

## **Cultural Praxis Fulfillment Narrative**

In order to meet my cultural praxis requirement I chose to follow pathway 2, which asks for the student to live and work in a local heritage community over an extended period of time without interruption for at least two years. I fulfilled this requirement in many ways, first by being part of a heritage community myself due to my Mexican background and secondly due to my work and living experiences within the community of Salinas, California (a community that is in large numbers populated by people of Hispanic heritage). I will be narrating my experience as a native speaker of the Spanish language, my own Mexican Heritage and the living and working experiences I had in the community that I mentioned above.

I was born in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico on the fall of 1992. I spend most of my childhood living in a small community of the state. It was the type of community where everyone pretty much knew each other, were everyone will help one another, and the days went by with such a peaceful sensation. I attended elementary school there until completing the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. I have the best memories of the Escuela Primaria 20 de Mayo. There were about 3 festivals through the years to commemorate the most important Holidays like the Mexican Revolution, the Day of the Kid and Mother's Day. On top of everything, I was always the top student of my class and I got to compete in regional reading events as well as National Anthem competitions; life was good and I couldn't have grown in a better place. The town was full of folklore and traditions that are so unique to the Mexican culture. I loved my town, my people, and the life that I had that it was simply heart-breaking decision to leave it all behind. The summer of 2002 my family decided to move to the United States in search of better opportunities. For me, it was a complete shock, but at the age of 9 the only thing I could was to accept my parent's decision and immigrate to this country. I didn't realize I was about to face

some of the toughest days of my life. It is simply not easy to move to a different country when your language and your culture are different. I had to assimilate to my new life in the United States, to learn English and to get use to the life style of the country. On my way of doing so, I struggled a lot with the language and I was even made fun off for my particular accent and my unavoidable shyness. I was the only one in my grade who was doing through that phase of transitioning. However, regardless of all the struggles I moved forward with conviction knowing that if I worked hard and tried my best someday I will get somewhere. The toughest year was the first one; from then on middle school and high school were much simple. In deed I adapted to the life in this country and I learned all aspects of the language, but I never left behind my Hispanic heritage. Spanish was always the language spoken at home and still is. My culture, my preferences in music and art have always been relevant to my Mexican heritage, which I guard with much pride. I physically left my country and I also left behind so many things and people whom I loved, but I brought with me all that I was and all that I knew; I have always carried with me my native language and my traditions and I plan to continue to pass them on because I praise them with all my heart.

As I enter CSU Monterey Bay, I moved away from home and into a new community. On the fall of 2010 my journey began around the community of Salinas, California. I was first introduced to this community as part of my lower division Service Learning course where I was placed on El Sausal Middle School. This particular school is constituted of 98% Latino students. It was definitely a new experience for me since I had not been in a school with so many students of Hispanic heritage in this country and I was determined to make the best of the time I was to spend there. The students were very welcoming and receptive to my help. It was incredibly for me to see how comfortable they felt when they worked with due to the fact that I was Latina just

like them. Time went by very fast and soon the semester was over, but I was grateful to have had such an amazing experience with those Latinos who thought me so much and they reminded me much of myself. I later joined California Mini-Corps, which is a program who provides tutors for migrant students around the area. During my first year as part of the program, I was placed at Castroville Elementary School. Castroville is also another community that is at its most Hispanic heritage based. In this particular site, I worked closely to migrant student from kinder garden all the way to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. My job was to tutor migrant students who were mostly struggling with the learning of the English language. I often had to use my Spanish skills to translate or to interact with my students' parents. I enjoyed working with that community so much. It was small and much unified; the parents were always willing to work with the school to produce the best outcomes for their children. It reminded me a lot of the community in Mexico where I had grown up, where people will bring their children to their classroom and they were wait on the schools patio at the end of the school day so they could pick them up. During my second year in Mini-Corp I was back working in Salinas, but this time at Everett Alvarez High School. Again, I got to work with some wonderful migrant students who were at its most from Mexican and Salvadorian descent. I was able to develop a close relationship with each of them, which allowed me find out more about their heritage and their traditions. Since most of these students pertained to the ESL program, the usage of the Spanish language with them was very constant since they still felt more comfortable speaking their native language whenever they could. Again, it was great for me as well as for them to feel identify with each other due to of Hispanic heritage. As we all realized, been an immigrant in this country can be quite challenging, but is always nice to find someone who shares a similar background with you and who can remind you a bit of your own heritage.

As far as my living experiences, I able to not only work but also to live and expend a good amount of time around the area of Salinas, Ca. This is definitely a different community in comparison to where I was used to living. Since I came to this country I had lived in the community of Hollister, which is growing to be more divers, but it is still dominated by people of white heritage. When I arrived to Salinas, the difference between this two communities was quite difference, especially if I make reference to the East side of the city where I got to live. Salinas is simply a community full of Hispanic heritage; everywhere you go you are able to find something or someone relevant to the Hispanic cultures. It is a city where you can find numerous Mexican shops, Mexican restaurants, you can listening to Spanish music all around the city and you can survive with no problem speaking only the Spanish language. In addition, this community celebrates so many of the Hispanic traditions, just as they would be celebrated in their respective countries. For example, the celebrations for Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Mexican Independence. Without doubt, having expend some time within this community helped me realized how alive can our Hispanic heritage can be in this country. I was glad to see how our language and our traditions keep on surviving regardless of the time and the distance of our native countries.

I can personally state that I was able to meet the fulfillment for the Cultural Praxis requirement within the World Language and Culture department. Both my working and living experiences for the past four years, brought me extremely close to communities full of Hispanic Heritage. I had some amazing experiences from which I learned much and that I will always praise; they helped me achieve a better conscience of the Hispanic cultures and a greater pride of my own Hispanic heritage.