

Gloria Sosa: [00:03](#) Okay. Yadira. So, um, again, thank you for the second part of the interview. So we were getting to the point where, um, you are at Cal State LA and you met SURGE, you met Norma, Jose, but, um, let's back trace, like you mentioned, let's back trace to, um, when was the first time that you, uh, disclosed your undocumented status to someone else besides your family circle, right? So, um, you wanna start there? We can.

Yadira Ramirez: [00:35](#) Okay. So I don't really, I didn't really disclose, but I remember that the first time I knew that I was different or that, you know, I think, uh, being documented play a role, a role, uh, was in elementary. Like I said, I came to the US in 1989 and I finished fir-, fifth grade here in, uh, in the U.S. And the way it worked for us, because, uh, we were already late in the year, uh, or we were already here, um, and everything was full. We got tra-, we got bused to Lakewood, we lived in Long Beach, and we got bused to Lakewood to an all white school, <laugh>, mainly except for those two or three E S L classes. And I remember one day there was a competition.

Gloria Sosa: [01:27](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [01:28](#) Uh, where it came to like a relay race or it was a a a a running competition.

Yadira Ramirez: [01:35](#) And I clearly remember that, uh, uh, you were gonna win a Turkey for Thanksgiving, if you know.

Gloria Sosa: [01:44](#) A turkey?

Yadira Ramirez: [01:45](#) If you were the winner. And, uh, I think we, I did pretty well, but unfortunately I could, I did not get the Turkey. And they said that I couldn't because I was undocumented or because we didn't have papers. And, and this was back in 1989, so I am now that I think about it as an adult is, of course they knew we were immigrants because we were in ESL classes. Right. But I just can't believe that it was just a Turkey!

Gloria Sosa: [02:22](#) Right. And, and.

Yadira Ramirez: [02:23](#) That they couldn't, they couldn't give it to us because according to them.

Gloria Sosa: [02:29](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [02:29](#) We were undocumented, um, you know, but since I was 10 years old.

Gloria Sosa: [02:36](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [02:37](#) I guess que no le puso mucho cuidado.

Gloria Sosa: [02:39](#) Right.

Yadira Ramirez: [02:39](#) It was just like, oh, okay. I just remember feeling uncomfortable? If I could say it like that.

Gloria Sosa: [02:46](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Yadira Ramirez: [02:47](#) Uncomfortable. And, uh, I don't know if it was embarrassment, um, but that, that's what I remember. That's what stood out from that, uh, from that race or from that competition. Um, but it was, it was just weird. It was weird.

Gloria Sosa: [03:06](#) And these, who was the people at school, like the teachers who told you this?

Yadira Ramirez: [03:12](#) Um, yeah, it was, it was, uh, it was the teachers. Yes. Again, they didn't tell me d- they, they didn't tell me directly. I, I could hear in the background, so I was there, but I could hear them in the background and I could hear that they, they wouldn't. Now again, I didn't speak English, but, you know, there was someone there that was translating and that's all I remember, but I didn't know what that meant to be honest.

Gloria Sosa: [03:43](#) Right. You're a child.

Yadira Ramirez: [03:45](#) That's Yeah. I didn't, I didn't know what that meant. And again, we were just coming in from Mexico.

Gloria Sosa: [03:49](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [03:50](#) Didn't speak the language at all, and very uncomfortable to be in a white school, <laugh>.

Gloria Sosa: [03:56](#) Right, right. And, and your, even your ESL peers, you mentioned there were not, uh, Latinos or Latinas. Right? Yeah.

Yadira Ramirez: [04:04](#) Yeah. There was, there was difficulty constant, uh, communicating with them, because I do remember, uh, there was, uh, quite a bit of students, uh, Cambodia. Cambodia was, uh, I think, uh, there were a lot of Cambodians in my neighborhood at that time that I was growing up.

Gloria Sosa: [04:22](#) Right. Long Beach has a high population of Cambodian immigrants. Mm-hmm.

Yadira Ramirez: [04:25](#) <affirmative>. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Gloria Sosa: [04:26](#) Yeah. Yes. So when, so these feelings of embarrassment, uncomfortable, did you ever, um, spoke about it with your family members or someone about it?

Yadira Ramirez: [04:39](#) No. You know, I, no, I don't remember talking about it to be honest. I just let it go. Yeah.

Gloria Sosa: [04:54](#) And were you think, do you think that that might have a, um, that played a role later on as you moved forward in your education, that maybe you were able to connect with the teachers because you were, you, you had the fear that they might reject you or, um, just not, I guess, not help you out because of the status that you had?

