

**Interviewer:** What is your country of origin, and what does it mean to you?

**Luz:** I am from Cusco, Peru. Being Peruvian means, for me, a lot. We are a culture with family oriented, with amazing traditions. Something I always keep in my mind is our heritage is from the Incas. Something always my father tell us is something we keep in is the word *ayny*, in Quechua mean ‘today for you, tomorrow for me,’ that means reciprocity. It’s something that I give all of myself to continue working my whole life. Also, when I came to the United States, I applied that and I created different mentorship programs, where [I can] apply this principle to help each other. ‘Today for you, tomorrow for me’ is a way of mentorship.

**Interviewer:** When did you come to the United States?

**Luz:** I came to the United States in 2004 due to health issues of my youngest daughter. Happened a miracle, she has a brain tumor, but after two years she was okay. Family was local. I decided to stay here because I can give back what I received in this state. I started learning English, because I didn’t know any English. After I learned English, I felt more confident. I was told my career as a lawyer doesn’t mean anything, I need to start over. I start over in this country. I started with my English classes, I got my Associate of Science degree in social work at Salt Lake Community College. I went at the University of Utah I get my Master’s degree in Social Work with emphasis in international social work, and I go back to college and apply as an advisor, and currently I am lead advisor for ESL students and Salt Lake Technical College (SLTC) programs. And also, I am part of different organizations that the main goal is to help our community for diverse backgrounds.

**Interviewer:** What was your life like before you emigrated?

**Luz:** I was a lawyer in Peru. I finished my studies, my Master’s, and my PhD, and I was [a] prosecutor for almost seven years. Yeah, I have a nice life. I don’t believe I would move from my country but due to health issues of my daughter, I moved here because they have great hospitals here in Salt Lake City and Utah. For me, it was a huge blessing, because my daughter is now good because of that.

**Interviewer:** What objects tell the story of your life?

**Luz:** In the beginning, like any immigrant when we came here, is like ‘I want to go back to my country, I want to continue to be a lawyer, I want to go back to my job because it was a nice job for a prosecutor,’ but after the health of my daughter kept me here, I prioritized who is first. Our families is first. I decided to resign myself because, for me, my family is first. In this case, my daughter was. So I resigned my job, I start over here. As I shared with you, it was a miracle to have her be okay and safe. The objective of my life was, ‘Okay, I will give back to my community.’ Especially because I have this principle I learned from my childhood that’s like, ‘help others make you alive, help others can give you a life,’ and start thinking of others can give you the power to start creating. So I create different programs here, for example, Amigos

Mentores is the student with more experience helps the new ones to navigate the system and you can become successful. Right now I create another program, it's ESL Legacy Mentors Program to help ESL students, they can help each other, and they can be successful. I don't want they can only learn English and get better job, I want they learn English and find the amazing opportunities this state, this country, has. They can continue through the shared programs or they can get a degree, or they can get better jobs. Or, some people they already have a degree, how they can revalidate, what they need to learn, how they can transfer to get the Master's degree. In other words, my objective is like, serve others, find the strengths of other people, and help each other to be successful.

**Interviewer:** What possessions does your family treasure?

**Luz:** Possessions my family treasures are a handwoven tapestry of Machu Picchu, family diaries, and albums. The tapestry was gifted to us by my mother when my family and I immigrated to the United States. It has been around since I was a young girl and having it in our home is a reminder to my family the importance of remembering where we come from and inspires us to preserve our cultural legacy. The diaries and our family album remind us of our personal journey and history. We often hold family night get together to remind us of the values of family unity. Also, these possessions allow us to persevere in our practice of Quechua, the language of our Inca ancestors. We are committed to keeping this linguistic heritage alive. To share, there is a traditional Inca greeting that our family loves, *ama sua, ama llulla, ama quella*, which means, 'Do not steal, do not lie, do not be lazy.' It helps us stay united as a family and serves as a constant reminder of the values that define us as a people and guides us in our daily lives as we strive to uphold these principles.

**Interviewer:** How are you and your parents alike and different?

**Luz:** In my case, I think it's the generation of my parents, the teaching of my parents, keep with me, because I lived in Peru close to them. But my children is another generation, they seem sometimes, I cannot say assimilation because we're trying to fight against that. It's acculturation, so now my children is that they keep the Peruvian culture and they learn about this wonderful culture of the United States and try to combine the best while keeping both of them.

**Interviewer:** Can you tell me about your religious or spiritual beliefs?

**Luz:** When I was younger, in my childhood, always my parents teach us, because she was an anthropologist, she'd teach us about the Incas culture. How they consider the Pacha mama, the Earth, and the sun, the God's sun, how important it is to value the nature. But after I became Catholic, because everybody becomes Catholic when they are a child over there, in Peru. But after when I'd grown, I became LDS and I married there. I love the way how in this religion family is important, so, yeah, my daughters grow with these principles and values. And also, remember always about our tradition and history.

**Interviewer:** What is your favorite holiday food memory?

**Luz:** My favorite holiday food memory is when celebrating the Intiraymi festival in my hometown of Cusco, Peru because of the dish, *cuye al horno*, which is baked guinea pig. In the U.S. guinea pigs are pets but *cuye* holds a special place in our Peruvian cultural celebrations and is a major part of the cuisine. This eating practice extends to the Andean region too. One instance I recall of introducing *cuye* to my daughters is when they traveled with me to Cusco for the Intiraymi festival. When *cuye* was served, my daughters were in disbelief and very reluctant to see the dish. They knew of the dish, but seeing it served was a still a shock to them. Despite their initial hesitation, my daughters eventually tried it and were pleasantly surprised by its delicious flavor. I love this dish because I have many memories with sharing this culinary tradition with loved ones.

**Interviewer:** What is the meaning of ‘being welcoming’ to you?

**Luz:** The meaning of welcoming, for me, is when you make others feel safe. And make you feel not only safe physically, also psychologically. The person who shows you kindness, and also the way how they address to you, and respect your values. And respect for what is the most important for you and what is the most important for other people. And take into consideration that each of us are unique and each of us have a lot to give. This is for me a welcoming environment.

**Interviewer:** What are some hopes for your community?

**Luz:** As all of us, I am from the Hispanic community, but I believe all of us, all the community with diversity programs, we dream the same. More opportunities, more options. Work together, grow together. Right now, for example, when I create ESL/Amigos Mentores was only for Hispanic/Latino students. We grew, we started with 40 students, after we get 1,700 students. The way how we work is the students with the most experience help the new ones, and we continue growing. We create the chain of success, I feel so happy to continue creating the beginning of the chain to grow. Right now, for example, I worked started going to college when I start, we are not too much Hispanic/Latino but we are now continue growing and is now a Hispanic serving institute, where we have a high amount of Hispanic/Latino students. So, right now we are growing. The most important thing is the education is the key to success for me. My hope is everybody can reach the education they want. I know there is a lot of opportunities here. Only thing we need to do is ask, this is the reason I encourage my community to ask questions. Ask, you will find. If you don’t ask, you will stay where you are.

**Interviewer:** What does the American dream mean to you?

**Luz:** Normally, when you came it’s like to get a better job, to get the home of your dreams, education. But now, my dream is part is like, what I say the meaning is like, ‘come to this country, find better education, better opportunities, a new job, a home, and everything you want.’



But now my dream is, once you get what you, is to contribute, to be successful. Once you are successful or get something, share with everyone. Share with everyone.