

US Air Force Captain Cristina Miranda...

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 in the Philippines, my husband's uncle suggested that I apply in the US military so I can get my husband and son faster than just waiting for me to become a citizen. So, the main reason why I joined the Air Force in 1994 was the hope of getting my husband to the US in the quickest possible time. However, it took the same amount of time to petition him—5 years.

You see, I've been here in the US two years before I joined the Air Force. To apply for citizenship, you need to be active 3 years. So, it's not true that joining the Air Force would be quicker. Recruiters will tell you whatever you want to hear. It wasn't true, but everything was all a blessing. I was fooled that being in the service, you have special preferences. But, it was a good decision to join the military anyway," shared Cristina.

One of the many benefits of her military career is education. The military encourages its personnel to further their education—for free. "I got paid going to school,"

Miranda said happily. She got a BS Human Resource Management degree in 1999 from Troy State University and her Master's in Business Administration (MBA) from the Naval Postgraduate School, in Monterey, California in 2002. "I did night and weekend school to finish my degree. And I went to school full time for 18 months to get my MBA," Cristina said.

Cristina spoke very positively about her military career. "I enlisted in 1994 but I've been in the Air Force for almost 8 years before I crossed over to officership through the Officer Training School. I've been a captain since 2006. There were many challenges such as moving bases and locations every two to three years. I would say the biggest challenge is the stress that I put on my husband and my two children, Derek and Joshua. My husband had to quit his job and not establish a career because we want to keep the family together. When Derek was younger, he was not affected as much as when he became a teenager. Then,

he began to complain about not having steady friends and school," she admitted.

While there are still far fewer women serving in the military, Cristina said that the population of women who have joined is currently 63,633. They make up around 33 percent with the 67 percent being males. "I can't tell you how many Filipino women there are now in the Air Force but it's a good number," said Miranda.

Asked if she endured discrimination in the air force, Cristina said, "Race and sex discrimination are inevitable anywhere you go."

Cristina is six years away to retirement if she desires. It has been a good career and she encourages men and women, especially fellow *Pinoys*, to "join the Air Force or any service for that matter. There are numerous benefits and if you're hardworking, it's easy to go up the ranks."

The main reason for Cristina's joining the military is also the major reason why she has stayed—

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