



City of Alexandria
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Immigrant Alexandria, Past, Present, and Future
Oral History Program



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Interviewer: *Holly Bowers*

Audio and Video Recording: *Terilee Edwards-Hewitt*

Transcriber: *Holly Bowers*

Abstract: Priscila Izar was born in São Paulo, Brazil, but has lived for several years in Alexandria with her husband and daughters. In the interview she talks about growing up in Brazil and earning her degree in urban planning. She discusses coming to the United States for her master's degree, and then the time she and her husband spent working in South Africa, Brazil, and Albania before moving to Alexandria.

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INTRODUCTIONS 00:00	
Holly Bowers	This is Holly Bowers. It is May 15, 2015, and I am here with Priscila Izar.
Priscila Izar	Yes, this is Priscila Izar.
Terilee Edwards-Hewitt	Sorry, let's move the microphone this way. [laughter]
HB	This is why I bring tech people.
Priscila Izar	Makes a huge difference. [laughs]
HB	Great! So to start, Priscila, I'd love to hear a little bit from you about where you grew up, what your childhood was like in Brazil.
Priscila Izar	Okay. So I'm from São Paulo, Brazil. Born and raised in the city of São Paulo, so I see myself as a very urban creature. I grew up in a middle-class workers' neighborhood called Vila Miriana.
HB	Any chance you could spell that for us?
Priscila Izar	Sorry. Sure. V-I-L-A, Vila, and then Miriana's M-I-R-I-A-N-A.
HB	Thank you.
CHILDHOOD – FOOD TRADITIONS 01:04	
Priscila Izar	<p>So I grew up in the same house, very different from the growing up of this region, of Alexandria. What I remember growing up is that I was sort of in a busy street even though São Paulo by then was still relatively calm, especially compared to now. And I had lots of friends that could play on the street, but I lived on a downhill that became a busy street very quickly. So I grew up with, you know, no gates yet in front of my house, but I couldn't really play on the street. But I had a small backyard that I used to play.</p> <p>And my whole family lived in São Paulo—my grandparents and aunts and uncles. So half of my family—can I start telling you about my parents' family already? All right. So my father's side came from Lebanon. My grandmother went to Brazil very little with her mom from Lebanon. And they were very, you know, very Lebanese family. My mother's side came from Italy. So between both families we had very strong traditions and very strong traditions around food. So one Sunday we would go and eat at my grandmother's, my father's</p>

	<p>mother's house, and the other one at my mother's parents' house. So, you know, it was very, very ordinary growing up of a kid.</p>
<p>HB</p>	<p>Do you remember any of the particular traditional dishes that you would have, or celebrations?</p>
<p>Priscila Izar</p>	<p>Oh yes! [laughs] Yes. So on my mother's mother's house, yes, on my maternal grandmother's house, it was all around pasta. But also, well, I should say that, too. Even though they came from Italy and Lebanon, they were also—they came to the countryside of Brazil to work as farmers. So there was also just this tradition of countryside cooking, and also very careful about. It wasn't grand at all, and they were very economic in their cooking. So at my mother's mother's house, there was always something around pasta and chicken and sometimes polenta, which was like the super-basic staple but for us it was a luxury. And [inaudible] roasted chicken, and pasta. At Christmas we would make our own pasta and that was a huge thing. We made gnocchi. So we would buy the special potatoes and then we had to get the proper – you know, there was always the proper amount of flour; if you went too much it would get too hard, if you went too little, it would just not be consistent enough to go in the boiling water. And then it was just—I really just loved [it.] And then we had to learn how to make the proper little holes in the pasta, too, and I learned that with my grandma through the years. So it was always very special.</p> <p>At my father's mother's house, it was <i>kibbeh</i>, a little pastry that's sort of like a samosa that's called <i>sfeeha</i>, and it's dough with meat inside and it was just delicious. We would go and help my grandma make it and then wait, you know, so we could eat in the afternoon. And in my grandma's house it was my grandma, my aunt, and my cousin—three women. And so my cousin, who was sort of like the forty-something [years old] then, was very strict, and we could not eat anything before supper! And my grandmother of course would say, "You can have one!" [laughs] So it was very cute. And so, what else did we have? We had something that—I found out that different places call dishes by different names—what we called <i>labneh</i>. And it was yogurt, it was homemade yogurt and then this <i>kibbeh</i>, which is like this bulgur wheat mixed with ground beef. So this was boiled inside the yogurt. And it was one of the most delicious things. I loved it. And a few years ago I made it, and it wasn't the same thing at all. But just the smell brought me memories.</p> <p>So what else did we eat? We were big in—we made—same thing, we</p>

