

**Transcript for Oral History Interview**  
**Conducted for University of Maryland Course IMM 400/ THET 428I**

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**Interviewer's (Student) name:** Iliana Papanicolaou

**Interviewee's name:** Penelope Costas (pseudonym)

**Interviewee's Country of Origin:** Greece

**Interviewee's Current Residence:** North Bethesda, Maryland, U.S.A.

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**Place of Interview:** Penelope's apartment sitting room

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**INTERVIEW:**

ILIANA: Welcome Popi, and I'd like to make a short announcement before we start, a Happy Birthday to you.

PENELOPE: Oh thank you

ILIANA: And many more years to come, eh -

PENELOPE: I hope so.

*(Both laugh)*

ILIANA: I know so!

PENELOPE: Yea...thank you.

ILIANA: Of course. Um, so let's just start. Let's-let's start out with some, some questions. Um.

PENELOPE: Okay.

ILIANA: Where were you born?

PENELOPE: Well, I was born in ah, Zakynthos. In a small island. In Ionian Sea.

ILIANA: *(whispers)* Wow.

PENELOPE: Yeah...

ILIANA: An-and um, on the island that you come from, Zakynthos, like how would you describe your life growing up?

PENELOPE: Oh...it was beautiful, I...um. I was uh...growing in a, small village of course, and uh...my parents provided us everything. It was beautiful.

ILIANA: And what are some of the, feelings, that come up when you think about, the island?

PENELOPE: Oh...I always dream of it, and uh in fact, when I dream, at night, I dream uh...the island.

ILIANA: (*whispers*) Wow.

PENELOPE: Uh I dr-I dream of what, um...would I have uh...lived, in the island.

ILIANA: You put yourself in the scenario of, if you had lived there / what your life would be like?

PENELOPE: / Yea, yea yea.

ILIANA: Do you know why that happens? Or do you have an uh- do you have em...have you thought about why you- you dream so much about it-

PENELOPE: Well, I think uh, and because uh...I lived my first years, my best years, when I was a child. And uh...I was a happy child there.

ILIANA: And what were your- / do you remember any of your first memories, there, as a child? Um, or, could you share some of, um, the memories, you had on the island, that you still cherish today- you still remember?

PENELOPE: / Yea.

PENELOPE: Well uh, I remember everything, and uh...um, I was going to school there. My first school, was there, and uh...I had a beautiful experience. My teachers were nice, and my parents, um...and we used to live in the village / but uh...sometimes, we moved to...to the city.

ILIANA: / Mhm.

PENELOPE: And uh, in the city we had, a lot of fish, and seafood, and I remember, when I was uh...in the village, I was uh...asking my mother, to go and get uh, some seashells, to eat. And she went to the city, to get the seashells uh and / bought them- Yes and I rem- and I-I cannot forget it.

ILIANA: / To bring back to the...village.

PENELOPE: And I love the sardish-

ILIANA: Can you still taste / the seashell?

PENELOPE: / Yes, yes, ye. (*ILIANA laughs*)

PENELOPE: I love it.

ILIANA: Taste is- was a big part of your / experience there probably, the food the-  
PENELOPE: / Mhm.

PENELOPE: Yea, the food...an-and also the...the ocean, the beach, when we went to the beach I enjoyed uh, swimming /. Yea, I learned swimming, when I was child. And I love swimming, I love swimming in the ocean.

ILIANA: / Mm.

ILIANA: Did you ever find yourself, going out for a swim so you could, relax and just distress or...um...like, do you remember a moment, that- that you- like in the- in the water that, you- you can still like feel...like today?

PENELOPE: Oh yea, I'm happy when I, swim, when I see...the ocean. Um...I'm happy.

ILIANA: Hm. How did, your culture and the traditions on the island, or from Greece in general, how did it influence you, or inform your life?

PENELOPE: Well uh...we had uh...beautiful traditions uh, and uh, I still keep them.

ILIANA: Can you / elaborate on some of them? Like which ones, like- come to your mind, that you really kept?

PENELOPE: / Yea, I follow them.

PENELOPE: Well uh, when uh, we had uh...Christmas for instance, we had to go to the church, at midnight, and I remember, oh we were getting ready, to go to... the church, and everybody, uh...from the village, we were walking, in the street, and all the children were, all together. It was fun.

ILIANA: Mm...wow, those are things that are difficult to, to find in today's, today's age.

PENELOPE: Well, we live in a, modern world.

ILIANA: Things are always changing / everything always evolving. Even Greece.

PENELOPE: / Yes, what can you do. Yes, everywhere.

ILIANA: As a child you said that you, you remember everything. And um, I wonder if storytelling on the island of Zakynthos, was a big part of life there.

PENELOPE: Sure.

ILIANA: Like listening to stories and then retelling them.

PENELOPE: Oh yea, I had an aunt, who was uh...telling us always stories. Before we go to bed, she used to tell us stories. And when uh, it was cold, we had to stay in and she was telling us

uh...different kinds of uh...stories. Yea.

