho más duro para tener mayores ingresos, pero para que nosotros no tuviéramos que tener cuatro horas diarias en bus. ¿Qué eso qué implicaba? Que empezáramos a crecer solos porque ya no estaba la abuelita al lado. La abuelita no tenía la posibilidad de irse a vivir a Bogotá, Bogotá cuando tenía otros hijos y tenía otros nietos. Entonces, ya mi mamá optó por comprar una estufa eléctrica, que eso hacía años no se utilizaba, y decía “Ustedes solo manejen la eléctrica. Llegan del colegio, lo ponen aquí en alto, lo calientan rápido, lo cogen...”. Nos explicaba el paso a paso para que nosotros comiéramos solos. Para que calentáramos la comida solos. Para que cenáramos solos. Para que arregláramos el apartamento. Para que todo estuviera listo porque mi mamá, literalmente, no podía hacer todo al tiempo.

PV: Y, ¿cómo fue el cambio de crecer con la abuela, luego mudarse?

IV: Durísimo. Durísimo. Y cuando mi abuelita murió fue terrible. Terrible. Yo creo que más para los nietos que para los hijos. O sea, es como si se nos hubiese muerto la mamá porque mi abuelita era la que nos consentía en eso, en que tuviéramos la comida. En que sí, podíamos salir con precaución y con cuidados, pero sabemos que para alguien adulto éramos alguien importante. Pero, en el otro lado, no. Ya llegar a la gran ciudad, pues era como “No confío en nadie. No conozco a nadie. Pues, se cuidan solos”. Es que ya estamos grandes. Ya tenemos trece años. Doce años. Once años. Algo así. Ya nos podemos cuidar solos, claro... Clarísimo. Entonces, una dice “Qué falta nos hace el sentir que es importante que alguien te recoja del colegio, que alguien te cuide en la comida”. O sea, yo creo que el concepto de cuidado juega mucho en esa transición de los movimientos. O sea, de las migraciones. El cuidado es una perspectiva. Investigativamente, sería una variable que varía muchísimo. Ahora ya de grande, y en estos contextos en los que estoy ahorita, es que entiendo a mi mamá porque digo “¿A quién le dejo mis hijas?”.

PV: El sentirte arropado.

IV: Claro. Y, cuando estás desarropado, ¿no te da frío? Sí. ¿No te sientes como solo? Entonces era como “Bueno, vamos a calentar. Vamos a hacer las tareas”. O sea, los deberes. “No, pues qué plan...”. Bueno, pues a veces los hacíamos. A veces, no los hacíamos. A veces, nos poníamos a ver tele. A veces, nos íbamos a la calle. A veces...

PV: Y, por ejemplo, lo que has dicho de, bueno, crecer con un gemelo, ¿cómo es? Nunca me lo he imaginado.

IV: ¡Dios, qué ha sido interesante! Porque, además, es hombre. Entonces tiene una perspectiva distinta de la vida. Pero, cuando se nos ocurría hacer locuras, pues, a los dos por igual. Mi hermano es gay. Y, digamos, lo reconoció y sale del closet cuando estaba en la universidad,

que ese fue también, digamos, otro momento importante porque fue decirle a mi mamá “Bueno, tengo algo que decirte”. Ya mi mamá lo sospechaba. Pero, pues, digamos, que eso en el colegio tú no lo visualizas. Y visualizas, sí claro, que él tiene una perspectiva de ver el mundo distinta a la mía. Y, básicamente, también es por género porque resolvemos las cosas distintas. Él era si yo tenía un novio “No llore por él, no sea boba. Ese tipo no sé qué... Ese chino tal cosa...”. Nosotros le decimos chinos a los adolescentes. Entonces, como “Ay, no le preste atención a eso, no sé que... Eso es pasajero. Así son los hombres”. Como muy racional en muchas cosas. Pero, por ejemplo, un día teníamos mucho frío en el apartamento. Estaba lloviendo y “¡Qué frío, qué frío!”. Y él dijo “¿Y si hacemos una chimenea? Una fogata”. Yo “Ay, pues sí. ¿Cómo la hacemos?”. Entonces, le dimos la vuelta al tapete de la cocina y con bombona de gas y todo al lado, se nos ocurrió casi que gastar todo el cuaderno haciendo fuego en la cocina y calentándonos. Imaginándonos que era un gran camping. Entonces, traíamos cobijas y más papel para el fuego. O sea, mira que no nos pasó nada porque Dios es muy grande. Y, luego, recogimos. Le dimos la vuelta al tapete. Y nos quedamos callados. Entonces, para esas locuras éramos... Y que éramos compañía, ya que empezó a darse cuenta que no cuadraba en las cosas que nosotros hacíamos, era mi hermana. Porque le parecía inmaduro, ridículo, una pérdida de tiempo. Bueno, seis años más grande. “Pero, ¿mi mamá por qué me pone a mí a cuidarlos a ustedes?”. Mi hermana decía “Yo quedé a cuidarlos hoy, pero tengo que irme a hacer un trabajo a donde una compañera”. Entonces, en el patio del piso, se movía de patio en patio para llegar a donde las amigas. Y, mi hermano y yo “Pues, hágale lo que quiera. Pues usted ya es grande”. Pero, grande... pues tampoco era tan grande realmente. Pero, claro, ella decía “Yo no me hallo con ustedes. Yo no quiero ser mamá, seis años más grande que ustedes. Entonces, ustedes me guardan el secreto y yo les guardo el suyo”. Entonces era como “Vale. Está bien”. Hasta que mi mamá en el transcurso de la semana se iba dando cuenta. “¿Por qué el tapete está quemado? ¿Por qué hay papelitos quemados por todo el apartamento? ¿Qué es

esto? ¿Qué hicieron?”. “Nada”. Hasta que... mi mamá era operación chancleta. Chancleta va, chancleta viene. Y terminábamos contando la verdad. Pero, también, digamos que la operación chancleta, aunque suene muy salvaje en estos tiempos, nos enseñó a qué cosas no se hacían. No solo porque estaba mal, si no por un tema de que la mamá es la mamá. Como que no superes a tu mamá. Tu mamá es tu mamá. Ya luego, de grande es que aprendí, digamos, el triángulo de las familias. Y es que las generaciones pues, finalmente, son eso. Tienen que asumir su papel. Mi abuela no fue tan condescendiente con sus hijos como lo fue con nosotros. Mi mamá no ha sido condescendiente con mis hijas como lo fue con nosotros. O sea, “Oye, es que en serio. Tú cambias mucho cuando eres abuela”. Porque yo estoy viendo una mamá muy distinta a la que yo conocí. Entonces, mi mamá ahora me dice que porqué regaño a las niñas, que no les hable tan duro. Pues, “Yo les estoy hablando como tú me enseñaste”. “Ay, no. Pero es que no se hace así”. “¿Me vienes a decir después de treinta y nueve años que no se hace así?”. Y mi mamá decía lo mismo que pasaba con mi abuelita. Para mí, mi abuelita materna también fue un sol. Pero, claro, como no estuvo a cargo de nosotros porque ella vivía en el pueblo, en Fusa, entonces era la abuela de las vacaciones.

PV: Es diferente.

IV: Súper diferente. Entonces, pues era muy linda, pero no tenía que vivir nuestros problemas. En cambio, la otra sí. Que si nos caímos, ¿qué hacía ella? ¿Qué nos aplicaba? Pues ella lo solucionaba, finalmente. Ella era la que nos daba permiso de ver televisión o no; de que hiciéramos las tareas, los deberes... Y, pues claro, ya mi mamá se empezaba a dar cuenta en lo académico “¿Qué no han hecho? ¿Qué no hicieron tareas? Pero, ¿qué están haciendo? Pero, miren. Trabajo y estoy pendiente de ustedes”. Entender ya de grandes, pues, que pasaba por unas etapas emocionales durísimas. Durísimas. Y sola. Que todavía nosotros tres nos

preguntamos, “Oiga, pero es que ¿cómo es posible que todavía queramos a mi papá? Con todo lo que nos ha hecho”. Pero, luego decimos, sí. Porque, finalmente, es mi papá.

PV: Sí, y también la perspectiva. Hay cosas que cuando vas creciendo no te das cuenta hasta que luego dices “Uy, pues si todo esto hubiese sido consciente cuando era pequeña, igual la relación sería diferente”. Pero, claro, tú tienes otras memorias y otras experiencias.

IV: Y hasta ahora de grandes que tú vienes a decir “Ah, pues que este man no tuvo papá”. Y, por ejemplo, ya de grandes que yo me vengo a dar cuenta que, además de que tengo un nombre muy particular, tengo un apellido femenino. O sea, tengo un apellido de mi linaje femenino. Y con mi hermano y mi hermana lo hablábamos y nosotras somos Vargas porque mi abuelita lo dejó clarísimo. Y, es que, ¿quién es ella? Y como la vivíamos tan intensamente con ella, pues súper orgullosos de ser Vargas. Nosotros decíamos qué tal haber tenido el apellido de un tipo, para completar policía, que creo en todo el mundo nadie quiere, y que abandonó a mi abuelita y mi papá. Pues, no. ¡Qué orgullo tener ese apellido! Luego, decíamos “Bien hecho”. El apellido de mi abuelita que nos crió, que nos vio llorar, que nos vio frustrarnos, que nos vio caer y nos limpiaba las rodillas. Y nos dejaba volver a seguir jugando. Es un orgullo tener el apellido materno de mi papá y no el paterno.

PV: Pues sí. Y ahora para ubicarme yo un poco. Naciste en Bogotá. Luego estuviste unos años viviendo allí hasta que os fuisteis a Fusa. Y, ¿lo de Fusa más o menos era cuando tenías...?

IV: Como dos años. Allí hice sexto y séptimo de bachillerato. La primaria se acaba en quinto y tienes bachillerato de sexto a once. Entonces, allí hice sexto y séptimo. Luego, hice octavo, noveno, décimo y once en Bogotá otra vez.

PV: Y, ¿cómo fue el cambio de vivir primero en la ciudad y luego pasar al pueblo?

IV: Uff, pasar al pueblo fue lo máximo porque éramos los niños *play*. O sea, éramos los niños que venían de la gran ciudad. Entonces, no sé si acá hay ese dicho de ‘‘En tierra de ciegos, el tuerto es rey’’. Y ese dicho es como que ante este círculo de todo malo, el que sea el menos malo es lo mejor. Y, claro, de estar viviendo en la ciudad a pasar a un pueblo, pues todos los niños decían ‘‘Estos citadinos. Y, ¿qué tal es Bogotá? Y, ¿Bogotá cómo es? ¿Hay mar?’’. Nosotros ‘‘¿Mar? No. Hay tráfico. Hay contaminación. Todo nos queda lejos’’. Pero, para los niños en su momento, imagínate. En sexto, allá acabando la primaria, pues es chiquitos. ¿Cuántos años tiene uno ahí? No sé, era muy pequeño. Entonces, claro, éramos los niños que mejor nos iba académicamente. Nos la sabíamos todas. Todos querían ser nuestros amiguitos porque ‘‘Son los niños de la gran ciudad’’. Yo fui representante estudiantil. Sexto y séptimo. Mi hermano también era el yo no sé qué de la representación de los yo no sé qué niños... O sea, éramos lo más. Lo top. Que no pasó cuando nos regresamos. Porque, claro, ‘‘Resulta que ustedes vienen de un pueblo’’. ‘‘No, pero es que nosotros nos la sabemos todas académicamente. Diez. Diez sobre diez’’. ‘‘No. Pasaron el examen de admisión, sí. Pero, no sabe inglés. Académicamente, les faltan esto y esto...’’.

