

Natividad Quinto

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1:20:08

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SPEAKERS

Natividad Quinto, Nasriya Witt

- N** Nasriya Witt 00:04
Today's the 25th of September, 2022. My name is Nasriya Witt, and I'm an oral history fellow with the Institute for Diversity and Civic Life. I'm joining from Oldenburg, Germany on a Zoom call with Mrs. Quinto. Mrs. Quinto, would you like to introduce yourself and tell me where you're joining from?
- N** Natividad Quinto 00:25
Hi, I'm Mrs. Natividad Quinto. I'm from San Antonio, Texas.
- N** Nasriya Witt 00:35
To start off, could you tell me a bit about yourself? Where were you born, where have you lived, and what brought you to Texas?
- N** Natividad Quinto 00:45
I was born in Manila, Philippines. I came to the United States at the age of thirty-one on a working visa, and I work in different hospitals. And the latest hospital I work in was University Hospital in San Antonio, Texas.
- N** Nasriya Witt 01:13
Where did you go to school when you lived in the Philippines? Why did you study nursing?
- N** Natividad Quinto 01:22

I went to Emilio Aguinaldo College in the Philippines. At first, I studied education, and I told my dad that I don't want to be a teacher, I want to be a nurse. And I guess he was afraid that I might end up like my sister who kept changing her college course. So he said, "If you really want to be a nurse, then you need to finish education, and then you can enroll in nursing." And that's exactly what I did when I graduated from education. I started with nursing, because I really wanted to be a nurse.

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Nasriya Witt 02:18

And what was your family like growing up? Do you have siblings besides your sister?

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Natividad Quinto 02:25

I belong to a big family. There's eight of us siblings. I'm the youngest. There's five of us girls, and there's three boys.

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Nasriya Witt 02:46

And is most of your family in the US now, or do you still have some siblings in the Philippines?

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Natividad Quinto 02:55

I still have two siblings in the Philippines. Actually, one of my siblings Lourdes was adopted after my sister, who's one year ahead of me, died at the age of five. And my mother was a nurse at that time in a government facility. And I guess they missed her so much, so they adapted this girl. And besides Lourdes, I still have my brother who still lives in the Philippines. The rest of us are here. There's only seven of us now who are alive. My eldest brother had died. So the rest of us are here. It's actually me, my sister Ellen, my sister Luz, my sister Marie, my brother Eligio. So there's five of us here in the United States.

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Nasriya Witt 04:13

Interesting and did you enjoy growing up in a big family? What are some core memories from that time of your life?

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Natividad Quinto 04:19

Yeah, I really enjoyed my childhood, because I get to play with different children around the neighborhood who are actually our neighbors. And back then life was so simple. We don't have the modern gadgets or play toys that children now have. We would play hide and seek, because back then, behind us was a huge field that's empty. But it's a hilly area, and we would play hide and seek there. Or we would play - we call it patintero. I don't know how they call it

here. We have this line, and you get in, and if the other member of the other party touches you, then you're out. I don't know. I don't know how they call that game here. I know that children have that kind of game here too.

N Natividad Quinto 05:41

But I really did enjoy my childhood. I have an aunt who never married. In fact, there were two of them. They took care of us while both of my parents worked in the morning, and then they would come back in the late afternoon. But after housework, which is usually in the afternoon, maybe three or four in the afternoon, we're free to play with our friends in the neighborhood. Even though we had a very simple life, it was a happy childhood for me. I really enjoyed it a lot. Now Therese, since she's an only child, I have to find playmates for her each time when I'm off, so that at least she gets to play with other kids too, I'm thinking so that she'll enjoy what I experienced when I was a young child.

N Nasriya Witt 07:04

And you mentioned that both your parents worked. What did they do?

N Natividad Quinto 07:09

My father was a customs inspector, and my mother was a registered nurse.

N Nasriya Witt 07:20

Interesting. And you and your sister are also nurses, right?

N Natividad Quinto 07:24

Yeah, my eldest sister was a nurse, and my sister Ellen, who also lives in San Antonio is a retired nurse.

N Nasriya Witt 07:36

Did you move to the US right after finishing nursing school?

N Natividad Quinto 07:41

No, I did work in the Philippines. I graduated. I worked in the Philippines for two years at Cardinal Santos Memorial Hospital. And after that, I applied to work here. I didn't even want to come here, because I was young then. Well, I was already twenty-nine, thirty-one when I left the Philippines. But I didn't want to come here, but my eldest sister who was already in Michigan, Saginaw, Michigan, sent me these review books to pass the CGFNS exam. And I said

to myself, "Okay, I will just take this exam to make her happy." So I took the exam, and I passed it, and she sent me the money necessary for me to apply and pay for the exam. After I passed it, and I got the letter announcing to me that I passed the exam, and I had two friends in the house at the time, I told them, "This is a waste." And they said, "Why?" "Because I'm never going to the United States. Why would I go there? I'm happy here."

