



TRANSCRIPTS



IMMIGRANT VOICES

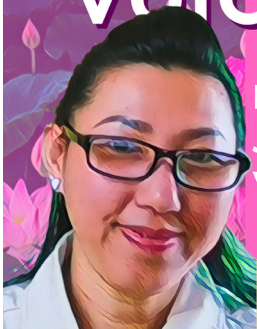


Our journeys.
Our struggles.
Our successes.
Our stories.



VOLUME EIGHT: EPISODES 22-24 • SPRING 2022

IMMIGRANT VOICES



Episode 22
JENNY from
Vietnam



OUR JOURNEYS • OUR VOICES • OUR STRUGGLES • OUR SUCCESSES

IMMIGRANT VOICES



Episode 23
ARCHANGE
from HAITI



OUR JOURNEYS • OUR VOICES • OUR STRUGGLES • OUR SUCCESSES

IMMIGRANT VOICES



Episode 24
XIOMARA
from
EL SALVADOR



OUR JOURNEYS • OUR VOICES • OUR STRUGGLES • OUR SUCCESSES



**EPISODE #22 — JENNY
FROM VIETNAM**

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**EPISODE #23 — ARCHANGE
FROM HAITI**

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**EPISODE #24 — XIOMARA
FROM EL SALVADOR**

THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS

Thank you for your interest in the Immigrant Voices Podcast Project, the brainchild of Michelle Duval, the Program Director at the Adult Education Program at the Gardner Pilot Academy in Allston, Massachusetts and podcaster and producer ESOL teacher Deborah Bluestein. You can learn more about the English for Speakers of Other Languages Program at our website www.gpaesol.com. or by emailing Michelle Duval directly at m.duval@live.com. Without the funding of Charlesview, Inc., and the support of Jo-Ann Barbour, its Executive Director, this project would never have been possible. We send a big thank you to all the guests who participated in the 2022 series of interviews, and to our listeners, we say thank you and do come back for the upcoming episodes. You can hear all of these episodes going back to the fall of 2020 as podcasts on your favorite podcast channels: Apple Podcast, Google Play, and others as well as directly from our gpaesol.com website.





EPISODE #22—JENNY FROM VIETNAM

when they was young, they play together. Also with my brother they live close like neighbor. So always he always visits my house at that time, but then later he moved to the USA to renew them with his family and then he couple of times he went back to travel and then at that time we always work together or like went out together and yeah, that's why it looks like a movie, but like it the way I know him.

or aunt, they call by the name. It's not like as my country, that is impolite to call a girl like that, it's like a relative. You are little younger people, you have to polite. It's like, if your aunt have a name, you could not call by a name. You just like "Aunt" or like "Uncle" or like "Grandmom" or like the other way to call, but here, the little kids could call anything by name. It's like, oh, Sandy, or like Michael. We are really shocked about that. Yeah.

GUEST INTRO/00:38

An enterprising and resilient teenager in Vietnam, Jenny learned the art of sewing, creating stylish clothing for herself, her family, and her neighbors. Two more careers unfolded before marrying and coming to the U.S. at 30. Once here, this energetic, intelligent woman struggled through culture shock to gain enough English and confidence to make her way to a fourth career and a happy life. With her children in school, Jenny dreams of opening her own salon one day. Multi-talented, it's clear that Jenny's greatest passion and success are built around her love of connecting with people.

COMING TO THE U.S./01:36

DEBORAH:

So Jenny, welcome. Thanks for doing this interview. And tell me, how did you happen to come to the United States from Vietnam?

JENNY:

Thank you, Deborah. I came to the USA by marrying my husband, but as I know it's like in previous centers until the present it's like plenty people around the world come here with different reasons like domestic violence, real life-threatening, and policies, economic. But honestly, I think I was lucky than many people by the way I came here because I'm married to my husband that more easy for me and I feel so happy for that.

DEBORAH:

And how did you meet your husband? Is he American?

JENNY:

No, my husband is before it is my brother's friend. So when he was in Vietnam,

DEBORAH:

Nice. Nice. And what year was it that you came to the United States Jenny?

JENNY:

I came here when I was 30 between 31 years old. I remember about 2006. Yeah, 2006.

CULTURE SHOCK/03:31

DEBORAH:

So, what was it like? Was it a shock, a culture shock coming to the United States?

JENNY:

For me it's in my imagination is like very different. When I was in my country my thought is, "Oh, America is nice, very easy. Everything is like heaven." Because everyone says, "American dream, you know, everything easy, beautiful, wonderful." But when I came here, oh my God, I really have culture shock. Well everything from A to Z—is like culture, language, and about like the people: how they wear their clothes every time in four seasons. Oh yeah, about the weather, also. It really different everything.

DEBORAH:

What was the most shocking thing to you?

JENNY:

Maybe about culture. Maybe about culture, yeah.

DEBORAH:

What aspect of the culture are you referring to?

JENNY:

Because here the first I remember when I first came here, everyone in my friend's families because I visit their families. And I heard a little boy called a grandmom, uncle,

ACQUIRING ENGLISH/05:34

DEBORAH:

So what happened when you came to the States? What was the first thing that you did? Did you get a job or did you go to school? What about your English. How much English did you know before you got here?

JENNY:

Okay. So interesting question for me. It's like, I learn English in my country when I was in middle school. But that's just a basic one is like really basic one. And because the accent is very different from Vietnamese sound, you know. The teacher accent is like 100 percent total different from here. So that's why when I look at the book or something, I easy then when the teacher talked. And when I came here every time I went out is very difficult for me because even when I asked something so simple like where a restroom is, I say the way I asked the way that they didn't understand what I talking about and when they answer me and they show me where is I, if I even like didn't understand what they talk about, what is show me around. What with that problem I was very nervous. And I asked my husband like, okay, I may went to school in Sunday. But because when I beginning here, I just like I used to visit around a city and know more about the location where I live, but I didn't go to a school yet. But later on only one month later I went to location school in Boston, but after only a couple months I quit because at that time I was pregnant. I have a baby. I were tired the whole time, but when the first time I finished my school, it just for on level four in my English. So from that after I have a baby I busy with them the

whole time and take care of my family. And I had no chance left to school again until last two years.

DEBORAH:

How many children do you have?

JENNY:

I have two kids and one boy and one girl. So they are attending school. Now they attending a great school now and I'm very happy for that.

STUDYING ONLINE/08:15

DEBORAH:

You have a little more freedom now?

JENNY:

Yes, of course. That's why I back to school. So from you remember 2019? 2019 was a difficult year for everyone in the world. So everyone's stay at home around home. They could not went out anywhere except at home. So at that time, I have a chance to take online class to attend in a GPA program. Until now I feel I'm lucky and that's how helping me to improve my English very much. I appreciate.

DEBORAH:

That's great. So it sounds like you, you know what's going on now when someone is speaking to you.

JENNY:

Yes, it's very clearly. And if I didn't understand that, I don't understand what what are they talking, I will ask again and I know how to ask and I understand like normal. Basic thing. All I can ask or I can talk. Yeah.

CAREERS IN VIETNAM/09:23

DEBORAH:

So you told me earlier that you have a job in a salon. Could you tell me a little bit about that work and how long you've been doing that?

JENNY:

You mean my job in here or in my country?

DEBORAH:

Both. I'd love to hear about what you did before you came here and, what you're doing now that your kids are a little bit older.

JENNY:

Oh, that's a long story for me if I talk about.

DEBORAH:

I love long stories. Why don't you tell me what you did before you came to this country?