PV: O sea, ¿fue duro luego volver?

IV: Claro, porque llegamos en muchas desventajas académicamente. Y socialmente porque, claro, ya llegas a octavo de bachillerato, tres, cuatro de la Eso, pues ya la gente tiene amigos. Entonces, ‘‘No, es que yo soy el nuevo y vengo de un pueblo’’. Entonces, como que ya no eres el atractivo. Como ‘‘Y ¿qué tal el pueblo?’’. ‘‘No, pero no es un pueblo. Es una gran ciudad’’. ‘‘No, no es Bogotá’’. No es Bogotá, pero tratar de decir ‘‘No, pero yo también estudié. Pero, yo también aprendí’’. ‘‘Pero, no somos amigos’’. Entonces ahí, por ejemplo, yo me consideré

la persona más tímida, introvertida de la vida. O sea, como que “Trágame tierra”. Empieza la adolescencia, la época de las fiestas. Entonces empecé a tener amigos de los años mayores. O sea, yo en octavo tenía amigos de once, de décimo. Entonces, ellos eran con los que nos íbamos de fiesta. Como vivíamos en Bogotá, pero inicialmente no tan cerca de la universidad, entonces eso hacía que mi mamá dijera “Bueno, pues, les toca quedarse a donde vayan a la fiesta porque no se pueden devolver a la una de la mañana. Un taxi nos cobraría un ojo, un pulmón y un riñón. No es posible que tú pagues un taxi. Pues les toca quedarse donde sus amigos”. Y eso en Bogotá es muy difícil porque nadie confía en el otro. Entonces, nadie quiere que sus hijos se queden donde sus amigos. Entonces, era como empezar a “Bueno, ya esta noche estuve de fiesta, nos quedamos donde Fulanito”. O bien, no había celular. Teléfono fijo. “Mami, ya llegué. Cuando salga el sol y haya bus, me voy para la casa”. Pero, digamos, ¿por qué éramos famosos en el colegio? Por los nombres. Todo el colegio sabía quién era Hunzahua y quién era Iraca. Todo el colegio. “Ah, ustedes son los nombres raros”. “Sí”. Ahí ya no era la época del bullying, digamos por la adolescencia, si no por quienes eran tu grupo social de clase. Entonces, los más famosos jugaban volleyball. Nosotros no jugábamos volleyball. Los más famosos del colegio, además de que jugaban volleyball, hacían otros deportes y nosotros ningún deporte practicábamos. Claro, menos. Entonces, empezamos a hacer como un grupito de amigos y meternos con los que menos eran famosos.

PV: Os fuisteis ahí juntando.

IV: Exacto. Cada uno en su salón porque siempre hubo una cosa súper bonita y es que nunca compartimos salón. Que a mí me parece bonito porque siempre hablábamos de amigos distintos. Creo que no hubiese sido posible si los dos hubiésemos sido del mismo salón. Eso nos pasó como en primero y segundo, éramos del mismo salón. Pero, siempre hermanos, mellizos y el mismo salón, no.

PV: Para tener cada uno también un poco más de espacio.

IV: Exacto. Eso nos ayudó a que cada uno tuviera sus cosas, su independencia, sus amigos. Y, como a defender ese espacio de no ser el famoso o la famosa. Pero, compartir con ese pequeño grupo de amigos. Entonces, yo conocí a sus amigos. Mi hermano conocía mis amigos y es ahora que “Oiga, saludos le mandó no sé quién, que me lo encontré”. “Ay, gracias”. Porque todo el colegio sabía quién éramos. Pues, nada, época bonita también.

PV: Y, ¿cómo empieza a ser esa época, sobre todo, cuando ya estás en la adolescencia, empiezas a tener ya tu grupo, estando en la ciudad?

IV: ¿Cómo se vive? Pues se vive más... Digamos, mi mamá siempre ha sido una mujer muy temerosa. No al extremo porque conozco otras mamás peores. Pero, era como muy “Cuidado, que aquí roban. Cuidado, que aquí te pueden tocar. Cuidado, que aquí los buses van muy llenos. Te pueden sacar el celular. Te pueden sacar la billetera. Te pueden robar. Cuidado porque te pueden echar algo en la nariz y te drogan”. A mi hermana le pasó. Entonces, cuando le pasó a mi hermana fue durísimo porque fue decir “Esto existe de verdad. La gente es mala”. A mi hermana la drogaron. No supimos cómo. Ella estaba en el centro, pero ella solo dice que iba caminando. Y un tipo la coge la mano. Y se la aprieta fuerte. Y ella luego no se acuerda de nada. Se acuerda que ese hombre le dijo que no botara esa moneda. Que le abriera la maleta. Le abrió la maleta. Le sacó lo que pudo. Luego le dijo “Váyase a esa iglesia y pregunte por el padre”. Ella fue. Habló con el padre. Le dijo “Es que a mí me mandaron hablar con usted”. “¿Quién?”. “El señor”. Y entonces, claro, el padre se da cuenta que mi hermana está muy mal, que algo le pasa. Le pide un número de teléfono. Lllaman a mi mamá. Mi mamá vuela para el centro. Está rarísima. No tiene la mirada fija. Tiene la pupila dilatada. No sabe qué pasó. Nos vamos para el apartamento. Empieza a vomitar. Ya toca llevarla de urgencias. Nosotros solos esperando a mi mamá a ver qué habrá pasado con mi hermana. Llega mi papá. Le hacen unas

pruebas y le echaron escopolamina. Porque yo no sé en qué cabeza cabe que una adolescente tenga millones. Es estúpido. ¿Qué le habrán robado? Pues, lo del bus. No tenía más. Entonces, fue como mi mamá alertarse más de “Eso pasa en la gran ciudad. Eso no hubiera pasado en Fusa. Pero, ya no estamos en Fusa. Entonces, cuidado, por favor. Menos salidas, menos cosas”. Porque mi hermana estuvo hospitalizada como ocho días. Consciente y todo, pero mal. Entonces, una dice “Eso es lo que implica vivir en la gran ciudad...”. Estar alerta. Siempre ha implicado como a ti te roban y te echan la culpa a ti. “Pero, ¿para qué sacaste el celular?”. “O sea, ¿la culpa es mía porque yo saqué el celular?”. “Sí, porque tú sabes que acá no lo puedes sacar”. Pero, claro que tiene otras ventajas. En términos de que tienes más actividades para inventarte, para hacer, para visitar, para salir. Entonces, ya la adolescencia a puertas de terminar el colegio, los planes ya son otros. Irse de viaje a otras ciudades. Es el plan de los chicos, de las chicas. Entonces, es arriesgarse un poco más a vivir de manera aventurera. Ya poco a poco tus papás se van relajando. Se van dando cuenta que, bueno, ya pues vamos creciendo. Como ellos mismos nos enseñaron a cuestionar, pues nosotros también cuestionábamos porqué sí, porqué no. ¿Por qué esto? ¿Por qué no más? Todo lo cuestionábamos. Todo lo preguntábamos. Y yo creo que por eso mi hermana es enfermera jefe. O sea, estudió enfermería superior, que llamamos nosotros. Y mi hermano es antropólogo y yo trabajadora social. Entonces, ¿qué más van a pedir, si no sociales y de la salud acá? Y, súmale que fuimos los primeros de la familia en ser universitarios. Fuimos los primeros. Entonces, parecíamos los niños ricos de la familia.

PV: Eso siempre es un gran cambio. Yo lo noto en mi familia. Yo fui la segunda de mi familia. Bueno, por parte de madre, la segunda. Y, por parte de padre, la primera. Y, mi madre tiene ocho hermanos. Esa es una familia enorme y solo habíamos sido, incluso de mis primos mayores porque yo soy de las primas pequeñas, y era mi primo, uno con el que me llevo cuatro años, el primero y yo la segunda. Entonces, eso, quieras o no, siempre

dices igual parece una tontería de “Yo he estado en la universidad”. Pero, en familias que vienen de cierto contexto es un gran boom. Y, sobre todo, para la familia notar de “Mira, hasta donde he llegado que mi hija puede ir a la Universidad”. O para los abuelos de “Mira hasta donde ha progresado la familia que la niña puede ir a la Universidad”.

IV: Tal cual. Es que somos iguales. Era el orgullo de que “Ellos sí lo lograron. Claro, porque están en Bogotá. Porque ellos sí pueden. Son los ricos de la familia”. Para mi familia paterna somos los millonarios. Y para mi familia materna es que “El haber vivido en Bogotá, eso te cambia la vida”. Ya de mi familia materna, el resto sí siguió estudiando y mi familia paterna no. Si estudió una más, fue mucho. Entonces, como “Es que ustedes han tenido oportunidades”. Claro, somos de un país tan desigual que entiendo lo de las oportunidades, pero también entiendo que ustedes han perdido muchas oportunidades por no saberlas aprovechar. Pero, también digo, pues qué pecado si a veces la vida te la venden como “Es que lo más importante es trabajar”. Y que no exista la menor posibilidad de que sales del colegio a estudiar a la Universidad. En cambio, para nosotros era como “Sí o sí. Se van a la Universidad”. Es que no hay otra opción. ¿Qué es el pequeño detalle? Es que “No te vamos a pagar Universidad privada porque no hay. Tiene que ser en la pública. O es en la pública o mira a ver qué haces”. Entonces, yo inicialmente quería ser psicóloga. Me presenté a psicología. No pasé. Fue traumático. Fue mi primer semestre haciendo otras cosas, como estar pendiente de mi abuelo porque ya estaba muy enfermo; jugar tenis porque la universidad... Bueno, en Bogotá jugar tenis es un deporte muy de élite, como tú estás jugando tenis ahí tan play. Pero, resulta que es que yo terminé jugando tenis porque es que la cancha de tenis quedaba al frente del colegio, dentro de la misma Universidad. Y, como vivía tan cerca, ¿qué más hacía? Y sin saber qué diablos quería hacer con mi vida, por mi mente pasó cine y televisión, veterinaria, zootecnia... Todo. Todas las carreras que había en la Universidad Nacional pasaron por mí. No tenía ni idea que existía el trabajo social. O sea, no sabía qué era. Pero, en ese año, bueno, mi

hermano cambió de carrera. Mi hermana también cambió de carrera. Todos perdidos. Pero, luego ellos fueron como ubicándose en sus carreras y yo todavía no. Entonces yo fui, digamos de los tres, la que se quedó un semestre sin estudiar literalmente nada porque no sabía qué estudiar. Y, entonces, el frustrarme frente a lo que yo creía que iba a hacer porque “Seguro iba a ser psicóloga”, me permitió, llevando a mi abuelito a un control médico, conocer a una trabajadora social. Y yo dije “Ah, tan chévere es la labor que ella hace” porque nos ayudó en un momento crítico. Mi abuelito tenía que hacer diálisis tres veces a la semana. Entonces, la desocupada de Iraca era la que lo tenía que llevar. Lo sacaba del carro. Lo subía al hospital. Lo pesaban. Luego, lo conectaban. Luego, lo recogía. Así, así. Y en una subida, digamos, de la silla a la pesa mi abuelito se me desmaya. Llega un médico. Lo atiende. Dice “Tu abuelito está muy mal. Ya hoy no hay diálisis. Ni nunca más va a haber diálisis. Tu abuelito va muy mal”. Y, entonces, llega una trabajadora social. Llega una señora y dice “Bueno, tu abuelito no es de este sistema de salud. Te tengo que remitir a otro hospital. Pero, yo le voy a dar una muerte digna a tu abuelito”. Y yo... “¿Qué?!” Llamé a mi papá. “Ven por tu papá”, digamos, el esposo de mi abuela. “Ven, que se va a morir en pocas palabras. Que no va a ser en este hospital, que va a ser en el otro”. Y todos “Pero no, ese hospital es terrible. Allá dejan morir la gente. Es terrible”. Claro, entonces empecé a entender que los hospitales eran distintos, que lo público... Literal, había una época en donde en ese hospital, que era el más grande, cogían cartones y los ponían en el piso porque no había camillas para la gente. Y, literal, por eso decían que la gente se moría en el piso. Pues, porque si venías muy mal y te tocó piso y no camilla, te morías en el piso. Y, entonces, mi abuelita luego por el teléfono “No, mi amor, ayúdame, que no vaya a estar en el piso”. Y ya yo metida ahí, no hubo quién me sacara de ese hospital. Y siempre fue como el contacto con la trabajadora social. Y entonces, yo luego, ya que íbamos ubicándonos más, que ya nos dieron una habitación, yo le decía a mi papá “¿Y qué es trabajo

social?’. Entonces me dijo ‘‘Háblate con ella’’. Y ella me explicó. Entonces, yo dije ‘‘Ay, no, esto me gusta mucho. Y, ¿está en una universidad pública?’’. Y sí, efectivamente.