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Natividad Quinto 09:26

And a lot of our cousins who came there said they're lonely there. I was young then, I wasn't thinking of the future, so I never planned to come here. But after my sister, again in Michigan, started sending me money so that I can apply for a working visa, I need to please her again. So I said to myself, "Okay, I'll just try this out. And if I'm not happy, then I can always come back to the Philippines." Back then, both of my parents were still alive. So that's what happened. I applied to an agency, and I got a working visa at Brookdale Hospital Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York. And I came there with two other girls from the Philippines who also applied to work in the United States.

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Nasriya Witt 10:44

And what was Brooklyn like? Did you have any challenges while you were there? Did you enjoy your time there?

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Natividad Quinto 10:53

In Brooklyn, it's like a cultural shock, because I've never been out of the country and at the age of thirty-one, I left the Philippines, but I was excited to enjoy life in a different country. Brooklyn, is mostly a Black area, but there's also "in fact, Brookdale Hospital is actually a Jewish hospital. At the beginning, we were taught how to be careful. If we're traveling, your bag has to be in front of you. It cannot be hanging on your side. Your bag might be snatched. There's mugging there. I heard that the crime rate there is high. So I was afraid to travel alone, I always traveled with a call nurse that I trusted. And if four of us are off at the same time, we will all go shopping. We would take the trains to go to New York City and go shopping.

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Natividad Quinto 12:27

But I know that there are good and bad people anywhere just like in the Philippines. And one thing that really struck me was one time when I was with another girl who was there ahead of me, I was standing near the subway. Actually, it's near the railroad tracks. She told me, "Nati, don't stand near the tracks because somebody might push you into the railroad tracks." And it shocked me. Why would anybody do that? But she had told me that that had happened before. So if I'm waiting for the train, you don't have to be near the tracks. You can just be away and wait for the train. And even my brother said, "Nati, be careful. Be careful with these people."

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Natividad Quinto 13:35

I just smiled because the room that we rented, it's actually owned by a couple who I heard were

also Catholic. So I wasn't afraid staying. It's a two story house, and we all rented one room each. So I wasn't really afraid and I would walk from that house to the bus stop, and I wasn't afraid to do that, even during winter time. And nothing happened to me. I was safe. I guess you ust have to be careful too. And at night, I think he was a security guard or an employee at Brookdale hospital. He would take us all, there's four of us, and he would drop us off where we lived after duty, after working, instead of taking the bus. Because in New York, I think the bus system, it's all hours of the day and night compared to here in San Antonio.

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Nasriya Witt 15:08

Right. And what years did you live in Brooklyn?

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Natividad Quinto 15:16

I arrived in '85, November. I had a three year contract. So more or less, '85, '86, '87.

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Nasriya Witt 15:28

And then you decided to move elsewhere?

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Natividad Quinto 15:31

Yeah, after my contract, my brother who lived in Kingston, New York out there, he said, "Nati, come here. You don't have to pay-" some type of tax, maybe city tax or something. And so I resigned. And when the nurses and their supervisors gave me this farewell party at Brookdale Hospital. It was funny. One of the Black supervisors, I overheard her say, "She's going to the White people." [laughs] That was funny to me. Yeah, Kingston is mostly - it's upstate New York, it's mostly White people there. I didn't realize that until I arrived there. And I worked there, I worked at Benedictine Hospital. It was also a Catholic hospital.

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Nasriya Witt 16:54

And in these first few years in the US, did you have any problems adjusting to life in a new country? And also, what were your financial resources like? Were you supporting your family back home?

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Natividad Quinto 17:11

No, I didn't send any money, like some people did to support their family. But when I transferred to upstate New York, to Kingston, and my father had a stroke, on my own, I decided to send money every month to my father, just so he knows that I'm there to help out, and I'm thinking of him. And I would try to call him as often as I can, but every time I would call, he would start crying. That's one thing I remember. During my first year in Brooklyn - because I

just kept working, and when I'm off, since I'm afraid to go out on my own, it's like I'm always facing the four walls of my bedroom. And it's such a lonesome situation for me. Every time I would write the Philippines, I would always write in bold letters, "I am going home." And my goal then was to keep saving money, so that I can go back home. And after my two year contract in Brooklyn, for some reason I said to myself, "Okay, I'm already here. I might as well just go on." That was my thinking.

