Who I am and where I am from is what makes me unique. Being proud of myself has to do with how I was raised. What I can tell you is that Colombia is mine, you don’t choose where you’re from so it really gives you the strength you need. It’s about love. I love it with the good and the bad. I grew up in the 80s in Colombia, where the guerillas and the cartel were doing a lot. I don’t know exactly what that taught me, but that was unique.

I have always had a social conscience. Since I was young, probably had to do with the armed conflict in Colombia. It helps me understand that it doesn’t matter how you got here, it’s that everyone has come here for a reason, and they all need help. I had to find a community where I could feel more at home in this new land, and I think my work gives me a little bit of that. There’s a lot that I feel I can give. Work is where you can also get new friends.

I’d like to tell Latinx youth that you don’t change yourself for anyone and keep being you.

I would tell them to get to know where their parents come from. There’s beauty and heart where people come from. Ask your parents about how they grew up, even the little things. Learn some of the history of the country, look at the newspaper from the day your parents left and ask questions about that.

Recorded in June 2021 by Alexandra O’Farrell, MCLA Policy Fellow, Macalester College Student | Class of 2022