

Ashley: [00:00:00](#) Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me. Um, to start, can you tell me your name, age, and who you are?

Tess: [00:00:06](#) My name is Marites Cortes. I am fifty-seven years old and I work for Cargill. I am their chemistry lab technician at Mount Crawford Virginia. I came to Virginia in 2008, 26, 2008.

Ashley: [00:00:06](#) And where did you come here from?

Tess: [00:00:48](#) I came from a uh Missouri. Springfield, Missouri. Cargill is a big company dealing with a meat solutions. I was working at Willow Brook foods dealing also with Turkey. I was their lab tech for chemistry and micro. And Cargill bought it. And the lab supervisor here in Mount Crawford Cargill came to do inventory of our staff in the lab and she offered me to come here and see if I like to find out if I would like to go and work here also. So it was a last decision that I said, OK, I'll go three days. It was all paper came and see and I liked the place and I saw a big opportunity for me to learn more testing. They had a bigger lab than where I was and plus the associates who were working there. They were all women and I feel like I, you know, I was accepted. I feel very comfortable with them, so I decided to come just for a year to find out something. I told my kids, I have two kids, and I told my daughter to give me one year, let me go there just to change that scenery and know something. So, um, I came then I like my job. I like the plant where I worked too. Everybody were very friendly and accommodating and feel like I have family too. and from coming over here. I met the especially Pam Showalter, she was out assistant HR and I was looking for a church so she invited me to go with her to Church of Nazarene at Boyers Road and Republic Road. And so I went with her and from then on I'm also a member and become a member of the church. And through that I met a lot of People oriented, very humble, and, and I learned more about that, our God and through our work too some people there took me to become a member at the RMH wellness center. So I went there and meet a lot of people also who are very positive minded and very supportive and was invited. One day I was, I met a Vounda Brown, she used to be the director for international festival of Harrisonburg. and she invited me to go to one of her meetings. So I went and then I, I got involved with the international festival of Harrisonburg. And from then on until now. And still, uh, I'm still, um, I'm one of their planning committee of the International Festival of Harrisonburg, which they always do It end of, it's a Saturday, last Saturday of September every year. Um. So, uh, my story is, very long. [laughs].

Ashley: [00:04:42](#) I know you said that you planned on coming here for one year, but I feel like it's been more than one year? {4:45}

Tess: [00:04:54](#) It's more than one. Yeah, my reason of staying more here is I think because uh, I got so much involvement with the community and uh, I feel like I really like it and it made my life more interesting. So I met a lot of people from different cultures, met a lot of people who are distinguished rich people, but I found them very, very humble and, and, and most of all I learn more about our God and with that knowledge I'm, I'm able to, um, to defend and talk about him to my friends and even to my family. I'm Catholic by birth. I mean I was born Catholic, but um, since I got divorced I feel like I was, I'm not anymore a Catholic because of a, I know how rigid, you know, the, the way it is with the Catholic church. So I was looking for another church, like the assembly or God and some other churches. But when I came over here, uh, I find that a church of Nazarene is really where I belong because of their goals is knowing God and knowing God after that is go and reach out to people, you know. And share what I learned from there. There's now pressure that's which I like and, and just just being there and being very accepting, you know, and I think that's how I am accepting and at the same time wanting to learn more about our lord and also trying and doing, doing his way just to, you know, to be his foot and hands and able to share what I know about him, to tell my friends and to people who have come to know me. And well the first time I really, I came here, I came here in 2008. That was like August somewhere maybe 24 of August and um, I came by car, uh, my, my daughter and Anabell came with me and my coworkers here already reserved or already um renting a place for me in Massanutten. I was there in Massanutten for six months. Then when one day I went, one Sunday I went to church, a church of Nazarene. When I came out there came Eva Tran, a Filipina and married a foot doctor here in town. Dr Tom Tran and asked me if I am from Philippines. You know, or I'm Filipina and then invited me to go with her to meet other Filipinos because. Because I thin I said OK, because I was alone and I that time really I did not know a lot of Filipinos. Like it took me two months to meet a Filipino. I go to Walmart, sometimes hung out there and most of the people that come near to me are Spanish speaking and they talk the Spanish to me. And well I know how to speak Spanish too, so they thought I was Mexican and even I think my Filipino friend that I made later on, they thought I was Mexican because I could, I could speak Spanish. From church of Nazarene. I met a lot of yeah Mexican Spanish speaking people that I made really good friendship with, one from Dominican Republic and she just left this, uh, this month to go home and take care of her mom.

But I'm hoping to see here one of these days to visit. Any ways, from church of Nazarene. I made like the doctor, ah pastor's son and I got involved in hope distributed. It's a food bank. So I started volunteering. I think that's why one of the reason I came here because I came to, I feel like when I do service I was happy to do something at the same time I would say where I do this, I learned something. I connect with other people know more other cultures at the same time, learn, learn how to speak better or being learned to communicate with the Hispanic people because I sat down in the computer and asked for their basic questions in Spanish so my Spanish was being practice. So I love doing that. And so I've been doing that a lot. And Cargill at the same time, is a very good company because the support ambassador hours, you know the support. Well I'm doing this job outside Cargill. I get the hours, as ambassador hours for Cargill. So they, you know, the acknowledge it and which is one of. I think that year when I started doing a lot of things, I became one of their ambassador of the year for that plat because I had so many hours. I mean I wasn't doing something. I was just. I mean, at home I couldn't stay home because I was like lonely thinking about my son, my kid, and so I devote my time doing service so it was good and I feel good and I, I was not really so lonely because I know, uh, I found myself having passion, doing community service. I did not know that when I was in Springfield I was very attentive to work, family, my mom and there, so my life evolved with my work and my family. I came over here, my work and my life become involved with my work and the community and I found that I love doing it and being with the Filipino community at the same time, um, i got involved with them. And at first I did not want to be a member because they have this membership and all this thing and I didn't want to be any officers. I was just saying I come and help out. I don't have, I don't want to be an officer or something. But then Eva Tran, then one day said, no, we want a vice president. Our community's name is Filipino American community of Shenandoah Valley. So she said, we need a, a, a vice president because our vice president stepped down and they want a replacement and they so me, I think I was very engrossed with community services, so she said, you can think that place. So I said, no, I don't know how. But then later I said, OK, so I become vice president in that starts in 2010 until 19... oh 15 because 2015 the president stepped down. its a two years a term. So, um, when she stepped down, there's one more year for her to do. So I have to step up and take her place. So I was doing that and then the following year there was an election again and I just did it. So I did three years of presidency in our community until, uh, until 20... 2016. {13:33}

Ashley:	00:04:54	And was that a lot of responsibility for?
Tess:	00:13:38	<p>oooh [laughs]. It was. And I was asking, I was, I was saying it was a lot of responsibility being president. Um, I learned a lot from them from that experience. I learned a lot. I learned to be strong and I learned to be more independent and I do find some shortcomings that if I had to get, you know, be that or be another person, I could do something different, I can modify it because I know how, how short I was in some areas, but I know that during my time I did give my best, I did it all and that made me more satisfied and happy with myself despite of all these struggles is it's a big struggle. So when you are in a position, if you have to step in when somebody is not there or you have to do it or if there's. No, no... [laughs].</p>
Ashley:	00:14:47	I understand what you mean. {14:47}
Tess:	00:14:48	<p>I think it's everywhere in any kind. It doesn't have to be a president or even like what you're doing if you are like you have friends to do one job and some is not. giving total energy on it. Not giving effort, doing it. Somebody who leads us to take over and make sure that it's done. And it brought me that realization that, um, to be that maturity type of thing. Where become I become, I think became very responsible and the only thing that I could have done also is I could have it. I became very serious and I should not be, you know, I mean because that's for just for myself, you know, but I could have, you know, just not give in to people when they said I should have bought more thing. This is your part, you should do this. I am not taking all of the work. I mean that's what they should have done, you know. But anyway, it's an experience that when it comes back will not do it again. Right. Because we learn from it. So. But through to our community, the, in the, in the President, I also meet a lot of community leaders from different culture. So it's really my, a friend circle become big responsibility becomes bigger because they asked me to, oh we have a meetings leaders and so we can, we are going to do this and that for the community. And I was always, you know, I was always doing it for community. I think. Yeah, I think about the community for me. So most of the time my home is left because I'm always out out, out, and they invite me. I'm always up, come back home. I said, oh my goodness, it's good. I'm alone. Or else I would be in trouble. That's, that's the life I had an being. Um, and then, um, the expectations of people also. Sometimes if you don't, if you think about that, you'll be lost. You'll be depressed. So now I said no. I mean what I did, I know that I said I cannot promise you anything, but I'll do my best while I'm in that position. I cannot do more than what you expect me. It's just giving my best. If</p>

