

3-5-1999

Andre, Maria Claudia Oral History Interview: Class Projects

Erin L. Mayer

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/class_projects



Part of the [Archival Science Commons](#), and the [Oral History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Repository citation: Mayer, Erin L., "Andre, Maria Claudia Oral History Interview: Class Projects" (1999). *Class Projects*. Paper 55. http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/class_projects/55

Published in: *History 201 Oral History Interviews (1999) (immigrant residents of Holland) (H98-1351)*, March 5, 1999. Copyright © 1999 Hope College, Holland, MI.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Oral History Interviews at Digital Commons @ Hope College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Class Projects by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Hope College. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@hope.edu.

Interview with Marie Claudia Andre
Professor of Modern/ Classical Languages, Hope College
Interviewed by Erin L. Mayer on 3/5/99
History 201 - Larry Wagenaar's Michigan History Class
Spring 1999 Semester

EM: My name is Erin Mayer and I am interviewing Marie Claudia Andre. Today's date is March 5, 1999. Our first question is; what part of Argentina are you from? And can you describe your homeland and what it was like to live there?

MA: I am from Buenos Aires, Argentina. It is a very big city. I grew up in an upper-class family so I had a very good childhood as far as having everything. I went to a very traditional Catholic school with very formal education. I don't know. Are you asking if my childhood was a normal childhood? I would go to the school most of the day from seven thirty to five o'clock. So I spent a good chunk of the day at school. And then on the weekends I would play with my friends or do what all kids do at their respective age or go to a club. During the summers we had a summer home about five or six hours from Buenos Aires or we would go to a beach house. So I had a very nice upbringing in the city. Even though it is a big city, I enjoyed living there. There was enough going on to keep me entertained as a child. Just imagine growing up in New York City or Paris or any other big city like that. So it was a very good way of growing up, at least for me.

EM: Could you tell me why you emigrated? And what prompted you to leave?

MA: I married an American, that's why I emigrated. I met him in 1985 and we fell madly in love. So I decided to move up here.

EM: What concerns did you have about leaving your home country?

MA: Well, at the time none because I was completely in love. The concerns came later. Then I started realizing that it was not going to be very easy to adapt to a new country. At that

point it did not really cross my mind where I was going. I didn't really have any concerns, I was 25 then. I just wanted to be with my husband. I didn't care. If he had been Chinese, maybe I would live in China now. I didn't have any thoughts then of what I was about to do.

EM: Who did you travel to the U.S. with? Did everyone in your family come?

MA: No. Everybody is still there. Nobody else came. I just came with my husband Bob. My family came to visit, but they didn't move to the U.S.

EM: Why did you choose the United States and not another country? What attracted you here?

MA: Well, again, that was something that was really chosen for me. It was more a love life than my own election, really.

EM: Where did you first go in the U.S.?

MA: First was Saugerties, NY or Woodstock, NY which is the next town or the one that people know the most, that's Woodstock.

EM: Describe your impressions of that place.

MA: Oh, I loved it. It was really cool. Well I was surprised at how green everything was. I had never been to the U.S. before. I had traveled, but not to the U.S. According to what I had seen in the movies, I thought that everything was paved here, that everything was a big city. So, I was very surprised that two hours from New York it was like paradise. I really loved it. I couldn't believe the woods or the Adirondacks and all that part of upper New York, upstate New York. I really, really liked it. It was of course much of a change from a big city, but I always enjoy country life because I would go to the country during the summer growing up. It was great for me.

EM: What impressions did you have of Americans when you first came?

MA: I don't know. That's a hard question. I never really thought about Americans until I came to the U.S. I studied them in school, but I studied the culture. Of Course my first impression was one, but then through the years I have changed that first impression. I found them very polite and reserved and very....can I make some criticism? At first I thought that in many aspects there were some hypocritical perspectives toward others. For example, we may joke about other people's looks. We talk about other people all the time. If someone is ridiculously dressed everyone will tell you, "you look so ridiculous" or make fun, but without being mean. It's not like a really severe, harsh criticism. It's more playful. I remember going out with a friend of mine and making a remark about this lady. It was just a remark to talk about something. Like when you talk about the weather, we talk about other people. And she said, "You are so mean" or " What a remark!" I said, "Don't tell me that you looked at her and you didn't think that she looked funny..." And she said, "No here people are free and they can wear whatever they want." For many years I just couldn't believe that people would not think the way I would think, and just go about their own business not minding the others opinions. In every Argentine there is some critical standpoint towards aesthetics. After awhile, I realized that Americans don't really care. They are not as analytical or as critical or judgmental as we are. Through the years I have realized that some people are, but many are not. I also learned not to generalize, that Americans are very different in New York and here. That Americans are not just one group of people around the world. People tend to talk about "how Americans are". Well, no, Americans are very different all way through.

