




# TRANSCRIPTS



## IMMIGRANT VOICES

Our journeys.  
Our struggles.  
Our successes.  
Our stories.



VOLUME SIX: EPISODES 16-18 • FALL 2021

## IMMIGRANT VOICES



Episode 16  
ALEIDE  
from BRAZIL



OUR JOURNEYS • OUR VOICES • OUR STRUGGLES • OUR SUCCESSES

## IMMIGRANT VOICES



Episode 17  
MARIA  
from  
GUATEMALA



OUR JOURNEYS • OUR VOICES • OUR STRUGGLES • OUR SUCCESSES

## IMMIGRANT VOICES



Episode 18  
CAIO from  
BRAZIL



OUR JOURNEYS • OUR VOICES • OUR STRUGGLES • OUR SUCCESSES



**EPISODE #16 — ALEIDE  
FROM BRAZIL**

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**EPISODE #17 — MARIA  
FROM GUATEMALA**

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**EPISODE #18 — CAIO  
FROM BRAZIL**

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## EPISODE #16—ALEIDE FROM BRAZIL

I could work and it would be easy to start to make some money. So definitely USA the best country in the world to make easy money.

**DEBORAH:**

That's what you thought.

**ALEIDE:**

Not easy. You work a lot. But you know if you work the money comes. So we had some friends here so we came. I was very stressed. I had a small business in Brazil and I was so stressed with everything and I wanted to go away. Go out. So we came here. We have two daughters. They are twins. When we came, they were 21. They were already in college. So I said to my husband, "I think we can go. It will be fine." I wouldn't want to leave them if they were too young over there. So that's why I came because I want to live another country. And the USA would make it possible.

**DEBORAH:**

Was it difficult to come here? Did you have, was it hard to get a visa or what? What were the steps?

**ALEIDE:**

Oh yeah. I said to Adson, my husband. Let's go to USA. He said, "I don't want to go! Don't want to go!" The life was easier for him than to me because he wasn't working in our company any more. He was working different things, cultural staging. He used to work with the city hall with events. Shows. So he used to be a lot out. But I was very stressed. And he said, "Go provide all the documents. Make the appointments at the consulate and I'll go with you." So I went. I prepared all the documents, went to the consulate in Rio de Janeiro. We lived in Espirito Santo. Rio de Janeiro was six hours away driving from my city. So we drove there and then they gave us for one year. We had one year to travel here. So to come. Then we decided and I went home. Now you have to go. We lived our company from seven years. We make and live from this company.

**DEBORAH:**

What kind of business was it?

**ALEIDE:**

T shirts silkscreening factory. We used to do both. Silk screening for other companies and at stores that sell clothes. We would print their clothes. We raised our daughters. It was doing well. It was fine. But it was enough. It wasn't bad. My life in Brazil. We had a house. Car. Our daughters were in college. We didn't miss anything. It was fine.

**DEBORAH:**

You said you were stressed.

**ALEIDE:**

I was very stressed. Sometimes we had twelve employees. I didn't want to run a company any more. I was forty-six. I said if I don't go now, I'll never go to stay abroad. Not just to come for a visit, I wanted to live here. So that's why I said, I have to go now. I'm forty-six. I can't wait anymore. Of course, in the beginning, I didn't have this impact. People here they don't throw trash on the street. I didn't do this in Brazil. I never threw out the window my garbage. And when I walked my dogs, I would pick up after them. I didn't have this conflict. Some people say they have this conflict because things are very strict. The laws. The rules so I didn't have a problem to adapt to this but it was different.

## ADAPTING AND FINDING WORK/07:50

**DEBORAH:**

What was the biggest challenge?

**ALEIDE:**

The biggest challenge was to adaptation. When I thought about my city, it was so far away. So hard. It hurts. So and then I started to look for a job. I started to clean house. After a month it was here I did some jobs in between to make some money. I started to work helping someone. It was hard. I wasn't used to cleaning houses.

**DEBORAH:**

You didn't want to clean?

**ALEIDE:**

I wasn't used to cleaning houses. I used to clean my own house. Not like that. Oh my God my hands! I couldn't close my hands open. It hurts a lot. Can you believe, I lost

## GUEST INTRO/00:38

Curious to experience life abroad and improve their financial life, Aleide and her husband Adson—whose interview was one of the first in this series—decided to emigrate to the United States from Brazil in 2007. Their twin daughters were in college, old enough to take care of themselves, and so the couple's living abroad adventure began. Filled with an entrepreneurial streak, Aleide soon started her own house cleaning business endearing herself to clients who quickly became her friends. Despite the strong roots the couple grew during their fourteen years in the U.S.; their hearts were pulling them back to Brazil. This interview is in two parts. Aleide's life here in Boston and then just a few days before her tear-filled departure back to her homeland. The flute music you hear in the background is by Aleide's devoted husband, Adson.

## COMING TO THE U.S./01:50

**DEBORAH:**

My next guest is Aleide from Brazil who's been in this country for how many years now?

**ALEIDE:**

Almost thirteen.

**DEBORAH:**

And tell me, Aleide, why did you come here? What were the reasons that brought you to the United States?

**ALEIDE:**

Well, I was forty-six when I came to this country. I wanted to live abroad in another country so at first I thought I'd love to go to Europe. To Portugal. Or the whole Europe. Go through. I didn't have the money to just travel so I had to think about a place where

30 pounds in three months. So it was everything. The work was is hard. I'm still doing the same thing. And I came home and I set myself on the bed and stay there like half hour, not move for a half hour. Don't move.

**DEBORAH:**

Did you have second thoughts? Did, did you think, "I should never have come?"

**ALEIDE:**

No, never, never, Deborah. Never. I sick myself. I said to myself no way I'm here. I don't want to go home right now.

**DEBORAH:**

So what happened when the visa was up?

**ALEIDE:**

When the visa was up I was illegal. Life was still the same. Nothing changed. I never had a problem with immigration. Never.

**DEBORAH:**

Were you afraid about it?

**ALEIDE:**

When I started to drive, then yes. One year and a half we didn't have a car. I started to drive one year and six months after I came. That's when I started my own business. I started to have my own clients. So then I needed a car. We got a very old car and I started to drive. I drove in Brazil so I knew how to drive. So cautious. Never pass the limit. Many times. You have to go on. I'm here so I have to keep going.

## STARTING A BUSINESS/11:17

**DEBORAH:**

Was there a particular day or experience you had that made you decide "I'm going to start my own business? This is it." Sometimes there's like one event that happens and you say "I've had it now I'm going to start running business." Was there? Tell me what about that day?

**ALEIDE:**

Actually, many times I thought about giving up. I don't want to clean house any more. I want to go different. I want to talk to people because when you work for someone else, you just follow these people you just say "Hi" and "Bye" and you make so few money you know. So and you work a lot. And sometimes—working as a cleaner is so hard; it is so hard. It is hard. I like what I

do. Since I started to do my own houses, my own clients, I like what I do. I like to make people happy. I really like what I do.

**DEBORAH:**

But what was there one day you said, "This is it. I'm going to do it!"?

**ALEIDE:**

Actually, I said after one year and a half, "I have to make more money. I have to make things easier to myself" because working as a helper is hard, Deborah. I know people who clean like ten houses in a day. Two or three people. You have to be so fast. I'm sure they don't do a good job. You don't have time to do a good job. So I said, "I have to start to make my own business. To do my own cleaning" and then I said when I got a chance for one client so I said, "I'm gonna jump in! If I don't get this chance, maybe it will never happen." Because if you doing something. I was making so little money. Some weeks, I said "Oh my God!" But then I start to work for myself, help someone as well, so then started to come more business, more business.

**DEBORAH:**

Who was your first, client?

**ALEIDE:**

I'm still working for her today thirteen years later. She was a woman in Newton.

**DEBORAH:**

How did you find her?

**ALEIDE:**

Someone told me, "Someone needs a cleaning." So I went there. A friend of mine said she used to work for someone else. Just one person. It was twice a week which was good. Twice a week. So then I started to go and she referred me to more and more and more and that's how everything starts.

**DEBORAH:**

Do you like being your own boss?

**ALEIDE:**

Oh yeah. Is much easier, in this case. I was boss in Brazil. I used to be a boss. I have sometimes so many employees it's hard; it's so here I was my own boss. I knew was doing, I didn't have a complaint, you know, no complaints, nothing. So when I left so I came home, I was everything fine. I knew I had done everything well, so no complaints,

you know. I came home tired, but I was like, you know what I mean?

**DEBORAH:**

You're tired, but not the other tired.

**ALEIDE:**

Yeah. So I said, I came when I came to home, I was my mind was fine you know. I wasn't too stressful either. I was tired. I wasn't stressed at all.

## DECIDING TO STAY/15:57

**DEBORAH:**

What are the things about living in the United States that convinced you and your husband why you wanted to stay?

