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ORAL HISTORY LAB (OHL)

University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez

Oral History Interview with Arelys Marzán

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview of Arelys Marzán conducted by Lizmarie Sánchez Centeno on May 18, 2022. This interview is part of coursework 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.

This transcript was edited by UPRM graduate student Daphne M. Ponce Feliciano in order to improve aspects such as accuracy and readability.

Lizmarie (Interviewer) [00:00:01]: Hello, my name is Lizmarie Sánchez Centeno from Professor Ricia Chansky's Oral History class. I will be interviewing Arelys Marzán. How are you Arelys?

Arelys (Interviewee) [00:00:12]: I'm quite fine, thanks for asking.

Interviewer [00:00:15]: What is your age, if you could tell us?

Interviewee [00:00:16]: I'm 19 years old.

Interviewer [00:00:18]: And are you aware that we can interview you and- and that your name will appear in the interview? Do you agree with this?

Interviewee [00:00:25]: Yes, I agree that my name may come up in the interview.

Interviewer [00:00:29]: OK, can you tell me where you live and with whom?

Interviewee [00:00:34]: Well, I'm from here, from Mayagüez. All my life, I have lived here in Mayagüez and I currently live with my twin sister.

Interviewer [00:00:43]: Interesting, and do they look a lot like you?

Interviewee [00:00:47]: We're fraternal twins, we look identical but we're not.

Interviewer [00:00:53]: How curious, how curious.

Interviewer [00:00:55]: And with this whole COVID thing- how have you been

feeling? Have you or a family member gotten sick?

Interviewee [00:01:01]: Well, look, quite a few from my family have gotten sick from COVID. I got sick in January, I did get sick but I *didn't* because I didn't have any symptoms.

Interviewer [00:01:12]: It's an asymptomatic case.

Interviewee [00:01:13]: The only thing it gave me was an allergy, so I hadn't been affected by COVID. That being said, I couldn't work and, well, my partner had COVID, he felt it pretty bad, my partner's family also had very strong symptoms. So yes, I have seen how people have been affected by COVID.

Interviewer [00:01:32]: And what do you think about that, what state of mind does COVID leave you in?

Interviewee [00:01:39]: Well, to give a bit of background as to what COVID has done for me, because the pandemic was a time when I suffered a lot, especially my mental health because I had anxiety and depression- but when COVID started, I was locked up all the time, I couldn't go out, I couldn't do anything and that began to affect me a lot and now 2 years have passed and I see how it affects me because I no longer feel as comfortable as I used to feel when interacting with people, in talking with other people, in having contact with other people. They give me more manias, that if the germs that if all those things are locked up and one sees how that begins to affect you in the long run, even though one does not see how it affects the same moment that the pandemic began to pass.

Interviewer [00:02:36]: I understand, I understand, and that you told me that before you felt stress and anxiety, what is the reason?

Interviewee [00:02:44]: Well, I was under a lot of stress and anxiety because of things that were happening at home, that they had problems and that started to make me anxious. The fact that when I was in eighth grade my mom left for the United States and I didn't see her anymore started to make me anxious because I was used to being with her all the time and well when I started to make the change from the university that was a big shock for me because one realizes what it is to be an adult and the responsibilities that it entails. There I began to have all that anxiety that I am an adult, I have responsibilities, I have things to do, I have to be aware that yes to this, yes to the other and it changes my life completely. Not only that the stress of the class, the weight that it has. Having to be aware that yes to this class because if you are not aware of this class you missed the material and in that exam came exactly that detail that the teacher said in that class and that was what it did was worsen those symptoms that I had stress and anxiety.

Interviewer [00:04:00]: what do you say, do you prefer online or face-to-face classes?

Interviewee [00:04:04]: A thousand times in person. Online I can't concentrate even

a little bit. I can have the Videos on and or I'm watching the class and she starts writing down everything, well concentrated, but I see that my cat passes by and the class was crazy because I got distracted, I went with my cat and I started to hug her at this the other my phone rings I take the call and I'm not waiting for the class. If it is face-to-face, I feel that need to give that respect to the teacher who is at the front of the class looking at me, and there, well, I have all my attention towards that person, but being online that person does not see me and I start to get distracted and despite what I try to concentrate I try to put in the world that I am studying, that I am in a class I go into limbo and the class gets crazy

Interviewer [00:04:59]: Why were you interested in studying a STEM degree, especially chemical engineering?