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Natividad Quinto 19:05

And from Kingston, I didn't stay in Kingston too long. I was just there - I can't remember, did I stay there even a year? I went to New Rochelle, New York. I enjoyed New Rochelle, New York because it's a multi-culture area. And there's also a Macy's shopping clearance center there, which we enjoyed going to because everything there is 50% off compared to the regular Macy's. And back then, I already bought a used car. And I could go to familiar places. And I wasn't really scared to do that. Because I also had a neighbor who are both LVMs, and she helped me with my car maintenance. But at least during my stay in New Rochelle in New York was happier compared to when I was in Brooklyn or upstate New York in Kingston.

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Nasriya Witt 20:35

Did you get your driver's license in the US or in the Philippines?

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Natividad Quinto 20:41

I did get it when I was in Kingston because I had Filipino friends there. And I asked one of the girls to teach me how to drive, but it's actually my sister-in-law who was so patient, she said, "Let me teach you how to drive." So I said, "Okay." The first time we went out, she used her Mercedes. And I told my sister-in-law, "[inaudible], I won't have the money to pay you back if I crash this Mercedes." [laughs] And she said, "Oh, you'll be fine." And one time she made me drive. It's a very wide road, but really not that big, and she made me drive there. And after a while, there's this police car that we heard the siren. And then of course, I had to pull over. And this tall lady policeman came out, and she said, "Driver's license, registration, please." And I gave her my student driver's permit, and my sister-in-law told her that she's teaching me how to drive. And policewoman says something like, "This is not the right-" I think that's what she said, "This is not the right time to practice driving," because it started raining a little bit. Just a little bit. Not really bad.

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Natividad Quinto 22:34

And then when it came time for me to get my driver's license, for my road test, I had to ask girlfriend, the Filipina who also had the patience to teach me, I told her, "I don't know perfectly how to do parallel parking." So before the test, I kept practicing how to do the parallel parking, and I did pass the test, including the park, which I feared so much. I feared that I may not pass it because I haven't perfected the parallel parking, but I was able to pass the exam.

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Nasriya Witt 23:32

Interesting, I'm sure that really opened up your life in the US and gave you more freedom. You mentioned that once you got to New Rochelle, you felt more settled. What were some significant things that happened while you live there?

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Natividad Quinto 23:48

I liked working in the hospital. When you become an older nurse, you don't like to be floated to other units because that's really stressful for a nurse. But back then since I was in my early thirties if I come to my medical unit and my charge nurse tells me, "Okay Miss Tagaamo, you need to float to so and so and be a medication nurse there." I would just say, "Okay, it's nothing to me." You just do what you're told because we signed that contract that you can be floated to other units. So it's part of the job, and I would do that. But when I was much older as a nurse, in my fifties, I didn't want being floated. What was the other question?

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Nasriya Witt 25:05

I just wondered, what were some significant things that happened in your life while you lived in New Rochelle? [inaudible]

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Natividad Quinto 25:15

In New Rochelle, I lived in the second floor of a house. It's owned by an Italian family. And I was rooming in with this Filipina-Chinese girl. She was such a nice person, and I enjoyed rooming in with her. Sometimes we would go out too. I would drive her. And after a while another Filipina joined us. She was also a nurse. We would go out, and I would drive them to the grocery stores. And every Sunday we would go to church to hear mass. And it's just that at that time, I guess I was more adjusted to living life in the US. And I also enjoyed my friendship with these two other ladies who are just a few years older than me, who live in the house right next to this Italian house that we're renting.

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Natividad Quinto 26:54

And one time, since we're new in the US and we're struggling to save money. Because our bedroom the, three of us, it's carpeted. And one day as we were going out, my friend said, "Hey Nati, we can use that." The Italian family took out this mattress, and it was clean, and it still looked good. So they said, "We can use that, Nati," and I said, "Okay, let's get it [laughs] from outside the house." We brought it up to our room on the second floor and put it in our bedroom. And there you go, we got a free mattress, we just have to cover it with the fitted sheet. And then sometimes on our day off, since it's an old house, you can open the window all the way. And then you can sit on the windowsill. And then we can look out, and one time when we were looking out, we saw this lady, real tall, who got out of her car. And she looked like a cowboy. She has her boots on with her tight pants, and her hat was also a cowboy hat.

