

OUR STORIES



Level 4

English As A Second Language

Belmont UMC

April 2020

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April 2020

Dear friends,

I hope you enjoy this little book of stories. You worked hard on them and each one is different and each is special. It's never easy to write a story. And it's especially not easy to write one in a new language. Congratulations! You should be very proud of this achievement!!

In these days of uncertainty due to the Covid-19 epidemic, it is especially important that we let our friends know how important they are to us. I am so sorry that this ESL year had to be cut short and I share hopes for good health and safety for you all.

It has been a real pleasure to be with you all this year in our English as a Second Language class at Belmont United Methodist Church. When you started studying, most of you were strangers. You came to our group from over 10 different countries. Over the year, you have made many good friendships that I hope will continue into the future. We may have started as strangers, but we have all learned that we have much more in common with each other than we ever dreamed.

You have worked hard this year. Your English has improved tremendously. It is so difficult to live in a foreign country and learn a new language. I hope that living in the USA has become a little easier for you and that you continue to grow more and more comfortable in your life here.

Our country is better because you are here—no matter whether you are studying or working here for a short time, or whether you are now living here permanently. My life is much richer because I know you.

I am grateful for your dedication and determination and wish you all the best in Life.

Happy Reading!!

Mary Kaye Jordan

My Time in Nashville

Victor Carvalho/Brazil

I thought about talking about my history when I was young or talking about my friends and family in my country Brazil, but I realized that this is the opportunity to talk about a recent history of my life, which is my life and experience in Nashville, where I met a lot of friends and gained a wonderful experience.

I was born and grew up in a regular life, around a good family and friends in Rio de Janeiro – Brazil. I had a quiet and easy life, but when I met my wife Marcella everything changed. I have fallen in love with a person that loves challenges and no routines, and this changed everything in my life, but I enjoyed that. I'm a luck guy because I am married to an incredible woman that twisted my life. We are lawyers in Brazil and she has a job there and her employer gave her a scholarship to study abroad, so we decided together that she would take this opportunity and now we are here.

I quit my job to follow Marcella and improve my English in the USA. We brought our little dog Nina and we spent a lot of good times here. While my wife has been doing her course at Vanderbilt University, I have studied English at Vanderbilt too and at Belmont Methodist Church where I met my teachers Frank and Mary Kaye and a lot of friends.

Mary Kaye is my champion here, a person who helped me a lot, not just for teaching me English- but she was able to give me good vibes. I'm happy that I met a lot of friends from many countries that I have never imagined to meet, like Shanaz from Iran, Moon and Bookyung from South Korea, Changun and Joana from China, Asil from Kazakhstan who has an incredible history, the funniest guy Jose from El Salvador, Victor from Mexico that we laughed a lot and many others.

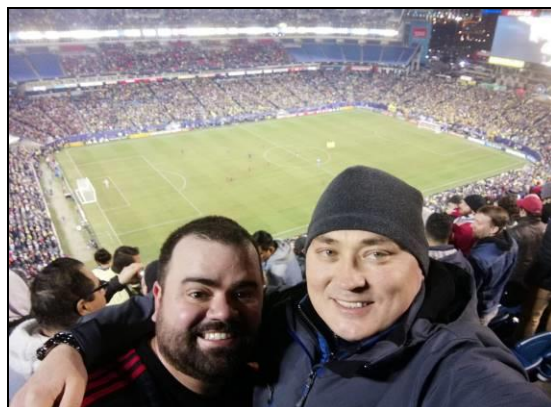
I had a job, house, my car and my friends in my country and I needed to leave everything to move away for a long time, and it was a really difficult time for me. However, the English class at Belmont made a real difference in my life and I believe that it happens with a lot of others

students, so I hope this ESL program continues for a long time because the Belmont Methodist Church community made a real difference in my life. I enjoyed every class that Belmont has given me, including the conversation classes with incredible volunteers that probably don't know how important they are to me and my classmates.

Beyond the English classes, I started volunteer work at the Frist Art Museum and the American Red Cross. I was mesmerized how Americans, at least in Tennessee, really care about each other. Unfortunately, we had a big tornado and a lot of places were damaged, so being part of a team of volunteers at Red Cross was incredible, and I'm sure that I will bring this moment with me back to my country.

Unfortunately, in the end of our journey in Nashville, we had another big problem. The whole world is experiencing a Coronavirus pandemic, that closed all schools, many stores, and everybody is forced to be locked down and respect a social distance. My wife and I still have some on-line classes at Vanderbilt, and now we intend to go back to our country in a couple months, which is earlier than we had planned. It is really sad that, before I go back to Brazil, I will likely not have a chance to say good bye to friends that I met here with a huge hug. But as soon as possible I intend to return here just to do that.