**ALEIDE:**

Well, since I was here, we broke our lives in Brazil. Since we were here so we had to make money. And save money and send money to Brazil. We bought another apartment. We bought a small place with land. That's where we're going to live when I get there. The whole time, the thought was go back to Brazil. Not live here forever. I had all my life in Brazil. Forty-six years in Brazil. All my roots were there. You know when you get old, you think about what? You always remember when you were young, right? Like when the kids were little so the friends you have. I miss friends from Brazil. We never really made friends here. We have acquaintances, but friends, friends, no. Sometimes it takes your whole life to make a bunch of friends, right? So you have friends when our kids were little. And now they are all grown up. They are in college. You know. I miss being in touch with these people again and going to events. Performances together.

**DEBORAH:**

Does the technology today, like WhatsApp and FaceTime help?

**ALEIDE:**

Oh helps yeah, yeah, sure. When we came in we actually just talked to my daughter once a week. We had to buy cards. So was it took us seven months to have our first cell phone. So and there's smartphone. I just had a like it six years later. So, but yeah, it was now it's easy. I talk to my mom, I talk to my sister, talk to my other daughter in Brazil every day, every day. Sometimes in the morning when I have my breakfast we talk.

We almost we have our breakfast together, right?

**DEBORAH:**  
That's sweet.

**ALEIDE:**  
Yeah. At this time, in the quarantine, more right. Helps every day.

**DEBORAH:**  
Did you bring anything with you from Brazil that you still have some little objects, maybe something in here that you carried in your pocketbook in your pocket or some little thing that you still have?

**ALEIDE:**  
I have some not real jewelry, some earrings, some clothes. Fourteen years later I still have some clothes from Brazil.

**DEBORAH:**  
Did you have hobbies in Brazil? I know you were busy with your business, but growing up, did you have other interests?

**ALEIDE:**  
You know, I'm the kind of person I don't have hobbies. I don't have hobbies.

**DEBORAH:**  
You said you liked the mandalas, coloring them.

**ALEIDE:**  
I love them. I used to have a big one, a painting, one house, a friend of us paint them. I do like those, but I never made one or I don't know.

## PERSONAL GROWTH/20:050

**DEBORAH:**  
So based on your experience and the knowledge you have now, what, one thing you wish you could have changed before you came. Knowing what you know now, is there some something one thing?

**ALEIDE:**  
Nothing. I changed a lot. I changed it because you don't even know the country. I know I changed some way. But I think my essential is to the same. I'm the same person. Always I liked to watch documentaries, to know about the history. I like history.

**DEBORAH:**  
What's the hardest thing about being

separated from your daughters? I know one of them is here in the states and Mariana's here.

**ALEIDE:**  
Yeah. And now it is we stay five years without seeing them. Then we didn't see them, just talk on the phone. Now it's much easier. Mariana is here and the other one comes often. She comes like two sometimes three times a year. That's great. She comes like for twenty days, fifteen days or ten days. And it's nice. It's nice. Yeah.

## FUTURE DREAMS/21:29

**DEBORAH:**  
So aside from the American dream, what human dreams have you had for yourself and what, what do you feel that you've accomplished? What are your dreams today for yourself and your business? That's a lot of questions.

**ALEIDE:**  
Well, Deborah. I want to retire. I want to be free. I want to go, I want to go back to Brazil. To see my mom who is ninety-three and I don't want to work hard like I'm working right now is to work. I'm almost fifty-nine and my dream is being in Brazil next year by January next year. I want to be in Brazil because I can't live here and not to be able to go back and forth.

**DEBORAH:**  
Do you have any hope of becoming a citizen here so you could go back and forth?

**ALEIDE:**  
No. That is no way to become a citizen here. If I had, if there was a chance, I would just stay more longer here. But now, and after this pandemic, I realized that why am I here working, working, working, working. I'm you're fifty nine. How long I have to live? So I feel this, that I have to stop. I want to stop. I'm not saying that I'm not going to work at all. I will find something to do. I'm not like now that I work every day six o'clock in the morning I get up. Yeah. Go work. I come home six or seven.

## DURING COVID/23:26

**DEBORAH:**  
Even during the pandemic?

**ALEIDE:**  
No. Not now this days. No, but it's not the

same, you know, you are not on vacation. You always have to think about money, money, money. So how I'm gonna pay my bills if I'm not working?

**DEBORAH:**  
So you are doing some now?

**ALEIDE:**  
Now I am doing some work. Some people are coming back. I'm resuming. So in the meantime some clients were still paying me and others I was doing shopping for them instead of cleaning. They used, they pay me the same to two times a week I go to the supermarket.

**DEBORAH:**  
Do you leave the food on the doorstep or do you go inside their houses?

**ALEIDE:**  
No I don't go inside their house. I leave it inside the garage. And the two others I leave on the back porch, then they grab it. So but I risk going to the supermarket. But I have to keep my income.

**DEBORAH:**  
You keep earning some money.

**ALEIDE:**  
Yes.

**DEBORAH:**  
Is there anything else you want to tell me about anything? What was the biggest struggle about being in United States in the whole time, since you came in 2007, like 2007 to 2020; and what stands out as the biggest struggle and what stands out as the biggest success?

## LEARNING ENGLISH/25:14

**ALEIDE:**  
The biggest struggle was being out of my country for so long. It's hard, many times you cried. And what's good that I could make enough money to my retirement, but to help a lot, make possible to me go back to Brazil. And living in another country always just is good. You see things, you learn the thing, I learned in English. So I'm not proficient at all, but I can communicate that very nice.

**DEBORAH:**  
You do very very well.

**ALEIDE:**

I loved that. I loved that. I couldn't live here for thirteen years not being able to speak. No. How would you be very upset to myself? So angry to myself. I know people that they live here fourteen years, twenty years, thirty years, they don't speak. Or when they speak, they don't know what they are speaking. If they see written somewhere, they don't know, they don't write and they don't read. They just speak of people sixty years. They don't, they don't know. So I would never forgive myself if I had to learn.

**DEBORAH:**

So you should feel proud of that, for sure.

**ALEIDE:**

Yeah, I am, I am. I know young people, they are here like four or five years and they don't speak English yet. Why you don't? So I came was forty-six. So, and I learned also I want. Right. So that's, I think that's, the big thing if you want what I do. When I have my clients, we talk about everything and I like to talk to express myself. So I'm not just a, housecleaner. Right. I just said I'm not just a housecleaner, I'm more than that. So then able to show them that I was more than just a housecleaner.

**DEBORAH:**

You have a very active mind and imagination. I've been able to observe.

**ALEIDE:**

Yeah, I think so. I am very proud of myself. What I got. I keep all my clients. When you talk, it's making me very happy, but you talk to, but I know most of them just clean the house because they don't talk to their clients. They just go in. But I talk to them. I talk a lot. I talk about everything. That's what makes what I liked. Talk about the ideas about politicians, music, history, you know, so I, I was very proud of it. Well, myself.

**DEBORAH:**

It sounds like clients have become your friends more than just acquaintances.

**ALEIDE:**

They are. I have one client special that I go to the performances with them because they know I like blues, jazz, so they ask me to go, so we go. So it's very nice. When my daughter was sick in Brazil, my client offered to bring her here. She said to me,

"I will pay everything. Don't worry about money. You don't have to pay me back." So one of them she told me, "What am I going to do? What am I going to do about you?" Usually I said, "Guys I'm gonna leave. I have to go back." They cried. No no, it's not because like Mariana jokes she is like me she likes to joke she likes to talk. I'm not to flatter myself. Someone knows you are smart. You are just a house cleaner? I said, "No don't worry she knows." She said to us another time, "You are smart people."

**DEBORAH:**

Well, thank you so much for sharing your story with me, Aleide. I've enjoyed getting to know you

**ALEIDE:**

Thank you Deborah.

**DEBORAH:**

And learning a little bit more about you tonight, with this conversation. And I have a dream for you and Adson that you will have a miraculous way to become a citizen, so you can go back and forth.

**ALEIDE:**

We will need a miracle.

**DEBORAH:**

Who knows? Maybe there'll be an administrative change and maybe.

**ALEIDE:**

I don't think it's going to change.

**DEBORAH:**

Trump is going to get in?

**ALEIDE:**

I think he's going to be re-elected.

**DEBORAH:**

Thank you very much for this conversation.

**ALEIDE:**

Thank you. And I'm very glad to meet people like you, like Erica, like Michelle. I'm very happy to have been those that school at GPA.

**DEBORAH:**

How many years did you go there?

**ALEIDE:**

Since I came here since 2007, I started to go. At the beginning, I didn't go every day? I was sometimes I skipped some year, but

that ways I went there. So there I learned the grammar over there. Yes.

