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Episode 8
GLORIA
from Brazil



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Episode 9
SILVIA
from
HONDURAS



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**EPISODE #7 — LELYS
FROM VENEZUELA**

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**EPISODE #8 — GLORIA
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FROM HONDURAS**

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EPISODE #7—LELYS FROM VENEZUELA

GUEST INTRO/00:40

On a quest for adventure, Lelys traveled to Spain from Venezuela in 2016. An accomplished language teacher of Portuguese and Italian, her career Plan A was to make her living in Europe teaching languages. That's when she met her Spanish husband-to-be—a long-time Bostonian—on vacation in Madrid. The couple's bond soon grew into a decade long, long-distance relationship before Lelys made Boston her home.

She soon discovered that her international certificates as a Zumba instructor—career Plan B—rather than her language teaching credentials, morphed into her Plan A. Being a Zumba instructor ignited a passion in Lelys and attracted and inspired students of all ages and body types. Her students say going to fitness class with Lelys is like coming to a great party! Lelys adapts the fitness routines to the needs of the students, always encouraging them to top their personal best without shaming or pushing too hard.

This interview was recorded just before the 2020 lockdown when Lelys had plans of opening her own brick and mortar fitness studio in Boston. Without skipping a beat, she brought her Zumba classes online to great reviews. Hopefully once the pandemic is behind us she'll open her doors to her students who follow her anywhere for her unique brand of fitness fun.

SEEKING ADVENTURE/02:45

DEBORAH:

So Lelys, what were you just saying about your reasons for coming to this country, as you said they were different from other peoples'?

LELYS:

Yes, I am lucky because I became an immigrant for love. I met my husband in Spain in 2016. I was looking for new, new experiences, new ways because my country, Venezuela, has a hard political situation and looking for opportunities. I was working, I was with my family. I was good, thanks God, but I was looking for new things. Adventure. And I went to Spain because my grandfather came from Canaria.

DEBORAH:

Canary Islands?

LELYS:

Canary Islands. And I went to Spain and I say, maybe I can do something there. I had studied language. I thought that once I was living in Italy, that was my big dream in this life. But I came from Spain. I went to Spain to see what I can find there. I met my husband. My husband is from Spain from Madrid. We met in Madrid. I was visiting my friends there and he was visiting his family. And he lived here in Boston for many years and he was on vacation when we met. That is why that I came to Boston. I never imagined to come to Boston. Then we established a relationship. I traveled for 10 years to Boston. And finally we decide that I move here.

DEBORAH:

So it was a long-term, long-distance relationship.

LELYS:

Yes. It was.

DEBORAH:

Wow. What were some of the biggest obstacles for you coming to this country?

LELYS:

The weather. Venezuela is like this spring is spring time, the most part of the year. When I live in Caracas, it's spring weather. Summer. But never is it so cold. I think that the only places colder than Boston are Canada and Siberia.

DEBORAH:

Okay.

LELYS:

Yes. I think that I am not a traditional immigrant because when you talk with immigrants, they had a hard process to begin here. People that pass, borderlines, people that need to separate from family.

DEBORAH:

Did you leave family behind?

A "LIGHT" IMMIGRANT/06:30

LELYS:

Yes, I leave my mom, my sister. But I came here because I want. And it's a personal decision, but many people came here because they were forced to come here. Because they needed to leave the life that they had. People that suffer persecution. People that suffer hungry or social problems, hard social problem. I am a light immigrant.

DEBORAH:

A light immigrant?

LELYS:

Yes.

DEBORAH:

Interesting. I never heard that term before.

LELYS:

You can use it. I leave you. You can use it. For that because I can, and I have security when I move here. My husband lived here for many years. I have, I had a house to come. I had food. I have everything. He was my support thanks for my husband and that, that made my life better. That I feel better. I miss my way there. I miss my friends. I miss my family. I miss my environment, but I feel comfortable here too, because I'm not alone.

DEBORAH:

Right.

LELYS:

And I came because I want. And I came for love.

DEBORAH:

Right, right. So you and your husband are both immigrants and you've made a decision to make the United States and Boston your home. What's the biggest reason why

you've stayed here as opposed to living in another country?

LELYS:

Because he lived here.

DEBORAH:

Ok. Ok.

LELYS:

That was because maybe he was living in Memphis. I will be in Memphis.

VENEZUELA TODAY/08:36

DEBORAH:

Can you say a few words about the political situation in Venezuela today?

LELYS:

When I came, even five years ago, political and economic situation in Venezuela was bad, but, now it's worse and it's getting worse because we didn't, we have not changed in all this time. It's around 20 years that we go back and back and back. People is leaving the country because they need new opportunity. People desire to live better. Nobody wants to leave their own country. Only adventure people, or their reason, for example, like me, that you meet a guy in another country, but nobody wants to leave their own country or be forced to leave. But living in Venezuela now is really hard. I continue to go because my mom is there. My mom needs my help and she's getting a bit older. Yes. And she needs you need help. And I feel grateful to be here. And help her because if we live together, we can make company, but it's hard to live there. But if I stay outside, I can visit her. But it's not frequently, but twice a year maybe I can go to my country and visit my mom, but I can help her better than if I will, if I will be there.

THE FITNESS WORLD/ 10:43

DEBORAH:

Okay. Tell me a little bit about how you got started in the fitness world. I'm so impressed with all the certifications and the training that you've had. It's extraordinary.

LELYS:

Well, I am a language teacher. But no English teacher, of course. I teach Italian and Portuguese in Venezuela. That was my bachelor's degree, but in Venezuela or in Latin countries you need to make different things. When I came to the United States, I make a

Plan B. Plan B was teach Zumba. I take the certification in Venezuela and I say, does this mean international certification? And I say, well, if I move to Spain or United States I can teach Zumba there, but plan B become Plan A. When I start to teach Zumba, I see the fitness world is a world. And I, start to met people and I met a good friend that is from Venezuela, too. She's from my same city where I grew up, but we met here in Boston. She's around 20 years living here. She pushed me on to make another thing all the time. I was afraid about my language and she said, "You can do it. Come on. We can take another, another license." And I'm very grateful to meet this lady, because she was, she inspired me to make things that I think, my language is stopped to do it.

