M: When did you migrate to Australia?

Ju: Technically speaking, I haven’t migrated to Australia yet but I come to Australia in 2015, It think its February.

M: What were the main factors?

Ju: We were just trying to look for difference, a different lifestyle. We meaning my husband and I. I think we just got married few months before that and then its just work in China getting so stressful, and also all the family in China trying to push us to have children and we feel like – we want to have a change, to do something different before we actually have a child. Another thing is that they were just trying to push us to buy a house as well and we working in Shanghai but we don’t like the city and we always want to find a different city. You know, its so big. But then the big environment especially the political and economic environment was so demanding. We feel like we didn’t belong. So we thought why don’t we go to Australia and have a look.

M: Were there other destinations in mind?

Ju: Umm.. We – because we only have friends in Australia, in Germany friends. I think at that time we didn’t have any friends in Canada so we are trying to look through our friends ways to see whats going on in different countries. But both of us, we speak English. We thought Australia is maybe the easiest place we could start looking for. Umm.. I speak French too but my husband doesn’t like French so we just go to Australia.

M: So did you consider European countries?

Ju: Actually we thought about Germany as well but we thought Australia will be the first step. We go have a look first. And then now, 4 years we stay here.

M: Ethnic background

Ju: So, my husband and I we are both Ethnic Chinese. We were born and raised in China and we coming from the same province – the middle part of China, but different cities. Our family, ancestry is long history. I come from a big family. My grandparents, they were scholars. They were like educated but my dad, he didn’t, because of the history reasons in China, because of peace generation, he didn’t went for, you know, formal education. My mom is the same. And yeah, I think in general the whole fanily, my grandparents generation – even though I was little but I can tell the difference of their impact on our generation. Not on my father’s generation but our generation. What kind of my brother and I – we look for formal education, we want to learn more. My husband is a different story. His dads side is, his dad is a construction worker or manager in some period and his mom coming from a different family background. His family is like, so complicated, I didn’t like that. Like, his parents was always fighting, like I didn’t know that before we were dating or after we were dating for so long to meet his parents. Yeah, anyway, it’s a long story. Furthermore, to the grandparents generation, I think his dads side were very rich. Moms side was quite poor. Like, exactly like my family background. So, maybe that’s a historical coincidence. How we joined to each other, you know, with that baggage’s, I don’t know.

M: Did the family have a history of migration?

Ju: My family, they migrated from the North part of China to the middle part of China. It also, in consistence with Chinese history as well. There was like 4 generations before that – there was some political movements, and they moved south. You may want to check the Chinese history. And I think once they move dto this mountain area, I think my dads family, they bought all the land. So, they will settle down in there. But my grandparents generation, they were like super rich and I think they were like, travelling around, yeah but my dad didn’t tell us stories about their generation.

M: How did you and husband meet?

Ju: We actually met at high school. Yeah, we went to the same boarding school and then we met there. It was boring and then, you know, both of us – my husband and I were like studying nerds, in Australian terms. But yeah, anyway, we met through students union doing all this kind of crazy students work.

M: Professional background?

Ju: I think, its really hard to say. So, I studied English, the language, as my Bachelor degree and then I did some work as a interpreter and translator and then I found a specific area for migration to have foreigners – we call expatriates to China to work, mainly to work. So then, I worked in that area called relocation and migration services, I think for roughly 5 years, before I came to Australia. And now I am doing PhD studies in Migration studies. We can say its consistent, I am still using my professional knowledge about how expatriates migrate and how they adopt to workplace and manage the work-life balance, things like that. All the ideas are coming from that professional background. I think if you look at it that way, I think, I am still using my professional knowledge to this. But at some point, I think this move beyond that as well because at that time it mainly focused at the law, the legal background, the legal regulations in China but now I am moving to another direction – to research the experience. So, in that sense, it’s not so much related to my professional training or professional experience, I think. So I come here in 2015. I think I still worked for the China company for about a year or so We just doing remote – like – working from home from over here. And then, at that time I was pregnant and then I had a leave, a break, a very short break and then I started uni over here and I did my Masters over here and then just go further. I didn’t go for workplace job or something. At that time, I just thought, if I want to change my lifestyle, I may start it from way of thinking. Probably that was wrong. I should just go find a job or do something else and be happy. Laughs.

