

**Voices from Puerto Rico from Hartford, CT**  
**George Demetrion (Editor)**  
**Manager of Community-Based programming**  
**Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford**

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**Voices from Puerto Rico from Hartford, CT**  
**George Demetrion (Editor)**  
**Manager of Community-Based programming**  
**Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford**

**Lesson One**

I was born in Puerto Rico and my town is Cidra. I went to school in Cidra with my three brothers and four sisters. When I was thirteen, I started working making kitchen cabinets. I did this while still attending school. A few years later I worked in construction building houses. It would take three months to build one house.

When I was thirty years old I went to work for my brother in his restaurant in Cidra. I worked with him for three years and then I went to night school and I worked at a factory during the day.

My father lived in Cidra and had a big farm. I used to visit him and help him on the farm.

I used to visit my brother on vacation in Long Island. I lived in Long Island for about six months in 1975 and returned to Puerto Rico. I recently moved to Hartford in May of 1993.

**Jose Santiago**  
**Arbor Street Reading Center**

**Fill in the Blanks**

I was born in Puerto Rico and my \_\_\_\_\_ is Cidra. I went to school in Cidra with my three brothers and four \_\_\_\_\_. When I was thirteen, I started working making kitchen \_\_\_\_\_. I did this while

still \_\_\_\_\_ school. A few years later I worked in construction \_\_\_\_\_ houses. It would take three months to build one \_\_\_\_\_.

When I was thirty years old I went to \_\_\_\_\_ for my brother in his restaurant in Cidra. I worked with him for three years and then I went to night \_\_\_\_\_ and I worked at a factory during the \_\_\_\_\_.

My father \_\_\_\_\_ in Cidra and had a big farm. I used to visit him and \_\_\_\_\_ him on the farm.

I used to \_\_\_\_\_ my brother on vacation in Long Island. I lived in Long Island for about six \_\_\_\_\_ in 1975 and returned to Puerto Rico. I recently \_\_\_\_\_ to Hartford in May of 1993.

| Words        | Syllables                    | Write Sentence |
|--------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| thirteen     | thir-teen (2 syllables)      |                |
| kitchen      | kit-chen (2 syllables)       |                |
| construction | con-struc-tion (3 syllables) |                |
| thirty       | thir-ty (2 syllables)        |                |
| restaurant   | res-taur-ant (3 syllables)   |                |
| vacation     | va-ca-tion (3 syllables)     |                |
| recently     | re-cent-ly (3 syllables)     |                |

## Questions

1. Describe Jose's life while growing up in Cidra?
2. What kind of work did he do?
3. How did he learn about life in the U.S. mainland?
4. In what ways does your life compare with Jose's?
5. In what ways is your life different?

## Lesson Two

The following three stories tell a little bit about life in Puerto Rico, but focus mostly on living in Hartford.

I left Puerto Rico in 1991 because I needed to change my life. I needed to learn English. I lived in San Lorenzo in Puerto Rico. San Lorenzo is a city. I worked in the factory making women's clothes. Work is no good in Puerto Rico. I did not want to work in a factory in the United States. I wanted another type of job, maybe as a nurse.

I have six brothers and two sisters. They went to school. I was the oldest. My father wanted me to stay at home all the time to wash, cook, and clean. I needed to continue with school first, to learn English, and then to become a nurse or counselor.

### **Maria Pomales Arbor Street Reading Center**

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My name is David Nieves. I am from Puerto Rico. I came from Caguas. Caguas is a city. I came to the United States around 1978. I came to make some money. Jobs in Puerto Rico do not pay too much. I worked in the Progreso Supermarket in Caguas. I worked in the meat department.

First I came to Detroit. I was there for two years. I worked on a farm picking mushrooms. I went to Philadelphia for another job. It was on a farm, too, but they had different kinds of vegetables. I was in Philadelphia one year.

Then I moved to Hartford to see my mother. She lived on Sigourney Street. I moved in with her. I worked in a factory for fifteen years. I worked at Foodway National on Silas Deane Highway in Wethersfield. I was a machine operator. I got laid off on September 15, 1992.

I don't work now. I can't find another job. I want to find another job.

**David Nieves**  
**Arbor Street Reading Center**

\*\*\*\*\*

My name is Ulises Talaba. I am from Puerto Rico. I lived in Byamon. It's a big city. I came here in '84 after high school. I came to Hartford because my sister asked if I wanted to work in the factory.

I lived on Elliot Street and later moved to White Street. I worked in the same factory as David in the Sauce Department. They closed the factory and moved to Boise, Idaho for the taxes. They laid me off.

I took training as a chef. I finished the training and filled out an application for Spaghetti Warehouse, Chili's, Hooters. They did not call me.

Now I am employed. I'm working part time for a food service. I serve lunch for schools. I need a full time job to pay the rent or hit the lotto. I want to learn more English. I have many friends—Jamaicans, Greek, Vietnamese, Columbian, Peruvian, and Gringos.

**Ulisis Talaba**  
**Arbor Street Reading Center**

## Fill in the Blanks

My \_\_\_\_\_ is David Nieves. I am from Puerto Rico. I \_\_\_\_\_ from Caguas. Caguas is a city. I came to the United States around 1978. I came to \_\_\_\_\_ some money. Jobs in Puerto Rico do not \_\_\_\_\_ too much. I worked in the Progreso Supermarket in Caguas. I worked in the \_\_\_\_\_ department.

First I \_\_\_\_\_ to Detroit. I was there for two \_\_\_\_\_. I worked on a farm \_\_\_\_\_ mushrooms. I went to Philadelphia for another job. It was on a farm, too, but they had different \_\_\_\_\_ of vegetables. I was in Philadelphia one \_\_\_\_\_.

Then I \_\_\_\_\_ to Hartford to see my mother. She \_\_\_\_\_ on Sigourney Street. I \_\_\_\_\_ in with her. I worked in a factory for fifteen \_\_\_\_\_. I worked at Foodway National on Silas Deane Highway in Wethersfield. I was a \_\_\_\_\_ operator. I got laid off on September 15, 1992.

I don't work now. I can't find \_\_\_\_\_ job. I want to find another \_\_\_\_\_.

| Words   | Syllables               | Write Sentence |
|---------|-------------------------|----------------|
| learn   | learn (one syllable)    |                |
| factory | fac-tor-y (3 syllables) |                |
| another | a-noth-er (3 syllables) |                |
|         |                         |                |

|             |                              |  |
|-------------|------------------------------|--|
| continue    | con-tin-ue (3 syllables)     |  |
| department  | de-part-ment (3 syllables)   |  |
| mushrooms   | mush-rooms (2 syllables)     |  |
| different   | dif-fer-ent (3 syllables)    |  |
| operator    | op-er-a-tor (3 syllables)    |  |
| because     | be-cause (2 syllables)       |  |
| application | ap-pli-ca-tion (4 syllables) |  |
| training    | train-ing (2 syllables)      |  |
| friends     | friends (one syllable)       |  |

### Questions

1. Why did Maria, David, and Ullis come to the U.S. mainland?
2. What kind of work did each of them do in Puerto Rico?
3. What kind of work did each of them do in Hartford?
4. What kind of work did you do in your homeland?
5. What kind of work did you do in the U.S?