Interviewee [00:05:07]: Long story and interesting I didn't know that I wanted to study when I was in High School, I was in 10 and I still didn't know that I wanted to study, everyone already knew oh I want this I want the other thing and I kind of don't know what I want to do and well I love to cook I love math I loved chemistry but I didn't know how to find something that would combine all those things that I liked well I said well I have a hobby with dance I can also look for a job with dance but realizing as I was growing up dance was not going to give me a secure job in my whole life because I was going to grow up, I was going to be an old woman and I was not going to be able to continue doing the same dances that I do now and well I began to look for a lot of my teachers they told me oh I should study engineering because you are very intelligent, especially in mathematics. And I don't like it because the only engineering I knew was civil engineering, and mechanics, I didn't know there was a chemical one. I start looking because they did not order a project where it said that you want to be for the future. And everyone already knew and I fought well without knowing what I wanted to do I started looking there I found what it was in the biochemist and I said that it combined the two things to my love mathematics and chemistry and well despite what I said but I don't like engineering having the mentality of what it was as they had explained to me before, ah that was when I was accepted into a school camp I was the last one they took I entered during the week instead of the whole month and despite what was I behind there I saw how I loved what I was doing in that laboratory and I was working in the field of chemical engineering and I was doing many experiments seeing how this particle works, in gravity And seeing how that lifted my spirits I lit that spark of interest and said this is what I want to study, that's when I knew that I want to study chemical engineering I want to do this for the rest of my life and that's when I decided that this is what I was going to be.

Interviewer [00:007:34]: And do you still do that dance hobby?

Interviewee [00:07:35]: Well, I do it hidden at home because I also had a problem with... when I danced they started telling me that my twin dances better than I do all those critics who say constantly comparing well that started to bother me make you doubt my talent and when you doubt my talent a lot, well I stopped doing it I didn't continue dancing but at home, I'm like this out of nowhere listen to a song and you know how to read or I'm at Walmart a song can come on and I start dancing because I hear a song but this way to present and give a Show to someone I have not had the

opportunity because I no longer do the mobile so that others can see me

Interviewer [00:08:24]: And you are not interested in joining the school dance team in the future in these years that you have left studying?

Interviewee [00:08:30]: I've been thinking about it because I talked to a friend who recommended that I had talent because he saw that I did somersaults and that I had the extension to do the Split, raise my leg. All the technology that is done in the dance and I started to think that even though I am not doing anything right now I would like to see if in some future I could enter and at least participate in the jousting or some competition in which I feel that my talent was valid because it helped a well-rounded team in a competition and I would like that. So there may be a chance that I will do it in the future.

Interviewer [00:09:16]: And I ask you when you decided to study chemical engineering with all that time that has passed with the time you had that you still wanted to study that you contact me from grade 10 did you have support from your family?

Interviewee [00:09:29]: Look mommy was in the United States So mommy the support was always there but it was distant it was a support that didn't feel physical...

Interviewer [00:09:38]: Present?

Interviewee [00:09:38]: Exactly, I didn't feel it presently because with my family, that is, my dad, the story is always a little different because the relationship was different and, well, although there was a certain love and respect. The support in the branches such as science or as a branch... with stereotyped careers, that is, of men, because there was not much support there because the mentality before science was for the man that women stay now be it in the kitchen or being a housewife, cleaning... that mentality was still there and it was a bit complicated for them to understand that this is really what I wanted to do and that I was going to do it with or without the support.

Interviewer [00:10:35]: And when you go to class, realizing that even though your family didn't have much support, but already being in engineering you've realized that there are more men or women or that you say there is a fifty-fifty?

Interviewee [00:10:49]: Well look at that there if I have a lot to go on because in my first year that I entered the school I ran into this student who was the English class that we were going to do pi Review in which I was going to check his work and this person checked mine and I realized that this person had a very closed mind but I said I'm not going to get involved in that that's not a problem for me I'm just going to run his work and that's it Next semester I have to take a class with this person in chemistry and I, well, normal because he is a person who studies, I also study each one in his own way and every time I responded to things and this person has not responded to him every time he does something good every time he saw that I was successful it bothered him because I'm going to see that he got upset every time the class was online they didn't force us but they don't want us to have to have the camera on to be sure you were in the

class well I saw that if I answered quickly I would put ca ra and then they started to look at me badly and once he wrote me a comment on WhatsApp and I looked at him like OK but what's your problem I'm in my career that's what I like to do if you don't like that I I am studying this it is your problem because it is my life and well and well to continue he made me understand that many people around me will not support you if they do not give you as competition when I sit down for the first time in person and see around me most were men and I stayed like but we are in 2021 if I am not mistaken and this is still seen as a Men dominant carrier, only for men women are just as capable as men to make any career and it was a moment that It took me by surprise to know that we are in this year and there are still many people who think that way so even if I wish it were fifty-fifty or that there was a woman, one realizes that we have not yet reached that stage.