## CHANGE OF PLANS: DECIDING TO LEAVE/31:02

Months after my initial interview with Aleide, I caught up with her days before her departure from the U.S. for her homeland of Brazil. Here's our conversation.

**DEBORAH:**

So Aleide is my guest today. And we're just doing a little addendum to the interview that we did a few months ago because change of plans. So talk to me about your change of plans.

**ALEIDE:**

Well, we decided to go back to Brazil. Moving back to Brazil for good.

**DEBORAH:**

In the interview that we did you said, "I want to retire. I want to be free. I want to go back to Brazil. See my mom who's ninety-three and I don't think I want to work hard. Like I am working right now. I'm almost 59. And my dream is to be in Brazil by January next year. Because I can't live here and not being able to go back and forth."

**ALEIDE:**

Yes, that's what I said. That's what I'm doing.

**DEBORAH:**

Okay.

**ALEIDE:**

We are going back me and Adson.

**DEBORAH:**

You also said, if you could have become a citizen here, you might have stayed and then gone back and forth more freely.

**ALEIDE:**

Yes. If I could go back and forth, I would stay for a while longer. So by the end, I'm sure that I would be back to Brazil anyway, but, I would stay longer.

**DEBORAH:**

Was it a hard decision?

**ALEIDE:**

It was to us. Was planning to go back to Brazil for three years maybe. We always have the idea to go back to Brazil but for the

last three years really said, “It’s time to go.” We were waiting for the right moment. And then now it’s the right moment.

## THE RIGHT TIME TO SAY GOODBYE/33:03

**DEBORAH:**

And why is now the right moment?

**ALEIDE:**

We achieved what we wanted here.

**DEBORAH:**

Which was?

**ALEIDE:**

Well, save some money. My daughter was here studying. She finished her English. She finished her master’s degree and I think it now it’s time. I love it here. No, I love, I love, I love the Boston. I love people that I met here. I met so many great people here. I love, I love it. These people, you, the whole GPA, and people that I worked for we have a real relationship. Know just creates. I received so many not, just benefits. Real feeling, I know they are real, really feeling sad because I’m leaving and I’m sad to always everyone that I say goodbye. We cried. Yes.

**DEBORAH:**

They were sorry to see you go.

**ALEIDE:**

Yeah.

**DEBORAH:**

Will you stay in touch with people?

**ALEIDE:**

Yeah. How, how long did they ask, please be in touch. Sending me your email so sending me your phone over there. So you let’s go over and be on WhatsApp, say, sure. All of them, I used to have a contact. They are all of it. Then asked me to show on Google, where I am going. So that’s the place so good. So, and I think some or another will come to us really. Really.

**DEBORAH:**

That would be wonderful.

**ALEIDE:**

Yeah. Be so happy to have any of you guys be a guest in Brazil. Why would we be so happy really.

## WHAT SHE’LL MISS/35:12

**DEBORAH:**

What do you think you’re going to miss the most?

**ALEIDE:**

Well, beside the people of course, I miss so much the spring time. Even though I love the winter. And today, all this snow, for my departure was very nice. I love the snow.

**DEBORAH:**

Really?

**ALEIDE:**

I do love the snow falling down. But this springtime is just unbelievable. When I arrived it was summer, July. And to me okay. That landscape, but like hearts and the trees and everything they’re there. The fall was fine. Nice views. There’s so beautiful, but not to compare it to this spring know. I was every, to me is the same thing I love. So I dunno. So some things, that comes, I don’t know to express, but every year is something that I love it the same way was the first time you know.

**DEBORAH:**

So in Brazil, you don’t have a season like spring time?

**ALEIDE:**

We do, but not like here. This spring is different, a little bit different, but not like here, cause you don’t have a really, we don’t have all the seasons so distinct. So, and one thing that makes me feel here I realized is how fast time goes by because every season you’ll see summer again. It’s fall again, so that makes us realize as well that our time is passing you know. And then you have to realize, I’m almost sixty. I’m fifty-nine. I know no one knows who is gonna go first. But like when you get sixty, just you’ll know that the time is really running out you know what I mean.

**DEBORAH:**

It becomes more precious.

**ALEIDE:**

Exactly. And then I don’t want I go back to when I barely can walk you know. I used to have some energy and you still have I have energy, strength. So, so to go back and enjoy.

**DEBORAH:**

That sounds good. You and Adson were talking about how when you came here it was like a new life. And now going back to Brazil is going to be like a new life again. And how is it going to be like a new life again for you to go to Brazil?

**ALEIDE:**

Oh, it’s it’s a challenge. My friends told me when I came in here was forty-six and he said, you want to avoid it to be old, so when you come, you’ll have is everything so new to you so, and you have it to your brain must work. When, when you came here and it’s different now want to go back and because we have our roots, there is a new beginning. Yes. But, it’s not like here when everything was how would say there wasn’t.

**DEBORAH:**

Brand new.

**ALEIDE:**

Brand new. We didn’t know what you would find here. We didn’t know the language. I remember taking train. We didn’t have a GPS that time. So we had a map, use maps at that time. We stayed one year and a half we didn’t have a car here. So then we bought an old car. Shift. Manual was too. We used to have in my car a book the maps, you know.

**DEBORAH:**

Right.

**ALEIDE:**

Before we left the house before we started to drive, we’ve got there and find it all the routes are great. So much easier now. Now it’s totally fine. You can go anywhere.

## STAYING IN TOUCH/39:53

**DEBORAH:**

Well, and communication between the two countries is easier now with WhatsApp and internet—all those things. What one thing are you looking forward to the most? I know to see your family. Is there something else that you’re looking forward to so much about going back to Brazil in addition to reuniting with your friends and family?

**ALEIDE:**

But one thing that I miss so much is to see a performance with people. We have friends there who are musicians and walking through the old streets that I used to know is

really going back. Can see the place, talk my language all the time.

**DEBORAH:**  
Yes.

**ALEIDE:**  
That's something you feel—I don't know, like comfortable. I speak all day long. Most of the time in English is good.

**DEBORAH:**  
Yes. You do very well. You express yourself very well.

**ALEIDE:**  
But being in my country, being in my hometown and see the people there. So talk and go to the events, go to dinner, listen to the music. Even though you can't listen to the music anywhere now cause we'll have to do that acknowledge cause it's different.

**DEBORAH:**  
Right.

**ALEIDE:**  
Once we be together and do the same thing they used to do before.

**DEBORAH:**  
But will you be able to do that given COVID 19 and all that?

**ALEIDE:**  
Not really, but maybe one year I think would be not huge events, but the close the friend didn't know. But the other since.

**DEBORAH:**  
It's a good time in terms of the vaccine being out there in the world now that's going to change things.

**ALEIDE:**  
Yeah. In the way that it's going to be. I hope I'll be alive!

**DEBORAH:**  
When you came here you left the twins because they were in college. And then one of them is still—they visited you here from time to time. And one of them, Marianna is still is going to stay in the United States. Why is that?

**ALEIDE:**  
Oh, it's not time for her to go. I think she would love to go back with us. It's not her time. She's too young and she has her own plan, her own goals.

## CANINE LOVE/42:31

**DEBORAH:**  
Adson was saying that you both love dogs and that you can't have dogs here so much, but that's one of the things you wanted to be sure to have in Brazil.

**ALEIDE:**  
Yeah. We had four dogs when we left and now we'll have a big backyard in Brazil. Is important because you know dogs they alert us if something's not right. We have snakes in the backyard. Because where we are we going to live is a preservational area.

**DEBORAH:**  
So the dogs are a form of protection too.

**ALEIDE:**  
Yes, in Brazil it is very common to have dogs in your back yard. Not really inside the house, you have they live outside. So they are free to run around. So, you know, so yeah, they have their dog house outside. Most of them live outside. They don't live in an apartment. You have to have a place for them outside.

**DEBORAH:**  
Is there anything else that you would like to say about the decision of leaving?

**ALEIDE:**  
The decision is right. It's the right thing to do right now.

## FACING POLITICAL ISSUES IN BRAZIL/43:49

**DEBORAH:**  
How about anything about the political situation down there with Bolsonaro?

**ALEIDE:**  
Because bad, the political situation is bad.

**DEBORAH:**  
That's not frightening you?

**ALEIDE:**  
Not really, but make us sad. Doesn't matter where you make us sad. I know I'm going to be we're going to be "recude," how you say?

**DEBORAH:**  
Oh, recluse.

**ALEIDE:**  
Because.

**DEBORAH:**  
Stay on your own.

**ALEIDE:**  
We're gonna try to stay away from the situation is so bad because we see people that we know, and now they are in favor of this crazy guy. You don't understand how, why it's so bad. They say, "Oh, you have to talk to people who think different from you." But seriously this kinds of thoughts, I don't want to discuss. It's so bad.