6. What kind of work did you want to do when you came to the U.S?
7. If you are still working or would like to work, what skills do you need to get the kind of job you want?
8. Name at least three reasons why work is important to you?

## Lesson Three

The following three essays were written by Marilyn De Jesus. Marilyn studied ESL at the Arbor Street Reading Center.

### Life in Cayey, Puerto Rico

I was born in Caguas at the hospital, but I grew up in Cayey and lived there with my family while I was in Puerto Rico. Cayey is a small town. It's in central Puerto Rico.

In Cayey, there was a lot of American industry. There was a Coca Cola plant. There was also the Winston Plastic Company and a textile factory that specialized in making graduation gowns.

I had a lot of friends in my town. We played volleyball, basketball and baseball. We went to parties and danced a lot. Dancing was my favorite hobby.

I spent time not only with my friends, but with my mother, brother and little sister. My mother made many cakes for parties and holidays. In Cayey there are no beaches, but Puerto Rico has many beautiful beaches. One of the best universities in Puerto Rico is in Cayey.

\*\*\*\*\*

### High School in Cayey

Cayey has two high schools: a general high school and a vocational high school. I was in the vocational high school and studied accounting, but I didn't finish. I only completed the eleventh grade because I didn't like accounting. To start another program at the vocational school, I would have had to have started at the tenth grade. I could

have gone to the general high school, but I didn't want to go because there were too many bad people there in gangs and doing drugs. That was the reason I didn't finish high school.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Coming to the U.S.A.**

I came to the U.S.A. in November, 1991. Education was one of the reasons. I wanted to finish high school. I wanted to learn English and I wanted to study something. I wanted to learn how to design clothes.

The economic situation is better here than in Puerto Rico. There are more opportunities to find jobs. I have relatives here in Hartford, New York and New Jersey. That's also why I came here.

| <b>Word</b> | <b>Syllable</b>             | <b>Write Sentence</b> |
|-------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| hospital    | hos-pi-tal (3 syllables)    |                       |
| industry    | in-dus-try (2 syllables)    |                       |
| beaches     | beach-es (2 syllables)      |                       |
| beautiful   | beaut-i-ful (3 syllables)   |                       |
| general     | gen-er-al (3 syllables)     |                       |
| vocational  | vo-ca-tion-al (4 syllables) |                       |
|             |                             |                       |

|           |                            |  |
|-----------|----------------------------|--|
| design    | de-sign (2 syllables)      |  |
| clothes   | clothes (one syllable)     |  |
| situation | sit-u-a-tion (4 syllables) |  |

### Fill in the Blanks

I was \_\_\_\_\_ in Caguas at the hospital, but I grew up in Cayey and lived there with my \_\_\_\_\_ while I was in Puerto Rico. Cayey is a small \_\_\_\_\_. It's in central Puerto Rico.

In Cayey, there was a lot of American \_\_\_\_\_. There was a Coca Cola plant. There was also the Winston Plastic Company and a textile factory that specialized in making \_\_\_\_\_ gowns.

I had a lot of \_\_\_\_\_ in my town. We played volleyball, basketball and \_\_\_\_\_. We went to parties and \_\_\_\_\_ a lot. Dancing was my favorite hobby.

I spent time not only with my friends, but with my \_\_\_\_\_, brother and little sister. My mother made many \_\_\_\_\_ for parties and \_\_\_\_\_. In Cayey there are no beaches, but Puerto Rico has many beautiful beaches. One of the best \_\_\_\_\_ in Puerto Rico is in Cayey.

### Questions

1. What was the economy like in Cayey?
2. What was the economy like in the town where you grew up?

3. What was Marilyn's social life like in Cayey? Describe it.
4. What was your social life like in the town where you grew up?
5. What was high school like for Marilyn? Describe it?
6. What was school like for you?
7. Why did Marilyn come to the U.S. mainland?
8. What did you like about Marilyn's story?
9. What would you like to ask her?
10. In what ways does Marilyn's story remind you of your own even if your story and her story were very different?
11. If you were to write a letter to Marilyn, what would you like to say?

## Lesson Four

The following stories were completed in Richard Griffis' ESL class held at the Milner Elementary School.

### Eliseo Cruz's Story

One morning, Eliseo Cruz brought two very large photographs of himself to our class. Each was in color and stood three \*feet high. He was shown standing confidently with muscles ripping across his chest, arms and legs. We set them on chairs, so that we could take all the time we wanted to look at this handsome young man.

I competed four times to be "Mr. Puerto Rico." I trained myself in a gym and I tried hard to win. I worked out every day for three hours. I practiced so I would have good health. I trained different muscles. I repeated my exercises over and over, many times. I used small dumb bells, one in each hand. I did four sets and I did each set ten times. I lifted 200 pounds ten times.

I did not get the title of "Mr. Puerto Rico" because I was getting divorced from my wife and I could not compete very well. In my mind I had a problem.

I began training In July, 1977 in San Tursie. I was twenty-five years old. When I started I weighed 230 pounds. I ate tuna fish and water for one month. Tuna fish and water have no fat. Then I weighed 190 pounds and my waist was twenty-eight inches round. Today I weigh 220 pounds.

I didn't continue to practice because I did not have the money. It cost forty dollars every month at the gym.

I won three titles. They were: "Dorado", "Toa Baja", and the "Atlas Gym" title.

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### **Georgiana Perez's Story**

Georgiana brought her son Jonathan, to our class one morning. She also brought two small and brightly colored paintings. She painted them herself, she said. The one with a wide river and a waterfall was painted just two days before. We enjoyed having Jonathan with us, but we spent the whole time looking at the paintings and talking about colors and the way houses, trees and water looks in Puerto Rico.

I painted my first picture in 1980. I was twenty-nine years old. In Puerto Rico I went to a school to see examples of good paintings. It was in Caguas.

I liked to draw when I was a young girl. I always liked painting and drawing very much. I like to paint palm trees with cocoa nuts, and houses. I also like to paint people. I paint any time, in the morning or in the afternoon. I paint when I see something in my mind. I have five pictures in my house that I painted. They have different styles. In Puerto Rico my mother has more pictures. I don't know how many.

I would like to go to school for painting. I want to know how to paint flowers. I also want to paint people. I want to paint people's faces so well they look like a photograph.

When I am lonely I like to paint. Then I feel proud. I am happy when I finish a picture. My friends say, "I like that. Give me one!" My husband likes my paintings, too. He says, "Don't give them away."

## Felicita Rios' Story

Felicita helps in the soup kitchen at La Iglesia de Dios, Inc. It is a pentecostal church on 1313 Main Street in Hartford.

Sometimes eight, sometimes ten people from our church work in the soup kitchen. There is one leader. Two men and two women do the cooking. The rest of the people serve the food. Sometimes I cook and sometimes I serve coffee and clear the tables.

The kitchen is open on Sundays from eleven o'clock to two o'clock. Sometimes seventy people come and sometimes over eighty. One day 102 people came. Most of them were homeless. They stay in the shelters. They have to go out of the shelters every morning at six o'clock.

The people sign their names on a paper when they come in. Then they sit down and eat. When they finish eating, they get up and leave. They sit at long tables. We come and serve them.

There are men and women of all different ages. Many of them do not have families. Many of them also have alcohol and drug problems. Some people come back every Sunday. New people come too.

We cook rice and beans, vegetables and chicken. We serve ice tea, fruit punch, and coffee.