ILIANA: Mm. Do you remember, any one in particular that you- that you liked or you share with your own grandchildren? Like uh...

PENELOPE: Oh, there are so many. (*ILIANA laughs*)  
(Long pause)

PENELOPE: Well, I remember it was about uh...Kokkino Skoufitsa.

(*ILIANA and PENELOPE laugh*)

ILIANA: I know that one too!

PENELOPE: Yea and actually my mother used to...make uh, a costume for me, and uh...when I was uh- wearing this costume, uh, there was a-a little boy next uh...to our village uh...where he was coming to get some uh, fruit, from us. Uh...he was calling me, Kokkino Skoufitsa! Kokkino Skoufitsa!

ILIANA: And can you um, tell-tell us what Kokkino Skoufitsa is for those who don't know?

PENELOPE: Oh it's the red uh... / re-red hood uh...

ILIANA: / Riding. Red Riding Hood.

PENELOPE: Yes.

ILIANA: Yes. So you were raised by both your mother and your father?

PENELOPE: (*quick to respond*) Yes.

ILIANA: (*Popi makes reaffirming sounds*) How was life at home like um, were there other caretakers as well?

PENELOPE: Yea, whe-um- I had my mother, my father, and my aunt. Yea...

ILIANA: How so with your aunt? She was also...

PENELOPE: She-she was uh...part of the family, and uh...she took care of us. Everybody, my mother, my aunt, my father. Eh, they were very close to each other, and we had love. It was beautiful.

ILIANA: Do you think that the...like this culture, this the- the culture in Greece to um...to be a family like the- the concentration they-they put on that um...does it affect people? Like does it um...Does it make it who-who they are? Does it make them who they are, this-this uh / the

values of family?

PENELOPE: / Oh sure...Yes I'm sure.

PENELOPE: And many people, lots of people continue, and follow this uh, traditions.

ILIANA: And um...following that comment, if there are any, what ideals or virtues did your, your home country of Zakynthos or Greece, um teach you, um...and did you, when you came to the United States, di-did you use them? Did you put them to use?

PENELOPE: Oh yes, I tried, because uh...we carry our traditions, ourselves, and uh...we follow them and we continue with this. Maybe not uh...one hundred percent, but, we do.

ILIANA: (*softly*) That's beautiful And uh...talking more about the immigration, were you the first from your family to immigrate? Are you the only one of your family to immigrate?

PENELOPE: Yea...I'm the only one. Yea, nobody wanted to immigrate.

ILIANA: (*laughs lightly*) Everyone / wanted to stay on the island.

PENELOPE: / Yea..I was the pioneer.

(*Both laugh*)

ILIANA: The risk taker.

PENELOPE: Yes, yes!

ILIANA: How so? / What drew you to the United States?

PENELOPE: / Uh...

PENELOPE: Well uh, I came, through my work. So...I was excited and I wanted to come, um...

ILIANA: What job were you offered here?

PENELOPE: Um...well I offered uh...I was offered by my government and I came here.

ILIANA: Yea / to work.

PENELOPE: / And that was uh...a big thing for me.

ILIANA: Big move.

PENELOPE: Yes.

ILIANA: And how did your family feel about *you* coming to the United States?

PENELOPE: Oh boy they didn't like it. They didn't like it because it's too far. Yea...

ILIANA: Did they ever, come to visit you or-

PENELOPE: Yes, yes! My father came uh, twice. Yea...but he was an old man he couldn't uh, stay. He didn't *like* to stay, here.

ILIANA: He didn't like the lifestyle here?

PENELOPE: Well he wanted to be in his home, and uh...enjoy his uh...relatives/ there. And in the country.

ILIANA: / Yea exactly. Especially at old age-

PENELOPE: Yes.

ILIANA: You want to go back to the place.

PENELOPE: Yea because he didn't like to be here, isolated in a house.

ILIANA: Was he used to that he wa- / he wasn't used to this sort of lifestyle then.

PENELOPE: / No. No.

ILIANA: Hm. And when you came to the United States, did you have an image of what it would be like in your mind? Eh...

PENELOPE: Mm...

ILIANA: Did your expectations meet the reality you saw?

PENELOPE: No, no. I didn't know many things, and when I came I saw, so big country I mean, everything was big, large. The buildings, the roads, the shops. Eh...everything was big. Huge.

ILIANA: And you weren't used to that.

PENELOPE: (*ILIANA laughs*) No, no. In my country everything is tiny. Small.

(*ILIANA laughs*)

ILIANA: Wow. And when you...came to the United States, what were the conditions, when you travelled? So um, um...was it your first time away from home? And-

PENELOPE: Uh...not really because uh...I had left home when I was twenty, and uh...I went to England to go to school. So.../ it was-

ILIANA: / What were you studying in England?

PENELOPE: Uh...I studied English and Sociology.

ILIANA: Mhm, very nice. Sociology. So you...had seen something out of the ordinary, / before.

PENELOPE: / Right. Yea, yea.

ILIANA: Was the United States / something different?