That's it that I start to take a license to teach with weights, weight classes, then we start with pilates. I am in love with pilates classes is amazing world. And that's it. I continue educating in different disciplines between inside Zumba and in other disciplines too, because we, we take together for example Aqua Zumba, toning, Zumba toning, Zumba Kicks, another discipline inside the Zumba world, but we take other certifications outside of Zumba.

DEBORAH:

So that's a whole world that was your Plan B. So when you were in Venezuela, you weren't into fitness teaching?

LELYS:

No, I was.

DEBORAH:

What was the moment when you decided that was going to be the work that you would do here?

LELYS:

I love exercise. All my life I do something. I run, I went to the gym. Aerobics, I love aerobics classes, and I love dancing. And Zumba is the mix of dancing and exercise. That was perfect for me. I say, okay, I should do that. That's it that I become a Zumba instructor.

HOBBIES/14:18

DEBORAH:

Ah. Aside from your work and fitness Lelys, what were some of the hobbies that you had when you were in Venezuela? I'd like to hear about those. I know you have many, many

interests. Tell me about the mandalas.

LELYS:

Coloring mandalas was old fashioned hobby that I have been when I lived in Venezuela I usually coloring mandalas.

DEBORAH:

Do you draw the original mandala?

LELYS:

No, no. I bought the mandala book only for coloring. I like to mix these combinations with colors. Before the study language, I start to study architecture. Maybe, from that I bring that kind of thing that works with forms and colors.

DEBORAH:

Interesting. Yes. Wow. Did you want to be an architect?

LELYS:

Yes.

DEBORAH:

When did you change your mind?

LELYS:

Oh, life! If you don't make the change, life makes the change for you.

DEBORAH:

Oh yes.

LELYS:

Then I passed for letters when I studied language. And now it's the fitness. I don't know what, what is the next step.

ALL THINGS CONNECT/15:52

DEBORAH:

It's all about creative energy. I feel like people have said to me, how could you teach yoga and do writing and do all these things? And I, I think everything's related. It's about removing the obstacles inside your body and your mind that keep the life force from moving around your body.

LELYS:

Yeah. I agree with you. Everything is connected.

DEBORAH:

Everything is connected.

LELYS:

When you think about, biologist that is study electrical engineer, for example. And

you say, what, what are different things? No, they connection that they have about the equipment. Different things, but everything is connected.

LINK TO VENEZUELA/16:51

DEBORAH:

Absolutely. And I think it makes learning more in more permanent when you're learning something and how it's connected in so many different ways. Did you bring something with you from Venezuela that you've always kept with you? Some little object or something that?

LELYS:

Well, I bring my dog.

DEBORAH:

Your dog?

LELYS:

My dog. That was my daughter for 16 years. But he passed, she passed away three years ago.

DEBORAH:

What kind of dog was she?

LELYS:

It was a beautiful and lovely golden retriever. Beautiful. Everybody loved her, but this is the bad part to have a dog that they live less than us.

DEBORAH:

Right. Shorter.

LELYS:

Yes. when I talked with my husband I say, "I'm going to United States. I move. Only if I can go with my dog."

DEBORAH:

What was her name?

LELYS:

Sukkah.

DEBORAH:

Sukkah.

LELYS:

Yes. Beautiful. But after she passed away, three years became really hard because she was, like I told everybody, she was my bond with Venezuela.

DEBORAH:

Oh, she was like—

LELYS:

Because she connected me, how would you say?

DEBORAH:

Like a link to it?

LELYS:

My link with Venezuela, my memories from Venezuela seen through her. She was a little part of my life in Venezuela here because we share many things in Venezuela. She bring me that the memory is my link with my country, with my roots. Was the only thing that I can bring with me. When she leave was really hard for me.

DEBORAH:

I can hear that.

LELYS:

After that, I just started to work more to have my mind busy in other things.

FUTURE DREAMS/19:27

DEBORAH:

Speaking of which, keeping busy with your mind, what, what are your dreams right now?

LELYS:

I think to have another dog.

DEBORAH:

Okay.

LELYS:

My husband has agreed to it. Finally. And I want to live quiet. That's it. That I want live quiet, enjoy the things that I do.

DEBORAH:

And your business.

LELYS:

And my business. I love to bring joy and health to people. This is the part that I love more from my work.

DEBORAH:

You're making such a big contribution. By making people have fun and get fit at the same time. You just generate that when you came the night that the Mayor was there and you had him exercising in front of everybody. We could see that you inspire people.

LELYS:

Well. My students say that they want to come to my classes because I'm not military

bootcamp classes. For example, they say that I push on them to make them exercise become healthier.

DEBORAH:

Are you saying that they like it because you're not moving military or because you are military?

LELYS:

Are not a military, but softly, I immerse them in the exercise.

DEBORAH:

Great. Great. Well, thank you so much Lelys for sharing your journey

LELYS:

Thank you for inviting me.

DEBORAH:

And it's been great talking with you. Hope to see you again soon.

LELYS:

Thank you.



As I listened to Lelys share how she is an immigrant because of love, I realized that she radiates love everywhere. Not just for the love of her husband or her love for her dear departed canine companion Sukka, Lelys is someone who radiates a loving nature to whomever she meets. This accounts for her loyal students who follow her to whatever studio she might be teaching from or virtually online. Her optimistic nature and her passion for health and fitness inspire all who meet her and I am sure success will follow her wherever she goes.



EPISODE #8— GLORIA FROM BRAZIL

INTRO TO GLORIA/ 00:45

When her marriage fell apart, Gloria decided to answer her brother's invitation to emigrate to the U.S. from Brazil with her two small girls. She needed to start her life over again. The prospect of staying in Brazil, moving in with her mother whose child-rearing philosophy was in conflict with Gloria's, was not an option.

So Gloria took the leap, letting fate decide if the pieces for her move fell into place without a major struggle. Her visa came through and an apartment opened up in her brother's building in Boston. So whatever obstacles might have kept her in Brazil melted away.

She soon discovered that paying rent and getting her girls into good schools wasn't going to be easy. She started her house cleaning business Nice and Easy Cleaning Service. That's when she encountered the people she would call her earth angels who became part of her adopted family.