JENNY:

That way. So, I remember that's what in the decade 1990 that's pretty long times ago. And at that time I still a teenager. So in my country, you know, Vietnam is not a development country at that time because the country is not open for the whole world, you know. And at that time if you want to looking for a good job, a good salary that's a problem. So at that time before I still went to school, middle school only, but I think it's like it, that's socialism time because the people need not too rich to bought everything they want to enjoy the life like here. So at that time, the people love to sew their own garments like clothes, designer clothes at home. So too many lady, they just stay home and garment the clothes it like the tailor.

DEBORAH:

Did you make your own clothes?

JENNY:

Yes. So I went to a center to learn about it. I had my teacher and I learned how to design a clothes, how to make a style and have fashions. And at that time, you'll have to pay not very expensive for that, because that job is very popular. And if that's the case, you know. I still school, I stay in school and learn weekend only. So at the other time, if I free, I did my job at like tailor at home to help my neighbor, friends, and my family to design clothes and I not got the full price for that. It's just like for supporting me, support to me to, to make properly all the material to this, to work with my job. That's it. And they all very supported me at that time. And that's my first career, my own business at home, but with not much money I own, you know, just for my hobbies and my favorite one to learn for that.

DEBORAH:

So you were a teenager and you were in business for yourself?

JENNY:

Yes. And I'm very I'm proud myself because at that age not much people know how to design the clothes they want and do what they want, but I did. I learned that and help

my neighbor and people around me. So I'm proud of myself that time. And my second job I would tell me tell you about my second job.

DEBORAH:

Is this your second job? You mean once you came to the States or a second job in Vietnam?

JENNY:

It's still in my country because I continue to tell that by my age, you know, and at that time, because I a little bit older, a little bit older, it's like middle school, almost high school. So, I worked for a restaurant. I worked at the drink counter. They call it like here maybe they call it here bartender. But in my country, they call drink service or drink counter. So at that time, it like. If the people want some drink, I will make that. And just serve the people. And the other side in that culture, you're not only just for drink, you first for too many different thing and different work, because like you know, in my country not one people are not, like one person here. I standing there, but you work with too many different work.

DEBORAH:

Are you saying that the job meant you had to prepare the drinks, but you had lots of other things you had to do at the same time?

JENNY:

Yes. Exactly.

DEBORAH:

Like what were the other things you had to do?

JENNY:

The other thing because the restaurant is not a small one. The restaurant is for it holds one to invite friends there to party or to have a wedding party, a birthday party. That also a hotel, but the hotel in upstairs a restaurant in downstairs. So I work it downstairs for a restaurant only, but I had to like connect with people like solving when they want to come here to ask for the menu, they asked for a service and they asked for a price like accounting, like how to pay at the finish the wedding.

DEBORAH:

So they did the wedding planning and you

helped with the wedding planning. And did you give them estimates of what it would cost them to have a wedding in the hotel?

JENNY:

For me it like when the people come and you met with them and you talk about a menu and then you talk about a price and after they agree with everything. You introduced to the other departments with like a chef. So they have to talk more detail about that. But my work is only there and finish that. And when the party begins I have to work with just the drinks and after they finish a party I had to accounting with the meal and clean up everything. Oh my God!

DEBORAH:

So many different parts of that job. You weren't just a server. Yeah. We were like, you helped plan the events.

JENNY:

Yes, that's for that is I learn more, you know, I learn more from that and I happy to work with that because like I connect with too many kind of people around us. And I learned from them a lot. And more importantly like if someone needs help I can help, but after work my whole body numb.

DEBORAH:

Exhausted.

JENNY:

It's so awful, but I happy to work with that job also.

DEBORAH:

It sounds like you do a great job working with people.

JENNY:

Yes. I love it. I love, I love to connect with people. Yes. And I worked there for a couple years.

DEBORAH:

Then when you came to the States, what happened in terms of your careers?

JENNY:

Oh, I'm still not finished. I still have the other job.

DEBORAH:

Job number three in Vietnam.

JENNY:

Job number three in Vietnam.

DEBORAH:

Oh, fantastic. Let's hear it.

JENNY:

You, you ready to hear my third job? And that job is a more interesting job I have. This time at that time I totally changed like eighty degrees with different job. Because at that time I have more skill between when I was worked with restaurant. I've had time to work and learn other skills. I learn computer. I learn a language like English and Chinese. And we got, I learned that at the other time of job, you know, in between and, after I quit that restaurant job, I feel more, I feel more confident for myself and I looking for the other job and this job I worked with a foreign company. My boss is from Taiwan. He was Taiwanese and that is garment factory.

DEBORAH:

Wow! A garment factory. So this one, you knew a lot about it from your sewing.

JENNY:

Yes, I sewing, but that totally different from what I learned because what I learned is just like a tailor a simple thing for yourself to do single, single one, you know, but a garment factory, they have to finish a ton of that as export to foreign country with over a thousand workers for that. And my boss is really a nice guy and he gave me a chance because that company also a new company just move from Vietnam you know.

DEBORAH:

A chance.

JENNY:

Yes. He gave you a chance to got the new job.

DEBORAH:

What were your responsibilities in this new job for the garment factory?

JENNY:

That's a great question. Just same with the second job, I got you know, it's still too many work on that job. So I was assistant for manager. So my job is also translate a language between Vietnamese, Chinese, and I also work with the workers in the factory to help them provide the accessories for the products. If they're not enough, I have to connect with the client. I have to deal with manager. I have to deal with the workers and also I have to translate paper-

work. What is that's, like the client and all the sample, they have a technic technical a form in order it's like the order form that asks you exactly how you garment the clothes. It's like a fashion. Even the label on something very simple. You have to make exactly what they want. So I have to generate the paperwork for the worker and help them what they want. Yeah. It's too much. It's just stressful.

DEBORAH:

So much responsibility.

JENNY:

Too much for me. But I always try my best to work, but also at that time, I thought like because I'm new I'm new worker I'm new at that job. And I really appreciate for my boss to give me that chance to learn, you know. In my mind, I just thought like, oh, this job for learning, not for earning money. So that's why I feel great.

HOMESICK WHILE MAKING A LIFE IN THE U.S./20:57

DEBORAH:

Was that the last job in Vietnam? And then you came to the United States. Or was there a fourth job?

JENNY:

No, basically for when I came here it's just like stay home parent the most time is because. When you came here, you're no chance to do what you want, you know. It's just so difficult. Because like I tell you is the culture shock and the language you just like a meal and sleep and empty. You know everything is so difficult for me when I beginning my new life. I thought that like just for a baby when you learn how to eat, how to walk, how to talk. I imagine the same thing with that for me at that time. And I feel it's very, very hard for the beginning. I just feel, oh, I have to went back to my country. I could not stay here anymore for a couple years, you know?

DEBORAH:

Wow. So you must've been homesick for Vietnam.

JENNY:

Very. Absolutely. And I feel lonely because all my friend is not here. All my friend wasn't here is all day worry in my country is my family only me and I only my husband family. At that time, I stay home to take care

of my kids is I feel depression, you know? I'm feeling lonely. It's really hard time for me.

DEBORAH:

So the American dream was a little bit of a nightmare for a while.

JENNY:

For me it's like, I think it like because before I heard, when I was in, in my country, I heard everyone says different way before realize what you deal with is so different. It's like you have to learn from zero, everything from a zero.

DEBORAH:

That's a big contrast from all those responsible jobs where people looked up to you as somebody who had so many skills and then to be here and be at zero again, must've been very hard.

JENNY:

The first thing you have to try is learn the language that the most difficult one the language.

DEBORAH:

Did you make clothing for your children? Did you sew clothes for them?

JENNY:

Because here is heaven. I don't need to sewing for my children and anywhere the price is not too expensive. The style is wonderful. So market anywhere, so that easy to purchase. So I don't have to work so hard for that.

FINDING A NEW CAREER/23:39

DEBORAH:

You said you started to feel depressed. Did the depression lift? Did it go away a little bit, and if so, what made the depression go away?