you find me somebody who can do better than me, go for it. That's what I did. Yeah. So, but with our community, our community, I feel like with me and the other people, I cannot just do it by myself during my time. We achieve a lot of things, you know, we have done, like we registered a social group that's during my time. Then we have been performing during international festival. We do our cultural dances and also two years ago we also started our own Dahlia is a string instruments and we added it in our performance in, during the, when we, the community, we were able to like, I'm also one of their dancers, so we were able to perform dances. We used to be invited by elementary schools. So we go like stonespring elementary, the Harrisonburg school, that school behind, um, Lowes, I forgot the elementary school right there.

Ashley:

[00:14:48](#)

Skyline?

Tess:

[00:18:48](#)

Yeah. So we perform our cultural dances there and when, one time also we at for the first time and last time we participated on a July fourth parade and we had, we had uh, we won as the most creative. Yeah. Float. So it was something that I could think that and feel happy with it because I know it was, it was not given, it was with a lot of effort to do things like that, you know. So, but now that I'm not here, I could say I could take deep breaths and I could say, well that's good to know. I can, I can. I told myself I can take care of myself. Now I have a, I bought me a house three years ago, a two bedroom house because from one I told you it was for my son six months. Then I'm to Eva splays for over a year. One year something. Then, uh, because she was saying that they were selling their place, so they helped me find another one bedroom apartment with the crystal field properties at pleasant valley. So I stayed there. Until Yeah, June. I think that was June until June. 2015 I stayed. I stayed there and then at that time I said, well, I don't know if my kids want me back. I would go back to Missouri. I will just forget my job. So I asked my kids, you really want me to be there? Back to you? I said, I'm ready. I am ready to go back if you really want me. Then my daughter said, no, mommy, just stay there because they found out that my company is a big company and I would not be able to find me a job like that with the privileges. you know I have invested a lot of my time because where when I was working with Willow Brooks, I have 13 years and they have accepted that years, so that year plus this year, so I'm now 20 something years, so that was a blessing for me to have that because the owner, my years of service at Willow brooks, so at this time I, I'm now getting all the benefits of the Cargill employee and it's, it's not easy to go start all over again and I'm looking into our am 57 years old, 58 in October, so

looking into an early retirement which is maybe 62, 63 so I can spend my time with my grandkids. I have one now.

Ashley: [00:18:48](#)

Congratulations! {21:50}

Tess: [00:21:51](#)

Yes, I had. She got, she turned one year old in March this year and so that's my plan as of now. You'll never know. It can change, but I'm. Where I am now is I have changed quite a bit from that experience of being the president and the going in to do the service because I was very active with Relay of life through our work. Very activity that relay of life, united way, um black run clean up, which we just did up Harrisonburg and then I am a mentor of also the bbs big sister. Big Brother's and I started with them, draw our, a company to, uh, this is my third year.

Ashley: [00:21:51](#)

oh, nice!

Tess: [00:22:48](#)

I have a, maybe she's 12 years old. No, I think know she was nine when I started. So, uh, black run, united way. And from time to time there was a time I was with the climate change, which are Johnny and the voice of Harrisonburg. I don't know If you heard about that, it started about two years ago. I was there in the first year...

Ashley: [00:22:48](#)

Yes I have.

Tess: [00:23:15](#)

with Lisa Porter. Yeah. So I started with that, but then a last year really I had, I was, my health was going down. I have a knee surgery, total knee replacement. It was hard for me. So I had my surgery in November last year. So I really, my health that prevails me to be more active because every time I started it was just hurting. So I decided to have the total knee replacement and came back to work this early 18th of January up to now and, and trying to just reorganize my life, you know, it's not easy. I did not know that, you know. Yeah. Going back, doing your normal work and then being alone. Now I have a house, I have more responsibilities the yard the inside, you know, it's different when you are just being in an apartment and there's so many things like the hope distributed. We're raising funds for, for a We have a new building and we're raising funds. So this year really I'm very much involved. I am still trying to. Yeah. But I'm planning to be, to go back and be also a help with the international festival this year. You can see as you come and see us!

Ashley: [00:23:15](#)

of course, yes!

Tess: [00:24:56](#) yeah and and we will be needing some help too [laughs]. we will be needing a lot of help.

Ashley: [00:24:59](#) I love to get involved too, Yes. You have my phone number

Tess: [00:25:01](#) yeah and you can even come and be in our meetings. So. So the more people. And we know that the more diversity we are, the better we can be where I am to that I am so enthused. And so I'm motivated to, I like people to come, you know, give them support and give them encouragement and motivation to be involved because really life is short and when you are involved as when you're, you feel more in it and you feel more heartier because you see the fruit of your labor talking. It's not you talk any work with it and that's the best way. Yeah. So yeah, 2008 and 2018 by August, this 18 years here in Harrison, in, in, in Virginia because my son not in six months, then Harrisonburg after that until 2015. then my I, my house. i'm now in my house.

Ashley: [00:25:01](#) okay.

Tess: [00:26:14](#) Yeah. So that's Harrisonburg has changed a lot really when I came in and it was a very small town, it was like a very few people. But then lately, like maybe two, three years ago started going up and that everything's like now I see lots of houses right there in republic road. There was no houses in that side.

Ashley: [00:26:38](#) Do you think these have been good changes or?

Tess: [00:26:47](#) For me it? is me. I love changes because I know in changes there's it's, it's beneficial for everyone. You know, you cannot stay like history, you know, you need to evolve and be a better person. Maybe you encounter things that are not good, but at the same because there's always bad and good things even as we have our bad side and good side, but if we cultivate our good side we will be more better person. They're not cultivated bad side, so that's when I meet somebody. I always look for the good things because I know when I look for by bad things, there's always something that I can be, but when you meet somebody and look at the good things, you hear people saying, oh, she is. Like I said, I'm not going to be that judgmental or not. just letting them because of what they said. I will just follow. It's how the person react with me and how the person talk with me that I can say something and sometimes I said we are now because I know God. I said, God, please help me. Help this person change or realize what she's doing because there are certain. Say there are certain, there are certain times, there are certain ways when you can also tell this person, you know, you cannot just tell you're not good, you did this one is something

like I learned to feel, to feel how, how may react or something. I don't know if you have that.

Ashley: [00:26:47](#)

yeah, understand what you mean there yes.

Tess: [00:28:27](#)

As you grow, as you get more experienced, you learn, you learn that feeling. But it's sometimes it's just if our mind is so busy we don't have that. But if we just slow down a little bit and even listen to what the person say you can, you can get it.

Ashley: [00:28:47](#)

Can you think of any um, I guess any further changes that you would like to see in our community in harrisonburg or improvements?