Most of this interview was recorded just before 2020 lockdown when Gloria and I were able to meet in person. I caught up with her later by telephone to get her take on living through this pandemic. And you'll hear a few minutes from that conversation.

GETTING TO THE U.S./02:22

DEBORAH:

So tonight's guest is Gloria, who has an interesting story of what brought her to the U.S. and what she's been doing ever since.

Hi Gloria. Thank you so much for being here. Tell us a little bit about yourself and what brought you to the United States.

GLORIA:

As you said, my name is Gloria. I came here

a very long time ago with my two children at an age very, very young. Since then, I have lived here and made this country my home.

DEBORAH:

What was the, what motivated you to come? Was there some challenge in your life?

GLORIA:

Oh, yes. I came to this country for two reasons. My marriage was just ended. My two kids and I were living with my parents in their house. My children at that time they were 5 and 7 years old. And I wanted to raise them without any interference. And, you know, grandparents! There is no way that you can tell, "No this is my children and gonna be raised my way." And was about too much love. And it wasn't good for none of them. And the second reason that made me feel more into come was because my brother was living here and he invited me to come. We called on the phone. Sometimes I answered the phone. And he knew I was there kind of lost. Not too desperate. It was recently the breakup. But I knew in the future it would be something like maybe I would be out of control. And according to my brother, it would be a very good experience for me and my daughters as well. Since I had nothing to lose like I told you, I decided to pursue that. After I had all the documentations and the visas, I decided to come.

DEBORAH:

I like what you said earlier, when we were talking before we started recording, you said, you said you didn't want to force it. If it was meant to be, things would go smoothly. And if there were obstacles, you would take that as a sign.

GLORIA:

Like I said, I was lost. I didn't know which way. I thought going to a different state in my country. I'm from Brazil. It's huge. I can go far and start my life over again with my kids. And then my brother invited me. It was a second chance. But I didn't know what would be good for me for sure. Then what I asked to God to give me a sign. Then

I said, Ok. If it's going to be hard to get a visa, that's not the way. I'm not going. I'm not going to risk my kids. I'm not going to risk my self. But if this happens, I know it's meant to be and I'll take as a yes answer. And everything worked so well.

DEBORAH:

So when, when you came here, did you encounter any obstacles or surprises?

GLORIA:

I think in my case it was a particular thing. My brother lived in a small apartment with his wife. He was married for just a few years, a recent marriage, and his mother-in-law who also came from Brazil. And we didn't have the chance to stay with them. What he said to me on the phone when I was in Brazil, and then I decided to come. He told me, "There is an apartment empty in the same building where I live. I'm going to rent it for you."

DEBORAH:

Wow!

GLORIA:

"And then you'll be responsible to pay for it with your money. Because it's gonna be good for you. The kids a transition for them. Everything is going to be so new." And you know. Now I know how crazy I was. I should be worried. But when you're young you're not very worried about things. And I said. I'll take it.

DEBORAH:

How many years ago was that?

GLORIA:

Oh, 20 years ago.

FACING REALITY/07:53

DEBORAH:

Wow.

GLORIA:

And then I said OK. It's crazy because it's a rent to pay, kids to feed. When I came the apartment was running the rent and my kids needed winter clothes. They were an age to growing. New shoes. New clothes. You know. Different food. And to make them. I was so worried about their emo-

tional. In the beginning when we came, we went to Florida first, to Disney World. We stayed five days there. Everything was like vacation. And for me too! I didn't care. I wasn't living the real life. I was on vacation. And then when I got here in the apartment. A bed for my kids, one mattress on the floor for me. A little chair. No furniture. A TV that I think was kind of not black and white, but in very bad condition. Was a different world than my reality. But I didn't care yet you know. Everything was in process for me. I just was living the moment. Not with. When I was in Disneyland, it was a vacation. Here I knew was different. But I wasn't yet, living the real life.

STRUGGLES/09:32

DEBORAH:

So how did you, how did you solve it? How did you get into the real life? Is that, did you have struggles? Were there any struggles?

GLORIA:

Oh so many struggles.

DEBORAH:

Tell me about some of the struggles you encountered.

GLORIA:

Oh my God. So many struggles. Imagine someone from a different country with two little kids that you love more than anything. Like every mother. I'm no different. And then you're not able to manage everything. Work and kids and money and I had to work. My first job was in a catering company. You know when they do functions and you serve. And sometimes a few times I was kind of humiliated. Because I was once serving someone and he said, "I don't want you to serve me." And I said, "Why not?" and he said, "I want a native language to do that." I was there doing my best. Humble. I remember that hurt me so much. It was so hard for me and I treat everyone so well. And thank God in a table of nine people the other nine people were so caring. So wonderful. Then I said, OK, don't take. And other cases. But we...I want to forget about those things because I found, like I said, so many angels that lifted me up.

DEBORAH:

When we talked earlier, you called them Earth Angels. Tell me about, tell me about one of the Earth Angels.

EARTH ANGELS/11:32

GLORIA:

Oh my God. I have one a family that I worked for them. It's because I had my children and I started as a housecleaner there. And little by little she got to know me. And then I started to also babysit her kids. And we became a family. And so intense our friendship that I remember once my daughter. Well, this is a long story. My daughter was finishing middle school and she has to go a high school. And I wanted her to live where it's easy for me to control them. To pick them up and to know where they were since I had to work. It wasn't so easy at that time when nobody had cell phones. Also, little kid with a cell phone. But this is another case. I went to see St. Joseph Academy to be able to put them there. They had three plans. First of all, you have to submit and then you pay a certain amount. It was a little high for me. I didn't have that money. And they have Plan A, B, and C. And I said, "Oh my God." I went to speak with the lady. She sympathized with my kids. And I remember telling her I came with mascara because this way I can remember that I cannot cry and I remember I was crying. Oh I wasn't supposed to cry. I put mascara on because I knew with mascara I could not cry and it would force me to be strong. But it didn't work.

DEBORAH:

So did you have streaks going down your face?