	<p>made bread. And I just enjoyed being with my grandma. We would make the dough and then we had to hit the dough on the table, and there was a proper you know, there was a certain sound that the dough should make when hitting the table. If it wasn't that certain sound, it wasn't right. Oh, we also made, when I said that we used bulgur wheat with ground beef, we grind the beef. So we would help my grandma do that. It was a lot around food, a lot of traditions around food.</p>
<p>CHILDHOOD GAMES AND HOBBIES 07:06</p>	
<p>HB</p>	<p>Wonderful. And you mentioned earlier playing in the neighborhood. What sorts of games did you play with everyone else in the neighborhood?</p>
<p>Priscila Izar</p>	<p>My group play was at school. And the school, the way that I grew up and most of my friends grew up, we went to private school. And it was from noon to five, I guess, yes, noon to five. And then by third grade I started going in the morning. It was also half day, and that's how it is still. We go home for the main meals. And we do lots of homework, there's tons of homework. So my group play was at school and we played catch, hide-and-seek, we played some other, like, dancing and holding hands and turning in circles, I can't remember, like ring around the rosy, but different kinds of games. And then we played, as we got older we would play basketball and volleyball. There were more lunch or snack breaks than I see my girls having, and we would just hang out and talk. There was a lot, I mean, as we became a teenager that's all we would do, just hang out and talk.</p> <p>Then at home, I have a two-year older sister, but my sister is the type that loved to read, from, I don't know, from the time she learned how to read. So I would beg for her to play with me for a little bit. And we would play school or—I can't even remember what we played. No, no, then we had our own—we would wrestle a lot until one of us would get hurt and start crying. But I played a lot on my own. So my mom made me a blackboard and I would play that I was a teacher and I had my little desk and my cool pieces of paper. And I love to remember that. I tell my girls, even though I probably shouldn't say, I had a substitute teacher that had braces. And I thought it was the coolest thing. So I found a bracelet, a kids' bracelet that fit my wrist, and I would put that in my mouth. [laughs] It was like the biggest choking hazard! So I would put that in my mouth and teach whatever</p>

	<p>I learned that day, and do my homework, and write on my board, and I was in paradise.</p> <p>And I was all by myself, you know. My mom went back to school, too, when I was—I can't remember if I was in third grade or fourth grade, but around that time. So at some point in the afternoon, she would go to school, we would stay, you know, take care of each other, and I did a lot on my own and I was fine. So I did that, and I played—I also find ways to play soccer by myself. I was saying that we had a backyard, but it wasn't grass at all. It was tile floor, and there was a big corridor. So in that corridor I would play soccer, and then I found a place where it was my goal, and then I would play volleyball on the wall. And it sounds kind of sad, but, you know, it was fine. [laughs] Yes, so those were the games.</p>
<p>HB</p>	<p>Did you have other hobbies outside of when you got a little bit older, outside of teaching or sports?</p>
<p>Priscila Izar</p>	<p>So I started doing—so we played piano for a while. Both my sister and I had piano classes that didn't last long, unfortunately. I love to sing and I sang a lot, but I never did it, you know, as a hobby. We did pottery. We got into, somehow, it was sort of like my mom and my sister would come up with these ideas and I would just follow along, you know, just be told, "Oh, you're doing English classes now," or, "You're doing piano." It was like, "Okay!" So we started doing pottery, and we loved it. And I did that, so I started doing pottery, I think, and there's some stuff here that I can show afterwards that I did, I think I was thirteen. And even though I was, you know, sometimes I would be not super careful with the details, but I kept doing it until even after university. I went back and did like a technical course in sculpture and really enjoyed it. We did a lot of—my mom always liked doing yoga, so we would do some sort of yoga classes at school, after school.</p> <p>And then a big part of me growing up was going to the beach. We had a beach house, so on the weekends all we did was go to that beach house, but it was wonderful. I went to the beach a lot.</p>
<p>FAMILY VACATIONS AT THE BEACH 12:21</p>	
<p>HB</p>	<p>Would it just be your parents and your sister? Did extended family come with you? Friends?</p>
<p>Priscila Izar</p>	<p>So my aunt, my father's aunt, so my grandmother's sister, who was almost my father's age, though, she was the one that went to the north</p>

	<p>coast of São Paulo. It's very beautiful, and it was very pristine then. And she bought a house. And it was four hours from, well, by then I think it was five hours from São Paulo. And it was rough. We would get so carsick going. But she was the one that bought a house, and then we, my father, bought it, too. And it was, it wasn't a shack, but it was almost. So we would go and for, I don't know, maybe two years he was doing, you know, like improving it a little bit. And the way that it worked, we would either go Friday nights or Saturday morning, and he would work on the construction, you know, got a contractor there. And we would spend the day at the beach. Again, it was paradise for us. My mom wasn't too excited about it because she didn't like the beach, but we were in paradise. You know, I can't compare to any beach that I've been to here, it was dark sand, so it wasn't really necessarily attractive, even though now I think, like, the most beautiful place. But it was calm water, so we could go and, you know, play. And then there was wide sand and the turf, and then we would walk to our house and it was, like walk two hundred meters to our house, but it was dirt roads and then those super simple houses, but it was great.</p> <p>Then eventually an avenue came and cut this dry sand and that was very, very sad. And then the water got polluted—as the development started the water got polluted to the point that we couldn't go to that beach anymore and we would have to drive to other beaches. And then finally came the asphalt. I remember when the asphalt, the pavement, came, and it was so sad. So sad. I joked that my sister and I became environmentalists by growing up and seeing the beach be destroyed. But yes, so sorry, what? The question about the beach was—? [laughs]</p>
HB	We were talking about the other things you did outside of—?
Priscila Izar	Yes! We went a lot. The downside of it is that we didn't travel around the country very much, but that's what we did. And then we would have extended family during vacation. We had cousins and an aunt and uncle that lived in Rio [de Janeiro] and then they moved to Brasilia and they would come to São Paulo for vacation and we would all go to the beach.
HB	That sounds absolutely wonderful.
Priscila Izar	Yes, I know! Right? Well, you know, it's always lots of very intricate family dynamics, but yes. We loved as kids.