Interviewer [00:13:40]: If you think that most of your classmates help you or are always competitive, have you had teachers who discriminate against you for the simple fact of being a woman?

Interviewee [00:13:45] have there I have several stories because there are colleagues who helped me there are colleagues who consider me as equal to them and I simply see that they are a person who understands that love and men are capable of being The same thing if I have doubts about a job, he helps me if that person is of no use, but he also gives me the case once I have to study with a person in organic chemistry and this person is going to help you and I am helping and this person He seriously told me, you don't know that because you don't know that, oh yes, there is easy shopping, but if it's this and that and he made comments as if to feel superior. But since I'm very sarcastic and since I'm very sassy, I didn't stay put. Because that person had doubts about a specific topic and that was the topic that I dominated the most, I have doubts about this and I really don't know that and he quickly turned pale, daddy turned pale and it made me laugh because He realized how stupid he sounded every time he told me discriminated against for the simple fact of being a woman. So with professors, I have had very excellent professors who have always been available ah look sit with me at office time we talk so that you understand the material so that you can do it because you are just as capable as anyone but I have also come across professors who do not understand any type of situation or even discriminate. Because in a calculus class that I had, the teacher just didn't want to communicate with me at all.

Interviewer [00:15:41]: And why is that?

Interviewee [00:15:42] I would say that I had doubts or I would say sorry, professor, I am going to an appointment with my psychiatrist psychologist and she no longer answered me. And at the beginning of the class I wasn't doing very well, but at the end of your health exam and when with my final grade it was thirst and I, but because that, I'm sure it's once because I know that they receive I started well but in the end, I swept the class because I managed to understand the material I looked for tutoring and help and the teacher never answered me he never answered my messages or my e-mails and I was shocked because when I found out and talked to some of my peers they don't go through that. The teacher sent them messages, he answered the e-mail, and he was willing to communicate with them. And the only difference is that they were men and I

was a woman. Then one realizes even though they do not do it to you as very aggressive....

Interviewer [00:16:55]...Not directly?

Interviewee [00:16:56]: Exactly not directly they are doing it to you however they want that shocked me because I didn't know that there were still teachers who had that mentality.

Interviewer [00:17:08] If we are in the 21st century as one says that supposedly that no longer exists but we have seen too many cases already with the same thing that we are discriminated against for simply being a woman in the STEM area

Interviewee [00:17:24]: Exactly.

Interviewer [00:17:25]: And what things have you had to overcome? Overcome yourself in these years that you have had since although they have only been a university year if I am not mistaken...

Interviewee [00:17:35]: Yes...

Interviewer [00:17:36]: They have been strong because we have had a pandemic, the strike many situations that affect you academically. What do you think about that?

Interviewee [00:17:47]: Well, look, I started at the university in 1920, which was that lookout, I'm not going to my recording, I'm not going to my prom, and starting with that I was already in my little girl because that always it was my dream to have a pro to have a recording where they told me it looked you were that academic mass we are proud of you but I didn't have any of that As soon as I started school I begin to see that it is much more difficult than I thought because the change was a lot and at that very moment I was becoming independent, emancipating myself, AND looking to be completely independent, moving in with my twin only had both at the same time. In September of that same year, twenty was when I had a car crash and that's why I had to be absent, how are we going to say, to round up about a month, since I couldn't move much anymore, I couldn't move my neck, he opened my head did not have to close. And even though you say you don't adjust little by little you talk to all the teachers but not all the teachers allow so much time to go by and it is understandable for us in the class but the situation that was already there I felt horrible now I didn't know how to adapt yet at the time. So it was a little difficult at first because I was failing my grades. I had two or three C's that first semester being an academically excellent student at that. I already began to mentally lower the fact that I am not capable of being in school I saw that I was incapable that I was not enough I was intelligent that I was useless to me I was useless that I did not deserve to be in school that he was taking space away from a person who deserved it.