The cooks prepare a "todo junto" [everything together] in big pots. They put oil in the big pot and then put in peppers, garlic, onion, celery, potatoes, carrots, and chicken. They cut the chicken into medium sized pieces and put in three or four small cans of tomato



sauce. Then they put the lid on the pot and cook it slowly on a low fire for thirty to forty minutes.

In our church the children and youths are in classes on Saturdays from ten o'clock to twelve o'clock. On Saturday nights at seven o'clock everybody comes to the church to study, pray and sing.

On some Sundays I am not there. I visit my four sons in Willimantic and we all go fishing. We are a big family.

| Word      | Syllables                 | Write Sentence |
|-----------|---------------------------|----------------|
| muscles   | Mus-cles (2 syllables)    |                |
| practiced | prac-ticed (2 syllables)  |                |
| repeated  | re-pea-ted (3 syllables)  |                |
| different | dif-fer-ent (3 syllables) |                |
| compete   | com-pete (2 syllables)    |                |
| lonely    | lon-e-ly (3 syllables)    |                |
| homeless  | home-less (2 syllables)   |                |
| shelter   | shel-ter (2 syllables)    |                |

## Fill in the Blanks

Sometimes eight, sometimes ten people from our church work in the \_\_\_\_\_ kitchen. There is \_\_\_\_\_ leader. Two men and two women \_\_\_\_\_ the cooking. The rest of the \_\_\_\_\_ serve the food. Sometimes I cook and \_\_\_\_\_ I serve coffee and clear the \_\_\_\_\_.

The \_\_\_\_\_ is open on Sundays from eleven o'clock to two o'clock. Sometimes seventy people come and \_\_\_\_\_ over eighty. One \_\_\_\_\_ 102 people came. Most of them were \_\_\_\_\_. They \_\_\_\_\_ in the shelters. They have to go out of the shelters every \_\_\_\_\_ at six o'clock.

The people \_\_\_\_\_ their names on a paper when they come in. Then they \_\_\_\_\_ down and eat. When they \_\_\_\_\_ eating, they get up and leave. They sit at long \_\_\_\_\_. We come and serve them.

There are men and women of all \_\_\_\_\_ ages. Many of them do not have \_\_\_\_\_. Many of them also have alcohol and \_\_\_\_\_ problems. Some people come back every Sunday. New \_\_\_\_\_ come too.

We cook rice and \_\_\_\_\_, vegetables and \_\_\_\_\_. We serve ice tea, fruit punch, and coffee.

The cooks \_\_\_\_\_ a "todo junto" [everything together] in big pots. They put \_\_\_\_\_ in the big pot and then put in peppers, garlic, onion, celery, \_\_\_\_\_, carrots, and chicken. They cut the chicken into medium sized pieces and put in three or four small cans of tomato sauce. Then they put the \_\_\_\_\_ on the pot and cook it slowly on a low fire for \_\_\_\_\_ to forty minutes.

In our church the children and youths are in classes on Saturdays from ten o'clock to twelve o'clock. On Saturday \_\_\_\_\_ at seven o'clock \_\_\_\_\_ comes to the church to study, pray and sing.

On some Sundays I am not there. I visit my four sons in Willimantic and we all go fishing. We are a big \_\_\_\_\_.

### Questions

1. How did Eliseo prepare to become "Mr. Puerto Rico?"
2. What made it hard for him to concentrate on the title?
3. In what ways do you think Eliseo benefitted by training for the title even though he did not become Mr. Puerto Rico?"
4. Do you think the effort was worth it? Why or why not?
5. How important is discipline and training to achieving your goals? Explain?
6. If you were to write a letter to Eliseo what would you say?
7. What kind of painting did Georgiana like?
8. Why do you think she liked painting so much?
9. Should Georgiana give her paintings away like her friends say or should she keep them for herself like her husband says?
10. What is a special thing you like best to do?
11. How does Felicita's church support the needs of the community?
12. How important do you think it is for religious groups to provide this type of service to the community?
13. Besides a soup kitchen or shelter, what are some other ways religious groups can help meet community needs?
14. In what ways do you think Felicita benefitted by volunteering in the kitchen?
15. What are some ways that you have volunteered?
16. What did you like about it?
17. What didn't you like about it?
18. In what ways can volunteers help improve society?

19. In what ways can government help improve society?

20. If you were to write a letter to *Georgiana* or *Felicita*, what would you say?

## Lesson Five

I was born in Puerto Rico on August 22, 1955. I have eight brothers and only two sisters. I don't want to remember my father. He was a very bad person. But my mother wasn't like him. She was and still is a nice person.

I remember my mother used to wash clothes and iron for other people, so we could have something to eat and so we could go to school. I felt sorry for her because she used to iron at night and she used to do everything by herself. Later, my mother got sick and she had to split my brothers and sisters. The three youngest ones went to stay with my grandmother and the others decided to stay with their father. One of my sisters went to stay with my aunt and the other one was staying with a rich woman. I stayed with my mother to help her with my other brothers. When my mother got better she went to get all my brothers and sisters. We moved to a place far away because my father used to hit my mother.

At last, my mother found a job as a janitor, and so we kept going on in life. In July 1984, my brother died in a car accident. It was really hard for us to accept his death, and my mother lost her job. My sisters finished school. The youngest one works at a casino in Atlantic City and the other is a secretary for a lawyer and is still studying. And for my brothers, one is a policeman in Puerto Rico and the rest of my brothers do different things in the community.

I didn't finish school. I ran away from home when I was sixteen and now I have five children. In 1989 I came to the U.S. to stay. I like it better in Hartford. I feel better here because I am learning English. I hope I can learn the language so I can help older people who

need help. I do need to thank my teacher Ms. Schonberger because she is helping me learn English. She is a great teacher. She is a nice person to me and the rest of the students. I hope one day to be what I always wanted to be.

**Teresa Rodriguez**  
**Clark Family Resource Center**

| Word      | Syllables                  | Write Sentence |
|-----------|----------------------------|----------------|
| eight     | eight (one syllable)       |                |
| remember  | re-mem-ber (3 syllables)   |                |
| clothes   | Clothes (one syllable)     |                |
| decided   | de-ci-ded (3 syllables)    |                |
| accident  | ac-ci-dent (3 syllables)   |                |
| casino    | ca-si-no (3 syllables)     |                |
| secretary | sec-re-tar-y (4 syllables) |                |
| community | com-mun-i-ty (4 syllables) |                |

## Fill in the Blanks

I was born in Puerto Rico on August 22, 1955. I have eight \_\_\_\_\_ and only two sisters. I don't want to \_\_\_\_\_ my father. He was a very bad \_\_\_\_\_. But my mother wasn't like him. She was and still is a \_\_\_\_\_ person.

I remember my mother used to wash clothes and iron for other people, so we could have \_\_\_\_\_ to eat and so we could go to school. I felt sorry for her because she used to iron at \_\_\_\_\_ and she used to do everything by herself. Later, my mother got sick and she had to split my brothers and \_\_\_\_\_. The three youngest ones went to stay with my grandmother and the others decided to stay with their \_\_\_\_\_. One of my sisters went to stay with my aunt and the other one was staying with a \_\_\_\_\_ woman. I stayed with my mother to help her with my other brothers. When my mother got \_\_\_\_\_ she went to get all my brothers and sisters. We moved to a place far away because my father used to \_\_\_\_\_ my mother.