PENELOPE: / It wasn't strange for me but it was, a different uh...country. Big, everything was big.

*(ILIANA laughs)*

PENELOPE: And I remember when I went to the, grocery store, I was, amazed and I said 'Oh my God, what is this. So many things.' And I started bough-buying things that I didn't used them/ I didn't need them.

ILIANA: / *(chuckling)* Or didn't need.

PENELOPE: So...when I went home, I ended up with so many things that I didn't need them. That's what uh...impressed me.

ILIANA: Yea. The first impre/ssions of the thi-

PENELOPE: / Yea, the first impression.

ILIANA: Everything big. Did you have any trouble, on your travel here- on your journey to the United States? Like the actually like (pause) the trans/portation.

PENELOPE: / I-I flew!

ILIANA: You flew.

PENELOPE: Yea, no...

ILIANA: But you didn't meet any-

PENELOPE: No, no problem.

ILIANA: Yea. And who greeted you when you came? When you finally landed. Did / someone welcome-

PENELOPE: / Oh um...there was a friend that he was uh...at the airport. Yea...a friend and colleague actually.

PENELOPE: And he picked me up, and when I was coming from the airport, it was night-time, and everything was dark, and I thought, that uh...that I came very close to the ocean. I-It looked to me like, being in the ocean. But it wasn't.

ILIANA: Because you were thinking about what you knew / what-

PENELOPE: / Yea.

ILIANA: And, correct me if I'm wrong, is that because on your island, when you used to see, / this sight, that's what it was it reminded you of / the o-

PENELOPE: / Yea, yea. / Yea. (*PENELOPE and ILIANA laugh*)

ILIANA: We go back to the ocean.

PENELOPE: (*laughs*) Yea...I carry it with me.

ILIANA: What is it about- I understand that feeling that you were talking about with water.

PENELOPE: Yea...I'm uh, connected with this. Yea...I have lived all my life, in um...it's part of my life.

ILIANA: Does it remind you of home?

PENELOPE: Yea. I cannot live without it.

ILIANA: When you came here, did you have dreams? Even though you had a job offer, did you have other aspirations, dreams?

PENELOPE: Yes. I always had dreams. Even now-

ILIANA: You seem like you're a person of dreams, ah?

PENELOPE: Even now!

ILIANA: What else were you involved in? Or were you involved, in other activities other than your job?

PENELOPE: Oh...I...I went to school and I learned uh...photography. So... / I kept myself busy with uh...photography and I did uh...a lot of exhibitions with my pictures.

ILIANA: /(*softly*) Wow.

ILIANA: And where was this?

PENELOPE: Here in the States uh...I...send them, to Chicago, to Los Angeles.

ILIANA: (*softly*) Wow.

PENELOPE: Yes, I have a lot of uh...exhibits.

ILIANA: So, was art / em...a big part of your life?



PENELOPE: / Yes. Yes.

PENELOPE: Right.

ILIANA: And you continued, / through it. Were there other kinds of art you got involved in?

PENELOPE: / Yea.

PENELOPE: Well I li- uh...I like writing. I write poems. I have written a book, about the island. / The history, the culture, and uh, the food.

ILIANA: / Zakynthos eh.

PENELOPE: Now I'm writing eh, another book, about uh...the importance of uh...grandmother. So I keep myself busy.

*(ILIANA laughs)*

PENELOPE: And also with poetry.

ILIANA: Going off of this idea, of keeping yourself busy, what do you think about, a life, especially in the United States, without, finding something to occupy your time? What I want/ to say, is it important to have something, to constantly live by?

PENELOPE: / Well.

PENELOPE: Yes it is important, for everyone. It's not only here. But everywhere. Wherever you are you have to be creative. You have to do things uh, of course things that you like, first, and uh...you have to participate in uh society, and, give uh, give your uh...best, for the society.

ILIANA: That reminds me of, uh the ancient Greek theatre. This idea that it is / theatre is a civic duty. That, as a citizen- *(PENELOPE's phone rings)* oh it's okay.

PENELOPE: / Mhm!

ILIANA: That's fine, you're a busy person, okay? *(PENELOPE and ILIANA laugh)*

PENELOPE: Yea...what can/ you do.

ILIANA: / A lot of people like you.

ILIANA: Eh...I was going to as- um. Th-that idea that it's- it's your responsibility as a citizen to participate-

PENELOPE: Yes, of course!

ILIANA: Within the theatre especially that was such a big / point, did you ever get involved in theatre?

PENELOPE: / Yea.

PENELOPE: Yes I did. I had uh...participated in eh...Greek theatre of course, four times. Yea / I acted.

ILIANA: / Wow, how about in the United States as well, / Greek theatre?

PENELOPE: / Yes yes I acted. I love acting, and uh...I enjoyed it.

ILIANA: If you were to give a piece of advice, to young actors of today, one piece of advice, what would it be?

PENELOPE: Well, to go on and uh...be creative, and participate in all kinds of art.

ILIANA: Not just stick to one kind.

PENELOPE: Wha- whatever they like. It's beautiful.