Interviewer [00:19:49]: And that change that affected you mentally because of the grades. Do you also link it to why they said that the school was for men, that is why

they are looking for more men to study engineering, what do you think about that?

Interviewee [00:20:07]: Well, look at those moments if that was my answer, my answer was well I'm not capable, most likely other men and why does he have the mentality because they are strong but I'm not I'm not Mentally enough, the college for men is most likely right to be able to study engineering, and more than that, one of my grandfathers made a comment saying that I didn't attend the classes, but I did because that's easy and Online is easier and no it's not easy it's hard for me I can't educate myself it's been complicated for me and I explain all the situations that happened and they don't understand they just see me as less because I couldn't do things well or get good grades then that semester passes I go to the second semester first year and I end up hospitalized in a psychiatric hospital where that was the lowest point and I really said I can't be in school I'm not good for this that but first a shock So that it's life telling me that I can't be studying and second finishing a psychiatric hospital even though I see other people who go through the same thing that I was the youngest there we cried or that it was like I'm already going through all this problem and none of my age is going through it. I'm going for the first semester of the second year that's when we started face-to-face and being face-to-face was the best thing that had happened to me, even though I was working and at the same time I was studying, my focus was completely there. I had friends who could help me study I am going to do the thing I had my medicine with the medicines and to this day medicine has still not been found that has helped me 100% because I had people and I had support and it was not only a friend but also friends and that made me feel like OK maybe last year wasn't mine but this is going to be my year. the second year is going to be my year and well that's when I took organic chemistry and inorganic chemistry it was horrible horrible horrible, and I said well I'm not capable then it's me the problem it's me who doesn't deserve to be here because I know it's not just with women because I have friends who if they can do it, I'm the problem, I should go, I should stop studying. But I enroll however I want this year, which is what I am currently doing, and I simply say that we will see if I stop working for a while. At least this semester to see if I adjust and start to focus on my classes and I have seen a change even though I still have my mental health problems and I have a situation that is happening to me what happened last semester and this semester my grades are much better buying them because I was able to get help, I found friends who were going through the same thing as me because they hadn't told me when they met me but over time they told me if I have anxiety or I have this or I have depression or I have bipolarity and there I said I am not the only one who is going through these problems. I see countless people who have reasonable accommodation and I say if they are capable I am too because they are in the same position as me now is not the moment where I saw myself with the first year that I said I am the only one who is going through this I am the one who is useless because other people are just like me and when they come to cry where I say if you can you are a bastard you are worth more than the mental health problems you have you are worth more than your notes and when I hear myself say that I say because that did not apply to me if I say it to the other person it means that I can also advise myself.

Interviewer [00:24:38]: And when you talk to me about how you got sick and went to live with your twin, did that help you? because you did? family problems? From what I heard, your grandfather often did not support you or hinted that you were not enough for those things because you were a woman.

Interviewee [00:24:59]: Well, look at emancipation, it was a long, difficult, horrible, tedious process, but it did help me because I make my medical appointments on my own, I can't apply for it, let's say a credit card, I do all the things I need I was already doing it, but if the permit, I'll explain, I'll explain, I'm doing all my things alone, but according to Puerto Rico, even if you're 18 years old, you can drink but you can't go to the doctor alone, it doesn't make sense, but nothing, I'm emancipated I can do my things alone I don't need my dad to be in the hospital with me I know I need to go, I don't need him to permit a doctor so they can do a lab on me. I can do it on my own, which helps me and makes my life a lot easier because there I was able to do things on my own, since I already lived alone with my twin, and it was difficult at first because at first Alejandra didn't want to because she used quotation marks to that you are going to do that if this if that and if I understand where you are coming from because most likely they do not mean it in a bad way but the comments at that time were not the best comment that could be said. No, because you are not going to be able to do things as adults because you are not an adult but you wanted us to do everything alone. So we were adults now and my twin and I said, you know, we are going to move, we are going to live our lives alone, we have our rules. But we are not going to deviate from our lane, but neither are we going to be tying ourselves down AND depriving ourselves of doing the things we want to do because our family won't let us.

Interviewer [00:27:01]: When you moved in with your twin, did your family's communication remain the same, or do you think something changed because of the simple fact that two women left to live alone? According to ancient society, women could not live alone, the man was the one who kept the money or the food for the house, and the woman who served was to take care of the children?

