

MY IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE by TIAGO FERREIRA
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It was January 2002 when I came home from school, as I would do everyday. My father was home; it surprised me a lot due to the fact that he would always work late. So being shocked as I was to find my father home, I asked him why he was home so early. My dad explained to me that he and my mom had very important news to tell me and my sister.

I was excited, I wanted to know what they had to tell us. My dad started talking, saying that he wanted to give me and my sister a better future, and that in our country we wouldn't have a very good future due to the financial crisis. He kept talking until he finally said that we were going to move to the United States. My sister was very excited to move to the United States, she was seventeen years old and it was every teenager's dream in Portugal at that time. On the other hand I was eleven years old and the thought about leaving my friends and the country I was born in was horrific. I didn't want to leave Portugal, but what saying would a eleven year old have in the decision?

The day came February 1st 2002, it was a cold morning. My uncle took us to the airport where we would be boarding the airplane in a couple hours. The airplane departed from the airport. I couldn't believe I was leaving my beautiful country. The plane finally arrived at the United States. February 2nd 2002, a day that I would and will always remember, at the time it was the worst day of my life, but now I finally see why I migrated to the United States. I now thank my parents for giving a chance to have a better future. Its up to me to make it happen.

Having my uncles living in the Connecticut River Valley was what led my family to settle around the surroundings of the river. Due to my uncle living in Agawam, we had to move there, as he rented an apartment for us. Agawam wasn't the best place; it's a great town but it has a lot of land, and it is a wonderful experience of a country living. But coming from a city where the beach was just five minutes away, getting used to Agawam was very hard. Coming to the United States was a solution to the economic problems that my family had in Portugal. My parents' hopes, aspirations and expectations when bringing us to this country were that we could get a better economic life and to give me and my sister a better life. They wanted us to have everything we wanted, something that in Portugal was not possible. I had to overcome many obstacles in order to get used to life here in the United States. Adjusting to life was very hard, specially the language. Learning and understanding English was one of the hardest obstacles that I had to overcome. Also living in Agawam where there were no Portuguese people was very hard to try to fit in. I had no friends at the beginning; it was a tough time in my life, a time that I don't wish that anyone goes through.

After 6 months in Agawam my parents decided to move to Ludlow due to the large Portuguese population that this town has. Ludlow somewhat reminds me of Portugal, all the shops that exist and seeing people talk Portuguese made me feel and keep cultural relations to my country. Living in Ludlow has helped me fit in the last couple of years and I am now very happy in this country. Although I love my country I understand that I could never have what I have here.

Today, most of the people that I hangout with are kids just like me who came to this country searching for a better life. Having a lot of Portuguese immigrants like myself helps me to always have a piece of my culture intact as I mostly only speak Portuguese in my community. My community reminds me of Portugal and living here is great. It gives me childhood memories of Portugal as I lived in a very similar place in Portugal, just closer to the beach.

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