Tess: [00:28:56](#)

I would love for the people to be more involved, you know, on what we're doing here because in reality it's when you are involved that you can make more changes. You know, I want to see the other people get motivated, excited, get, you know, find some, find something in them that will, that will, that we can use to excite them. So they see the good changes, you know, we, we need to be more on top of the good changes even though we cannot say that it's a good change but be open to it and if there's something that's you think that will not give a positive impact, then we can find solution that solution yet get solutions from, you know, from the discussion of the different groups in the community. Because I know we have different culture and mentality are different. Even you, even Americans, I think it depends on how they grew up in their houses. So they had their own culture at home and more on us. We come from different country and sometimes I know a lot of my friends, they have a terrible time. um just terrible time to adjust in this country because one example is like in my country, you can go and visit your friends anytime here we need to call and, and you go, sometimes you come to our place and we're eating. You are invited. That's why we always cook more, more food because if there's somebody there we can always have this share our food because we don't want somebody sitting down there and we're eating. We want to share and have them with us and sometimes it was for me it was one of them, my shook because I know that this, these kids are coming to my place and when we are eating we were always so open and get some, give them something to eat. But one day I was in their house and they were eating. I feel so bad. I was embarrassed because they were eating under just like looking at me and didn't say nothing. you know? so it was so bad i didn't know what to do. so i just said oh can I just go home, I'll come back. Yeah, because you know, it's just, we're not used to it.

Ashley: [00:28:56](#) It's different yeah. {31:37}

Tess: [00:31:37](#) But with my step dad, my dad, my dad passed away. He was 42. My mom remarried. My Stepdad, who is from [inaudible], Missouri and she, they were here in. She came to stay here in 1984. I think that when and I came here in 1990 to stay. I came from Liberia, Africa. So we. He did not know too much too, and we were sitting there and you're used to just, he was just eating and eating and I think he was thinking that we just go dig in and eat because we, at first we were staying in their house. We took refuge because of the civil war in Liberia. So I had to, we were, we were, um, order to get out of the country because it was really getting bad. So me and my kids came to my mom and stayed with them for a year, but at first it was hard a little bit because that at least he was a very nice step dad and he was used to eating and all. But then later on he, he's, he changed too because they were there and he said, come on, get some food, you know. So we kind of. Yeah.

Ashley: [00:33:03](#) How old were your kids when you came here with them?

Tess: [00:33:06](#) My son was, um, it was in 1990 and he was born in 87, 85, so five years. And my daughter is about three, three to four years old because he, she's born in 87. The first time I came here in America is 1985. Then I stayed a little bit longer because I went with my mom to Philippines and we did have his birthday in Philippines and then came back here. So I came for vacation for three months. That's including Philippines and here. Then when my daughter was four months old in 87, we took her also here so my mom can see, can see her. So in 1990 we came to stay because of the bad thing and I was I was not that. I came with a passport with a. How you call this one. I was not an immigrant yet. Then, uh, we applied for a green card holder and then my mom, because my ex-husband is from Spain, didn't say your mom is coming, whether it's getting married, an American. Don't tell me that you want to go to America. You know how Spanish people something. So I don't know if you know some other. We have also this thing of them that they are so proud people too. So I really I never thought that being a citizen. Yeah. we immigrate and then we realize that Africa is not going to be a better country for us. And the kids started going to school. So my mom, um, petition as, and we work on our papers. We were still here, we did pay a lawyer to take care of our papers. We didn't have to get out of the country, so we have our green cards. Then later on the time that we could do our, um, being a citizen a, I did not do it until like, I think I came to tell since become a citizen until about 2007 I think. 2007 or 6 I applied for my citizenship.

Ashley: [00:35:26](#) And what was it like coming here and I was adjusting to this new climate with your kids being so young too?

Tess: [00:35:31](#) that was not really a problem because Africa It's very hot and humid. It came here in April so, um, it was a little bit colder over, so scared. Remember in in, in Missouri, the thunder and the lightning, they were like giant hearing it was there was a child and the three of us, because my mom had this big bed a queen sized bed, so the three of us, when we hear the lightning and thunder, we were three of us were just covered with them. with the blanket who were hugging each other because we were so scared, but then later on it was kind of. Yeah, it did. It was so cold and it was like, yeah, we did. One thing that I learned through my mom is she was always on top of me. I said, you will not survive in here if you're too slow. Because I did. I usually just cook, so I just attended to my cooking. When I washed my clothes. I just attend to washing clothes. Say not, not here in America you have. I learned multitasking, so when I cook she showed me cook, wash clothes and iron. we used iron clothes until the time that we learned not to iron it [laughs]. but she showed me when you don't have to iron, if you are on top of it. I mean when it's done you take it out and fluff it and it's almost like you're ironing. Yeah. But if you let it stay there will be all wrinkled, wrinkled. You can just turn it on again. The best thing is put in a hanger. I learned that one.

Ashley: [00:35:31](#) yes my mom taught me that too [laughs]. {37:24}.

Tess: [00:37:26](#) Yeah. So you don't have. But my mom is very good, with it when she just take it out and all this fold it good and it just kind of like you iron it and its still warm. Yeah. So my mom would say, you can not do this in America. all the time my mom was here so. you know, I used, at first I was not able to work because I came here as a, just a visitor visa. Yeah. Until uh, we had a friend, my sister was working uh, in one restaurant and she knew the owners and she waitressed is good money in the, you know, when you went to such really good, especially on a good restaurant, they give really good tips. So to change my environment and being bored, being home and not doing anything. So I go like Fridays, Friday nights and Saturday nights, like being, I was doing a hosTess. Yeah. They later on when I have my, you know, when my papers were OK, I started, I love to cook, so I found a part-time job, just a part-time job cooking for some priests in that and I learned a lot of things doing it also because they just let me go and just let me go to the grocery stores and just sign my name and get whatever I want for me to and it was nice. Then later on I went and my mom was always on top of me so you need to go back to school and she wanted

me to become a nurse because it was in demand, so I went to school, do my pre nursing courses and started a [inaudible] for registered nurse at St John's School of nursing and know it in Springfield, Missouri in Missouri. So I do have a bachelor degree in zoology. That's my major. And my minor chemistry. I have graduated in Liberia, University of Liberia because that's where I came from. I, yeah, I, I went there when I was 18 years old and went to school. [inaudible confusion] Yeah. My, my own. I should not be saying that. Where my dad worked for the government of health. He was a medical doctor. That's when he went to Africa and he was one of the, uh, like a, a doctor in one province.

Tess:

[00:40:13](#)

He was the medical officer of one province of Liberia and I was 18 and I had a boyfriend, a Filipino who was in Canada and asked my dad for marriage. I was in Philippines. they left us in Philippines because we were still the second years. I was a sophomore and doing a bachelor of science. My Dad called and said What? What's this? I was not ready for marriage. My ex, my, my boyfriend was. And so he decided for me and my other sister to. Take us to Africa because he did not want us to get married so young. I was 18, so after they are, when we went to school there. But then that same year two, my dad passed away. He had a cardiac arrest. He was and he was doing so much work where they had some epidemic from that province and he had to take almost everyday travel to Monrovia. The capital. Liberia too, [inaudible] for his patients because they did not have the resource, the medicine to take care of them so they have to go to the main main hospitals. They were just at that time they were just building a hospital also, so my dad stayed in the hospital for two to, I think it was two nights, one Saturday we went there and spend time with them in home to our friend to sleep. On Sunday morning we were woken, waking up and said, hey, you need to go to the hospital, you need to go to your dad. So. But when I reached there, that already passed away.

Ashley:

[00:42:23](#)

I'm sorry to hear that.