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Natividad Quinto 28:43

And then one one time also, during our day off, there's a house right across us, and my Chinese friend told me, "Hey Nati, let's go and visit that lady who lives all alone." And I said, "Oh okay, let's visit her." And we knocked, and she opened the door. We brought her something to eat. But it's so sad. It seems like she leaves all alone, and the place was filthy. We tried to throw out some of the things that needed to be thrown out. It looked like she could be suffering from dementia. Because after some months later, the fire truck and the EMS came and took her, and I don't know. We really don't know what happened to her. The next thing we saw was the family members cleaning out the place. That was sad. And it's funny, one of my experiences when I was in Brooklyn. No, no, no New Rochelle, because - wait, I'm confusing. Oh, I'm sorry. Nevermind. Forget about that.

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Nasriya Witt 30:29

Was it about a memory from Brooklyn?

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Natividad Quinto 30:33

No. But when I was in Brooklyn, there was this - I was only thirty-something at that time. There was this elderly gentleman in this Catholic church who would always ask me and my friend to do the offertory during the mass. This is when we bring the unconsecrated bread and wine to the altar before the priest performs during the mass the consecration where he blesses the bread and wine that would turn into the body and blood of Jesus, because Jesus himself had said it's so. It's a matter of faith. And so he would always do that. And he asked for my number. He was friendly, and I was also trying to be friendly with him. And just a few phone calls, maybe on the third or fourth phone call, he asked me - and one time, he also invited me to his home, and he was a widower.

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Natividad Quinto 31:51

And I went there, since it was just an invitation. And he showed me the dresses of his former wife, etc, etc. He showed me their entire house, it's a little house. And one day when he called me on the phone, I was shocked when he said, "Will you marry me?" I was so shocked. I didn't realize he would ask me that question. That was one of the shocking things. But when I was with him, he was never fresh with me. He treated me with respect. That's one thing that really matter. It's just so shocking when he asked me, "Will you marry me?" Maybe he thought my being friendly with him is a sign that I also like him in a different way. But no, I was just trying to be friendly and polite with him. That was all my intention.

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Nasriya Witt 33:08

And how did you respond to the proposal?

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Natividad Quinto 33:10

I think I said no. And when I told the other two girls I was with, they started to laugh because at that time, he was already sixty-three years old. And back then, when when I was in Brooklyn, to save money - because I don't know, of course, if you're new to a country, you may be switching hospitals, right? And that's what I did. So all I had was - No, no, no, this was already in New Rochelle. We, all three of us on the second floor, had our own bedroom with the two other Filipina girls. And the two girls, I think they bought their own bedroom set or at least a bed with a mattress. One of the girls bought a sala set." And I said to myself, "Why would I buy those things? That means if we terminate our lease on this house, then you had to move out, and that would create a problem if I keep buying all this stuff." So in my bedroom, all I had was my two boxes of clothes, or three boxes of clothes. And I bought an egg crate mattress and covered it with a fitted sheet. So when I moved out of the house, the second floor, all I had to bring was my three boxes of clothes, and I rolled up the egg crate mattress. While these two girls, they had to hire a small mover to move out their stuff.

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Natividad Quinto 35:40

I had a slight miscommunication with one of the girls. I actually liked her a lot, but she stopped talking to me, and I stopped talking to her too, because of the way she treated me. I was so unhappy. I became so unhappy living with her, but the other girl was just quiet, so I decided to move out, and because I moved out then, that would be an extra burden for them. They had to pay my part of the rent, but the landlady allowed us to move out without any penalty at that time. Because I didn't agree with what she was doing, and I told her what was on my mind, and she didn't like that. That was when she stopped talking to me.

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Nasriya Witt 36:34

The landlady?

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Natividad Quinto 36:36

No, the other Filipina girl who was with me, because at that time in New Rochelle, we already had our own room each of us.

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Nasriya Witt 36:51

And then when you moved, did you move to somewhere else in New Rochelle?

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Natividad Quinto 36:56

From New Rochelle, that's when - I'm sorry because sometimes I could be forgetting - from New Rochelle, that's when I moved in with this Filipina-Chinese girl, and I enjoyed her company a lot, because she's so sweet and friendly. And she's easy to get along with. She worked in a nursing home, and I worked at New Rochelle hospital. So like I said, when I moved out of that three bedroom rental property on the second floor, I moved in with this girl on the second floor of the house of this Italian family.

N Nasriya Witt 38:09

And how long were you in New Rochelle? For what years of your life?