Interviewee [00:27:28]: At first our family said no because you are girls and the men are going to take advantage of you and they are going to want to visit you and don't leave any boy in the apartment. They were understandable things but many things were said like we weren't capable of handling everything but we tried what we were capable of doing because currently I don't work right now because I took a break but my twin continues to work and right now we both contribute to the house. If I have the savings that I made before for times like this when I am not working and being able to continue copying all my things and that does not help to show our family that we are capable and the relationship with them practically changed because at first they did not like it what I don't know and they wanted us in the house not to be independent that that wasn't going to help but now they see us as the responsible adult women that we are, they don't see us as the little girls that we had to be controlled at all times. One sees the difference, they are understanding that we are mature enough to shape our lives and they are not treating us now as they should treat us with the respect that we deserve because at all times we have shown that we are capable.

Interviewer [00:29:05]: It's kind of hard having to study and work more times online. I feel like you were also putting in double the effort while you were online in your freshman year of college. How can you express yourself about that?

Interviewee [00:29:23]: Well, look at that, it was hell because studying and working on

Skype, yes, but it's more difficult when you're going through things like the ones you're going through. For example, I was going through emancipation because of family problems, all of that complicates plus the process why there are days when you get up and say that I don't want to do anything I don't want to work I don't want to go to study I want to stay tucked up in bed doing absolutely nothing. What is there also comes from depression and mental health that is deteriorating little by little with all the weight that one puts on and although no, the time we do not have to put more weight yet to be able to show that we are the same capable of what men are. Men do a little and many times they applaud him because he is a man and unfortunately we live in a society that still thinks if not everyone but enough to be able to make this life more complicated and I had to make the title of the effort to be able to show him that I could start to deal with my study and that I was capable of doing it and more so being alone with my daughter nothing that we did not have help from a father who cooks for us or cleans our clothes, or cleans our room, or takes us to such a place, or take us to the medical appointment. The time did not come when we had to do everything alone, deal with everything alone in ours, it is yours alone, which complicates the process and greatly complicates the way one feels because one does not feel well overwhelmed but it is possible, it can be done.

Interviewer [00:31:15]: If you were to advise a person who tells you that they want to be independent, what advice did you want to hear when you were in the emancipation process and now do you think it would have been easier for you if someone would it have helped?

Interviewee [00:31:35]: I would have loved to hear that it's okay to take a break at some point, that it's okay that one day you just can't do anything and say teacher I don't feel well I'm going to skip your class and that day do nothing. Go to the beach, go do something you like, it's good to take a break, a break where you do nothing. Because you are going to need it is very overwhelming. As I was saying, I advise that they become independent, which is good to do at an age of 18 to 19 years and more if you are having problems with a family member, that you do not feel support or that you feel too much pressure at home. Simply whatever reason is causing you a worse state of mental health, it is good that you become independent so that you can build your life little by little, and being independent does not mean being adrift, it will be what you want, you always have to set rules. To say you know my mom used to say that I always have to be home at 12, at 12 I have to be home. Because it is important to protect yourself and be sure at all times that it arrived safely at my house. It is one of the rules that you can keep, you can keep several rules like that I can only go out with people I know things like that an adult would do, that a father would do that sometimes one says oh but this guy is a lot. Well, you accommodate them as you want. That's good for when you become independent because you're looking for a middle ground to be free but not so free that you become rebellious and go out of your way. I follow the path of my studies, I follow the path of work, and I keep trying to do everything but in balance. We are going to give 33% to my studies, in focus, I give that amount of time to my studies. I give 15% to work because although work is important, studies are more important. I give 15% to the things I like, I give 15% to my family, and so on. You are looking for a "middle ground" of the things you need and how much percentage of time you are going to dedicate to those things. For me, that is the best advice I can give you because there you will be managing your time. And handle the responsibilities of the things you have

in your life.

Interviewer [00:34:26]: Why do you tell me that 18-19 years for you is the best stage to become independent?