PV: Ya estaba ahí trabajo social.

IV: Entonces, yo dije ya. Y pues empecé a presentarme a trabajo social. Y de una pasé. Y de una dije ‘‘Esto es lo mío’’.

PV: Y, ¿cómo es la Iraca de esa época? No sé, ¿qué inquietudes tiene? Porque, claro, trabajo social te tiene que gustar mucho todo lo que es esa perspectiva, sobre todo, de cuidado, ¿no? Es muy duro estudiar trabajo social, sobre todo, por lo que es el trabajo de después.

IV: Digamos que en América Latina la educación es sumamente exigente en todos los niveles. En el bachillerato. En el pregrado que llamamos nosotros. O sea, en las licenciaturas que llaman acá. Es muy exigente. Es de exámenes. Es de presentaciones. Es intensísimo. Entonces, lo que hacíamos, digamos, fue aprender a cuestionar mucho la realidad social. A conocer las políticas públicas. A entender que el tema de los estratos es una vaina garrafal en términos de que buscó como política pública ayudar a los menos favorecidos, pero nos dividió. Geográficamente nos dividió. Entonces, la gente de un lado no quería vivir en el otro. Pero, quedaron políticas que favorecían a unos más que a otros. Entonces, siempre ha sido como una visión muy crítica. Es de las ciencias sociales. No es de las ciencias de la salud en Colombia, por lo menos. Entonces, eso hace que tú te la pases con antropólogos, con sociólogos, con filósofos... que de entrada, tienen una visión mucho más comunitaria, muy anticolonial. Crítica al doscientos por ciento. Entonces claro, digamos que mis papás finalmente apoyaban, pues con mi hermano antropólogo también, que participáramos en marchas, que participáramos en movimientos comunitarios que buscaban algo. Entonces, ellos decían como ‘‘Bueno, pero tiene razón’’.

Cosas así. Porque la visión del trabajo social en España es muy distinta porque está más concentrado en el asistencialismo. O sea, tú las ves más en hospitales, más en hogares, más en ayuntamientos. En cambio, nosotros en Colombia podemos ser profesores. Claro, trabajamos también en hospitales, pero el término, más que asistencial, es de la construcción de redes, de tal forma que el proceso que lleve esta persona se sostenga a partir de una política pública. Entonces, tenemos un jurgo de formación política para que lo operativo y lo puntual de tus acciones se anclen a algo duradero. Entonces críticos, pues bien. Digamos, por lo menos en mi casa porque mis papás eran también de la misma línea. Entonces, o hablarlo con mi papá o hablarlo con mi mamá fue como ‘‘Muy bien. Por ahí es’’. Mi primer trabajo fue con habitante de calle. Nunca tuve prácticas con habitante de calle. Tuve prácticas con mujeres y hombres Lgbt que se dedicaban a la prostitución en parques. No con habitante de calle, si no, digamos, poblaciones específicas que iban con niños. En educación. Y justo salgo de la universidad y mi primer trabajo es con habitante de calle. Entonces mi mamá, con esa visión de que ‘‘El trabajo es lo más importante en tu vida’’, pues dijo ‘‘Es lo primero que le sale, mamita. Hágale’’. Entonces bueno, vamos. Eso también me hizo ser una mujer mucho más sencilla en lo físico y en lo material. Y en lo humano. Pues, obviamente, mi trabajo no era de andar con anillos de oro. Nunca me han gustado. Ni aretes de oro, ni nada que brille, ni nada de oro porque nunca he estado en contextos en donde eso sea importante. Ves, no vengo de una familia que utilice el oro. Entonces, claramente, como que no. Y, pues, por mi contexto laboral. Entonces, yo mientras tenía compañeras del colegio que se dedicaron a estudiar, por ejemplo, economía, que yo las veía en la súper oficinas con los anillos porque, además, eso estratifica. La apariencia un montón y donde vivas. ‘‘Ay, es que me fui a vivir a no sé donde...’’. O sea, que tú ya te imaginas cuánto ganas. Imaginas que te ha ido muy bien laboralmente. Entonces, pues más hippie pa’ donde siendo trabajadora social y trabajando con habitante de calle. Entonces fue conocer, digamos, que una parte muy oscura de la humanidad. Pero, al mismo tiempo conocí a

pastoral universitaria. O sea, mi familia es católica de base, pero no éramos como los de todos los domingos ir a misa y más en la adolescencia como “¡Qué aburrido!”. Pero, conocí una pastoral distinta porque eran jóvenes que estaban en diferentes universidades públicas y privadas de Bogotá que hacían misiones en pueblos, que hablaban con la gente, que conocían otras realidades, que llevaban de comer a los habitantes de calle. Y yo decía “Me gusta”. Y en esa pastoral, en tercer semestre, conocí que el Papa, el Papa que esté de turno, cada tres años convoca a los jóvenes y hace Jornadas Mundiales de la Juventud. Entonces, tenía la primera oportunidad de ir a Canadá. Y, pues, de entrada mi mamá me dijo “Ay, si sabes contar, no cuentas conmigo”. Eran tres millones de pesos que eso ahorita en euros es como seiscientos euros. Entonces, pues, en su momento era mucha plata para nosotros. Mucha. Mi papá dijo “Yo te doy quinientos mil pesos”. Yo “Bueno, me quedan dos millones y medio para conseguirlo”. Me dijeron “Presenta un ensayo, a ver si te ganas un subsidio”. Hice el ensayo. Quedé segunda. O sea, entonces me dieron un subsidio. Aún me seguía faltando plata. Con mis amigos de la misma pastoral, de otras universidades vendíamos botones en las iglesias. Por ejemplo, nos íbamos a un estadio. “Hoy hay concierto de Metálica”, pues botones de Metálica. Nos íbamos a esta iglesia, decíamos “En esta iglesia no cree en la Virgen, pues no hacemos botones de Virgen, si no lo que usted crea”. En tal iglesia creen en las pirámides, pues botones de pirámides. Sandwiches los domingos en ciclovía. O sea, todo lo que fuera vender y levantar el dinero, hacíamos. Entonces, mi mamá dijo “Yo no tengo plata”. Me acuerdo mucho que yo lloraba porque yo decía “Yo quiero salir del país. Yo quiero viajar”. Nunca había cogido un avión en mi vida. No conocía ni el mar porque de Bogotá a la costa, o sea conocer el mar, te implica una hora y media de avión o veinte horas en carro. Entonces, no tenemos carro. Empezando por ahí. Mi papá sí, pero nosotras no. Y, pues, un tiquete de avión era imposible. O sea, mi mamá no daba pa’ tanto. Imposible. Y pues sí, no pagábamos universidad, pero tocaba pagar otras cosas. La comida, los servicios, el arriendo, el alquiler. Entonces, la cosa se

fue ahí como poniendo difícil, pero mi mamá me decía “Usted quiere vender sándwiches, yo la ayudo con los sándwiches. Véndalos. Usted quiere hacer botones, dígame donde. Yo le ayudo a vender. Usted quiere hacer una rifa, yo le ayudo a vender la rifa. Yo le ayudo con lo operativo, pero no le puedo dar la plata”. Y así fue que fui consiguiendo. Me fui como con cuarenta dólares a Canadá. Y fui con cuarenta dólares que fui y volví. O sea, ¿cómo hice? No sé, pero la divina providencia. Y estando eso en la Universidad. Y salgo. Después de conocer Canadá y llegar a trabajar con habitante de calle y yo dije “Miércoles, ¿qué es esto?”. O sea, es conocer la persona adicta. En Bogotá pasaba una cosa. Hay una calle, bueno ya la quitaron hace un par de años, que se llamaba el Bronx y antes un sector que se llamaba El Cartucho. Y ahí nacían los niños. Era un parque. Y los habitantes de calle hacían sus hogares con telas y ahí vendían. Era tráfico de personas. Era tráfico de drogas. Nacían los niños. Las mujeres drogadas parían ahí. Llegaba la gente de todo el mundo. Adicta. Yo decía “¿Qué hago acá? El trabajo social no sirve para nada. Yo aquí no le voy a cambiar la vida a nadie. ¡Qué cosa tan frustrante!”. Me contrató una ONG porque, digamos, nuestra tarea era sacar a los habitantes de calle de El Bronx y de El Cartucho. Que vivieran en un edificio, en una finca. Se les pagaba los apartamentos. Se les pagaba el alquiler de esos pisos. Mientras tanto, con terapia ocupacional, educación especial, otras profesiones, buscarle trabajo a la gente. Rehabilitarla, se llamaba en su momento. O sea, quitarle la adicción y que empezara a trabajar. La trabajadora social, además de sacarlos de allá, tenía que gestionar todo lo administrativo. “¿Tiene cédula?”. “Nunca me he registrado porque nací en El Bronx”. O sea, no tenía lo que llamaban aquí el libro de familia. “Okay, ¿que tú cómo te llamabas?”. “A mí toda la vida, digamos, me han llamado *El Piojo*?”. “Bueno, pero no te puedes llamar *El Piojo*. Es imposible. Entonces, fue empezar a darme cuenta que había gente sin registrar. Había gente que nunca había tenido una cédula. Un antecedente judicial, pues obvio que no. Que habían robado. Que a saber cuántas más cosas habían hecho. Que el valor hacia el otro era “O sea, si yo estoy drogado y

tengo que chusar y matar a alguien para ganarme un celular, un reloj y con eso puedo conseguir pa' el vicio, pues lo hago. ¿Por qué no?». Para ellos todas las personas son ricas, son millonarias. Entonces ya que tuve la oportunidad de salir del país en un momento, yo decía “Esto no es posible. O sea, no es posible que exista tanto... de verdad, la parte tan oscura del ser humano ahí. Ahí era”.

PV: ¿Fue como descubrir todo eso de repente ahí?

