

ESOL VOICES: Student Spotlight

Lazaro Turino Andino

Lazaro Turino Andino is an ESOL student from Cuba. Lazaro has lived in the United States for 6 years. He started attending MCC in January 2016, and he hopes to earn an undergraduate degree in Electrical Engineering and one day attend law school. In this short narrative, Lazaro shares with us how he felt when he found out he was going to be able to come to the United States.

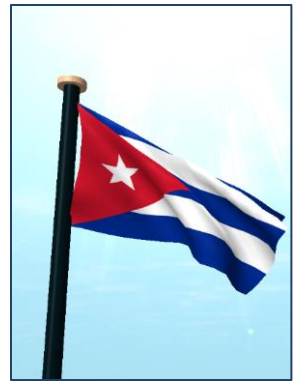


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The Bittersweet Taste of an American Dream

With my baggage in one hand, and in the other one my broken heart, I jumped on the aluminum bird. My parents taught me that the sky is the limit when you want something in life. In order to be successful, we need to make great sacrifices.

While I was doing my paperwork to get a visa to the U.S., I was thinking about the promised land. Some of my friends joked with me saying, "Lazaro you are going to meet Obama, perhaps work for him in the White House. Or maybe we will see you in Hollywood like Brad Pitt or Leonardo DiCaprio."

On January 26, 2010, the sky was gray; a breeze of cold and humid air hugged everyone who was in the park just a few meters away from the majestic United States Embassy in Havana, Cuba. The elegant building that for many Cubans was a dream, and for others, a symbol of hope. I was nervous and fearful to go inside the building because I saw the tears of the upbeat souls who waited for a visa just like me. The sea of tears reflected the pain of those Cubans who were denied a visa. My time came. I was in the security screening line to get inside the United States

Embassy. I put my belongings in a basket and I walked through the metal detector machine. Everything was fine. The security agent gave me back my personal effects, and I was assigned a pass to join the multitude who were already inside.

After 15 minutes of desperation, I heard my name called on the intercom. "Lazaro Turino to window number 3." I was paralyzed. For an instant, I felt like I was welded in the chair. I knew I was one step closer to discovering America. I imagined myself as Christopher Columbus and my mind was already surfing in America, but my slightly built body was still anchored in Cuba.

When I was close to the window, I listened to the lovely voice of a female U.S. officer. "Puede sentarse señor Turino." You may sit Mr. Turino. How relieved I was when that lady spoke Spanish. I had thought that the interview was going to be in English, and I only spoke my native language well. The young officer asked me a few simple questions to which I replied without hesitation. At the end of the interview, she asked for my passport. I called my passport "my precious," like in the movie *The*

Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey.

I gave her my passport and after a few minutes of waiting, I saw her walking towards me. My heart was beating faster with every step she took. With a Mona Lisa smile on her face, I heard the words, "Felicidades, usted es el elegido para una visa a los Estados Unidos de America." Congratulations, you are eligible for a visa to the United States of America.

I felt so happy and cheerful that I ran out of the building as fast as a lightning bolt. I went back to my hometown Cienfuegos. I gave the good news to my family, and made jokes with my friends. "Finally Obama is going to have the pleasure to meet me, and Hollywood better be prepared for the new Cuban star. Of course, that will be me," I said while we all laughed.

A week later, I went back to Havana to retrieve my passport with the visa stamped in it. I felt lucky and rewarded.

Finally, the day came when my friends and family united and gave me best wishes for my journey and new life. I am not superman. I cried like a baby alone in his crib. And when I saw my mother and father

crying too, I hugged them as hard as I could, and I kissed them with the promise that I would be back someday. I looked them in the eyes and said, "Los amo, cuidense mucho, nos veremos pronto." I love you both, take care a lot, we will see each other soon.

"Be yourself, think wisely, follow your heart, and unleash your full potential to accomplish your dreams," said my mom.



I felt the wings roaring as I grabbed the arms of the reclining seat as

strongly as I could, and gently I was pushed back into the seat while the plane was taking off. After 50 minutes of my terrifying fear of flying, I landed and someone said, "Welcome to the United States of America." Those were the first words that I heard in English when I arrived to this amazing country.

I have been living here since April 9, 2010. I have a job to support myself and occasionally help my parents. I am still looking for my "American dream" and a happily-ever-after fairytale ending. I still have

many dreams to accomplish, and promises to fulfill, but I am never going to give up.

In my journey to a new life I decided to return to school. I want to become an immigration attorney to fight for those who want to come to "The Land of the Free, Home of the Brave." I will work hard to succeed, to reach my goals, and make my family proud of me. I will take the advice of an old friend. I remember his words like it was yesterday, "Perhaps I will never reach the stars, but I will die trying."



ESOL Voices a collection of stories written by ESOL students at Monroe Community College. This publication highlights our students MCC who come from all over the world. Look for a new story in the Tribune each month. We hope you will find these stories interesting and inspiring.

Katie Leite & Pamela Fornieri, ESOL Program, Sept./Oct. 2016
