

What it Means to Me to Live in the United States of America

When discussing careers in the classroom, a first grade teacher would hear children mention occupations like firefighters, lawyers, or doctors. To my misfortune, I never participated in such powwows in my first grade class because of the language barrier that stood firmly between my classmates and I. It was more of a Great Wall of China than a barrier if you asked me. Yet, I was lucky that the word "doctor" meant the same, was written the same, and sounded the same in Spanish as well as in English except for a small difference in the accentuation. Therefore, as soon as my brain recognized what was going on I was able to yell out this word without my classmates thinking that I was speaking in a bizarre, foreign language.

From the time that I was just a couple inches too short to ride the big kid roller coasters, I had always wanted to be a doctor. If poor Johnny had fell from the monkey bars, you could be assured that I would be at his side on the sand trying to clean his battle wounds. You can also be certain that Mrs. Adler would be running to the scene, ordering me to keep my hands away from the blood meanwhile waving her hands in a fury. At the time I was only a seven year old who wanted to help a classmate that was in pain. My tendencies were innate and there was nothing I could do to restrict them because the very next day there I was again, getting scolded for the same reasons.

Because the English language wasn't what we would call my cup of tea, I had trouble communicating with people who didn't speak Spanish. I was put into ESOL for a year and then I almost failed the second grade because my progress was going anywhere but up. Back in 1997, summer school still existed and it was my lifesaver. I realized that now was the time to get used to the change of environment. The environment was simply not going to change for me. I mastered the language and no longer dreaded the sight of the school bus in the mornings. Although I had a hard time because of it at first, speaking Spanish ended up helping me. My

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ability to speak the language helped me score a 5 on my Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish Language Exam last year. The United States is a huge melting pot of different cultures and being bilingual can only help me rather than hurt me.

Here in the United States, there are jobs that make nearly six-figures and they also come with great benefits that can be applied to the entire family. Such careers are possible as well as abundant whereas in Peru they are only a sweet dream. A dream that turns sour once the person is rudely awakened to see that a dream is all it will ever be. I am grateful that my family and I get to make these dreams into reality thanks to the opportunities we have from living in this country. I have worked very hard to get where I am today and that is why I have the chance to be the first member of my family to go to college straight out of high school. I need to point out that there are people who have worked as hard as I have but live in poorer countries and so they never get the opportunity to reward themselves in the end. In Peru, the bills and expenses of my large family seemed to add up to an arm and a leg. My mom had to drop out of high school in order to help the family come up with the much-needed money. But, moving to this country changed our financial status and we are working towards achieving our goals.

Just two years ago, my mom was able to go back to school to finish her education. She is now at AIU majoring in criminal justice and with the help of financial assistance she will receive the degree she has always wanted. I was lucky to have had the opportunity to go to a high school like Monarch. Monarch is still a baby with only five years of teaching kids; therefore, it has newer buildings and cleaner facilities, which is unheard of from where I come from. This nation's education system provides everyone with an education and it does not discriminate. It sees the potential in every single person and so it helps everyone reach his or her highest potential. I have a mental countdown of the days left until June 30th when I will start the next stage in my life at the University of Florida. There I will reach my highest potential and there I will become a doctor.