

Gloria Sosa: [00:00:00](#) So thank you so much Yadira, for giving the time to talk to you and, uh, we'll get started. So can you please share with me your preferred gender pronouns and during what years you were Cal State LA?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:00:13](#) Um, yes. So she, her, ella.

Gloria Sosa: [00:00:18](#) And during what years were you at Cal State LA?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:00:20](#) So I was at Cal State LA 2001 to 2007. I did my bachelor's, uh, in social work. I graduated in 2003 and then I took a year off and I came back and did my master's. Um. And, I was there from 2000, I think, uh, 2004. And I was supposed to graduate in 2006. I did. I did walk, um, but mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I didn't finish till 2007.

Gloria Sosa: [00:01:13](#) Okay. And did you commence an undergraduate, um, as a transfer student or from high school? No, I was a transfer student. Okay. Um, yeah, I graduated from high school and then I went to Trade Tech, uh, where I was there, there for almost three years. And the reason for that is because, um, I mean, I was undocumented.

Gloria Sosa: [00:01:35](#) Right.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:01:35](#) And I really did not know how to maneuver, or do you know the whole process?

Gloria Sosa: [00:01:41](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:01:43](#) When I graduated from high school, this, this was back in 97.

Gloria Sosa: [00:01:48](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:01:48](#) And so when I graduated, we still did not have Assembly Bill 540.

Gloria Sosa: [00:01:53](#) Right.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:01:53](#) We did not have D.A.C.A. We didn't have any of that. Um, and so of course, everybody's pushing you to apply to colleges.

Gloria Sosa: [00:02:03](#) Right.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:02:03](#) And to do everything. And for me, I knew I was undocumented.

Gloria Sosa: [00:02:09](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:02:09](#) But I didn't really knew what that meant. And it wasn't until my senior year where people started talking about college.

Gloria Sosa: [00:02:17](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:02:17](#) And I know that I did want to go to college. I wanted to go to UC Santa Cruz.

Gloria Sosa: [00:02:22](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:02:22](#) And I, um, it wasn't until then that I found out the meaning of what being undocumented was, because I went to see the college counselor and basically right away she told me, oh, um, you can't apply for college. There's nothing that we can do for you. And that was it. I walked out of, uh, the college, the, what is it, the college office.

Gloria Sosa: [00:02:49](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:02:49](#) And I was just, uh, really disappointed.

Gloria Sosa: [00:02:52](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:02:53](#) Um, I had a teacher who was, uh, one of the electives, wood shop. And uh, he basically was the one that, uh, pushed me to continue. And I told him my situation and he basically said, well, there is a way. Um, and you know, I was surprised, to be honest, because, uh, hay un señor mayor Caucasian.

Gloria Sosa: [00:03:20](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative> mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:03:20](#) And he basically told me that he knew someone at the office at Trade Tech and that I could come in under the Leticia A law because I was not 18 yet. And, um, cuz I graduated at 17, my birthday's not until November.

Gloria Sosa: [00:03:43](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:03:43](#) And so apparently we could qualify under our parents, uh, if they were legal or in the process. And so that was the case, and that's how we, we, my twin and I got into trade tech.

Gloria Sosa: [00:03:57](#) Oh, okay. So you were a twin?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:03:59](#) Yes. <laugh>.

Gloria Sosa: [00:04:00](#) <laugh>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:04:01](#) Yes.

Gloria Sosa: [00:04:02](#) Okay. So, um, beautiful. Let me back track a little to, um, to you, to your family background. Where you're from. Where did you grow up? When you got here?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:04:15](#) <laugh>? Um, so I, I always say I'm from Nayarit, um, but my birth certificate says Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:04:28](#) I was only born there.

Gloria Sosa: [00:04:30](#) Uh, okay. <laugh>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:04:31](#) I was only born there. Uh, again, I am a twin. And back in 1979, which is my year, um, you know, uh, my mom is from Nayarit, Las Varas, Nayarit. Um, and so she needed to be rushed to a bigger hospital because she was carrying twins and there was a bit of danger there.

Gloria Sosa: [00:04:56](#) Mm-hmm.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:04:56](#) And so she got rushed to Puerto Vallarta, and that's where she had us. And, uh, then we came back to <laugh> Nayarit.

Gloria Sosa: [00:05:06](#) Okay.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:05:06](#) So that's, that's pretty much all I know, Nayarit. Um, and so I was there till the age of 10, um, almost 10. And then I was brought here to the U.S.

Gloria Sosa: [00:05:18](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:05:20](#) Um, my parents separated a year after my twin and I were born.

Gloria Sosa: [00:05:25](#) Okay.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:05:26](#) Um, and so my mom had to leave us under the care of my grandparents, um, maternal grandparents, and, uh, while she went to Puerto Vallarta to work.

Gloria Sosa: [00:05:37](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

Yadira Ramirez: [00:05:39](#) Um, and we will see her according, right. According to them, we will see her every other weekend because she was, uh, busy working. Um, and then when we were five years old, um, I think she, well, I don't remember anything, but when, when we were

five, she decided to come to the U.S. And she left us with, uh, our grandparents. '.

- Gloria Sosa: [00:06:03](#) Mm-hmm.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:06:03](#) And so we were there for another almost, almost five years. Another five years. So, do I have a recollection of my mother? Not really. Mm-hmm. My parents, uh, to me were always my, my grandparents. Right. Um, my grandpa ended up dying in 2009, but to me he was mi papa, mi apa.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:06:26](#) Right? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:06:26](#) And my grandma, I just went to visit her. She just turned 90.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:06:31](#) Oh my God.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:06:31](#) And to, to me, she's my ama!
- Gloria Sosa: [00:06:35](#) Right! Yeah.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:06:35](#) She's my ama, yes. So, yep. That's where I'm from. And I came to the US again, uh, July, 1989, I think.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:06:49](#) July 28th, 1989. And, uh, we didn't know we were coming. Um, you know, so I have an aunt.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:07:02](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:07:02](#) Uh, that went to visit us. Uh, went to visit my grandma.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:07:07](#) In Nayarit?
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:07:08](#) In Nayarit, yes. And my grandma, uh, at the time, my grandparents at that time, they had, uh, three of their kids still living at home. Um, and my grandparents had 10 kids, uh, 11, but one of them was killed. Um, so they had, um, three still kids that they were raising, and then they had five grandchildren.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:07:33](#) Mm-hmm.<Affirmative>, and they were raising as well?
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:07:35](#) That they were raising as well. And so, uh, it was five of us and, uh, two were from this aunt that came to visit. Um, and then my mom two, and then another aunt who had one more child there.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:07:49](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:07:49](#) And so my aunt came and she came with the purpose of taking her kids.

Gloria Sosa: [00:07:55](#) Oh, okay.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:07:56](#) Uh, with her.

Gloria Sosa: [00:07:57](#) She was living at the U.S.? Your aunt?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:07:58](#) Yes!

Gloria Sosa: [00:07:58](#) Okay.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:07:59](#) Yeah. And so she went to pick up her kids.

Gloria Sosa: [00:08:01](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:08:02](#) And to bring them here. And not until like the last day that they tell us that we were also coming.

