

Interviewee: Mimoza Koshi
Interviewers: Lucelis Perez and Nguyen Tran
Location: Worcester, Massachusetts
Transcribers: Lucelis Perez and Nguyen Tran



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Abstract: Mimoza Koshi was born in Tepelena, Albania in March of 1969. She came to America in June of 1999 along with her husband and two sons through a program called DV Visa. It is a program where a person is selected to come to the United States to work. After her arrival in Worcester, it took her a long time to adjust to the different culture and way of living. She spoke no English, but eventually learned through night school. Eventually, she enrolled in Assumption College and received her bachelor's degree for Business Administration in 2010. Today, she continues to work two jobs. Her first job is at Santander Bank as a branch manager where she recently was promoted. Her second job is as a security officer for Abbvie, a research-based pharmaceutical center also in Worcester, during the weekends. Because Mimoza Koshi is an immigrant, she speaks about the importance of taking opportunities that are available and open in America. She wants other "newcomers" or women immigrants to realize that having a family should not stop them from pursuing their dreams and getting an education. If she can achieve it while raising a family in America, than so can they. She often uses her banking job to express the importance of it to the immigrant clients that she meets. Throughout the interview, Mimoza demonstrates her appreciation for opportunities and women's rights and freedoms in America.

LP: Hello, my name is Lucy and this is my partner Nguyen. Today we are completing a citywide oral history of the lives of Worcester women, aiming to collect stories about a broad range of experiences. Based on the goals of nine--1850 National Women's Rights Convention in Worcester, we are focusing on areas of women's education, health, work, and politics and community involvement. We want to focus today on your experiences with your education, so thank you for your help with us, with this important project.

MK: Hi Lucy and Nguyen.

NT: Hello [laughter]

MK: My name is Mimoza and I'm happy to be part of your project, and to be interviewed, so I can feedback on my experience that I have while living in U.S.

LP: Okay, thank you. So, we want to start with some general questions about your family. So, when were you born?

MK: I was born March 1969 in Albania.

LP: In Albania?

MK: Yes.

LP: Okay.

MK: Do you know where is Albania?

LP: I don't know where it is, where is it in--

MK: It is in Europe and North of Greece.

LP: Oh okay, that's good, and so your ethnicity, you are Albanian?

MK: I'm Albanian

LP: Okay, so are you married?

MK: Yes.

LP: And what is your husband's name?

MK: [inaudible]

LP: What was that?

MK: Abedin

LP: Can you spell that for us?

MK: A-B-E-D-I-N.

LP: Thank you [laughter]. So how long have you been married to him?

MK: For twenty-four years.

LP: Twenty-four years, wow.

MK: Yes!

LP: Do you have any children?

MK: I have two boys, one is twenty-four and one is nineteen.

LP: And what are their names?

MK: Arben and Gerald.

LP: Arben and Gerald?

MK: Yes.

LP: Do you have any grandchildren?

MK: No.

LP: [laughter] Okay, so, how about you tell us a little bit about your parents?

MK: My parents still live in Albania.

LP: Okay.

MK: I still have both living – they live in capital of Albania, Tirana, and I often talk with them through Skype.

LP: Through Skype?

MK: Yes.

LP: Okay.

MK: And through the, the phone. Last time I was there was three years ago. I like to go every year, but the busy life that we run here, it's gets a little bit more involved here.

LP: Yeah, but you're, you know, you've gotten to see them and you're still in contact with them

MK: Yes.

LP: Yeah, I like Skype, that's like the best way to contact people who aren't around. So, when did you arrive to America?

MK: We came to America, June 1999.

LP: June 1999.

MK: The end of June 1999.

LP: Okay.

MK: And, we came here to Worcester, Massachusetts.

LP: So did you come to Worcester right away?

MK: Yes. First place that I came here was Worcester.

LP: Okay.

MK: We came to U.S. through a program, DV Visa. It's something that you get selected to work in U.S.

LP: Okay.

MK: It's called DV Visa...program.

LP: Okay. So...where do you live in the city now?

MK: Right now, I live [] Street..

LP: Have you lived in different parts of Worcester?

MK: Yes, I have lived in different parts of Worcester. I've lived – at beginning, we came and we moved to Wall Street.

LP: Mhm.

MK: Zip code is 01604.

LP: Mhm.

MK: And we lived there for three years, and from there we moved to Kingsbury Street, 01610.

LP: Okay.

MK: So, we have lived in different parts since before we purchased a house here.

LP: So, how long have you lived in this house?

MK: I lived the house since October, 2004.

LP: Okay.

NT: Wow.

MK: So, it's nine years.

