

## Coming to the United States

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Fortune Society affords me the opportunity to maintain structure in my life and helps me reach my career goals. I have completed the Career Development Group, which helped me prepare for job interviews, to write a resume, and to work on job skills development. I also focused on the areas that needed improvement and used the computer lab to enhance my writing and computing skills. I am exploring and expressing myself through my writing and I am also taking a Business Computing class. This training will help prepare me for the workforce.

My advice to anyone wanting help but not knowing how to ask for it is to find someone you can talk to, be it a good friend or a thera-

pist. Identify the problem; accept the fact that you have a problem. Be ready, willing, and able to ask for help and to work on your problem. There are all types of resources available to help you address your issues. If you are an ex-offender, The Fortune Society has multiple programs to help you achieve your goals. All you need to do is ask for the help you want.

To learn more about The Fortune Society visit [www.fortunesociety.org](http://www.fortunesociety.org).

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*Octrisha Parker was born in Cleveland, Ohio. She came to New York in 1973 in search of success and to escape the pain of her past. In New York she discovered that she could not hide from herself. She has been clean and sober for three years.*

## Making a U-turn by Ivette Hernandez

I came to the United States at the age of nine to live with my mother, brothers, and sisters. The cold winter and different culture were new to me. In school I was very scared around the Americans, but it was the beginning of my new life. My four sisters and two brothers helped me to learn the English language.

At the age of 11, we moved from Cleveland to Lorain, Ohio and my mother enrolled us in elementary school. I got a lot of help from the bilingual teachers, especially Mr. Garcia. I will never forget him because he gave me very good advice. He always reminded me to never give up on my education and also not to let go of my future dreams, which were to improve my English and to graduate. He also said that without a good education I was going to float from one minimum wage job to another. I really didn't pay too much attention then, but now I know that he was right.

I remember my mother wasn't too expressive, but deep inside I knew she was very proud of me when I passed to high school with A's, B's, and 1 C. But in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade I became very rebellious. I left my house and went on the wrong

routes. I dropped out of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. I started off with two jobs, working 10 to 12 hours a day. At the age of 18 and a half, I became pregnant with my first son. I am now 33 years old and have five children.

I have spent many years of my life seeing others get their diplomas, college degrees, and good paying jobs. Now it's time to better myself. As I grow, I learn from my mistakes. You don't stay 18 forever, and one day I just opened my eyes and realized that I am 33 years old with five children that depend on me. They deserve a better life.

It is time for me to stop looking at what I could have been. It doesn't matter how many years have passed, there is always a chance to make a u-turn in life. That is why I am taking GED classes. After I finish, I plan to go to college. I will make a better future for my children and me.

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*Ivette Hernandez is enrolled in the Lorain, Ohio ABLE/GED program. She hopes to graduate this year and plans to study English/Spanish translation at Lorain Community College.*