ILIANA: Does it fill your life? Like this is the element that fills you.

PENELOPE: Of course, of course.

ILIANA: How do you feel when you're on stage? Or, perhaps, film or...

PENELOPE: Um...I Feel that uh... That I conquer the world. I feel that uh...I give em...and I offer something to the society.

ILIANA: And that's- something that could be-

PENELOPE: And it's fulfilling. It's a full feeling.

ILIANA: I'm very interested in in the um, the-the the art culture, the poetic and art culture, / of your island Zakynthos. Um, and how that's influenced you / So, / if you'd like to elaborate on that so, / the big poets of- / yea go-

PENELOPE: / Mhm.

/ Yes.

/ Yes.

/ Yes of-

/ Right, yea I know what you mean.

PENELOPE: Yes, we were raised uh, in this uh...community that uh...we, we learned about the...the poets.

ILIANA: Which / one-

PENELOPE: Like uh...

ILIANA: Yea what were some of the-

PENELOPE: Dionysios Solomos, our national poet eh...Kalvos. So many we have. And uh...we had to learn, when we were children, small children, we had to learn eh...by heart, the...the poems. So...we were raised, with this.

ILIANA: How has that shaped the way you see the world? How-how did you bring that, um, the grow- like the raising (pause) within, within like this, this rich culture, into- when you moved to the United States, I'm say- did you have difficulty assimilating, um, or understanding like the difference, / the big difference I'm assuming?

PENELOPE: / Mhm

PENELOPE: Yea, there is a difference, but uh...but I'm uh...content . I'm uh...happy and um...I'm content. So...I fe-I feel that-that uh...that I know a lot of things, and I appreciate uh, my culture.

ILIANA: And, at the same time do you also have a appreciation for the United States? / Even though, yes.

PENELOPE: / Yes.

PENELOPE: Yes, because this is uh...em, a country of different cultures and uh, and uh, all these societies participate, and they...show their uh, traditions, and cultures. And-

ILIANA: That's a beautiful / thing.

PENELOPE: / And uh, they appreciate. Whatever they do.

ILIANA: What has the United States taught you? What have you gained from living here?

PENELOPE: Oh...I think discipline and uh, also to appreciate each other, and respect, each other. (pause) And uh...love each other. (pause) We're all different, but uh in the end, we-we're human beings. And we have to respect each other.

ILIANA: Very well said. Very well said. Um...I wonder when you- when you visit Zakyntho, do you ever miss the United States?

PENELOPE: Yes, if I stay there for a...long time, I miss, yes.

*(PENELOPE and ILIANA laugh)*

ILIANA: We don't know where we belong!

PENELOPE: Yea...

ILIANA: And same when you're here, / do you miss Zakynthos I bet?

PENELOPE: / Yea...

PENELOPE: Yes, I bet.

ILIANA: Do you consider yourself an immigrant?

PENELOPE: Uh...not really.

ILIANA: What would you consider yourself-

PENELOPE: Because I think I'm adjusted to this uh...culture.

ILIANA: Yea.

PENELOPE: Yea.

ILIANA: I wond- is there- if you were to identify yourself as something he- as someone here like, settler, an immigrant, a visitor, what would you /- do you- do you identify yourself with something or it's open?

PENELOPE: / Mm...

PENELOPE: I dunno, I feel like an international uh... a human being.

ILIANA: I understa- /espe-and perhaps um, your artistic element, plays...

PENELOPE: / Yea...

PENELOPE: Yes, and uh...because I have travelled a lot and uh...I'm more with uh...artistic uh...

ILIANA: The charms of art.

PENELOPE: Yea.

ILIANA: I understand that. Eh...

PENELOPE: Yea...I love people. I love communication / with people

ILIANA: / Mhm

ILIANA: Do you consider yourself, going off of- off of your point as identifying yourself as eh...almost like a global, person. Like a person of the people, not setting yourself down to one eh...you know, way of identifying yourself. Do...do you consider yourself more of an individual or as, um someone who is part of a-a group of people? Um, do these roles, you know, can they live together, can they be both?

PENELOPE: Yes I think so, because I'm in a society that I- that I can uh...go with *anyone* (pause) and uh...share.

ILIANA: Mm.

(Long pause)

ILIANA: How- what has, what has surprised you the most, in the United States, living here? If there is anything. Or what has impressed you...what has shocked you? Eh...what I want to say is like, have you- have you seen or experienced something that you felt, um, eh...you've- you've never lived before you've never experienced before?

PENELOPE: Well uh...it's uh...sad to say that uh...I didn't like to...to see homeless people. That's uh...what surprise me. Because uh...I never thought in my life that uh, uh...that in the United States, the richest country of the *world* to have uh...homeless people. And that uh...I couldn't uh, believe it.

ILIANA: And how did that make you, rethink or reflect upon your own life, seeing that? Did that create any- did-um. Yea did you- didroo um...like did you ever reflect on...your own life when you saw the poverty? Suddenly you had something to compare it too.

