

Jose Antonio Munoz Barrantes

Costa Rica



Jose: Good afternoon everybody. I am learning English. My name is Jose Munoz. You call me Jose. I am from Costa Rica. Costa Rica is a little country in Central America. I am 53 years. I have two sons - They live with me here in the United States.

Interviewer: When did you come to the United States?

Jose: February 28. I coming with my two sons, February 28th this year [2023]. I lived for four months in Florida. In June 27, we moved here to Utah.

Interviewer: Who helped you to come to United States?

Jose: The U.S. government. It's difficult to believe, but thank God and thank the U.S.A. government. The U.S.A. government has Diversity Visa Program globally. I won! I won the opportunity and the privilege to live here and take the opportunity. My sons and I, we took the opportunity for the visa for coming here.

Interviewer: Did you play the lottery or did someone help you financially?

Jose: Yeah, the process was really long and expensive but the principal applicant is a patron.

Interviewer: What was your life like before you immigrated?

Jose: I worked in Costa Rica with the technology, I am a professional in technology. I have a Bachelor's in Technology. I worked in banks, in company services. Now, in United States, I am working to get recognized the academic grades for working here in a similar activity. But in Costa Rica, my life was really, really happy, really amazing, and interesting.

Interviewer: Why did you want to come here?

Jose: The principal reason is because the U.S.A. government gave us the opportunity. But behind this opportunity, represents a lot of other amazing opportunities, personal opportunities for growth and professional growth. My two sons, the older son is 22 years and my younger son is 16 years. For them, it's really amazing future to live here. This is the special reason we moved here.

Interviewer: What does Costa Rica mean for you?

Jose: It's my house, all my family, with the exception of two sisters live here, one sister live here one in Florida and the second a sister in Virginia. But the another family, the core family, live in Costa Rica. Costa Rica give us the opportunity to have a house, a profession, get married, get divorced. It represents a lot of memories, it represents a lot of special moments in my life. Costa Rica is a little country is a small geographical space. We have a lot of nature, beach, mountains, rivers, and lakes really in a small geographical space. Represents so many special moments and special places in my life.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about the cultures of your country?

Jose: Costa Rica is traditional. The official religion is Catholic. We are a traditional country because we are a small country for this reason the people are calm in our country, we don't have a military, don't have armaments, only the Civil Police. Costa Rica has a culture of peace, a culture of education. The Political Constitution has a clause that obligates the government to bring a percent of money each year specifically for education. Another element in our culture we like to protect the natural environment because our principal incoming is tourists. In the last year, a professional services like call center, duty-free spaces, has been coming, they are another incoming reason that Costa Rica protects this model to do business.

Interviewer: What is your 'American Dream'?

Jose: Wow okay. To live here is my dream. But, in this moment my dream is the opportunity to see my two sons grow up, professionally grow up, personally grow up, make their family here, that my granddaughters and grandsons grow up here. In my case, a personal dream is to get a job in my specialization, in my professional field. I am working to achieve this objective. I am studying English, it's my weakness, but I need to work strong in this area. But my dream is the happiness of my sons. This is my principal dream.

Interviewer: What is your favorite holiday?

Jose: Christmas. In this moment, in the United States, we enjoy Thanksgiving Day because the Americans celebrate really amazing. But in Costa Rica, it's Christmas. In Costa Rica usually don't celebrate Thanksgiving Day because this date really special to Americans, not Costa Ricans. In Costa Rica, my favorite date is Christmas because we prepare a special food, *tamales*. Tamales is a special activity because all family meets in the same in a house or in a special place and all participate (granddaughter, grandfather, grandmother, sons, daughter, etc.). The whole family meets to cook tamales and drink coffee. We have a beverage, *agua dulce*, which is a sweet beverage with tamales. It's delicious, really delicious. It's a special date in Costa Rica, we enjoy a lot.

Interviewer: Costa Rica is a U.S. territory where Americans can go without like Visa, and you mentioned that Costa Rica is big on protecting the nature. How do you feel about the number of tourists that come and their effect on the natural ecosystem of Costa Rica?