LP: Yeah, so do you have any family members who live in this area?

MK: My family is here, and I have [inaudible] from my husband's side that lives in other part of zip code 01606.

LP: Okay, so is most of your family still in Albania, or?

MK: My family is in Albania, and I have a sister lives in Greece and sister in England, so--

LP: Oh, wow.

MK: Yes, we are spread all over world [laughter].

LP: Have you seen any changes in Worcester over time since you've been here for a few years now.

MK: Yes, yes, I remember when I came here, there was a different environment. It took me a long time to adjust, long time. I had to, to be – to come, and to face a different culture, different way of living.

LP: Mhm.

MK: I had – when I moved here, let me tell you something else, when I moved here I spoke no English.

LP: Wow.

MK: Yes.

LP: How was--

NT: I didn't know that [laughter].

LP: How was adjusting to the language?

MK: Yeah, tell me about it.

NT: [laughter]

MK: It was a long--it was a long way for me, but always I never – always I see myself as great opportunity to come here. I never thought in my mind that I was going to succeed. So, we believe as a family in education, and me and my husband, we went and – went to school, night school to learn English.

NT: Wow, I didn't know that.

MK: Then continue to work two jobs and keep a family. So we're able to continue the studies to learn English and after, we enrolled in school. My husband graduated from Worcester State University with Master's degree in Biotech – Biotechnology.

LP: Wow.

MK: And I received bachelor degree from Assumption College. I graduated 2010 for Business Administration. So, I really see that as great accomplishment...

LP: Yeah.

MK: Something that I can show to my kids that they can do better than I did.

LP: Yeah, yup.

NT: How do you feel about being an immigrant in Worcester?

MK: When I arrived here, as I mentioned before, I arrived here, I had no family. I had language barrier, I didn't know any English. I had many difficulties. I had to go through tough times because I [was] adjusting to the culture, adjusting to the environment, to the people. I had my own difficulties, I had challenges. I had to overcome a lot of objections. You know, I still have accent no matter how I speak, I was not born here. I still have different mindset of thinking. I think things sometime in different way that some people around me will think, but always I am open for ideas and ways to change. But do I have difficulties? Yes, I do. Did I see myself as immigrant and someone that – I didn't, even nowadays that I have opportunities to meet a lot of people, people that aren't from here, they were born here, or they lived all their life here, and I could see the reaction, and the question that they make me – so in one way I feel like they are not appropriate, but, you know what? I do not take things personally, and I see more in positive sides. I see more the positive out of everything. So – and try not judge others. I try not to. You know, I'm proud of who I am, and I'm proud of what I've accomplished. I know America is melting pot. It's a lot of immigrants have come here, and they have succeeded here, and they have made – they made this country as home, and I have too, so...I'm here.

LP: That's a very good attitude to have about it. So being an immigrant, you must know some other immigrants in Worcester, and from other places, so [coughs] excuse me, do you know any other languages? Have you interacted with anybody else?

MK: Yes, I – besides my mother language that is Albanian, now I am in English of course [laughter]. But I speak moderate Spanish and write. I was able to go back and get a couple classes in college for Spanish. I do have many interaction with Spanish speaking customers, and it does give me enjoyment where I am able to not only serve them, but help them on their language. I have met different immigrants here that they come recently from Bhutan, Nepal, or from Iraq. On those languages, I've tried to learn what is essential for communication for banking, and greetings, and, you know, being immigrant and not knowing the language and being in environment and someone tells you something on your language, it's very helpful for them. They see someone that is someone there that cares for them. Always I have in the back of my mind to try to help and be open minded, to learn. I had taken a Russian language for eight years back home, but, I haven't really practiced, and if you don't use it, you lose it, but always I'm open to learn more languages and

LP: That's great.

MK: ...to interact and to – it's eye opening. So [the] more you talk with the different cultures, more you get into learning about values, about tradition, about the food, more you learn from it, more you adjust, more you get ...

LP: That's good, thank you.

NT: Is that good? Okay. So, since you already started your education, I was gonna ask you, but, were there any challenges you faced?

MK: Yes, there was a lot of challenges--

NT: In education?

MK: First challenges, I would say the adjusting to the new country, new environment, culture. I had to learn about different, like history. I have to learn about how to interact with the different cultures and learn from that kind – value and respect them too. So it's a great adjustment on this culture. So since America is melting pot, so we're all from different countries we got to respect, but keep, still preserve [inaudible] the culture too. I had difficulty coming up through here, through now, the barrier on the language was a big one. So, I'm able to – beginning to, to understand the basics, but all of those challenges were overcome by my hard work and my persistence that I have – I have set.