I will miss so much everyone and everything in Nashville. I spent almost one year here and it's the perfect way to say thanks for everyone that I have met here. I know that I'm blessed to being able to experience this. Thank you, everyone.



Cheering on Nashville Soccer Club

Who Are The Americans?

Monique Costa/Brazil

This is a question that is so simple to answer but also extremely complex. I'll tell you why.

Our teacher gave us a card, it contained instructions to write about some funny story and on the paper she had written; "What was your first impression when you arrived in America?"

"What would I like Americans to know about my culture?" That's when I thought, "But I have never left America! These questions can be asked of some people in my class, but not for me and some other classmates."

That was when I said, "Professor, but I am also an American. I am part of South America- but it is still on the American continent. As are the Mexicans, Argentines, Uruguayans, Chileans and etc." And someone spoke; "True, Mexicans are part of Central America". Note: Mexicans are part of North America as much as Canadians. For example, it is normal to hear "Ahh! You are Brazilian. You are Latin or, you are part of Latin America, or better, some people do not know which continent I belong to. Brasileira- Brasil.

The term `Latina` was given to us as a stereotype, politically speaking, since the city or the country "Latin" does not exist. But there does exist the dead Latin language, from which some languages originate; Portuguese Spanish, Italian, French, Catalan, Galego and Hungarian.

Curious, right?

It became normal to name citizens who were born in the United States as 'Americans' and to see them as the only ones to be called that. This is such a political way, because in fact everyone who is part of this side of the world, we are ALL Americans. Whether from the south or the north or central.

So, If you were born somewhere in the Americas, don't forget...you are an American!

My First Day at University

Jose Guerrero/Mexico

When I Finished High School, I decided to study at the University in Mexico City (UNAM). It was necessary to take an admission exam and finally I was accepted in the school.

The University is located in the south of Mexico City, and I had to travel almost three hours away because I lived in another city. I used bus and subway every day.

My first class started at 7:00 am, so on my first day of school, I decided to wake up very early at 3:00 am. That is when my adventure began.

My first problem started with the bathroom, because the water heater broke down, I lost time checking it and in the end I showered with cold water.

Due to the breakdown of the bathroom, I arrived late to the bus station and missed the bus as well. It was necessary to take another bus thirty minutes later, there was my second problem...

The trip was long due to traffic. I was already stressed and nervous because I didn't want to be late for my first day. I finally arrived after eight in the morning. I was very stressed. It was necessary to go to the restroom before the class, but I didn't know where it were located and there were no students or teacher to ask. I finally found it but...

The restroom didn't have signs to indicate if it were for men or women. I swear I already had my eyes blank for that moment, so I still decided to wait for someone to leave the restroom to know I could enter. I could not wait any longer. I decided to enter but when I walked a few

steps I saw a person at the sink, the person had long blond hair to the waist, so I did not know what to do, I froze and I just said “I am Sorry, I didn’t know that this was the women’s restroom”... but when the person heard me, he turned his head and looked at me and started laughing. I realized that it was a boy. I was very embarrassed but he explained to me that on the first day of school the old students remove the signs from the restroom to make jokes to the new students.

Class was over by then... I had missed my first class at the university. But school improved after that.



Line Dancing



Takes a lot of concentration!

My Journey to the United States

Febe Guevara/Mexico

Around twenty-five years ago, I decided to come to the United States to get a job since the last two companies for which I had worked had gone out of business. I worked for these two companies as a secretary.

At the time of crossing the International Bridge with a Tourist Visa, I was crying because I was leaving my boyfriend there. I remember that my older sister Noemi, who came with me, was upset with me because of my behavior. She said that it was very childish. I think she feared that Immigration would stop us and investigate us, not only me, but both of us, and return us to Mexico.

When I first arrived from Mexico to Houston, I started working with a nice family four days a week. However, I lived with them seven days a week since I didn't have a place to live. Then my brother arrived in Houston and we decided to look for an apartment and live the three of us there.

I worked for this family taking care of the children---even taking them to school when their mother was working outside the city (because she worked as a flight attendant). I have beautiful memories of the whole family.

While I was in the United States, my boyfriend Armando stayed in Mexico, because he was finishing University. When he finished and because I no longer intended to return to Mexico, he decided to come to the United States too.

Two years later, we returned to Mexico for three weeks to get married and both families were with us at our wedding.

