

Carmen Toribio Martinez

Conference Project: *Sharing a Story with Ms. Laurinda Thompson.*

December 16th, 2022.

[00:00:00] - [00:01:52]: Music + Introductions.

**Carmen:** Good afternoon. My name is Carmen Toribio Martinez. I'm a Sarah Lawrence student and I have the pleasure to conduct an interview with the awesome Ms. Laurinda, Ms. Laurinda Thompson, who is part of the adult day care center, at Wartburg. And how are you doing today, Ms. Laurinda?

**Ms. Laurinda:** I am doing well, and you?

**Carmen:** I am good, thanks. And can you introduce yourself a little bit?

**Ms. Laurinda:** My name is Laurinda Thompson. I live in Mount Vernon for 50 something years, I guess, yeah.

**Carmen:** Wow.

**Ms. Laurinda:** I went to Mount Vernon High School. I went to work at the American Red Cross. I dealt with them during the 9/11 incident. After that, from that, I worked as a security guard. Um, during the 9/11, I gave blood, they gave, the stores gave diapers, everything, but I gave blood.

**Carmen:** So you were helping a lot.

**Ms. Laurinda:** I ended up finding a job as a security guard company. I was working at IBM for about a year, and they told me, the office told me to come to them. Because I've got office experience typing and everything, I said "yeah I have that." So I got into the office. So I was the only female in the office. I have worked in New York, um, Yonkers, Connecticut, White Plains, different places.

**Carmen:** Wow.

**Ms. Laurinda:** Yeah. So I was doing back and forth, back and forth.

**Carmen:** You are really a hard working person.

**Ms. Laurinda:** Yeah, yeah.

Transition {Ms. Laurinda's interests} [00:01:53] - [00:02:26]

**Carmen:** I know that you haved work a lot. But, what is something that you spend your time doing? What is something that you enjoy doing?

**Ms. Laurinda:** Before I got sick.

**Carmen:** Uhum.

**Ms. Laurinda:** I used to make some shea butter.

**Carmen:** Uhum.

**Ms. Laurinda:** And a friend of mine said all the good good qualities of the shea butter. So I used to make candles. I started making that, and hit right there! Yeah. But I want to make some more other things.

**Carmen:** So the talent is still going on, huh?

**Ms. Laurinda:** Uhum!

Subject change - Transitioning on Ms. Laurinda's time coming to Wartburg. [00:02:27] - [00:03:11]

**Ms. Laurinda:** When I came from the hospital, I was home, I didn't know what to do. I said, "I can't do nothing", because my vision wasn't good. I was legally blind. A letter came in the mail saying that they have papers, some places for you to go to a daycare center, activities there: TV, movies, bingo, um therapy, I said "oh! therapy, that is it." Because I wanted, yeah, I wanted to get my legs together.

**Carmen:** Yeah.

**Ms. Laurinda:** I loved going to gym and stuff. So I went to, I came here, started doing therapy. I met some people, it was fine!

Subject change - Transitioning on Ms. Laurinda's passion for walking. [00:03:12] - [00:03:35]

**Carmen:** You are very active.

**Ms. Laurinda:** Yeah.

**Carmen:** Because you also told me that you used to walk a lot, right?

**Ms. Laurinda:** Um, I have walked so many...do you know Mount Vernon?

**Carmen:** Yes.

**Ms. Laurinda:** Okay. All right. So I live on Fifth Avenue. I used to walk to Dyre avenue, it's like maybe 20 minutes.

**Carmen:** I can't even climb a hill!

Transition {Ms. Laurinda's experience after getting sick} [00:03:36] - [00:04:10]

**Carmen:** So how was the process of getting sick, and going back to what you're doing now?

**Ms. Laurinda:** When I was in the hospital. I came out in a wheelchair. So, I couldn't even maneuver, I was like crashing and I said, "I can't do it." I said no. No, I have to, I need a walker. When you are in a walker, you got to learn to walk. So then, that is it. But hopefully, I can go to the hospital or therapy or something for my legs, I could walk better.

Transitioning to Ms. Laurinda's favorite memory of the center (Wartburg). [00:04:11] - [00:05:30]

**Carmen:** What is a memorable memory that you have about the center?

**Ms. Laurinda:** When I first came. It was too big. It was a lot of people. It was like two cafeterias it was filled, filled. When I came back, it was only one cafeteria and very few people. So little by little people is coming. A lady that I spoke to last week, her name is Gwen. Gwen. She's blind. She used to be a patrol officer.

**Carmen:** Oh.

**Ms. Laurinda:** Yes, she used to do that. Then she got sick. She got blind, and then she came, and that is it. So, but she wants to do more work to or do something. When you get sick, some people just give up. Just think there is nothing else and that's it, they get depressed. So I said, "I can't do that, no." Someone said, "do you get depressed?" I said, "well yeah, one time. Off and on like I can't do what I want to." But that's the thing, I am doing more now. At least I am doing more than before.