Jose: Costa Rica has a surge of tourists coming. Costa Rica has special design to protect environment- Policies to protect the environment. But tourists keep coming and dollars are welcome. But the policies, the government policies, is our mission to protect our environment. Another thing is the local tourists. Costa Rica has two seasons- summer and winter- only two seasons. In winter, the tourists don't like to visit us, but the business industry promote the local tourists- The prices are lowered and we can visit the special places that usually in summer is visited by another kind of tourists. But we have a lot of beautiful places, for this reason the local tourists enjoy these places too.

Interviewer: What is the story behind your name?

Jose: Costa Rica is a traditional place, as I mentioned a minute ago. My father is Catholic. (My mother passed away too many years ago), but my father and my mother were Catholics. My name is the same name as 'Joseph' the carpenter, father of Jesus, the carpenter. For this reason, my name is 'Jose.' Another reason, my name is the same name that my father has because for tradition the first son received the same name that the father had.

Interviewer: What are you grateful for about America?

Jose: For bringing us here. I am grateful to U.S.A. government because they bring us the privilege, gift, opportunity. But the principle reason is the privilege. It's a privilege to live here because America is made for so many persons, so many cultures, so many ideas, so many characteristics. It's really amazing. I like it a lot. When I was living in Florida, I received some classes at First Coast Technology College, which is similar to the Community College in Salt Lake. We participated in a conversation where we all sat at the same table, we had the opportunity to talk with a Ukrainian couple, two Russian girls, the American teacher, one Brazilian person, and I am from Costa Rica. So five nationalities at the same table. It is amazing, I liked it a lot. This is a reason I am grateful to America for giving us, to my sons, the privilege to enjoy these moments. In Costa Rica, it is rare to enjoy these moments when you can sit together with another people from another countries.

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

Jose: This kind of activity [interviewing for *Faces of Salt Lake County*]. For me, these really special activities represent that I am welcomed in the United States. I will never forget in the Texas airport in April, the official immigrant received our credentials and he smiled at us and told us 'Welcome to America, it is a pleasure to receive you, like a permanent resident.' Wow! That moment, those seconds, that simple moment, represents the special welcoming to this country. Wow. In Costa Rica, we have slang that there is no price on a moment. Our life is composed of a series of moments.

Interviewer: When in life have you felt most alone or connected?

Jose: Most alone was when I lost my mother I was 12 years. My mother passed away because she has a sick problem in her brain. And most connected was when coming here with my sons, connected with my sons. Because when coming here it is necessary to bring forth the links, the relationship between fathers and sons. If you live apart, or if you have fight, or problems inside the family, oh *fatal*, horrible. I choose to connect with my two sons to bring forth the relationship and survive and enjoy the experience even until now. Now, we have only 7 months been here, I want to enjoy years into the future. We need to stay connected to survive this experience this opportunity here.

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

Jose: The *tamales* traditions. Another tradition is *gallo pinto*,¹ which is a typical food in my country. My sons love this food. I passed this tradition to my sons and here in the United States he cooks *gallo pinto*. Thank God we can find the ingredients to cook the traditional foods. Another tradition is to pray. In the moment, we are not continuous to Catholics, and we are not Mormons. My cousin is my neighbor, and he is Mormon. I love some details of the Mormon religion. It is a really special religion. I find similarities between Catholics and Mormons. This is a rich situation for me to pass to my sons and reinforce the religion and love to Jesus.

Interviewer: What are your hopes for your community?

Jose: My community in this moment is really good. We live in Eagle Mountain, Saratoga Springs. I love this community because the neighborhood is good people. The great majority is Mormon, and they are a people that are really nice. They are a kind people. They welcomed and received us with love and received us with special things, sometimes food. They invite us to participate to church and different activities that they have between the church and the community. My hope for them is to continue to grow up in this environment, this healthy environment. This environment is similar to Costa Rica in the sense that is a nice people. In Costa Rica we have slang, *pura vida*. *Pura vida* is good life, be nice, be happy wherever. In my neighborhood, my community, I live this slang day to day. I hope to continue living this way.