**DEBORAH:**  
I hope you'll be safe and that your mother is going to be so thrilled to see you. Oh my God!

**ALEIDE:**  
She's just counting the days.

**DEBORAH:**  
That's fantastic. Anything else that you can think of?

## THANK YOU TO ALL/45:09

**ALEIDE:**  
I have to say, thank you to Boston. To the people I met here, for people that are like you, Michelle, Erica. And I don't want to say names because is so though it's not the GPA and the Boston community, just so many people behind. Right. So I just have to say thank you so much. And I don't regret anything, not for a minute, even for a minute to have come here because we you grow as a person, your financial was good too. So we are leaving this country but we grew roots here as well to me because you have so much respect for the people. I never thought grow this kind of relationship here. Really. I never thought that this would happen so, and happened.

**DEBORAH:**  
That's great.

**ALEIDE:**  
So I'm so very grateful, not just me, Adson, Marianna, my daughter, she's so well connected here too. So I'm very happy for us as a human. We did this, but when we made I'm not sure which digital made to this kid, but they'll just happened because I mean that very happy outside I lived in you. In the end, it's just this, the positive.

**DEBORAH:**  
That's wonderful, no regrets. And you

learned a lot and you learned a language.

**ALEIDE:**

That's amazing. Yeah. I don't wanna lose that. I wanna, like I said, I was still watching TV in English movies now. I don't want to, I don't want to go back just cookies and then you'll have a chance to be on Zoom classes on Zoom.

**DEBORAH:**

You should really get some of your friends together there in Brazil and we'll have a satellite English.

**ALEIDE:**

I already have friends that they say, wow, I told you this. Well, there they are ready to go to school with us.

**DEBORAH:**

Wonderful.

**ALEIDE:**

Whoa. I could, I thought about these verses and none of these possible, so on it is. So I knew that he had happy and they'll make my friends very happy.

**DEBORAH:**

I don't want to hang up, but . . .

**ALEIDE:**

We have to.

**DEBORAH:**

So thank you so much.

**ALEIDE:**

Thank you, Deborah.

**DEBORAH:**

Safe travels. Well, you safe travels wherever you go and stay in touch. And, it's been an honor to meet you and, and work with you and Adson in the classroom.

**ALEIDE:**

You guys are great.

**DEBORAH:**

Okay.

## **WRAPPING UP/48:16**

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Saddened by Aleide's and Adson's imminent departure, our goodbye tears are mixed with happiness ones for their retirement years in Brazil. We are grateful for the enormous contribution Aleide and her husband Adson have made to our Gardner Pilot Academy and greater Boston communities. With the tools of today's technology, we know we will stay in touch with them.



## EPISODE #17—MARIA FROM GUATEMALA

### GUEST INTRO/00:39

As she looked back over her thirteen years as an immigrant in the U.S., Maria's biggest regret after leaving Guatemala and walking through a desert filled with venomous snakes, not enough food and water, was the good-byes never spoken to friends and family—especially family members now separated by death—her grandparents. Denied a visa, at twenty, Maria risked the journey here to join her brother and reunite with the “love of her life.” Three children later, and still happily married, she had been right to follow her heart. Haunted by the death of those she will never see again, she remains undeterred as she pursues a career in Early Childhood Education while balancing her roles as mother and student to keep her family healthy and strong.

### COMING TO THE U.S./01:57

**DEBORAH:**

My guest is Maria. And Maria, how are you today?

**MARIA:**

I am good. Thank you. How are you?

**DEBORAH:**

I'm doing well. I'd love to ask you a few questions about your experience. What was the main reason behind your desire to leave Guatemala?

**MARIA:**

I have two main reasons to come here. The first one. It's because my boyfriend was here and I wanted to be with him. He is, and he was, the love of my life. But also, it was because my brother was here working to support my mother and my younger siblings

because my father abandoned us when we were underage to work by ourselves. And my older brother decided to come here. He was working on everything he was making was for my mother and for us because we were little and so after I was old enough and my boyfriend was here too and I said, “Well, I have to go. Because I cannot leave my brother working by himself to support our family.”

**DEBORAH:**

How old were you at that point?

**MARIA:**

I was 20 when I came here.

**DEBORAH:**

How had you met the love of your life?

**MARIA:**

I was at school. I was in 11 grade when I met him. I had a friend and any, they have cousins. My best friend is my husband's cousin and I met him through her. So that's how I met him.

**DEBORAH:**

Did you end up with the love of your life?

**MARIA:**

Yes, we have. Yeah. We have been together married for almost 16 years now.

**DEBORAH:**

And how did you get here? What was the journey like?

**MARIA:**

I came here as most immigrants. I have to say that I came through the border because I tried twice to get a visa to come here, but they denied it to me and I was looking for a job in Guatemala and I didn't find a job for me over there. So I say, “I have to go.” And yeah, I have to say that I came through the border that are when back then it wasn't so bad. I wasn't like the news today. So it was hard to come just because it was a lot of walking, and not much food. But other than that, I have to be thankful that it wasn't dangerous for me to come here.

**DEBORAH:**

How many days did it take you?

**MARIA:**

It was like exactly one month because we were stuck in the middle of nowhere for more than one week. That's why it took so long to come here.

**DEBORAH:**

Was there one particular moment during the journey that was the most difficult or scary? Anything that you'd be willing to share?

**MARIA:**

The most scary thing was the walk, the desert without knowing where you were going and find maybe the border patrol over there. I think what scares you most is getting caught over there. And of course, we were afraid of snakes and everything. Animals from there. Other than that there was no big risks.

**DEBORAH:**

Did you see any snakes?

**MARIA:**

Yes. Yes. A very poisonous he was. Very very close to me. And I don't know how, it didn't bite me, but I was so lucky. It was very, very close to me. And it was known in Guatemala as one of the most venomous snakes. Yeah.

**DEBORAH:**

So when you cross the border, what state were you in? Texas? Was it another state?

**MARIA:**

We got to Phoenix.

**DEBORAH:**

Oh and how many people were in the group?

**MARIA:**

We started thirty-four I remember. While coming here, we know that some people was, the border patrol got them. Some of them were sent back. So in the end, I don't exactly know how many of the group was able to cross.

**DEBORAH:**

Kind of scary not knowing if you'd get through.

**MARIA:**

Yes. I was traveling with two of my uncles and at least the three of us were able to cross safely.

**DEBORAH:**

And then how many days was it before you were reunited with your husband-to-be?

**MARIA:**

I spent a week in California because I have family over there and after one week, Boston, but the well, exactly we landed at Rhode Island. Yes. I took a plane from California to Rhode Island. I think that was a very common route for people to come.

**DEBORAH:**

So it was a little bit easier than it has been recently.

**MARIA:**

Yeah, I think back then it was a little bit easier and I think it was a little bit safer than now.

**DEBORAH:**

Venomous snakes don't make me think it's very safe there.

**MARIA:**

I'm talking about bigger threats right now for immigrants to come.

## LEAVING A CAREER BEHIND IN GUATEMALA/08:22

**DEBORAH:**

So it's great you made it and arrived in one piece. Were you on some kind of career path? And you said you were a student when you were 20. So did you have a career in Guatemala that you were going to pursue? And how did that change when you came here?

**MARIA:**

Yeah, in Guatemala I graduated as an elementary teacher will be here. I can teach from first to sixth grade in Guatemala.

**DEBORAH:**

Early childhood education.

**MARIA:**

In Guatemala, I graduated the equivalent of what an elementary teacher would be here. I could teach from first to sixth grade in Guatemala. I finished my twelve years of studying in Guatemala which you need to finish there in order to get a diploma.

## GOING BACK TO SCHOOL/09:09

**DEBORAH:**

Were you able to use that certification here in the states in any way?

**MARIA:**

Unfortunately here is equal to high school. So when I came here, I found out that my twelve years to study I was a professional there, everybody here it's equal to high school. So I translate in my diploma right now, if I want to finish another career, I will have to prove that I at least I have my diploma and I've been studying to be an early education teacher here. I have a certificate in early education. So I'm still studying to have my associates.

**DEBORAH:**

It's impressive.

**MARIA:**

Yes. It's hard, you know, right now because I have three kids, but when I came here, I didn't know that I could keep studying. Maybe I wasn't so interested back then, but if I would know that I could keep studying by now I will be an elementary teacher here too, but I didn't know. And when I found out that I had two kids already. And it's hard. It's hard to go to college in the evenings when you just want to relax and do nothing. But I'm still, I'm still enrolled in college getting my associate's in early education.

**DEBORAH:**

Good for you. And are the classes online now because of the pandemic?

**MARIA:**

Yes. My last class was completely crazy because we were trying to have classes online and sometimes the internet was down. Sometimes something happened, but I finished my class already, so. Well, now I am until September it will be my next class.

## FINDING WORK/11:18

**DEBORAH:**

Good for you to pursue that. But what kind of work did you do when you first got here? What were you able to find?

