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### Is leaving everything behind really worth it all?

For many generations, New York City and the United States overall have been seen as an escape paradise for many immigrants that want to leave their natal countries because of the lack of resources many may have and in search of a better future for their family. While some know the hardships and sleepless nights that will come along after leaving their homeland, others have no idea of what is expecting them, most times having high expectations and thinking they will have their dream life as soon as they step foot in “American” land. Moving to a different country brings many surprises that you would have never thought of because every day is a new experience, with its problems and things to solve. At the end of the day, is the physical, emotional, and physiological pain that immigrants endure when and after moving to NYC worth it? The subculture of immigrants who move to NYC looking for a better life is a big one, made up of many different individuals who share one goal, and that is to provide for their families.

After interviewing an old man at the flower store at the corner of my block, I had a better understanding of everything you have to leave behind, carrying only your faith and hopes of having a better life wherever life takes you. Ricardo Fuentes, a humble 58-year-old man, told me a little piece of his journey, his story and his life when I was buying flowers and overheard him talking about how he had left his country 35 years ago when he was just 23 and I took the chance to tell him about my research study. I started asking him questions about how moving to a different country had affected him and if he believed that everything he went and is going through is worth it at the end of the day? His words stayed with me as he told me “I will never forget the day I left my mother and everything I knew behind. Looking for a better future for

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myself and my loved ones, I left Puerto Rico when I was 23 years old and it has been one hell of a ride ever since I left my island, Boriken” I could feel the emotions in his words and the melancholy on his wounded heart because it is true that leaving everything behind is not easy and especially when that's all you have known for your whole life.

Ricardo went on telling me how “getting used to NYC was hard because of the barrier language, the beliefs many people have over Latinos and also finding a job that pays you enough for you to live, not survive”. After some time talking about each other's experience about leaving our homelands he made it very clear to me that “it is true that moving on for everything you know is hard, but I've found a home in NYC and I'm glad everything happened the way it did; things may be hard but not impossible and as long as I have food to eat and a roof over my head, I will always be beyond blessed” The conversation with Ricardo, gave me a new understanding of how there's always an option to focus on the good sides of things and be grateful for the things you do have. Therefore, Ricardo believed that moving to NYC was worth it all because that's what life had in store for him.

Although it is true that we can always focus on the good sides of things, that's not a reason to ignore the bad and the facts about all the hardships that immigrants go through on a daily when moving to NYC. from things like being discriminated against for no reason at all, to not being able to find a decent paying job and also having trouble finding a place to live. Many immigrants when arriving in NYC have to stay with relatives, small apartments designed for small families being shared by 8 people because they have no place to stay. In an article called “Hispanics facing racial discrimination in New York City’s rental housing market” by B. Rose Kelly, the author describes how hard it is for Hispanics to find a place to live in New York City, a place

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going through a crisis of affordable rental places, where most people spend half their paychecks on their rent. Hispanics are more prone to be racially discriminated against by landlords and rarely get back those looking to rent. “Compared to whites, they are 28 percent less likely to have a landlord return their calls and 49 percent less likely to receive an offer at all.” Finding a place to live is one of the main hardships that immigrants go through when leaving their homeland because the job that they usually get, doesn't pay enough for them to afford a nice place to live and especially in New York where the rent is higher than everywhere else.

Thankfully, as the world evolves, people started giving problems like racial discrimination more attention while trying to end it so that everyone gets a fair chance of getting to rent the apartments.

The immigration of Hispanics to the United States has been going on for a long period of time, and since the beginning of it, Latinos have been fighting for inclusion and their voices to be heard. It is hard for many Latinos to feel that their voice matters, especially when many of those Latinos who travel to New York and The United States overall don't know much English, and their kids have to help them in most things. In an article called “American Latino Theme Study: Struggle for Inclusion” by Louis DeSipio it is stated how the Latino community keeps growing and is often seen as a challenge for the overall population, but this growth gives each other strength to know that they are not alone and reinforces the fact that they will not stop advocating for their voices to be heard. The author of the article explains how the movement has been going on for many decades and that although there have been some gains, “the quest for full and equal inclusion remains” It is honorable how Latinos leave their natal countries and gather together to

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fight for their rights, because at the end of the day we are all the same and one, and what they want is to “participate equally in the American society regardless of race and ethnicity”.

It is as if all the challenges that immigrants endure when leaving their country is a quest from God to make them stronger and unite people with the same purpose no matter where they might find themselves at. The fight for equal rights that Latinos in New York and the United States have is a demonstration of how far people can get when they work together, especially in “foreign land”, and at the end of the day makes it worth it enduring the physical, emotional and psychological pain that they endure because at the end of the day they are living to their purpose and will get what they want.

The impacts that Latinos have can be seen everywhere they go, especially in a multicultural city like NYC. An article called “New York and Beyond: The Latino Communities of the Tri-State Area” by the Hispanic Federation states how Latinos are “transforming neighborhoods, altering political campaigns and changing the way people do business” There is something anyone cant denies, and that's the energy Latinos bring to wherever they are. Their energy and joy rise through the commotions and hardships that life throws to them, adding cheerful and loving vibes to their surroundings. It can be artistically, commercially, or even in a simple conversation, but Latinos always make everything better. Latinos are very community-oriented and they have shown it over and over through their history. In the early 20th century, Latinos started forming communities in New York and New Jersey, communities that are still present nowadays.

No matter how far Hispanics may be from their home, they will always find a way to make the place they are at feel as if they were still in their country. With simple things like selling empanadas, painting walls with tropical themes, playing a potpourri in the middle of the street,

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playing dominoes in the afternoon, and overall just maintaining everything they cherish so much from their country present with them, Latinos and especially Dominicans will always have their beautiful land present, in a peace of their hearts. This is illustrated in the article “Why Manhattan’s the Little Dominican Republic is a Home Away from Home for Recent Immigrants” when a piece of Washington Heights and Inwood was given the name of Little Dominican Republic to celebrate the contributions that Dominicans and all Latinos give to society and the economy of New York. The article explains how many aspects were brought to New York from the Dominican Republic by its residents, keeping the culture alive and making it feel like they are still present on their beautiful island.

Wherever life takes a Latino, you will see that it will flourish and make the best out of their situation, no matter how hard it gets, there's always time to enjoy life and be grateful for what you have. The article says how there are not so many spaces to congregate for Latinos in NYC so they just make those spaces themselves, taking parks, sidewalks, and sitting there talking about life while listening to merengue and playing a round of dominoes. There are indeed many hardships that come with moving to a different country and leaving everything you once knew behind but at the end of the day that's what life is about and changes give you growth. It's been demonstrated how culture can survive no matter where you go, if you keep it present in your heart and transmit it to others it will always stay with you.

In conclusion, the question that if all the physical, emotional, and psychological pain that immigrants endure is worth it has been answered in a way that highlights the good things about moving to a different country and the many things you learn from everyone around you, that comes from a different background but somehow people still connect and love each other. Any

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hardship that comes in life is worth it because it is making you grow into your highest potential and even more when you handle those hardships knowing the reason you are doing so is to give your loved ones a better life and future.

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