Gloria Sosa: [00:08:09](#) Oh, okay.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:08:10](#) And so we were, we were happy, we were shocked. We, I mean, there were so many emotions. I mean, finally I was gonna be able to see my mom. Um, so I was, I was really excited. Um, and so we traveled by bus all the way to Tijuana, and that took a couple of days and it was really tough. Really tough. And, uh, <laugh>, I don't even know. But, um, so that we wouldn't get dizzy. Right.

Gloria Sosa: [00:08:45](#) Uhhuh.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:08:45](#) Nos dieron a little bit of gasoline. <Laugh> <laugh>

Gloria Sosa: [00:08:50](#) Okay.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:08:51](#) So that, that could help us with any upset stomach or anything. I don't know if it worked. But the thing is, we never got dizzy. <Laugh>

Gloria Sosa: [00:08:59](#) Ok. If that happened, a few...

Yadira Ramirez: [00:09:02](#) <laugh> Uh, we never got dizzy.

Gloria Sosa: [00:09:04](#) Okay, it worked.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:09:05](#) So we made it to, we made it to Tijuana. And from there, um, everything is just really confusing to be honest. From there, I remember that my aunt left, she left us with uh un señor. Um, ese señor met with somebody else. Um, and next thing we know, we were in a car.

Gloria Sosa: [00:09:32](#) Well, the children were leaving.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:09:34](#) Yeah. So it was the four of us that came with them. And they had other people, I don't know how we all fit in that car, <laugh>, but, uh, my cousin, my male cousin el lo pusieron en la **cajuela**.

Gloria Sosa: [00:09:49](#) Were they around your age or younger?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:09:51](#) Uh, my cousins are at least three. My, my male cousin, he's three years older, and my female cousin, she is two years older.

Gloria Sosa: [00:10:01](#) Is that older?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:10:01](#) Yeah. So around the same age.

Gloria Sosa: [00:10:02](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:10:03](#) Yeah. And my cousin was in **cahuella** with somebody else, and then they put two of us under the seat. And then my sister and I, and somebody else was sitting on, you know, on the regular sofa and or backseat, and then the two people in front. And we just drove for a long time. And next thing I know, it got dark and we stopped by at a house.

Gloria Sosa: [00:10:31](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:10:31](#) I, I don't know, I don't remember where, but it was a house and there were a lot of people there.

Gloria Sosa: [00:10:37](#) Mm-hmm.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:10:37](#) And they gave us food and.

Gloria Sosa: [00:10:40](#) Okay.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:10:40](#) I, I fell in love with hotdogs there. <laugh>

Gloria Sosa: [00:10:43](#) That was your first encounter with hotdogs?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:10:45](#) Yeah, that was my first encounter with hot dogs, and they ran out of ketchup.

Gloria Sosa: [00:10:50](#) Oh, no.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:10:50](#) So I had to eat it with mustard. And so that's the way I eat my hot dogs with mustard. Okay. I don't really like the ketchup. No. And then from there, they told us to, I remember they told us to, uh, rest.

Gloria Sosa: [00:11:04](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:11:06](#) Um, they told us to get dressed and to make sure that we wore everything in black.

Gloria Sosa: [00:11:11](#) mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:11:11](#) And in the middle of the night, um, all they just said was keep running. We got out of the house and it was to run and run and run and run. And I didn't even know what we were doing, you know?

Gloria Sosa: [00:11:24](#) Right.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:11:24](#) I didn't even know what we were doing. And I just remember running for a long time and being really tired and I fell and my sister was, you know, helping me to get up and, you know, and I got to the point where I was crying, you know, I was crying because I was so tired, so exhausted.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:11:45](#) And I don't even know what we were doing. Um, I don't think there was any explanation as to what we were going to do. We were just dropped off and that was it. Um, next thing I know, you know, it was, uh, morning time and we had run for a long time and a car came, picked us up and, you know, the person that was there started talking to us and saying how, you know, he knew my mom and my aunt and, you know, he.

Gloria Sosa: [00:12:17](#) mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:12:17](#) He just dropped us off at my mom's house. And that was it.

Gloria Sosa: [00:12:22](#) So you were running through the night and just next thing you know, you're with your mom?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:12:26](#) Yeah, yeah. And that was it. I was like I don't even know what happened. What we did. Nothing. But, that how we came here.

Gloria Sosa: [00:12:26](#) Very interesting.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:12:41](#) Would I do that to my kids? No way!

Gloria Sosa: [00:12:45](#) <laugh>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:12:45](#) No way. You know, just leaving them like that with strangers.

Gloria Sosa: [00:12:50](#) Yes.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:12:50](#) No, I, I will never do that. I mean, I myself have a 10 year old and an 8 year old, so no, no. I don't know what my mom and my aunt was thinking, to be honest, <laugh>. But I know that I'm not the only one. I know that there's a lot of kids and that's how they do it.

Gloria Sosa: [00:13:07](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:13:08](#) And we were lucky that, you know, we won help. We weren't held back that back. And that no immigration didn't, you know, get us or anything cuz it was just, uh, we were, I remember being at that house only, you know, that afternoon that we, that we got there and midnight. It was time to run.

Gloria Sosa: [00:13:28](#) Yes. It is a story of many, many of us. Yeah. Many children. I have gone through that.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:13:33](#) Yeah.

Gloria Sosa: [00:13:34](#) Yes. And I, I imagine the parents have really big motives for, you know, putting their children through that.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:13:41](#) That. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I'm glad that, you know, we had.

Gloria Sosa: [00:13:45](#) Uh, you made it safe.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:13:47](#) Yeah. We made it safe. And overall our experience was, uh.

Gloria Sosa: [00:13:50](#) Okay.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:13:51](#) Yeah.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:13:52](#) Okay.

Gloria Sosa: [00:13:52](#) I mean, you get to, to try hot dogs.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:13:55](#) Yes. I love hot dogs now.

Gloria Sosa: [00:13:58](#) Good. Well, thank you for sharing that. I know that that's powerful and emo-, it brings some type of feelings and emotions. Thank you.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:14:04](#) Yeah. There's still a lot that I don't remember. Do you know what I mean? I, I just, uh, vaguely remember these things. The running, I remember because I fell and I remember crying and I just didn't know what was going on. And the house that we stayed, I remember because of the hot dogs, <laugh>, <laugh>, um, you know, um, so yeah. So I, I, no, I, I like, I wish I, I could know more, but that's all I really remember.

Gloria Sosa: [00:14:30](#) Do you think it have to do with the detachment, the kind of the detachment the situation because you didn't know what was going on?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:14:37](#) I think part of it. Yeah. Yeah. Not, not knowing exactly what we were doing.

Gloria Sosa: [00:14:42](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:14:42](#) Or why we were doing it. You know, all my aunt said was we're leaving tomorrow and, you know, you're gonna get to live with your mom. And, you know, as a almost 10 year old, I mean, if you have never lived with your mom, it's like, it's a big deal.

Gloria Sosa: [00:14:58](#) Right.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:14:58](#) It's a big deal. And, uh, I, I clearly remember that there was, uh, a neighbor who had brought his wife and she was white. And, um, because my aunt was from here and she had taken her little girl with her, who at that time was like four, and she spoke English. And so I remember going to this neighbor's house and I wanted her to teach me English. So,

Gloria Sosa: [00:15:24](#) In Nayarit? Or once you were.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:15:26](#) No in Nayarit.

