

Omar Ramirez

Guatemala



Interviewer: When did you come to the United States?

Omar: I came here in 2019.

Interviewer: How do you spell your name?

Omar: O-M-A-R.

Interviewer: What's the story behind your name?

Omar: To be honest, I don't really know. But I've heard that my name comes from like in Arabic meaning 'waters.' I don't really know what it means, but that's the only thing I know. It's just a name that my parents thought that would be good for me.

Interviewer: What is your country of origin and what does it mean to you?

Omar: My country of origin is Guatemala. To me, it's the place where I feel home, where I feel safe, because that's where I was born. Everywhere I go, I always think about one day going back there because like my whole family is there.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about the process of coming here from Guatemala?

Omar: Well, it was pretty hard at the beginning because of the language. I didn't speak English at all- Spanish is my first language. It was really hard, but I feel like this state is probably one of the best, if not THE best. People here welcomed me when I got here, and people were friendly. They just made me felt like at home.

Interviewer: Who helped you come?

Omar: It was my dad and then I had family here. I had two uncles here.

Interviewer: What are your hopes for your community in Guatemala?

Omar: Now Guatemala is going through a serious event and it is a tough time in Guatemala now. So, my hope is that we, as a community, just unite and start standing up for our beliefs and start fighting for our country.

Interviewer: What are your hopes for your community here in Utah?

Omar: I only work here. To be honest, I don't really know that many Guatemalans here. Most of my friends are from Mexico or America. I only know a couple of people from Guatemala here, but I would like to get to know more people here so that we can do something even though we're not in Guatemala.

Interviewer: What are you grateful for in America?

Omar: A lot of things. America has given me many opportunities. Like a better job and a better life. Also the language. The culture, I really like the American culture and just the people in general.

Interviewer: What are your religious or spiritual beliefs?

Omar: I'm Catholic.

Interviewer: Would you like to go back to your country?

Omar: Yes.

Interviewer: What is your favorite holiday in the U.S.?

Omar: I think it would be Thanksgiving.

Interviewer: What was your experience like when you first came here and started to learn English?

Omar: It was hard. I didn't think that I was gonna be able to understand or speak it at all, because it was really hard. The first months, or I think up to the first year, I was just having a hard time. I thought to myself, 'I'm never gonna be able to speak English.' But, I just never gave up.

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

Omar: My parents, we kind of share the same beliefs. For example, like religion, everyone in our family is Catholic, so we pretty much share all the same beliefs. Being here has changed a little bit of my perspective about things. But in general, we pretty much believe the same.

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

Omar: The meaning of 'being welcoming' is when you go to a place and you feel like you're home because way that people treat you is so respectful. Even though I'm not from here and people can tell that I'm not American, I'm not white, people are friendly in general. I think that's what it means to me.

Interviewer: What object tells the story of your life?

Omar: I always carry like a cross like this [referencing his necklace] with me. I think that would be my object.

Interviewer: Do you have a job?

Omar: Yes.

Interviewer: What is your job?

Omar: It's kind of like excavation.

Interviewer: What do you do?

Omar: We just dig holes and fix sewer lines and mostly stuff like that.

Interviewer: Did you get a chance to go to college?

Omar: Yes. I went to college for only one year because I got a scholarship. I still want to go back but I just haven't gotten another scholarship.

Interviewer: Would you mind telling me which college you went to?

Omar: Salt Lake Community College.

Interviewer: How was it?

Omar: I really liked it.

Interviewer: Are there any careers that you would like to pursue right now?

Omar: Computer Science.

Interviewer: What is your 'American Dream'?

Omar: I would like to one day like get my degree in computer science. I would like to work remotely so that way I can visit Guatemala and still make money. I would like to also, with my money, help people back in Guatemala by offering them education by paying for their school so they can have a better life. My 'American Dream' is to make their 'American Dream' come true.

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

Omar: I think traditions would be like, mostly a religious tradition like celebrating holidays like Christmas and Thanksgiving. Even though in Guatemala we don't celebrate Thanksgiving.

Interviewer: Can you explain to me the difference in culture between Guatemala and the United States?

Omar: The food is different, like a lot. Where I come from we don't have a lot of fast food, it's mostly homemade food. So that's different. With music, we don't listen to the kind of music that people listen to here. People are friendly here but it's different. This is something that when I got here I was a little bit shocked by because where I come from people say, 'Good morning,' or when you see someone in the morning, even though you don't know the person, you just say, 'Hi' to them. And people don't do that here in America.

Interviewer: What was it like growing up in Guatemala?

Omar: Even though we, my family, weren't rich or anything, we had everything that we wanted. And I think we were happy. The place where I grew up is in the mountains and we had everything that we wanted. Our parents, if there was something that we didn't have, they would do their best to get it. So I don't think that I would change anything of it.

Interviewer: Does your family live here with you?

Omar: Most of my family is still in Guatemala. I've got here only like my dad and my sister and like cousins and uncles.

Interviewer: If you're someone who has become a citizen of the United States through naturalization, can you please share your experience of the process of becoming a U.S. citizen?

Omar: I haven't become one.

Interviewer: Was Utah the first state you came to?

Omar: Yes.

Interviewer: Are you a green card holder?

Omar: No.

Interviewer: Are you a DACA student?

Omar: No.

Interviewer: Do you have any advice for this group, as most of them are immigrants and refugees from different countries?

Omar: Well, I think what I would say is just keep doing what you guys are doing. It seems like you guys really got this. So just keep it up.

Interviewer: What does help you to integrate and adapt to your community?

Omar: I think school helped me a lot, and it's still helping me. That's how I am meeting different people and new people. Also, church is helping me a lot. And people in general, like friends.

Interviewer: Did you speak English before coming here?

Omar: No, I didn't.

Interviewer: Where did you start learning English?

Omar: As I got here. So that was like over four years ago, I think.

Interviewer: Did you go to Horizonte?

Omar: No, at first I went to Highland High School.

Interviewer: What year were you at Highland?

Omar: I think it was like 2019 and '20. That was when COVID hit so I couldn't finish, so I had to go to Horizonte.

Interviewer: Do you have any hobbies?

Omar: I like the outdoors. I like hiking, mountain biking, anything outdoors. I like taking pictures sometimes.

Interviewer: In Guatemala, do you guys play soccer?

Omar: Yeah, we play soccer.