GLORIA:

I said didn't work. Didn't work. And because I said to her I don't fit Plan B or plan C. and she said I'm sorry there is nothing I can do. And then God—I think life is a puzzle. It knows someone is going to fit that space for you. It's something so amazing. My life is full of blessings. I'm so blessed. And then I went that day, you won't believe. And then my client said to me, "Gloria what's going on?" I said, "Nothing." And she said, "Bobby's here." Bob is her husband. "He is waiting for you in the living room. He wants to talk to you. We know you need help." I was at that time so emotional. So everything made me cry. And I hate that. I didn't want to cry. I want to be strong. And then Bob was there and he said to me, "How much money do you need?" He had a checkbook. He said, "How much do you want? Tell me."

DEBORAH:

He knew you needed it to send your children.

GLORIA:

He knew something. And I said to him. I need to pay for my daughter because it's gonna be safer for her. It's gonna be easier for her and it's gonna be easier for me but I don't have the money to give them. Oh I forgot to say, the lady said, "I cannot do anything for you, but I can make a plan D for you, but I cannot make it free for you for this big payment." And I didn't have. He said, "I trust you. I know you gonna pay. I'll make plan D for you." Was amazing but I still have this thing that I didn't have the money and without that no plan D. God just. It's so amazing. And he said and I said the money that I need. I had maybe hundred dollars. And I said to him, "I'll pay you back." And he said, "No." I need to pay you back. Because maybe I'll need other times. Now that I know that I have this, like they used to say to me, "We are your nest." They always say to me. And then he gave me the money. They only accepted half of the money. At least half of the money they accepted. And because of them my daughter could go to a nice school and she also was accepted into Boston College. All those things made the path change for her.

PATHS TO CHANGE/17:05

DEBORAH:

It made the path change for you too.

GLORIA:

Oh, for me a lot. Knowing that my daughter was in a small Catholic place and close to my house, knowing that when I get there, they knew my last name. They knew. And also I became more noticeable for them because my situation they knew. And I never ever gave any excuse to not pay. I paid everything. She stayed there for four years. And it was amazing. And I'm thankful. This same couple. Once I needed to move but nobody wants to rent for someone with two kids. And they always give an excuse. And I knew it was an excuse. I needed a place.

DEBORAH:

Do you think that it was because you were immigrant?

GLORIA:

No, I don't think because I was immigrant. I

think because I was an, I am a house cleaner, with two kids was very unsafe insecurity for them. Especially by law to take me out.

DEBORAH:

But they didn't know your true character.

GLORIA:

No. And then they always say, always give them. I always, Oh, I cried. So they said, "Oh, someone was before you." Then I spoke with Bob. He said, "I'm going to be your co-signer." Well, like this, I found the place and it, yeah, they are my.

DEBORAH:

Earth angel for sure.

GLORIA:

That's case. One of them.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/18:37

DEBORAH:

That was a great story. Tell me something about a success that you feel proud of since you've been here.

GLORIA:

I have many moments that I felt. I think the most emotional and scary moment. I have so many emotionals moment, but when my older daughter graduated from high school and I knew she had a dream to go to—and she's a bright student student, oh my God. If I tell about her. She's in the list has a book of the best students of America. She is something and she deserves. I was so proud to see some of my clients with me supporting me there. And I was so.

DEBORAH:

At her at her graduation?

GLORIA:

High school, graduating high school, but I was so proud that for me, it was, and I was so scared about now did most important for her college. How many children wants they cannot afford that?

DEBORAH:

Right. Right.

GLORIA:

And then after four years, my daughter graduates college. It was so good for me, was such a like something achievement that now she's okay. And I made it. I made it.

DEBORAH:

It's a real success.

GLORIA:

Oh yeah. And knowing like for me, I'm proud that we, we could manage to. Like I mean, independent, I survived. I went with my mistake. I went to interview. I take my daughters to the doctor by myself. I did everything with fear, but I confront all the fear doesn't mean that I had so many fear, but didn't stop me. Didn't stop for anything.

DEBORAH:

That's fantastic.

GLORIA:

Now wasn't easy, but it was possible. And I knew, I knew everything that I have.

DEBORAH:

Were you like that in Brazil? Did you have that kind of confidence before? Or is that something that you grew into through your experience?

GLORIA:

How can I say in Brazil? I didn't have that situation. Everything was much easier for me. I was in a different category. I wasn't a different character here. I was the beginning new different thing in Brazil. I know what I was. I knew how it was I was doing what I learned to do here. Sometimes I remember that I thought it was a nightmare. I want to wake up. I want to wake up and now I'm so thankful because life is a trade. When you change, you can. When I lost so many things. I left behind so many things, but what I gain is priceless.

DEBORAH:

That's great.

GLORIA:

What I gain I'm inside of me. If you see like how happy I am, how fulfillment I am. It doesn't mean that I have a lot or I have many things it's not, but means that I survive. Everything was put in front of me everything and I knew. And I want to show my daughters with dignity. With people.

DEBORAH:

You want to be a living example to them.

GLORIA:

And I know nobody what I can tell you cannot do alone. If you have people know who you are. They know you deserve chance

like oh my God. If I tell things amazing that unbelievable happened to me because they believe on me, on my character, that I deserve those things. And these what to make you you have to deserve. These is something that you gain new, you earned it, not your gain, you weren't in debt. And I think I earned everything it's not what's given to me is because I earned that. Yeah.

MISSING BRAZIL/23:27

DEBORAH:

Well, Gloria, this has been terrific. I just wanted to ask you one thing. What do you miss? Something from Brazil? I know the food probably.

GLORIA:

My daughter. By the way, my daughter said to me, why everything for you is, "Oh in Brazil!" But when they go there, they got all in paradise. And now you understand how in Brazil it's the best. Oh. Even every kind of food. Chinese food in Brazil, they are the best generally. It's the best in Germany. I was still say that because we are good. I, of course I miss, but you maybe don't believe that, but I learn in life. It gives this because I read a lot of things to make me, you know, I don't cry for things that I don't have, I'm blessed for things that I, I have.

DEBORAH:

You appreciate.

GLORIA:

I appreciate so much but of course I miss. I miss the beach, the place, the food, my friends, my family. When I see them with the Samba and my brother has a beautiful place for the weekends. And sometime I'm working the day that I was working sweating even in cold weather. And they are there. I say it's not fair! And then I miss that. I miss the smile. I miss so many things.