At last, my mother found a job as a \_\_\_\_\_, and so we kept going on in life. In July 1984, my brother died in a car accident. It was really hard for us to accept his death, and my mother lost her job. My sisters finished school. The youngest one works at a \_\_\_\_\_ in Atlantic City and the other is a secretary for a lawyer and is still studying. And for my brothers, one is a policeman in Puerto Rico and the rest of my brothers do different things in the \_\_\_\_\_.

I didn't finish school. I ran away from home when I was sixteen and now I have five children. In 1989 I came to the U.S. to stay. I like it better in Hartford. I feel better here because I am learning English. I hope I can learn the \_\_\_\_\_ so I can help older people

who need help. I do need to thank my teacher Ms. Schonberger because she is helping me learn \_\_\_\_\_. She is a great teacher. She is a nice person to me and the rest of the students. I hope one day to be what I always wanted to be.

### **Questions**

1. What picture do you have in your mind about Teresa's mother?
2. What influence do you think Teresa's mother had on her?
3. Why do you think Teresa ran away from home as a teenager?
4. How important is it for Teresesa to speak English?
5. What does Teresa's story remind you of in your life?
6. If you were going to write a letter to Tersa what would you say?



## Lesson Six

I come from Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. I have five sisters and four brothers, but my mother wasn't their mother. I have another brother and he is in Puerto Rico, too. He and I grew up together. My mother raised us alone. It was hard for her. When she was seventeen years old she came to Brooklyn, N.Y. She lived there for thirteen years. She married and had my brother.

Then they came to Puerto Rico and my brother was six years old when she met my father and had a second baby (me). When I was three years old I can remember my grandmother. I loved her. She was very loving. She made candies for sale. She made food for sale, too. My grandfather was an angry man. All the time he drank beer and came to the house to fight with my grandmother. When she died, he sold the house and my mother took us to another house.

We moved to the city. I liked the house, the people, and the school. I was eight years old. We stayed for four years. Then we moved to another house in the country. I liked it there, too, especially the school. I made many friends and in this place I had my first job. I was a baby-sitter and housekeeper. When I was sixteen years old I worked in a hospital. I did a job like nursing for three years. I went to high school, too. I worked and studied at same time.

My brother got married and my mother and I stayed alone. I met my first husband during this time. I worked in a store like K-Mart. My mother was sick and died after I married. I felt bad. I didn't want to live. The time passed.

I had a lot of problems with my husband. He was an alcoholic and didn't know how to get out of this vice. At last, I divorced him and I

had my son, "Miguel." When he was one year old, I met a good man. He was visiting his mother's house in Puerto Rico. For two weeks he had his vacation. He lived in Cleveland, Ohio. He had been living for twenty-five years in the U.S. I met him at my mother's house. His mother was my best friend.

I came with him and my son to Hartford. My husband already had a job and apartment. I spent four years in Hartford. When I came here I didn't know how to speak English. But I understood the people when they talked because in Puerto Rico I watched movies in English and studied English grammar, too.

I wanted to study English and my friend told me about Literacy Volunteers and I called Judy Lopez. She told me the date and place to go. I went to Clark School and I met Steve [a former program manager at LVGH] and next time met my teacher Pam. She's very nice. She told me, "You are intelligent but you talk too much." She's all right. She has a reason to say this. I learned a lot of English with her. My classmates are very friendly. Bonnie told me about Literacy Volunteers. Modesto is nice. Teresa is nice and Silvia, too. I had a good experience with Literacy Volunteer. I'm glad to be here.

**Zoraida Jimenez**  
**Clark Family Resource Center**

| <b>Words</b> | <b>Syllables</b>              | <b>Write Sentence</b> |
|--------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| raised       | raised (one syllable)         |                       |
| seventeen    | sev-en-teen (three syllables) |                       |
| thirteen     | thir-teen (two syllables)     |                       |
| remember     | re-mem-ber (3 syllables)      |                       |
| angry        | an-gry (2 syllables)          |                       |
| fight        | fight (one syllable)          |                       |
| especially   | e-spec-i-a-lly (4 syllables)  |                       |
| sixteen      | six-teen (two syllables)      |                       |
| nursing      | nur-sing (2 syllables)        |                       |
| husband      | hus-band (2 syllables)        |                       |
| alcoholic    | al-co-hol-ic (4 syllables)    |                       |
| intelligent  | in-tel-li-gent (4 syllables)  |                       |
| experience   | ex-per-i-ence (4 syllables)   |                       |

## Fill in the Blanks

I come from Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. I have five sisters and four brothers, but my \_\_\_\_\_ wasn't their mother. I have another brother and he is in Puerto Rico, too. He and I grew up \_\_\_\_\_. My mother raised us alone. It was \_\_\_\_\_ for her. When she was seventeen years old she came to Brooklyn, N.Y. She lived there for thirteen \_\_\_\_\_. She married and had my brother.

Then they came to Puerto Rico and my brother was six years old when she met my father and had a second baby (me). When I was three years old I can \_\_\_\_\_ my grandmother. I loved her. She was very loving. She made \_\_\_\_\_ for sale. She made food for sale, too. My grandfather was an \_\_\_\_\_ man. All the time he drank beer and came to the house to \_\_\_\_\_ with my grandmother. When she died, he sold the house and my mother took us to \_\_\_\_\_ house.

We moved to the city. I liked the house, the people, and the school. I was eight years old. We \_\_\_\_\_ for four years. Then we moved to another house in the country. I liked it there, too, \_\_\_\_\_ the school. I made many friends and in this place I had my first job. I was a baby-sitter and housekeeper. When I was sixteen years old I \_\_\_\_\_ in a hospital. I did a job like nursing for three years. I went to high \_\_\_\_\_, too. I worked and studied at same time.

My brother got married and my mother and I \_\_\_\_\_ alone. I met my first husband during this time. I worked in a store like K-Mart. My mother was sick and \_\_\_\_\_ after I married. I felt bad. I didn't \_\_\_\_\_ to live. The time passed.

I had a lot of \_\_\_\_\_ with my husband. He was an alcoholic and didn't know how to get out of this vice. At last, I \_\_\_\_\_ him and I had my son, "Miguel." When he was one year old, I met a good man. He was visiting his mother's house in Puerto Rico. For two weeks he had his vacation. He lived in Cleveland, Ohio. He had been living for twenty-five years in the U.S. I met him at my mother's \_\_\_\_\_. His mother was my best \_\_\_\_\_.

I came with him and my son to Hartford. My husband already had a job and apartment. I spent four \_\_\_\_\_ in Hartford. When I came here I didn't know how to speak English. But I \_\_\_\_\_ the people when they talked because in Puerto Rico I watched movies in English and \_\_\_\_\_ English grammar, too.

I wanted to study English and my friend told me about Literacy Volunteers and I called Judy Lopez. She told me the date and place to go. I went to Clark School and I met Steve [a former program manager at LVGH] and next time \_\_\_\_\_ my teacher Pam. She's very nice. She told me, "You are \_\_\_\_\_ but you talk too much." She's all right. She has a reason to say this. I learned a lot of English with her. My classmates are very friendly. Bonnie told me about Literacy Volunteers. Modesto is nice. Teresa is nice and Silvia, too. I had a good \_\_\_\_\_ with Literacy Volunteer. I'm glad to be here.