IV: De repente. Niños. Ver niños consumiendo. Mira, es que yo llegaba llorando a la casa. Llorando. “Mami, no tendrá ni seis años y ya estaba pegado al boxe”. Otras embarazadas y consumiendo a lo que daba. Entonces, tú dices “¿Qué es esto? ¿Qué es esto, por Dios?”. Empezar a ver procesos con las familias. Empezar a “Bueno, ¿tú cómo te quieres llamar?”. Esa era mi tarea, desde “¿Cómo te quieres llamar?”, registrarte, generarte una cédula, sacarte antecedentes. Yo era el puente entre el habitante de calle y lo judicial y administrativo que todo ser humano tiene que tener. El libro de familia, partamos por ahí. Luego, con personas que me duplicaban la edad. Entonces, yo era la Doctora, porque en Colombia todo el mundo es Doctor o Doctora. Entonces, “Ay, Doctora Iraca, pero es que yo no puedo ir a antecedentes penales porque tienen mis huellas y yo robé, yo maté, yo hice...”. Muy bien. En una entrevista con una habitante de calle, estábamos las dos así sentadas cuando me dice “Doctora, ¿qué hora es?”. Y yo “Ay, oiga, mi reloj... Ay, ¿yo no traje reloj? No, no sé qué hora es”. Y de un momento a otro me dice “¿Y este no es su reloj?”. Y yo “No te lo creo”. Así de cerca como estamos las dos, me había robado el reloj que lo tenía en mi muñeca porque es que son ágiles. Son magos. Entonces, fue empezar a descubrir que tenían unas habilidades que la Universidad nunca te explica, nunca te enseña, pero que la vida te empieza... Y que yo tenía la posibilidad, a diferencia de otros profesionales, de conocer su vida, su pasado, su presente y tratar de ayudarles en su futuro. Entonces yo dije “No. Ahora sí amo el trabajo social. Esto es lo mío”.

Duré un montón de años trabajando con habitante de calle y eso me zarandeó. Luego seguí con pastoral. Y seguí en las Jornadas Mundiales. Seguí viajando. Seguí saliendo del país, pero con los pies en la tierra diciendo “Esto es una cara de la moneda”. Pero, la gente no conoce de verdad la otra cara de la moneda cuando tú tienes una adicción, cuando vives en la calle o cuando has nacido en la calle. O cuando has tenido familia... porque también conocí muchos casos así “En tal calle, en tal casa vive mi familia, pero yo como me volví adicto a la cocaína o la heroína, pues terminé habitante de calle. Entonces, ya no puedo entrar a la casa. O cuando entro, me robo la licuadora. Me robo el televisor. Me robo no sé qué...”. Entonces, como tratar de hablar con su familia y decir “Denle una oportunidad”. Que ellos le digan a uno que “No sea ilusa”, que ellos no creen en él o en ella. Bueno... Y empezar a trabajar con ellos fue de domingo a domingo porque nos tocaba cuidar de la casa, del edificio entre los mismos profesionales. Entonces, era o domingos o sábados. O entre semana. En un sector donde todo el mundo decía “Pero, ¿cómo te metes allá?”. Porque el bus te deja en un lado y luego te tienes que ir caminando todo eso. Y tú sabes que no te roban pues porque ya ellos saben que tú eres la doctora. Ya me conocían. Entonces, era chistosísimo que yo, por ejemplo, un día fuimos al cine con mi papá y mi hermano. Y saliendo del cine, me abraza un habitante de calle con la lona de todas las cosas que había reciclado, cochino hasta el techo. Y se me lanza y te abraza. Y “¡Doctora!”. Y mi papá que se moría. Mi hermano pegado al techo. Y mi hermano le dice a mi papá “Esos son los amigos de Iraca, papi”. Y, entonces, mi papá “¿Estás bien hija?”. “Sí, les presento a Pedro”. Pongámosle un nombre. “Pedro, ¿por qué estás reciclando otra vez? ¿Volviste a la calle?”. “Ay, doctora, es que sí. Duré tantos años trabajando... Luego, volví a la adicción...”. Y uno dice “No...”. “Pero, mire que Fulanito sí consiguió trabajo. Pero, mire que le cambió la vida a no sé quién... Ya los niños no viven en el Bronx. Acabaron eso. Ya están en colegios los niños que tú conociste”. Entonces, tú dices “Ay, bueno, no son muchos, pero algo se hizo”.

PV: Es un sector muy difícil. Y, bueno, ¿qué supone para ti, claro, ver todo ese lado como oscuro y darte cuenta de lo que puedes hacer, de lo que está a tu alcance y de lo que no? Aunque sea tu trabajo, pues, te gustaría hacer muchas cosas, pero...

IV: Total. Y, también, digamos, con los pies en la tierra. O sea, tú ayudas hasta donde se puede. Al principio me cargaba muchísimo. No dormía. Me soñaba con esas familias, con esos casos. Una vez uno me amenazó. Me puso un pedazo de vidrio y me dijo "Me deja salir o la mato". Y yo "Pues máteme". ¿Qué podía perder? Pues, bueno, que Dios es muy grande y no me pasó nada o que el otro dijo "Ay, yo pa' que le voy a hacer daño a esta vieja". Y no salió de la casa porque sabía que iba a consumir. Pero, luego digo "¿Qué irresponsable! ¿Cómo le digo yo que me mate antes de dejarle salir? Pues, que salga y se consuma hasta los huesos si quiere". Luego digo "No, pero...". Entonces, es algo como al día de ¿será que es posible cambiar la vida de alguien? Y, luego me di cuenta de que sí. Que sí es posible. O sea, tú no tienes la varita mágica, pero tú tienes unas habilidades que le pueden ayudar a alguien más. O puedes ser el puente de otras cosas. Entonces, fue darle valor a entender que, por ejemplo, en unas ocasiones me pasaba que salía una Jornada Mundial, por ejemplo, Alemania y volver a trabajar con habitante de calle de un día para otro. Entonces como que tú dices... Claro, la parte linda de Alemania. Tú no ves a las personas habitantes de calle. Tú crees que tu país es el peor. Pero, el estar así fuera tiempos cortos en un lugar y en el otro me permitió ampliar mi visión de mundo y entender que hay problemas aquí como hay problemas allá. Que son en proporciones distintas, claro. Que hay más abandono, por ejemplo, de esta problemática allá que acá. Que aquí también consumen. Acá me refiero a Europa, Estados Unidos, Centro América que consumen. Claro que consumen. Pero, que hay un trato distinto de un habitante de calle. O sea, acá llegar a Castellón y no ver a la gente durmiendo en el piso, en la calle. O sea, solo en el Ribalta y allí he visto la misma persona siempre.

PV: Aquí sí que es verdad que hay bastantes, pero yo creo que es como algo más... no íntimo, pero sí más escondido, más tapado. Igual que el caso de drogadicción, yo creo que también. Por ejemplo, en mi familia han habido muchos casos que yo me he enterado cuando ya era mayor y decir de "He crecido con mi prima toda mi vida y yo no me he dado cuenta de nada". Y luego era un caso que dices "Dios, madre mía... Todas las cosas que han pasado y yo no me he enterado de nada". Entonces, yo creo que aquí igual hay mucho caso, pero creo que igual está un poco más escondido. Creo.

IV: Porque no se ve públicamente. No solo en Europa. No solo en España, si no, por ejemplo, en Canadá. Y es que los habitantes de calle no tienen... Bueno, ahorita hace poco que estuve otra vez en Canadá. Sí hay unos sectores, por ejemplo, en Vancouver donde son las calles completas de las personas que viven en la calle. Pero, viven en carpas. Entonces, tú dices, bueno, pues que ya tenemos una perspectiva distinta de la calle. Si tienes carpas es porque el estado te las lleva porque tú no vas a comprarlas a Decathlon. Si no, que el estado se preocupó por el habitante de calle y les dio carpas. Que ellos pidan y tú sepas que la plata que les vas dar es para consumir, eso es otra cosa. Que no es un hueco en donde... Es que ojalá lo puedas ver en internet como eran las casas de El Bronx o de la L que llamaban. Eran huecos. Eran casas antiguas, abandonadas que empezaron a conquistar los mismos habitantes de calle. Entonces, eran huecos y huecos donde había de todo. O sea, las violaciones, los abusos que había en esos lugares. Y la gente drogada no tenía ni idea de lo que pasaba allá. Pero, lo que te digo, ahora ya de más grande volver a Canadá y decir "Es que esto es una concepción distinta de qué es un habitante de calle porque acá, por lo menos, claramente hay una inversión del estado". Hay una inversión en lo público. Al legalizar, claro, no era lo mismo. Ya fui yo con las niñas y decir "¿A qué huele mami?". La marihuana es como acá el cigarrillo. Claro, venimos de una ciudad o de un país en donde no se fuma tanto y donde no está permitido el consumo tan en la calle.

Entonces, con niñas abordo tú dices ‘‘Uy, ¿cómo te explico qué es la marihuana?’’. Pero, es como acá el cigarrillo. Entonces, una dice política pública allá y acá, sí. Pero, las tenemos distintas. Pero, también, eso aún me permitió darme cuenta que yo me soñaba, yo le decía a mi abuelita, incluso en su momento antes de fallecer, ‘‘Ay, me encantaría que mis primos fueran, mis primos conocieran otro país, conocieran otras ciudades’’. Pero, también siento que fue como que ‘‘No. Muchos no les gusta viajar. Déjalos quietos’’. Y ya la vida laboral como, oiga, qué rico es que viajemos y nos demos cuenta que hay más allá de Colombia o más allá de Bogotá. Hay otras regiones. Entonces, con una amiga de Pastoral lo que hacíamos era una vez al año nos íbamos las dos a alguna región de Colombia. Las dos solitas a conocer porque decíamos ‘‘Es que tenemos que salir de las realidades en las que estamos porque todo no es Bogotá. Ni todo es Colombia’’. Entonces, eso también me permitió ver que hay muchas formas de migrar. Que todos no migramos de la misma manera. Que hay migraciones temporales. Por ejemplo, lo que pasa en el máster. Son dos años y tú sabes que tienes un reloj encima. Y que en dos años la gente se va. Y, especialmente, los que tienen unas becas súper comprometidas. Entonces, tú sabes que eso va a pasar. Pero, también te das cuenta que hay migraciones en las que, por ejemplo, llegar a un aeropuerto y decir ‘‘Es que soy colombiana’’. ‘‘Una fila especial’’. ‘‘Bueno... Y, ¿por qué?’’. ‘‘Porque es que en tu país uno no sabe...’’. ‘‘Yo sí sé. Yo sé que en la vida he visto la cocaína. En la vida he tenido un amigo que haya consumido cocaína. Y tengo mucha gente conocida. Pero, mucha gente conocida. Y ninguna ha consumido en su vida la cocaína. Pero, tú me vas a parar acá’’.

PV: Todos los prejuicios y estereotipos y todo...

IV: Una vez en un aeropuerto, yo llevaba en esa época las cámaras de rollito. Así súper grandes. Que justo mi papá me la había prestado. Y en un aeropuerto ‘‘Abra la cámara’’. Y yo ‘‘Pero, si la abro, velo el rollo. Daño todas las fotos que he tomado’’ porque el señor policía quiere

que yo le abra la foto. Y ahí en mi machucado inglés le decía que no era posible. O sea, que me dañaba las fotos. Me quita la cámara y dice “Yo voy a tomar fotos”. Y él empezaba a tomar y decía “Pero, no le sale droga”. Y yo “¿Qué?! ¿Usted cree que yo...?”. “Ah, es que es colombiana”. Y yo “Sé que soy Colombiana, pero soy un ser humano y no consumo, no vendo. ¿Qué es esto?”.

PV: Y lo del tema de los viajes que hacías con la Pastoral, ¿eso era en los años de Universidad o ya después cuando estabas trabajando?

