

Interviewee: Edna Maria Froio
Interviewer: Jolene Jennings, Executive Director, Literacy
Volunteers of Greater Worcester
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Transcriber: Jolene Jennings, Executive Director, Literacy Volunteers of Greater Worcester



Abstract: Edna Maria (DaSilva) Froio was born in Brazil in 1963. Edna came to the United States of America from Recife da Pernambuco, Brazil in 2007. Her initial intention was to gain employment in the U.S. and save money to return to Brazil after three years. She needed work elsewhere, as there was limited opportunity for someone over age 40 to find good work in Brazil. She says that youth is favored in Brazil by employers and experienced adults are not. Her journey to leave her native country, her large nuclear family, and to learn the English language in order to secure a job was very challenging during the first year. After losing her position in finance in Brazil, she came to Worcester. Since she had friends in the area, she first settled here. She found a job in a laundry/dry cleaner. A better position as a janitor at UMMS [University of Massachusetts Medical School] in Shrewsbury followed, and she is still there today. She likes her employer very much, and hopes to have further opportunities there, perhaps in finance. She has been learning English language skills with Literacy Volunteers of Greater Worcester for three years, initially taking group courses, then moving on to her one-to-one tutor, which she still has today. She has made significant gains in her English and continues to work and progress with completing one- year of studies at QCC [Quinsigamond Community College]. She has made sacrifices but gained much in return. Her life changed dramatically after several years in the United States of America. She lost her career status in Brazil, but she gained her own family. She married for the first time and gained a husband along with three step-children and several grand-children. She expresses much joy and happiness. Edna is a joyous person and has much to offer her family, work, and the community. She will soon be taking her citizenship test in the United States of America.

JJ: The questions that they are most interested in, I'll get to them in details, but just for the recording can you just state your name?

EF: Edna Maria Froio.

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JJ: Okay, Edna. Where were you born ?

EF: I born in Brazil.

JJ: When were you born in Brazil?

EF: Augusto 27th, 1963.

JJ: Okay, Okay, have you ever married?

EF: Yeah, I am married six years ago.

JJ: Oh, okay, you're a newlywed. [laughter]. What is the name of your husband?

EF: Domenico Francesco Froio

JJ: Okay, thank you. Do you have children?

EF: No, no I don't, I am a stepmother.

JJ: You are a stepmother? And, what are their first names, the stepchildren's first names?

EF: Enza, Gracy, and Franceso

JJ: Okay, very good. Where did you attend school?

EF: Over here?

JJ: Where did you attend school from your home country or here?

EF: I attended school. I finished psychology in Brazil. Yeah.

JJ: And then when you came to the United States, did you study here too?

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EF: Yes. I went to Quinsigamond College [Quinsigamond Community College] for English for one year.

JJ: Okay, you studied at Literacy Volunteers of Greater Worcester with English, too?

EF: Too, yeah

JJ: And with tutor only or with tutor and classes?

EF: I started with the class and for three, I think three months at UMass Medical School [University of Massachusetts Medical School].

JJ: That was with us. [University of Massachusetts Medical School]

EF: Yeah, and after I had my tutor

JJ: Okay, and how long have you had your tutor?

EF: Two years.

JJ: Okay, great. Thank you.

EF: You're welcome.

JJ: Do you currently work in this country?

EF: Excuse me?

JJ: Do you currently work in this country?

EF: This country, yes.

JJ: Did you work in your home, your native country in Brazil?

EF: Yes, I did.

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JJ: What kind of work did you do in Brazil?

EF: I work with account.

JJ: Account?

EF: Account.

JJ: Accounting/financials?

EF: Financial. Yes. Accounting financial.

JJ: OK. What kind of work do you do in this country?

EF: I am a janitor

JJ: A janitor, cleaning?

EF: Cleaning. Yeah, I worked with a dry cleaning, I start work with dry cleaning after I moved for UMass for janitor.

JJ: Oh okay. So you're in janitorial work at UMass.

EF: [umhumm]

JJ: And, have you thought about going back into financial?

EF: Yes. I wish one day, yeah, my goals is to come back to finance again.