EM: Why did you leave New York?

MA: I left New York because I got hired at Hope. That is why I live up here in Holland.

EM: And so, that is why you settled here?

MA: Uh-huh.(yes)

EM: What were your first impressions of Holland?

MA: My first impressions of Holland...Let's see, I've been here five years. The first years I was writing my dissertation so I didn't have any time to explore or have any impressions.

Later, after I finished, and defended and I started relating more to the area. I like

Holland. I like the town. I like it for what it is. I have to admit it is hard for me to adjust to Holland because I like either a big city or I like the country. Holland is in between. I

love Holland particularly in the summer because I like the beach and I love summers.

And it's a very nice place. In the winter it is very hard for me to be here, basically because of lack of things to do. It is a very comfortable place to live. I don't have to worry too much about my teenage son, for example. So it is not like a big city. It's comfortable as far as security.

EM: Can you describe some of the problems you faced adjusting to life here?

MA: Here in Holland or here in the U.S.?

EM: Both.

MA: The main problem adjusting, of course is not the place it's more the people. The thing that really makes my life hard, in general, is to be seen as someone different or to be seen as a minority. In Latin America we don't have that sort of discrimination. We have social discrimination but not ethnic or racial. That's something that I really get upset at, because

I'm considered different and because of the lack of knowledge of a lot of people here, in general. I get categorized with Hispanic-Americans, like a Mexican, and Argentineans have absolutely nothing in common with Mexicans at all. We just speak the same language. It would be like you guys being seen as Australians, and you don't really have that much in common with Australians other than language. But because you come from the other side of the Rio Grande...Or you know the term of "person of color". What is "of color?" We don't have that racial discrimination, I'm not sure if it is discrimination, but segregation. So if you go to apply for a job in Latin America, nobody will ask you, which is your ethnic background. So that it was something to be seen as a foreigner, but here I am a minority, this term sounds disrespectful to me. I understand that a lot of people here came because they were looking for jobs. But I do not have that background. Again, I could be living in my country and still be fine. I'm here because I have a child and I want my son to have his father closer so, I decided to stay. Not because I would be struggling at home. My reasons for being here are maybe different from a lot of other people. I actually agreed to do this interview because there is that misconception that everybody that comes to the U.S. is because they are starving or struggling. I have a lot of friends here who they came for political reasons or exiles or their parents moved here and they are just here for a couple of years and they will go back to their countries when their parents die. There are other reasons other than the financial or economic reasons that will bring you to this country. Something else that is annoying to me is the idea of *being* "Latin". Why Italians who are Spanish or French are not Latins to Americans? They are more Latin than anybody else. Sometimes I think, not so much in New York, but in this

area in the middle, it is harder to relate in the sense that people are so much more reserved and less open to diversity. It makes it hard to relate to people because you do not really know what they are thinking. Are they telling you what they really mean? People here are harder to figure out. I am so used to everyone telling me at home whatever they think. And of course I miss that, I miss that a lot. It takes so much more time to relate to people here. Sometimes I just drop it. I don't try to relate as much as I should because I do not have too much patience and I get discouraged. Also, as far as Holland, it is weather. It is hard to adjust, too. I don't like cold weather. I grew up in Buenos Aires where there is cold weather but it doesn't snow. It's hard for me to be in cold weather and not be able to even go skiing. Like New York, for example, I lived upstate so the snow did not bother me because I could go skiing. But here, just to go skiing to the nearest resort it's at least two hours drive. These are the two or three things that make my life a little bit hard in general. Those are the problems I encounter as far as what is it that I don't like of this area. Again it is the lack of interest in the majority of people to show an interest, to be curious about who you are, where you come from, what's your background. I don't just like to be dumped in the category "Oh you're Hispanic and I know everything about you. You eat burritos and..." No, that's not who we are. We are very different. Every country is very different from each other. Sometimes I'm appalled at the lack of knowledge of students. Give them a map of Latin America and they have no clue of where the countries or things are. And it's even the same continent. In our system of education, we are forced to study geography. That's important. We are usually focusing on the past, on traditions and culture, where you come from. The future, because of so many political

problems and a funny economy, it is always uncertain. So we concentrate in the past trying to understand the present. Our system of values is different what do we as Argentines cherish or what is important to us is quite unique. Not everybody wants to be rich. That is another thing that I try to get my students to understand. Argentine people do have the option to make money and perhaps have a business, but they also cherish other things. They want to be with their families and friends. So you make less money, but there is life and living your everyday life. That is sometimes more important than having three cars.