M: How long did you plan/consider the move?

Ju: I thnk the idea was probably in our mind roughly for 2 years. It was quite difficult for my husband to make the decision. He was, still is, the only child in his family and he never really got this idea to live so far away from his family. I was the opposite. I was, I travelled a lot within China and I always wanted to find out whats new and have new experiences. So, I kind of persuade him to try different things. So coming to Australia, like, actually, like, when it came to my mind, I said to him that if you don’t want to go, I will go by myself. So, you know, he said, like we are a couple, so we are supposed to be together. So, he said okay – lets do this. So then, after we had a serious talk, I started to do IELTS and then he did IELTS as well. But its just, everything on paperwork, seems to be so good for me. Not until we come we realised that I couldn’t carry on the same profession because of the different regulations of being a migration agent over here. So, that was quite challenging for me actually. But he, he was, he had a small company back in China and he has all this business background and our friends over here offered him a job right away so bingo – and we stayed. We come as business visa and then he was offered a job, and then we start to talk to migration agent, and then, and looking to what kind of visa we can do. But, that’s where the difficulty started. Apparently, its Marketing something – at that time, they need to do a skills assessment something, and he couldn’t pass that and then we thought about other options. So that company hire me as well but because of my professional background, they couldn’t hire me for the regulations even though I have all the knowledge of marketing, sales… I have the experience but it’s just the industry doesn’t fit. I worked for the consultancy company before so I have all this kind of skills. The migration consultancy – and I have management skills because I literally built a team from only myself to 6 people by the time I left the company only in 3 years. I have marketing skills, I basically marketing our migration service, and relocation service, like a lot. And I know, I have sales experience as well, prior to this migration consultancy, I did sales for pad company and steel company as well. I was quite successful in each job. It’s just when we come here, they say no – you cannot just say you have that, and it doesn’t count. I have a degree in English language and then they were saying you have a degree in English Language, and you did marketing and sales and the you did migration consultancy – that’s all migration and that’s a specific industry which doesn’t fit over here. So, we talked so many different options. Its just – nothing works. So, I said, well, okay maybe this is a time to do my Masters because I always wanted to do a Masters. It sounds like the only right move, and also because I was pregnant and yeah.. and now we start to look for student visa and we realised if my husband needs a full-time job, I need to do a Research degree. So, here I am.

M: Research on visa options

Ju: Oh, we didn’t conduct any research or anything on that. Actually its just, we said, to over friends here we want to come to Australia and have a look. Do you want to.. Can you like, invite us? So they sent us an invitation letter saying you know, because we did business before, and we invited them to come over to have a look. Yeah, so we used that letter to apply. So, they gave us a Business visa, I think we didn’t, at that time we didn’t have to choose which type of visa we need to apply.

M: Role of family in migration

Ju: My parents, they actually, they don’t mind. But they had no capacity to help us but they just simply believe that everything I do is right. My brother never concerned anything about my life or work. So, my family, I don’t think they helped or resist I any way. My husband’s family was actually like a push force for us to come because his mom simply like push us to buy a house, have children. I think that’s a last draw on my husbands shoulder to push us to move further , to move far away. For me, I think, I just wanted to maybe change, I just wanted to move away to another city just within China, eventually. And then, yeah, but his mom and dad divorced by that time and that was hard time, like, his mom was super depressed, and she lived with us and she had a really negative effect on me. I think my husband saw that even though I have a really good relationship with my mother in law but she affect me like, mentally, psychologically. And I wasn’t happy. Like, I worked super hard. So my husband barely saw me at home. So I always go early to work and come back like, 9 or 10 at night so yeah, but I don’t know. Maybe that’s a good thing or not. And then, another thing was that she found a partner before we moved. I think she moved to living with him few months before we actually decided we wanted to come because my husband, you know, somebody is looking after her and she seems to be happy. Yeah, so it seems like, her life actually, was big part of my husbands consideration, whether, you know, to move away or not to move away even though at the beginning, like I said earlier, we have 2 years in considering to move but he never actually make up his mind to go but that’s the thing. She moved away and she moved away with her life - find a partner, get a job and they were happy so that means that we can actually have our life. But we didn’t like Shanghai. We thought that we would go to other cities anyway but why not to be brave and go to different country.