N Natividad Quinto 38:23

I think I was in New Rochelle for at least two years, two to three years. And then I went to Abilene, Texas, because I really don't like the winter there. I told you when I was rooming in with this really nice and sweet, Filipina-Chinese girl. Later on, she had a boyfriend who is an obstetrician in the nursing home. I don't know how she met him. No, I'm sorry. He's an internal medicine doctor. And [she] became [his] girlfriend. And one time they had a fight, and she asked me - and this was nighttime, and it was snowing - she asked me, "Nati, can you drive me to his house? I need to talk to him." So I agreed. She's just my friend. And so I drove there, and I don't think I really had the snow tires. Probably I did, but it wasn't easy driving when there's snow on the road, and that's when I decided it's too cold in New York. I said to myself, "I don't want to stay in New York. I have to go to a state where it's a lot warmer." That's why I applied in Abilene

N Nasriya Witt 40:08

And what year did you move to Abilene?

N Natividad Quinto 40:15

I think I moved to Abilene in '92. I was in Abilene for four years, that I'm sure.

N Nasriya Witt 40:27

And is that where you met your husband?

N Natividad Quinto 40:31

I met my husband by correspondence as a pen pal when I was in Abilene.

N Nasriya Witt 40:54

And what were some of your first memories of Texas?

N Natividad Quinto 41:00

Texas is a very friendly state because you don't see that in the city of New York. When you're walking - because I live in the mobile home park, and I can actually really walk to go to the

grocery store. No, I don't think I walked. I also had the car back then. Or when you're just walking, people would greet you, they would say hi to you and ask you how you're doing it. That's just pretty common in Texas, at least in Abilene. Abilene back then is a pretty quiet city compared to San Antonio. Although here also the people are friendly, but Abilene you could hardly hear any murders or any crimes. When I was in the tiny city of Abilene, Texas, the people are very friendly and they're also helpful. Very helpful and friendly.

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Nasriya Witt 42:31

And when you were in Abilene, did you have a community of Filipino friends?

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Natividad Quinto 42:37

I lived in an apartment. That apartment back then was really cheap. Was it only \$250? And I had my own little apartment. Yeah, I lived in an apartment with a number of ladies, one, two, three, four, five, who are Filipina nurses working in - shoot, what is the name of that hospital I worked in? Hold on. [speaking in Tagalog to third party] Hendrick Medical Center. And all we had to do was just cross the parking lot, and there's Hendrick Medical Center. And I would get invited to not so many parties, because I was constantly working. Every now and then. And one time my next door neighbor friend was an LV [licensed vocational nurse] and a Filipina, and she has three kids, and one time she told me, "Nati, we can take the bus, let's go to Disneyland." So we went, but I didn't like that experience because I have motion sickness, so I had to keep myself from eating so that I won't vomit. And by the time we arrived in Disneyland, it's like being in the Philippines again because of the air, the warm air there, and I saw coconut or palm trees, and I didn't see coconut or palm trees when I was in Brooklyn or when I was in Kingston, New York. So that was another experience for me. But at least we had a good time there because it was my first time to see Disneyland. It's just a smaller area compared to Disney World.

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Nasriya Witt 45:19

That sounds fun. And what made you move from Abilene to San Antonio?

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Natividad Quinto 45:28

One time when my good friend came to visit me in Abilene, there wasn't really much to see in Abilene, so that's why I said to myself, "Maybe I should move to a bigger city like San Antonio where I could go see places." At least there's places to see like SeaWorld, Fiesta Texas, amusement parks, which we don't have in Abilene. And it's so funny when - hold on. [speaking in Tagalog to third party] Julie, that's her name. When Julie visited me, and I picked her up at the airport, the first thing she told me was "Nati, that plane ride is so scary, because it's such a small plane, and you could feel any changes in altitude." And when I experienced that myself, it is a very scary flight, especially for someone who has motion sickness. And there was hardly any place for me to show her, because there's really nothing much in Abilene. There's one.

There's Abilene Christian University, and there's Hendrick Medical Center and another hospital, and that was it. And you have to go to San Antonio or Dallas if you want to see amusement parks or other places.

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Nasriya Witt 47:59

Did you get married in Abilene?

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Natividad Quinto 48:02

Yes. I was brought up Catholic, and I know if you decide to get married, you have to be married in the church. So when he joined me, we went and were married first by the judge in the municipality. It's a civil wedding. Just him and me and the judge as witness. And then when we came to San Antonio, we were regular members of this Catholic church, but at the very beginning, I made sure that as early as possible, we should be married in the Catholic Church, and that's what we did. And the one in attendance was my sister - it was a very small chapel. Back then we didn't have the big church yet. It was just my sister, my brother-in-law, and of course the priest and my two nephews which were very young then, maybe six and eight years old at that time. And then after the wedding, we ate in a Chinese restaurant. Of course, the priest was with us.