JJ: Finish Quinsigamond College and then to go on maybe for more financial?

EF: More financial.

JJ: What area of finance do you want to be in?

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EF: Ahh...I want a to be financial for—if I have, what do I say [whispers]? If I have opportunity, I want a continue working at UMass.

JJ: In UMass in finance?

EF: Finance.

JJ: Okay, great. Thank you. Okay, the next section will focus on the immigration experience you had coming from Brazil to the United States of America. So, when did you leave Brazil? When did you leave?

EF: June, October 2007.

JJ: Okay. How old where you when you left?

EF: 44 years old [big sigh-smile]

JJ: You remember that, 44! What was the reason you and/or your family left the country?

EF: Just me. I come here because I think in America, in America I have more opportunity for a better life.

JJ: So, you needed a better life?

EF: [umhumm]

JJ: What were the conditions like in Brazil when you left?

EF: Ahh...my condition?

JJ: What was the country's condition like?

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EF: That that economy not too well and they before I had a good job and during I lost my job, I worked in a different company and after working at this company for five years, I say no, I am going to America for good, a good opportunity. I came here for to stay for three years then came back to Brazil, now I am here for 10 years.

JJ: Ten years, wow! Congratulations! Yeah, your anniversary is coming up, you said October?. Very good.

EF: October. Mmmhum

JJ: So you have looked for better opportunity,yup?

EF: [umhumm]

JJ: Do you think you found a better opportunity?

EF: Yes. Yeah I do.

JJ: And how so?

EF: Yes because, I have a nice wonderful family after I got married.

JJ: So you met your husband here?

EF: Here. Yes. I have my wonderful family and I like my job and I love Brazil, but I love America too!

JJ: Okay.

EF: I no want to go back for live in Brazil, I want to live here.

JJ: You love the people and the...good, good?

EF: I love the people.

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JJ: How did others in your home country treat you when they knew you were leaving?

EF: My family little sad, my family said, “Why you going?” I said, “I am going because I want to—I want to change my life,” and my life change completely.

JJ: It change for the better?

EF: [umhumm] Yeah. It changed for the better.

JJ: Good,good and why did you or your family choose the United States, why not some other country?

EF: Ahh, because I have [friends] here.

JJ: Okay

EF: And I talked with my friends, and when I talk, they told me, ‘Okay, you want to come here, you can come. ‘

JJ: So your friends lived here from Brazil? They moved here?

EF: Yes. They live here, they still live here. They told me the life is no easy. When I came here 10 years ago, for six months I cried. I want to come back. And everybody told me that everybody knows that six months to one year you will be fine [*voice waivers a bit*]. Because in Brazil, I drove, over here I need to walked, in snowing, I walk. I don’t...

JJ: Because you didn’t have your drivers’ license?

EF: No I don’t speak any English.

JJ: When you first came here?

EF: My English zero! I don’t know nothing about the English. I went to the store.

JJ: You were a brave woman to come here without any English at all and choose to do that.

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EF: Any English at all. I went to the store and I made a lot of mistakes. Every time I pointed, I pointed at everything I needed to buy. One time, I went to my apartment, one time, no ride. I don't have ride and I took the bus and stopped in city hall, in front of city hall about 8:30pm. And I look for the bus to go home. Nothing.

JJ: Eight-thirty at night?

EF: Eight-thirty at night. Nothing, no more bus. And I cry, cry, cried. I can't talk to nobody.

JJ: You walked home?

EF: [umhumm] I called, I called my my friend, where you are? I said, "Oh I am at 7-11. Before 7-11 it had different name, I don't remember the name? And she said, "Okay. I got to call you for taxi, une taxi to picker up you." I say okay. And the taxi come. My sister, my friend said, "Convince the man give me a ride to bring me home five minutes." [laughter]

JJ: You walked all that way [laughter]!?

EF: Five minutes to my house-unbelievable [laughter].

JJ: You were so close!

EF: So close!

JJ: That's a scary thing-yah-yah. You stuck it out though, it was worth it for you.

EF: [umhumm]

JJ: What was the actual journey to this country like for you? The travel from Brazil to the United States, what was the travel, the journey like?