After our honeymoon, we returned to Houston where we continued for five more years. In a very hard winter, my husband had very little work, so we decided to come to Nashville. A brother who was here made the invitation and that was how we got to settle here.

However, we were not able to return to Mexico for many years. It was really sad when we left our families and customs. It was even more sad when our parents died and we could not be with the whole family.

Fast forward to today. My older sister Noemi is still living in Houston. She is a very smart woman and I think she has taken advantage of every opportunity Life has given her. She quickly fixed her immigration situation and attended college to learn English and already has some years working as a substitute teacher in an elementary school in Houston.

Thank God we have lived without many problems. With a lot of work, and after spending six years with being able to have a family, God gave us a daughter and a son. I am happy because, Thank God- my husband and I have our documents after twenty five years.

The Cookie Song

Felicitas Hernandez/Mexico

My name is Felicitas. I am from Mexico. I have two daughters, Belem and Amy. They are very sweet.

This story shows they are the most fun thing forever.

When I came to Nashville, the difficult part was learning to speak and listen to English.

My daughters loved to listen to music. We were in the car one morning. I heard a song and the girls started laughing. They asked, "Mami, do you know what the song says?" I said "Cookies". They answered, "No, Mami! It says "Cool Kids"!! And I started laughing along with them.

The best thing about this story is that they say they'll keep this moment in their heart and whenever they are sad, or not having a good day, they remember the cookies song, and then they'll smile and be happy.

Not knowing English does not always embarrass us. Sometimes it creates good times!!!

I love my daughters.

Cucumber Ships

Asil Jumanbayev/Khazakstan

Every summer my brother and I went to visit our grandmother and grandfather. We liked to go to our grandparents because they lived in a beautiful place. The village was small but so interesting. Around the village were big mountains where we went camping or just walked. We had a favorite place where there was a big waterfall. When the weather was so hot, we liked to swim under the waterfall in the cool river. In the village grew a lot of fruit trees such as apples, pears, apricots, peaches, cherries and mulberry. We ate little at home because all we needed we found outside. Sometimes we went fishing and fried fish by the fire. So went the days of vacation.

One day Grandmother left to visit our aunt in the city. My brother Arman and I were at home. Grandfather made us wooden guns and, like all the boys, we played game of war. When we had captured all enemies on land, we wanted to destroy warships at sea- but we did not have warships. So, we decided to build warships ourselves. First, we built ships from wood, but wooden ships quickly broke because they were not high quality.

Then we found two big cucumbers. The cucumbers made great warships. They were green-yellow like real warships. We ate the inside of the cucumbers and saved the skin. Now that we were full and ready for sea battle, nothing could stop us from being victorious at sea. But...

Soon came back Grandmother. She went to look for something in the garden but did not find it. She asked us if we saw two cucumbers which she kept for seeds. We of course told about our victory at the sea, but I thought that Grandmother was not impressed. She took a big stick and said – ***“Now I will show you victory at sea”***. We understood that now we would “meet” Grandmother’s stick. I said to my brother – ***“Time to run, brother”*** and ran as fast as I could. L ran to the waterfall and waited there. Soon came Arman. He was upset because he “met” the big stick. I hugged him and said that all is well because we are winners. We swam some time and came back home. Grandmother forgave us for the cucumbers and fed us delicious cookies. Now we knew that cucumbers are not only to eat and to make warships, but also for seeds. Because if we will grow new cucumbers, we can make a lot of new warships.....



Thanksgiving Celebration

Wild Dogs

Asil Jumanbayev/Kazakhstan

It was in China. My wife Jessica and I traveled around the world. One day we went to a city, where lived Tibetans. Around the city were beautiful and very green mountains. We met a little with Tibetan culture when we were in a monastery and talked with one guy who studied medicine there. I don't remember his name, but I remember that he was very friendly and his English was very good. We asked him about how and where he learned the language, and he said, "I taught myself the language in the monastery." Even in Tibet, people study English!

We lived in a Tibetan hotel where we had traditional place to sleep and every morning the landlord brought us a delicious breakfast. Breakfast included tea with yak milk and dumplings with yak meat.