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Nasriya Witt 49:51

And was this St Brigid Catholic Church?

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Natividad Quinto 49:53

Correct, St Brigid Catholic Church.

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Nasriya Witt 49:58

When you first moved to San Antonio then, how did you adjust to life in that city? And how did you make friends and build a community?

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Natividad Quinto 50:12

When I arrived in San Antonio, of course, I have to apply, and I was just constantly working. But when my sister Ellen moved to San Antonio from Massachusetts, she was working in a nursing home. It was her, my brother-in-law, and my two nephews. My husband drove there and got them. And I think they also had a car back then, and they drove here to San Antonio. And St Brigid is our regular church. I first worked in Santa Rosa Rehab Hospital. No, no, I first worked in University Hospital. Back then the name was Bexar County Hospital District. But lately they changed it to University Hospital. That's when I got pregnant with Therese. And now

here I was working with cancer patients, with chemotherapy, in that area where I work, oncology, and I was pregnant with Therese. And of course, they stopped me. I cannot give chemotherapy at that time anymore until I had Therese.

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Natividad Quinto 52:08

And now that I'm here, we would get invited to Filipino gatherings. Now that I'm much older, I'm 68 now, and I'm sick with this bone marrow disease, it gets to be tiring to me sometimes. My sister told me I'm not a very social person. That's what she said. Well, because part of this disease also, you can suffer from depression. And that's one thing I'm trying to fight, but I don't want to take any antidepressant pills, so I just have to deal with it one day at a time. But especially when when Theresa was young, very young, of course, we want to bring her to places. I got this one year membership in SeaWorld, and we would also go to Fiesta Texas. And when my my sister Marie - and she brought along her best friend - came to visit us, we also brought them to places that they would enjoy seeing and experiencing.

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Natividad Quinto 53:48

So as a younger person, besides working a lot, because Therese was very young, we would go to SeaWorld. And I didn't really join any Filipino community, because in the hospital where I work in oncology, it's a cancer unit. There's always a shortage of nurses. Even though I don't want to work over time, if my call nurses would call me and say that, "We're so short Nati, there's only two of us with x number of patients." You feel bad for them. So I feel obligated to help out because if I were in the same situation as them, I would like at least one of my call nurses to help us out, because it would be a very stressful situation if you don't have an extra nurse. So most of the time overtimes that I did were something that I didn't really sign up for. But I feel compelled to help out, because it would be too much for my co-nurses if they don't get any extra help.

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Nasriya Witt 55:27

You mentioned that you didn't really join a Filipino community. But what kind of Filipino traditions and practices do you keep up with? Is it related to religion or the types of foods you make? And why do you continue to practice these traditions and customs?

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Natividad Quinto 55:48

With the Filipino community, when we go to parties, a lot of times besides American food, it would be a potluck, and we would bring Filipino food. And I don't cook, it's usually my husband who cooks. So if it's a potluck, he would cook some type of Filipino food. And back then, when I was younger, and Therese was a young girl, we would have parties also in the house. First, I was a member of this Fátima Group. It's a religious group. A statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary would be brought to the house, and the family will pray the rosary each day to the Blessed Mother. And when they bring the statue of our Blessed Lady, it would usually be just a small potluck with a few people who would say the prayers, and then they would leave.

N

Natividad Quinto 57:06

But when Therese was up to the age of fourteen, every year I would have a party in our house during her July 4th birthday, which is actually Independence Day in the US, which is a big holiday. And that was with the Filipinos when they get together. Besides, there's a lot of dancing, and that I enjoyed a lot back then when I was stronger. A lot of the ladies, we like to dance, even if our husbands don't like to dance, but the ladies would be dancing. That was something that I enjoyed doing when I had the yearly parties in the house. And then when Therese was older, I would make her invite her friends since she's older then, and they would have their own activities, like trip to Jerusalem, etc.

N

Nasriya Witt 58:24

In your time in Texas, have you visited the Philippines?