LP: So we'd like to ask you a little bit about your experience at Assumption, could you tell

something about that?

MK: Yes, Assumption, my favorite school [laughter]. I went to Assumption and it took me almost seven years to obtain my bachelor degree, and I did through Continuing Education, my classes. Was great experience – I loved it, loved it, loved it. I would tell anyone to go and do that, and I was happy when Nguyen went there because I thought that it's great school. I loved the campus, I loved even the [inaudible] walk on the campus there. I would feel like quiet, that relaxing place. The place that I really wanted to be there.

LP: And you felt safe?

MK: Of course safe, but I felt like all the, -- how can I say – the grounds and everywhere, the classes. The classes were so small, and so good. The professors, so knowledgeable. Always I would gain a lot out from the class. One time I had class, online class and I didn't like it. I miss the interaction in the class. So I like always to be in a class, that is--

LP: The classroom setting?

MK: The classroom setting, yes.

LP: Okay.

MK: I loved it – I graduated in 2010, and my intention is to go back. Hopefully.

LP: So, for your MBA?

MK: Yes, hopefully. Right now I have other family obligation. I cannot be able to do that, but hopefully, I am hopeful to out go and pursue studies there. I loved Assumption – the mission and everything – the professors, the setting, the caring, everything.

LP: That's good. Well, it's good that we're, we go to Assumption also, because we like it too. I'm having a good experience and--

NT: Yeah, same here. That's great.

NT: Okay, so was it normal for women in your culture to go to school?

MK: Its normal, its normal for for the women of my country to go to school, but before they get married. No women in my country used to go to school after they get married. If you get married, you get a family, you have a kids, you have no way of getting back to school. And for me it was great that I did achieve while taking care of family and continue to pursue my dreams. And always I do, I do relate my story to a lot of people I have met through those years. I do, for

twelve years, I have been working in customer service field. Helping customers from different areas of the state, from different countries, different cultures, and trying to be role model in some way to those people that I met, those newcomers in this country, that you can do this what I did. You'll be able to accomplish in this country, this is great opportunity for them.

LP: So we want to get to where you've been working in your past history in working. Do you work outside the home?

MK: Yes. I do work as a banker.

LP: Ah, so which bank do you work at?

MK: I work for Santander bank.

LP: What was that?

MK: Santander

LP: Oh

MK: Santander is a new name of the bank, previously known as Sovereign Bank

LP: Okay, (NT: Yeah) yeah I've, I've seen that, the signs, okay

MK: Santander, yes and uh--

LP: Okay, how long have you been working?

MK: I have been working for them for twelve years.

LP: Okay, that's a long time.

MK: And right now I go, I get promoted as a branch manager.

LP: Wow, so what were you doing before that?

MK: I had dealt with different positions. I have started from teller, go up to lead to teller, to supervisor, to teller manager. I have done personal banking and now I get promoted to the branch manager.

LP: That's really good. So how did you come to do this work? Who like told you about this job or....

MK: When first I came here, then I spoke no English. I did work at the coffee shop and I work at

this restaurant food court, food court, and one of the restaurants close down and I wasn't employed for one month. But even though, even though I was working, always I was looking for a way to improve myself to find a better job to find a better education. Always I was on a search for the jobs and this job happen to be that one day I go to the bank and I was doing my banking, and I was asking, always trying to connect with the woman. So I connect with people then ask questions. I'd ask if they had opening and they told me that there is some opening and they got the manager to talk with me. So they allowed me to apply and they gave me the interview. So I was able to pass those and I was happy and thanked them for the opportunity they gave me and--

LP: Yeah 'cause even though you felt like you were, you were unemployed, but you, you still persevered and tried your hardest to find...

MK: It's only one month that I wasn't employed, but always I had – even before I got employed further, always I was applying, applying, and looking to find connections. Finding connections, networking with other women where they working to see opportunities opening, job openings and to match my skills and my education was what I was looking for. So I was looking for the direction that I could pursue more studies.

LP: Mhm, that's great. So so talking about work we want to talk about housework. So what are your primary responsibilities in terms of housework?

MK: Okay I do have a lot of responsibilities, taking care of my family, cooking, cleaning, providing for family and we see the family as whole. So we offer to be work together and to make sure that we....

LP: So you work together, so you share the housework with everyone else?

MK: Yes

LP: Okay, that's good. So has your housework change over time? Do you feel like you do more or less? Do other people contribute more?

MK: The housework I won't say that they – I do less, but we try to balance and we try to do what's the best, yes.

LP: So how have you balanced your job and taking care of your family?

