Intercultural Marriage

English 120

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The world is an interesting and a diverse place to live in. Sometimes people have no control over who they begin a love relationship with. One does not see color, religion, culture, country, etc. difference, so it is very possible that someone may fall in love with a foreigner who has a totally different culture, which may result in a cross-cultural marriage. No matter how deeply this couple is in love with each other, differences will rise due to the variations in culture. Marrying someone with a totally different culture can lead to the, inability to communicate with family members and leaving one’s own traditions and comforts.

I met my husband and love of my life Jose in late December 2011 through a dating app. We talked only in messages for the first couple of months. His family was amid some very serious health concerns as was my own so, neither of us had much time for socializing. However, we would send messages when we had a spare moment to ourselves. On the 28th of January I got a text while I was at work from Jose asking me if I wanted to have dinner with him that evening at five o’clock at a local mall. Of course, I wanted to meet him and quickly messaged him my reply.

I could hear the beating of my heart and the slow tick, tick, tick of my watch as I drove to the mall. It was as if it were counting down the seconds to the moment my life would change forever. Jose had obviously arrived before me. I rounded the corner leading to the food court and there he was seated just across from me. He looked up as if knowing I was there. Our eyes locked and for just a moment I felt my heart flutter in my chest. It was at that moment I knew the man seated in front of me dressed in blue jeans and a black Ralph Lauren polo shirt was special. We embraced with a short hug and decided to walk around the mall. We never made it to dinner that night, instead we walked around the mall for five hours talking and getting to know one another before going our separate way. We continued to talk daily and on valentine’s day 2012 Jose met me at my apartment. I had just arrived home from work. Still in my dirty work scrubs, hair piled high on the top of my head in the world’s messiest bun and no makeup. There just inside of my front door Jose bent down on one knee and asked me to be his girlfriend.

April rolled around and it was time to meet each other’s families. Jose’s was raised in a strict catholic household. A rather large gap from my Christian upbringing. His family welcomed me with open arms, as did mine to him. A vast majority of Jose’s family only speaks Spanish. This poses a rather large problem for me since I speak very little Spanish. During the first few years of our marriage, I felt extremely uncomfortable during family gatherings. I would sit as close to Jose as I could since I relied on him to translate for me during these types of situations and get together. I never truly understood what people around me were saying. I remember one occasion when Jose’s aunts visited, there was some pointing of fingers and laughing about my limited cooking skills in very broken English. I did not need a translator to know that they didn’t approve of our relationship.  This uncomfortable situation left me very unnerved, since then I have become more proficient in the Spanish language so I can speak for myself without the use of translation.

In May 2012 Jose took me to the local lake front. Disguising the occasion as a casual evening walk in the wetland preserve. There as the sun set surrounded by cranes and cattails Jose proposed to me and of course I said yes. Much to his family’s disbelief and relentless cautioning we were married in November of that same year.

It was not until we were married, I noticed really the shift in our family dynamics and his family’s real attitude towards me. I was no longer just the tolerated girlfriend I was now their son’s wife and I found out very quickly certain things were expected of me. I was raised in a culture where the husband helps the wife in a team effort. However, in his culture the women stay home and do all the housework while catering to the men’s every need. Even though I also worked full time I was now expected to keep the house in proper order, and always ensure there was a home cooked meal ready for Jose when he got home from work. There were a few occasions during the first year or two of our marriage when things were out of place when my in-laws had visited, it is for certain once they left a brief phone call was received to notify Jose of my faults and inadequacy as a wife. Above all else this has been the biggest issue in our marriage thus far. Through years of patience and communication, we have developed a system of chores and responsibilities for our home. Even though I still do a vast majority of everything there are still some things that Jose has agreed to assume charge.  On one occasion my in-laws made an unexpected appearance in our home. I was making dinner and folding laundry at the kitchen table. My mother-in-law saw fit to point out that there should not be any excuse as to why there was still dirty dishes in the kitchen sink.

For the last 8 years of our marriage this is how our lives have functioned. I tried to be the model wife to please not only my husband but also my in-laws. However sometimes it can be very challenging to hold onto my own personality.  Things became slightly easier in June 2017 when I became pregnant with our first child. Growing up children in my family always stayed in a crib or bassinet either in a nursery of their own or in the parents’ room. I was not against having our child in our room with us. However, my husband insists that she sleeps in our bed. This has been a nightly occurrence since the day we brought her home from the hospital.

In the Hispanic culture it is not uncommon for children and parents to share the same room or even the same bed especially during the years of infancy. This concept was completely new and foreign to me. It has been a rather had adjust for me personally. My daughter is extremely attached to her father due to this bonding and sometimes becomes very jealous of our relationship. It has not been easy on my self-esteem when she pushes me away from him.  However, I realize that she is only little once, so I try to cherish every little amount of time I get with her while she is young.

Just like any marriage, the thing that binds interracial couples together, and what helps them bridge the divides they face, is having the same values and shared visions of their lives.  Despite having different families of origin, our values are aligned. Our priorities all align despite our different upbringings and heritage. That is what makes it work, otherwise you will find it very difficult to make it through the hard times. Every night before we go to sleep Jose and we discuss our day, as well as our goals and dreams. We have been blessed in the way we think very much alike and have not disagreed on very much. When we have disagreed on an issue, we are quick to form a compromise and resolve the issue, never letting it the issue last more then a few hours. Regardless of ethnicity no marriage is perfect. A situation will always arise to test your strength and abilities.

What makes a marriage strong and last is your ability to communicate and work together as a team. Looking back, I feel that my husband and I should have communicated more effectively. Regarding our expectations of one another following our marriage. I should have voiced my concerns and complaints from the very start of our relationship instead of after we were married. However, through it all I can say with confidence that I have gained a vast amount of strength and confidence in myself. Our marriage has never been stronger than it is now in my opinion. I know there will be more trying times ahead of us however as long as we remain united and support one another we will succeed.

Ethnic groups bring wealth and diversity to our societies by introducing us to their own customs and ideas. Intercultural marriages are no different. I think that the more love there is in the world, the better we all will be, regardless of how or whom we choose to love.