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Natividad Quinto 58:36

One time, just one time, because it's actually - I think I only went home one time, but back then I think Therese was already thirteen or fourteen. And before we even left for the Philippines, she asked me, "Mom, start teaching me or talking to me in Tagalog, so that I can at least understand what they're saying when we arrive there." No, I think I went home twice already. And that's what I did. When I went back home, I really enjoyed it, because we stayed in the bungalow of my adopted sister Lourdes, and back then she already had three kids and a husband, and we would go shopping at Divisoria. Back then it was an open market, but now it's air conditioned. It's an air conditioned market now. And I like going there too, because after shopping we would eat in the Filipino restaurants, which compared to the restaurants here, it's so much cheaper and the food is so good. Foods that I haven't tasted for quite a while. Although there's a Filipino restaurant here, but of course, back there, what you have is Filipino and Chinese food, which are so good.

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Natividad Quinto 1:00:43

So whenever if we go to a store to buy something, I would tell her myself, "Therese, don't talk in English, because then they might give me a higher price. The vendor would give me a higher price. So I will just talk to the vendor and just listen, okay? Don't be talking in this." "Okay mom." That's of the things I would tell her. And every now and then, when I was there, two or three times I went grocery shopping to the grocery store for my sister and her family. Of course, we're all eating together. So when you come from the States, they think you're rich, and you have so much money, and you're the one in charge. When I was there staying with her, I was the one in charge of feeding everybody, doing the grocery shopping. And we went to this famous tourist spot. And we went there. I forgot the name of the place, but it's so beautiful. And we even ate at a restaurant where there's water running beneath the bamboo thing where you're eating. The food is so delicious. You're never hungry. It was a resort. But I asked them how much is the overnight pay to stay over in that resort. My gosh, it was so expensive. I think what they quoted me was \$300. And my brother-in-law back then said, "No, I know a place

where it's so much cheaper." And I think I only paid \$150 a night, and there's even a swimming pool where the kids enjoyed swimming the next day, and the place was so clean and well provided too, so that the kids had a good time there.

N

Nasriya Witt 1:03:29

Interesting. I'm going to pivot a little bit and ask some questions related to race and ethnic relations and your political opinions. Since moving to the US, have you experienced any unfair treatment? What happened, and if you'd like to share, why did you think it happened?

N

Natividad Quinto 1:04:00

When I was in Kingston, upstate New York, I told you it's mostly a White area. I felt some type of discrimination there. I never liked working day shift because back in the Philippines, I'm used to working evening or night shift. Back then there's three shifts, day, evening, and night shift. And it's just due to a slight medication error which is not even a big one. And that the head nurse decided to transfer me to the day shift and I didn't like working day shift. And I talked to Sister who was in charge of the - she's religious nun, a Catholic nun - who was in charge of the nursing department back then. And I told her about the discrimination that I felt, and that's one of the reasons why I left there. I didn't stay too long, even the other nurses. But plus also, our salary was so much cheaper compared to when I transferred to New Rochelle hospital, because our rent in that house that the sisters got for us was being deducted from our salary. That's why all of us, we didn't stay too long at Kingston hospital. That's when from Kingston, I went to New Rochelle.

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Natividad Quinto 1:06:07

Political, I'm not really interested in politics. In fact, the only time I started voting was when I had to vote for George Bush. That's the only time I voted. Otherwise, I'm not the sort of person who's interested in politics compared to my husband. Because like I said, I'm constantly working. And if I'm at home, I would be busy cleaning the house and keeping the house in order or doing grocery shopping and other stuff that, for me, is more important. And I tried to bring up Therese in the way that I was brought up in the Philippines. I know that here it's a regular thing now for young people to live in with a boyfriend without the benefit of marriage. That's a no-no back where I was raised in the Philippines. But nowadays, I know it's a common thing for the young people to do that. I hear and see it a lot of times.

N

Nasriya Witt 1:08:02

Yes, it is pretty common in the US. Have your political viewsâ€”oh, sorry. Actually, I'm not gonna ask the question. Have you changed in any surprising ways since you moved to the US?

N

Natividad Quinto 1:08:20

Have I changed? I don't think so, because I'm still the same Filipina that came to the US. I came here at an older age, and I don't think my views when it comes to morality have changed at all,

even to my religious practices. Before I even would remind Therese not to forget to attend the Sunday Mass, because we do that every day and also in between. Now that we only have one car - we used to have two cars - I would try to attend everyday mass at St Brigid Church.

N

Natividad Quinto 1:09:24

But one thing that was hard for me was when I retired from nursing at the age of sixty - because nursing can be really stressful, and at that time, the computer work was getting harder for us, because when I started nursing even with my other friend who was Filipino-American, she's younger than me by about three yours, the computer work was harder for us, because when I started with computer work, I was already in my mid-fifties. And even then at that time when I was at the VA hospital, the computer work wasn't that much compared to when I transferred to University Hospital, where everything is computerized. When I was at the VA, we still had the heart chart, the paper chart. We still used paper charting, but at University Hospital, you have to do everything in the computer. And they always say that we have the computer to make the work easier for us. I don't know about that, because with us chemo nurses, you have to go back to the chart. And say you gave morphine or Dilaudid at 10am, at 10:30, 10 minutes later, you have to update your chart. Because we were always told, "If it's not charted, then it's not done. You have to do your update on charting, and it states there how the pain medication affected the patient, whether it gave relief or not."