JENNY:

Yes. That's also nice questions. Because at that time I thought like I could not stay home the whole time and I start to thought about, okay, I have to learn something. I learn something more easy to make money. And easy for me to don't need too much language to learn. It's like don't need to too many skills of English. So my friend told me like, oh, you should learn about a nail job. It's like a nail technician. And then I thought about this and then I take

six months to learn to went to school and I got the license. Yeah. After I got a license, I started to apply for part-time jobs. It just a weekend when my husband stay home to help me take care of the baby. And then I work on the weekend for two days. And then, that makes me more happier to connect with other people.

DEBORAH:

Are you still doing that work?

JENNY:

I keep working. I keep working for that job until I have more time when my kid going. A couple year later I learn more about a facial and a facial needs more time. I need the whole year to learn and got the license for that. For now I still work only part-time and not a full-time. I love my job now.

MISSING VIETNAM/25:30

DEBORAH:

That sounds great. What do you miss most now about Vietnam?

JENNY:

Maybe my family because some of my siblings is still over there. And as the other sad story I think I miss, I miss my mom the most. You know in Vietnam last year the more difficult year in Vietnam because of COVID and my mom just passed away last year. I feel so the regret is the most regret thing I could not back there to visit her at that moment. At last moment that the most regret I couldn't make.

DEBORAH:

Are you saying that's a regret?

JENNY:

Yes. I miss her. That's until now I still think about her.

DEBORAH:

To go back to Vietnam. Are you do you have a green card or are you able to travel?

JENNY:

No. I am a citizen now. I was a citizen from 2010. Yes. I got that from a long time ago but because the pandemic I cannot.

DEBORAH:

The pandemic.

JENNY:

Yeah. I could not went back at that time and

that's so, so hard for me to talk about that. Until now I still like oh, my God, not easy at all.

A MEMENTO FROM VIETNAM/26:56

DEBORAH:

Did you bring something from Vietnam that you have with you? Some little thing, maybe that you carry in your purse or you keep near you that you will always keep with you?

JENNY:

Oh, thank you for asking that question. That made me remember. Yeah. I show you this one. You see where I wear. That's the ring. That's just like a gem. That's a gem that's the more meaning that the most meaning stuff, I show you. That simple.

DEBORAH:

Can you hold it up and just hold it? Let me take a picture of it. Okay. Just, just like that.

JENNY:

So this ring is I always wear it anytime I went out. I brought a lot too many things with me, but this is easy thing I wear the whole time.

DEBORAH:

What is the symbolism of that ring or what is the history of that ring? Why is it so important?

JENNY:

Yes, that's important to me and meaningful to me because that the gift from my mom. Yes. And this one is when I moved here my mom bought it. My mom said, okay this gem is bring the lucky to you. So you should wear it the whole time. Is that good. So for



that I always when I see the ring I remember my mom all the time. She's just beside me, you know, in my heart. And if I feel my mum then.

DEBORAH:
That's lovely.

JENNY:
Yes. Thank you. You like it?

DEBORAH:
Yes, I do. I got a picture of it.

JENNY:
Yeah, because this ring you know red gem in my country.

DEBORAH:
Yeah. What kind of gem is it? What is it called?

JENNY:
It's like onyx.

DEBORAH:
O N Y X onyx?

JENNY:
Yes. Onyx. And in my culture is like it will bring the lucky to you if you wear it. Some-time it will change the color. It will change the color you see here this side, you see the dark one, right. But the other side you also see the light one.

DEBORAH:
Wow, that's fantastic.

JENNY:
The people say when you change the color that time you have luck. I believe it. But it's not easy to have that change color, you know. When you wear it your whole life maybe.

JENNY'S ADVICE/29:26

DEBORAH:
Jenny, tell me what words of advice would you give somebody coming to this country based on what you learned that you didn't expect? What should they be prepared for?

JENNY:
That's a great question. My advice for immigrant. If they move to the other foreign country, they should prepare first thing, they should prepare for the language of that country. And that's so important, you know, if they learn more, they know more,

and they will get the easy life when they enter that country. And for me because when I was that age and not much chance to preparing. When you enter here you had to like take care of kids, take care of family, earn money, and less chance for education for yourself. So that the regret I on myself. So for me and my advice is like you have to learn the language first. Also you could learn about the technicals for any job you liked. Also you could learn about the skill, the life skill, you know everywhere. You'll have experience in your life. You'll survive easily. And for me it's like connections, community, the people around you, like your neighbor, your worker, coworker, also like the people you met, that's so important to connect with other people around.

DEBORAH:
Don't be shy.

JENNY:
Don't be shy to make you alone. You feel lonely if you shy. Yes, be brave!

FUTURE DREAMS FOR A SALON AND TRAVEL/31:15

DEBORAH:
So, Jenny, what is in store for the future? What are some of your dreams that you're hoping to realize?

JENNY:
That's a great question. I think my little dream is accomplished. My little dream accomplished. My little dream is so simple because I just wish for my children to attend a great school. And now my kids is when they're ready they in Boston Latin School. The first school in the Boston. So I'm so grateful for that. And my second dream, I hope in future I create my own salon.

DEBORAH:
Your own salon. Your own salon.

JENNY:
Yes. I hope that my dream come true. And the other dream also in my, my favorites like it because I like travel. So I hope someday I could travel around the world.

DEBORAH:
Where were some of the places you'd like to go?

JENNY:
So many places. I could say in the world.

But the most I could visit is maybe Japan. Yes. That's a quality country for the everything. So I love to visit first if I had a chance.

DEBORAH:
Well, this has been great talking to you. Is there anything else that you would like to share that we didn't cover in this conversation?

JENNY:
Thank you, Deborah. First I want to thank you to you. To give me a chance to talk with you. That's very great time for me. Also I want to thank for GPA program, and thank for Michelle to give me opportunity to attend this Immigrant Voices Podcast Project, and that's like a journey for me here. And I feel grateful to share my story for everyone.

DEBORAH:
Thank you so much. This has been really interesting and you keep smiling. That's not going to show up on the podcast, but it just tells me that you have a very positive approach to your life and your desire to connect with other people is very cool.

JENNY:
Well, my job now because my job is need to connect with people around to give them positive thoughts. So every time when I work with my clients they are so very happy and bring a smile back on their own. And every time they say, "Oh, thank you, Jenny. I love you." I say I feel so great about that.

DEBORAH:
That's great. Well, thank you so much.

JENNY:
Thank you, Deborah.

WRAPPING UP/34:29

It's clear from hearing Jenny's story that she turns every opportunity that comes her way into a chance for growth and learning. Whether during her Vietnamese life as a neighborhood seamstress, a wedding planner, a garment factory manager, or a salon worker in the U.S., Jenny never shies away from responsibility and hard work. We are grateful to have her as a vibrant member of our GPA community.



EPISODE #23—ARCHANGE FROM HAITI

GUEST INTRO/00:38

A few months after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Archange, a trained and certified accountant but jobless, left Haiti to join his sister in the U.S. His journey here started a more extensive personal and professional journey in his new home. Working first as a supermarket clerk and personal shopper, he earned money to bring his wife and children here. Still working, he attended multiple schools to learn English and to train to become a nurse's assistant. While his English improved steadily, he became a U.S. citizen. After taking more than 40 courses to satisfy prerequisites, he has been accepted into a nurse's training program in the fall of 2022. Ambitious, compassionate, and patient, Archange exemplifies the drive and resilience I have seen in many immigrants. His determination to make a new life and thrive in the process is unstoppable no matter the obstacles.

COMING TO THE U.S./02:00

DEBORAH:

So Archange, welcome to the Immigrant Voices Podcast Project.

ARCHANGE:

Thank you for having me today.

