

PODCAST EPISODE CULTURE SHOCK

Sun, 5/2 9:00PM • 15:01

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

harrisonburg, paloma, united states, people, immigrants, perceptions, immigrated, lives, knox, community, culture, environmental justice, women, talking, individualistic, friends, children, eat, expectations

SPEAKERS

Jinky Knox, Paloma, Corrine Landrum

Corrine Landrum 00:15

Hello and welcome to the Harrisonburg 360 podcast. My name is Corrine and I'll be your host this week. Harrisonburg360 podcast is an attempt to capture and record narratives of immigrants living in the Harrisonburg community. Using past and present voices of Harrisonburg immigrants, students in our JMU English class have collaborated to create a space focused on listening to each other's voices. Every person deserves a chance to tell their story and we as a class are privileged to share these stories with you in hopes of expanding perceptions of what it means to be an immigrant in Harrisonburg. Each week Harrisonburg360 is produced by a different team of students. This week's episode, Culture Shock, is produced by myself, Caroline FitzGerald, Kevin Hennessy, and Olivia Comer. In this week's episode, we will be talking with Paloma Saucedo about her experience immigrating from Mexico to the United States. We will also be analyzing an interview with Jinky Knox, a resident of Harrisonburg, Virginia who immigrated from the Philippines in 2001. Our focus will be on Jinky and Paloma's initial perceptions of the United States and how those perceptions were challenged and possibly changed through their immigration experience, and how these two women adapted to their new homes in southern Virginia. Throughout this podcast, we will compare and contrast the immigration narratives from these two women in order to highlight the intensity of being exposed to an unfamiliar culture in another country. This is an experience most immigrants currently face or have faced regardless of where they came from. Both Paloma Saucedo and Jinky Knox discuss their expectations of the United States prior to their immigration. Paloma believed the United States was a universally affluent country where you spend your time shopping, and everyone has the time and money for leisure activities.

Paloma 02:27

So I was kind of like expecting, you know, coming to like a big city and you know, just kind of like what you see on TV and a lot of like, shops and nightlife and all of this stuff. Well, we came to Greenville, Virginia. So there was absolutely nothing but cows there. So it was just a big shock, because I just didn't know, rural US, you know, like I did, I thought it was all like, you know, lights and bargains and, you know, a lot of like buzz and things going on. So yeah, it was just really, really depressing, because there was just like nobody, you know, other than us. So yeah, that was my first experience with the US.

Corrine Landrum 03:23

On the other hand, Jinky's main perception of the United States was that it was racially homogenous, but she soon discovered otherwise.

Jinky Knox 03:30

I was in California when I come here in 2001. And so we were Wherever I look around there is a lot of Asians. So I said, Well, I want to be in a place where there's a lot of white people. And so I have a cousin that lives in Staunton and that's why we moved here.

Corrine Landrum 03:50

Although these women have very different perceptions of the United States, they were similarly shocked when their expectations were not met. Upon her arrival in the United States. Paloma Saucedo was confronted with an extremely rural area completely devoid of shopping centers and urbanization, whereas Jinky found the number of non-white citizens in the United States, especially Filipinos to be overwhelming. This prompted us to ask the questions. What was the expectation versus the experienced reality? And how did this shape the immigration experience for each individual? How did these two women cope with their new cultural reality? Another common experience of Paloma and Jinky was the consideration of what aspects of their heritage and culture they wanted to keep, and which aspects they wanted to leave behind. Jinky Knox was extremely eager to assimilate to American culture. While Paloma was more apprehensive, Jinky Knox was ready to distance herself from a culture that she considered to be too gossip-y and collectivist and she wanted to assert herself as an individual in the United States.

Jinky Knox 04:52

I didn't do it right away. There's a lot in Asian community. There's just a lot gossip talking, talking. I don't like that. I'm very private people... person, I think, very individualistic.

Corrine Landrum 05:11

Jinky describes gossiping as being a large aspect of her culture because the people living in areas she grew up in "did not have anything to do" (Jinky).

Jinky Knox 05:20

[Jinky Laughing] A lot of people, they have a lot of time in their hands. And it's pretty much in the Philippines is like that, you know, they just watch for the time, okay, breakfast, eight o'clock. 10 o'clock will be another snap. 12 o'clock is lunch, four o'clock will be another snacks, and then dinner. I mean, a lot of people are a woman that works there.

Corrine Landrum 05:51

Paloma, on the other hand, immediately noticed the aspects of her Mexican culture that were not commonplace in America.