Gloria Sosa: [00:15:26](#) Oh, okay.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:15:27](#) Yeah. So I will go and I will sit with her and she spoke a little bit of Spanish. So by the time I came here, I already knew my ABCs!

Gloria Sosa: [00:15:36](#) <laugh> <laugh>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:15:38](#) And the numbers up to 10. So, you know, I, and, and I just did it for fun, you know. Okay. Yeah. I was doing it for fun and to learn something, but yeah.

Gloria Sosa: [00:15:49](#) Interesting, interesting. Okay. So tell me, you got here, you're a 10 year old with your twin, you've never seen your mom. How was the change?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:15:59](#) It was not what I expected. Not what I imagined.

Gloria Sosa: [00:16:08](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:16:08](#) You know, I had created myself, uh, this wonderful life with my mom. Right. You know, who was gonna be loving, protective, who was going to be the best mom ever, even though I didn't know what a mom was, <laugh>. Um, and so I came here. When we came, my mom was, uh, really dry, uh, unaffectionate. Um, she was already married and she had another daughter. Um, we are seven years apart, so she was about three, three years old. And I personally never felt that I, um, I never felt part of a family. I don't know if you can understand, I always felt like, uh, I came in to a family that was already structured. Yes. And so that made it really hard. And so, um, it was, of course, the first couple of days, everything is nice.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:17:13](#) But, um.

Gloria Sosa: [00:17:14](#) Right.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:17:14](#) After that, it was, uh, it was very, very, very sad.

Gloria Sosa: [00:17:20](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:17:21](#) Um, my mom, uh, ended up slapping me on the first week, and I was terrified and my whole, you know, what I had imagined, just, it went down. It was just not what I was expecting. And so my mom actually slapped me because, and I remember I was at the laundromat and my mom, basically, I, to be honest, on the way here, I, when the bus ride to Tijuana.

Gloria Sosa: [00:17:58](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:17:59](#) I kept on asking myself, should I call her, by her first name? Should I call her mom, you know, mama, what would I call her? And so I had made my mind that I was gonna call her mom. But as the days went by and I didn't get that affection, that

connection, um, that day at the laundromat, I decided to call her by her first name.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:18:22](#) And so she slapped me and she told me, don't forget, I'm your mother, you need to call me mama.

Gloria Sosa: [00:18:31](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:18:32](#) And, uh, it was, uh, it was a hard awakening. Um, once I knew English, you know, and I learned how to say mom, I started using mom to talk to her. And I will say, mom, mom, because to me that created a distance.

Gloria Sosa: [00:18:55](#) Right.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:18:56](#) I wasn't really saying, mama, I was saying it, it didn't carry so much, uh, uh, power or endear, endearment. It was just mom.

Gloria Sosa: [00:19:07](#) Right.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:19:07](#) And that's what I, that's how I addressed her by mom and my ama. My mama is my grandma.

Gloria Sosa: [00:19:18](#) Okay. Yes. They used to call mom, your mom here.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:19:22](#) Yeah. You know, I, I do. Sometimes I call her, hey mom, you know, or ama you know, I, I I will say, mom, I'm learning more to say, you know, ama, but for the most part is mom. And it's very quick to the point that she won't notice it that much. You know what I mean? So if I call her, and then I'll go on with whatever I need to say.

Gloria Sosa: [00:19:48](#) Interesting. So that family environment was difficult, challenging to adjust to, right? Yeah. But you had your twin with you?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:19:55](#) I had my twin, uh, but it was, uh, how can I say this? Um, in Mexico, we were, we were there together. I mean, we, uh, we slept together. I mean, my grandparents were very poor, so, um, all the kids slept in la sala, or whatever it was called, la sala mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So you can imagine from one wall to the other, it was the whole kids.

Gloria Sosa: [00:20:24](#) Row of children.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:20:24](#) And my mom, my sister and I were, you know, we slept, uh, next to each other. And that was the only time that we got

affection because we will cuddle with each other. You know, we will get that warmth that we wanted from each other. But, um, my sister had, uh, issues with hearing.

- Gloria Sosa: [00:20:47](#) Mm-hmm.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:20:47](#) And so she was always set back educa, uh, academically. And so, um, in my town, what they will do, cuz there were so many kids, they.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:20:56](#) Right.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:20:56](#) Had a morning session and an afternoon session, and I went in the morning session and my sister went in the afternoon session.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:21:05](#) So there was hardly any interaction. And to be honest, uh, era una niña **vaga**, curiosa! You know? And I will leave the house at seven, and I, you wouldn't see me coming back home till probably eight, nine o'clock.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:21:24](#) Oh, wow.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:21:25](#) Where was I, I was visiting neighbors, friends. I was walking around the whole town, um, playing around with the kids.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:21:34](#) Mm-hmm.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:21:34](#) I mean, we played so much outside, you know, la pega la tray , a las escondidas, I mean, so many things that we did that when I came here.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:21:45](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:21:45](#) There was none of that.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:21:47](#) Right, right.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:21:49](#) None of that. It was all just being locked up.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:21:52](#) Right. <laugh>. Yes.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:21:53](#) And I got depressed. I got depressed, um, not only because of the big change.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:22:00](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:22:01](#) I was also upset because the kids had told me that las calles eran de oro. <Laugh>

Gloria Sosa: [00:22:11](#) The kids back in Nayarit?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:22:13](#) The, the streets were made outta gold. That, you know, everything was so fancy and, and everything. And it was just like, it was a lie.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:22:23](#) So I was disappointed in that sense. And, um, and, and all of that. So it was just, it just made it really, really tough. Um, and so I became depressed and I started school and, uh, gosh, school was another thing in Mexico. I wouldn't say that I was a good student <laugh> in Mexico. I was, uh, si me pegaron los maestros, si me pusieron orejas de buro you know, si me regañaron mucho, I was very disorganized. I never brought in my homework, but there was no one really there.

Gloria Sosa: [00:23:03](#) To push.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:23:03](#) You know, to push me to tell me that I needed to do these things. And so, um, I would say I was like a c c student, you know? Mm-hmm. And I was okay with that, and everybody was okay with that. Um, and in coming here, um, our first school was, uh, uh, it was, so my parents lived in Long Beach. My mom lived in Long Beach with her husband.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:23:30](#) And, uh, from Long Beach, we were, we came late to the, to the school. Right. And so the only school that was open was in Lakewood.

Gloria Sosa: [00:23:41](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:23:41](#) So we will have to be, um, bused, bused to, uh, Lakewood. And we went to a school where it was only white people.

Gloria Sosa: [00:23:51](#) Right. <laugh> to say, Lakewood is all white at this time.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:23:54](#) Yeah. It was only white. And they, I remember specifically.

Gloria Sosa: [00:23:59](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:23:59](#) They had two or three classes that were supposed to be ESL. Okay. And that's where they placed us, the teacher and the student aide, or the aide.

Gloria Sosa: [00:24:10](#) Uhhuh. <Affirmative>. Uhhuh <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:24:11](#) Were white. And they did not speak Spanish.