DEBORAH:

What would you, would you trade it for your life today?

GLORIA:

You know I think you say something very important. Say today. Today I'm older. I think but I don't know. I think I want to enjoy but I don't want this life to be all the time like that. I don't want to have only this kind of life.

DEBORAH:

Dancing and partying, right?

GLORIA:

No, but it's good to have once in a while.

DEBORAH:

So are you finding a place to do that here in Boston?

GLORIA:

I never looked for it. Never looked for it.

FUTURE DREAMS/25:56

DEBORAH:

What are your dreams, Gloria, about the future? Do you have?

GLORIA:

Well, the future, will you say like "down the road"?

DEBORAH:

Yeah, sure. It could be "down the road," next year. It could be next week.

GLORIA:

Yeah. No, what I, oh, by the way. And then I'm saying in Portuguese I said the perfect position to get in town. Then because then I have a different concept about down the road that thought about down the road. The minimal is a year, but can be, one week after I did that. No, I thought it was a year or more. What's a long term. I thought it I thought.

DEBORAH:

It does suggest a long term.

GLORIA:

What I want. I want to have more time for myself. I really, especially now that I start to. Now I'm in a phase. Such a wonderful phase in life that I am so blessed. I'm so happy with me.

DEBORAH:

That's great.

GLORIA:

Doesn't mean that I don't want to get better. Many things need to get better but it's good. I've improved a lot. I'm proud about the person that I've become, very proud. I know from some of my reading and things that I'm a better person. I want to be better and better. And I want to enjoy more my life. I want to be around people.

DEBORAH:

You want a little more fun.

GLORIA:

It's not only about more fun. Something like essential like be with my family and teach my grandson. And I also wanna help people. My friends. To be stronger. To be a better person. Because when you go through life you know what helped you to survive.

DEBORAH:

You want to give back.

GLORIA:

I wanna show. I wanna express. I wanna do nonprofit. But doesn't mean I'll actually do it. But before I want to enjoy just resting, beach, read a lot, improve my English. Learn things. And try to fix my memory because it's losing all the time.

THE GARDNER/28:49

DEBORAH:

Thank you so much, Gloria, just maybe just a couple words, how has the Gardner been a factor in your life in terms of your learning more English or meeting other people.

GLORIA:

I'm going to give you a specific example. This happened last year I used, I used to text my client. And before like, think that took me 10 minutes, today it took me three.

DEBORAH:

Three minutes.

GLORIA:

And also my daughter. Sometime when something very important, I asked my daughter to check for me. And she has done that even though she's not patient with them. She always not have time, but then she said to me, "Oh, your English is improving."

DEBORAH:

Nice.

GLORIA:

I said, "Oh, is that true?" She said, "Yes, you're writing with much much less mistakes." And I could notice before, I used to write a note for her and so many. And then I start one or two little things before was big things. Sometimes it's preposition and it was getting minimum. And this made me

more confident and believe it because came from her and came from people. Like I said, the other day, "What did you say?" "Excuse me." "Could you say again?" Or a face like confused face. I don't know if, because I'm getting always much more distracted, but I think it has happened. It's become easier for them. And for me. I don't say too much anymore "uh," any more or get nervous too much like now. I won't believe that I'm talking like that with you. I'm surprised. But what I learned is you have to have opportunity to open, speak out, say; don't be afraid because my English is started to improve. When I start to come here and have opportunity to make my mistakes, to be corrected for them in a nice way, to learn one thing. If it was a month it was good. And talking with others is good. And I, I don't have many people with whom I can talk. Here was the opportunity to talk and to show off.

DEBORAH:

Well, I don't consider that you're showing off, and I think people listening are gonna really enjoy your story, Gloria. Thank you so much for coming.

GLORIA:

Thank you for having me.

COVID CATCH UP/32:08

A few weeks after this interview with Gloria, I gave her a call to see how she was fairing during the pandemic. And the following are some excerpts from that conversation.

DEBORAH:

And I want you to just tell me how this situation in the world with the virus and everything has had an effect on you and your family. And you started to say in a lot of different ways. You could just keep talking to me about it for a few minutes.

GLORIA:

OK. Let me start. The world has changed as we all know. And I feel vulnerable. I feel scary. I feel on one side I feel I'm lucky and blessed. To have food, to have a place. And to have compassion and sympathy for me. It's such a different moment. It's funny because I always wished to have some time for myself to enjoy all of it.

DEBORAH:

You've got plenty of time now!

GLORIA:

And I cannot put things together because I'm having nightmares. Although I'm in a good situation right now a good one, I'm healthy. Like I said, I have food, I have a place, but I don't know how far is this going.

DEBORAH:

I know. It's a cloud of uncertainty. I had a nightmare about a tornado coming and I was hiding underneath the car.

GLORIA:

You know, for me, I just like four, five days ago, four or five days, I decided to not watch TV. I go like when I want, I go to my computer to check whatever I want for that CNN, whatever I want to hear because was twenty-four seven. In my mind, the only thought I used to thought a lot about my grandson. All of a sudden, I put my coronavirus in first place of my God. I dream about all day long. And I don't know what is wrong what is right anymore. Should I go to work because I need the money? Should I stay home and be a part of the stay at home order? You know, it's so confused. It's so complicated. And so I really don't know. What I notice is that no one is acting normal anymore.

DEBORAH:

Right.

GLORIA:

Because you have to change your whole life, your routine, your habits. For me it's easy because I don't have little kids. But for the other side, I stay by myself, with no one to see.

DEBORAH:

Do you live alone?

GLORIA:

Right now. And then. what, what doesn't bother me, I don't see anyone unless I go out, but I'm not supposed to go out.

DEBORAH:

At least a walk?

GLORIA:

Today I did that. I'm not a walk person, you know. I don't like exercise. Things changing. I'm changing. What I think is good about that is that we all are having time to think about what life means. I just want to take the best of that. I start to improve my

inner. To be a better person. What can I do? And I'm having nightmare and when I see people that was in such a good place in life. And now things change so fast. And how vulnerable we are. How weak we are and how no everybody. I don't say about religion. Everybody has to have something. I have God in my life.

DEBORAH:

Yeah. I was going to ask you what, what in your life calms you down?