N

Natividad Quinto 1:11:35

So when I retired, it was so hard for me, it's like nursing is all I know what to do, ever since I graduated. And all of a sudden, I thought, "Well, when I retire I would be more relaxed." And when I retired, I said to myself, "Oh my God, what will I do now?" So when my sister heard that this Filipina, this husband and wife, needed a sitter for their mother and mother-in-law who has Parkinson's and dementia, I willingly took it, although I'm not really getting as much as I'm getting when I was a registered nurse. At least I'm able to get out of the house, and I still feel myself useful taking care of somebody. That was so hard for me, that transition from working full time to retiring and just being in the house and doing housework.

N

Nasriya Witt 1:12:59

Just one second, okay Mrs. Quinto? I'm gonna ask my roommate to stop making noise. I'll be back in a minute.

N

Natividad Quinto 1:13:05

Okay.

N

Nasriya Witt 1:13:06

[Pause]. Okay, I'm back. So what do you see as your identity? Do you see yourself as Filipino, Filipino-American?

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Natividad Quinto 1:13:59

I see myself actually as a Filipino but American too, because I have to pay taxes. I like to vote, and you have to abide by the laws of the United States of America. But I've retained my religious and moral beliefs as a Filipino.

N

Nasriya Witt 1:14:30

What goals do you have for yourself and your family?

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Natividad Quinto 1:14:37

I told you I have this bone marrow disease, and I have to give myself an injection every two weeks, which has bad side effects. And right now my goal is just one day at a time for me now. I don't know how long I have, how much time I have left. And one of my prayers to God is, "Please Lord, let me at least live long enough so that Therese would finish her nursing and find a job". I don't think I mentioned to you, my eldest sister has dementia now, and my other sister also is beginning to be real forgetful, and that's what's happening to me. And I'm very scared of that, and one of my prayers is, "Please Lord, I know I will die from this bone marrow disease, but please don't let me lose my sanity. If I have a choice, Lord, I don't want to have dementia. Whatever time I have left, please let me maintain my sanity, so that I can still do whatever paperwork I'm supposed to be doing before I die."

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Natividad Quinto 1:16:23

That may be weird sounding to you, but those are some of my short time goals or wishes while I'm still here. And I've told Therese those, because one of the side effects of this injection, which is called BESREMi, is hair loss, and I have lost so much hair already. I can't prevent the hair loss, the hair loss would keep occurring, because it's one of the side effects of this injection. But if I stop this injection, then at high risk for a stroke or a heart attack, so I need to keep having it if I want to live a little longer.

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Nasriya Witt 1:17:19

Thank you for sharing. Sorry, you were gonna continue?

N

Natividad Quinto 1:17:24

No, it's okay. What were you about to ask?

N

Nasriya Witt 1:17:27

So my last question for you: if you could shoot a message into the future for historians, or for your great grandkids, for example, what would it be, keeping in mind that this interview is going to be archived for people to listen to in the future?

N Natividad Quinto 1:17:48

Live a good life. Try to help as much people as you can, especially those who are less fortunate, when they ask you for help. Don't ever say no. It could be a monetary help just like my relatives in the Philippines. But never say no, always do something for them. And always treat other people with respect just like the way you want to be treated yourself. Any person of any race or religion. And what else? Be very kind to people, because all of us have our own difficulties, or little crosses that we carry, and that's part of living here in this world. And just be always kind and helpful to people, and maybe live just one day at a time, and not try to look far ahead into the future, because sometimes we don't know what the future will bring.

N Nasriya Witt 1:19:32

That's very intelligent, thank you. Is there anything else you'd like to share?

N Natividad Quinto 1:19:46

No, that's about it, Nasriya.

N Nasriya Witt 1:19:49

All right, thank you.

N Natividad Quinto 1:19:51

Do you have any other questions?

N Nasriya Witt 1:19:53

No, is it okay if I go ahead and stop the recording?

N Natividad Quinto 1:19:57

Sure, sure.

N Nasriya Witt 1:19:58

Great, thank you so much.



Natividad Quinto 1:20:01

Thank you