Gloria Sosa: [00:24:14](#) Oh. Of course.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:24:15](#) And everyone in the class, we were a mix between Cambodian.

Gloria Sosa: [00:24:20](#) Mm-hmm. Hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:24:20](#) Between, I remember there was two girls that were from Brazil.

Gloria Sosa: [00:24:25](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:24:25](#) Um, you know, we were, it was just a mix of, of different ethnicities, different races.

Gloria Sosa: [00:24:31](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:24:31](#) But at the end, we couldn't really communicate! <Laugh>

Gloria Sosa: [00:24:36](#) Because they were so different.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:24:37](#) Yes. You know, it was hard to communicate with them at the same time. And those that, um, you know, the other Latinos or the other students that spoke my language, I mean, I couldn't get them to help me to communicate with the teacher. So I don't know if it was on anxiety or what it was.

Gloria Sosa: [00:24:55](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:24:56](#) I cried those six months. We were only at that school for six months, and I cried every day. Every day I cried. And I, I guess to cope, I needed to go use the restroom and I will cry because the teacher wouldn't let me go to the restroom. And again, it was that communication. And so I will ask other kids how to say it, but they wouldn't know either, <laugh>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:25:27](#) So it was just a really tough situation. And once I learned how to say it, then I didn't understand what the teacher meant. So I will ask her, um, can I go to the restroom? And the teacher will reply, yes, you can, but you may not. In, I, I didn't understand what she meant.

Gloria Sosa: [00:25:48](#) Right. And I wait, yes or no, right? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:25:50](#) Uh, I did not understand what she meant. And so I will cry even more and more and more. I remember I peed myself once, and, uh, then after that, I think she knew that I. was serious about

going to the restroom, but she will always tell me the same thing until I learned to say, may I go to the restroom? You know? And it was, uh, it was very tough.

- Gloria Sosa: [00:26:16](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:26:16](#) And we were very different from the other students. You know, my mom, con las medias, con las calcetitas, con las zapatos de charol, con las vestidos ampones, con la trensa, we stood out, <laugh>, we stood out, and once we were there, it was, it was embarrassing at times, you know, to be wearing all of that and to see everybody else so different.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:26:47](#) But I think, um, the rest of the students knew who we were, and, you know mm-hmm. And, and I never got mistreated or anything, but it was just, uh, or if I did, I don't, you know, I couldn't understand mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, but yeah, so I learned English. Uh, basically they will sit us down in a circle, and for the most of the part, most of the day, we will listen to, they will sit us down to listen, and we will listen to, uh, all of the stories and rhymes and, and, and stuff. And they will make us repeat it. And that's how it was. So a lot of Humpty dumpty, <laugh>, little lamb, all of that. It was just constantly constant hearing. Yep.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:27:35](#) And do you remember how long it took you to learn basic English enough to communicate a little better with them, the teachers?
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:27:43](#) Yeah. So I, from there, uh,
- Gloria Sosa: [00:27:47](#) And you came into elementary school?
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:27:49](#) Yes. So we, I finished fifth grade here. Oh, okay. I finished fifth grade. So yes, I do have my, what is it? My diploma from that school. Yes. And then from there, you know, we went to middle school, and I remember that by middle school, you know, I was a little bit better with my English. Mm-hmm. Um, yeah.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:28:13](#) And you went to long beach?
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:28:14](#) Beach, long Beach, still in long beach.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:28:15](#) Do you remember what middle school was that?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:28:16](#) Yeah, that was Franklin Middle School. Franklin Middle School. And my elementary, I think it was Hollenbeck. Let me, let me see. Um, elementary.

Gloria Sosa: [00:28:29](#) And at this time, are you with, with your twin at the same classes or no?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:28:33](#) No. Um, so I was the one that was able to move ahead, and she was always behind.

Gloria Sosa: [00:28:41](#) Okay.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:28:41](#) She, um, they found out that, um, okay, tenia **roto en tímpano** and so they had to do extensive surgery, but that had already played a role in, you know, in her, uh, education. Uh, so, um, that played a, a role. And, um, yeah. So we were always in different classes, never really together.

Gloria Sosa: [00:29:09](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:29:11](#) Um, I was able to get out of E S L in the 10th grade, and she was in ESL throughout the, through throughout high school as well. I don't know what happened, you know, in middle school I did. Okay. Um, so I went from being a C student to becoming an A student. And Okay. I, and I'm not trying to show off, but <laugh>, I think a lot of it was, um, and it's sad to say this, but a lot of it was that I was competing for my mom's love, you know?

Gloria Sosa: [00:29:49](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:29:49](#) And so now it was like, for the first time I was competing with my twin sister, you know, to get that attention. And then she also had, um, the other little girl.

Gloria Sosa: [00:30:01](#) Right.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:30:01](#) So it was just, it was just hard. Maybe I was being selfish, but I wanted my mom for me, you know?

Gloria Sosa: [00:30:07](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:30:07](#) And so I thought that by becoming a good student, you know, that she, she will like me. Right. And, um.

Gloria Sosa: [00:30:16](#) Was that the case?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:30:18](#) No. <laugh>. No. And so it was, uh, how can I say this? Uh, yeah. So it, it wasn't, it wasn't like that, but I did pretty well. I did pretty well in school. I was mainly an A student. Like I said, I, you know, um, my first time that I remember being depressed was actually in the sixth grade. I went and I spoke to a teacher about, you know, um, that I wanted to kill myself, to be honest.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:30:51](#) Um, and I was not even 11 years old, but the shock of just, uh, I guess it was there that I didn't wanna be here. I didn't wanna be here anymore. I, I miss where I was from. You know, we didn't bring anything with us, just la ropa que trajiamos and the cambio that we had to dress all in black. But that was it. Uh, I didn't bring anything. Like no one really asked me. Right. No one asked me. They just said, tomorrow you're leaving. And yes, I was really excited, but once I was here, it was, it was nothing like I had expected or imagined. And so, yeah, that's when I, I said that, and once again, my mother got really upset at me. And, you know, then it was just, things got really bad. And then we experienced some child abuse in terms of her husband towards my twin and I, and then, you know, we were separated and, and then, you know, just my sister left the house to marry because she just wanted to get out.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:32:10](#) And I, myself stayed, um, longer till 26. And it was because my mom had another child. And, you know, I helped to raise her. And, uh, the relationship with my mom and I is, uh, it's not strong.

Gloria Sosa: [00:32:28](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:32:28](#) It's not a good one. Um, I know she's there.

Gloria Sosa: [00:32:33](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:32:33](#) And I know she will help me out. But, uh, you know, she decided to choose her husband, you know, than us. And so I felt a lot of the times that, you know, she left us out there and she made that choice. And then we come here to live with her, and she made another choice to choose him over us. And so it just, it just made it really difficult. Now that I'm a mom, she's a great grandmother. <laugh>, uh, this, I don't know if you can understand this, but she's a great grandmother and she loves my boys, and, uh, because she loves them.

Gloria Sosa: [00:33:09](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:33:09](#) And because I see how good she is with her, it, it, you know, the void that I have, that emptiness.

Gloria Sosa: [00:33:16](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:33:16](#) You know, it gets, uh, fulfilled.

