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Armadillo Suites, Guatemala City

Rachel: Do you have memories of life, and your family before the armed conflict?

Anastasia: Before, my family lived very united, and peaceful; we had the freedom to do what we wanted because there weren't problems, there wasn't slavery. They lived together, and went to the fields to work and have fun. There were no problems. They always liked to go work in the fields. My grandmother had a horse. That horse was beautiful. I was always practicing how to get on to the horse and I wasn't afraid before the armed conflict. My brothers were happy and proud to be with my mother playing.

Rachel: How many brothers do you have?

Anastasia: Eight. Four brothers and four sisters. We're eight total.

Rachel: and your parents worked in the fields?

Anastasia: Yes, they worked in the fields.

Rachel: When did the armed conflict reach your community?

Anastasia: In 1980

Rachel: And do you remember the violence?

Anastasia: Our lives became terrible beginning when the internal armed conflict hit because my family suffered and we were always hiding in the woods. My grandfather could no longer walk very well and we would always take him to a secret place so that the military wouldn't find him. We would hide him. We fled with my family, and we went for two or three days during the armed conflict, during that time they found and killed my grandfather. Another thing that made my life horrible is that my brother died because he got sick, and he died of hunger and lack of attention. That's what happened. Sometimes at night the people would come to recruit the people that hid my mother in the woods or the ravine. Then, during the winter, it rains a lot and all of it passes above my parents. It was a terrible life. There was forced recruitment in Guatemala where the military would come and force the boys, from ages 15, 12, 14, 18 years old to go and serve in the military. And that's why, my mother, my parents left, and organized so that the forced recruitment couldn't be forced on us. Sometimes they would take girls if there weren't boys. For example, they took a girl between the ages of 15 and 18 to do military service. And, that's why my mother got up and organized to found the organization CONAVIGUA. She also organized for us because we were also part of the armed conflict. Now, we struggle so that we can get ahead and so that Guatemala can be free. Then, it was a terrible life that we organized, that's why the movement of young mayans originated, what is now MOJOMAYAS. I am a member of that organization also. I want

them to clarify what took place in Guatemala. And thanks to this outlet, what happened can be made public. There are so many people, indigenous people, so many of us that did not feel the pain because Sometimes, one might say, “well, those people don’t, or look like they don’t work. I don’t know where they are going to go or what they are going to do.” Well, We are seeing the reality of our country, of our communities, of what happened...well, because many have criticized us, it’s just that those people look like they want to be...they want to be in that armed conflict again because...they are still in the same problems. And another thing that I want to make public at the international level, and at the national level is what the armed conflict was like. It was a terrible life because many people died, they killed, and there wasn’t time to bury the dead, they just threw them down ravines. They would throw, one, two, three people there, and bury them there. And there isn’t one day where they would break, it was always like this, like the case of my grandfather because someone killed him and also they buried him near his house where we are living now. When the military was going to come we left our homes, and I remember that my brother began to cry because he didn’t want to leave the house and my mother had to cover his face with a handkerchief so that no one would hear his cries, and as a result he has had an illness where he tends to faint. It was the fault of the military that my brothers, and our family went through this. Many families suffered and felt pain, because of what happened, and I want to make it known. That’s why we are struggling in organizations like the MOJOMAYAS so that we make known and shed light on how it was for many families because many people don’t know, they don’t have a clue what it was like. They don’t know what happened during the armed conflict in many communities and departments where these problems took place.

Rachel: How did you feel during the period of armed conflict?

Anastasia: I felt pain, and that can never be erased, because We still have to remember it, we have to give our testimonies, and it can’t be erased. We are young, we have to say these things to our children and our grandchildren that will come about the armed conflict so that this historical memory doesn’t get erased. We need to continue remembering because we would always comment in my family how things used to be. Then that needs to not be erased so that we remember how things shouldn’t be.

Rachel: What were the effects of the armed conflicts on your life to this day?

Anastasia: The effects that we have had...we are struggling, we are trying to increase awareness among other young people, we are making it known so that it doesn’t take place again. It’s a very difficult effect on the life of indigenous people because the indigenous towns were the worst affected. So we have to fight to organize so that we can move forward with our lives.

Rachel: And why is it important for you to tell your story?

Anastasia: Because It is important to tell our stories of what happened during the armed conflict. I want to tell because I want to clarify what happened and how it took place. They also haven’t clarified what took place to children. Many children died because of

lack of care and from hunger. I do not know that children also suffered not only the fathers and mothers of families. Everyone suffered a lot, they burned houses, they burned corn, and when they found people they did what ever they wanted with them. So, I tell this so that it all comes to public light at an international level. Other countries can support us so that it doesn't happen again. I believe that we continue to suffer because there continues to be a lot of violence, there is a lot of death in the capital, we are still living difficult times because these situations continue to surge.

Rachel: And would you like to say anything else?

Anastasia: I only want to say a bit more. I want to say that we ask that the government help us or clarify what took place during the armed conflict because many presidents have been responsible for hiding what happened to the indigenous people. I want them to consider the indigenous populations so that we can become equal and we can end discrimination. Currently there is a lot of discrimination because right now there continues to be discrimination and racism against the indigenous people.