M: Friends and Community

Ju: I think in terms of friends, I think I only saw them moving away like one moved to France, one moved to Germany. But they were in different situations – they married a local. But seeing the life, like you know on social media they put on different .. (inaudible) But they were not providing any like, detail process as to how to go out of China. Because my professional background, I was quite confident, I will be able to find a way. Anyway, other, like close friends, they don’t want us to go actually. They feel like, you know youre a good friend. We want our friend to stay together but at that time I thought we are just coming to Australia maybe for a year, we will probably go back. Anyway, we didn’t. And other friends I don’t think we have a lot of friends for networking, or Im not a big fan of social media and FB was banned in China. And, yeah, they are, not so many platforms were available to us to get information. We have education agents in China but they always charge you money to give information which I don’t believe as well and yeah, for us we just thought we have to come to Australia to have a look and search the information by ourselves and also because we speak the language we are so confident we are going to survive here by all means.We have couple of business clients – so before we come here, my husband was doing business with them. Maybe like, I think, to a couple of close clients he mentioned he may be coming to Australia. I think they were quite supportive but they didn’t ask then why.

M: How long did the initial visa process take?

Ju: The first – the business visa, I think that was quite straight forward. So the friend over here send us the invitation and then we just book the flights; we just showed them our bank account with enough savings to stay in Australia for a year. Yeah, that’s it. It was 1 year visa. It only took us like 4 days. So, I prepare the documents. I think that was maybe spend one day filling the forms and preparing other documentation. That was quite quick. But before we do that, actually I was always thought I may go for further education so I did other process like notarising our degrees, translate that, get them officially transcribed, translate into English and notarise that. We did our ielts test. – that was not required but I prepared that anyway as a just, you know, just, out of my professional experience, you know, that we may need other options and they may request this kind of documentation and if we come to Australia nobody in China has the capacity to help us to do that kind of thing. We even notarise our marriage certificate, our birth certificates. You know everything I can think of as a professional migration consultant, I prepared it. The only thing I didn’t no is the criminal record because that is a timely document. Even if I did that I know that at some point I will do that again. So, that’s the only document that I knew could be handy but I didn’t do.

M: How do you consider to be skilled?

Ju: Like I mentioned to you before I have the knowledge of the management, sales, marketing. I have the two different language capacity, no I have to say 3 – Chinese, French, English – that’s 3. And then I have cross-cultural background like dealing with expatriates and migration experience as well. Even though maybe that doesn’t apply over here but I, it can work for companies who is dealing with Chinese, you know. Im a expert in that kind of background. I just feel like Im skilled. I’m actually really skilled. I have 7 years working experience, 5 years of management skills and I couldn’t transport them over here. Its just a shame. I didn’t actually go out and find a job because of I was pregnant, and I thought you know, if I don’t have a long-term visa maybe it’s kind of challenging for me to find a job. So, which I couldn’t say I was biased or, its just we thought about our visa and then I didn’t even go and apply.

M: Tell me about all the visa cat you went through.