CHORES 15:40	
HB	And did you and your sister have any household chores?
Priscila Izar	We did. So, when we were little we had to go—so my mom was a stay-at-home mom. And so we went to the store and considering at that time going to the store was more complex than going to the store now. So we would go to lots of little stores to buy whatever we needed. We went to the street market every Wednesday. We thought that was pure torture. And today I love going to Del Ray. Oh, I’m sorry, did I—are you from here?
HB	I haven’t been to the Del Ray market.
Priscila Izar	<p>Yes, so now it is trendy going to the farmers’ market in Del Ray and Old Town, and I laugh and I tell David, my husband, “I’ve done this my whole life!” [laughs] So anyway, we would go to the street market that we did not like at all. It was dirty, it was noisy, people—. So, at the supermarket, even though it was much smaller—there were not a lot of chains—it was quiet and you had the aisles. At the street market people would yell for you to buy, and if they saw a kid they would yell even more, and it was scary. But we had to go, we had no choice. As we would walk through the market, we would have to start helping my mom with the cart, and then we had to help carrying everything, putting everything away. I think she washed a bunch of vegetables before and we helped her a little bit. When she started going to—she went back to university, then my sister—and, like I said, I can’t remember perfectly, but I think I was nine, my sister was eleven—my sister made dinner. You know, like warmed up, but finished up dinner every day, and somehow we would get ourselves organized, we would have dinner, and then we washed the dishes. My sister and I washed the dishes and my father helped. My brother was older and was totally like the rebel teenager that did not get involved in any household chores. [laughter] It is still a point of contention in the family! But yes, he did other stuff—he drove. But we did that.</p> <p>Then there was, we would have housekeepers on and off, sometimes somebody that would sleep, so like a live-in housekeeper that would leave on the weekends. And sometimes, a lot of times, just a cleaning lady that would come twice a week. So depending on the housekeeping situation, we would have to help more or less with serious cleaning. And we never did any washing. I learned how to wash my clothes after I left my house because there was a lot of—</p>

	washing machines were much less—we had one, but we didn't wash everything at all. And no dryer, so there was all the hanging and ironing, you know. Yes, ironing everything that you can imagine. Yes.
SCHOOL IN BRAZIL 19:00	
HB	Can you tell me a little bit more about what school was like?
Priscila Izar	School. Like I said, it was a big part of the day, and it was—so, it's quite comparable to here. It started in something called <i>jardim</i> , which would be the pre-k [kindergarten], then a kindergarten, and then first grade.
HB	Could you spell <i>jardim</i> ?
Priscila Izar	<i>Jardim</i> . J—that's sort of like the grade, right? So it's J-I-no, sorry. J-A-R-D-I-M. It's sort of like the "infant's garden"— <i>jardim de infância</i> . Then, the equivalent to kindergarten would be <i>pre</i> , which would be like preschool. We call <i>pre</i> , P-R-E. And then first grade. So it's changed so far, but for me it was first to fourth grade, that was elementary school. Then fifth to eighth was middle school, and then three years of high school. And then from high school we, all of my friends went to university. Different types of university, and I can tell you more about it. But some did a preparatory course to do the exam to get into university. And then—I think we followed the French system—for each university that we go to we have to do an exam that's called <i>vestibular</i> . And—do you want me to spell that?
HB	That would be wonderful. [laughter]
Priscila Izar	So it's V-E-S-T-I-B-U-L-A-R.
HB	Thank you.
Priscila Izar	And that's, you know, that's super, super tough. It was really hard. So the last year of high school was really stressful, not because you're doing applications like here, but because you're studying to do the exam. And the most competitive universities, if you want to get into, the more you have to prepare, so it was really stressful. But so the school was not—like I said before, wasn't such a big part of the day as it is here, but it was where all the social dynamics took place. I was, I think I am, if you would label in any way, I'm sort of like sensitive, I guess, so I—and I loved my home and playing in my house, and I guess, because I didn't have so many friends in the neighborhood I was sort of used to do my own games and I was pretty content with it. So at school it's kind of overwhelming, all the—dealing with all the

