

# Encounters: “...you have to start all over again in the American system.”

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written by Joanna Sharpless | May 3, 2018



I'm originally from Guyana. It's a little country in South America, between Brazil and Venezuela. I'm from British Guyana, and we're the only English-speaking country in that hemisphere. My whole family came from there together—my wife, my daughter and I. My daughter was around eight years old at the time. She loves it here now. She says she doesn't want to go back. We came as legal residents, but now I'm a citizen.

Back home, you hear a lot of things about America: It's a big, beautiful country, blah, blah, blah. Yes, it kept up some of my expectations, but part

of it that bothered me was getting jobs. It was really, really hard. I went to high school in Guyana, and I took an exam that's like what you would take to get a bachelor's degree. But coming over here, you have to start all over again in the American system. I started with minimum pay, which is like \$7 an hour. It's hard, especially with the exorbitant prices over here. Now I'm a little better, because the pay is better. It's not the top—but, you know, I like this area because of the schooling and the medical care.

I had a cataract in my eye. I used to see that sometimes when I got onto the subway, I'd see kind of a blur-blurred vision. I had surgery, and it was successful. Sometimes I still get sands and graininess in my vision, and when I go out, I need to use sunglasses because the sun makes my eyes kind of watery. But it's been fine. I wouldn't be able to get a surgery like that back home.