### **Questions**

1. What were the significant events in Zoraida's life? Make a list of them.
2. How do you think what she experienced growing up influenced her life as an adult?

3. Describe your life growing up as a child and a teenager. What were the significant events for you during that time period?
4. What made these events significant?
5. In what ways has your adult life been influenced by your younger years?
6. In what ways have you changed?
7. In what ways was Zoraida's adulthood influenced by her younger years?
8. In what ways did she break against her childhood influences and family patterns?
9. What does that say about her?

## Lesson Seven

In 1952 when I was born in San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico, my parents lived on a small farm where they had an old wooden house. My father was a farmer and my mother took care of my older brother and me, and helped my father in the farm.

During that time we did not have electricity because that service was not available in the country. We got water from the river and we also washed our clothes there. We lived like that for many years until my father migrated to the United States to work in the fields. He came home at the end of every year with money and every time before he left, he got my mother pregnant.

At last, my father was able to buy a better house and a bigger farm and we started living in better conditions. He did not go back to the United States and started working his own farm. Little by little he bought animals and our situation got better.

My aunts and uncles lived near by, and together with my parents, worked to have better conditions on the farm.

Then my brother and I started going to school. My older brother could not continue his studies because he had some problems with his eyes and other illnesses. During that time, we never went to see the doctors and our parents took care of us with medicines made out of different plants.

I remember when my father used to sit with me in a hammock during the afternoon and he would teach me how to write my name and

the numbers, one through ten, and how to read. That is why when I went to school for the first time, they skipped me to the second grade. During that time there was no kindergarten. So I started at the second grade and attended school until the third grade. Because my parents needed to send my two sisters to school, I had to stay in the house and help them with the chores.

My parents received letters from the school asking them to send me back, but with the poor conditions at my house, I could not go back. My parents did not have enough money to send all of us to school. Time passed that way and we became ten brothers and sisters.

I was eleven when I went to live with nuns at a home for old people, but my mother got very sick with cancer and I had to go back home to take care of my brothers and sisters with the help of my father. The youngest was only two weeks old. I took care of them for nine months.

During that time Social Services came to my house for my younger brothers and sisters. They took five of them away and I still haven't seen the three younger ones. When my brothers and sisters left, I went back with the nuns, and my father stayed with the other four.

Later on, I started regular classes in Hato Rey, Puerto Rico. For some months I studied half a day and worked at home until I completed seventh grade. Then I took a sewing course for three months. I took my brothers and sisters with me to the home and my father got married with another woman who had ten kids.

After some years my father and his wife went to live in Chicago and we stayed in Puerto Rico. Since we did not have anywhere to go,



we continued to work at the home because my father sold the farm, the house and everything that belonged to us.

After two of my sisters got married, I took the money I had saved, and went on a trip to Mexico for a month which was really interesting and that I will never forget!

When I came back I stayed with the nuns and I was there for a couple of more months. Then one of my sisters asked me to move in with her. After that I started to work with different families, taking care of children. After my sister got sick I had to take care of my niece when she was one year old, by that time. Then I continued to help my sisters with their sons.

After that I met a guy and for one year got to know him better. After that we decided to get married. But before that, we left to go to New Jersey to earn the money to build a house. Then we started to live together, and I got pregnant, and he left again to work in New Jersey so we could buy things for the baby and pay for the furniture. Six months later he came back and two months after that I gave birth to a baby girl. During that time everything was fine. My husband found a job and I started working as a baby-sitter for my neighbor, in my house.

When my first daughter was nine months old, I got pregnant again. I had problems, so I went to the hospital, but I never knew I was going to have twins. I got really sick. I had lots of problems with the salt I had to use while I was pregnant. Because of that I lost one of my daughters. After that I gradually got over the shock and went home with my small child. She only weighed two-and-a-half pounds. She did not respond to the treatment the doctors were giving her, so

I had to take her back to the hospital, and she had to stay there for a couple of months. I was with her all the time. Now she is twelve years old and she is a really good daughter.

My two daughters are my treasure. In 1985 I came to Hartford, looking for a better place for my daughters to learn. After they started to go to school, I started to try to learn English, but every time I did, for some reason, I had to stop. Then I started to work in a factory. I worked there for a year. Then I was laid off.

After a time a neighbor told me about the different programs that Literacy Volunteers offered and I started to study English again. I surprised myself when I found out how much I had learned, and although there's a lot I don't understand, I know that I will make it. Our tutor is really patient, and the rest of the students are very nice people. I got interested in learning.

My intention is to find a job and to help my daughters with all they need so they will learn and have a nice future.

**Bonifacia Reyes**  
**Clark Family Resource Center**

| Word        | Syllables                     | Write Sentence |
|-------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| farmer      | farm-er (2 syllables)         |                |
| electricity | e-lec-tric-i-ty (5 syllables) |                |
| available   | a-vail-a-ble (4 syllables)    |                |

|           |                            |  |
|-----------|----------------------------|--|
| migrated  | mi-gra-ted (3 syllables)   |  |
| pregnant  | preg-nant (2 syllables)    |  |
| bigger    | (big-ger) 2 syllables      |  |
| situation | sit-u-a-tion (4 syllables) |  |
| together  | to-geth-er (3 syllables)   |  |
| continue  | con-tin-ue (3 syllables)   |  |
| received  | re-ceived (2 syllables)    |  |
| earn      | earn (one syllable)        |  |
| furniture | furn-i-ture (3 syllables)  |  |
| gradually | grad-u-a-lly (4 syllables) |  |
| neighbor  | neigh-bor (2 syllables)    |  |
| intention | in-ten-tion (3 syllables)  |  |

## Fill in the Blanks

In 1952 when I was born in San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico, my \_\_\_\_\_ lived on a small farm where they had an old wooden \_\_\_\_\_. My father was a \_\_\_\_\_ and my mother took care of my older brother and me, and helped my father in the farm.

During that time we did not have electricity \_\_\_\_\_ because that service was not available in the country. We got water from the river and we also \_\_\_\_\_ our clothes there. We lived like that for many years until my father \_\_\_\_\_ to the United States to work in the fields. He came home at the end of every year with \_\_\_\_\_ and every time before he left, he got my mother pregnant.

At last, my father was able to buy a better \_\_\_\_\_ and a bigger farm and we started living in better \_\_\_\_\_. He did not go back to the United States and started working his own farm. Little by little he bought animals and our situation got \_\_\_\_\_.

My aunts and uncles lived near by, and together with my parents, worked to have better \_\_\_\_\_ on the farm.

Then my brother and I started going to school. My older brother could not \_\_\_\_\_ his studies because he had some \_\_\_\_\_ with his eyes and other illnesses. During that time, we never went to see the doctors and our parents took care of us with \_\_\_\_\_ made out of different plants.

I \_\_\_\_\_ when my father used to sit with me in a hammock during the afternoon and he would teach me how to write my name and the numbers, one through ten, and how to read. That is why when I went to school for the first time, they skipped me to the second \_\_\_\_\_. During that time there was no kindergarten. So I

started at the second grade and \_\_\_\_\_ school until the third grade. Because my parents needed to send my two sisters to school, I had to stay in the house and \_\_\_\_\_ them with the chores.

