

Interviewer: Would you mind by just starting and introducing yourself?

Ayda: Sure. My name is Ayda Posso, I am from Colombia. And I've been here since I was 13.

Interviewer: When did you come to the U.S.?

Ayda: Sorry, I said 13. I came when I was 14, three months before my 15th birthday.

Interviewer: Who helped you come to the United States?

Ayda: My dad. My dad was the one who came first. And then two years later he sent for my mom and I.

Interviewer: Why did you immigrate to the United States? What was the reason?

Ayda: Well, the reason it was at that moment that my dad, he was like 45. At that moment, in Colombia, he was getting too old. He was an FBI agent. And then one day he went to the office. And then they said 'You are too old to work.' So imagine 45 right now, that is like young. So for him, 'I'm 45, I'm an FBI agent almost all my life' and they just like 'You don't have a job anymore.' So it was very hard for him to kind of adjust to what was going to happen later. So the plan was my uncle, his brother, said, 'This situation is really bad in Colombia.' So he decided this is the way.

Interviewer: If you don't mind me asking, was he an FBI agent for the Colombian government or the United States government?

Ayda: For Columbia. Yeah.

Interviewer: What is your 'American Dream'?

Ayda: I think I'm living the 'American Dream' now. The number one is that since I was very little, I always told my mom that I wanted to go to the United States. So every time that she was saying 'Do you want to celebrate your birthday?' I was like, 'No, I want you to save the money so we can go to the United States because I want to go when I turned 15.' And then I know that at that time, it was very hard because I can remember her face like, 'Okay', but it was too hard because, you know, it's very hard to come here. So then exactly, like I said I came at 14 years old in January (and I turned 15 in March). So my dream came true. So everything that you put in your mind, you can get it.

Interviewer: Why did you want to come to the United States?

Ayda: I think it was something I know since little. I used to listen to music by people like Madonna and Michael Jackson. And I pretended I knew what they were saying in the songs. But I didn't know at all, so I was just dancing to the songs. And when we used to watch movies, I had the same feeling, like America looks really interesting. And so I always wanted to come here.

Interviewer: How did you end up learning English?

Ayda: When I got here I went to Horizonte. So I went there for summer school, and then after that, I went I think I lost a little bit half of a year and then I went to high school. The first year that I went sophomore that was South High. South High was right here in the campus of Salt Lake Community College. And then they closed. And then I moved to graduate from Highland. So, GO HIGHLAND!

Interviewer: What are your hopes for your community?

Ayda: I work a lot in the community. And I like to help them all, there's so many things that everybody needs in the community. So you know, everybody from every place, you know, so it's so nice. We have a lot of diversity, we can learn the culture. So I want everybody to learn what I wasn't able to learn when I got here. You know, it's like more the guidance at that time, transportation, public transportation, where they can learn English, clinics, health, dental, all those things. So, I want them to feel comfortable in the County.

Interviewer: What were some culture shocks that you experienced when you came to America?

Ayda: Oh, that's a good question. It was, like, everybody is too independent. You know, like everybody is over there in their own little thing. And you know, my culture is like, everybody is out and playing, 'Let's play ball or play this.' So it was very interesting because the streets are quiet. And so that was one of the things for me.

Interviewer: Did you feel alone when you first moved to the United States?

Ayda: In some ways, because when I came my sister had to stay in Colombia. So she was like, my little partner to play at the same time. It was like the dream came true for me. So I was like, 'Wow, I'm in the United States.' So I was seeing everything, it was a lot, but it was good too.

Interpreter: What are you grateful for from America?

Ayda: The freedom of being able to say whatever expression, whatever I think, and I have in my mind. I know I have to be careful with some things. But that's one of them, being able to speak- I think that's the number one.

Interviewer: What are some positive aspects in your life here and when you came to the United States, or your aspects in your new life in the United States when you came?

Ayda: Oh, I mean, it's kind of hard because it's almost everything. I think kind of everything. I never went back to Colombia. And I can go anytime, it's just not like 'This was it' at the beginning, I was afraid that if I go back I wasn't gonna be able to come back. So that's why even at the beginning when I was able to go and come back, there was just a fear that maybe my dream is something that's going to come up that the immigration was gonna say 'No,' TSA was gonna say 'No.' So I think everything.

Interviewer: What traditions have been passed on in your family?

Ayda: Oh, the food. Number one is the food. We have some traditions in Christmas and that is still passed from my mom. When she used to wrap the little bit of presents in Colombia- it was like one thing, we were only able to get one thing and my thing was a Barbie- and so the game for her was to hide the present. And it was so much fun. She hid them at midnight because our belief at that time was just baby Jesus was born at midnight. So he brings the presents the 24th. So she was like, 'Okay, go to sleep. And then I wake you up.' So she like 'Time to wake up' and then, 'Okay, go find the present.' So sometimes I see my sister's present and had to be quiet because she has to find hers. And then my sister was there, and she saw mine and she didn't say anything. It took like an hour or two and it was so much fun for one present.