PENELOPE: Sure, um yea I compare it uh... Life in my country, we never had uh...eh, homeless people, we might have uh, had uh, poor people but uh, um, either the relatives or uh...friends, would help them. Uhum, of course now it's getting worse, unfortunately. Uh but uh...in my time, when I was young and uh, raised in Greece, we didn't have um...homeless people.

ILIANA: And why do you think that's changing right now? You said something that times are changing, things are getting / worse-

PENELOPE: / Oh because of the...economic cri-crisis.

ILIANA: In Greece.

PENELOPE: Yes.

ILIANA: As soon as the economics change, so does the lifestyle it seems.

PENELOPE: It might be better?

ILIANA: Righ- eh em.

ILIANA: So then my question would be like, do you think that (pause) in...that the economics of a-of a country also inform how people, enjoy their life?

PENELOPE: Oh yea. It counts.

ILIANA: Mhm.

PENELOPE: Yea. Well there are many reasons / of a...

ILIANA: / Yea of course. That's not the- one / reason, but-

PENELOPE: Yea. Many reasons. Unfortunately.

ILIANA: Eh...now that we're- we're talking about um...like comparing the-the two cultures um, and what you bring from one culture to the other, whether you're in Zakynthos or you're going to the United States or when you're in the United States, and you have Zakynthos on your mind. Um, another element um, which is important to the- Greek community, religion. Then how does religion play a role in your life? Does it have a place in the United States?

PENELOPE: Oh yes, here, everybody has uh (pause) the churches uh...or um...their communities. There- they can enjoy their uh religion, everybody.

ILIANA: Mm the freedom-

PENELOPE: Yea.

ILIANA: -To practice religion. And have you found that um, it's been used as a way to hold on, to something? To hold on to...the roots?

PENELOPE: Yes I think so.

ILIANA: Is it easy to do so in this country? Do you believe / from your experi-

PENELOPE: / Yes, yes uh...

PENELOPE: Yes, it gives you the opportunity to do...whatever you want.

(Pause)

ILIANA: After living in the United States- how many years have you-have you been here for?

PENELOPE: Well, about thirty.

ILIANA: Okay, so you've had- you-you've had some experiences here like, that um, have stayed with you too um, but you also have the- the life that you lived i-in Zakynthos. Um, now like, reflecting off, of those two worlds, / um...I mean have you um. Do you-do you have a certain belief of what living a good life is made of? What is a good life, if you have a definition for it?

PENELOPE: / Mhm.

ILIANA: Or is it difficult?

PENELOPE: Well it depends on the person. A good life for me is uh...uh...to have a place to...to sleep, uh...food to survive, and uh...do things that you like.

ILIANA: So, that being said, the idea of the home, and where the home lies, what is your, identity-like identification / of your home?

PENELOPE: / Well to have a...good family, be loved, and love.

ILIANA: Mm...so it centers around the idea of love.

PENELOPE: Of Course.

ILIANA: We go back to there / ah? The-

PENELOPE: / Yea.

PENELOPE: Because we came to this world, to love each other. We didn't come to hate / each other.

ILIANA: / Mhm.

PENELOPE: And / love breaks everything.

ILIANA: / So-

ILIANA: Love. So love is home?

PENELOPE: Yes.

ILIANA: Home for you isn't one place?

PENELOPE: Home is uh...wherever you are, with your family, with your friends. Those you love.

ILIANA: What has kept you here, in the United States?

PENELOPE: Oh, my...grandchildren.

ILIANA: Oh...(ILIANA and PENELOPE laugh) Another joy there, ah?

PENELOPE: Yes, that's wonderful.

ILIANA: Is that the main reason?

PENELOPE: Yes.

ILIANA: Your family.

PENELOPE: Mhm.

ILIANA: How many / grandchildren do you have?

PENELOPE: / Yea that's-that's what you call love.

ILIANA: That's so beautiful.

PENELOPE: Yea...

ILIANA: How many / grandchildren do you have?

PENELOPE: / It is.

PENELOPE: Three.

ILIANA: Three. And they're young / I presume, ah?

PENELOPE: / Yea. Two...girls and one boy.

ILIANA: *(softly)* Wow.

PENELOPE: Yea, I was happy today because they call me. They call me "Yiayia happy birthday!"

ILIANA: *(laughs)* What else / do you want.

PENELOPE: / Yiayia...

PENELOPE: Yea...and uh...we'll get together, next uh...Wednesday.

ILIANA: Mm for celebrations.

PENELOPE: Yea.

ILIANA: And tha-

PENELOPE: And that's what you call, happiness.

ILIANA: And I was gonna say, and that is what is enough.

PENELOPE: Yes.

ILIANA: That's what's enough.

ILIANA: What em... um...let's see. I want to ask you just a couple more questions. Em...how 'bout food?

PENELOPE: Food?/ Food is important.

ILIANA: / Eh because you said you wrote about food in your book.

PENELOPE: Yes.



ILIANA: What- what about food?

PENELOPE: Food is uh...very important for our lives, and uh...I'm like it because uh, I follow the... Mediterranean diet.