Interviewee [00:34:32]: For me, it was the best stage because, well, my partner became independent at 21-22 and it was an excellent decision to do that. But I know that I had to do it at 18-19 because I was already having problems with my family. If I didn't leave, I would most likely be here, because with the suicidal thoughts that I ate and all that would have already taken my life or simply the path that I had to take had not come. If I hadn't become independent, I would probably still be at my parents' house right now and go to study, but I wouldn't have had the same focus on you as I do now. Right now I am a completely different person than what they say. There may be that when one begins to grow up, one begins to see what responsibilities are, one begins to drink as they say out there, so you already have that freedom of "uhh I can go out to drink, I can go crazy, I can do things as I please win". But if you become independent you can go drink, but I have to be responsible, I have to do this, I have to do someone else. Ah yes, I can drink but I have to be careful because I work tomorrow, or I have an exam tomorrow period and you begin to realize what causes and effects are, if you do something right or if you do something wrong what will happen later. You begin to understand what the decision is that one must make in his life, to continue on the right path.

Interviewer [00:36:13]: That is very good advice, for all those people who want to become independent. When do they want to do it, what processes must they follow, or what steps to be able to do it?

Interviewee [00:36:22]: Emancipation is not an easy process at all, because with emancipation the first thing you have to do is find a lawyer who will sign all the papers for you and find justification for you to emancipate. Sometimes it is done with a jury, but those cases are more extreme where there is abuse in the family, and negligence because when you look for a lawyer you have to tell him why you want to make that decision, get your parents to sign those papers because It is another of the difficult processes. If your parents don't want you to be independent, they have the power to make you not independent. Because they have to sign those papers, if they don't sign it, you don't get emancipation. So I advise them to find a lawyer, talk to their parents, sit down and tell them I want to do this for such and such a reason. Because there you are giving the reasons in which it will benefit you to be independent and many of those reasons are valid. That they do it because they need to grow as human being is the most important thing you can look for. If you are not looking to become independent, do it for growth, not on a whim, for trying to get on the bad side with your parents because that is what you are going to do kid yourself. One seeks to have the right purpose. After sitting down with your parents, the lawyer is going to sign everything and then they start sending it to a justice department. Whatever, they send it to them and that's when your birth certificate with emancipation arrives in the mail. Some have to prepare mentally because you are no longer going to be a baby, now you go to the doctor, you only go to the hospital alone, you go to the corner and if they tell you something, you are an adult, you make decisions on your own, so you have to prepare

yourself mentally. Are you sure? Sit down with your parents, talk to your parents, and tell them the reasons. Do they accept? Well, we go to the lawyer, we sign everything and when you get there you should already know what your plan is, how you are going to continue doing your things and what your goals are to continue running your life on the right path. That if maybe you get sidetracked at some point that happens we are human, we are not perfect, and we do not go astray sometimes but the importance is to fall back on the path you should follow.

Interviewer [00:39:10]: I don't know if you told me right, but when you became independent you lost contact with your father at that time, or he helped them even though he wanted to be emancipated. What arose there?

Interviewee [00:39:23]: Look at the beginning my dad got a little upset, he said he didn't know why we wanted to do this, it's not going to help him, it's not going to be like you think. And there are times that you are going to get rid of his comment but, he noticed why we had to do it, for our medical appointments, to be able to make our life as adults that we are. Because there were times that if I went to the doctor, even though I lived alone because obviously I moved and emancipation had not yet come if I got sick my father still had to be there and if he was working I would not go to the doctor, so I had to wait and my dad understood that it was necessary to do it and he left his opinion that my baby did I have to protect her, that thought that parents have who want to leave their child in a little bubble, he left that thought now and She began to understand why I am going to support her, I am going to try to do the best of everything and although at first he did not understand and did not want to support us, over time he began to adapt and that is why we now have a better relationship.

Interviewer [00:40:47]: Did that strengthen your and your sister's relationship with your dad?

Interviewee [00:40:51]: Yes, it strengthened her, at first you know that the situation was strange and tough, but over time each person understood and the situation and the relationship between my sister and my dad improved a lot.

Interviewer [00:41:10]: And your mental health improved, how did you already tell me that you had suicidal thoughts when you lived at your father's house, did your mental health improve after you left home?

