

Public Broadcasting Service (PBS): In the Mix
Teen Immigrants (Excerpt)

June 2010

- Narrator: Throughout history America's been seen as the land of opportunity. In the past, millions of immigrants came to America by boat, suffering horrible conditions until they reached Ellis Island. One of the first things they saw was the statue of Liberty—the symbol of freedom. They left their old countries for a new life, for economic opportunity, for political and religious freedom. This year, about one million immigrants came to the country for the same reason.
- [Unidentified female voice]: *(in the background)* America, a free country.
- [Unidentified male voice]: *(in the background)* The most reason why my mom bought me here was I think for me to have a good future.
- [Unidentified male voice]: *(in the background)* Before I came here, I think America was like heaven because you see in the movie, you see everything. You see money. You see cars. Oh my god. I want to go there. I want to live the same way.
- [Unidentified male voice]: *(in the background)* Before I come to America, I was scared how I'm going to be like in a school different language, different traditions.
- [Unidentified female voice]: *(in the background)* When I came, I don't know if I was excited or sad. I didn't know, but I knew definitely that it was going to change my life.
- Luincys: This is my story. I remember saying good bye to my father and my uncle. I was crying. We were all crying and I remember that, I don't know when I was going to see my father again. Saying good bye was so hard for me and getting on the plane. I was with my sister and my mother so I had a great support. My name is Luincys Fernandez. I'm 17 years old. I was born in Dominican Republic and I came to America in April 25th, 1993. When I came, everything looked the same—brown, tall, and I don't know, dark. Everything was totally different. I felt myself so strange and I didn't know where I was and I just wanted to go back. The first time I went to school, it was so scary. My sister and I didn't know what to do. I remember I was wearing black sneakers and tight jeans. It's like I was out of fashion. People could see that

I was new. I was a newcomer. The first struggle was the language. I was very sad going to school and being able to not communicate with other people. It was, for a time, I became mute. I just listened and listened and I couldn't figure it out, not even a word of what they were saying, not even one word. And I was sweating. I felt like I was getting smaller and smaller and the world was getting bigger and bigger. It was frustrating for me. I pulled my hair all over and I cried. I cried for six months. I was feeling very pressured in a way because I wanted to do good, but I couldn't. *(Transition)* Terms like discrimination, prejudice, stereotype, I never heard those terms in my country. I learned them here. I remember someone saying that the Dominicans in Washington Heights, they're all drug addicts. I remember my teacher always telling us that you should go to college. You should continue education and show the Americans that you're not here to be a rat. *(Transition)* I think the fact that my father in that same year came to the United States and lived with us, made me more, I don't know, it really made me move on. So when I was in eighth grade, we were working in groups in the class. I always had my dictionary in front of me to look up words. I started to speak. *(Transition)* Two years ago, I really didn't want to become a citizen. It was that kind of feeling. Am I going to lose my Dominican tradition? Am I going to lose the Dominican part of myself? Eleven years of my life were there. My childhood is entirely there. I think the peaceful side of myself is there and the struggle when the challenges and achievements of myself since I was growing up here, they're still here. I mean they're building up here in the United States. I want to be somebody with a profession that could help the community. Not only Hispanic community, but the whole community because I think that since we're all human beings, we have to help each other one way or another.

- End of video -

Video participant:

Luincys Fernandez – Student