Tess:

[00:42:25](#)

yeah, Forty two years old. So we took his cadaver home. Philippines, everything is paid by the government and the government of Liberia offered us scholarship to finish school. So that's what happened. And then there I met my ex-husband from Spain because my mom started working for the company and my mom met my dad, my step dad, and I said, well I better go home to up Philippines. I don't want to be in the middle of them relationship. I don't want to stay with them and they get married and there comes this guy, my ex husband and said, hey,

this. He felt, he told me how he felt and that is OK if I go back to Philippines. But then I decided, OK, I just marry, got married with him for 16 years and have two kids, Amabell and Alex and got divorced here in, um, 19... I cam 1990 So 9- about 97. You got divorced and at the same time my stepdad passed away the same day we were in the court. Yeah, my step-dad passed away. My mom is never married, but, um, were four girls. All girls? No. No boys and the oldest

Ashley: [00:42:25](#)

Are your siblings here here too?

Tess: [00:44:02](#)

yes we're all here. Yeah. My Step-dad one was in Philippines. Before then my dad was asking, only went for her. It was very hard for her to come because she was over age already. When my mom get married with my step that it took him only a week or two weeks to change the nationality. Yeah. My Dad, my step dad was a diplomat. He was a agriculture specialists in Liberia at that time. We. And USA personnel, so it was OK because my sister was only eight or nine years old when it happened. When they got married it was easy for them. So she went and traveled with them and we went to Bangladesh and then they gave me, said 60 or sorry, my stepdad said no, I want to retire. So he stayed here and my mom stayed with them and she went to work and, and get some certificate. Become uh, you know, the one that gives medicine to the older people that's like she had to do. She was only as a nursing student when she married my dad at that time when they get married. So when she came, she worked in the nursing home and then we get certified. And that's the thing when I came in here, yeah, it was hard for me because I wasn't so use. I was used to have my own place and have somebody do things for me. I came back here, had to do everything and nobody would take care of my daughter and my sons. I have to do that. And then I also found, we found out that my son was also, he's disabled. He is, uh, he has a retardation, mental, like a child. So that's the main thing, I think really that it's the main thing. That's why we decided to stay here in America because of the, his future, you know, I want him to be happy and, and I found out and I've seen how the American um, Accept disabled people and how they make the support and have their life better where I could not find it at home in Philippines or in Spain because I've seen a lot of disabled people in Spain. They hide them from people. They stay at home here. I see a lot of the, a lot of things they can do, you know, a lot of things they offer for them to have a full life if possible. So that's the one thing I liked and made me, you know, so yeah, this is a place for my son

Ashley: [00:44:02](#)

And what kinds of things has your son been doing?

Tess:

[00:47:22](#)

well, yeah, at first it was stuff also really having the not same for him because he is mentally child. He's 33 years old. He just turned 33, last 18 of this month, so he, he goes to workshop in Springfield and there's an access bus that comes picking up. We pay a little bit because it's government funded, so Monday when Monday to Wednesday he works in the workshop and then choose a Thursday to Friday he goes to continued ed and to learn skills. Like a money casheir. Yeah, but during like Mondays and Mondays after work he goes bowling when you have. Yeah. We enrolled him in bowling and on Tuesdays he goes to team. He goes to a park. There were a lot of the same disables people, different categories. They go meet and they do things together. Yeah. And I wanted him more, but my, my daughter said, no mom he wont even have more time to Spend time with that with dad. So I said OK, but he wants to come here with me. And as a mom I feel so bad about it though because I know whenever I go visit name she, he has me that day that I go home, he just has mum I want to go with you to see that. Yeah. But before that he was always with me. We got divorced, he was with me, she stayed with me, just me and him because my daughter was with that middle school. She went and, and with him stay with him and different city which is like about 20 minutes away. Yeah. But my son was always with me. He only go and visit his dad on weekends, like Friday night he comes to pick him up and he said he sent to me on Sunday afternoon. So when I came over here, that was really tough. I know I was crying almost sometimes I was doing my job because I miss him a lot and whenever I go he likes it to me and he hugs me that when he turns away and then there was one time I know he was crying. Yes, he was because. When I leave sometimes when I go there I drive by myself how to draw them. So much driving time. And then one time I went back, I say I forgot something. [interruption] He turned around and I see this big tears just running on the cheek. So when I went back to then and i'm just crying crying half way to St Louis and I don't know if you know springfield, Missouri, Springfield and St Louis, like about four hours drive my. I have two sisters and they live in O'fallon outside simply is. So that's where I go sometimes stop there before I proceed my trip to Springfield. Like I live here like 7:00 o'clock in the morning or if I could better five I reached to, to their place in St Louis about let's say about 8:00 because you know the time change because one time. So I reached about 8:00 in the evening. So yes, sometimes I just stayed there so spend time with them, sleep there and then the following day I go proceed to Missouri which is about four hours drive . But there was a time I went straight though I went straight from here there I reached like maybe 11, almost 12 o'clock.

Ashley:	00:51:24	oh wow, Do you feel like here in Harrisonburg there would be less opportunity for your son or? {51:29}
Tess:	00:51:29	<p>There is a lot of opportunity because I went and looked for it. I went to the workshop, I met a lot of people, I was researching about the opportunity, the possibilities for him to come, but my, the reason that I just stopped doing it because I don't want to have any bad relationship with his sister Amabell and his dad because his dad told the kids that the only reason why he's here is because of them or is he would have been in Spain. So I think in my daughter's mind she said, mom, dad did not go and for, for, for him to be with me and i'm just me, you know, if something happened to me, what will happen to Alexis? So while there she is there and her dad is there and my mom is there. So that's the main thing. So I did, I just stop because she told me if you're insistent taking him there, I will fight you in court and I don't want that. I want, I want our family to be close to be together. Now that they have accepted that me and her dad cannot, we outgrow each other. We cannot be together. You know, it just not she, she knows that. And she accepted that I don't want more, more, you know, conflict. So that's why when I go there, yeah, he spend, he has a bowling is like, he's so happy. And wherever I go he wanted to be with me all the time. We got to walmart, i said stop talking because he's loud. And then he tells the cashier, this is my mom from Virginia. Yeah. that's my son, but he is Is Very, he is fun. Loving. Very um, helpful was to help all the time. Only my mom didn't want him to help. She thinks that she is faster. Know she didn't have the patence but we knew how, you know, mom doesn't have patient. She's in hers. She, my mom's 77 years old. So I miss him. But at the same time thinking I have to be strong because I want him to bond with his dad and his sister. I know if I'm there, even my daughter I think will not be so strong like now because I know they want something. I will be running, I'll be there when I'm not there. They have to struggle to. And struggle makes you strong.</p>
Ashley:	00:54:26	umhm, kind of like how you learned how to be more independent. when coming here {54:30}
Tess:	00:54:28	<p>Yeah. And becoming more independent. Yeah. First Time I came here in Missouri In Missouri not. Not the time that we spent. I was so scared to go out alone. I don't want to go out. And My step dad taught me how to drive. I was, I already drove in Africa where I have a stick-shift car. But when I came here, so my stick that showed me how to use the automatic. Yeah. So, but then yeah, I learned and then I realized that if I don't go venture to other places I'll go nowhere. So that's what I did. And I showed</p>

my other friend who's been there for a while. She was so scared to go to Kansas City. I know Kansas city. Have you been there?

Ashley: [00:55:22](#)

I have not been there, no.

Tess: [00:55:25](#)

Boy, they have this four lanes and drove fast. And my friend, she used to go there to act as a service because she is Church of Christ, but Christ founded by a Filipino in Philippines. So they have a church there and she's part of that. And she used to call me and tell me, let's go drive the car. For me and yeah, it's so fast. It's like 70 up there and four lanes. and then now she, she does drive.

Ashley: [00:55:59](#)

Did you teach her how to drive or?