IV: Alcancé a hacer unos años en la Universidad. Casi todo. Y, ya cuando salí de la Universidad, hice creo que dos. La Jornada de Madrid, que fue en el 2011. Ya la hice incluso con Guille, que ya nos conocíamos. Y una anterior, que él sí que no quiso venir, que fue la de Alemania. Pero, ya digamos en la vida laboral. Entonces, lo que yo hice es que yo, paralelo a mi trabajo con habitante de calle, dedicaba horas a Pastoral para pagarme el viaje. “Yo te pago con horas de trabajo y tú me pagas con el tiquete”. Entonces, claro, como ya venía con la experiencia en la Universidad de qué eran las Jornadas Mundiales, digamos que ya tenía un nivel distinto de responsabilidad. Entonces, me mandaban, por ejemplo, a Bruselas. Entonces, “Iracá llega a Bruselas. Los aviones de Bogotá a Medellín... Tantos son nuestros peregrinos. Recíbelos y los tienes que conectar con tal salida de avión, de aeropuerto. A tal avión, a tal hora”. Entonces, ese era como mi trabajo logístico. Ser la representante de la Jornada Mundial de Colombia en el país en que me tocara recibir a los aviones y luego llegar a conectarme al país que ya era. Vivir esas dos semanas o ese casi mes en donde fuera. Y devolverme con X avión para volver a dejar, porque generalmente los peregrinos que viajan son jóvenes. ¿Has ido?

PV: No. No he ido, pero sí que conozco gente que ha ido. Porque nunca he sido muy... de esa parte de religión y todo eso, jornadas. Pero, sí, como iba a un colegio católico había mucha gente que iba a las jornadas. Y de la de Madrid me acuerdo. O sea, que estaba como todo el boom en España cuando se hicieron aquí y todo. De eso me acuerdo.

IV: Yo ahí conocí qué eran cuarenta grados, cuarenta y dos grados de verano y dije “Dios mío, nos vamos a derretir. Nos vamos a morir”. Madrid colapsó. Pero, eso era como la oportunidad. Y cuando yo conozco a Guile, le dilo “Ven. Es que, baby, hay mucho más que Colombia. Tenemos que mover. Tenemos que conocer. Vamos a la Jornada”. Y él como “Okay”. Y también lo veía muy lejos, muy imposible de alcanzar. Cuando su primera Jornada fue Madrid dijo, perdóname la grosería, pero “¡La madre! Esto lo volvemos a vivir”. Y, luego fue como por otras razones. Por ejemplo, volvemos a Canadá fue porque yo presenté una ponencia en un evento de sostenibilidad. Y era el primer evento que se hacía paralelo inglés y español. Entonces, fue como la primera convocatoria que se hizo en América Latina para hacer ponencias en Español y yo presenté mi tesis de grado. Les gustó muchísimo, que tiene que ver con sostenibilidad. Entonces me dijeron “Listo, pues el evento es en Vancouver”. Y yo “Nos vamos a Vancouver con las niñas porque vamos a vivirla”. Entonces, también ha sido como la experiencia. Y gracias a Dios y a las oportunidades porque, finalmente, pues ha sido eso. Las oportunidades también. Demostrarle a las niñas que, desde bebés, es posible viajar. Pero, es posible si tú, uno, buscas las oportunidades y las aprovechas. Y no te atas a muchas cosas. Pero, no es fácil. Aún con esa experiencia que te estoy diciendo, que sí que soy una bendecida y que he podido viajar desde hace muchos años, llegar aquí fue durísimo. Entonces, tú dices te sirve porque ya hay muchas cosas que tú, entre comillas, crees que superas. Pero, la gente, al mismo tiempo los estereotipos parece como que te frenara. Entonces, dicen “Claro, te damos una visa X a tal país porque ya hemos dado cuenta que has utilizado otras visas y has regresado a tu país”. Pero, entonces, luego llegas acá y te dicen “Pero, es que tú no tienes vida acrediticia en

España. ¿Cómo te vamos a alquilar un piso?”. Entonces, dices “Sí, pero espérate. Es que también tengo vida crediticia en otro país”. “No me interesa”. Y luego, “Es que colombiana y estudiante, sí. Pero, colombiana, estudiante y con familia, no. Eso nunca se ha visto”. Y yo “¿A qué sí? ¿A qué te estoy diciendo la verdad? Así tú no me quieras creer”. O sea, ya ni siquiera el estereotipo es que seas del país X o Z. Les podría haber dicho que vengo de Estados Unidos. Igual. Si no tienes una vida crediticia en ese país “No existes. No me interesa”. Es un pero todo. Entonces, uno dice “Claro, y luego decía yo”. Cuando nosotros nos vinimos fue también la época en donde migró muchos venezolanos a Colombia y nos pasaba lo mismo. Y lo hablamos con Guille y decíamos “¿Cuántas veces nosotros quizás hicimos lo mismo?”. Y escuchábamos “No, es que si tú eres venezolano, no te puedo alquilar un piso. No te puedo alquilar porque, ¿cómo me vas a asegurar que no me vas a robar? ¿Que sí vas a pagar los servicios? ¿Que sí vas a cuidar el piso? Entonces, uno dice “Juepucha”. Y cuando cambian los papeles es que te das cuenta que migrar no siempre es fácil porque tú no vas con nada asegurado. Con nada.

PV: O sea, vienes de una realidad y ves como el otro lado de...

IV: Y como en vez de que la gente te ayude a que sean oportunidades, se vuelven problemas. Pero, les decía a unas mamás del colegio de las niñas “Miren, y que esto no solo se los digo por mí, si no a futuro. Esto depende más que del migrante, de la persona que recepciona”. Porque ya tenemos un grupito, por lo menos en el colegio, de personas conocidas, pero ha sido por las familias que se han tomado la molestia de decir “Oye, ¿tú eres la nueva? ¿Tú eres la mamá de la niña tal que comparte clase con mis hijos?”. “Sí”. “Ay, ¿cierto que tú vienes de Colombia?”. “Sí”. Pero tú ya lo piensas dos veces. ¿Digo sí o digo no? “S”. “¡Ah, bienvenida!”. Okay, okay... Se puede. Pero, se puede gracias a la gente local. Porque por más de que tú le tengas mucha energía y muchas ganas, si la gente local no te abre las puertas, esto

es una mierda. Y se vuelve un total caos porque tú dices ‘‘Venga, hablamos el mismo idioma’’. ‘‘No, no es cierto. No hablamos el mismo idioma. Por más de que hablemos el español, el castellano, no hablamos el mismo idioma porque es que resulta que es que tú eres la nueva. Tú vienes de un país. No entiendes nada acá’’. Si te ha atendido mal un funcionario, pues entonces tú entiendes que lo que él te dijo es lo único que existe. Y poco a poco, te empiezas a dar cuenta que hay mucho más de lo que te dijo el funcionario. Entonces, tú dices ¿de quién depende? ¿De mí? No, depende de la persona que te está atendiendo. Mira, te voy a poner un ejemplo sencillo. Cuando llegamos a este bar y llega el mesero y te pregunta ‘‘¿Qué quieres?’’. Yo digo ‘‘¿Qué me ofreces?’’. El mesero me dice ‘‘Pida lo que quiera’’. Y yo ‘‘No, que te juro que no hay lo que yo quiero. Entonces, tú muéstrame una carta de opciones para no pedir una cosa que no hay’’. ¿Sí, me explico? Pero, literalmente, eso me ha pasado en los bares de acá, que yo quiero un café, un capuchino con vainilla y estoy segura que no lo voy a conseguir acá. Entonces, no me digas qué quieres, si no dime qué me ofreces. Lo mismo pasa en las grandes escalas de la gobernanza, digamos, técnicamente en una ciudad. ‘‘Dime cómo funciona y yo traduzco lo que tú me estás contando a mi realidad y entiendo que lo que tú me llamas Libro de familia, para mí se llama Registro civil. Lo que tú me dices Ministerio de Universidades para mí se llama Ministerio de Educación. Pero, dime qué hay’’. Pero, que a mí me toque buscarlo, no sé como se llama acá para buscar. Lo intento con mis términos y no lo encuentro. Entonces, dime qué hago. Dime cómo busco un colegio. Dime cómo me empadrono. Dime cómo saco los NIEs. ¿Quién te enseña eso?

PV: Que al final es eso, tampoco tienes ayuda de la población local. Es como ‘‘Yo llego aquí, pero no sé por dónde empezar’’.

IV: Por donde tirar. No es posible encontrar quien te de una mano y dice ‘‘Estira de ahí. Esa cuerda es. Esa es’’. No. Entonces ha sido como ‘‘Ensayo y error’’. Que también creo que

seguimos siendo unos bendecidos porque finalmente lo más duro fue el primer mes, siento yo. Que se vendrán nuevos cambios si queremos cambiar de piso porque volvemos con lo mismo. Si ahora que vamos a renovar las visas, ¿va a ser lo mismo? Sí. Pero, en términos, por ejemplo, de lo social, que para mí es muy importante, ha sido bueno porque hemos dado con familias en este colegio que ellos han sido los que nos han abierto las puertas. “¿Quieren viajar este fin de semana a la casa de pueblo que tenemos?”. “Vale, vamos”. Entonces, creo que ya me conozco todos los pueblos de aquí aledaños de la comunidad de Castellón gracias a ellos. Gracias a que mi casero dijo “Les dejo el carro, ¿les interesa?”. Y nosotros “Sí, pero no tenemos plata para comprarlo”. “Me lo pagan en dos años. Ustedes van a estar aquí dos años. Me lo pasan a cuota”. Y que nos lo haya dejado a mil y pico de euros. Mil doscientos. Mil... algo así. Y, claro, en pesos por lo menos sería cuatro millones de pesos. Tú no consigues un carro por cuatro millones de pesos. Nunca. O quién sabe en qué condiciones. Entonces, han sido como muchas cosas que tú dices yo no puedo generalizar. Cuando venga otro migrante, que le vaya a asegurar un piso con el casero que tengo, que es un hit; un carro porque ha sido mera coincidencia; unas familias de colegio como las que nos ha tocado porque, realmente, no sé si ha sido suerte o coincidencia, de bendiciones, de maravilla, de suertudos... No lo sé. Pero que, claramente, no ha sido lo mismo para todos. Entonces, digo yo, como para todos, no era fácil orientarme en la UJI porque no era muy común que llegara gente estudiante con hijos. Entonces como “No tengo idea”. “Pero, ¿si no saben ustedes qué hago yo acá?”.

PV: Eso le pasó también a la otra chica que he entrevistado, Carlyne. También llegó desde Kenia con toda su familia, con los hijos. Y, entonces, claro es una visión de ya es diferente de la gente que viene migrante de cada país y luego aún es diferente si vienes solo, si vienes con la familia, si vienes con...

IV: Total. Y con un contexto que nadie se espera. Encontrábamos una señora que me decía “No es cierto que usted quiera buscar un piso para su familia porque aquí las estudiantes no vienen con familia”. Y yo “O sea, ¿qué usted me está diciendo mentirosa? Y es en serio. Entonces, ¿aquí cómo funcionan? ¿Diciendo mentiras? Pues, entonces, le digo una mentira”. Si así van a ser las respuestas de todos, o sea, la embarramos completamente. Pero, luego poco a poco ha sido interesante ver y mostrarle a las niñas otras realidades. Que conozcan las estaciones, que en Colombia no tenemos. Que tengan el mar cuando somos de una ciudad tan céntrica y tan fría. Que ya la ida al mar no es una vez al año o cada dos años, que es como lo máximo que tú haces. Porque, de hecho, todavía conozco gente joven de veinte, veintidós años que nunca han ido a conocer el mar. O como ir a la costa en Colombia y que te pregunten “¿Bogotá tiene mar?”. Porque nunca han ido a Bogotá. Entonces tú dices, todavía tenemos tantas brechas internamente, pues peor saltar el charco que es cruzarte a Europa.

