

Interviewer: First, would you like to introduce yourself?

Joana: So, I'm Joana. I'm from Brazil. I've been living here for 13 years. My family's here- My three kids and my husband. That's all my family that's here, the rest is all in Brazil.

Interviewer: When did you come to the United States?

Joana: So, I came 13 years ago with my husband.

Interviewer: What was your life like before you immigrated?

Joana: Life was simple because I was very young, so I did not have a lot of responsibilities. I was only 22 when I came here. So I say that I became an adult in United States. All the responsibilities came when I left my mom, my dad, and moved to a different country.

Interviewer: Do you like it better here or back in your home country?

Joana: I like it here better now. Now it feels like home. It didn't in the beginning. But now, after many years now, it feels like home.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about what that first year was like?

Joana: That first year felt like a mistake. I wanted to go back to my country. I did not understand the language. We do not know anybody so it felt like a mistake at the beginning. But that was the first year.

Interviewer: Did you start in Utah or were you in a different part of the U.S.?

Joana: I came to Utah first. Been in Utah for 13 years.

Interviewer: What does your country mean to you?

Joana: My country is my roots. Everything I am I feel like it was built there. It's where everything comes from.

Interviewer: What's your favorite holiday food memory?

Joana: New Year's, because there was a lot of fireworks, big parties at the beach. It is a bit different from here. So that was my favorite.

Interviewer: What are you grateful for about America?

Joana: I'm grateful for the opportunities that I knew that we wouldn't have there [in Brazil]. The doors that were opened.

Interviewer: What is the story behind your name?

Joana: My name is from my grandma. So my mom chose the same name that my grandma had, and also because it rhymes with my sister's name - she liked names that rhymed.

Interviewer: Can I ask what your sister's name is?

Joana: 'Mariana.' So because in Portuguese they don't say 'Jo-an-uh' we say 'Jo-ah-nah.' It kinda rhythms so she liked it.

Interviewer: What are your hopes for your community?

Joana: For my community, I hope that we are more united. Because I feel like we don't know each other. We all live in the same neighborhood, go to the same church, and have jobs very close, but we don't know each other. So I feel like it would be good to get to know people more, the ones that are close to me.

Interviewer: What is the meaning of 'being welcoming' to you?

Joana: I think for me, was being helpful. When you were an immigrant and you leave your family, it was very important to have help, to have people that actually show you where everything was, where we could get certain help. So for me means being helpful.

Interviewer: Do you mind if I ask you why you decided to leave Brazil?

Joana: Yeah, so it wasn't my dream. But was my husband's to pursue a better education. Because we just felt like we would not have that in Brazil. So I came actually to support him on his education. And he came to learn English, go to college. And then he did all that graduated and now he stays here and he works.

Interviewer: What college did he go to?

Joana: BYU.

Interviewer: When have you felt the most connected and the most alone?

Joana: I felt most alone in the beginning, and when I had kids because that's when family wasn't here to help, so you felt like, 'I'm alone.' I feel more connected now. Now, I'm actually working at a school and I feel like I have a responsibility. I actually am helping other people, so I feel connected because I am also helping, I'm also doing something in my community. So I think now, after 13 years, is actually when I feel connected.

Interviewer: What are your hopes for your community?

Joana: To feel more united and less closed.

Interviewer: What are your spiritual/religious beliefs?

Joana: I'm LDS, from the LDS church. I wasn't an LDS all my life, I was Catholic because that's the main religion in my country. But I knew about the church very young. So, I was actually baptized at the LDS church back in Brazil. And that's how I kind of knew about Utah because it was very connected to my religion. And that's why we chose Utah to come, not other states.

Interviewer: Being in America for so many years, do you feel like America has been everything you hoped it would be, or was it different from what you imagined?

Joana: It was different from what we imagined about America. We thought it would be like, ‘You're gonna come here and you're gonna have so many opportunities, then you're gonna be rich and everything's gonna be very fast.’ And yes, we had so many opportunities, but we also had a lot of struggles and it was step-by-step. So it was not as easy as I thought it would be when I was back in Brazil.