My parents received letters from the school asking them to send me back, but with the poor \_\_\_\_\_ at my house, I could not go back. My parents did not have \_\_\_\_\_ money to send all of us to school. Time passed that way and we became ten brothers and sisters.

I was eleven when I went to live with nuns at a home for \_\_\_\_\_ people, but my mother got very sick with cancer and I had to go back home to take care of my brothers and sisters with the help of my father. The youngest was only two weeks old. I took care of them for nine \_\_\_\_\_.

During that time Social Services came to my house for my younger brothers and sisters. They took five of them away and I still haven't seen the three younger ones. When my brothers and sisters left, I went back with the nuns, and my father \_\_\_\_\_ with the other four.

Later on, I started regular classes in Hato Rey, Puerto Rico. For some months I studied half a day and worked at home until I completed seventh grade. Then I took a sewing course for three months. I took my brothers and sisters with me to the home and my father got \_\_\_\_\_ with another woman who had ten kids.

After some years my father and his \_\_\_\_\_ went to live in Chicago and we stayed in Puerto Rico. Since we did not have anywhere to go, we continued to work at the home because my father sold the farm, the house and everything that belonged to us.

After two of my sisters got married, I took the money I had saved, and went on a trip to Mexico for a month which was really \_\_\_\_\_ and that I will never forget!

When I came back I stayed with the nuns and I was there for a couple of more months. Then one of my sisters asked me to move in with her. After that I started to work with \_\_\_\_\_ families, taking care of children. After my sister got sick I had to take care of my niece when she was one year old, by that time. Then I \_\_\_\_\_ to help my sisters with their sons.

After that I met a guy and for one year got to know him better. After that we decided to get married. But before that, we left to go to New Jersey to \_\_\_\_\_ the money to build a house. Then we started to live together, and I got pregnant, and he left again to work in New Jersey so we could buy things for the baby and pay for the furniture. Six months later he came back and two months after that I gave birth to a baby girl. During that time everything was fine. My husband found a \_\_\_\_\_ and I started working as a baby-sitter for my neighbor, in my house.

When my first \_\_\_\_\_ was nine months old, I got pregnant again. I had problems, so I went to the hospital, but I never knew I was going to have twins. I got really \_\_\_\_\_. I had lots of \_\_\_\_\_ with the salt I had to use while I was pregnant. Because of that I lost one of my daughters. After that I gradually got over the \_\_\_\_\_ and went home with my small child. She only weighed two-and-a-half pounds. She did not respond to the \_\_\_\_\_ the doctors were giving her, so I had to take her back to the hospital, and she had to

stay there for a couple of months. I was with her all the time. Now she is twelve years old and she is a really good \_\_\_\_\_.

My two daughters are my treasure. In 1985 I came to Hartford, looking for a better place for my daughters to learn. After they started to go to school, I started to try to learn \_\_\_\_\_, but every time I did, for some reason, I had to stop. Then I started to \_\_\_\_\_ in a factory. I worked there for a year. Then I was laid off.

After a time a \_\_\_\_\_ told me about the different programs that Literacy Volunteers offered and I started to \_\_\_\_\_ English again. I surprised myself when I found out how much I had \_\_\_\_\_, and although there's a lot I don't understand, I know that I will make it. Our tutor is really \_\_\_\_\_, and the rest of the students are very \_\_\_\_\_ people. I got interested in learning.

My intention is to find a job and to help my \_\_\_\_\_ with all they need so they will learn and have a nice \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Questions**

1. What role did Bonificia's father play in supporting his family?
2. In what ways did Bonificia's father support his children emotionally?
3. Why was Bonificia not allowed to attend school after the third grade?
4. What role did Bonificia play in the family?
5. Why do you think Bonificia's family was broken apart?
6. How did Bonificia's life change as she became an adult?
7. What hardships did she face and how did she deal with them?

8. What do you think is most important to Bonificia?
9. What does Bonificia's story make you think about in your own life?
10. Make a list of all the jobs Modesto had in Puerto Rico and the mainland U.S.



## Lesson Eight

My name is Modesto Rivera. I come from Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. It is a very nice town.

When I was a child I worked on my father's farm. I grew beans, yams, tomatoes, green peppers and other vegetables. I liked helping my father at the farm, because I was happy working with him. I am happy when I remember my childhood.

When I was young I worked in construction in my town. That was a very hard job. I worked on houses and other constructions jobs. When I was fifteen years old I came to the United States, because I wanted to change my life.

I came in April 1965 to U.S. for first time. I was fifteen years old. I wanted to change my life. I didn't speak English, but I started to work with my brother in a hotel. I was a dishwasher. I went to Puerto Rico again, because I was worried about my family. In 1967 I went to Puerto Rico. I met a young lady named Elizabeth. She became my girlfriend and I was married to her for four and a half years. We had three children. Their names are Modesto Jr., Maribeth and Wilfredo. We got divorced in October 1972.

In 1973 I started to study Commercial Administration at the Interamerican University in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, but I left after one semester because I didn't have a job and I needed work to get money for my children. I came back to U.S. the same year to work again. I came to Hartford, Connecticut and found a job with the same hotel I worked for before.

I met Carmen in 1986 when I studied English in Hartford High School. She's very nice, but she is sick. She has a heart problem and

she has diabetes. She needs a medical assistant. She goes to the hospital every month.

Now I study English with Literacy Volunteers. I feel good in the class because I learn a lot with my teacher Pam and the other students.

I am going to Puerto Rico to see my mother for Mother's Day. I shall come back here in June. I hope to take the G.E.D. in English and to look for a job.

**Modesto Rivera**  
**Clark Family Resource Center**

| Word         | Syllables                       | Write Sentence |
|--------------|---------------------------------|----------------|
| construction | con-struc-tion<br>(3 syllables) |                |
| fifteen      | fif-teen (2<br>syllables)       |                |
| diabetes     | di-a-be-tes (4<br>syllables)    |                |

### Fill in the Blanks

My name is Modesto Rivera. I come from Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. It is a very \_\_\_\_\_ town.

When I was a child I worked on my \_\_\_\_\_ farm. I grew beans, yams, tomatoes, green peppers and other \_\_\_\_\_. I liked helping my father at the farm, because I was happy \_\_\_\_\_ with him. I am happy when I remember my childhood.

When I was young I worked in \_\_\_\_\_ in my town. That was a very \_\_\_\_\_ job. I worked on houses and other construction jobs. When I was fifteen years old I came to the United States, because I wanted to \_\_\_\_\_ my life.

I came in April 1965 to U.S. for first \_\_\_\_\_. I was fifteen years old. I wanted to change my \_\_\_\_\_. I didn't speak English, but I started to \_\_\_\_\_ with my brother in a hotel. I was a dishwasher. I went to Puerto Rico again, because I was worried about my \_\_\_\_\_. In 1967 I went to Puerto Rico. I met a young lady named Elizabeth. She became my \_\_\_\_\_ and I was married to her for four and a half years. We had three children. Their names are Modesto Jr., Maribeth and Wilfredo. We got \_\_\_\_\_ in October 1972.

In 1973 I started to study Commercial Administration at the Interamerican University in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, but I left after one \_\_\_\_\_ because I didn't have a job and I needed work to get money for my children. I came back to U.S. the same \_\_\_\_\_ to work again. I came to Hartford, Connecticut and found a job with the same hotel I worked for before.