**MARIA:**

I found a job as a daycare assistant. So I've been working with kids since I came here.

It was kind of you know, at least I have my experience as a teacher in Guatemala. So that helped me here to work as a daycare assistant.

**DEBORAH:**

That was a good job to find. What was the hardest thing about once you got on? What was the biggest obstacle for you? What was the hardest thing about, what was the kind of shock? Was there a culture shock?

**MARIA:**

Oh yeah of course. The first thing you realize is that you cannot speak this language and you have to learn. A new language, a new culture and many things here that, that change. Also I realized that I was so far away from my mother, my siblings, and yeah, that was it. It was very hard for me. At least it was very hard to realize I was so far away. I couldn't say, "Okay, this weekend, I'm going to go see my mother." Yes. That was one of the hardest things to realize when you finally come here.

**DEBORAH:**

Because you can't go back and forth.

**MARIA:**

Yup. You can't, you know, like, you know, you'll have advantages and disadvantages. When you come here, you come here, you are started working. You started helping the people you cared about, but you cannot go back and see them like we would like to do. And you know, in the process of being here, you lost, maybe someone and you will never see them again. And that's one of the disadvantages that we have that we maybe don't think about them when we decide to come here. So everything in life has a price.

**DEBORAH:**

That is for sure.

## LEARNING ENGLISH/13:28

**DEBORAH:**

How soon did you start working on your English acquisition when you got here? Did you take classes? What did you do to learn English?

**MARIA:**

In Guatemala, you have like from ninth to twelfth grade. We learn mostly vocabulary but you know that's just a little start to come here. At least you know some words, how to say your name or good morning to some-

one but when I really started learning was when I started working in the daycare because the lady was bi-lingual. She was from Guatemala too. And there were kids that were old enough to know two languages. So, I started learning English as a game with the kids. You know, I will grab an object and ask them “What was the name of that?” And when they say the name of that, I will repeat it and repeat it, maybe only in my mind. That was the way I started learning English. And then reading books to them, and there were two kids who were old enough they were bi-lingual and I would ask them, “How do you say this in English?”

It was there that I learned a little bit. Then I worked there for two years. Then I moved to Boston and I was on the border with Brookline. So I left the job as a daycare assistant and I came here and I started working as a babysitter in Brookline. So that family only spoke English. So I said to myself, “Well there is no option for you! You have to speak English, even with the little you know.” And I started talking with them and reading books to the little boy.

After we decided to take some classes but we were never able to finish any classes. We would miss many classes. And the years pass so quickly and you don’t realize that you are not learning enough English. Then we started listening to music in English, watching movies, maybe when you understand only half of it, but that was the way we were pushing ourselves to learn some English. And after the years, I found the website and that we were able to attend English lessons. And that’s how we came to meet a very nice lady, Michelle Duval, and the Gardner Pilot Academy where we currently are taking English lessons.

**DEBORAH:**

So is your husband also taking English lessons?

**MARIA:**

Yes, he is.

## TECHNOLOGY HELPS/16:51

**DEBORAH:**

Okay, great. Can you just back up on one thing? I wanted to ask you, you had said how difficult it was. Couldn’t see your siblings, some of your family again, has the technology of WhatsApp and FaceTime and Zoom has that helped you reconnect

more with a little more satisfaction to your family in Guatemala?

**MARIA:**

Yes. The technology nowadays it’s helpful for us because we can have video calls through with our family. Yeah in Guatemala. And it’s a little relief at least to see them through a screen. So that’s a nice way to communicate with them and better it’s. It’s just still, it’s hard because you can’t really. How your siblings, my youngest brother he is twenty and he was, he doesn’t really know me. He doesn’t really remember me because, you know, well, at least we don’t have that much memories together because he was only almost four when I left my country.

## MISSING THE CULTURE OF GUATEMALA/18:09

**DEBORAH:**

What do you long for? What do you miss the most about the country? Obviously the family and siblings and a lot about the culture. What other aspects do you miss?

**MARIA:**

As you said, besides my family I miss being able to gather with family, more friends, and relatives, because in Guatemala at least the town where I grew up, we are very close. If someone needs help we will gather almost the whole town to help that person. And that’s something you miss here. Because here you have to work and go home. The next day the same thing. The same routine every day. Work. Home. Maybe just go grocery shopping and if you need some clothes, you go to the mall. But in Guatemala, even birthday parties are completely different. No matter what day of the week is your birthday some families will come to see and celebrate with you. Here you have to, at least I choose the weekend to make a little party for my kids. Because I know during the week everybody’s working. And those things change a lot here. There it’s a little different like you have like it’s easier to gather with your family. That’s one of the things that I really miss.

**DEBORAH:**

Is this sheltering in place because of the coronavirus made that kind of loss of social interaction even greater?

**MARIA:**

Yeah. This has been completely weird. We cannot see our families, our relatives here. Even here we haven’t seen our relatives for more than two months. We can’t go visit anyone within here. Completely home just go outside to get some fresh air. To take a walk. Or go to a restaurant to pick up our food. These are the only activities we’ve been able to right now.

## JOYFUL SINGING/20:46

**DEBORAH:**

So did you have a hobby back in Guatemala? Something that was a special interest for you? That you have not been able to continue or have continued here?

**MARIA:**

Well, a really big hobby I enjoy singing. And I used to do that in Guatemala back in school. I will sing every time I have an opportunity at church I will also sing. And here I also have that hobby. It’s a little bit. It’s my favorite thing to do. I just sing along Christian songs now. I really like to sing. I used to sing in Guatemala. Here too I look for karaoke on YouTube and I like to sing the songs I know.

**DEBORAH:**

What’s your favorite kind of music?

**MARIA:**

I will say worship songs. That’s my favorite.

**DEBORAH:**

And do you sing in Spanish or English or both?

**MARIA:**

If I know a song in English, I will sing, but mostly it’s Spanish, you know.

## BILINGUAL CHILDREN & DREAMS FOR THEM/22:10

**DEBORAH:**

Are your children bilingual?

**MARIA:**

Yes, they are. It’s easier for me. They are bi-lingual. With them, that’s one of my main—to raising bilingual.

**DEBORAH:**

So good for the brain.

**MARIA:**

It is.

**DEBORAH:**

My five-year-old granddaughter is bilingual. My daughter-in-law's parents came from Honduras. My daughter-in-law's mother does a lot of the childcare for my granddaughter and can't speak much English, but she speaks to her in Spanish and my son teaches Spanish so it's so good for children to be bilingual.

**MARIA:**

It is. I think that's a great gift that a child can have. Because as you know, the Spanish-speaking community is growing so our kids really need to know as many languages that they can learn it's better for them. You know, in the future, I guess, that will be a great opportunity for them to find a better job if they are bilingual, they know more than two languages. To me, it's like a gift a child can have because honestly I see many other languages here and I think it's better to know as many as you can. My older son is learning Mandarin right now. So I hope he really learns how to communicate with it. You never know when you can use your language to help somebody else.

## REGRETS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS/23:48

**DEBORAH:**

Based on your experience and the knowledge you have now, what one thing would you wish you could have changed before you came to this country? And if you have any regrets?

**MARIA:**

That's a tricky question. I may be as I told you knowing that you may not see your family again. Maybe your father or your mother. I lost my grandfathers while I was here. Those things I didn't know were going to happen. We don't think about those things. Maybe I would have said goodbye in a better way. When we come here we tried not to make a big deal because we say, "What if I don't get to the other side?" I will come back and they will make fun of you that you didn't cross and you will say goodbye. Because I tried to come here like without telling many people, but in the process, I didn't say a nice goodbye to my grandparents. And now both of my grandfathers are gone. Those are the things maybe we...I know there is no time to change that. Yeah.

**DEBORAH:**

But it has to be one of the hardest things. What are you proud of that you've accomplished since you've been in the States? What are you most proud of?

**MARIA:**

I am proud to know that I came here, um, to help my mother. I am still helping my mother. I was here to support my brother. And, um, even though he just passed away this December.

**DEBORAH:**

So sorry.

**MARIA:**

Yes, he passed away, and I feel proud knowing that I was here, and I helped him. I support him. I see him, as far as I was able to do it. So I am proud of myself for having the courage to come here knowing that it was a very dangerous travel. So, but I am proud of that.

## FUTURE DREAMS/26:25

**DEBORAH:**

Sounds like you have a lot. Three children, a career that you're still pursuing. Well, that's impressive. Aside from the American dream, what human dream have you had for yourself? Have you accomplished? You say you're in school, so you're working towards it. What are your dreams today for yourself for your family?

**MARIA:**

My bigger dream besides the American dream was to come here and get married with my husband now. But my, I think right now, as a mother, my bigger or biggest dream is to see my kids grows healthier and happy. That's my big dream right now.