Gloria Sosa: [00:33:20](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:33:20](#) By what she gives to them. And so I try to have a relationship with her because of my kids. Um, and my mom and I, our relationship is, we are able to talk about Mexico, you know?

Gloria Sosa: [00:33:36](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:33:36](#) So I am, I, my twin wants nothing to do with Mexico. She never, she's never been there. She never wants to go back. She never really, uh, wrote letters. She never really talks to them. Nothing. She's completely, She wants nothing to do. I, on the other hand, have always kept in touch. And, uh, and so my mom and I have that connection.

Gloria Sosa: [00:34:01](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:34:01](#) So we're able to talk about mi tia, mi tío, mi abuela, el que esta pasando aqui, allá.

Gloria Sosa: [00:34:08](#) Okay.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:34:08](#) You know?

Gloria Sosa: [00:34:08](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:34:09](#) But when it comes to us? No.

Gloria Sosa: [00:34:12](#) Not yet.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:34:14](#) No, we don't have that when it comes to my boys. Yes.

Gloria Sosa: [00:34:17](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:34:17](#) You know, but us? No.

Gloria Sosa: [00:34:20](#) Yeah. Well, hopefully at some point, you can address those issues.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:34:24](#) Hopefully. Yeah.

Gloria Sosa: [00:34:26](#) It takes a lot of work, I think. Yeah. You know, better than me. How, how, how much of a person takes to, to, to be able to address those Yeah. Issues, those feeling, those repress emotions.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:34:41](#) Yeah. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah. So it's, uh, yeah.

Gloria Sosa: [00:34:45](#) Yes. Thank you for sharing that. That's very, um, personal and intimate. Thank you for opening up to, to me and sharing that experiences. So, um, I learned about a lot of school stuff and your family, but tell me about the neighborhood. You, you came to Long Beach, and then you stay in Long Beach, or did you?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:35:06](#) Yeah, so we stayed in Long Beach, uh, pretty much I finished eighth grade here.

Gloria Sosa: [00:35:12](#) Mm-hmm.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:35:12](#) Here in L.A. Um, so pretty much we got there. We got there in July. Sorry, I did finish. I did a whole year at, uh, elementary. It was here that I did only the last six months of eighth grade here. And I did it at Carver Middle School. I'm not sure if you're familiar with Carver.

Gloria Sosa: [00:35:33](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:35:34](#) Um, so yeah. So it was, it was, was a big difference.

Gloria Sosa: [00:35:37](#) Really?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:35:39](#) Um, so my mom, my, my mom and her husband, they used to live pretty much, um. It was an okay neighborhood, you know?

Gloria Sosa: [00:35:50](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:35:50](#) It was clean. Some of our neighbors were white, uh, Asian, um, you know, I remember that there were people from Honduras, um, you know, and it was just a mix of people, but it was clean, it was nice.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:36:07](#) Um, the school that I went to, Franklin Middle School, uh, was less than a block. So it was like an easy walk, walk. And, um, you know, there was, uh, kids, you know, who were white, and it was a mixed group.

Gloria Sosa: [00:36:22](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:36:22](#) Um, so that was nice. And then, um, there's something about Long Beach that I really like. Um, I still hope to one day live in Long Beach, um, because I, I really have, I really like it. And I don't know if it's because it was the first place that I went to live.

Gloria Sosa: [00:36:47](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:36:47](#) But in Narayrit, we are known for the beaches. And I could tell you that I'm a beach girl, <laugh> at heart, you know, and no saliamos de las playas,

Gloria Sosa: [00:36:58](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

Yadira Ramirez: [00:36:58](#) And the fact that Long Beach, um, the beach was only at a walking distance from my mom's house. Oh, okay. It, it almost became like a, like an escape, you know?

Gloria Sosa: [00:37:09](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:37:09](#) And so, um, I like Long Beach. I really do it, it, whenever I drive by there, it just brings a sense of calmness, you know? It really does. Um, so what was it, uh, 1989. So 1992 maybe. Um, we moved to LA and that was because my stepfather had gotten a new job, and, you know, it was closer to here. His stepsisters had bought property.

Gloria Sosa: [00:37:41](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:37:41](#) And they had offer, uh, you know, it was like a, not a triplex, but, you know, sort of like a four different houses, but duplex. And so they offered for him to live in one of the houses.

Gloria Sosa: [00:37:54](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:37:54](#) For a cheaper rent! And so that's the reason why we moved the neighborhood was dirtier. Uh, the neighborhood was mainly at that time, um, African American and Latino. There was no white, no Asian, nothing from a different culture.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:38:13](#) It was, it's just Mexican, from what I remember. <laugh> and African American. And then we went to Carter, where I finished eighth grade, and it was the first time that I got bullied.

Gloria Sosa: [00:38:27](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:38:27](#) It was the first time that I experienced that racial, uh, difference, uh, with the, uh, you know, African American girls.

Gloria Sosa: [00:38:36](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:38:37](#) Um, it was the first time I saw Cholos, you know, Cholias.

Gloria Sosa: [00:38:42](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:38:42](#) Um, you know, it was just there. I was exposed to so much that I did not see before at the, at the other school, to be honest. I saw the ditching, I saw the girls, uh, would change clothes, you know, to something more revealing. It, it was just, it was just like, it was just a lot. It was quite a bit of a change.

Gloria Sosa: [00:39:04](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:39:05](#) Um, from there, uh, we went to, uh, Jefferson, um, high school, um, Thomas Jefferson High School, and that's where I did my, my high school. And it was pretty much the same thing. Uh, it was pretty much the same type of, um, behavior, the same type of.

Gloria Sosa: [00:39:24](#) Mm-hmm. <AFFIRMATIVE>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:39:24](#) Students. Um, I was lucky enough, um, I, like I said, ninth grade was when they tested me to find out if I was still in ESL.

Gloria Sosa: [00:39:34](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:39:34](#) Or in regular classes. I don't know how I did it, but I was lucky enough to pass the test. And, uh, I was put in regular classes, but at the same time, I was put in AP classes.

Gloria Sosa: [00:39:48](#) Mm-hmm.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:39:48](#) And I, um, and I really don't know what happened, Gloria, but it was like, all of a sudden there was like a click where all of a sudden I remember understanding everything that people will say, <laugh>. It's like, I, I dunno what happened. I really don't know. I can't tell you that it took this time. No.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:40:09](#) It's like.

Gloria Sosa: [00:40:10](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:40:10](#) Like, it was like an overnight kind of thing where Oh, I understand perfectly what you're saying.

Gloria Sosa: [00:40:16](#) Right.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:40:16](#) And, um, I was lucky enough that I was placed in, uh, like I said, in, in, um, in that level of classes. And at, at that school, they had different programs, and I got put in, uh, early College Academy.

Gloria Sosa: [00:40:31](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Okay.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:40:33](#) And so the students that I was with, uh, you know, they were the students that were there for an actual education, <laugh>, you know?

Gloria Sosa: [00:40:42](#) Yes.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:40:42](#) They were very competitive, really studious. And so I was among them. And so I continue to study, and I, I did pretty well, you know, I did pretty well. Um, I'm not saying that I'm smart because I, I'm not the SAT scores were horrible <laugh>, but, um, you know, I managed to graduate, um, and I was, uh, the 10th student of the class of the whole 1997 class.