Yadira Ramirez: [05:23](#) Perhaps it did, because after that, I just learned to be quiet about that issue, you know? And even at home, I mean, back in the nineties it was still like, that was taboo. You don't really talk about it. And so, um, so yeah. So I just, uh, I, I didn't bring it up. I just kept quiet.

Gloria Sosa: [05:49](#) And it was because it wasn't speak of, or just because they told you explicitly not to say anything?

Yadira Ramirez: [05:56](#) I, yes. In my family it was something that, you know, please don't talk about that. Okay. And I think, uh, even I think we will hear more about ice, um, you know, in the nineties than, um, even nowadays. Uh, I remember. And so it was just something that, uh, you wouldn't really talk about just to be safe.

Gloria Sosa: [06:21](#) Right. The, the immigration and the political climate was different, right?

Yadira Ramirez: [06:25](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

New Speaker: [06:26](#) Than it's not per se.

Yadira Ramirez: [06:27](#) Yeah.

Gloria Sosa: [06:28](#) Yeah. That is. And if I may ask, I if you feel comfortable answering this question, so you're not, that's okay. Are you still undocumented?

Yadira Ramirez: [06:39](#) No. No.

New Speaker: [06:40](#) Oh, okay.

Yadira Ramirez: [06:40](#) Um, so I actually, um, did all of my schooling, uh, undocumented. I, um, graduated, uh, with my master's degree in, uh, again, I was supposed to graduate in June of 2006, but I didn't finish my thesis on time. And so I didn't finish school till the following year in April. Um, but, uh, in two, when I graduated with my masters, when I walked with the rest of my friends, uh, actually that day of graduation, I went to get married. Um, so I got married on June 10th, 2006.

New Speaker: [07:24](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [07:25](#) And, uh, got married. And my, uh, then husband is the one that helped me, um, with my immigration, uh, paperwork. I, um, so we got married and we applied right away. Thankfully, um, my stepfather had actually petitioned us. He was, he's a still a, a resident, and we were able to apply under the 245i, in which, you know, we didn't need to leave the country. And so I actually started the paperwork probably around July of 2006. And by the following year, I was already a resident. Um, and so, um, I was a resident in 2007, and I waited to become a U.S. Citizen, and I became a U.S. Citizen in 2012.

Gloria Sosa: [08:22](#) Yay. Congratulations.

Yadira Ramirez: [08:24](#) Thank you. Thank you.

Gloria Sosa: [08:25](#) Hey, why did you wait it so long?

Yadira Ramirez: [08:28](#) You know, I, I, I'm not sure to be honest why I just waited. Um, I'm not sure if it was the fact that I just felt like I was going to give a part of myself maybe, uh, away, uh, or if it was the fact that, uh, I just, uh, didn't want responsibilities at that moment, <laugh>, to be honest, you know? Um, and so it was just, uh, it was just, I, I just waited. And by the time I decided to do it, I decided to do it. And, uh, it was when I had, I was gonna have my first son and I said, no, I gotta do this now. And so I did it. But then what was happening in 2012, I think it was, it was, well, it's always important, you know, they're always talking about, um, becoming a citizen so that you can vote for presidents.

Yadira Ramirez: [09:34](#) And I think it was.

New Speaker: [09:34](#) And it was for elections.

Yadira Ramirez: [09:37](#) Yes. So I was trying to be among that group, uh, of people so that I could vote in 2012. Yeah. Yeah.

New Speaker: [09:46](#) Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Yadira Ramirez: [09:47](#) Yeah. So that's how I, I became a, a legal, uh, that's how I became a US citizen. And last year, okay, last year I received a letter from immigration letting me know that I had been approved to apply for the visa that my stepfather applied for me in 97.

New Speaker: [10:12](#) Oh. In my God.

Yadira Ramirez: [10:14](#) In 97.

New Speaker: [10:15](#) Yes.

Yadira Ramirez: [10:16](#) And so when I saw that letter, it was, I'm like, wow, I would have waited this long to be able to get a visa under my stepfather's application. And it was eye-awakening, you know, it was just like, oh, wow. Look at how many years? 97 to 2021. I mean, that was just incredible to see. And then at the same time, I got scared.