EM: Did you have any problem with the language when you came here?

MA: Oh, no. Actually I came speaking British English when, so at first it was funny. I spoke "properly," I had a very thick English accent and I was using all these expressions I learned at school. I would say "perhaps" instead of "maybe." Or "we stayed a place for a fortnight" and people would ask "what's a fortnight?" And would go "It's a period of fifteen days." So everything was my old definition from the dictionary. I would use these old English expressions like "a fly in the ointment" or "tell that to the marines" or just stupid things that you learn from books. Then you realize that you can't even use these idioms in England because they're really old and obsolete! No I didn't have any problems with language other than people would laugh at me every so often. It would be harder to understand people from Long Island at the time when I was in New York and others from other parts of the U.S.

EM: Did you know many people here?

MA: No. I didn't know anybody other than my husband.

EM: Where were you first employed and was it difficult to find employment?

MA: Marist College in Poughkeepsie, NY. At first I was over-qualified for a lot of things. In Latin America, if someone with a lot of qualifications comes to ask for a job, she or he get it for sure. But to be over-qualified I thought "Oh my God, I can't believe it!" I'm over-qualified for a secretary. However, it didn't take long. It wasn't a problem to find a job.

EM: Tell me about the jobs you've had since moving to Holland.

MA: I was teaching at a middle school as a replacement. I was working there in the mornings and in the afternoons, I was teaching at Marist College. At both places I was teaching Spanish. I had friends who were fashion designers, so when they needed models just to fill in certain shows I worked also as a model. All these other odd jobs were more free lance, not through an agency because I didn't really have the time to travel and I had a son. My son was little, so I couldn't dedicate a lot of time to go wild as far as modeling or any of the other things. I also worked as a free lance translator and interpreter for court, which was a lot of fun. I liked doing that a lot. I also worked for a magazine in publishing. However, I was teaching most of the time. That was the safe job, most of the other jobs were more for fun. Then I started working at Bard College, also in NY and right after I started the Ph.D. program. I was working as a T.A. in the University of NY and I was still working at Bard. That was really in a nutshell everything I did as far as work. And then I got hired here at Hope.

EM: How did the move here affect your family?

MA: My parents were thrilled. I come from a very liberal family. Both my parents love

traveling. My mom had been living in Brazil, since my parents were divorced when I was young. My mother left Argentina even before I did. They were thrilled. They supported everything I did, in fact my father was the one who bought me the ticket to come to the U.S. In general, I don't plan things. I go through life where it takes me. I don't plan ahead. I still would like to move to another place and start again. Not necessarily Argentina. I see life as a traveller. The more you travel, move and adjust and go through that process as much as you can, always moving and changing, that is "really living your life." I don't like to stay here and get stale and not enjoy that constant process. Of course you go through a lot of pain and hardship, but it's part of the whole thing. You also get a lot of it too. My grandmother was the one who really suffered me being away because she and I were very close. For me too, it was very hard to be away. I really regret it in my relationship with her, that was the thing that I regretted the most of not being able to be with her the last years of her life, or my mom's life. Both of them passed when I was living here. So that was the hardest thing.

EM: What traditions did you bring with you and are still a part of your family?

MA: Many, many, many. I'm very Argentine. I have not completely adjusted to the American way. There are a lot of things that I've learned that I think they are positive that I like of the U.S. but there are a lot of things that I keep from home. Simple things and not so simple things. I still speak my mind. Now maybe I'm more concerned about the other people's feelings and I pick my words more carefully than I would have done before, but I still say what I think. That's part of my personality and my culture. I still cherish the past and the older I get the more I do so. I'm still researching and writing. My mind and heart

