

Mayra Abish Sanchez-Gomez

Mexico



Interviewer: Do you mind starting by introducing yourself?

Mayra: My name is Mayra Abby Sanchez and I'm from Mexico.

Interviewer: How long have you been here?

Mayra: I have been living here for 27 years.

Interviewer: What was your life like before you immigrated here?

Mayra: Well, I finished my high school and I entered to the University but I started facing some struggles and I have some family here that invited me to come. It was just a short time after high school when I came here, and basically, I was a student, but I was struggling with ways to go into school.

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

Mayra: My country is Mexico. I was born in Mexico City. I lived there until I was four years old and my parents moved to Hidalgo, which is a state an hour far from Mexico City. I grew up there until I moved here. So from here and there. It means a lot because my parents they are from different states in Mexico. My mom, she's from Veracruz, which is in the Gulf Coast of Mexico. And my dad, he's from Hidalgo. So I have good memories when visiting my grandmother in Veracruz and visiting my other grandmother in Hidalgo. Especially being outside of Mexico, I started learning more about the culture, appreciate more my culture, my ancestors, and the meaning of traditions. So yeah, I love it.

Interviewer: Do you have a favorite tradition?

Mayra: When I was little, I really enjoyed Christmas, because everyone gets together. And I really enjoy that. Being here, I appreciate more *Dia de los Muertos*, especially after the *Coco* movie when they uplift the traditions. I started enjoying more the cultural meaning in celebrating Dia de los Muertos.

Interviewer: Is that coming up in the next month?

Mayra: Yeah. November first and second.

Interviewer: Do you have any plans?

Mayra: Yeah, we are planning to do some altars and we are participating in the community to the altars.

Interviewer: What traditions have been passed down in your family?

Mayra: Well, the first thing is the family-centered activities is important for us. Because many of our festivities and traditions are more surrounded into the religious sense, for my family, being from a different religion, it didn't mean the same sometimes. But because when we were kids, I didn't realize how much important are some of these cultural traditions. Like celebrating the holiday celebrating the quinceanera it wasn't a part of what my family lived before. But as a family, we didn't follow some cultural traditions, but we have another ways to celebrate or to pass a tradition, which was more the family gatherings, sharing family history. But now, as I've grown up, and as a mother, I just love to retake some of the things that we celebrate as a culture.

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

Mayra: I think I get from my dad the excitement to be with people. My dad is one of those persons that he passed on the street and everybody says 'Hi' to him, because he meets everyone, he loves to serve others, and he really enjoys to be surrounded by people. So I think that's the part of my dad that I really like and he passed it onto me- I do the same thing. So for my mom, I think I learned a lot of patience. I come from a big family, we are eight in our family. So being patient with family, kids especially. And I have nine kids and I have one miscarriage so in total 10 pregnancies. So it is something maybe familiar to me. My mom always said like, 'You girls you are exactly like me,' and I was like, 'Okay, thank you' [laughter]. Yeah, but I think the enjoyment for family and have a big family is part of her, and who I am.

Interviewer: What's your favorite holiday food?

Mayra: My favorite holiday food is the *Pozole*. *Pozole* is like a soup where you can make it with *hominy*, which is like dried *maize*, and chicken or pork, and can be green or red and it is spicy and you can add lettuce and radish and onion and lemon.

Interviewer: What is something you like to do for fun?

Mayra: Nothing [laughter], because we have so many kids, it keeps me busy doing here and there. But just being in the nature, doing nothing specifically. I like being in nature and listening to silence. I think I started learning to do that because I always be surrounded by people, my kids, you know, everyday life and those silent moments are special.

Interviewer: What are your hopes and dreams for the future?

Mayra: As an immigrant mother, I didn't realize until I got into the community and I worked with more families, the need to support more the mom as a professional. It is a professional, the minimum is just staying at home. Being a mom is to have several abilities; cooking, scheduling, driving, dealing with a lot of things... You cannot believe all what the moms does. We need to appreciate their work. For the moms, my hope is that every mom can see themselves not as just, 'a mom' that they are because they take care of the kids, but by the persons who they are and the value that they have and the things that they can bring into the community. Because everyone has abilities. Everyone has something to give. So seeing more of that side in our society and not just to say, 'I'm a stay-at-home mom', but 'I'm a stay-at-home mom doing several things.'

Interviewer: What is something you like most about America?

Mayra: What I like most here is the possibilities that you have to do different things. At least for me coming from a country where the social issues are very marked between rich and poor, and we can see it here too, but we have a difference. We can find so many tools around us. So anything can be possible if we use those tools that we have in the community and in the system.

Interviewer: How have you made an effort to connect with the community around you?

Mayra: When I decided to step out of my house, I started a nonprofit organization called Comunidad Materna Utah. It is a nonprofit that supports expectant moms and their families to provide resources. We provide prenatal classes, support groups, home visits, and better postpartum support. So when I decide to create something that I live, and I feel the need it helps me to see hope. It was an opportunity for me to grow and to provide something valuable into our community.

Interviewer: What city do you live in?

Mayra: Right now I live in Kearns.

Interviewer: When you got here, what was the most difficult part of your integration?

Mayra: Oh, the language. Language. When I got here, I was single and I didn't understand many things. It just was my goal to study English. At the same time, I worked to survive. So language, and understanding the resources because I didn't know of any resources. It was difficult.

Interviewer: Have you been back to Mexico?

Mayra: Not yet.

Interviewer: What advice do you have for this group?

Mayra: You have a bright future, just take your opportunities. You can grow and do as much as you want. You can dream high. I have nine kids, they are young, and sometimes they waste time and they lose the journey of exploring and doing things. Just try to find your purpose. Everyone, every human, we live trying to find our purpose, and sometimes we feel awful because something is missing in our lives. But finding who you are, what you want to bring into this world, how you want to leave this world. Everyone matters. You matter. What you are doing now is gonna impact the next years. So don't lose your dreams. And if you don't have one now, just think about it. Who you are, why you are here? Use existential thinking- Who I am? Why I'm here? Find the best inside you, your talents, your gifts. Especially your gifts are gonna guide you in your life. But you need to pay attention to that, if you don't pay attention to that is easily to be lost.

Interviewer: For your own children, what are you hoping for their futures?

Mayra: They can find themselves. They have to decide and find. For me, I feel like I can achieve my goal when I see them fulfill their life with the things that they love to do, and understanding who they are.

Interviewer: You mentioned that your religion was different from the ones the majority of people practiced when you were in Mexico. Could you just let me know what those two religions were?

Mayra: Mexico was different than here. Because in Mexico I was LDS while the majority is Catholic. And when I got here, I was like, 'Oh thank you,' because the majority was LDS.