

ORAL HISTORY LAB (OHL)

University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez

Oral History Interview with Carmen Mojica Quiñones

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview of Carmen Mojica Quiñones conducted by Andrea Roldán Arroyo on November 17, 2022. This interview is part of course work done by students at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

Interview Transcript:

Interviewer: Andrea Roldán Arroyo

Interviewee: Carmen Mojica Quiñones

Date: November 17, 2022

Location: Voladoras, Moca, PR

Andrea [00:00:00]:

What's your full name?

Carmen [00:00:02]:

Carmen Mojica Quiñones.

Andrea [00:00:06]:

You don't have a middle name?

Carmen [00:00:08]:

Yes, but I got rid of it.

Andrea [00:00:10]:

Why?

Carmen [00:00:11]:

I got rid of it because that middle name is a last name, it's De Jesús, and everywhere I went and got my name on file...

Andrea [00:00:17]:

Mm-hmm.

Carmen [00:00:18]:

No... They would look me up on file and not find me because they would file my last name under D and not M. [Unclear] affidavit and I changed it. [Unclear] I eliminated it.

Andrea [00:00:32]:

And you didn't want to name yourself something else?

Carmen [00:00:34]:

I didn't name myself anything else.

Andrea [00:00:36]:

And why did your mom name you De Jesús?

Carmen [00:00:39]:

How should I know? My dad's name was Jesús maybe she did it... in his honor or she was religious.

Andrea [00:00:48]:

She was religious, your mom?

Carmen [00:00:50]:

I think so.

Andrea [00:00:51]:

You think or you know?

Carmen [00:00:52]:

[Long Pause]

Andrea [00:00:56]:

I know. [Inaudible]

Andrea [00:01:04]:

How old are you? [Long Pause] [Laughs]

Carmen [00:01:10]:

[Laughs] I'm going to tell you but if somebody else asks I won't tell them.

Andrea [00:01:15]:

Alright, tell me.

Carmen [00:01:16]:

I am eighty-one years old.

Andrea [00:01:18]:

And when is your birthday?

Carmen [00:01:20]:

On August 3rd.

Andrea [00:01:21]:

Of?

Carmen [00:01:22]:

I was born on forty-one.

Andrea [00:01:24]:

1941?

Carmen [00:01:25]:

Yes.

Andrea [00:01:28]:

And where do you live right now?

Carmen [00:01:35]:

My house? In Barrio Voladoras in Moca.

Andrea [00:01:36]:

In Moca. And how many years have you been living here?

Carmen [00:01:37]:

Like twenty-six years.

Andrea [00:01:41]:

And where did you grow up?

Carmen [00:01:42]:

Ay, I grew up in San Sebastián del Pepino.

Andrea [00:01:44]:

In Del Pepino?

Carmen [00:01:45]:

Del Pepino.

Andrea [00:01:46]:

With your parents, both of them?

Carmen [00:01:50]:

Exactly.

Andrea [00:01:51]:

And with your brother?

Carmen [00:01:53]:

[Yes] and my brother.

Andrea [00:01:54]:

What's his name?

Carmen [00:01:55]:

Jesús Mojica, the owner of grocery stores in Añasco and Aguada, Selectos-

Andrea [00:02:05]:

And why do they call him Junior?

Carmen [00:02:06]:

Because he has the same name as my dad.

Andrea [00:02:09]:

And what were the names of your parents?

Carmen [00:02:10]:

Jesús... and my mom Salvadora Quiñones.

Andrea [00:02:16]:

Salvadora Quiñones and Jesús Mojica. And how old were they when they died?

Carmen [00:02:21]:

My mom died at 76 and my dad died at... 78, more or less.

Andrea [00:02:30]:

And how old were you?

Carmen [00:02:31]:

I don't remember but I was young.

Andrea [00:02:39]:

And did you go to school?

Carmen [00:02:41]:

Yes.

Andrea [00:02:42]:

Which one?

Carmen [00:02:45]:

The first few grades were in Juitier [sp?] in San Sebastián.

Andrea [00:02:50]:

What was it?

Carmen [00:02:51]:

Juitier [sp?].

Andrea [00:02:52]:

Juitier [sp?].

Carmen [00:02:53]:

In San Sebastián.

Andrea [00:02:54]:

Until what grade [were you there]?

Carmen [00:02:57]:

I think I was there until sixth grade... because then I went to Narciso Rabel Cabrero...

Andrea [00:03:05]:

Narciso-

Carmen [00:03:06]:

Narciso Rabel Cabrero, it's the one that is near the Agudilla exit.

Andrea [00:03:11]:

Okay, and you were there from sixth grade until what grade?

Carmen [00:03:15]:

I was there from seventh grade until twelfth grade.

Andrea [00:03:17]:

You graduated from there?

Carmen [00:03:18]:

Mm-hmm.

Andrea [00:03:19]:

And how old were you when you graduated? Seventeen?

Carmen [00:03:22]:

Sixteen... I think.