**DEBORAH:**

That's a good one. I've got one more question. Do you have some object or something that you brought with you from Guatemala that you've had, maybe from the time you were a child or that you had right around the time you traveled to be United States that you still have some, some object or personal small thing?

**MARIA:**

No. I decided you cannot bring like many things when you come here, at least, the way I came here. So if I have something

that was maybe of value to me, I will leave it there and it's over there, like safe where they know that I will find it when I get back.

**DEBORAH:**

Well, I certainly hope that things change in immigration scene and that somehow you are able to find a pathway to citizenship so that you can go back to Guatemala and your children reunite with your family there. That's my dream for you.

**MARIA:**

Thank you. Yeah. That was. Yeah, we hope that too because it will be like, one of the happiest things for us to go back and see our family again, our friends, and our town.

**DEBORAH:**

Wow. Well, Maria, thank you so much for chatting with me today and meeting to tell your story. I know that other people hearing it will feel encouraged by it. Thank you very much.

**MARIA:**

And thank you too for taking this time to interview me and send this story to somebody else.

**DEBORAH:**

You're very welcome.

## WRAPPING UP/29:10

**M**aria and her husband are a vital part of our Gardner Pilot Academy community. We are grateful for her courageous journey all those years ago. Let's hope she finds a way someday to show her children the beauty of her native country and experience the hugs and kisses so long denied from friends and family there.



## EPISODE #18—CAIO A DREAMER FROM BRAZIL

### GUEST INTRO/00:39

**N**ow in his mid-20s, Caio came to this country from Brazil with his parents when he was four years old. Although he has siblings still in Brazil, he hasn't met them. Even though, with the help of technology, he has grown up with them, it is not the same. Caio is a Dreamer—a very accomplished, educated, inner-directed young man with lofty goals yet with his feet planted firmly on the ground of reality. Mature beyond his years, he has had to live with uncertainty about his future status. Ever anxious about his parents' welfare, over the years, he assumed the role of interpreter, legal counsel, and financial advisor for them. Despite shouldering so much weight and responsibility, Caio is an optimist with an excellent sense of humor who puts anyone at ease.

### COMING TO THE U.S. AS A TODDLER/01:55

**DEBORAH:**

All right. So my guest is Caio and he is a Dreamer. So Caio how old were you when you came to this country?

**CAIO:**

Hi, Deborah. I was four years old when I arrived with both of my folks.

**DEBORAH:**

And were they fleeing? Was the country war-torn? This was Brazil, right?

**CAIO:**

This was Brazil. Yeah. We were fortunate enough to leave a country that didn't have any physical problems, a crisis due to violence like other war-torn countries might've been, but it wasn't performing so well financially. So we sought a better opportunity. And that was to come to the United States.

**DEBORAH:**

Do you have any memories? Four years old. It's pretty young.

**CAIO:**

Yeah, definitely. Most of my vivid memories are from family events and I believe that's because the family members that are most clear and my memories are the ones that I still have a connection with nowadays. So that sort of linkage is well maintained, but very few memories of things outside of family life. A couple of environments and scenarios I might've been in often, but beyond that not much.

**DEBORAH:**

Do you have any photos from that period when the whole family was together?

**CAIO:**

I do have some photos of specifically that folks from Brazil sent over WhatsApp or by email. And when I see some of those, sometimes I may get a flashback, but it's very, it's very faint. And the ones that we do have in our possession nowadays are not too many. So not as many references as I would like to have.

**DEBORAH:**

Maybe you'll send me one. If you've got a picture of actually when you were four from Brazil. If you've got something I'd love to have a copy of it. That would be terrific.

**CAIO:**

Sure, yeah. I have some from even younger, a couple of birthday parties that I've actually seen. So those are fun. I enjoy looking at those.

### CAIO THE POLYGLOT/03:55

**DEBORAH:**

So tell me, are you bilingual? I'm assuming that you are bilingual and if so, how has that helped you to straddle the two cultures?

**CAIO:**

I am. I'm actually fortunate enough to know a few more than just two. So I do speak Portuguese and English fluently, but I've also picked up Spanish and Italian as well. I guess what I can say is language to me is very important and I'm happy to have had

the opportunity to add on more than just my native tongue and the tongue of the nation that we migrated to. I think that it's really the best key to unlocking both cultures. It's realistically the closest thing, the thing keeping me the closest to my home culture. You know, when I go to a store or a business that speaks Portuguese, I will always use my Brazilian Portuguese to interact with folks at the place of business. When I'm being introduced to someone who is from another country, I might try to find a connection in my base language with their base language. So not only does it keep me really tied in with my culture, it helps me connect with folks from another culture who might not have English so strongly in their domain.

**DEBORAH:**

When did you learn Italian?

**CAIO:**

I actually picked it up in college. So that was the most recent one.

**DEBORAH:**

Yeah, I speak Italian a little bit. I studied painting many years ago in Florence and it stayed with me. My son Aaron speaks Portuguese, Spanish, English, a little bit of Japanese, a little bit of Greek.

**CAIO:**

He has to leave some for the rest of us!

### MAINTAINING BRAZILIAN ROOTS/05:36

**DEBORAH:**

In what ways do you feel connected to the country of your birth and to your siblings and extended family there?

**CAIO:**

I maintain a strong connection through things like social media and technology. In my home life, I speak Portuguese at home instead of English so I don't lose that connection. Our culture at home is still very rooted in our Brazilian culture, but integrated with certain parts of American culture as well. I watch Brazilian TV. I stay up to date on Brazilian news. Being someone who's always interested in current events, there's a lot in Brazil right now, so it's not

too hard to keep up with. But, you know, having the connection through social media and through a lot of apps on my phone that I can communicate with my family, being able to connect with them through video and ways such as FaceTime or just calling makes things so much easier to maintain that connection and to be able to keep up with how everyone's currently doing.

**DEBORAH:**

Yeah. Brazil's having a pretty tough time with coronavirus right now.

**CAIO:**

We are, yeah.

**DEBORAH:**

Has it impacted any of your extended family members?

**CAIO:**

I do have a family member who works in the medical field and her daughter contracted COVID. And that was a tricky time period to navigate, but luckily she's recovered and my cousin is doing great as well. And everyone's healthy, so I'm very, very glad.

## **DREAMER STATUS — OBSTACLES & ASSETS/07:14**

**DEBORAH:**

Oh, that's good. In what ways has your status as a Dreamer been an obstacle on one hand and an asset on the other hand?

**CAIO:**

So I would say the obstacles of being a dreamer are the most obvious ones. Certainly travel being restricted has impacted my life in many ways. I'm someone who enjoys traveling and I try to do it as much domestically as possible. But having so many friends that also enjoy traveling really limits how much I'm able to do beyond the country, which is none at all. Attending college also came with a lot of sacrifice because loans are very limited for Dreamers. When I was in high school getting ready to transition to university, navigating the FAFSA process was basically non-existent, and finding scholarships was terribly difficult. I was actually very lucky to actually be in my, going into my senior year the same summer that President Obama created the DACA program. And so because of that, I was able to go to school and Governor Patrick at the time signed into law for in-state students. If

you attended a state university, you could pay the same in-state fee. And so for that reason, I was able to go to school for that fee and actually get my college education. But some of the other obstacles are accounted for in the fact that I'm responsible for most of my family's legal presence. I'm the administrator, the lawyer, the representative, the security guard to my parents. So, you know, you do have to give up a little bit and limit your dreams to a much slower schedule than you would envision just to yourself. But it's definitely something that I do with love and care and give back in a way that they gave to me so much and they've sacrificed to come here for a better life for all of us. And I guess that sort of transitions me into some of the assets because from one of the things I see as the biggest positive is that I had to mature at a much younger age than most of my friends did. I understood business working with insurance companies, providing for myself much sooner than my other friends had to. I mean some of them until today struggle with some of the things that I had to pick up when I was 15 or 16. So I think the biggest asset of all is you learn to become very resourceful. Because you have to seek out any and all opportunities that you have access to because you start off at a place when you have so little compared to everyone else.

## **EDUCATIONAL GOALS DEFY LIMITATIONS/09:56**

**DEBORAH:**

When did you become aware? How old were you—obviously as a teenager, you had to take on these responsibilities—but how old were you when you first became aware of the difference between yourself and other kids in school? In what ways did you become aware, your earliest memory of it?

**CAIO:**

I think the first instance where it really impacted my life was when I turned 16 and I couldn't go for my driver's license like everyone else. Everyone was out getting their permits and I had to just accept the fact that the same scenario wouldn't make itself present for me. I learned to be very good at calling shotgun and asking my friends for rides without becoming annoying. But so that was, that was definitely the first time that I noticed that there was a major difference in between how available things were going to

be for me, the older I became. And the bigger impact, I would say, would be during the college application process because neither my guidance counselor at school nor I really had a really good idea of what my opportunities were. And I sort of just navigated through what made itself available. And luckily that led me to an experience that I was really fortunate to be proud of and fond of the school I ended up at.