DEBORAH:

Can you tell me about your story of coming to the States when you did and what was the journey like and what made you decide to come to the States?

ARCHANGE:

Like you know Haiti is a poor country. And even when you went to school, you have a career like me. I have a diploma in accounting and when you finish, it's really hard to find a job. Finally, I decided to my mother

was here before, and she applied for me, and they calling me to give me a green card, and finally, I decided to come here, but I didn't have plans to go back to school. First I find a personal part-time job at Stop and Shop. And then a few months later I find another part-time job at Star Market, but after one year I found that very, very tired with these two jobs. And I changed my mind and I decided to go back to school and keep one part-time job. So I went to Jewish Vocational Services in Boston, affiliated with the American Red Cross and I took the CNA classes to become a nurse's assistant and my first job was at Benchmark Senior Living in Newton.

DEBORAH:

How was your English when you got here?

ARCHANGE:

When I got here, I can really read, but I can't understand when someone talked to me because I think they're going too fast. But thanks to my sister, she was a good support from and for and she after one week I came here and then she brought me to the Gardner School for learn English. And Mrs. Duval suggested me to start with first with the second level. Yeah. But after six months, I love this school because I found a personal part time job at Stop and Shop because I left my wife pregnant, and I would like to do something to help her while she's pregnant this again and was shopping to buy some stuff for the little girls.

DEBORAH:

Did your wife come with you from Haiti?

ARCHANGE:

No. I came first and then apply for my wife and my two daughters.

NEW COUNTRY, NEW CAREER/04:27

DEBORAH:

What were some of the obstacles that you encountered when you got here?

ARCHANGE:

When I got here, my sister encouraged me to go to nursing school and that's why I started with the CNA first to see if I can go to nursing school.

DEBORAH:

About your accounting career. Do you have plans to go back to that?

ARCHANGE:

No, because actually last month I just received an email from Bunker Hill Community College and I just been accepted to the nursing program for the fall of 2022.

DEBORAH:

You're going into the nursing program? That's fantastic. What made you decide on that career path?

ARCHANGE:

You know, when you're working with people, it's compassion. And I'm very sensitive for them though. And many of them encouraged me to go to nursing school and the way I'm working with them, they encouraged me saying "You should be a nurse," be in school and I listened to them.

DEBORAH:

What happened during the pandemic for you?

ARCHANGE:

During the pandemic it's hard for us. So especially when you're working in a hospital is a lot of people come with COVID and I have high blood pressure and I am prediabetes too. Finally I had an appointment with my doctor and I asked her to put in a leave for me. And she did that for me. And after three months, I should go back to school because I cannot stay without a job because I have the bills to pay. I got the vaccine in December 2020. And this second shot in January 2021. Thanks to God I'm still alive. It's thanks to God because a lot of people pass away.

DEBORAH:

Really. So during the pandemic you were actually working in a hospital— Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. Okay. And what did you do there?

ARCHANGE:

I'm working as a patient care technician. Helping people with their vital signs, EKG, taking their blood sugar and so on.

DEBORAH:

Great training for you for the nursing career. Tell me some more about what it was like what made you decide. I know you said that your mother was here, your sister was here and you had become an accountant but there wasn't that much work in Haiti. So you decided to come here.

ARCHANGE:

Yeah, finding a job in Haiti it's not you must have someone in the government to give you something to do. It's not easy.

DEBORAH:

Connections.

ARCHANGE:

Yeah. A connection in the government.

DEBORAH:

So now you have connections here.

HELPFUL CONNECTIONS FOR LEARNING/06:47

ARCHANGE:

Yeah, connections here. Thanks God. Many people have made.

DEBORAH:

Who are some of the people that have helped you?

ARCHANGE:

I have my sister. I can say thanks also to Mrs. Duval. She was a good help for me too and I would like to thank her for everything she has done for me. I feel I think, another connection in Brighton to Sister Pat. She taught me very well to become a U.S. citizen. I took a computer class at Jackson Mann in Brighton and Charlesview Center in Brighton. Yeah, that's a lot of people helped me.

DEBORAH:

So you took English classes and computer classes and what other kinds of classes did you take?

ARCHANGE:

I took two distance classes. One at Notre Dame education center in Boston and one at Jackson Mann. While I left that nurse school to work as a personal shopper at Stop and Shop, I took two distance classes to improve my English.

DEBORAH:

You're pretty ambitious about learning English.

ARCHANGE:

My family came. While I came and my family wasn't here, but I think they will come here. I have to improve my English so when they come here, I can help them with everything they need.

DEBORAH:

Did your wife come here?

ARCHANGE:

My wife came six years ago with my two children.

DEBORAH:

How old are your children now?

ARCHANGE:

The older one is 11 and the other one is nine years old.

MISSING HAITI/08:25

DEBORAH:

What do you miss about Haiti?

ARCHANGE:

I miss a lot of things from Haiti: my friends, my family. But during winter, it's really cold! But Haiti natives always is always hot. But thanks to technology, I bought a Roku box; sometime I'm watching Haitian TV while I'm here.

DEBORAH:

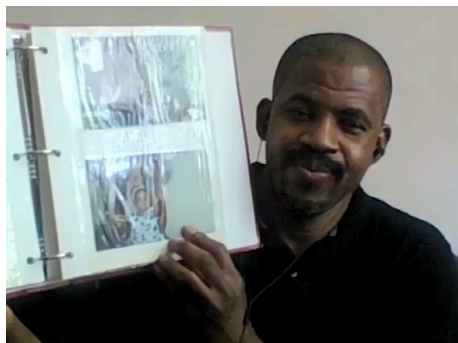
Connected to the culture.

ARCHANGE:

To the culture, yeah.

DEBORAH:

Did you bring anything from Haiti that you have always keep with you, maybe something you carry in your pocket, or maybe a book or something?



ARCHANGE:

I came with an album photo. When I'm thinking about my family and I can see their pictures I have their photo and I can take a look when I miss them.

DEBORAH:

Does that help?

ARCHANGE:

Yeah. It helps.

DEBORAH:

FaceTime and Skype and those kinds of things are you connecting with friends and family that way?

ARCHANGE:

I used Skype while my wife and my kids were in Haiti. When I need to talk to my wife, I'll use Skype on Facebook and I talked to them. It was very useful.

DEBORAH:

How is your wife adjusting and the kids adjusting to being here?

ARCHANGE:

They are very adjusted here because they've been here for six years. My wife going to school to learn English and my kids going to Boston public school, and they really have to take.

A PATH TO CITIZENSHIP/09:48

DEBORAH:

Tell me a little bit more about your path to citizenship. When you decided to do it and how long it took you and what was involved for you?

ARCHANGE:

Because when my family was in Haiti, my sister encouraged me to become a U.S. citizen. When you are a U.S. citizen and things was fast, and that's why pushing me to become a U.S. citizen. I took courses for three months at the Literacy Connection in Brighton with Sister Pat, and then she helped me with the application with everything and I'm so grateful to her.

DEBORAH:

What advice would you give to other immigrants coming to this country? Either from your country or just about from anywhere?

ARCHANGE:

It's really good to go back to school learn

English and because the school is going to help them with everything they need. Yeah, I think so. When you have a career, you can have everything and everything. You can have car, can have a house. Everything you want.

GROWING HIS CAREER/10:46

DEBORAH:

How long is the nursing program for you? When will you be done?

ARCHANGE:

I'll be done in 2024. But I took my first pre college class at BIDMC in spring 2017. Now I finished with all prerequisites. And I'd been accepted to the nursing program.

DEBORAH:

You started taking courses to become a nurse in 2017?

ARCHANGE:

Yeah, I took math, English, biology, sociology, psychology. Now I finished with last semester. I finished with the last course sociology. And now I am accepted into the nursing program.

DEBORAH:

You excited about it?