Andrea [00:03:27]:

Sixteen. And how... old were you when you got married? If you got married?

Carmen [00:03:34]:

I got married like at seventeen, I was young.

Andrea [00:03:38]:

At seventeen you got married? And why so young?

Carmen [00:03:40]:

Well because... my mom when... back then, when a boy and a girl fell in love they had to stay home, the girl had to stay home from school, I got pulled from school, because I had to learn how to cook, how to flat iron the clothes, and learn how to be a housewife... and so... I-I liked school...

Andrea [00:04:12]:

You liked it [school].

Carmen [00:04:19]:

Oh, and the boys had to visit the [girl at her] house. They would set up a date so he could come visit.

Andrea [00:04:30]:

Your parents or his parents [would set up the date]?

Carmen [00:04:31]:

No, no, my parents.

Andrea [00:04:32]:

Okay.

Carmen [00:04:33]:

They would set up a date for him to come visit and we would sit in the living room, him, me, my dad, or my mom. In the living room.

Andrea [00:04:44]:

Talking?

Carmen [00:04:45]:

Talking too, that's all we did. And because I wanted to go to school and they wouldn't let me because I was "in love"...

Andrea [00:04:54]:

But why wouldn't they let you if you were in love... I mean why did you have to leave school?

Carmen [00:05:00]:

It wasn't that I wanted to leave school is that they pulled me out-

Andrea [00:05:02]:

You didn't want to leave-

Carmen [00:05:03]:

No, they pulled me out. [Chuckles]

Andrea [00:05:05]:

But why did they-

Carmen [00:05:07]:

Because back then that was the custom.

Andrea [00:05:10]:

That was like the religion, the tradition?

Carmen [00:05:12]:

Because that was the custom that my mom saw from her siblings and the people she had [in her life]... my grandparents, her parents... lived in... they had several farms and that's what they did... and their children worked at home. Some of them went to school but never worked [outside of home]... during that time there were no [outside work] opportunities or anything like that.

Andrea [00:05:45]:

Mm-hmm.

Carmen [00:05:46]:

So that was the tradition.

Andrea [00:05:51]:

So, the tradition was that once you were in love you had to leave school and learn things, learn how to iron clothes, learn how to cook, clean...

Carmen [00:05:59]:

May-maybe other people didn't do it [that way], but that's how we did it in my mom's house because that's how they grew up too. So, they thought that was the [way to do things]...

Andrea [00:06:10]:

And what was your boyfriend's name at the time?

Carmen [00:06:16]:

He was my only boyfriend back then.

Andrea [00:06:20]:

What was his name?

Carmen [00:06:22]:

Well, the one who I married, Néstor Rodón.

Andrea [00:06:24]:

Néstor Rodón, with an “s” or an “x”?

Carmen [00:06:28]:

With an “s”.

Andrea [00:06:30]:

Néstor. And how long were you married?

Carmen [00:06:34]:

Not long because I divorced him. Like six years or so.

Andrea [00:06:38]:

And you had kids with him?

Carmen [00:06:40]:

Yes. I had three.

Andrea [00:06:43]:

And how many other kids do you have?

Carmen [00:06:47]:

One more.

Andrea [00:06:48]:

From which marriage?

Carmen [00:06:50]:

From my marriage to Antonio Roldán. That’s your dad [that we’re talking about]. [Laughs]

Andrea [00:06:55]:

[Chuckles] I know. And how many marriages were you in?

Carmen [00:07:01]:

Three.

Andrea [00:07:04]:

[Laughs] How many did you have? Tell me the truth, this is-this is your life.

Carmen [00:07:11]:

[Laughs] It is my life, I had three...

Andrea [00:07:12]:

You had more [Laughs] don't come at me with that story!

Carmen [00:07:16]:

[Laughs] I had one more.

Andrea [00:07:18]:

You had four total.

Carmen [00:07:19]:

Yes. [Chuckles]

Andrea [00:07:20]:

The first one was Néstor Rodón. The second one who was it?

Carmen [00:07:26]:

Who do you think it was? Antonio Roldán...

Andrea [00:07:29]:

He was the second?

Carmen [00:07:30]:

Yes...

Andrea [00:07:31]:

And the third?

Carmen [00:07:32]:

The third was Wilson.

Andrea [00:07:36]:

There's a fourth... [Laughs]

[Recording paused]

Andrea [00:07:42]:

Why did you think you divorced so many times?

Carmen [00:07:48]:

Because things were not going well... and to avoid worse things it was better that way.

Andrea [00:07:57]:

Were they sexist?

Carmen [00:08:00]:

They were sexist [yes]... For example, Antonio loved to drink... that was his life. He was a good person when he was sober but when he drank-

Andrea [00:08:23]:

He was another.

Carmen [00:08:24]:

I tried to get him to go to doctors, I tried taking him. I did everything I could, psychiatrists, psychologists, and it wasn't enough. I couldn't...

Andrea [00:08:36]:

What did you do?

Carmen [00:08:38]:

I divorced him... and then I married him again later. [Laughs]

Andrea [00:08:43]:

Oh no...