EF: It's okay.

JJ: Flying?

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EF: Yeah, I fly, ya. Brazil to here was 18 hours, nine hours here.

JJ: And how did you prepare for your trip to come here?

EF: I had my Visa to come here. I renewed for my passport because my passport expired. I went for my passport. And I boughta, I bought the ticks.

JJ: You bought what?

EF: I bought the ticket from Brazil to America and I, and I arrived in, in a New York.

JJ: New York?

EF: New York, and my friend went over there to pick me up in New York.

JJ: Yes. That's a big city to come into. What part of Brazil did you live in?

EF: I am from North to Brazil, Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil.

JJ: Pernambuco [sounds like Benaboko].

EF: Recife de Pernambuco.

JJ: Okay and that's northern Brazil. And is that more rural, like is that a lot of trees?

EF: City. I lived near the ocean.

JJ: Oh you lived near the ocean, how beautiful.

EF: [umhumm].

JJ: Have you been to the ocean here?

EF: Yeah. I've been to Maine, Cape Cod

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JJ: Cape Cod, okay. Is that your favorite part of the ocean around here, Cape Cod?

EF: [Ahh] Prefer Maine [laughter].

JJ: Maine [ahh]. Yes, that's a beautiful place in Maine, I agree.

JJ: So, ummm, we already know about what your family did. And what was, the trip here was fine, no problem because you had family here?

EF: No problem, yeah.

JJ: Who came with you when you immigrated, did you, did you come alone?

EF: I came alone.

JJ: And did you leave, you left your family behind? And who did you leave behind?

EF: I. Yes. In Brazil?

JJ: Yes, in Brazil.

EF: In Brazil, I lived myself, I had an apartment over there. And I came for pay to work [inaudible words] and come back to Brazil after three years.

JJ: That's what you came here for originally, then you met your husband. [laughs]

EF: Then I met my husband.

JJ: So you actually came here to save money to go back to Brazil.

EF: Yes, save money and go back to Brazil.

JJ: Okay, and this happened with your husband. Did you leave your parents?

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EF: My parents passed away. My mother passed away I was 13 years old.

JJ: Ohhh, okay.

EF: My father passed away a when I was 25.

JJ: When you were young, okay. So you had little family left.

EF: Yeah. I have brothers and sisters.

JJ: A lot how many?

EF: Three brothers and five sisters.

JJ: Woohoo...[laughs]

EF: It's a big family [laughs]

JJ: I hear that, there's big families. And so they still live there?

EF: Yes, they still live there.

JJ: Okay. What was it like when you first came to the United States of America? What was your first impression?

EF: I say, "Oh my gosh it is so beautiful!" Before, ahh, 18 years ago, I came here.

JJ: [Ahh]

EF: Not in Worcester. I went to Florida.

JJ: Florida? Okay.

EF: I did cruise.

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JJ: A cruise.

EF: A cruise with someone to St. Thomas. After, me and my friend we went to New York for 10 days.

JJ: And how old were you then?

EF: Oh.

JJ: 20?

EF: No more, 18 this almost 20 years ago.

JJ: 30?

EF: 34, I 54 now.

JJ: And that was this your first cruise?

EF: Yes. My first cruise

JJ: Special

EF: After three years, I came back.

JJ: What changes in lifestyle did you make when you came here?

EF: My lifestyle changes. Before, I lived myself, now I get got married. I have three grand ...

JJ: Three step-children and three grandchildren?

EF: Yes with five.

JJ: So the grandchildren with one or are they spread out?

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EF: Yeah, no. We have my first step-daughter she has two boys, my second step-daughter she has one boy, she adopted one boy and my step-son he have two boys.

JJ: All boys?! Oh my goodness. [laughs]

EF: All boys. All boys

JJ: You have a lot of energy in that household [laughs].

EF: [umhumm] And my life changed.

JJ: From single to married with a house full of children and grandchildren. But you seem happy.

EF: Yes. I am happy. I have one step-daughter, she lives in Hawaii

JJ: Oh.

EF: Now she here and we spend a lot of time at home.

JJ: Is she living here?

EF: No, she just visiting.