ARCHANGE:

Yeah. Very excited. I can't wait to start.

DEBORAH:

Those were all courses you needed to take in advance before you get into the nursing programs, is that it?

ARCHANGE:

I was more interesting to take English courses, but, the person responsible for this school program put me in math class and I was at the top of the class at the end. And the next semester I registered to take reading 095. Yeah, I pass it and I take writing 090 and so on.

DEBORAH:

Altogether, how many courses have you been taking since 2017?

ARCHANGE:

Forty classes that took BIDMC. It's one per semester. And while I'm moving to Bunker Hill Community College I took two for every semester. Yeah. And during the summertime, I took total.

DEBORAH:

How do you compare a career as an accountant with a career as nurse? They're so different. Or maybe not, I don't know. How do you see it?

ARCHANGE:

Yeah. It's very different. For accounting you work with computer, but for nursing, you work with people and I really like to help people, especially when they are sick.

DEBORAH:

During COVID you were in the hospital working around COVID patients?

ARCHANGE:

Yes. Yes. Because I mean an assistant nurse needs to do vital signs, you should go and taking vital signs, taking blood sugar in the patient. If the patient is dirty, you should clean the patient. We should do everything for the patient.

DEBORAH:

Kind of like a nurse's aide.

A MAN OF FAITH/13:16

ARCHANGE:

But I'm a Christian so I always pray to God to keep me alive And I say, thank you.

DEBORAH:

So the church is a big part of your life. You want to talk about that a little bit? How you found a community here in the States.

ARCHANGE:

I found the community here because my sister already connected with people here. And when I came here she connect me with someone. And someone every Saturday. I'm a Seventh Day Adventist. Every Saturday someone picks me up and we go to church together.

DEBORAH:

You're a Seventh Day Adventist?

ARCHANGE:

Seventh Day Adventist, yes.

DEBORAH:

Wow. That's very particular kind of religion. You have a lot of strict rules, right?

ARCHANGE:

Very strict rules. You cannot work on Saturday. At the beginning, they put me to work every night on Saturday, and on Sunday

at BI. It was really hard for me, especially when you have kids. Sometimes the little one comes and says, "I want you to pick me up, Daddy!" It's very tired. But when, when I go back to school the manager took me off from the night and I'm working day now.

DEBORAH:

It must've been hard. Well, how did you decide when you had to work on Saturdays when they asked you to work on Saturdays?

ARCHANGE:

Because Sabbath starts on Friday, on sunset on Friday and finish on sunset time on Saturday that I can work at from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. on Saturdays.

DEBORAH:

You can work Saturday night.

ARCHANGE:

Saturday night.

DEBORAH:

Were you a Seventh Day Adventist in Haiti?

ARCHANGE:

Yes. I have been a Seventh Day Adventist since 1995.

HOBBIES/15:00

DEBORAH:

It must give you a lot of stability in your life. Tell me a little bit about the music that you do or that you enjoy. Do you have hobbies?

ARCHANGE:

Yes. I would like to listen to music, especially Christian music. I would like to play soccer, ride bike with my kids and play ball with my kids, especially when they have time off and we can go to the park and play together.

DEBORAH:

Are you able to play soccer? Have you connected with people to play soccer locally?

ARCHANGE:

No. Not here. I played only when I was in Haiti.

DEBORAH:

You missed that?

ARCHANGE:

Yeah. I miss that. When I go to the park with the girls, I play soccer with them.

DEBORAH:

You play soccer with your kids. How do they like it?

ARCHANGE:

They like it.

HAITI'S HARDSHIPS/15:42

DEBORAH:

There've been a lot of tragedies in Haiti. Acts of, you know, just mother nature, tearing the place apart. That must be hard to be here and watch what's going on there. How do you deal with that?

ARCHANGE:

I was in Haiti when the earthquake in 2010. And that earthquake killed more than 3000 people. I was there too. I was sleeping and shaking. But while they are shaking I said "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus." And finally, thanks God. I lost many people in my family too and some friends.

DEBORAH:

They perished in the earthquake.

ARCHANGE:

Yeah.

DEBORAH:

Did you come to the States related to that event?

ARCHANGE:

I came nine months after the earthquake.

DEBORAH:

Is it a special visa because of the earthquake?

ARCHANGE:

But I cannot find job there, that's the problem though. And right now I think the thing is worse now. People kidnapping people.

FUTURE PLANS/16:51

DEBORAH:

There's a lot of hardship there. Tell me about the future. What are some of your future plans, Archange?

ARCHANGE:

My future I would like to be a registered nurse, taking care of people. And the Christian views too, I would like to share the gospel with people and with my friends.

DEBORAH:

Any other thoughts of things that you had wanted to be sure to talk about?

ARCHANGE:

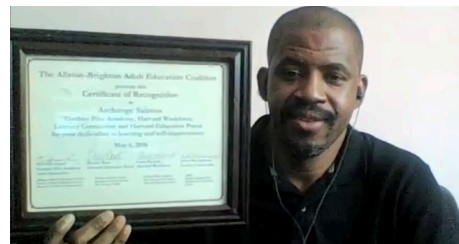
I would like to thank you for your time talking to me today. I would like to thank many people who helped me. This is a certificate I received while I'm here. And from Mrs. Duval, Gardner Pilot Academy Adult Education Program, Beverly Bass Harvard Education Portal, Carol Kolenik Harvard Workforce and Sister Pat Andrews The Literacy Connection.

DEBORAH:

You're a hard worker.

ARCHANGE:

Thank you. Thank you.



SUCCESSES/17:48

DEBORAH:

I have a few questions left. What do you feel has been your greatest success since you've been here and what has been the most difficult challenge since you've been here?

ARCHANGE:

My big success is the letter I received from Bunker Hill Community College, and I've been accepted into the nursing program. I was so excited I, when I say this news and also I won a scholarship at BIDMC. One last year and the other one the year before to continue with my education.

DEBORAH:

That's fantastic.

ARCHANGE:

And the hardest thing for me when I'm here, it was when I was looking for a place to live with my family. And before I live with my sister and some days I pass the day with my mother, but when my wife came with my children, it's really hard for me. Sometimes when I'm looking for two-bedroom to rent. When they know, you have two kids, they refuse to give you we'll give you their rental. And finally, I think I talked

with Deborah [GM] and she said she can help me find someone to help me. And she connected me with Mrs. Duval. So thanks to Mrs. Duval for her help. I cannot find a word so that thank her for everything she had done for me. And she helped, she helped me after four months. And then they called me for an interview at the building where I'm living now. She helped me and she had me since 2016, I'm living here. That was great.

DEBORAH:

She helped you find a place to live. That's fantastic. So are you in the Charlesview community neighborhood there?

ARCHANGE:

No. I apply over there but they didn't call me yet. I applied over 10 years ago.

FAVORITE U.S. THING/20:00

DEBORAH:

What's your favorite thing about being here?

ARCHANGE:

My favorite thing here is to go back to school to help me improve myself. Sometimes you see other people struggle to live here, but I think I do everything I can do to improve myself until I have a better life for myself and for my family. Now that I go back to school and say the same thing.

DEBORAH:

So your kids have been here a while. Do they speak English with no accent? At this point? Are they bilingual? Do they speak French and English?

ARCHANGE:

Haitian Creole. Haitian Creole and English. Sometimes they say, "Daddy, you speak with accent!" I said, "I didn't born here." I said it's normal to speak with accent. But their English is very well.

DEBORAH:

So Haitian Creole is connected to French, right?

ARCHANGE:

And to French. Unfortunately, they didn't have a chance to go to school in Haiti. For me I speak Haitian Creole French.

DEBORAH:

So are the kids learning Haitian Creole

French as well as English?

ARCHANGE:

Haitian Creole and English.