	<p>relationships. And I had very strong-minded girls that got there a year before me, so I was total outsider. And for some reason I decided that those would be my friends. So it was rough to get them to be my friends. It was rough. I had to put up with a lot! [laughs] So it was stressful that time. On the other hand, I remember my teachers. I remember liking them a lot. And I loved the learning environment and the structure of school when I was little.</p> <p>Then as I went to middle school, the school that I studied was pretty conservative, and sort of like an authoritarian system. So I told my parents that I wanted out, I wanted to move to a different high school. So I went to—I was the only one of my siblings that went to a different high school. And it was interesting because it was a private Catholic high school, whereas the school that we went to was not religious but it was much more open. It was bigger and it had a humanities track on the high school, whereas our previous school was just sort of science or engineering and math and biologics.</p>
HB	That's really interesting.
Priscila Izar	<p>Yes. You know, it's—again, I don't think this is tracked anymore, but it was quite tracked when I was growing up. And you could—the tracking was based on your interests; you decided where to go. And then in both schools that I studied, but much more in the first one, if you were a really good student you were in Class A. If you were a really bad student you were, like, D, so it was sort of like an informal separation of, classification of the students. So there were just two tracking. But I have super successful friends that were in the D and also that—I decided to, once I went to this other high school, I started in the biology track, then I went to the humanities. And I ended up doing architecture, which I should probably be in the math one. So it was just based on your interests. And there was that pressure, by the time you got to high school there was that pressure of, “What do you want to do?” But it was flexible in that it all ended at the end of high school. And what got you in university was really that test that I said. Of course that's not to say that the grade—what is very unfair about this system is that the better your schooling, which for middle-class and for richer families, you're going to get to the best school that is the best school, but also is the public school, so you don't pay for university. Whereas if you had a weaker education in middle and high school, then it doesn't matter all this tracking, you just—it's really hard to get into school and it's expensive, too.</p>

HB	In university were you also on a track or were you able to take courses across several different areas?
UNIVERSITY AND EARLY CAREER IN URBAN PLANNING 25:40	
Priscila Izar	<p>So that depended very much on the university. I ended up going to a private university also. I'm finally, now that I'm at Virginia Tech [Virginia Polytechnical Institute and State University] I'm finally at a public institution. [laughs] So I went to a private university to study architecture, Mackenzie, which is Mackenzie University in São Paulo, so M-A-C-K -E-N-Z-I-E. When I graduated, there was the University of São Paulo—the School of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of São Paulo, and Mackenzie University, the two strongest programs in São Paulo. And they were totally different programs; they could have different names. And the one that I did, I had all my classes, I had no option. I had my course, the courses that I should take and I guess the only option I had was when was at the place. It's a five-year course, which I think still is, and I could decide to go more slowly. And I think you had to finish in seven or eight years, but that was it. But the classes were set, and if I would take some other class in another school within the university, it was on my own. At USP [University of São Paulo] in it was totally different; there were many more options to take and sort of do your program. And that varies; again, that varies if it's the public or the private system. It varies tremendously.</p>
HB	Makes sense. Did most of your friends stay in São Paulo for university?
Priscila Izar	<p>Yes. So that's another huge difference. There was none, especially for people living in São Paulo, we kept living with our parents. Our lives didn't really change. The biggest change was you around that time, most people got a car and then some people would have a car or not, but they could drive. But we kept living with our parents. There were, of course, people that would come to São Paulo, especially from São Paulo's countryside, to come to study in the city of São Paulo. So there was a huge change for them, but most of my friends were from São Paulo also. I don't know why I remember some people in my class that were not from São Paulo and then they had their own apartment, but I don't remember even going there because we had a lot of group work to do at my school. But, like I say, all of my closer friends lived with their parents, too. And then we, I remember having friends in high school that were like, "Oh, I can't wait to go to school</p>

	and to go to another city!” and I remember thinking, “I don’t want—” Like I said, I was very home-bound.
HB	That’s kind of funny now that you’re so far away.
Priscila Izar	I know, yes! It is.
HB	So you said your course was five years. What did you do after that? Is that when you left São Paulo, or did you stay in the city for a while?
Priscila Izar	<p>No. So I finished university and then I finished university of architecture, and I wasn’t crazy about being an architect, like drawing buildings. In my final year at school when we have to do big graduation projects, it’s called a graduation project, I got into urban planning, and I loved it. And so I, when I finished school I started pursuing ways to work with urban planning, which was tough because it was really through local government, but by then there was nothing going on. I was sort of in a black hole, because as a student I could do an internship. I could apply for internships. But as a recent graduate, unless there was an opening, and then there was a process to get to it, there was not much. So I was—I started looking around, and there were professors from the University of São Paulo that had their own private offices. And I got to—I first started watching classes with one of them, and then he invited me to work on a project with him. So that’s how I got it. And it was really, really cool and exciting, and I was really happy. I worked with him for seven years on and off. It was tough. Sometimes, whatever public government we were working with were like, “Oh, we have no money to pay you guys!” And we were like, “Great!” But, you know. It was this whole system of we’re still living with our parents. And now I compare it with here, and I’m like, “Yes.” You know. In a way, I—so when I just came here—and I don’t mean to jump, we can, when I just came here and I looked and I thought, “Oh my god, we were, I was living with my parents until I was twenty-seven. How terrible. That’s so dependent.” But at the same time, we didn’t have any way to buy a house, at least not in my economic level. So, yes. [laughs] We stayed with them for a long time. So it wasn’t like I couldn’t pay rent if I wasn’t paid, because I was with my parents, but it was very demoralizing.</p> <p>So anyway, I worked with him. Most of my friends, and that’s what I did, too. We would have, like, little projects on the side. As soon as I finished my university my parents wanted to move from this first house that we lived, and I had already designed a house at school with another friend. And then as soon as school finished they started</p>