**DEBORAH:**

Where did you go?

**CAIO:**

I went to UMass Boston. And UMass Boston at the time when I did make my option, was one of the only realistic schools that provided me an opportunity. I won't lie when I say that there were other schools I had more of an intention to study at and tried everything possible from getting in touch with alumni networks, showing up personally to admissions offices to speak directly to people, counselors at the schools about any opportunity I could have to find a scholarship to make it less of a financial burden from my family to attend because I had really set plans to attend some of these institutions, but the way things worked out, I ended up at a state school. And at first, I was, you know, I butt heads with that idea in the beginning and it turned out to be one of the best decisions I've made in my life because it just took the experiences that I had at having to be resourceful at a young age and put me in touch with the community of people that was very diverse and had come from similar experiences. So we could all share in the fact that we've had those difficulties, we've overcome them, and to continue to help each other grow.

**DEBORAH:**

Well, that's terrific. I've had some experience with UMass Boston. I took a writer's workshop at the Joyner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences. I don't know if they're still running that workshop in the summer, but it was phenomenal. And I was very, very impressed by the student body there. And I felt like it was a place where people really could change family karma in a way that other privileged institutions weren't offering that kind of a transformational experience somehow. First-generation people kind of things.

**CAIO:**

Absolutely. One of the most gratifying things about being there was you could see, you could see hope as you walked around and as you attended classes, you could see people from all different walks of life, first-generation students, students who were legacy students—everyone just being at an institution that allows you to be a commuter, but, because you're a commuter at a school like UMass Boston, you learn how to manage your work life, your social life, and your student life so much more than someone who is away at college, away from a town, not having to focus on anything other than their studies would. So I think it gives us a really big leg up on that and just prepares you for life at a much faster rate than you might have at another institution.

**DEBORAH:**

It sounds like you've made the most of it for sure.

**CAIO:**

I had to! Yeah.

**DEBORAH:**

What does a "legacy" student mean? Could you define that?

**CAIO:**

A student whose parents or grandparents might've attended the same university. I don't know if I might've used the wrong term there, but, if you had a family member who also attended the same school, and now you attended as well.

**DEBORAH:**

Oh, okay. So it seems like you've put some thought into these questions here. You're very articulate. I appreciate it. Do you have early memories from the country and I've already asked you that a little bit. But how old were you when you realized that your status as a Dreamer was going to have an effect on your life and your future? And I asked that earlier and you answered it as when you turned 16, but what about when you were maybe 10? I mean, did you notice that your parents maybe were more careful avoiding, I don't know, police, or that there was an element of fear in the household about being deported or something like that? Was that a cloud of that over the family that you were able to perceive as a youngster?

**CAIO:**

Yeah. So when I think about how that sort of impact had always been present when I was being brought up, it wasn't something that ever stood out to me when I was young because the only thing I was focused on was hanging out with friends, playing sports and going to school. But the older I became, the more I stopped to analyze and look back on some of the experiences that we had when I was younger, that's when the sort of the glass ceiling broke and I noticed all of the ways our household was different than the friends I would go visit after school, which is my parents always instilled this idea that we had to be very careful on the road so that we didn't get pulled over for any reason. Just making sure that you didn't do anything when you're outside of the home that would attract negative attention. It wasn't something that I really understood as fear. But the older I got and the more I realized that my age would put me in a situation where I could face a consequence for taking an action or not being as careful as my parents warned me to be when I was younger that then I would be put in a precarious situation, that's when it really started hitting me. So when I went off to college was definitely the concerns from my mom about staying out or attending an event after school, or just doing anything was, "Remember, your friends don't have the same consequences if you do something incorrect and have to answer to that." And, because of that, there's always anxiety and it definitely plays a major role in everyday life. The older I got, the more that anxiety transitioned, not as much into my life, but my parents.

Being a Dreamer and having access to documents from DACA, what I'm able to do is I'm able to work without worry. I'm able to drive with a driver's license. So I can pretty much go about my average daily life without ever worrying about anything. But every day I leave the house, I always think about what could happen to my parents. What should happen if someone should get pulled over? What should happen if they're a part of a situation as a consequence and have to answer to authorities. What are they going to do without me present? Because I'm someone who likes to be very articulate and to have answers ready. And my parents, I worry, would not be able to communicate in a moment like that. But, you know, with all of that being said, one of the things I'm grateful for is living in a state like Massachusetts and being in a city like Boston that has

so many protections for immigrants. And that makes it definitely a little bit easier on my mind when I leave every day, knowing that should anything happen, there are all these legal networks set up to look out for my parents.

## LAW & POLITICS/18:22

**DEBORAH:**

It sounds like from our earlier conversation with you that you or your career has led you into some of those organizations. Or did I misshear you when we spoke earlier? The professional work, in fact, that's actually one of the questions I have here is how have your educational choices and career path been influenced by your status as a Dreamer?

**CAIO:**

Yeah. So, my mother, I'd say my father too, but mostly my mother has come from a background in law and politics. And I guess the apple doesn't fall far from the tree because it just happened to be what I was interested in as well. And when I went to school, I went to study political science. And I also had minors in international relations and anthropology. So, working with that gave me many great chances to intern at places like the statehouse for Governor Patrick at Senator Warren's office. I interned with the United Nations Association of Greater Boston. And so the more I experienced through my internships and through my classwork, I realized that the passion was there for the same field. And outside of the classroom I was a part of student government and worked with organizations that would help students who didn't have the same opportunities as some of the other students might have. And it led me to where I am today, which is a company that prioritizes clients that have similar missions in mind, which are progressive values and advancing those.

**DEBORAH:**

That's a pretty complete answer and it is very impressive places where you've done internships and you've met these people like Elizabeth Warren and Governor Patrick right, right, right in the middle of the action.

**CAIO:**

Yes. There was a very important quote I learned from one of my first political science classes in college, which was, "If you're

not at the table, you're on the menu." So I took that to heart. I took that to heart.

**DEBORAH:**  
That is a great quote.

**CAIO:**  
Yeah.  
**DEBORAH:**

"If you're not at the table, you're on the menu." Who said that?

**CAIO:**  
My professor in my Intro to Public Policy class.

**DEBORAH:**  
Wow. It sounds like you live by that philosophy.

**CAIO:**  
It's true. Especially someone in my situation growing up, you avoid letting anyone know your status as much as humanly possible. So taking advantage of internships that I wouldn't be able to have as a career, someone who isn't a U.S. citizen can't work for a senator or a federal government position, like an aide to a federal elected official. So I had to take advantage of these positions as an intern and learn as much from them as I could so that I could not only diversify my curriculum but be able to impact the community in that position as well as I could from the position of an intern, giving back to the Commonwealth to helping fellow citizens of the community.

## **FUTURE DREAMS/21:37**

**DEBORAH:**  
Yeah. You're definitely an insider. Wow. So aside from the typical American dream, what human dream have you had for yourself and your life? You're pretty young, 25, but still, mature for your age, for sure. Have you accomplished it and what are your dreams today?

**CAIO:**  
One of my dreams actually—I'm very inspired by film and acting and entertainment so that passion has brought me to a lot of different acting opportunities in school. I always got involved in theater and acting classes as much as I could with other things that I had going on. And I've accomplished some really fun experiences. I've been an extra in several productions. This past fall

I was one of the principal cast for a small film shot up in New Hampshire. And really in the past year, I've expanded a lot on the acting work I've done and sort of taken that plunge on exploring this dream and seeing how far it takes me without feeling like it might be something I regret later on in life if I let it slip by now.

**DEBORAH:**  
That you'd regret that not following through on that passion?

**CAIO:**  
Right.

**DEBORAH:**  
So how do you balance that with political science?

**CAIO:**  
It's a balance with that.

**DEBORAH:**  
You're preparing your speech at the Academy Awards.

**CAIO:**  
Can you tell I've always enjoyed public speaking?

**DEBORAH:**  
Well, as soon as I heard your voice on the telephone, I was like, oh my God, it's very professional sounding. Wonderful. Is the word timbre, yeah?

**CAIO:**  
Thank you very much.

**DEBORAH:**  
And it's accent-free. And not that I would expect an accent from Brazil or anything, but just regionally, you don't seem to have a regional accent.

**CAIO:**  
We can turn that on if you'd like, I'll accent the "r's."

**DEBORAH:**  
Give me, give me. Can you mimic something?

**CAIO:**  
I'm embarrassed. I'm embarrassed.

**DEBORAH:**  
I'm asking because I have two sons. One is a professional musician that tours around with a group called Foreigner. I don't know

if you've ever heard of them.