ILIANA: Mm...still in / the United States you try your best to...to keep the Mediterranean diet?

PENELOPE: / Yes, yes uh, so...

PENELOPE: The best is to eat uh, fish, olive oil, and uh vegetables.

ILIANA: Mm.

PENELOPE: Yea that's the most important.

ILIANA: No meat?

PENELOPE: Well / of course, yea sometimes, but uh...it's uh, much healthier.

ILIANA: / For the- for the most part.

ILIANA: Mm. It's definitely true. And on the island of Zakynthos, the diet / was as so.

PENELOPE: / It's re- oh yea, oh yea.

PENELOPE: It's similar to the Italian uh...cuisine because uh...it was influenced by the Venetians, so...they have the-the mediterranean diet.

ILIANA: Mm. Yea. Have you returned, to Zakynthos, since you've been in the United States?

PENELOPE: Oh yes, yes. Almost every year.

ILIANA: Does anything change, when you go there?

PENELOPE: Uh...yes, unfortunately. Yea everything has changed because of the tourism. Tourism has destroyed uh, a lot of uh...um...places in the island.

ILIANA: Mm. Like what in- specifically em.../ the natural?

PENELOPE: / Well uh, it's natural it's uh...the tourists, they don't care and, they destroy wherever they go. They used-

ILIANA: The vandalism / like em.

PENELOPE: / Yes.

PENELOPE: Yes. Unfortunately.

ILIANA: Especially because there's a lot of, either archaic or uh, historical landmarks / everywhere in Greece generally.

PENELOPE: / Yea...

PENELOPE: And the food, the restaurants don't use uh...um...good food uh, fresh and uh, you know.

ILIANA: Consum- because of the / consumerism?

PENELOPE: / Yea. Yea.

ILIANA: When you go back to Zakynthos, after having lived in the United States, eh, do you ever go there and say, mm...compare your li- like is it a new- do you see it with a new eye? The island?

PENELOPE: Mm...yea but I...but I know and I accept it, I mean I cannot compare, it's different. Yes, it's different. There, the culture is different so...what can you do?

ILIANA: Mhm. Do you ever feel homesick, when you're here?

PENELOPE: Mm, sometimes. Yea. It's natural.

ILIANA: Mhm. When are the moments do you think where you feel it the most?

PENELOPE: Um...well sometimes when I...missed all the music, um...the food. There are many things, my...family.

ILIANA: And music I was- music is a big part / of the culture as well. Specifically in Zakynthos.

PENELOPE: / It is, it is. Ah yes of course. Yea.

PENELOPE: It's ou-our identification. (pause) Yea...

ILIANA: And um...do you- what foods do you enjoy in the United States that you don't have, i-in Zakynthos.

PENELOPE: Oh...I think the fruit, that um...we get it uh...any time of the year.

*(ILIANA laughs)*

PENELOPE: Yea.

ILIANA: Accessibility-

PENELOPE: Yea...yea

ILIANA: So in Zakynthos it's by season eh-

PENELOPE: Right.

ILIANA: Um, di-did you have any side jobs, while you were here in the United States? Like-

PENELOPE: Oh yea.

ILIANA: Yea.

PENELOPE: Yea, I had some uh, a little jobs.

ILIANA: Mhm. Like what?

PENELOPE: Wa-well I was working for eh...a doctor's office, in the, front desk.

ILIANA: Hm...so you were the face of the doctor's office.

PENELOPE: Yea...*(PENELOPE and ILIANA laugh)*

ILIANA: They kept coming back!

PENELOPE: Yea! Right. Yea...

ILIANA: Do you consider yourself a member of this nation? I know it's a-

PENELOPE: I think so.

ILIANA: Yes?

PENELOPE: Yea.

ILIANA: You've lived long enough here ah?

PENELOPE: Yea.

ILIANA: Hm.

PENELOPE: I'm adopted.

*(Both laugh)*

ILIANA: Do you...at the same time- do you feel disconnected in some way from-from the culture, the-the way of life here?

PENELOPE: Mm...not really.

ILIANA: Mm.

PENELOPE: Because I can enjoy everything, here. I don't have any, uh...difficulties.

ILIANA: Mhm. Can you say that you have changed in any way, since, the moment you moved here?

PENELOPE: Well uh, I dunno, maybe I'm ah...sometimes isolated. Eh, which is a good in a way because, I can be by myself at home, and uh study, read, write. So I enjoy, my...my creativity.

ILIANA: Having come from, Zakynthos, how would you describe the people in the United States? Is there- is there something that characterizes, the people here to you?

PENELOPE: Well, um...as far as I can see, they are very nice people.

ILIANA: Yea.

PENELOPE: Yea, very polite.

ILIANA: Yea. Do you / do you see any values here that they stress, that they live by for example?

PENELOPE: / And uh...

PENELOPE: Well there are people that they are ah...um (pause) they have values, but uh, there are also people that they don't, this is uh...

ILIANA: Also, / depends, on the people.