JJ: Have you been there yet?

EF: Not yet.

JJ: I like that answer...not yet [laughs] Okay. So your lifestyle has changed quite a bit. Now have you dropped any customs because you feel somebody pressured you to so when you came here?

EF: No. No.

JJ: Okay. You still practice your beliefs, your holidays?

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EF: Yeah. My holiday—I do more holidays from America, not Brazil. Ahh, Christmas is the same in Brazil as America. In Brazil we don't have Thanksgiving.

JJ: Will you celebrate Carnaval?

EF: Carnaval. No, not here. I never went.

JJ: There are Brazilian communities with, who that celebrate here. My mom, getting off track here, my mom lives in Framingham, which has a big Brazilian community there they may celebrate there.

EF: Another one they celebrate, they call Sunjrone [Saint John], a lot of food, different kind of food.

JJ: And that celebrates a past president? Who, what does the holiday celebrate?

EF: Ahhh . Fourth of July...we don't have.

JJ: You have Independence Day though in September though?

EF: Independence Day in September, and a Valentine, Valentines Day, we in Brazil a Juno, over here in America, a February.

JJ: So your Independence Day, what kind of celebrations did you have in Brazil for Independence Day?

EF: Parodie. Parodie. All these go to celebrate big holiday. The folks, everybody, the collegie and the collegie, the high school celebrate participate in the parodie.

JJ: Did you have military vehicles celebrate in the parade too?

EF: Ya. Anhha. Yes we have.

JJ: I've been in Europe and I've seen that before. [chuckle]. Thank you.

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EF: You're welcome.

JJ: And how were you treated when you first arrived in the United States? How were you treated when you first arrived here? How did people react and treat you?

EF: So sorry.

JJ: No no. That's okay.

EF: In Brazil, the people, we are more, [ahh] more friendly.

JJ: Yeah.

EF: Over here, they are more—I would say, what they say [hesitate], they are good, but they more...[ahh]

JJ: I'm not going to give you the word you tell me what do you think [hesitation]...You are moving yourself back and putting your hands in front of your body...like distance.

EF: Yes. Distance.

JJ: Okay.

EF: I don't, I live in Shrewsbury for eight years, eight years and I don't know all of the neighborhood, just a few.

JJ: Yeah. And your neighbors were close to your apartment?

EF: The apartment.

JJ: Nobody talked to each other?

EF: Ah, over here, just hi, hi in summertime.

JJ: What were the nationalities of the people that you lived around in Worcester that ...?

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EF: I think more I have, we have Indian and the America.

JJ: In Shrewsbury?

EF: [umhumm] In Shrewsbury. Yeah. And over here, in Brazil, ahh if you ask something, okay come on bring the coffee, little piece of cake. [Laughter] We are more found home.

JJ: Serious Italian around here, ya. Very inclusive, friendly, umm, I think umm, something we need to learn more how to do that around here. But umm I think ummm cities are more so, people are more distant and protective of themselves. And was your family name changed when you came to this country? You changed your last name?

EF: Yes. I changed my last name yeah DaSilva for Froio.

JJ: Okay. What was your maiden name?

EF: Maria.

JJ: Maria? Was your last name?

EF: DaSilva

JJ: DaSilva. Okay.

EF: DaSliva

JJ: Okay, and now you changed it. You still carry, you still carry that last name DaSilva and then Froio.

EF: [umhumm] Yes.

JJ: That's your husband's name?

EF: Yes. my husband's name.

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JJ: You took that name?

EF: Because in Brazil, a lot of DaSilva's say, na "*Better catch the Silva*" [laughter].

JJ: Now you stand out. [laughs] And what is it like for you now? This is the category we are under now. What were your hopes for yourself when you came here, and have you realized those hopes? The hopes and dreams that you had.

EF: Hmmum. I, my dream is speak English well, and after ahh my citizen, citizenship.

JJ: Citizen.

EF: My citizen. I did my application, I did my fingerprinting, now I wait for my interview.

JJ: Ohh, you didn't get your interview yet? Oh it's coming?

EF: Yeah, it's coming. I no did it yet.

JJ: Did you do take the test? Not yet?