Tess: [00:56:01](#)

I think it's not teaching. She knew how to drive, but the thing is the courage, the courage to go there, to be brave, to go because she was frozen, scared and I know that's our thing is when we are scared we cannot do anything. It stopped us from doing something. It stopped us from feeling the good things. It does stop us. It makes us do just do something. You don't want to change because you want just the common thing, a normal thing. You want what you used to be, but it's when like change, like you said, the change in Harrisonburg. if we are not opening the change. Just imagine. Just imagine we will not grow. The mentality over the people will not. They will be stopped and then when somebody come in and it was a what? It's when you are exposed to these, exposed to other people, exposed to other culture that your your knowledge also really expand and then by that I feel like when you know about them, you really learn to respect. You will learn to understand why they do it is in that because if you don't know, you see that's so weird. why are you doing that, that's not right. How do well, how would you put this not right when they don't know how we are brought up or how we see things. I mean as for me, yeah, that's me and I think I feel exposure, exposing people to other culture, the things that maybe kind of weird will help a lot too. To open the mind or the community. that's why involvement of everyone and and discussing things together where we can discuss. We can talk in an adult way. we don't have to quarl. We didn't have to fight. We can compromise and find good ways to do things. You know where everyone involved gets the benefits. I will just that there's always a way where we can benefit and only also we. That's it. It's, it's, it's educate.

Ashley: [00:58:42](#)

I know you've told me about quite a few important changes in your life. Were there any other important changes?

Tess: [00:58:51](#) My religion, the changes, uh, for me now I have changed a lot through experiences. Like relationship for me is I wouldn't say sacred, but I do respect and it's a big thing for me. relationship And when I relate with people I do the best way I can, where I can be more authentic. The one that changed me is like being in a lot of people are so down to earth and are so open to, to their bad experiences because it's very hard to tell other people your bad experience. We want to tell the good things, you know, and it's so hard to accept that we do make mistakes and that's one thing that I have learned that being honest and being authentic and being respectful and, and an open minded will will help me a lot. it makes my life different. My perception has changed. i have changed, I have changed. Yeah. I have changed and I know I have been patient, right? Patient. But um, I was a little bit judgmental before. I now I'm not, I'm not. That judgemental.

Ashley: [00:58:51](#) Judgmental in what sense?

Tess: [01:00:39](#) judging people. How the...like culture wise, you know. why do you do this and why do you do that? I accepted that. It doesn't mean that I have to do it. I will not tell you. Oh, that's not good because I mean, I know, I know God, but that's the part where I could not see God. Did they know what they're doing or you don't know what they're doing please. It's not for me to tell them, but it's, you know, I will pray for them. You know, because there are so many things here that's done that like morality, you know? Uh, it's not for me and, and I, I just like, I just pray for that because now they have something [inaudible]. Girls don't be so freezing. Girls don't just open your legs. [laughs] I'm sorry, not just open then. boys don't do that. Don't do that. You know, your, your mom, you have to thing you need to respect the women. But it's just that the thing that people really do value our values are, you know, I think there's a lot of...I just feel like being a woman, we deserve the best. And having the best is also finding self respecting us because if we don't have the self respect you, you cannot expect the best for you need to allow yourself to have your own value and the Stand firm for it. It cannot be just because like this guy got so much money, have the best sports car and all. It's OK. It's not OK. You have to think of the consequences. Is that I feel like everybody has a choice. No, it's not for me to judge them, that kind of way as for me, I want the best bring God's blessing. And so I think that's why I'm still like this. I mean people will say, why didn't you get married again? I have experienced, but it's hard, you know, it's hard to trust in our relationship. Substance is very important. If somebody cannot respect you and don't have any value, how can you? i want a Marriage, I don't want any more divorce. I want marriage for life if there is. Yeah. And

so that's, that's what I said. I'd rather be not married somebody and I'm still happy they think i'm lonely, i'm not. I know god. I have a lot of people.

Ashley: [01:03:30](#)

Yeah. You have your whole community here.

Tess: [01:03:31](#)

Uh, yeah, I have the whole community and I learned and I still, I'm still growing every day. We are growing every day we're learning something. We just have to be open and, and one thing also I learned is to accept it because I think I have that feeling that I don't deserve it. I said, thank you. If I said, oh no, no, I didn't do it, you know, that's not now. I learned to say when somebody say something good, I said, oh thank you. Need to learn to love our self being human being a woman

Ashley: [01:04:13](#)

That's a great attitude to have {1:04:15}.

Tess: [01:04:18](#)

Yeah, and I know we can instill it to other women because we deserve the best and to be really the best is to have our own self value. The be firm, but money isn't everything because you know what? Have money now, how about tomorrow

Ashley: [01:04:18](#)

it could be gone.

Tess: [01:04:41](#)

its gone and when its gone what you do, you'll be crying in the street asking for help. Nobody's helping me. Maybe three friends we'll have even now or for two, three days it will be awake, but they cannot continue helping you with your own family.

Ashley: [01:05:01](#)

I have another question. Since being here, building on the judgment. Have you experienced any judgment from other people?

Tess: [01:05:09](#)

Maybe, but I don't look at that way. I, I, I don't put it in my mind because I know there's people that were, are always they survived from negativity, you know, to get people, so to do that, I've seen people that will put you down to make them feel good about you, but that's up to you really is. That's up to us. If we let them do that, does we call toxic people? Never happy, never happy. They always complaining. I met those people too. People were always stock something. No matter how you try, you'll be positive with them and try to put energy in them, but they are not happy. I learned to stop doing it. I learned to just get away. Stay away from that. People. Stay away and have your sense of you don't want to be crazy. You don't want to be depressed. Be with people who are, who give you positive energy, who makes

you feel happy because it happens a lot to me, especially at work when sometimes you are overworked and people get like depressed and, and start bickering. i dont want too or not just work friends. I don't get involved with that. I don't want to get involved with them. Stay away from drama.

Ashley: [01:06:50](#) So I know you told me where you're working now and I told you, told me back when you were in Missouri that you worked as a hosTess and as a cook. Did you do anything else in between that time or?

Tess: [01:07:01](#) I work, I will work with that. I work with willowbrook foods to. I know everything right there because I started as a....how you call this one? Um, I started from the bottom like any production, we're dealing with turkey in there. So I started second shift and I was fun to, it was open wide and eye opening for me because learning, oh this is how to make. This is how ham was made you know the slices that you buy at the grocery stores. Oh, this is how I did. I said, they say we need to strip it and say what's stripping because we put this, they make, they make this ham and put it a special, a plastic and they put it in the oven, Cook it, and then after the oven, that's when we strip the plastic. We take out the plastic bag and then when we take it from their we either wrap it with spices. Sometimes you can this, there's lots of spices. so either wrap it or some of them we, it goes through the conveyor belt with a liquid smoke liquid smoke on it. I a.. I mean that's, eye opening for me. I've never seen this how are they made. from there. We put it in the machine where it bags again, we bag them. Then it was the uh, dates and then put in the box input. But from that box it goes to pallets then to the car, to the truck that will deliver it, you know? And some of them we fry. And from there I worked, that's production for sometimes. Then I got so tired because we were. I said, what's going on? We may work better than men though. I'd seen guys. Is this a big guys? But look at this. They're like, im not saying lazy but um I think they let the women work.

Ashley: [01:07:01](#) I believe it.

Tess: [01:09:18](#) Yeah, we work more than them So I said no, let me go to sanitation and worked for sanitation. But first I was working in the laundry six months now I did not forget because that was a tough job. Never ending washing, folding, drying, just we smocks white smocks, big glovess of these sleeves, the aprons, the gloves standing and its never ending. And then somebody asked for supplies, you know, come there. I was, I was doing second ship. So I said, oh, I went home to the Philippines for a vacation. When I came back I said, no, I want to do other things.