Gloria Sosa: [00:41:10](#) Wow. Oh my gosh. Thats a huge accomplishment.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:41:12](#) Um, yeah. But to my parents, it was just like, whatever.

Gloria Sosa: [00:41:18](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:41:18](#) Um, I did apply to colleges, and I got accepted to UC Santa Cruz. Oh, okay. Um, and that was the school that I wanted to go, but unfortunately.

Gloria Sosa: [00:41:27](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:41:28](#) How was I gonna do that?

Gloria Sosa: [00:41:30](#) So you did apply.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:41:31](#) I did, I did end up applying at the end because someone from UCLA came over and started talking to us about colleges.

Gloria Sosa: [00:41:41](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:41:41](#) And I told him that I didn't have papers. And so he was the one that said, apply anyway. And he encouraged me. And I remember my professors, my teachers were helping, uh, the students with their application.

Gloria Sosa: [00:41:55](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:41:55](#) With their, you know, essay. And so, um, they helped me and I, I got into that one and I got into, I don't remember where else, but specifically I know it was that one. And, uh, I remember getting a few letters from Yale, uh, University, and I was just so excited. I mean, I never applied there, but the fact that, you know, that, that they show interest in you. Right, right.

Gloria Sosa: [00:42:23](#) Yes, yes. <laugh>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:42:25](#) So, yeah. So,

Gloria Sosa: [00:42:26](#) Yeah, just little girl from Nayarit got a letter from Yale, right?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:42:29](#) Yes. Saying, you know, we would love to have you please apply.

Gloria Sosa: [00:42:33](#) <laugh>. Yes. Yeah. It's good. Yeah.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:42:36](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah.

Gloria Sosa: [00:42:37](#) So this person from UCLA came to your, to Jefferson? Yes. To Jefferson. And then did they walk you through the process of applying.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:42:47](#) Yes.

Gloria Sosa: [00:42:47](#) As an undocumented student?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:42:50](#) Um, no. I mean, they just said to try and apply, and yes, I think they did, because I was able to get the fee waivers for the applications, and I submitted them. I didn't apply to as many schools, because again, I just didn't know that I, I knew already that I was not gonna go, but I, I did it just to kind of feel like the rest of my classmates, like I was a part of it. And so when I got accepted to UC Santa Cruz, like everybody knew, and it was exciting, but deep down I knew that that was never gonna happen. And it was really depressing. Yeah. And, um, well, what did you ask?

Gloria Sosa: [00:43:38](#) If the person, do you remember the person's name from the UCLA?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:43:43](#) Uh, I think his first name was Ugo.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:43:47](#) Era un señor chaparito, morentio. I will say that he was probably either from Oaxaca, not that I'm trying to.

Gloria Sosa: [00:43:58](#) Did he offer you, um, options on how to pay in actually going to one of the schools that you were accepted to. No, no, no, no one no approaching. And you didn't either.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:44:11](#) I didn't know.

Gloria Sosa: [00:44:12](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:44:12](#) I, I really didn't know. I mean, once the college counselor said, there's nothing we can do for you. You need to, you know, there's nothing. So I just walked out. And it wasn't until he came in, um, I met him at the college, uh, center. Uh, and so I spoke to him and I told him my situation, and he said, well, I'm having a talk about college applications and everything. Perhaps you should listen to it. And my mom and I went, and, you know, he encourages, uh, encouraged me to apply. And I did apply to UCLA, I applied to UC Santa Cruz, um, I don't remember which other ones, but I, I didn't apply for too many.

Gloria Sosa: [00:44:52](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:44:52](#) But, um, yeah, UCLA said no. And, uh, and yeah, but no, he didn't, he didn't mention anything. All that was said was scholarships.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:45:04](#) And I remember applying to several scholarships in particular. I remember, um, there was one, uh, to apply as twins that you could probably get the scholarship. And we did get it. Oh. But it was only like \$500, you know?

Gloria Sosa: [00:45:20](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:45:21](#) I was able to go to trade tech because I, um, in some ways was able to get some assistance. There was, uh, I was part of the, um, I was part of the key club. I'm not sure if you're familiar with it. No. So it was one of the groups at, at, um, school, at Jeff, which was mainly helping out the community.

Gloria Sosa: [00:45:43](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:45:43](#) And we did a lot of community service. And so the, um, our leader, or our men or mentor from that, um, program basically

decided to give me a a hundred and a hundred and, what is it, \$150 scholarship for every semester.

Gloria Sosa: [00:46:01](#)

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:46:02](#)

And so that really helped a bit, you know, because I, myself didn't know how to pay for it. The way they did it with Leticia A, I can't remember the other part, but we were giving a student ID number, which was 0, 0, 0, <laugh> zero. But it was enough to pay, uh, as a resident and not as a non-resident. So that saved us money. And, um, I don't know if we qualified for some financial assistant, but we weren't, we didn't have to pay that much. I remember. And at that time, 97, I mean, it was \$11 a unit, um, it was more affordable than what it is now. Yeah. And so it was, it was neat. Yeah.

Gloria Sosa: [00:46:52](#)

And then you learned about the trade tech through your, um, teacher.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:46:57](#)

Wood shop teacher. Yes, he referred me to, um, a lady that he knew that could help me, and I went to see her, and she did. She was the one that helped me. Um, and we got in. And then, you know, second year, I, I will go visit her often, and, you know, one day I just said, you know what? I'm done. I'm tired. I, I wanna transfer. I wanna go somewhere else, but I don't know how to do it. And she actually recommended somebody else at Cal State LA to help me get in. And, um, and that's how I got in. So the people, both, both persons at, um, Trade Tech and Cal State LA were African American.

Gloria Sosa: [00:47:43](#)

Ah, okay.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:47:43](#)

And so, to me, that meant something, you know? Yeah. It's like, wow. They were the ones that me dieron la mano and I was able to get in and, um, esta persona worked at the EOP office, and I kept in contact with him for a long time.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:48:01](#)

And again, I was giving another student ID number, which was a lot of zeros.

Gloria Sosa: [00:48:06](#)

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:48:06](#)

And, uh, it wasn't until, uh, AB 540 came in, which I think was mostly towards my graduate school, that that's how I tried to, I tried to apply, and I got in as an AB 540 student.

Gloria Sosa: [00:48:21](#)

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:48:21](#) Um, what did they do with paperwork? I don't really know, you know, but they were the ones that were able to move things for me to be able to go to school. There was hardly any scholarships, you know, at that time.

Gloria Sosa: [00:48:35](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:48:35](#) Uh, again, the movement for AB 540 had not started yet until, I think it was graduate school that I started to hear more.

Gloria Sosa: [00:48:45](#) Yeah. So, uh, I wanna backtrack a little. So, when, who was the first person that you disclosed your undocumented status to in the school system?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:48:55](#) It was my, um, wood shop teacher. And then it was the college counselor. Well, it was the college counselor, and then it was, uh, the wood shop teacher. But he was the one that helped me.

Gloria Sosa: [00:49:09](#) What was that? Was that hard?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:49:15](#) It's just embarrassing. It was embarrassing. It's embarrassing. Why? Uh, again, I knew that I was undocumented, but I didn't know what that meant.