EF: No, not yet, yeah

JJ: When is your appointment?

EF: I don't know. They no give.

JJ: They didn't give it to you yet? Did they give you appointment yet?

EF: No, they didn't give it to me yet. Nothing. They no give it. But I did my fingerprints. Yeah.

JJ: Okay. Okay.

EF: And after, my goals is changing the job. I, I like my job. I don't mind everyday going to my job.

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JJ: You don't mind it but?

EF: But if I have opportunity for improve myself, I...

JJ: Right.

EF: Why not? I can do.

JJ: Yes. I agree, we should never stop learning.

EF: [umhumm]

JJ: How are you treated now that you're in this country for so long? How do people interact with you?

EF: Yeah. They, now, because if sometime I make mistake, I know, ah when I talk, but I'm not afraid. I talk, I go and talk. If I have some, if I have any question, I am going and I ask a question. If I need help, and they helping me. Yeah, they helping me. Especially on my floor I work, everybody try helping me.

JJ: So you've gained confidence?

EF: Yeah, I'm very confident now.

JJ: Good.

EF: [umhumm]

JJ: So that's how that's how you are treated now? They are help you and you have confidence?

JJ: Has your initial impression of the United States ummm changed over time? Has your impression of, your view of the United States, changed since the time you've been here?

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EF: I, I think that the people, the people change. I think, I don't know if I understand the way of the question. [hesitation]

JJ: Well.

EF: The country see or the people?

JJ: I think I would say [hesitation] I could say either one. Yeah, what have you experienced with seeing change.

EF: Oh boy.

JJ: [Laughter] There is probably a lot of things you could talk about, but your first thought that comes to mind with what you think has changed over time in the United States.

EF: [Ahh.] I don't understand the question [soft spoken].

JJ: That's okay, we can skip that if you want. We can come back to that if you think about it.

EF: Okay. Come back to.

JJ: And what are some of the differences and similarities about the cultures here and in your home country of Brazil?

EF: Ah. One thing I like here [hesitation] if somebody want a going opportunity for life, America give this opportunity for everybody he came, for immigration.

JJ: So that's, that's different than Brazil?

EF: [umhumm] Because in Brazil, if somebody lose the job after forty-year...

JJ: Yes.

EF: Find out another job is very difficult.

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JJ: [~~Ahh~~] Aah.

EF: Because after 40 years for Brazil, you are, we are old you know. They no look for you experience you have before.

JJ: I see. So they don't... Ummm. What I hear you saying is they don't really VALUE older employees?

EF: [umhumm] Old employees.

JJ: They. It's hard to find a job?

EF: Yes-hard to find a job

JJ: Interesting

EF: [umhumm] And security. You have a lot of security here.

JJ: Okay.

EF: For health, health insurancy, for health insurancy. What I say. No health insurancy, for if I going to the doc for the hospital.

JJ: [umhumm]

EF: You no need the medical insurance immediately. The emergency, the doctor see you.

JJ: See you. Yeah...cause what will happen in Brazil if you go to the doctors and you don't have insurance or money?

EF: You need to wait a lot for mostly three months one month for to make one appointment for one specialist if you need to go to an eye doctor, you need to wait two months, three months, four months.

JJ: And do you have to have insurance or money or do you get free care if you don't have it?

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EF: We have look like free care but no need the carda, you just going you waiting for the doctor.

JJ: It takes longer.

EF: Takes longer.

JJ: And have you noticed differences in what is expected of men and women here in the United States?

EF: Ummhumm.

JJ: And first compared to your country.

EF: OK. Yeah. Okay, yeah. Over here, I think women and men have the same opportunity.

JJ: Umhumm. Okay.

EF: Over there, more discrimination?

JJ: In Brazil, more discrimination?

EF: More discrimination.

JJ: And how so? Give me one example.

EF: Okay. Umhumm.

JJ: How did you see discrimination?

EF: If I work, if somebody work in the same position...

JJ: Yes.

EF: The men has more, they pay.

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JJ: Much more?

EF: Much more!

JJ: Because we do have that same problem here sometimes too (laughs) but not as much..