Ju: Okay so visas right. We have business visa, and then we went to I think bridging visa and then we have student visa and then my daughter was born and then we have bridging visa again because we have to re-apply all 3 together and then we have student visa again and that was a change for student visa (574 to 500). Again we have a bridging visa because we got a new student visa. So here, I think it took us 4 days. This is 2015. And this still 2015. Bridging visa i don’t remember how long... I don’t remember exactly how long. This was granted over here for 3 years – and then this bridging visa because my daughter was born. That was a mistake because when we applied for this student visa we forgot to mention that I was pregnant or something and then and they were saying, after my daughter was born, that you have to apply for another visa, because they were saying you didn’t mention over here that you are expecting a baby. If you know, at that point, you won’t have to go through this process. And we yeah, so these take couple of months I think. So these were granted July, yeah and for 2.5 years until the end of the study and then this was – this was when. I think in May 2018 and then – that was pretty soon. 4 years, I think 4 years visa. That only take I think 2 weeks in between from that bridge visa to student visa. I think that was the quickest one. Over here, this was submit I think in March and was granted in July because they had to review the information for my daughter, I think I had to submit birth certificate, immunisation – I don’t know why they ask for that. I think they ask for a few documentations. I just feel like you know, that’s my daughter but they wanna ask to prove that’s our daughter. Laughs.

M: Was husband a dependent?

Ju: Yeah – so here my husband is the same. No business we are the same, we are not dependents on either of us but then starting from here – he’s the dependant. But then because I’m doing the research, he is able to work full time without any working hour restrictions.

M: Commercial services

Ju: We use migration agent over here – Chinese ethnicity background. I did this myself. I did this myself. I should put the sponsor nomination somewhere here. Okay so in between over here, I think last year.. what time last year?.. August last year 2018 I should put in here – employer nomination. That’s, over here in between. We ask our husbands employer to do this. This is my husband’s side - to do the employer nomination for us because at that time he actually had 2 years working experience in Australia. We thought, you know, maybe we can give it try. And then, that’s not right, this visa go rejected. Not visa, this process go rejected. It didn’t even reach to the visa application stage yet. So rejected in, um, whats now, April? It was rejected in April. So, we used, really, we shouldn’t do that.. we used migration agent to do that. Its really bad idea. I should do. I should wait and trying to do it myself.

M: Why?

Ju: This agent is a good salesman. He present all this opportunity for us to take it. He didn’t have enough legal knowledge of preparing the documents. I don’t know how he deal with other clients but from my perspective I think this guy is just taking money for submitting application and the money for the training place as well. So that’s why I was so pissed off when the nomination go rejected. And from the immigration rejected letter – I can tell they didn’t do the job because. I can do that documentation in one day. If I can do it in one day then that means that he probably just did that in one day and he didn’t even thought of thoroughly what should be done.

M: Other commercial services

Ju: So you remember I said that we had all the documents in China translated and notarised so that come in handy over here. So they didn’t do anything. So, I did all the job for this guy. He just charged for the money. And, we did IELTS. I think my husband did a second one over here because that expired. So yeah, he did ielts. Yeah my husband did that. No he didn’t even do skills assessment.

M: Why did you use a migration agent?

Ju: Its just that because I don’t have time to do it myself. I was studying, I raise a child and I worked as well. I just don’t have the mental capacity to do the application. Its just because this migration process requires details – like, all the planning, all the document preparations, right. I thought if we hire somebody and they do all this kind of planning job for us.. you know.. that would be easy. But, that’s the thing of trusting other people and trusting them professionally. Actually, they are not professional. That’s quite disappointing. I don’t know. I was quite mad.

M: How much have these processes cost – money wise?

Ju: Oh – that’s a lot of money. I don’t remember how much but okay – just have a general idea right. We did IELTS twice for me. My husband did twice as well. We did medical check I think, twice. So students visa – business visa we paid application. So for 2 of us, I think it cost us 2500 rnb so thats $500AUD. And IELTS – in China it was more expensive – I think 400 something in China – $350. Medical check, so twice for me and then plus Joy. For family its more expensive. I think it cost us for 2 of us – mine was 600 something – we used BUPA, it was quite expensive 600 + 2 + 3 and this is the most expensive one – employer. So student visa we paid $500, employer nomination we paid $2000 and our employer paid $6000 for the training fees, and then student visa – so these two I think is nearly 600. And then here its 600 as well. The good thing for research student is that husband and dependent – they are free so that’s $600 as well. Oh insurance money – that’s the biggest amount and tuition fees. So insurance for the first one for 3 years, I think we paid $15k as a family. Its insane. But now we are paying more. So, for PhD we paid 20000 – insane right.And then tuition fee – Masters - $25000 and then second year its half – I was lucky. Luckily for PhD the tuition fee was waived and we got the scholarship and cover for 1 persons insurance. Childcare – so Joy attending childcare since she was 10 months old. So, now shes 3.5. I think the first year I think its only 10-12 so that’s 1 year old. I think 2000 something. 2nd and 3rd and (roughly per year) – for childcare the same amount as my tuition fee. Its that much. So, every penny we earned, its back in Australia. So we checked our bank account actually. If we look exactly now back to 4 years ago, we have the same saving. So 4 years passed, we spent all the money we earn here and the savings were all gone in between. This savings which is saved gradually, a little bit by the time. That’s insane right!? So - If I am not a skilled migrant, I don’t know who is qualified as a skilled migrant! Laughs