are still in Argentina as far as my work. In fact moving out of my homeland made me more aware of my own culture, and now it has become my topic of study. Usually when you are in a country you don't study your own culture because you think you know it, but then, when you move out you realize there is so much more to know because you miss it and you usually idealize it. You still want to know what is going on there. Then, as far as these routine things I do...like my dinner, I still have dinner at eight or nine. I cannot get used to the American dinner schedule. I still eat late. I try to be laid back, but that's very hard. That's some of the things I learned here in the U.S., that you have to produce. I really work hard at having my friends in Argentina, or the few that I have here, I try to keep that going. For us it is very important to have your friends, and friends of your culture too, not to let the time or the distance affect that friendship. I see it important to keep my language, so now I still think a lot in Spanish or I dream in Spanish. Also my temper! You know it's my temper. Argentines are very Italian. We had a very big mass of Italian immigrants in the beginning of the century so we have adopted a lot of the way of being. We are very much straightforward, intense as far as what we like, what we talk about, gestures, the way of dressing. I still dress like an European. Every so often I wear blue jeans, but the fashion I keep is more European. Besides I try to mother my son the Argentine way, which is a little more giving and caring. I like to spend more time with him. Maybe that is my misconception that American mothers are always busy far from home. However, I don't spend a lot of time with American mothers, but for what I see. For me his education is important so I didn't work when he was little I just tried to be there for him. I postponed a lot of the things for myself. I think childhood is an important

period of time so I did not want to keep somebody else looking for him or having babysitters around.

EM: Why have you stayed in Holland?

MA: So far I like it here. I like my job, so I'm staying here. I don't know. When I came I thought that I'd work there for three years and then maybe I'd move to a bigger city. It was a good place to raise my child. And then I met a Dutch guy, and so we started dating and then we ended up getting married six months ago. He is from here and we decided to stay. I like to have at least that fiction, that eventually I will move to go somewhere else. That is why I haven't bought a house yet. I just can't see myself staying too much, too long at one place. But maybe that will change later. There are a lot of things that people at my age already consider. I have a job, I'll buy a house but I never saw myself like that. Now I'm 40 and I'm still thinking.

EM: In what ways have you been involved in the Holland community?

MA: I've been involved in Latin Americans United for Progress. Every so often, I translate documents for a variety of local organizations. Basically, I use my language skills more than any other thing.

EM: Do you have a church affiliation?

MA: No I don't. Again, as I mentioned, Catholics would evade - I'm not sure Catholics born in the United States - but most Catholics it is very common that if you are living in a place or you are an immigrant, you don't attend the same church everytime. We don't see church as a community place. It's more a spiritual place. Our perception of religion. We don't talk about it. That is probably the only thing we don't talk about. Anything else we

talk. You can talk about any sort of aspect of your daily life, or even the most intimate, but you don't talk about religion. That is absolutely a very personal area. Of course everybody takes for granted. You go to church or not, but that's your own personal thing. My faith is my own world. I went to Catholic School for 12 years and then I went to Catholic University for 5 more years. Our perception of religion is very personal. That is the most individualistic aspect of our culture.

EM: Do you feel that your faith helped you in the changes that occurred when you moved?

MA: Definitely. I learned a lot. When I came to the U.S. I learned a lot about other religions. That was the most positive thing I got out of coming to the United States. Being in contact with other people from different countries. That changed the way I understood religion and spirituality. I started researching and reading a lot more about other religions. Not necessarily Protestant, but more Asian, Jewish, more non-Western and non-Christian.

EM: Increasingly Holland has become more culturally diverse. When you see newer immigrants settling in Holland how do you feel?

MA: Everything depends on their background. I wish that Holland would really be more culturally diverse. I don't really consider Holland to be multicultural. I think it's bicultural or tricultural. It's either white, American, or Hispanic Americans from Mexico and Asians. That to me is not multicultural. I don't see a lot of African Americans other than International students. In other places like NY, you see a whole bunch of Latin Americans from all places of Latin America, or African Americans from all parts of Africa. There are people from so many different countries. And I loved that! And that

was to me the most exciting thing of when I came to the U.S. I loved that aspect of it. In Holland, it depends more on the reasons they have come here. If they come to have a future, well I feel happy for them. For many of them life is a struggle, and they are constantly migrating. Others have family in the area. Of course if they come to Holland it is for some reason, they will be better here than they were before. So I am happy. I don't think anyone comes here to be worse than they were before, otherwise they would not come. I think that I'm glad there is a chance and the opportunity to improve their lives. However, there is also that sadness that it is too bad that their countries are not helping them to stay where they are. Particularly, for traditional families, when they have to split that is a very painful experience. There is always the uncertainty of not knowing when you are going to go back to your homeland or if somebody you love might die just out of the blue. Then you are stuck there missing some things that life has that are unexpected. It's never easy to leave your country. For me it was easy because I was not thinking, again. When reality hits, it stops being easy. You realize I miss not being able to say this or I wish I could wear that or I miss this kind of food. The stupid little things, become important.