I met Carmen in 1986 when I studied English in Hartford High School. She's very nice, but she is \_\_\_\_\_. She has a heart problem and she has \_\_\_\_\_. She needs a medical assistant. She goes to the \_\_\_\_\_ every month.

Now I study English with Literacy Volunteers. I feel good in the class because I learn a lot with my teacher Pam and the other students.

I am going to Puerto Rico to see my mother for Mother's Day. I shall \_\_\_\_\_ back here in June. I \_\_\_\_\_ to take the G.E.D. in English and to look for a job.

### **Questions**

1. In what ways do you think Modesto changed his life by coming to the U.S.?
2. In what ways have you changed your life by coming to the U.S.
3. In what ways is Modesto's story different from Teresa's, Zoraida's, and Bonificia's?
4. What might this say about male/female relationships in Puerto Rico and among Puerto Ricans as they migrate to the U.S. mainland?

## Lesson Nine

### A True Story

#### A story of a past life aimed toward the world championship of 1989

(Translated by Judy Reed)

This story originally appeared in **Our History: Remembering Puerto Rico**, edited by Judy Reed. It has been slightly revised for this volume.

This is about my past as a fighter who will never forget the boxing world. I, Elvin R. Clemente, have been a boxer since 1978. Boxing attracted me, so I began to practice it. One of my best supporters was my older brother Angel. It was a difficult beginning for me. I wasn't able to count on family support or on collecting the resources needed for a career in boxing. This was the beginning of a long uphill trek. Why uphill? Because it wasn't easy to be an athlete without economic means.

I began my task with much sacrifice. But I didn't give up. Without a boxing crown I had to prepare as if I were already a champion. By the year 1983 I was practicing the hard sport of boxing with other good boxers. When I felt sure of obtaining my first medal I had my first bout. It was in 1985 in a town competition in the marathon at Chermorque. The fact that it was my first bout made a strong impression on me. I never had an experience like that before.

My first fight was against a guy who was backed by a well-known promoter. He was very famous and his boys held many boxing championships. I suffered from that first bout, losing by a knockout in my first defeat. But I was not defeated mentally. Later, when my

road was uphill I prepared harder. I liked to prepare in an intense way.

The next year I began to have hope when I became more sure of myself. When I knew I could survive a real ordeal, I could smell a championship. The year 1987 was when I won my first medal and trophy as an athlete. Then I was approached by some gamblers, but I disliked them so much that when my previous opponent's trainer offered to train me, I didn't want him to because he wanted to steal the fight from me. These are things that don't have to happen in sports.

For the reader of this history and the interested public, I want to say that I never had a trainer or a handler in my corner to send me out to fight. I went out alone to confront my influential boxing opponents.

When I was in Levittown, Puerto Rico I had a handler. That was when my career as a boxer opened up. My objective was to reach the world championships in 1989. It was a long road. That was when I met good athletes like the champion of the light weight division, Chapo Rosario. He had brought much glory to Puerto Rico. I practiced with all the guys - they were all good, amateur and professional. All were favorites in different divisions of boxing.

In 1989 the hour came when I had to represent my backer. I did it with much pride. The hour of truth came when I went to fight in the regional eliminations in Puerto Rico in the North Region. I became champion of the North in the 156 pound class. By the year 1990 there would be victories and some things not to my taste in my boxing life. But I didn't give up. My objective was to go on to the world championships in 1989. That was when I fought for the first time on

HBO TV, transmitted to the USA. My fight was against a national champion, a veteran of many fights when I fought him for the first time.

| <b>Words</b>  | <b>Syllables</b>               | <b>Write Sentence</b> |
|---------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| beginning     | be-gin-ning (3 syllables)      |                       |
| difficult     | dif-fi-cult (3 syllables)      |                       |
| uphill        | up-hill (2 syllables)          |                       |
| athlete       | ath-lete (2 syllables)         |                       |
| competition   | com-pe-ti-ion (4 syllables)    |                       |
| championships | champ-i-on-ships (4 syllables) |                       |
| intense       | in-tense (2 syllables)         |                       |
| approached    | ap-proa-ched (3 syllables)     |                       |
| gambler       | gam-bler (2 syllables)         |                       |
| regional      | re-gi-o-nal (3 syllables)      |                       |

## Fill in the Blanks

This is about my past as a \_\_\_\_\_ who will never forget the boxing world. I, Elvin R. Clemente, have been a \_\_\_\_\_ since 1978. Boxing attracted me, so I began to \_\_\_\_\_ it. One of my best \_\_\_\_\_ was my older brother Angel. It was a difficult beginning for me. I wasn't able to count on family \_\_\_\_\_ or on collecting the resources needed for a career in boxing. This was the \_\_\_\_\_ of a long uphill trek. Why uphill? Because it wasn't easy to be an athlete without economic means.

I began my task with much sacrifice. But I didn't give up. Without a boxing crown I had to prepare as if I were already a \_\_\_\_\_. By the year 1983 I was practicing the hard sport of boxing with other \_\_\_\_\_ boxers. When I felt sure of obtaining my first medal I had my first bout. It was in 1985 in a town \_\_\_\_\_ in the marathon at Chermorque. The fact that it was my first bout made a strong impression on \_\_\_\_\_. I never had an \_\_\_\_\_ like that before.

My first fight was against a guy who was backed by a well-known promoter. He was very \_\_\_\_\_ and his boys held many boxing championships. I suffered from that first bout, losing by a knockout in my first \_\_\_\_\_. But I was not defeated \_\_\_\_\_. Later, when my road was uphill I prepared harder. I liked to prepare in an \_\_\_\_\_ way.

The next year I began to have hope when I became more sure of \_\_\_\_\_. When I knew I could survive a real ordeal, I could smell a championship. The year 1987 was when I won my first medal and trophy as an athlete. Then I was \_\_\_\_\_ by some gamblers, but I \_\_\_\_\_ them so much that when my previous opponent's



trainer offered to train me, I didn't want him to because he wanted to \_\_\_\_\_ the fight from me. These are things that don't have to \_\_\_\_\_ in sports.

For the reader of this history and the interested public, I want to say that I never had a \_\_\_\_\_ or a handler in my corner to send me out to fight. I went out alone to confront my influential boxing \_\_\_\_\_.

When I was in Levittown, Puerto Rico I had a handler. That was when my career as a boxer \_\_\_\_\_ up. My \_\_\_\_\_ was to reach the world championships in 1989. It was a long \_\_\_\_\_. That was when I met good athletes like the champion of the light weight division, Chapo Rosario. He had brought much glory to Puerto Rico. I \_\_\_\_\_ with all the guys - they were all good, amateur and professional. All were favorites in different divisions of boxing.

In 1989 the hour came when I had to represent my backer. I did it with much pride. The hour of truth came when I went to fight in the \_\_\_\_\_ eliminations in Puerto Rico in the North Region. I became \_\_\_\_\_ of the North in the 156 pound class. By the year 1990 there would be \_\_\_\_\_ and some things not to my taste in my boxing life. But I didn't give up. My objective was to go on to the world championships in 1989. That was when I fought for the first time on HBO TV, transmitted to the USA. My fight was against a \_\_\_\_\_ champion, a veteran of many fights when I fought him for the first time.

