

Malaya: What are a few or one or two happy memories of you and your grandmother, together? I mean, you told me she used to pluck roses out of the back garden. And, take your time. There's no rush. I want you to be sure in your answer.

Lolita: Sure. My grandmother lived with us growing up.

Malaya: Where did you grow up?

Lolita: I grew up in northern California. My mom, when she would go to work, when both my parents would go to work, my grandma would take care of me and my brothers. The most fond memories I have of her was probably when I was four or five years old. She would wake me up in the mornings and she would give me a piggyback ride to the kitchen. I mean, she was probably 60, late 60s, early 70s, but she would carry me. It's a very Filipino thing, but she would make me coffee and rice. And so, I would just sit there at the kitchen counter eating that.

Malaya: Coffee and rice, you said?

Lolita: Coffee and rice, yeah. She knew that was my favorite thing. Some mornings, I feel like it would just be me and her. I think my older brother would be at school. When I think back to those times, like it's just me and her at home and we would just be hanging out together.

Malaya: Nice.

Lolita: That's definitely my top memory of her.

Malaya: Okay. Okay. That's fine. That's perfect.

Lolita: Switching gears a bit, you do work with public health, and HIV, et cetera, what about, particularly working as an HIV worker, for lack of a better term, I sorry, what about that fulfills you?

Malaya: I mean.

Lolita: And again, take your time.

Malaya: I've always been told by my mom that-

Lolita: I'm listening.

Malaya: I'm a very compassionate and conscientious person.

Lolita: Hold on.

Malaya: Yeah.

Lolita: Okay.

Malaya: I guess, for me, it really comes back to remembering how challenging it was when I was diagnosed with HIV and the support systems that I had, and so I kind of just see the work that I do as paying it forward, to be that person for another young person living with HIV who is newly diagnosis, or who's been diagnosed, but hasn't had the opportunity to heal and process. I just really try to provide that space, and that affirmation, and that unconditional love and support, that I felt like I needed.

Lolita: Excellent. Excellent. Thank you. That's perfect. Thank you so, hold on. And you pronounce, I meant to ask you, is it Malaya or-

Malaya: Malaya.

Lolita: It is Malaya. I want sure, Malaya or Malaya.

Malaya: Yeah.