Paloma 05:57

I mean, culture was completely different in Mexico... and I was not long ago talking to a coworker... and he is black, from the south... And we were talking about how in both our cultures, like if you're in the neighborhood, and someone that you know, lives there, just like pop in and say "Hey, how are you?" You know, and people be like, "Hey, come on in, stay for dinner." And we both found out that in, you know, white culture, like, that does not happen. So, the first time that I did that, and just showed up at someone's house, like the look on their faces was like, you know, like, what, what who died? Like, why are you here unannounced? And people definitely were not like, inviting, you know, like, Oh, yeah, come in, and let's eat our food that, you know, we're planning on eating anyway. So just like a lot of cultural differences. And so, I have learned to, you know, adapt and be okay with that. And like, I don't show up in my, you know, whites, my boyfriend's homes, but, um, with my Latino, or black friends, or, you know, folk of color, like it's acceptable, and we actually can do that, and, you know, they show up on my door, like, it's fine, we just, you know, we would do it, like, if we were in Mexico, so I can Mexico, there's still this culture of collectivism and I have found that the US is very, very individualistic, and the whole, like, you know, lift yourself by your bootstraps kind of thinking, I feel like in Mexico, you just from you know, seeing my parents and my grandparents as I grew up, we were put in have money we were pretty much for as well, but we always helped like, you know, there was a family in the neighborhood that didn't have food. And we have a saying that, you know, [Speaks in Spanish]... which basically means, when you're making beans you just throw more water in it to make it like, look like it's more and more filling but it's still the same amount of beans. But you share with whoever needs it.

Corrine Landrum 08:14

Both Paloma and Jinky come from cultural backgrounds that are heavily collectivist and community based. While Jinky was ready to leave that behind, Paloma was looking to establish her own form of community in her new home. Both women have been here since 2001. And since their arrival, they have adapted to their communities in the ways they see fit. Although Paloma and Jinky had different expectations when they immigrated to the United States, both currently have an expressed interest in reconnecting with their roots and other immigrants from their home countries. Paloma used her experiences as an immigrant in order to give back to her community in Harrisonburg.

Paloma 08:53

you know, having experienced life as an immigrant and as a single mom, and as a queer person coming out later in life in a different country in a different community. Definitely, all of that has impacted my work and who I am today. And so all my... everything that I have done, like work wise has been in like social services or human services. And I've always felt like I'm in a good position as a human, being bilingual and having a college degree and having the opportunity to work those jobs to, like, close that gap and like advocate for people like me, you know, for people that have had the same experiences as me. One of the things I remember when I was working for Valley Aids Network, we had a food pantry and when I became the director there one of my first priorities was to get that food pantry, like fully stocked in, you know, like, just make it a place where people didn't feel like they were getting a handout, but where people were like, oh, like, it's nice to go there, and you know, we can go there and then pick foods that we're actually going to eat. And somebody had asked me, like, why was that so important to me? And my answer was, well, because I was once living off food bank food, you know, and when you get like, 20,000 cans of green beans, you know, in a box of mac and cheese, like, what

do you do with that? Like, how do you make dinner for your kids with that, you know, so we always make sure that we had kind of like, like a meal pattern, you know, like a meal plan. So people could actually get items that they could make a full meal with, and are just like, random cans of vegetables that nobody eats, you know, peanut butter. And now, as a daycare provider, we are really focused on social justice and having an anti-racist curriculum. We talk about environmental justice, we do our own gardening to teach the children about environmental justice, and we're very... we are very intentional on inclusion. So even you know, the words that we use, for example we don't define family, as like, Mom, Dad, children, you know, my family is anybody that lives together and cares for this child, you know, so your family can look like, you know, something completely different from my family or their family. We try to use inclusive language, you know, and teach children about inclusion. And so yeah, definitely trying to make this generation truly... not just, you know, claim that diversity and like, Oh, you know, we're, we're kind of like filling the quota and, you know, checking the box, like, yeah, we have a Latino child or we have, you know, this ethnicity or this language, but really showing these children and my child is, you know, part of this cohort, that diversity and inclusion goes beyond checking boxes, you know, goes beyond a slogan or a picture.

Corrine Landrum 12:40

Similar to Paloma's interest in the educating the Harrisonburg community to make for a more inclusive community, Jinky has become more interested in including herself as well. When Jinky first immigrated to the United States, she tried to create a distance from her Filipino community and herself. Now, however, she has led her friends convince her to reconnect with the Filipino American community.

Jinky Knox 13:02

I didn't know why I wasn't looking. I wasn't interested. And but in the long run, when, you know you go to store and like Jamie said, if you see like dark hair, you ask them yeah. And then you find out they are Indonesian. Okay, there. So, um, I don't know what, um, sometimes it comes with maturity too. I wasn't really looking for Filipino friends. I feel like you know, I can live by myself or you know... I come here by myself so I wouldn't survive by myself. But you know, perceptions change. It's good, which is a good thing. I'm looking forward to meeting a lot of Olympians invite them to Bible study.

Corrine Landrum 14:01

Both Jinky Knox and Paloma Saucedo are undoubtedly strong women who take pride in their individuality. However, after speaking with Paloma and listening to Jinky Knox's story, it became evident that although they were creating a new life for themselves in the United States, they were not doing this in order to forget their roots. The theme of community transcends both of these women and is an important aspect of many immigrants. Thank you for joining us today on Harrisonburg360. We are grateful to Paloma Saucedo, Jinky Knox, Hannah Moses and Dr. Fagan for making this episode possible. Our interview with Paloma was conducted by Olivia Comer. Our content producers were Caroline FitzGerald and Kevin Hennessy. And I'm today's host, Corinne Landrum. Join us next time on Harrisonburg360.