DEBORAH:

Tell me about the food here versus the food and Haiti.

ARCHANGE:

I would say they are very different. Yeah.

DEBORAH:

Can you be specific? Like how are they different?

ARCHANGE:

Here I saw people who put a lot of sugar and a lot of salt on their food. It's not healthy for people. In Haiti it is different. People like to cook in their own home. And here people go into restaurants more than people in Haiti. And our food is very good Haitian food.

DEBORAH:

So are you eating that at home?

ARCHANGE:

Yes. Every day Haitian food. Sometime we went to McDonald's because sometimes the kids like some fries. Yeah.

DEBORAH:

It's not a regular part of their diet.

ARCHANGE:

Not regular.

ADVICE/21:56

DEBORAH:

Archange, is there anything else that you'd like to share that other immigrants might benefit from hearing about—either your philosophy about how to adjust here or what they should do when they come here?

ARCHANGE:

My advice for other immigrants here, I would like to say to them to follow the people who did great things when they came here. They must go to school. Because with school they can do everything they want.

DEBORAH:

Education is a big value for you. Anything else that you'd like to say?

ARCHANGE:

And thank you for your time. I really appre-

ciate it. And thank you everyone who has helped me.

DEBORAH:

Thank you. What are your kids' names. Talk to me about your kids?

ARCHANGE:

Angela and Angie

DEBORAH:

They must be very proud of their father. That's fantastic. About the, about the nurse's program. That's really great.

ARCHANGE:

Very good.

DEBORAH:

Thanks so much, Archange.

ARCHANGE:

Thank you too.

DEBORAH:

I'm really impressed. If I go to the hospital, I want you to be my nurse. Yeah. It's so good to have people who really love what they do. Thanks a lot.

ARCHANGE:

Thank you, have a good one!

WRAPPING UP/23:08

Staunchly compassionate, ambitious, and determined, Archange has made his way toward his American Dream. Leaving his accounting career behind in his native Haiti, Archange discovered his passion for helping people, especially when they are sick. Now enrolled in a program to become a registered nurse, his focus is clear, and his career path ahead is certain. Archange and his family continue to be an essential part of our greater Gardner Pilot Academy community.



EPISODE #24—XIOMARA FROM EL SALVADOR

GUEST INTRO/00:39

On course to become a graphic designer in her native country, Xiomara decided instead to join her husband, Pedro. He had escaped to the U.S. to avoid the violence and pressures local gangs in El Salvador exerted on young men. Leaving the familiar with no sense of what was facing her and unable to speak English, she and her young son Francisco came to this country in 2007. Working in a nursing home's laundry with Brazilian immigrants did little to further her English acquisition. Slowly, with increasing confidence, she could speak and be understood enough in English to help her father grow his moving company. Now, as the business's office manager, she writes quotes and invoices, administers customer concerns, arranges schedules, and works with people in transition from around the world.

COMING TO THE U.S./01:47

DEBORAH:

My guest today is Xiomara from El Salvador. Xiomara, tell me a little bit about how you came to the United States.

XIOMARA:

Oh, hi Deborah. Yes, I came to the country in 2007. I am from El Salvador. It's one of the smallest country in Central America. I'm very proud where I am from. I want to share about how was my neighborhood where I grew up. That's a beautiful place over there. Everyone knows each other and everyone was very kind and happy people in that times. I feel that I had a happy childhood. I grew up with my mom and my father. My father was a professional chef, my mom was a seamstress and she worked in a supermarket too, I remember. And my father was a professional chef, but the

payment wasn't enough for our home. So he was the first person that emigrated to this country to serve a better life. I remember when my father came here he said that was very tough for him and for us over there, because we usually was my father, my mother, and me. And it was one of the thing more saddest in my life when my father came first here. But he always called us every day and send letters for feeling like he was over there with us, with my mom. My mom tried to be a mother and father in any moment in my life. And I have a lot of friends in my neighborhood.

And when I started the high school, I met my husband Pedro. And he was my friend. And we started the relationship when the second year of high school. When we graduate, we decide to have my first child very young. I like Pedro in that times because he always was a very, responsibility man and very mature for his age. And yeah, we decide to have Francisco and we graduate together and we became very good friends and then parents.

And in the neighborhood that I grew up became dangerous for teenagers and Pedro decide to emigrate too for that situation. And was very sad because it's often you feel in danger in your own country. Mostly because you've finished your studies, you have your friends over there. It's very sad to decide to emigrate to other countries that you don't know. But Pedro because he's a man, they have more dangerous than a woman.

So Pedro came here first and then the situation was worse and I decide to came too. I remember when I came here, but the thing is like my story is very different because I had my father and Pedro here in this country. That was a very advantage for me because they help me over here with the jobs, with the language, try to say, "Oh, Xiomara, you have to study, you have to do this." And for another people it's more, it's more hard. But yes, my first job over here was in the nursing home in the laundry and I say, "Oh my gosh!" Because in my country when I came here I was studying my career in graphic design. I just did maybe a year, I

think. Yeah. And then I decided to came.

DEBORAH:

How many years passed before you were able to come and join him?

XIOMARA:

Two years. Yeah. Pedro came first here and then two years later I came over here. Because the situation over there was very worse in my country and in our neighborhoods. All my friends decide to go in other places for that situation. And I decide to came here.

MOUNTING VIOLENCE/05:54

DEBORAH:

Could you go into some detail about what was so dangerous in your country if you don't mind? What kinds of things were happening?

XIOMARA:

Yeah. I remember one of a sad thing that happened was one of our friends because we know everybody over there and we have a lot of friends. And one of our friends they, we were in a place like close to a park and we were in a corner of the street because everyone, Pedro and their friends they make like dance, like break dance and that time that were very popular. And we were over there and one in one car just right in the street. And they shooting. And one of our friends was got the shooting and the guys killed my friend. He died. And that was the most surprise for us. And everyone was very sad and say nobody can be outside.

We usually play outside in the street with the with the friend with the ball everything. But when that happened and we didn't again, and everyone was very sad and think about because the gangs started to grow up in every places. And it was more dangerous for the mens because when these people that are part of the gangs asking, "Oh, you have to be part of us." And when the one person say no they try to force to get into the gangs and that's was scared for everyone.

DEBORAH:

That's why your husband left. He was in so

much danger. He was being pressured to be in a gang.

XIOMARA:

Yes. Yes. Because my husband he was the person that study and in the night and work in the date. And, he was a very healthy guy and he like a lot of the sports and everything and this people study asking everyone if you wanna get into the gang. And when you say no, they one, one of the guys was more violent and they say, "You have to go come with us because, you know, we will do something your family," or they, they . . .

DEBORAH:

They threatened you.

XIOMARA:

Yes. They threaten you. And that's Pedro, was very scared mostly because we have a Francisco baby is and he said, no, I can't I can't be here. And the and the problem is that you can go in another city, but in that times was in 2004 when this gang started to put very violent with the teenagers. Yeah.

And Pedro came here and then two years later Pedro told me we have to come too. and I came here and was one of the situation. That was the situation because I was very happy over there in my country. I was a study, I have my friends over there. I try to be inside to my house every time, to the university, to the house, not be outside because these guys you know you never know when they came shooting and everything. But Pedro and me was separated and the kids, Francisco too, and Pedro was thinking if he back again to my country or we came we come here, but Pedro was a little bit scared we came here but it was very tough because he was unsafe for him to back.

LEAVING A CAREER BEHIND TO MAKE A NEW LIFE/09:29

DEBORAH:

Studying graphic design is very different from working in a laundry. How did you deal with your disappointments?