M: Technology

Ju: I think technology – only like phone or no – I mean like networking. Actually, That’s one thing we feel like we didn’t do a lot of research on the things we should do. Like, especially choosing a agent – we didn’t do like, a thorough assessment, whether this guy are, you know, experienced or qualified. I only look at his registration number to look at whether he is a legal registered agent. That’s the only think I looked at. That was a huge mistake. So, looking back I think I should use those kind of networks more wisely. Actually, I think there bare some Chinese migration forums online – I don’t remember what they are called. I think tick tak world visa. I used this type of websites to check some requirements when I was free before I come here. But I think very limited. That’s a mistake. I should use that more wisely, definitely and do my research.Currently I didn’t do any research at all. I just go, you know, I finish my study and then I would do everything by myself thoroughly and prepare that. I know its that – maybe it’s a mistake as well. Maybe we should think about migration from now as a starting point because it takes time and its constantly changing. I don’t know. Its just that I don’t have time for that. Its more concerning of psychological, emotional management than time consuming actually. I think if I squeeze the time to do research, maybe I can do that. Its just, keeping up with all of these changes is so – like – driving me crazy. If I start to do this process and then they just suddenly change, so like, whats the point. I do all this preparation and its for nothing.

M: Social connections

Ju: I think I have to say the networking in China give us some positive perspective about migration to Australia because if you look at the life in China – I mean apparently it looks beautiful. But the trip we went back to China last Christmas was quite depressing as well actually. So we see all this economic bubble in China. We can see whats wrong in there but our friends, our family sitting there – they couldnt see it. That was kind of our motivation to stay here. I just feel like they were driving by – not social media – by the media, by politics, by everything in this huge bubble but they were so much in it, they couldn’t see that. And we were there from here coming over there, you know, after 4 years, we can actually see that, there’s a huge bubble – for housing, for property, for education and all the anxiety and depression they are feeling daily. They didn’t express but they , like you can feel it, when you are with them. Everybody is in, so quick pace, they were rushing to work, rushing to school, rushing to finish everything, rushing to..I don’t know, theyre just rushing. They never even stop and think why we are doing this. Whats the point of docing this. So you know if a child is going to primary school, why are you putting them into early training starting from 8 months old. Howcome? They should enjoy being a baby.. being able to cry.. play..

M: Regulatory aspects?

Ju: We have so many right. Over here for business, we have to have the invitation; we have to got money, and then that’s it. So student visa. Obviously I have to have the educational background for the schools, so yeah, IELTS, and financial. What else – medical, marriage cert notarised, yeah and then Student visa is the same thing + my daughters birth cert. Over here employer nomination because the agent didn’t do ant good job we just take whatever we had, student visa is the same thing it’s the same one. But how come you have to do IELTS – IELTS is a skill. IT doesn’t expire right. Can you like, when you write your thesis – can you say please – I don’t swear but that’s insane to say that your English language skills expired – come on. Who come up with that idea! OMG.

M: Current immigration policies?

Ju: It change so fats – I lost tracking of them. I remember when I first come there was the skilled occupation list so that changed from every year. At the beginning I was checking on that I thought that I may go for one of the occupation on the list and then it changed next year I thought, whats the point. I wont go for that. I’ll go for something I like. If Australia for some reason, they don’t accept me, I will go somewhere they will accept me for who I am for the profession I like. Maybe its too ideal.