One day we decided to go camping in the mountains. Local people said to us that in the mountains there are wild dogs and dogs can be dangerous. But we decided to go anyway. The next day we got up early, ate our typical traditional breakfast and went to walk in the city. The city was small but interesting. We visited the market where a lot of traditional Tibetan things were for sale, such as the Tibetan national clothes, beautiful dishes, and souvenirs. In the afternoon, we went to the mountains. We climbed with a wonderful mood, because we wanted to have a good time in nature and we didn't think about wild dogs. On the way, we met a guy who was coming back to the city. He said that in the forest he saw a big wild dog and so he came back. I began to understand that it is true, it is not a fake story like I thought before. I started to worry. After 5 minutes we entered the forest. The forest was dark, although it was still daytime, and it looked like a scary movie. Because of this, our hair stood on end. We stopped and said, "Okay, we are here and we will sleep here." We found a place for the tent and began to prepare for the night. Jessica unpacked the backpacks, while I went to collect firewood. As I looked for firewood, I thought about the hound of the Baskervilles. Night fell...

We sat by the fire and looked around carefully. While we ate dinner, I told my wife some scary stories, but she was not scared. I was not scared either, but we both understood that it could be dangerous if we will meet wild dogs. I prepared big sticks for us - I was ready to fight if wild dogs came. Anxiety didn't leave us all night. We slept with sticks nearby, sometimes waking up and listening to the sounds of the night.

In the morning I went for a walk. As I was walking, I saw something moving. I quickly lay down on the ground and suddenly I saw a wild dog. I should have been scared, but instead I just laughed. The dog was very small and more afraid of me than I was of it. When I returned to camp, I told my wife about the "scary" dog and we laughed together remembering the long, anxious night.

Coming to America

Aysenur Kahraman/Turkey

Coming to America was always my biggest dream. I wanted to realize my dream and started to research universities in America. I found Vanderbilt University so I applied to make an internship here. Vanderbilt University accepted me. But I hadn't ever been to the USA before and didn't know anybody in Nashville. I found a Turkish girl, Deniz, from the Vanderbilt Website. I contacted this girl by email when I was in Turkey. She is a medical student at Vanderbilt.

One to two days after coming to America, I emailed Deniz. 'I came here and when you have available time, we can meet.' The girl answered my message quickly. But I hadn't any internet or telephone line. I could only connect to the Vanderbilt's WIFI. Not every place had WIFI and everywhere was so strange to me. When I came here at first, buildings seemed so huge in my eyes. There were a lot of cars here and I didn't know some traffic rules. It was confusing for me. (But I'm better about this situation now. :)

Anyway, Deniz asked me, 'Do you know Vanderbilt Hospital's entrance?' I just replied 'no'. :) Then, I sent her a picture of where I was. She looked at that picture and said to me 'You're in the right place.' It turns out that I was at the entrance of the hospital. Actually, we both were at the same place but we did not see each other.

Sometimes when this memory comes to my mind, I still laugh to myself. This was a fun memory for me. I was very lost at first and didn't know any place. But I know each place more now.

When I came here at first everything was very confusing to me. Because I didn't have any idea about anything. But, I have got a lot of ideas about America and I'm so happy to be here.

American people are very helpful and hospitable. I like it here. For example, since I am a foreigner here, they always ask me that if you need any help, please tell me. They helped to me find housing. They invited me to their family's home to celebrate Christmas. I've been here for almost 4 months and I have lots of memories about America.

I always tell about my life in America to my friends. They would like to come here. I hope, they will come here one day.



Christmas at the Jordans'

Why I Haven't Been to the Library for a While

Moon Kim / South Korea

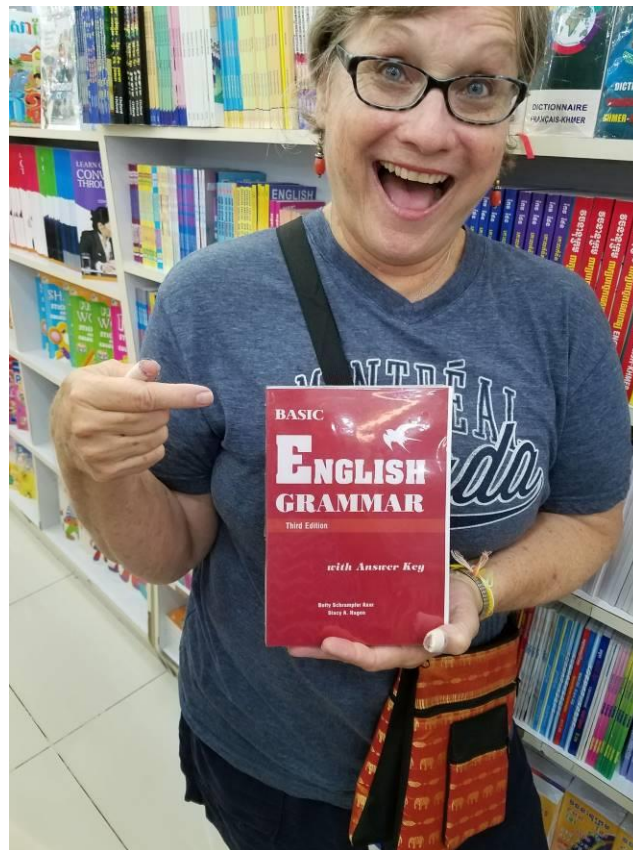
It happened the first month I was in America. At that time, I couldn't speak well (It's still a problem) and I'm not good at driving. So I stayed at home with my 2 year old son Hajun almost all day. But sometimes I used to go to story time at the library near my apartment.

