

Two Worlds, Two Languages, One me

My mother spoke to me in Spanish. My father spoke to me in English.

Mi madre me hablaba en español. Mi padre me hablaba en inglés.

BY GABRIELA PLUMLEY

Being of Hispanic and Irish descent I was taught to speak two languages practically from birth. My mother immigrated to the US 25 years ago and became a bilingual teacher. She prided herself in speaking both languages and wanted to instill that gift in me.

My father was born in the US and had always been interested in other cultures and customs. My mother read poetry in a cultural center that my father happened to go to. He hadn't been able to understand her writing but immediately took an interest in her.

After I was born I spent a lot of time at home with my dad, making English the language I become accustomed to using. My mother insisted on only speaking to me in Spanish to reassure that I would be strong in her language as well. Being so young, I separated the two languages, one I associated with my mother and the other with my father.

I am 17 years old and have started my senior year at Haddon Township high school in New Jersey. Like many others my age, I have questioned my identity. With brown hair, brown eyes and tan skin—very few people believe that I have any Irish descent. Most assume I am Italian or when they hear I am Hispanic, assume I am either Puerto Rican or Mexican. I'm glad others are curious, but sometimes I wish they would ask rather than assume.

Travel has been one way to figure myself out and feel a sense of pride in my bi-cultural background. Travel has always been a huge part of my family life; I have been fortunate enough to visit both Colombia and Ireland, seeing where my parents came from and the roots of who I am.

I have to say I feel a bit closer to my Colombian heritage—maybe because of my coloring, my Spanish abilities, or the fact that I have much more family there and we've traveled there more often. But the Irish side is very much a part of who I am as well. I'll never forget the pride I felt when we visited the village that bears the Plumley name.

From learning first-hand about the lands and cultures of both sides of my family, I am now able to take pride in who I am and appreciate my bi-cultural heritage. I also learned to appreciate my parents and the chances I have to learn from them. Most importantly, I learned to truly appreciate myself and all that I have to offer as someone who embodies

two cultures,
two languages,
two worlds in one.



Por ser de origen tanto hispano como irlandés, se me enseñaron dos lenguas prácticamente desde mi nacimiento. Mi madre llegó a los Estados Unidos hace 25 años y se hizo profesora bilingüe. Se sentía orgullosa de hablar dos lenguas y me quiso inculcar ese talento.

Mi padre nació en los Estados Unidos y siempre había estado interesado en otras culturas y costumbres. Conoció a mi madre en un centro cultural en el que ella leía poesía. El no podía entender sus escritos, pero de inmediato sintió interés por ella.

Después de nacer, pasaba gran parte de mi tiempo con mi padre y el inglés se convirtió en la lengua que me acostumbré a usar. Mi madre insistía en hablarme en español para asegurarse de que yo adquiriera su lengua también. Como yo era tan joven, separé los dos lenguajes; uno que asociaba con mi madre y el otro con mi padre.

Tengo 17 años y acabo de comenzar mi último año de escuela secundaria en Haddon Township High School en Nueva Jersey. Como tantos otros adolescentes de mi edad, he cuestionado mi identidad. Debido a mi cabello castaño, mis ojos pardos y mi piel trigueña, muy pocas personas creen que tengo ascendencia irlandesa. La mayoría de las personas suponen que soy italiana o cuando oyen que soy hispana deducen que soy puertorriqueña o mejicana. Me agrada que los demás expresen curiosidad, pero a veces me preferiría que me preguntaran sobre mi origen en lugar de asumir algo que no es.

He tenido la fortuna de visitar tanto Colombia como Irlanda. Debo admitir que me siento un poco más cercana a mi herencia colombiana probablemente debido a mi complexión, a mis habilidades con el español o al hecho de que mi familia colombiana es mucho más grande y a que he viajado para allá con más frecuencia. Sin embargo, mi lado irlandés es una parte muy importante de quien soy también. Nunca olvidaré el orgullo que sentí cuando visité un pueblo que llevaba nuestro apellido "Plumley".

Al aprender acerca de la tierra y cultura de ambos lados de mi familia de mis dos culturas, ahora puedo sentirme orgullosa de quien soy y aprecio mi herencia bicultural. También he aprendido a apreciar a mis padres y las oportunidades de aprendizaje que me ofrecen. Sobre todo, he aprendido a apreciarme a mí misma y todo lo que tengo para ofrecer como un alguien que conforma dos culturas, dos lenguas dos mundos en uno.

My Two Homes

BY PRISCILLA CRUZ

I was born in Philadelphia.

It's the place I call my home.

My family originally came from Puerto Rico. Spanish was their native language, but English is my first language.

For most of my life I knew very little about this beautiful island—but all that changed in the span of twelve days.

It's ironic how the love for where I was born can change in less than two weeks.

