

Maritza Zavala—31 years old

Jimena: What's your name?

Maritza: My name is Maritza Zavala.

J: Where are you from Maritza?

M: I'm from Honduras.

J: Where do you live now?

M: I live in Gretna.

J: And how long have you lived in the New Orleans area?

M: I've lived here for three years.

J: Three years, that's common, many people tell me three years. What's your current neighborhood like?

M: Well, it's peaceful, there's a lot of traffic, a lot of police, but it's better because it's safer when the police are around. But it's peaceful, we've never had any problems there, with anything or anyone.

J: Very good. Can you tell us a little about why you came to live in New Orleans?

M: Well, first of all because my husband came here and then sent for me, and well, the people with him were friends from back home too, so for that reason we came to live here.

J: Did you both come after Katrina?

M: Well, I came here after Katrina, just after, but he was already here before Katrina.

J: Can you tell us about some of the important differences between the lifestyle here and that of your country?

M: Yes, here in New Orleans it's good because there's work—well, now there's not much, not like before when I first came here—there was lots of work, lots of sources of work everywhere, there were places to get work, but now it's very difficult, it's getting so complicated that you work more, but it's very little what they give you for it, the wages you earn are very little.

J: How is it different from your country, from Honduras?

M: The difference is that there, there's freedom. There you have freedom for...many things. You're with your family, the difference is that you're with your family, but there, there's no work, there's nowhere to get it.

J: But you have more freedom in Honduras?

M: Yes.

J: What do you miss most about Honduras, about your home?

M: My family. I miss my family a lot, my children—my son. The environment—everything!

J: The environment? How is the environment different?

M: Because it's better... There you don't just go from work to home to work to home, I don't know, you feel like a prisoner (here), you don't go out, you don't have the freedom, like over there, you say, I'm going out, I'm going to visit my parents, my mother, and you go. And here, no, here it's uh, well also because you don't have the family, you just have friends nearby. And another thing is, uh, you go and see you friends and maybe they're really tired because they worked all day, and they just want to work, and work, and work.

J: The whole life is dedicated to working.

M: The whole life; work and work and work.

J: What's something that impresses you about New Orleans? And what's something you don't like?

M: Right now, I don't know, I've seen a lot of things, like assaults, robberies. Fifteen days ago, something happened on Canal and Broad...

J: What happened?

M: They killed a lady, and around there something almost always happens. It makes one afraid to have to pass by there. I don't live around there, but I hear the news and I know about these things. The good thing is that the police are always on top of everything and they keep order, and they always catch the ones going around doing bad things.

J: Always, huh. Is there something you like about New Orleans?

M: That I like? No, I don't like it, the only thing I like is that there's work.

J: Mmm-hmm. In your opinion, what are some of the biggest problems that New Orleans, and particularly the Hispanic community, face now, and what can we do about them?

M:

J: You're not sure?

M: I'm not sure.

J: What are you hoping to achieve here, in your time in New Orleans?

M: Oh, a lot of things. I have a lot of plans. When I came, my goal was two years, but with the need we have right now, our money isn't sufficient to be able to say that in three years we have everything we need, I think two or three years is very little. I have a lot of plans...

J: What kind of plans?

M: Uh, I don't know, I have a lot of plans to work, work, very fast, and go back to my family to my son that's waiting for me.

J: How much more time do you think you'll stay?

M: Mmm, maybe six, four years. Four years, because I have my little boy too.

J: Tell me about your son? How old is he?

M: He's six, and I left him when he was three.

J: Do you have a lot of contact with him?

M: Yes, I talk with him almost every day. I usually talk to him before he goes to school, or if not, when he gets home from school. But he always asks me when I'm going to leave (the US), or he wants to come here, that's what he always tells me.

J: You miss him a lot.

M: Yes.

J: Well, thank you, any other comments?

M: No, that's alright.

J: Okay, thanks for talking with us.