**Carmen:** So you basically improved your mindset to think ahead, right?

**Ms. Laurinda:** Yeah, yeah.

Transition {Ms. Laurinda's perspective of "hard situations"} [00:05:31] - [00:06:01]

**Carmen:** And what is something that motivates you to face hard situations?

**Ms. Laurinda:** Hard situations? I haven't met, I haven't had none, that I know of.

**Carmen:** Hard situations?

**Ms. Laurinda:** Yeah, so.

**Carmen:** You don't consider that you have never had a hard situation?

**Ms. Laurinda:** No.

**Carmen:** Like something that have bother you in some way?

**Ms. Laurinda:** No, no, no.

**Carmen:** So you stay positive.

**Ms. Laurinda:** That's right, that's me! But if I had my vision it would be better.

Subject change - Ms. Laurinda's vision [00:06:02] - [00:08:07]

**Carmen:** Your vision?

**Ms. Laurinda:** Yeah.

**Carmen:** Has it being difficult to adapt to the change?

**Ms. Laurinda:** When I was in the hospital, I could see, then my vision started dying out like...

**Carmen:** Blurry?

**Ms. Laurinda:** My eyes, yeah blurry. It was like weird. So I said I need my glasses, I have glasses. So I asked my son to give me some glasses. Then I got home but, my eyes started hurting. So I guess, I come to find out and I was lacking medicine. Because of medicine I was so weak, MS (Multiple sclerosis). Then they'll (doctors) help you out with some. But when I was in a coma, I had not me... I was in a coma for three months, so no medicine. Then I went to a doctor, they said "you know what? Your vision will become better. Take some pills, essentially." And my vision came back a little bit because like this table used to be black, everything is black black, like the floor was either gray or black!

**Carmen:** You are legally blind, right? Correct?

**Ms. Laurinda:** Right, I am, I am.

**Carmen:** And what is that mean for you?

**Ms. Laurinda:** Um.

**Carmen:** Because as you said, you're also improving your vision at the same time.

**Ms. Laurinda:** Yeah, that's it. I was worse than that. When I came out from the hospital, that's when it got darker. I wasn't blind. I used to, I couldn't see a lot, like I couldn't see this, it was black (touching the table). But I can't read. Now, I can see your, the prints on the paper, before it was nothing, now it's prints and a set of lines. Now it will eventually be lines, I see prints, so eventually I'll read.

**Carmen:** Oh, you are little by little progressing

**Ms. Laurinda:** Yeah, yeah.

**Carmen:** I'm so glad to hear that.

**Ms. Laurinda:** Yeah.

Transition {Breaking Blindness' stereotype} [00:08:08] - [00:08:53]

**Carmen:** Do you think that you're also breaking the stereotype of being blind? Some people have a perception...

**Ms. Laurinda:** Yeah, I think so. Because there's people that is blind just think it's hopeless. But it's not. There's another girl here, she's blind she has been blind since birth.

**Carmen:** Annie?

**Ms. Laurinda:** Annie, yeah. She's off today and she's more active than everything.

**Carmen:** Yes, I have seen.

**Ms. Laurinda:** I asked her if she does braille. And she said, "yes, I do braille." I said that I want to learn braille as well.

**Carmen:** That's great.

**Ms. Laurinda:** So I found somewhere to...

**Carmen:** Take classes?

**Ms. Laurinda:** Yeah. It is some blocks away.

Transition {Ms. Laurinda's message and advice to the younger blind generation} [00:08:54] - [00:10:01]

**Carmen:** Wow! Based on that, what is something you wish people knew about being blind? About blind people?

**Ms. Laurinda:** When you're blind or legally blind some people take advantage of you. They use you, they are thinking "oh she is blind whatever. I'll take this, she won't know." So they take advantage of you. Karma will get you, karma.

**Carmen:** Karma? Yes. For sure. What is something that you, what is something that you will say to a younger blind generation?

**Ms. Laurinda:** For a blind person, if you are blind, don't think you're dumb or stupid. If you have a question, ask the question because maybe that person might not even know.

**Carmen:** Exactly, yeah. I think that's something that applies to everyone, at the same time. And to also be kind, right?

**Ms. Laurinda:** That's right, always be kind, always be kind. Don't let this sickness help you to say nasty, mean, nothing. That would not get you nowhere at all. That's it.

Conclusion {Final acknowledgments + Music} [00:10:02] - [00:11:13]

**Carmen:** Thank you for sharing all your experiences with me.

**Ms. Laurinda:** You are welcome.

**Carmen:** Thank you for letting me get to know you better.

**Ms. Laurinda:** You are welcome.

**Carmen:** And is there something else that you wish to share?

**Ms. Laurinda:** I don't know, if I get my vision back...

**Carmen:** Oh, we are going to pray that you get it back!

**Ms. Laurinda:** Okay! I have places that call up that will help to employ me and hopefully I could do something. If I could work on a laptop because I still know the letters, numbers, and everything, I am still fine with that. Most important I have to see, that is it. But the first thought is to go back to work today, go back to work that is it.

**Carmen:** Ohh, that's so nice! And you are also going to learn braille!

**Ms. Laurinda:** Uhum, that is it.

**Carmen:** You are going to learn everything! And how was this experience for you, to share a little about your story?

**Ms. Laurinda:** You know what, it is more opening up because really, um, I haven't really told too many people in a long time, until you came.

**Carmen:** Oh, thank you!

**Ms. Laurinda:** Yeah, until you came! That is it.