Of course, in Philadelphia it's easier for me to communicate, and that's important! It's

also the home of my friends, my family, and my school. And, another thing that I like about

Philadelphia is the fact that there are so many different people with fascinating cultures here. It's a busy, bustling, and interesting city.

In contrast, Puerto Rico, is more beautiful to look at because it has an old world charm to it. It's quiet, yet festive, and the food is delicious!

Philadelphia is called "The City of Brotherly Love"—yet many will disagree. In Philadelphia needless deaths occur everyday, kids are hurt on their way to school or even while they are IN school! In certain neighborhoods, everywhere you turn you hear threats, or screams, children crying and people cursing.

It's sad and it's scary.

I've become used to some of the chaos, but I don't live my own life that way! I do love and feel proud of where I come from because there are many good things in

Philadelphia that outweigh the bad—world-famous museums, great colleges, and it's the place where America's birth took place!

As for Puerto Rico? It was hard for me to speak to people. My Spanish is not very good and I hesitated over my words—at times I even stuttered. It was very difficult to share what I wanted to say. But, as the days moved on, the better my Spanish became. Still, English is my first language and I'd much rather speak English!

As for friends? I made a few new ones in Puerto Rico, but my real long-time friends live in Philadelphia. Friends that I've grown up with and know very well—and they know me. I would hate to leave those friends that I now consider family. If I moved to Puerto Rico, I would have to start life all over again. I would have to build up trust with strangers.

Strangers who act differently and talk differently.

Strangers who grew up in a different culture, atmosphere, and lifestyle.

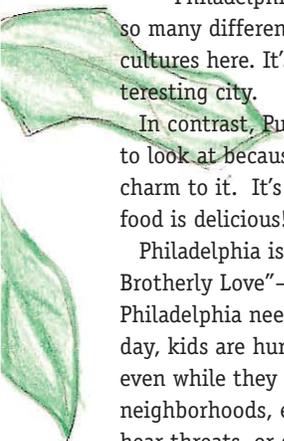
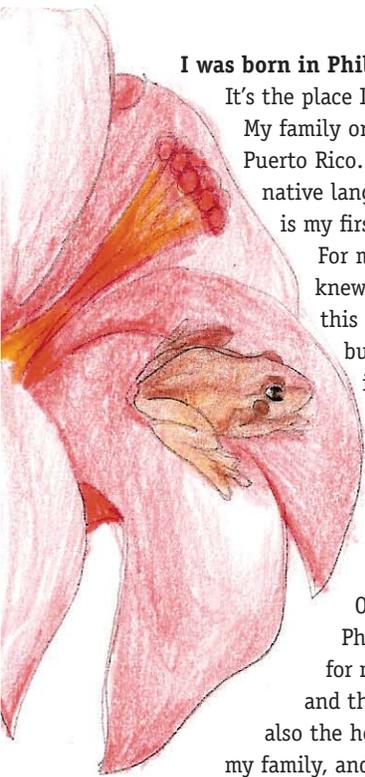
It would be harder for me to find new friends. In Puerto Rico I would have nothing but family—and, although family is a wonderful thing, it would be lonely to not spend time with other people closer to my age.

Philadelphia, unlike Puerto Rico, is not made up of only one culture. This is the final thing that I love about Philadelphia. Many people from different cultures live together in one city, and that's great: Asians, Hispanics, African-Americans, Irish, Polish, German, etc. are all under the roof of the big city. This is what I think makes Philadelphia "The City of Brotherly Love." I

thought that no other place could beat this city. And, I certainly never thought that my opinion would change after such a short trip to Puerto Rico—but it did.

When I arrived in San Juan, I was so excited! I had never seen a city so beautiful. In Philadelphia I don't see much of nature, so I was so fascinated by all the greenery in San Juan.

I visited Puerto Rico's many white, sandy beaches, and loved being there. The water was so clear. I could actually see my feet under the water! It was so amazing to watch myself wiggle my toes. I never thought something so simple could be so extraordinary.



I watched the palm trees dance in the wind and it was so relaxing. I couldn't get enough of the place!

But, the most beautiful thing to me in all of Puerto Rico was the yard of my grandmother's house. I expected to see a simple home with a small yard, but this is not what I found. What I saw took my breath away. Her little home was built on a large hill, and, as I looked out over the yard I saw hundreds of trees around me and below me. Lush vines wrapped themselves around the trees, tall palms swayed in the breeze, birds chirped and sang for me—it felt like I was in heaven. Never before was nature so important to me. Some city kids think that plants and trees are not all that fascinating and I once thought that way, too. But those old thoughts were immediately erased from my mind as I stood there looking at the paradise I had found in my grandmother's back yard.

Then, a sudden pride filled my heart. Knowing that my own "roots" came from this amazing place brought tears to my eyes.