EM: What are your feelings about the other ethnic groups that are here - the Hispanic, the Dutch, the Asian communities? Do you have any feelings about those?

MA: No, not really. I don't have any feelings about those groups in particular. I guess my concern is what I see about the Dutch being too paternalistic with the other groups and the other groups trying to accommodate. It's easy for me to say that because I am an American citizen, but that is not my country so I don't feel that I can be objective if I had

a whole bunch of immigrants coming to my country, maybe I would feel different. Because it's not my country, you don't really care that much about immigration. Everyone here was an immigrant to begin with. European descendants are as immigrant as anybody else. Migration has been happening forever and ever, so it's an issue. I don't know why Americans spend so much time concentrating on this topic, and creating all this vocabulary - diversity, multicultural, ethnic background, all the euphemisms about color. In Latin America we call Blacks "Blacks" and nobody gets offended. To us the term "Black" is very endearing, I call some of my friends "Negra" which is the word in Spanish. Everybody is Negra, but it is an endearing term. Why us euphemisms when there is color? Every year there are more and more terms and more stuff and more money spent toward all these programs towards multiculturalism and diversity. Why is that so important? I was talking to a colleague the other day and maybe I was hired because I am a minority and I am a woman. That really bothered me because I did not want to be hired because I was a minority. I wanted to be hired because of what I know, because I have this degree to prove it, and because I am someone of value. I did not want to get hired because I would fit nicely in the institution. I see it more and more; it's just more of an issue to integrate more people of color. Why not just let the things go naturally? Why is it such a concern to create diversity if it's not natural? If people do not want to come to this town, well, it's okay! If I am a student, I don't want to be different, you just want to go and blend in and do your life. You don't want anyone to know what you are doing. Stressing the differences can be counterproductive. I think maybe the intention is a good one, but sometimes when you try too much you force people to react in a negative way.

In that case, Latin Americans tend to be very rebellious to everything. We try consciously to avoid being pinpointed or grouped or told what to do. That is part of our history, an idiosyncrasy. That's why Latin America is chaotic, because we consciously opt to be chaotic and we like that. In chaos there is beauty too. There is a joy in ambiguity and we like that. Some of my students avoid ambiguity, they want you to tell them what is the end of the story or what is the poem about. And most of our stories and poems are absolutely ambiguous and that is the beauty of art. When looking at a picture, you see it this way; I see it this other way. There is not one way and that's the point. Not all of us are the same and not all of us are equal. There is a sense of idealism too that freedom. Our sense of freedom is different than the sense of American freedom. American freedom is more like an individualistic freedom. Our freedom is not individualistic, it's not just you, it's all your family, and all your values and all your traditions and you don't want to be pinpointed. I don't see myself as someone of color because I am 100% European. I have absolutely no Indian blood. However, I am someone of color here. I am French and Swiss so I don't consider myself a person a color. I'd be honored to be one, but I'm just a mix of European bloods. I see the struggle of Hispanics and the people of color and what they go through. And I see the other side of the coin too. I think that all in all Anglos mean well, but you have to understand other people's needs and their necessities and where they come from. It goes beyond just trying to mean well and present them the world the way you see it. There are zillions of ways of perceiving the world!

EM: Do you see these immigrants facing problems and opportunities that are the same that you had or is there something different?

MA: I think that if you come without income and means you have to adjust to whatever you get, so you don't get to be picky or choosy. I get to be cocky because I have my means and if I'm not fine here I'll just go home tomorrow. So I don't have that phantom that I go back home and my family is starving. I think that it is great that programs like El Centro help immigrants who come and that members of community help them adjust. I think that's a wonderful thing! It would be great if there would be more. In some areas people need the education to adjust because where they come from or their reality is so different! Some immigrants have never seen a phone. But that doesn't mean they are stupid. They have to adjust to modern society, but that doesn't mean they are stupid. They have a different kind of knowledge that we don't have anymore--we have lost it. Maybe their survival strategies are more developed than anybody else. I think there is always a balance or equilibrium. Maybe this person doesn't know how to use a phone, but they will be able to get water out of the land in an emergency. I think that even the marginal experiences are important. Even if they come from a very poor background, they also have something to say and something to teach.

EM: How do you feel about the Dutch heritage that Holland has tried to preserve? Like Tulip Time?