So I went and do other things. I clean stuck cleaning floors, cleaning bathrooms, never done that before in my life. never cleaning floors. And then I'm cleaning a containers where the grin for the Turkey, the the grin that they fixed for Turkey. Makes So injectors, injectors, choppers. Huge massagers use much bigger than this. And at first I was waiting for somebody. I'm too small. I cannot love something. You know? Sometimes you have to lift the cover. After that I said, no, I cannot wait for somebody to come and help me. I find ways where I could take it out so I can clean it, so I started from that. Then I become a trainer from you see its by hats, white iand then we have yellow, which is training. Then blue, the blue. It was become you become a an area leader, how you know and red is the supervisor, so I become blue. I got the hat for blue and when you have that you have to learn, know how to train, how to inspect because you have to inspect machines before a QC quality control before, but production come and do use the area so you need to clean all those areas. I learned to. Nobody wanted to climb. It's not claiming, but you have to have a G cliff where it push you, that thing that machine that it goes up to clean the units. yeah you have to harness and all. I had to do the things that I've never done in my life and dealing with different kinds of people there because there's a lot of people that can stay. It was third shift from 10:30 to 6:30 in the morning. So a lot of us, our, our coworkers come from a halfway house. You know what this halfway house?

Ashley: [01:09:18](#)

No, i'm not familiar with it. {1:12:32}

Tess: [01:12:32](#)

they were, they were criminals. They were like, some of them were mostly the one that I had was um, they were the meth the main meth, so they were in jail halfway house. It's like halfway going out. They're almost ready to get out the finish their sentence. So they were in the halfway house and then their supervisor, they have something in there somewhere in the ankle. They have that one become an work willow brooks It's OK for them. But Cargill don't accept felons though. They were fellons, right? Cargill don't accept those. If you have a felony, a thing, they will not accept your accept. But Willow Brock's before. Yes. Especially for sanitation because Ah, we're always short of people and it's hard to get people to work third shift. So we have people from halfway house, some of them mostly from meth and production and some of them really killed some people too, but they were in the halfway house. They are almost done and there's always somebody that we can call if something happen. So I started from knowing everything from there and then I feel, so for me, I, I'm happy because for me I knew, I knew it. It's just the knowledge of knowing, being able

to do it. That's where I am. I mean I was not thinking about this status really. It's just my knowledge that learning things and being able to do it and at the same time really is also a having respect with other people even though they come from that type, from the area of their life, you know, because there are things that I find very good in them because they are criminals doesn't mean that they are so bad. They are bad.

Ashley: [01:14:37](#)

And now, um, so what kinds of... I know you told me a little bit about your job now, but what kinds of work and like what kinds of people are you working with now here in Harrisonburg?

Tess: [01:14:46](#)

oh, Here we're like family where where I'm working with were not so many and there's one guy and one guy. most we are women and, and now this time I really am so happy because I see a teamwork helping each other. Before when I came first came in. It's just like, you do this, you always do that. And then the others just do this, you know, now there's more, um, there's more people getting into each other, helping each other and if somebody can not do it, they just jump in and help you. Before said nobody helped you finish that one. Nothing there. nobody. And before. Also, it's like when you, you're new, you do the worst thing. Some just want to sit down somewhere, you have to continue doing this thing like that. But now I've seen so much that uh, do you have changed in a way where, excuse me, I wanted to learn other things that not just this thing. Now I'm learning more different stuff because when I came in I was really more on the chemistry side and doing nutritional value. testing for nutritional value of our products, like routine salts, calcium, fats, and some other special testing. That's the use it for. I think they use it for a labels of our product moisture's now, uh, when I came back from the surgery since I was in there, I think because I was in there to do all that. So she stopped accepting other testing. But the more basic one in chemistry there were only doing bones Calcium, moisture. I think that's more or less all. We're not doing any more like fats, fats, protein. We're not doing, so now. I'm, I'm more and more of my time is really micro is micro area, we're testing salmonella, bacteria, coniflobatra. all this bacteria that make us sick. we're growing it to find out we grow using some samples from different plans. We get samples from Nebraska with Erskineville in Nebraska, from Springdale. We have Dayton man, we have Timberville. They sent us products, Albert Lee to, to test for Salmonella and to test for some. Um, bacteria and uh yeast like digging the grave is there. So I'm, I'm learning all those and, and I'm working now on learning to really finish the whole process, like a, putting the samples into the machine. We have big machines that will analyze it, it will read it and gives us results

after, I think it's after three, four hours. So that one I have quite a few to learn more like reporting stuff, reading the, we have plates, we culture it, put into plates and then after incubator and we read, read how many spots there and then they have their space shelf, how many colonies and stuff like that and what is acceptable and not acceptable. So it's like it. Yeah. Because before I told my supervisor member that um, I was not, I wasn't just doing my chemistry and I think I was bored. So I went out to the community. I bought more of my time to the community and I don't know, it was God's thing too because he let me do it. Like attending voices of Harrisonburg meetings, like on Wednesdays, like at the icehouse ice house, the house I used to go there like for an hour or two I think I came out from my work and she did not mind. I come, I came out, I go back into chemistry. I didn't mind staying alone too, I mean staying for long as long as I finished my testing. She, that she did not mind itself flexible she is. So it was really, I think God put it in a way where I could come in and out. I've been going to lots of meetings. I come out, I broke, I had these meetings and I said, OK, then I come back and finish what I have to do on that day. Sometimes they come home like 8:00, 9:00 in the evening for some occasions where I have to go and attend meetings. And she did not mind. So he was OK. Now, uh, I think she's still OK, but I have not really done that because we are very short handed and I see my friends, they're need, need my help, you know? And I hate to leave people doing those thing and I'm out there, you know, I, I think I have to prioritize, you know, I work. I told myself I came to Virginia to work. It's not the community that my main, my main reason why I'm here because of my job. I came to work, I came here to connect with people, not to separate them. That's my main thing and I want to see improvement. I want to see this. I think for either for my goal community that people will learn and other things and that life is short and there's so much stuff you can learn if you're just open to it. There is a lot of things, even in the small things just be open to. It doesn't be close and, and, and, and I just think life is, is very interesting. What do you think?

Ashley:

[01:22:00](#)

I agree yeah, and especially being here like on a college campus, there's so many things that when you just open your eyes and look around, you realize there's so many things that you can learn from all the experiences that you have and the people that you interact with, like whether or not you realize it at first. When you reflect on those things, you realize how they kind of changed who you are.

Tess:

[01:22:16](#)

Yeah, it does. And then you become acceptable. We are accepting to them and you become the realize that the you give

respect, but when you do that, you are respecting yourself. Did you know that you respect yourself, respect yourself, respect others, but sometimes you don't. Maybe we will because we get our minds going somewhere. We, we tend to forget. There's just so many things, things in our mind and then then you come to realize, oh wow. And you learn something from them.

Ashley:

[01:22:55](#)

I just have a couple more questions to. Um, I just kind of wrap it up. Are there any. I know I asked you about changes that you would like to see in Harrisonburg. Are there any changes that you'd like to see in the nation General?