EF: Okay. Let me see another one.

JJ: How about opportunities for promotion?

EF: For the, for men, is they do more they prefer more. Over here, if you apply for a job, nobody ask you if you are married, how old you are?

JJ: And they do in Brazil?

EF: They do in Brazil.

JJ: Ohh, oh yes, that's different.

EF: How many kids you have?

JJ: That's something that they can't ask, it's more regulated here, yeah. That's a good answer. Ummm.

JJ: Were your expectations of America, the United States of America met? Did we satisfy your expectations here in the United States of America?

EF: Yeah.

JJ: In what ways do you share your knowledge, skills and experiences with others? [no response] Such as, schools, religious organizations, community organizations. So, something like your experience of finances from Brazil, do you, even though you don't do that for a job now in the United States, do you help out your religious organization with maybe overseeing other accounting or other volunteering in the community?

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EF: I, if I have the opportunity I do, because, somebody did that with me too.

JJ: Okay, so have you had the opportunity to do that yet?

EF: Not yet, not yet.

JJ: Ok, and you're interested though?

EF: Umhumm.

JJ: Okay. Good! What does your culture mean to you?

EF: What my culture ...my...[whisper]

JJ: So when you think of Brazil, and the culture you had there, what does it mean to you, what does it mean to you when you think about it.

EF: I think a lot of things need to be changed. Especial the political party. Especial the political party.

JJ: Umhumm.

EF: Brazil is beautiful place, rich, everything we plant growing.

JJ: Yes.

EF: But we don't have people for organizations, people for ad-min-istra-tion.

JJ: Umhumm.

EF: Because the corruption is...

JJ: Well, you haven't really been, from what I understand from Brazil, your country has not been on its own for that long. I mean, you were under rulership from different countries in the

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area until I think it was maybe like the late 1800's or really started doing elections in the early 1900's, right?

EF: Umhumm.

JJ: For people so. It takes a while to have a democracy but—so corruption needs to stop.

EF: Yes. It needs to stop, it needs to stop. It need to stop because, they don't invest for education, for security, for health.

JJ: Police, they have the police?

EF: For police. If they pay less money, they pay the government pay nothing for people.

JJ: People don't get paid much to work for the government?

EF: No. No. No

JJ: And do you pay taxes?

EF: We pay a lot of taxes, lotta, lotta tax.

JJ: A lotta taxes.

EF: A lot of taxes. No, over here we pay tax, but we know what the government do.

JJ: Right. So you get something for your taxes but over there you got very little?

EF: Very little.

JJ: Hmm. But umm you do have—you have—I think the Brazil's primarily the religion is Catholic.

EF: Catholic, yes.

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JJ: So you value that for your religion from your culture?

EF: Yeah.

JJ: You get to practice your Catholicism here still?

EF: Yeah. I am going to go every Sunday but I'm going to church

JJ: So that's good that you have choices. [laughs]. There is a lot of Catholics here in the United States. Is there anything else you would like to add that we didn't get a chance to talk about?

EF: Umhumm.

JJ: About your journey from Brazil to the United States?

EF: United States. Umm...[laughs].

JJ: That's okay. Well we talked about your photo, now that will come. You'll stop and we'll do that another time since you just got off of work and we'll come back for that. But I think we covered everything. Oh the one question you said....Has your initial impression of the United States of America changed over time?

EF: Was going to change?

JJ: So your initial impression, I remember you telling me when you went into New York, you said it is such a beautiful place.

EF: Placa.

JJ: So has the first impression, the initial impression changed?

EF: I think it beautiful too, New York and let me see some other things changed [soft voice]. Oh boy.... [laughter].

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JJ: That's okay. We'll finish there. I think you've shared a lot of information with us and I appreciate it Edna.

This is Jolene Jennings, Executive Director for Literacy Volunteers Greater Worcester. It's 7/18/2017 and I just interviewed Edna Maria Froio. Thank you Edna.

EF: You're welcome. I really appreciate. I am sooo proud because I came here I don't know nothing about English, now I can talk, I can understand.

JJ: And your applying for citizenship! [laughs] Congratulations!

EF: Thank you.

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