**CAIO:**  
I have, yeah.

**DEBORAH:**  
He plays keyboards and backup vocals. And my other son is a linguist, as I told you, but he does dialect coaching.

**CAIO:**  
Ah, very cool.

**DEBORAH:**  
So, you know, you probably have an excellent ear for language, obviously, so do a little mimicry for me. We can take it out, but I'd love to hear you. Can you do a South Boston?

**CAIO:**  
As a Southie accent. I mean, it's just, it's, it's one of those things that you, that comes out when you're with your friends and you're watching a Pats game on a Sunday, you know, it's naturally, it's going to come out in some places more than another, but I mean, it's, it's not usually how I speak, *but if I, if I need to talk to my friends a little bit shorter so we can, you know, sorta just, just get the language out a little bit quicker. It's not that hard.*

**DEBORAH:**  
I hear it.

**CAIO:**  
Kind of something we joke around with because I mean, it's, it's not naturally mine. And so I don't want to make it come off like it is, but being from Boston, it's one of those things that everyone from around here plays with.

**DEBORAH:**  
Right, right.

**CAIO:**  
But you did ask how I sort of balanced that with the other dreams. I guess to answer that, I think it's really a balance of three things for me. One is balancing the creative dream, which is the one I think that inspires me the most in terms of motivating me to seek things that are not there. The second is the dream of working in the political and professional sphere and being able to grow in that field enough that I can help benefit other people who come from my background and other people. Personally to me, an area of interest is human rights and helping other folks who have been oppressed

in other ways. So growing professionally in that sense that I can use those skills to help those others that are experiencing oppression as well. And then the third dream I would say is the dream of making sure that my parents are well cared for because, there's no way for me, realistically, and without stress or anxiety to follow my principal dreams without worrying about them being taken care of. And so, like I mentioned earlier, the rates of velocity at which I can pursue my main dreams is definitely something that is slowed down a bit, because I don't do much without making sure that my parents are cared for as if I were caring for myself. So, one thing that I worry about and that I strive to do is to help them grow their business so that they can be taken care of financially and that they can fend for themselves if I should leave Boston or leave Massachusetts to go pursue something else. I wouldn't worry about them and needing to provide in that sense, if they're well taken care of by their business.

**DEBORAH:**

Yeah, well your dad has certainly spoken highly of you and how much you've helped him with websites and all kinds of things like that with his business.

**CAIO:**

He does all the work.

**DEBORAH:**

He's an incredible cook. Oh my God. He brought a few things to class that, you know, we just devoured.

**CAIO:**

It's hard to stay in shape in this house. I'll tell you that.

## STAYING IN BALANCE/27:20

**DEBORAH:**

I'm not surprised. Do you have any practices that keep you, that offset some of that anxiety, like meditation or running or something that kind of ever-present anxiety that you've had to grow up with basically, that's there? I'm sure it's there all the time. Certainly the activism that you've practiced in your life—it's like taking that and making something out of it, not being victimized by it. I just wondered if you have some practice or personal tool.

**CAIO:**

I think being able to speak with people

about how you feel is the most important, a way to unload some of the stress and anxiety. So I have some friends that I'm very close with and they know my story and they've grown with me through similar struggles or they've grown with me through their own struggles, but both of us battling obstacles at the same time. And I've learned along the way that being open about how you might be struggling with an aspect of an obstacle created by your life, being in such a position is really important to being able to not let it hold you back and move on from it. But some of the other things, I mean, myself personally, watching films for me is a huge stress relief. Just a way to sort of turn my head. Uh, turn my brain off and allow my subconscious to really take everything in while not having to actively think about anything that might be work-related or another stressful, situation. I'm a very active person. So physical activity for me is another way that I can let go of some of that anxiety. I try to work out, even during this crisis we're living through, at least, you know, four or five times a week, so that I'm keeping my mind focused.

**DEBORAH:**

Where are you doing that?

**CAIO:**

Well, right now I do it at home. Yeah. So I've, I've sort of built a little arsenal up of home gym equipment. And, I've made it work to my benefit as best I can, but I'd like to think that not too far in the future, I could go back to a gym, without the worry of touching any surfaces that might be infected.

**DEBORAH:**

It's a real challenge. I don't think that what was normal before will ever be normal again. I mean, they'll be a new normal, I believe.

**CAIO:**

Yeah. I mean with good cause too for everyone being preventative of some of the things that we should have always been.

## PATH TO CITIZENSHIP/30:00

**DEBORAH:**

Right. I'm curious about, you're very proactive and you're very positive and you're aggressive in your passions obviously to help others and protect your parents and everything. But how do you see your personal

path to citizenship? What does it look like for you right now in 2020?

**CAIO:**

You know, to be honest with you, I don't have an answer to that. I think that coming from my position, the thing that's gotten me by in the most positive way is just having faith that things will work out, not necessarily knowing how they will, especially because it is up to the administration in charge at the time, how easy your life is going to be as a Dreamer or not. And any day a different policy directive could be released that makes not anyone else's life more difficult, but you as a Dreamer, that one little aspect change could make everything in your life more difficult. So I think that if you don't maintain that focus and the faith that not knowing necessarily how, but knowing that things will one day be as you had always hoped they would have been, is the thing that gets you through it. As it stands, there's really only a certain number of ways that my status would be fixed. And that's either through marriage or that's through a new law that is passed by Congress or some other kind of miracle that would facilitate that happening. So, without having tangible things we can really look forward to, it's about making the most of what you have today and tomorrow and focusing on not letting your fears get the best of you.

**DEBORAH:**

Well said. Well, Caio, this has been just wonderful talking with you and I'm sure that when we put this podcast together, and have people listening, you'll be inspiring them as well. Thank you so much for taking the time to chat with me tonight.

**CAIO:**

Thank you for the opportunity. It was a pleasure.

## STAYING POSITIVE/32:14

**DEBORAH:**

Oh, good. I'm glad you enjoyed it. Is there anything else that you want to say about anything, maybe that the questions didn't tap into or something?

**CAIO:**

No, I think you touched on a really important aspect, which was, despite and I mean, I see this with a lot of other activists who have a Dreamer background as well. Despite the fact that we try to be very positive

and work towards advancing these goals, what we all live with is a constant anxiety that you can't really fix. And when you asked me the question that allowed me to answer that I think that's really important to highlight because I know that other Dreamers out there are facing the same things and, some days are harder than others, some nights before going to sleep, I get a little paranoid and I might think, what if tomorrow when I leave for work and my parents can't come back because they might've been pulled over and a cop wasn't understanding because they were in a town that they took a wrong turn in and now they're dealing with an immigration judge. We did come over with a tourist visa, we came over through a plane. So I understand that deportation from my family is nothing like it is for many other families out there. So, I mean, while that is something that brings me a little bit of comfort in knowing that the safeguards are a little different for us, I know that there are still a lot of things that keep me up at night or make me a little hesitant before walking out the door that a lot of other Dreamers are experiencing as well. And just hoping that they remember that everything's going to be all right, because in life, anything that's ever made you question or feel upset or make you believe that you might not overcome it, you're here today and you overcame it. So it's going to be the same situation.

**DEBORAH:**

Sound philosophy for sure. Wow, you're going to go far, Caio, for sure.

**CAIO:**

Thank you.

**DEBORAH:**

We need you. We need you that's for sure. Thank you so much. This was delightful. Thanks.

## WRAPPING UP/34:24

Anyone listening to this interview can hear Caio's mix of confidence, humility, intelligence, and passion. Whether he pursues a career as an actor or he is someone who will someday hold a political office, he will continue to be a person of influence with a voice for many who cannot speak for themselves. Yes, he is a Dreamer as one of the recipients of the DACA program, but he is anything but a dreamer in terms of what it takes to build a meaningful life grounded in reality.

## THANKS FOR STAYING WITH US DURING OUR FIRST YEAR OF IMMIGRANT VOICES PODCAST PROJECT/35:07

Thank you for staying with us right to the end of this final episode in this series completing our first twelve months of interviews. The Immigrant Voices Podcast Project is the brain child of Michelle Duval the Program Director at the Adult Education program at the Gardner Pilot Academy in Allston, Massachusetts and interviewer and podcaster Deborah Bluestein. You can learn more about English for Speakers of Other Languages courses at our website, [gpaesol.com](http://gpaesol.com) or by emailing Michelle Duval directly at [m.duval@live.com](mailto:m.duval@live.com).

Without the funding of Charlesview, Inc. and the support of its Executive Director, Joanne Barbour, this year-long project would never have been possible. A special thanks to music consultant Michael Bluestein who helped us locate royalty-free music as background for each of our guest introductions.

And last but not least, a big thank you to all the immigrant guests who have participated in this series of interviews. And to all our listeners, we say, "Thank you for tuning in to the first year of our Immigrant Voices Podcast Project. We hope to continue the series, so be on the lookout for our second year of interviews in 2022."