Interviewee [00:41:25]: I'm not going to lie to you and tell you that it's better and I live super well, I don't have any suicidal thoughts anymore because they would be a lie that doesn't go away overnight. But I can tell you that there was an improvement, there are things that have fallen on me and there are times when I say I can't take it anymore, and I have suicidal thoughts but at the same time, I don't have that pressure and bad understanding that they had at my dad's house that makes me say Arelys calm down that little by little we can overcome this. But about suicidal thoughts, there are days when I get up and I don't want to do anything, I'm not going to get up, I'm going to stay in my bed, I don't want to eat or take a bath. There are times that even at my dad's house it happened to me when I had to take a bath, I started to tremble when I felt the water because I just couldn't stop the depression and all the suicidal thoughts. I

couldn't and over time that got better, there are times when I say "oh my God I don't want to take a bath" but now I say "Arelis don't be so dirty and go take a bath". And I take a bath, but it's something that I couldn't be before, it's something that I look at and say I'm not as bad as I think or as I was because one day like yesterday if I didn't want to take a bath I'd start to tremble I'd have a panic attack and I didn't take a bath. On a day like today, I say to myself "Arelis, don't be dirty and go take a bath". That it takes me five minutes just bathing, yes, because I didn't want to bathe but I do, I have improved. Because it's what I couldn't do before, now at least I have the mind to be able to do it. In addition to the fact that I have the help of psychologists and psychiatrists, because I currently have pills but can seek help and have a psychologist, the support staff helps to facilitate that process.

Interviewer [00:43:39]: That has been fabulous, I mean, you have improved, you have grown as a person, you strengthened your relationship with your father by the simple fact of becoming independent. When many times people think that this is a bad thing, that he is going to become independent, that you will not be able to achieve it, but in your case, we saw that it is a good thing.

Interviewee [00:43:56]: Yes, and one thinks that parents are going to keep that grudge, for becoming independent, but if a parent loves you and cares about you, they're going to put that aside. The, "it's my baby, I have to protect it, keep it in a little bubble so that nothing happens to it, if this or that, you have to control it". They are going to put that aside to simply understand that a person is going to want his life because he is his child.

Interviewer [00:44:30]: And who have been those people that you have had support or the people that you have lost in this long process?

Interviewee [00:44:41]: I have lost several people, because when I was in high school one is ignorant, and I was in the psychologist since I was in 11th grade, and there was a friend, I said she was my friend, who began to gossip about me, that I was crazy that I was this or that simply because I had anxiety, at that time the diagnosis was only anxiety since over time they have done more studies and They are still doing studies to see what other things I may have because they have already confirmed that I have depression and anxiety, but it is not the only thing. There is something else that is causing everything to me. And nothing that person although not only did he leave me, but he also cut me off, he made me take a long time to create friendships. And nothing, that person, even though not only did he cut me off, but he also made me last a long time in creating friendships because he was a person that I gave my trust and he was a person who stabbed me in the back and did not care as I did I felt, it didn't matter that I was already going through anxiety and everything. And even though I was ignorant of the situation because we are young, it hurt me a lot. I lost quite a few friends there. I had an ex-partner who also made me feel worse because no matter what I told him I was having an anxiety attack or that I wasn't feeling well, he made me feel bad about having it. And they are people who, at the moment you feel worse when you lose them. But I lost a person who did not deserve to be in my life. Now I see it as if my ex-partner was worth nothing. That friend? She wasn't worth it either, because she wasn't even a friend. They are people that we lose but properly. They are people who do not deserve to be in

your life. However, I have won people that I have seen who have had the same process as me, or who simply support me, I can tell them "Look, I don't feel good today, I have a lot of anxiety, I'm shaking, I'm crying all day" and they tell me "where are you? Let me go see you and at least give you a hug", or "look come by the house, I'll give you food, and we'll play for a while and then you go home". They make me understand that I am not alone, I cried and suffered for people who left my life, but I have all these excellent people by my side. I have my current partner who can give me an anxiety attack and doesn't make me feel guilty.

Interviewer [00:48:27]: And you told me that your mom has always supported you, but she is not present. How do you feel about that?

Interviewee [00:48:29]: Look at that, it's been one of the hardest things I've ever been through in my life because I was always mommy's girl. Before she left, she slept with me every night, she slept with me until I fell asleep, and then she left. She woke me up every morning, with love, and it was very difficult for me to let her go because I was very attached to her, and when I began to go through this whole process. I cried because I wanted my mom with me. My mom calls me every day without fail and tells me things she does. She had me and makes me feel good, when I have anxiety attacks, the first one I call is her and I tell her everything that happened to me. When all this started, she got me the psychologist. Yes, it hurt me a lot, because I know my mom is not here. But he always gives me his support, even from afar. Many times he has visited me with surprise. Although he is far away, he is always there for me.