	<p>building the house. So with my brother, who is a civil engineer, so my brother was the engineer, I was the architect, and I would go every day and work with the contractor on the house, which was cool. It was like I say, it's always very involved in family dynamics, which is always very complicated, but it was a great experience.</p>
HB	<p>Does your family still live in that house?</p>
Priscila Izar	<p>No. My family—so this brother, which is the only one I have, eventually he decided he did not want to live in São Paulo anymore. So first he went to live in this beach town that I was talking about, and he and my sister-in-law lived there for I don't know how many years. They had their children there, but as the children started growing up and became school-aged, they moved to another city in the countryside of São Paulo. And then once my—so this beach town that I'm talking to is Ubatuba. So it's U-B-A T-U-B-A.</p>
HB	<p>Thank you! [laughter]</p>
Priscila Izar	<p>When they, so they moved from Ubatuba to Itu, which is I-T-U. When my parents, when my father retired, and after a few years, they—okay, so that's an important part I have to tell you about. My sister is married but doesn't—they don't have kids. My brother and sister-in-law have two kids. So my parents, once they retired, they went after the grandchildren, [laughs] and so they moved to Itu, too. So, you know, there's pros and cons. It's much calmer, like really countryside living, but they're a little nervous that they don't have that great access to health, like hospitals and doctors like they had in São Paulo. But that's what they did. So they're there.</p> <p>This house, so the house that I grew up at was sold finally. The house that I built with my brother is rented. And then my sister and her husband live in the house that my dad and his siblings built for my grandmother.</p>
HB	<p>Cool. That's so interesting that you and your brother were able to build a house together. That's really cool. So you were doing that as well as you're working with the professor—.</p>
<p>GRADUATE STUDY IN THE UNITED STATES 34:53</p>	
Priscila Izar	<p>Yes. So I'm working at this urban planning firm, and doing some architecture projects on the side. And at the urban planning firm sometimes it was urban planning but sometimes it was architecture, too. And then I was getting a little, you know, a little bored with</p>

everything and thinking “What am I going to do?” So I decided to do a summer session in [the University of California] Berkeley and take some urban planning courses. But I was really, like, trying to get—really not thinking about studying abroad very seriously. Then I went to Berkeley in summer of [19]97, and I took three, no, two classes in urban planning. And I didn’t really explain that, but I took English for many years twice a week, you know, like in a language school. So going to Berkeley was a discovery in many ways. First, that I realized that I could actually use my English! You know, understand, be understood. I loved the structure of the classes at the—it was just so structured. It was very different than my school. We didn’t have it so clear what were we supposed to deliver to the end to the professor in the beginning of the course, and I just thought, “Wow, this is incredible, how straightforward it is what we have to do.” And I just loved being by myself. I loved it. I was at the international house, so I was not by myself at all, but just, you know, being on my own and not having to, I guess, to explain to my family what was going on every day, it just felt very interesting—a very interesting way to live for a few years.

So I went back to Brazil after that and spent the rest of the summer here. Went back to Brazil and then, sure enough, the boyfriend and I broke up. It was sort of like a common—you know, mutual agreement. And then I thought, “Okay. So I want to do a master’s degree at Berkeley. I want to go back to Berkeley and study.” And that’s what I wanted. So I started studying for it and I applied to it, and as I was applying and looking for scholarships—because that was the only way—so I was looking for scholarships, and there was one particular school, an institution in Brazil, that gave all this – this is all pre-internet, so—I mean, internet was already on, but it wasn’t, like Google. So I was going to this English school to find out about scholarships, and I saw another program at Duke [University in Durham, North Carolina] in international development policy that interested me because I was already—the work that I did was very related to policy, too. So I applied to that one, too, as well as to a bunch of scholarships. And then I didn’t get into Berkeley, which was very, very sad, but I got into this program at Duke and I got a scholarship from the World Bank. And it was an opportunity impossible to refuse.