PV: Y, ¿cómo son los últimos años antes de venir aquí? O sea, en Colombia. Porque empezaste a trabajar con los habitantes de calle, ¿luego seguiste trabajando?

IV: Luego pasé a trabajar con un colegio. Un cambio abismal. Pero, también en el centro de Bogotá. Entonces, ya conocía la zona. Ya un poco más tranquila, más segura. Yo no te puedo decir que a mí me han intentado robar ni con cuchillo ni con arma como muchas veces pasa en el centro de Bogotá pues porque, finalmente, mis mejores amigos eran los habitantes de calle. Entonces, pasé a trabajar a un colegio y mi tarea era ayudar a que el colegio en la noche ya no era colegio de escuela, digamos, si no de formación técnica. Como un FP que hay acá. Entonces, mi tarea era ayudarle a esos chicos de FP, de Formación Profesional a que tuvieran los recursos para pagarse su FP y tuvieran qué comer, además. Entonces, trabajaba como de cuatro de la tarde a diez de la noche en la institución como tal, escuchándolos, haciéndoles visitas en el día, en las mañanas, en sus casas, en sus trabajos; buscando cómo movía sus hojas

de vida. De ahí, luego pasé a un hospital en el área de salud mental. Entonces, eso fue otra perspectiva. Eso me abrió otras líneas de trabajo sin querer queriendo. Tenemos dos agremiaciones, que es el Consejo Nacional de Trabajo Social y la que se encarga de las escuelas de Trabajo Social. Entonces, en el Consejo Nacional me dijeron que si quería trabajar como representante de los gremios en el Ministerio de Salud con perspectiva de Trabajo Social en salud mental. ‘‘Pues, bien. Hagámoslo’’. Y son cosas que, por ejemplo, también hacía de honore. Al ser representante de tu gremio, eso no es un trabajo. No te pagan por eso. Pero, yo decía ‘‘Pero, es que estoy trabajando en lo mí’’. O sea, en lo que me gusta. De verdad que para mí es muy difícil decir no. Entonces, también fue como bonito empezar a que en el día, por ejemplo, trabajaba en el hospital y ya empezar paralelo a trabajar en proyectos con el ministerio. A defender, digamos, nuestra profesión porque no somos psiquiatras, no somos psicólogos, no somos enfermeros. Entonces, qué hace un trabajador social en perspectiva de salud mental viendo a los niños, adolescentes y adultos con patologías mentales. Entonces, qué haces si tú no eres médico, ni recetas fórmulas, pero tampoco eres psicólogo para mirar la personalidad del fulano. Entonces, cómo te mueves en lo comunitario, en lo familiar con los paciente. Y ha sido bonito porque también aprendí que las familias no tienen porqué entender las enfermedades. O sea, todo lo contrario. Yo era quien les explicaba qué eran las enfermedades porque las familias se salían después de la consulta con psiquiatría igual de perdidas que como entraban. ‘‘Es que no sé, el doctor me dijo que la patología de mi hijo, de mi esposo, de mi familiar era un F500, una esquizofrenia...’’. ‘‘¿Su merced entiende qué es esquizofrenia?’’. ‘‘No’’. ‘‘¿Le ha preguntado al psiquiatra?’’. ‘‘No’’. ‘‘Muy bien. Entonces, venga yo le explico. Es que resulta que...’’. Entonces, desde desmenuzarle a la gente las patologías hasta buscarles posibles trabajos o posibles contextos sociales en donde puede ser que no ganen dinero, pero sí que tengan una vida activa aún teniendo la patología. Y, después, de ahí pasé a ser profe de la Universidad. De dos Universidades, una pública y una privada, en

Trabajo Social porque, claro, ya tenía experiencia en diferentes campos de acción profesional. Entonces, ‘¿te interesa dictar una clase?’’. Empecé con una clase de salud mental y, luego, terminé con prácticas, con proyectos de grado. O sea, renuncié a lo otro y me concentré en dos universidades a dictar para formación en Trabajo Social. Y, como es una carrera profesional, entonces, en una universidad son cuatro años. En otra son cinco. Pero, igual de intensas. Y, entonces, ya mi tema se volvió un poco más académico, más de investigación, más de preparar las clases, más de hablar desde la experiencia en terreno con, a veces, las ideologías que hay en las universidades y con el deber ser, qué no es. Entonces, eso fue como la oportunidad de hacer el click entre la teoría y la práctica. Hablarles desde la teoría, pero contarles mi experiencia. Desde la vida real, qué es lo que pasa. Y ahí duré nueve años... ocho años.

PV: Mucho tiempo. Y entonces, ¿cuál es, igual, como las razones para migrar desde Colombia a España? ¿Fue una decisión de familia? O ¿fue de ‘Bueno, mira, yo tengo esta idea, podríamos venir...’? No sé, ¿cómo fue?

IV: Fue una decisión de familia. De hecho, lo habíamos pensado y, como habíamos tenido la posibilidad de lo de Canadá, Guille decía ‘¿Uy, qué chévere migrar a Canadá!’’. Fue como la idea inicial. Pero, cuando empiezo a buscar un máster, encuentro el de la UJI y yo me enamoré de esa malla curricular. O sea, yo decía ‘¿Uff, qué nota poder trabajar con las Naciones Unidas! ¿Qué nota poder trabajar en los países en términos de construcción de paz, en educación para la paz que es lo que me encanta!’’. Claro, como vengo de un país en donde la Paz hace parte de la cátedra, las Universidades ahora entonces se pelean por quién tiene la cátedra de Paz. Mi hermano trabaja con la Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz porque nuestros discursos en familia han sido frente a la firma del acuerdo, frente a la guerrilla. En un momento, hubo la oportunidad cuando la guerrilla se desmovilizó a visitar con otros profesionales unos campos. Se llamaron ‘territorios transitorios’ para que los guerrilleros se desmovilizaran, incluso antes de que

entregaran las armas. Y era como de ciudadano de tú a tú, el guerrillero diciéndonos “Nos dejaron este pedazo de potrero que no tiene agua, que no tiene luz y aquí tenemos niños”. Aunque ante la gente no existan menores de edad, claramente que sí había. Y aquí hay personas que, como cualquier ser humano, tiene unas necesidades básicas. Entonces, yo también decía, después de esa experiencia de conocer la otra parte de la moneda, que también fueron campesinos, que también fueron personas víctimas de este conflicto horroroso, digo ¿por qué, de verdad, no hablamos de paz desde estas dos partes y no desde la de un gobierno que dice que ha hecho maravillas? Pero, tampoco es del otro lado creyendo que la guerrilla no hizo nada porque hay que asumir la responsabilidad de lo que hizo. De todo lo que hizo. Entonces, yo decía “A mí el de paz me gusta muchísimo”. Entonces, Guille decía “Pero, y Castellón... ¿dónde queda Castellón?”. Y yo “Pues, sé que queda en Valencia. Es lo único que sé, que es de parte de la Comunidad Valenciana”. Y, entonces, empezamos como a mirar. Decíamos “Bueno, esto va a ser una cosa así. Si el visado tuyo sale y, a partir del tuyo, sale el nuestro, nos vamos”.

PV: ¿El de Guille?

IV: Ajá. Y el de las niñas, que dependía del mío. Bueno, dependía del Consulado que nos dieran las visas. Entonces, decíamos “Uy, un máster de dos años... Pero, con más veras porque un máster de un año para hacer todo un cambio con familia. No, pues, hagámoslo bien y hagámoslo a dos años”. Y fue analizar qué perdíamos. Perdíamos el trabajo. Juepucha, es muy importante. Pero, entonces, Guille ya venía con un emprendimiento. Y es que él, paralelo a ser empleado, ha tenido su empresa de software. Entonces, dijo “Bueno, pues, si a mí me llegan a echar, no me permiten la virtualidad, yo potencio mi empresa aquí y la hacemos”. Yo lo hablé en la Universidad. La Universidad la Salle, con quien trabajaba. Les dije “Pasa esto y fui admitida, ¿qué hago?”. “Profe, váyase. Váyase y, por lo menos, este semestre sigue virtual”.

Porque como la pandemia yo no paré de trabajar porque todas mis clases fueron virtuales, entonces ‘‘Profé, hágale’’. A Guille sí le dijeron no, ‘‘No puedes seguir’’ y eso que trabajaba con una empresa francesa. Con Acsa. Pero, ellos le dijeron ‘‘No, es imposible’’. Entonces, dijimos como ‘‘No...’’. Luego, llegaron las visas de todos y entonces dijimos ‘‘Sí’’. O sea, ¿por qué no darles esta oportunidad a las niñas? Entonces dijimos ‘‘Sí. O todos o ninguno’’. Eso sí, yo lo tenía clarísimo. Yo haber pasado a la universidad, maravilloso. Pero, yo sola no me voy. Yo no voy a dejar a mis hijas, por muy máster bonito que sea, dos años. Olvídate. Ni a mi esposo que amo y adoro. Entonces, dijimos ‘‘Bueno, esperemos’’. Cuando, tin, tin, sí, los cuatro. Y nosotros ‘‘Perfecto, nos vamos’’. Y, también, fue muy bonito porque en términos operativos todo se fue dando tan fácil. Amigos que no tenían cosas ‘‘Les compramos las cosas de las niñas. Les compramos las cosas de la cocina. Les compramos no sé qué...’’. Y nosotros ‘‘Pero, si ni sé si lo voy a vender’’. Pero, ‘‘Se los compramos’’. Bueno. El carro nos lo compró unos amigos que ni siquiera tienen licencia para conducir. Nos lo compraron. Y nosotros ‘‘¿Qué es esto? ¿Cómo se está dando la cosa tan fácil?’’. Para la familia, especialmente, de Guille no fue tan fácil. Pero, digamos, mi mamá me dijo una frase que no la olvidaré nunca en la vida y dijo ‘‘Yo no te voy a quitar algo que no te puedo dar’’. Y me acuerdo que estábamos en la finca del pueblo en la que te digo, en la que alquilaron, cuando le dije ‘‘Mami, pasa esto y si nos sale la visa, pues no iríamos para España’’. Dijo ‘‘Hija, me dolerá en el alma’’ y lloró. ‘‘Pero, yo no te voy a quitar algo que no te puedo dar. Dale. Y si tú ves que ese es un mejor lugar para las niñas, dale’’. Y al principio le dio depresión, fue durísimo. Pues, no llevamos aún ni un año, pero ya casi. Pero, luego, escuchar a las niñas bien. Contarte un poco lo que pasó anoche y que las niñas le digan a las abuelitas ‘‘Abuelita, es que hemos salido con mi mamá o con mi papá a la una de la mañana a caminar a Castellón porque hemos salido a comer a un lado y para llegar a la casa nos gastamos veinte minutos caminando. Y, abuelita, pues bien. Y no hay ladrones. Y no nos roban. No tenemos que estar pendiente del celular. Y no tenemos

que estar pendiente de la billetera”. Pues, eso, en términos de seguridad mi mamá decía “Increíble”. Que ellas vieron que cogiendo el coche podíamos llegar de España a Francia fue “Niñas esto ya es Francia”. “¿¡Qué!?”. “Esto es Francia, ¿lo pueden creer?”. Porque tenemos unos amigos en Cataluña y entonces digo “Es que Francia es aquí no más”. Y como no, que fueron dos horas. Y entonces, uno dice “Esto es Francia, niñas. Miren. Sí ven que ya hablan francés. Sí ven que todo está en francés”. Ellas estaban que no la creía. “Hemos cambiado de país de un día en un día, mami”. Claro que les ha dado duro. Ellas nos dijeron “¿No habrá posibilidad mami de que el vecino de España no sea Francia, si no Colombia?”. Y yo “¿Por qué?”. “Porque si Colombia fuera el vecino de España veríamos a los abuelitos más seguida. Estaríamos con los amigos más seguido”. No tendrían que volar once horas. No tendrían que pagar tanto dinero.