XIOMARA:

Yes, because when I came here Pedro always told me over the phone say, "Oh, Xiomara, here is very different. Here's another life. Mostly you don't know the language. It's hard for you start the conversation. And when you came here, you don't have your

legal status in the beginning. Hard for get a job." And Pedro was disappointed say oh my God here is good. But you have to get this and you have to learn the language. But that's say oh, I don't like to go because in my country I was a study and I have everything over there, but I thinking about my son and my and my husband I have to be with him.

DEBORAH:

An important decision, obviously. Yes.

XIOMARA:

And you know what? My grandma from my from my father she encouraged me to come here because I was like, oh no, okay. I would be here if we have to be separated, but I don't wanna go. I was scared. And my grandma say, "Xiomara, you have to go with your with your kid and your husband because you are a family and you have to care your husband because you over here you see the situation. It's not, it's not good." Unfortunately, it's over there. You finish your career. It's it is hard to get that job. It's a very different kind of thing that is very difficult in my country. It's beautiful. But when you are an adult it started to become hardest.

LEARNING ENGLISH/11:05

DEBORAH:

How hard was it to learn English for you?

XIOMARA:

I think was very hard to learn English because in my country we studied English. It's different. Just words just sentences the colors, things like that. But conversation when you not take a specific subject. No, no, you don't speak very well. So when I came here I think was very hard, mostly because I am very shy and I think take like couple years like four or five years to feel more comfortable to talk with the people. And one of my challenge too, is because I started my first job was in a laundry, but all my coworker was a Brazilian woman and they speak Portuguese and I learn Portuguese. For practice English, I always have to practice in the school with the teacher or with some friends outside. Pedro has more opportunity be more fluently when he speak because all the people over there is from here they speak only English but that's one of my challenge.

JOINING THE FAMILY BUSINESS/12:19

DEBORAH:

Well, I think you're doing a great job. Tell me how soon did you get involved with your father's moving business? What was that all about? Can you tell me a little bit about that journey from the laundry room to a moving company and being kind of the girl Friday taking care of so many things for your father.

XIOMARA:

I held my first job in the laundry and I did a couple years. And then when I came here in 2007, my father in 2009 because my father, he used to work in a moving company. Because my father have long time here and he had started the business in 2009. He said, "Oh, why not I open the business a moving company?" And one Colombian guy helped him in that moment to make a website and with the calls and everything and the emails because my father was own experience about it too.

And my father told me because I was paying in private classes, English classes, and my father say, "Oh, Xiomara. I have a friend, they go to GPA, this school in the neighborhood of Allston and they speak very well. And this is free. So you have to go and check and you can go over there. Okay?" And I went over there I say oh, kind of the same and is free, so I will stay here. And my father told me one day because he is an amazing father and friend for me. And he said, "I have the dream that you will speak English and you will help me with my moving company. And I say, "Oh my God! Is too much pressure for me. But yes, I will try my best to speak very soon and understand the reading, the writing, and everything."

And yes and my father started the business in 2009 and I started to work with him in 2012. My mom came here too with a visa. She came here and she stayed with us too. And she helped my father with something with a business too. Yeah. In 2012 and 2013 I started to take the phone calls. I feel more in the beginning was very I have a lot experience was, "Oh my gosh!" Sometime I didn't understand anything that the client told me. But I was "Can you please send me an email with the details?" I wrote that sentences in a notebook I things like I can't say

to the people and sometimes people hang up the phone. “No, you not understand!” In the beginning, but yes. And so my father started the business in 2009 and he encouraged me to speak English and, and he put all the faith on me. And he said, “You will help me with the business.” And I did. I think he always encouraged me in different things in my life.

DEBORAH:

That’s great to have a parent that’s so encouraging. What do you like about working in the moving business?

XIOMARA:

I like to work in a moving business because first of all, I have my own schedule because I came here. I had my second child over here. And that’s one of the things that I like to work with my father I have my own schedule. And I talk with the people and listen the different accents to the people. I like it to hear them I learn how, people from India. Now I understand better how can I understand the accent when they are speaking with me. And I’m very happy about that. Maybe I’m a little bit have to speak more fluently, but I understand everything. And that’s one of the skills that I learn with working in a moving company and also to my skills and the computers and the emails and things like that I learned my country I can do it over here. I can help my father about it.

RETRIEVING SKILLS FROM THE PAST CAREER/16:24

DEBORAH:

Are you using your graphic design skills in the marketing part of the business?

XIOMARA:

Some of them because I learn but not everything, but some of them I can apply in the marketing. We have to put more marketing and more things in the business. But my son right now is helping me because he’s taking the same too. He likes that career that kind of stuff. And he helps us a lot too with the moving company right now.

DEBORAH:

Is he the one that’s the musician?

XIOMARA:

Yes. Francisco.

DEBORAH:

Francisco.

XIOMARA:

He’s my first child. Yeah.

DEBORAH:

Tell us a little bit about him—how he works in the business and also his musical talents.

XIOMARA:

Yes. Francisco is a amazing child. He’s very brilliant, intelligent. My father too, encouraged him to learn the guitar to play a guitar. When he was 10 years old, he knows a program over here in Allston/Brighton a free lessons for guitar, and he encouraged Francisco to learn in. Francisco love it in the first moment Francisco, started to play. And then he followed everything and was a very good skill for him. And my father encouraged him too. Also to Hailey, my second one, but Hailey likes more dance. She doesn’t like to play, but Francisco too when he started the high school he was interested to Boston Art for because he liked the music. He liked to use computers, drawing, and being do things like this. And I’m very surprised.

DEBORAH:

Is he going to go to the Boston Arts Academy? They just built a brand new gorgeous building. Is he, is he going be a student there?

XIOMARA:

Yeah. You saw it in the Fenway?

DEBORAH:

I live right around the corner from it. I’ve been watching it.

XIOMARA:

Oh yeah. Yeah. He made one of the the billboards in the Fenway. Yes. And he is the number one in visual art there. His teacher say, “Wow, Francisco’s amazing.” And in her classmate and she’s very happy with Francisco. Yes. He’s the same. He’s a very kind and he support us. He support me and support the grandpa, and also Pedro. But Pedro’s in a moving company too, but it is another company that he started. Yeah. Pedro started this company I think in 2010, I think, Pedro started Michael’s moving company.

DEBORAH:

Oh yeah, sure. I’ve seen the trucks. So your husband is a competitor with your father!

XIOMARA:

He’s a competitor. Yes, because my father worked for this person Michael a long time ago. And when Pedro came here. My father bring Pedro to the company and Pedro loves there because you know what in my country when Pedro because Pedro work in my country in a study, he has more hard life but over there he work in a moving company too in El Salvador. And when he came here, he work in the same company my father bring to him and Michael Movers and he’s over there for a long time. But my father wants to be a part. He put his own business.

DEBORAH:

Friendly competitors.

XIOMARA:

Friendly competitors.

CHALLENGES/20:00

DEBORAH:

So, Xiomara, tell me what has been the biggest challenge for you over the years being here? If you could narrow it down to one or two things, what would you say?

XIOMARA:

One of my big challenges is not complete my education. Not complete my education, I think was a little bit frustrated for me because I want to finish my career. I told my kids that you never give up. I will have the opportunity to do it, to study again and complete the education graphic design. And yes. And they will see, they will see. And everyone have an American dream, right. But another the human dream that I always I have is I grew up I grew up with overweight. And I was very sad and that times always I tried to lose weight and I never did it but now I’m very happy because I complete my goal and now I have the weight that I always dreaming I have.

DEBORAH:

Your ideal weight. How did you do that? That’s a big challenge and very few people succeed in that goal. How did you do it?

XIOMARA:

I started last year July 26th, 2021. When

I saw my weight and I saw like almost the 200. I say, oh my God, no! It's too much! It's enough. All my life I try to lose weight and now I have this age and I almost 200, it can't happen. And I decide to change my food, change my life. I try to be more energetic, make more exercise. And I did. I tried to be very—how is the word same Spanish *disciplina*? I put discipline in my life and my food. And mostly in your food you have to put the discipline your food. And I started to do workout every day half hour, and now I have the weight and I say, oh my gosh.