Yadira Ramirez: [10:46](#) I got scared because it's like, how is it that I'm a U.S. Citizen now and immigration is telling me that, you know, if I don't apply within the next, uh, three months, if I don't answer to this, then I will not qualify for a Visa anymore. And I was trying to get ahold of them to let them know, Hey, I'm now a U.S. citizen, and I could never get ahold of anyone. I emailed them, I said, I'm now a U.S. Citizen. What do you want me to do? It was all that fear came up again, you know, being scared that that was gonna be taken away. Um, but I got no reply from anyone. I did make a copy of that email just in case something happens in the future. And then in talking to other people, they just said, you know, that there's actually no communication between immigration and that, you know, they just probably never knew. They probably never connected. And I think it was also when I applied, it was under Yadira Ramirez Diaz, you know, and then when I became a citizen and a, a resident, it was under Yadira Ramirez Flores. So probably the name change, you know, made a difference. They couldn't connect. But I was, I was upset. I'm like, wow, you guys are not doing your job <laugh>. How could you guys not know? But at the same time there came this fear of everything was gonna be taken away. Yeah.

Gloria Sosa: [12:15](#) Right. I mean, so the, the, I would say the trauma that we carry as an undocumented, right? At some point. And then you still constantly thinking, what if it gets taken away? Right?

Yadira Ramirez: [12:27](#) Yes.

Gloria Sosa: [12:28](#) I think its a valid emotion to have. And, um, I'm pretty sure you're not the only one who experiences that fear losing the status once you already have it.

Yadira Ramirez: [12:39](#) Yes. Yes.

New Speaker: [12:40](#) Yeah. Thank you for sharing that.

Yadira Ramirez: [12:42](#) I mean, so The reply came 24 years later, 24 Years later.

New Speaker: [12:47](#) 97, yeah.

Yadira Ramirez: [12:48](#) 97 to 2021 that I could apply for a visa. Wow. 24 years.

Gloria Sosa: [12:56](#) Yeah. So, um, Mexicans do wait longer than any other nationality to get a visa, and it's so ridiculous that we had to wait that long. We are neighbors and we have land ties, we have everything. I mean, we can even go back in history if we told everything. Right. <laugh>, and, and it's, it's just like, it, it doesn't make any sense. Yes. But that, and, but I'm glad you're a citizen now, and you can help change those policies and those laws.

Yadira Ramirez: [13:29](#) Yes, yes.

Gloria Sosa: [13:30](#) Yes. Okay. So.

Yadira Ramirez: [13:32](#) So yeah. So that's, that's how I became, and again, I did it, uh, upon graduation. I had been dating my boyfriend for about 10 years. Um, so when we got divorced, we got divorced, uh, barely in May of this year. Well, the divorce came through barely in May of this year. And when he, he made a comment about, but I helped you, oh, when I received that letter, I showed him and he said, well, aren't you happy that I helped you with your papers?

New Speaker: [14:05](#) Mm-hmm.

Yadira Ramirez: [14:06](#) And, um, the way he said it, it was just like, it was like, I couldn't believe he had mentioned those words to me, because I knew that I didn't get married for the papers, you know, uh, after

being together for 10 years, uh, I knew that I didn't do it for that, but it was just, uh, sarcastically said, uh, which, uh, I think, uh, for a moment there como que sentia como que maybe I need to stay para gradacimento, you know, in this relationship, even though it's not a good relationship. Um, but that's the way I felt at that time when he, when he told me that mm-hmm. almost como que se le debiera algo. <Affirmative>.

Gloria Sosa: [14:56](#)

Well, I'm glad you didn't stay if it wasn't a good relationship. Right. Not even for but to think, to, to pay back, I guess. But I'm glad you didn't. And, um, yes. You know, I think that's an issue that a lot of women go through and, um, thank you for sharing that. That's a very emotional experience that you went through. And, um, yes. I think that we, we need to do some work around women being mistreated because of having obtained their legal status through their spouses. So that's, that's, uh, um, a source of violence, not only physical, but also psychological violence. Right. And I'm sure you can speak of this more than me, but I think that, um, we need to do something to, to address those issues.

Yadira Ramirez: [15:43](#)

Yeah.

New Speaker: [15:43](#)

You're not the only, the first person I hear say something like that, but, um, yes. Perhaps in the future we could, we could, um, organize to, to do something around this.

Yadira Ramirez: [15:54](#)

Yeah. You know, and, and now that I think about it, since you're talking about this, in 2009, it was when, you know, so two years later after I got married, it was when, you know, we started having problems with our marriage and, um, where he actually, and I'm sorry to disclose so much, but he actually.