One day Hajun and I went to the library with my Korean friend Sung and her son Hyun. After story time, Hajun and Hyun played together in the library. At that time, Hajun was being potty trained. While playing, he accidentally wet his pants. I was a little bit embarrassed and I told Hajun we had to go home now. But he thought I was angry so he was upset. Suddenly he screamed and began to cry. In Korea, people in the library must be quiet. So I ran out of the library with my crying son. Outside in the parking lot I was talking to Hajun about why we should go home. Suddenly, Sung ran out of the library. And she asked me about her son. "Did you see Hyun?" She said that her son was missing. So I told her, "No, I didn't. He must be in the library because I haven't seen Hyun in the parking lot. So go back into the library." She went back into the library to find Hyun.

Hajun stopped crying and I sat him in his car seat and I waited for my friend. Ten minutes later she came out of the library, smiling and holding Hyun's hand. She laughed at me and told me. "When I went back to the library to find Hyun, everyone I met told me, "A few minutes ago I saw an Asian woman go out with your crying son. Maybe they will be in the parking lot. So, go to the parking place."" Suddenly I had become a kidnapper! Fortunately she found her son

waiting for his mommy in the library. But I became a kidnapper. Hearing her say that I was so embarrassed. I think it just happened because, to Americans, Asian people look alike. But I couldn't go to the library for a while because I was afraid people would remember me as a kidnapper.

We laugh and talk about it now and she still teases me about being a kidnapper. But then I was really embarrassed.



Don't forget to study your English!

Where Is My Bed?

John Machado/Brazil

When we arrived in the USA, my wife and I went to live in a small furnished apartment in the city of Charlotte, NC until our things arrived and we were able to rent a house. Our things were transported by ship and the delivery time was 45 to 60 days. We started looking for a house, and when we found it we decided to buy a new bed. We agreed with the store on the delivery day and the delivery time was between 8 am and 5 pm.

I went to the house and sat on the floor with only a bottle of water and a cell phone. There was no chair at all. I figured that with luck the delivery would be made in the morning, but when it was 4 pm, the doorbell rang and soon I heard the truck leaving. As I had the key to the back of the house, I ran out until I reached the yard and then ran to the front. The delivery truck was already a block away. I started running in the middle of the street and screaming like crazy, ***“Where’s my bed? Man!!!- my bed?”***...And the truck was out of sight. I went crazy with rage.

I called my wife and told her what happened. She promptly called the store to complain. However, when I returned, I realized that there were several boxes at the front door. I started laughing at myself and discovered that here the purchases are left on your doorstep and you do not need to sign any documents that you have received and no one will steal your things. Even people put payments in letters and post them in their mailboxes. It is impossible to think that in my country. Surely you would be without your things quickly. All of our houses are made up of forts, huge walls, gates, electric fences, etc.

I was very relieved and happy--until I had to carry everything on my own to the second floor. But that’s another story...

The House of My Dreams

Jose Menjivar/El Salvador

One day I was talking with my wife. I thought about selling the house and buying a bigger one. I researched information about how I could see the house and buy a bigger one. Having a bigger house than the one I have would cost too much.

Then I thought about extending my house into a bigger one. With my ideas, I started to build a bigger house—saving me \$100,000. I bought all the materials and I then proceeded to work on the foundation. Then I started working on the wall of the base, continuing with all the electrical, plumbing, roof and finishing around the walls.

I was building the house of my dreams. All by myself --with many sacrifices and my wife's help. I was working every day, even on the weekends to succeed in building my dream home. It wasn't easy, but with the help of God anything is possible. After six months, I had my dream home.



Our class is always ready to try new foods!

Communicating in a New Language

Amalia Ramirez/Mexico

It all started one day that I came to visit my son who lives and works in Pennsylvania. He kindly introduced me to his boss and coworkers. His boss's name was Marco, originally from Switzerland and now an American citizen. He started talking to me but....OH!!!! I didn't know how to speak English or German or French. He speaks those three languages, but he didn't know how to speak Spanish. I think there was a small problem between us. I only knew elementary words and sentences in English, so our conversation began to be very funny. Can you imagine it?