Interviewer: What was it like growing up in Costa Rica?

Jose: Good. We grew up in peace. We grew up with good education. We grew up with tolerance. We learn be tolerant especially since we have borders with Nicaragua and Panama. Panama is a good country. Nicaragua is really difficult because it has military and has a lot of problems bought votes. But, Costa Rica is a really good experience because it teach us to be tolerant, to be grateful. For example, in this moment we have grateful with U.S.A. government for this privilege. But this fact permits us to incorporate our past lives in Costa Rica, which was a good life, but now life is better.

Interviewer: What are some similarities you notice between Costa Rica and the U.S.?

Jose: Really difficult question because they are different countries in size, etc. The people is nice. The people is kind. In terms of education, we have a more theoretical education, but in United States it is theoretical and practical. The similar is that both countries have a special budget to education, to special programs, to academic programs. This is similar to Costa Rica, but in this country, I see that it is enforced to practice both sides- theoretical and practical. Costa Rica is more theoretical they live because they do not have much research to pass to practice the theoretical, but here the practice is really excellent. Another similarity is the tourist. For example, Utah has a lot of beautiful places and has a strong incomings of dollars in tourist. Another similarity is, in Costa Rica last years the government has called a push for a technological industry. This is the same in the United States, especially Utah. This is a reason why we moved

¹ *Gallo pinto* translates to, 'spotted rooster.' It is a traditional dish that uses rice and beans as base and has many variations

from Florida to Utah- Utah is a really attractive state in the technical industry. Utah has really strong companies in telecommunication. The last similarity is the food. There is really delicious food in the United States, similar to Costa Rica.

Interviewer: You said that living in America is a dream, has there ever been a time that you wished you were back in Costa Rica?

Jose: No, no, no. I want to go back to Costa Rica to visit my family, but my life is here. My sons love United States. I want to go back to visit my family, but not to live. [My sons] love United States and my son has a girlfriend in Costa Rica and he calls her saying 'come here.' Only for visit my family, but United States is our house, our home, our future. When we took the decision to move here is because we analyze different points that change your life. No, no no. Thank you, but no.

Interviewer: Does your son go to school?

Jose: Pablo, my older son, he is studying remote, by Internet, in an university in Costa Rica. Because when we moved he was studying in the last year for his Bachelor in Technology. He's applied for a special project, a thesis, to finish the grade. In the first semester of the next year, he is going to graduate and finish studying in Costa Rica.

Interviewer: Since he is finishing his degree in Costa Rica, will he be accepted in America?

Jose: This is an excellent question. United States has a really strong system to incorporate academic grades, but you need to document and present evidence, present details of what you studied in your other country. For example, the company here in United States, ECE, is a company that analyzes your academic grades in your origin country and asks you the details of the material, the details of the credits. This company asked you for all the documents and evidence. They analyze and match the academics in United States and finally bring you results. They either say 'Okay, your bachelor is equivalent to a bachelor here' or say, 'No, your bachelor needs more material to incorporate your bachelor here.' It all depends on the career, the study, it depends on the difference of the elements. Each case is different.

Interviewer: When you came to the U.S. did you go to school, like Horizonte, to learn English?

Jose: My profession is technology. I have technical English, but the English level in Costa Rica was enough. Here no. Here I need to reinforce my English knowledge. For this reason, in Florida I took some classes in the First Coast Technical College, similar to Salt Lake Community College. But only four months we lived in Florida, then we moved here. In the morning today, we enrolled me in Salt Lake Community College to retake my studies in English. My sons are bilingual. When we lived in Costa Rica I paid for special classes for them in English. My youngest son integrated perfectly in the high school in the moment, in Cedar Valley, Eagle Mountain and my older son is bilingual too, he's working in this moment. I just need to work on English for me.