And I remember when I got to Duke, somebody—but it was always—leaving Brazil was always very sad. When I left to go to Berkeley I

	<p>was totally scared, so I remember crying at the airport and thinking, “Oh, I hope my parents ask me if I want to stay, because then I’m going to say, “Yes! Sure!”” So then, coming to Duke, of course I didn’t have that feeling but it was just like sad and crying leaving Brazil. So I remember a student—but I had that image of Berkeley as the U.S.</p>
<p>HB</p>	<p>Hmm. [laughs]</p>
<p>Priscila Izar</p>	<p>So I remember somebody picking me up from the airport from my school, and I was like “Oh, I cannot wait to see Durham!” And she’s like, “Oh, you might be disappointed.” [laughs] And sure enough, it was very different from what I expected, much more sprawled and the school was not close to the city as it is in Berkeley. But I loved the school. It was an international program, so there’s the welcoming, the staff, they’re all very much concerned with receiving us. So, you know, they help you get your apartment and everything, so it was fun settling in. And then when the program started, I met David, my husband. He was in the same program. We were the two architects—so in the beginning when I was considering if I would come to Duke or not, when I was still dealing with my sadness of not going to, and my questioning of not going to Berkeley and thinking, “Does it make sense to go to a program that’s not urban planning?” They wrote me from the program at Duke and saying, “Look, there’s another architect coming, he works with reconstruction, postwar reconstruction, maybe you guys can work together.” And so I was looking to, waiting to meet him as somebody that I would work together. But then we started—we worked together but also very soon we were going out. So it was a really good time. We were both—I mean, the whole program, but we were both—after having worked and after doing these courses at Berkeley, I knew that I could do it. It was really easy. Compared to working and the pressures of work, for me the master’s degree was wonderful. I was homesick, but not super homesick. I had a super-fun roommate from Greece that we clicked very quickly and so, yes, it was great. It was a great experience.</p>
<p>HB</p>	<p>Did you adjust to life in Durham after a while?</p>
<p>Priscila Izar</p>	<p>So, you know, you’re very much school-oriented, right? So I had a bicycle and we lived at an apartment complex just by the school, so I would bike to school. And I just thought it was very—I remember telling both David and my roommate that I just missed street lights and the density of São Paulo.</p>

HB	Wow.
Priscila Izar	I missed street lights and noise and people walking. But David got me into—and I remember about eight months that we were there, just getting blue and with the winter and just thinking, “I’m too homesick!” And he got me into running. We would go running around the Duke forest and that was great. So I have this memory of, you know, some very special things that happened during this time at Duke. I mean, and in Durham too. For a while there I worked at a CDC [Community Development Corporation] called Haiti CDC. They worked on community development and housing and I worked on a community development plan for them. So I started creating my own ties. So the city itself I didn’t really understand it at first, it was all very spread out, no real city feeling. I mean, it’s heritage of urban renewal, but I did not really understand it at first, but I also did not really liked it. But my time there, I enjoyed a lot.
INTERNATIONAL WORK POST-GRADUATION 44:21	
HB	Could you stay in the [United] States after that?
Priscila Izar	So that was two years, and then David and I got married at the end of our school program. But he was already working with an NGO [Non-Governmental Organization], he was already in this international development track, much more so than I was. So there was the issue of what sort of job choices we both could have, and then my visa, which I should know which type of visa I had, I had, like, graduate student visa with a scholarship, so I think it’s J-1? Or F-1.
HB	That sounds—.
Priscila Izar	I think it’s J-1, because I think I came first with an F-1 to Berkeley, and then a J-1. My visa required that I went back to Brazil. Well, it’s kind of tricky. We can talk about it if it makes sense for the project. But it required that I work outside of the U.S. for two years. The idea was to return to the home country and avoid brain drain, but there was no control whether I—if I left the U.S., I would go to Brazil or somewhere else. But there was just pressure to leave the U.S. And I could extend, and I did extend, for a year. So I had to get a job, I think before graduation, to be able to ask for an extension. And I got that at the last minute—you know, I got a job with an NGO that I wasn’t too excited with, but that allowed me to stay. But meanwhile David was interviewing for jobs with international NGOs, and to go to the field. And eventually he got an offer. He got a few offers and I was still, like

I said, even though I was already travelling I was still homebound and worried, so there's some places that I didn't want to go. And I remember calling my mom and saying, "Oh, David got a job to go to this country," and she'd cry on the other side of the phone and said, "I'm so worried!" Then I told David, "I can't do this!" Now thinking about it I'm like "Oh my god, how silly I was!"

Finally he got a job with an NGO to go to South Africa, and that's what we did. So I worked for a while here, but eventually, after a few months, we went to South Africa with his job. Which of course—again, you would think, "It's so exciting"—however, we just finished school and we were equals in school, right, and doing exciting work, both academic and professional work. In the end of the first year of school I did an internship with the World Bank that was very interesting. Through the internship I went back to Brazil to do a survey about fourteen housing and slum upgrading projects funded by the World Bank. After this I wrote a report that I also had the chance to present at a seminar at the Bank. I was very happy to see that there were lots of opportunities for work in my field after getting my degree. Then I got a job here with an NGO that wasn't really in my field and I was feeling already a little bummed out. Then we went to South Africa and I couldn't work because of the type of working visa that we had and the working policy in South Africa at that time. That was 2000, so apartheid had ended relatively recently, [Nelson] Mandela was elected in [19]94, and there was a lot of effort put into making sure that jobs that could go to locals wouldn't go to other people. So there was a lot of scrutiny with relation to issuing work permits. And we didn't go to Johannesburg or to Pretoria, we went to Port Elizabeth, where there were fewer opportunities for international jobs.