PV: Al final la parte de migrar es eso. Echas de menos lo de allí. Te gusta lo de aquí porque, bueno, tus hijas se ven súper contentas de estar aquí.

IV: Sí. Y que ya empiezan a tener amigos. Y el tener amigos te ayuda a echar raíces. Pero, luego, es también muy doloroso sacar esas raíces y decir “Se acabó el tiempo. Me tengo que devolver”. Entonces, digamos, que a futuro lo que esperamos es que se nos den las cosas para que legalmente podamos... por ejemplo, que la empresa de Guille pueda estar acá y que yo me pueda vincular con ONGs. Porque la vida laboral no solamente te ayuda a echar raíces, si no a ver la dignidad y la potencialidad del ser humano que eres. Más allá de lo que hayas estudiado. Para mí trabajar es la posibilidad de decir “Soy útil”. A mí no me importa si tengo doctorado, máster, PhD. No. A mí lo que me interesa es que lo que yo estudie, le sirva a la gente. A veces, creo que ni siquiera pienso en qué tanto me sirva a mí, si no en que yo le pueda ayudar a la gente a solucionar sus problemas. Para mí eso es...

PV: Como dar de vuelta a la sociedad.

IV: Exacto. La sociedad me ha dado mucho porque soy hija de lo público. Y, porque cuando escucho acá tantos colombianos con historias tan distintas, yo digo ‘‘Uff’’. Es que en el mismo máster. La historia de Laura no es la misma de Óscar. La de Óscar no es la misma de este muchacho que nos acaba de servir el café. La de él no es igual a la mía. La mía no es la misma que la de Guille. La de Guille no es la misma de las niñas. Entonces, tú dices, aún cuando somos cuatro, tenemos cuatro historias distintas de migración y la hemos vivido muy distinta.

PV: Y aún, dentro de la misma persona, no hay solo una historia. Hay un abanico de historias.

IV: Hay un abanico. Que siento que tenemos un privilegio porque, y lo hablábamos ayer en el Semillero, yo siento que tenemos opciones. Porque al no llegar aquí en condición de asilo por amenaza, como tenemos aquí mucha gente conocida, tú dices, es que la gente no tiene opción. Tú ya no te puedes regresar a tu país en condición de asilo porque es tu vida la que se pone en juego. Entonces, no hay opción. Nosotros sí tenemos una opción y es la libertad de decir ‘‘Okay, nos devolvemos. Nos devolvemos con un capital humano, cultural y social mucho más enriquecido los cuatro’’. Pero, también, contemplar la posibilidad de decir ‘‘Bueno, y ¿qué pasa si nos queremos quedar?’’. Que es la posibilidad. Entonces, tú dices, tener la posibilidad, tener opciones es una cosa que, lamentablemente, la gente no tiene.

PV: Y yo creo que eso es también como la parte, sobre todo en tu caso o para mucha gente... O sea, de eso se trata este trabajo. De ver, vale, cada historia es diferente. Hay gente que tiene estas opciones, gente que le pasa estas cosas, gente que puede tomar estas decisiones... Y al final, es que sí, tú formas parte del sistema, pero cada sistema nos afecta de una manera diferente y cada persona migra de una manera diferente. Tiene una

historia diferente. Entonces, es como qué pena que todo eso, al final, se quede reducido por ‘Ah, ¿vienes de Colombia? Pues tienes que tener esta historia. ¿Vienes de no sé dónde? Ah, pues tienes que tener esta historia’.

IV: Yo te he contado cuando me contaste lo de esta entrevista, por ejemplo, pensaba mucho en los primeros días de clase de las niñas. Porque a nosotros nunca nos dijeron que los colegios se hablaba valenciano. Bueno, más bien, que cada colegio era como medio independiente en eso. Y que justo el colegio que el señor del servidor público que nos tocó no nos lo haya explicado y nos haya mandado a un colegio que es noventa por ciento valenciano, era muy distinto a que nos hubiera dicho que hay colegios que no tienen tan alto nivel de un idioma que en la vida habíamos escuchado. Pero, al mismo tiempo decir, tengo la dicha de que mis hijas se hayan acoplado y que hayan cogido el valenciano muchísimo más rápido que nosotros. Y que ya empiecen a tener amigos acá, amigas acá, pues tú dices, bien. Que no es tan chévere cuando el profesor de una de tus hijas te dice ‘Es que como la mayoría de latinos que vienen aquí tienen un nivel de educación tan baja...’. ¿Qué? Entonces, digo ‘¿Usted ha tenido la posibilidad de salir de Castellón en algún momento en la vida? Con seguridad que no’.

PV: Es algo también muy curioso porque aquí España es un país europeo, pero, yo hablo también desde la experiencia de mi familia, pero por ejemplo, mis padres nunca habían salido de España hasta que yo tenía dieciséis años que fuimos de crucero. O sea, en la vida habían salido de España. O sea, igual hasta habían ido, sobre todo mi padre, Madrid y Barcelona porque mi abuela tiene familia allí. Y mi madre a lo mejor había ido también a Barcelona, o a Cuenca o algún sitio. Y yo lo noto también. Yo soy afortunada. Yo hasta los dieciséis, diecisiete tampoco salí nunca del país comparado con otros nenes del colegio o nenas. Pero, claro, yo lo pienso de yo me estoy enriqueciendo ahora de eso, pero mis padres nunca han tenido nada de eso. Hay muchas cosas que quieras o no... O sea, claro,

luego también depende mucho de la perspectiva con la que viajes y con las miras que tengas y todo. Pero, hay una parte que te estás perdiendo. El tener contacto con otra gente te hace ser más abierto, no sé. Hablar con otra gente.

IV: Pero, ¿tú no sientes que es una falla que ellos no hayan ido? ¿Qué es una lástima que ellos no lo hayan hecho antes hasta que tú lo viviste y viste todo lo enriquecedor que es? Tal cual. Si yo no salgo a este viaje a Canadá, yo creo que nunca me hubiera ilusionado tanto con la necesidad de viajar. Es que ya se vuelve una necesidad. O sea, como que es importante y yo le decía a mi mamá. Y mi mamá “¿Qué va a ser importante? ¿Yo que voy a viajar?”. Mira, es su primer viaje. Estamos a ocho días de que llegue a España y va a ser su primer viaje. Después de haberle dicho “Mami, vamos a México. Vamos a Chile. Vamos a Ecuador que lo tenemos aquí al lado. Vamos a Panamá”. “No, no, no”. Fue que nosotros nos moviéramos “Ah, ahora sí”. Me voy a pegar un viaje de once horas, en vez de haberme pegado tres. Pero, ahora sí tiene ilusión.

PV: Bueno, también el teneros aquí, el decir “Voy a ver a mi hija. Voy a ver a mis nietas”.

IV: Pero, yo creo que a tus papás ya les cambió la perspectiva después de haber hecho el crucero.

PV: Sí, bueno, luego han hecho sus pocos viajes. Pero, también te ayuda a entender eso, pues también el contexto que tiene cada generación. Pues, mis padres no tenían tantos recursos. Entonces, yo lo entiendo y digo, vale, aún así no hemos sido la familia con más recursos, pero yo he tenido la oportunidad. O sea, lo que ha significado para mí y lo que ha significado para ellos el hecho de decir “Oye, mira. Este año vamos a tener vacaciones. Nos vamos a ir los cuatro de crucero”. Entonces, claro, te das cuenta sobre todo cuando eres mayor. Porque cuando te vas, dices de “Ah, pues, yo no me quiero ir con mis padres

de viaje''. Pero, cuando eres mayor te das cuenta de, claro, es que son experiencias diferentes de cómo lo vivo yo. Y, aunque pueda ser una tontería lo de viajar. Yo, por ejemplo, ahora mi madre con eso también tengo muchos problemas porque es como ''Cuando tienes dinero, siempre te quieres ir''. Y yo ''Pues, sí. Yo quiero el dinero para viajar, sobre todo''. Y sé que es un privilegio y por la posición que tengo, pero, o sea, es como lo que tú dices, la necesidad que se te crea de salir, explorar, ver qué hay...

IV: Y sería muy bueno, y ya te lo digo como un consejo personal, que fueras hacia América Latina.

PV: Es mi top. O sea, yo el año que viene espero poder ir ya.

IV: Es que por todo. Por tu personalidad. Por tu juventud. Porque nosotros decimos qué pesar que los europeos... bueno no sé si los españoles, no sé si es que estamos generalizando mucho, pero no sé por qué no les gusta viajar. Y sí, que menos que de aquí para allá. No sé si por los miedos, por los imaginarios. No lo sé...

PV: Sí. Aquí se crean muchos miedos.

IV: Pero, yo le decía a los papás del colegio de las niñas ''Es que ustedes creen que una va caminando en Bogotá o en Colombia y que caen las bombas. O que andamos en taparrabos. O que la coca está regada en el piso. O que el fantasma de Pablo Escobar aún existe. Ahora, no les estoy diciendo que hay zonas a las que nosotros, ni siquiera los mismos colombianos, conocemos porque son peligrosas. Ustedes creen ¿qué hacen los turistas? No se van a meter a la boca del lobo. Pero, eso no significa que no conozcan los países''.

PV: Y aquí, sobre todo eso, hay mucho miedo. De “Ay, si vas a América Latina te van a robar... La droga... Si eres mujer, lo que te puede pasar...”. Lo que tú dices, hay que tener cuidado, pero también en muchos sitios.

IV: Pero, cuando vayas, porque sé que vas a tener la oportunidad de ir, tú vas a decir “Oye, pero esto es igual que otras ciudades”. Incluso, arquitectónicamente, vas a decir “Pues, claro, qué diferencia”. Porque nuestro desarrollo arquitectónico y, bueno, nuestro desarrollo ha sido en los últimos años. Entonces, esto para nosotros arquitectónicamente es muy antiguo. O sea, yo nunca había visto un ascensor que se abriera con...

PV: ¿Con la puerta?

IV: Eso es de la época de mi abuela. Mi mamá dice “Uy, pero yo me acuerdo que eso lo quitaron el año no sé qué...”. Y yo “Pues, imagínate, que aquí son todos así”. Entonces, claro, uno dice hay mucha cosa que yo sé que a los jóvenes les encantaría conocer de América Latina. Y que los miedos de sus padres no pueden ser el tabú para que lo conozcan. Tienes una ventaja, además. Que haber hecho el master con estudiantes de otros países es tener la posibilidad de conocer esos países con ellos mismos.

PV: Sí, yo desde aquí ya noto que he viajado un poco sin haber llegado al destino.

IV: Total. Eso me ha pasado, por ejemplo, con Reney. “Oye, ¿y Filipinas cómo es? Cuéntame”. ¿Qué es ese país? Y, entonces, luego terminamos concluyendo como “Muy seguramente el tuyo se parece al mío”.

PV: Hay un montón de cosas... O sea, yo, por ejemplo, de Filipinas, hasta que conocí a Reney, era ignorante total. Y, luego, hay un montón de cosas que, mira, hablamos un idioma que se parece mucho al español. Los nombres, que muchos son españoles. Y, claro,

luego te pones a analizar las cosas que te cuenta y tenemos muchas cosas en común, aunque estés en la otra parte del mundo. Y nunca te has dado cuenta hasta que te has puesto en contacto con esa persona.

IV: Y que tienes también un privilegio y es que el poder hablar otro idioma va a ser más fácil que te muevas por el mundo.

