

Interview with a Spanish Immigrant

Good day Frau E. Lopez, thanks a lot for taking some time to talk about migration and the emigration of your parents to Germany. Please give a short overview about the situation of your parents and their families (i.e. where did they live before they moved to Germany, what kind of profession did they have).

My parents originally are from Spain. My mother comes from Galicia and my father from Castile. My father's parents owned a hairdresser's salon and my mother's parents were farmers.

What were the reasons for immigrating to Germany, when and how did it happen?

My mother was eighteen (1959) and my father was twenty-one when they came to Germany. The company *Bahlsen* tried to hire more employees. So my mother decided to take the job because she didn't want to stay in Spain. She also needed more money. She came to Germany by bus which was paid for by *Bahlsen*. My father actually wanted to visit his sister, who had immigrated to Germany, and after a while he found a job as a warehouseman (the company was looking for guest-workers).

How was life in that new country for your parents? Were there any problems concerning prejudices and intolerance or the search for a home?

No, there were no problems with prejudices. Even the search for a home went well because the companies paid for the apartment. My parents used to live in a "workers' house" that was built by the companies.

Did they live together with people from other countries?

No, there were just Spanish people living in that "workers' house".

Did your parents learn German before they came to Germany?

Both started learning German when they arrived in Germany. My mother was able to learn that language very quickly but my father had some troubles. He learned only how to use the common speech. He never got to know the orthography. Both actually didn't want to learn German because they never had the intention to stay any longer in Germany.

Did you grow up monolingually or bilingually?

At school and at kindergarten I learned German. At home we only talked Spanish, whereas I made my children grow up bilingually.

How was the chance to have a career for your parents? Were there any ways to climb the ladder?

As I said, my parents didn't want to stay in Germany for a long time because they just wanted to earn money. At first my mother worked as a secretary for *Bahlsen* in Barsinghausen. Hereafter she moved to Seelze because she got a job as a secretary and interpreter at *Riedel de Haen*. She was lucky because in these days there were no equal chances concerning guest-workers and Germans.

At first my father worked in Langenhagen in a logistic company as a warehouseman, but he changed to *Riedel de Haen* in Seelze, where he worked as a warehouseman, too. To work there he needed a driver's license. This was paid for by the company. Moreover he was able to make the driver's license in Spanish. He didn't have the chance get a higher position, because the company only needed warehousemen. My parents got to know themselves in Seelze and they moved together in a paid workhouse.

Did they get an additional financial support from the German government or from relatives?

No. Both of them had well paid jobs and because of that they didn't need more help other than the paid flat. Because both of them had a job till their return to Spain they didn't get any benefit or something else.

Why and when did your parents go back to Spain?

My parents had not a good feeling in Germany and they never identified themselves as Germans and they have never had a German passport. They went back to Spain in 1996 where they had spent every holiday and met their relations before. My father wanted to go back earlier than my mother who was happy with her job and she had a lot of friends in Germany. With the beginning of the pension there were no reasons to stay in Germany.

Why did you stay in Germany?

I stayed in Germany because I found a husband and a good job. Nevertheless I have a Spanish passport to show my roots because I am still feeling Spanish. I let my children decide which citizenship they want to acquire.

At the end, just a few questions concerning the topic of migration: Do you think it is difficult to immigrate to Germany?

It's harder to immigrate than years ago when my parents came to Germany. Because of the demand of guest workers after the Second World War it was really easy to immigrate. Jobs were even offered to them by the companies. These days no guest workers are required and that's why, in my opinion, the Immigration Act was made so restrictive.

What do you think about a naturalization test for people that want to immigrate to Germany?

I think it is very important to know how to speak the language. It's also possible to learn the language by staying in that country, like my parents did. Moreover before immigrating, one has to know about the culture of that country, it makes a social integration way easier.

Thank you very much for answering these questions.

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