**Elena Juan Transcription**

**Elena:** So we are talking about my connection to the community, so my background is from Spain, so the connections I have are to the Spanish speaking people in Connecticut. And I remember my brother many many many years ago… he even started a group of Spaniards in Connecticut, he met like two people because there were not too many people, but now there are more so the connection that we have is basically the spanish language and many of us are spanish teachers in different schools and colleges.

**Andrew (Interviewer):** You yourself are a Spanish teacher as well?

**Elena:** I am a Spanish teacher, I teach in a public school. I have taught in a private school but I am now in a public school in glastonbury. And my connection to the hispanic community has to do with more how we celebrate and that is through music, private parties, and through food. I was telling Andrew (interviewer) that when we go back to Spain we come back with saffron, besides the olive oil and also jamon serrano, costco sells jamon serrano which is like prosciutto so that has been in the last couple of days we tell eachother its here its 99 dollars for a whole one which is extremely cheap for them. So then you have it for the holidays, for christmas. So for the saffron we make paella which is our main dish and the gatherings are around big paellas that can have a lot of people and through music we usually have somebody or more than one that plays the guitar so that is also how we unite ourselves. So it is food, music, and dance that unite us and the language of course and we celebrate a lot. In terms of doing things in the community, myself, I have participated in Park parade which is a parade that starts in Hartford and goes through West Hartford. Representing when my daughter was younger, it was Spain, with the flag and she would dress in the flamenco dress. And then also and I have been participating in a concert that is called “Guitar under the Stars” that has already 26 years and it started near the river in where I think is Hartford and moved to riverfront in the orchestra, then in the last years it has been at Saint Josephs and is now at the Bushnell. That concert is guitar under the stars and the guitar is the main instrument. So that is basically how I see myself as a Spanish speaker in Connecticut. And of course because many of us are spanish teachers we are bringing our culture in a more intellectual way and different aspects.

Andrew: When you came to Connecticut from Spain were there any things that you immediately found gruesome?

When I came from Spain I went to the University of Houston to study my masters, and there was a group called hispanic Americans…something. And they had some events and when I would go to the events, cultural events connected to the University like the guitar concert, flamenco, a lot of things. What I remember is when I would go over there my knees would shake because it was such an emotional thing to hear the language, to see the people have a thrill, so it was kind of emotional. There I discovered more when I was in Houston I discovered. My mom is from Colombia, so I discovered the Colombian aspect of me in the United states. I didn't know I was a Latina or hispanic until you lived here and configurize that you are part of a group that you don’t even know until you live here so I think the first years were difficult. I have this fight in myself. There is this culture, and it’s over America, and it’s over my family, so there’s this ah... fight, internal fight where you think things are better. Something as small as, as something in the news... you watch TV? The journalists, the people on TV, the broad....

**Andrew:** The broadcasting.

**Elena:** The broadcasting! And they were very casual and they had their cup of coffee, and they’d be very casual talking about “a war in vietnam” or whatever and they were casual so I thought it was odd.

**Andrew:** Yes so distinctively American

**Elena:** Yeah that time it was all so odd, and now it’s just the same. Let’s have a party, and they have a guitar at the party, and a timeframe and there was nothing fun! It was a fiesta party, and it was shocking. And it was all those years ago, but it was like mingling with all those people, so that period ended when I discovered I needed to be more planted. And there’s a moment where you accept the community and where you are, you’re bilingual that to that’s, for me? That’s the hard part. It took years, it took years. And uh also, because I came from the south of Spain, which has a very big difference, and so I arrived from Houston and it took me a while to value the way I had collected [unintelligible, 8:24] and when you get to Houston and look up and look at those buildings and the most modern architecture you could find. And so by looking at the modern architecture I was able to connect the feeling of art and [unintelligible, 8:44] and coming from Madrid, the architecture is so elegant that you cannot miss that.

**Andrew:** And you come here and everything is, glass.

**Elena:** Yes, or some pretty color or something. And so I learned to value, I-I wanted to grasp whatever value I could to [unintelligible, 9:04]

**Andrew:** Oh, absolutely. That’s actually learning how to live all over again

**Elena:** Exactly!

**Andrew:** Of course, did you speak English when you came to the United States?

**Elena:** I spoke in the present tense and it took me years to understand the difference between the past tense you know? [unintelligible, 9:26] No, no it wasn’t. Actually, my husband was in French. Yeah, so I did English after school, uh from my third grade to grade eleven, and then it was French, so English was not my strength.

**Andrew:** Well you’ve made great leaps and strides there! Now you’re educating us! That’s wonderful, I don’t want to pry anything else out of you because you’ve been such a wonderful source so thank you, but I have one last question for you. As someone coming from Spain, for people who live in Connecticut, what was one thing you’d want them to know about the experience of coming here from Spain? One thing that if, Say I don’t know anything about Spain, I don’t have any frame of context of what it’s like to be an immigrant, what is the one thing that you would want me to know?

**Elena:** If you’re from Spain?

**Andrew:** If I don’t know anything about being an immigrant in the United States.

**Elena:** I’m sorry, say that again?

**Andrew:** You got it.

**Elena:** I’m talking to an American?

**Andrew:** Yeah, you’re talking to an American. What’s is one thing you want people from Connecticut to know, who’s not an immigrant or have that experience of coming from somewhere else and coming here, what is one thing you’d want them to know?

**Elena:** I appreciate your patience. What I’d want you to know is that I appreciate your patience, and your sense of community you have in America so, I have appreciation. When I was in Houston I went to a baptist church and I took two classes for free, because college was expensive and later, much later because I was already Spanish. So with that, thank you for the opportunity to speak.

**Andrew:** Thank you so much for sitting down with us, I won’t interrogate you anymore, you were wonderful and thank you so much for that!

**Elena:** Of course!