PENELOPE: / Also. Yea it depends, on the societies.

ILIANA: Mhm. Here in-in Maryland, that the-where you live, or Washington D.C.-

PENELOPE: Mhm

ILIANA: Is there something in particular you appreciate, that the- that the society provides?

PENELOPE: It's uh, it's an organized uh...country and um...I like that.

ILIANA: Mm, hm. Is-is organized different than what you, knew?

PENELOPE: Yes.

ILIANA: Back in Greece.

PENELOPE: Yea.

ILIANA: It's a little less organized.

*(ILIANA and PENELOPE laugh)*

ILIANA: Um...I just have a couple more that's it. Em... When does your- your knowledge of the American and the Greek culture, how do they, complement each other? Does that make sense?

PENELOPE: Uh...I think they respect each other.

ILIANA: I think so too.

PENELOPE: Yea.

ILIANA: I think- I've- I think, correct me if I'm- that there is a- there's a rea- there's a philhellenism / here. Have you- have you experienced anything, of that kind?

PENELOPE: / Yea.

PENELOPE: Mm...no I never had- oh, actually, in my neighborhood, they expect me, some uh...ladies that I know, when they ask me where I'm from, and I told them that I'm from Greece, oh they were uh... very happy to...meet me because they have uh, studied at school about Ancient Greece, and they...they respect, our uh, culture.

ILIANA: Mhm. Do you think-

PENELOPE: They-they think we have history and uh...they appreciate that.

ILIANA: Mm. (Pause) Do you think- is the same or different for, the Greek side when they look at America, um...is there something that they- that say people back in your home, believe America to be?

PENELOPE: Oh there are different / people, you know some people respect it and, some others don't.

ILIANA: / Mhm.

ILIANA: Again it depends. *(ILIANA laughs)*

PENELOPE: Yea, yea.

ILIANA: Of course. 'Cause for different people, it will provide / something different.

PENELOPE: / Yes.

PENELOPE: It depends on the mentality and their culture, their uh, education. It's different.

ILIANA: Has the happiest moment, you ever lived, been in the United States?

PENELOPE: Mm...hm. Well, when I was invited uh, um...to the...White House.

ILIANA: Oh...is a big honor.

PENELOPE: Yea. It was for the...um, I think it was, when uh, the Prime Minister of Greece came to the United States and I was there and I was, very happy . / I was proud of myself that I was, at the White House.

ILIANA: / Mm.

ILIANA: Wow. That you / made it. Did /you think to yourself, "I was just a girl on an island / and now..." can you elaborate a little bit on that, the feel- did you- / did you have any feelings like you were almost a child again?

PENELOPE: / Yea. Yea.

/ It was beautiful.

/ Yea.

/ Well.

PENELOPE: Of course. (*ILIANA laughs*)

PENELOPE: Yea.

ILIANA: In- in Zakynthos like do you- eh you said you had some of your happiest moments there.

PENELOPE: Mhm.

ILIANA: Share one with us, if you- if you like.

PENELOPE: Mm...when I was at school, I was a good student and I was uh...holding the...flag at the parade, and I was so happy (*PENELOPE and ILIANA laugh*) as a child.

ILIANA: If you could go back to the day you decided 'I'm going to go to America' even though it was- your job sent you. Um, would you still make the decision to come? Now having experienced it.

PENELOPE: Yes. Yes. I would come / again.

ILIANA: / You wou- ILIANA: You don't regret it.

PENELOPE: No, no no. Never.

ILIANA: Is that- is that- is th- is that a moral of yours? In other words, um...like the- like the way you live your life is with no regrets? / To some extent?

PENELOPE: / Mm yea.

PENELOPE: No. No. I don't have any regrets. And you have to follow what life gives you. ILIANA: Mm.

PENELOPE: You have to go on.

ILIANA: You know this is, that's a very interesting point because, more and more, I see, that uh...people, like, lose uh that feeling of contentness / in their lives. It's- it's um, /and that could be from any reason. /It could be from many reasons. Eh technology, and-and so on. Politics, / how they become part of people's lives, but um, how-how have you been able to stay content? Is there something, that um, when you start to feel eh like-

PENELOPE: / Mhm

/ But it's sad.

/ Yea, yea.

/ Mm.

PENELOPE: I'm always optimist.

ILIANA: Okay!

PENELOPE: Optimist.

ILIANA: Here we go!

PENELOPE: Yea. Yea...you have to go on in life and do whatever you like, and you have to love, to do things.

ILIANA: So you can't do things from a place of, indifference?

PENELOPE: Yea.

ILIANA: You have to, feel something for / the thing you are doing.

PENELOPE: / Of course.

ILIANA: Hm. And- and I have a, just like three questions left. Um...would you like to change anything about your life here? In the United States.

PENELOPE: Uh, to change my life. I cannot change my life, because I'm not very good uh wi- in uh, financial (*ILIANA laughs*)...situation. And uh...otherwise...

ILIANA: We're good.

PENELOPE: Yea, I would like to, uh have more time, to write, and enjoy my, writing.