GLORIA:

God and Mother of God. This is what lifts me up. This is what keeps me together, keeps me calm. Doesn't mean that I don't fear. Doesn't mean that I'm not scared. But this gives me control. Nothing is bad forever and nothing's good forever. In the end, I have to be strong, I have to be someone to make some difference for good. I wanna take something positive from that. I don't only want to think how bad things are happening. But let's take something for me to improve myself. Even improve my English too.

DEBORAH:

Your English is terrific. It's very good.

GLORIA:

I really hope that things change for better after that because for so short time the whole world is in the same situation—dangerous. Is that kind of war, but not between man. It's something different.

DEBORAH:

Wow.

SILVER LININGS/38:27

GLORIA:

And we need to help each other now. We need to think about. Doesn't matter power. Everybody are together. Doesn't matter that the United State is the best country. We have the highest number of deaths is that so bad. The most rate. It doesn't matter anymore. It matters that we need together fight.

DEBORAH:

You've got the right attitude. And the pollution is clearing up. I mean the earth is, is healing itself. There's dolphins in Venice, in the Grand Canal and swans that haven't been there for, you know, centuries.

GLORIA:

And you know, now the air much, much better.

DEBORAH:

Yeah.

GLORIA:

I know. The sound, the pollution sound pollution. It's nothing anymore.

DEBORAH:

We have to learn from it. We have to learn from it, Gloria.

GLORIA:

You have to change.

DEBORAH:

Wake up. A big wake up call.

GLORIA:

Big wake up call. I wanna understand like that. Don't change. Because I'm changing for couple weeks, couple months. I don't know how long it's gonna be this situation. And then after that, do your part. Change. Help. Help each other. Help the world. Help the earth. Help the animals. Do your part. Now we need to protect old people. We need to protect ourselves. Then start to keep these in your life. We are so vulnerable. Don't forget.

DEBORAH:

I'm thinking about writing an essay that says, "I Risked My Life for a Banana." I want to go to the store for a banana. Am I going to pick up a virus and get sick and die?

GLORIA:

You know, it's like, everything is true. By the way you talking about that. I said it doesn't make sense for me. I was like okay I need to do my part. I cannot go like I cancel all my old people to go to work. I don't contact them. And then I want to protect my time. Then I went to the supermarket ten days ago, eight days ago. It was crazy. Still crazy. Everybody was still working. Not that much. I think stay at home order was a day before and I went to supermarket. I said, oh my God. Okay. Everybody decided to go to the supermarket. Was hundred people there. Everybody's too close to it. Doesn't make sense. I said, okay now I maybe got it. I hope not. And then I said, okay, let me see everybody. I check about 15 second things

and breathe, you know, the thing that you can find signs that you can be worried about or not. And I said it doesn't make sense, but it's so like the government saying everybody's saying is a new situation. We are going to make so many mistakes. We make mistake. The government make mistakes because we don't know anything. We so fragile.

DEBORAH:

Thank you so much for sharing your opinion about what's going on. I really wanted to know what you're thinking.

GLORIA:

Thank you for calling me so I have someone to talk with.

DEBORAH:

You can call me anytime, Gloria.
Thank you.

FINAL WRAP UP/42:24

Gloria exemplifies the courage and positivity that I have seen in so many of the immigrants I have interviewed. Her ability to put gratitude at the center of her life, her ability to ask for help when she needed it for herself and her girls are what have carried her through the years. She combines grace and stamina, two qualities that endear her to all she meets and keep her psychic boat from rocking no matter what stormy days she might encounter.



EPISODE #9— SILVIA FROM HONDURAS

GUEST INTRO/00:38

Raised on a farm in poverty in Honduras, the youngest of seven siblings, Silvia's prospects for bettering her life were slim. One sister had already emigrated to the United States and Silvia at the age of nineteen decided to follow. Along her treacherous journey—in the midst of traveling on trains and buses and for the most part walking and walking—she discovered once she reached Mexico that she was pregnant. Her choice was to return back to Honduras or continue on toward the U.S. border and face a life in a foreign country as a single parent. Resilient and courageous, after one month of traveling, Silvia reached her sister and started her life over again. She found work, she gave birth to her precious daughter, and she began to learn English. Today Silvia provides a safe and secure home for her small family, and is a proud member of the Gardner Pilot Academy Adult Immigrant learners community.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS/01:11

DEBORAH:

Everybody has a story to tell, do you know, everybody's story is different. So tell me a little bit about your story, about how you came to this country. What kinds of things you encountered on the way here? We could start with that.

SILVIA:

My name is Silvia. I have been here for ten years. I came from Honduras so I decided to emigrate to this country because in my country, the situation in which I was living was not the best. I grew up in poverty.

DEBORAH:

Okay.

SILVIA:

So where my parents had to work hard in farming. So they worked in farming to give me and my sisters the necessary. When I say the necessary, I'm talking about clothes, shoes, food, etc.

DEBORAH:

The basics.

SILVIA:

Yea, the basics. Exactly. That was so hard for me. Then we are like seven sisters no brothers.

DEBORAH:

Wow!

SILVIA:

I'm the youngest.

DEBORAH:

You're youngest. You're the baby.

SILVIA:

Yes. I have a daughter and she's nine years old.

COMING TO THE U.S./03:43

DEBORAH:

Was there a special event or something that gave you the courage to come to the States?

SILVIA:

When I was in Honduras, I graduated high school but that was very difficult to find a job. So in that time one of my sisters was here and she helped me to come to this country. But when I came to here, it was very difficult.

DEBORAH:

Tell me about it.

SILVIA:

I was nineteen years old. I had finished high school in Honduras and when I came here, my life changed drastically. You know why? To my surprise, I was pregnant.

DEBORAH:

Oh, Oh, you didn't know?

SILVIA:

I didn't know. And that happened. So I found out during my journey coming here.

DEBORAH:

How did you come?

SILVIA:

Immigrants come here by walking, trains, cars cross the rivers.

DEBORAH:

Every way.

SILVIA:

Exactly.

DEBORAH:

You were in the middle of your journey and you found you were pregnant.