DEBORAH:

What kind of exercise did you do and what kind of changes did you make in your food? What did you cut out? What did you put in? Those are dramatic changes and how long did it take you to lose the weight you wanted to lose?

XIOMARA:

So, I lost the weight in a short time. And I'm very surprised myself because it usually takes a year but with discipline, you can, you can have it in short time. I started on July and now it's almost one year and I lose like over 50 pounds. The bad habit that I had is to eat junk food like chips and things like that. And now I change for fruit. I read a lot about the vegetable what types work for you and fruit. Now I am. That's the other thing that I really recommend to my friend, because everyone was very surprised when they saw me in December and Christmas. They say, "Oh my God, you okay? You are not sick?" because the change was very dramatic. And everyone was asking me if something happened with me and they say, no, no, no. I just changed my habit about the food, and I do exercise every, every day.

DEBORAH:

Do you go to a gym? What kind of exercise are you doing?

XIOMARA:

Yeah, sometimes I go to the gym because for my little girl I when Pedro, my husband is here. I go or when my older son is over here, but usually at home. I started to with my little one I started to walk every because in the past I was the person that no, I don't like to do exercise. Only Pedro likes to do workout things like that. And I said, no, no, no, I might. Don't like. But now when I try to change my body, I started to walk with

my little one. And then over here home I try to follow videos how to do Zumba, things like that because I like to dance and you have to see what you like for you can feel happy and you can do it. I try to follow videos and with for exercise videos and things like that. And always half hour, every day half-hour, and I try to do a routine for you can have the success. Yes.

DEBORAH:

They say discipline sets you free.

XIOMARA:

Exactly. That word that I forgot in English, but the same in Spanish "discipline" is the key for everything for learn language for learn everything in your life.

EL SALVADOR MEMENTO/24:46

DEBORAH:

Did you bring anything from El Salvador, some little thing that you always keep with you?

XIOMARA:

The first time when I came here I bring one of my dolls. I have a doll from my grandma, the grandma that encouraged me to come here. And I remember that I put I tried to protect that doll, but I don't lose it or something and I still have it. And also a small mirror that my mom used to have in El Salvador. And it's very special. Because she have it from, I think from little one too and I still have it. And I'm very happy because when I saw this kind of thing they remember me all, the things in the past. And when I was with my grandma and my mom this a bear, but this is from El Salvador. And



you know what? This one, one of my, my grandma's friend.

DEBORAH:

Sweet. It looks brand new. How old is it?

XIOMARA:

I was like 10 years when my grandma because when my grandma was a butcher and she was that kind of business in El Salvador. And this bear her friend next to her business make these dolls. They make it over there with very easy and you know what that friend the name was Xiomara. They have a friend, they are friends for a long time. My grandma always told me their story about the friend. And when I was born, she told my father, please put the name to your little one Xiomara like my best friend and my my mom was very upset when, oh my God. No. Why? But I don't know. Maybe she, that this friend was very special for her. You have to put Xiomara like my friend. And so my father put my the name Xiomara for honor for my grandma.

DEBORAH:

Wow. Wow. So that doll has double significance.

XIOMARA:

Yes. And it's very in good condition. The kids say, oh my God, mom, you have a very good condition because I put it like into a glass cabinet. Yes. And I put it in the high place because Katie take everything. And the mirror, I still use it. I still use it for me.

DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE AND ADVICE/27:06

DEBORAH:

Tell me, Xiomara, what are your dreams about the future?

XIOMARA:

One of my dreams is to back to my country, back for vacation or see my friends. I used to have contact with them with with the social media and things like that. But I really wanna back to the house that I grew up and see everything over there. That's one of my dreams. And the other dream that I have is to, the moving company can be a bigger company. My father can have a bigger company and stay with my family, stay with my family to be a very good example for my kids, for my husband, that he's a very good husband. I feel very blessed for the family

that God give it to me. Yes, but my first dream is to go back to El Salvador. I have long time and I'm very sad when I remember my place, my friends, my other family. I hope so one day I can back.

DEBORAH:

What advice would you give to an immigrant coming to this country today?

XIOMARA:

One of my advice is first don't be frustrated for not speak the language. Try to learn the language. Try to encourage every day, every day, mostly with some immigrant they don't have the family, the kids, or maybe the husband or the wife, but this country they can give you a lot of opportunities, but you have to get the good things, not because you can have the bad things as well. First to learn the language. Fight for everything they want to fight over here and to be a good person, good people over here for the country too, because you have to appreciate it. Why the country give it to you because in your countries, and not only in El Salvador, I think everyone in different countries from Central America, South America, I think they have this kind of situation. Unfortunately your country, don't give you the opportunities. Maybe you finish the career and you don't find a job. Or the people, dangerous people over there. In this country, maybe we are living right now in a very sad situation too, but they give you more opportunities, even though you are immigrant, they give you opportunities. You have to appreciated this country about it and, fight for everything and learn the language. And yes.

WRAPPING UP/29:44

DEBORAH:

What else would you like to say?

XIOMARA:

Another important thing is helps your people, your same people, immigrant people, you don't be selfish, but because you have to help each other mostly. People like you from your country or the other country you have to help them. That's the other dream that I have. I have a lot of dreams, but my other important dream, I say, I want to complete my education but I want in the future to help people because I like always in my family, the family that I have over here or friends, they just say, "Xiomara, you can do something for me?" I have to learn

to say "No." Because I always say yes and I and sometimes I say, okay, I, I will do it, but let me just do it something or when I have the time but I, I can say no. And I like to, to advice or, or share, share, you know like the things I know. I know, very like selfish say, no, I like to, oh, why you not go to GPA to learn English? Why not do this one? I like to share everything that good things for everyone. And that's the other thing that you have to help your own people.

DEBORAH:

Especially people who have just arrived. And you remember what it was like when you first got here.

XIOMARA:

Yes. And unfortunately you have people that don't help you. They don't help you. They treat you bad. It's very sad, but you learn for that people too. And mostly when it's people from your country, or immigrants and you see that they act very bad with you. I just remember things and now I try to do my best with everyone that I know. I told my kids when you know new people in the school, you have to help the people, the friends you have, see, they speak Spanish and they need help. You have to help everyone if you can. So, yeah, that's the other example that I try to, to give it to them.

DEBORAH:

Are all three children bilingual?

XIOMARA:

Yes.

DEBORAH:

That's great. That's great.

XIOMARA:

The little one start to speak like English is Spanish. English is Spanish. They listen.

DEBORAH:

Spanglish.

XIOMARA:

Spanglish. Yes. It's very, it's very intelligent. Yeah.

DEBORAH:

It's been great talking to you, Xiomara. Is there anything else that you would like to add or say ?

XIOMARA:

Thank you so much for the opportunity.

And I'm very happy that you was my teacher and you are the person that interviewed me right now. I'm very happy. Thank you so much. I have to say huge thank you to you, to Michelle, to everyone. I have many people from this kind of program excellent people.

DEBORAH:

Well, thank you so much, Xiomara.

XIOMARA:

Thank you.

IN CONCLUSION/32:42

Cheerful, enthusiastic, and warm, Xiomara has become the go-to person in her father's moving company while raising three children. Smiling and steady, she continues to gain fluency in English. Xiomara is determined to finish her education to become a full-time graphic designer. In the meantime, she keeps her design skills fresh by creating marketing tools for the growth and expansion of her father's moving company. Although she misses some of her life in El Salvador, she has made a new one here in the States, and is always eager to help her fellow immigrants transition to their new life.