MA: I think it's okay. I live on 8th Street so whenever it's Tulip Time I hate it. Because it just gets really crazy. I think it's important to preserve your roots, so of course I support that. It would be nice to have an alternative to that festival. Maybe if Hispanic Americans would be more organized instead of blending in the Dutch festival. They could have maybe their own festival. Sometimes you see this in the parades this very Mexican

looking kids dressed as Dutch; I don't know still how I feel about that. That's something I have to process. It's sad to me when I see having to sell your own culture, your own values just to adopt to somebody else's to conform and adjust. It's like walking with somebody else's shoes, which do not always fit. And never knowing that maybe you needed a different kind of shoe to go through life in a more comfortable way. Fine, if you feel Dutch in your heart and you need to do that, do that. If you're Mexican and you feel Dutch, it's okay too. It has to be something that it really comes from within, from your heart. Of course anything that preserves heritage, that's important. But there are so many other cultures too.

EM: What are your feeling about the Cinco de Mayo festival?

MA: That's great too. That would be probably the equivalent of the Dutch parade. I don't celebrate either one because I'm not Dutch and I'm not Mexican. If they had an Argentine parade maybe I'd be there. My son participates in the parade in the Dutch festival because he wants to. We have been to the Cinco de Mayo Fiesta a couple of times just because it's fun and it's interesting. I like to be exposed to both cultures.

EM: Do you feel the community celebrates your heritage well?

MA: Yeah. I think that they do. In general, Americans are great at that in every place that you go. This year we were in the U.P. and there was a polka evening. And there were all these old Polish ladies and some men and they were dancing the polka. I cried. They playing their accordion and dancing around. That celebration of you tradition I think that it's a wonderful thing. I really admire the sense of community, in general the U.S. Wherever you go you have community affairs.

EM: Have you experienced any discrimination in Holland?

MA: No. There have been some instances here at Hope where I've felt discriminated, but not really in Holland. Well, I don't think I look very colored. I know that people realize that I'm not American, but usually they think that I am French or Italian. I'm usually considered European, never Mexican or Hispanic. I'm not that dark and I'm too tall and I'm so skinny. Discrimination has happened more at a work level, than in the community.

EM: What paths has your child taken?

MA: He is very American. He is like any American child. But he loves Argentina. He likes going there. I have not made any move to make him feel Argentine. He doesn't even speak Spanish. When he was growing up I was speaking Spanish, but then he went to this age where he did not, well his father did not speak Spanish, so all the kids go through this "no, don't talk to me like that!" So there is that denial. So I quit. Now again he wants to, so he is learning it now. We go home to Argentina almost every year and he loves it there. So now he's into, "I'm half Argentine. And I really want to move there and I want to go there." It has to come from within, so I never made any move to make him feel like he was Argentine, because he is American, he was born and raised here. It was important for me to understand my roots and my origins and that I belong there, I think that it's good for him to understand that he belongs here. "I" am from South America and he may love the food and the people and go there and live there, but for me it's important to see that there is one country that he feels is his, that is his land and his culture. It is important to have the sense that you belong somewhere and that your roots are there. Then you are able to become a citizen of the world. I like to travel, I could live in any other country,

but I was born in Argentina. There are so many other cultures and so many other things to see in the world, I always tell my son " How do you know your pillow is the most comfortable if you don't try a Chinese pillow, an Indian pillow, a South American pillow?" The variety helps you become more comfortable and more educated. The more you know about others, the more you can even learn about yourself.

EM: What would you say to a friend who was considering moving to the United States?

MA: That's a hard question. It depends on my friend. It depends on his or her mentality. Some friends I would say, "No. Stay home. You would never make it." Some other friends I would go, "Yeah, go. But go to this place." It depends on what they are looking for. Because people here are so different, it depends on the friend and what he or she is looking for. It's not easy. For example, My husband said, "Let's just go to live in Argentina." But I said, "No. We're not going to live in Argentina unless you have been there at least three times and you see if you can take it." Because it's not easy to adjust to other peoples' culture. If you move within Latin America, that's easy cause we have the same values and the same ideas in general. We are very different in a lot of things but the principal thing, the emotional background, it's very much the same. What we cherish, it's very much the same. To move to Europe it's very much the same because it's a lot of the same education, the same values, and what's important, or appreciation for history or general culture. But moving to America, it's another story. Some people love it. Some people go back home. Some people come and go all the time. I mean as far as Argentina. I have friends who have been here ten years and they went back to South America and they're not coming back to the U.S. Some friends come and go all the time.

Others are here because they don't want to be there anymore. I don't think I would just say, "Yes, go there!" It depends on the person too, on how the personality is. If it's my friend of course I would want the best, so I would just try to give the best advice.

EM: Thank you very much.