So there I was, from recent grad to—and so, to aggravate even more, it was a small town and everybody looked at me and were like, "Oh, but you can take care of your husband!" I was like, "Oh no, that's not what I want to do!" [laughter] So, again, now I think about it, I'm like, "Oh my god, why didn't I have patience?" But I was super impatient and nervous and I wanted to go back to work. So we stayed there for a year, and eventually I taught at the university and did some consulting work, but we didn't really give ourselves time to establish relationships, both professional and personal. We made a wonderful friend that we still keep in touch with, and she's an urban planner. And I remember telling her, "We're leaving," and she was just like,

“But—.” She was opening a firm. And she was like the total opposite of me; she went to South Africa to do her research work, there she met her future husband, started working locally, then married him, and at that time she was also opening an urban planning firm. And she said, “But you were going to be the first person that we would contract!” And I was like, “No, we’re going back to Brazil.”

So from South Africa, we went back to Brazil. I went back to the firm that I worked before, managing a new community planning project. And David came. And that was 2000, there was already a different vibe in Brazil; there was more talk about urban planning and housing. And the Workers’ Party had just been elected at the local government in São Paulo, and everybody was excited thinking a lot was going to happen. So we moved back. But David didn’t speak Portuguese then, so it wasn’t so easy for him to speak Portuguese. And we moved back to my parents’ house, which was a catastrophe! [laughter] So, then—just to have an idea, we were around—I was thirty-one [years old], David was thirty-six. Again, being very impatient, we were like, “Okay, this is not working. We’ve got to do something about it.” So we started looking for a house. David was looking for a job and he started teaching English. But at the same time, I changed jobs and I, my work was really getting interesting, I was able to build up on the research that I did during my master’s degree.

So for me in the job front was really great, but we were, just the personal situation wasn’t great. David applied for a position as a foreign service officer with U.S.A.I.D. [United States Agency for International Development], and then he got it. And by then we were sort of living—we had, I guess, a three-month—you know when we talk now, “What’s your five-year plan?” I guess our plan was like, “What’s our three-month plan?” So he applied, I was like, “Sure! Let’s try it again!” My poor parents bought us an apartment, then my mother’s mother had passed away and they sold her house all sort of at the same time. So my parents were seeing that the whole living with them wasn’t really working, of course, they bought an apartment for us. And so they are super excited that the whole family’s very close, and then I guess that, I don’t know, I think probably like two months after they bought the apartment I said, “Well, we’re going to try again moving back to the U.S.” And I remember thinking, “If it doesn’t work we can come back.” But my mom was devastated, and she was like, “Oh, but this is—I always thought that you would come back after school, but this is for good.” And I was like, “No, it’s not

	<p>for good!” And she was like, “Yes, it is!” So I remember being very, very, very sad, like heartbroken but with your mom, which is ten times worse than heartbroken with a love relationship, I guess. And David was like, “Maybe we can’t do it.” But I, stubborn as I am, I said, “No, let’s try it,” because it was tough. I thought it was tough for him as well. And I guess, again, we didn’t have a whole lot of patience just to wait and see if his situation would change as he learned Portuguese and he could get a job on his field and everything. He, I think he was less stubborn and impatient than I was, but he had a student loan that he was really worried with. So I guess this was the aggravating factor for him. For me it was just like, you know, I can figure out what to do, I’ve worked in the U.S. before, I’ve studied in the U.S., I’m much more comfortable navigating the U.S. environment than you are in the Brazilian environment. So I was like, “No, let’s go. You follow your career and I’ll follow.”</p> <p>So that’s how we came back here. So we came back in 2003, early 2003. But again, it was very, very tough because—I mean, I guess as you go through and we had just moved to our new apartment because then I told my parents—it was a very old apartment and I was working, I said, “Okay. I will at least renovate it and give back to you in proper condition for renting or whatever.” So we lived there for a while, and it was really nice and it was like, you know, we lived in our apartment again. So we left that, and when we came back here it was—the war in Iraq had just started and it was just weird. It was very weird for me. He went back to work and I was not working and I started trying to set up new connections, but it was all very slow and I was super anxious.</p>
<p>HB</p>	<p>Were you in the [Washington] D.C. area at that point if he was at U.S.A.I.D., or were you somewhere else in the U.S.?</p>
<p>Priscila Izar</p>	<p>It’s in D.C., sorry. So U.S.A.I.D.—so he joined as a foreign, it’s a N.E.P program, which, I can’t remember what’s the acronym for N.E.P. There is a training period and then the officers go out overseas. And I guess, he did sort of like the short, you have, I guess, maybe up to three years to stay here and then go overseas? Because there’s some requirements to get tenure and you can’t just stay here forever if you’re a foreign service officer. But we went fairly quickly; he joined in 2003 and by August 2004 we were moving to Albania, which was the first country we went. So he was working in D.C., I was trying to figure out what to do and, like I said, I had done an internship at the World Bank and I worked with some people in Brazil that I met here,</p>