Gloria Sosa: [00:49:26](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:49:26](#) And once I found out, it was just embarrassing and sad because, um, the teacher had asked me about where was I going because he saw that potential in me. Right. And to say nowhere. And, you know, he's like, why? And just to open up about that. And he was just like, oh, I see. I see. Well, let me see what I can do for you. And that was it. His name is Mr. McCarthy. Yeah. I was bad in wood shop.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:50:03](#) I scared of the machine. I dunno what kind potential he saw. Because.

Gloria Sosa: [00:50:14](#) He probably did not want you to go to that route!

Yadira Ramirez: [00:50:14](#) I could barely make a little piece of wood like this <laugh>.

Gloria Sosa: [00:50:20](#) This kids gonna give us so much. Please go to college. Yeah, yeah, yeah. No.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:50:26](#) I was, I was really bad at wood shop, so I don't know what he saw. But, uh, but yeah, he, he really wanted to help me. Um, there was a student behind me, total gangster, total, total

gangster <laugh>. And no one really will talk to him. No one will really do anything with him. And I started talking to him and I started helping him, you know, not with cutting or <laugh>, but more of the written stuff. And I think the teacher saw good, and that kid ended up doing well in the class, you know?

- Gloria Sosa: [00:50:58](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:50:58](#) He was motivated and he thanked me for being able to do that, being able to connect. I'm helping the door cause it's hot.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:51:06](#) <laugh> <laugh>. Okay. So now we got to the point where you, um, are coming to, well, how about the experience at a trade school? At the tech string Tech trade?
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:51:21](#) Um.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:51:21](#) What, what did you study there?
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:51:23](#) I just did the liberal arts.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:51:24](#) Oh, okay.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:51:25](#) You know, I just got my AA in liberal Arts and mm-hmm. I did all of the GEs, and it was, uh, it was pretty good. I mean, I'm, I'm not good in math.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:51:37](#) <laugh>, <laugh>.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:51:38](#) I'm not good in math, but, you know. Okay. The experience itself was, uh, was pretty good. I kept myself active and, you know, I tried to do well in classes.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:51:48](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:51:49](#) I actually went in as a major in, uh, I wanted to do international business <laugh>.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:51:56](#) Ah, ok.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:51:57](#) And I, that's all that I wanted to do, but I started taking the business classes, <laugh>, the economics classes, and I did not enjoy them. <laugh>, I was barely passing them. And I said, no, this is not for me. And so trade Tech was able to help me to find out what I really wanted to do. And so I went to see a counselor, they did that the Meyers Personality Test? I'm not sure if you've heard of it or done it, do you know what it is?

Gloria Sosa: [00:52:28](#) I, I think I heard about it, but I don't, I don't think that I like a standardized test.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:52:32](#) Uh huh <affirmative>.

Gloria Sosa: [00:52:33](#) To measure who you should be, or, you know?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:52:36](#) Yeah. Yeah.

Gloria Sosa: [00:52:37](#) I didn't like that <laugh>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:52:39](#) Well, they did it. And I think it, it was pretty, pretty accurate. And, uh, I also got involved at, at church and, uh, there was a point where I didn't know what I wanted to do because I was actually thinking of missionary work. Mm. Um, and so at the end, I, I didn't dare do that. Um, again, you know, por los papeles tambien, I'm like I was gonna go, I was not gonna come back. Um, I wasn't get, I was not gonna be able to see my family, and so I decided not to. And so I asked myself, you know, what is the best thing, you know, next to wanting to become a mission, uh, do mission work? And, uh, it was either a nurse or a social worker. And I knew that working with body fluid <laugh>, it's not my feeling, so I went into social work. Okay. Yeah. But it was a good experience, you know, I learned a lot and I had some really good professors.

Gloria Sosa: [00:53:37](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:53:38](#) Yeah.

Gloria Sosa: [00:53:39](#) Interesting. I'm glad that you had the good experience there.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:53:41](#) Yeah. And at the time, I think it was, uh, again, I, I think a lot has changed when it comes to education, but, um, I think a lot of the classes were mixed with a lot of people from Ethiopia.

Gloria Sosa: [00:53:56](#) Mm-hmm.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:53:56](#) And so they were very studious, you know, they were trying to make sure that they made something of themselves.

Gloria Sosa: [00:54:05](#) Mm-hmm.

Gloria Sosa: [00:54:05](#) <affirmative> and did you cut up to it?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:54:08](#) Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It was, it was, uh, it was competitive. Yeah.

Gloria Sosa: [00:54:13](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Okay.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:54:14](#) Yeah.

Gloria Sosa: [00:54:15](#) So, and tell me a little bit about church. You didn't mention it before. Um, was it a Christian Church? A Catholic Church?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:54:20](#) Catholic church, yeah. And, and I, I didn't get involved till after I graduated high school.

Gloria Sosa: [00:54:25](#) Oh, okay. And, um, why did you feel that call to the missionary work?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:54:32](#) Uh, so I got really involved <laugh> with church. Uh, we actually, my friend and I started the youth group.

Gloria Sosa: [00:54:39](#) mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:54:40](#) Um, and so we were there for a few years. I, you know, I met some wonderful people. I met my padrinos, uh, and they are like my second parents, to be honest.

Gloria Sosa: [00:54:53](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:54:54](#) And, um, you know, I got so involved to the point where we had, um, misioneras quién venían y ayudaban las classes.

Gloria Sosa: [00:55:03](#) Uh, the youth program?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:55:03](#) The youth group, and just in general at church and everything. And so, you know, they were, it was fascinating to, to see their lifestyle, you know, and to be around them. They were so wise and smart and, you know, they, they, they just had in my eyes, you know, just, uh, a very perfect life, you know, in my eyes.

Gloria Sosa: [00:55:03](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative> Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:55:03](#) And so I, I think I just, uh, liked it and I, I wanted to do that. Yeah.

Gloria Sosa: [00:55:03](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Gloria Sosa: [00:55:36](#) Yeah. And, and why did you see that they had a perfect life? Was it, um, that they were traveling a lot, or?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:55:43](#) Well, the fact that they were, you know, uh, I guess it was a calm, serene.

Gloria Sosa: [00:55:49](#) Oh, okay.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:55:49](#) Life.

Gloria Sosa: [00:55:50](#) <laugh>. Oh.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:55:51](#) Okay. Not too many problems <laugh>, at least in.

Gloria Sosa: [00:55:55](#) Your view. Right.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:55:56](#) In my view. You know, they just carry themselves very, uh, very calm, very serene, um, very simple. And that was attractive to me.

Gloria Sosa: [00:56:09](#) Right.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:56:10](#) When they were helping others.

Gloria Sosa: [00:56:11](#) Because at this point you have that conflict of wanting to further education, but not being able to, right. Yes.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:56:19](#) That, that too. That too. But it will give me a chance to travel. Now, I even thought that maybe they could even help me with the papers, right?

Gloria Sosa: [00:56:27](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:56:27](#) But again, uh, I was, I was gonna stay in that kind of lifestyle. Um, but yeah. Yeah. But at the end, it was, uh, boyfriend and <laugh> family that stopped me. <laugh>.