Interviewer: Can I ask you about the actual immigration process, how you started it, and how it went?

Joana: So my husband came as a student. And as a student, he came on a student visa and I got a dependent visa. So as a dependent visa, there's not a lot you can do with it. So I could not go to school, I could not go to work. There's many things you cannot do. So I thought that was one of the reasons I was so disconnected and alone, because there was so many things that I, by law, I could not do. And after he graduated, he got a job. Then he got in the process for green card, and I got mine and I was able to get all my documents and get in. Now I can work because we have the green card. But as a dependent, I could not. And then that disconnected me from everything.

Interviewer: You work at a school now is that right?

Joana: Yes, I work with autistic kids, in an autistic unit. So that's when I most feel like I'm needed. That's why when you guys asked ‘When was I more connected?’ It's now, working with the kids.

Interviewer: Is there any specific memory working with the kids that you like to think about?

Joana: Yes, there was this kid who actually spoke Portuguese and he was autistic. Nobody could understand what he said and how to help him. And I felt like I was there and I could help. And he learned English, he was able to learn how to read a little bit. And I felt like I had an important role as someone that spoke Portuguese and someone that could connect with him. So I think this was my favorite memory with the kids... I was the only one that could speak Portuguese to an autistic kid that was new in the school, and to their families. So that felt really great.

Interviewer: What school do you work at?

Joana: It's called Terra Linda Elementary. So it's in my neighborhood, it's the same school where my kids go, so makes it easy.

Interviewer: Have you preserved your cultural traditions while adapting to life here in the U.S.?

Joana: Yes, we get together sometimes with friends from Brazil and we have parties where we teach our kids what they, and the foods that we have- So we teach them all that. The language is always an issue to teach my kids but they know a little bit. But we've started to present things to them, especially the food.

Interviewer: How was your life now compared to back then?

Joana: It's much better. What I have here, how I grew up, and what I can give to my kids it's totally different. I can give them so much more than I had as a kid growing up.

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

Joana: I think the cooking. Teach them how to cook, and cooking the food from our country. That is the most traditional thing that I have passed to them.

Interviewer: What food? What is the staple food in Brazil?

Joana: Rice, beans, meats. The staple food is rice and beans. We always have beans.

Interviewer: What is your happiest memory in America?

Joana: It was when we got the green card. It felt like freedom, we could do so many things!

Interviewer: Are you a U.S. citizen now?

Joana: No, we have the green card.

Interviewer: When will you be eligible to apply for citizenship?

Joana: In two years. Because I think it's five years completely.

Interviewer: How are you and your parents alike and different?

Joana: My parents were very comfortable and very scared of change. I was not. I wanted to change, I wanted something different. They were comfortable where they were with things as they were, but I was not comfortable. I wanted something more. I wanted to have a better house, a better education, being safe, feel safe. Because that's something we did not have in my country - We did not feel safe, like going out. I did not feel safe even to have things. People should not know what you have because it would be stole. So you always felt like you should not have it because someone will take it from you. So I feel like being safe and being able to have better things without being afraid of someone taking it from you.

Interviewer: Is there anything you wish more people knew about Brazil?

Joana: First, that we speak Portuguese because everybody thinks that we speak Spanish. So I think that would be it. And also that is a rich country with lots of rich culture. We are welcoming, that's just how we are. We like to get to know more people. That's why we miss a lot about Brazil. And we like hugs, but Americans don't like hugs.

Interviewer: Any advice for this group?

Joana: I think it's to be open and not being comfortable. You can always get and do better than what your parents did. And probably what they did it was the best that they could. But you guys can do one more, one step forward. I say that the difference between me and my sister is that

someone had to break a cycle, like a cycle from many years of poverty. Of nobody going to college. So someone has to break the cycle. And sometimes it has to be you. You got to not be comfortable with the circle where you are. You got to break that cycle and have more than what your family have.

Interviewer: Can I ask you what you hope that next step for your children is going to be?

Joana: For my children, I hope that they all get a college degree. That they all have their family. To never be comfortable where they are because they already have a good life in here. But I want them to have more because that's what you're supposed to do. You are always supposed to do a little more than your parents did.