

Key:

TP: Tyler Parliman

JD: Jose DaRocha

0:00

TP: Hello! This is the immigrant stories project my name is Tyler Parliman (Interviewer)

0:11

JD: And I'm Jose DaRocha (Interviewee).

0:13

TP: And let's get started. How was your life in Portugal before coming to the United States?

(Question #1)

0:15

JD: I don't really remember much; I was young I was 7 years old. I went to school for about 2 years, I helped my mother on the farm. Took care of the animals and did house chores you know. Played with my friends, that's about it. As far as I can remember.

0:47

TP: Do you remember how your father explained leaving to the United States?

(Question #2)

0:50

JD: My father didn't explain it, my father immigrated from Portugal to France and then from France he got a visa and came to the United States and he was here 2 years and when his visa was about to expire he got a lawyer stayed in the United States and then a year later he brought us over.

1:17

TP: Okay, um next question. Do you remember your preparations when leaving to the US?
(Question #3)

1:21

JD: Like I said I was very young so... I'm sure we packed some clothes, and my mother told us that we were leaving. I don't think we had a say in it (chuckles).

1:31

TP: You wrote about your difficulties at school, especially a language barrier.

1:37

JD: Umm hmm.

1:38

TP: Can you elaborate on those experiences and how you overcame them?
(Question #4)

1:42

JD: Well, you know when I came to the US we didn't come in the beginning of the year we came in like December so school was already going. So, I didn't know anybody we didn't know anybody when we first came here so you know we went to school came to a strange country which is totally different from the country where I came you know. I was brought up in a farm area in the small town I belonged to it was a small town it was basically farm area (farmers). You come to the United States and we moved to Newark and it was a city. So it's all buildings and everything was totally different and we got (parent's enrolled in school) and it was tough our teachers didn't speak any Portuguese. It was tough for me to even ask to go to the bathroom. I didn't know how to ask or do that so I was difficult but when they say your young you pick it up quick I used to go... my father would take me work with him because he didn't want me to hanging around Newark and getting in trouble so (chuckle) He took me to the restaurant and I you know doing little jobs and the waitresses when they got off they would take me because my father would have to work late. So they would always take me to the park and stuff like that so I started picking up. I guess I picked up more English from speaking with them and you know having conversations with them and stuff and trying to communicate then I actually did in school. You know school helped with the writing and all that but the you know.

3:33

TP: The in real life physical applications.

3:34

JD: Yeah

3:35

TP: Came with working with your Dad

3:36

JD: Yeah, working with my Dad and the people he worked with and I hung around them.

3:42

TP: Do you have any fun memories from your early years that you would like to share?

(Question #5)

3:46

JD: In Portugal or here?

3:48

TP: Either or, or both.

3:50

JD: Well Portugal was fun, you're a little kid and your it's not like the US. Over there we knew everybody it's a small town, so everybody knew who I was and knew who everybody was so. You had more freedom you know like when you came here it was more my parents were both working so we didn't. we had the neighborhood kids it was more what the word. Enclose or more isolated.

4:32

TP: Okay.

4:33

JD: But you know I had fun. I got along with people so, I always had fun you know?

4:42

TP: Yeah.

4:43

JD: Playing with if was hide and go seek or whatever it was the games that we used to play as kids. Manhunt. (chuckle)

4:49

TP: (Chuckle) Yeah, the fun ones.

4:50

JD: Yeah, the fun ones.

4:52

TP: Umm, In 8th grade you started working with working with your father, how was that experience?

(Question #6)

5:00

JD: Eh, it was good he got me a part-time job at the restaurant so on the weekends I would work there you know. And I would learn it was pretty cool. I got to eat what I wanted (chuckle) and it taught me a lot. I always wanted to be a cook but my father told me no. because it was too much of a. Well when you work in a kitchen it's a very long day and its very your trapped you know you're stuck there from ten o'clock in the morning to ten o'clock at night and your working six days a week your day off is in the middle of the week but when I was a kid it was fun. I got, my father taught me a lot of things. Showed me how to do things how to cook things and all that so. It was it was good. I enjoyed it.

5:57

TP: Umm, where there any other kids where you work at the restaurant?

(Question #7)

6:02

JD: No! (chuckles)

6:03

TP: (Chuckles)

6:05

JD: There were no other kids it was just me. (chuckles)

6:07

TP: Umm.

6:08

JD: Another thing too is the owner of the restaurant like if you went on errands or whatever he would always take me you know.

6:17

TP: Yeah!

6:18

JD: To get this or to get that he would take me with him. It was good.

6:25

TP: It seems like you valued your time there at the restaurant.

6:28

JD: Yeah

6:29

TP: Umm... Did you work anywhere else other than the restaurant?

(Question #8)

6:40

JD: When I was younger?

6:44

TP: Yeah.

6:47

JD: When I was younger, When I got older I stayed working there into high school and stuff on the weekends I'd go to work there and I worked in the kitchen and then if they had parties I would always go outside and serve the parties like if they had a carving station they'd put me out there carving the meat and serve the people and stuff. I did everything if they need help washing the dishes I'd help those guys but my father would always drag me back where he was so he could show me you know the more important stuff not just the you know just go wash the dishes and he'd say come over here I want to show you how to do this or do that so. It was good.

7:33

TP: When starting your family, you lost your job and experience unemployment. How did you feel in that moment?