SILVIA:

Yes. And when I was in Mexico when I started vomiting. And that changed everything. That wasn't what I expected. I wasn't scared. I just was thinking about how to tell my sister about what happened to me.

DEBORAH:

Right.

SILVIA:

I was knowing.

DEBORAH:

How did she react?

SILVIA:

She was okay. So now you know what you have to do. Go back to your country or cancel the United States. She said something like that. But it was so hard because I didn't expect it.

STAYING THE COURSE/06:03

DEBORAH:

Yes. That's a huge thing.

SILVIA:

That I had a child coming my way. But my sister here helped me a lot with the situation. First she brought me to the hospital. That is where my process begins. After that I had to look for a job. That was a very difficult part. So you know why it was so difficult for me? Because for two reasons. First, I didn't speak English in that time. And second, I was pregnant. So that was a difficulty.

FINDING WORK/06:47

DEBORAH:

Did you find something?

SILVIA:

Yeah, finally one friend took me to the job. So it was a Indian restaurant in Jamaica Plain.

DEBORAH:

Okay.

SILVIA:

I started to work in as a busser, basser. Sorry. I was a busser,

DEBORAH:

A baker. You mean baking?

SILVIA:

Finally yeah, one friend took me to the job. It was an Indian restaurant in Jamaica Plain. I started working as a busboy. I was nervous because when I went to the tables to fill up the water, there were a couple they questioned me about the menu and I didn't understand. That was embarrassing for me. When they asked for something and I didn't understand.

DEBORAH:

So when did things start to change? Like with the language? Because you express yourself very well in English.

SILVIA:

Yeah, but when I started to take English class at the GPA.

DEBORAH:

Okay.

SILVIA:

But, you know what happened when I was like three months later, I got fired. You know why? Because, they found out I was pregnant.

DEBORAH:

And so what happened? They let you go?

SILVIA:

They say it was a risk for them to allow me to work there. Yeah, so those are difficult moments for me.

DIFFICULT MOMENTS/08:24

DEBORAH:

Was that the most difficult moment? What's the most difficult moment you've had when

you look back, when you look back at your life?

SILVIA:

On my way to come to this country.

DEBORAH:

The journey. How long did it take you?

SILVIA:

Like one month.

DEBORAH:

Train, little walking, buses.

SILVIA:

I was walking day and night. That was so hard. Uncomfortable.

DEBORAH:

Sure.

SILVIA:

The rest of my pregnancy month I had to stay home. It was boring for me.

DEBORAH:

That's understandable. You have to stay home now. Are you staying home now? Because of the coronavirus?

SILVIA:

Exactly. Yeah.

DEBORAH:

How is this different?

SILVIA:

I think now I know like my daughter. I have my daughter and that's how I was pregnant. I didn't know nothing. So now.

SUCSESSES/09:24

DEBORAH:

What were some of the successes that you had—the things that made you feel proud or made you feel like you've made the right choice?

SILVIA:

I think that I feel proud because of myself because I support my daughter, I am a single mom. So I work hard to support her. And yeah. And the other thing is I have accomplished one of my dreams.

DEBORAH:

Oh?

SILVIA:

In Honduras I bought a house, but two

small houses actually, but with my sister, so now it's being rented.

DEBORAH:

Oh, so you're getting rental income from Honduras?

SILVIA:

Yeah, exactly. Two small houses in the city and the town where my sister lives.

DEBORAH:

Oh, congratulations. That's good.

SILVIA:

Thank you. That's a good like actually. I accomplished.

DEBORAH:

Yes.

SILVIA:

But yeah, finally, she was born my daughter and now she's nine years-old. And the other thing I want to tell you is about, after that my daughter she was born.

DEBORAH:

Right.

MISSING HONDURAS/10:39

SILVIA:

So I start to working at McDonald's for eight years. For eight years. The first few years were hard for me because I miss my family.

DEBORAH:

Back in Honduras?

SILVIA:

Yeah. And like that I left behind. Yeah. And also I miss my culture.

DEBORAH:

What things about your culture? Did you miss the most?

SILVIA:

I think my, my food, some traditions we do in Honduras.

DEBORAH:

Tell me about one of the traditions that you really miss.

SILVIA:

Oh, ya it's Christmas.

DEBORAH:

How is it different there from here?

SILVIA:

It's maybe like different because in Honduras one of the traditional is for Christmas. You have to buy, new clothes. Everyone has to buy a new clothes, new everything, shoes, clothes and everything for that day. So I don't care for the rest of the year, but for Christmas everybody has to have a new outfit.

DEBORAH:

That's a tradition in Honduras.

SILVIA:

Yeah. It's one of the traditions. Another like the first day of the month, like, December, they visited. We call him and do this. We call like *posada*. *Posada* means the group for the person. We see their house and they do something religious, read the Bible, sing and something like that. And they share some food. Everyday; it starts December first.

DEBORAH:

Oh, okay. So you've missed that here. It's different.

SILVIA:

Oh, of course. And the food, of course, my mom, my mom made. It's pretty good. Everything.

FROM HONDURAS/12:28

DEBORAH:

Did you bring anything? Some object or, something with you?

SILVIA:

Yes.

DEBORAH:

What is it?

SILVIA:

I actually, yeah, I have like my agenda, my like contacts, my friends contact. So it's small book.

DEBORAH:

Like an address book.

SILVIA:

Exactly. That that is there.

DEBORAH:

Did you stay in touch with your friends?

SILVIA:

Some of my friends. And also I have my ID from Honduras too.

DEBORAH:

Your identification?

SILVIA:

In Honduras we call it *cedula*, we say *cedula* in Spanish.

DEBORAH:

Yeah, okay.

SILVIA:

But I miss a lot my family. It was so hard for me the first few years. But one of my hardest part about my journey was after one year I been here so I received the bad news.

DEBORAH:

What?

SILVIA:

So that was my mom had breast cancer.

DEBORAH:

Ah.

SILVIA:

That was a long process.

DEBORAH:

And then you couldn't go there to be with her.

SILVIA:

Exactly. That was difficult part for me.

DEBORAH:

How did you cope with it? How did you manage to get through that time?

SILVIA:

I was. I don't know. I can't believe my mom has a cancer breast, but finally my mom now, she's a survivor, so thanks God.

