

was born. . . . I wanted them to have a connection to their country by having a connection with family.

I do visit Mexico often, and my children go with me. I like to drive because I like for the kids to see the Mexican landscape. . . . I want them to see how people live . . . and I want them to realize that people there don't have opportunities like we have living in the U.S. No matter how poor we are in the U.S., we are not as poor as we would be in Mexico. They got to see why my parents decided to leave their country and why they brought their family here.

**On September 16, 1810 Mexico gained independence from Spain. That date is a national holiday, Mexican Independence Day.*

CLEMENTINA

Interviewed by Heather Tosteson

I WANT TO BE ONE, BUT I WONDER . . .

I was born in Freetown, Sierra Leone. I came to the United States on September 21, 2006. I will be able to become a citizen in September 2011. I have always wanted to be a citizen since I came. In June I can apply. Then I will have an interview, fingerprints, and take the test.

Womanhood

My mom taught me most about what it was to be a woman. I grew up with my mom and aunt and dad. I had a twin sister. In Africa, you are told what you can do at different ages. In Africa, fifty to sixty percent of women are housewives. Both my mom and my aunt were. As a girl if you're coming up the first thing your mom teaches you is that you will have menstruation and then you will have to defend yourselves against boys or you'll get pregnant.

In my tribe you need to be twenty-one before you can lose your virginity. In Sierra Leone there are twelve tribes. I am of the Krio tribe. We don't have female circumcision, so I can't tell you about it. But the rest of the tribes do. We're from the English tribe so we don't believe in that circumcision. In the other tribes, fifteen is the age of maturity. That is when you would be married and start having kids. But in our tribe twenty-one is the age at which you can become sexually active and have affairs. This allows women to have more education.

In Africa we raise our children strict so that children will stay in the same way all their lives. You can't start late, it won't stick. Even if you are in your thirties, your parents can whip the hell out of you if you do something wrong. For the parent, the kid is never grown to the parents. That independence doesn't apply in Africa. In Africa, you shouldn't look in people's eyes, especially your parents. Your hands should always be behind