7:43

JD: Well your scared, let's see I worked in a chemical plant for 12 years I think it was. When I was there I got married and we are starting a family the company got relocated and they want me to go to Rhode Island and when they moved they wanted me to go with them but my wife didn't. She wanted to stay by her parents, close to her parents and stuff and I didn't want to go anyway and what's the chances you go there and a couple of months later or a year later or whatever they relocated and they shut that place down you know and then.

8:30

TP: Your always traveling.

8:32

JD: Yeah, so I stayed here and got unemployed for a month and then I got into construction.

8:42

TP: Umm, did you get. Did you think you got any resilience from immigrating from Portugal to the United States when dealing with.

8:53

JD: Like jobs and stuff?

8:56

TP: Yeah

8:57

JD: Because I wasn't from this country?

8:59

TP: No, no, no, but do you think that you were able to gain some resilience from umm searching for jobs? Was it easier for you?

(Question #10)

9:18

JD: Umm, I guess I had that mentality that my father had like you had to support your family so you have to do whatever you have to do you know. One job closed down I looked for something else.

9:37

TP: You arrived to the United States in the 1970s but you applied for citizenship in 2017. Was there a reason?

9:46

JD: (Chuckles) I was lazy I guess. The way I looked at it and some people question me about it oh you're not a citizen? For me I didn't need a piece of paper in my hands to tell me I am an American this country and given me everything that I have. I love the country where I was born because that's where my parents were born and that's where I had the being of my childhood but this country his is the one that gave me everything I have. So, I didn't need a piece of paper to

say you are an American citizen. I saw people that were American citizen the way they acted and to me seemed unamerican. So, I didn't need a piece of paper to tell me that I was an American.

10:50

TP: So you already felt that, I guess from a young age you predominantly don't remember as much in Portugal that you really connect more as an America.

11:00

JD: Yeah, as far as I'm concerned was an American. I love like I said I love Portugal that's where I was born and stuff my home country, but I would never consider moving there this is home.

11:17

TP: Community work is something meaningful to you either at your Church, Soccer teams or Boy Scouts. What inspires you to be so active in the community?

11:26

JD: Well I guess it was at first my kids. They were growing up and they needed help when playing soccer or sports or whatever coaches they needed coaches and nobody was stepping up and I stepped up. My wife she enrolled the boys in boy scouts, I never knew what boy scouts were because I never dealt with them. My parents, my Mom didn't speak no English and my Dad spoke broken English so I didn't have growing up I didn't have that I guess I wanted to give my kids more then what I had growing up so I wanted them to be more involved you know like I

wasn't able to play on the soccer team because I either was working. I played soccer in high school the only sports I played were the school sports I didn't have the outside teams that I played on I liked playing soccer but I never got the chance because there were travel games and my Dad was working and my Mom couldn't take me so uh when my kids were growing up I wanted them to get to experience everything I didn't get to experience or whatever they wanted to be in I wanted to part of it of it because the thing is as much as I love my father he was always working so he didn't come and see my soccer games he didn't come and see my track meets or whatever so I'm gonna be there for my kids in whatever they were involved in I wanted to be a part of it.

13:13

TP: You wanted to be active.

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JD: Yeah, active in their lives.

13:22

TP: Umm, you talked about your father bringing you to the United States for a better life. If you were in your father shoes, do you think you would try immigrating at your age?

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JD: At the age that I'm at now?

13:36

TP: Yeah.

13:37

JD: At this age I don't think so (combined chuckles). It's you know my father started immigrating when he was young you know. He was, I don't know if you need to know this but he never knew who his father was. His mom I don't know if abandoned is too strong of a word but she left him as a servant in her cousin's house and his job was to take his little cousin to school and after he dropped her off he would come home and take care of the animals, take care of stuff on the farm. When he was old enough he just started going first was the city then France and then you know he was always looking for somewhere better. I guess if I was in his shoes I would I started at

(Dog Barks)

If I was in his shoes I don't know if I could've done the same thing but I wish I hopefully as uh

15:06

TP: Fortunate?

15:07

JD: Fortunate or the guts that he had to just not knowing the languages or whatsoever and just doing what he had to do for his family.

15:20

TP: Do you have a message to those who are afraid of immigrating or coming to the United States?

15:38

JD: You know I was umm, what I tell my kids is you can't succeed if you don't fail. So, you know try your hardest if you fall down get back up again its hard going to another country that you didn't speak English like China or France or you don't a place. A place you don't speak the language and just getting off the airplane and you have fricking no clue what's going on so it's scary but it depends on the circumstances if you live in a country you're not going anywhere and it's like it's a lot of countries in the politics and everything you want to get out of there and you want to get your family a better life you got to do what you gotta do and face the consequences when you get there (chuckle) I guess.

16:57

TP: Would you recommend those considering immigration to come to the United States?]

17:03

JD: Umm, Yeah to me as many faults the United States have and stuff to me it's the greatest country in the world. It's yeah, definitely you know if you want to make something of yourself. You know basically, to me this is the country you can do it. You know, before early on everybody came the United States for a reason you know came through Ellis Island, I came from an airplane (chuckle) they came in search of a better life if you're looking for a better life. Yeah, United States if you're willing to work.

17:54

TP: Alright we are done with the interview, Thank you for your time, Mr. DaRocha.

17:57

JD: Your welcome Buddy.