MK: It's great question. That is time management and trying to balance those is not easy tasks. Besides this job I do have second job for weekends. That I work every day of the week, seven days and still I'm able to find time for my family.

LP: Mhm, that's great.

NT: [Whispers] You go girl!

LP: Yeah, I know that for me I want to, you know, focus on education but I also want to have a family eventually so, it's good to know that it's possible--

MK: It's possible, yup.

LP: Yeah, so yeah.

NT: Okay, so moving on. Now we're gonna ask you about politics.

MK: Okay

NT: [Laughter] Okay so do you consider yourself active politically?

MK: No

NT: Okay [Laughter] if you aren't, why not?

MK: Uh

NT: You can be honest. [Laughter]

MK: I am honest [interviewers laugh] that's why I say no. I don't, I don't, I don't put lot of importance of politics on my, in my life. I am – I know that sometimes I don't want to reveal my politic [everyone laughs] [inaudible] but I like lean more on democratic side.

NT: Okay, so have you been involved in volunteer or community work?

MK: I could say that no activity. I haven't, I haven't done activity even though at my work place right now they have, they have made a big time that I should get involved and I'm looking for work to use that time to do community service.

NT: Okay.

LP: So now I like to ask you a couple of questions about your health.

MK: Yes.

LP: Do you have any health issues?

MK: No

LP: Okay that's good. So you consider yourself to be healthy.

MK: Yes.

LP: So what have your experiences been in accessing quality, affordable health care?

MK: Okay, healthcare is getting expensive even though we do have this insurance through the employers. We see that every year those premiums go up and always that it's a form of a way – we end up paying and paying more and in one way it made that for me to make decision to go the doctor a little bit. I have to make a decision, is this appropriate to go this time or not. It's something that I really have to wait to make a decision to go and see a doctor.

NT: Mhm, yeah it does.

LP: It does get expensive, going to ... [inaudible] So whose health are you responsible for besides your own?

MK: My family's health too.

LP: Okay

NT: Okay, so to make it a little more funner, what do you do for fun?

MK: What I do for fun?

NT: Yes. During your free time.

MK: I like reading. I read. I like to do the handcraft. I used to do quilting. I do crochet. I like flowers. I like flowers and I like ...

NT: [laughter] Decorating.

MK: Yeah decorating. Yeah.

NT: So--

MK: Yes

NT: There's outside activities that you like? Like planting, gardening--

MK: I like planting the garden yes, gardening, planting the garden. I like nature a lot and I like I like the photographing too.

NT: Oh yeah, I've seen some of your work.

MK: ...have my (inaudible) so I can be a perfect photograph.

NT: She's a pro at taking flower photos [laughter].

LP: Oh that's fine [laughter].

NT: Okay so do you spend a lot of time with your family?

MK: I try to but if I could have more time I could spend more time with them.

LP & NT: Mhm

LP: So how do you feel about the choices you've made in your life? Do you have any regrets? Do you feel like you've come a long way and.....

MK: I've come – I feel I don't have a regret. I still think always in the positive side. I get the positive out of everything that I see. I have come a long way. I think I have accomplished what I wanted to. I'm looking forward. I have more goals to achieve. I'm looking on a career...(inaudible)...life and I feel like so far I've done good and I'm proud of myself.

LP: Yeah I think by just hearing you talk about your past life it's encouraging. So I think that, yeah you've made some good choices...

MK: Yes

LP: ...considering where you are right now. So based on your life experiences, what advice would you give a woman of today or for the future?

MK: I could give advice to them that when the opportunity is there, they need to grab it and go for it. This is the country that the women have all the rights of this country that they can exercise all their – [long pause] all the freedom they exercise and everything so they'll be able to continue education, take care of family, and be someone in life.

LP: I agree with that. So those are all the questions we have for you today and we thank you so much--

NT: Thank you.

MK: All set? That was short.

NT: I thought that it would go longer but [laughter] I guess not--

LP: But yeah, it was it was a good opportunity for us to do that--

NT: We made it easy for you--

LP: Yeah

MK: I made it?

NT: It's done, thank you very much--

MK: It was a nice talking with you and giving those -- this is a fun interview. I thought it was--[NT: laughter] going to be different but ...

LP: It's nice to reflect on things like that--

MK: Yes, yes, yes and really I am proud of what I've done so far and always as I told you I meet a lot of people and a lot from different countries. And in Worcester we see a lot of newcomers who are immigrants from different countries and I'm always try to talk to those women, how they can become someone in this country. They have this opportunity. That's how I see it.

LP: That's great. Thank you so much.

MK: Thank you Lucy and Nguyen--

NT: Thank you Moza. Okay bye.