When I stepped outside late one evening I heard a few cars passing by, some horses neighing, and hundred of birds chirping and singing. I also heard soft rattles and the sound of the Coqui. A Coqui is a frog

these foods for breakfast, lunch and dinner!

Now, as I read over my words about the things that I love about Philadelphia and Puerto Rico, I feel that I truly love Puerto Rico more. There lies my family history, my homeland, my heartland. I love Puerto Rico because I felt I truly belong on that little island. The beauty, the peacefulness, the spirit, and food stole my heart forever. That short twelve-day trip gave me pride in my roots, and, someday in the future, I want to live there.

When I left Puerto Rico I felt that my heart was being ripped out of my chest. I remember watching my cousins waving goodbye and all I did was cry. I did not want to leave!

When I arrived back in Philadelphia, nothing seemed the same to me. The water in the Delaware was dirty, the local beaches



Nature was my radio and it was music to my ears.

that chirps his name and, he's the mascot of Puerto Rico! The sound of these frogs put me to sleep. Their soft chirps were like a lullaby.

Puerto Rico was peaceful.

Nature was my radio and it was music to my ears.

The last and the best thing about Puerto Rico was the food! All I ate was *pastelillos*, *alcapurias*, and rice—the best food in the world!

A *pastelillo* is ground beef inside a disc. The disc is like a special tortilla. You fry it and the taste is heavenly. I can't explain the taste of an *alcapuria*, but it also has ground beef inside. And Puerto Rican rice?! To me, is the best rice ever! These foods are perfect and I honestly think that I could live the rest of my life eating only

were over-crowded, the pace of life was so fast, and all the trees looked so plain and ugly. The concrete jungle was no longer holding much fascination for me and for weeks I hated being back here. But, then I realized that Philadelphia is my home.

Philadelphia is where I live.

And I do have many things to be thankful for because I do live here.

But, as all of those thoughts registered in my mind, I also thought back to those lovely evenings in my grandmother's yard—the peace, the beauty of it all.

It was then I realized that although my body resides in "The City of Brotherly Love" my heart and my soul would for always and forever only live within that beautiful little island, that small piece of heaven on earth, that paradise the world calls—Puerto Rico. ■

Mis dos Hogares

Nací en Philadelphia y es el sitio que llamo mi hogar.

Mi familia vino de Puerto Rico y Español fue su lengua nativa, pero Inglés es mi primer lenguaje. Por la mayor parte de mi vida supe poco sobre esta bella isla—pero todo eso cambio en el espacio de doce días.

Es irónico como el amor al sitio donde uno nació puede cambiar en menos de dos semanas. Por supuesto, en Philadelphia me es más fácil comunicarme y eso es importante. Es también el hogar de mis amigos, mi familia, y mi escuela. Otra cosa que me gusta de Philadelphia es que hay tantas personas con culturas fascinantes. Es una ciudad muy interesante.

En contraste, la isla de Puerto Rico es más bella porque tiene un encanto de viejo mundo. Es serena pero festiva, y la comida es deliciosa. Philadelphia se conoce como "La Ciudad del Amor a la Hermandad" pero muchos no la ven así. En Philadelphia ocurren a diario muchas muertes innecesarias. En algunos vecindarios donde quiera que uno vira, oye gritos y niños llorando. Es triste y penoso.

Me he acostumbrado al caos pero no vivo mi vida de esta forma. Me siento orgullosa de Philadelphia porque hay muchas cosas positivas como museos famosos, buenos colegios, y es la cuna de América.

Cuando llegue a Puerto Rico fue muy difícil comunicarme porque mi español no es muy bueno, pero una vez que pasaron los días, me sentí más cómoda con el español.

Hice nuevos amigos en Puerto Rico, pero los viejos amigos de Philadelphia son los mejores. Si algún día decidiera vivir en la isla, tendría que ajustarme a muchos cambios.

En Philadelphia hay más de una cultura y esto es una de las cosas que me agrada de esta ciudad. Todas estas culturas comparten una ciudad.

Siempre vi a Philadelphia de esta manera hasta que tuve la oportunidad de conocer a la isla de Puerto Rico. Una vez que vi su verdor y su esplendor, quede fascinada. La idea de que mis raíces provienen de un sitio tan bello trajo lágrimas a mis ojos. Me quede impresionada con la música del Coqui. El Coqui es un pequeño sapito oriundo de Puerto Rico y es la mascota de Puerto Rico.

Ahora que tengo la oportunidad de leer mis narraciones de Puerto Rico, siento que quiero la isla mucho más y me siento orgullosa de ser de descendencia Puertorriqueña.

Sin embargo, Philadelphia es donde nací y donde vivo, no obstante, después de haber visto la isla, si es posible querer a los dos sitios por igual, así los quiero.

Yo vivo en Philadelphia y la quiero mucho pero mi corazón y mi alma pertenecen a ese trozo de cielo al que el mundo llama—Puerto Rico.