PV: Eso también es una posición muy privilegiada de hablar, pero, a mí me encantaría migrar. Eso, por ver... He vivido toda mi vida aquí. Entonces, no sé lo que... Sí, tengo arraigo y tengo raíces por una parte, pero es como no sé, ¿y qué más?

IV: Hazlo. ¿A dónde te gustaría migrar?

PV: Sobre todo, a América Latina.

IV: ¡Ay, bienvenida! Y hay tanto por hacer. Tanto.

PV: Pues, nada, si quieres podemos hacer como las últimas preguntas. Las he cogido de, no sé si verás esta asignatura, la de Introducción a Estudios de Paz y Conflictos, que nosotros la hicimos en inglés con Orla y ella nos enseñó mucho lo que son técnicas de mapas empáticos. Sobre todo, para tratar el nivel más personal de la persona y, luego, como lo puedes... Es una técnica muy bonita porque puedes aplicar como lo personal luego viéndolo con los contextos sociales y todo, pero empezando desde la persona. Entonces, yo también he cogido como unas... hay muchas preguntas como “¿Qué es lo que ves, a nivel de tú como persona, este contexto? ¿Qué es lo que sientes? ¿Qué es lo que piensas?”. Entonces, adaptándolo un poco a este proceso de todo lo que son historias personales y todo eso, pues ver, como un poco cómo ha sido para ti y también cerrarlo. Porque es importante, una vez que se abre esto, pues luego cerrarlo un poco. ¿Qué es lo

que consideras tú que todas estas experiencias, todo este camino que has recorrido, diferentes sitios de Colombia, luego aquí, Vancouver...? ¿Cómo te han definido a ti como persona? No sé, ¿cuál es el valor que le das a todo este camino que has recorrido?

IV: Uy, yo creo que el mayor valor que yo le sigo dando es la fuerza femenina. O sea, yo le agradezco a mi abuela las decisiones que tomó. Le agradezco a mi mamá las decisiones que tomó porque fueron decisiones de migrar internamente muy importantes. Pero, que nos cambió la vida a las generaciones siguientes. Valoro su fuerza, su verraquera, su empuje por decir “Estoy sola”. Las dos solas. En años distintos, en contextos rurales y urbanos distintos. Pero, dijeron “Solas, vamos y vamos con todas”. A contextos que no conocían, a lugares inexplorados, pero que lo hicieron. Y yo siento que tanto consciente, como inconscientemente, afloran en mí en decir hay muchos miedos que yo tengo, pero no de conocer algo nuevo. O sea, yo aún cojo mi bicicleta y me voy. Terminó en pueblos perdidos, que luego me toca poner un google para regresarme a Castellón. Pero, digo “Si yo no hubiera cogido por acá, pues no llego. No hubiera conocido este lugar tan hermoso”. Y no tuviera historias que contarle a mis hijas, si no que tengo historias que contarle incluso a mi mamá y decirle “Mamá, acá tenemos que venir”. Pero, porque creo que lo último que quiero es tener miedo. Entonces, valoro eso.

PV: Al final eso, la parte del miedo es también mucha resiliencia, ¿no?

IV: Sí, total. Yo creo que el miedo, aunque mi mamá es una persona que le teme a muchas cosas, también nos enseñó a que, en términos de tomar decisiones, es peor no tomarlas y acomodarnos. Acomodarnos es lo más fácil. Que llegará pronto en algún momento. No sé si a los noventa. No sé... Pero a los treinta y nueve todavía no siento la necesidad de no soñar con mover.

PV: Y, ¿cómo es la Iraca de hoy? ¿Cómo te definirías a ti misma? ¿Los valores, todo lo que te ha enseñado este camino?

IV: Uff, digamos que me lo ha resaltado también mucho Guille, que me agradeció un montón y al principio me decía eso y yo decía “No me digas eso porque me molesta”. Y luego lo fui entendiendo y es que él me dice “Estamos aquí gracias a ti. O sea, esto no lo hubiéramos vivido si tú no hubieras dicho “Bueno, hagámosle”. Si tú no hubieras dicho, ¿cómo se nos va a ocurrir viajar a los cuatro? No estaríamos acá”. Entonces, luego, ya no me pongo brava porque digo la Iraca de estos treinta y nueve se siente muy orgullosa de tener todavía ilusión por movernos, de creer en la capacidad de dos niñas de nueve y seis años, de creer en la capacidad de innovación y de sorpresa de Guille. Todavía me creo en la posibilidad de descubrir otras cosas. O sea, la vida me hace ilusión todavía. Entonces, creo que la Iraca de hoy, particularmente, todavía está enamorada de la vida. Todavía está enamorada de las cosas que no conoce. Y que todavía tiene las energías para decir “Vamos a hacerle. Vamos a descubrir. Vamos a romper fronteras”. Porque creo en que, desde mi profesión como desde lo que he visto en Colombia, uno de los peores problemas que tiene la humanidad es ponernos fronteras. Porque internamente lo vivimos en Colombia. Tenemos muchas fronteras. Visibles. Invisibles. Y lo último que quiero es ponerme una frontera. Quiero demostrarme a mí misma y, en segundo grado a mi familia, en que las fronteras se pueden romper. Pero, si tú no lo intentas, vas a seguir creyendo que la frontera no te va a dejar cruzar. Y yo en el seminario con Reney decía “Mi exposición se va a llamar *Menos muros y más puentes* porque, de verdad yo creo que si construimos más puentes, podemos abrirles el espacio a otros”. O sea, tú empieza a viajar Paulis. Tú empieza a viajar y te vas a dar cuenta que tus generaciones futuras, indistintamente si decides o no ser mamá, las generaciones futuras de todo tu linaje familiar se van a dar cuenta que tuvieron una prima, que tuvieron una tía o que tuvieron una mamá, lo que quieras ser, que tomó unas decisiones distintas. Yo creo que la Iraca de hoy le está abriendo el paso a las

posibilidades de las generaciones futuras. Y que, por lo menos, no siento que la edad sea un problema. Yo de verdad que me siento con un espíritu muy joven. Que todavía, en serio, que digo lo que te decía ahorita, o sea, ‘‘Paulis, dale. Dale’’. Lo puedes hacer. Pero, si lo quieres hacer.

PV: Yo lo quiero hacer.

IV: Entonces lo vas a lograr con seguridad.

PV: Y, bueno, ya la última pregunta. Es un poco más por el proceso en sí de contar la historia porque... O sea ya me he dado cuenta haciendo más proyectos de este tipo, no para todo el mundo es fácil hablar de su historia personal. Incluso, hay gente que decide no participar en este tipo de proyectos porque no se ve preparada para hablar de esto. Pueden ser momentos duros. Igual está en una fase en la que igual aún no han procesado, no han sanado. Entonces, ¿cómo ha sido el proceso para ti de contar tu historia personal? Y, ¿cómo lo has vivido este ratito?

IV: ¡Qué buena pregunta! Porque ha sido un ejercicio de interés personal entender de dónde vengo. Y ha sido un interés personal en pro de mi salud mental y en pro de entender que tengo unos orígenes que vienen de diferentes partes del país y que tuvieron consecuencias en las generaciones inmediatas a las mías. Me refiero a mi mamá, mi papá y mis tíos, respectivamente. Y a mis abuelos, inmediatamente. Entonces, ha sido un interés por buscar, por ejemplo, constelaciones familiares. Entonces, ya he constelado. Ya me han constelado. He tenido sesiones con psicólogas y psiquiatras que tienen unas líneas más de entender el linaje familiar y sus efectos en estas generaciones. Entonces, ha sido como llorar en su momento porqué pasó lo que pasó, pero también agradecer lo vivido y comprender, pues, que yo no tengo porqué avergonzarme por cosas que yo no hice. Que yo no haya conocido al que podría yo decir es un

desgraciado infeliz, que fue el papá de mi papá. Que como lo deja botado y ni siquiera le da la cara. Que eso no fue culpa mía. Y que lo reconozco como consanguineamente el que debió haber sido mi abuelo, pero que, social y familiarmente no es mi figura de abuelo, si no la persona que conocí de abuelo. Ha sido reconocer que, digamos, poder entender muchos miedos de mi mamá. Porque, digo, cuando conocí su historia, la guerrilla, los abusos, las violaciones... yo digo, esto no debió haber pasado. Pero, tampoco fue culpa mía. Y, con todo el dolor y lo que lloré en su momento en esas sesiones terapéuticas, más que terapia me parecía rico empezar a entender que lo que pasó yo no lo generé. Y no fue culpa mía. Entonces, que no tengo porqué culpabilizarme por cosas que pasaron en mis familiares anteriores. Pero, que tampoco negarlo va a ayudarme mucho. Y, que en algún momento se lo tendré que contar a mis hijas. Muy seguramente. Pero, todavía no están en edad de comprender todos los rollos ni que les interese. Pero, que se las tendré que contar, sí. Porque para mí es un ejercicio sanador que todas las familias, todos los seres humanos deberían tener. Pero, ha sido más como un ejercicio que no solamente ha sido mío, sino de mis hermanos también. De manera independiente cada uno llega a donde alguna psicóloga así como medio alternativa, medio salida del consultorio tradicional. Y todos terminamos como yendo allá o conociendo esa perspectiva porque, finalmente, nos hemos dado cuenta que tenemos algunos rasgos de personalidad o algunas cosas, incluso, físicas que tú dices "Pero, ¿yo por qué tengo esto si es que...?". Entonces, tú dices, "Bueno, es que pasó producto de...". ¿Entiendes? Por ejemplo, tengo una tía que toda su infancia fue trágica, fue durísima, fue terrible y entender que era adoptada... Tú dices "Juepucha, es que esto empieza a cambiar". Porque nos hemos mezclado unos con otros y en esas mezclas también ha habido mucho amor, pero también ha habido mucho sufrimiento. Entonces, no sé... Por eso creo que a estas alturas te puedo hablar con tranquilidad. Que se me agua el ojo, que se me pone un nudo en la garganta nomás de acordarme todo lo que vivieron y muchas cosas que quizás ni conozco. Y que lo lamento mucho por ellos, en especial por las mujeres. Pero,

que también digo no me quedo con eso, si no que me quedo con la valentía y la fuerza que muchas han demostrado. Muchas de mi familia. Entonces, creo que por eso te puedo decir “Me encanta”. Me encanta hablar de mí. Me encanta sentir que soy tan imperfecta como la paz. Que soy tan imperfecta como cualquier otro ser humano. Pero, que creo que uno de los consejos, además de viajar, que le daría a la gente es la necesidad de buscar, llámese, terapia. Llámese, ayuda espiritual. Llámese, ayuda psicológica, psiquiátrica, no sé... que les ayude a cuidar su salud mental. Todos los seres humanos lo deberíamos hacer. Y ahí se vincula mucho el poder comprender de dónde vienes. Y valorar. Y dejar ir muchas cosas que ya no puedes cambiar. Entonces, por eso creo que me gusta.

PV: O sea, ¿valoras como una buena experiencia el poder contar tu...?

IV: Sí. Lo valoro porque ya pasé por un ejercicio personal de esos y porque siento que constantemente lo busco. Seguir fortaleciendo mis antecesores familiares. Agradecerles por lo que hicieron. Perdonarlos sin que ellos, incluso, lo sepan de muchas cosas que me parece que hicieron muy mal. O que generaron dolor en otros. Y seguir. Pero, como valoro el hecho de querer dedicar tiempo a conocer a la familia que hay detrás mío. Por eso.

PV: Súper bonito. Bueno, ya yo creo que más que suficiente. Muchas gracias Iraca.