DEBORAH:

That's fantastic. That's fantastic.

SILVIA:

Exactly. It's a long process. Yeah. And after that, the same year, I think my, grandma she died.

DEBORAH:

And you couldn't be there.

SILVIA:

Exactly. Also so hard for all my life.

LOOKING BACK/14:18

DEBORAH:

If you look back, is there something that

you would have done differently about your journey or the decision?

NO REGRETS/14:25

SILVIA:

I think I have a good decision to come to this country.

DEBORAH:

Good.

SILVIA:

I miss my family and everything but stay here is the best decision I take in my life.

DEBORAH:

It's the best, best decision of your life. Wow. Wow. And tell me why you say that.

SILVIA:

Because this country has so many opportunities. I feel comfortable here and I have more opportunities like work, education. So for my daughter also because she was born here, so I have more opportunities. I can relate with the other persons from different countries. Yeah. And also, I can support my family.

DEBORAH:

That's good. That's great.

SILVIA:

Yeah, in my country, the situation is very difficult and this moment is worse than ten years ago.

DEBORAH:

And because.

SILVIA:

Because the government.

DEBORAH:

Because of the government.

SILVIA:

Exactly. No medicine, the education is so bad. Everything. Everything.

DEBORAH:

When you were there, did you feel like your life was in danger by staying there?

SILVIA:

Oh, yeah.

DEBORAH:

Would you share anything about that that made you decide? Like, was there a

moment, a day, a night as an experience that you said I'm getting out of here?

SILVIA:

Oh yeah, yeah. I have an experience when I was in my country about 2009 that happened with the president Manuel Zelaya. He was out the government. Everything changed at that moment. You had to stay in just like now in this moment. That was in 2009.

DEBORAH:

It was because it was just dangerous.

SILVIA:

Exactly.

DEBORAH:

Was it the military that made you frightened?

SILVIA:

Yeah, exactly. I think here I saved my life. Yeah for me and for my family, but the point is I can't visit the rest of my family. So that was the hard part right now.

LIFE IN A PANDEMIC/17:06

DEBORAH:

That's the hard part. And Sylvia, how are you coping now with this coronavirus situation? Tell me about that a little bit.

SILVIA:

This process is very difficult for me and for all my family because it affects my economy, my family's economy. The thing is the education. So it's not the same like for example, my daughter she works a lot on the computer to do her homework. But it's not the same. When you see the person like so it's very difficult. Really. It's uncomfortable to stay at home all day long. But in my case, I still working for 25 hours per week.

DEBORAH:

You're working 25 hours a week. But outside.

SILVIA:

In a restaurant outside. Just for take out. It's very danger you know. It's very scary and afraid when I go out my house but I have to do it because I have to pay my utilities. Everything. The rent. So, you know what's the problem right now? It's the government has to support the people who are legal who have the social security number so in that I

can't stay home because the coronavirus I have to go work. That's the other part.

DEBORAH:

You're not going to get a check from anybody.

SILVIA:

Yeah.

DEBORAH:

Well, the money that, okay. Wow, it's gotta be difficult right now, but it's not going to be permanent, but it's a hard time right now for sure.

SILVIA:

It's a hard time for everybody. Yeah.

DEBORAH:

So when you go to work, do you wear a mask and gloves and stuff?

SILVIA:

Actually, no. I feel uncomfortable wearing a mask. I try to do it. Actually, today when I went to the Stop and Shop to buy some food. So I tried to put it on, but I can't breathe. I feel uncomfortable.

DEBORAH:

Well, let's hope this doesn't take too long. I have a feeling it's gonna go into the summer, but we'll see. I live by myself so I'm alone a lot normally. And when I feel like I've been alone too long, I just go out the front door. Because I live in downtown Boston.

SILVIA:

Oh, nice.

DEBORAH:

And there's restaurants and everything and people. Now I go out and there's nobody there.

SILVIA:

So yeah.

DEBORAH:

And everything's closed. So, it's another world and it's happening all over the world. It isn't like it's just happening here.

SILVIA:

Exactly. So I told my family too and I asked about how is over there and they saying the same. I think worse than here.

DEBORAH:

Really?

SILVIA:

Because in some cases because they over there doesn't the hospital doesn't have medicine that doesn't have the materials for this coronavirus.

BI-LINGUAL BENEFITS/20:18

DEBORAH:

So you're worried about here and you're worried about there too. Yeah. Is your daughter bilingual? Does she speak Spanish and English?

SILVIA:

Yes.

DEBORAH:

That's fantastic.

SILVIA:

Very good, very good. And she understands, and she writes and she reads.

DEBORAH:

My granddaughter is five years old and she is bilingual. Her mother's mother is from Honduras. I think, from the island of Roatan.

SILVIA:

Oh, Roatan. Nice

DEBORAH:

So it's so good for the brain cells to be bi-lingual especially.

SILVIA:

From that's very important. You have more opportunity.

DEBORAH:

Definitely. Definitely. Sylvia, do you want to ask me anything?

SILVIA:

Yes. How you doing? Why you think about the coronavirus happens right now?

DEBORAH:

I think I can only watch just so much of the news and then I get upset. I think it's a good time to be distracted by hobbies and things that you like to do that normally you don't have time for, like, reading or making crafts or something like that. I was going to visit my granddaughter in Los Angeles but I had to cancel the trip.

SILVIA:

Wow. And how was you? Your son right?

DEBORAH:

The baby. I have two boys.

SILVIA:

The baby's a girl, right?

DEBORAH:

She's doing great. Her mother is working from home and her father, my son is doing a little bit of work from home. But he's doing most of the childcare.

SILVIA:

Thank you.

DEBORAH:

Thank you, Sylvia, so much.

SILVIA:

Have a great day. Thank you.

DEBORAH:

Bye.

SILVIA:

Bye.

WRAP UP/20:00

Silvia's story exemplifies the strength and determination she needed when obstacles threatened. Whether the surprise of an unplanned pregnancy, or the day-to-day challenges of keeping strong during this pandemic, Silvia does what she must to maintain a life of security and safety for herself and her daughter. She views her decision to emigrate to the U.S. as the most important one she has made in her life. Silvia remains a vital member of the Gardner Pilot Academy family.