Interviewer [00:50:52]: So the distance, even though you're far away, you feel that it's there. Changing the subject, what were those manias you created due to COVID?

[.....]

Interviewee [00:51:00]: I've always been a crank, but now I'm worse. Because of the pandemic, if I go to Walmart, I have to quickly pour alcohol. Thinking about bacteria makes me panic. When someone gets into my car, I douse the car in alcohol. When the stores are full, I get claustrophobic.

Interviewer [00:52:52]: And about the major, chemical engineering, this being a STEM major and the fact that you're a woman. What advice would you give to those girls who want to study something in STEM?

Interviewee [00:53:10]: Well, my main advice is never to pay attention to someone who underestimates you because you are 100% capable of doing what you set out to do. I was at a belief camp, which I mentioned earlier, and there was this person who saw me as a competition. That person was not in the camp, he was simply participating in the camp. But it made me feel bad, I was looking for a way to say that it is that like you, referring to the fact that I was a woman. I was mentioning it indirectly, I didn't know and I understood that it was because of that. I started to feel bad, I said but how is it possible that he is telling me something like that if I am already in the camp. However, me being the one who entered a week later, I was the one who won first place on the posters of that camp and everyone was surprised that I was in the first place because

nobody expected it. And that's when I said, "this is to silence everyone because they said I wasn't capable because I was a woman." Being a woman and the last one to enter the camp, I went to the first place, and any woman who proposes it can achieve it. We are all just as capable as others, you have to trust yourself is paramount. Do not show others that you are capable, show it to yourself.

Interviewee [00:55:09]: I was curious, were there more men than women in that camp?

Interviewer [00:55:12]: Yes, there were more men than women.

Interviewee [00:55:13]: I see that you stood out that day, were there positive comments towards you, or were there not so good comments?

Interviewee [00:53:10]: For everyone, it was a shock that I was the winner of it. When the winner was announced, some people were happy for me, but some people were upset that I was the winner. Not only people from the camp but people who were going to observe it.

Interviewer [00:56:09]: Was the person's disgust noticeable?

Interviewee [00:56:10]: Exactly, you could tell the person's disgust. I noticed when they gave me the trophy, that a lot of people looked upset. They didn't like the fact that I was the winner. That made me want to prove even more that women are capable of being in STEM careers and that people can't underestimate us because we are powerful.

Interviewer [00:56:47]: I've seen that you've had good experiences at school, with good classmates. But you have also had many bad experiences, you have been discriminated against several times, both by teachers and classmates. You saw that disgust from your family too. How do you feel that you are still here, still able to make it, and continue to show that women in STEM are the best?

Interviewee [00:57:23]: For me in the past, I wouldn't have seen myself capable of doing everything I've done, much more with all the setbacks I've had. And although many people said "she's not going to go far", knowing that right now I look at my grades and say "this year I managed and I have excellent grades". I am sure that I will be a woman with a bachelor's degree in STEM, and that will prove to the whole world that women are just as capable, and for me, we even have better power than men because we can do what you don't think you can and more.

Interviewer [00:58:29]: You have several classmates, right? In what would be Chemical Engineering (INQU). How do you interact with them, do they support each other?

Interviewee [00:58:44]: I have several colleagues at INQU, and from other engineering careers. I have seen that most of the time if there is the support between one and the other. Because especially in my second semester of the first year, and in the first semester of the second year, I met a classmate of mine, who is also in chemical engineering, and she helped me without any problem. She sent me the tasks, and she

explained to me, that at all times she was willing to help me, I never received a no from her. Instead, when it was my turn, I helped her back. By chance of life, last semester, we happened to be together in our laboratory.

Interviewer [00:59:51]: And was this experience a good one?

Interviewee [00:59:56]: Yes, I liked him a lot because he was a person who was giving me his support from the beginning, and he didn't see me as a competition. For that, I thank you very much.

Interviewer [01:00:04]: Well Arelys, that's a very interesting and detailed story. I know that you are going to achieve everything you set your mind to, you are one more woman in STEM careers, which adds more to the numbers. Thank you for being willing to tell me your story and give me details about it. This will help many other young women who want to study a STEM career and are afraid of the simple fact of being discriminated against, that they see that it will happen, but that they cannot be removed. Thank you very much.

Interviewee [01:00:43]: Thanks to you, for having me in the interview and for allowing me to give that little push to the future girls who come for STEM.

THE END