Tess:

[01:23:06](#)

I always think about really what I want love. people that we are here on earth to love each other. You know, and that I always think like in all of this really come back to love, you know, all in thinking about it that at the end it's all about love because, you know, if we can only read love, you have respect, you have understanding, you have compassion and you know, if we have only that one, there will be peace in our nation. And, and, and what do you do? why do We have to complicate life, you know, now. I mean I think it's us, it's us. People thinking only about ourselves is us thinking I'm, I'm better than the other one says thinking I want more. If we don't have that one, if we just be accepting and, and be able to be just satisfied or what we have, you know, and I don't think we're, we have to fight, we have to kill each other. You know, it's, it's like it's degreed in as maybe being selfish being, you know, if that, if we can work it out and take that one out from the mentality of other people who have that, I think the world will be a better place to live in. Amen. Yeah, it, it's, it's that thing. It's the material things. I think if we learn, I'm not seeing it. I know God, but maybe you think other people think of other person, you know, that the, the believe in. If, if only we can be, we can really learn to understand and we learn to respect each other. I think we can solve this case. this a war in, in other countries. No, and want to say some thing too that like you think about the union union, some people want to have union, some people don't. I was just going into what happened with Cargill to the other day. I don't know if you read. They were trying to unionize the Cargill and my friend called me and said, Oh, I've just been thinking about because I saw her name on the paper that she was one. One of the people that was arrested went to Dayton plant Cargill and they want to just demand something, talk to them and nobody came out so they went. I think they went to the premises instead, so they were caught because they were not. They were against the law, right. They will listen to them. They should just be say not in the property, but at the same time Cargill did not send any representative to meet these people. So I told my friend, I don't

know because that I will ask God to give me more guidance about it because this is very sensitive. I just feel like if there is somebody who knows how to, who, who knows somebody who talk to Cargill somebody and how you called inner... intermediate person that can talk to Cargill with the other people who have demands or who or who were afflicted. You feel depressed or they he'll feel repressed or by them because you know they're. They're out of job because things happen. If there's some representative that can talk to them and make them see what's happening. I mean if they could resolve with that, resolved the problem. We don't need a union, we don't have to be unionized. I mean it's the same thing. You have to pay, you know, and, and it's the same. The same thing. Some people are good, some people are not. Some people take advantage of it, you know, like my sister has been telling me about their two in New York. They are union is good, it will represent you, but there are some people too that is using it. You're saying in a way that because some people use it in a bad way so I just feel that whatever we do, we have the choices but then our choices, there's always a positive and negative negative outcome. So we just have to balance, you know, to find balance where, where it has a positive or negative at that that there's more positive than negative because you don't think that we can have a perfect thing. only god. I don't think there's always something because I just feel like life is made a positive and negative and then to find out how can you. How can you see what is positive and negative? If everything is positive or everything is negative? you know? You see how I easy it. If you don't like you, you behave the same way and you see the same thing. A child watching you is deceived, you behave the same so the child will will see that behavior. It's the same thing, but if he sees something, no. The other one is not behaving the same way. Then he can compare and he can tell which one is better for him. That's my analogy or something...

Ashley: [01:30:00](#)

yes, you you like to lead by example. You know?

Tess: [01:30:02](#)

Yeah, and I like that. I always say talk is cheap, so it's like like lead by example. If you say something, not just with lips, but the with...work work with it, what you're doing, you're going to school. It's not just talking, talking. You have to put effort in and you have to read. You have to do your thesis. You have to do a lot of things

Ashley: [01:30:02](#)

[laughs] yeah, a lot of things. {1:30:32}

Tess: [01:30:33](#)

but you know afterwards you don't realize how great you did, how great you are, how you can. You can feel more satisfaction

than having like something just given to you. You will not appreciate it that much. I've seen a lot of incidents where a child is given so much stuff. full of toys all at Christmas time, room full of toys. At first is the child is so happy with this one. then afterwards he doesn't understand. then comes another and he's happier. What happened to the rest? in Just four seconds. He was laughing and so happy. Then afterwards, go back to the other one. How can appreciate. He never appreciate anything and by doing that too, it's not. I don't know if he will appreciate his life. He would just think that it's everything is given, handed down, but if you work for it, you really feel it. I thought before for me to add before I'm the oldest child, so I was the favorite one. What I wanted i always got. Sometimes I said I wish I'm still a child because now I have to work. You know what, I always tell my friends, the more I went, the more I feel about myself, the more I'm happier. that's what I've learned.

Ashley: [01:30:33](#)

That's great. Yeah,

Tess: [01:32:06](#)

yeah, because I can see something. I can see my, the, my labor. I could see that I really, really did the best I could. I was really putting a lot of my energy to that thing and then I can see results even if there's no result. I just. That feeling that you did it, that satisfaction that you just don't let it go. You, you, you did something out of it. {1:32:29}

Ashley: [01:32:32](#)

Another question I have. I know there's a very strong rhetoric around the issue of immigration, the public sphere today. Do you have any comments that you want to make on that? {1:32:40}

Tess: [01:32:40](#)

I see a lot of conversation and I like, I want to be neutral, you know, I want, I like to hear from them. I like to hear from them and yeah they are right in their own way and my friend are also writing their own way and, and, and, and they said they want to change this way and then somebody said, how could you do that? You know, it's not fair because the way their experiences so that they have to work very hard. Like the Dama Da...Da what's that?

Ashley: [01:32:40](#)

Daca?

Tess: [01:33:11](#)

Daca. Yeah. I said, I asked my friend, what do you think about Daca? I said, no, I don't. Why it's not fair. Look, we come here. I come here. I struggled. I seen my kids to. I go to work every day and all this. I seen, I seen my kids and I have to pay from my pocket. I worked very hard and I'm not very familiar with daca

but She said like that daca is like a. do you have these things and they don't have to go work they're Just given the thing. They go to w-- they go to school. I don't know how true it is, but something like, yeah, they don't have to really work that much. Like, like then-

Ashley: [01:33:53](#) what i've heard is that [microphone moves] I'm sorry. My understanding of daca is that it simply allows children who were brought here and are undocumented to be protected against deportation while they work and go to school. And that once your-

Tess: [01:33:53](#) yeah, free. right?

Ashley: [01:33:53](#) I'm not entirely sure if the-

Tess: [01:34:14](#) Yeah, but something like that. But like here that who, people who has been here, like my sister, I mean, yeah, like my sister didn't have that. She has to work very hard. She has and my mom and you have to help pay for her education. You see I, that's the free education for daca I think thats the thing and she has to go [inaudible]. You to get her own money. But I think I honestly the daca is different. So that's, I think that's, that's the thing. I said well if you say, if you look at it that way to know. And I think for the daca people they look at other things they have for me, I think they have to think also what, they have to listen to what the other people say. It's not just I have to do this, I have to do this, you know, you have to do this, you have to give it to me. They shouldn't be. And I mean it's a privilege. I think that's a privilege for those people who have daca to. So I think they had to listen to other people. Why they do they don't. Why you have to find out why they don't want it to continue.

Ashley: [01:34:14](#) some more open communication-

Tess: [01:35:25](#) Yeah. They have to. And then at the same time, maybe by that they can be, you know, they, the, there's some kind of changes where both sides can be satisfied. you know? not just like i want this like a kid. I want this. I want this. I said, I mean this should be something where okay you can have both of them. How about you can have it this time and then tomorrow I cannot be stuff. I think that's the best way though.

Ashley: [01:35:54](#) But do you have any thoughts on, I guess the debate around the border control issues and the idea of building a wall and not building a wall.

Tess: [01:36:05](#) ohh not building or buildina a- who was telling me something? i, I don't know. I just hear something like somebody was telling me that here is one of this. She is asked to be a witness or something. How? I don't know the name of that. You are asked by the government to be one of the witness out to, to judge. I'm

Ashley: [01:36:05](#) on a jury?

Tess: [01:36:34](#) yes jury duty? and I have heard a lot and not, I'm not discriminating the Hispanic people, you know, because what I heard is really in Harrisonburg. There's a lot. That's what she's saying. That's what I heard just from her that a lot that's happening is Hispanic people are in Rampant having criminal criminals that are Hispanic, you know, so I don't know if you hear about Filipinos because Filipino, we are group of people that we want to just, we don't want to trouble. We want to do the best we can and we are more or less Filipino is like we are like family oriented and we just want to stay in one side. We don't want trouble so we don't want to go out and, and, and, and, and have [inaudible] like I said Oh we want this and that, you know, we don't want to be in that. We are just people that don't want any trouble at all and wants to stay away from that. But I know a lot of, some people, they are so vocal with it, but then do they didn't know really why they really know really what they're doing, you know, the, the, do they have the, the full knowledge, you know, or don't know the consequences of what they're doing. I don't know because myself, I want stay away from that. No, I, I've been asked to rally that what they call rally and all. I'm not very comfortable with rallies. I'm more on, on helping other people on other things Than Rallies voicing out those things. I just feel like negotiates negotiations and, and if we can avoid rallies that would be great. This, this things I stay from.