	<p>so I went back to the World Bank and I ended up doing some consultant work for them. That was pretty long, thinking about it, but it was on-and-off and not very clear where was that going.</p> <p>Meanwhile, my brother and sister-in-law had kids, and we were like, “Oh, yes! Time to have kids!” So we moved here in March, I got pregnant with our first daughter in August, which was great. It was lovely. I really enjoyed being pregnant. It was again bittersweet because then, <i>then</i> I finally realized, “Oh, I wish I were in Brazil,” especially after seeing my niece and nephew. Rationally I was like, “Yes, we can move back to the U.S. again, have a kid, and we can see,” but when things happened I was like, “Oh, I wish I were close to my parents.” Other than that, I mean, not only did we didn’t do that, but we moved to Albania, you know, far away from anything. And it was lovely. I mean, I loved Albania in a way. But moving there—I remember telling David that moving there, with a newborn—Flora was three months [old] when we went—was like moving to Mars. Because in South Africa we spoke English; in Albania we had to—I had to learn to speak Albanian to get around because people didn’t speak English. Anyways, so coming back to the U.S. was for his work with U.S.A.I.D.</p>
ATTAINING U.S. CITIZENSHIP 58:23	
HB	Is that when you went through the naturalization process?
Priscila Izar	<p>Yes. So I was sort of oblivious to the whole thing that was going on with the naturalization process. So the way that happened is that he got assigned to U.S.A.I.D. when we were in Brazil and there was this whole security clearance that he goes through, which was pretty intense. Once he got cleared, I guess, it was an expedited process to get the green card. So we went to Rio—I don’t know why we went to Rio, but we went to Rio—and I did an interview, and, you know, I don’t really remember what we had to do. But so that it – the process started in February, January, February, because he got the notice that he was going to start working with U.S.A.I.D. by beginning of December of 2002. So I guess either January or February, I think January, sorry, 2003 we went to Rio—and I don’t remember why we had to go to Rio—to the interview for the green card. By—in March when I came in here, I already had my green card.</p>
HB	Wow.
Priscila Izar	Yes. And there was something that I wish I remembered, and I can try

	<p>to remember if you would like me to—there was something that I got at the airport. So I think I came in with some paperwork and I got my—I remember there was something, some paper that I got at the airport. Then once I got this paper at the airport I think we got the green card through the mail a few weeks later. But it was really a matter of two, two and a half months. And that was it. That was the green card. And then there were issues also with having the green card, but I guess I could do any type of work. By then I was careful also about applying for citizenship because I still had hopes to do a doctorate degree and I wanted to be able to apply for scholarships like I had for my master’s degree, and I also—yes, so that was the issue with applying for U.S. citizenship. And I just didn’t—the green card worked for me.</p> <p>So then, when we went to Albania, I was an eligible family member, but not quite because I had a green card. So that’s when we decided that it would be better to have citizenship. And then, by then also Brazil accepted dual citizenship. So we met some people working for U.S.A.I.D. or State Department that had been put in this position of having to give away their passports, and I just—with the whole process of moving here, the way it was, the fact that I wasn’t thrilled about leaving Brazil, I was sort of like, “No.” Even though it was all decided, but I was still—it wasn’t an easy decision. I was like, “But I am not giving up my citizenship. I can’t do that.” So the fact that I can keep both my passports was a big thing. So when we were in Albania we decided to apply, and again I think—we were there for a while. We arrived in Albania in August, I think I decided to apply around November, October, November. And I we travelled back to the U.S. in April of the following year. So it did not take more than six months to for the citizenship. And then I took the exam, you know, I studied for the exam and I did it, and that’s how I got my citizenship.</p>
<p>DISCUSSING NEXT STEPS 01:02:49</p>	
<p>HB</p>	<p>Wow. I do just want to do a time check because I know that you have the party that you want to get to, so I want to make sure that you have ample time to do that.</p>
<p>Priscila Izar</p>	<p>Okay.</p>
<p>TEH</p>	<p>It’s 2:45, so is that a good stopping point? Or I don’t know when you need to go, because I know you’ve got a thing.</p>
<p>Priscila Izar</p>	<p>Yes. I think if there’s anything—because I know there are lots of questions we didn’t get to—there’s so much!</p>

TEH	Well, it's possible to schedule a second one, just because this is really great.
Priscila Izar	Yes. I'm sorry, I really talk a lot.
HB	No, it's been so interesting! I felt that I wasn't asking you very many questions because I'm just listening and taking it all in!
Priscila Izar	Just cut me off! [laughter]