ILIANA: To enjoy your art eh.

PENELOPE: Yea.

ILIANA: *(softly)* Wow.

PENELOPE: And uh, also I like to travel. / I like travelling.

ILIANA: / *(softly)* Wow.

ILIANA: Hm. And um, how has this country progressed you, as an individual, or a member of the society. Um...wh- do you know if there are any, um, what-what are the most generous or rewarding aspects, here?

PENELOPE: Well, um, that I had uh, freedom, to do whatever I want. That uh, comes.

ILIANA: Did you have ever struggle here? PENELOPE: Oh...not before, maybe now a little.

ILIANA: Mm.

PENELOPE: Otherwise uh...I'm happy. I'm, not asking for many, things.

ILIANA: Simple / but good.

PENELOPE: / Yea.

PENELOPE: And uh...I believe that uh...the simplest, the better.

ILIANA: This is the key. *(PENELOPE and ILIANA laugh)*

PENELOPE: I dunno.

ILIANA: I- I've one last question. Um, when you think of Zakynthos, what sensations come to mind? Taste, feel, smell, hear. Do any of these senses, get um stimulated? I know you said you dream, or if you- you think of certain experiences um, that make you feel / something-

PENELOPE: / Mm.

PENELOPE: The sea.

ILIANA: The sea.

PENELOPE: Yea.



ILIANA: We go back to the sea...Mm.

PENELOPE: Yea. I'm uh...always dreaming, and diving in the sea.

ILIANA: One day do you think you'll ever go back to the sea? That sea.

PENELOPE: Yea I think...I'm thinking of uh, even if I die, to be burnt, to be cremated, and my, ashes will go, around the island /. In the sea. Stay forever.

ILIANA: / Mm.

ILIANA: What is beautiful...

ILIANA: Only an artist.

PENELOPE: Oh I love these things.

*(PENELOPE and ILIANA laugh)*

PENELOPE: Yea. Yea you know Maria Kalas uh, was uh...cremated, and uh they threw the / ashes in the Aegean.

ILIANA: / Mm.

ILIANA: Who is Maria Kalas?

PENELOPE: Oh, the...the singer.

ILIANA: Oh...from Zakynthos?

PENELOPE: No. / No, no.

ILIANA: / No.

ILIANA: But she liked the island, that's why?

PENELOPE: The sea.

ILIANA: The sea itself.

PENELOPE: Like uh...

PENELOPE: Yea the sea. The Aegean.

ILIANA: Wow, and ma-my final question is um, as an artist, of many forms, writing, eh acting, photography, uh and many more. *(PENELOPE and ILIANA laugh)* I'm sure. Poems, poetry. Um, how-how do you view the world?

PENELOPE: Ah...the world is beautiful, wonderful. And uh, we are the ones that we have to, uh...make it more beautiful. It's up to us.

ILIANA: Is there anything else, you'd like to share, or to make known, about your life here?

PENELOPE: What uh...what else.

ILIANA: What else is there? You're full of stories you.

*(PENELOPE and ILIANA laugh)*

PENELOPE: Well uh, if we, start uh, telling stories, we'll never end.

*(PENELOPE laughs)*

ILIANA: We'd never get tired.

*(ILIANA laughs)*

ILIANA: Yea...

PENELOPE: Oh...

PENELOPE: But we can dream.

ILIANA: Contin/uously

PENELOPE: / And we can dream, we can dream, and dream.

ILIANA: And we'll see where that dream takes us.

PENELOPE: Mm...well you have plenty of time to dream, yourself.

ILIANA: You're so sweet. Oh my goodness.

PENELOPE: Yes...

ILIANA: And it's your birthday today.

PENELOPE: Yea...thank you. / And good luck to you.

ILIANA: / Actually-

ILIANA: Yes, thank you.

PENELOPE: Yes...you have- the whole time, to dream and plan and to create and, and uh, you do whatever you want, in life.

ILIANA: Thank you.

PENELOPE: That's what I wish you.

ILIANA: And to anyone that has a dream um, which is, everyone I think-

*(ILIANA laughs)*

PENELOPE: Yea everyone, but especially you young.

ILIANA: It's true.

PENELOPE: Yea. You dream and you do whatever you want. Good luck.

ILIANA: Thank you very much. And on your birthday too. *(PENELOPE laughs)* The most wishes / I can shine on you.

PENELOPE: / Yes...thank you.

ILIANA: Is there any- is there anything on your birthday that- now today that is your birthday, that uh, you woke up today you thought, wow-

*(ILIANA laughs)*

PENELOPE: Yea...

ILIANA: Do you have a realization of some sort?

PENELOPE: As long as I'm happy- as long as I'm healthy (pause) it's okay.

ILIANA: Everything else can wait.

PENELOPE: Yea...

ILIANA: Above all. Oh I love spending time with you thank you, so so / so much.

PENELOPE: / Thank you.

PENELOPE: Thank you, good luck to you.

ILIANA: Thank you.

[Speaks to one another in Greek]