Interviewer: What is the story behind your name?

Ayda: So my name is spelled A-Y-D-A. and what I heard is that my mom, when she had my sister, her nurse was named 'Ayda.' So she liked it and that is where it came from. And I like it a lot. I heard that it comes from the Middle East, part of Turkey, or part of Egypt? I don't know.

Interviewer: Being an immigrant yourself, what would you like people who are not immigrants to know about immigrants and your life?

Ayda: Everything. They should learn about everything. Our culture, our beliefs, things that we do in the community. Each of us has our own community in our own home. So I think everybody should learn where we come from. That there is something else besides what is here.

Interviewer: When you were at Highland what is one thing you like about it?

Ayda: It was so much fun. So there were only three or four Hispanics. And we were in that little group. So we had to learn English no matter what. And then as you guys know, most of us try to go to the group of where we came from. So it was the three of us, but at the same time was trying to bring everybody. I didn't miss any of the dances- it was so much fun. So you guys should go. Yeah, so it was fun. I think I had a good experience being in Highland. I need to go back and see how it is.

Interpreter: When you immigrated from Colombia, you said your sister remained in Colombia. Why was that?

Ayda: Because at the moment, my dad wasn't able to bring us all together. And she was married too. So that's why she had to stay. And then two years later, he brought her here.

Interviewer: Okay, so she was older than you?

Ayda: She is older. I'm the baby. It was just the two of us.

Interpreter: What are you grateful for about America?

Ayda: I think everything. I'm still learning because the cultures. I've been here for so long. But I still learning because there's people from other states that are not the same as Utah. So I came straight to Utah. So I'm very grateful for everything, the opportunities the United States gives.

Interviewer: So before you said that you were scared to go back to Colombia, of the fear of being stuck there and not being able to come back. Would you say that now that fear is gone?

Ayda: It is gone in a way. In the way that I can go back but because it's not safe and my demeanor is different now from the demeanor that they have there. Even if I go, I cannot go the way I'm dressing right now. So it will be different, they will kind of target me. So I'm afraid that they can kidnap me or something because 'Oh, she's coming from the United States.'

Interviewer: Do they often kidnap?

Ayda: They do. Because everybody is struggling over there. So most of the time they have a plan already. So it's like, 'Okay, somebody that comes from the United States, they have money,' they think that we're rich. And then they're like, 'Okay, if I kidnap her, I can ask for money,' but I don't know who they're gonna ask money to. But yeah, that's the fear now. If I go, it has to be by having a guide. I haven't been there for so long, so I forgot how the change with the money is, I have to learn again. And then the other thing, I will be lost in the streets. So I have to have somebody that can guide me, like an uncle or someone.

Interviewer: Do you have anyone who can guide you?

Ayda: Yes, I have an uncle. He's getting older. But my cousins are someone that I can ask. Because normally by now you have to have kind of like a guidance/bodyguard.

Interpreter: What is something you wish you had in your country that you have right now in America?

Ayda: Oh, safety. Yes, safety. Right now we can still go with the latest jewelry, walking in the street, and being able to have a nice night, go and ride a bike. But over there- No.

Interviewer: What are your goals for future you or your family?

Ayda: I want to learn more. I always wanted to be an orthodontist. And I wasn't able because I kind of changed my path a little bit. Everything changed, I got married and had kids. It is never too late. But I think maybe just learn more about investment and see where that goes.

Interviewer: What city in Salt Lake County do you live in?

Ayda: In Draper.

Interpreter: And what was your hometown in Colombia?

Ayda: Cali.

Interpreter: Sorry, I don't find anything about Colombia. Is that North or South?

Ayda: That is kind of South-East.

Interviewer: Okay. And the final question is, are you a U.S. citizen now?

Ayda: Yes.

Interpreter: And could you briefly talk about what the naturalization process was like?

Ayda: It was okay. So I got my permanent resident and I had to wait for three years. And then in those three years, I learned the test. And then I applied to be citizen, and then the ceremony was the best. So I was like, 'Yes, I got this!' And so it wasn't that hard, it was just waiting after you get your resident, about three years. You are waiting to have a passport - a new American passport!

Interviewer: What kind of advice would you give a person who is trying to apply for citizenship?

Ayda: I think my advice is just start applying. If they already have the three years, and in that moment all you have is to study the test and learn the history of the United States, learn who's the president, learn everything, and learn how to vote. That's the number one because most of us, we don't know how to vote.