Ashley: [01:38:38](#) Yes. I understand where you're coming from. so Is there anything else that you would like the public to know about your story that you want to mention that you haven't told yet?

Tess: [01:38:47](#) Oh, did I tell you about that? Uh, we are, we are in the archive, Shenandoah archive.

Ashley: [01:38:47](#) Um, I don't recall.

Tess: [01:38:55](#) Yeah. One time I was, we were interviewed by Hannah mosses. That was in 2015.

Ashley: [01:38:55](#) Oh Yes, i-

Tess:	<u>01:39:04</u>	And we have, you can find me, my thing too in special umm...
Ashley:	<u>01:39:04</u>	collections?
Tess:	<u>01:39:15</u>	collections yes Shenandoah. they talk about how we come from Shenandoah valley, .something like that. This one is a little bit different because your, your, your, your thing is, you know, with the government with the Daca
Ashley:	<u>01:39:15</u>	well-
Tess:	<u>01:39:24</u>	there is more on how we come and I think you can. Some of my stories, some of them are there. I mean, the way I say things might be kind of different. You might get something new in that.
Ashley:	<u>01:39:37</u>	OK, nice. Um, is there anything that you want students to take away from this interview after they listened to it?
Tess:	<u>01:39:43</u>	Ooh, can I at least. [laughs]. I don't know. You know, what I know, I'm just letting you. I'm just telling what I feel in my experience, but I don't know [laughs]. you know how hard it is to think. how about you, what you think?
Ashley:	<u>01:40:08</u>	What I think students should take away?
Tess:	<u>01:40:08</u>	uh huh
Ashley:	<u>01:40:10</u>	well, I think you've told a very nice story about staying true to yourself and always being open minded and being open to change and trying to always work as hard as you can to just improve yourself and kind of get to the best place which you can. Which has been very inspiring. I love how you also spoke about your motives to stay here in the United States and how um, how you kind of coped with adjusting to the different culture and how you kind of found your own way and like an industry that was ideal for you and how you continue to build on your education and I'm a do what you wanted to do, which I think was very inspiring. I think that's definitely something a lot of students can take away from this and benefit from in listing to this. Would you agree with that or?
Tess:	<u>01:40:55</u>	Yeah, I think I get a. That would be nice because my thing really is to inspire and motivate people and be more open minded to change because change is good. It's for the better. If it changed that that's bad, then I don't want to be part of it. But maybe somehow if some changes you cannot stop so maybe I can use it for something else. Something good. We can make something

good out of it. You know? It's always like doing the, doing the good thing, doing the right thing. Yeah. But if you use it for bad things, I am not for it. Yeah. We need to change for the best for everyone. It's not just for one person because we want people to accept maybe sometimes it's harder for them to accept, you know, some people are so used to all things and some people, I think it's personality, you know, there's some fixed for personality, right? But you know, we, there's always ways to, to the to do things that where we can show, show this person that this, these [inaudible] is good. like I said talk. It's not enough you need to do the walk.

Ashley:

[01:42:20](#)

I just have one more question for you to take a second to think about this. You can, I guess, what was the biggest struggle or challenge or barrier that you had to overcome in immigrating to the United States, which you think is important for other people to hear?

Tess:

[01:42:36](#)

Hm. Well lets see about that, well, one thing I want to say, so the people in our country are always thinking that coming over here in America is a land of poss-lots of potential to a land where we, a land . Oh, now I don't want to say gold, but a lot of opportunities where people are given the if we want to work, there's work, you know, like in my country is hard because you want to work. It's hard to find work. There's just so many people. here, You work no matter what, you can find money and there's so much stuff to do. i know A lot. I know what in my country, a lot of, even people like stealing in department stores, I heard their, they're graduate, they're college graduate. they wont accept people not college graduate anymore. So here, I mean it's like some people been work three jobs [laughs]. yeah, three jobs, so they get more money there. It's like there's no more national. Not as much opportunity, you know, but here if you just work hard work and you have the energy to work three, four jobs, you can do it. [laughs] Yeah. But immigrant immigration here is, it was not, well some people are blessed. I can just say some people are blessed and have not a lot of trouble doing their paperwork's in bringing their kids here. In sort time. A lot of people have troubles. I don't know. What I can say is about my sister, she was like 20 something years old when my mom petitioned her while she was petitioned before that, but she did not agree. My mom remarrying my Stepdad, so at that time she was in Philippines and my other sister, she was 18 years old yet, so my sister, youngest sister went and gave her or two papers for her just to sign so she could have been- easier in Bangladesh, in Asia because it's this, you know, everybody knows everyone. So it was not as bad as my sister was so upset with my mom. She, I think she was she burned it, she burned

the papers. Then the time when she decided that, oh, I want to be there, I want to be with you guys because we were all here already. It took us a long day. I took her I think over 10 years

Ashley: [01:46:14](#) just to be able to come here?

Tess: [01:46:14](#) yeah

Ashley: [01:46:14](#) oh my goodness.

Tess: [01:46:21](#) For her paper to, for her paper to come out. Yeah. Because, um, we, we, we did a lot of things. We I know we went to the university and we wanted her to help continue ed or master degree and she was, we were denied because she's, oh, she's already petition, wait for it to come out.

Ashley: [01:46:21](#) so you tried to try to get her a student visa?

Tess: [01:46:46](#) yeah, student visa. We tried, my dad since he knows some government officials. We- he tried to go and ask for help.

Ashley: [01:46:54](#) What year was this around?

Tess: [01:46:54](#) uh my, my sister?

Ashley: [01:47:00](#) When you first started trying, if you can recall.

Tess: [01:47:03](#) I think I came in 1990, somewhere in the [number confusion] She comes in about 98 Maybe 99. Yeah, but because I know my sister's 10, 12 years younger than me. No, no, eight years younger than me because the youngest is 10 years younger and she is second to the youngest. Yeah, It took us that long. we tried and so she wanted. She really wanted to come now. Yeah, it took her that, but for us it was not really that hard because my ex husband is from Spain. see and my kids have a Spanish nationality? And I was the only Filipino because I did not want to become a Spanish. When I married my ex husband, I could have changed my nationality into Spanish right away. Automatic. But I stood up and said, no, I don't want to be. I want to be Filipino citizen. Yeah. So but when I came here. So that's the time when we decided that o w, so my mom petition us we. But yeah, we spent money. I don't know how much we spent maybe around on 5,000. Yeah, three to five thousand for the lawyer.

Ashley: [01:47:03](#) So it was-

Tess: [01:48:49](#) We didn't have to go out. We stayed, you see some people, some people were asked to go out. And wait, we stayed and we're able to work.

Ashley: [01:49:00](#) You're able to work while you stayed-

Tess: [01:49:04](#) Yeah. Yeah. So that's the thing that we had and So I know some of our friends here, they came here to marriage. So I know one friend she came to two years ago and after a year she is able to bring her kids. They were under under, under 18 years old though. yeah, they're here So I, I said, I told my friend you're so blessed because I know a lot of other friends that have been waiting for their kids. They've been here for awhile and you just come in. See?

Ashley: [01:49:44](#) Were there any other comments that you wanted to make just to wrap up the interview?

Tess: [01:49:53](#) Yeah Um, I want the best for everyone and I would like if this, you know, with this work of yours that um, people will get something out of it and it will be something that maybe can, it can help, uh, open, open the eyes of other people to be more understanding and respectful of other cultures. And if there's a way that we can be together, get united and discuss things and I'm just negotiate and compromise whatever is the problem that we encounter in our life here in Harrisonburg.

Ashley: [01:50:42](#) OK. Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me. I really do appreciate you sharing your story.