Gloria Sosa: [00:56:41](#) Okay. Things happen for a reason. <laugh>.

Gloria Sosa: [00:56:43](#) Yes.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:56:45](#) Okay. Uh, thank you for sharing that. So now we are, would you graduated, you transferred from the Trade Tech to Cal State LA because they found a way to help the system. Yeah. So tell me how did it go? Cal State LA.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:57:01](#) It was a shock.

Gloria Sosa: [00:57:03](#) It was?

Yadira Ramirez: [00:57:03](#) It was a shock. I mean, it was so different from Trade Tech. It was, the campus was so much bigger. I mean, I, I just felt really intimidated, um, by, by everything and everyone. I had a couple

of people that I knew that were there from high school. Um, my best friend was there, so that brought a sense of comfort. Oh, okay. But it was just very intimidating.

- Gloria Sosa: [00:57:27](#) Yeah.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:57:27](#) Very intimidating for me. Um, and, uh, I managed to get a job there at, uh, I don't know if you're familiar with it, it's no longer there, Dolchini's.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:57:40](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:57:40](#) Yeah. So I was able to get a job with them through a friend of mine. And, you know, I got the job and then I told people at SURGE and then some other people started working there when some of us, you know, will leave. And so Dolchini's became, uh.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:58:00](#) I didn't know that!
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:58:01](#) A sanctuary in some ways for a lot of us, because it gave us a part-time job, and we were able to get at least 50% off on the food <laugh>, you know?
- Gloria Sosa: [00:58:18](#) Hey, that's good. I mean, that's a good thing. That's a good deal!
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:58:18](#) I was there from, you know, I, my job with them, I worked with them for six years, and I will start.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:58:27](#) That's long time!
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:58:27](#) Yeah. I will start at 6:30 in the morning.
- Gloria Sosa: [00:58:29](#) Wow.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:58:30](#) And I wouldn't get home from my studies probably until 9 or 10 o'clock at night. And so Dolchini's was what fed me.<Laugh>
- Gloria Sosa: [00:58:42](#) <laugh>. Right. Well, all day you were gone. You were out of the house.
- Yadira Ramirez: [00:58:45](#) Yeah. They fed me, uh, all those years. And thanks to that job, I paid for my education. That's how I paid for my whole education. Now, it doesn't compare to what it is now. I, I do wanna emphasize that <laugh>. Yes. But you know, I, I will say that my whole education maybe cost me between, at the most 20,000. At the most 20,000.

Gloria Sosa: [00:59:13](#) Wow, that's, that's a good deal.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:59:14](#) <laugh>Yes. You know? Uh, to get my master's degree and my bachelor's. Yes. But it was Dolchini's that helped me to pay for it.

Gloria Sosa: [00:59:23](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:59:23](#) Yeah. By, I worked there. I saved the money. I lived at home. I lived at home until I graduated from my master's degree, and then I got married and moved in with my husband.

Gloria Sosa: [00:59:34](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [00:59:34](#) But I didn't have too many bills. So whatever I made at Dolchini's, it was for me, and I will save it for school. And when I took that year off, um, to come back to the Master's program, it was because I, I wanted to save.

Gloria Sosa: [00:59:48](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:59:48](#) Um, so I could have enough for the master's program, but at the same time enough so that, I mean, I, I couldn't get everything, but, uh, I was always one semester ahead, you know, when it came to payments.

Yadira Ramirez: [01:00:02](#) So I always had enough for the next semester. Right. Yeah. And so I, I wanted to have enough to cover me so that I, whatever I made.

Gloria Sosa: [01:00:10](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [01:00:10](#) Was enough for the following semester.

Gloria Sosa: [01:00:12](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [01:00:12](#) Yeah. So that's, that's how I did it. And, uh, in, uh, once again, after I almost, uh, right before graduation and for my bachelor's, I got really depressed because here we go again. We're graduating and I'm not gonna be able to do anything with this degree.

Gloria Sosa: [01:00:36](#) Right.

Yadira Ramirez: [01:00:37](#) Um, and I got really depressed. And at that time I was able to talk to, um, a good professor of mine that I still keep in touch with. And that, uh, I actually spoke to her and we were two

hours on the phone catching up <laugh>. Um, and she, and she was the first person that I told about my situation and she was very at Cal State LA and she was really supportive cuz she was asking me what was I gonna do.

- Gloria Sosa: [01:01:08](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.
- Yadira Ramirez: [01:01:08](#) Thanks to her, I was able to, um, she connected me to, uh, another professor who had an adult day healthcare.
- Gloria Sosa: [01:01:18](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.
- Yadira Ramirez: [01:01:18](#) In, um, Baldwin, Baldwin Park.
- Gloria Sosa: [01:01:21](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.
- Yadira Ramirez: [01:01:21](#) And I, um, I did my, uh, one year of service with him.
- Gloria Sosa: [01:01:27](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.
- Yadira Ramirez: [01:01:27](#) So that I wouldn't lose what I had learned, you know what I mean? So that will be my practicum because.
- Gloria Sosa: [01:01:33](#) Internship.
- Yadira Ramirez: [01:01:33](#) Yeah. I took a whole year off and I learned a lot. No, no, no. It was not paid. It was, it was just something that I was doing. Okay. Okay. So that I could feel like I was doing something, something.
- Gloria Sosa: [01:01:44](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.
- Yadira Ramirez: [01:01:44](#) And he was, uh, he was really helpful and he was the one that pushed me to get into the graduate program. He's like, what else are you gonna do? Right. Give it a try. You don't know what's gonna change, it's really gonna help you.
- Yadira Ramirez: [01:01:57](#) And so I actually applied for the master's program and he helped me with the application. And then I got in and I was there and the same teacher, um, the same professor that I told in 2003 became my professor. And so she's the one that, uh, uh, kept me strong and towards the end towards thesis time.
- Gloria Sosa: [01:02:23](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.
- Yadira Ramirez: [01:02:23](#) When it was time for thesis, I, uh, once again towards the last year, I got depressed again because what am I gonna do? You

know, everybody was talking about they were gonna go to Italy, they were gonna go to Cabos, they were gonna go to all these places once they graduated. And I was just like, yeah, yeah, yeah. And I became really depressed because I didn't know what I was gonna do. And so I talked to my professor and she was the one that mentioned AB 540.

- Yadira Ramirez: [01:02:50](#) She said that there was a new group starting that she had heard. And uh, and you know, she wanted me to join up. Yes.
- Gloria Sosa: [01:02:59](#) May I ask who is this professor?
- Yadira Ramirez: [01:03:00](#) Her name is Johan Alchler, one of my, yeah, she's from, uh, the social work department.
- Gloria Sosa: [01:03:06](#) Oh, okay.
- Yadira Ramirez: [01:03:07](#) I don't know how she found out <laugh>, but, but she told me that they met at Dolchini's! And um, sure enough, I went to their meeting and I think it was Jose, um, Norma, um, I'm not sure who else was there, but, uh, that's how I got to know AB 540. And, uh, we started meeting at Dolchini's!
- Gloria Sosa: [01:03:32](#) Right. Okay. That's a good place to stop.
- New Speaker: [01:03:35](#) The The patio. Yeah. Yeah.