

Interview with Marlon Ruiz—25 years old

M: My name is Marlon Ruiz.

J: Where are you from Marlon?

M: I am from Nicaragua.

J: Where do you live now?

M: I live in New Orleans, LA.

J: And how long have you lived here?

M: I've been here for two years, more or less.

J: And where do you live? What's the neighborhood like?

M: Well, where I live it's super dangerous. Every night I'm afraid as I pass every corner in the neighborhood I live, because it's super dangerous. Every night you hear shots...super dangerous. And the police, from what I see they don't do anything to try and catch the ones who are shooting...

J: Marlon, can you tell me why you came to live here?

M: Well, first of all because my family lives here, or a part of my family. I have my aunt and cousins that live here, and my aunt's husband—I live with them currently.

J: Can you describe some of the differences—how life here is different from your country?

M: Right, well one of the differences is that here, at least, you can find work, but you can't find any "tranquilidad" (peace/security). Back in one's country you can find "tranquilidad" because you have your family at your side, at least...

J: But your family is at your side here!

M: I have my family here but just part of it. I don't really feel that I do, because I'm missing my brothers and sisters and really...most of my family is back there

J: in Nicaragua.

M: Most of my family is in Nicaragua, I've got my mother back there, my father too, my sister and my nieces and nephews.

J: What do you miss most about Nicaragua?

M: Well!

J: Them?

M: My parents and...the traditional foods of my country!

J: The food! What's the food like in Nicaragua?

M: Well, everyone has their own opinion, I only have my own, but I think it's delicious because it's my country's food.

J: But is it that different from the food here?

M: Oh, yes of course! I like (the food here) very little, not very much...

J: Mmm, what's something that impresses you about this city?

M: What impresses me?

J: Something you like.

M: A level of crime higher than any I've seen in my life—that's what impresses me. The level of crime. Here there is a level of crime that's...horrible to see. Every night, every day there's an attack, a death...that's what's impressive to me.

J: Anything positive?

M: Something positive? Well, some people can be nice here...that's the "positive" that I can offer.

J: It's difficult to live here.

M: It's very difficult to live here. And it's worse to be far from your family.

J: How do you feel, as an immigrant, living in this city? What's the situation like for immigrants?

M: Well, that's the saddest thing I can offer my opinion on. To be "encerrado" (locked in, trapped) isn't easy—one feels trapped. That is to say, it's not like (being an) American that can come and go anywhere they want. And one stays trapped for another reason too, that there's a high level of racism too, against Latinos. Being trapped, coming back from work, tired, and then you just go to bed, it's like—it's not very nice to live that way.

J: What do you mean by "encerrado"? Because it's dangerous to go out?

M: Yes, one part of it is that it's dangerous to go out, because the majority of the time, when they assault someone, it's the Latinos.

J: You really think so?

M: It could be, it seems to me, that it's the majority.

J: What do you hope to achieve here, in your time in New Orleans? And how long do you think you'll stay?

M: Well, I hope to achieve a better future for me, and a better future for my family in Nicaragua, try to help them out a little more. And really, I don't know how long I'll stay here, how much more time I can stay here, because of the situation we're living. Once you save a little money, you always want a little more, and a little more because the needs of your family are very great and trying to help them is what you're thinking about, to help them and hope that they can get ahead, move forward.

J: Thank you Marlon. Do you have any more comments?

M: No.

J: Ok, thank you.