The two singles- without compromise- began to take an interest in each other. I learned that sign language is fun too. He started studying Spanish and I studied English on my own with an online program called Duolingo. I felt very stressed about not being able to communicate well. When he sent me messages, I had to translate them from English to Spanish - and to answer, I had to translate from Spanish to English. So it took me about 15 minutes to answer.

One day we talked about getting married and that made me more distressed. But that motivated me to find where to study English- and, if possible, to study all day and every day.

So far, I have been studying English for three years and I don't know how many more years I need. I just know that one day I will speak it well.

I finally married him on September 8, 2017. We found a language we could communicate in.

The language of love.

A Scary Day

Susette Spann/Brazil

If we are more attentive to children, we recover fundamental lessons that we forget on the way to adult life. Like the importance of being authentic, for example, or living in the now.

When Rafaela was two, we already had many stories to tell. Since birth, she was independent and strong-willed. We had to watch her like a hawk. It was in the weekend in Curitiba, Brazil, in my birthplace and also of my children where happened this episode of Rafaela that I will tell.

We are Roman Catholics and the church families used to take turns receiving the statue of the Virgin Mary (“Nossa Senhora”) in our houses once a month. It spent 24 hours with us, and in the afternoon we handed it over to the next registered neighbor in the group of thirty people. It has been a Catholic tradition for over 100 years.

My neighbor who lived across the street called me to discuss when I would receive the statue of Our Lady, because I was nine months pregnant and expected my baby any day. It was a sunny winter day and Rafaela was at her playhouse. She used to play for hours. That day, she had her sketchbook and crayons.

As the playhouse was far from the gate, I didn’t bother to close the gate because the conversation would be quick. We were chatting absently and did not notice that Rafaela had left. We only realized when she was almost close to crossing the fast street that was ten meters from our house.

My heart sped up and I was running to her and screaming, “Where are you thinking of going!” She replied naturally, in baby language, “I’m going to school!” I kept running towards her. The feeling I had was that I was running in slow motion. I didn’t seem to be moving fast enough to reach her.

I finally arrived and grabbed her. At that moment, I just hugged her and thanked God and Our Lady for Rafaela’s safety. But after the scare was gone, I didn’t know whether to laugh, cry or spank her bottom.

After I got over the scare, I was impressed with her determination and self-confidence. She knew where she wanted to go and how to get there. The following year we made sure that Rafaela went to school—but never again by herself. I learned my lesson.

After that, my attention was always on my children, 100%. In adulthood we lost somewhere in the past the ability to explore the new, we do not appreciate curiosity, which is important in all stages of adult life, too. Sometimes it is necessary to rescue our inside child.

My Dream

Demet Yildiz/Turkey

It was 2014. I was preparing to come to a medical congress in America. That night in my dream I saw myself in a big crowd. Everybody was running somewhere. Suddenly I noticed that there were two small coffins at the top of a fountain. When I asked what happened, they said two kids died. I was terrified. Then suddenly a loud voice behind me said you're pregnant. At that moment I woke up jumping out of bed. It was so real that I was still under its influence. I had a pregnancy test right in the morning. The result was negative. But my dream was so real I still couldn't believe the result.

I came to America the next day. Everything smelled different, but since the test was negative, I still didn't think I was pregnant. When I returned to Turkey and took a second pregnancy test, the results were positive. I couldn't believe it, my dream came true.

I had a very difficult pregnancy. Threatened miscarriage, so I had to rest all the time. But worst of all was the doctor's suspicion of Down syndrome found on an anomaly ultrasound. I met with many of my doctor friends. I was 36 years old and posed a great risk for this Down syndrome. According to them, I should have had amniocentesis for a definitive diagnosis, and even some suggested termination of pregnancy. One of my friends had experienced similar things and she had terminated her pregnancy after amniocentesis. I thought for a long time. She was my baby and I wanted her no matter what. I never had a test and I stayed in throughout pregnancy to avoid losing the baby. After all, she was a gift of God to me. I always thought so and always prayed to put her in good health.

Thank God my daughter Serra was born very healthy. It could have been otherwise, but the fact that it was a gift from God to me would never change. Of course we don't know the future but sometimes we can see the roads that come up. I think what matters is that our conscience is comfortable after making our choice.