## Questions

1. Why was a boxing career an uphill trek for Elvin?
2. How did Elvin prepare for his career?
3. What does he mean by saying, "I like to prepare in an intense way?"
4. What obstacles did he have to overcome during his career? How did he handle them?
5. What do you think boxing meant to Elvin?
6. If you were to write a letter to Elvin, what would you say?

## Lesson Ten

The following stories come from residents of Shepherd Park on Sisson Avenue in Hartford who participate in an ESOL class led by Lori Bilosz and Michael Stahl.

### Antonia Santiago

My name is Antonia Santiago. I was born in Utuado, Puerto Rico. I was born on March 14, 1918. I came to American in 1964, to Hartford, CT. When I came to the U.S. my nephew sent for me because I am a widow. My sister came to Hartford in 1974, but she died two years ago. I have two brothers and two sisters in Puerto Rico. I miss my family in Puerto Rico. My sister calls me every month.

\*\*\*\*\*

I am Adelaide Ortiz. I was born in Puerto Rico. My birthday is October 15, 1924. I came to the United States on August 26, 1963 to have a better future for my children. I have one boy and two girls. As soon as I arrived in New York, I started to work in the Bronx. I moved to Manhattan and started to make watchbands.

My children attended school. One day my son told me the teacher wanted to see me. I went to school and the teacher gave me a letter for welfare. My son, Milton, needed clothes for a graduation from sixth grade. She did that because my son told her that I was a single mother and my salary was poor. I made \$38 a week. But because I worked so hard, I made \$80 a week on piecework. For those reasons this is the country that will never be forgotten.

### Carmen Santiago's Story

I come from Puerto Rico, a beautiful small land with lovely generous people. I came here for a better future for myself and my family.

Indeed, I am very happy and proud of this great country. Sometimes I miss my Puerto Rico

I was born in Corozol in East Puerto Rico in 1929—Depression time. MY father and mother worked on the farm. I went to the eight grade. Then I stayed with my mother at home. I learned to sew with her. I just stayed at the house all the time doing housework. Then I found my boyfriend, George, and that was the end of that. Then we came to the U.S.A.

I didn't know English at that time. That was starting in 1950, not many people spoke Spanish in New York. So it was hard. My first daughter was born in 1950. I decided to learn English by reading the newspaper and watching TV. My oldest daughter went to school and started learning English. She started teaching me. Then I went to work in a factory. People were friendly. I found two ladies who spoke Spanish, but they spoke English, too. With them I learned to speak a little more of English. My youngest son was born in 1958. I stopped working at the factory and worked at home while my children grew up.

My husband passed away on 1979. I got sick and was tired. I took care of my grandchildren most of the time. I came to Shepherd Park last November.

**Maria Gonzalez**  
**October 23, 2000**

I got married in 1954. I have seven children, four boys and three girls. The first is named Radame. We call him Nerry. My next son is Wilson. Next is Marie. She was born in 1952. Next is Wilburt. He was born in 1960. Next is Harry. He was born in 1963. Next is Olga. She was born in 1970. The other one is Naomi. She was born in 1971. We have ten grandchildren.

Nerry lives in East Hampton. His wife's name is Norma. They have two children. The two boys are in the navy. Nerry ploughs snow for the state. Wilson lives in Puerto Rico. He fixes street lights. Maria lives in Puerto Rico with her husband Epiphanio. They have one son. She cuts hair. Wilburt is sick. He has schizophrenia. He got sick when he was twelve. His hormones changed. He is in the hospital in Middletown. Every week I visit him. I bring him food he likes. Harry lives in Clemens Place in Hartford. His wife's name is Evelyn. They have three children. In Puerto Rico he was a plumber. He is studying to be a plumber here. Olga lives in Puerto Rico. She is divorced. She has two children. Now she doesn't work. She's raising her children. Naomi lives in Newington. Her husband's name is Richard. They got married two years ago. They have no children. She's working with computers at Aetna.

## Coming to America

(Several members of the group said what made them happy and sad about coming to the U.S. mainland and leaving Puerto Rico)

| Happy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Sad                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• My grandson sent for me to take care of his children.</li><li>• I'm happy because all my children are in the U.S. They are all working.</li><li>• Here my children learn English and work here, too</li><li>• I'm happy because I have all my children and grandchildren here</li><li>• We have many programs here.</li><li>• We have good support for the elderly.</li><li>• I am happy because the most important medication and medical care are given to me through medicaid.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I'm sad because I miss my family in Puerto Rico.</li><li>• I'm sad because I left my homeland.</li><li>• Sometimes I'm sad because I have one daughter in Puerto Rico. She doesn't like it here. She doesn't like winter.</li><li>• My brother is in Puerto Rico. He hates the winter.</li><li>• I'm sad when I remember my friends, my time with them, talking with them. I miss them.</li></ul> <p>I'm sad because many members of my family passed away in Puerto Rico. December 1<sup>st</sup> my sister dies three years ago. I have only one brother left in Puerto Rico. He's very sick. He had a stroke. Part of his brain was damaged. When he tries to talk to people he can't speak. He forgets what he wants to say.</p> |

**Fill in the Blanks**  
**(Carmen Santiago's story)**

I come from Puerto Rico, a beautiful small \_\_\_\_\_ with lovely generous \_\_\_\_\_. I came here for a better future for myself and my \_\_\_\_\_. Indeed, I am very happy and proud of this great country. Sometimes I miss my Puerto Rico

I was born in Corozol in East Puerto Rico in 1929—Depression time. MY father and mother worked on the \_\_\_\_\_. I went to the eight grade. Then I stayed with my mother at home. I learned to sew with her. I just stayed at the house all the time doing \_\_\_\_\_. Then I found my boyfriend, George, and that was the end of that. Then we came to the U.S.A.

I didn't know English at that time. That was starting in 1950, not many people spoke \_\_\_\_\_ in New York. So it was hard. My first daughter was born in 1950. I decided to learn English by reading the newspaper and \_\_\_\_\_ TV. My oldest daughter went to school and started learning English. She started \_\_\_\_\_ me. Then I went to work in a \_\_\_\_\_. People were friendly. I found two ladies who spoke Spanish, but they spoke English, too. With them I learned to speak a little more of \_\_\_\_\_. My youngest son was born in 1958. I stopped working at the \_\_\_\_\_ and worked at home while my children grew up.

My husband passed away on 1979. I got \_\_\_\_\_ and was tired. I took care of my \_\_\_\_\_ most of the time. I came to Shepherd Park last November.

| Word          | Syllable                      | Write Sentence |
|---------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| nephew        | neph-ew (2 syllables)         |                |
| clothes       | clothes (one syllables)       |                |
| piecework     | piece-work (2 syllables)      |                |
| forgotten     | for-got-ten (2 syllables)     |                |
| generous      | gen-er-ous (3 syllables)      |                |
| housework     | housework (2 syllables)       |                |
| boyfriend     | boy-friend (2 syllables)      |                |
| friendly      | friend-ly (2 syllables)       |                |
| grandchildren | grand-chil-dren (3 syllables) |                |

### Questions

1. What was life like for you in your native country?
2. Why did you come to the United States?
3. What was life like for you when you came to the United States?
4. What do you miss most about your homeland?
5. Do you stay in touch with people from your country? How?
6. What makes you happy and sad about coming to the U.S. Mainland and leaving your country?



**Happy**

**Sad**