Carmen [00:08:44]:

[Laughs] Yeah.

Andrea [00:08:45]:

And why did you marry him again?

Carmen [00:08:47]:

Because I felt sorry for him... and it didn't work.

Andrea [00:08:52]:

Ahh. And why were they sexist? In what way?

Carmen [00:08:59]:

Because it was his way. In the house things were done his way. And he wanted to eat what he wanted to eat. Things like that.

Andrea [00:09:11]:

If you did something, for example, if you cooked and it wasn't what we wanted [to eat], did he argue?

Carmen [00:09:17]:

If he was drunk, he argued, but if he wasn't he ate it. It was an impossible life with a drunk.

Andrea [00:09:24]:

Okay. And let me ask you, did they [ex-husbands] let you work?

Carmen [00:09:35]:

With Néstor... that's why I divorced him... because he was also a student, a medicine student, and he didn't want me to work. I had already graduated as an education major and they offered me a job and he didn't want me to take it; and I told him that I had to work because I couldn't be responsible for three kids... or two kids, and not have any source of income. I couldn't sit back and rely on his parents or my parents for money, because he was studying [he had no money].

Andrea [00:10:14]:

And why didn't he let you work?

Carmen [00:10:16]:

Because he would often be jealous [controlling], it was sick even. He thought I was his possession, not because of what I was wearing and not because I was doing anything wrong, but if I was standing outside in the balcony, he would often come up from behind to look at what I was looking. [He would do] things like that, things that only a person that wasn't in his right mind would do.

Andrea [00:10:51]:

And you finished? You graduated?

Carmen [00:10:53]:

I started school [college] while I was married.

Andrea [00:10:56]:

No, I mean in school... you said before that because you fell in love, they took you out of school [high school]. What happened then? Did you learn the things that were required of you [how to be a housewife]?

Carmen [00:11:13]:

At that point I already knew several things about being a housewife, like how to clean, how to cook. I did several things. I even knew how to roast coffee [from scratch]. It's a very long process... And then when I got married, I continued my studies.

Andrea: [00:11: 29]:

So, you had to get married to go back to school [high school]?

Carmen [00:11:33]:

Yes, I finished school and then I started college right after. I took 19 credit hours in the summer.

Andrea [00:11:38]:

And when did you graduate? What year?

Carmen [00:11:40]:

I don't remember the year, but I know I graduated from the Interamerican [University]-

Andrea [00:11:47]:

No, no, when did you graduate high school?

Carmen [00:11:48]:

No, I don't remember. I don't remember the years. I just know I started college as soon as I finished high school and I took 19 credit hours in the summer-

Andrea [00:12:04]:

What was your major?

Carmen [00:12:06]:

I began my major in education.

Andrea [00:12:08]:

And was that what you wanted to pursue?

Carmen [00:12:09]:

No, I didn't want to pursue that. At first, when I was still at my parents' house I wanted to study nursing. I always said I wanted to become a nurse.

Andrea [00:12:22]:

And why did you want to become a nurse?

Carmen [00:12:24]:

Because I liked it. I don't know why, I just liked it... but then my mom said no. She said that nurses had a bad reputation.

Andrea [00:12:40]:

Why did they have a bad reputation?

Carmen [00:12:41]:

Ay, I don't know, that's what she [my mom] said... but then-

Andrea [00:12:45]:

So, she never let you?

Carmen [00:12:47]:

She said no. She said that I wasn't going to study to be a nurse. She said that I better stay home and not study if that was the case.

Andrea [00:12:55]:

And why did you have to listen to her and do as she said?

Carmen [00:12:58]:

Because things back then were not as they are today. Nowadays, you guys put on clothes and walk away. [Chuckles] And when your mom asks “where are you going” you say “when I’m back I’ll tell you”; back then it wasn’t like that... If one left the house without permission, they would’ve killed us... [Laughs]

Andrea [00:13:25]:

[Laughs] So you didn’t major in what you wanted because your mom didn’t let you-

Carmen [00:13:26]:

I didn’t even have girlfriends. I didn’t even have girlfriends because my mom said that “amigo era el ratón del queso.” [A friend was mouse to cheese]

Andrea [00:13:33]:

Okay.

Carmen [00:13:35]:

And you couldn’t have friends either.

Andrea [00:13:38]:

But... so the one in charge in your household was your mom? Who was in charge of you?

Carmen [00:13:44]:

My mom was in charge of me. My dad was in charge of everything else in our household, but he always ended up doing whatever my mom said. [Laughs]

Andrea [00:13:52]:

So, your dad wasn’t as sexist, it was more your mom?

Carmen [00:13:55]:

No, no. My dad was always at work and doing things, but my mom was the one in charge. In matters of raising us, she was the one in charge.

Andrea [00:14:05]:

Did your mom work? Or did he not want her to work?

Carmen [00:14:10]:

No, I mean during that time, women never went to work they always stayed home.

Andrea [00:14:15]:

Yeah, it was customary.