

Nickolas Diaz

American History per 3

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Mr. Whitesell,

My great depression survivor was my great grandmother Candida Natalia Triana. She was born December 1, 1908, in a rural area of central Cuba called Las Villas. Her story would have to be told to me by her son, my grandfather, Jose Enrique Diaz, now 81 (born March 21, 1940). My grandfather is a great storyteller and he takes great pleasure telling the stories to me. Everyone in my family is of Spanish/Cuban birth and or descent so this is the closest I could get to the United States.

At the age of 27 (in 1935) my great grandmother Candida had nineteen siblings (the last 2 were twins), their modest family home was demolished by a hurricane in 1933 forcing many of her older siblings to scatter to different parts of Cuba and out of the country to places like Tampa, Florida in order to sustain themselves, much like the Dust Bowl. Her father died in 1935 of throat cancer, five years after the twin's birth, forcing the remaining family to move to La Habana, Cuba, and take up several living areas in different relative homes that would help out. Therefore, she lived in both the countryside of Las Villas and the City Capital of La Habana, Cuba between 1936 and 1941.

Candida's life in the countryside of Cuba was of a low middle class but she received a good education graduating from high school. Candida's mother Antonia, tended to the large family. Her father Aurelio, an immigrant (of Andalusia, Spain) had worked for himself as a cook at a location he owned in a small nearby town. People would come with pots that he would fill with

the food he had prepared. The food would consist of white rice, black beans, yam, yucca, cornmeal, and very little meat, but since it was Cuba, sugar was plentiful. Aurelio barely made ends meet with such a big family. Candida's father would be helped out by a fraternity (the Masons) He would buy the food he prepared from the farmers also in the fraternity.

Life in the city of Habana, Cuba was as can be imagined difficult at first because of the death of the family's provider, the destruction of the family house, the displacement of the family members, and the economic crisis and the big change from country to city life.

Housing conditions in that period of time consisted of "Cuarterias," or people renting rooms in their apartments, because of the current economic crisis. Candida's husband, a telegraph operator, would later get her employment as a switch line operator for the phone company. My Grandmother was lucky enough to at least have a job. Making 14 pesos a month, she would help support the family. The food in the city was scarce in the depression years, not because there wasn't food but because there wasn't enough money to buy enough food.

Candida's younger brother (Juan) who wasn't so lucky, couldn't get a job in Habana. Juan's main job (other than rare and far between odd jobs) was selling his blood to a blood bank for ten years, as he possessed a very rare type of blood. During the depression years, his blood was his livelihood, till his death of a heart attack at the age of 40, ten years later. Juan's young wife would be forced to give away their baby to relatives because they couldn't support the family. In the case of my Grandfather Jose, the depression pressures would later cause Candida to send 2 of her 3 sons to live with her sister's family in a "Bohio" (Cuban Hut type house, dirt floor, straw roof) in the country for 2 years until she could afford to take care of them again.

Because of the effects of the depression, the economy in Cuba took longer to recover, at least until 1941 if not longer. The prices of the main export in Cuba, sugar, fell because of few buyers worldwide. Little money flow meant little money to buy food and goods. This cycle would affect almost everything, living conditions, education, nutrition, outlook on life. Both my great grandmother as well as my grandfather would live its effects.