Student Biographies



Victor Carvalho's laugh is contagious (everybody laughs when he laughs!) and he tells many funny stories. He and his wife Marcella came to study at Vanderbilt last summer and will go back to Brazil in May of 2020. Their little dog Nina has had many adventures with them here in Nashville. This is not the first time Victor has lived in the USA. He worked as a parking lot attendant at Universal Studios ten years ago. He worked in the mornings and rode roller coasters every afternoon. Victor likes to play guitar and practice Jiu Jitsu. . He would love to go back to Italy-where the people are expressive and the food is incredible.



Monique Costa arrived in Nashville in April 2019 from Brazil to join her husband Tiago who is a doctoral student at Vanderbilt. In her hometown Recife, many people live in apartments. She was surprised to see so many houses –big houses with big yards and clean streets. It was also very strange to her that people were so friendly. But that is something that she really loves about Nashville. Monique enjoys riding bikes, going to the gym and walking in nearby parks with so many beautiful trees. Since Monique is not a big fan of red meat, it does not bother her that she has not found any really good Brazilian restaurants here. But she does love sushi and recommends “Rock and Roll Sushi” on 21st Avenue. Monique looks forward to going back to Italy where she has lived and visited in the past.



Jose Guerero moved to Nashville from Mexico three years ago to be with family here. In Mexico, Jose worked as a Chemist and taught in hospitals and laboratories. Many of the people he works with here in Nashville speak Spanish, but his boss is American and speaks English VERY quickly! He is hard to understand! Although Jose likes to cook, his mom does most of the cooking. She is an excellent chef who has shared wonderful food with our class. Jose enjoys making and painting tiny papier mache figures in his free-time. His dream is to visit Europe- France, Spain, and especially Greece and the Parthenon.



Febe Guevara is originally from Mexico, but has lived in Nashville for many years. She has spent much of the past two decades raising her two wonderful children. Febe enjoys being outside to walk, but she doesn't particularly like working in the yard (like Mary Kaye). Febe loves to read the Bible and attend church. Her favorite food to cook is "Sopes"- corn tortillas with beans, covered with salsa, tomatoes, lettuce and fresh cheese. YUM! She also recommends the restaurant "Sombrero" in Lenox Village. Puppy Maximo says that he has the best mom in the world!



Felicitas Hernandez moved to Nashville fifteen years ago with her husband, Victor, and their two sons. They had a friend who said that Nashville was a beautiful city, so that is why they chose to come here. They now have four wonderful children- two sons and two daughters. Two little dogs complete their family. Her family is very active in their church. Felicitas enjoys listening to music (as we can see in her story “The Cookie Song”) and she also enjoys cooking. Fajitas are one of her favorite things to make. Four years ago, Felicitas and Victor took their children to Disney World. They had a wonderful time and she says that if she could go anywhere in the world, she would return to the Magic Kingdom.



Asil Jumanbayev was born in April 1986 in Kazakhstan. He had a wonderful childhood and had many adventures with his brother. You can read one in his story “Cucumber Ships”. This guy loves adventures and his life shows that. Asil’s life changed when he met and fell in love with Jessica, a Peace Corps volunteer who was working in his country. In 2019, he moved to Franklin, TN to marry her. Asil is the type of man who lives life with joy and enthusiasm. He enjoys reading books and watching movies about history, detectives, science and documentaries. He loves to be active-- hiking, climbing, swimming, running. He also plays soccer, Frisbee, and chess. Asil has traveled to many countries and he plans to travel more. India, Australia, and Mongolia are on his list of countries to see.



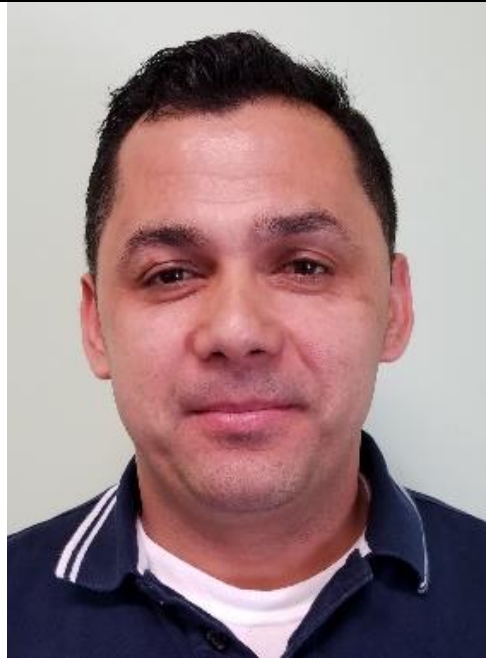
Aysenur Kahraman arrived in Nashville in November 2019. She is a dietitian doing research at Vanderbilt in the Gastroenterology department. When she arrived, she was surprised at how “hospitable” people are here and was very grateful for their friendliness. She continues to do her research while in Covid-19 self-quarantine, but looks forward to getting out and eating good Turkish kebabs at Anatolia Restaurant. Aisha spends a lot of time studying, In her free time she enjoys swimming, walking outside and reading. She has watched American movies and tv shows and likes the show “Friends”. Aisha has many years to follow her dreams of visiting many cities and countries. She’d like to visit American cities like New York City, Miami, Chicago and Los Angeles. She looks forward to visiting Spain, Italy and Germany. Aisha has a beautiful smile and is always full of joy and enthusiasm for Life. It is certain that her family will be eager to see her when she returns to Turkey in the fall.