M: Obstacles/Challenges

Ju: Challenges all the time right – money – like you can see all the money I have spent. I think financially, that’s a huge challenge. Money – Money – all this money. Its too much money. I wont highlight all of them but Money. Money is the main challenge – money. And then regulation as well. Like regulation, this one, employer sponsorship. I don’t know whether it’s a challenging of visa process or its a challenging of finding like a really good migration agent or the Government should regulate the migration agent. I don’t know how to put this way but there should be like 3 points, So regulation on just visa itself and regulation on agents and also there should be assessment of agents.

M: Social support services?

Ju: NGOS they are not a big thing in China and they are corrupted. They lost public trust so we never use any NGOS. I think I should mention, like, peer support over here. Peer professional knowledge save us some money.

M: Okay – next steps?

Ju: Future is beautiful, right? Option 1 – finish PhD, go back to China and be an Associate professor and not recognised by anybody internationally. Number 2 – stay in Australia, find a, find a, I don’t know post doc or lecturing of im lucky enough, or researcher. I think we have post work visa or something and then depending on where I am going, probably get PR in few years. So, I’m thinking so this kind of job, I can go or you know, professional jobs. It’s the last option of staying in Australia for doing something. I really love doing research so if professional kind of job can allow me to do research as well, I don’t mind, as long as what I’m doing I like. That’s the whole point of the whole process. OR We go to another country – so go for Postdocs or I don’t know, if any other opportunities for NGOS or academic jobs. Maybe Canada. Its sounds like, super cool to go there but it’s a bit cold for us. It’s just a thought.

M: Family

Ju: I probably sponsor my niece. I have two niece but if their parents want them to come here. My first niece she is 10 yo so she wants to come, and maybe you know sponsor her to study over here – that’s a good option. My parents wont be able to enjoy the lifestyle over here because of the language. They don’t speak English. I feel like its going to be super difficult for them to fit in. My in-laws, I don’t think they will be enjoying over here as well. So, probably they will come and stay for short term – sponsor them for short term but I don’t think for PR they will.

M: Have they visited?

Ju: No – their visa got rejected for no reason. Okay so we were in the bridging visa, so parents visa got rejected. So apparently, we were on bridging visa so they thought our parents will come here, stay here, don’t want to return. That’s what they thought, They gave us reason that said that my husband was the only child and then I applied my parents visa first and they rejected that and said they found my parents relationship within China was not strong enough to draw them back to China. And I was like, that’s insane and there was no appealing process. And then I applied for my husband, they rejected for same reasons, said that my husband was the only child so they were so afraid that they will come over and stay over here and not go back to China. Come on, My MIL has a mother – an elder mother, and all this network in China. I barely think that they will stay over here and got go back. I got a friend coming to visit me – so July last year I got family here – my cousins. So, they come visit us so I just give them the website. They submit application by themselves.

Ju: [looks at the map] So much money we have spent!

M: How do you feel with the map?

Ju: I didn’t realise we have spent so much money. Im gonna take this back and talk to my husband – this is how much money we have spent. And this is probably only part of that right? You see we did all this documentation in China, that’s separate. That’s OMG. Umm. I mean if I look back I feel like if you just think about migration, I should do a better job from the beginning – not just running about doing all this kind of things, pursuing my career which is not a career yet and I don’t know whether its going to be a career. Its just something I’m interested in and looking back from the perspective of migration starring for 2015 use my professional knowledge and think thoroughly even before we are going so far away – do that at the beginning, planning, and yeah… I wont be able to sleep tonight realising how much money ive spent on this only in 4 years. So much money on migration. We wont be buying ahouse in like 10 years or something. Do you want to have a place where you feel like you can mess with walls, you can draw on the walls. Actually, I really want to draw on the walls. You know this kind of place, you can like destroy it. You don’t want to think about what you are doing, you know, and also I want to find this place where I can buy all this kinds of cups and mugs that I like.