Moonjeong Kim came here in 2018 from South Korea. She and her family (including 4 year old Jun) will be here for three years. When she arrived, she found it very odd that complete strangers in the parking lot would make eye contact and say hello. She said she would quickly dash to her car or apartment. In South Korea, you would never speak to someone you don’t know. Very strange! She misses the overnight delivery services in SK- especially in this time of quarantine. But, like Moon says, Korea is a much smaller country than the USA, so deliveries are faster. Moon likes to crochet and knit (sweaters, tote bags, hats, baby booties, etc.) Someday Moon would like to visit Spain’s famous architecture (Gaudi Sacred Family Cathedral). New York City is also on her list. Actually, in these days of quarantining, she says ANYWHERE—as long as it is by herself!!



John Machado has lived in the USA for four years. Originally from Brazil, he now calls Hendersonville home. He shares his life with beautiful wife Fernanda and their little daughter. During this time of the Covid-19 quarantine, John is also staying busy by taking several courses on the Internet. He loves to cook and play games. He says that his favorite food is barbeque, but he frequently goes to Japanese restaurants. When he came to the USA, he was surprised by the education of the American people and also how the country is well organized and efficient in its services. John has traveled to many cities in the USA- New York, DC, Ashville, NC, Savannah, GA, and hopes someday to go to the Grand Canyon.



Jose Menjivar is a determined and hard-working guy. He came to the US from El Salvador in 1999. He works hard to provide a good life for his family. He is a wonderful father to his beautiful children and an amazing husband to his lovely wife Haydie. He has two girls and a set of twins (boy and girl). His face lights up whenever he talks about his family. He stays busy working and remodeling his home. Jose likes to play soccer in his free time and he likes Mexican food. Jose has a passion to learn English, tries his hardest every day, and studies every chance he gets. Jose is a generous, honest, trustworthy man. His goal is to work hard, improve his English and continue to care for his family.



Amalia Ramirez thought she was coming from Mexico City to Pennsylvania to visit her son. While there, she met a wonderful man who would eventually become her husband. You can read her story here in this book. Amalia has two adult sons. One in Pennsylvania and one in Mexico. She also has two teenage grandchildren. Amalia believes that it is very important that she learn to speak English well and she spends a lot of time studying the language. She likes to stay busy. She also loves to travel and believes that traveling opens you to different cultures, places and foods that you might not know. Studying ESL at Belmont also gives her that opportunity. She has traveled to many countries in Europe, India, the Grand Cayman Islands and throughout the USA. She would love to visit Alaska, Hawaii, Peru and Colombia.



Susette Spann has two adult children, Rafaela and Willian, who live in Brazil. Susie is married to Joe Spann, an American citizen, whom she met while she was on vacation in Orlando, Florida. She says that since then she has lived a love story which she never imagined she would ever live. In Brazil, Susie was a professional aesthetician. Now she is a full-time, dedicated housewife. She loves to cook and keep house and study English. Susie enjoys reading self-help and spiritual books. She has many hobbies including painting, making collages, handicrafts and even making fountains with waterfalls. "We are not rich, but we have what money cannot pay for...a sincere and true relationship."



Demet Yildiz was born and raised in Turkey. She is a Doctor of Neurology. In the summer of 2019, she came to Vanderbilt University along with her husband and her nearly five year old daughter, Serra. You can read about Serra in Demet’s story “My Dream” here in this book. Demet is a hard worker who has spent her time in the US not only working at Vanderbilt, but also studying English at Belmont ESL. In her spare time, Demet enjoys reading and watching movies. She plans to return to Turkey in May of 2020 and is currently very busy “tying up loose ends” as she prepares to leave this country. It is a very stressful time- especially as she attempts to travel during the Covid-19 situation.



Belmont ESL 2019-2020